

# BRIEFLY

**Spanish PM meets Yeltsin:** Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez met with President Boris Yeltsin in the Kremlin on Wednesday for intensive talks on trade, Russia-Europe relations and the crisis in Bosnia. AP reports from Moscow.

Gonzalez and a Spanish government delegation were received in an official ceremony in the Kremlin's elaborate St. George's Hall, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

**Mon rebels meet Myanmar Junta:** A leading ethnic Mon guerilla leader Nai Shwe Kyn held a meeting with Myanmar military leader General Than Shwe at the Myanmar Defence Ministry on Tuesday, official Myanmar radio said. AFP reports from Bangkok.

The talks between the head of the New Mon State Party (NMSF) and Myanmar's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) were also attended by other senior Myanmar military officials and NMSF leaders, radio Yangon said in a broadcast monitored in Bangkok.

**Indian Air Force pilot killed:** An Indian Air Force pilot was killed when his Mig fighter aircraft crashed while on a training mission, the press Trust of India reported yesterday. AFP says from New Delhi.

The accident occurred Tuesday in the Bhuj district of the western state of Gujarat, near India's border with Pakistan, the news agency said. It did not specify which model of the Russian-built Mig had been lost. India's Air Force flies Mig-21s, Mig-23s, and four squadrons of Mig-29s.

**41 Asians captured in UAE:** United Arab Emirates (UAE) coast guards have seized 41 Asians who tried to enter the country illegally in search of jobs, coast guard sources said yesterday. AFP reports from Abu Dhabi.

The 41 Iranians, Pakistanis and Afghans were captured on Tuesday after their two boats entered the territorial waters of the eastern Emirate of Fujairah in the Gulf of Oman, the sources said.

**Rains claim 22 in Sikkim:** Monsoon rains caused a five-story building to collapse in the remote state of Sikkim, killing at least 22 people, police said Wednesday. AP reports from Gauhati, India.

Twenty-three people were injured when the building caved in after two days of torrential rains in Deorali, a suburb of Zantok, the capital of Sikkim, which borders Tibet in the northeast.

**Russia, Iran sign accords:** Russia and Iran have signed two accords on nuclear cooperation, under which Russia will help Iran establish nuclear power stations in Bushire, a port city in southern Iran, as from October, it was announced yesterday. Xinhua reports from Moscow.

A senior official with Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy made the announcement at a press conference held in Moscow. Under an agreement Russia signed with Iran in January 1992, Russia will help Iran rebuild a nuclear power plant in Bushire.

**Part of Great Wall to be lit up:** A well-known section of the Great Wall in suburban Beijing will be lit up on weekend nights from September 16. Xinhua reports from Beijing.

An executive from the Badaling Tourism Development Company said that more than 1,000 m of the Badaling section of the Great Wall will be illuminated with 680 spotlights on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights from September 16.

**Rain, storm kill 43 in Morocco:** Torrential rain and hail storms killed more than 43 people in various parts of Morocco in the second series of rain storms in less than a month, the Interior Ministry said Tuesday. AP reports from Rabat.

The ministry said 43 people were killed Monday in the flooding in scattered regions of this North African nation, some fatally injured by hail that accompanied the downpour.

**Wife of Bal Thackeray dead:** Meena Thackeray, the wife of Bal Thackeray, the de facto leader of Maharashtra state, died of a heart attack early Wednesday. She was 63, AP reports from Bombay.

Mrs. Thackeray died at a clinic in Panvel, a town southeast of Bombay, where she was rushed after she suffered the heart attack in a smaller nearby clinic where she was being treated.

**Taliban impose curfew in Herat**

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A Taliban spokesman earlier reported that three key pro-government army commanders, including General Abdallah, had been captured during the fighting for Herat.

**South Korea willing to help flood-hit North**

SEOUL, Sept 6: South Korea said Wednesday it is willing to help flood-stricken North Korea if the communist country takes steps to remove key obstacles blocking rapprochement, reports AP.

South Korea made the suggestion as it prepared to reopen talks with North Korea in Beijing on September 27. Pyongyang is expected to seek relief aid.

