

BRIEFLY



French President Jacques Chirac (L) chats with British Prime Minister John Major Sunday after he arrived at the country home of the Prime Minister. — AFP/UNB photo

Jet crash claims 1 in Brazil: A Brazilian fighter jet crashed during an air show in northeastern Brazil, killing its pilot, television reports said on Sunday. Reuter reports from Rio de Janeiro.

Images recorded by an amateur cameraman and broadcast on Globo television showed the F-5 jet soaring vertically into the sky just after take off on Saturday.

Christopher visits Syria: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher briefly visits Syria yesterday after an absence of four months to try to break a stalemate, he now admits, exists in Israeli-Syrian negotiations over the Golan Heights, Reuter reports from Amman.

"I wish I could say that I anticipated a breakthrough, but I really don't," he told reporters in Amman on Sunday.

Iraq frees 3 Saudis, 4 Kuwaitis: President Saddam Hussein's government has freed four Saudis and three Kuwaitis jailed for illegally entering Iraq, a Kuwaiti Interior Ministry spokesman said Sunday, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

It was the first time Iraq had released Saudi prisoners since the 1991 Gulf War to free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, while the last Kuwaiti to have been released was three weeks ago.

Young man gets 60 yrs jail in UAE: An Islamic Court jailed a 27-year-old man for 60 years and ordered him lashed 360 times for abusing three girls and stealing their jewellery, a newspaper reported Sunday, AFP reports from Dubai.

The court in Ras al-Kaymah, one of the seven members of the United Arab Emirates, found the man guilty on Saturday of "abducting three young girls, abusing them and stealing their gold jewellery," Al-Khaleej said.

Israel keeps border with Gaza, WB open: Israel kept its borders with Gaza and the West Bank open yesterday but warned Israelis to be vigilant after the militant Palestinian group Islamic Jihad vowed to avenge the killing of its leader Fathi Shakaqi, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Israeli radio and television said security officials advised the public to be on the lookout for suspicious package and had raised the possibility of bomb attacks on Jewish targets in Israel or abroad.

Croatian ruling party leading in polls: Croatia's ruling Christian Democratic Union under President Franjo Tudjman took an early lead in legislature elections Sunday, winning 48.40 per cent of the vote according to partial results, AFP reports from Zagreb.

The Electoral Commission tally selected voting in 17 constituencies with an electoral roll of 309, 389, less than 10 per cent of all eligible voters in Croatia.

Ex-defence minister of SA to be held: South Africa's former defence minister General Magnus Malan and 10 senior officers will be arrested on Thursday over a hit-squad killing of 13 blacks in 1987, safety and Security Sydney Mufamadi said on Sunday, Reuter reports from Pretoria.

These individuals will be formally arrested by a team of detectives ... at the Durban Regional Court on Thursday morning," Mufamadi told a news conference.

Russia's EC bars reformist party from Dec 17 polls

MOSCOW, Oct 30: Russia's Electoral Commission barred the country's leading reformist party from general elections, creating a political storm as President Boris Yeltsin remained secluded in hospital with a heart problem, reports Reuter.

The Central Electoral Commission, dealing a severe blow to Russia's democratic movement, ruled that the Yabloko grouping of economist and politician Grigory Yavlinsky could not contest the December 17 polls for the State Duma, lower house of parliament.

It was not clear whether Yeltsin was immediately informed of the decision, as even top aides were barred from visiting him.

Official reports said Yeltsin's condition remained unchanged on Sunday, three days after he was taken to hospital after his second mild heart attack in less than four months.

A spokesman for Yeltsin's press service said the 64-year-old leader was undergoing prescribed treatment in the Moscow Central Clinic Hospital.

He has not appeared in public since returning from a trip to the United States last Tuesday and the hospital has not released any pictures of him.

The commission said Yabloko violated the rules by dropping at least six candidates from its election list against their wishes and it rejected Yabloko's application for registration, making it the third group to be barred from the election.

"He who takes the risk of assassinating Israelis also take the risk of being assassinated," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told state radio on Sunday from Amman where he is attending a Middle East economic summit.

As usual after this type of operation, Israeli leaders refused to confirm their agents' involvement and were careful

Hand-to-hand fighting leaves 160 dead in northern Lanka

COLOMBO, Oct 30: Fierce fighting raged in northern Sri Lanka today as security forces captured a key town held by Tamil rebels, leaving at least 160 combatants dead on both sides, defence sources here said, reports AFP.

Ground troops captured the small town of Urelu on Sunday morning and troops had advanced into the nearby larger town of Neerveli amid stiff rebel resistance, a defence source said.

