

# BRIEFLY

## EU FMs meet for second day:

European Union Foreign Ministers began the second day of an informal meeting in Usedom yesterday, expected to discuss links between the EU and eastern and central Europe. AFP reports from Germany.

The ministers, joined by their counterparts from Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden, had agreed Saturday to support a partial lifting of sanctions against Serbia in response to Belgrade's agreement for observers to be placed along its border with Bosnia.

## Iran to open N-centre:

Iran is to open a new nuclear research centre in the northwestern province of east Azerbaijan province, the Iranian Atomic Energy chief Reza Amrollahi said yesterday. AFP reports from Tehran.

The first phase of the complex in Banab near the provincial city of Tabriz is set to open within the next six months, he said quoted by Tehran radio.

## Quake hits northern Thailand:

An earthquake measuring around five on the Richter scale hit the Mae Sot district of Thailand's northern Chiang Rai province on Sunday, a meteorological department official said. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

The epicentre of the quake, which hit at 8.31 am (0131 GMT), was in a hilly area with a small population. The meteorological department had no reports of major damage, deaths or injuries so far. We have a report of some damage to the walls of a hospital in Mae Sot town, the official said.

## Bus mishap kills 9 in Moscow:

A bus carrying mushroom pickers collided head-on with a truck on the Moscow-St Petersburg highway, killing nine people and injuring seven, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported Sunday. AP reports from Moscow.

The accident took place Saturday in the Valdai district about 500 kilometers (300 miles) west of Moscow, the report said.

## Storm spares Puerto Rico:

Tropical Storm Debby spared Puerto Rico as it moved westward through the Caribbean early Sunday. The storm earlier had killed three people and caused extensive damage to the islands of St. Lucia and Martinique. AP reports from San Juan.

The National Weather Service canceled a tropical storm warning and flash flood watch for the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as Debby moved west northwest, passing some 150 miles (240 kilometres) south of Mona Islands, Puerto Rico.

## 30,000 die in Angolan war:

About 30,000 citizens were killed in the past two years in the central Angolana city of Kuito in the fighting between government troops and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), a reporter of Angolan news agency, Joao Borges, said Saturday. Xinhua reports from Luanda.

Borges, who had been covering news in Kuito for over two years, briefed the local reporters on the situation of the city, saying the fighting there were very fierce and casualties heavy. He added that the population there were only 150,000, half of that before the war.

## 4 Chinese trawlers seized:

Marine police seized four Chinese trawlers and their 44 crew yesterday fishing illegally in South Korean waters. Yonhap news agency reported. Reuter says from Seoul.

It said the trawlers were fishing near the western island of Wl. Police were not available to confirm the report.

## 10 charged with corruption:

Seven Taiwanese army officers and three civilians have been charged with corruption in a defence procurement case, newspapers reported yesterday. Reuter says from Taipei.

The officers were charged by military prosecutors and the three civilians by a district court.

## Violence continues in Burundi:

At least 70 people were killed in an attack almost a week ago on a catholic church in Burundi as ethnic violence continued to escalate, the Red Cross said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Bujumbura.

"People are being killed here almost every day now, no body claims responsibility for the attacks, it's just speculation from both sides and rumours," Daniel Philippine, chief of delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Bujumbura, told Reuters.

## 3 Swedish journalists held:

Swedish television reported Saturday that three of its journalists had been arrested by Turkish police in the town of Kulu, south of Ankara, for an unknown reason. AFP reports from Stockholm.

It was the second such incident in a week. Ann-Britt Petersson on the news programme Aktuellt said the arrests could be linked to the fact that one of the journalists, Arif Zerewan, was an ethnic Kurd, though of Swedish nationality.

## Irish peace process on track:

Governments of both Britain and Ireland say Northern Ireland's peace process is still on track despite a "hiccup" caused when five IRA prisoners attempted a violent jail break. Reuter reports from Belfast.

Government sources in Dublin said British Prime Minister John Major and his Irish counterpart Albert Reynolds spent about 20 minutes on the telephone discussing the effects of last week's Irish Republican Army ceasefire.

## Pope pleads for Balkan peace:

Pope John Paul II pleaded for peace and reconciliation in the Balkans on his first trip to former Yugoslavia and said only forgiveness would end the hatreds caused by war. Reuter reports from Zagreb.

Tens of thousands of people greeted the Pope on his arrival in Croatia on Saturday, standing several deep along the 15 km (10 mile) route to the city centre and cheering as he passed in his bullet proof "popemobile."