Public opinion is building in South Korea against giving further aid to the North because of its failure to reciprocate previous South Korean humanitarian gestures.

Under a historic aid deal, struck in Beijing in June in the two countries' first official contact in more than a year, South Korea is shipping 150,000 tons of free rice to the impoverished North. About 120,000 tons have been delivered.

But the reclusive, hard-line North is detaining a South Korean fishing boat and its eight crewmen and has not eased anti-South propaganda, despite an earlier promise to resolve those issues.

Another key pending issue is the disappearance of a South Korean missionary near the Chinese-North Korean border in July. South Korea says he was kidnapped. North Korea claims he defected.

"We will spare no effort to help and cooperate with the North when it is willing to resolve issues that divide the South and North," Deputy Prime Minister Rha Woong-bae told a meeting of the Korean-American Association. Repeating an earlier report to the United Nations, North Korea said Wednesday.

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# Afghan demonstrators attack Pak Embassy in Kabul

KABUL, Sept 6: At least 5,000 Afghan demonstrators attacked the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul today in protest at Islamabad's alleged support for the Islamic Taleban militia, reports Reuter.

Witnesses said the Pakistani Embassy was ablaze in four places and smoke was also seen rising from the adjacent British Embassy compound, though it was not under direct attack.

It was not clear if several unidentified people lying near the embassy gate were dead or wounded.

One Pakistani Embassy staffer was led away, limping and holding his head, apparently after being beaten up.

Armed Afghan security men and soldiers stood by and watched as the angry crowd attacked the embassy. Some demonstrators surged into the compound, broke into buildings and set fires.

The protesters assaulted a Japanese Television crew working for the United Nations and snatched the film from the camera of a Reuter photographer.

"This is a spontaneous expression of people's sentiments," said Aziz Morad spokesman for Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani. "Our forces have been preventing people from breaking into the embassy grounds and we will send more troops."

He told reporters the government would provide security at the main United Nations compound in Kabul,

which he said could also be a target for demonstrations.

The protesters had gathered in central Kabul about 10 am (0530 gmt) before marching on the Pakistani Embassy, in the former British Embassy compound in Northern Kabul.

"Death to Benazir, death to leghari," they chanted, in reference to Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Farooq Leghari.

In Islamabad, Foreign Ministry officials said they had no word on the embassy attack. British diplomats said they were trying to contact Afghan support staff at the British Embassy in Kabul. No British diplomats are posted there.

Only a few countries, including Pakistan, Iran and

# Off the Record



File photo of Graca Machel, widow of former Mozambique President Samora Machel. Graca is the new fiancée of South African President Nelson Mandela.

**Python's prey**

KUALA LUMPUR: A seven-metre (23-ft) long python killed a Malaysian rubber tapper by squeezing him and then swallowing him partly before police killed it. The New Straits Times reported yesterday, says Reuter.

The victim's brother alerted police after he caught the python in the act of swallowing 29-year-old Ee Heng Chuan on Monday night near the town of Semagat.

The newspaper quoted police officer Abu Samah as saying the victim had multiple fractures. There were also fang marks on his legs, suggesting that he had been caught unaware by the Python," Abu said.

"While it is common for pythons to devour smaller animals such as chickens and goats, attacks on humans especially adults, are not common, at least here," The New Straits Times quoted University of Malaya zoologist Khew Bong Heang as saying.

Khew said the longest python on record was one shot in Sri Lanka in 1912, measuring 10 metres (32 ft). The biggest in captivity in Malaysia was around six metres (20 ft).

**1,500 years of 'Kung Fu' temple**

BEIJING: China's Shaolin Temple, famed in the West as the birthplace of "kung fu," is celebrating 1,500 years of training monks and martial artists, reports AP.

Dozens of Buddhism's grand masters and masters from temples in 16 other countries are at the Shaolin Temple, in the Songshan mountains of east China's Henan province, taking part in a six-day celebration, the official China Daily reported Wednesday.

