

International

BRIEFLY

UN peacekeeper shot in Haiti: A French member of the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti was shot in the head by an unidentified assailant and critically wounded. UN sources said on Friday. Reuter reports from Port-au-Prince.

Marshall Christian Margnier, 36, a member of the UN civilian police force in the western town of Petit Goave, was preparing to go to bed when he was shot in the head Thursday night from a distance of about 10 yards (metres). UN spokesman Eric Falt said at a news briefing.

Lankan student shot dead in USA: A Sri Lankan student from a Texas college was shot to death early Friday as he reportedly tried to stop an argument at the family housing complex at Oklahoma State University. AP reports from Stillwater, Oklahoma.

The student was shot in the head, chest and abdomen. Stillwater Medical Centre spokeswoman Elaine Ackerson said. The university withheld the man's name until his parents in Sri Lanka could be notified of the death.

Albright to visit Myanmar: US Ambassador Madeleine Albright will urge Myanmar military rulers to move toward democracy when she visits the southeast Asian nation later this month, a spokesman said Friday. AP reports from United Nations.

Albright would be the highest-ranking US official to visit Myanmar since the military took power in 1988.

Gunmen kill 3 in Egypt: Islamic militants shot dead three people, including a coptic Christian, in attacks in the troubled Minya province of southern Egypt Saturday, police said. AFP reports from Minya, Egypt.

They said two assailants killed a coptic municipal worker in Al-Mahras. Gunmen also opened fire in Al-Halega market-place, killing village chief Sanad Abdel Maksud Mohammad and a cattle merchant.

Kuwaiti policeman arrested: A Kuwaiti policeman has been arrested on charge of trying to rape a US woman after kidnapping her. Al-Watan newspaper reported Saturday. AFP says from Kuwait City.

The American, who was not named, escaped and alerted the US embassy.

Colombia to fight kidnappers: Colombian President Ernesto Samper announced a strategy on Friday to fight kidnapping in a country where nearly 100 people are taken hostage every month, one of the highest abduction rates in the world. Reuter reports from Bogota.

Less than a week after news of the kidnapping of a British diplomat in central Colombia was made public, Samper told Congress he would create a special office dedicated exclusively to fighting the crime and offer cash rewards for information leading to the release of hostages and capture of kidnappers.

Turkey bans gay festival: The governor's office Friday banned Turkey's first gay festival, saying it would offend society's values. AP reports from Istanbul.

The Gay-Lesbian Cultural Festival was scheduled to start Saturday. Movies, documentaries and panel discussions were planned for the week-long festival.

10 Kurds killed in N Iraq: At least 10 fighters were killed in renewed clashes between Turkish Kurds separatists and Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq, a Kurdish official said Friday. AFP reports from Ankara.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) representative Saefon Dizal, said that 10 KDP fighters died and 11 were wounded in Kani Masi near the Turkish border on Thursday.

2 die in Russian prison: Two prisoners smothered to death in an airless, overcrowded prison and a third man was hospitalised in critical condition, the ITAR-Tass news agency said Saturday. AP reports from Moscow.

It said three other inmates at the pre-trial facility in Perm, a city in the Urals, had to be revived with respirators Friday night. The warden ordered windows and food hatches throughout the overcrowded prison opened on Saturday, the dispatch said.

45 Brotherhood leaders to face trial in Egypt

CAIRO, Sept 2: About 45 leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood will face trial in Egyptian military courts for membership of the banned fundamentalist organisation and other non-violent offences, judicial sources said today, reports Reuter.

It will be the first mass trial of Brotherhood members since 1965 and the decision to try them confirms the sharp change in the government's policy towards the organisation, the largest and most influential of Egypt's fundamentalist groups.

Muslim Brotherhood said it was part of a government attempt to make sure they do not win any seats in parliamentary elections expected to take place in November.

The leaders include Essam Eryan, deputy secretary-general of the Egyptian

Medical Association, Ibrahim Zafaarani, the secretary-general of the association's branch in Alexandria, and Mohammed All-Sayed Habib, a prominent academic at the university in the southern city of Assiut.

Many of them have been in detention without charge since January, with the courts repeatedly extending the detention orders at intervals at 45 days.

The judicial sources said the military prosecutor had not yet drafted the chargesheet but government officials have already accused them of holding illegal meetings in secret to prepare for the parliamentary elections.

Members of the Brotherhood cannot stand for election in the name of the Brotherhood.

Indian troops on full alert ahead of Beant's cremation

CHANDIGARH, India, Sept 2: Indian troops were placed on full alert here today in preparation for the funeral of assassinated Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh, who was blown up by a car bomb two days ago, reports AFP.