Sixty-eight soldiers have been killed in hand-to-hand fighting since Sunday and the military estimated at least 92 rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had been killed, the spokesman said.

Pierce fighting raged Neerveli amid reports that the Tamil Tiger guerillas

killed eight more Sinhalese civilians in the island's southeast, their sixth alleged massacre in eight days.

Earlier reports from the military had said that ground troops had encountered deadly mine fields at Neerveli, located eight kilometers (five miles) north of the town of Jaffna, the capital of the region.

Local officials said LTTE gunmen killed eight Sinhalese civilians collecting firewood in the southeastern region of Panama in the district of Ampara.

The mutilated bodies of the eight men were found Sunday and a man who had escaped from LTTE gunmen had witnessed two of them being hacked to death, a local official said.

The latest attack on un-

armed Sinhalese civilians raised the civilian toll in massacres blamed on the LTTE in the past eight days to 124. Most of the victims were hacked to death with swords, knives and machetes.

Chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said the massacres were aimed at blunting the military campaign in the northern Jaffna peninsula. The army has signalled the offensive as an attempt to capture the town of Jaffna.

However, despite the massacres, the security forces maintained their advance on Jaffna, Munasinghe said, adding that the Tiger attempt to divert the attention of troops had failed.

Artillery guns and the air force were deployed to bomb LTTE targets before ground troops captured parts of

Neerveli Sunday after securing a key highway through the town, defence sources said.

Defence officials said the military bombed and destroyed a base of the "air Tigers," a new wing of the LTTE which is responsible of anti-aircraft guns and a unit also known to have acquired six microlight aircraft.

Tiger targets at Kopai and Urampirai, LTTE strongholds to the south and southwest of Neerveli, were bombed by air force Sunday, a military statement said.

Neerveli is considered strategically vital for the Tamil Tigers because it is one of their best-fortified forward positions defending Jaffna, the capital of the rebel-dominated peninsula and the symbol of Tamil separatism.

Iraq urges Ghali to use authority for lifting ban

BAGHDAD, Oct 30: Iraq has urged UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to use his significant authority to bring about an end to economic sanctions against Baghdad the official Iraqi news agency INA reported on Sunday, reports Reuter.

INA said Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Aziz in a letter to Ghali, also demanded that interference in Iraq's internal affairs and breaches of its sovereignty be ended.

Aziz asked Ghali to use his "significant authority to force a complete lifting of sanctions and stop interference in Iraq's internal affairs and respect its sovereignty and its people's right in choosing their form of government, INA said.



Residents look at a five-storey building that was almost entirely destroyed when a booby-trapped truck blew up Sunday in Rouiba, 15 km (nine miles) east of Algiers. Six people were killed and 98 injured in the blast. The attack came just hours after President Liamine Zeroul officially launched his election campaign ahead of the first round of the presidential polls on November 16. — AFP/UNB photo

Indian nurses to go on strike from tomorrow

NEW DELHI, Oct 30: Thousands of angry hospital nurses here plan to launch an indefinite strike to protest a television serial which has nurses cavorting in mini skirts while at work, reports AFP.

An estimated 8,000 nurses in three major government hospitals and several smaller ones will cease work daily during two busy morning hours beginning Wednesday to press their demand for deleting the "objectionable" scenes.

"We have no choice because the authorities do not seem to sympathise with us," complained S Takwal, President of the Delhi Nurses Union who works at the Safdarjung Hospital, a city landmark.

Nurses in New Delhi's hospitals stopped wearing uniforms on September 22 after the first revealing advertisements for the TV serial "Dil Ka Doctor" (doctor of hearts) hit the media.

Raphel expresses support for UN peace bid in Afghanistan

BAGRAN, Afghanistan, Oct 30: US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel met Ahmed Shah Masood, the top commander of Afghan government forces, here today and expressed support for UN peace efforts in Afghanistan, reports AFP.

"Our position at this point is to support the UN effort," Raphel told reporters following a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with Masood.

"We believe that the UN can help as a catalyst or a facilitator in bringing peace to war-torn Afghanistan, she said. "But at the end of the day it's the Afghans themselves who have to do it."

She said Washington would be prepared to provide assistance for reconstruction "when peace and security are restored."

Raphel, who flew into this military air base north of Kabul on a UN plane, said "various options for transfer of power," and the need for

"guarantees," were among the issues raised with Masood. She did not elaborate.

Mahmoud Mestiri, the head of the UN peace mission in Afghanistan, has

Ganges water remain contaminated

NEW DELHI, Oct 30: The waters in the Ganges river remain contaminated with bacteria of fecal origin, although the much-hyped Ganges Action Plan (GAP) has reduced the pollution level in the river, according to a report by a team of experts, reports Xinhua.

