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MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER LASHES OUT AT MEDIA CONTROL

by Farhan Haq

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 1 (IPS) - Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed delivered an impassioned attack Friday against what he deemed the pervasive, Western-controlled media and its stereotypes of the developing world.

Mahathir told the 48th session of the U.N. General Assembly that "the people who control the media control our minds, and probably control the world." He defended the right of developing nations to keep Western-controlled media at bay, arguing, "Today they broadcast slanted news. Tomorrow they will broadcast raw pornography to corrupt our children and destroy our culture."

Mahathir contended that already, Western conglomerated media dominate the Third World, defining which conflicts are meaningful and what course human rights and development should follow. Malaysia, he claimed, did not fit into that conception. "We should, according to the stereotypical western concept of a Third World country, be politically unstable, administratively incompetent and

economically depressed.

"But we are not quite typical," he added. "And we dare to speak our minds." Developing governments have particularly viewed with concern the expansion of such satellite stations as Rupert Murdoch's Sky-TV conglomerate and Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN). "A very few people in the west control all the international media," Mahathir noted. "Some are journalists, but quite a few are not. Collectively, they are Big Brothers."

Media analysts have argued that such channels were instrumental in building a consensus on the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War by broadcasting powerful -- and, many claim, slanted -- images throughout the world. Mahathir decried the media's ability to pick and choose the topics to which almost the entire world now has access. He argued that, in the recent Bosnian conflict, the media itself was culpable for shifting the focus from atrocities to diplomacy.

"We should know about the bestiality of the Serbs in Bosnia so we may react," he said. "But this knowledge is largely denied us. On the other hand, we are shown this parade of negotiators to a peace conference, day in and day out." The Malaysian prime minister also said the West abandoned the Bosnian Muslims to the negotiating process rather than allow them to obtain arms to defend themselves.

"Only the most gullible will still believe that the vociferous champions of freedom and democracy will risk their necks for other people's freedom and democracy," he said. "The crime of the (Bosnian) Muslims is that they wish for a non-Muslim,

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NGOs PRESS FOR U.S. SANCTIONS AGAINST NORWAY FOR WHALING

by Jim Lobe

WASHINGTON, Oct 1 (IPS) - U.S. and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) pressed Friday for U.S. President Bill Clinton to impose trade sanctions against Norway for Oslo's 1992 decision to resume commercial whaling.

Clinton has to decide on a recommendation from the Commerce Department to level sanctions against Norway under the 1967 'Pelly Amendment', which empowers the President to impose sweeping trade penalties against nations which undermine international programmes for animal conservation.

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religiously heterogenous state," Mahathir said, noting their Serb attackers openly declared their intention "to ensure that Europe remains Christian."

Malaysia, he noted, was one of only a few Muslim countries allowed to send troops to the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the former Yugoslavia, commenting, "Apparently, the distrust of Muslims is quite widespread." As long as such conflicts are handled -- and reported -- in a manner reflecting only the interests of a few Western powers, developing nations would be justified in seeking to restrict access to foreign information, Mahathir said.

To those who would object to his characterisation of the media world order, Mahathir replied, "Here at the United Nations, we will say what we feel we should say. Of course, the controlled 'free' Western media will not publish it."

IMF HEAD CALLS PROPOSED RUSSIA REFORMS A REVOLUTION

by Thalif Deen

WASHINGTON Sep 30 (IPS) - Russia is finalising a comprehensive package of economic reforms that will pave the way for the resumption of financial assistance by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus told reporters Thursday that despite the "great political turmoil" in the country, the Russians were working on a "significant package of reforms", including a government decree eliminating all subsidised loans. "If you have not seen a revolution, this is a revolution," Camdessus said at the end of the joint World Bank-IMF annual meeting here.

The IMF disbursed \$1.5 billion to Russia in June. But it has held back another \$1.5 billion because of Moscow's failure to reduce inflation and carry out other promised reforms. Camdessus suggested that once implementation of the package begins, the IMF will resume its funding to Russia.

At a breakfast briefing for reporters Thursday, World Bank President Lewis Preston complained that the Bank's proposed programmes in Russia were being held up because of the country's constitutional crisis. "We are frustrated with what's going on there," he said. Camdessus said he held a series of discussions with a visiting Russian delegation to the Bank-IMF meeting this week and was impressed with the package of proposed reforms.

Under the package, he said, all future loans will be extended only at Russian Central Bank lending rates -- there will be no more subsidised loans. Camdessus said the Russians will also remove subsidies for the raising of cattle and the production of grain, while the price of bread "will be stabilised".

