

## BRIEFLY

**Rao to visit DPRK next year:**

Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao is to visit North Korea next year, a leader of his Ruling Congress (I) party said yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

"Rao will go some time after April," said Congress General Secretary Sushil Kumar Shinde, who visited North Korea for a week from October 7 heading a three-member party delegation.

**4 prisoners killed in Rwanda:**

Rwandan government soldiers shot and killed four prisoners who attempted to escape from a prison van but 22 others got away. Rwandan radio reported on Wednesday night. AP says from London.

The prisoners were suspected of involvement in genocide, according to the report monitored by the BBC. Rwandan Radio said the prisoners tried to escape when the van which was transferring them to the main prison in Kibuye in western Rwanda broke down. No other details were available.

**9 more killed in Burundi:**

Clashes that broke out at the end of last week between Hutu militants and the Tutsi dominated army in northwestern Burundi have now claimed at least 29 lives, the Burundi News Agency (ADP) said on Wednesday. AFP reports from Bujumbura.

In the latest fighting, nine people were killed and another nine badly wounded on Tuesday when a gang armed with grenades and automatic weapons attacked a camp for displaced persons and a military post at Rugombo in Cibitoke Province, the agency said.

**Gaddafi denounces Arabs:**

Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gaddafi on Wednesday denounced Arab rulers "who are bowing in humiliation, one after another," to sign peace treaties with Israel, Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency reported, says AP from Nicosia.

The agency, monitored in Nicosia, said that Gaddafi told the Iranian ambassador in Tripoli that Muslims around the world should unite in a "consolidated Islamic front to confront the West's brutal crusade against Muslims."

**US comedian Martha Raye dies:**

Comedian Martha Raye, who had been seriously ill for years, died on Wednesday at a Los Angeles hospital, a hospital spokesman said. She was 78 years old. Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

Raye suffered from severe circulatory problems and her death "was an aggregate of that and other health difficulties," said Ron Wise, spokesman for the Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre.

**30 hurt in US oil plant blast:**

An explosion ripped through an oil refinery on Wednesday, injuring 30 workers including some who were trapped on scaffolding by their safety belts, AP reports from Torrance, California.

The afternoon blast originated in a line carrying liquid petroleum gas, but its cause wasn't immediately known, said Bill Buckalew, environmental health and safety manager at the Mobil Oil plant.

**Chechen clash claims 65 more:**

A major offensive on Wednesday by separatist Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev's troops against the Moscow-backed opposition has left at least 90 dead, the Chechen authorities said, AFP reports from Moscow.

Dudayev has deployed between 1,000 and 2,000 men out of an estimated total force of 3,000, ten times more than the numbers he has used in previous skirmishes with three main opposition groups.

**Neo-Nazi leader jailed:**

A court jailed Austrian neo-Nazi leader Gottfried Kuessel for 11 years on Wednesday for founding an extreme rightwing organisation banned under Austrian law. Reuter reports from Vienna.

Kuessel, 36, showed no emotion as Judge Klodhilde Eckbrecht delivered the sentence in a late-night session following a retrial of his case ordered by the Supreme Court.

**Israeli shells kill 5 in Lebanon:**

Israeli tank shells killed three civilians in South Lebanon late on Wednesday, bringing to five the number killed three in 12 hours, security sources said. Reuter reports from Nabatiyeh, Lebanon.

They said an Israeli tank fired several shells into the village of Nabatiyeh Al-Fawqa just outside the Jewish state's occupation zone in the south.

**Blast claims one in Iraq:**

One person was killed and five were seriously hurt on Wednesday when a bomb blast rocked an Iraqi government ministry in Baghdad, state television reported, AFP says from Baghdad.

The three kilogramme (6.6 pound) bomb containing a battery and trigger wires went off in a prayer room in the Waqf Ministry in charge of religious endowments, injuring three men and three women. One died later in hospital.

**Lankan paramedics on strike:**

Work in out-patients departments (OPD) of Sri Lanka's government hospitals remained crippled for the second day yesterday as 2,500 para-medical employees decided to continue a token strike, Xinhua reports from Colombo.

Union representatives of medical laboratory technologists, x-ray technicians, physiotherapists and pharmacists said they were not satisfied with the health ministry's promise to appoint a committee to look into their demands.

**Chinese VP to visit Japan:**

Chinese Vice President Rong Yiren plans to visit Japan next week, perhaps to mend fences following China's recent harsh criticism of Tokyo for its Taiwan policy, reports AP from Beijing.

Rong is travelling to Japan for a "goodwill visit" intended to develop good neighbourly relations. Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian told reporters on Thursday.