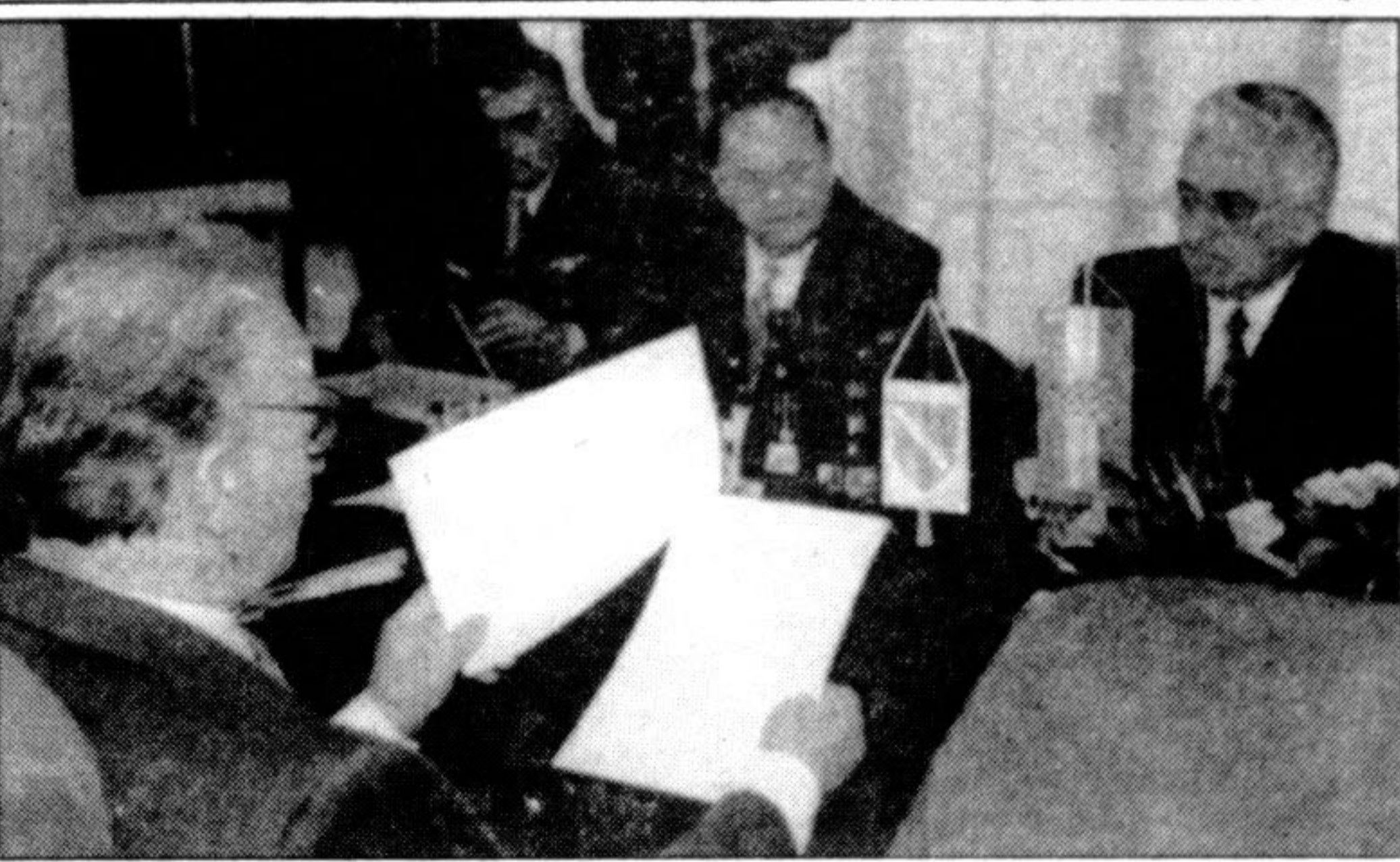
"May peace reign in the world and Buddhism shine over all," said Shaolin's Master Young Xin.

A ceremony on Sunday included Buddhist chants and thundering gun salutes.

All this week, the temple is holding religious rites, workshops and martial arts performance.

The Shaolin Temple was founded in 495. It played a key role in the development of Zen Buddhism 32 years later when the monk Bodhidharma, founder of Zen, arrived from India.

