

International

BRIEFLY

Egyptian writer Naguib dies: Egyptian philosopher and writer Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, whose articles and books were widely read in the Arab world, died Wednesday of complications from diabetes. He was 88, AP reports from Cairo.

Mahmoud suffered from diabetes for years and had been in a hospital for a week before he died, a spokesman at el-Safa Hospital told.

Mahmoud wrote extensively in books and articles about Arab cultural and political affairs. He recently finished his autobiography, "The Harvest of the Years."

Russian FM in Kabul: Russian Foreign Minister Andriy Kozyrev flew into Kabul airport early yesterday, for a two-day visit and talks on bilateral issues including conflict on the border with Tajikistan, an aide said, AFP reports from Kabul.

"We are going to discuss different issues including the situation on the Afghan-Tajik border," said an aide accompanying Kozyrev.

However, Kozyrev did not state any specific reasons for his visit, commenting only that, "It's too early to comment now."

Pope in Latvia: Pope John Paul II took his Baltic pilgrimage to this heavily Protestant country Wednesday, bringing with him a message of reconciliation in a region emerging from Soviet rule, AP reports from Riga.

The Pope flew from Vilnius, Lithuania, arriving in a downpour. But tens of thousands packed the streets, waving white handkerchiefs as the Pope's motorcade went by.

As he did in Lithuania, John Paul paid tribute to the "long trials" Latvia underwent during five decades of Soviet occupation.

Riots leave 12 hurt in Panama: At least 12 people were hurt and 60 arrested in protests after a top aide to former dictator Gen. Manuel Noriega and six other soldiers were cleared in the 1985 killing of a dissident leader, authorities said Tuesday, AP reports from Panama City.

The riots broke out Monday night in the provincial capital of David after the verdict in the 1985 slaying of Dr. Hugo Spadafora. Police used shotguns and teargas to control the crowd. No arrests or injuries were reported in protests in Panama City and the Pacific port of Chitre.

Noriega and two other officers who also are charged in the killing have chosen a trial without a jury. The general, who is serving a 40-year drug sentence in the United States, is being tried in absentia. A verdict is expected by the end of the month.

Israeli court asks Rabin to fire two ministers

JERUSALEM, Sept 8: In a decision that could threaten the Middle East peace talks, the Supreme Court on Wednesday asked Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to fire a minister and a deputy minister who are under investigation for corruption, reports AP.

The two, Interior Minister Arneh Deri and Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Rafael Pinchasi, belong to the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party.

Shas has threatened to bolt Rabin's ruling coalition if Deri and Pinchasi are fired. Shas has six seats in the 120-seat Parliament.

Without Shas, Rabin could continue to rule with a thin one-vote margin since his coalition would still control 56 seats and have the support of five Arab legislators who are not part of the coalition.

But Shas' departure would rob Rabin of his Jewish majority for making peace with the Arabs and weaken his ability to grant concessions in the peace talks.

A police investigation against Deri began more than three years ago. When Rabin formed

his government in July 1992, Deri gave him a letter promising he would suspend himself the moment an indictment was submitted against him in court.

Last month, the attorney general asked that Parliament lift Deri's immunity so he could be indicted for bribery and fraud. Deri allegedly funnelled some \$250,000 in state money to the party and into his own pockets and used his position as interior minister to export favours from municipalities.

The attorney general said Deri should step down. But Deri refused, pointing to the earlier agreement with Rabin which said he could stay in office until an indictment was submitted in court.

But the Supreme Court ruled 5-0 on Wednesday to cancel the agreement, saying it was illegal. The high court ruled in response to an appeal by clean government activists.

The judges said that if Deri stayed in office while such charges were pending against him, it would have serious consequences for the image of government.

ROK rejects DPRK's demand to halt joint war games

SEOUL, Sept 8: South Korea rejected Wednesday a North Korean demand to halt military exercises with the United States but said it will dispatch delegates for inter-Korean border talks on Friday, reports AP.

