

BRIEFLY

Ireland to set up ties with Bosnia: Ireland said Wednesday it will establish diplomatic relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina, AP reports from Dublin. Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring and Bosnian Foreign Minister Mohammed Sacirbey reached the agreement at the United Nations in New York, according to the Irish Foreign Affairs Department.

Cambodia seizes 120 kg morphine: Cambodian police have seized 120 kg (264 lb) of white powder which has been identified as morphine, a local newspaper reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Phnom Penh. Heng Peo, head of the capital's anti-drug department, was quoted in the Cambodia Daily as saying the drug was seized in central Kompong Chhnang province en route to the capital.

4 more executed in China: Four people have been executed and 31 sentenced to long prison terms in China's biggest case of kidnapping of babies and children since the 1949 Communist takeover, the China News Service said yesterday. Reuter reports from Beijing. The People's Intermediate Court at Chongqing in southwestern Sichuan province sentenced the 35 at a public rally on Wednesday.

12 feared drowned in UP: At least 12 people were feared drowned when a boat carrying school children capsized in the northern district of Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh state, the Press Trust of India said Thursday. AFP reports from New Delhi. The news agency said the overloaded boat, carrying about 30 people, tilted and capsized in the Gangi river on Wednesday. Three bodies have been recovered so far.

Landslide buries 15 in Russia: A landslide in the northern Caucasus Mountains buried at least 15 people, an official said Thursday, AP reports from Moscow. The slide occurred Wednesday afternoon near the village of Alkun in Russia's southern republic of Ingushetia, said Emergency Situations Ministry spokeswoman Tatyana Timoshenkova. She said she couldn't confirm the number of people or comment on whether any could have survived.

Launch of Columbia postponed: The scheduled Thursday morning launch of the space shuttle Columbia was postponed when NASA discovered a hydrogen leak during fuelling. Reuter reports from Cape Canaveral. "We scrubbed at 4 am EDT (0800 GMT) due to a hydrogen leak in main engine number one," said spokesman George Diller. Diller said replacing the fuel valve in the engine would mean a delay of "about a week."

Chernomyrdin arrives in Seoul: Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin arrived in Seoul early Thursday for a three-day official visit to South Korea and went almost immediately into a meeting with his counterpart Lee Hong Koo, officials said, AFP reports from Seoul. It is the first visit by Chernomyrdin to South Korea since Moscow and Seoul set up ties five years ago.

150 Malaysian cult men surrender: About 150 Muslim and Christian members of a shadowy religious group surrendered to police in eastern Malaysia Thursday after spending at least a week holed up in a farmhouse, a news agency reported, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur. The members of the recently-formed group, whose name is not known, believed that the world will come to an end next month, Bernama news agency and Malaysian newspapers reported. The group's activities could not be independently confirmed. News reports described the group as a doomsday cult. It is believed to be led by an Indonesian of Timorese origin and his Filipino wife.

Hired killer executed in US: A man convicted of a murder-for-hire plot was executed Wednesday night by injection, becoming the 300th person put to death in the United States since capital punishment was reinstated 19 years ago, AP reports from Virginia. Dennis W Stockton, 54, was convicted of killing an 18-year-old for 1,500 dollars in what police said was a drug-related slaying.

BJP splits in Gujarat

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: India's opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) faced a bitter public split in its showcase state of Gujarat today that could hurt the chances of the party in general elections next year, reports Reuter. Gujarat Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel cut short a tour of the United States to promote investment in his state and was rushing back to try to avert a complete rupture. Police used tear gas and batons outside government offices in the Gujarat state capital, Gandhinagar, on Wednesday night to disperse angry supporters of Patel protesting at dissident moves to oust him. National leaders of the BJP, the biggest opposition party in the Indian parliament, played down the extent of the crisis and said it would blow over. But the bid by a dissident

3 terrorists held in Delhi

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faction to grab power from Patel was likely to have national repercussions for the party, coming only months before a general election that BJP leaders have said will bring them to power in New Delhi. Gujarat is one of India's most industrialised states. "The image of the BJP has certainly suffered grievous damage," The Pioneer newspaper said. "With the Lok Sabha (lower house) elections barely a few months away, this hardly augurs well for the party."

Senior BJP officials were dispatched to mend the split in the state, where the party won a landslide victory in elections only seven months ago. The split appeared to be motivated by dissatisfaction in some sections of the Gujarat party at the way the chairmanships of state corporations and other bodies were being handed out.