**Egypt blasts Tel Aviv incident:**

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday sent condolences to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin over the bombing of a bus in Tel Aviv, Egypt's Middle East news agency said, AFP reports from Cairo.

**S Pacific Forum new UN observer:**

The South Pacific Forum, a 15-nation regional organisation, has been granted observer status at the United Nations General Assembly, a forum statement said yesterday. Reuter reports from Suva.

# US starts diplomatic efforts to isolate Hamas, Hezbollah

WASHINGTON, Oct 20: The United States has begun a diplomatic initiative to isolate the Palestinian fundamentalist group Hamas and others attempting to undermine Arab-Israeli peace efforts, officials said Wednesday, reports AFP.

State Department spokesman Michael McCurry said Washington has contracted "a host of countries" including Syria to encourage them to cut financial and other ties to

groups such as Hamas, which kidnapped and killed an Israeli soldier this month.

"Others in the world community now have to take a stand against this type of violence and those who have lent either encouragement or financial resources, tacitly or directly, to group like Hamas and others who would destroy the peace process," he said.

McCurry said Washington had also encouraged Palestine

Liberation Organisation Chief Yasser Arafat to distance himself from the acts of violence by Hamas.

"The increased activity by those who would attempt to poison and destroy the peace process is precisely because the peace process is working and moving ahead with greater momentum," the official said.

"These are acts of desperation by people who see that the citizens of this region are

making peace."

A US administration official said meanwhile that Washington would press Syria to end support for groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Meanwhile, AP from Shati Refugee Camp, Gaza Strip reports: A top Hamas leader said Thursday the war against Israeli civilians would continue, but he offered the Jewish state a temporary truce.

"The military resistance will continue against Israel and against all Israeli targets including civilians," said Inad Falaji, a senior figure in the Islamic resistance movement. "The holy war will not stop."

Falaji demanded Israel withdraw from the West Bank, dismantle Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and declare an end to the fight against Hamas activists.

"We will accept a temporary truce with Israel if Israel meets our demands," Falaji said in an interview with The Associated Press in the Gaza Strip refugee camp.

He said a truce would be honoured by the military wing of Hamas, the Izzetline al-Qassam Brigades, which claimed responsibility for four deadly bus bomb attacks including Wednesday's explosion in Tel Aviv that left 20 dead.

"We are in a war with Israel. Sometimes we do more and sometimes we do less, but we will not stop until Israel accepts our demands," said Falaji.



Israeli protest on Wednesday in Jerusalem against the suicidal terrorist attack on a bus claimed by the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas in Tel Aviv. — AFP photo

# Myanmar opposition leader quits politics

BANGKOK, Oct 20: A prominent Myanmar opposition figure, seen by many as the catalyst for the 1988 democracy movement, has announced he has "given up politics and will never return," according to a Burmese-language journal, reports AFP.

Former Brigadier General Aung Gyi, 75, told the Yangon-based, economic publication Kyeebway that his popularity was at an end, and he had decided to become a businessman.

"As a good politician, I know that this is the time to leave politics," Aung Gyi was quoted as saying in the latest edition of the monthly.

The state-sanctioned journal said Aung Gyi had also abolished the Union National Democracy Party (UNDP) which he founded in December 1988, and had cancelled its registration.

The former army officer had set up a private company called the Dinger Company Ltd and had signed a total of 25 agreements with Kuala Lumpur-based Napos Lions Group, Kyeebway said.

The firm and its partner have agreed to invest in banking, construction, communications, industry and agricultural projects in Myanmar, he was quoted as saying.

Aung Gyi's official retirement marks the end of an incendiary political career which spanned more than half a century.

Born in 1919, he participated in the country's earliest independence bid and, in

1945, fought against the Japanese occupation army under the command of Ne Win.

He later became a deputy in Ne Win's military regime which seized power in 1962, but was sacked one year later for his economic policies which deviated from the hard-core Socialism espoused by his chief.

He was sentenced to three years in prison in 1965 for his political activities and, in 1973, served another year.

## Empress Michiko turns 60

TOKYO, Oct 20: Though often likened to a breeze of change in Japan's tradition-bound palace, Empress Michiko, who marked her 60th birthday on Thursday, credited her husband with bringing the ancient institution up to date.

AP reports, "I believe it is those who are in the direct line of succession to the throne, and not their spouses or families, who are the measure of the process of change," she said in her annual birthday statement.

"Each generation is like a new wind, and each new wind would not have blown without the one before it."

For many Japanese, Michiko's wedding to Emperor Akihito in 1959 symbolises the flowering of a more democratic society after the dark years of World War II. Akihito assumed the throne after the death of his father, Emperor Hirohito, in 1989.

# Violent protest against Criminal Justice Bill outside Commons

LONDON, Oct 20: Radical opponents of tough new law-and-order legislation by the Conservative government clashed with police on Wednesday. Hurling rocks and bottles in siege-like violence outside the British Parliament, reports Reuter.

Police arrested 11 people and witnesses reported several demonstrators injured in the clash, the second against the controversial proposed measure this month.

At least 17 civilians and eight police officers were taken to hospital and 26 arrests made in another protest over the bill on October 9, described as the worst riots since an anti-racism demon-

stration turned violent a year ago.

As some marchers were pushed back by mounted police on Wednesday, Members of Parliament complained about being under siege after police lost all doors as a precaution.

There were chants of "kill the bill" and "freedoms are thrown into the police lines after an earlier peaceful demonstration dispersed.

"We have a situation now where this house is under siege," senior Conservative MP Sir James Spicern said as legislators debated the criminal justice and public order bill which opponents say infringes civil liberties.

# Rwandan FM clarifies his 'disappearance'

PARIS, Oct 20: Rwandan Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Ndagijimana denied on Wednesday reports that he had disappeared with about 187,000 dollars destined for his country's UN mission, saying he was on a private visit to Paris, reports Reuter.

The report shows the atmosphere of prejudice, suspicion and mistrust which currently rules at the heart of the Rwandan government," Ndagijimana said in a statement faxed to Reuters.

Senior Rwandan officials at the United Nations in New York had said on Tuesday that their mission was left with "zero" cash after Ndagijimana vanished with about 187,000 dollar he had brought to NY.

# Off the Record



Singer and actress Madonna listens to a speech by US President Bill Clinton on Wednesday in New York during a fund-raising event for New York Governor Mario Cuomo. — AFP photo

## To protest father's series of marriages

CAIRO: A 12-year-old boy has hanged himself in a poor district of Cairo to protest against his father's series of marriages which left the family destitute, Al-Akhabar newspaper said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Yesser Kamal Salem climbed to the top of a stable in Shubra where he lived with his 22 brothers and sisters and hanged himself from the grape-vines, the semi-official daily said.

His body was found by his father Kamal Salem Salem, 55, when he went to wake up his children to go to their jobs in workshops and on donkey carts.

Yesser's suicide was seen as protest against his father's series of marriages, the newspaper said. Married for the 11th time, Salem had at one point had four wives all at once.

## Snow Princess on heat escapes from zoo

BEIJING: A 10,000-yuan (1,200-dollar) reward is being offered for the recapture of a female panda on heat that escaped from Suzhou Zoo last month by bending back the bars of her cage in an apparent state of sexual frenzy, a report said Thursday, according to AFP.

According to the China Daily, the Panda, which goes by the benign name of Snow Princess, had worked herself into a "terrible rage" on the afternoon of September 16 and defied attempts by a local vet to calm her down.

Snow Princess managed to bend the bars of her cage back far enough to escape and was last spotted by tourists near a forest-covered mountain outside Suzhou in the eastern province of Jiangsu.



Several thousand Iranians pass by the Iranian parliament on Wednesday in Tehran during the official funeral ceremony for about thousand Iranian soldiers who had been missing in action during the war between Iraq and Iran which lasted from 1980 to 1988. — AFP photo

# Moro rebels take 26 Christians hostage

COTABATO, Philippines, Oct 20: Muslim guerillas are holding 26 Christian civilians hostage in the southern Philippines, an official said on Thursday, reports AFP.

The civilians were abducted on Monday from Kabakan town, 895 kilometers (555 miles) south of Manila, by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and their fate is unknown, said north Cotabato Province Governor Rosario Diaz.

Earlier today, about 40 MILF rebels attacked an abandoned village near Alesan town, burning one chapel and 10 houses of Christian settlers who had left on Monday, Diaz added.

The army said the sudden burst of MILF activity followed a weekend attack by the army against rebel units who had occupied a 1.7 billion peso (65 million dollar) irrigation project managed by South Korea's Shinsung Corp. in Carmen town.

So far, 20 MILF guerillas, two soldiers and 16 civilians have been killed, and more than 2,000 Muslims and Christians have fled their homes in four towns near the construction site since the military action, Diaz said.

The South Korean firm said from its office in Manila that it

would continue with the project.

"We are not withdrawing, we will continue working until after the trouble is over," Lee Jee-Chul, project manager for Shinsung Corp, told AFP.

The MILF is a breakaway faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which is now engaged in peace talks with the government after the failure of its war for secession in the south in the early 1970s.

## Tajik Deputy PM killed in blast

MOSCOW: Tajik Vice Premier Munavarsho Naziev and his driver were killed today when their car blew up on a landmine planted by Islamic rebels in Central Tajikistan, the Tajik Security Ministry announced, reports AFP.

