

## BRIEFLY

**UN troops kill 4 Somalis:** Four Somali gunmen were killed and several others wounded in an exchange of gunfire with Zimbabwean troops serving in the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia, a UN military spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from Mogadishu.

There were no casualties among the UN troops during the fire fight which occurred on Friday in the town of Balad, north of Mogadishu, the spokesman said.

**2300 arrested in Rwanda:** The new Rwandan government has arrested up to 2,300 people in connection with massacres during the country's recent bloody civil war, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced Friday. AFP reports from Kigali.

Over the past nine days authorities have arrested almost as many people they did in the previous two months, said Marjolaine Martin, joint head of the ICRC delegation in Kigali, the ICRC said the figures were compiled by its own staff. Martin added that most of the prisoners visited by the ICRC were in Kigali, Butare, Gitarama and Kibungo.

**Change in China's plans:** China will not hold a military parade as part of its celebration of the 45th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic, a newspaper said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The Communist Party central committee has called for widespread celebrations on October 1, especially in the capital, but has decided against a military parade, the Legal daily said.

**UNITA accepts UN peace plan:** The UN Security Council on Friday said it would not consider further sanctions against UNITA because the Angolan rebels have formally accepted a UN peace plan, AP reports from United Nations.

In a non-binding statement, the 15-nation council said it considers a letter from UNITA "as constituting the required formal acceptance by UNITA of the complete set of proposals on national reconciliation."

**Vietnam claims Spratly:** Vietnam has restated its claim to sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, rejecting a Chinese statement this week that the archipelago in the South China Sea was Chinese territory. Reuter reports from Hanoi.

The Spratlys, potentially rich in oil, are also claimed wholly or in part by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan.

**Pak army in rescue operation:** Pakistani troops and navy divers were enlisted in a massive operation on Friday to rescue thousands of people stranded by floods in the Dadu district of southern Sind Province, officials said. AFP reports from Karachi.

Conditions in Dadu became more dangerous after a breach in an embankment at Manchar Lake. More than 70 divers, along with boats and other equipment, were rushed to the area on Thursday to help rescue workers and troops move local residents to safer regions.

**Abiola needs medical help:** Jailed Nigerian opposition leader Moshod Abiola needs urgent specialist medical help and will not be able to attend the resumption of his treason trial, the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) said in a statement on Friday. AFP reports from Lagos.

The opposition leader's health had shown a "sudden deterioration," the association said without specifying the nature of the illness.

**Bid to escape UK prison foiled:** Prison and police officers recaptured six inmates, including five IRA men, after an armed breakout bid from Britain's maximum-security prison, authorities said Saturday. AP reports from London.

The escapees were spotted late Friday cutting through an inner fence of Whiteomoor prison about 110 miles (170 kms) north of London in rural Cambridgeshire.

**Contact lost with satellite:** Contract was lost on Friday with a satellite launched into orbit from French Guiana by a Western European Ariane rocket for the US communication giant AT and T a spokesman for the company said. Reuter reports from Paris.

There is a problem, we've lost contact with the satellite," the spokesman told Reuters in Paris. The Ariane-42L rocket had blasted off at 9:29 pm (0029 GMT on Friday) from the European Space Agency (ESA) launch centre in Kourou on South America's northeast coast.

**Japan to send 480 troops:** Japan plans to send more than 480 self-defence force members to Africa starting September 16 for three months on a humanitarian mission to help Rwandan refugees. Jiji press reported on Friday. AFP says from Tokyo.

The news agency said the defence agency was scheduled to dispatch the soldiers to the Zairean town of Goma to engage in medical treatment, water supply and air transport.

**7 pc of Lebanese die in war:** Between 150,000 and 200,000 people or seven per cent of the population were killed in the 15-year civil war in Lebanon, according to an official report published in the press on Friday. AFP says from Beirut.

About 10 per cent or 300,000 people were also wounded in the fighting and half of them left with permanent side-effects, said the report from the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs.

**Palestinian shot in Hebron:** An Israeli settler opened fire in the streets in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron on Friday, wounding a Palestinian in the head, Palestinian sources said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The gunman stopped his car in a commercial district and fired his pistol in several directions. One bullet hit 25-year-old Hetam Mahmud Abu-Rayhan in the head, the sources said.

**5 executed in Saudi Arabia:** Two Pakistani drug smugglers and three Saudi murderers including a man who burned his father to death in a locked car, were executed in Saudi Arabia on Friday. Gulf news agencies reported. Reuter says from Dubai.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said two Pakistani men, named as Dalbar Mohammad Qol and Ali Nawaz Mohammad Aziz Amir Ali, were executed in the port of Jeddah after being convicted of smuggling heroin into the Kingdom.

**40 hurt in Burundi blast:** Some 40 people were injured, some seriously, when a grenade exploded on Friday in the central market of the Burundian capital Bujumbura, police said. AFP reports from Bujumbura.

Police said they did not know who lobbed the grenade into a part of the market where spare parts for cars and ironmongery are sold.

**Quake hits S Philippines:** A moderately strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.6 rocked the southern Philippines Saturday, but no casualties or serious property damage were reported. AP says from Manila.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the quake struck at 12:54 pm (0454 GMT) off the coast of Davao Oriental Province, about 65 kilometers (40 miles) east of the town of Banganga and about 1,025 kilometers (640 miles) southeast of Manila.

**Muslims to continue struggle:** A Tajik Muslim opposition leader rejected the government's offer to take part in presidential elections, pledging to continue the armed struggle, news reports said on Friday. AP says from Moscow.

Meanwhile, opposition forces continued to battle government units and the Russian soldiers who support them.

## India slams views on Kashmir Islamabad misleads OIC: Delhi

NEW DELHI, Sept 10: India on Friday slammed the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) for its views on Kashmir, saying its arch-foe Pakistan had misled the Muslim nations' group, reports Reuter.

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) appealed to India on Friday to open talks with Pakistan to settle their dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Secretary-General Hamid Al-Gabid, addressing a news conference at the end of a three-day Foreign Ministers' Conference of the 51-Nation OIC, also urged India to release political prisoners in Kashmir.

A resolution adopted by the conference condemned what it called "The continuing massive violations of human rights of the Kashmiri people" in the two-thirds of the region ruled by India, where New Delhi is

fighting a separatist revolt by rejecting the OIC's views.

"Pakistan has blatantly misused its position as the host country to mislead the member states of the OIC and divert attention from Pakistan's record of supporting terrorism and directed against the political unity and territorial integrity of India," Singh said in a statement.

He accused Pakistan of using the OIC forum to generate false propaganda that relations between India and Pakistan were strained to the extent it was impossible to have peaceful bilateral negotiations.

"Pakistan has indulged in war-mongering, nuclear adventurism and threats to give credibility to its claims. Pakistan must not delude itself into believing that many find this convincing," Singh said.

"Despite these provocations, we continue our offer to

address bilateral issues, including issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir, in a dialogue with Pakistan ...," he said.

India-Pakistan have fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir, since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

The Islamabad conference asked Gaid to establish contact with India and Pakistan and "the true representatives" of the Kashmiri people to promote a just and peaceful settlement of the issue.

It urged India to allow international Human Rights groups to visit Kashmir, where police and hospitals have reported more than 17,000 deaths in the insurgency since early 1990.

The Islamabad conference decided to set up a contact group on Kashmir at the

United Nations to coordinate member states' efforts for "promoting the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people."

Singh said there were several OIC members who respected India's territorial integrity and rejected terrorism and interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

"India reciprocates such sentiments and looks forwards to working with those nations to enhance our mutual cooperation," Singh said.

New Delhi regard the whole of Kashmir as an integral part of India. But Islamabad wants the predominantly Muslim Kashmiris to decide in a UN-mandated plebiscite whether to join Islamic Pakistan or Hindu-Majority India.

Some of the Kashmiri militant groups seek to reunite Kashmir into an independent state.



Police officers look at pictures and paraphernalia depicting Muslim deviant Ashaari Muhammad which were seized from Malaysia's outlawed Islamic sect Al-Arqam in a dawn raid at its headquarters in Sungai Bera, outside Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP photo.

## Mahathir hints at early polls

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10: Malaysia's governing coalition will not put off dealing with controversial national issues despite an impending election, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was quoted on Saturday as saying, reports AP.

"As a responsible government we cannot wait to deal with problems just because of an impending election," Mahathir said in Alor Star, his hometown in northwestern Malaysia, the Star daily reported.

The five-year term of the National Front coalition of 14 ethnic parties, that has ruled the country since independence from Britain in 1957, ends in October next year.

But speculation is widespread that Mahathir will call the polls this year because of the booming economy and

other factors that favour his government despite a recent spate of setbacks.

The coalition, which controls parliament and 12 of Malaysia's 13 state legislatures with more than two-third majority, is expected to easily retain power despite the problems like the recent controversy over suppression of the Al-Arqam Islamic sect.

The Muslim-dominated moderate government outlawed the 100,000 strong extremist sect last month for deviationist teachings. On Friday, police detained 121 people in the first step towards a nationwide crackdown.

"Although our action against Al-Arqam may have caused us to be unpopular, we had a task and that was to protect the interest of Islam ... not our interest in elections," Mahathir

was quoted as saying.

Six sect members, including Ashaari, are being held under the Internal Security Act which allows indefinite imprisonment without trial, and criticism from human rights groups has been harsh.

Other major problems confronting the government include an alleged affair between a top party official and a 15-year-old student. There is a cloud of heavy smog over the capital Kuala Lumpur, for which some blame the government, and a recent fire at Kuala Lumpur International Airport — the fourth in two years — knocked out approach radar.

But some analyst say low unemployment and 8 per cent annual economic growth in recent years may give the current government enough clout to sail through early elections.

## Pakistan, China deny, US reports on M-11 missiles

ISLAMABAD, Sept 10: Pakistan and China both denied on Friday a report published in the United States that Islamabad was buying from Beijing M-11 ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, reports Reuter.

"We don't have them," Pakistani Foreign Minister Aseef Ahmad Ali told reporters, denying a report by the Washington Times newspaper on Wednesday.

Earlier a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing dismissed the report and said such a fictitious report is most irresponsible.

Ali said Pakistan had repeatedly denied such reports in the past and added: "They insist saying it again and again so what can we do about it."

He accused the Western press of ignoring the development and deployment of a family of missiles by India,

## First official US team arrives in DPRK

SEOUL, Sept 10: The first official US delegation to travel to North Korea arrived in its capital Pyongyang to discuss the opening of diplomatic offices, a major step toward normalising relations, reports AP.

The American officials, led by State Department Korea specialist Lynn Turk, are to hold technical talks on how Washington and Pyongyang can open liaison offices in each other's capitals.

The United States has never had relations with North Korea since its founding as a communist state in 1948. Opening liaison offices would be a major step toward mutual recognition.

The delegation arrived in Pyongyang on Saturday evening, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said in a short report.

The US State Department said it sees no symbolic signif-

icance in the fact that American officials are going to Pyongyang for the talks, but spokesman Mike McCurry conceded last week that the North Koreans might.

North Korea has always been keenly aware of political symbolism. During the Korean War, the North insisted that truce talks take place at Kaesong, an ancient Korean capital occupied by the communist armies.

UN negotiators had to drive there under a white flag of truce, which gave the appearance that UN forces were arriving under a flag of surrender to seek terms. The talks were later shifted at US insistence to the neutral border village of Panmunjom.

US officials say relations won't be normalised unless North Korea lets inspectors in to dispel suspicions that it has been secretly building nuclear weapons.

## China summons US ambassador to lodge protest

BEIJING, Sept 10: China summoned the United States ambassador in Beijing today to strongly protest Washington's decision to upgrade its relations with Taiwan, the official Xinhua news agency reported, says AFP.

US ambassador to China Stapleton Roy was summoned by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu, the news agency said, providing no further details.

On Thursday the ministry's spokesman, Shen Guofang, called the US move to increase informal ties with Taipei, "interfering in China's internal affairs," which could seriously damage Sino-US ties.

Washington on Wednesday announced, for the first time since the United States officially recognised the People's Republic of China 15 years ago, its intention to reconsider Taiwan's political status. Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province.

## Madame Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Sept 10: The widow of late nationalist leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek flew to Taipei today and was greeted at the airport by President Lee Teng-Hui and ruling Nationalist Party leaders, reports Reuter.

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, who is believed to be 95 and lives in seclusion in the United States, returned to Taiwan to visit a niece now in hospital in Taipei with cancer.

A smiling Madame Chiang, dressed in a navy blue traditional cheongsam, accepted a bouquet of yellow orchids from the President and his wife before shaking hands with premier Lien Chan and other party vice-chairmen.

She fled to Taiwan with her husband after the defeat of the nationalist forces by the communists in 1949.

## NATO war games from tomorrow

WARSAW, Sept 10: Senior NATO and eastern European military leaders will gather in Poland Monday for joint military operations organised under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's partnership for peace agreement, reports AFP.

US General William Carter and Polish General Zygmunt Sadowski will direct the joint manoeuvres, organised under the programme agreed earlier this year to involve eastern countries more closely in NATO operations.

General George Joulwan, the commander-in-chief of NATO forces in Europe and interim NATO Secretary General Silvio Balanzino will be present at the opening of the exercise on Monday in Biedrusko near Poznan, in western Poland.

Polish President Lech Walesa will be present on September 16, when exercises end.

Thirteen countries will take part.

## Bosnia urges US to lift ban unilaterally

ISLAMABAD, Sept 10: Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said here today he was hopeful the United States would unilaterally lift an arms embargo, reports AFP.

"A champion of democracy, will not like to go on record as having kept the embargo on a country which is a victim of fascist aggression," Silajdzic said before his departure after attending a major Islamic conference here.

"The embargo is illegal, unjust," he said, adding "we have the commitment from the US government to work on lifting it multilaterally or unilaterally."

The Bosnian leader said the multi-ethnic American society was more responsive to the problem in the war-torn republic compared with the "inertia" shown by Europe which seeds Bosnia as a "nation state."

Bosnia has always been a mixed society of three ethnic

groups, Silajdzic said.

The arms ban had produced "only negative results and destruction," he said and asked: "Why keep it then?"

"It is the duty of the international community, the UN Security Council and each of its five permanent members to end the embargo and uphold the legal, human and international right of Bosnian people to defend themselves," he said.

He said Bosnians accepted the proposed peace plan although it was "unjust" stressing that all conflicts, including Indo-Pakistan Kashmir dispute, should be resolved in a spirit of compromise. Bosnia should be made a "model" for resolving similar problems and situations that may arise in the world in future, he said.

Silajdzic praised the decisions in support of his country taken by the extraordinary meeting of foreign ministers of Islamic states in Islamabad, which ended Friday.

## Protest against killing in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Sept 10: Thousands of people came out on the streets of the state capital and shops downed their shutters on Saturday to protest the killing of a teenager reportedly by paramilitary troops, reports AP.

The strike, barely a day after soldiers killed 11 people in a bus when militants fired at them, highlighted the recurrent disruptions in the state where rebels are fighting for independence.

Encounters are frequent between the rebels and the security forces trying to crush the Muslim insurrection, which turned violent four years ago and has since left 9,500 people dead.

On Saturday, residents of Nowhatta, a crowded neighbourhood of Srinagar, shouted slogans against the Border Security Force soldiers as the body of Mohammad Sayeed Gujri was taken to his house.

in a procession.

They accused the paramilitary soldiers of killing the 16-year-old at point blank range on Friday. Witnesses said Gujri was one of the three suspected militants rounded up by the paramilitary soldiers and taken to their camp in Nowhatta.

Gujri's body was found lying on the street outside the camp, witnesses said. Officials of the paramilitary organisation were not immediately available for comment.

On Friday, a defence spokesman, giving the daily summary of clashes for the previous 24 hours, said 54 people, including 30 militants, were killed in various clashes in the state.

The separatists in India's only Muslim-majority state accuse the federal government of discrimination in jobs and education. Although the government is secular, about 82 per cent of India's 910 million population is Hindu.

## Off the Record

### Plants bleed when cut!

LOUGHBOROUGH, England: A botany professor accused vegetarians on Friday of being cruel to plants when they tuck into a bowl of salad or slice a juicy tomato, reports Reuter.

"If you cut a lettuce you are being awfully cruel," Professor Malcolm Wilkins of Glasgow University said in a speech about plant sensitivity to a British science conference.

Wilkins said plants are sophisticated organisms which "bleed" a clear liquid when cut. "Plants are sensitive organisms. But students tell me they are vegetarians because they don't like animals being killed," he said.

"I say to them 'you are perfectly happy to slice up a tomato or cucumber ... where is your logic?'"

Wilkins told the conference at Loughborough University in central England that plants are much more sophisticated than people think and some emit crackling noises inaudible to the human ear when they need water.

### Transferred for kissing

KUALA LUMPUR: An immigration officer who kissed a foreign journalist after she arrived in Malaysia has been transferred from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport pending a further investigation, officials said, reports AP.

Immigration Department Public Relations Officer Mohamed Aris Chonin told reporters Saturday that the officer had confessed to kissing Galina Petounina, 36, from Kyrgyzstan when she arrived here nine days ago to attend a UN conference.

Petounina had complained to the Malay Mail afternoon daily that when she arrived the officer kept one portion of her arrival card, saying he would deliver it to her personally at her hotel room.

She protested, but he went to her room later to deliver the card and talked to her for about 30 minutes, after which he asked her to kiss him, Petounina said.

She thought it was the local custom and complied, and he returned the kiss.

Later a conference official told her it was not a custom and she complained to the Malay Mail, which carried the report.

### Italians prefer spaghetti after making love

ROME: Italians are no longer content to smoke a cigarette after making love — these days they prefer to tuck into a plate of spaghetti, according to a study of sex and food, reports Reuter.

"Nowadays after sex it's more important to eat than to have a smoke ... and what people like is spaghetti," Roman psychologist Willy Pastini, author of the survey, said on Friday.

Pastini also said a woman in love would lose her appetite, while a man became more ravenous.

He told the newspaper Corriere Della Sera this was not the only difference he discovered.

"Italian men think a good dinner is enough to seduce a woman, while women expect a man to know how to talk as well," he said.

## Cairo confce fights against female circumcision

CAIRO, Sept 10: The UN population conference has taken up the fight against the traditional practice of female circumcisions, which leaves two million young girls scarred for life each year, reports AFP.

The conference action plan states that government should take urgent measures to end female genital mutilation and set up prevention services for men and women to deter them from carrying on the tradition.

The campaign against female circumcision — the removal of some or most of the external genitalia — was first launched in 1952 before the UN Human Rights Commission.

But 40 years on, it has made

little progress.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 85 to 115 million women have undergone genital mutilation, principally in Africa.

There are three types of circumcision, WHO says. The simplest, the clitoridectomy, is the removal of the clitoris, while the second, excision, involves the removal of all or part of the labia minora and part of the labia majora.

The third, called infibulation, adds to that the sewing together of the sides of the vulva, leaving only a tiny hole through which urine and menstrual blood can flow.

East African women are the worst affected. In Djibouti and Somalia, where infibulation is

the rule, excision is carried out on 98 per cent of women.

In Eritrea and Ethiopia 90 per cent of women are circumcised — regardless of whether they are Christian, Muslim or Falasha (Jewish).

Likewise in Egypt, half of women are circumcised whatever their religion, disproving common misconceptions that mutilation is confined to any religion in particular.

It is carried out without anaesthetic and often by unqualified people, with rudimentary instruments and no hygiene. Apart from terrible pain, the risks of haemorrhaging and infection are high.

The operation makes sexual relations very painful and it can play a large part in mater-

nal and infant deaths during childbirth. Because it prolongs labour, it can lead to the baby being suffocated.

Action programmes launched by WHO — which forbids its medical staff to carry out the operation — and non-government organisations have had limited effect so far.

"A voluntary policy is not enough, and social practices like this can only evolve with education," said Jeanne Dina Nfon Priso, a Cameroon doctor.

"Tradition has to be preserved because it is part of identity, but not traditions like this which run counter to women's health and basic rights," she said.

Often a rite of passage, circumcision is above all a way of

controlling female sexual desire, which it deliberately represses.

A woman who has undergone infibulation is "opened" with a knife or piece of glass the first time her husband has sex with her, so her virginity is guaranteed for him.

For Dr. Nfon Priso, one simple principle lies behind circumcision, "the woman is there to give pleasure to the man, but the idea that she too has a right to pleasure remains taboo," she says.

The nine-day UN international conference on population and development groups delegations from 182 countries and runs until September 13.

## Tajik Muslim rebels seize strategic town

DUSHANBE, Sept 10: The Tajik Islamic opposition seized control of a strategic town in central Tajikistan following fighting in which at least 20 government soldiers were killed and 20 disappeared. Russian military officials said today, reports AFP.

The opposition seized the town of Tavaklara, 150 kilometres (100 miles) east of Dushanbe and took control of the road between Dushanbe and Momoosomabad.

The capture of the town will force the government forces to fall back towards the Kullab region, the Russian official said.