The temple shut to fame around 610 when 13 Shaolin monks resented Prince Li Shimin, who went on to found the Tang Dynasty, from enemies. Since then, the school has been famous for its school of martial arts.



Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (R) and his Bosnian counterpart Alija Izetbegovic (L) are seated at the conference table prior to their talks at Split airport Tuesday. A statement will be released at the end of the talks, the Croatian agency Hina said. The talks follow Izetbegovic's visit to Ankara where he met US envoy Richard Holbrooke who is holding talks with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. — AFP/UNB photo

# Punjab Assembly dissolved

ISLAMABAD, Sept 6: President Farooq Leghari abruptly dismissed the provincial Punjab government charging rampant corruption and incompetence, news reports said Wednesday, says AP.

The dismissal orders were issued late on Tuesday and have been widely condemned by opposition politicians as well as some of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's political allies.

It was not clear how the dismissal will effect her coalition government at the center. Her biggest partner is an ally of the deposed Punjab Chief Minister Manzoor Wattoo.

"This new development could be harmful for the smooth function of democracy in the country," Hamid Nasir Chatta, Benazir's coalition partner, was quoted as saying in the independent national newspaper.

Meanwhile, Leghari gave control of Punjab province to a retired army general. Punjab is Pakistan's most prosperous province and home to more than 60 per cent of the country's 120 million people.

Analysts here say the President, who is a close ally of Benazir, dismissed the Punjab government at her behest.

Since her re-election in 1993, Benazir has been trying to consolidate her power in the country's four provinces.

In the critical Punjab province, Benazir's Pakistan People's Party formed an uneasy coalition government after winning only 94 seats in the 240-seat provincial legislature.

# Iran closes border with Afghanistan

NICOSIA, Sept 6: Iran has closed its border with Afghanistan and stepped up security there after the Taleban Islamic movement captured areas captured near the border, the Iranian News Agency IRNA said today, reports Reuter.

It said a meeting of border officials chaired by Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati decided on Tuesday to beef up military and police forces in the border region.

The Taleban student militia in the last few days captured the western city of Herat and northwestern regions bordering on Iran from forces supporting Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani.



Abner Afuang, former police officer turned activist torches a French flag Wednesday outside the French Embassy in suburban Manila to protest the underground nuclear test it conducted early today in the South Pacific. — AFP/UNB photo

# Iran denies Iraqi Kurd's charges

TEHRAN, Sept 6: Iran on Tuesday denied Iraqi Kurd charges that it packed attacks by Turkish Kurd separatists in order to sabotage a Kurdish truce in Northern Iraq, reports AFP.

An Iraqi Kurd group accused Iran and Syria on Saturday of helping guerillas from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to infiltrate Northern Iraq to carry out attacks and stir up inter-Kurd conflict.

But Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmud Mohammadi said the claim was "totally baseless."

"It is obvious that as we place great importance on the security and stability of our neighbour Iraq, was place the same importance on the security and stability of Turkey," he said.

# Iran asks Taliban to stay away from border

TEHRAN, Sept 6: Iran today issued a stern warning to Taliban militia to stay clear of border regions with the Islamic republic after it captured all of western Afghanistan, reports AFP.

"Afghan warring factions better must take care not to approach the Iranian frontier on the pretext of undertaking a hot pursuit" against the forces of the former Governor of Herat province, Ismail Khan, Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati said.

Khan fled to Iran Tuesday after the Taliban on Tuesday captured the key city of Herat, 120 kilometres (90 miles) from the Iranian border and was granted asylum.

Besharati did not name the Taliban, but the warning was pointedly directed at the student-led anti-Shiite fundamentalist movement, which Iran has always distrusted.

He also called on Iranian security forces stationed in the border region to stay alert and "closely watch all movements."

The border with Afghanistan would remain sealed and Iran would not allow any refugees to enter the country, he added.

However, facilities may be set up along part of the border to help any "eventual refugee influx," the head of the Interior Ministry's refugee department, Ahmad Hussein said.