Restarting inter-Korean dialogue after 10 months of silence is a key US condition for further high-level talks between the United States and Communist North Korea.

There was no immediate response from North Korea.

The Koreans earlier had agreed to reopen dialogue, but prospects were clouded by an unexpected North Korean demand this week that Seoul promise to discontinue yearly war exercises with the United States.

The North also insisted South Korea stop seeking alliances with other countries to pressure Pyongyang to resolve suspicions about its nuclear programme.

"I hope your side will come without making conditions," South Korean Prime Minister Hwang In-sung said in a message to his North Korean counterpart, Kang Song San.

Hwang suggested South and North Korean delegates meet on Friday at the border truce village of Panmunjom for talks on exchanging special envoys.

Such talks could satisfy one condition for a third round of high-level talks between the United States and North Korea, tentatively scheduled for Geneva later this month. The other condition was that North Korea cooperate with International Atomic Energy Agency inspections.

The first breakthrough in inter-Korean relations in months came last week when North Korea, changing its hard-line policy, agreed to discuss nuclear issues with South Korea.

Iran may call off death threat, says Rushdie

LONDON, Sept 8: Salman Rushdie said Tuesday he believes Iran may soon bow to international pressure to call off the death threat against him made by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989, reports AP.

"It seems to be now or never — in the next six or nine months Iran may publicly and finally say it has no further interest in pursuing Khomeini's murderous intentions," the British author told reporters.

"My patience is running out. I have said to the British government I am not prepared to do this for much longer," he said.

MANILA, Sept 8: AIDS infection is approaching "emergency" proportions in Asia, posing a serious threat to the economies of the region's poorer countries, experts attending a conference here said today, reports AFP.

David Bloom, chairman of the Economics Department of Columbia University, warned that by 2000, half of all Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) infection cases could be in Asia, the world's most populous region.

"The centre of gravity of AIDS is moving towards Asia," Bloom said, adding that this could seriously affect the economies of countries in the region because it was expensive to treat affected people in their "prime working years."

John Dwyer, Head of the

Repatriation of 189 Palestinian deportees begins today

MARJ EZ-ZOUHOUR (Lebanon), Sept 8: Some 189 Palestinian Muslim fundamentalists expelled to South Lebanon by Israel last year will start to return on Thursday, their spokesman said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Abdel Aziz Rantissi of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Iltamas) said he had been informed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Israel that he would receive a list of the 189 names on Wednesday.

They would be repatriated starting the next day, after nine months at their Marj Ez-Zouhour camp, he said.

There are 396 Palestinian deportees stranded in no-man's land just north of Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon, where they were dumped by Israeli authorities on December 17.

Israel expelled 415 Palestinians, suspected to be members of the radical Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups, before taking back 19 people who were deported in error.

Defence Ministry spokesman Oded Ben Ami said Monday that 189 of the deportees would be repatriated before September 17. The rest are to return before the end of the year. Their return begins as Israel and the PLO are on the verge of mutual recognition and signing a historic deal for Palestinian autonomy starting in the Gaza Strip, a Hamas hotbed, and the West Bank city of Jericho.

Both Hamas and the Islamic Jihad are fierce opponents of the Middle East peace process.

In the makeshift camp at Marj Ez-Zouhour, preparations are underway for the departure of nearly half the occupants, with deportees writing letters to be taken back home by those leaving.

The Israel army is also making preparations at the Zmraya crossing-point, where the deportees will pass into the security zone.

Three tents have been set up to be used for medical examinations and some 50 Israeli soldiers have arrived at the post, which is usually held by Israel's proxy South Lebanon army militia.

Reuter adds: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said on Tuesday he was sure Gulf Arab states would give the Palestinians money to finance a proposed self-rule agreement with Israel.

"I think the political support is there," Hurd told a news conference in Abu Dhabi. "The financial needs are not yet specific (but)...I don't doubt there will be a specific response."

Hurd, who spent more than 90 minutes in a meeting with UAE President Sheikh Zaid Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, said the proposed agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was "deserving of full support in the Arab world."