Hundreds of police and paramilitary forces were deployed ahead of Beant Singh's cremation on the outskirts of this city which Punjab officials say will be attended by thousands of people.

However Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, who was a friend of the slain Sikh politician, will stay away because of security reasons, a senior police officer said here.

Beant Singh, 73, who crushed a bloody Sikh separatist campaign in Punjab after becoming chief minister of the northern state in February 1992, was blown up Thursday as he got into his

car which had been rigged with explosives.

An official spokesman said Beant Singh would be cremated with military honour after his flower-draped body is brought back from his native village where it was taken early today.

Armed policemen sealed off the entire cremation site and the surrounding neighbourhood, running random checks on vehicles around the city, which is joint capital of Punjab and neighbouring Haryana state.

Detectives meanwhile made slow progress in unravelling the meticulously planned assassination, releasing the descriptions of two young Sikhs who police said could have set off the car bomb by remote-control.

Newspapers have blamed lax security for the killing.

French navy storms Greenpeace ships Massive protests from Melbourne to Paris against N-tests

SYDNEY, Australia, Sept 2: Angry protesters from Melbourne to Paris marked the final hours of September 1, the starting date from which France says it could resume testing nuclear weapons in the South Pacific, reports AP.

Demonstrators marched through cities, staked out airports, invaded embassies and fell to the street in mock agony as red flares burned to symbolise death by radiation. Police stopped most protests.

French navy commandos stormed two Greenpeace protest vessels at the Murooa Atoll test site, 1,200 kilometres (750 miles) southeast of Tahiti. Once aboard the MV Greenpeace and the Rainbow Warrior II, the ships leading international peace flotilla, commandos detained 60 crew members. The navy began towing the ships to Hao Atoll, a French military base 600 kilometres (375 miles) away.

In Papeete, Tahiti, the capital of French Polynesia, protesters held an anti-nuclear, pro-independence rally of up to 15,000 on Saturday. About 100 legislators from Japan, Europe, Australia and New Zealand are flying in for the demonstration, including Japan's Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura.

Papeete was the site of scuffles in the past two days between police and protesters who tried to take over the airport and government buildings.

In Paris, more than 600 protesters hoping to deliver 3.3 million signatures denouncing the tests tried to form a human chain stretch-

ing from the river Seine to the presidential palace. Riot police, stationed daily in the posh shopping district near the palace, pushed them back. Paris police headquarters said 300 people were arrested.

In Lausanne, Switzerland, about 20 protesters temporarily occupied two French diplomatic offices Friday, putting signs on the windows saying the facility was "closed because of nuclear tests." In Basel, five or six protesters locked themselves in the visa section of the French consulate; they left when police arrived a half-hour later.

But the biggest protest was in Melbourne, when 3,000 people marched through the streets Friday night and fell to the ground in a "die-in," symbolising radiation poisoning.

In Sydney, a large demonstration was planned for Saturday.

Prime Minister Paul Keating issued an 11th-hour appeal to France on Friday night to call off the test.

