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Featured Friday, Nov. 1, among the day's top 15 stories, received by 1,400 newspapers worldwide.

Guru works quietly for peace at U.N.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A small man sits cross-legged on stage, a wooden flute held up to his smooth, round face. Plaintive echoes gently fill the hall, then give way to silence.

The sounds are simple, far from the pomp that marked the United Nations' official 40th anniversary. But they drew 21 U.N. ambassadors and nearly 2,000 New Yorkers to a performance this week.

Sri Chinmoy gave the concert at Lincoln Center as a birthday present to the world organization. For more than a decade, the spiritual master has been working in a quiet way to bring peace to the turbulent halls of the United Nations.

Twice a week, close to 100 delegates and staff gather during their lunch hour in a basement conference room at U.N. headquarters to meditate with the 54-year-old philosopher.

"If the inner world is inundated with peace," Sri Chinmoy tells them, "then the nightmare of world war cannot even come into being."



AP Laserphoto

Sri Chinmoy

Monday's "Peace Concert" at Lincoln Center was an extension of that effort. Sri Chinmoy took up a dozen instruments during the evening, from an Indian sitar to the harmonium.

The Peace Meditation group at the United Nations, founded in 1970, seeks to keep delegates and employees focused on the ideals of the organization: cooperation and peace.

"There may be hurricane on the top of the ocean, but it doesn't mean there is a hurricane in the depths," Susan Brummell, a spokeswoman

for the group, said in an interview. "It is only by tapping the vast wealth of inner peace that we will ever be able to smooth the troubled waters of the United Nations."

"It's not necessarily a fast process," she said.

Last week, as the world watched the organization celebrate its anniversary, politics prevented U.N. delegates from agreeing even on a declaration to mark the occasion. The United States objected to a paragraph referring to Palestinian self-determination, and Arab states refused to leave it out.

"That's the type of thing that discourages me," said Adhiratha Keefe, head of records management for the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, who is a member of the group. "If it wasn't for (the meditation sessions), I probably would have left the U.N. long ago."

Born Chinmoy Kumar Chose in Chittagong, in what is now Bangladesh, Sri Chinmoy now counts 1,100 disciples around the world. His meditation center in Queens, New York, is one of 60 worldwide.

He is a prolific writer, painter and composer and a dedicated runner and tennis player.

His philosophy, he said recently, is to accept the setbacks as temporary. "We accept society as it is and, at the same time, strive to better society — with its kind cooperation."

The U.N. secretary general, Javier Perez de Cuellar, has applauded the group's work.

"In your meditation you see

beyond the superficial distinctions of race, sex, language or religion as the (U.N.) Charter encourages us to do," he told the group. "You concentrate on the truths and ideals which unite all mankind: the longing for peace, the need for compassion, the search for tolerance and understanding."

Sri Chinmoy doesn't try to mediate between disputing sides at the United Nations. His meditation is designed to give different sides a sense of their commonality.

In addition to its meditation sessions and lectures, the group touches U.N. life in other ways. The State of New York has given it, under a renewable lease, a man-made island slightly larger than a tugboat.

Once little more than a subway airshaft and a haven for rats, the island lies in the East River in view of half of the U.N. offices. The group has planted a tree and grass, and put up U.N.-blue fence defining the boundary between the greenery and its rocky shore. The rats have disappeared of their own accord.

"We see it as kind of symbolic of the transformation of the U.N. and of the world," said Miss Brummell.