Naziev's bodyguard was seriously injured in the attack, which occurred at 0200 GMT in the village of Djafir in the Islamic-controlled Garm region some 230 kilometres (144 miles) from the capital Dushanbe.

Naziev's death came shortly before a UN-sponsored ceasefire agreed by the government and the Islamic opposition was due to go into effect at 0300 GMT.

## Rebels attack Cong leader's house in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Oct 20: A top Kashmiri politician had a narrow escape today when Muslim guerrillas lobbed grenades at his well-guarded house here, police said, reports AFP.

Maulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, a local leader of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's Congress (I) Party, was dazed but unhurt when two of three grenades thrown by the militants exploded, police said.

No one was injured in the blasts and the attackers escaped.

All of the windows in the house were shattered and its outer wall was damaged, police said, one grenade was defused by Indian troops. A dozen policemen normally guard Ansari's house.

# Europe doesn't want Serbs to lose war in Bosnia: Karadzic

BELGRADE, Oct 20: Europe does not want the Serbs to lose the war in Bosnia, the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic claimed on Wednesday, according to the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA, reports AFP.

Karadzic, talking in the Bosnian Serb-held town of Nova Topola, said that "no European nation not even Germany, wants the Serbs to lose the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially not against the Muslims."

He said it was becoming more and more evident that the international community was looking for a compromise solution.

His first choice remained unification with Serbia, he said followed by a merger with the

rump Yugoslavia, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro.

The third choice was total independence, Karadzic said. The Bosnian Serbs have rejected an international peace plan drawn up by the United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany that would leave them in possession of 49 per cent of Bosnian territory.

Their rejection of the plan has brought them under strengthened sanctions endorsed by their former sponsor Belgrade.

Meanwhile a dangerous armed showdown loomed near Sarajevo on Thursday as Bosnian government troops clung to positions inside a UN demilitarised zone (DMZ) ignoring a deadline to leave set by Serb forces.

Repeated appeals by UN peacekeepers have failed to persuade 500 government soldiers to vacate the DMZ which Muslim commandos penetrated on October 6 to ambush a Serb post, killing 20 Serbs including four female medics.

Enraged Serbs gave the UN until October 20 to dislodge Muslim troops from the DMZ, or they would blast them out, erasing the zone of separation and signalling a relapse to heavy fighting outside Sarajevo.

UN Protection Force UNPROFOR soldiers then swept out 650 Bosnian troops from the DMZ by blowing up newly dug trenches and bunkers but 500 have refused to budge. UN officers said.

UNPROFOR created the DMZ running over Ignjan and

Bjelasnica mountains in August 1993 to halt an onslaught on Sarajevo by the Serbs, who pledged to honour it on condition peacekeepers kept it free of combatants.

But Muslim forces have lately been using the zone as a staging point for raids to soften up Serb lines since the collapse of peace efforts in August, when the Serbs rejected big power pressure to cede land for a fair settlement.

The Bosnian government on Tuesday rebuffed UN demands for a pullout from the DMZ as an affront to the sovereignty of a UN recognised country, 70 per cent of which has been taken by separatist Serbs in 30 months of war.

UNPROFOR then threatened to withdraw its French

peacekeepers from the DMZ and suggested this could backfire for the government into renewed Serb assaults on Sarajevo, which is a UN "safe area."

There was no change in the government's position as the clock ticked towards today's deadline.

But Bosnian vice president Ejup Ganic said on Wednesday night he hoped differences with UNPROFOR over the status of the DMZ -- the government is linking it with other unspecified security steps -- could be resolved shortly.

UN sources said the Muslims appeared to hope that the Bosnian Serb army strapped for manpower and believed short of fuel with Muslims

harrying it on many fronts, would be unable to mount a frontal attack into the DMZ.

The government's new defiance of UNPROFOR is driven by disgust over what it considers the UN's passivity in the face of constant Serb attacks on aid convoys and civilians inside UN weapons-exclusion zones.

UNPROFOR says it is running out of fuel vital for its humanitarian mission because of a Serb blockade and has warned of "extremely strong action" to correct the situation.

An UNPROFOR spokesman said the fuel shortfall was critical and "is reaching the point where our ability to carry out our operations is being threatened."

## India to sign extradition treaty with US

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: India will sign an extradition treaty with the United States, similar to existing pacts with Britain and Canada, Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

"We will have an extradition treaty with the US very soon," Chavan told reporters on the eve of a week-long visit to Britain and Canada.

He said the pact with Britain had put "psychological pressure" on militants operating from London, forcing them to shift and ushered a "qualitative change" in the attitude of British authorities about passing on information quickly.