

# BRIEFLY

**Rosa Parks assaulted:** Rosa Parks, whose refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man sparked the US civil rights movement, was assaulted at home Tuesday night and treated for facial injuries. AP reports from Detroit.

Parks, 81, was taken to Detroit Receiving Hospital, where she was initially listed in good condition with swelling on the right side of her face. She was released later Tuesday.

**8 Indian policemen drowned:** Eight policemen drowned when bandits fired on a boat ferrying them across a river in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a newspaper reported yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

The boat capsized following sustained gunfire near the Nepal frontier at midnight on Monday, the Asian Age reported.

**Fire razes Sumatra:** Drought-induced fires have razed around 1,400 hectares (around 3,458 acres) of forest in Indonesia's southern Sumatra province over the last two weeks, a local police official said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

A spokesman for the south Sumatra police, Lieutenant Suyanto, said by telephone that the precise extent of the fires was as yet unknown, but that around 1,400 hectares of forest in five districts in the province had burned.

**Army frees 36 Indians:** The army freed 36 Indians held captive by Maoist rebels and destroyed four guerilla camps in a remote region of Peru's Amazon jungle, the military said Tuesday. AP reports from Lima.

A military communique said army patrols captured two members of the Shining Path guerillas and confiscated 54 firearms during a four-day operation last week.

**UK to join Haiti invasion:** Britain is prepared to join a US-led multinational invasion of Haiti to topple the Caribbean island's military regime and restore democracy, a Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from London.

London will provide a royal navy frigate and a contingent of specialist military advisers to train troops for the UN-approved intervention, the spokesman said.

**Syrian hanged:** A 26-year-old Syrian convicted of murder and robbery was hanged early Wednesday in the northern city of Homs, the official newspaper Al-Baath said, reports from Damascus.

It said that Tareq bin Mohammed Rifaei had been tried and sentenced to death in connection with the March 4 fatal shooting of Faysal al-Zaim, a gold merchant in Homs, 180 kilometers (110 miles) north of Damascus.

**Sudan offers ties with Egypt:** Sudan's military leader Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, has offered to normalise relations with neighbouring Egypt in the interests of Arab unity, Libya's official Jana news agency reported on Tuesday. Reuter says from Tunis.

Bashir made his offer after arriving in Libya on Monday for festivities marking the 25th anniversary of the September 1 coup that brought Muammar Gaddafi to power there Jana said.

**Cambodian party expels 3:** The Cambodian People's Party, political win of the former Vietnamese-installed government, has expelled three ex-ministers in connection with last month's coup attempt, Reuter reports from Phnom Penh.

The decision to oust Prince Norodom Chakrapong, Sinsong and Sin Sen was announced in a statement dated August 30 at the end of a two-day party meeting.

**Police beat Wang:** A prominent political dissident said he was beaten by police who took him into custody Wednesday, the day after a high-level US official left Beijing, AP reports from Beijing.

Police have been stationed outside dissident Wang Dan's home for the past three months. Last week, he issued a statement to the press detailing police harassment and saying that he planned to lodge a formal complaint with Beijing courts if the surveillance did not stop.

**Japan to set up \$1b fund:** Japan announced yesterday it was setting up one billion dollars fund for cultural and vocational projects across Asia over the next decade as a token of apology for victims of Japan's aggression before 1945. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

"It is imperative for us Japanese to look squarely to our history with the peoples of neighbouring Asia and elsewhere," Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama said in a statement announcing the plan.

**Filipino blast death toll 79:** The death toll following a coal mine blast in the southern Philippines has reached 79 and could exceed 100, police said on Wednesday disputing lower casualty figures issued by the state-run colliery. AFP reports from Cebu, Philippines.

Police also alleged that a dynamite blast triggered the methane gas underground explosion near Malangas town late Monday, which officials of the Philippine National Oil Co (PNOC) strongly dispute.

**Angolan forces capture Belize:** Angolan government forces have captured the town of Belize in the northern oil enclave of Cabinda from FLEC separatists and UNITA rebels, state radio said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Luanda.

At the end of Tuesday morning after heavy fighting government forces took the town, it said.

**Quake rocks Hokkaido:** A strong earthquake rocked the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido yesterday, measuring five on the Japanese scale of one to seven; the Meteorological Agency said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The agency said the earthquake occurred at 6:07 pm (0907 GMT) and was centred on the city of Kushiro in eastern Hokkaido.

**Indian students' march:** Some 250 students marched to the US embassy in New Delhi demanding Pakistan be declared a "terrorist state" by President Bill Clinton's administration for supporting insurgency in India, witnesses said, AFP reports from New Delhi.

The activists of the students action committee also denounced a statement by former Premier Nawaz Sharif that Islamabad had a nuclear bomb and could use it against India in the event of a war over the disputed northern state of Kashmir.

**Chakrapong in France:** Cambodian Prince Norodom Chakrapong, linked to a coup attempt last month in his homeland and declared unwelcome in two countries where he took refuge, arrived Tuesday in France, AP reports from Paris.

The prince arrived in Paris on a flight from Helsinki, Finland, and headed immediately for Montpellier from where he issued a statement saying he was "forced to leave my country." He took up residence with his son-in-law, a former Socialist member of parliament, Jean-Marie Cambacceres.

**380 S Yemeni soldiers return:** More than 380 South Yemeni soldiers who fled to Saudi Arabia after the civil war returned to Sanaa Tuesday nearly two weeks after the deadline for an amnesty proclaimed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. AFP reports from Sanaa.

Yemen television said that the 383 soldiers who flew in on two Saudia airline jet, would be pardoned even though they had come home late.

**Quake jolts E Indonesia:** An earthquake measuring 5.7 on the Richter Scale rocked the Alor islands in eastern Indonesia early yesterday, the local meteorological and geophysical agency said. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

There were no immediate report of casualties. The quake was centred in the Flores Sea, 70 km (45 miles) northwest of the Kalabahi town of Alor, and occurred at 6:42 am (19:42 GMT).

# Saudi Islamic scholars' call to boycott Cairo confce

RIYADH, Aug 31: The kingdom's top Islamic scholars Wednesday asked all Muslims to boycott a UN population conference in Cairo and called on them to help stop "the spread of sin," reports AP.

They said a draft document to be presented at the conference encourages abortion, contraception, premarital sex and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

"All the document contained was a vicious assault on Muslim society and a violent confrontation with it," the Supreme Council of Ulemas, or religious scholars, said in a statement.

They said the UN draft was aimed at turning Islamic society "into one of disease-ridden sex perverts without morals."

The council, led by the kingdom's chief Islamic legis-

lator Sheik Abdul-Aziz bin Baz, huddled for four days in emergency session in the resort city of Taif before issuing the statement.

They said the draft document prepared at the United Nations for the conference "is immoral and heretical."

The statement, distributed by the official Saudi Press Agency and read on state-run radio, said Muslims must boycott the conference.

"Muslims, governments and peoples, individuals, and groups, should stand one line in face against any call for loose morals, permissiveness and the spread of sin," it said.

Saudi Arabia and at least one other Islamic nation, Sudan, have said they are boycotting the conference, which is to open Saturday. Lebanon also is not participating and

# India, Pakistan urged to halt N-plans

NEW DELHI, Aug 31: International mediators pressed India and Pakistan on Tuesday to renounce their alleged atomic weapons programmes as Islamabad and Delhi were each reported to have expelled one of the other's diplomats in a spying row, reports Reuter.

A meeting in New Delhi of a US-led group of nations seeking to stem the spread of missile technology urged India to halt its alleged nuclear warfare project.

Senior officials from the United States, Britain, Switzerland and Australia told the Indian government that New

**Honduras to accept 5000 Cubans**

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Israeli border guards and soldiers keep a tight security around the tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron on August 30 as the Interior Committee of the Israeli Parliament visits the site where an Israeli settler murdered 29 Muslims last February. — AFP photo

# UNHCR official talks with Yangon junta leaders

BANGKOK, Aug 31: A senior official for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) met leaders of Myanmar's ruling junta in Yangon on Tuesday, state-run radio Yangon reported, says Reuter.

Werner Blatter, the Geneva-based UNHCR director for Asia-Oceania, held talks with Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary General of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) — official name of ruling Myanmar's military regime — the radio said in a dispatch monitored here.

The meeting, held in the Defence Ministry, was also attended by Myanmar Foreign Minister, Ohn Gyaw and Director General of Immigration and Manpower Department, Maung Aung.

# Chinese vote to disband HK legislature

BEIJING, Aug 31: Fulfilling earlier threats, Chinese legislators voted Wednesday to disband Hong Kong's legislature and other elected institutions when the colony reverts to Chinese rule in 1997, reports AP.

The vote means that democratic reforms implemented in Hong Kong by Chris Patten, the colony's London-appointed governor, are unlikely to survive the Chinese takeover.

The vote, reported by the official Xinhua news agency, came on the final day of an eight-day session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

The committee also discussed major financial legislation, including laws on commercial banking, advertising

# Strike paralyses Kashmir

SRINAGAR: A strike called by Muslim separatists to mourn the death of nine of their comrades paralysed the troubled Kashmir valley today, police and residents said, reports AFP.

All shops and businesses, government offices, banks and post offices were shut in this Kashmir summer capital and other Muslim majority towns in the valley, police sources said.

Civilian traffic went off the roads in Srinagar, the urban hub of a four-year-old Muslim separatist campaign which has left more than 10,000 people dead in Kashmir since 1989.

The shutdown was called by the outlawed Hizbul Mujahideen in memory of nine of its members who were shot dead by Indian security forces in north Kashmir on Sunday. One of the dead was a foreign mercenary, the group said.

# Ravi Shankar honoured

WASHINGTON, Aug 31: Sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, a legend in his lifetime, was conferred an honorary Doctorate of Music by the University of Victoria, Canada, at a special convocation on the eve of the XV Commonwealth Games, reports PTL.

Pandit Ravi Shankar, who live in Encinitas near San Diego, California joined world renowned personalities in the fields of sports, performing arts social work, music and academics from England, Australia, Canada, Malaysia and Nigeria in receiving the honorary doctorate.

# France expels 20 Algerians

PARIS, Aug 31: France today expelled 20 Algerians who have been interned as suspected Muslim guerrilla sympathisers, the Interior Ministry said, reports Reuter.

It did not say where the men, held for up to three weeks at a disused army camp northeast of Paris, were sent to.

Earlier this month the government interned a total of 26 Algerians in the village of Folembrey until they could be deported to a third country.

"The country of destination having been decided, the expulsions were carried out today for 20 of the 26 people under forced residence at Folembrey," the ministry said.

The Algerians were detained in police swoops following the killing of five French government workers by Muslim guerrillas at a French embassy housing compound in Algiers on August 3.

# Russia completes troops pullout from Germany

BERLIN, Aug 31: The commander in chief of the Russian army in Germany today formally ended almost half a century of Russian and Soviet military presence on German soil, reports Reuter.

"I report to you that the international agreement on the temporary stay and the complete withdrawal of the Soviet army in Germany has been fulfilled," General Matvei Burlakov told Russian President Boris Yeltsin and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, gathered with guests of honour on Berlin's Gendarmenmarkt Square.

Soviet troops stayed in eastern Germany as an occupation force after helping to defeat Hitler and conquering Berlin at the end of World War Two. Later they were kept in East Germany as part of the Moscow controlled Warsaw Pact military alliance.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of East Germany's Communist regime in 1989 brought the four war victors — the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and France together to agree the withdrawal of all their troops and give united Germany full sovereignty over its own territory once more.

The pullout of over 340,000 soldiers and their equipment, now under the control of Russia as successor to the Soviet Union, took four years and represented one of the biggest troop movements in history.

AFP adds: President Boris Yeltsin praised the German people Tuesday as he arrived in Berlin for ceremonies marking the completion of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Germany.

# Off the Record

## Unprecedented climb!

TEHRAN: A group of Iranian women, fully covered in keeping with Islamic tradition, climbed to the top of the country's highest mountain for the first time since the 1979 revolution, a newspaper reported Tuesday, says AFP.

The group of 16 students from Tehran university, climbed the northeastern flank of the Damavand in north-eastern Iran to the peak, 5,671 meters (18,710 feet) above ground, the daily Hamshahri said.

It was an unprecedented climb for women who had been increasingly excluded from sports since the revolution because of religious restrictions.

But mountain climbing has become considered a practical sport for women because they can take part fully covered meeting Islamic standards.

The team had already climbed several mountain tops in Iran this year, the paper added.

## 3 days in bank vault

NEW DELHI: An Indian woman survived nearly three days locked in a Calcutta bank vault by chanting religious verses and swallowing her saliva, the Indian Express newspaper reported Wednesday, says Reuter.

It said Pushpa Singhania, 52, was going through her safety deposit box on Saturday when the lights went out and the vault door closed.

She survived 68 hours through the normal Sunday closing and Monday's Hindu religious holiday to be overheard chanting by a cleaner as he started work on Tuesday morning, the newspaper said.

Then, things got tricky.

Bank officials summoned to open the vault in front of police and relatives — who had been searching for her frantically — refused to do so until the Singhania family promised in writing not to sue the bank for negligence, the newspaper said.

"We told them that if they did not unlock the door, we would break it open ourselves," the newspaper quoted brother-in-law Vinod Singhania as saying.

"This quietened them and at last they did what they should have done as soon as they reached the bank," he said. They opened the vault.

On Tuesday evening Pushpa Singhania was still in a state of shock and under sedation, the newspaper added.

## Military-trained dolphins flown to new home

WASHINGTON: The first military-trained dolphins from the US navy mammal fleet were being flown Tuesday to a new home as part of post-coldwar scale down, the navy said, reports Reuter.

The two Atlantic bottlenose dolphins were on duty in San Diego, California, home of the navy's 125-strong marine mammal fleet. They were headed for Gulf world, a marine park in the northern Florida panhandle.

The transfer is part of the US military scale down. Each of the navy's dolphins, sea lions and beluga whales costs an estimated 15,000 dollar to 20,000 dollar to feed and maintain.

"We have 25 more dolphins than what we need to support our programme," said Lieutenant Kenneth Ross, a navy spokesman at the Pentagon.

He said about 70 dolphins will remain on active duty, for sonar-related research, to guard ships and help recover underwater objects.

Earlier this year, the navy began fishing for new homes for the mammals after congress authorised their de-commission. The navy concluded they could not simply be set free because they may lack survival skills developed in the wild.

## Japan's hottest disco shuts down

TOKYO: A Japanese disco that set off a nationwide craze for exhibitionistic dancing was closing its doors Wednesday, less than a year after authorities stripped it of its claim to fame, reports AP.

Three years ago, Juliana's disco began admitting scantily clad females for free, and gave them an elevated stage to dance on.

Soon, hundreds of young Japanese women with boring, dead-end office jobs were spending their nights gyrating away in G strings and tiny miniskirts — before a crowd of men who paid a 55 dollars (5,500-yen) entry fee to watch.

Last November, though, police pressured the disco to ban G-strings, ultra-short skirts and stage dancing. They claimed some women were using the fire escape as a place to change from street clothes into their scanty striptease outfits.

# Benazir may not attend Cairo confce

ISLAMABAD, Aug 31: Benazir Bhutto, leader of a country that grows by 3.5 million people annually may withdraw from next week's United Nations population conference due to the mounting controversy surrounding the event, reports AP.

Benazir is scheduled to give one of the main speeches when the conference opens September 5 in Cairo, Egypt. But she's reconsidering her trip as a growing number of Muslim nations and groups complain that the gathering is a Western attempt to advocate "immorality."

The prime minister's visit is still under consideration. No decision has been made.

Shanaz Wazir Ali, a special assistant to the prime minister for the social sector, said in an interview Wednesday.

Benazir enjoys the international spotlight that such conferences provide, and her attendance was considered a certainty until the controversy began heating up.

Benazir, who is probably the most prominent woman in the Islamic world, will be in an awkward position if she goes to Cairo.

Her government advocates family planning, and she would likely face strong criticism from conservative Muslims opposed to the conference.

Saudi Arabia and Sudan announced this week they would not participate and other Muslim states may follow suit.

Mrs. Ali, who guides Pakistan's family planning programme said the government had reservations about the draft proposal for the Cairo conference, which raises issues such as abortion and sex outside of marriage.

"We're waiting to see what influence the prime minister can have over the draft," said Munir Akram, a spokesman for Pakistan's Foreign Ministry.

Pakistan is already the world's seventh most populous nation with 126 million people, and it adds another 3.5 million each year, making it the third largest contributor to world population after China and India.

The country is considered one of the world's "most serious family planning failures," according to a report issued last year by Population Action International, a private, US-based group.

Benazir's government has sought to improve family planning services, but in a cautious