

## Milosevic compliance with accord insufficient: US

WASHINGTON, Oct 17: The Clinton administration said that Yugoslav compliance with the US-brokered agreement on Kosovo was substantial but not sufficient to rule out the possibility of airstrikes in the coming days, reports AP.

We believe NATO's guns should remain cocked and NATO's military commander should remain in a position to act," State Department spokesman James P Rubin said Friday, explaining US support for an extension in authorisation of the use of force by NATO against Serb forces.

Rubin spoke to reporters in the rural Maryland setting where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat are holding peace talks.

He said about half the military units that were in Kosovo but didn't belong there are no longer in the field — meaning they are confined to barracks or have left the province. In addition, he said monitors are seeing fewer and fewer police in the countryside.

Meanwhile, the CIA estimated 35,000 refugees have come down from the mountains

in the past 36 hours out of about 300,000 ethnic Albanians who had fled Serb forces since February, a senior administration official said. UN and US disaster and refugee assistance teams are on the ground, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

U-2 spy planes will begin flying over Kosovo on Saturday as part of a NATO force to ensure that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic is complying with UN demands to pull back his army and police troops, the official said.

An unarmed 2,000-member international verification force, which Milosevic officially agreed to on Friday, is just arriving in Kosovo with an initial 54 members under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

US officials have not revealed how many Americans will participate in verification, but the State Department is considering hiring observers from a private Virginia company, Military Professional Resources Inc, said an administration official and the company.



Divesh Vihria, aged 8, wearing sunglasses, holding a candle, when he and other children visited the US embassy bomb site, Friday. Divesh was seriously injured in both eyes when the August 7, 1998 bomb blast struck in Nairobi. 224 people died including 12 Americans and 5,500 injured during the August 7, 1998 bombing in Nairobi. — AP/UNB photo

## Typhoon Zeb kills 85 across Philippines, Taiwan

TAIPEI, Oct 17: Typhoon Zeb killed at least 85 people on a violent march across the Philippines and Taiwan and was now headed for Japan, officials said today, reports Reuters.

The storm, which killed 67 in the Philippines, had weakened significantly, meteorologists said. It was lumbering northeast into the open Pacific towards the southern Japanese island of Okinawa.

Taiwan's central weather bureau lifted islandwide land and sea typhoon warnings early today, enabling people to get out and assess the damage, clear wreckage, hunt for missing survivors and bury the dead.

Packed with strong winds and heavy rains, Zeb swept across the densely populated island on Thursday and Friday, killing at least 18 people on Taiwan and leaving 13 missing.

Rescuers found two bodies buried alive by landslides under collapsed homes in Taipei late on Friday.

Government offices, financial markets, schools and businesses resumed normal operations today after Friday's shutdown.

## Noisy demonstration in Tehran Iranian hardliners vow to kill Rushdie

TEHRAN, Oct 17: More than 1,000 Iranians staged a noisy demonstration Friday against British author Salman Rushdie, vowing to kill him and the publishers of his book 'The Satanic Verses', reports AP.

The protesters cheered as the organisers unveiled a three-story portrait of an alleged would-be assassin of Rushdie that was painted on an apartment building in a northern suburb of Tehran.

The crowd carried banners reading "There is no turning back from Imam Khomeini's fatwa" in clear opposition to the government's decision last month to distance itself from the death sentence imposed on Rushdie by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

The ayatollah, the leader of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, condemned the Booker Prize-winning author to death on the grounds that his book blasphemed Islam.

The Iranian government said last month that it did not support the bounty offered for the death of Rushdie and, after a meeting between their foreign

ministers on September 24, Britain and Iran decided to upgrade their relations to ambassadorial level.

The move has been fiercely attacked by hardliners in Iran who oppose the policies of the moderate President Mohammad Khatami. A semi-government organisation raised the bounty to more than \$2.8 million and Friday's demonstration as the second this week by supporters of the fatwa.

"Our government must know that if they don't want to participate in carrying out the orders of Imam Khomeini, that's fine. But if they want to interfere with his edict, then we are facing serious problems," the protest leader, Allah Karam, told the crowd through loudspeakers.

Demonstrators shouted "Rushdie must die."

