

# BRIEFLY

**Ramos meets OIC Secy Gen:** Philippine President Fidel Ramos met in Jeddah on Monday with the secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to discuss the fate of Filipino Muslims. The Saudi news agency SPA reported. AFP says from Jeddah.

Ramos and Hamid Algabid of the OIC considered "negotiations underway between the Philippines government and the Moro National Liberation Front" on political autonomy for Muslims, the agency added.

**Abacha sacks finance minister:** Nigeria's military ruler General Sani Abacha sacked his Finance Minister Kalu Idika Kalu on Monday, state television said. Reuter reports from Lagos.

It quoted an official statement as saying that arrangements had been made to cover Kalu's responsibilities but gave no further details.

**Protester commits suicide:** An unemployed shop clerk committed suicide with a fruit knife in front of the presidential palace to protest against Beijing's efforts to isolate Taiwan internationally, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Taipei.

Peng Pin-Sen, 37, stabbed himself in the heart after shouting "long live the Republic of China."

**Protestant leader meets Major:** Prime Minister John Major met with Northern Ireland's leading Protestant politician on Monday, fueling speculation of an announcement soon on talks involving IRA supporters. AP reports from London.

Major and Ulster Unionist leader James Molyneux made no comments after their hour-long discussion at Major's Downing Street residence. A spokesman for Major, requesting anonymity, said they were cordial and constructive.

**5 shot dead in S. Africa:** A white farmer who shot and killed five black men he caught in his hen house over the weekend was trying to protect his property, police said. AP reports from Johannesburg.

The farmer was not arrested, though police said they were investigating the shooting. "There appears to be no doubt he was acting in defence of his property," police spokesman Capt. Belinda Kleynhans told the Star, a Johannesburg newspaper. She said he had previously lost chickens to thieves.

**AFP newsmen halt strike:** Unions representing staff at Agence France-Presse halted a 24-hour strike late Monday after reaching agreement with management on the future of agency's Spanish-language service. AFP reports from Paris.

The six unions had called on editorial, administrative and technical staff to stop work at 14:00 p.m. (1300 GMT) on Monday after a meeting of journalists at AFP headquarters in Paris.

**Perry to visit Japan:** U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry will briefly visit Japan later this week for talks with government leaders after visits to China and South Korea. U.S. defence officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Beijing.

Perry plans to arrive in Tokyo from Seoul late on Friday and will meet Japanese officials Saturday morning during a brief stop before leaving for Hawaii, they said.

**25 Cubans return home:** A handful of Cuban refugees returned home from the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, and federal officials say 900 more are being processed for repatriation. AP reports from Miami.

25 refugees were flown to Havana on Monday aboard a U.S. immigration and naturalisation service plane, said Justice Department spokesman Carl Stern.

**3rd US soldier commits suicide:** A US soldier — the third in less than a month — committed suicide at the weekend in Port-au-Prince but a US military spokesman said Monday the series of deaths were unrelated. AFP reports from Haiti.

The service man, whose identity was withheld, shot himself near the Bowen airfield, a former Haitian military base. Colonel Barry Willey told a news conference.

**Chopper collision kills 3 in Japan:** Three people died when two helicopters owned by rival newspapers collided while covering a tanker collision story yesterday police said. Reuter reports from Osaka.

The three dead, a photographer, a pilot and a mechanic, were all in a helicopter owned by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper which collided with one owned by rival Mainichi Shimbun.

**Estonia transfers N-fuel:** All the nuclear fuel from the strategic submarine base at Paldiski, Estonia has been transferred to Russia as dictated in a Russo-Estonian accord, a base official said on Sunday. AFP reports from Moscow.

The last graphite rods from the base's two reactors were taken away on a special train Saturday, which crossed the Estonian border at Narva.

**US, ROK likely to cancel war games**

SEOUL, Oct 18: The United States and South Korea are likely to cancel joint war games this year to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula, a Seoul Defence Ministry spokesman said today, reports Reuter.

"I believe team spirit exercises will not be held in view of a nuclear deal reached between the United States and North Korea in Geneva. But a formal decision has yet to be made," he said.