"You really need courage to do that," Camdessus said. The Russians also assured him they will cut taxes -- on everything except energy. "These are truly significant measures taken in particularly adverse conditions," and they will go a long way on the road to stabilisation and the granting of the second installment of the IMF stand by loan, Camdessus said.

The IMF head also provided a new political cure -- a free market economy -- to halt the spread of corruption in both rich and poor nations. He said corruption could be eliminated by relinquishing state-run institutions to the private sector. The state sector, he said, provides the opportunity for corrupt civil servants.

"A country's civil service should be small in numbers and high in calibre," he added. Asked about the impact of the IMF's structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) on Africa, Camdessus said that "bad management" was one of the primary causes of the problems facing the region -- that "good governance" should replace "bad management".

Camdessus, in an address to the Bank-Fund annual meeting Tuesday, described Africa as "a sinking continent". But he said the IMF had helped a number of African countries "to arise from stagnation and regression". "We are eager to continue making a contribution there, but it is abundantly clear that we can do so only with a new Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF)," he said. ESAF, which expires at the end of November, provided concessional loans to poor countries undergoing structural reforms.

ENVIRONMENT PAYS PRICE FOR ASIA'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS

BANGKOK, Oct 1 (IPS) - The Asia-Pacific may include many of the world's most dynamic economies, but such success is extracting a costly environmental toll on the region, says a United Nations economic agency. According to the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), increasing industrialisation and economic growth in the region has led to deforestation, pollution and degradation of ground water supplies and disturbance of the marine environment.

ESCAP is holding a special session on the environment and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific here from Oct. 4 to 8. At a meeting last month among Pacific Rim nations, ESCAP executive secretary Rafeuddin Ahmed of Pakistan warned that Asia's future looked bleak despite its continued economic growth unless governments recognise the need for sustainable development in their economic programmes. "Unless the desire to ensure

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a sustainable future becomes a central concern of national governments and of the citizens as well, the continuing deterioration of the economies' natural life support will eventually overwhelm efforts to improve human conditions in the region," he said.

An ESCAP statement released here Thursday cited industrialisation, high commercial fishing or logging, complacency and the failure to enforce existing regulations among the key reasons for the rapid deterioration of the region's environment. Between 1975 to 1986, the Asia-Pacific region had already been losing 1.8 million hectares of closed forest a year. But new data released here by the U.N. agency show that the figure had risen to 4.7 million hectares from 1986 and 1990.

"As a result, the area under forest cover in many Asian countries has been reduced by 10 percent," ESCAP said in the statement. ESCAP said desertification in the Asia-Pacific has affected more than 860 million hectares of productive land, including degraded forest and woodland. The region has also lost 85 million hectares of cultivated land. "In countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, between 17 and 50 percent of the land has suffered degradation," it added.

At the same time, exploitation of groundwater has led to problems of land subsidence, saltwater intrusion and groundwater pollution in more than one-third of the Asia-Pacific. "Air and water pollution are increasing at an alarming rate," said ESCAP. "The use of solid fuel has nearly doubled in 12 years, while industrial emission of carbon dioxide and the use of agrochemicals have risen steadily."

For instance, it said, New Delhi's Jamuna River collects some five million gallons of industrial effluents every day. In Malaysia, palm oil and rubber effluents mixed with other industrial wastes and sewerage have resulted in 42 rivers there being declared officially "dead".

Ahmed, speaking before businessmen and government officials at the Pacific Rim Forum last month in Indonesia, said nothing short of putting the environment "at the centre of economic and political decision-making" can achieve sustainable development. ■

FUJIMORI PRESENTS LETTER FROM REBEL LEADER

By Marina Gilbert

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 1 (IPS) - Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori chose the United Nations General Assembly Friday as a forum to present a letter from rebel leader Abimael Guzman offering a peace accord.

"But a peace accord implies negotiations

between two opposing groups considered equals, not just in terms of force, but in ethical and moral makeup. This (Guzman's offer) is inadmissible, because there can be no negotiation with a terrorist and genocidal group," Fujimori said.

Guzman is founder and leader of the Maoist rebel group 'Sendero Luminoso.' He has been in captivity since Sep. 12, 1992. Fujimori had to pause three times during his speech to accept the applause of the United Nations, which recognised him as the originator of a current political fashion.

Since his Sep. 5, 1992 Presidential coup, Fujimori's tactic has been duplicated around the world, with varying degrees of success and failure, most recently in Russia. "We in Peru have lived through the alternative, which today the government of president Boris Yeltsin is also dramatically living," Fujimori said.

