



Serb policemen joke with an ethnic Albanian boy as he wears one of their caps in the ethnic Albanian catholic village of Pecki Glodjani, some 60-km west of Pristina Saturday. A week after a political agreement intended to stop Kosovo's fighting, violence is still on going in the war-ravaged Kosovo province. — AP/UNB photo

Clinton's appeal to Israelis, Palestinians

WASHINGTON, Oct 25: President Bill Clinton on Saturday urged Israelis and Palestinians to show courage in the coming months to keep the Middle East peace process moving forward, reports Reuters.

Clinton made his appeal in his weekly radio address one day after the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians signed an interim peace accord at the White House, renewing hopes for a final Middle East settlement.

"Keeping the peace process on track will require continued courage by Israelis and Palestinians in the months ahead," Clinton said. "But this agreement shows what is possible when the will for peace is strong."

The president was a key mediator in nine days of exhaustive talks at Wye plantation in rural Maryland. He said on Saturday that he was proud the United States helped forge the deal.

"America will continue to work for a just and lasting peace in this land that is holy for so many people throughout the world," Clinton said.

The agreement signed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat foresees a phased Israeli withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank in exchange for Palestinian security measures against violent extremists.

Israeli settlers in WB protest ME accord

OFRA, West Bank, Oct 25: Israeli settlers, angry over their government's agreement to turn over parts of the West Bank to Palestinians, blocked roads across the West Bank on Sunday, reports AP.

About 50 Israelis rushed past Israeli police and sat cross-legged on the highway next to this settlement north of Jerusalem, blocking traffic.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was flying home from Washington as Jewish settlers, once his staunch supporters, took to the streets to express their anger at his agreement with their Palestinian neighbours.

Israel's main opposition party, Labour, is gearing up for early general elections, party leaders told Israel radio. They estimated that elections would take place in four months. Netanyahu's term is to expire in mid-2000.

Israeli politicians from most parties predicted political turmoil in the wake of the signing of the agreement. "This government probably won't survive," said David Levy, who quit his post as Netanyahu's foreign minister in January.

Two of Netanyahu's supporters in the parliament say they will vote against him in upcoming no-confidence motions.

Netanyahu has only a one-seat majority. The moderate opposition Labour party, which originated the peace process with the Palestinians, pledges to back the accord in parliament and refrain from voting no confidence in Netanyahu's government for two weeks.

"I'm here to show that this is a sad day," said Natan El, 38, an engineer, sitting in the middle of the main north-south highway through the West Bank. "We are in danger of losing our land, the land we have returned to after 2000 years." Then police dragged the settlers off the road, arresting seven.

There were similar demonstrations throughout the West Bank. Police, with orders to keep the roads open, arrested 31 protesters, according to Aharon Domb, head of the settlers' council. He said 20 settlers, including women and children, were injured in clashes with police near the settlement of Kadumin. Police said two police were lightly injured.

Israeli police were also on alert for possible attacks by Palestinian extremists opposed to the accord, according to Israel radio. At the same time, the Israelis allowed an extra 20,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza to enter Israel as of Sunday morning, bringing the total to 54,000.

The settlers awoke to a new reality on Sunday morning. "We hoped this moment would never come," said Shlomo Filber, a leader of the settlers' movement. The agreement signed at the White House Friday includes an Israeli handover of 13.1 per cent of the West Bank to Palestinian civilian control.

That means some Jewish settlements will be surrounded by Palestinian-controlled territory, except for access roads.

At Shiloh, one of the settlements likely to be isolated, Israelis are frustrated, said Batya Medad, a teacher. She told the Associated Press that settlers were disheartened by the previous, moderate Israeli government's "obvious joy" at the difficulties caused by the agreements with the Palestinians.

"People are so badly scarred from the process and all the anxiety we had to put up with," she said, "that I don't think people have the strength to react the way we once did."

She said there is no chance that the agreement signed Friday will result in peaceful relations between settlers and Palestinians. "This is taking away our security," she complained.

