

## BRIEFLY

**Ghali in Russia:** United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in Moscow Friday to begin a four-day visit to Russia, AFP reports from Moscow.

The visit is his first to Moscow since his election to the post of UN leader. Boutros-Ghali was welcomed at the airport by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev with whom he was to have a first round of talks later in the day, a UN official said.

Boutros-Ghali touched down several hours late from Jakarta where he attended the summit of Non-Aligned nations. He will leave on Monday for Paris.

Russia took over all the Soviet Union's rights and privileges at the United Nations and is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

**35 feared killed UP cloudburst:** At least 35 people were feared killed in a cloudburst in Gadni village in Ohamoli district in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday, according to official reports available on Friday. PTI says from Lucknow.

The reports said rescue and relief teams have rushed to the village. Further details were awaited. Reports of landslides were also received from Pithoragarh.

There were also reports of several houses being damaged and roads blocked following landslides and torrential rains in the Pauri Garhwal and Pithoragarh districts and the adjoining region.

**Iranian medical team in Kabul:** An Iranian medical team arrived in the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday to begin assisting the war-weary population, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported, says AP from Nicosia.

IRNA, monitored in Nicosia, said that some of 36 tons of medicine and medical supplies donated by Iran also were delivered.

The 11-member medical team, transported by Afghan military planes, plans to set up an emergency clinic in Kabul, the agency said.

**General strike in Greece:** Thousands of workers demonstrated in the capital Thursday during a general strike as fears mounted that an eight-day walkout at the power company could lead to a nationwide blackout, reports AP from Athens.

The one-day general strike, protesting the conservative government's economic austerity policies and legislation revising the social welfare system, hampered operations of the public utility companies, state hospitals and the state-owned Hellenic Radio-Television Corporation.

**Clinton still leads over Bush:** Democrat Bill Clinton held a 15-point lead over President Bush among voters nationwide as the presidential race headed into the Labour Day weekend, according to a CNN-USA on Friday poll released Thursday, reports AP from Washington.

The survey showed 54 per cent for Clinton and running-mate Al Gore to 39 per cent for Bush and Vice President Dan Quayle with 7 per cent undecided.

The poll by the Gallup Organisation was based on telephone interviews August 31 to September 2 with 1,007 registered voters and had an error margin of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

In the survey, 14 per cent of those responding said they would vote for Dallas business executive Ross Perot if he were on the ballot, even if he did not actively campaign. In that case, Clinton would get 47 per cent and Bush 34 per cent, according to the poll.

**Canadians vote Oct 26:** Canadians will vote October 26 on constitutional changes that aim to protect Quebec's unique French identity and give native Canadians the right to self-rule, reports AP from Meech.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced the date Thursday, after conferring with cabinet ministers at a government guest house north Ottawa.

"It's time for Canadians to choose," he told reporters. But he refused to say what would happen if Canadians rejected the national unity pact finalized last week by provincial and aboriginal leaders. The national vote is not binding.

## Jyoti Basu rules out Jharkhand autonomy

CALCUTTA, Sept 4: The West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, today ruled out the possibility of according regional autonomy status to the tribals who, he said, accounted for only four to eight per cent of the total population in the state, reports PTI.

Asked for his reaction on a press report quoting the union Home Minister S B Chavan, as having said that the center was considering granting union territory status to the 'Jharkhand region', Basu told newsmen here that such regional autonomy status for the tribals was 'applicable' to Bihar. 'Our party also approves of it.'

Asserting that West Bengal would never come under the

## ANC vows to topple white govt

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 4: The African National Congress quashed prospects for a resumption of full-scale democracy talks in South Africa and vowed to intensify its campaign to topple the white minority government, reports Reuters.

"The National Executive Committee (NEC) endorsed proposals for the intensification of the mass campaign... to achieve democracy, steps to deal with violence and the immediate release of political prisoners," the ANC said in a statement.

"We will not let the government off the hook, we will continue the pressure..." The statement, following a three-day meeting of the ANC's top policy-making body, dashed optimism expressed by President F W De Klerk, other government leaders and the international community that democracy talks could soon resume.

Other South African leaders said they feared the ANC decision to step up its campaign of mass protests and strikes would cause more harm to the economy and precipitate further bloodshed in the black townships.

## Pak NA resolution on Babri Masjid issue India ready to give befitting reply, threatens Sharad

VARANASI, Sept 4: The Defence Minister Sharad Pawar yesterday said India was fully prepared to give a befitting reply to Pakistan if it indulged in actions, which were against security and integrity of our country, reports PTI.