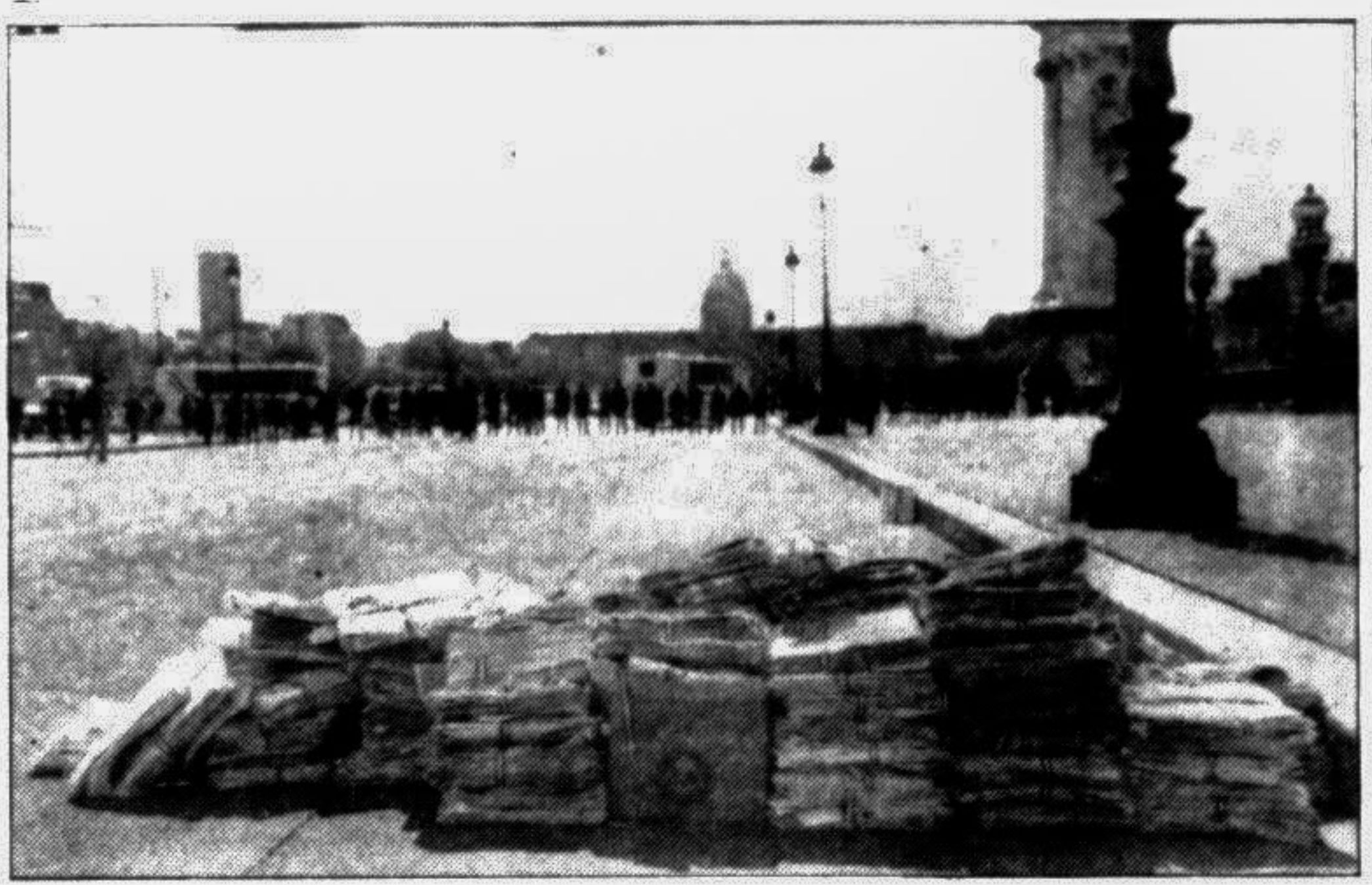
"They have no moral right to conduct these tests," he said.

"Until the tests stop, we will continue to remind the French government that with

every test they conduct, the good name of France will be diminished in this part of the world."

Members of the Pacific Island Nations have said they would demand a nuclear-free Pacific at the South Pacific Forum meeting in Papua New Guinea on Monday.

Next week, the French nuclear tests will be on the agenda in Quito, Ecuador, by leaders of the Group of Rio countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.



Millions of signatures against nuclear testing collected by Greenpeace lay on the Alexandre III bridge in Paris on Friday, after a demonstration called by organisation. The protest took place in spite of the authorities' interdiction. — AFP/UNB photo

India sets up radio contact with Al-Faran

SRINAGAR, Sept 2: Indian officials on Saturday established radio contact with the Muslim captors of four Western hostages being held in Kashmir, but it remained unclear when the two-month kidnap drama would end, reports AFP.

A Kashmir government official spoke for about 10 minutes over "a wireless set" with the abductors, who are believed to be based in the mountains around the resort of Pahalgam, where the Westerners were seized in early July.

Details of the conversation were not available, but police sources said further radio contact would be made later Saturday.

Karens vow to work for peace

MAE SOT, Thailand: Myanmar's embattled Karen guerillas finished a 10-day congress vowing to work towards talks with Myanmar military government but leaders warned today peace would be elusive if political concerns were not addressed, reports Reuter.

Almost 200 members of the Karen National Union (KNU), one of the world's oldest guerilla groups, gathered for the meeting in their besieged zone of control in remote southeastern Myanmar.

The KNU suffered serious military setbacks earlier this year, losing its headquarters to a Myanmar government offensive after several hundred troops in the rebel army mutinied and joined the government side.

Last month, KNU leaders held preliminary talks with representatives of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)

Balkan FMs meet in Geneva next week to end conflict

WASHINGTON, Sep 2: In a hopeful diplomatic sign, the foreign ministers of Bosnia, Croatia and Serb-led Yugoslavia will meet in Geneva next week to try to lay the groundwork of settlement of the 3-year-old Balkan conflict, reports AP.