The British Foreign Secretary, who was flying to Saudi Arabia late on Tuesday, said he had been "heartened and encouraged" by his talks with Sheikh Zaid and a meeting he had in London on Monday with King Hussein of Jordan.

He hoped there would be reconciliation between Arab states divided over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

"The situation is changing. The Arab world like the rest of the world was to some extent divided about the Gulf War. Now there is another situation. The prospect of ending a very long... dispute is changing the situation," he said.

Hurd said the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council in backing the Arab-Israeli agreement was an "important factor."



Ruth Nitzan, owner of a flag factory in Jerusalem, puts together Sept. 7 the first prototype of a Palestinian flag made by Israelis. The Berman factory was assigned, by a Palestinian-American company from Denver, to produce 2,000 Palestinian flags. — AFP photo

UN mission leaves behind nothing but AIDS: Khmers

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Sept 8: The radical Khmer Rouge said Wednesday that the U.N. peacekeeping mission is leaving behind nothing but AIDS in Cambodia and suggested that people throw faces in the mission chief's face, reports AP.

The government wants to avoid further bloodshed and end the civil conflict through negotiations, government spokesman Ek Sereyavath told a news conference Wednesday.

"Our idea is that the Khmer Rouge should return to the Cambodian community," Ek said. "It's not good for them to stay in the jungle."

He said Cambodian leaders agreed to provide for a king in the new constitution in hopes of ending the war with the Khmer Rouge, which has supported the idea.

Head of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk is to be named king but only with powers to pardon criminals.

Ek indicated that Sihanouk might pardon the Khmer Rouge for killing hundreds of thousands of Cambodians during

its fanatical rule in the 1970s. Sihanouk is to hold talks with the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh in October.

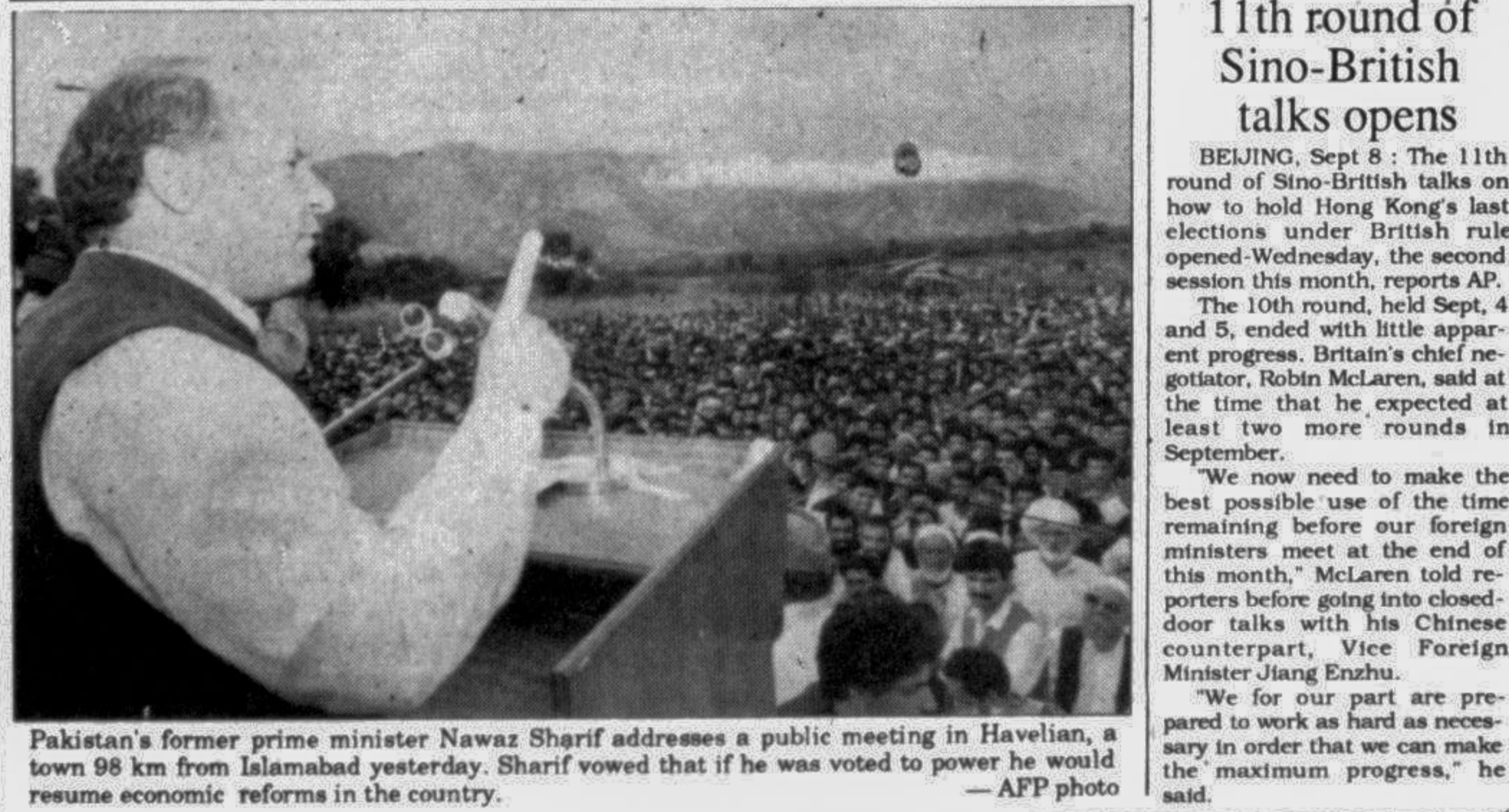
The Khmer Rouge signed a 1991 accord to end 13 years of war with a Vietnamese-installed government. But it violated the accord and boycotted U.N.-organised elections in May.

When its former battlefield allies won the election, the Khmer Rouge made overtures to join the new administration.

Sihanouk's son, Cambodian government co-chairman Prince Norodom Ranariddh, indicated that the Khmer Rouge's hatred of the Vietnamese was widely shared.

In an interview broadcast Tuesday night over the U.N. radio, Ranariddh said that, as king, his father would not let the Khmer Rouge's protests against the numerous ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia go unanswered.

Ranariddh said many people, not just the Khmer Rouge, are worried about the problem of the Yuen, a derogatory word for the Vietnamese.



Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif addresses a public meeting in Havelian, a town 98 km from Islamabad yesterday. Sharif vowed that if he was voted to power he would resume economic reforms in the country. — AFP photo

Clinton talks to Yeltsin on ME, Bosnia issues

WASHINGTON, Sept 8: President Bill Clinton discussed Middle East developments and the situation in Bosnia during a telephone conversation on Tuesday with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the White House said, reports Reuter.

Clinton spoke with the Russian leader for about 40 minutes on several bilateral foreign policy issues, White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers said in a statement.

"President Clinton reiterated strong U.S. support for Russian political and market reform and the work of President Yeltsin and the Russian government to keep those reforms on track," Myers said.

The two leaders discussed peace talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation and pledged to work together to promote peace in the Middle East, Myers said.

They also discussed the Russian decision to withdraw troops from Lithuania, and Clinton affirmed U.S. support for a "rapid and complete withdrawal of forces from Latvia and Estonia," Myers said.

Myers said Yeltsin briefed Clinton on his recent trip to Ukraine, and Clinton affirmed U.S. interest in working with the two parties in resolving outstanding issues concerning nuclear weapons now deployed in Ukraine.

Clinton and Yeltsin also talked about efforts to promote peace in Bosnia, Myers said.

Bosnia and developments in the Middle East were also discussed on Tuesday in a telephone conversation between Clinton and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Myers said.

