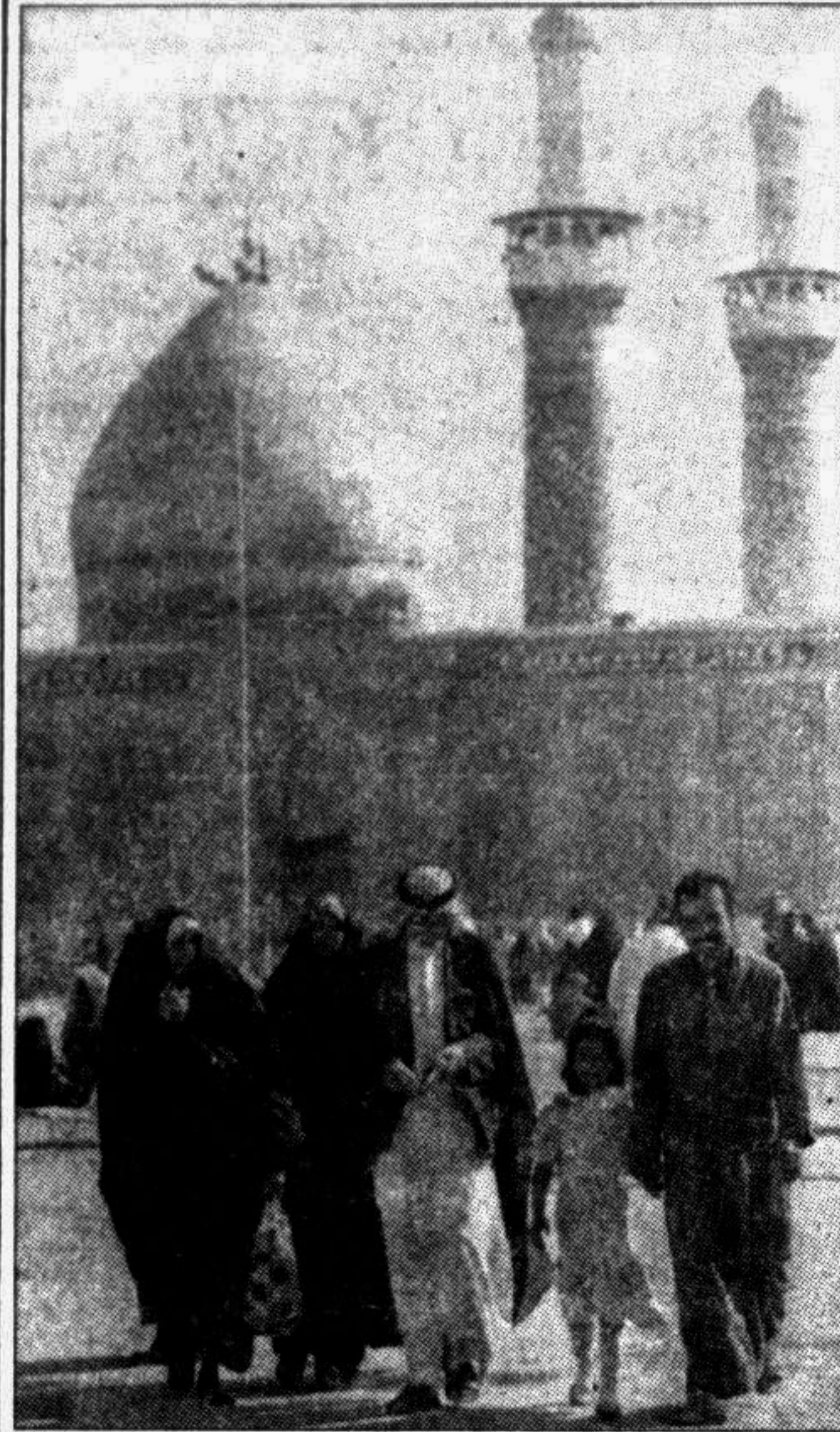


BRIEFLY



Iraqi Shi'ites come out from Imam Al-Hussein Mosque in Karbala some 100 kilometres, south of Baghdad on Wednesday, where despite the bloody repression in 1991 Iraqi President Saddam Hussain got 100 per cent in Karbala of "yes" votes in last Sunday's referendum. — AFP/UNB photo

Arafat congratulates Saddam: PLO leader Yasser Arafat congratulated President Saddam Hussein on Wednesday on his referendum victory as President of Iraq for a seven-year term, the official Iraqi news agency said, Reuter reports from Baghdad. "It pleases me to send to you, on behalf of the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and on my own behalf the sincerest cordial congratulations, for the distinguished national role you play in promoting and uniting our Arab nation," it quoted Arafat as saying.

