BRIFFIY

US citizens in Karachi warned: The United States said on Wednesday it had received unconfirmed reports of threats to US citizens in Karachi and advised them to take safety precautions. AFP reports from

Washington. US diplomats have "received uncorroborated information of a threat of harm American citizens in the Karachi area," the statement said, adding that there was no more specific information.

Colin Powell in London: Former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell had an hour-long meeting with Prime Minister John Major at his 10 Downing

Street office Thursday, AP reports from London. A Downing Street spokesman refused comment on

grounds the visit was private. In September Powell, who retired from the US army last year, accompanied Jimmy Carter to Haiti for talks with military leaders which averted a US invasion of the Caribbean nation.

Armenia joins NATO's peace plan:
Armenia became the 23rd country to join NATO's partnership for peace programme Wednesday but said it did not want the alliance interfering in its conflict with Azerbaijan over the

enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, Reuter reports from Brussels. "The conference for security and cooperation in Europe is involved in the process and that's enough," alliance sources quoted the former Soviet Republic's Foreign Minister, Vahan Papazian, saying after a signing ceremony.

Israelis shell Palestinian camp: Israeli gunboats shelled a Palestinian refugee camp near north Lebanon city on Wednesday killing one resident, security source said, AFP reports from Tripoli, Lebanon.

The shelling caused slight damage in the Nahr el-Bared Camp, the sources added. It was the first attack by the Israelis on north Lebanon this year.

Ethiopia cancels Bombay flight: Ethiopian airlines suspended its flight Wednesday from the Ethiopian capital to Bombay because of outbreak of plague in

India, Reuter reports from Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Airlines General Manager Ahmed Kellow said in a statement the national carrier has yet to decide whether to suspend its other scheduled flights to India later in the week.

Czech PM meets Kim in Seoul: Visiting Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus and South Korean President Kim Young-Sam held talks yesterday to discuss ways to expand economic cooperation and other ties between the two nations, Reuter reports from Seoul.

A presidential spokesman said Kim asked Klaus to help more South Korean firms take part in a telecommunications modernisation project in the Czech Republic.

US marine commits suicide: A Marine deployed on a mission to Haiti apparently committed suicide, the Pentagon said on Wednesday, AP reports from Washington.

The soldier was identified as Lance Cpl. Maurice A. Williams, 21, who died of a gunshot wound while aboard the USS Nashville. The ship was in port at Roosevelt Roads. Puerto Rico, at the time of the incident.



American scientist Edward Teller, a member of the World War II Manhattan Project which developed the US atomic bomb, holds in his hand on September 27 the start key, with which the first Soviet H-bomb was exploded. Teller was on one-week visit to the Russian nuclear weapons centre, Cheliabinsk. This was the first visit by American specialists to the centre.

German actor Ruehmann dies: Heinz Ruehmann, one of Germany's most popular actors who starred in more than 100 films over the last 70 years, has

died at the age of 92, his family said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Munich Ruehmann, whose career survived and flourished under Nazi rule after he divorced his Jewish wife, struggled through

Germany's early post-war years with debt and a failed film company before reemerging in the mid-1950s as a popular

DPRK denies outbreak of cholera: North Korea on Thursday denied that cholera has broken out in the communist state and instead claimed that rival South Korea is turning into a "kingdom of all diseases," AP reports from Seoul.

"It is a ludicrous and impudent gibberish," said a North Korean radio broadcast, commenting on South Korea's offer of medical supplies to help check the reported spread of cholera in the North.

Akihito meets D'estaing in Paris: Japanese Emperor Akihito met former President Valery Giscard D'estaing and Senate Speaker Rene Monory on Wednesday, the third day of his visit to France, Reuter

The emperor also visited schools for handicapped children and lunched at the Sorbonne, heart of Paris University, before attending a reception at the Japanese embassy.

Bosnian Serbs, Muslims begin exchange of POWs

SARAJEVO, Oct 6: Bosnia's Serbs and government forces began one of the largest prisoner swap of the war Thursday, and the Serbs agreed unconditionally to allow the airport in Sarajevo to reopen, reports AP.

