Off the Record

Washington, Moscow hail peace accord

Bosnian warring factions

BREFLY

Protesters burn Chirac's effigy: Protesters burned and effigy of French President Jacques Chirac, shouted insults and threw paint at the French Embassy on Friday to protest France's resumption this week of nuclear testing in the South Pacific. Reuter

reports from Lima. The protesters, mostly members of local environmental groups, blocked traffic outside the embassy for two hours but there was no violence and no arrests appeared to have been made, witnesses said.

US to send aid to flood-hit DPRK:

The US government has decided to donate 25,000 dollars to help North Korea's flood victims, according to a South Korean news report Saturday. AP reports from Seoul.

The Yonhap news agency said the US State Department made the announcement Friday. It quoted unidentified diplomatic sources as saying the donation, while small, is expected to have an impact on improving bilateral relations. UN and Red Cross officials have visited North Korea to inspect the damage from the devastating floods after the reclusive communist country sent a latter claiming 5.2 mil lion people have been affected, with 15 billion dollars in damage.

Mother Teresa to get Giants Award: The Nobel laureate Mother Teresa has been named recipient of this year's "Giants International Award" for her immense contribution to society. PTI reports from

Bombay. The award would be presented to Mother Teresa on the "Giants Day." the 23rd anniversary of the Giants International, on September 17 here.

KSA executes 2 Saudis: Two Saudis were executed in Saudi Arabia after being convicted in two separate cases of sodomy and murder, a Saudi newspaper said yesterday. Reuter reports from Dubai.

Dhuweihi Bin Mohammad Bin Nasser Al-Sahli, was found guilty of being the ringleader of a gang that kidnapped boys, raped them, stole cars and robbed homes. He was beheaded in Riyadh on Friday, the English-language Saudi Gazette newspaper said.

David Trible new Ulster leader:

Northern Ireland's largest Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists (UUP), elected David Trible as its new leader Friday, AFP reports from Belfast

Trible whose attitude towards the Ulster peace process will play a determining role in the future of the province. took 466 of the 864 votes of the members of the party's ruling council in a secret ballot in Belfast's Ulster Hall. John Taylor was in second place with 233 votes.

Murayama's popularity falls: Support for the government of Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama fell to a new low of 22 per cent as many voters criticised the Japanese premier for lack of leadership, a leading daily said yesterday. AFP reports from Tokyo.

A survey conducted last week by the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper showed the approval rate had dropped three percentage points from three months ago.

Ex-Cong leader held in Bogota: Cerar Perez Garcia, former president of the Lower House of Congress, was arrested Friday in connection with a probe of a 1988 killing of 44 peasants, government

officials said, AFP reports from Bogota.

Perez Garcia, 59, was captured in the Eldorado Airport as he was heading to gland for an international confer-

23 die in Vietnam ferry blast: The

death toll from an explosion and fire aboard an overcrowded ferry in southern Vietnam has risen to 23. with police finding more bodies wasted ashore in a neighbouring province, a local official said Saturday, AP reports from Hanoi.

Six of the dead were children, and 14 passengers were still missing, said Tran Xuan Nghiem, chief of traffic police for Kien Giang province.

Floods kill 46 in Philippines: Searchers on Saturday scoured remote villages in the

southern Philippines where flash floods this week killed at least 46 people. More than 50 others remained missing. AP reports from Philippines.

Dad Tuan, mayor of Tiboli town, said the 46 casualties were members of families who were living around Lake Maughan in Tiboli in South Cotabato province, about 992 kilometres (620 miles) south of Manila.

N-test sparks anti-colonial move in French Polynesia

SYDNEY, Australia, Sept 9: this is to get our freedom France's nuclear weapons test beneath Mururoa Atoll on Tuesday infuriated Tahitians already fed up with 150 years of French colonial rule. reports AP.

So when hundreds of protestors set fire to downtown Papeete, the Tahitian capital, and looted its airport, their message to France was twofold: end nuclear tests and give independence to

"The resumption of nuclear testing at the atoll of Mururoa was the spark," Oscar Temaru, the leader of French Polynesia's main independence party, told

Associated Press Television. "We are really fed up with the French colonial system. the only way to get rid of all

French Polynesia.

that programme ended when its former colony Algeria fought for and won independence. Polynesians who wel-

tests since 1966.

from this colonial power."

Observers said Friday the

nuclear blast fused the two

issues in the minds of many

indigenous Polynesians who

have tolerated 176 nuclear

South Pacific, France ran nu-

clear tests in North Africa

Before testing in the

comed a test moratorium imposed by former socialist French President Francois Mitterrand in 1992 were shocked when current conservative President Jacques Chirac decided to resume testing.

