

Bosnian Muslims not rearming covertly: US

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: The United States said on Friday it did not believe Bosnian Muslims are covertly rearming for a renewed offensive against Bosnian Serbs, reports Reuters.

"The United States does not believe that the Sarajevo government is engaged in a covert rearming effort outside of the US-led international training and equipment programme, State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters.

"The government in Sarajevo has given the United States several assurances many times that it will continue to implement the Dayton agreement through peaceful means and has no plans to resume fighting unilaterally in Bosnia," he added.

Rubin was reacting to a report in Friday's New York Times that the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo appears to be intensifying a clandestine programme to arm and train its military.

The newspaper also quoted senior NATO officials as saying that the Bosnian Muslim military was close to, or may already have achieved, the ability

to mount a crushing offensive against the Serb sector of Bosnia.

Rubin charged that "some people may have an interest in exaggerating the possible rearming of the Bosnian government and suggesting that something is going on covertly as a way of hyping this issue when, frankly, the arming of Bosnia is quite overt."

After the 1995 US-mediated Bosnia peace agreement, Washington launched a programme to build up the army of the new Muslim-Croat federation in Bosnia as a counterweight to the Bosnian Serbs, which had a huge advantage in heavy weapons during the war.

But many European allies opposed the initiative, arguing that it would undermine the peace and make it more likely the parties would return to war at some point.

Under the programme, the United States is providing about \$100 million of excess military equipment including 45 M 60 tanks, 80 M 113 armoured personnel carriers, small arms, communications equipment, computer equipment for training.

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates have donated equipment as well, including howitzers, field guns, anti-aircraft trucks, tanks and reconnaissance vehicles, Rubin said.

He said "it would be stupid in the extreme for the Bosnian government to lay the golden egg by engaging in some kind of separate covert arms programme."

The New York Times reported that an Egyptian freighter sailing under a Ukrainian flag was quarantined under NATO guard off the Croatian port of Ploce carrying a shipment of secret arms for the Muslims.

Concerning that allegation, Rubin said "the United States can confirm that a particular vessel that was referred to has 10 T-55 tanks and spare parts on board," but he said it was part of the US-led "Train-and-equip programme."

The United States asked NATO to delay approval for the ship because of "procedural problems," but, "we expect these issues to be resolved shortly and the ship will be allowed to enter port and unload the tanks," Rubin said.



Former US president George Bush, centre, flanked by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, left, and German President Roman Herzog, thumbs up when they leave Stuttgart's Opera House on Friday, after the ceremony for Germany's Unity Day. On Friday Germany celebrates the reunification of 1989. — AP/UNB photo

Sharif to help stop border clashes in Kashmir: Gujral

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said today that Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had assured him Islamabad would cooperate with India to stop border clashes in Kashmir, reports Reuters.

"The United News of India (UNI) quoted Gujral as saying: 'Last night Nawaz Sharif telephoned me to convey that he had asked his army to get in touch with our army to see that the situation that has emerged in the past few days is closed.'"

Gujral was speaking to reporters before leaving on an eight-day tour of Uganda, South Africa and Egypt.

UNI quoted an official spokesman as saying that during their conversation on a telephone hotline late on Friday, Sharif agreed with Gujral that the firing between the Indian and Pakistani troops at the Himalayan border should stop.

The spokesman said the Pakistani prime minister had state that suitable instructions in this regard had been issued by him to his military authorities.

Sharif said the director general of military operations of the two countries could now follow up and take appropriate corrective action. Gujral told Sharif that similar instructions had been given to the Indian military authorities.

India said this week 18 civilians died in cross-border firing in the disputed Kashmir valley.

ASUNCION, Paraguay, Oct 4: Paraguay's President Juan Carlos Wasmosy on Friday ordered top presidential candidate former Gen Lino Oviedo detained for 30 days for insulting him, reports Reuters.

Acting in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Wasmosy sent an army colonel to deliver the order to Oviedo's lawyer Jose Appleyard.

Presidential candidate held in Paraguay

Junta calls Suu Kyi 'inconsistent' for refusing talks

YANGON, Oct 4: Myanmar military regime criticised opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Saturday for canceling talks last month with one of the country's top generals, calling her 'inconsistent', reports AP.