A man in a wheel-chair took the podium to deliver a message in English to Rushdie. "Listen to me. Remember my face. I'm your killer. I want to have a dialogue with you — with a machine gun. We will kill you."

## Release of Indian fishermen held in Pakistan ordered Indo-Pak diplomats meet for second day

ISLAMABAD, Oct 17: Senior Indian and Pakistani diplomats met for a second day today to discuss a 50-year old dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir, officials said, reports Reuters.

"Today we are going to start with the agenda item pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir," Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shamsah Ahmad told reporters before a meeting with his Indian counterpart, K Raghunath.

Talks on Friday between the government officials focused on peace and security in the region in which both sides exchanged proposals on the issue of nuclear and conventional arms, officials said.

"I can say some substantive proposals were exchanged from both sides, and now we have to give very careful consideration to these proposals," Ahmad said. He did not elaborate.

Raghunath declined to answer reporters' questions. Pak-

istan says Kashmir is crucial and 'core to peace and security in South Asia.'

Tensions between the two neighbours, who have fought three wars since their independence from Britain in 1947, have risen since they conducted tit-for-tat nuclear tests last May.

Two of those wars were over Kashmir. Talks have been deadlocked since September last year because of acrimony over Kashmir.

New Delhi blames Islamabad for sponsoring a nine-year old rebellion in Indian-ruled Kashmir. Pakistan denies the charge and says it only offers moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people in their struggle for self-determination.

An AFP report adds, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Friday ordered the release of all Indian fishermen held by Pakistan as the two countries opened talks

on peace and security, officials here said.

"As a gesture of goodwill and in view of humanitarian considerations," Sharif also ordered the release of all Indian boats in Pakistan's custody, the officials said.

Pakistan's decision to "unilaterally" release the fishermen and boats, was conveyed to the leader of Indian delegation K. Raghunath, who met Sharif late Friday, they said.

Raghunath conveyed the "good wishes" of Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to Sharif which were "reciprocated," they said.

Sources said Pakistan was holding 145 Indian fishermen and 26 boats on charges on illegally fishing in its territorial waters.

Some 182 Pakistani fishermen and 21 boats were in Indian custody on similar charges, they said.

## Ugandan govt preparing amnesty bill for rebels

KAMPALA, Uganda, Oct 17: Seeking new ways to end 12 years of insurgency in northern and western Uganda, the government plans to introduce a bill in parliament that would offer amnesty to all rebel groups, Radio Uganda said Saturday, reports AP.

The state-run radio said the government had appointed five ministers to consult with district and regional officials to win support for the proposed Amnesty Bill 1998.

The report could not be immediately confirmed. The radio did not say when the bill would be presented in parliament.

If true, it would mark a departure from President Yoweri Museveni's refusal to negotiate with rebels who he has labeled traitors and terrorists.

"In accordance with a policy of reconciliation as one of the avenues of establishing peace in all parts of the country, an amnesty will be extended to all persons engaged in activities of war," said a statement broadcast over Radio Uganda and issued by Ruhakana Rugunda, the minister in charge of the president's office.

Two major rebel groups and several smaller ones are operating in Uganda: the Lord's Resistance Army which has terrorised the north of the country from bases in war-torn southern Sudan, and the Allied Democratic Forces which is based along Uganda's western border with Congo.

## Serb forces to pull back before NATO deadline

LONDON, Oct 17: Yugoslav's ambassador to London said Saturday that Serb forces will pull out of Kosovo province ahead of a new NATO deadline and in time to avoid threatened air strikes, reports AP.

"I am convinced that our leader (Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic) has been pulling his troops out of Kosovo," Milos Radulovic said in an interview with British Broadcasting Corp. radio.

Milosevic agreed Monday to withdraw remaining Serb forces from Kosovo, begin negotiations with ethnic Albanians toward self-rule in the southern Serbian province, and allow up to 300,000 refugees to go home.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation on Friday gave Milosevic another 10 days, until October 27, to comply with international demands and pull his troops out of Kosovo or face air attacks.

Milosevic has met another demand by allowing 2,000 foreign monitors into the province.

Radulovic dismissed reports that Serbian forces were remaining in large numbers. "If you ask separatists, then you can be sure that they will say no forces were pulled out," the envoy said.