The airport accord was reached after hours of negotiations between Bosnian Serb leaders and Yasushi Akashi, the chief UN representative for the former Yugoslavia.

Akashi went to the talks armed with a NATO threat of expanded air power against the Bosnian Serbs.

"They seem to the extremely unhappy with NATO's strong stand," Akashi said Wednesday.

the ten killed.

CAIRO, Oct 6: Egyptian

President Hosni Mubarak on

Wednesday urged Israel to

withdraw completely from the

Golan Heights and southern

Lebanon in order to sign a

peace deal with Syria, saying it

had no other choice, reports

"We are convinced that

there is no alternative to a

complete Israeli pullout from

the Golan and the whole of

(occupied) Lebanese territory

if we want to see total peace,"

he said in a speech marking

the anniversary of the 1973

try to have signed a peace

treaty with Israel in 1979.

which led the Jewish state to

return the Sinai peninsula in

the Middle East peace process

launched in 1991, said

"recognition of the principle of

total peace from a total with-

drawal would open the way for

mutual understanding between

all the concerned parties.

Mubarak, a key mediator in

Egypt is the only Arab coun-

Arab-Israeli war.

reopen later Thursday, has been closed because of veiled Serb threats to shoot at planes following a NATO air strike on a Serb tank Sept 22 in retaliation for Serb assaults on French peacekeepers. The capital has relied on the UN airlift for about 80 per cent of its food and other needs.

The Serbs had reportedly demanded the airport, handed over to the UN in July 1992. be put under joint UN-Serb control Akashi dismissed the

"It was not an easy, friendly atmosphere; it was a businesslike atmosphere, trying to understand each other's position," Akashi told reporters.

After a nearly 10-hour de-Sarajevo airport, which is to lay, the exchange of prisoners

Hartian Army Chief General Raoul Cedras -L.), Maj Gen Jean Claude Duperval (C) and Maj

Philippe Biamby stand at attention on Wednesday during the mass funeral service for 10

Haitians killed by US troops on September 24 in Cap Haitien. Cedras wept at the funeral for

Israeli pullout from Golan

a must for peace: Mubarak

had proved a "solid basis" for

the Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

which was "a good model to

lish "comprehensive peace"

when it launched the October

1973 war, Mubarak said, wel-

coming the fact that today

"peace is a realty" in Sinai, the

Soyuz TM-20

arrives at Mir

6: Three astronauts, two Ru-

ssians and a German, arrived

safe and sound early Thursday

at the Russian space station

Mir, where they joined three

colleagues who have been aloof

officials at mission control said

capsule carrying the three ar

with Mir at 0028 GMT Thurs-

day, two minutes ahead of

riving astronauts linked up

here, reports AFP.

for several months, space

A Russian Soyuz TM-20

KALININGRAD, Russia, Oct

Egypt had wanted to estab-

He said the same principle

of war at Sarajevo's Brotherhood and Unity bridge got under way around dawn Thursday.

Two UN armored personnel carriers transported Serbs government-held Sarajevo to a Serb-held part of the city. Two other UN vehicles loaded with Muslim POWs then crossed the bridge into government-held Sarajevo.

The exchange, involving a total of nearly 300 prisoners, was to be carried out in a series of shuttles across the bridge over several hours.

The prisoner swap almost collapsed when Serbs sent about 120 Muslims across the bridge Wednesday afternoon after forcing them from their homes.

- AFP photo

West Bank and Gaza.

Tomorrow we shall see

Egypt hosted several rounds

peace in Lebanon, on the Golan

Heights and in Jerusalem," he

of talks between Israel and the

limited Palestinian self-rule in

ports: Another barrier between

Arabs and Jews fell Wednesday

when Syria's Foreign Minister

Farouk Al-Shara held his first

formal meeting with US

Jewish leaders, according to a

source with the World Jewish

Foreign Minister has met for-

mally with Jewish groups in

this country," the source said

Jewish leaders in Washington

for 45 minutes after meeting

members of the house of rep-

resentatives' foreign affairs

committee, who stayed for the

session with Jewish leaders

the source said.