An editorial in the state-run newspaper The New Light of Myanmar said Suu Kyi had repeatedly called for dialogues with the State Law and Order Restoration Council — the military government — and then backed out when the offer was extended.

The head of military intelligence, Gen Khin Myunt, last month made a rare proposal to meet with Aung Shwe, the chairman of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, and two executive committee members to discuss their differences.

The movement's most popular leaders, Suu Kyi, vice-chairman Tin Oo and Kyi Maung, were not invited to the talks. Suspecting a ploy by the military regime to split the party's leadership, the NLD did not attend.

Suu Kyi, who is the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner, said in the past that she would hold dialogues with SLORC "unconditionally and informally," the editorial said.

It also criticised comments made by Suu Kyi at September 27 party congress questioning the motives of the military junta's desire for talks.

"When the government extended the invitation to NLD

leaders the authorities did not state the purpose of the meeting," the editorial quoted Suu Kyi as saying, adding that it is for the party calling for talks to decide the purpose.

The military junta also turned the tables on Suu Kyi in the editorial, calling her "undemocratic" for warning NLD members against trying to split up the party.

"Anyone who tried to break up the party and hamper the democracy movement will be dealt with by the party disciplinary committee", Suu Kyi was quoted in the article as telling party members at the two-day congress.

Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory in May 1990 elections, but the military kept the results from being honoured.

She was released from six years of house arrest in 1995, but the ruling junta continues to curb any independent political activity.

The party has cited government crackdowns across the country, closure of offices, arrest of members, forcing of elected members of Parliament to resign, and the death of members in prison.

There have been a string of attacks against Suu Kyi and her party in state-run papers since the talks with Aung Shwe were rebuffed.

She has been criticised of putting personal interests before national interests.

BRIEFLY

10 killed in Colombia: An armed group has attacked a legal commission in east-central Colombia and killed at least 10 of its members, the private radio Caracol said Friday, AFP reports from Bogota.

At least three commission members were injured and the fate of 15 others is unknown, the radio network said. The attack was reported by three secret police agents who were among those injured but managed to make their way to the town of San Martin, Caracol reported.

Mudslide kills 4 in Pakistan: Four women were killed and one was seriously injured when they were buried under a landslide in a village in northwestern Pakistan's Bunair district, local officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Peshawar.

The five women, three from the same family, were digging Friday on a slope for earth to repair their house when part of the hillside gave way and fell on them. Two women were dead when pulled from the rubble and two died after in hospital. The condition of the fifth woman was serious, police said.

US model Amy Wesson sued: Top American fashion model Amy Wesson has been hit by a nearly 10 million dollars breach-of-contract lawsuit filed by her former agency, a company official said Friday, AP reports from New York.

New York-based Company Model Management Inc accused Wesson, 20, of spiralling into drug abuse, leading her to show up late for work and to cancel assignments without giving a reason, said Robert Flutue, part-owner of the agency. "Her behaviour started to affect her reputation, the reputation of this firm, and there were serious economic disadvantages to what was going on," he said.

7 Pak nationals drown in Indus: Seven men drowned in the Indus River during a fishing holiday in Pakistan's northwest, authorities said Saturday, AP reports from Peshawar.

One member of the party appeared to have fallen into the river, which roars through some of the world's tallest peaks in Pakistan's north, and the others drowned trying to save him, authorities said.

The men, who worked together at an automotive shop in the northwestern city of Peshawar, had travelled 60 kilometres (40 miles) to the east to a popular fishing spot along the Indus.

Call to end violence in E Timor: Nobel peace laureate Jose Ramos-Horta is urging East Timorese guerrillas to avoid acts of violence in contested East Timor, but he stopped short of calling for a unilateral cease fire with Indonesia, AP reports from United Nations.

In a statement faxed to news organisations, Ramos-Horta noted international diplomatic efforts by South African President Nelson Mandela, the United Nations and others seeking a solution to the dispute.

"In this context, I wish to make a most emphatic appeal to the resistance leaders in East Timor, the freedom fighters in the mountains, the clandestine network, the youths and students as well as those who are involved directly or indirectly in this noble struggle to resist any temptation to engage in armed violence," Ramos-Horta said.