Radulovic said the Yugoslav authorities have also allowed more than 400 journalists into Kosovo, as well as humanitarian organisations. "There are so many people. So the situation is quite transparent there," he said.

## ME peace talks fail to make any headway

WYE MILLS, Maryland, Oct 17: Two days of talks between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat have failed to make any progress on key issues standing in the way of a new Mideast peace accord, officials from both sides said on Friday, reports AP.

During the latest two rounds of meeting Friday at the Wye River Conference Center near here, Netanyahu notably reiterated his demand that Palestinians extradite some 30 militants accused of involvement in deadly anti-Israeli attacks, — a demand Arafat has ruled out, the officials said.

Netanyahu also insisted that the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), convene to reaffirm the cancellation of anti-Israel clauses in the PLO charter.

Arafat, with US backing, has refused, saying that the PNC already annulled the offensive clauses at a May 1996 meeting and that the decision can be ratified by the smaller PLO executive committee.

"Netanyahu has simply repeated the same old position," said a Palestinian official following the meetings.

"Nothing has moved," confirmed one Israeli official.

AP adds: Halfway through the latest round of Mideast peace talks, President Bill Clinton is again joining Israeli and Palestinian leaders to try to mediate differences over counter-terrorist.

In the balance is a long-sought accord that would give the Palestinians control over more land in the West Bank.

Clinton planned to meet Saturday with Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, with hopes an agreement can be reached by Sunday.

Saturday's talks were being described as "informal" since it is the Jewish Sabbath and work is proscribed.

According to diplomatic sources, the Palestinians have accepted neither an Israeli demand that terrorism suspects be extradited to Israel for trial nor an American compromise that they be tried by Palestinian courts.

And while the Palestinians were willing to take steps to enhance security in Ramallah, a major Arab city on the outskirts of Jerusalem, there was "absolutely no real movement on anything" else Friday, the second day of the US-sponsored summit, said one of the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

## Afghan opposition forces retake strategic town from Taliban

ISLAMABAD, Oct 17: Afghanistan's opposition forces recaptured a strategic northern town from the Taliban Islamic militia in overnight fighting, a Pakistan-based Afghan news service reported today, says Reuters.

Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), quoting opposition sources, said the Taliban were pushed out of Taloqan, capital of Takhar Province, by the forces of Ahmed Shah Masood, military chief of the ousted Afghan government.

There was no immediate comment available from the Taliban, who captured the strategic stronghold in August.

The fighting took place as

the United Nations stepped up efforts to ease tension between the Taliban and Iran and the Taliban renewed a campaign to oust Masood, the last potent challenger to their rule.

UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, an Algerian diplomat, is in Pakistan for talks with the Taliban on defusing tension caused by the Islamic militia's admission that Maverick fighters killed 11 Iranian officials when they overran the opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif in August.

