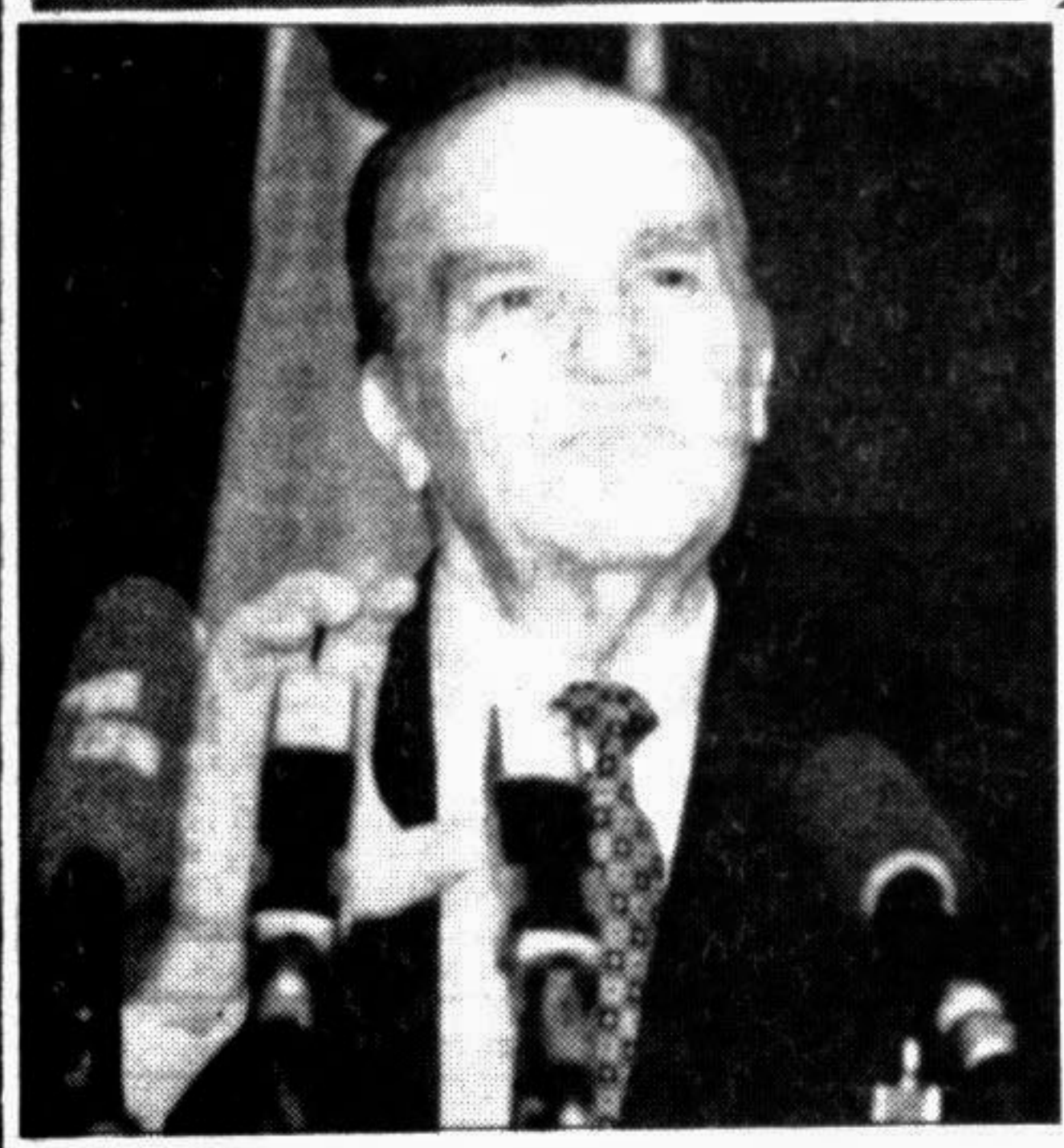


BRIEFLY



Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic gestures during Thursday his press conference following the meeting with US envoy Richard Holbrooke, Thursday. The Bosnian government and separatist Serbs have agreed to a 60-day ceasefire aimed at ending a three-year civil war. The ceasefire is to go into effect on October 10th.