Korean talks yield no results

GENEVA, Oct 25: A third round of tortuous talks to bring peace to the divided Korean peninsula ended on Saturday with a small procedural step forward but no headway towards overcoming the long-running conflict, reports Reuters.

North Korea issued a firm warning at the end that it would not tone down its demand for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, but agreed to come to Geneva for a fourth round of talks set for January 18-22 which it will chair.

In what the top Pyongyang official called the start of a long journey, the only tangible accord was on the creation of two sub-committees to discuss the formation of a peace regime and tension reduction steps.

In a joint statement the four parties, North and South Korea and their respective allies in the 1950-53 Korean war, the United States and China, said the two sub-committees would first meet in Geneva at the same time as the next round in January.

"Their members will not have negotiating power and will report to the formal four-party meetings. A joint declaration said the working groups would be convened during each round. Compared to the last round in March which collapsed amid

bitter wrangling between US and North Korean officials this round appeared to have ended on a more constructive note.

"Delegations of the four parties had useful and constructive discussions which were conducted in a businesslike manner," South Korean delegation head Park Kun-Woo told reporters.

While the broad aim of the talks is to replace the 1953 armistice with a permanent peace pact, the near-term goal is to lock the two Koreas into a bilateral dialogue.

Given the frosty relations between the two Koreas, which have been technically at war for nearly half a century, diplomats see the mere continuation of the talks as a good sign.

These negotiations are inching along at such a low rate that progress is sometimes judged in terms of routine protocol and body language.

At the round in March the rival Koreans spent an entire day haggling over where they should sit before they began talking and avoided direct contact with each other.

This time their delegation heads posed for photographers at the end of the session standing next to each other albeit only for a few brief seconds before the North Korean walked away.

BRIEFLY

DPRK expels ROK spy: North Korea on Saturday expelled an American citizen whom it said had spied for South Korea, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The American, Kim Jin Gyoung visited North Korea several times as a spy of South Korea's Agency for National Security Planning, KCNA said late Saturday. Kim admitted his espionage activity, the North Korean official news agency said without giving details of the allegations.

LTTE frees 9 hostages: Six Sri Lankan government soldiers and three civilian seamen were released by Tamil rebels in the north of the country Saturday, according to reports yesterday. Xinhua reports from Colombo.

The soldiers, who had been held by the rebels for the past three years, were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Vavuniya town. Two of the civilians released are from the passenger ferry MV Irish Mona which was captured by rebels on August 29, 1995, and the other was aboard the MV Nissan, an Indonesian ferry set on fire by the rebels off the Mannar Coast on July 1, 1997.

Bihar minister resigns: The ministry in Bihar Saturday night received a jolt with minister for law Deonath Prasad tendering his resignation from the state council of ministers. PTI reports from Patna.

Prasad who had already registered his protest after being shifted to law ministry from science and technology department, sent his resignation to chief minister Rabri Devi late Saturday night.

France-Qatar sign defence pact: French defence minister Alain Richard signed a new defence agreement with Qatar Saturday during a two-day official visit to the small gulf state, a French diplomat said. AFP reports from Doha.

The new agreement signed with Qatari chief of staff Hamad Ibn Ali al Attiya "builds on all the provisions of an earlier one France signed with Qatar in 1994," the diplomat said. It "establishes a joint committee of chiefs of staff which will meet regularly and strengthens France's commitment to Qatar's security," he said.

Chopper with 3 Nepalese missing: A helicopter with three Nepalese nationals aboard went missing yesterday morning in Solukhumbu district of eastern Nepal, the official RSS news agency reported, Xinhua reports from Kathmandu.

The helicopter took off at 11:23 (local time) from Lukla airport in Solukhumbu, but lost contact three minutes later, RSS said. It was scheduled to fly to Jiri in neighboring Dolakha district to pick up the body of a Belgian citizen name Walter RJ, according to RSS.

Blast kills 7 in Louisiana: A natural gas well exploded and caught fire Saturday afternoon, killing seven of the 13 workers of the crew. At least one of four injured workers remained hospitalised, AP reports from Bryceland.