The study was undertaken to assess the performance of the schemes completed under GAP and their impact on reduction of pollution load drained into the river. The 225-page report has been submitted to the Environmental and Forests Ministry.

been shuttling between the country's warring factions in a bid to broker a power-sharing or some other agreement which could end the fighting.

The government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani has lost control of much of the country during the past year to the Islamic militia known as the Taliban.

Before meeting here with Masood, Raphel held talks with two regional leaders — Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostam in his northern stronghold of Maza-e-Sarif and Abdul Qadir, governor of the eastern city of Jalalabad.

Raphel also strongly denied suggestions that the United States had abandoned Afghanistan following the 1989 Soviet pullout and the end of the Cold War.

"It's unfair to say that we've lost interest in Afghanistan," she said.

"We have a very strong foreign policy interest in seeing a stable Afghanistan."

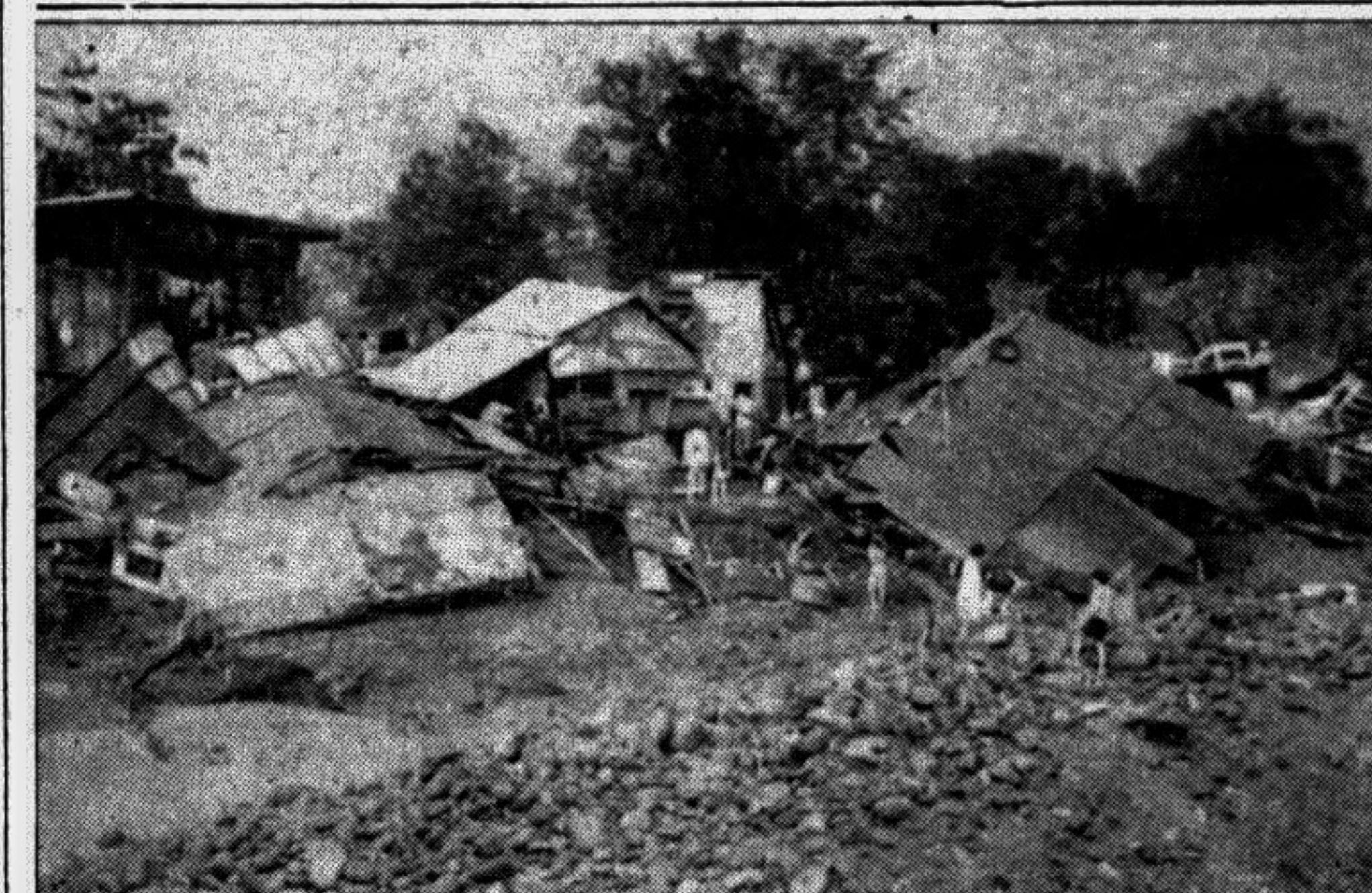
Mock funeral for slain Jihad leader held in Rafah

RAFAH, Gaza Strip, Oct 30: Thousands of Muslim fundamentalists crying for revenge against Israel held a mock funeral for slain Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shakaqi in his home town of Rafah on Sunday, reports AFP.