Gore to meet Russian PM today: Vice President Al Gore and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin will meet Saturday in Bangor, Maine, to follow up on discussions at the 1995 Moscow summit. AP reports from Washington.

President Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin asked their No. 2 men to discuss a variety of issues broached at the leaders' May meeting.

Violence claims 8 in Guatemala: At least eight former exiles were killed and 15 others wounded Thursday in an ambush of a meeting to plan the anniversary celebration of their return to Guatemala. UN and refugee leaders said. AP reports from Guatemala City.

Officials of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said at least eight were killed and 15 injured in the isolated jungle town of October 8, in the municipality of Chisec.

9 Filipino stuntmen killed in mishap: Nine Filipino movie stuntmen on their way to perform daring stunts were killed when their jeep crashed into a bus, police said Friday. Reuter reports from San Fernando, Philippine.

The accident at Tarlac, 110 km (69 miles) north of Manila, occurred on Thursday morning when the jeep was overtaking a 10-wheeler truck, they said. The jeep and the bus collided head-on.

Egypt frees 350 militants: Egypt released over 350 "repentant" Muslim militants from its prisons to mark the anniversary of the October 1973 war with Israel, the government Daily Al-Ahram said yesterday. AFP reports from Cairo.

The 353 former members of armed militant groups walked free on Thursday. Al-Ahram said.

6 Russian troops killed in Grozny: Six Russian soldiers were killed and four wounded during clashes with separatist forces in the Chechen capital Grozny and in eastern areas of the Muslim republic. Military sources said Friday. AFP reports from Moscow.

Iraqi officials pressing people to vote for Saddam

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Oct 6: Iraqi officials are pressuring their people to vote for Saddam Hussein as president in this month's referendum on opposition member said Thursday, reports AFP.

"The ruling Baath Party is making door-to-door visits, making residents sign documents committing them to vote yes" in the October 15 referendum. Mohammad Abdel Jabbar, head of an opposition weekly said.

The government will control the vote because "the ballot papers distributed to the voters will be numbered, which helps to determine how people voted," said Abdel Jabbar, who heads Al-Mutamarr, mouthpiece for the Iraqi National Congress.

A parallel referendum in Iraqi schools planned for October 11 "is a means to pressure parents," he added. "If a child says no, that means that his father, his mother or big brother is against Saddam."

The state-run Iraqi students federation said Monday that a referendum will be organised for the country's five million pupils to allow them to show their loyalty to Saddam Hussein.

Baghdad announced in September that it was holding a referendum on extending the term of Saddam Hussein, 58, who has been president since 1979, for another seven years.

Iraq said that the first such vote to be held since the monarchy was overthrown 37 years ago was decided in response to "lies" made by Iraq's enemies on how the country is governed.

Reuter adds from United Nations: Iraq's foreign minister accused the United States on Thursday of a lack of credibility by deliberately misinterpreting UN resolutions on sanctions against Baghdad because of its own political objectives.

Addressing the General Assembly, Foreign Minister Mohammed Saad al-Sahaf also called for a dialogue with states in the Middle East region but did not give specifics.

High level Russian team to visit Cuba MOSCOW, Oct 6: A high-level Russian delegation goes to Cuba next week to discuss military cooperation and construction of a controversial nuclear power station. First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets said Thursday, reports AFP.

Soskovets was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency that his delegation, leaving October 10, would sign a series of documents including agreements on using Russian experts to build a nuclear plant and on supplies of industrial spare parts.

Israeli parliament ratifies self-rule expansion accord

JERUSALEM, Oct 6: Israel's parliament heeded Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's plea to "give peace a chance," voting early Friday to ratify an accord that grants the PLO control over West Bank cities and signals and end to 28 years of Israeli occupation, reports AP.

The accord was approved 16-59 after a tumultuous 15-hour debate.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, speaking last, defended the agreement against criticism that it gives away too much to the Palestinians and endangers the safety of Israelis.

"We did not concede anything," he said. "The agreement did not create the reality. The reality created the agreement."

Parliamentary ratification of the accord had been in question after two rebel members of Rabin's Labour Party said they would vote against it.

Rabin declared the proceedings a vote of confidence in the government, meaning a defeat would have brought down his coalition.

The deciding vote in favour turned out to be lawmaker Alex Goldfarb, who recently broke away from the right-wing Tsomet Party and joined Rabin's coalition. Goldfarb was booed by opposition lawmakers as he cast his vote.