Share met about a dozen

in a telephone interview.

"It is the first time a Syrian

Congress

PLO leading up to the launch of

Reuter from New York re-

The swap then teetered on failure at least twice more during last-minute negotiations on the final numbers of prisoners involved:

International The Committee of the Red Cross. which helped arrange the swap, said it would release a detailed breakdown of the numbers on either side after the exchange was completed.

The Bosnian Serbs are trying to expel all non-Serbs from the 70 per cent of Bosnia they control. Thousands of Muslims have been expelled from Serbheld areas in northern and central Bosnia in recent weeks.

The Serbs also continued to break their own promises to allow free passage for UN aid.

Haitian parliament

to debate

amnesty law

Haiti's parliament was to meet

today to debate a draft amnesty

law that could shield Lieute-

nant General Raoul Cedras and

other military leaders from

arrest if it is passed before the

country's exiled president

The draft, presented Wed-

nesday by interim Justice

Minister Rene Prosper, covers

only political crimes but would allow President Jean-Bertrand

Aristide to issue a decree

Aristide, ousted in a bloody.

1991 military coup, has

pledged to return to Haiti on

October 15 under a US-bro-

kered agreement that calls for

an amnesty but does not re-

quire it after the populist pres-

India, Nepal

ident's return.

returns, reports Reuter.

broadening the amnesty.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 6:

Blair faces big test of his reform programme

BLACKPOOL. England. Oct delegat es will be reluctant to British opposition leader. Tony Blair was today facing the first big test of his programme of make the Labour Party electable by severing its Socialist roots, reports Reuter

Senior aides said Laboy.'s annual conference could well pass a motion recomm titting the party to large-scale nationalisation of industries privatised under 15 years of Conservative leadership.

Blair, who has kept up a breathless pace of reform since he became leader in July, dropped a bombshell on Tuesday by proposing to do exactly the opposite. He said the party had to slav

its sacred cow-clause four of its 1918 Constitutions. promising common ownership of industry if it wanted to win voters' trust and regain power. The issue is highly emo-

tional, and Blair's aides know

dump c lause four so soon. They were still working to head off a vote after today's debate but said any defeat would not block Blair's re forms.

"It'll be portrayed as a mess if the vote goes against us, but

in the broader sweep of things it won't matter," one said. Blair has calculated that he will win the real battle in the months ahe ad and that huffing and puffing from the left is a small prize to pay to establish Labour, out of power for 15 years, as a mainstream party

the middle classes can trust.

"In order to break through and convince the British peo ple that it is right to change the government and vote in a Labour government, we must be clear about where we stand," he told the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on Wednesday.

Off the Record

Woman cancels her own funeral

LONDON: Dorothy Cushing had to cancel her own funeral when doctors admitted there had been an X-ray mix-up and she was not dying of lung cancer after all, reports Reuter.

The 51-year-old grandmother gave away her clothes and jewellery during three months of agonising chemotherapy which followed the doctors' wrong diagnosis, newspapers reported on Wednesday.

"I made my will and had the undertaker around. I contacted the crematorium and told them I wanted my ashes scattered by relations." she said after seeking compensation from the central England hospital in Birmingham that treated

Lawyers are discussing the amount of compensation.

Di faces fresh scandal soon?

LONDON: The Princess of Wales faces fresh claims about her private life in another book due out soon, according to the Daily Express Wednesday, reports AFP.

The book by royal author Andrew Morton is understood to name a married man who is "now the central figure in her life," said the paper. I added that she had turned to him for comfort and sup

port amid the furore over "Princess in Love," published ear lier this week and which claims the princess had a five-year affair with an army officer. The pair were said to be in constant contact by phone but

were unable to meet often because of the threat of being seen in public.

