

International

**BRIEFLY**

**Wu praises Hillary's speech:** Chinese-American activist Harry Wu on Thursday praised U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton for her hard-hitting speech on human rights at a U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing. Reuter reports from Washington.

"I want to applaud Mrs Clinton. She deserves my praise," he told a news conference, at the National Press Club. "All Americans should be proud of their First Lady as she stood up and affirmed the principles of the United States."

**Floods hit New Delhi:** Monsoon flooding along the banks of the Yamuna River forced New Delhi to evacuate thousands of people from its shanty towns, close its main bus station and cancel nearly half of its train traffic on Friday, AP reports from New Delhi.

About 100,000 travellers were stranded at the Inter State Bus Terminal and two railroad stations. The bus station, where 1,200 buses normally depart a day, was closed when flood waters reached knee level. Forty percent of railway traffic was stopped after floods began to submerge a railroad bridge that connects New Delhi with eastern India.

**1 die in train mishap in S Korea:** A train and a truck collided at a level crossing in the South Korean town of Okcheon yesterday killing one person and injuring about 30, police said, Reuter reports from Seoul.

Four carriages were derailed by the collision which stranded many people on the rail line linking Seoul and the southern port of Pusan, South Korea's second largest city.

**Murayama plans to visit US in Oct:** Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama plans to visit the United States in October to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, officials said Friday, AP reports from Tokyo.

Murayama plans to attend a special session of the U.N. General Assembly that will mark the golden anniversary of the world body's founding on United Nations Day, October 24, said a Foreign Ministry official. Kyodo News Service reported that Murayama would leave Japan October 21, give a speech at the session and return on October 23.

**5 Thai workers electrocuted:** Five workers at a fruit-processing factory in Thailand were electrocuted in a pickled mango storage tank when an extension cord from a radio fell into the tank, police said yesterday, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

"Police said that radio they hooked up to the electricity supply short-circuited and the cord fell into water at the bottom of the tank during the accident on Thursday. The workers apparently died one after the other as they tried to help their colleagues, police said."

**Clinton's aide arrested:** President Clinton's senior adviser, George Stephanopoulos, has been arrested for leaving the scene of automobile accident and driving without a permit, police said Friday, AP reports from Washington.

"Stephanopoulos was arrested at 11:45 pm, Thursday in the Georgetown section of Washington, according to a police communications supervisor who spoke only on condition of anonymity. He was taken to the 2nd District police station and charged with driving without a permit and leaving the scene of an accident, the supervisor said. Details of the accident were not immediately available."

**China detains 3 TV newsmen:** Chinese police detained a three-person television crew as they were filming a march to present a petition at the United Nations Women's Conference in Beijing yesterday, witnesses said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The crew, from Hong Kong's TVB station, were grabbed by plainclothes security men who dragged them along a street leading out of the site of the UN Fourth World Women's Conference. The three, reporter Tammy Tan, a cameraman and a soundman, shouted and struggled as they were pulled along the street by more than a dozen police.

**Chechens destroyed 307 tanks:** Chechen separatists destroyed 307 Russian tanks in the fighting which began last December in the rebellious northern Caucasus region, the armed forces reported on Thursday, Reuter says from Moscow.

Colonel-General Alexander Galkin, head of tank forces at the Ministry of Defence, told ITAR-Tass news agency that a total of 1,200 armoured vehicles took part in the campaign "to disarm illegal armed groups." It was not clear how many of those were tanks.

**Kennedy Jr launches magazine:** John Kennedy Jr. introduced his new project Thursday to more than 100 invited reporters — a magazine named George. AP reports from New York.

The magazine is about politics and meant for the 18-to-45 age group. Kennedy is a co-founder and the editor in chief. The first issue features Madonna in a regular celebrity feature. "If I Were President," Julia Roberts talking about her trip to Haiti; Kennedy's interview with former Alabama Gov. George Wallace; and a piece on stumping in New Hampshire with Republican presidential candidate Richard Lugar.