Two of the workers were uninjured, said Bob Lane, chief operating officer for Sonat Exploration Co, which owns the well. The intense heat from the fire prevented rescue crews from getting close enough to remove some of the bodies of those who were killed.

Volcano erupts in N Japan: A volcano erupted in northern Japan on Sunday, sending a column of smoke 1,200 meters (3,960 feet) into the sky, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. No injuries or damage were reported, AP reports from Tokyo.

The 1,131-metre high Mount Komagatake erupted at 9:12 am (0012 GMT), the agency said. Four small volcanic tremors were recorded after the eruption and the meteorological agency urged caution for those living near the mountain.

Expansion of NATO a 'serious mistake': Yeltsin

VIENNA, Oct 25: Russian President Boris Yeltsin said the expansion of NATO was a "serious mistake" and was already having negative consequences, according to an Austrian newspaper reported, says Reuters.

In an interview to be published in the Sunday edition of the Australian daily Korean Zeitung, Yeltsin said neutrality as a political land national status had not outlived its usefulness.

The existence of neutral states in Europe "enriches the pallet of inter-state relations and stabilises the political climate on the continent", he said.

Pinochet's release demanded in Chile

SANTIAGO, Chile Oct 25: Thousands of rightist supporters of Gen. Augusto Pinochet rallied to demand the release of the former dictator, who is under arrest in London, reports AP.

As the rally ended Saturday evening, police used water cannons to disperse small groups of demonstrators who were blocking traffic and trying to march to the British and Spanish embassies in eastern Santiago.

No injuries were reported, but reporters saw several demonstrators being detained. Congressman Pablo Longuerita, president of the far-right, pro-Pinochet Democratic Independent Union, said he knew of six detainees, who would be released shortly. Police had no immediate comment on detentions.

The demonstrators waved Chilean flags and pictures of Pinochet and repeatedly sang the Chilean anthem.

Blair warns Sovereignty of Falklands won't dominate talks with Menem

LONDON, Oct 25: British Prime Minister Tony Blair today warned Argentina that the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands would not dominate the agenda when President Carlos Menem visits Britain next week, reports AFP.

In an interview to be published in today's Argentinian daily newspaper Clarin but passed to the British Press Association by Blair's office, Blair said raising the issue would not be a "fruitful line" to pursue.

"We have made it clear that the visit is not going to be about negotiating on the Falklands," he said. "We have a different agenda but it is not the dimension on which this visit is going to focus."

Blair's remarks would appear to put him at odds with Menem. London would prefer that the two countries state their differing positions and moved on to other issues.

But earlier this week, Menem was prompted to insist on an open "dialogue" on the issue when he denied that an article which appeared under his name in the British Sun newspaper contained an apology for the 1982 Falklands War.

Taliban to ban use of mines

ISLAMABAD, Oct 25: Afghanistan's Taliban movement said on Saturday that it would outlaw the use of mines by its fighters and challenged its opposition foes to do the same, reports Reuters.

The Taliban statement was announced the day after a mine believed to date from the Soviet occupation killed 26 members of a wedding party in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar.

It said that the Taliban "government" would never use mines again and called on opposition factions to try to wrest back territory from the Islamic militia's control to do the same.

A spokesman for the Taliban which is not recognised as a government except by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, said the ban would apply whatever the opposition did.

Even if the opposition uses mines, we will never use them again," Abdul Hay Muteam told the Afghan Islamic Press, a Pakistan-based news agency.

Nearly half a million Afghans have been maimed by mines planted by Soviet troops in the 1980s and by various factions who have struggled for dominance ever since.

The Taliban said it would adhere to the 1997 Ottawa Convention which outlaws mines. It cannot sign the document because the UN seat is held by the government it ousted in 1996.

Typhoon Babs death toll now 140 in Philippines

MANILA, Oct 20: Typhoon Babs killed at least 140 people and injured 130 in the Philippines and the figure is expected to rise after relief work intensified today, disaster officials said, reports AP.