The demonstrators, several of them masked and armed, carried an empty coffin and a portrait of the 43-year-old militant born in Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip.

They burnt Israeli and US flags, shouting Allahu Akbar (God is great).

Shakaqi, who was travelling with a Libyan passport under another name, was assassinated in Malta on Sunday.



Residents of this central city inspect their toppled houses after the Philippines was struck by severe tropical storm Zack on Sunday, the third typhoon this year. The storm killed at least 121 people across the country. — AFP/UNB photo

Kashmiri leader survives assassination bid

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 30: Kashmiri Muslim separatist leader Ali Shah Geelani survived an assassination bid here today when a rocket hit his residence and damaged the building, police said, reports AFP.

Two people were "slightly injured," police added.

Geelani, acting head of the All Parties Kashmir Freedom Conference which groups 23 Muslim rebel and political parties, and members of his family were sleeping when the rocket struck his house at 3:00 am (2130 GMT), police said.

Geelani, 70, who is also a leader of the pro-Pakistan Jamat-e-Islami group escaped without injury although the attack brought down the top floor of the two-storey building in southwest Srinagar, they said.

There have been no claims of responsibility and no de-

tails about the rocket fired. Abdul Ghani Lone, another conference leader, escaped unhurt from a daring assassination attempt two weeks ago in this state summer capital when unidentified gunmen entered his house and fired at him.

Lone blamed the attack on Indian troops and Kuka Parray, a Muslim rebel leader who Lone says is an Indian agent.

More than 12,000 people have died in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, since 1989 in violence linked to the Muslim separatist drive. Internecine rebel fighting has also claimed several lives.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting insurgency in the divided state, the cause of two wars between the neighbours Islamabad denies the charge.

Off the Record

Man disguises himself as woman to win bet

TEHRAN, A man was given 20 lashes of the whip for disguising himself as a woman to ride the women's section of a bus in Tehran, newspapers reported in Tehran on Sunday, reports AFP.

The man, identified as 31-year-old Mohsen, had braved the adventure to win a bet of 100,000 rials he had made with his father to travel between their houses in a bus while dressed as a woman in a long coat and a scarf — which all women here are obliged to wear to conform to Islamic standards.

But he was given away by his large size and men's shoes. Several fellow passengers "extremely angered by his act" beat him up, the papers said.

A court sentenced him to 20 lashes of the whip for "he ugly act and his violation of Islamic principles."

Elephants-victim of drought

HARARE, At least 17 elephants have died of thirst in Zimbabwe's largest animal sanctuary, Hwange National Park, in the past three weeks, the Wildlife Society of Zimbabwe reported on Sunday, says Reuter.

Collin Gilles, the society's chairman for southwestern Matabeleland province, told Zimbabwe's official news agency ZIANA that the animals had died in a central area of the park.

"There are no artificial water sources in the area," Gilles was quoted as saying from Bulawayo, the country's second largest city.

Officials from national parks and wildlife management were unavailable for comment.

Last week Environment Minister Chen Chimutengwende said there were few if any deaths of elephants in the park due to water shortage, adding that 20 new boreholes were dug there this year after Zimbabwe was hit by a drought.

Zimbabwe's elephant population is estimated at over 80,000.

Twins reunited after 67 years

BEIJING, Chinese twin sisters separated just after birth when their rickshawman father gave one up for adoption were reunited 67 years later after a chance encounter in a city park, the China Daily said Sunday, reports Reuter.

Zhou Qunying and Peng Meiyang were born to the wife of a rickshaw puller in the central city of Wuhan in 1928. Two months after their birth the impoverished family gave the first born to an orphanage. She was adopted by a vegetable farmer who named her Zhou Qunying but never told her she was adopted.

Peng, who is retired from the Wuhan Glass Factory, searched for her sister but without success until last June when Peng's daughter saw an old woman selling tea in a city park and noticed a resemblance to her mother.

Peng went to see the tea seller and the two sisters were reunited, the paper said a medical check showed the two had the same blood type and noted the probability of their being twins as 99.9999 per cent, the newspaper said.