Both presidents suddenly and unilaterally dissolved their respective nation's parliaments, ending constitutional rule. Former Guatemalan president Jorge Derrano also tried a similar tactic, but was quickly deposed. Nevertheless, Fujimori's principal motive during his U.N. address appears to have been the delivery of yet another political blow to Sendero Luminoso.

The letter from Guzman, which was widely distributed to journalists, said "We come to you, as Peru's chief of state, to request conversations that will lead to a peace accord whose application can lead to the end of a war, which has for over 13 years plagued our country."

"Let's take this transcendental step, leaving behind our ideology and class principles, completely secure of the inevitable necessity and with the clear understanding of the needs of the people, the nation and society," Guzman wrote. The letter was also signed by Elena Iparraguirre, the group's second-in-command.

When asked for assurances that the rebel leaders were not coerced into signing the letter, Fujimori said his government did not use "communist methods or Stalinist brainwashing." Fujimori said he would present a video of Guzman and Iparraguirre "voluntarily signing" the letter, although earlier he had denied knowledge of contact between the two at the maximum security prison where they are being held.

While he admitted the letter had been written and signed 15 days earlier, Fujimori said he chose the General Assembly as a forum to avoid further acts of violence in Peru. Later, Fujimori posed for photographers and television cameras, with the letter conspicuously displayed.

The letter "that I am showing you is of utmost importance and impact, because these are the two most important leaders of Sendero," he said. Fujimori denied that the revelation of the letter was part of an official propaganda campaign for the Oct. 31 referendum to decide on constitutional changes, including the possibility that Fujimori will be eligible for re-election in 1995. "That campaign began a month ago," Fujimori said. ■

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U.S. SENATE PASSES \$12.9 BILLION FOREIGN AID BILL

WASHINGTON, Sep 30 (IPS) - The U.S. Senate Thursday approved a \$12.9 billion 1994 foreign aid bill, with most of the funds earmarked for Israel, Egypt, Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union.

The bill, which President Bill Clinton is to sign into law before midnight, is \$1.1 billion less than last year's allocation, and the smallest in real terms in well over a decade. It includes a \$1.024 billion contribution to the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank affiliate which provides credits to the world's poorest nations.

The bill will also clear the way for Washington's first contribution to the core fund of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which will receive \$30 million. The 1994 bill is also the first since 1986 to

provide funding to the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA). The amount is \$10 million less than was requested by Clinton, but it ends an eight-year embargo of the fund.

The big winners in the 1994 bill are Israel and Egypt which will receive more than five billion dollars between them. They will also get virtually all of the military aid offered -- \$3.0 billion of \$3.14 billion. The bill halves the Clinton administration's \$42 million request for military training grants, but contains less military aid than any U.S. foreign aid bill in more than a decade.

It also earmarks \$25 million for aid to the West Bank and Gaza and authorises the administration to dip into an Economic Support Fund (ESF) for additional funds. The Clinton administration, which Friday hosted a donors' conference to aid the Palestinian authority that will be set up under the Sep. 13 Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord, has pledged \$250 million over the next two years. ■

NGOs PRESS FOR U.S. SANCTIONS AGAINST NORWAY FOR WHALING

(continued from front cover)

Greenpeace, the Centre for Marine Conservation (CMC), and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) fear Clinton will retreat from an anti-whaling position voiced this year.

Officials of the NGOs told a press conference Friday they found a meeting here this week between Norway's Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland and U.S. Vice-President Al Gore worrisome. The Norwegian press allege that a deal has been drummed up, under which Norway would agree to stop whaling for one year in exchange for Clinton's decision not to impose sanctions.

The environmental NGOs say the United States would then back Norway's position in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to alter its Revised Management Procedure to permit quotas for some commercial whaling. "We're hoping these are false reports," said one NGO representative. "If any back-room deals have been cut, we haven't been informed."

Norway broke an IWC-decreed moratorium on commercial whaling in 1993 by hunting for 160 Northeast Atlantic Minke whales. Oslo has insisted that minke whales are not truly endangered and can sustain a healthy population even with an annual catch of between 2,000 and 4,000. But Greenpeace and others argue that the minke whale population in the northeast Atlantic has fallen by about 50 percent over the past 30 years and is not now increasing despite the commercial whaling moratorium declared in 1985.

The NGOs have launched vigorous efforts to press Norway to stop commercial whaling. They

have organised an international boycott of Norwegian products and pressed multinational corporations not to invest in Norway.

