

UNSC vows to resume UNSCOM operations

US for retaining ban to topple Saddam: Aziz

LONDON, Nov 1: Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said on Friday the United States' aim in maintaining sanctions was to topple President Saddam Hussein, and that an American military strike would make no difference to Baghdad, reports Reuters.

The United States has its special objectives on Iraq, whether we cooperate with the UN Security Council or not, whether we cooperate with UNSCOM (UN arms inspectors) or not," Aziz told Qatari Al-Jazeera television in an interview broadcast on Friday night and monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

He was speaking before an announcement that United Nations weapons inspection teams in Iraq, which halted operations after Baghdad ordered the expulsion of their American members, intended to resume full duties on Monday with the Americans taking part.

The Security Council had already condemned Iraq's decision to bar American UN personnel and warned of unspecified "serious consequences" if it persisted.

The activities of the weapons inspectors are part of a regime of economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations to try to force it to abandon weapons of mass destruction after its occupation forces were driven out of Kuwait in 1991.

Aziz said US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright did not want the sanctions lifted until Iraq's leader was changed. He said this had nothing to do with UNSCOM — the UN Special Commission on Iraqi weapons.

The United States has an objective. The objective is to make Iraq surrender to its policy, to its will," Aziz said.

The security of Russia, France, and China is not threatened by the UNSCOM, while our security is... if the Americans continue to lead the UNSCOM, then the embargo will not be lifted. So, why should we continue? This is the question. We have endured so much...

"Why should we continue to do this if the embargo is not lifted?... are the Americans going to strike us? They did that in 1991, 1993, and 1996. It makes no difference," Aziz said.

AP adds from United Nations: Raising the stakes against Baghdad, the United Nations said Friday it will resume weapons inspections in Iraq next week with "all nationalities" participating, despite an Iraqi order for Americans on the team to leave.

The chief weapons inspector Richard Butler, also told the Security Council that he considered that Iraq's order for American team members to leave the country constituted a breach of the 1991 ceasefire which ended the Persian Gulf War.

That drew a sharp rebuke from French Ambassador Alain Dejumet, who said it was up to the council to declare a breach, a move which could pave the way for military action.

"Mr Butler can give us his opinion," Dejumet said. "But that's only his opinion."

Two more moons of Urenus found

NEW YORK, Nov 1: Astronomers have discovered two small moons orbiting Uranus, bringing to 17 the number of moons circling the seventh planet, reports AP.

The larger moon measures only 100 miles across, the smaller only 50 miles (80 kilometres). Unlike the planet's other moons, they orbit Uranus at a crazy angle, alternately rising high above and then plunging far below the plane occupied by most solar system objects.

Planetary satellites like the two new ones, known as irregular moons, have already been discovered orbiting Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune.

"I think it's great," said Jonathan Lunine, an astronomer at the University of Arizona. "Finding where irregulars are tells you about the formation of the solar system."

The larger moon appears red in photographs, suggesting to astronomers that it may be covered with hydrocarbons produced by the cosmic ray bombardment of methane ice on the object.

Astronomers discovered the moons using the Hale telescope at California's Palomar Observatory. The moons were first spotted on the nights of Sept. 6 and 7, and their existence was confirmed with observations made last weekend.



A Kashmiri policeman calls for assistance while trying to move the body of a dead police official into an armoured car after an explosion in Srinagar Friday. A local police chief and two soldiers were killed in the blast, which injured at least 12 people. None of the dozens of Kashmiri Muslim groups fighting for independence from India have claimed responsibility for the explosion. — AP/UNB photo

Govt's decision to strengthen rule of law: Pak CJ

ISLAMABAD, Nov 1: Pakistan Chief Justice Sajjad Ali was reported today saying he was "satisfied" with the government's decision to appoint five more judges to the Supreme Court as recommended by him, reports AFP.

"It is a positive step which will end a state of uncertainty in the country," Shah told The Nation daily, soon after prime minister announced the move in the National Assembly late Friday.

"Better late than never," Shah added, saying the decision should have been taken much earlier.

The chief justice said the move would strengthen the constitution and rule of law in the country.

Political uncertainty had gripped Pakistan for weeks amid a bitter dispute between the government and the judiciary centering on the issue of judicial appointments sought by the chief justice.

Sharif told The Nation the government had decided to implement the recommendations of the chief justice in the larger national interest. The announcement was widely welcomed in Pakistan.

Kuki rebels set ablaze 176 houses in Manipur

IMPHAL, Nov 1: At least 176 houses were set ablaze by armed Kuki activists in Manipur's strife-torn Churachandpur district in continuing Kuki-Paite clashes, reports PTI.