Perot again shakes up US presidential political picture

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: Once again, maverick billionaire Ross Perot has shaken up the US presidential political picture with his surprise announcement on Monday that he is forming a third party for the 1996 election, reports Reuter. The Texas industrialist with his familiar high pitched twang took advantage of the same political soapbox he used in 1992 to launch his bid as an independent candidate for president. He chose CNN's "Larry King's Live" programme after asking the cable network for air time and flying to Los Angeles from his Dallas base to make the announcement. Perot left many unan-

Troops carry out house-to-house search around Hazratbal Mosque

SRINAGAR, India, Sept 28: Indian troops carried out a house-to-house sweep near Kashmir's holiest mosque today as warring Muslim separatist groups braced for a showdown over the Islamic shrine, reports AFP. Hundreds of paramilitary troops in olive green uniforms took part in the massive search of the thickly populated areas around the Hazratbal Mosque for militants and hidden weapons, residents and police sources said.

The troops, backed by the local police, blocked one of the main roads leading to the mosque, which houses a whisker Kashmiri Muslims believe came from the beard of the Prophet Mohammed. The crackdown came a day before a renegade militant leader, Kuka Parry, vowed to address a public meeting on Friday at the marble shrine, which has been used for years as a platform by Kashmiri Muslim politicians.

Parry's announcement was denounced by separatist groups which called for a general strike in the Kashmir Valley on Friday in protest against the proposed visit by an Indian election official and the killing of 14 militants on Monday. Parry, dubbed an Indian agent by Muslim separatists, told AFP on Tuesday at his stronghold in Hajin, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) from here, that he would address the Friday congregation at Hazratbal at all costs. "Who can stop me?" he said, pointing to an AK-47 assault rifle. "We shall be in Hazratbal on Friday."

Shabir Siddiqi, a Muslim guerrilla who has an office near Hazratbal and who heads a rival faction of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), has threatened to foil Parry's meeting. Police said there could be a showdown Friday between Parry's men and rival Muslim groups near the shrine, located on the outskirts of this Kashmir summer capital. All militant groups in Kashmir are heavily armed. "There is a lot of tension in the area", said a resident living close to Hazratbal, which Indian troops besieged for more than a month in 1993 to flush out dozens of Muslim militants holed up inside. Police have placed sand-bagged bunkers outside the shrine and brought in reinforcements on Thursday to prevent possible damage to the complex, which is visited by thousands of Muslim on Fridays.

The Muslim separatist campaign in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989. Reuter adds: Kashmiri newspapers resumed publication today, ending an eight-



Twenty-four-year old Stefan Jauch of Germany checks his camera Sunday on Srinagar's Dal Lake where hundreds of houseboats remain vacant due to six years of fighting between Kashmiri militants and Indian government forces. — AFP/UNB photo

China drops plan to sell two N-reactors to Iran

NEW YORK, Sept 28: In another sign of improved US-Chinese relations, China is dropping plans to sell two nuclear reactors to Iran, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said Wednesday, reports AP. The announcement reflected a far more conciliatory tone from Beijing in recent weeks. At the start of a meeting with Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Qian also backed away from his government's harsh reaction to the unofficial US visit of Taiwan's president last summer.

But the more friendly dialogue did not result in the announcement of a meeting this October between President Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin. Such an announcement was widely expected. "Having a summit meeting and where it would take place is still under discussion," said a senior administration official, who discussed the Christopher-Qian meeting only on condition he not be identified by name. The official said the Qian "made it clear that the Iran reactor deal would not be implemented."

The United States has been pressuring Russia, so far without success, to cancel a contract to build nuclear power plants in Iran. The US position is that the sale of any nuclear technology, even for civilian power generation, could have dangerous consequences.

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He welcomed the Chinese decision but added, "I'm not saying this clears up every possible problem" regarding Chinese dealings with Iran. The Beijing government is also suspected of selling missile parts to Iran as well as to Pakistan. If proven, that would result in cutting off US assistance to China. The official also said that Qian delivered a letter from Jiang to Clinton. He refused to discuss its contents. At the opening of the nearly two-hour meeting, both Christopher and Qian emphasized the recent improvement of US-Chinese relations.



US Defence Secretary William Perry (L) poses with King Hussein of Jordan during a photo opportunity at the Pentagon on Wednesday. King Hussein is scheduled to attend ceremonies at the White House Thursday for the signing of the West Bank autonomy accord with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). — AFP/UNB photo

Palestinian state won't be created within 50 yrs'

TEL AVIV, Sept 28: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Wednesday he saw no Palestinian state being created on the West Bank and Gaza Strip for at least another 25 to 50 years, reports AFP. Rabin was interviewed by Israeli state television before his departure for Washington to sign an historic accord today to expand Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank.

