



In this photo released on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister, right, shakes the hand of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Standing in the back are US Vice President Al Gore and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The Wye Plantation Summit ended Friday with the signing at the White House of an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. — AP/UNB photo

# Pakistan moving closer to signing CTBT, NPT

ISLAMABAD, Oct 26: Pakistan was today moving closer to signing a global test ban treaty, with foreign minister Sartaj Aziz quoted as saying that the pact would not damage its nuclear deterrent capability, reports AFP.

Pakistan has "no objection" to signing the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the yet-to-be-finalised Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT). The Nation quoted him as saying.

Aziz said Pakistan's nuclear tests in May in response to tests by India in the same month had restored the regional balance of power. Pakistan therefore sees "no harm" in signing the anti-proliferation treaties, he said.

Nuclear scientists had advised the government that there was no harm in signing the CTBT and FMCT at this stage as we had enough enriched nuclear material to maintain the power equilibrium in the region," he said.

Aziz said the US wants Pakistan to sign before lifting sanctions it imposed following the nuclear tests. He said Islamabad was trying to ease an economic crisis which stemmed partially from the nuclear penalties.

The US-led sanctions, im-

posed on both India and Pakistan, also stalled loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The government wanted to pull the country out of the economic crisis as we knew that Russia, despite having nuclear status, had collapsed economically," the foreign minister said.

Aziz, however, stopped short of a clear statement that Islamabad would sign the CTBT before the US lifts sanctions.

Pakistan's balance of payments position sharply worsened after foreign loans were suspended, pushing it to the verge of default.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is due to visit Washington in December at the invitation of US President Bill Clinton, who has been given a waiver authority by Congress to ease the impact of the sanctions for one year.

Sharif, in an address to the UN General Assembly in September, said Pakistan was willing to sign the CTBT once the sanctions were lifted — removing the "atmosphere of coercion."

On dialogue with India, resumed this month in Islamabad

after a break of more than a year. Aziz was quoted as saying that New Delhi's agreement to discuss the core dispute of Kashmir was a "positive sign."

But India still does not accept a Pakistani proposal to form a separate joint working group to tackle the issue, which has caused two of their three wars since independence in 1947.

India holds the southern two-thirds of the Himalayan region and Pakistan the rest. The Islamabad talks between the Indian and Pakistani foreign secretaries merely reiterated previous positions.

Pakistan wants a UN-sponsored referendum in Kashmir while India rejects this and says its sovereignty over the state is incontestable.

Aziz said Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee did not want war with Pakistan but his Interior Minister LK Advani had adopted a hardline policy.

"Advani even thinks that it is the right time to launch an attack on Pakistan, which at present is facing law and order and economic crises," he said.

The next talks on Kashmir between India and Pakistan are scheduled for February. They will be preceded by a session in New Delhi in November

# 29 killed in two attacks in Colombia

BOGOTA, Oct 26: At least 29 people were killed Sunday in two separate attacks in northern Colombia, apparently by members of this country's feared rightist paramilitary squads, police and news reports said, reports AFP.

Heavily armed paramilitaries late Sunday killed around 20 people in an attack on the town of Altos Del Rosario, on the Caribbean Coast, radio station radionet reported, quoting police and army sources.

The governor of Bolivar Province, where the town is located, confirmed the attack to the station, but said reports from the area were still sketchy.

The paramilitaries reportedly killed Jose Mendoza, who had run as a left-wing candidate for mayor, the station said.

The group then killed a group of peasants after forcing them from their homes, radionet said.

The Rosario attack follows an earlier one Sunday in the north-eastern town of San Carlos, where eight civilians and one paramilitary squad member died.

# 2 cops among 7 killed in Karachi

KARACHI, Oct 26: Seven police including two policemen, have been shot dead in fresh troubles in Pakistan's violence-plagued city of Karachi, police and hospital sources said today, reports AFP.

Two policemen and two others were killed today after three were gunned overnight, they said.

Police said the officers were kidnapped and tortured before being shot.

The new killings came about a week after the high-profile murder of the former governor of southern Sindh province, Hakim Mohammad Saeed, by unidentified assailants.