## 25 hurt in Italian clash:

Clashes between youths and police left 25 people injured Saturday night after a demonstration in Milan against the closing of a social centre, police said. AFP reports from Italy.

Between 15,000 and 20,000 young people turned out but were prevented by police from approaching the town hall.

## Five freed in Paris:

Five demonstrators arrested Saturday near the Chinese embassy in Paris as they protested against Chinese policy in Tibet were freed after some four hours, a Tibetan People's Support Group said. AFP reports from Paris.

The protest coincided with a state visit to Paris by Chinese President Jiang Zemin. A dozen demonstrators, shouting slogans attacking Chinese "repression" in Tibet, tried to unfurl a Tibetan flag as Jiang's motorcade passed. Five were arrested.

## Indonesia sends 62 troops:

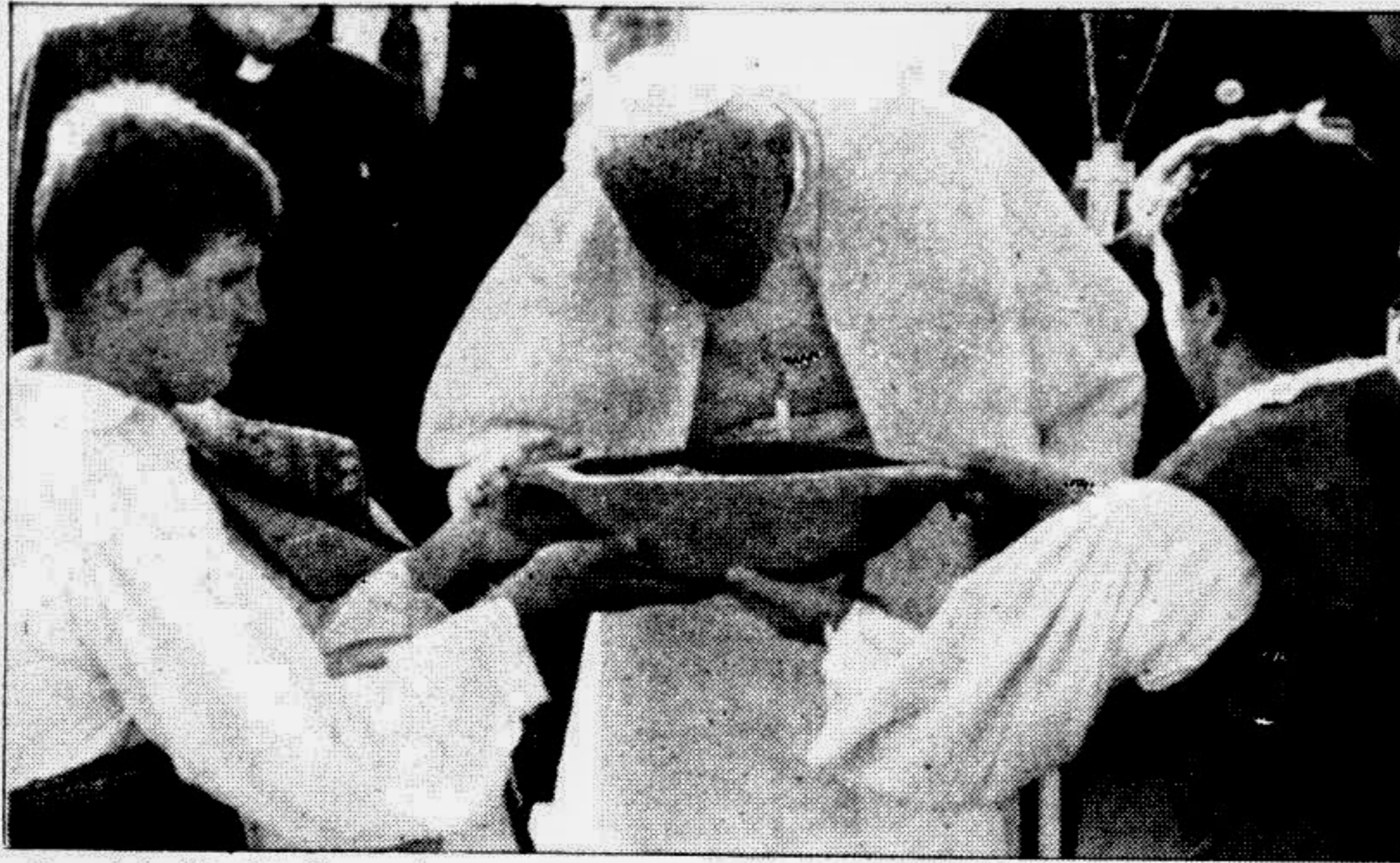
Indonesia yesterday sent to Bosnia Herzegovina 62 troops, the first of 219, medical military personnel who will be deployed there, news reports said. AFP reports from Jakarta.

The army information centre was quoted by the media Indonesia Daily as saying that the other 219 soldiers will be sent on September 26. The Indonesian contingent, which will be assigned to the United Nations for six to nine months, include personnel from the army, navy and air force, including two surgeons, an anaesthetist, two dentists, five general practice physicians and two environmental health specialists.

## Quake shakes Tokyo:

An earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale shook Tokyo and nearby areas yesterday meteorological agency said. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

There were no reports of damage or casualties. The tremor, centred 70 km (44 miles) below the surface of the sea of Boso peninsula in the Pacific ocean, occurred at around 5.10 pm (0610 GMT).



Pope John Paul II kisses the ground presented to him in a wooden bowl by two men dressed in national costumes upon his arrival in Zagreb on Saturday. — AFP photo

# Lanka asks several top diplomats to return

COLOMBO, Sept 11: Sri Lanka is recalling several top diplomats who are political appointees of the former government and replacing them with career officers, Foreign Ministry sources said today, reports Reuter.

They said the ambassadors to the United States and Russia, considered political appointees, had returned at the end of their appointments.

At least seven other mission heads had been asked to return, the sources said. More junior officers, many appointed because they are related to former ruling party politicians or favoured officials, would also be recalled.

The People's Alliance (PA) government which took power last month has promised to reverse the former government's

widely-criticised policy of appointing the bulk of diplomats and supporting staff from outside the foreign service.

Another report adds: About 300 refugees crossed over from Tamil rebel territory in the northwestern Mannar district into army controlled land further South on Friday, northern residents said on Saturday.

They said the refugees had been allowed to leave by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are fighting for a separate state in the north and east, and control the area.

Residents said that since the start of September, 740 people have crossed over, walking the nine km from the Madhu refugee camp in Mannar to Chittikulam in the

northern Vavuniya district.

The Madu camp is run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and has some 30,000 people. The Sri Lankan government sends food for the refugees.

One year ago, the government stopped rations for about 11,000 people, saying they should return to their homes in the army-controlled areas, mainly in Vavuniya.

"Earlier the LTTE was not letting them go but now they are not stopping the refugees from leaving, so they are coming over," a resident said by telephone.

The government and the military were preparing food, medicine and shelter for another 10,000 people expected to arrive shortly, residents said.

# Crimean parliament dissolved

SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine, Sept 11: The president of the separatist Crimean Peninsula dissolved parliament Sunday and imposed emergency rule, describing elected lawmakers as corrupt and "unworthy of the people," reports AP.

In a speech broadcast on regional television and radio, Yuri Meshkov said he was scheduling a referendum for next April 9 to resolve the constitutional deadlock between parliament and the president. He said he was assuming "full power" until then.

Lawmakers, locked out of parliament, held an emergency session in the nearby general prosecutor's office. They denounced Meshkov's decree as unconstitutional and said they would keep working, appealing

for people to remain calm.

Parliament had stripped Meshkov of many of his powers on Wednesday in an ongoing dispute over which government branch has greater power.

The spectre of two rival bodies claiming ultimate authority renewed fears of the outbreak of violence in the volatile Black Sea province. It was unclear if Meshkov had sufficient support to enforce his decree.

In May, Meshkov and the lawmakers jointly took Crimea to the brink of civil war by adopting a constitution that Ukrainian authorities viewed as tantamount to a declaration of independence.

But the independence drive has been stymied by strong warnings of intervention by the

Ukrainian government, and feuds among political factions in Crimea have caused several political killings and the current constitutional crisis.

"The president violated the republic's constitution," parliament speaker Serget Tsekov said in remarks reported by the ITAR-Tass news agency, after Meshkov sealed the main entrance to parliament. "We are now taking measures to do away with this error in a normal way."

Lawmaker Leonid Grach, standing on the steps of parliament, called Meshkov's action a "stupid move." As he spoke, elderly Meshkov supporters taunted him with chants of "criminal" — echoing Meshkov's charge that lawmakers are engaged in widespread corruption.



Pakistani President Farooq Ahmed Leghari (C) is accompanied by the son of Ayatollah Khomeini, Hodjateslam Ahmad Khomeini (R) and Iranian Transport Minister Torkan (L) while visiting the Khomeini's mausoleum on Saturday in Tehran. — AFP photo

# Level of backwardness in Egyptian society alarming

CAIRO, Sept 11: Man may have been to the moon but many Egyptians still worry about which side they should sleep on or whether women can undress in front of their pets, according to a liberal group lobbying Cairo's UN population conference, reports Reuter.

The Egyptian enlightenment society, at a seminar on the sidelines of the UN conference, said on Saturday that such superstitious concerns were holding back Egyptian society.

Stories abound of how people in Egypt are obsessed with the minutes of Islamic ritual that rule their lives, they said.

"In the media, for example a woman asked a cleric if she could take off her clothes in front of her pet or not. The religious answer was that she can take off her clothes if the pet

is a female and not a male," said Waseem El-Sissi, a consultant urologist at a Cairo hospital.

"Another man asked if he could use his left hand to drink and the religious answer was no because it is the devil's hand and that he should use his right hand so that the angels could drink before him," he said.

The secularists, comprising doctors, journalists and university lecturers, said educational, social and political reforms were badly needed to fight off backwardness.

"People abroad have been to the moon and people here still wonder whether to enter the loo with his right, or left foot and what is haram (forbidden) and what's not. These customs are hindering our progress," he said.

The activists said the level

of backwardness in society, even among the educated, was alarming.

A magazine put out by the doctors' syndicate, dominated by Muslim fundamentalists, demanded women medical students not study or see men's sexual organs. They also wanted male doctors to examine males, and women to examine women, the group said.

The enlightenment society was founded by secular writer Farag Foda, killed in 1991 by Muslim militants for preaching secularism and criticising religious superstitions.

The society faces a major obstacle in the rise of Muslim fanaticism in Egypt.

"We... call for a secular state and according to the customs of this nation, secularism means atheism and apostasy," said Mohammed Abu Isaad, a university teacher.

# Hekmatyar men capture Khenjan

TAKHTASANG (Afghanistan), Sept 11: Coalition forces opposing Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani have scored their first major victory in months with the capture of the strategic northern town of Khenjan, increasing pressure on besieged Kabul, reports AFP.

Khenjan's capture gives the anti-Rabbani forces a significant advantage by cutting off a main supply route to Kabul from the border with Tajikistan.

With three other routes already in their control, all four main access roads to Kabul are now in the hands of forces loyal to Hezb-I-Islami faction chief and ex-premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his allies.

Although their foes are now able to tighten a supply blockade of Kabul ahead of the winter, Rabbani's forces can still rely on airlifts of vital petrol from Herat through the Bagram airbase near the capital, while food and other goods have regularly poured into Kabul through smuggling from Hezb-held areas.

# Ghali arrives in Japan

TOKYO, Sept 11: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in Japan today for a four day visit during which he is expected to discuss Tokyo's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, reports Reuter.

While here, Boutros-Ghali will meet Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, Foreign Minister Yohei Kono and Emperor Akihito.

The UN Chief's visit coincides with a heated debate among Japanese politicians and bureaucrats over what future role Japan sees for itself in world affairs.

Japan has voiced an interest in becoming a permanent member of an expanded UN Security Council provided the move has the backing of neighbouring Asian nations — the main victims of Japan's world war two aggression.

# Rio group for an end to US ban on Cuba

RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept 11: Fourteen Latin American and Caribbean countries called Saturday for an end to the US embargo against Cuba and praised the accord reached in New York on ending the boat people crisis, reports AFP.

The 14 members of the RIO group issued the declaration on the second day of their two-day meeting in Brazil.

The RIO group includes Argentina, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Guatemala.

# Nearly 1.3m foreigners in Japan

TOKYO, Sept 11: The number of registered foreigners living in Japan hit a record high of 1,320,748 in December last year, up 3.1 per cent from a year earlier, according to Justice Ministry statistics, reports AFP.

The ministry's annual report issued over the weekend said registered foreign residents accounted for 1.06 per cent of Japan's population of 124.76 of 124.76 million.

People from Asia topped the list, accounting for 77.8 per cent of the total, followed by South America with 14.9 per cent, North America with 3.9 per cent and Europe with 2.3 per cent.