SARAJEVO, Sept 9: Dip-

lomats claimed a breakthro-

former Yugoslavia with agree-

ment on a plan to share

Bosnia between its warring

parties, but those making war

showed they would not give

ground easily, reports Reuter.

air strikes designed to drive

home United Nations ultima-

tums for the Serbs to with-

the siege of Sarajevo.

the search for peace".

draw heavy weapons and end

Richard Holbrooke hailed the

agreement between foreign

ministers of Bosnia, Croatia

and the Serb-led rump

Yugoslavia as a "milestone in

US President Bill Clinton.

speaking in Washington, put

the deal in simple terms:

"They need to quit killing

In Geneva, US envoy

NATO, too, said the peace

ugh towards peace in the

The Geneva agreement acknowledges the Bosnian Serb entity of the Republika Srapska and a 51-49 division of territory between the Muslim-Croat Federation and Serbs within the current borders of the internationally recognised state of Bosniaaccord had no bearing on its Herzegovina.

But the rhetoric from leaders of the warring parties showed how difficult that will be to achieve by negotiation.

There will be no swapping of territory and nowhere will our army withdraw,"said Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, whose army has fought for three and a half years against the break-up of a unitary secular Bosnian state into Serb and Muslim halves.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic stressed

won't give ground easily that the Geneva deal was only verbal but he realised what he saw as acknowledgement for his self-declared Republika Srapska and said, "The

door is now open to peace". The agreement failed to address the occupation by Serbia of eastern Slovania, a swathe of Croatian territory seized in the first days of the break up of Yugoslavia in 1991 and a potential flashpoint to a whole new war be-

tween Zagreb and Belgrade. As the peace deal emerged, the fighting in Bosnia

A mortar hit a Sarajevo boulevard, spraying shrapnel across a crowded sidewalk and wounding at least seven

NATO and the UN were also drawn into the mayhem. Bosnian Serbs showed journalists damage to civilian

homes near a bridge hit by NATO air strikes in eastern Bosnia and Serb media said UN sources said peacekeepers were taking the hospital claim seriously and were in-

vestigating. AFP adds: Moscow has welcomed an accord on Bosnia reached in Geneva, saying the international community's efforts at brokering peace in the Balkans had paid off.

"The final document fixes the principles which were laid out in the contact group peace plan and this document received the support of the president of Yugoslavia Bosnia and Croatia," First Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov was quoted as saying Friday by Interfax news

We can say that the contact group plan has begun to be put into practice."

Albright meets Suu Kyi

YANGON, Sept 9: The US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright. had a lengthy meeting today with Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. reports AFP.

Albright, who met Friday with military intelligence chief Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt and other senior junta officials, is the highestranking US government official to visit Myanmar since the military crackdown in 1988

Myanmar official news agency, radio and television reported Albright had talked with Khin Nyunt Foreign Minister Ohn Yaw and others, but there were no details of the substance of the talks.

Today's meeting took place at the lakeside home of Aung San Suu Kyi.

'China makes sure dissidents keep silence during UN confce'

US Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright (right) presents a poster of the

Fourth Women Conference during her meeting with Myanmer political leader Aung San

BEIJING, Sept 9: Chinese cancer-stricken veteran acdemocracy activists and their families are being followed, . detained and forced to leave town to silence them during the UN women's conference, a human rights group said Saturday, reports AP.

Suu Kyi at her residence in Yangon on Saturday.

Chinese authorities are concerned that Western human rights organisations attending the meeting may contact the dissidents or their families.

cism for placing the groups prison for fomenting the and others under heavy surveillance at a 10-day conference-connected conclave of voluntary organisations that ended Friday.

One of the groups, Human Rights in China, reported Saturday that the wife of

tivist Chen Ziming was suddenly taken to his prison August 29 - the day before the UN meetings began — to care for him. He was put in a hospital Wednesday. Authorities previously de-

nied Wang Zhihong's requests to win better medical care for Chen, the New Yorkbased group said. Wang publicly pushed for

Chen's release after he was China drew heavy criti- sentenced to 13 years in massive 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations. Given a medical release last year to undergo treatment for cancer of the testicles. Chen was rearrested in June.

> The mother of Wang Dan. a student leader of the 1989

movement, has been forced to stop work because of intimidation by plainclothes police, the group said. They made their presence obvious. standing outside her door and following her every where, even into her office.

- AFP/UNB photo

The police told her the surveillance was ordered to prevent foreigners from visiting her during the UN meetings. Human Rights in China

Wang was taken into custody in May after signing with 44 others a petition calling for the rule of law and democracy.

Many of the signers have been detained or harassed and, like Wang, some are still being held.

referendum on independence 'illegal' QUEBEC CITY, Sept 9

Quebec SC rules

The Superior Court of Quebec ruled Friday that a referendum on Quebec's independence from Canada is "illegal" but he declined to impose an injunction to stop the process, reports AFP.