The 78-year-old educationist, philanthropist and practitioner of traditional herbal medicine was killed along with two of his associates, heightening security fears.

Meanwhile, officials said at least six suspects had been detained in connection with the assassination. A seventh suspect died in police custody on Friday and authorities have ordered an inquiry in to the death.

# Contraceptive vaccines for males

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Women who complain about being always the target of family planning methods will be pleased to know that Indian scientists have developed two contraceptive vaccines for males, reports PTI.

These two male vaccines are among several new contraceptive technologies to be discussed at the seventh International Congress on Reproductive Immunology (ICRI) opening here tomorrow.

The four-day congress organised by the National Institute of Immunology (NII), will address issues related to immunological aspects of reproductive tract infections, infertility, contraceptive vaccines, pregnancy, acquired immuno deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the endocrine system.

# Baath Party denounces ME accord

BAGHDAD, Oct 26: Iraq's ruling Baath Party denounced the Wye River Middle East accord on Sunday as a big loss for the Palestinians and said it cemented the United States dominance of the region, reports AFP.

The land for peace accord has pushed the Palestinian cause and the Arab-Israeli conflict to a dangerous crossroads," said a statement from the Baath leadership broadcast on state television.

This Zionist American accord is devoted to American hegemony and the process of capitulation in the name of peace, it said.

# Mahathir blasts foreign media, hints at controls

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 26: Malaysia's prime minister on Monday accused the international news media of distorting his country's political trouble, and warned he has a "legal obligation" to curb those who misuse their power, reports AP.

It was not immediately clear whether Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad plans any formal limits on foreign reporters, always one of his main targets of his criticism.

Mahathir has been lambasted for his arrest of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, once in line to take over the government of the Southeast Asian nation but now a prisoner awaiting trial on sex and corruption charges.

"Today it is quite impossible to stop what comes through the air. Any amount of lies can be spread, and there is practically nothing we can do about this," Mahathir told an international editors' group in Malaysian capital.

"We accept that," he said. "But we will have to exercise some form of legal obligation in this country in order to ensure that people who are given power do not misuse power."

An opinion piece in the influential, government-backed New Straits Times newspaper recently suggested that troublesome foreign reporters could be thrown in jail.

Much of Mahathir's address to the opening session of the Commonwealth Press Union on Monday was devoted to the role of the news media and what he sees as their excesses.

The media is powerful, in most instances more powerful than governments and politicians like me," the prime minister told about 500 delegates to the conference, which groups journalists from countries that once belonged to the British Empire.

One of the three main goals of the Commonwealth Press Union is "the protection of press freedom and the defense of organisations or individuals who come under threat."

Mahathir said that "the impression given to people all over the world is that Malaysia is in a state of perpetual turmoil, a police state where police brutality is a daily, or even an hourly occurrence."

He likely was still smarting from a violent demonstration Saturday in which, for the first time, protesters lobbed stones at riot police after being doused with tear gas.

Mahathir accused Anwar of instigating the seemingly endless round of rowdy street protests, in hopes of toppling Asia's longest-serving ruler.

"We cannot be brought down by demonstrations in the streets," Mahathir told the delegates in a brief question-and-answer session after his speech.

# Charles' popularity continues to improve

LONDON, Oct 26: A poll published Monday indicates Prince Charles' popularity continues to improve, but that there is still opposition to his companion Camilla Parker Bowles becoming queen, reports AP.

The survey, conducted by research group MORI for The Sun, Britain's top selling tabloid newspaper, shows that the number of people naming Charles as one of their favourite royals has increased 9 per cent over the last four years.

Of the 600 people surveyed in the telephone poll conducted Oct 23-24, 25 per cent placed him in their top two or three royals, up from 16 per cent in December 1994.

The results appear to be consistent with another poll conducted by MORI this summer that indicated Prince Charles' popularity has soared since the death of Princess Diana in a Paris car crash on Aug 31, 1997. He then had an approval rating of 62 per cent, up from 42 per cent before Diana's death.

But in Monday's poll, three-quarters opposed the idea of Parker Bowles, Charles' long-time companion, becoming queen.

The findings came after a telephone poll of 500 people published in this week's Sunday Mirror indicated 54 per cent wanted to see Charles become king, up from 46 per cent last year.