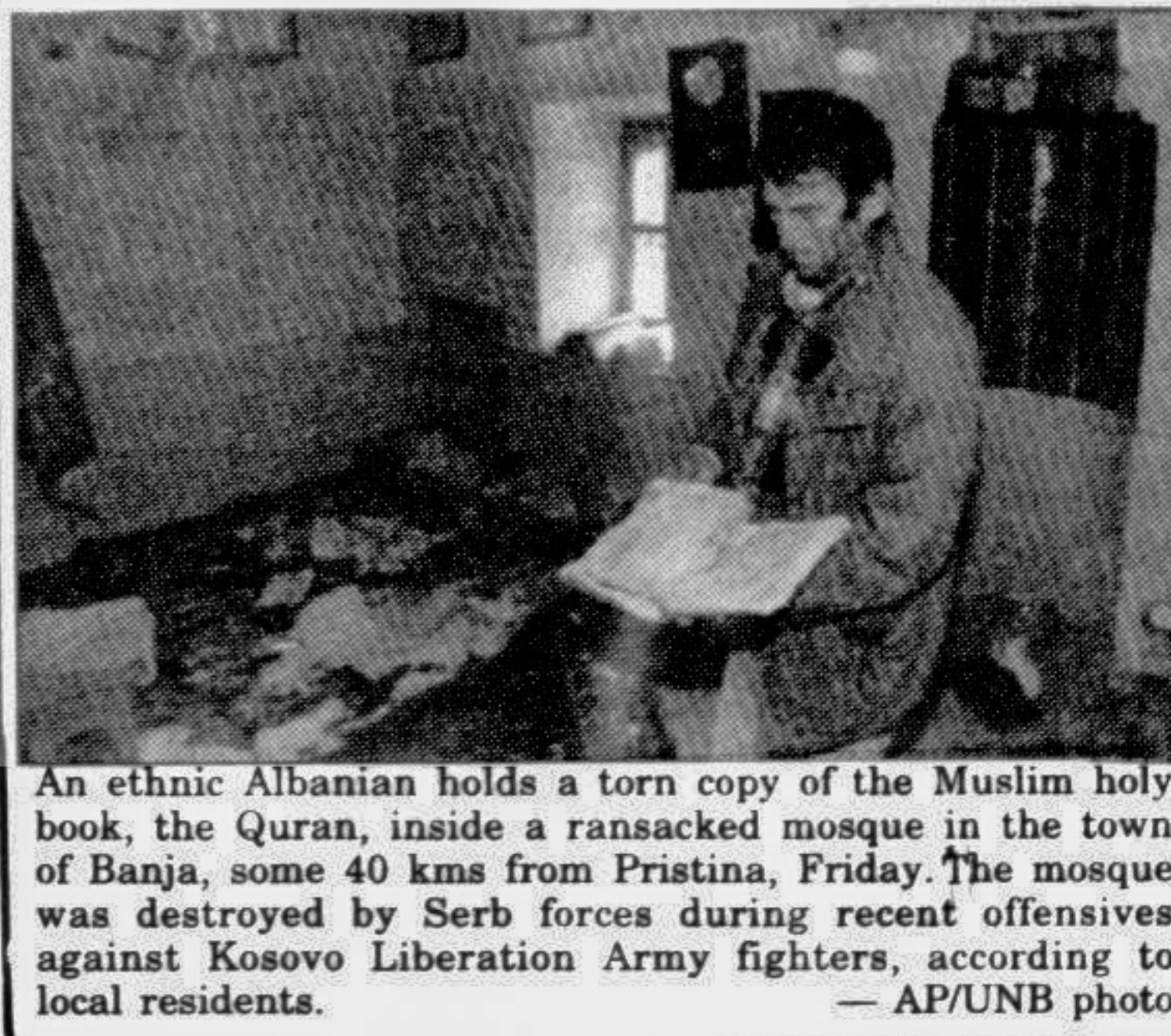
The Taliban have turned their attention to crushing Masood, whose forces are dug in some 25 km north of the capital, to reinforce their claim to

control the entire country and back their calls for recognition of the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

AIP said hundreds of Taliban fighters were arrested on Friday night and Masood forces seized three helicopters and more than 20 tons in the fighting, which has been going on for more than a week.

Masood, who remains the only obstacle in the Taliban's way of gaining complete control of Afghanistan, needed to recapture Taloqan because of the province's proximity to neighbouring Tajikistan.

Masood's forces are resisting the Taliban offences in Ghorband valley in Parwan Province



An ethnic Albanian holds a torn copy of the Muslim holy book, the Quran, inside a ransacked mosque in the town of Banja, some 40 kms from Pristina, Friday. The mosque was destroyed by Serb forces during recent offensives against Kosovo Liberation Army fighters, according to local residents. — AP/UNB photo

## Indian court criticises Bihar govt

NEW DELHI, Oct 17: An Indian court has criticised a provincial government which premier Atal Behari Vajpayee unsuccessfully tried to sack for a state of total anarchy which led people to live "like animals," media reports said today, reports AP.

The High Court of the eastern state of Bihar, ruling on a public interest petition filed by a lawyer, said: "people in Bihar are living like animals even as criminals are moving about and operating with liberty."

Legislators and the elite are being killed with the killers going scot-free," Judges BP Singh and SK Sinha were quoted in the Times of India daily as saying.

Vajpayee's government suffered a humiliating snub last month when President KR Narayanan rejected its recom-

mendation to sack the Bihar administration of Chief Minister Rabri Devi, an illiterate mother of nine.

Narayanan told the federal government it had given no constitutionally valid grounds for sacking an elected state government.