Yet another volume featuring the turbulent marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales, this time by respected journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, is thought to be due for publication within weeks.

It was on a television documentary by Dimbleby earlier this year that Prince Charles, who is heir to the British throne confessed he had been unfaithful to his wife once it has be come clear their marriage had irretrievably broken down

New 'castration' vaccine for tom cats

LONDON: Tom cats might cringe, but a British drug com pany says pet owners will welcome a new vaccine that "castrates" their animals chemically, reports AP.

Proteus International PLC said Thursc'ay the injections stop sperm production and rapidly reduce the levels of testosterone in the male cast without subjecting them to "today's more drastic methods."

Preliminary research on 24 tom cats showed the drug reduced their territorial marking and straying in pursuit of sex with no bad side effects, said Jurek S Sikorski, the company's business development and marketing director

The cats become less antisocial and less aggressive, ac cording to Proteus, a Manchester-based company that spe

cialises in designing drugs by computer.

But Sikorski acknowledged the drug is mainly intended to

appease the consciences of cat owners. Putting cats under the traditional knife "is as traumatic for

them as it is for the animal," he said in a telephone interview The vaccine might also avoid infections that can occur when cats are surgically castrated or problems they can experience with anesthesia, he said. Unlike regular castration, the effects of the chemical cas-

tration could be reversed as the drug wears off in a year or so.

Aftershocks continue to rock N Japan TOKYO. Oct 6: A strong

earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.4 rocked northern Japan Thursday morning. It was one of a series of aftershocks that followed Tuesday's devastating undersea quake. reports AP. There were no immediate

Kuril Islands in Russia's Far East were killed by Tuesday's massive earthquake. With a magnitude of 8.2, it was the strongest temblor to hit the region in 26 years. Police in Japan said 228

end border security talks KATHMANDU, Oct 6: Ne-

pal-India border security talks for ensuring a peaceful midterm election to the Nepali lower house concluded Wednesday at Biratnagar in Eastern Nepal, reports Xinhua. A meeting of the coordina-

tion committee of Nepal-India border security decided to jointly check illegal cross-border infiltration and control the movement of criminal minded and other unwanted elements to ensure a free, fair and peaceful election to be held in November, local press reported today.

The meeting also decided to keep close watch on the activities of suspected persons and seal the border 24 hours before the election. At the meeting, the Indian

side pledged cooperation in Nepal's effort for holding a peaceful election in Nepal. Both sides agreed to solve

each' other's local problems through mutual cooperation and understanding.

reports of damage or injuries from Thursday's aftershock which hit at 5:39 am (2039 GMT Wednesday), local police At least 10 people in the

other people were injured by that earthquake, most of them on Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost main island.

ROK urges US to get tougher with DPRK

SEOUL. Oct 6: Anticipating an official transfer of power soon in Communist North Korea. South Korea is urging the United States to get tougher in nuclear talks with the secretive North, reports

Reflecting official frustration with the talks, South Korea's media called on Washington Thursday to once again consider sanctions against the North if it does not agree to open its nuclear facilities to ensure it is not making nuclear "The only way out is to force

it to say yes on the pain of sanctions." The English-language Korea Herald said in an editorial. On Thursday, North Korea's

I official media quoted a visiting

Russian nationalist political leader as saving that the power transfer in the North had been successfully completed.

"What impressed us most deeply is that the issue of the continuity of politics and leadership has been successfully solved in your country. VV Zhirinovsky, the chairman of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party, told reporters in Pyong yang. North Korea's capital.