"The government's referendum process is clearly illegal and leaves the conclusion that the plaintiff has the right to redress," said Judge Robert Lesage in a 47-page

The plaintiff, former separatist guy Bertrand, con verted to the cause of Canadian unity earlier this year and claimed that the referendum process was a "coup d'etat" against the country's constitution.

Strikes in Srinagar to protest blast at BBC office

SRINAGAR, Sept 9: Businesses, banks and restaurants shut down Saturday in Srinagar, capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, after Kashmiri groups called a strike to protest a parcel bomb that injured three journalists, reports AP.

No one has so far claimed responsibility for Thursday's blast, but the Hurriyat Conference, representing 32 pro-separatist groups in the northern state of Kashmir, blamed the guerilla outfit, Iqwanul Muslimoon. It said the group was sympathetic to the Indian government.

The parcel, addressed to Yusuf Jameel, a journalist working for the British Broadcasting Corp. Reuters news agency and an Indian - AFP/UNB photo I newspaper, exploded

Vladimir Zhirnovski (R), gestures to express his admiration for Italian porn star and member of Italian parliament Chichollina (Ilona Staller) while seated at a table in the famous Moscow night club "Up and Down" - AFP/UNB photo Friday. A test for journalist

run for US President, reports Reuter.

The leader of Liberal Democratic Party of Russia,

ULAN BATOR, Mongolia: Hillary Rodham Clinton on Friday paused to take a question from a local reporter, only to discover the journalist was interested in her plans to

"Reporters are the same the world over," the surprised First Lady, who is promoting health issues in Mongolia. said with a laugh. "There must be something in the water." Then President Clinton's wife added, "no".

Prey to breast cancer

LONDON: Airline attendants are nearly twice as likely to get breast cancer as other women, according to Finnish researchers, reports AP.

But the researchers said they doubted the unexpected finding is related to the increased radiation in the atmosphere at high altitudes.

Instead, they suggested there may be something peculiar in the lifestyle of flight attendants, such as diet or chronic jetlag, which might affect hormones.

Flight attendants also tend to delay childbirth or not have children, two factors linked to increased risk of breast cancer. But that would not explain why the risk doubled, said Dr Anssi Auvinen, one of the investigators at the Finnish Centre for Radiation and Nuclear Safety in Helsinki.

"The point of our study was to assess whether there is an increase or not, and we cannot make inferences regarding the causes," Auvinen said.

He said he thought it was "highly unlikely" that radiation exposure was responsible for the increase.

But Dr Daniel Hoffman, chairman of preventive medicine and public health at George Washington School of Medicine in Washington. DC, said it could not be ruled

There is a wealth of information showing that radiation induces breast cancer, even at fairly low doses," Hoffman said. "This study is suggestive but needs further work." such as detailed information about individual radiation exposure.

The study is published in this week's edition of the British Medical Journal.

He wants to live forever

CALIFORNIA: A man who believed that ingesting human ashes would help him attain "everlasting life" was arrested on suspicion of stealing remains form cemetries, police said, reports AFP.

Police said Rodney Hines, 36, claimed he snorted some of the ashes and sprinkled them on his food because he wanted to live forever.

Arrested Wednesday, Hines was booked on suspicion of stealing remains from four graves in July.

Tooth of prehistoric man discovered

PARIS, Sept 9: Archaeologists announced Friday they had discovered the tooth of a prehistoric man from some 400,000 years ago in what is now Casablanca, reports AFP. The upper premolar tooth is the third fossil from that

period to be unearthed on what is known as the "Thomas: I" site, where a Franco-Moroccan dig has been going on since 1988. The dig is led by Fatima-Zohra Sbihi Alawi of the National Institute of Science, Archaeology and Heritage (INSPA) in Rabat, and by Jean-Paul Raynal, of the National entre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Bordeauk.

FMs of Iran, Turkey, Syria defend Iraq's integrity

TEHRAN, Sept 9: The foreign ministers of Turkey. Iran and Syria on Friday defended the territorial integrity of neighbouring Iraq and warned about the dangers of its dismemberment. reports Reuter. "Disintegration of Iraq

would have nefarious and dangerous repercussions on regional and international peace, stability and security." said a statement after their talks in Tehran. Iran's Ali Akbar Velayati.

Farouq Al-Shara of Syria and Turkey's Erdal Inonu also rejected all foreign interference in Iraq, without giving details. Like Iraq, Turkey, Iran

and Syria all have sizeable Kurdish minorities and are concerned about factional

fighting among Kurdish groups which control northern Iraq. Reports of dissension

among Iraq's rulers have focused attention on the complex and drastic implications of any break-up along ethnic lines could have on the re-Shi'ite Iran shares a

strong affinity with coreligionists in Iraq, now the majority in a country dominated by Sunni Muslims. All three countries host

leaders of Iraqi opposition groups at the same time as saying they support Iraq's territorial integrity.