Friday's announcement by the US State Department came just hours after NATO suspended its attacks on Bosnian Serb positions in order to give diplomacy a chance to work.

Acting Secretary of State Strobe Talbot later warned that the Bosnian Serbs can expect a resumption of NATO airstrikes unless they halt all attacks against Sarajevo and other safe areas of Bosnia and against United Nations rep-

resentatives.

"Our diplomatic effort will go forward, we will persist in our pursuit of peace at the negotiating table — in Geneva and beyond," Talbot told a Friday night gathering sponsored by the US United Nations Association.

But he added that whether the diplomatic process "unfolds against a backdrop of continued airstrikes or a continued suspension depends on whether the Bosnian Serb leaders commit themselves to end the shelling of the UN safe areas, end all attacks on representatives of the international community, including those representing the UN and end their strangulation and intimidation of Sarajevo."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher is on vacation.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns announced the Geneva meetings after intense US negotiations in the Balkans led by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, the department's point man for the crisis.

Burns said the negotiations "will be complicated and difficult but are in the interests of all parties to the conflict and the international community."

"The United States is prepared to do everything in its power, working with our partners and others, to assist the parties as they now begin the search for peace," Burns told reporters.

Dissolution of parliament Nepal's govt to appeal Supreme Court ruling

KATHMANDU, Sept 2: Nepal's minority communist government will appeal a Supreme Court ruling declaring King Birendra's dissolution of parliament unconstitutional, a party official said Saturday, reports AFP.

The Supreme Court on August 28 upheld an opposition appeal against the dissolution which the communist government requested.

Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari, head of the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML), said he had been forced to seek a dissolution as his government faced a censure motion it was almost certain to lose.

The opposition, led by the

Nepali Congress Party, appealed the King's decision and asked for parliament to be reconvened.

Parliament is due to meet again September 5 and the three opposition parties will press their censure motion. Log Mehar Shrestha, vice-chairman of the rightist Rastriya Prajatantra Party, told AFP.

If it wins the vote the opposition could be asked to form a coalition government.

But a highly placed Communist Party source said all NCP-UML members of parliament were likely to boycott parliament to avoid the censure motion.

Off the Record

Frantic bid to have a car

CAIRO: An Egyptian forced his daughter to sell a kidney for the equivalent of 5,000 US dollars to buy a new car. The daily Al-Akhbar reported today, says AFP.

The 22-year-old daughter refused to return home after her father, who was not named by the newspaper, forced her to have the operation carried out at a private hospital.

The morbid tale was revealed in court after the father reported the woman missing to the police claiming she had been abducted.

Insecure courthouse

LOS ANGELES: A man furious that his estranged wife was trying to seize his car shot her to death Friday at a downtown courthouse, reports AP.

Harry Zelig, 50, was arrested and booked for investigation of murder, police said. Bail was set at 1 million dollars.

Eileen Zelig, 40, died in surgery about three hours after she was shot. She lived in fear of Zelig and wanted him to sell his guns or turn them over to police because he had threatened her before, according to court records.

The couple, who married in 1982, had a 10-year-old son and two daughters, ages 6 and 12. The 6-year-old was with her parents as they left a courtroom about 9 am just two blocks from where OJ Simpson is on trial.

"The ex-wife had gone after the man's car," said attorney Wendy Herzog, who saw the couple in the courtroom. "It was a collection case and for that reason it was being transferred to civil."

As they reached the foot of an escalator, Zelig pulled a handgun and shot Mrs. Zelig, police Sgt. David McGill said. The young girl cried, "My daddy" after Mrs. Zelig was shot, according to a witness.

Poor 'Lion King'

STAFFORD, Virginia: A Christian group wants Walt Disney Co. to remove "The Lion King" from video stores, claiming the cartoon movie briefly shows the word "sex," reports AP.

The American Life League, which claims to be the nation's largest anti-abortion group, was alerted to the fleeting appearance of the word by a woman who said her 4-year-old son noticed it.

After seeing that the word appears to be formed by a dissipating cloud of dust about midway through the movie, the group began encouraging readers of its newsletter to call or write to Disney to complain.

"It's just appalling for them to do that," said Tracey Casale of the Stafford-based group, which claims 250,000 supporters. "To put a sexual message, no matter how subtle, in what's supposed to be a family movie, negates everything they claim to be."

Arafat, Peres agree on timetable for meet

CERNOBBIO, Italy, Sept 2: PLO head Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres agreed on Friday on a timetable for further meetings in protracted negotiations on Palestinian self-rule, a Palestinian official said.