Seoul and Washington suspended the exercises earlier this year but said at the time they would go ahead in November unless the North agreed to open its suspected nuclear sites to international scrutiny.

**Chandrika won't let army interfere in peace talks**

COLOMBO, Oct 18: Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka says she will not allow the military to interfere in her efforts to end the 11-year war with Tamil rebels, reports AP.

"The army up till now has reigned supreme... They have been a government unto themselves," Chandrika said.

"Their attitude was that we cannot decide anything on our own, we have to get permission from them... Our government is not willing to tolerate this," Chandrika said in an interview to the British Broadcasting Corporation. The text of the interview was made available to The Associated Press on Tuesday.

**Junta to meet Suu Kyi again**

BANGKOK, Oct 18: Myanmar's military rulers told Thailand's deputy foreign minister they will soon meet for a second time with dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, an official said on Tuesday, reports AP.

Suwat Jirapan secretary to Deputy Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan, said Myanmar's first secretary general, Lt Gen Khin Nyunt, discussed the planned meeting during Suran's one-day visit to Myanmar Monday.

Khin Nyunt and junta leader Gen Than Shwe met with Aung San Suu Kyi in mid-September for the first time since they placed her under house arrest five years ago.

The Myanmar junta has come under increasing pressure in recent months to free her.

**Queen, Thatcher face maternal anxiety over their sons' crises**

LONDON, Oct 18: Queen Elizabeth and Margaret Thatcher, who as monarch and prime minister steered Britain through the 1980s, now face maternal anxiety over their sons' mid-life crises, reports Reuter.

Prince Charles, 45, and Mark Thatcher, 41, have serious marital problems and their roles in life have been under close media and public scrutiny this month, embarrassing their illustrious mothers.

The queen, now 68, glowed with pride when her son married his beautiful bride, then Lady Diana, in 1981 and when Mark had a child with his glamorous Texan wife Margaret Thatcher, 69, forgot herself and pronounced regally "We are a grandmother."

But both marriages are now on the rocks putting strains on the respective mothers who are said to be deeply upset that "riase breaks down?", one former Thatcher aide said.

Prince Charles' inner feelings in an authorised biography, extracts of which were published on Sunday, showed he never loved his wife, raising questions about his fitness to rule and again throwing the future of the monarchy up for debate.

In turn, the Thatcher dynasty, just one week before, was the subject of allegations by the Sunday Times newspaper that Mark Thatcher amassed a fortune in commission for helping to secure a huge arms deal with Saudi Arabia, signed by his mother, in 1985.

When the queen stepped off her aircraft in Moscow for an historic visit to Russia on Monday and when Lady Thatcher swept imperiously into the Conservative Party conference last week, people watched intently to see if the strain was showing.

The queen, always at ease on important occasions, looked relaxed as she shook hands and reviewed troops but Thatcher looked pale, drawn and distracted, a fact not lost on Britain's tabloid newspapers who blew up photographs of her face.

Sir Tim Bell, one of her closest advisers, stepped in to try and smooth over the cracks. He confirmed Mark Thatcher's marriage was in trouble but said the couple were not about to divorce and Margaret Thatcher was not suffering.

"She wasn't the least bit anxious," said Bell, a public relations consultant and loyal aide lieutenant of Thatcher. "She's just lost a lot of weight. Women of 69 who lose weight tend to look a bit haggard."

The "Iron lady" is known to idolise her son and when he got lost in the Sahara desert during a sports car rally in 1982, the then premier broke down and wept in public for the only time during her more than 11 years in power.

The queen is not given to great shows of emotion, wanting to preserve the mystique of Britain's monarchy. The closest she came to expressing her pain was by describing the year that Charles and Diana split up as her "annus horribilis".

This contrasts sharply with Charles, the future king, who poured out his heart in astonishingly frank confessions to broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby, who published intimate details of how the heir to the throne felt alienated in the royal family.

**Newspapers in Kashmir go on strike**

SRINAGAR, Oct 18: Irked by frequent rebel threats over news coverage, all newspapers in Kashmir stopped publication on Tuesday and began an indefinite strike, reports AP.

The latest showdown came as some rebels opened fire in the air on Sunday outside the office of the Kashmir's oldest newspaper, The Daily Aftab, that refused to follow their order to shut down, according to its owner, Khwaja Sanaulah Bhat.