Official sources said today that Kuki National Front (KNF) activists attacked five villages Friday, opened indiscriminate fire and set ablaze at least 176 houses.

All the villages are located close to each other.

Gunshots were heard for several hours but there was no report of any casualty.

Reports from the district said the armed activists first burned down 100 houses, including the Henglep sub-divisional headquarters.



A Thai model wearing a headdress decorated with toy snakes parades on the catwalk during a Halloween fashion show Friday which was held to promote a local shopping mall. — AP/UNB photo

Tigers kill 3 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Nov 1: Tamil Tiger guerrillas detonated a mine in eastern Sri Lanka, killing three civilians and wounding four, the military said today, reports AFP.

A military spokesman said the rebels of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) exploded the mine Friday at Kaluwanerani in Batticaloa district as a vehicle was passing by.

The identity of the victims was not known, he said, but added that there were no military personnel in the vehicle.

Publisher files case seeking credit for song used in DI's funeral

PORTLAND, Oregon, Nov 1: A publisher has gone to court seeking credit for a song on Princess Diana's funeral album, reports AP.

CP Publications, a non-profit religious corporation based in Portland, owns the copyright for "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" by Sebastian Temple, also known as "Prayer of St. Francis."

"When my client got wind of it, we agreed to waive royalties and allow it to be used for chapel purposes," Portland attorney Leonard D. DuBoff said.

But the song was used without reference to the composer or publisher on a compact disc titled: "Diana, Princess of Wales 1961-1997: The BBC recording of the Funeral Services," DuBoff said.

BRIEFLY

Mahathir to visit Canada: Despite preoccupations with a financial crisis at home, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has scheduled a visit to Canada to increase investment in his country in information technology, the national news agency said Saturday. AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Mahathir's eight-day visit begins on November 19. He is expected to meet Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chretien and attend the summit meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, a trade group, Bernama news agency said, quoting a government spokesman.

China-Malaysia defence talks held: Commander of air force of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Lt Gen Liu Shunyang held separate talks in Kuala Lumpur Friday with Malaysian Defence Minister Syed Hamid Albar and his Malaysian counterpart Ahmed Saruji on cooperation between the two countries' armed forces, especially the two air forces. Xinhua says from Kuala Lumpur.

Welcoming Liu for his first visit to Malaysia, the Malaysian defence minister expressed the hope that there would be more exchanges between the two armed forces to promote mutual understanding. Syed Hamid said his government attaches great importance to the development of relations between the armed forces of the two countries.

Nanny gets life term in US: A life sentence handed down by a US court on a 19-year-old British nanny found guilty of murdering an eight-month-old baby in her care was "an insult to justice," according to Saturday's tabloid press. AFP reports from London.

Given the strength of the defence evidence, it is barely conceivable that 12 rational and fair-minded individuals (the jury) could declare themselves free of any reasonable doubt about Louise Woodward's guilty, said The Express. It added that many will feel that the loss of child nurtured and loved over 19 years is greater than the loss, though terrible one just eight-month-old.

907 HIV cases in HK: The number of reported HIV infections in Hong Kong has risen to 907, due to an increase of 52 persons who were found to be positive for the HIV antibody test in the third quarter of this year, the department of health said Friday. Xinhua reports from Hong Kong.

The number of new HIV infections reported in the third quarter is the highest ever received in a single quarter since the surveillance system was established in 1984, officials of the department said.

War-era bomb found in Vietnam: A massive Vietnam War-era bomb was discovered buried at a construction site at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport, an official said Saturday. AP reports from Hanoi.

The bomb was found by supervisors working on an airport expansion project. Military engineers have been informed of the bomb, which was found about three metres (10 feet) underground. The explosive, a remnant of frequent US bombing campaigns over North Vietnam during the 1960s and early 1970s, is about one metre (3.3 feet) in length and 30 centimetres (12 inches) in diameter.

Hashimoto arrives in Russia: Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto arrived in Krasnoyarsk yesterday and flew by helicopter to a rural residence for an informal summit with President Boris Yeltsin, AFP reports from Krasnoyarsk.

The two-day summit at Sosna (pine), a picturesque riverside residence less than 10 kilometres (six miles) outside the central Siberian city, is billed as an opportunity for the two leaders to strike up a friendship and open a new chapter in Russian-Japanese relations.

Oldest male gorilla dies in Japan: The oldest male gorilla in captivity died at the Ueno zoological gardens in Tokyo yesterday at the age of 44, a zoo official said, Reuters reports from Tokyo.