Army to get whatever it needs, says Pranab

NEW DELHI, Oct 30: India will step up militarisation following the easing of US defence and economic sanctions on Pakistan, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Mukherjee said in an interview to the Times of India that the government would evolve "a befitting response" to the amendment by a key congressional panel on Tuesday which would benefit India's archrival Pakistan.

"We are gearing up our defence preparedness. What is needed will be supplied to the armed forces... whatever done," he said.

The minister said he believed the one-time waiver

is needed will simply be indicative of a "resumption" of arms supplies by Washington to Islamabad.

"We do not rule out the possibility of the United States giving more arms to Pakistan even though they (US officials) have told us this is a one-time operation," he said.

"We have to watch the situation," he said, adding that Pakistan would step up support to Muslim insurgents in the disputed northern state of Kashmir and in strife-torn Afghanistan.

"We shall continue to point out that this is not correct as it is injecting an arms race in the region," he added.

Tokyo court disbands Aum

TOKYO, Oct 30: The Tokyo District Court today issued an order to disband the Aum Supreme Truth sect linked to the deadly nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system in March, local reports said, says AFP.

The court will strip the sect of its religious status which means the disbandment of the Aum sect, according to press reports. The decision was motivated by the role of the sect in the terrorist attack in Tokyo subway in which 11 people died and 5,500 were injured.

Shakaki, another victim of Mossad's war of attrition

JERUSALEM, Oct 30: The elimination of Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shakaqi bore all the hallmarks of an operation by the Israeli secret service Mossad which has waged a merciless undercover war against Palestinian militants, reports AFP.

"He who takes the risk of assassinating Israelis also take the risk of being assassinated," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told state radio on Sunday from Amman where he is attending a Middle East economic summit.

to make sure that their country was not directly implicated in the killing of Shakaqi in Malta on Thursday.

"Israel has always insisted on showing its capacity to respond secretly to its security problems," Zeev Schiff, a military expert with the Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz, told AFP.

Since its creation in 1951, Mossad has stuck to that principle in numerous strikes at its enemies, often far from Israel's borders in unsafe territory. Discretion has always been the better part of valour for the service. In 1955, Mossad gave one

of its most daring agents, Yitzhak Shamir, a future prime minister and right-wing Likud Party leader, the task of creating a unit responsible for liquidating former Nazis in hiding.

Successive leaders of the Jewish state from left and right have since then developed the concept of "the long arm of the Israeli army" in an effort to heighten fears within the ranks of the "Palestinian enemy."

After Palestinian guerillas killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972, a number of PLO leaders were killed in mysterious circumstances. The assassinations started

in 1973 in Beirut when three Palestinian officials were killed in their beds by an Israeli commando unit.

Mossad agents followed that with similar operations in Paris, Cannes in southern France, London, Brussels, Kuwait and Larnaca in Cyprus. But the wave of assassinations was stopped for a while after a Moroccan waiter in a cafe was killed by mistake at Lillehammer in Norway on July 11, 1973.

On April 14, 1988, at the height of the Intifada, or Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, an Israeli commando went to Tunis and assassinated the

PLO's deputy leader, Khalil al-Wazir - Abu Jihad - in his villa.

Schiff said: "If Israel has effectively liquidated Shakaqi, that won't stop Islamic Jihad taking action, but it's a massive blow that will mean his successors will be on the defensive."

The Israeli authorities know from bitter experience, however, that there are likely to be bloody reprisals.

On January 22, 1995, less than three months after Hani Abed, an Islamic Jihad leader, was killed in a car bomb in the Gaza Strip, the group responded by killing 21 Israelis and wounding 68

in a suicide bomb attack on a bus.

Islamic Jihad said the bombing, at Beit Ltd, north of Tel Aviv, was to avenge the killing of Abed on November 3, 1994.

Another of Islamic Jihad's leaders, Mahmud al-Kawaja, was killed by masked men at his house in the Shatti Refugee Camp near Gaza City on June 22.

However, according to one senior Israeli official, the risk of reprisals will not stop Israel trying to liquidate its enemies wherever possible.

"It's a war of attrition. The terrorists deal us blows and we do the same to them," he said.

Sudan alleges Ugandan attack

KHARTOUM, Oct 30: Sudan said today Ugandan troops backed by tanks and armoured cars had launched attacks inside Sudan in an act of "direct aggression," reports Reuter.

A statement issued in Khartoum by the army general command and carried by the official Sudan news agency SUNA said the Ugandan forces had attacked the southern Sudanese town of Parajok on October 25 and the fighting was continuing.

"The aggressors have been confronted by our heroic armed forces in a daring manner and the battle is still raging on," the general command statement said.