Students raid USIS centre in S Korea

SEOUL, Sept 8: Several hundred South Korean students, hurling rocks and paint, staged a surprise raid on the USIS center in the southwestern city of Kwangju early today, causing minor damage, officials said, reports AFP.

Police firing tear gas dispersed the students, most of whom were from Chonnam National University and Kwangju university, after they got to the gate of the US Information Service facility, a US official and South Korean police said.

The students, carrying signs reading "Yankee, go home" and "No intelligence gathering," damaged an intercom system and smashed the windows of patrol cars and police buses parked nearby, the US official in Seoul said.

No casualties were reported. Kwangju, some 250 kilometres (150 miles) south of here, was the scene of a bloody army crackdown on pro-democracy students in 1980 which left at least 200 people dead.

Disidents alleged the US commander of the combined forces command freed up frontline South Korean units to conduct the crackdown.

Off the Record

Groundbreaking 'Food Biography'

NEW YORK: A pound of bacon, a loaf of Italian bread, peanut butter and jelly, OK, Mr. Presley, dinner is served, reports AP.

Elvis' dietary needs — and they made his other pursuits appear tame — are the topic of "The Life and Cuisine of Elvis Presley," a no-rolls-barred account of the meals that stretched a thousand jump suits.

The groundbreaking "Food Biography" is the tongue-in-cheek work of David Adler, an Elvis fan who tracked the King's chow from cradle to ... well, you know where he died.

Adler interviewed Elvis' Graceland cooks, his valet, His Tupelo, Miss, neighbours. He gathered menus from Elvis' high school. And the Army. And Las Vegas hotels. He hung out with Elvis stepbrothers. And Elvis' croner, and Barbara Eden.

The "Dream of Jeanie" star worked with Elvis on the forgettable film "Flaming Star," where Presley played a half-breed who protects his Indian mother from white ranchers. (Remember?)

Barbara was his love interest. Her mealtime recollections of Presley: "Good table manners. If he didn't (have them), I would remember that."

Marital strife results in castration

MANASSAS: A woman who said she cut off her husband's penis after she was allegedly forced to have sex was indicted Tuesday on a malicious wounding charge, reports AP.

Lorena Bobbitt, 24, will appear in Circuit Court on Wednesday for a trial date, said Prince William County Commonwealth's Attorney Paul Ebert.

Bobbitt told police that she was awakened by her husband in the early morning of June 23 and forced to have sex. She also told police that after she cut off her husband's penis with a kitchen knife she threw it out her car window as she drove to the police station to report that she had been raped.

Police recovered the organ and surgeons were able to reattach it in a nine-hour operation.

John Wayne Bobbitt has been charged with marital sexual assault and a September 27 trial date has been set.

Bobbitt has denied the charge, and his version of the events on June 23 differs markedly from Mrs. Bobbitt's, said his attorney, Greg Murphy.

Mrs. Bobbitt is in the process of divorcing her husband.

Jackson hides away from fans, media

HUIS TEN BOSCH (Japan): Michael Jackson hid away yesterday from adoring fans and intrusive media, hold up in a fake 17th century Dutch village Theme Park on the coast of southern Japan, reports Reuter.

The embattled Pop superstar, plagued by child sex abuse allegations and reported illness on previous stops of his "Dangerous" Asian concert tour, arrived in Japan on Tuesday ahead of two scheduled weekend performances in Fukuoka.

Within minutes, he had boarded a bus for the 2½ hour journey to the fantasy village of Huis Ten Bosch, erected last year outside the city of Nagasaki at a cost of 225 billion yen (2.16 billion dollars).

There, Jackson and his entourage, including heavyweight bodyguards, boarded boats to glide along a reproduction Dutch canal to the palace, the fanciest of the Theme Park's five hotels used in the past by members of the imperial family.

The Americans spent the night there, in suites costing a cool 300,000 yen (2,900 US dollar) apiece.

'Half of AIDS infection cases can be in Asia by 2000'

SCHOOL of Medicine of the University of New South Wales, said Thailand has lost 1.9 billion dollars due to AIDS.

