

**BRIEFLY**



Rizah Gabari, 30, the Iranian air steward who hijacked the Iranian passenger plane that landed in Israel Tuesday, is handcuffed and taken to the Eilat Court Thursday, where he was remanded in custody for 15 days. He is suspected of air piracy, illegal possession of weapon and illegal entry. — AFP/UNB photo

**Syria seizes 350 kg hashish:** Syrian customs patrol officers Wednesday seized 350 kilograms of hashish in the Damascus suburb of Rankus, coming from Lebanon en route to Jordan, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported Thursday. Xinhua reports from Damascus.

SANA report added that the hashish was confiscated together with the car carrying it. The competent authorities are currently questioning the smugglers about the operation in which two men, one woman and a child who was being used as a cover up, were involved.

**Gene linked with asthma found:** Australian and British scientists said Friday they had found a gene linked with asthma and certain allergies. Reuter reports from London.

They said it was the first time a gene had been linked with allergies. Dr William Cookson of John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and colleagues studied 1,000 people in a small town in Australia.

**Times of India ceases publication:** A labour dispute forced The Times of India, one of India's oldest and most respected newspapers, to suspend publication of its New Delhi editions Friday, company officials in New Delhi said. AFP reports from New Delhi.

The Times group also froze publication of its other Delhi-based dailies and magazines following a six-day disruption, they said.

**70 die of diarrhoea in W Bengal:** Altogether 70 children of North Dinajpur district in West Bengal died of diarrhoea during the last two months, official sources said yesterday. PTI reports from Siliguri.

In most cases, the patients expired before they could be taken to a hospital, the block development officer of Raiganj, BB Ghose, said.

**Typhoon kills 2 in Taiwan:** At least two people were killed in road accidents when a powerful typhoon raked Taiwan, packing winds of up to 162 kilometers (97 miles) per hour, officials said Friday. AFP reports from Taipei.

But the brunt of the storm, dubbed typhoon Ryan, suddenly veered from its expected course, skirting a feared landfall in southern Taiwan to head instead to the northeast, sparing the island from devastating damage, weathermen said.

**Oil tanker sinks in South Korea:** An oil tanker loaded with 2,800 tonnes of crude oil sank off the South Korean port city of Pusan and a six-kilometer-long (four mile) slick was spreading rapidly from the wreck, reports said Friday. AFP reports from Seoul.

The spill, the second to foul the southern coast in three months, started gushing from the 1,500 tonne Yul-Ho No 1 after it hit a rock late Wednesday and sank while under way 20 kilometers (15 miles) southwest of Pusan, the Korea Herald said.

**2 die as Chinese school collapses:** Sixty-five students and a teacher were buried in rubble when their mud and brick school collapsed, a news report said. Two were killed and nine were seriously injured. AP reports from Beijing.

The students were in a chemistry class on September in Helinge'er Country in Inner Mongolia, northern China, when the beam of the 20-year-old building fell and the whole structure collapsed, the China Youth Daily reported Thursday.

**SLORC should keep its promise to restore democracy: Suu Kyi**

**YANGON, Sept 22:** Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said today that Myanmar's military rulers, who grabbed power in 1988 promising the nation a return to democracy, should now keep to their word.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) promised democracy. We would like them to keep their promise. It's as simple as that," Suu Kyi, who was released in early July after nearly six years under house arrest, told Reuters in an interview.

"It is ironic that people are put into prison and persecuted simply because they are asking the government to keep their promise," the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize laureate said.

Thousands of people were killed or imprisoned before seven months of student-led pro-democracy demonstrations across Myanmar were finally crushed on September 18, 1988, when the military set up a new ruling body — the SLORC.

The leader of the SLORC at the time promised the nation the military would hold multi-party elections and return the country to democracy.

In a general election in May 1990, Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) swept more than 80 per cent of the seats. But the SLORC ignored the result and instead launched a massive crackdown on all opposition

in the country. Since her unexpected and unconditional release on July 10, Suu Kyi has repeatedly called on the SLORC for dialogue and national reconciliation but has been ignored.

Earlier this month, senior SLORC generals told the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, during a visit here that they were considering talks with Suu Kyi. But nothing formal has yet happened.