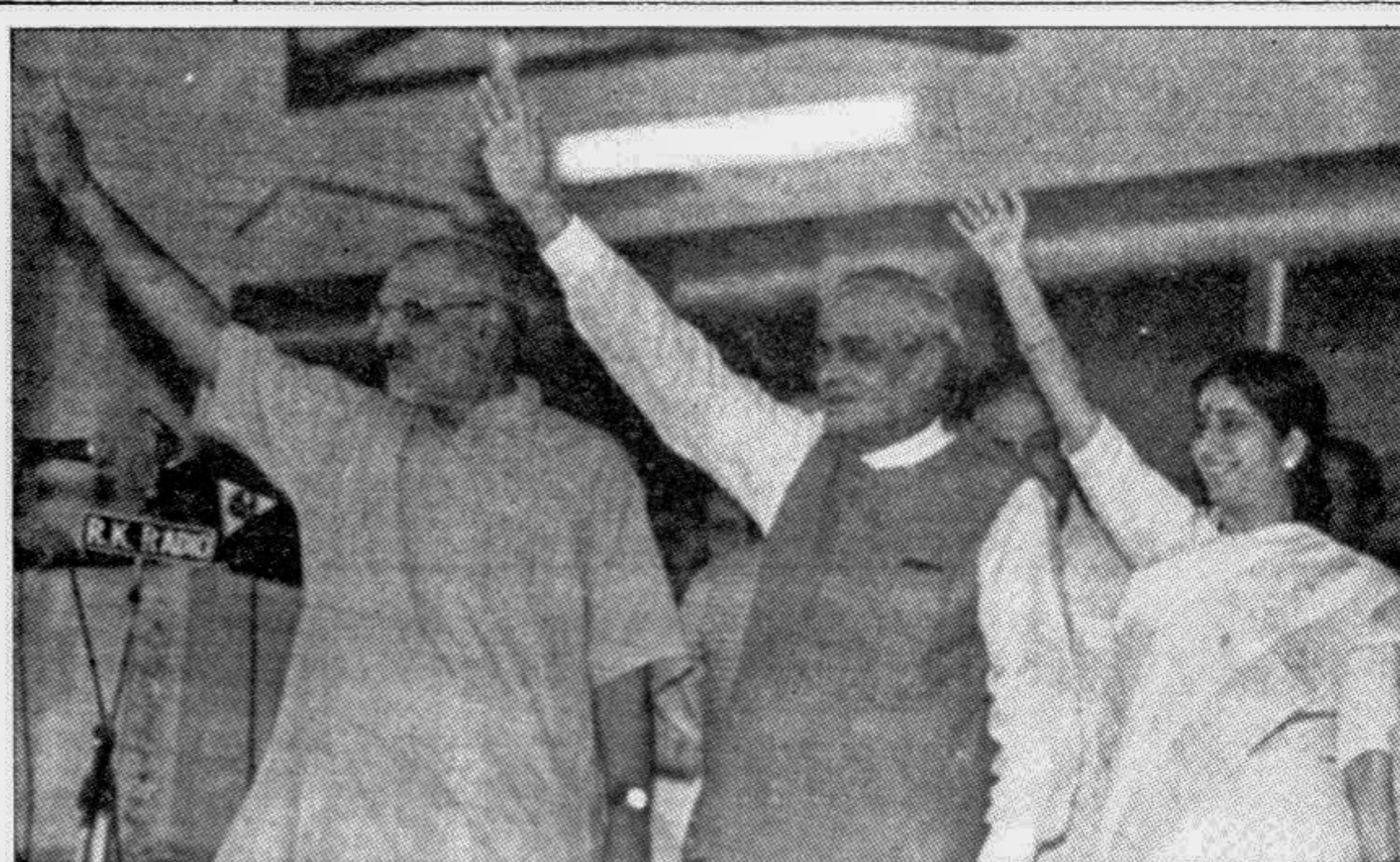
Merly Lucas duty officer at the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), said field officers and regional disaster officials were expected to file additional reports of damage.

The figure is expected to rise although we are hoping that it would not," Lucas told AFP.

She said relief operations were continuing in areas hit by Babs, which left the country late Friday after carving out a trail of destruction including major flooding due to continuing heavy rains.