Pakistani President Rafiq Tarar, left, decorates visiting Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saudi, right, with Pakistan's highest civil award Nishan-I-Pakistan, in Lahore Sunday. Prince Abdallah arrived here on a three-day official visit. — AP/UNB photo

# MQM leader sets price for supporting Sharif's govt

LONDON, Oct 26: The London-based leader of Pakistan's Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), whose party has again joined hands with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, has said this support would come at a price.

According to MQM sources, the strong statements issued by MQM chief Altaf Hussain have made it amply clear that in Sindh the group would support the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) government only if Sharif's party can improve the law and order situation in the province, reports IANS.

The MQM rejoined the coalition government of Sharif's party in Sindh after more than a year. Three MQM members were sworn in as ministers in Karachi over the weekend as part of a revived MQM-PML coalition. MQM ministers had pulled out of the 19-month-old coalition in August last year to protest the failure of the PML to maintain law and order in Karachi.

But even as the MQM announced its decision to re-join the PML in Sindh, Hussain was issuing statements condemning Sharif for his failure to protect Mohajirs in Karachi. Mohajirs are Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from India after the subcontinent's partition. Most Mohajirs support the MQM led by Hussain from his self-imposed exile in London.

More than 750 people are estimated to have been killed in sectarian violence in Karachi this year, 350 more than last year. Most of the victims of violence have been Mohajirs.

On the very day the MQM rejoined the Sindh government, Hussain challenged Sharif to investigate yet another murder of a Mohajir in Karachi. In his statement from London, Hussain alleged that MQM worker Fasih Ahmed was tortured and killed by men from government agencies. Officials had earlier admitted arresting Ahmed. Hussain said he also "vehemently condemned the brutal and inhuman torture being inflicted upon Amirullah Sheikh, former member of the Liaquatabad sector committee."

The MQM leader asked Sharif to have the murder of Fasih Ahmed investigated by a judicial commission.

# Allegations of terrorism against Bin Laden Taliban launch judicial probe

ISLAMABAD, Oct 26: The leader of Afghanistan's Taliban army launched a judicial inquiry into allegations of terrorism against Osama bin Laden — the man Washington calls enemy No. 1, a spokesman said Monday, reports AP.

The whole world is accusing bin Laden of terrorism, but we are saying he is not involved in this," said Abdul Hai Muttamayan, a Taliban spokesman reached by satellite telephone at his headquarters in southern Kandahar. "We have given power to the Supreme Court inquiry to hear evidence against Osama from anywhere in the world."

The inquiry was set up by a decree issued by Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban's reclusive leader and self-declared Amir ul-Momineen or leader of the Muslim faithful.

The United States charges bin Laden masterminded the deadly bombing of two US Embassies in East Africa in August that killed more than 200 people and wounded thousands others.

Bin Laden, a millionaire

Saudi Arabian, was exiled from his homeland after threatening to overthrow the Saudi monarchy for allowing US soldiers to be stationed in Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's two holiest sites at Mecca and Medina.

"After the attacks in East Africa, this propaganda against Osama has become more severe... we have clarified that Osama was not involved in these blasts," said Muttamayan. "But there are still allegations against him so we feel we should clear up the whole situation."

The Supreme Court judicial inquiry will be headed by the Taliban's Chief Justice Mullah Noor Mohammed Saqib, a graduate of one of Pakistan's largest religious schools, Dar-ul Aloom Haqqania.

On August 20 the United States launched a cruise missile attack on eastern Afghanistan aimed at suspected terrorist camps belonging to bin Laden.

While the death toll has varied, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers say 26 people were killed, including several Pakistanis belonging to Harakat-ul Ansar

an Islamic group on Washington's list of terrorist organizations.

Muttamayan said the inquiry also will investigate the killings in August of eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The killings sent already poor relations into a tailspin and Tehran deployed more than 200,000 soldiers on its border with Afghanistan threatening to take revenge for the death of its nationals.

The United Nations sent its special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to the region to soothe tempers and defuse tensions, something he accomplished after a visit to Tehran and southern Kandahar, where he was the first UN envoy to meet Omar.