I dies in NZ balloon crash: New Zealand police said one person was killed and two others were presumed dead after a hot air balloon carrying nine people crashed in icy seas off the coast of South Island yesterday, Reuter says from Wellington. Police spokeswoman Maggie Leask told Reuters a 28-year-old Japanese woman had died, six people were in hospital suffering from hypothermia, and two men were missing.

US grants visa to Castro: The United States has granted Cuban President Fidel Castro a visa to attend 50th anniversary ceremonies of the United Nations in New York next week, a US official said, Reuter reports from Washington. The official, who asked not to be identified said the visa would allow Castro to attend celebrations of the anniversary at the United Nations.

Colombian Congressman held: Colombian prosecutors arrested a Congressman of the ruling Liberal Party on Wednesday, the first of 12 congressmen being investigated for allegedly receiving money from drug traffickers. A spokesman for the prosecutor general's office told Reuters that Rodrigo Garavito, a member of the House of Representatives, was detained after the Supreme Court ordered his arrest earlier in the day. The spokesman did not know what charges the congressman faced.

Nation of Islam to plunge into US politics

WASHINGTON, Oct 19: Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, basking in the success of his Million Man March, said Wednesday his Nation of Islam Movement will now plunge into politics and become a "third political power," reports Reuter. The 62-year-old black leader told a news conference his organisation would follow through on Monday's assembly of what he said were more than one million black men but which police said numbered 400,000. He said his organisation would enter politics for the first time, register and mobilise millions of blacks and other disaffected voters to become a force in the 1996 presidential elections. "And so, we feel that rather than establishing a third political party, we will establish a third political power that will draw from the Democrats, the Republicans and independents and we will work together," said Farrakhan, whose organisation has split with mainstream Islam. Disavowing any political office ambitions himself, Farrakhan said he would work with other black organisations to get a political agenda said numbered 400,000. Meanwhile, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi congratulated black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan on "shaking" Washington by staging his Million Man March, saying it would help blacks.

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Iraqis still support Saddam despite hardship of UN embargo

BAGHDAD, Oct 19: Saddam Hussein, after being sworn in for another term as president, has declared that the Iraqi people are still firmly behind him despite the hardship of the UN embargo, reports AFP. Saddam, who gave his first speech Tuesday since winning 99.96 per cent of the vote in Sunday's unprecedented referendum, also pledged to boost the economy by encouraging the private sector and improve ties with fellow Arab states. "The Iraqi people wanted to declare to the world they are an enlightened, free and faithful people," Saddam, wearing a dark suit and striped tie, told a packed national assembly building. "That is why the people chose Saddam Hussein in this referendum at a time when vile aggressors are trying to starve them," the president said, according to the speech carried by the official Iraqi news agency. Crippling UN economic sanctions have been kept in place on Iraq since its August 1990 invasion and occupation of Kuwait since UN officials say Baghdad has failed to eliminate all its weapons of mass destruction. "In the midst of the uproar caused by mediocrities lackeys and agents, the people elected Saddam Hussein their president and

Air force jets pound Tamil villages, 40 civilians die

COLOMBO, Oct 19: Air force planes providing cover to advancing ground troops in northern Sri Lanka have bombed Tamil villages and killed at least 40 civilians, Tamil Tiger guerrillas claimed today, reports AFP. Ground attacks aircraft pounded four villages inside the Jaffna peninsula, the stronghold of the separatist Liberation Tigers on Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Wednesday, the guerrillas' clandestine radio said. The rebel radio said 19 more Tigers were also killed Wednesday while resisting an army advance inside the Jaffna peninsula and raised to 49 their death toll since the army launched the offensive on Tuesday. In a separate statement issued from its London office, the LTTE gave a lower civilian casualty figure. The one-page statement said 22 civilians were killed and 17 injured in air attacks on Wednesday.

"In its latest attempt to break out of the main northern military base of Palsly, the Sri Lankan military tried to push through LTTE frontlines at Navakiri, Ev Evinali, Nilavari and Achelu north areas. "The Sri Lankan forces were unable to make any headway and were pinned down at all four fronts," the LTTE statement said. However, military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe denied the rebel claim and said troops advanced 3.5 kilometres (2.2 miles) amid stiff resistance. Some 7,000 soldiers were deployed for the drive, code-named Rivirasa (sunshine). The army losses in two days of fighting was estimated at 50 killed and nearly 300 wounded. The military also claimed killing 61 rebels and wounding more than 250.

Munasinghe said the air force and artillery were used to pound LTTE positions ahead of army lines at dawn Wednesday but denied civilians were targeted. He said thousands of civilians had fled the area before the fighting began. Aid officials here said thousands of civilians abandoned their homes because they expected fighting after the air force dropped leaflets at the weekend urging people to move away from LTTE facilities. The overall toll in three incidents, including the Rivirasa offensive, across Sri Lanka's embattled northern and eastern regions on Tuesday and Wednesday, was 170 killed on both sides according to the military and 179 according to the Tigers. Reuter adds, Tamil Tiger guerrillas contradicted the Sri

Lankan military today saying their suicide bombers blew up three naval vessels in the port of Trincomalee on Tuesday, killing several sailors and high-ranking officers. The Sri Lankan military had said only one navy cargo ship was blown up in the attack, killing nine people. It said an attack on a naval craft alongside was foiled when sailors killed a frogman carrying a bomb weighing more than 30 kg (66 lb). The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighting for a homeland in the north and east of Sri Lanka, said in a statement the black sea Tigers blew up a landing craft, a fast personnel carrier and a Dvora fast-attack craft. "The members of the intelligence unit returned to base after the attack and confirmed the destruction of the vessels," the LTTE said.

Sanctions Committee rejects request Libya seeks UN permission to expel 1.12m by air

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 19: Libya asked the United Nations for permission to expel 1.12 million foreign workers through a deportation flights, but a UN committee rejected the request, documents obtained here Wednesday said, reports AFP. Libyan President Moammar Gaddafi has already expelled 5,000 of 30,000 Palestinian residents, along with a group of 13,000 Sudanese, by land and sea. But a request from Libya to the Sanctions Committee said there were an additional 500,000 Sudanese, plus 300,000 people from Chad, 250,000 people from Mali and another 67,000 people from seven other African countries targeted for expulsion. The total, excluding the Palestinians who were not listed, is 1.12 million people. Tripoli requested permission for 2,500 flights to expel them.

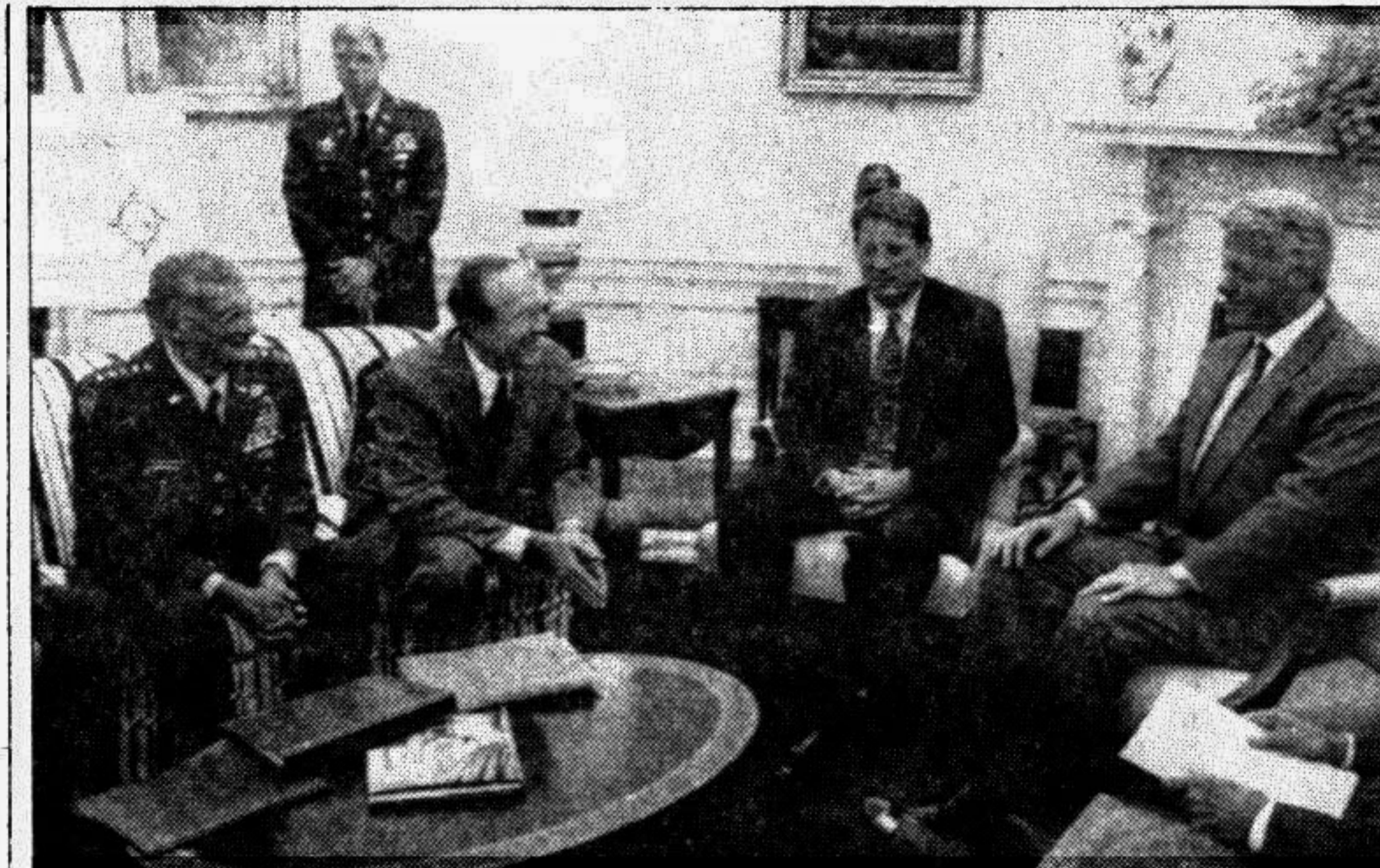
Libya is currently forbidden by the UN Security Council to fly planes in and out of the country until it turns over suspects accused in the 1988 terrorist bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, and UTA flight in Niger the following year. "Agreement has been reached with the infiltrators' states of origin to return them to their countries by air because of the hardships of travelling by land and because it is impossible to transport them across the desert by lorry because there are no proper roads between neighbouring states and Libya," the request said. "May risked dying of thirst on the outward journey from their homes across the Mauritanian, Algerian and Libyan desert, a distance of at least 4,000 to 5,000 kilometres (2,480 to 3,100 miles) of Arid Desert," it said.