A 60-60 tie would have meant the agreement was not ratified. The agreement was endorsed by Rabin's Cabinet last week.

Earlier, more than 20,000 Israelis holding candles and chanting "Rabin is a traitor" marched from downtown Jerusalem to the Knesset, or parliament, to protest the Israel-PLO agreement.

The accord, signed last week in Washington, calls for an Israeli troop withdrawal from Palestinian towns by the end of the year, the deployment of 12,000 armed Palestinian police in the West Bank, and Palestinian general elections by spring.

Rabin told the parliament that bloodshed would continue unless Israel ended its rule over the Palestinians.

"This (occupation) is not a solution for peace... We can continue to kill and be killed, but we can also try to stop this never-ending circle of violence," Rabin said in a 45-minute speech frequently interrupted by hecklers.

Rabin acknowledged that the agreement involves risks, but said he can freeze the withdrawal at any moment if the Palestinian Liberation Organisation chief Yasser Arafat does not live up to his commitments.

"This government decided to give peace a chance," he said. The opposition charged that Rabin did not have a popular mandate to make far-reaching concessions to the Palestinians.

Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the opposition right-wing Likud Party, predicted that Rabin's government would fall soon. "Soon a nationalist, responsible leadership will take control, a leadership that will return security to this country," he told protesters Thursday evening.

In parliament, Netanyahu accused Rabin of putting Israelis at risk. "You are moving the border back to the lines of 1967," Netanyahu told Rabin, referring to the 1967 Middle East war in which Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Two Israeli women walk past a portrait of President Saddam Hussein Thursday on their way to one of Baghdad's polling centres to check whether their names are registered on voting lists ahead of the October 15 referendum on the Iraqi leader's presidency.

— AFP/UNB photo

Serb forces retake Kljuc

BELGRADE, Oct 6: Bosnian Serb forces on Thursday recaptured the town of Kljuc in northwest Bosnia that had been seized by Muslim-led government troops in an offensive a month ago, the Serb news agency SRNA reported here, says AFP.

A SRNA correspondent in Banja Luka, just north of Kljuc, said Bosnian regular forces suffered heavy casualties and had retreated toward Drvar and Petrovac to the west.

Recapturing Kljuc would enable the Serbs to cut communications between Muslim-held Bihać in the northwest and Jajce, now in the hands of the Croats, in central Bosnia.

Serb offices in Banja Luka earlier this week said their campaign to take Kljuc would be bolstered by Croat reluctance to see the Muslims in complete control of the stretch of road.

Hammas appeals to Gaddafi to stop expulsion of Palestinians JERUSALEM, Oct 6: The hardline Palestinian group Hamas appealed to Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi on Thursday to put an immediate stop to his campaign to throw 30,000 Palestinians out of his country, reports AFP.

"We call on our brother Moamer Gaddafi to go back immediately on his unjustifiable decision," the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) said in a statement. "We deplore these mass expulsions, especially since we were expecting Gaddafi to announce during his press conference that he was going back on this campaign which ignores friendly relations between the two peoples and humanitarian and judicial considerations."

Teachers of S Philippines to be armed ISABELA, Philippines, Oct 6: The military commander in the southern Philippines said Friday he will arm teachers so they can protect themselves against bandits on a southern island, reports AP.

Major General Ruperto Ambil, chief of the Southern Command, said he agreed to a proposal by a provincial school superintendent Friday to allow the teachers to carry weapons.

about this," he said. "It matters what the parties do, not just what they say."

In contrast to countless failed truces, the warring sides themselves seem to want this ceasefire. The senior US envoy who negotiated it, Richard Holbrooke, shed the cautious demeanor of his recent shuttle mission to the Balkans.

"Today marks another important step forward, undeniable a big step forward," Holbrooke told reporters in Zagreb, the Croatian capital.

"I think this is a serious agreement, and it will be respected," Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic said in Sarajevo. "We will respect it, and I think the Bosnian Serbs will respect it."

As a sign of expectations for the accord, the United Nations announced it would soon begin reducing its peacekeeping force in Bosnia by about one-third, to 21,000 troops.