Zhirinovsky's statements were carried by the North's of ficial Korea Central News Agency and monitored in The day before, North Ko

rea said in the clearest lan guage vet that Kim Jong II will take over full authority follow ing the death July 8 of his fa ther. Kim II Sung

Chinese dissidents

UAE ready to let ICJ settle its dispute with Iran

The United Arab Emirates said on Wednesday it was ready to let the International Court of Justice settle its dispute with Iran over three Iranian-occupied islands in the Gulf, re-

ports AP. Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah al-Nuaimi told the UN not responded to requests for direct negotiations to end Iranian military occupation of the islands. The islands, Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu

act that runs counter to the UN Charter and the rules of in ternational law." Al-Nuaimi

Rats treated like gods at Hindu temple despite plague epidemic spoonfuls of water and milk Thousands of well-fed rats are licked by the rats to believers. treated like gods at a 600- who accept the offering in the year-old Hindu temple here

it down in one gulp. it, we don't consider the offer-

dents are the reincarnations of the descendants of Karni Mata, and that when the rats die

The rats are a part and parcel of this temple," said Ballu Dan Barth, a 58-year-old official at the shrine, located in the heart of this tiny town in

Rajasthan state

"When one of our family member dies, he becomes a rat," said Barth, detailing the history of the shrine. "And when the rat dies, he again be

> comes a family member. Barth, a farmer, dismissed the idea of the temple's rats spreading the plague epi-

known as the "Rat Temple.

Photographers jointly hold up an extremely rare white boa constrictor during the 1994 Rare

Animals and Pets Show in Taipei on Wednesday. The snake, which weighs 60 kilograms, is

There is no question of any plague outbreak here," said the crimson-turbaned Barth." If someone has plague, he should visit here and he will certainly get cured."

"Do you know that when these rats die, there is no The rats are everywhere

frequently emerging out of the dozens of holes along the walls. When they are not nibbling the holy offerings or drinking the milk, they doze or play with one another.

- AFP photo

The temple's corridors are lined with what seeds and maize for the divine rodents. The animals are at home

with the temple officials, who in turn do not bat an eyelid when the rats climb across their bodies or faces. When the officials eat, the rats gather around for a share of rice and wheat bread

The temple officials said there has not been a trace of any disease linked to rats at Deshnok although the local government is worried about

the plague outbreak that has killed more than 50 people in India.

"The government has made enquiries about the rats," said Barth. "We told them there is nothing to worry about. There might be plague all over the world, there cannot be one in Deshnok. These are God's creatures.

Across the country, thou sands of rats have been killed since an epidemic of pneumonic plague erupted in west ern India and rapidly spread to several states. No such thought is even entertained here.

No one knows how many rats there are in the temple Estimates range from a few thousand to more than said to come out in such large numbers that not an inch of floor can be seen.

Despite their status, the rats face familiar threats from cats and snakes.

"Cats" we keep shooing away." said Barth. "Snakes. however, manage to creep in through the burrows. But the moment a snake gobbies up a couple of rats, the other rats pounce on it and tear it to pieces.

To protect the rats from eagles and crows, the entire temple is covered by a net Besides rats, only the friendly pigeons are welcome at the shrine

Wei, Ren to get Kennedy Award WASHINGTON, Oct 6:

Chinese dissidents Wei Jingsheng and Ren Wanding on Wednesday were named to receive the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award for their role in advancing human rights and democracy in China, reports Reuter. But Wei, first paroled in

September 1993 after a long

prison term, has not been seen in public since April 1, when he was detained after meeting a senior US diplomat. And Ren, jailed since 1989.

is seriously ill after being detained for his role in the Tiananmen Square prodemocracy movement.

reports from Paris.

UNITED NATIONS. Oct 6: and their exalted status has remained untouched despite the country's plague epidemic. reports AFP A sea of grey rats constantly

premises, and visitors must vield before the tide. General Assembly that Iran had The rats freely savour the mounds of sugar balls, sweet meats and coconut, offered by the faithful to the resident goddess of Karni Mata, whose Musa, were seized in 1971 likeness is mounted on a large "We consider this an illegal brass tray at the edge of the temple's inner sanctum.

> The creatures are considered so holy that priests offer

scampers around the tiled

palm of their hands and drink "Until the rats have tasted

harmless. Boas are usually dark in colour.

ings holy," said Des Raj Meena. a temple official Legend has it that the ro-

they will be reborn as humans among her descendants.

Naturally, it is popularly