Suu Kyi, who has been meeting frequently with her NLD colleagues since gaining her freedom, said she believed her release may encourage others in Myanmar to be more open in their struggle for democracy. "Perhaps they can afford

to be a bit more frank... partly because my colleagues in the NLD are working together very openly and very unitedly," she said in the interview at her lakeside Yangon home.

A pressing issue ahead for the NLD and Suu Kyi is the next session of a SLORC-organised national convention, which has been meeting since January 1993 to draw up guidelines for a new Burmese constitution.

The military-dominated gathering, which has already agreed on a clause to give the army a leading role in future politics, has been roundly criticised by dissidents in exile and by Suu Kyi herself in the past.

**Fierce fighting in Kashmir**

**SRINAGAR, Sept 22:** A fierce gunbattle between Indian troops and holed up Muslim militants erupted in a residential district here today, officials and witnesses said, reports AFP.

Witnesses said the two sides were using assault rifles, machineguns and mortars in the firefight continuing near Avanti Bhavan, a Srinagar suburb some 12 kilometres from the heart of this city.

At least one Muslim separatist guerrilla was reported killed in the gunbattle between the holed-up militants and Indian troops surrounding the crowded residential district, police sources said.

The fighting erupted when army soldiers and paramilitary troops launched a search operation earlier today in Avanti Bhavan, they said.

Further details of the fighting were not immediately available.



Two Chechen fighters have launch with their machineguns next to them, in Grozny on Tuesday. Tense negotiations resumed in Chechnya on Thursday as the top Russian official in the rebel republic, who survived a bomb attack on Wednesday, flew to see President Boris Yeltsin. — AFP/UNB photo

**Clinton to delay formal declaration for second term**

**LOS ANGELES, Sept 22:** President Bill Clinton said on Thursday he will delay formally declaring his candidacy for a second term as long as possible and said he hoped America would be blind to Colin Powell's race if he seeks the White House, reports Reuter.

Clinton hoping to complete all his fund raising needs before the 1996 election year begins on Thursday wrapped up a four state drive that raised 5 million for his re-election coffers.

Clinton told programme host Larry King that everyone knows I intend to run again.

**Arab states for declaring ME N-free zone**

**VIENNA, Sept 22:** Fifteen Arab countries attending the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) annual conference in Vienna have called for declaring the Middle East a nuclear-free zone, including Israel, reports AFP.

The resolution, which will be submitted to a conference vote Friday, also called for placing Israel's nuclear facilities under international surveillance.

The 15 countries, including Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Syria, declared they were "apprehensive" about Israel's nuclear installations which have not been subjected to IAEA inspection.

There is an urgent need for Israel to accept a thorough inspection of its nuclear activities... as a gesture to ensure peace and security within the context of a Middle East nuclear-free zone", the resolution said.

**France threatens to cancel uranium contract ICJ rejects New Zealand bid to obtain ban on French N-test**

**THE HAGUE, Sept 22:** The International Court of Justice (ICJ) today rejected New Zealand's bid to obtain a ban on French underground nuclear tests in the South Pacific, reports Reuter.

The UN court ruled that it could not hold further proceedings in the case in which Wellington had asked the court to ban the tests in the Mururoa Atoll.

New Zealand had tried get the court to ban the tests by reopening a case which New Zealand and Australia brought against French atmospheric nuclear tests in the 1970s.

The UN court ruled in 1974 that there was no longer any reason for it to judge the case after France announced that year it would not carry out any more atmospheric tests.

New Zealand had sought to invoke a clause of the 1974 ruling which provided for a review if there was a change in the circumstances on which the court based its decision.

The International Court of Justice, the main judicial organ of the United Nations, ruled today that it was unable to review the 1974 decision.

Another Reuter report from Canberra says, France has threatened to cancel a uranium contract worth 12 million Australian dollars (9 million US dollars) a year if Australian trade unions block uranium supplies in protest over French nuclear testing an official said today.

"The French have expressed concern about the certainty of uranium supplies in the present climate and that concern was expressed to us by the ambassador," a Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman told Reuters.



Director Paul Verhoeven (C) poses with stars Gina Gershon (L) and Elizabeth Berkley at the Thursday's premiere of "Showgirls" in Beverly Hills, California. The film explores the world of Las Vegas "lap dancers". — AFP/UNB photo

**Pak-US relations back on track as Senate lifts ban**

**ISLAMABAD, Sept 22:** Pakistan has welcomed a US Senate vote to approve a one-time waiver of a ban on military sales to Islamabad as a "victory of truth and justice," reports Reuter.