A dozen guerilla groups fighting for independence in India's only Muslim-majority state frequently order editors not to publish news they consider injurious. Many newspapers have complied with the rebels' learing attacks.

**Rwandan FM missing in NY**

NEW YORK, Oct 18: The foreign minister of Rwanda has been missing since he checked out of a hotel with plans to deliver 187,000 dollars in cash to his country's UN mission 12 days ago, police said on Monday. AP reports from New York.

Jean Marie Vianney Ndagimana, the foreign minister, called the United Nations mission October 9 to cancel a meeting, police said. When mission personnel called the hotel to see what was wrong, they discovered that he had already checked out. The case was first reported to police on Monday by Mimi Bakurumusta, the Rwandan ambassador.

He told police that Ndagimana, who lives in Paris, arrived in the city with the Rwandan president.

**Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohamad shakes hands with Iranian President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani at his office in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Rafsanjani is in Malaysia on a three-day official visit.**

**Gunmen kill 23 in Karachi**

KARACHI, Oct 18: Roaming gunmen took religious, political and ethnic feuds to the streets of Pakistan's largest city, killing at least 23 people in two days of widespread lawlessness, police said Tuesday, reports AP.

"The snipers are everywhere. They are rampant," said Aleem Jafri, police superintendent in Karachi's western suburbs.

The separate shootings in different parts of town were the year's worst round of bloodletting in this southern port.

Violence began Monday when masked gunmen in a car shot and killed five Shiite Muslim worshippers at the Imam Bargha Shah Khurasan mosque in central Karachi. Police blamed Sunni Muslim militants.

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"I hope the improving of bilateral relations will make a significant contribution to peace in Asia and the rest of the world," Kang told reporters.

The draft accord broadly commits North Korea to opening its nuclear program to international inspection, rejoining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that bans the spread of nuclear weapons, and scrapping old-fashioned atomic power plants which can produce the bomb-making ingredient plutonium.

In return, the United States offers diplomatic links and North Korea will be given two modern light-water atomic reactors to replace its old-fashioned graphite-moderated ones.

Kang sounded confident that the North Korean leadership will give its approval.

"I am convinced this agreement when implemented will help resolve the so-called nuclear issue once and for all," he told journalists outside North Korea's lakeside diplomatic mission.

Chief US negotiator Robert L. Gallucci headed back to Washington to brief Congress and the Clinton administration on the details.

Subject to approval by the capitals, Gallucci and Kang will sign the deal in Geneva on Friday.

The agreement fleshes out one reached in August. Neither side commented on the details for now.

Gallucci termed the accord "broadly acceptable and positive" for the United States and North Korea's neighbors, including South Korea.

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She said records of 147,000 names out of 192,000 people who signed her campaign petition were erased as a result of a blackout earlier in the month. She blamed the intelligence service for the loss of data.

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# Clinton to attend signing of Jordan-Israel treaty Oct 26

WASHINGTON, Oct 18: Hoping for a measure of credit at a remarkable moment of peace, President Clinton will go to the Middle East to witness the Israel-Jordan treaty signing. The historic accord "must be welcomed by friends of peace all around the world," Clinton said, reports AP.

He was invited to participate in the Oct 26 ceremony by Jordan's King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who called Clinton aboard Air Force One shortly after they announced the accord Monday.

The trip, Clinton's first to the Middle East as president, comes in the midst of a string of foreign policy successes: the showdown with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, peaceful military intervention in Haiti and the announcement Monday of an agreement between the United States and North Korea over the communist regime's nuclear program.

Clinton, whose diplomats have kept involved in the movement toward peace in the Middle East, promised Monday to help Jordan and Israel on "a journey of peace that will bring them a bright future for generations to come."

"The United States has stood by them and worked with them, and we will stand by them every step of the way," he said.

In July, Clinton oversaw an agreement between the two nations to end their state of belligerency and in September 1993, he presided at the

White House as Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization came to terms.

Press secretary Dee Dee Myers said details of the trip had not been finalized, but she expected Clinton to be in the region "at least a couple of days." She left open the possibility that Clinton might also visit US troops in Kuwait while he's in the region.