The NDCC said most of the deaths were recorded in eastern Catanduanes province which accounted for 64 of the total.

The remaining deaths were recorded in the main northern island of Luzon, including the capital Manila and nearby provinces. Most of the deaths were due to drowning or landslides.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee centre, former Chief Minister Sahib Singh Verma left and Delhi Chief Minister Sushma Swaraj right wave to supporters in an assembly election rally in New Delhi, Saturday. — AP/UNB photo

Proposal to hold polls under neutral admn Indian constitutional experts term it as not practical

NEW DELHI, Oct 25: Chief Election Commissioner Dr M S Gill's proposal for a neutral administration in the centre and states during an election time has drawn flak with several constitutional experts saying the idea is neither practical nor provided for the rule book, reports PTI.

While former Chief Justice A M Ahmadi has found the idea "attractive at first blush, but its feasibility doubtful," former secretary general of Lok Sabha, SC Kashyap says "it's too utopian to think of an absolutely neutral, non-partisan group."

Similarly, D Raja, national secretary of CPI says the intention, although good, is impractical in the given situation because today the bureaucracy is not impartial and the role of

governors, as political appointees, is suspect.

Nonetheless, Janata Dal ideologue, Surendra Mohan holds that the proposal is entirely possible and can help ensure free and fair elections.

But Prof CP Bhabri of the Jawahar Lal Nehru University says that the move to install an apolitical team of experts is a "farce on democracy... It has no constitutional validity."

Both Bhabri and Kashyap instead note that constitution has given enough powers to the election commission to ensure a free and fair poll by strictly implementing the model code of conduct. And the commission should assert itself.

According to Dr Gill the basic idea behind the proposal for a neutral administration was to provide a level playing field to

all political parties and "we will have to accept this idea to make the poll process transparent in not too distant future."

He further contends that elections in states under central rule with the governor at the helm have been conducted better.

Justice Ahmadi, however, observes that there's no law calling for a state government to resign before the end of its tenure immediately after an election is notified.

"The promise that the administration during president's rule at election time would be neutral under governors may not be well-founded because into being there is no guarantee that the party in power at the centre will not appoint its own political nominees as governors in states going to polls."



Demonstrators at the mosque in the working-class enclave of Kampong Baru had gathered there to stopping the police, Saturday in Kuala Lumpur. Demonstrators at the mosque in the working-class enclave of Kampong Baru had gathered there for evening prayers and to regroup. They responded to the tear gas by chasing police officers and pelting them with stones. — AP/UNB photo

UNSC adopts Kosovo resolution

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 25: The UN Security Council has declared that action may be needed to protect unarmed international monitors in Kosovo — but council members disagree on just what that action could constitute, reports AP.

Permanent council members Russia and China abstained from Saturday's vote and maintained the resolution by no means authorises force. The United States, however, said NATO retained that right and Britain pledged to use whatever force was needed to protect the unarmed monitors.

"No one should be in any doubt that we will use to the full our inherent right to protect our nationals if they are in danger, and the right under this resolution to take action to ensure their safety and freedom of movement," said British Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock,

the council president. After nearly eight hours of rare Saturday consultations, the council adopted a resolution 13-0 to endorse the agreement to allow monitors to patrol Kosovo and NATO to verify from the air that fighting between Serb forces and ethnic Albanians has stopped.

In the resolution, the council demanded Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic implement the accord fully and promptly and affirmed that action may be needed to protect monitors in the case of emergency.

The resolution, diplomats said, was believed to have been the first by the Security Council to endorse a NATO operation.

Fighting between Serb forces and ethnic Albanians — who make up 90 per cent of Kosovo's population — has killed hundreds of people and forced about 300,000 from their homes since

a Serb crackdown on ethnic Albanian separatists began in February.

Under an Oct 12 deal that averted NATO airstrikes on Serb targets, Milosevic agreed to a ceasefire, to withdraw his special police forces from the province and to allow a 2,000-strong team from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to verify the agreement.