But the official told Reuters that no issues of substance were discussed in the 50 minutes of informal talks, held in two sessions on the fringes of a symposium both men were attending at Cernobbio, on Lake Como in northern Italy.

"We talked about dates and times for further meetings between the president and Israeli officials. On that we agreed," the official said. He gave no details.

An Israeli official described the atmosphere at the meeting as very good. "Hopefully, the talks with

Arafat will resume next week in Eilat," he said.

Peres said earlier that he and Arafat would discuss developments at talks this week between Israeli and PLO negotiators in Eilat, Israeli on extending Palestinian self-rule throughout the West Bank.

He said they would set an agenda for fresh talks on Monday and Tuesday.

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation are struggling to complete the second phase of their 1993 interim peace accord, which in 1994 set up Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Arafat, in a speech to politicians, financiers and business leaders at the Cernobbio symposium, chided Israel for the slow pace of the negotiations.

Hamas planning to turn into political party

CAIRO, Sept 2: The Palestinian Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas which has carried out several deadly anti-Israeli bombings is planning to turn into a political party, the Arab daily Al-Hayat reported today, says AFP.

It had a copy of an internal document drawn up in Gaza which showed that Hamas, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, had formed a committee in charge of creating party institutions.

The names of the committee members are being kept secret for security reasons, the London-based newspaper said.

"The preparatory committee is studying its options and other alternatives. At the right time, the party will materialise. But all the (group's) options are riddled with difficulties," it said.

Women urged to fight conservative movements

HUAIROU, China, Sept 2: Feminist speakers called on women around the world Saturday to fight conservative movements which are preaching racism, dictatorship and oppression of women, reports AP.

"I'm a socialist and a feminist and I am increasingly beginning to feel like a dinosaur," Pakistani filmmaker and activist Nighat S Khan told 1,500 women and men attending the world's largest global women's meeting.

A panel discussion on the rise of conservatism at the NGO Forum on Women featured only opponents of conservatism, who were applauded.

Feminist delegates to next week's UN conference on women are expected to clash with conservatives and religious fundamentalists who want to maintain traditional roles for women and exert control over their lives.

Many of the 19,000 participants from non-governmental organizations who are attending the NGO Forum are hoping to lobby the UN conference, which will help set the agenda for women in the 21st century.

Khan said conservatism appeals to the part of everyone that wants what is secure and familiar. But conservatism also brings racism, dictatorship and oppression of women, she said.

"A conservative tide has risen in the countries of the north that threatens the human rights of us all," echoed Linda Burnham of the Women of Color Resource Center in the United States.

She said conservatives are attempting to roll back the gains made in racial justice in the United States since World War II.

Toujan Faisal, the first woman member of Parliament in Jordan, said

that initially none of the fundamentalist movements were "bad because they are seeking sovereignty and self-determination, but carried too far, they become wrong."

American lesbian activist Mab Segrest of the World Council of Churches said conservatives are trying to dismantle welfare systems and defend their own power through racism, sexism and attacks on foreigners and homosexuals.

Women must work to create communities where "no one is expendable, either to profit or rigid community norms," she said.

Speakers also criticised the absence of women in decision-making and the worldwide increase of poverty and unemployment, which is hitting women hardest.

The women's movement should be involved in politics

or else we don't make the big decisions and we don't have a comprehensive solution," said Faisal, the Jordanian lawmaker.

She noted that in the earliest democracy in Greece, women and slaves had no rights. "The slaves are almost abolished but the women remain, and they don't get a share of that cake," she said.

At another panel, Irish activist Helen O'Connell called on women to demand that governments, companies, and international institutions which hold power "are accountable to us and that the wealth they are accumulating is shared with us." She works with the group Women in Development Europe.

Esther Ocloo of Ghana, a businesswoman and founder of Sustainable End of Hunger Foundation, said "women suffer most from Africa's increasing poverty" because

they are being forced out of jobs and losing government subsidies for the tools and seeds they need to plant crops.

Organisers of the NGO Forum met with Chinese authorities Saturday to protest harassment and confiscation of videotapes. But the Chinese continued harassing exiled Tibetans, disrupting a workshop on women living under foreign occupation.

The organisers said they have collected a list of complaints, most of them concerning human rights groups which have run afoul of Chinese authorities in trying to promote their causes.

During heavy rainstorms Friday, a taxi heading to Huairou went out of control and hit a tree, killing one American participant and injuring another. The dead man was identified by the US Embassy as Gerard Skladal from the New York area.