

# BRIEFLY

**Zhirinovskiy wins libel suit:** Russian nationalist leader and MP Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has won a 440-dollar libel suit he had filed against former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and the newspaper Izvestia. Itar-Tass news agency reported on Thursday. AFP says from London.

The agency, in a dispatch monitored by the BBC, said a Moscow court ordered Gaidar and the paper to pay 500,000 rubles each — or 440 dollars — to the Liberal Democratic chief for having damaged his honour and reputation. Zhirinovskiy went to court after Izvestia last May published an article by Gaidar in which, according to Itar-Tass, the nationalist leader was referred to as a fascist.

**Ex-Greek PM to be tried:** Greece's parliament voted on Thursday to send to trial former Conservative Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis for allegedly taking a bribe in the sale of a state cement company. Reuter reports from Athens.

The 300-seat parliament, where the ruling Socialists have a comfortable 170-member majority, voted to prosecute Mitsotakis on four separate charges of breach of faith, morality, instigating a crime, taking bribes and violating his duties as a cabinet member.

**Sudan rejects US evidence:** Sudan has rejected evidence provided by Washington that a training base for non-Sudanese guerrillas exists within its borders. State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said Thursday. AFP reports from Washington.

McCurry said that Khartoum had asked for evidence of terrorist activity within Sudan, but responded to delivery of evidence of a facility to train non-Sudanese extremists by "rejecting it out of hand."

**Latvian MPs okay new govt:** Latvian legislators voted on Thursday night to approve a new government led by Maris Gailis, the Minister of Economic Reform in the outgoing administration. AP reports from Riga.

Gailis, 43, replaces Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs, who resigned in July after key coalition partners left the government following a dispute over farm policy.

**4 shot in Gaza:** Four people were shot and wounded yesterday at a petrol station in the southern Israeli town of Ashkelon, near the main road from Gaza, Israeli radio stations said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

It was not immediately clear who carried out the shooting.

**Cuban exodus goes slow:** The coastguard said the former flood of Cuban refugees in the waters off Florida remained a trickle Thursday, confirming that Cuba's government has kept its promise to prevent the departure of its people by sea. Reuter reports from Miami.

"It's slow, I have to say that," said a spokesman for the coast guard.

He said only three Cubans had been rescued by coastguard crews between midnight (0400 GMT) and 2:00 pm (1800 GMT) Thursday, following the interception of only 17 Wednesday.

**Quake shakes Taiwan:** An earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale rocked Taiwan yesterday but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries, officials said. Reuter reports from Taipei.

The quake, centred 147 km (88 miles) southwest of the Pescadore Islands in the East China Sea, was recorded at 0620 GMT and rattled buildings in Taipei and other cities, the central weather bureau said.

**Democratic Party supports Barry:** The National Democratic Party on Thursday threw its support behind the campaign of Marion Barry, who left his job as mayor of Washington, DC in disgrace after being convicted for drug use. AP reports from Washington.

Barry defeated incumbent Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly and City Councilman John Ray in a landslide in Tuesday's Democratic primary. Barry won heavy support from Washington's black majority, especially in its poorer neighbourhoods, but he did not carry the city's white and wealthier areas.

**US court upholds charges:** An anti-abortion activist accused of fatally shooting a doctor and his volunteer escort lost a bid Thursday to dismiss federal charges. AP reports from Pensacola.

In refusing to drop the charges, US District Judge Roger Vinson upheld the constitutionality of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. The law has been upheld in at least four other cases since it was enacted in May.

**Taiwan to free 2000 prisoners:** Taiwan will release 2,000 prisoners from its crowded prisons to allow them to join their families for the mid-autumn moon festival next week, a Justice Ministry spokesman said yesterday. Reuter reports from Taipei.

The ministry has approved 500 applications for parole, while another 1,500 applicants are awaiting word on amnesty, David Tang, the ministry's communication secretary, said.

**Cuban envoy to Jamaica robbed:** Four men robbed Cuba's ambassador to Jamaica early Thursday in an affluent neighbourhood of the capital, police said. Reuter reports from Kingston.

Ambassador Dario Urra Torriente was driving his car shortly after midnight when the gunmen blocked his path with their car. The men took the ambassador's watch, jewellery and cash, and left in the ambassador's car, police said.