The latter effort yielded major dividends this week. The Norwegian press reported Monday that the U.S. auto giant, General Motors, had canceled a 30-million-dollar auto-parts contract with the same Norwegian company that manufactures Norway's whaling harpoons, Greenpeace said. The HSUS also released a letter dated Sep. 29 from General Motors Vice-President Bruce MacDonald in which he said GM had passed along the NGOs' concerns to the Swedish SAAB, with which it has a 50-50 joint venture.

Saab, according to the letter, had in turn been informed that the Norwegian company in question, Raufoss, had ceased manufacturing the harpoons. Gerald Leape, the head of Greenpeace's anti-whaling campaign, told reporters that a failure by Clinton to impose sanctions could well undermine the IWC and other international agreements.

"Norway's return to commercial whaling," he said, "seriously weakens the international moratorium on whaling. Letting Norway off the hook now will send the wrong signal to the handful of other nations that are already sharpening the harpoon tips in hopes of renewing their hunts," he said.

He said Japan and Iceland are likely candidates to resume their own whaling practices if Norway is not punished. He added that China and Taiwan, which are both under sanction by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) for permitting the trafficking of endangered tiger and bear parts, may also be encouraged to continue their practices if Washington does not act against Norway. ■

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NEWSBRIEFS...**MANDELA SEEKS TO SOOTHE FEARFUL INVESTORS**

WASHINGTON, Oct 1 (IPS) - Nelson Mandela sought to assure hundreds of potential investors here Friday that their money would be safe in South Africa. He said the concern of business both inside and outside South Africa was "quite understandable" given the political instability and "the violence that is bleeding our country".

But "this is a question that is enjoying the attention of all South Africans," the African National Congress (ANC) president told a conference on institutional investment in a post-apartheid South Africa. "We are...determined to ensure that our own country becomes an attractive destination for the enormous capital resources held by the institutions you represent," he said, acknowledging the intense competition around the world for funds.

Mandela last week urged countries to lift economic sanctions against South Africa. Almost immediately after he spoke at the United Nations, U.S. President Bill Clinton called for U.S. states and cities to lift remaining penalties against the nation. He said Washington will also move to free up International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank loans, and noted that his administration planned to mount an investment mission to South Africa.

The ANC, which faces an enormous economic challenge, has said that any government it forms would rid the country of control boards which currently set prices on such agricultural goods as maize, sugar, and citrus fruits. The party has in the past said it favoured nationalising industry, but leaders eager to woo investors and turning increasingly towards free trade. It has said it would eliminate foreign exchange controls in the hope that the free flow of money into the country would exceed the outflow.

Mandela Friday reminded the business community of the ANC's investment code put forward in May 1992. "We issued an investment code where we try to protect investments," he said, noting that entrepreneurs would be allowed to repatriate their investments, dividends, and profits. And for the benefit of those who fear "the radical economic policies of any organisation, including the ANC", he stressed that the government installed after

next April's multi-racial elections will be one of "national unity"...

WORLD BANK \$2.5 MILLION 5-YEAR FUNDING GOAL FOR WEST BANK

WASHINGTON, Oct 1 (IPS) - The Palestinian administration to be set up on the West Bank and Gaza will need \$2.5 billion from foreign sources over five years, World Bank President Lewis Preston said Friday. Addressing representatives of 46 countries who are being asked to contribute funding at a special pledging conference here, Preston said the Bank will soon begin operating a 35 million dollar Trust Fund for technical aid, training and project preparation for the territories.

Opening Friday's conference at the State Department, U.S. Vice President Al Gore said Washington will provide \$500 million over the five-year period to help implement the Sep. 13 peace accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). "It would be hard to think of a more worthwhile cause," he said.

And Russian Finance Minister Grigor'yevich Federov, who co-sponsored Friday's meeting, said Russia, despite its own economic problems, will also provide "concrete contributions towards Palestinian self-rule." Other senior officials from Canada, Europe and Asia are expected to pledge assistance to the new Palestinian entity which, under the Sep. 13 accord, will begin assuming power in Gaza and West Bank town of Jericho at the end of the year.

U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL TO VISIT MOZAMBIQUE

MAPUTO, Oct. 1 (IPS) - U.N. Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is expected in Mozambique later this month in a bid to keep the country's peace process on the rails.

"I don't think the visit reflects apprehension on the part of the (U.N.) Secretary general," said his special representative to Mozambique, Aldo Ajello. "But (the visit) will symbolise the attention the U.N. is giving the country." Boutros-Ghali will spend two days in Mozambique from Oct. 17, where he will meet with the government and the opposition Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), the two signatories to last October's peace accord....

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IPS, United Nations, Room 485, New York, N.Y. 10017
Tel.(212)963-6156/751-3255, Fax (212)754-2791/888-6099