Clinton called Monday's breakthrough "extraordinary achievement: it must be welcomed by the friends of peace all around the world."

"At a time when hatred and extremism and threatening behavior still stalk the Middle East, this agreement reminds us that moderation and reason are prevailing, that nations can put conflict behind them, that courageous statesmen can lead their people to peace," he said.

Looking ahead, Clinton said the United States was pressing Israel and Syria to reach a

peace agreement, too. "We're continuing to work there and we're encouraged," he said. We have to keep working until it's all done."

Israel's separate peace talks with Syria are snagged over Syria's demand to recoup all of the Israeli held Golan Heights.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher said the Jordan-Israel pact was an indication that "the enemies to peace cannot block the peace process."

He also hailed Rabin's decision to reopen negotiations with the PLO on expanding Palestinian self-rule. He had suspended the talks last week when an Israeli soldier was kidnapped in Gaza by Muslim fundamentalists. The soldier was later killed during an Israel rescue raid.

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A file picture shows Dagmar Koehl on the catwalk during the Miss Germany '77 contest. The former Miss Germany was elected member of parliament for the Christian Social Union in the legislative elections held on Oct 16. — AFP photo

# Off the Record

## Park living up to its reputation?

NEW YORK: Comedians joke about crime in New York city's Central Park, politicians bemoan it, out-of-towners fear it, and police say it's exaggerated, reports AP.

The park is "safer than Vermont," a commander proclaimed last summer comparing the park favourably with the idyllic and rural northern state.

But with 11 rapes this year so far, the park that attracts 14 million visitors a year is living up to the reputation it supposedly doesn't deserve.

The latest victim was a 39-year-old unemployed secretary who was attacked while jogging around the park's reservoir at 9:30 p.m. on Saturday. The woman, who was wearing stereo headphones, was grabbed by a man from behind and dragged at knifepoint into the bushes.

On Monday, the park was sunny and calm. The Guardian Angels, the city's self-appointed, red-bereted crimefighters, posted signs reading "After Dark, Be Smart - Stay Out of the Park." The Parks Department removed the signs.

Park officials cautioned against panic, saying that to jog in the park is one thing; to do so 1/alone 2/- after dark 3/- in the park's more overgrown, less frequented northern half is something else.

Fredrick Law Olmsted, the park's creator, never intended the park to be used after dark; lights were not included in his original plan. The park - at 840 acres, it's larger than Monaco - was a romantic, naturalistic retreat from the city full of hills and dales and vegetation that also gave bad guys cover.

## Sexual discrimination against soldiers?

SYDNEY: The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is looking at its ban on male soldiers wearing earrings and long hair which at least one trooper says constitutes sexual discrimination, reports Reuter.

In a letter published in an army newspaper, private Andrew Griffiths said it was illegal under Australia's anti-discrimination laws to force male soldiers to have short-back and sides haircuts, but allow women collar-length hair.

The issue of earrings and hair length for males and females is currently under review by the ADF and will be considered by the defence force personnel policy committee later this year," a spokeswoman, Major Jane Glenn, told reporters on Tuesday.

There are 51,699 male soldiers and sailors and airmen in Australia's permanent defence force, compared with 7321 females.

## In order to reduce traffic hazards ...

CANBERRA: Thirsty kangaroos invading the Australian capital's urban areas will be shot in order to reduce traffic hazards, reports AP.

Canberra's local government has approved a culling programme after many drivers got into accidents while swerving to avoid kangaroos. Hundreds of roos are believed to have been killed by vehicles.

A severe drought in eastern Australia has driven the animals out of their usual haunts in parks and rural areas around Canberra in search of food and water.

The Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory, Rosemary Follett, last week said culling kangaroos would be "abhorrent." But late Monday, her government approved the plan.

Farmers will be allowed to shoot Eastern Grey kangaroos on their properties between sunset and 11 p.m.

A local environmentalist, Jacqui Rees, objected. "The decision looks like annual kill, which is outrageous," Rees said.

Local auto repair shops say about one third of all traffic accidents in Canberra now involve kangaroos and the average repair bill approaches 4,000 Australian dollars (2,938 US dollars).