Benazir urges NAM to settle Kashmir issue

CARTAGENA, Colombia, Oct 19: Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, comparing the conflict in Kashmir to Bosnia, urged the Non-Aligned Movement on Wednesday to think of setting up a mechanism to prevent and resolve conflicts involving member states, reports Reuter. "The Cold War is over but the fight for freedom continues all over the world including Kashmir and Bosnia," Benazir told the 11th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cartagena, Colombia. She said Pakistan's dispute with India over Kashmir cast a shadow over the peace and stability of the Asian subcontinent and was the oldest unresolved item on the agenda of the United Nations.

China must recognise Taipei before summit: Lee

TAIPEI, Oct 19: Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui believes China must recognise Taipei as a "political entity" before any Taiwan-China summit can take place, a leading Taiwan newspaper said today, reports Reuter. The mass-circulation China Times quoted Lee as making the remarks during a meeting with local businessmen on Wednesday. "Before entering a summit for leaders from the two sides, the mainland must first recognise Taiwan as a political entity, so that both sides can talk on an equal status," the newspaper said, paraphrasing Lee's remarks. A spokesman at the presidential office in Taipei said by telephone he could neither confirm nor deny the report.



US President Bill Clinton (R) meets with Vice-President Al Gore (2nd R) and military advisers Wednesday in the Oval Office of the White House to brief Clinton on the war in Bosnia. Also seated are Defence Secretary William Perry (2nd L) and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman John Shalikashvili. The White House announced that peace talks between the Bosnians and Serb will begin October 31 near Dayton, Ohio. — AFP/UNB photo

Islamabad keen to talk to Delhi on containing arms race

CARTAGENA, Oct 19: Pakistan has said that it would like to enter into negotiations with India on the question of "containing arms race" in the region, reports PTI. "We would like to enter into negotiations with India because we are concerned about the military escalation in India," the Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said in a press statement yesterday on her arrival in the Colombian coastal city to attend the 11th NAM summit. Virtually launching a trade against India, she said Pakistan believed in a world where global peace and stability are promoted by controlling of missiles and the arms race. "We feel that in India the

development of missiles with nuclear warheads will begin a new arms race and that these warheads can hit Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Yemen," she stated literally using the Muslim card. "We think that it is a very dangerous military escalation. I suppose that as a woman leader, I feel even more duty bound towards peace and saving the world and our region from weapons of mass destruction," she said. Asked by a correspondent whether she would raise the issue at the summit, Benazir said the summit is not about India and Pakistan. "This summit is about the new role of NAM. I feel that NAM should concentrate on conflict resolution. We don't have a body with NAM that

can help end conflicts between NAM members," she said and suggested that member-states should consider the proposal for setting up a NAM mechanism for settling bilateral disputes. Asked about the role of women in NAM, Benazir said women everywhere have a very important role to play and NAM countries should focus on empowering women. Women constituted 50 per cent of the population in all NAM countries and "we see that in the process of politicalisation and democratisation, freedom is still lacking on a general level. This freedom should be translated into safeguarding the rights of women, especially working women," she said.