Bihar, a sprawling state of 100 million people, is ruled by Devi's centrist party, which bitterly opposes India's ruling Hindu nationalists.

Under Indian law the President must dismiss a provincial government if such a recommendation is forwarded a second time.

Devi's Maverick husband Laloo Prasad Yadav was Bihar's Chief Minister until July 1997 when he handed over the state government to her before his imprisonment in a huge corruption scandal.

## A weakened Yeltsin lacks energy for new reforms

MOSCOW, Oct 17: Since winning re-election in 1996, Boris Yeltsin has been on a two-year losing streak, reports AP.

His shaky health has become a national obsession and keeps him away from the Kremlin for days, and sometimes weeks, at a time.

The economy is suffering through its worst breakdown in the post-Soviet era, but he rarely raises the subject and hasn't even hinted at a recovery plan.

Even if he did, a growing band of critics argues, he's too weak physically and politically to launch any ambitious reforms before his term ends in 2000.

Always eager to show he's still in charge, Yeltsin has fired the entire government twice this year. But to what end? The new government, led by Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, is a mishmash of politicians from

various groups who are struggling to put together a coherent economic program.

Yeltsin, 67, brushes aside worries about his health and says there is no chance he will quit before his term ends, The Russian constitution makes impeachment an unlikely option, yet the clamor for Yeltsin's resignation is louder than it's ever been.

"Every one of his public events is painful to watch," said Andrei Pliontkovsky, a political analyst and harsh critic of the president. "He's out of touch. The state of his health and the state of mind are deplorable."

Several leading Russian newspapers have urged Yeltsin to step down. They freely speculate about whether he has Alzheimer's disease, or a return of heart problems that necessitated quintuple bypass surgery two years ago.

Yeltsin's public approval rating is in the single digits, but the president's hard-line foes have had difficulty turning this disenchantment into mass support.

Protests around the country on October 7 drew about 1 million marchers, but he crowds were much smaller than predicted and have not resulted in any sustained labor unrest.

Still, the president is losing support from traditionally friendly camps.

Temporary incapacity is one thing, but if a person cannot work and permanently perform his functions, he should muster the will and courage to say that," Moscow Mayor Luzhkov said Friday. "Everything now depends on the president himself."

Luzhkov, a likely presidential contender in 2000, has been an ally of Yeltsin and has never before openly questioned the

president's health or his ability to govern.

Yeltsin normally relishes a good fight and is at his best at times of confrontation.

Yet he has responded to the economic crisis by keeping a profile so low it borders on reclusive. He spends most days at a country residence to the west of Moscow, venturing into the Kremlin perhaps two or three times a week, and then only for a few hours.

Most public appearances are carefully controlled meetings in his Kremlin office, where he chitchats with government officials briefly for the benefit of the camera.

Last week's trip to Central Asia was his first foreign journey in five months, and it proved a public relations disaster. Yeltsin almost fell at a red carpet ceremony in Uzbekistan.

## Lockerbie bombing trial No breakthrough yet with Libya: Britain

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 17: Britain's Ambassador to the United Nations on Friday reported "no breakthrough" with Libya in securing a trial in the Netherlands of two suspects wanted for the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, reports AP.

British ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock informed the UN Security Council that he had passed on to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Wednesday "clarifications" to Libyan questions regarding the trial.

But speaking to reporters after the closed-door council ses-

sion, Greenstock said: "I'm not saying to you that there has been any breakthrough."

"All I'm saying is that I reported to the council that there are serious exchanges going on."

Asked whether Britain had now agreed to a Libyan demand that if convicted, the two Libyan suspects serve their sentences in the Netherlands or Libya, Greenstock restated the British position that they would be jailed in Scotland.

"We are not in discussion with the Libyans on this, and we're not negotiating on it," he said.

## Chinese military exercises not threatening to Taiwan

TAIPEI, Oct 17: Taiwan does not see present military exercises in China as intimidation and they are not linked to the high-level talks that are underway between the two rivals, a military official said Saturday, reports AP.

The exercises are part of routine maneuvers China holds every autumn and are not specially targeted at Taiwan, said the Defense Ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Two elder statesmen from Taiwan and China held talks in Shanghai this week to see ways of resuming contacts that were suspended three years ago after Beijing accused Taiwan of campaigning to raise its international recognition.

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