Muttamayan said the inquiry will compile evidence in both cases and decide whether charges will be laid. If charges are laid Muttamayan said a trial would be held in Afghanistan in keeping with Islamic laws, imposed throughout the 90 per cent of Afghanistan ruled by the Taliban.

# S Asian greens want equitable per capita emission norm for all

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: India and other South Asian countries should insist on an equitable per capita emission norm for the whole world at the forthcoming climate convention in Buenos Aires, Argentina, environmentalists from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka say, reports IANS.

The drafts drawn at these conventions are so cleverly worded that delegates from developing countries sign on them without being able to read the fine print," says Sunita Narain, deputy director of the New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). "We are being shanghaied into treaties without understanding their long-term implications," Dipak Gyawali, who represents a non-governmental organisation (NGO) doing environmental research in Nepal, adds.

Therefore, before signing any protocol, the government should hold intra-national debates to ascertain the viewpoint of people working for the environment, delegates said. At the 167-nation Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held from November 2 to 14,

the NGOs want their governments to insist that industrialised nations adopt the principle of "equal entitlements" immediately fixing the amount of emissions that each individual in the world is entitled to.

The developed countries have commodified the environment but it should be commodified equally," CSE Director Anil Agarwal told reporters in the capital. "For the first time, we have bargaining power, so let us use it." "Nations that have per capita emissions above the agreed entitlement must reduce their emissions and nations that are below it can increase their emissions to the level of convergence," Agarwal said explaining the concept of "equal entitlements."

According to him, per capita pollutant emission in the U.S. is equivalent to that of 25 Indians, 33 Pakistanis, 42 Malaysians, 85 Sri Lankans, 125 Bangladeshis, 250 Bhutanese and 500 Nepalese. CSE has also written to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee asking him to get a "clear brief" from the federal Cabinet on what exactly the Indian delegation's

position would be at the meeting. There is also a need to educate the common people about the nuances of climate change so that an informed public opinion can be formed on the subject which would force governments to draw a better bargain with developed countries, the greens said.

"There is a lack of information so that most people have difficulty understanding the concept of climate change," said Surein Peiris, a lawyer working for an NGO dealing in environmental litigation in Sri Lanka. If the principle of "equal entitlements" is agreed upon, nations like India, which emit way below what they would be entitled to, can also trade their remaining emissions with an industrialised country struggling to meet its emission reduction targets, Agarwal said.

The money could be invested in energy-efficiency measures and promotion of solar, wind and hydroelectric energy. "The energy consumption can grow without high increases in emissions," he suggested. The concept had been endorsed by member nations at

the recently concluded Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in South Africa while the European Parliament had seconded it, he claimed.

Stressing that developing countries should participate proactively at Buenos Aires, Agarwal said that adopting a reactive strategy by simply disagreeing with developed nations and demanding the first step towards pollution control from them would make developing countries vulnerable to be labelled as "stumbling blocks".

"India and China would be made to look as the key countries refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol demanding 'meaningful participation' from developing countries like India and China.

# Traditional Indian beauty treatments big in Britain

LONDON, Oct 26: Traditional Indian beauty treatment methods and Ayurvedic health remedies are fast becoming popular in Britain with an estimated 2,000 centres offering herbal beautification services. Clinics have sprung up across London offering traditional Indian beauty treatments with 'haldi' (turmeric) and 'besan' (gram flour), lemon juice and honey as well as scalp and body massages, reports IANS.

When Prime Minister Tony Blair's wife Cherie went to an Indian beautician at Chiltern Street she attracted a lot of interest. Every newspaper described at length what her beauty therapist Bharati Vyas offered that brought Cherie Blair, musician Cher and other celebrities rushing to her clinic. Vyas announces a "special and unique brand of wisdom" at 30 pounds (\$50) for 30 minutes plus tax. "Everybody that matters is with me," she says quite simply. But how wisdom? "Beauty on the outside begins on the inside," she says. "I give hands-on therapy on how to feel well inside and outside, and that brings beauty."