Off the Record

Who the father was? PARIS: President Jacques Chirac's unmarried daughter and closest media adviser, Claude, is expecting a baby, the magazine Paris Match said on Wednesday, reports Reuter. The popular gossip and current affairs weekly carried two photographs of Claude Chirac, a 32-year-old widow, which it said showed she was pregnant. It did not say who the father was. Chirac's office declined to make any comment. Claude, the youngest of the French head of state's two daughters, suffered a tragedy in 1993 when her husband of only a few months, a young political scientist, killed himself. Paris Match published photographs showing her socialising with a host of television and film personalities including actor Christopher Lambert, best known for starring in "Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan," and TV presenters Patrick Sabastien and Thierry Raza. A key presidential aide who is always close by her father's side, Claude Chirac is usually quick to melt into the background when cameras are flashing.

Drugs during pregnancy a life long risk

LONDON: Pregnancy could cause life long changes in the biochemistry of women's bodies that affect how they metabolise drugs, doctors said in a report published Thursday, reports Reuter. Even a mild stimulant like caffeine affects women who have never been pregnant differently than it affects men and those women who have been pregnant, the researchers said. The discovery was made by mistake during chemical tests on the effects of an enzyme that breaks down caffeine in volunteers many of whom were women who had been pregnant. The women who had never been pregnant broke down caffeine only 70 per cent as quickly as the others. What was a surprise is finding that after pregnancy, enzyme activity rebounds to levels higher than for women who have never been pregnant, said Neil Caporaso, an epidemiologist at the US National Cancer Institute.

Wonder soap

BEIJING: Millions of Chinese are trying a new way to lose weight — using a brand of soap called Soft that claims a success rate of 76 per cent, reports Reuter. The soap posted record sales of 200 million yuan (24 million dollar) nationwide in September, double the total sales in the first seven months of 1995, the Legal Daily said Thursday. It quoted a survey by the China Preventive Medicine Society as saying that the soap was successful in 76 per cent of cases in reducing weight. The soap was invented by experts during three years of research into traditional Chinese medicine and had been approved by China's Ministry of Health, it said. It is produced by a health product company in the southwest region of Guangxi.

Russians won't join peacekeeping in Bosnia under NATO

MOSCOW, Oct 19: President Boris Yeltsin took an assertive line ahead of a visit to the West vetoing NATO command over Russian peacekeepers in Bosnia and saying a firm "No" to NATO's eastward enlargement plan, reports Reuter. Asked by French television journalists on Wednesday if Russian troops would join a peacekeeping force in Bosnia, Yeltsin said categorically under the aegis of NATO, "No." He defended Russia's role in the peace process in former Yugoslavia, saying Moscow had contributed more than the four other members of the big power contact group the United States, Britain, France and Germany.



From L-R EU envoy Carl Bildt, Richard Holbrooke, chief US envoy for former Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, Serbian President, Milan Milutinovic Yugoslav diplomacy chief and Igor Ivanov, representative of Russian Federation have a chat prior to their talks on Wednesday. US, Russian and European Union envoys met to hold their first joint meeting to prepare for upcoming Bosnian peace talks. — AFP/UNB photo

NAM leaders press for reform of UNSC

CARTAGENA, Colombia, Oct 19: Non-Aligned leaders speaking out before the United Nations 50th anniversary commemoration, pressed on Wednesday for reform of the UN Security Council to give more decision making power to developing nations, reports Reuter. Addressing the 11th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, the largest group within the United Nations the speakers said the end of the Cold War may have halted the East-West conflict but had not resulted in a fairer world. They said an unequal world economic order and a UN Security Council dominated by developed powers were behind this injustice.

Almost all speakers pressed for reforms of the UN but the most outspoken advocates were Non-Aligned stalwarts Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Castro, a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, attacked the monopoly of power in the UN Security Council held by what he called Euro powers, nuclear powers and the super rich. He singled out the hegemonic power "of the United States, which he said was trying to use the Council to dominate the world. Mugabe called for a concerted push by the Non-Aligned Movement to change this. The status quo has become unacceptable, he said.

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