The agreement, signed by Izetbegovic and Bosnian Serb leaders including Radovan Karadzic, is to lead to further peace talks in the United States beginning October 25, and a postwar power-sharing agreement.

The exact division of territory remains to be worked out, and the complex power-sharing arrangement risks a return to the ethnic-based paralysis that spawned the fighting.

The conflict erupted in April 1992 when Bosnia's Serbs rebelled after a vote by the Muslim-Croat majority to secede from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

As negotiators worked feverishly to seal Thursday's deal, the United Nations reported more movement on the battlefield, including more than 100 soldiers from Croatia who crossed into Bosnia.

Croatian troops were crucial to a joint government-Croat offensive that won back wide swaths of territory from the Serbs during recent months. Croatia is not a party to the ceasefire, but Holbrooke said in Zagreb Thursday that Croatian "participation has been indispensable" in reaching it.

There also have been reports of recent Serb counter-offensives. Bosnian Serb television reported late Thursday that Serb fighters advancing on government-held Kljuc had entered the town, 140 kilometers (85 miles) northwest of Sarajevo. The report said there was intense street fighting, and an international peace conference in Paris.

The government army and rebel Bosnian Serbs are to halt all offensive actions, including laying of mines and sniping.

But US officials acknowl-

LTTE sacks intelligence chief Tigers kill 8 troops in attack

COLOMBO, Oct 6: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels killed eight soldiers today when they attacked a foot patrol in the eastern Polonnaruwa district, the military said, reports Reuter.

Four soldiers were wounded in the clash at Palamimadukanda. Defence Ministry operational headquarters said in a communique.

Residents travelling from the northern rebel-held Jaffna Peninsula to the south on today said monsoon rains were making life difficult for the current armed forces offensive. Many were taking shelter where they could find it by the roadside, they said.

The military said on Thursday more than 300 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerrillas have been killed in Operation Thunder Strike, which was launched on Sunday.

The army has captured 25 square km (10 square miles) of rebel territory since breaking out of the government-controlled Palaly Airbase, a spokesman said on Thursday. They were consolidating positions today.

The rebels broke a three-month truce and resumed hostilities in April, refusing to consider a peace plan to end the 12-year revolt. The LTTE are fighting for a separate homeland in the north and east.

AFP adds: A Tamil Tiger guerrilla charged with assassinating former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi has Malaysian state bans all public singing, dancing

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6: The Malaysian state of Kelantan, ruled by Muslim fundamentalists has banned all public singing and dancing in the state capital of Kota Bharu, reviling such performances as un-Islamic "haram" local news reports said, says AFP.

"From today, all charity drives, cultural shows, concerts or any functions which involve singing and dancing are banned," Kota Bharu Municipal Council president Hassan Abdullah was quoted Friday by the Star Daily as saying.

Hassan said the ban followed a directive from the state government, led by Parti Islam (PAS), classifying such performances contrary to religious beliefs.

A special Indian court hearing the Rajiv Gandhi case has already ordered the arrest of Prabhakaran, Amman and the head of the LTTE's women's wing, Akila to answer charges of murder.

"We know there is a lot of dissension within the LTTE, especially after the latest defeat they suffered inside Jaffna. They have never taken such losses in the past," Munasinghe said.

been sacked from his post as the rebels' intelligence chief, the military here said Thursday.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) removed Pottu Amman from his post before they suffered their worst military defeat in the northern Jaffna Peninsula earlier this week, a military spokesman said.

Spokesman Sarath Munasinghe told reporters that Pottu Amman had been replaced by another senior LTTE cadre identified as Kapil Amman.

Pottu Amman is the second accused, after LTTE supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran, in the slaying of Rajiv Gandhi during an election rally in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu on May 21, 1991.

Winner of the 1995 Asian Model Search International finals, Miss Philippines, Erma D. Magalang, 25, (C), poses for photographers with first runner-up, Miss Hong Kong, Eunis Chan Po Fun, 21, (R) and Miss Thailand, Rapeepun Vunnoraj, 23, late on Thursday. Miss Philippines won a 17,852 US dollar-working contract with Carrie Models International, a watch worth 14,285 US dollar, 2,142 US dollar in cash and cosmetics worth 1,071 US dollar.