"India would teach a lesson to Pakistan. Not only its present generation but future generation would remember at for a long (time)", he said addressing a meet the press programme at Paradkar Bhawan here after unveiling a portrait of the late Congress (I) leader, Pt Kamalapati Tripathi, on his 88th birth anniversary.

Referring to the resolution

in Pakistan National Assembly on the Ram Janambhumi-Babri Masjid issue, he said it was a clear intervention in the internal affairs of India.

Pakistan should avoid such things. Such actions affected the bilateral relations, he said.

Speaking at a public rally in Chandauli, some 30 kms from here, he said normalcy would return in Jammu and Kashmir within six months since the security forces were determined to flush out militants from the Kashmir valley.

The border areas were completely sealed in Jammu and Kashmir to check the infiltration and exfiltration of

Pak-trained militants, he said. He said now infiltration had been totally checked.

He said recruitment of women in defence services had begun in all the three forces.

An earlier AFP report from Delhi said: Indian security forces shot dead 18 Muslim guerrillas and arrested 79 in the troubled state of Kashmir.

The militants were killed in gunbattles in Srinagar, the summer capital of the state, and elsewhere in the Kashmir valley late Wednesday and Thursday, police were quoted as saying.

The victims included Iqbal

Zargar, acting chief of Al Umer Mujahideen, one of several groups campaigning for the secession of Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state in overwhelmingly Hindu India.

Kashmir police chief B.S. Bedi said security forces had also arrested 79 militants, including the chief of the 'Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen' group Abdul Gani Dar.

India, which holds the state's southern two-thirds, and Pakistan, which controls the northern third, have fought two wars over Kashmir. Thousands have died since 1989 in the Kashmiri separatist campaign.

## Zhivkov jailed for 7 years

SOFIA, Sept 4: The Supreme Court on Friday sentenced former Communist leader Todor Zhivkov to seven years in prison after finding him guilty of misappropriating state property and exceeding his authority, reports AP.

The court also found a former Zhivkov aide, Milko Balev, guilty of illegal hard currency transactions and sentenced him to a two-year prison term.

Zhivkov, 81, was the first former Soviet bloc leader to be tried, judged and sentenced.

Both the defence, which had asked for acquittal and the prosecution, which sought a 10-year prison term, said they would appeal.

Zhivkov has said he expects to spend the rest of his life behind bars on what he repeatedly has described as trumped-up charges. He pleaded innocent and his lawyers argued for acquittal.

## Bofors scandal Delhi police ask Swiss govt to ignore HC order

NEW DELHI, Sept 4: Indian police have asked Switzerland to ignore Delhi High Court orders blocking investigation of the Bofors arms scandal pending an appeal, officials said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The court on Wednesday dismissed corruption allegations, involving the 1.3 billion dollar Swedish arms deal, which helped topple the government of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1989. It also ordered the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) to withdraw letters to Swedish and Swiss authorities asking for cooperation in the investigation into the so-called Bofors scandal.

The CBI sent a fax message late Wednesday requesting Swiss authorities to ignore the Delhi court orders, a CBI spokesman said. CBI lawyers would appeal to the Supreme Court to quash the High Court judgement, he said.

Indian investigators have said kickbacks amounting to 53 million dollar are stashed in Swiss bank accounts and have asked authorities in Zurich to reveal the identities of the recipients.

Bofors officials have said the money was paid as winding up charges to agents after the Indian government stipulated that no middle-men were to be involved in the negotiations.

The bribery charges created a major political scandal when they surfaced in 1987, leading to accusation by the opposition and in newspapers that Rajiv Gandhi and senior aides were involved.

Gandhi, who always vehemently denied the allegations, was assassinated in May, 1991.

The Bofors scandal was a major factor in the defeat of Gandhi's Congress party government in 1989 elections.



JAKARTA: Foreign Ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) smile in this group photo on Thursday after sessions at the 10th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit on Thursday. From left: Arsa Sarasin (Thailand), Ahmad Badawi (Malaysia), Wong Kan Seng (Singapore), Ali Alatas (Indonesia), Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei) and Roberto Romulo (Philippines). —AP/UNB photo

## Karens capture army camp

HAUY PONG LAO (Myanmar), Sept 4: Karen guerrillas drank Moonshine whisky to celebrate their capture of this Myanmar army camp after three days of fighting, reports Reuters.

Twenty fighters from both sides were killed and seven wounded in the assault on Pong Lao, a major base on the Pae river in Kayah state about four km (two miles) from the

Thai border.