Foreign Minister Asf Ali Khan told the English-language newspaper The News that Thursday's 55-45 vote in the Senate had put US-Pakistan relations back on track.

"We look forward to a warm, cordial friendship with Washington based on a warm handshake, not a deep embrace," he was quoted today as saying.

All, describing the vote as a "victory of truth and justice," said a great injustice had been rectified.

He thanked US President Bill Clinton for his "positive interference" in Congress and Republican Senator Hank

Brown, who piloted the amendment through the Senate.

The vote would permit Pakistan to take delivery of 368 million dollar worth of US missiles and other military equipment held up by sanctions imposed in 1990 when the then-president George Bush declined to certify that Pakistan did not have nuclear weapons.

The Senate vote also paves the way for Pakistan to be reimbursed for, but not to receive, 28 Lockheed F-16A fighter, aircraft it bought at the same time. The entire package of aircraft and equipment was worth 1.4 billion dollars.

Senate opponents, citing the potential for the military sales to heighten tensions between Pakistan and India, said they would seek to reverse the vote.

**Off the Record**

**Nicotine alters moods, heightens alertness!**

**WASHINGTON:** Scientists announced on Thursday they had discovered a mechanism in the brain that may explain how nicotine alters moods and heightens alertness, reports Reuter.

The finding could help explain how people get hooked on nicotine and may even contribute to an anti-addictive treatment, Lorna Role of Columbia-Presbyterian Medical centre, the lead investigator, said by telephone from New York.

The research appeared in Friday's edition of the Journal Science.

Role's neurobiology team found a molecular mechanism that is triggered by nicotine in levels normally found in smokers. It occurs at an early stage in the process, in which one nerve cell sends out a signal to another in the central nervous system.

**Jailed for cow abuse!**

**COLOMBO:** A suburban court in the capital has sentenced a man for having sexual relations with a cow, a police official said Friday, reports AP.

Weerasagille Siriwardhana, 30, a bachelor who earned his living as a daily weaver, was given a suspended sentence of three months imprisonment, and fined 1,500 rupees (dhs 29) by Magistrate Maheshi Gunatilleke, on Wednesday.

He had pleaded guilty to the charge of "having an unnatural relationship with a cow," said a police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Siriwardhana had been discovered with the animal in the cow owner's back yard. The owner filed a complaint against Siriwardhana after the incident occurred last November in Migahawatta, near Colombo.

Siriwardhana was also convicted on Wednesday by the court for raping a woman in the same neighborhood two weeks before he was caught with the cow for that, he was given another three months in jail.

**Just for the barbie dolls**

**MODESTO, California:** A 6-year-old girl stabbed a 7-year-old girl in the back with a steak knife during a quarrel over barbie dolls, police said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Residents of the central California town of Modesto were shocked by the incident, which occurred on Monday when the two long-time friends were playing in a grassy playground in the middle of the apartment complex where they live.

"They got into an argument over the barbie dolls — who gets possession of which doll," Modesto police spokesman Kelly Huston said. The girl's names were not released.

**Thousands of Serbs vow to topple Milosevic**

**BELGRADE, Sept 22:** More than 10,000 Serb nationalists gathered in central Belgrade on Thursday, vowing to topple Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who they say has betrayed the Serb cause in Bosnia and Croatia, reports AP.

"Serbia has to topple the Communist monster," said Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, which organised the rally.

Milosevic instigated rebellions in the two neighbouring former Yugoslav republics with his nationalist rhetoric, but is trying now to foster a peace deal to get international sanctions lifted.

The Serbian president stood aside as Croatian troops recaptured large pieces of Serb held territory this summer, and allied Croats and Muslims have advanced recently in Bosnia.

"The Serbian people went to war led by the policy-maker Slobodan Milosevic and with the idea that all Serbs should live in one state," said Maja Gojkovic, a top party official and member of parliament.

At every mention of Milosevic's name the waving crowd boomed, deafening even the speakers, who were mostly Radical Party officials.

Milosevic "has sold out all of us," declared Radical Party legislator Branislav Petricevic.

Hundreds of police troops in full riot gear stood nearby, a reminder of Milosevic's domination in Serbia.

After two weeks of NATO air strikes, Bosnian Serbs have pulled out heavy weaponry, from around Sarajevo.

