

Peace will never come to Bosnia, says Alija

NEW YORK, Oct. 27: Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic believes that peace will never come to his country. New York Times reported today's edition, reports Reuter.

"The criminals have to be removed," the Bosnian President said in a meeting with editors of the newspaper. "That is the most important question."

He was referring to Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and military commander Ratko Mladic, who have led the rebellion against the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government.

Izetbegovic was quoted by The Times as saying he had received private indications that Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic would somehow remove the fair, whose fate has not been addressed in the peace plans under discussion.

Izetbegovic said it was important to find a role for Rus-

sian in any NATO-led peace-keeping force because the upcoming Russian elections could bring extreme nationalists to power. The Times reported. It quoted the Bosnian President as saying it was important to support Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

"All of us in the world should help Yeltsin," the newspaper quoted Izetbegovic as saying. "Whether he is good or bad, all the others are worse than he is."

The newspaper said Izetbegovic also discussed the tensions between his government and its Croatian allies. But the president did not expect war to resume between the two and he called on the West to keep pressure on President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia to preserve the integrity of Bosnia.

Izetbegovic said democratic elections were a key to eventual reconciliation and would drive belligerent Serb and Croats from power, the New York Times reported.

Aid organisations for 'safe havens' in Jaffna Chandrika rules out foreign mediation in ethnic conflict

COLOMBO, Oct. 27: President Chandrika Kumaratunga ruled out foreign mediation in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, which took a turn for the worst with a sudden surge in violence, a state-owned daily reported today, reports AFP.

Kumaratunga told a meeting in New York that the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) imposed war on her government and said talks could resume only if the rebels surrendered arms and agreed to a truce.

"One year ago we were foolish not to lay down conditions," Kumaratunga was quoted by the Daily News as saying. She was referring to unconditional talks with the LTTE which eventually broke off a truce on April 19.

The Daily News said the president ruled out third-party foreign mediation to

end the 23-year-old separatist campaign of the LTTE which is leading a guerrilla war to establish an independent homeland for minority Tamils.

"I can't find any better conflict resolution specialists than Sri Lankans themselves," said Kumaratunga whose radical political plan to end the bloodshed was rejected by hard-liners on both sides of the country's ethnic divide.

Kumaratunga's security forces have stepped up a major offensive against the LTTE inside their Northern Jaffna Peninsula stronghold since October 17 and the rebels have retaliated with a spate of attacks against non-military targets.

AFP adds Humanitarian organisations in Sri Lanka's embattled North-

ern Jaffna Peninsula are seeking "safe havens" for civilians following a major military onslaught in the region, Tamil guerrillas said today.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said the appeal was made Thursday by local and foreign non-governmental organisation to the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Aid workers at a meeting in Jaffna urged the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UNHCR "to take steps to declare Thenmaratchi (in the Jaffna Peninsula) a 'safe haven,'" the LTTE said.

In a statement received here from its London office, the Tigers said the call aimed at protecting "several hun-

dred thousand refugees" moving into Thenmaratchi in the face of an army advance on the town of Jaffna.

The LTTE statement quoted aid workers as saying that due to the government's intention to carry out a major military offensive there would be "a large-scale displacement of people" if a "safe haven" were not declared soon.

The LTTE said that over 300,000 civilians in the Jaffna Peninsula had been displaced and made refugees by the latest military offensive codenamed Rivirasa (Sunshine).

The guerrillas accused air force planes of attacking Ariyalai in the LTTE-controlled peninsula Thursday killing 10 civilians including a newly-married couple.

Roh apologises for accumulating slush fund of \$ 650m

SEOUL, Oct. 27: Former South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo on Friday apologised to the nation for accumulating a slush fund of 650 million dollars while in office, but said he had only 180 million left, reports AFP.

"I, Roh Tae-Woo, stand here to apologise to the people and confess contritely to raising a political fund," Roh said in a 10-minute-long nationally televised address from his home in Seoul.

"I feel ashamed and full of remorse for betraying the expectations of the people," said Roh who served as president from 1987 to 1993.

He said the political fund totalled 650 million dollars, and was raised mainly in donations from businessmen. Most was used for political activities such as party operations, he said.

BRIEFLY

King Hassan improves: King Hassan II of Morocco was improving Thursday after he was hospitalised with an acute respiratory infection, a hospital statement said, AFP reports from New York.

The new York hospital Connell Medical Centre did not offer any details of the 66-year-old King's condition nor how long he was expected to remain.

Christopher to visit Damascus: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher will pay a brief visit to Damascus on Monday for talks with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, the State Department said on Thursday, Reuter report, from Washington.

Christopher will make the visit expected to last only two or three hours — on the way back from a Middle East economic summit in Amman, department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters.

Quake rocks Eastern Japan: Moderate earthquake measuring 4.3 on the Richter scale rocked large areas of eastern Japan yesterday but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the meteorological agency and police said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The epicenter of the quake, which struck at 6:12 am (21:12 GMT Thursday), was located 100 kilometers (62 miles) northwest of Tokyo underground in Igaraki prefecture the agency said.

Turkey okays bill for early polls: The Turkish parliament approved a bill yesterday for early general elections on December 24, Turkey's state-run television said, Reuter reports from Ankara.

The bill had been submitted by Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party and the social democrat Republican People's Party (CHP). Ciller's minority government, which lost a vote of confidence on October 15, holds power on a caretaker basis.

Myanmar frees 30 prisoners: Authorities in Myanmar released 30 prisoners, including two women, from a southeastern prison after their sentences were reduced, state media reported yesterday, Reuter says from Bangkok.

The 30 were freed from prison in the city of Moulmein on Thursday, the newspaper reports said.

China frees dissidents' wife: China has freed the wife of jailed dissident Chen Ziming after detaining her for five days for protesting against the imprisonment of her husband, relatives said yesterday, Reuter reports from Beijing.

'DPRK remains military threat despite N-agreement'

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27: North Korea remains a military threat despite a year-old agreement freezing its suspected nuclear weapons programme, US Defence Secretary William Perry said Thursday, reports AFP.

The October 1994 agreement lowers the tensions that could lead to conflict on the Korean Peninsula, Perry told the Korea Society days ahead of a brief official visit to Tokyo and Seoul.

But he added that the new power structure in North Korea which came into power shortly after the agreement was signed, has embraced the old thinking and the rhetoric of the Cold War.

Present leadership has shown no sign of scaling back its military modernisation efforts or scaling back the number and intensity of its military exercises, he said.

The key to lasting peace

on the Korean Peninsula remains reconciliation between North and South Korea, Perry said.

US officials praise the nuclear agreement for achieving its crucial aim — freezing what Washington viewed as Pyongyang's campaign to produce enough plutonium for 10 nuclear bombs a year by the end of the decade.

But the International Atomic Energy Agency, which now has monitors in Pyongyang, says it is still unsure if more weapons grade plutonium has been diverted from the frozen experimental reactor in the Yongbyon Nuclear Complex.

A contract for construction of new safe nuclear reactors worth some four billion dollars meanwhile remains under negotiation between North Korea and an international consortium set up to facilitate the deal.

No split from Canada without consent, warns aborigines

MONTREAL, Oct. 27: Although they constitute hardly one per cent of the total Quebec population, the province's aboriginal communities are warning that there will be no split from Canada without their consent, reports AFP.

Quebec has 67,500 aboriginals including some 8,000 Inuit also known as Eskimos so far, they have refused to commit themselves for or against the separation of Quebec from Canada.

Most of the province's natives are expected to boycott the October 30 referendum in the largely French-speaking province.

In a joint declaration earlier this month some 25 Indian chiefs from nations as

the Crees Montagnais and Hurons said they recognise the right of Quebecers to express an opinion on their future - but insisted that such a decision would be seen by the aboriginal communities as simply consultative.

The Indian chiefs citing Canada's revised constitution of 1982, which was adopted despite opposition from the Quebec government do not recognise the province's right to take over the federal government's obligations to the aboriginal communities.

Some aboriginal communities are stressing an even tougher line the Crees of James Bay, for instance, flatly refuse to accept that Ottawa can negotiate the transfer of the crown's In-

dian treaty obligations to Quebec without their consent.

One thorny problem is over the insistence of the Quebec government that while Quebec has the right to secede from Canada no community with in the current province's borders may secede from Quebec.

The Indians and Inuit — known in Canada as the first nations, because their people were the first to arrive here — currently have reserves totalling 14,770 square kilometres (56,000 square miles) within Quebec.

They are also seeking ownership through the courts of approximately a further one million square kilometres (390,000 square

miles) of Quebec territory, or roughly two-thirds of the province's total land mass.

Among these land claims is a Cree demand in the Bay James region for a territory as large as Japan.

In southern Quebec, the Mohawks are claiming title to the island of Montreal while the Algonquins have an outstanding claim for the territory from Quebec City to Ottawa (including ownership of the land on which the federal parliament sits).

Also outstanding, throughout Canada, is the thorny question of what are the real rights of the aboriginal communities to self-government on the reserves.

Although there have been some successes — for in-

stance, Quebec's granting of autonomy to some Inuit, Atikamek and Montagnais communities — there are many unresolved disputes between different first nations and both the provincial and federal governments.

To prove their determination to be masters over their own destiny, two of Quebec's aboriginal communities will hold their own referendum before the province-wide poll on October 30.

Next Tuesday, Crees will be asked to say simply whether they wish to recognise the outcome of a Quebec decision to separate, while further north a similar question will be put to the Inuit on Thursday.



South Korean commuters are glued to a television set at Seoul railway station on Friday as former president Roh Tae-Woo apologises to the people for amassing a 650 million slush fund while in office 1987-1993. Roh said he had only 180 million left.

— AFP/UNB photo

Strike cripples Kashmir valley

SRINAGAR, India, Oct. 27: A protest strike called by Muslim separatists today crippled the Kashmir Valley, as Indian troops searched for a passenger bus hijacked by Muslim militants, police said, reports AFP.

The All Party Freedom Conference, an umbrella grouping of 23 separatist groups, organised the shutdown to denounce "the illegal and forcible annexation of Kashmir by India" on this day in 1947.

Shops, banks, businesses, post offices and government offices were closed while almost all traffic went off the roads in Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital, and neigh-

bouring Muslims-majority towns, police and residents said.

Kashmir, then ruled by a Hindu King, acceded to India soon after the sub-continent's partition into India and Pakistan in August 1947. Pakistan disputes Kashmir's ownership and has waged two wars with India over it.

India says the accession is final and irrevocable. Protest strikes called by Muslim groups frequently paralyse Kashmir.

In an unrelated development, Indian troops were today searching for a private bus that was hijacked here a day earlier by Muslim militants along with some 30

mostly nomadic passengers.

"We have no idea where the bus is," a police officer said. The bus was seized from a Srinagar residential district and the gunmen shot and wounded one of the passengers and threw him out when he raised an alarm. He has been admitted to a hospital.

Police sources said the bus might have been taken to Jammu, the state's winter capital. More than 12,000 people have been killed by official count in a bloody Muslim separatist campaign raging in Kashmir since 1989. India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the militants. Islamabad denies the charge.



Israeli policemen evacuate Jewish settlers from the illegal settlement at Givat Hadagan near Efrat on the West Bank on Thursday. The settlers returned to the site 25 October, three months after their last attempt to settle this hilltop. 30 of the settlers were arrested.

— AFP/UNB photo

Russia to destroy stock of its chemical weapons

MOSCOW, Oct. 27: The Russian government Thursday agreed the principle of destroying its stock of some 40,000 tonnes of chemical weapons, a top military official said, reports AFP.

But Russia was "not yet ready" to honour the terms of the chemical weapons convention it signed in 1993 but has yet to ratify, said General Stanislav Petrov, commander-in-chief of the Department of Chemical, Radioactive and Biological Weapons.

Russia was among 157 countries that signed the text of the convention. But the convention cannot be enforced until it is ratified by 65 signatory countries and so far, only 40 countries have ratified the document, Petrov told a press conference.

Violence claims 3 more in Karachi

KARACHI, Oct. 27: At least three people died in Karachi violence today, two of them in an encounter with the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA), police said, reports Reuter.

Police said a CIA team raided a house in the Central Lighthouse area seeking the arrest of wanted members of the ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM).

"Two terrorists were killed and a policeman was wounded in the shootout during the raid," a police official said. No further details were available.