Reacting to statements by his environment minister Yossisard, who said earlier that he was "convinced" a Palestinian state would be established, Rabin said: "he (Sarid) will have to wait another 25 years, or 50, and maybe more."

After an Israeli cabinet meeting that approved the autonomy accord Wednesday, Sarid said the agreement would eventually lead to the creation of a Palestinian state, which Rabin has repeatedly refused.

Hillary to join 'first ladies meet of Americas'

ASUNCION, Sept 28: Hillary Clinton, wife of US President Bill Clinton, will attend the "First Ladies Summit of the Americas" next month in Paraguay, officials here said Wednesday, reports AFP. Clinton will attend the October 16-20 meeting hosted by Paraguay's first lady Teresa Carrasco De Wasmosy with 20 other presidential spouses from Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada.

Summit organizer Lella Rachid said the first ladies would discuss issues concerning women and children and launch a campaign to wipe out measles by 2000, a project Clinton initiated.

64 Indian mine workers yet to be rescued

DHANBAD, India, Sept 28: More flood water seeped into a mine Thursday where 64 workers remained trapped in northern India, leaving rescue workers with little chance of saving them, reports AP. Heavy monsoon rains and water from an overflowing and breached canal also flooded three smaller mines on Wednesday, killing nine miners whose bodies were recovered.

The 64 trapped miners remained in a large 145-metre-deep (485-feet) mine that was nearly filled with water, police said. Rescue workers tried to shore up the breached canal and use four large pumps to remove water from the mine.

Indo-Pak tug of war over Kashmir at UNGA session

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 28: India and Pakistan engaged in an angry exchange over Kashmir late on Wednesday in what has become a feature of annual General Assembly sessions, reports Reuter. The latest dispute was touched off by extensive references to Kashmir in a speech to the Assembly by Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Asef Ahmad Ali, who said its inhabitants "continue to be killed, maimed, executed, tortured and dishonoured" by Indian forces.

India and Pakistan have gone to war three times since independence from Britain in 1947, twice over Kashmir. Exercising his reply at the end of the day, Nalin Surie of India said the Pakistani minister's remarks were "couched in abusive language and consisted entirely of falsehoods."

CPC expels ex-Beijing chief

BEIJING, Sept 28: The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) announced today the expulsion from its powerful politburo and Central Committee of former Beijing Party chief Chen Xitong, disgraced in a major scandal, reports AFP. The decision was announced at the fifth plenum of the party's powerful central committee, which ended today, the official Xinhua news agency said. The plenum also "suggested" that Chen be dismissed from the National People's Congress, China's parliament. Chen "held a grave responsibility for the law-breaking and criminal activities of Wang Baosen,"

Off the Record



Hannelore Kohl, wife of the German Chancellor holds Tuesday a copy of her newly released cook book, which she produced with the help of husband Helmut Kohl. The book which features regional German dishes, is entitled Culinary Journey". — AFP/UNB photo

Cat princess on crush diet

BIRMINGHAM: Princess the cat ate chicken curries, chapatis and canned cat food until she swelled to 60 pounds (27 kgs) and could no longer waddle to the kitty litter, reports AP. That's when her wealthy owners called in the Cats Protection League in Birmingham, 110 miles (180 kms) northwest of London. "The family was feeding her about five tins of cat food each day and on top of that she had a chicken biryani and chapatis," said Diane Reynolds, warden of the league's cat pound. "They didn't realize that they were actually being cruel by being so kind."

Princess was placed on a strict diet of canned cat food in the morning and dried food before bedtime, and her weight has fallen to 30 pounds (13.5 kgs). "She is a lot healthier now and we were quite surprised last week when we actually saw her break into a trot — that's the first time she has ever broken into her run in years," Reynolds said.

Princess is one of six cats who lived at the same house, where each had its own bedroom and bed. All of this feline was overweight, "but Princess was the largest and could not move her belly off the floor," Reynolds said. The owners names were not released.

Contrast symbols met each other

VATICAN CITY: A sex symbol of the 50s and a symbol of morality of the '90s touched hands at the Vatican, reports AP. Brigitte Bardot sat in the front row during Pope John Paul II's general audience Wednesday along with 40 other members of an animal rights group. The French woman has devoted herself to that cause since abandoning her film career. Afterward, Bardot kissed the pope's hand and the two chatted briefly, John Paul holding her hands in his.

"I have come to see the pope because he is one of the great world personalities and I hope he can play a role in our battle," Bardot told reporters when she arrived in the Paul VI Auditorium. Some in the crowd of several thousand applauded when Bardot walked to her seat. That was a marked contrast to the criticism the Vatican meted out following release of the film that brought her international fame in 1956, "And God Created Woman."

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