AIDS, caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), is an incurable disease which attacks the human body's immune system, rendering it vulnerable against infection.

The Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are sponsoring the conference, which centers on the effects of AIDS on the economy.

Although AIDS detection came much later in Asia, experts told the conference the disease was spreading rapidly particularly in India, Thailand and Myanmar.

Moscow plans to set up hotline with Turkey

MOSCOW, Sept 8: Russia plans to set up a hotline with Turkey to ease tension on the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are locked in undeclared war, and their southern neighbours Iran and Turkey, reports Reuter.

"We must step up efforts to settle the Karabakh conflict, to prevent the conflicting sides and their neighbours from turning this into an international dispute," Foreign Ministry spokesman Georgy Karasin said on Tuesday.

Thousands of people have died in the five-year conflict between Karabakh Armenians, with support from Yerevan, and Azeris over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Iran may call off death threat, says Rushdie

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"It seems to be now or never — in the next six or nine months Iran may publicly and finally say it has no further interest in pursuing Khomeini's murderous intentions," the British author told reporters.

"My patience is running out. I have said to the British government I am not prepared to do this for much longer," he said.

11th round of Sino-British talks opens

BEIJING, Sept 8: The 11th round of Sino-British talks on how to hold Hong Kong's last elections under British rule opened Wednesday, the second session this month, reports AP.

The 10th round, held Sept. 4 and 5, ended with little apparent progress. Britain's chief negotiator, Robin McLaren, said at the time that he expected at least two more rounds in September.

"We now need to make the best possible use of the time remaining before our foreign ministers meet at the end of this month," McLaren told reporters before going into closed-door talks with his Chinese counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Jiang Enzhu.

"We for our part are prepared to work as hard as necessary in order that we can make the 'maximum progress,' he said.

discrimination against AIDS victims, Dwyer said.

He said AIDS could be a "cruel blessing" because social reforms would be needed to combat it. "Unless so many factors that are wrong with society (are changed), we are not going to beat HIV," he added.

Kevin McGrath, the UNDP resident official here, said that aside from the cost of treating AIDS, there was also the cost of supporting orphans, increased absenteeism and fewer skilled labourers.

"Ultimately, HIV impact may increase the poverty level of countries already experiencing poor health care, inadequate sanitation and in some cases, famine," he said citing the African experience.

this time must act to combat it.

Dwyer called for a "Lesser of two evils" approach, but cautioned that control measures should be adopted to each country's culture.

He warned that New Delhi would have to find ways to raise the status of women and said that in the case of Indonesia and South Korea, "Complicity must disappear."

Bangkok would have to change attitudes of tourists visiting the country, while Yangon would have to change its attitude towards intravenous drug users, he added.

In the Philippines, the Roman Catholic church must accept "the lesser of two evils" and allow condom promotion, while Sri Lanka must fight

one million HIV-positive people in India and between 2,500,000 and 450,000 in Thailand, they said.

Myanmar which has detected 1,500,000 chiefly among intravenous drug users, could actually have as many as half a million cases, they added.

James Chin, an epidemiology professor at the University of California at Berkeley, said that only Thailand has a systematic collection of data so far.

Dwyer declared that "It's too late to avoid an emergency situation in Asia."

"We already have one." "History will judge us harshly for responding not quickly enough," he added.

He warned that by 2000, a million people in Asia could be infected each year, and that the

incidence of infection in the region could overtake Africa.

Chin said a "reasonable estimate" was that there would be between 30 and 40 million people infected with AIDS at the turn of the century.

The experts cited World Health Organization (WHO) figures which showed that the cost of AIDS prevention in developing countries would reach 2.58 billion dollars, and that 1.015 billion dollars would have to be allotted to treating sexually transmitted diseases, 800 million dollars to condom marketing, and 250 million dollars for school education.

WHO adviser on scientific affairs Lars Kalling said that "what is needed is political will," and that even countries with relatively low AIDS incidence at