**Tajik talks fail:** The Tajik government and Islamic opposition failed to agree on a ceasefire at the end of a third day on UN-sponsored peace talks in Tehran on Thursday, but decided to press on with their negotiations, officials said. AFP reports from Tehran.

UN special envoy Ramiro Pirez-Ballon told AFP the two sides had "different approaches," but were "determined to reach a compromise."

**99 suspects held in Uganda:** The Ugandan army has rounded up 99 suspected rebel collaborators in the past three days, the new Vision newspaper reported in Kampala on Thursday. AFP says from Kampala.

The suspects, including one woman, are accused of colluding with former Roman Catholic catechist Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and are being held at a military barracks in the northern town of Glu awaiting screening, the daily said.

## Official US presence in Somalia ends

**NAIROBI, Sept 16:** The official American presence in Somalia, ended when envoy Daniel Simpson left Mogadishu and flew to Kenya on Thursday night, a US embassy spokesman in Kenya said today, reports Reuter.

Simpson was the last US official to leave the US liaison office inside the heavily guarded UN compound in the lawless Somali capital.

The last 55 marine guards flew out to the Kenyan port of Mombasa on Thursday.

The embassy spokesman in Nairobi said Simpson was too

tired to speak to reporters after leaving Mogadishu with plainclothes security officers.

The quiet departure contrasted with the high profile pullout of the last US troops serving with UN peacekeeping forces in March and with their landing on Mogadishu's beaches in December 1992.

UN officials said Washington did not want public attention drawn to its officials quitting Somalia largely in chaos under clan warlords while at the same time the United States was preparing for an invasion of Haiti to oust military leaders.

# Benazir, Gonzalez hold joint press confce Pakistan seeks regional N-ban

MADRID, Sept 16: Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said on Thursday her country was committed to nuclear non-proliferation and seeking a regional ban, despite possessing the know-how and materials to build an atomic bomb, reports Reuter.

Benazir in Madrid on the second day of a two-day official visit, said Pakistan had not signed a nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) because it needed a deterrent to India which she said had tested a nuclear device and created a regional threat.

"Our (nuclear) programme is peaceful. We believe in non-proliferation, we have proposed regional non-proliferation and we will continue to do so.

"As far as India is concerned, there is a threat, but we hope that the fact that

Pakistan has the know-how is sufficient deterrent," Benazir said.

At a joint news conference whether Spanish counterpart Felipe Gonzalez. Benazir also assailed India on the issue of the disputed Kashmir region saying the wishes of the people in the region must be respected.

"At a time when so much peace is breaking out all over, surely peace in the subcontinent also deserves a chance," she said.

Benazir has started a campaign to raise world consciousness about the Kashmir region, which she calls "unfinished business from the partition" of the subcontinent in 1947.

While in Spain, Benazir aims to strengthen both economic and political ties with

the European country, which has a seat on the United Nations Security Council until the end of the year.

She has suggested holding a UN referendum on the governance of the Kashmir region similar to one planned for the former Spanish colony of western Sahara.

Pakistan rules one third of Kashmir and disputes India's control over the rest of the mainly Muslim-populated area.

Benazir is also using her stay in Spain to hold a joint meeting of Pakistan's European ambassadors to discuss Kashmir.

Gonzalez said he respected Benazir's explanation for Pakistan's reluctance to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty as Spain had done.