The joint statement did not mention the recent defection of two top Iraqi officials to Jordan.

Floods hit Taj Mahal

NEW DELHI, Sept 9: Swollen by incessant rains, the Jamuna River flooded a nursery in the Taj Mahal complex and rose along an outer wall of the monument to love, an official said

threat to the 17th-century marble structure, but workers laid hundreds of sand bags to prevent water from flowing into the manicured lawns of the Taj Mahal in the city of Agra, the official said.

flooded the Khan-e-Alam nursery, on the western side of the Taj, said Mukhesh Verma, a caretaker. He said workers are laying hundreds of sandbags at a gate that separates the nursery and the

Tigresses coming into forefront of war for Eelam

ports IPS.

state television splashed pictures of the Tamil Tiger militants killed in the largest military strike against the ebels in Sri Lanka's northeast Weliova border a few Saturday, reports AP weeks ago, viewers were sur-There was no immediate prised to see that most of

About two feet of water Taj Mahal.

COLOMBO, Sept 9: When Brigadier Munasinghe.

guerillas were women, re-

After all, women in the Sri Lankan military are usually confined to what are considered 'safe' jobs.

"Women in the Sri Lankan army do mainly administrative functions, except women in the National Guard deployed in the north-east border who are engaged in checking civilians passing through army sentry points," says military spokesperson

But the Tamil Tiger women are apparently entasks. The clandestine radio of the ethnic minority guerillas, fighting for independence in the island nation's north and east, for instance also confirmed that of the 180 people they lost in the Welioya battle, 128 were women.

Indeed, in two other incidents in the same area a day later, five women militants were killed.

Before that, the majority of the Tigers on a suicide mission to blow up the Sri Lankan navy command ship "Edithara" in the northern port of Kankenaturai also

Sarnath turned out to be women.

International Pictures in Hammersmith, London on Thursday.

To be sure, young women in battle fatigues, wielding AK-47 rifles with ammunition gaged in more hazardous strapped across their chests are a common sight across the rebel controlled northern territories.

From L to R Rita Wilson (Mrs Tom Hanks), actor Tom Hanks, the Princess of Wales.

director Ron Howard, producer Brian Grazer and partner Gigi Levangie pose for

photographers at the charity screening of Apollo 13 at the head office of the United

But is only now that have been repelled the media limelight for coming into the very forefront of the civil war. Women were inducted into the Tigers' 12-year-old

battle for an independent

homeland at the very inception of the rebel group itself. In the beginning, the conservative Tamil society frowned on them. But now

the Tigresses are widely accepted - and increasing daily in number. "The police and the army

didn't allow us to study in peace. They searched our homes, took some of us into custody and harassed us. That was the reason why we joined the Tigers. We wanted to fight for our own homeland," says Thamilaval, 24, a Tiger women cadre from the rebelheld Jaffna Peninsula.

"If we are striving for freedom with men, then it is our and our responsibility to participate fully," says Eva Ranveera of the local nongovernmental organisation Voice of Women, justifying the women cadres' moving to the front ranks of the battle.

In her book, the women Recounting that incident, lighters of the Liberation Tigers, Adele Ann, the Australian-born wife of Tiger Anton troops in the very first day of spokesperson

Balasingham. "young women broke the shackles of social constraints... as they entered into the new life of the armed revolutionary strug-

The demand by the young women that they be allowed to participate in the battle forced the Tiger leadership committed to the emancipation of women to expand its military programme to train them, says Adele Ann. One of the first women to

be killed in battle was Lieutenant Malathy, during a clash with the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)

Tiger veteran Janani says it was the women guerilla units who confronted the Indian

which came to the island under the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka accord to end the ethnic war "We were in our bunkers

the fight against the IPKF

firing at the Indians who jumped out of their vehicles and started firing at us," says Janani. "Malathy was shot in both legs and bleeding profusely. Realising that she was mortally wounded, she swallowed cyanide. Tiger women, like their

male counterparts, wear a cyanide capsule around their necks that they swallow to avoid capture, or when they find themselves in a situation like that faced by Malathy.

Tigresses have now launched an aggressive social reform campaign to better the status of women.

Chandrika asks cops to be lawful COLOMBO, Sept 9:

Apparently alarmed by reports of police killing civilians. President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Saturday warned her officers to be impartial and lawful, reports AP. The image of the police

force has been tarnished because of a few. I will take disciplinary action against those few," Mrs Kumaratunga told a meeting of about 250 senior policemen. Two weeks ago, police

legedly torturing and strangling to death 21 Tamil civilians. Their mutilated bodies were found in lakes. The civilians were sus-

said elite commandoes are

under investigation for al-

pected to be Tamil separatists who are fighting for a homeland.