The gorilla, Bul Bul, had been at zoo since 1957 and died of natural causes, he said. "Bul Bul was very popular with zoo visitors. He was big and formidable, an enormous people took his picture because he was so calm," the official said.

No new N-deals with Iran, China assures US

WASHINGTON, Nov 1: China gave clear-cut specific assurances "it will undertake no new nuclear deals with Iran in a bid to assure the United States it isn't spreading deadly weapons," a senior US official said Friday, reports AFP.

Those assurances worked out over two and a half years of negotiations paved the way for US President Bill Clinton to declare this week that he would certify to Congress that China isn't spreading nuclear weapons.

Once he does that US companies will be allowed to compete for contracts to build nuclear power plants in China, on which Beijing is expected to spend some 50 billion to 60 billion dollars over the next two decades.

Three of the biggest US power firms — ABB Combustion Engineering, General Electric, and Westinghouse — hope to share half that market by the year 2010.

"We don't have to take it on faith," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity, "we received clear-cut specific assurances with respect to China's nuclear cooperation in Iran."

Chinese authorities attended a meeting of nuclear supplier countries the Zangger Committee for the first time on October 16, the official said.

Where they made "rather impressive" assurances on nonproliferation.

He cited a "significant, positive shift in China's behavior" in the last several years on controlling nuclear technology.

Administration officials are now sharing those assurances with members of Congress some of whom doubt Beijing's willingness to control the spread of nuclear chemical, and conventional weapons technologies.

"China has assured US authorities that they are not going to engage in new nuclear cooperation with Iran and will complete a few existing projects in a relatively short period of time," the official said.

US authorities view those projects as a minimal to zero proliferation threat, the official told AFP.

Senator Joseph Biden, expressing a view shared by many legislators, said in a statement Wednesday that China appeared to have met the minimum requirements under current US law to buy nuclear technology.

"We will be monitoring China's conduct," he said.

A 1985 law governing US-Chinese nuclear cooperation provides also for exchanges of information and US visits to Chinese facilities to ensure compliance with nonproliferation pledges.

US President Bill Clinton is expected to transmit formal certification documents to Congress before the end of the current session November 7, after which Congress has 30 days to take action to block certification.

Reuter adds: China denounced Washington's appointment on Friday of a special coordinator for Tibet affairs as an "unacceptable" intervention in Chinese internal affairs.

"The US move is unacceptable," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofeng told reporters in New York when asked to comment on the naming of the Tibet coordinator.

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Russian FM blames Israel

Ross fails to break impasse in ME peace process

WASHINGTON, Nov 1: US mediator Dennis Ross has held a series of meetings with Israeli and Syrian officials in a so far unsuccessful search for a way to get their long-suspended peace talks reopened, the US State Department said, reports AP.

The revelation that the Israeli-Syrian peace track is alive, even if only barely, came on the eve of another Clinton administration attempt to hasten an Israeli pullback on the Golan Heights as well. Syria has made return of the strategic border enclave Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast War a condition of peace with the Jewish state.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, unlike his two immediate predecessors, Shimon Peres and the late Yitzhak Rabin, is reluctant. He regards the high ground overlooking northeastern Israel vital to the country's security.

Israel's talks with the Palestinians, meanwhile, will begin on Monday at the State Department, with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright presiding at the outset. The talks subsequently will shift to the more private US Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin, confirming Israeli press reports that Ross has held separate talks with Israelis and Syrians, said there had been no announcement because private diplomacy was often more productive.

"It should not come as a surprise to any of you or any people in the world that we have been trying to get the Israeli-Syrian track restarted," Rubin said Friday. "And the secretary of state went to Damascus and met with the Syrian leader precisely for that purpose."

"And from time to time, Ambassador Ross has met with Israelis, and he's met with Syrians, with the specific goal of trying to see whether we can find a formula to restart those talks."

So far, Ross has not found a formula to reopen the negotiations that under Israeli labour governments appeared at the brink of producing an Israeli withdrawal on the Golan Heights in exchange for Syrian diplomatic recognition.

Another report from Cairo says: Israel brought about the impasse in the Middle East peace process by going back on its word, Russia's foreign minister said Friday at the end of a week-long tour of the region.

"It is clear that the present deadlock is the result of the fact that the Israeli government deviated from the agreements and understandings concluded by its predecessors," Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said.

The statement was unusual in that it put the blame squarely on Israel for the peace process that unravelled after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took power last year.

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Prostitutes march in a candle-lit procession in memory of their fellow workers who have died from the AIDS virus during a procession in the streets of La Merced Neighbourhood in Mexico City on Friday. This annual ceremony set around the day of the dead festivities tries to promote safe sex and awareness of the rapid spread of HIV in Mexico. — AP/UNB photo

French are the best lovers in the world

PARIS: A 14-country survey of sexual behaviour and health found that the French are the best lovers in the world, though Brad Pitt and Sharon Stone are the biggest sex symbols in the country, reports AP.

The United States and South Africa came in second and third respectively, said the survey released this week by the London International Group PLC, maker of Durex condoms.

The designation "best lovers in the world" was based on a compilation of each country's ranking for frequency of sexual relations, amount of time spent having sex, and the importance attached to satisfying their partners.

The survey said 47 per cent of the French sex American screen stars Pitt and Stone as the biggest sex symbols.

Among the study's other findings:

The French are the most attentive lovers in the world, with 52 per cent of people surveyed saying their partner's satisfaction is what counts the most during sex.

Americans say they devote the most time to sex, with an average of 25.3 minutes, followed by English and Australians. Hong Kong had the fastest lover surveyed, averaging 12.3 minutes.

US plans to lead effort to clear world of land mines by 2010

WASHINGTON, Nov 1: The Clinton administration announced plans to lead an international effort to clear the world of land mines by 2010, reports AP.

The administration has been criticised for rejecting a treaty banning anti-personnel mines. But US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Friday that the best way to protect civilians is to "pull mines from the soil like the noxious weeds that they are."

She said a more aggressive approach to land mine clearance is needed because at current removal rates the task won't be completed until decades into the next century.

Albright said the administration expects to contribute 80 million dollars to the global demining effort in the fiscal year that began on October 1, twice the figure for last fiscal year. And she expressed hope that global efforts will reach 1 billion dollars annually, five times the current figure.

An estimated 100 million land mines in more than 64 countries cause about 26,000 casualties each year.

US Sen Patrick Leahy, a

leading advocate in Congress for the land mine treaty, praised the administration's effort but said it is no substitute for a ban on land mines.

"Why spend billions of dollars to get rid of the mines, if they are only going to be replaced with new mines?" he said. "We need to destroy the mines in the ground, and we need to stop laying of new mines. Both are necessary to rid the world of these insidious weapons."

On September 17, more than 100 countries approved, without US backing, a treaty that would ban anti-personnel mines. It is to go into effect in December.

The International Campaign to Ban Land Mines was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts in rallying support worldwide for the treaty.

Despite intense international pressure, President Clinton rejected the treaty on grounds that such weapons were needed on the Korean Peninsula. Beyond that, treaty critics contend the pact cannot be effectively policed.