The council was under pressure to pass a strong resolution because nations that may contribute to the OSCE team have been concerned about the safety of their people on the ground.

As permanent council members, Russia and China could have vetoed the resolution. Much of the negotiating Saturday was intended to prevent a possible veto by easing language about the threat of force, diplomats said.

Off the Record

Woman marries dead man!

JOHANNESBURG: An 80-year-old South African woman has "married" a man who died 25 years ago, they City Press newspaper reported Sunday, says AFP.

In the unusual ceremony at Vaalbank, east of Pretoria, Zibi Masanabo married the father of her children, Isaac Masanabo, who died in 1973.

"Isaac may be dead but he is still the best man for me," Masanabo told the weekly after the wedding.

The couple had seven children together since 1940, but were never legally married, although Isaac Masanabo had paid his lover's family one of the 12 cows agreed for her hand.

According to a tradition common in South Africa, a man must pay his future bride's family and agreed amount, called lobola, before marrying her.

It was Zibi Masanabo's dream to marry her long-time love, so last week her family organised a traditional Amandebele ceremony, followed by a church wedding. They also paid the outstanding lobola.

A cow was slaughtered and traditional beer flowed at a feast Saturday, after which Masanabo visited her husband-to-be's grave and laid wreaths.

The following day, her grandson, named after his grandfather Isaac, led Masanabo down the aisle and stood in as a witness. The bride said: "I am happy, my lifetime dream has been fulfilled and I believe Isaac is also a happy man now."

Diana cheated on her marriage, made death threats to Camilla?

LONDON, Oct 25: Diana, Princess of Wales, cheated first on her marriage vows and made death threats to Prince Charles' long-standing mistress, reports across the British press said today, says AFP.

Newspapers leapt upon a serialisation of a new book "Charles: Victim or Villain?" in The Mail on Sunday, written by one of Charles' staunchest supporters and drawing on interview with his friends.

Most concluded that the book would backfire on Charles and destroy attempts to rehabilitate him with the public.

While Diana was alive, Charles was always markedly less popular and his mistress Camilla Parker Bowles one of the most loathed women in Britain. But since her death, both have experienced boosts in their popularity.

The book claimed Diana made death threats to Parker Bowles during late-night phone calls.

The book, by Penny Junor, reported that the princes told Parker Bowles, "I've sent someone to kill you. They're outside the garden. Look out of the window. Can you see them?"

It also claimed that the princes' affair with one of her bodyguards, personal detective Barry Munnack, was the reason for the disintegration of her marriage to Charles.

The death of the detective a few years later in a motorcycle accident led Diana to slash at her body in an attempt at self mutilation, claimed the book.

Previously in a 1995 BBC interview Diana had admitted adultery with a British army captain but sought to blame the end of the marriage on Charles and Parker Bowles, saying there were always "three in this marriage."

On the night of Diana's death in a Paris car crash on August 31 last year, Junor wrote that Charles and Queen Elizabeth II, who were at Balmoral in Scotland, only communicated about arrangements for the funeral through courtiers. After a series of disagreements over how to bring the princess's body in a royal plane after an aide said "would you rather, ma'am, that she come back in a Harrods van?"

The remark referred to Diana's companion, Dodi Fayed, also killed in the crash and whose father was Harrods department store owner Mohammed Al Fayed.

Junor also wrote that Charles threw his wife's wedding ring at one of his aides, and that Diana once ranted for seven hours as she complained about everything she disliked about her new husband and his family.

The book also suggested Diana pretended to enjoy the same country pursuits as Charles as she was determined to become the Princess of Wales.

It is reported that up to 30 of the princess's close friends and advisers cooperated with the book written to coincide with his 50th birthday on November 14.

Junor told The Mail on Sunday newspaper she embarked on the book "to explain what really happened in that marriage. So far, no one has attempted to tell the complete story."

She described Charles as a "man emotionally handicapped by his upbringing and damaged by the failure of his marriage."

The reception to the book in the British press was largely hostile.

The Sunday Times quoted former friends of Diana as declaring that the book had "plundered her dignity" and would distress her sons princes William and Harry.