By country, nationals of South Korea and North Korea combined accounted for 51.7 per cent of the total, followed by nationals from China's with 15.9 per cent, Brazil with 11.7 per cent, the Philippines with 5.5 per cent and the United States with 3.2 per cent.

# US favours early polls in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: The United States favours early elections in India's troubled Jammu and Kashmir state, its ambassador Frank Wisner was quoted today as saying, reports Reuter.

"India has been approving constitutional changes to delay elections to the state assembly after Muslim militants there launched a major separatist campaign four years ago."

"We would welcome early elections," the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted Wisner as saying in an interview.

He said the interests of the Kashmiris should be considered in settling India's decade-old dispute with Pakistan over the territory but Washington did not necessarily prefer a plebiscite.

"The US has no preferred recommended solution. It is not in responsibility to pick the device for testing the will of the people," PTI quoted Wisner as saying.

"It is not up to the US to have a game plan or mediate without being asked for."

Pakistan, which has fought two of its three wars with India over Kashmir, has been pressing for a referendum in the region, citing a United Nations resolution that favoured a plebiscite.

Police and hospital sources say that more than 17,000 people have died in the uprising against New Delhi's rule over two-thirds of the former princely state. Pakistan rules the remainder.

# Off the Record



Rahima Orchient Yayah (C) waves to photographers after being crowned Miss Malaysia 1994 on Saturday in Kuala Lumpur. The 20-year-old from Malaysia's eastern Sabah state beat 15 contestants for the title, including first runner-up Vanaja Subramanian, 22, from Kuala Lumpur (R) and Margarita Dana Kaur (L), 21, from central Selangor. Rahima will represent Malaysia at the Miss World pageant in Johannesburg, South Africa, in December. — AFP photo

# Duchess of York has high expectations of her worth

LONDON: The Duchess of York, estranged wife of Britain's Prince Andrew, tried to sell two novels "On a Royal Theme" to US publishers for five million dollars, but was told they would not be worth a tenth the price, the Sunday Times reported, says AFP.

The paper said the proposition was being hawked on her behalf by John Bryan, with whom she was photographed in compromising pose in the south of France two years ago, but the only serious offer he could obtain was of 400,000 dollar "for a series of two or three mystery novels."

The report said the Duchess, Sarah Ferguson, had sacked Bryan and appointed a new literary agent but had still been unsuccessful.

It quoted a New York publisher as saying, "I suspect she had vastly high expectations of her own worth. Even if she wanted to write her autobiography it is unlikely that anyone would pay her much more than 500,000 dollars."

The Duchess wrote a number of books for children on the adventures of "Budge the Helicopter" which sold moderately well though critics were cool.

# Copycat Hell's Angels attack motor cyclists

TAIPEI: Five copycat Hell's Angels knifed and hit with iron chains nine other motorcyclists in separate attacks in Taichung City on Saturday, police said, reports AFP.

The bikers were dressed in black in an apparent bid to copy Hell's Angels gangs, indiscriminately stabbed the other men who were also on motorcycles.

Police said eight of the nine victims were critically injured. All said they did not know who their attackers were.

Police said they discovered two victims lying on the ground near a college. They said that 20 minutes later four factory workers reported that they had also been attacked. An hour later three high school students were found.

Police have ordered a hunt for the attackers.

# Liberian rebels seize Taylor's headquarters

MONROVIA, Liberia, Sept 11: A coalition of rebels has seized the headquarters of chief guerrilla leader Charles Taylor in a devastating setback for the man who began Liberia's civil war. UN officials said Saturday, reports AP.

If the Gbarnga base has fallen, it could spell the end for Taylor. But his defeat is unlikely to halt the war that the United Nations estimates has killed more than 150,000 people.

Brig Haq Aziz, deputy chief of the UN military observers, said the town fell late Friday to Taylor defectors fighting alongside their former rivals.

A contingent of observers in Gbarnga reported that fighting was continuing and the town was being "extensively looted," Aziz said.

"Differences of opinion exist everywhere, it is natural, but here the minute anyone differs with the customs or raises his voice against fanaticism... he is accused of being an infidel. This is tragic," he added.

The society is using a forum of non-government organisations running in parallel to the UN conference to publicise its views on such sensitive subjects.

In their proposal to the UN forum, they demanded that Egyptian laws be purged of any reference to discrimination between men and women and that new laws guarantee female rights in marriage and divorce.

The liberals said wife beating and abuse were rife in Egypt and called for a law to protect them and punish their husbands.

Women often dare not