The fleeing Burmese left behind tonnes of rice and other food as well as weapons.

"It was a big success to begin a new round of fighting," Karen army commander Colonel Bhi Thoo told a Reuters correspondent who visited the camp on Thursday.

Initial reports from Thai border sources said the attack

was launched by Karen guerrillas, the strongest of several ethnic insurgencies arrayed against the Myanmar government along its borders.

The visit disclosed that it was in fact made by a combined force of about 200 Karen and Myanmar Muslim army rebels.

Seventeen Myanmar soldiers and three Karen fighters were killed, Bhi Thoo said.

## China warned not to retaliate F-16 sale to Taiwan will promote peace: US

WASHINGTON, Sept 4: The United States on Thursday stepped into a murky legal quagmire to defend its sale of 150 F-16 jet fighters to Taiwan and warned China not to retaliate by shipping arms to the Middle East, reports Reuters.

The US administration defended President George Bush's decision to sell the planes to Taiwan on strategic grounds, saying it would promote peace and stability in East Asia.

Most commentators saw the decision, which ended a 10-year prohibition against Taiwan acquiring advanced US warplanes, as a straight vote-getting move by Bush, who is trailing Democratic presidential hopeful Bill Clinton in the polls two months before the November 3 general election.

China reacted furiously and threatened to pull out of talks among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council aimed at curbing international weapons sales.

On the face of it, Bush's decision seemed to contradict a

1982 communique which he helped negotiate with Beijing when he was vice president under Ronald Reagan.

In that document, the United States stated that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed either in qualitative or quantitative terms the level of those supplied in recent years, since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends to gradually reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan.

But US state department spokesman Joe Snyder insisted there was no contradiction between the communique and the sale of F-16s because Taiwan's ageing force of antiquated F-5s and F-104s were going out of service and needed to be replaced.

"We said we would be providing spare parts. It's impossible now to provide the spare parts for the old aircraft that they have and we're maintaining the quality of that air force in the only way that we have available," said Snyder.

Snyder said Beijing's recent acquisition of Russian SU-27

aircraft was a factor in the decision which would give Taiwan the confidence necessary to continue to improve relations with Beijing.

One of Washington's key concerns is that China, which agreed last year not to sell ballistic missiles and other advanced weapons to Arab states, might go back on its pledge as a way of demonstrating its anger over the Taiwan deal.

Snyder said the United States expected China to stand by its promise to abide by the provisions of the missile technology control regime and continue to take part in arms control talks.

"Clearly the Middle East is an area where all arms transfers have to be examined carefully. We would expect China to continue to participate in the president's arms transfer restraint initiative," he said.

Snyder said Washington had offered to send assistant secretary of state William Clark to Beijing to explain the sale but arrangements for the visit had not yet been made.

## Clinton has raised taxes 128 times as Arkansas governor?

WASHINGTON, Sept 4: Is President George Bush lying when he says Democratic challenger Bill Clinton raised taxes 128 times as Arkansas governor?

Charges and counter-charges are flying over a question that would seem to be one of basic math, reports Reuters.

"Who do you trust in this election? The candidate who raised taxes one time and regrets it, or the other candidate who raised taxes and fees 128 times and enjoyed it every time?" Bush asked the nation during his speech at the Republican National Convention.

Since his August 20 state-of-the-art, the figure of 128 tax or

fee increases during Clinton's 12 years as Arkansas governor has been repeated over and over by the Bush campaign despite blistering attacks from Clinton, the news media and commentators that it is misleading or simply false.

But the Bush campaign has dug in its heels and decided to stick with that number despite new accusations that it is now knowingly lying to make political hay.

"It's true. We believe it's true," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said on Thursday of the charge of 128 tax or fee increases, signalling Bush is not ready to back down on the charge.

In its lead editorial on Thursday, the Washington Post called the statement a "silly proposition."

"The people who are keeping the charge alive insist that it is true, even though they know they are making a fraudulent argument," the newspaper added.

Previously, the Post had labelled the figure "highly exaggerated" while the New York Times had called it "false" and the Wall Street Journal "highly misleading."

More outspoken has been commentator Michael Kinsley, who has figured large in the debate because one of his

columns refuting the figure has been widely cited by the media and was itself the subject of a six-page news release by the Bush campaign last Saturday that called the figure "undeniable."

"The '128-tax-increases-to-one' lie may be a small lie as these things go, but it is crystal clear," Kinsley wrote in a new column on the subject published Thursday.

"As such it is a test of character not just for Bush but for those around him."