Murder in US drops to its lowest rate

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: Murder in America dropped last year to its lowest rate in more than a quarter-century as serious crime posted its fifth straight annual decline, the FBI reported Saturday, reports AP.

There were 19,645 murders in the United States last year, down 9 per cent from 1995. The murder rate was 7.4 per 100,000 people, the lowest since 7.3 in 1969, FBI statisticians reported.

"This is really a striking new low," said Professor Alfred Blumstein of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. "It results largely from the 31 per cent drop in juvenile murder arrest rates since 1993, although the adult rate also has been declining, though more slowly, since 1991."

Overall, the FBI report chronicled 13.5 million crimes in 1996, down 3 per cent from the year before and the fifth consecutive decline. The total crime rate of 5,079 per 100,000 people was the lowest since 1984.

"These numbers show that escalating crime is not an unsolvable problem," Attorney General Janet Reno said.

For five years, President Bill Clinton said in a written statement, his administration has worked with police, prosecutors, school principals and community leaders to fight "for more police in our communities, fewer guns on our streets, tougher punishment for violent offenders and better opportunities for our kids."

89 more killed in two days in Algeria

ALGIERS, Oct 4: At least 89 people were killed, some of them hacked to death or decapitated, in a series of massacres in the last two days in the regions of Medea, Oran, and the Algerian capital, newspapers reported here today, reports AFP.

The garrison town of Blida, located 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of Algiers, was also attacked Friday evening with homemade rockets and at least four people were killed and 200 injured, the newspapers said.

A resident of Blida reached by telephone said the shelling had prompted widespread panic.

US deporting legal immigrants having felony convictions

EL PASO, Texas, Oct 4: US agents are rounding up and deporting dozens of foreigners who are legal residents of the United States but have felony convictions, officials said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Under a law passed earlier this year, so-called resident aliens with felony convictions can be deported. Federal agents on the first major roundup seized 43 people in Texas' border city of El Paso over a two-week period ending on Thursday.

"These are serious felons and they are a threat to our society," said Roberto Saenz, Assistant District Director of Investigations for the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service in El Paso.

He said other roundups were being conducted throughout the country, and they would continue on a monthly basis in El Paso.

Saenz said a new immigration law that went into effect in April allows the INS to deport resident aliens — who are not US citizens — if they have been convicted of a felony, regardless of when the crime was committed.

"In the past, those people could walk and the INS couldn't touch them," he said. "Under the new law we can deport these individuals... we're doing it across the country."

He said agents were focusing their raids on "career criminals and people who are serious threats," rather than people who were convicted years ago and have been clean since.

But a local human rights group attacked the operation.

"It's a ridiculous situation. A lot of them were convicted of minor crimes," said Susan Kern, president of the border rights coalition. "Nothing in the law allows them any remedy. They are just kicked out."

A list of those deported in the El Paso raids showed all were Mexicans with convictions for crimes ranging from drugs possession and auto theft to drug trafficking, attempted murder, domestic violence and sexual abuse of a minor.

None of the felony convictions was more than three years old.

INS officials said there are thousands of legal residents with felony convictions in the United States.

"The message is, we welcome you into this country but if you commit a serious felony you will lose that privilege," Saenz said.

Kern said she knew of one case where two men were deported for earlier drug possession convictions ever though they had families here and their children were US citizens.

US TV to air film on Mother Teresa today

LOS ANGELES, Oct 4: A television dramatisation of the life of Mother Teresa, the Roman Catholic nun and Nobel Peace Prize winner will be aired on US television on Sunday.

The film starring Geraldine Chapling as Mother Teresa was completed four months before her death and a spokesman for the family Channel Cable Network which will show the film, said the network is airing it at its regularly scheduled time.

The spokesman said the network declined to show the film earlier and halted all publicity for it until India had completed its state funeral for Mother Teresa.

Although the film has received respectful advance reviews, Mother Teresa's Roman Catholic order had said that the revered nun did not wish films to be made on her life in which actors would play her character.

NATO key to security in region, say Euro ministers

SOFIA, Oct 4: Southeast Europe's defence ministers asserted here Friday that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was the key to security in the region, endorsing greater US penetration despite Russian protests, reports AFP.

A meeting chaired by US Defence Secretary William Cohen and including minister from five candidates to join the alliance, agreed a joint declaration to this effect.

"NATO continues to be the major driving force in the construction of an inclusive European security architecture in close cooperation with the Western European Union," the European defence body, the statement said.

Russia had protested that it was not invited to the meeting, but Cohen swept Moscow's objections aside.

"I believe that Russia obviously plays an important role in security in Europe. That is why we formed a NATO-Russia charter," Cohen told reporters here.

The meeting was new links formed between states present, with Macedonia proposing a military cooperation agreement with neighbours Albania, Bulgaria and Greece, while Italy announced that it would be forming a light infantry brigade with Hungary and Slovenia.

The other defence ministers attending were from hosts Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

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Sri Lanka bans smoking in buses, trains

COLOMBO, Oct 4: Non-smokers will no longer have to inhale tobacco smoke on buses and trains as the government has decided to enforce a ban on smoking on public transport, a government minister said Saturday, reports AP.

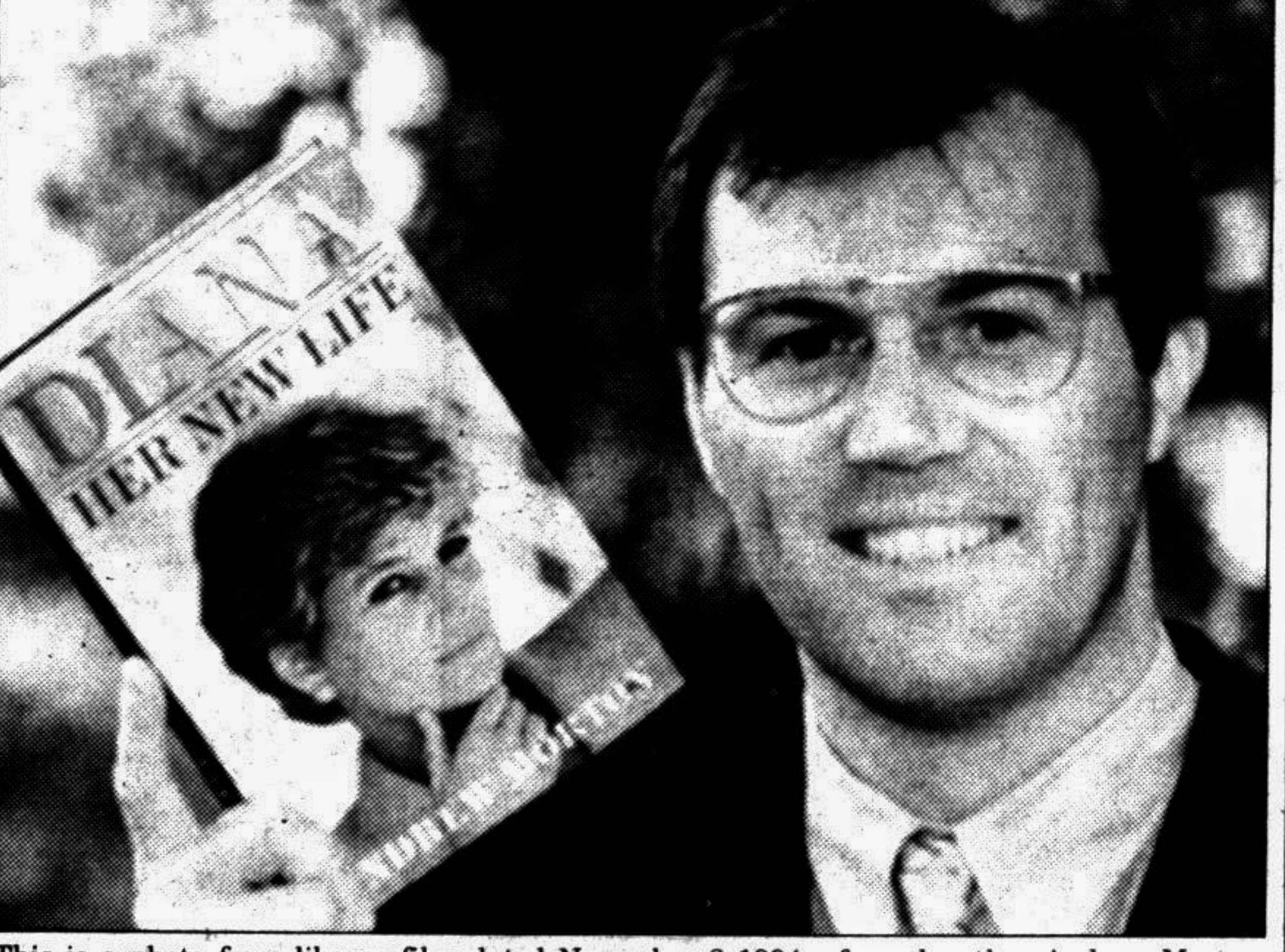
AHM Fowzie, the Sri Lankan minister of transport and highways said drivers and ticket-collectors would be responsible for cracking the whip.

"We've had numerous complaints from passengers of smokers puffing away with gay abandon," Fowzie said.

A ban on smoking in buses and trains has been in effect since 1960 but enforcement has been lax.

Fowzie said first time offenders would have to pay 1,000 rupees (dhs 16.50) while repeat offenders could face three months in jail or be fined up to 5,000 rupees (dhs 84.0).

An estimated 2.5 million commuters use the overcrowded bus and rail services daily.



This is a photo from library files dated November 8 1994, of royal author Andrew Morton with his book "Diana: Her New Life". Andrew Morton has received criticism for his issue of an updated book detailing the life of the Princess of Wales called "Diana, Her True Story In Her Own Words," and for his selling of tape transcripts to the American magazine The People for which it is alleged he received a fee of 100,000 pounds, (\$160,000). The family of Diana, Princess of Wales is considering an 11th hour bid to prevent publication of the new version which went on sale in London Friday. — AP/UNB photo

Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania pledge to crack down on crime

VARNA, Bulgaria, Oct 4: Three countries that sit astride a major smuggling route from Asia to Europe pledged Friday to crack down on organised crime and trafficking in drugs and weapons, reports AP.

The leaders of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey hope that by signing a declaration to fight crime they can draw closer to Western Europe and the United States.

Bulgaria and Romania were Soviet allies during the Cold War, while Turkey was a NATO member. But after the Cold War ended, their tight borders loosened up, and criminals were quick to take advantage.

The problem is of grave concern to the countries. Presidents Petar Stoyanov of Bulgaria, Emil Constantinescu of Romania and Suleyman Demirel of Turkey met Friday to discuss it.

At the end of their meeting they signed a declaration to jointly combat organised crime, terrorism, and drug and weapons trafficking.

Demirel also expressed firm support for bids by Romania and Bulgaria to join NATO.

"Turkey stands ready to assist both countries in their efforts to prepare their armed

forces for prospective NATO membership," Demirel told reporters.

"The security on the southern flank of NATO cannot be really ensured unless all countries in the region are members of the alliance," Constantinescu said.

The three heads of state also discussed infrastructure projects, which might become an issue in their applications to join the European Union.

They inaugurated a new 27 million dollars fiber-optic communications cable link under the Black Sea, which connects their three countries.

Stoyanov said that a similar meeting of presidents of Bulgaria, Romania and Greece is being prepared. He also said it is possible that Greece might join the other three in a four-way meeting in the future.

Bulgaria, a Christian Orthodox nation in the center of the Balkans, is trying to balance its relations with Orthodox Romania and Greece and with Muslim Turkey. However the rivalry between Turkey and Greece, which has escalated over territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea, could again be a barrier for such a meeting.

Lanka urges US to declare Tigers as terrorists

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 4: Sri Lanka on Friday called on the United States and other rich countries to declare the Tamil Tigers a terrorist group, deny them funds and campaign against the recruitment of child soldiers throughout the world, reports Reuters.

Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar told a press conference that he spoke on Thursday to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who told him a decision was expected soon, and added that Sri Lanka hopes it will be positive.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are fighting a 14-year war for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the Indian ocean island's north and east.