**Packwood resigns from Senate:** Bob Packwood, one of the most powerful politicians in Washington, resigned from the US Senate on Thursday rather than face possible expulsion on charges of sexual and ethical misconduct, Reuter reports from Washington.

"I am aware of the dishonour that has befallen me in the last three years and I don't want to visit further that dishonour on the Senate," Packwood said in an emotional, rambling and hastily arranged speech on the Senate floor. "I respect this institution, my colleagues, too much for that."

**Saddam renominated for presidency**

BAGHDAD, Sept 8: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was unanimously renominated for the presidency on Thursday by the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said, reports Reuter.

The council also approved amendments to Iraq's interim constitution, among them a provision to elect the president through secret ballot, INA said.

Iraq's 250 member National Assembly (parliament) has been summoned for an emergency session on Sunday to approve Saddam's nomination after which elections will be held within 60 days.

The referendum will be carried out through direct secret ballot within 60 days after the National Assembly's approval of the nomination, INA said of the election in which Saddam would be the only candidate for a seven-year-term.

The amendments were part of a decree signed by Saddam and read over Iraqi state television and radio by Culture and Information Minister Hamed Youssef Humadi.

They are the first constitutional amendments since Iraq became a republic following the July 14, 1958 revolution which toppled the monarchy.

Saddam has been President since 1979.

The new measures were taken almost a month after the defection to Jordan of Lieutenant General Hussein Kamel Hassan, who is a son-in-law of Saddam and was a key figure in his government.

An authoritative spokesman for the RCC said Iraqi leaders wanted to lend constitutional legitimacy to the leadership of the party and revolution.

He said the voting shall reaffirm and renew allegiance to the leader.

Russia continues criticism of bombing on Serbs  
**Expansion of NATO may trigger war throughout Europe: Yeltsin**

MOSCOW, Sept 8: Russian President Boris Yeltsin warned today that the planned expansion of NATO would be "a big mistake" which could trigger a war throughout Europe, reports AP.

"Expansion of NATO is a big mistake. The flame of war could spread throughout Europe," Yeltsin told a press conference here.

"If NATO established itself near Russia's borders there will be two military alliances in Europe. We will turn to our neighbours in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and other countries and Europe will return to the past: There will be two alliances," he said.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's partnership for peace programme is aimed at the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It provides for cooperation in training, exchanges of officers and joint exercises. Russia is also a member.

Yeltsin said NATO "should not be a military alliance, but a political organisation, and military forces should be shared so that each country can command them in turn, like in the European Union."

"NATO is bombing the Serbs and proposing that we sign an accord with it. Why would Russia sign an accord if NATO is only capable of bombing?" Yeltsin asked.

The three Baltic republics are among the countries in the former Soviet bloc actively seeking to join NATO.

The presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on Thursday called for speedy

admission of their former Soviet republics of NATO during a one-day summit in the Estonian capital Tallinn.

AP adds from Sarajevo: NATO warplanes bombed rebel Serb targets on Friday as diplomats struggled to end 40 months of war in Bosnia on a more peaceful front: the negotiating table.

UN officials in Sarajevo reported that the air campaign against the Serbs continued overnight. Powerful explosions were heard shortly after midnight (2200 GMT Thursday) from around the Serb-held suburb of Lukavica, and just before noon (1000 GMT) from Serb-held Hadzici to the southwest.

Meanwhile, a US envoy brought foreign ministers of Serb-led Yugoslavia, Bosnia

**Punjab's sacked CM joins hands with Nawaz Sharif**

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: Two Pakistani political enemies embraced each other and became allies on Thursday to confront Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in central Punjab province, reports Reuter.

Punjab's sacked chief minister Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo joined hands with national opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, setting up what political sources said would be a close race in the scramble for power.

President Farooq Leghari sacked Wattoo's coalition cabinet on Tuesday after a revolt by most provincial ministers from Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

On Thursday, Wattoo quit his breakaway minority faction of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-J) led by Hamid Nasir Chaththa and joined Sharif's mainstream Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), state television reported.

Wattoo had broken from Sharif in 1993 and, as the provincial parliament speaker and later as chief minister, led a political revolt in Punjab that greatly contributed to Sharif's dismissal as prime minister.