Rejecting suggestions that the United States has been a

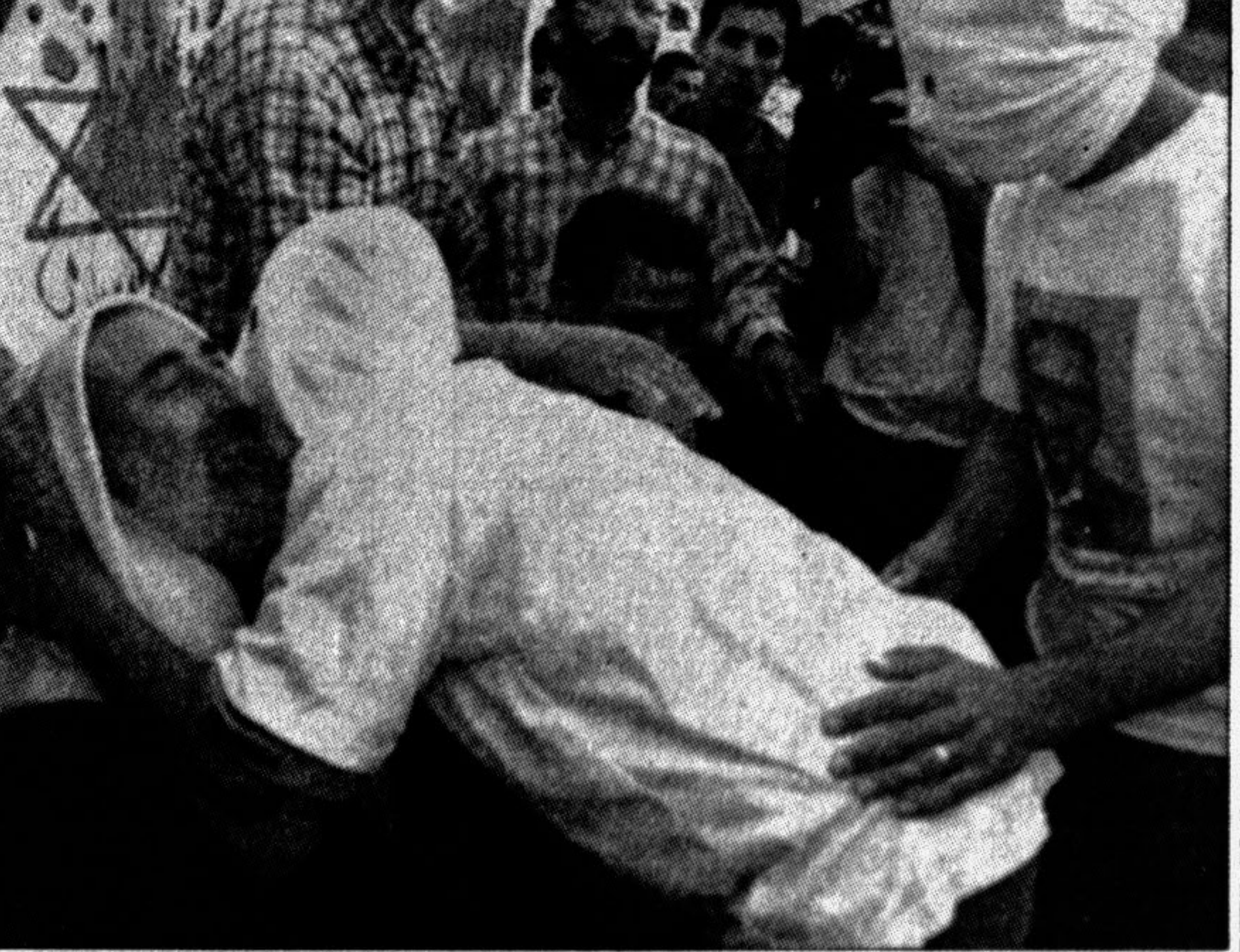
laggard on the land mine issue, Albright said US contributions alone over the years to demining efforts exceed all those combined by the signatories to the treaty.

Defence Secretary William Cohen, who joined Albright at a news briefing, said the United States has destroyed 1.5 million of these weapons and will destroy a similar number in the next year and a half.

Named to serve as special representative of Clinton and Albright for the land mine issue was Karl F. Inderfurth, who serves as the State Department's most senior official for South Asia.

Inderfurth told reporters that Korea is a "special area" that the administration is addressing as a separate issue. He said the administration hopes to come up with an alternate programme for Korea by 2006.

The International Campaign to Ban Land Mines welcomed the administration's announcement but said the steps outlined by Albright must be accompanied by political measures to achieve a land mine ban.



Sheikh Yassin is hugged by masked members of the Islamic Jihad following flag burnings during a Islamic Jihad demonstration Friday, marking the second anniversary of the killing of Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shekaki by Israeli Mosad in Malta. — AP/UNB photo

Mary McAleese becomes new Irish President

DUBLIN, Nov 1: Belfast law professor Mary McAleese was elected the new president of the Irish Republic Friday when she beat her nearest rival by an 18 per cent margin on the second count, election officials said, reports AFP.

McAleese will become the eighth head of state and the first Northern Ireland Catholic nationalist to hold the post when she is sworn in on November 11 at a ceremony in Dublin Castle.

The 46-year-old academic who took 59 per cent of the vote against Mary Banotti's 41 per cent will be Ireland's second woman president succeeding Mary Robinson, who resigned early to become UN Commissioner for Human Rights.

McAleese was born in the working class Ardoyne area of West Belfast and will next month move in to the republic's presidential mansion, Aras An Uachtaran, for the next seven years with her husband Martin, a dentist, and their three children.

In her first interview as president-elect, McAleese said in a message to the people of Northern Ireland that she hoped to see the two communities there change their language

and move away from conflict.

"Precisely because I do know that community very well, I am hoping that as the violence fades, the language softens, that we will actually find our way back to that spirit of mutual affection and generosity find our way back to one community as opposed to two communities, she said.

She pledged to make the official presidential residence the heart of Ireland's and promised to be the very best president one can be.

Banotti had a strong showing in Dublin constituencies but McAleese swept nearly all the rest of the country other 30 constituencies.

Despite the record number of candidates, the turnout was only 48 per cent. The lowest poll ever for a presidential election, when Robinson was elected in 1990 election, the turnout was 64 per cent.

Premier Bertie Ahern said McAleese would be an excellent president to lead Ireland into the next century.

"She showed herself in a contested election to be a person of great poise, great intellect and great ability — qualities that will enable her to be a very, very good president," he said.