MQM officials were not immediately available for comment.

Likhatabad is stronghold of the MQM which speaks for the political and economic rights of Urdu-speaking people who migrated from India at partition in 1947 and their descendants.

Castro hails NY visit as 'victory'

HAVANA, Oct. 27: Cuban President Fidel Castro returned to Havana on Thursday after a five-day New York visit that he hailed as a "victory" for communist-ruled Cuba in its fight to end a US economic embargo against the island, reports Reuter.

His trip to attend the United Nations 50th anniversary commemoration in New York was the high point of a two-week foreign tour that included a summit of Ibero-American leaders in Bariloche, Argentina and a similar meeting of non-aligned heads of state and government in Cartagena, Colombia.

Off the Record



Emma Blaydon of Christie's auction house shows a hat and cane on Thursday, once the property of Charlie Chaplin, which are to lead a sale of Chaplin artifacts early in December. The collection was compiled by Chaplin's half-brother, the late Wheeler Dryden. The hat and cane are expected to go under the hammer for over 10,000 pounds.

— AFP/UNB photo

3 wishing cards for his beloved

WASHINGTON: President Bill Clinton gave First Lady Hillary Clinton a whistle for her 48th birthday Thursday, an ordinary blower but one shaped like a woman holding the world above her head, reports AFP.

At a small birthday party in the White House Rose Garden, the President explained what had inspired this gift, suitable for wearing around the neck.

The design remind him of his wife, because she is always doing something for women around the world, said the First Lady's spokesman Neil Lattimore.

Lattimore said Hillary Clinton had received three of the gifts from her husband of an undisclosed nature, as well as three birthday cards. Clinton only showed the gathering two of the cards but mentioned the existence of a third.

I guess I will have to save it for my memories, she said.

The First Lady then left for New York where she was to visit a breast cancer research centre.

The First couple spent the afternoon together, we gave the President of the United States the afternoon off so he could enjoy Mrs Clinton's birthday," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry.

Bill Clinton turned 49 in August.

Taiwan issue key obstacle to Sino-US ties : Qian

BEIJING, Oct. 27: The issue of Taiwan remains the most serious obstacle to the development of Sino-US ties, despite the success of the recent presidential summit in New York, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen was quoted today as saying, reports AFP.

In a briefing to Chinese journalists in New York, Qian said Tuesday's summit between US President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin had been "positive and beneficial," with both sides reaching a "consensus" on how to tackle problems in their bilateral relationship.

Renewing his administration's commitment on the issue of Taiwan, which Beijing views as a renegade province, Clinton reaffirmed that the United States would pursue a "one China" policy.

"However, this does not mean that the Taiwan issue will cease to be the principal obstacle to the development

of Sino-US relations," Qian was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua news agency.

Bilateral contacts were suspended by China in June after Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui was allowed to make a "private" visit to the United States.

Beijing strongly opposes any international moves that might be taken as lending de-facto official recognition of the nationalist government in Taipei.

Despite Qian's remarks, Beijing has noticeably toned down its rhetoric on the dispute over Taiwan, dropping as a precondition for normalising Sino-US relations its demand for a concrete pledge from Washington to ban future visits by Taiwanese officials.

He also stressed that those relations were an internal Chinese affair that "require no international venue or outside help."

Rafsanjani defends role of clergymen in politics

TEHRAN, Oct. 27: President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Thursday defended the role of the Shi'ite Muslim clergy in Iranian politics insisting that religion and the state were inseparable, reports AFP.

His intervention came amid growing debate on the issue in Iran between liberal Islamic intellectuals led by philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush and Islamic fundamentalists.

The 1979 Islamic revolution which toppled the Shah's secular regime is not separable from the clergy. Our leader and heads of the legislative and executive branches of government are

clerics, said Rafsanjani himself a cleric.

It is not right to exclude the clergy from the administration of the country, he said.

Soroush, a professor who is popular among university students has challenged the rule of the clergy in Iran and called for separation of state from religion.

His political views have angered many Islamic conservatives and hardliners who have attacked and disrupted the professor's speeches at universities in Tehran and Esfahan in central Iran.

Since the attacks newspapers have commented for and against Soroush.