US working on declaration on Chinese N-cooperation

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: The US government expects to make a declaration at this month's summit that China isn't helping other nations make nuclear weapons, a statement that would signal an important improvement in US-Chinese relations, reports AP.

Opponents in Congress and arms control groups argue that a certification of US-Chinese nuclear cooperation is premature. And administration officials, in fact, are telling lawmakers in private that they are working to overcome the hurdle of China's long-term cooperation with Iran, according to a senior administration official.

The official said, however, that prospects for a breakthrough are good, and Kurt Campbell, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for East Asia, said the nuclear agreement could be the highlight of the October 29 Washington summit meeting of President Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

"Obviously, there's a hope that we'll be able to move ahead here," Campbell said, adding a caution: "There's no rush to do this in a way that can't be verified and that can't be explained to the Congress."

The other senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, was even more positive on progress toward an agreement. "I believe you can say we're on track to do it at the summit," the official said. "We have been pushing China hard to terminate or phase out its cooperation with Iran."

Other administration and Capitol Hill sources said they expect the historic certification to be announced in connection with the summit.

The Clinton-Jiang meeting will be the first Sino-US summit since the crackdown on democracy demonstrators at Tiananmen Square in 1989 upstaged relations. Clinton is to visit China next year.

Clinton's top aides are pushing for a showcase accomplishment on national security since breakthroughs on trade and human rights aren't expected at the meeting.

Certifying that China has stopped helping non-nuclear states develop weapons would let the US nuclear industry sell reactors and technology in China, which is expected to spend 60 billion dollars over 25 years on such energy sources.

After meeting with Clinton's National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, Sen Craig Thomas said he came away satisfied on the nuclear issue.

"I was told that the United

States wasn't going to short-change our interests to be able to announce something at a summit," said Thomas, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia.

Instead, Thomas said, US officials were impressing upon China that halting the spread of nuclear weapons is in China's own security interests.

But skeptics abound.

"No president has thus far been able to certify that China isn't spreading military nuclear technology" and we do not believe that it is possible to certify that it is the case today," Rep Edward Markey, wrote to Clinton in a letter signed by 62 members of Congress.

In late August Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Li Lanqing told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that China will not supply Iran with

nuclear reactor technology that could help Tehran make atomic weapons.

The United States is working to get guarantees. It wants China to cancel or indefinitely postpone export of a uranium conversion facility to Iran, although Tehran and Beijing insist the plant is for civilian uses.

Also under review is the transfer of a heavy water research reactor to Iran from China that would reportedly be fuelled by weapons-grade highly enriched uranium. Beijing, which signed a 10-year nuclear cooperation agreement with Iran in 1990, suspended the reactor sale in 1992 under US pressure.

The CIA says that in 1996 China remained the No. 1 exporter of weapon technology to Iran and Pakistan, and leaked intelligence reports have indicated some nuclear transfers.

But the States Department contends there's no evidence of such nuclear sales since May 1996 when China told the United States it would no longer assist "unsafeguarded nuclear facilities," meaning those in Pakistan.

That comment came after the CIA found China had sold 5,000 ring magnets to Pakistan to enrich uranium. Beijing denied that. Critics said it was just the latest broken promise by the Chinese.

China signed the Non-proliferation Treaty in 1992. This September, with the summit in sight, China issued export controls, including for "dual use" technologies, to demonstrate "unequivocal assurances" it isn't helping nuclear arms programmes in violation of international agreements.

Tigers kill ruling party activist in Jaffna

COLOMBO, Oct 4: Tamil rebels shot and killed a governing party activist in northern Jaffna, the defence ministry said today, reports AP.

The guerrillas attacked SP Dharmalingam, 57, on Friday in Colombuthurai, a village in government-controlled Jaffna, said Asoka Peris, a defence ministry official.

The military had captured the rebel stronghold of Jaffna last year.

Dharmalingam was targeted because the governing People's Alliance is trying to push an autonomy plan for Tamils in war-torn areas to win their support, officials said.

The plan envisages the merger of Tamil-dominated northern and eastern provinces to give Tamils more control over their own affairs.