Wattoo claims the support of 23 deputies in the 248-seat provincial assembly where Sharif's PML-N has 97 deputies compared to 104 of the PPP and at least 18 anti-Wattoo PML-J deputies, who said on Thursday they wanted to remain allies with Benazir.

Whoever has the support of a simple majority 125 deputies can be the future chief minister, political source said.

This makes a very close contest, the sources said. But they added that Benazir, being in government, will be in a much better position to win over smaller groups not yet allied to any party.



French President Jacques Chirac (C) poses for a "family picture" after a joint meeting of the Contact Groups of the western countries and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, at the Elysee Palace Thursday, held to study the American proposed peace plan for Bosnia. — AFP/UNB photo

**Afghans bid to storm Pak Embassy in Delhi foiled**

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Hundreds of policemen prevented Afghan demonstrators from storming the Pakistani Embassy in the Indian capital's heavily guarded diplomatic enclave today, reports AP.

Some 200 Afghan refugees protesting alleged Pakistani interference in their homeland were evicted from the diplomatic enclave after they entered the area by breaching a security cordon, police said.

The protest by supporters of the former regime of deposed Afghan President Najibullah came after the Pakistani mission in Kabul was burned to the ground on Wednesday by Afghan demonstrators.

In New Delhi, the protesters were seen chanting slogans against alleged interference in Afghanistan's affairs by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency.

They claimed the fall of several provinces to the Taliban student militia was engineered by Islamabad.

"Benazir Bhutto die," the refugees shouted as police called in reinforcements to thwart possible violence at

**Albright meets Myanmar junta**

YANGON, Sept 8: America's UN ambassador Madeleine Albright arrived in Myanmar Friday, becoming the highest ranking US official to visit the Southeast Asian nation since the military seized power in 1988 after brutally suppressing a pro-democracy uprising, reports AP.

She met with Gen. Khin Nyunt, said by many to be the most powerful member of the ruling military council.

Albright, who as UN ambassador is a member of President Bill Clinton's Cabinet, is to discuss with government and dissident leaders way to improve US relations with Myanmar.

Another report from Kabul adds: The Afghan Defence Ministry said here today that troops loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani repulsed a nighttime infantry offensive by the Taliban militia against the western frontlines guarding Kabul.

"The Taliban launched three unsuccessful assaults at us last night," the officials said.



A Chechen waves the national colours from the roof of the destroyed presidential palace as thousands of Chechens demonstrate Wednesday during celebrations of the fourth anniversary of their unilateral declaration of independence in Grozny. Some 6,000 Chechens gathered in the bomb-cratered main square, chanting anti-Russian slogans as a dozen rebels climbed into the skeleton of the presidential palace to raise the flag. — AFP/UNB photo

**Limited inheritance rights of women hot topic at Beijing confce**

HAIROU, China, Sept 8: The limited inheritance rights of women emerged today as a hot topic at the World Women's Conference in Beijing with some Islamic delegates arguing traditional laws should remain unchanged, reports Reuter.

They were opposed by delegates who say the issue is one of the greatest economic barriers to women.

The debate focuses on a paragraph in a draft document the conference plans to issue as a final declaration at the end of the United Nations' biggest-ever meeting. The declaration will outline an agenda for sexual equality for the next 10 years.

"Governments should undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women equal rights (equitable rights) with men to economic resources, including access to ownership

and control over land and other properties, credit inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology," the paragraph, enclosed in so-called "holy" brackets says.

The brackets reflect sharp differences among delegates that could lead to the paragraph being dropped.

"Inheritance is a matter of right," said Ela Bhatt, General Secretary of the Self-employed Women's Federation Cooperative Bank, with 250,000 members in six states of India. "A woman must have an equal right to inheritance."

India's women enjoy a legal right to the same inheritance as their brothers but in practice do not take it up especially in the case of land, because of opposition from their families who do not want family land divided, she said.

A stipulation in the Quran that a girl inherits just half that of her brother means many Muslim countries have adopted that as their inheritance law.