— AFP/UNB photo

Ceasefire in Bosnia may lead to power-sharing accord

SARAJEVO, Oct 6: Under direct US pressure, Bosnia's combatants finally signed what seems to be a sincere ceasefire deal. Now a world weary of their war waits to see whether they mean it, reports AP.

Even as they prepared to make good on the accord's terms — including a restoration of electricity and gas utilities in besieged Sarajevo — there were ominous reports of fighting in several areas.

The truce doesn't take effect until after midnight local time Tuesday (2301 GMT Monday). Fighting often has surged before previous truce deadlines in last-minute skirmishing for position.

President Clinton, who announced the agreement Thursday in Washington, acknowledged that unresolved problems remained. "We need to be clear-eyed



Two Iraqi women walk past a portrait of President Saddam Hussein Thursday on their way to one of Baghdad's polling centres to check whether their names are registered on voting lists ahead of the October 15 referendum on the Iraqi leader's presidency.

Off the Record

A precautionary guide for British MPs

LONDON: Sexual harassment is common in the House of Commons, but having sex is impossible, according to a veteran Labour member who has just issued a guide for new entrants, reports AFP.

"If you want to unzip your trousers or take your knickers off, don't do it in the palace of Westminster," London MP Brian Sedgemore advises in his "insider's guide to parliament."

"However, discreet you are, the security staff will get to know about it. Those chaps are professionals who can spot a bonk at 1,000 yards (metres)."

"Sexual harassment is commonplace," Sedgemore adds. "Groping is less so, but not unknown in bars, and on overseas trips when too much alcohol has been consumed."

"Journalists might find themselves victims, but it is inconceivable that women journalists would report MPs for sexual harassment. Indeed one or two good-looking ones know that by wearing a short skirt and talking intimately, they can guarantee themselves exclusive stories."

Rare blue whale instead of sardines

RABAT: Moroccan fishermen trawling for sardines in the Atlantic netted instead a 12-tonne blue whale, the Moroccan news agency MAP said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

At 13 metres (43 feet) long the whale dwarfed the 11-metre (36-foot) trawler, which was off the western Saharan Port of Tarfaya.

MAP quoted the captain as saying the whale failed to free itself from the net despite a struggle of more than 12 hours. It was not immediately known if the whale survived.

Syria warns of fresh conflict with Israel

ABU DHABI, Oct 6: Syria's army chief, in comments marking the 1973 Middle East war today, warned of a fresh confrontation against Israel and said the Jewish state did not want a just peace in the region, reports AFP.

General Hekmat Al-Shihabi said Syria would continue to bolster its defence capabilities to face what he called Israel's aggressive plans.

"What Israel wants is to resolve the problem its own way by perpetuating its occupation of Arab land, obliterations the legitimate Arab rights and reaching separate, fragile agreements that do not secure a solid base for a just and durable peace," he told the United Arab Emirates Daily Al-Bayan.

"This, in our opinion, will only lead to intensified Israeli aggression and permanent tension that increases the possibility of a fresh war."

Shihabi was apparently referring to Israel's separate peace deals with the Palestinians and Jordan. Syria

has opposed such accords on grounds they violate agreements for a pan-Arab peace with Tel Aviv.

His warning marked the 22nd anniversary of the 1973 Israeli-Arab war, the third major confrontation between the Jewish nation and its neighbours.

Shihabi said Syria, one of the most hardline Arab countries, was serious in seeking peace with Israel on the basis of the Madrid Conference, which was held three years ago to launch the Middle East peace process.

"We mean what we say. We will not do anything that will not serve the interests of Syria and the Arab nation," Shihabi said.

"But we stress that if the options of a just and comprehensive peace fail, there will be no power that can force Syria to abandon its principles. Syria will continue to stick to its national liberation line and pursue the struggle to attain the ambitions of our nation and regain our occupied land."

Demirel okays Ciller govt ANKARA, Oct 6: Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said on Thursday she had received presidential approval for a minority government which is expected to get its backing from a small far-right party, reports Reuter.

"The president has approved the government," Ciller told reporters outside her residence after a 45-minute meeting with President Suleyman Demirel in the presidential palace.

Demirel's approval of Ciller's cabinet list — composed of deputies from her conservative True Path Party (DYP) comes three weeks after her right left coalition collapsed.

The government is expected to draw support from the far-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which on Thursday agreed to give its backing if Ciller ended the three-week-old strike by public sector workers.