"There are decent people among the Bush campaign and the Republican leadership, and others who wish to be thought of as decent. Do they care if

the President lies? If they remain silent — or defend the lie — we'll have our answer," Kinsley said.

Clinton himself has attacked the tax charge but to date has stopped short of branding the President a liar, and Clinton spokeswoman Avis Lavelle said Thursday the campaign still had "no need" to do so.

Lavelle referred to reports by NBC news and the Boston Globe newspaper that Bush aides had privately acknowledged that the tax charge was untrue but would continue to use it because it was effective politically.

The Bush campaign says its

## Off the Record

### 'Run for water'

NEW DELHI: Over 5,000 school children drawn from various schools of the country will "run for water" with an aim to bring "water awareness" among the masses, reports PTI.

The run will be held in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Bangalore and Coimbatore from September to November this year, says a spokesman of the Water for Overall Rural Development (WORD) which is organising the run in five major cities of the country including Delhi.

In Delhi, over 5,000 school children drawn from various schools of the capital will participate in the run which will be flagged off from the historic Vijay Chow on Sept 6 at 8.30 am covering a distance of 2.5 km and culminate at national stadium, the spokesman said.

Ace athlete Shiny Wilson will be the flag bearer of the Delhi run along with other prominent international and national sports personalities of the country.

Through this awareness, the spokesman said, the urban children will be encouraged to raise funds for providing portable water to the less fortunate rural people and conserve water in the urban areas which often goes waste.

He said "an average person needs a minimum of 2.4 litres of water per day to survive and which is not easily available in rural India. This is why the future leaders of this country will run for water."

### He was then in swimming trunks

LONDON: A bodyguard on duty when Prince Andrew's estranged wife was photographed snuggling topless with an American man has been moved, police said, reports AP.

Scotland Yard police headquarters said the officer had been moved from guarding the couple's two small daughters to "other duties elsewhere in the royal and diplomatic protection squad."

A freelance photographer sniped the poolside pictures last month while the Duchess, the former Sarah Ferguson her children and American John Bryan were at a villa in France. Andrew is Queen Elizabeth II's second son.

Some shots included a bodyguard in swimming trunks lounging with a book beside the pool.

### Elena steps forward to bail Imelda out

MANILA: Imelda Marcos on Friday thanked a self-styled "ambassador" and heiress to a pharmaceutical fortune for agreeing to charter a plane to fly the body of Ferdinand Marcos from Hawaii, reports AP.

Elena Yee said Thursday she would charter a DC-10 jet to fly the body of ousted Philippine president for burial in the Philippines, where he was overthrown in the 1986 "people power revolution" of Corason Aquino.

Mrs Marcos, reputedly one of the world's richest women, said she could not raise funds to return the body because her assets are frozen by court orders in connection with corruption allegations against her family.

Marcos died in exile in Hawaii in 1989. The government banned his body from the Philippines but relented on condition he be buried in his northern home province instead of Manila as his family demanded.

### Mysterious smoke

COLOMBO: Mysterious smoke exuding from a dry river bed has generated the highest temperature recorded in Sri Lanka, and geologists said Friday they are baffled by the event, reports AP.

The smoke is rising from a dry stream bed in a mountain in Diyatalawa, a hill tourist resort in central Sri Lanka, said D A Kathirairachchi, the deputy director of the Geological Survey Department.

He said scientists are puzzled since there is no evidence of volcanic activity in the country, which lies outside any volcanic zone.



ITALY: Giovanna Fanelli, 26, poses at her home in Tirenna on Wednesday with a sash for the "Miss Gambe" (Miss Legs). She won recently in a local beauty contest. Fanelli, one of the candidates for the upcoming "Miss Italia" beauty contest, was excluded from the competition after the organizers found out that she was formerly a man who changed sex last year.

—AP/UNB photo

### Storms kill 150 in China

BEIJING, Sept 4: The death toll from a tropical storm that battered China's east coast climbed to 150 with the deaths of 24 people in northern Shandong province, an official newspaper reported Friday, says AP.

Beijing's Economic Daily (Jingji Ribao) said torrential rains and fierce winds from Tropical Storm Polly also killed 3,490 domestic animals, destroyed 10,894 houses and triggered five meter (16.5 feet) waves along the coast.

It was the first report of casualties in Shandong, which lies halfway between Beijing and Shanghai.

Another extended the dog-racing season. Others authorised "Beauty pageant fees," a "waste tyre" fee and a 10 dollar charge for testing water samples for bacterial infection.