Vyas has a three-month waiting list of women she calls

"high-powered ladies." They include television personalities, stage and cinema stars, the rich and the social climbers. Her nine studios, numbered Cave 1, 2, 3 etc improve beauty and wisdom for 920 clients a week, but London wants more. The treatments are more than a million-pounds-a-year business, and that is besides the bottled wisdom she sells through the House of Fraser's stores.

Much of the Indian treatment is being blended with the new boom in herbal care and remedies developed in America. Beauty that begins on the "inside" is worked usually through a diet that stresses simple and natural foods. The upmarket Harvey Nichols store has begun to offer Ayurvedic massages at its Urban Retreat. Books specifying Ayurvedic diets and tips from ever-ready beauticians offering diet charts are circulating in London to add to the growing British fondness for Indian and subcontinental food.

Travel agents are also promoting Ayurvedic health holidays in the southern Indian state of Kerala, a state renowned for such treatment.

# BRIEFLY

**Nationalists win Basque polls:** Moderate nationalists won elections on Sunday night in Spain's Basque region that could set the course for the region's peace process following a ceasefire by ETA separatist guerrillas, Reuters reports from Madrid.

With more than 80 per cent of the vote counted, the ruling Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) — which helped convince ETA to declare a truce last month — took 21 seats in the 75-seat regional parliament, officials returns showed.

**8 more held for Georgia revolt:** Police arrested eight more people accused of being involved in a one-day revolt against President Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgia's security minister said Monday, AP reports from Tbilisi.

The arrests on Sunday bring to 31 the number of people detained in connection with the Oct 19 revolt by mutinous soldiers in western Georgia, said State Security Minister Dzhegal Gakhokidze. The leader, Akakiy Eliava, remains at large. Eliava is a military commander who supported the late Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

**Dozens escape from Sumatra jail:** Dozens of prisoners remain at large after a mass escape from a prison on Sumatra island in northwestern Indonesia, officials said Monday, AP reports from Jakarta.

A prison officer at the penitentiary in Bireuen district in North Aceh regency, said a total of 80 prisoners broke out on Sunday after staging a riot. Forty were soon recaptured by police and guards. Three more surrendered later while another 37 were still free. Details of the escape were confirmed by police who said most of the escapees were detainees awaiting trial for a range of criminal charges.

**3 die as boats collide off Albania:** At least three illegal immigrants died and another 16 were missing after two boats collided off the coast of Albania, Italian coastguards said Sunday, Reuters reports from Rome.

They said one boat, thought to have been heading for the Albanian coast from Italy, rammed the other at around 3 am (0200 GMT) Sunday morning near the island of Sazan, 20 km from the port city of Vlora. The second boat exploded, killing two women and a baby. Coastguards said seven people were injured and were recovering in hospital in Vlora.



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholome, left, who leads nearly 300 million Orthodox Christians around the world, and Archbishop of Athens and Greece Christodoulos, right, during a joint mass on Mount Athos Sunday. The mass, also attended by the president of the republic, Costis Stephanopoulos, celebrated the 1000th founding anniversary of Xenofondos Monastery. — AP/UNB photo

**Finnish PM begins China visit:** Finnish Prime Minister PaaVo Lipponen arrived in Beijing Monday at the start of a five-day official visit to China, the Xinhua news agency reported, AFP says from Beijing.

Lipponen was expected to meet his Chinese counterpart Zhu Rongji later yesterday.

**2 cops shot dead in Sidon:** Two Lebanese policemen were shot dead on Saturday night in Sidon by two unidentified gunmen travelling on a motorbike, police said Sunday. The two attackers escaped. AFP reports from Sidon, Lebanon.

The attack took place on the central square where the two policemen were directing traffic. One man, Murshed Abi Saleh was killed outright. The other, Nizar Aridi died overnight from his injuries, the hospital said Sunday.

**10,563 HIV carriers in Vietnam:** Men make up 94 per cent of the 10,563 people known to be infected with the AIDS-causing HIV virus in Vietnam, and drug addicts account for 70 per cent of the total, the National AIDS Committee said Monday, AP reports from Hanoi.

It said 30 more people tested positive last week and that all were drug addicts. In addition, the number of cases could be up to 10 times higher than the official figure. Overall, 1,901 people have full-blown AIDS, and 1,013 have died since Vietnam's first case was detected in 1990, the committee said.