"The inheritance law is the biggest obstacle to economic advancement," said Monira Syeda Akter Khatun of Bangladesh.

The picture is the same in Nepal where women are not allowed to inherit land on equal terms as their brothers and what they own becomes the property of their husbands' family when they marry, said Manjuta Giri of the Nepal Centre for Rural Women's Integrated Development.

As an example, Giri said she was fighting four brothers for an equal share of land left to them by their father.

Women from the African country of Cameroon were in the same boat as those in

**Off the Record**



Singer Michael Jackson (R) hugs sister Janet after they won the award for Best Dance Video for their video "Scream" Thursday at the 1995 MTV Video Music Awards held at Radio City Music Hall in New York. The Jackson's video "Scream" was nominated for eleven awards. — AFP/UNB photo

**The way to get help!**

PANAMA CITY BEACH, Florida: A woman walked into a television station brandishing a handgun and briefly took two employees hostage Thursday before giving herself up, reports AP.

WJHG-TV went off the air just before its 5 pm newscast was to begin after the woman walked into the studio and reportedly said, "This is the only way I know how to get help."

The woman was identified as Robbie Smith, 52. No one was injured in the standoff, which lasted about eight minutes, until the arrival of sheriff's deputies.

The deputies spent more than two hours trying to talk Smith out of killing herself, said Lt Jerry Girvin. After Smith surrendered, she was taken to a mental hospital. Charges weren't expected to be filed.

Authorities said Smith walked into the studio, displayed a gun to a reporter and demanded to talk about her problems on the air.

**Good news for insomniacs**

LONDON: The smell of lavender oil could help cure insomnia in old people, researchers said Friday, reports Reuter.

Sleep disorders are increasingly common with age and doctors often prescribe powerful long-term hypnotic drugs, they said in an article in the Lancet Medical Magazine said.

Dr David Stretch and a team from Britain's University of Leicester tested lavender oil on four geriatric patients. Three had been on tranquilisers for up to three years.

The test showed the patients' sleep was much more restful and their sleep patterns restored after being exposed to the smell of the oil.

**Following his rock hero's path!**

LONDON: A British schoolboy apparently shot himself in a carbon copy of the suicide of his rock hero Kurt Cobain, an inquest heard on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Shane Thomas, 15, was found dead last Friday in his bedroom in Bridgend, South Wales, with a shotgun by his side, his girlfriend told police he had recently been very depressed.

"It could be seen from the walls in his bedroom that he idolised the pop group Nirvana. The lead singer from this band committed suicide in America last year by putting a firearm in his mouth," detective inspector John Adley told the inquest.

"It would appear that he has taken his own life by similar means," Adley said.

**Police harassment to newsmen on in Lanka**

COLOMBO, Sept 8: When she took office last year, President Chandrika Kumaratunga promised to spare Sri Lanka's journalists the attacks they had faced under her predecessor, reports AP.

Before he was assassinated in 1993, President Ranasinghe Premadasa often had police raid newspapers whose copy he didn't like and city officials turn off their water and power supplies.

But police raids also have taken place under Mrs Kumaratunga, who has accused the press of misusing its freedom and said she won't allow it to behave like "a wild ass."

From Monday through Thursday, police raided the offices of a tabloid newspaper that had written an article that included editorial comment. It urged the nation's police chief to resign after his elite commando unit was accused of strangling 21 Tamil civilians and dumping

the bodies in lakes near Colombo.

Police chief Wickremasinghe Rajaguru complained that he had been criminally defamed. Under his orders, detectives questioned reporters at the Sun weekly newspaper all four days.

"The police tried to seize a journalist from the office by force when he refused to answer questions," but editors intervened and protected him, the tabloid said in a statement. "Journalists and visitors in the office were harassed."

Last week, Rajaguru had said that his Special Task Force was under investigation for murdering the 21 Tamil civilians. More than a dozen policemen and soldiers have been arrested.

Police have detained thousands of Tamil civilians in Colombo, since the 12-year battle for independence by Tamil separatists resumed April 19 after a ceasefire.