Instead of the two-thirds of Bosnia they once held, they now have 50 per cent.

**Attempt on Mubarak 'Mastermind living in Sudan'**

**CAIRO, Sept 22:** Egyptian police said Thursday they have concrete proof that a Muslim militant leader believed to have masterminded a failed attempt to kill President Hosni Mubarak is living in Sudan, reports AFP.

Mustapha Hamza military chief of the Jamaa Islamiyya got in touch Wednesday from Sudan with two militants who were shot dead Thursday in Cairo, police said.

Mustapha Hamza instructed these two fundamentalists to carry out an attack on police cadres in Cairo, a police officer said adding that Hamza had given them his postal address in Khartoum.

**Nation of immigrants becoming less friendly to aliens**

**WASHINGTON, Sept 22:** It may be a nation of immigrants, but the United States is poised to become less friendly to foreigners who want to live the American dream, reports AFP.

Proposals pending before the US Congress, if passed would represent one of the most sweeping overhauls this century of laws affecting the foreign born, aiming not only to limit the number of immigrants allowed in, but curbing benefits for those already here.

The "immigration in the national interest act of 1995," awaiting consideration in the House of Representatives, seeks to curb illegal immigration by 35 per cent over five years, and sets new caps on legal immigration as well.

day's major retooling in the Senate of the nation's social welfare programmes — assistance for impoverished residents — bars most government social assistance for legal immigrants.

The immigration bill would ban essentially all government aid to illegals.

Supporters of the Republican-sponsored legislation note that foreign entry into the United States has hit record levels in the last few years, with a corresponding 580 per cent rise in claims for government aid from non-citizens who are elderly or disabled.

"As for those would-be immigrants in other countries how could our hearts not go out to them," said Texas representative Lamar Smith, sponsor of the immigrant bill. "Still, America cannot admit all those who want to journey here."

Detractors, most notably the Democratic opposition, claim the republicans are pondering to racial fears and scoring political points at the expense of a population they tend describe as the backbone of the nation.

"We think... beating up on our own history, immigration, will save us, and I don't understand that," said California representative Jose Serrano, a Democrat. "We're terrified that somehow our nation is going to get darker and more Spanish speaking. That's not going to happen."

The political winds, however, are blowing toward immigration reform. One Republican presidential candidate, Governor Pete Wilson of California, where anti-immigration sentiments run high, has made the issue his main campaign plank.

Others, such as Republican front-runner Bob Dole, are pushing efforts to make English the official language of the United States. Recent polls show overwhelming support both for curbs on legal immigration and for the English-only proposal.

"Immigration has become a hot-button issue," said Duke Austin a former spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) and currently a consultant to an immigration reform group. "In all my years at the INS, you couldn't get a politician

to touch immigration. Now everybody wants to."

None of this has been lost on President Bill Clinton, who — defying many leaders in his own Democratic Party — has embraced the welfare-reform bill that curbs benefits to legal immigrants, and has signalled support for many of the key provisions in the immigration reform act.

The most controversial measure would force businesses to use a call-in system to verify a potential employee's immigration status during hiring.

Opponents criticised the system as one step toward a dreaded national ID card, feared by Liberals and Conservatives alike. But the provision scored a key victory Thursday by passing the House Judiciary Committee.

Other key provisions included the abolishment of immigration preferences for non-immediate family members, and a limit of 330,000 per year for foreign spouses and minor children of US citizens. Experts say the measure will curb the "lateral proliferation" of immigrant families.

The bill would also force foreign-born citizens who want to bring their non-citizen parents into the United States to prove they can financially provide for them including full health-care coverage. And it would cut refugee admissions nearly in half, from 90,000 to 50,000.

"It is probably the most restrictive bill in half a century," complained Cecilia Munoz, deputy director of the pro-immigrant National Council of La Raza, an Hispanic advocacy group.

**26-member Nepali cabinet named**

**KATHMANDU, Sept 22:** Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has named a 26-member cabinet, reports AP.

King Birendra today formally announced the new appointments which include Prakash Chandra Lohani as foreign minister, state radio said.

There are 20 ministers, one state minister and five assistant ministers with cabinet rank in the tripartite coalition government headed by Deuba's Nepali Congress (NC).

Deuba retains Royal Palace, defence, general administration, social welfare, environment, sports and culture portfolios.

The coalition partners are the NC, the rightist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and the pro-India Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP).