

International

Arafat for 'European presence' at Erez talks

UNSC asks Israel, PA to pursue talks, fulfil commitments under accord

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5: The UN Security Council on Friday urged Israel and the Palestinians to pursue negotiations and fulfil their commitments under existing peace agreements...

Earlier report says, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called in Paris Friday for a 'European presence' at Israeli-Palestinian talks to start Sunday at the Erez-crossing between the Jewish state and the Gaza Strip.

'Go to the Middle East first.' Arafat arrived in Paris on Friday for talks with Chirac on the Middle East situation, after a visit to Italy as he tries to muster European support.

clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in the Palestinian territories. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are to open intensive talks at the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza on Sunday aimed at putting the Middle East peace process back on track after the violence which left more than 80 people dead in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

the long-delayed Israeli redeployment from the West Bank town of Hebron. Meanwhile, Israel lifted Friday its blockade of the Palestinian town of Jenin in the north of the occupied West Bank, a military spokesman said.



French President Jacques Chirac (R) talks, on Friday in Paris, with Palestinian authority President Yasser Arafat (L), during the European trip of the Palestinian leader on his way back from the Israeli-Palestinian summit held in Washington. - AFP/UNB photo

Communists for removal of Kashmir Governor

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: Indian Communists demanded today that Kashmir Governor K V Krishna Rao be sacked for attacking a Muslim party which won the first elections in a decade in the strife-torn state, reports AFP.

neptism. They used to do all this, these very chaps." CPI secretary Muqumun Farooqi said Rao's comments were "highly objectionable." The governor's sermon to the newly-elected members of the National Conference needs to be sharply nailed down as thoroughly improper, the party said.

UN barred from reacting to Taliban treatment of women

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5: China and Indonesia on Friday prevented the Security Council from reacting to the Taliban Islamic militia's treatment of women since seizing the Afghan capital Kabul, diplomats said here, reports AFP.

Afghan capital into mosques for prayers to mark the Muslim holy day. Security Council president Gerardo Martinez Blanco was only authorised by the 15-member Council to express to the press "concern" about the events in Afghanistan, and to urge all factions to "renounce the use of force and engage in a constructive political dialogue to achieve national reconciliation."

Wisnumurti caused a stir in the Council Chamber when he told his colleagues in an apparent slip of the tongue that "despite being" a Muslim-dominated country, Indonesia supported the role of women. One envoy summarised his Indonesian colleague's position jokingly as: "Despite being a Muslim Country, we like women."

Politician's bid to raise campaign money by nude pose

BALTIMORE, Oct 5: Most candidates dread getting caught with their pants down. Not John Kimble. He's willing to take everything off for Playgirl to raise money for his US congressional campaign, reports AP.

Bid to prevent exodus of Tamil India, Lanka step up naval patrols

COLOMBO, Oct 5: Sri Lanka and India have stepped up naval patrols to prevent an exodus of Tamil refugees fleeing to neighbouring southern India, a senior minister said here Friday, reports AFP.

He said about 2,500 Tamils have sought refuge in southern India since the end of July, but the outflow had dropped considerably with the stepping up of naval patrols by India and Sri Lanka. The Indians are looking after their side of the Palk Straits and we are patrolling on this side," he said. "We are both keen to ensure that there is no big exodus although a few may slip out."

BRIEFLY

Floods claim 16 in Vietnam

Sixteen people, 15 of them children, have died in flooding in southern Vietnam's Mekong Delta this month, an official from the flood control committee in a southern province said yesterday. All the sixteen deaths took place in An Giang province, which has been the worst hit so far. Floodwaters inundated some 160,000 houses and forced nearly 12,000 families to leave their homes. More than 150,000 children in the delta provinces of An Giang, Dong Thap and Long An had to quit schools because classrooms were inundated, the official said, AFP reports from Hanoi.

18 Greenpeace activists held in Turkey

Police on Friday briefly detained 18 Greenpeace activists who chained themselves to the gate of a coal-burning power plant, the Anatolia news agency said. The protesters charged the plant in Gokova Bay, about 700 kilometres (433 miles) south-east of Ankara, threatened a nearby nature park. They were released pending trial on December 17. The agency identified them as US citizens Peter Henry Wilcox and Gillian Hughes Murphy, two Italians, Leonardo Landi and Jalra Cioffi, Sten Anders Stenstrom and Andreas Zender from Sweden, Simon Paul of Britain and Sylvia Huber of Austria and one South African, Michael James Ian. No hometowns were given, AP reports from Ankara.

Turkish PM visits Libya

Turkey's prime minister travelled Friday to this outcast state, shrugging off criticism from within his own Cabinet and from Turkey's ally, the United States. Necmettin Erbakan, who took office in June, had campaigned on a promise of improving ties with the Islamic world and would not budge from plans to visit Libya despite objections from officials in his own government. Erbakan arrived after a four-hour drive from the Tunisian city of Djerba. He could not fly to Libya because of international sanctions against the north African country, AP reports from Tripoli, Libya.

Czech president turns 60

Few Czechs can imagine replacing President Vaclav Havel, but the man who first won fame as a playwright misses writing and is considering stepping out of public life. At 60, Havel clearly still enjoys his role as spiritual leader of a country that radiates optimism born of a swift and successful break with communism. But in an Associated Press interview Friday, he made clear he hasn't decided whether to seek a second term in 1998. "If I ran, then the question is whether I would be elected," Havel said with unnecessary modesty while enjoying a beer and cigarette Friday in his study at Prague's magnificent Castle, AP reports from Prague.



A Taliban militia (C) stops a taxi and a bicycle rider with a stick in his hand forcing them to go for Jumma prayers in front of Pul-i-Khishti mosque, in Kabul on Friday. Prayers were enforced for anyone who ventured near the mosque came exactly one week after the religious fighters stormed into Kabul. - AFP/UNB photo

Saddam has rebuilt army into credible fighting force

LONDON, Oct 5: Saddam Hussein has rebuilt the devastated Iraqi army into a credible fighting force by reviving the country's military industries and smuggling in military hardware, according to Jane's Intelligence Review, reports AP.

Under terms of the Gulf War ceasefire, Iraq was not barred from rebuilding its state-run conventional arms industry. Before the war, Iraq had the capacity to assemble tanks, convert and repair combat aircraft, produce aerial weapons, artillery systems, rockets and small arms, the magazine said.

The oil-rich Baghdad regime was spending \$1.1 billion a year on arms imports before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and used to buy new equipment rather than repair and maintain its military hardware, Jane's Intelligence Review said.

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EU leaders seek more unity at Ireland summit

DUBLIN, Ireland, Oct 5: Divided on myriad issues, the 15 European Union leaders gather for a summit Saturday hoping to expand on the little common ground they have found so far to rewrite the EU treaty and forge a closer bond, reports AP.

Number of old people to become double by 2020

GENEVA, Oct 5: The number of old people in the world is set to nearly double to around one billion by 2020, creating a potential headache for health services, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Friday, reports AP.

"As such, population ageing presents new and serious challenges for national and international public health," it added. Quoting forecasts by independent scientific organisations, WHO said seven developing countries will figure among the nations with the biggest proportion of old people by 2020. China is expected to have 231 million old people, India 145 million, Brazil 30 million, Indonesia 18 million, Pakistan 18 million, Mexico 15 million and Bangladesh 14.5 million. The proportion of the aged population in Europe was set to rise in the next quarter century to 24 per cent, 23 per cent in North America, 17 per cent in East Asia, 12 per cent in Latin America and 10 per cent in South Asia.

'Clinton in dark about China'

HONG KONG, Oct 5: US President Bill Clinton is in the dark about China because he has never paid a visit to Asia's biggest nation in his four years in office, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has said, reports AP.

Off the Record

Spookie, the first lion to undergo heart operation

PRETORIA: Spookie, a rare white lion cub, became the first lion to undergo a delicate and lengthy operation to repair a heart defect here Friday, veterinary surgeons said, reports AFP.



Spookie, the four-month-old white lion emerges from a five-hour open heart operation at Onderstepoort Veterinary Hospital on Friday. She underwent the operation, the first of its kind, in a bid to save her life. It will only be known after two weeks if the little lioness will live. - AFP/UNB photo

Disgruntled Japanese see little choice in polls

TOKYO, Oct 5: Takeshi Kikuchi flips on the television every night and feels "betrayed" by the conservative politicians he's supported for decades, reports AP.

other choice. While every party, including Hashimoto's, is offering a reform platform of cutting government waste and corruption, many Japanese have concluded, rightly or wrongly, that none is telling the truth. "I don't want to vote for any of them," said Sachiko Takeuchi as she shopped in Tokyo's Ginza district. "Parties keep splitting up and reforming but I don't trust them."

panies have long criticised for impeding imports. More likely, however, the election will result in more gridlock in the world's second-largest economy. Divided coalitions of conservatives and reformers would continue as they have for the past three years, with little to show for the struggle.

the doldrums under four different prime ministers, with Hashimoto taking over in January. And it has suffered the trauma of last year's devastating Kobe earthquake and the terrorist attack on Tokyo's subways — both of which were exacerbated by official bungling. It's a reflection on this country's troubles at home that candidates have barely even mentioned foreign policy, which means Japan's security alliance with the United States and other basic stances probably will change little.

"We have to crush the bureaucrats," declared Kazuo Nagamine as he pored over the books at the fruit wholesaling company he owns. He complained about the common practice of bureaucrats "descending from heaven" into lucrative corporate or semi-governmental jobs after retirement. "It's like a company: You have to do all you can to cut costs, and only then do you say, 'I'm sorry but we need to raise prices,'" said Shinji Koide, a salesman at a car marker's credit-card affiliate. Like many Japanese, however, Koide lumps all politicians into a group — "No one keeps their promises" — and so even he doesn't rule out casting his lot with the LDP camp.