Besharati stressed Iran would stay "neutral." "What is happening in Afghanistan is an internal problem," he said, urging various Afghan factions to "solve their differences through peaceful means."

The warning, the first official Iranian reaction to the fall of Herat, came at the end of a special meeting of top security officials.

# Taliban impose curfew in Herat Hillary calls for translating confce goals into reality

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**Hillary calls for translating confce goals into reality**

HUIAIROU, China, Sept 6: In a theater jammed with women singing, "We're going to keep on moving forward," US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on Wednesday urged activists from around the world to make sure that the high-minded goals of a UN Conference on Women become a reality, reports AP.

On a rain-drenched morning, senior American officials accompanying the First Lady got a taste of the heavy-handed treatment that women activists have complained about for days in this village 50 kilometres (30 miles) outside of Beijing.

Grim-faced security forces, posted at entrances with their arms locked together, shoved away Donna Shalala, the diminutive secretary of Health and Human Services, and Winston Lord, the assistant secretary of State for the Far East.

The two officials were in a crush of hundreds of people struggling to get in the gates and then through a huge backup at metal detectors at the main entrance. Even Betty Friedan, godmother of the US women's movement, couldn't get in.

After a half hour of trying, Shalala and Lord were finally admitted through a side door, their clothes soaked and their hair plastered on their heads. Mrs. Clinton's press secretary, Lisa Caputo, was kept out until after the First Lady spoke.

"The women's movement has been through tougher things than this," Shalala said good-naturedly. Mrs. Clinton got VIP treatment and did not encounter any problems. Lord and Shalala, though, rode to Huairou on a bus with the press and several other members of Mrs. Clinton's delegation, and everyone encountered problems.

Inside the theater, now turned into a conference hall, women filled every seat, sat in the aisles, packed a small balcony and jammed the doorways. There were more than 3,000 people, twice the building's capacity.

"We're going to keep on moving forward, never turning back," they sang as Mrs. Clinton took the stage. "We're going to work for women's freedom, never turning back."

There was a smattering of protest. Several women held up a sheet with the words, "Stop US Imperialism."

Another sign said, "Stop the rape in Bosnia."

The activists here are trying to shape the outcome of the women's conference in Beijing, and Mrs. Clinton assured them that their voices are being heard.

"You will be the key players in determining whether or not this conference goes beyond rhetoric and actually does something to improve the lives of women and families," declared Mrs. Clinton, a crusader for women's rights for 25 years.

"It will be (the activists) that will hold governments to the commitments they make," she said.

Many of the women here encountered obstacles in getting visas to enter China and then faced problems in housing and transportation and had to dig deep into their purses to pay for expenses.

Mrs. Clinton thanked them for their perseverance. "You did not give up. You did not stay away. You are playing an important role in this conference."

Outside, Chinese Security officials broadcast announcements blaming the crowd-control problems by moving the speech indoors — despite the downpour.

The government also maintained a stony silence about Mrs. Clinton's speech Tuesday, in which she chastised Beijing for its treatment of women in Huairou and said it was time to stop the silence about human rights abuses of women. The China Daily

# UFO again!

SEOUL, Sept 6: A newspaper here today published a picture of an alleged flying saucer taken by one of its photographers, galvanizing local UFO (Unidentified Flying Object) fanatics, reports AFP.

The picture, taken on Monday in Kapyeong county in the northeast suburbs of Seoul, showed a blurred image of a white saucer-shaped object trailing a dark blue contrail in the blue sky over the tiled roof of a farm house.

UFO devotees, who studied the picture, said that the object was making a right turn, leaving an after image in front of it. A white plume atop its dome is a phenomenon typical to UFOs known as "vapor," they said.

The picture was taken by Kim Sun Kyu, a 34-year-old photographer of Munhwa Ilbo (Culture Daily).

President Clinton was said to be delighted with the First Lady's speech, calling her with congratulations from Air Force One as he returned to Washington from California. An advance copy of Mrs. Clinton's remarks had been faxed to the President.

On Thursday, the First Lady will leave China for an overnight visit to Mongolia, where her visit will include meetings with nomadic women and homeless children. She will return to Washington on Friday.