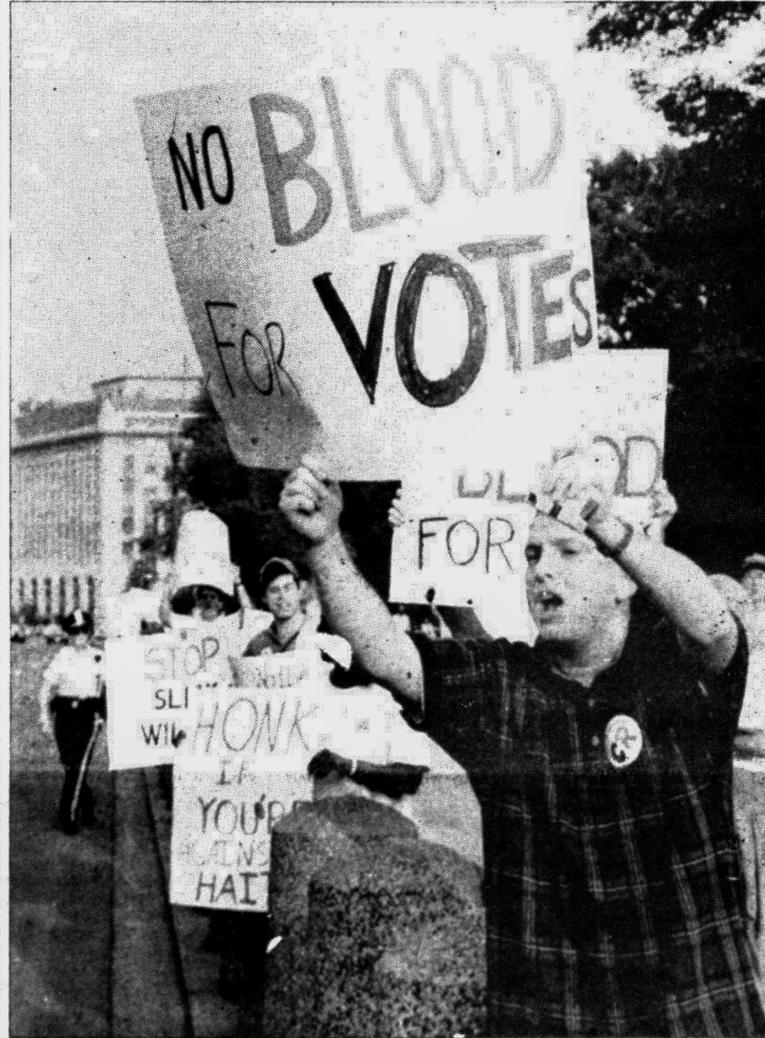
"Naturally it would like to see all countries reach the

same decision and sign the treaty. If believe the direction of the Prime Minister of Pakistan in pushing for a regional agreement is absolutely correct," Gonzalez said.

He lamented that Spanish aid had been used by countries to develop their defence industries and said Spain had drastically cut arms aid to countries like India.

"We are now making an investment in human capital by channelling aid money to education and health," he said.

But he added that the credits Spain just granted to Pakistan, amounting to 100 million in combined commercial and soft loans, were to be distributed according to priorities dictated by Pakistan, "as a measure of respect for the modernisation the country had undertaken."



Demonstrators against a possible invasion of Haiti protest outside the White House on Thursday as President Bill Clinton prepares to address the nation about his Haitian policy. — AFP photo

## World War II-era bomb explodes in E Berlin: 3 die

BERLIN, Sept 16: Three people were killed, eight injured and one was declared missing after a World War II-era bomb exploded on Thursday during excavation work in a busy business district of East Berlin, police said, reports AFP.

The three dead men were workers at the construction site and the injured people were bystanders and passers-by, police said. One construction worker was reported missing.

Rescue workers were searching through the rubble for the missing man and other people who may have been buried under the debris.

Police said the bomb was apparently set off by excavation equipment working at a construction site.

The late afternoon blast also partly collapsed a four-storey apartment block on Frankfurter Allee, one of East Berlin's main avenues.

## FIS rejects early talks with govt

ALGIERS, Sept 16: The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), whose leaders have just been released from prison, Thursday ruled out early peace talks with the Algerian government and a rival militant Islamic group rejected dialogue altogether, reports AFP.

In a setback to hopes for a quick end to nearly three years of bloody confrontations between security forces and Muslim fundamentalists, the FIS announced that it would not join talks on Tuesday between the government and the opposition.

Another militant movement, the armed Islamic group (GIA), rejected "any reconciliation, truce or dialogue with the renegade leadership."

"No compromise is possible and we do not accept posts or power sharing to the detriment of our convictions," the GIA declared in a statement released in Paris carrying the signature of group leader Abou

Abadalla Ahmad.

The GIA has claimed responsibility for the killing of nearly 60 foreigners in Algeria as part of its campaign to replace the military-backed government with an Islamic administration.

Algerian authorities have been battling Islamic insurgents since January 1992 when they cancelled the second round of general elections that FIS candidates were poised to win.

An estimated 10,000 people have died in clashes since then.

But the government last Tuesday freed FIS President Abassi Madani, vice president Ali Belahadj and the three other leaders in a bid to promote peace talks.

Algerian Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah Dembri said in Cairo Thursday that Madani had agreed in principle to take part in discussions scheduled for September 20.

## Pak Ahmadi's worship site demolished

ISLAMABAD, Sept 16: Local authorities in Rawalpindi on Thursday razed the structures of a place of worship of the banned Ahmadi sect of Islam, a sect official said.

"It is a naked denial of fundamental rights of worship and property," Rawalpindi's Ahmadi community chief, Mujibur Rehman, told Reuters by telephone.

He said the authorities had razed the site under pressure from fundamentalist Islamic clerics, after a local court vacated an earlier injunction against such a demolition.

Rehman said the razing was carried out even though the Ahmadi had filed an appeal before a higher court, which had set a hearing for next Monday.

No official comment was immediately available.

A group of Ahmadi prayed at the site and some cried as men employed by the Rawalpindi development authority used hammers and pickaxes to bring down a large prayer shed, a boundary wall and living quarters, witnesses said.

Local orthodox mullahs have campaigned for months against Ahmadi plans to build a prayer complex at the site, which Rehman said his community had owned for 50 years.

Human rights organisations have complained of persecution of the Ahmadi in Pakistan in recent years.

Arabs to press Israel for signing NPT

CAIRO, Sept 16: Arab League Foreign Ministers meeting here on Thursday decided to put pressure on Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), reports AFP.

Syria tried to persuade the League's 21 other members to give a pledge that they would not sign the treaty again next year unless Israel signed it.

The League opted to "put pressure on Israel to make it adhere to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and to open its installations to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)."

An Arab delegate who asked not to be named told reporters Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara failed to get a clear pledge from other delegates not to sign the treaty again.

## Cholera claims 150 in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: An epidemic of cholera has killed at least 150 people in the troubled Kashmir Valley over the past three weeks, the Times of India newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Another, 17,000 people have been affected by the disease, the daily quoted experts as saying. The maximum of 58 deaths had been reported from Baramulla district, bordering Pakistan.

Hospitals in Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital, had opened special wards to treat the victims, the Times said.

## Al Arqam wanted to seize power thru' violence

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16: The outlawed Islamic Al Arqam sect wanted to capture political power through magic and violence, Malaysia's top policeman reportedly said on Friday, reports AP.

Malaysian leaders have said that the group was not a threat to the governing party.

Al Arqam was supposed to have usurped power on the eve of the day that it believed would produce the resurrection of a local Muslim saint, Inspector General of Police Rahim Noor said.

Rahim said police extracted this information from Al Arqam leader Ashaari Mohammad, who is being in-

terrogated by police at an undisclosed detention centre.

On Thursday, Rahim announced that Ashaari had confessed to deviating from the true principles of Islam, a charge that the government used to ban Al Arqam on August 27.

Rahim's latest comments were published in Malaysia's national daily newspapers, whose editors interviewed him on Thursday.

Ashaari's purported confession appears to have strengthened the government's drive to disband Al Arqam, a messianic sect that claims to have 100,000 followers.

The sect ran 44 communes, 237 schools and a host of businesses said to be worth 118 million dollars.

But Rahim said the figure was exaggerated by Ashaari to portray the sect as a wealthy outfit in a bid to attract more followers. He did not say how much the government estimated Al Arqam is worth.

He said Ashaari was waiting for the resurrection of Sheikh Muhammad As Shami, a religious leader who died in the 1920s.

Ashaari expected Malaysia to then plunge into chaos, allowing him, as an aide of the messiah, to seize power, Rahim said. He did not say how Ashaari would have used magic in his alleged plans.

Besides Ashaari, his wife Khadijah Aam and four others also are being held under the Internal Security Law, which allows indefinite detention without trial.

Asked whether Ashaari's detection would solve the issue, Rahim said he was confident of resolving it in six months to one year.

He said police are hunting for two other key leaders, Ashaari's son Pakhrul Radzi, who is believed to be in London, and his right-hand man, Abdul Halim Abbas, said to be in Thailand.

Ashaari had set up a home-in-exile in Thailand in 1988 until he was deported September 2 and arrested by the Malaysian police.

# Off the Record

## Costly friendship

NEW DELHI: Seven men have been arrested for keeping a new Delhi University woman as a sex slave for a year, Indian newspapers reported yesterday, says Reuter.

They said the 19-year-old student who was not identified by police, had agreed last year to become the girlfriend of Praveen Kumar, 22.

He was alleged to have taken her to a friend's house, drugged and raped her, then photographed her naked being raped by the friend, the newspaper said.

The woman, under threat of having the nude photographs shown around campus, slept with the two men and five of their friends until the humiliation became too much earlier this month and she told her parents, they said.

The seven were charged with rape, blackmail, wrongful confinement and extortion.

## Jackson can stay mum

LOS ANGELES: Pop star Michael Jackson doesn't have to respond to a civil lawsuit filed against him by five former security guards, a judge ruled Thursday, reports AP.

Compelling him to respond to the lawsuit would "burden Jackson's constitutional rights" as long as he remains under investigation for child molestation, said California Superior Court Judge Richard Neal.

Jackson has been under investigation by Los Angeles and Santa Barbara County authorities since last year. He has denied the molestation allegations and has never been charged.

The guards filed a wrongful termination lawsuit last year, claiming they were fired by Jackson to taint their credibility should they be subpoenaed to testify against their boss.

A civil suit brought by the parents of a 14-year-old boy who claimed Jackson sexually abused him was settled out of court for an undisclosed sum.

## Kid's plea goes unheeded

BATON ROUGE: A 10-year-old boy begged three gunmen not to kill his daddy, offering them 2 dollars of his own money, but they brushed him off and shot his father to death, reports AP.

"I don't want your money, kid," the boy quoted one of the gunmen as saying.

Police said they had no motive in the slaying early Wednesday of Kevin Evans, a 32-year-old rap musician known as KE.

The family was awakened shortly after midnight by the sound of a car horn, and Evans went outside and was confronted by the gunmen, authorities said. The men forced Evans back inside with his wife, son and 6-year-old daughter.

"Please don't kill my daddy. I have 2 dollar on the dresser. You can take that," pleaded the boy, whose name was not released.

But the men ordered Evans' wife and children to leave the room, police said. "There was a struggle and numerous shots were fired," Detective Keith Bates said.

## Judges often fall asleep!

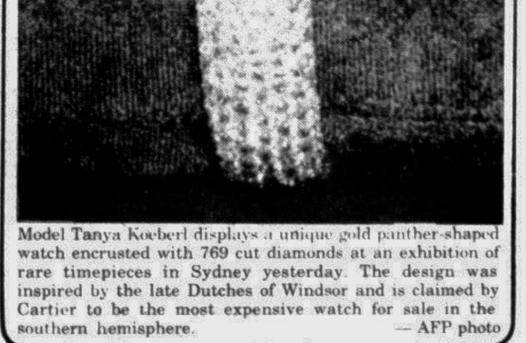
TOKYO: Three judges fell asleep at a mid-afternoon hearing of a construction bid-rigging case in western Japan, a newspaper reported yesterday, says Reuter.

Mainichi Shinbun said the three justices repeatedly dozed as two construction company officials testified in their court room in Matsue on Tuesday.

A Matsue district court official said one of the three admitted he fell asleep.

During a recess in the three-hour hearing, the chief judge had the courtroom's windows opened and was quoted as saying: "The air conditioning isn't working, and I think people are finding it hard to concentrate."

Upset lawyers in the area told the newspaper judges often fell asleep in court.



Model Tanya Koberl displays a unique gold panther-shaped watch encrusted with 769 cut diamonds at an exhibition of rare timepieces in Sydney yesterday. The design was inspired by the late Dutchess of Windsor and is claimed by Cartier to be the most expensive watch for sale in the southern hemisphere. — AFP photo

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The embassy spokesman in Nairobi said Simpson was too

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## Sino-US relations over Taiwan deteriorate

BEIJING, Sept 16: China said Thursday that Washington's shift in its Taiwan policy had "cast a shadow" over Sino-US ties and warned the matter could set back bilateral relations just as they were recovering from a row over a trade status, reports AP.

Tarnoff had stressed that Washington remained fully committed to its one-China policy — recognising Beijing as the sole legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan.

However, China, which views Taiwan as a renegade province, reacted angrily to the move to review ties, calling in the US Ambassador here Saturday to register a "strong protest."

He was referring to the explanation offered here Tuesday to Foreign Minister Qian Qichen by US Undersecretary