

**BRIEFLY**

**Mobutu for an end to refugee crisis:** Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko asked Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for an urgent solution to the Rwandan refugee crisis and for UN assistance in elections scheduled for 1997, according to a UN statement early yesterday. Reuter reports from United Nations.

Mobutu, who is in New York for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations, met on Friday with Boutros-Ghali and spoke of the hardships to his country in accommodating more than a million refugees.

**Flood-hit Thais block road:** More than 200 people blocked a road near Bangkok yesterday to demand assistance from the government because their houses have been under floodwaters for more than a month, police told Reuters, from Bangkok.

The protesters, residents of two housing estates on the outskirts of Bangkok, had prevented vehicles from using a road linking the northern and northeastern suburbs since the early morning, police said. They were demanding authorities provide makeshift shelters, drinking water, transportation and rubbish collection, police said.

**Quake shakes Mexico, Guatemala:** A strong earthquake shook southern Mexico and Guatemala last Friday, toppling homes and causing widespread panic, but there were no immediate reports of deaths or serious injuries. Reuter reports from Mexico City.

The quake, measuring a preliminary 6.3 on the open-ended Richter Scale, hit southern Mexico at 8:39 pm (0239 GMT) about 425 miles east southeast of Mexico City, the US geological survey said.

**Scientists discover new bacteria:** US scientists have discovered a bacteria that can live only on rock and water, adding fuel to the theory that life could conceivably exist on the planet Mars, AFP reports from Washington.

The discovery by microbiologist Todd Stevens and James McKinley of the Pacific Northwest Laboratory in Richland, Washington, could also show what life on earth resembled before planets began producing oxygen. Appropriately called slims, for subsurface lithoautotrophic microbial ecosystem, the substance was found in the deep aquifers of the Columbia river in the northwestern United States.

**Blast in KSA mosque kills 6:** Six people were killed and 101 wounded in a bomb attack in a mosque in Saudi Arabia during the main Friday prayer, an Interior Ministry spokesman said early yesterday, AFP reports from Riyadh.

The spokesman, quoted by the Saudi news agency SPA, said that initial inquiries pointed to a personal dispute as being the reason behind the blast.

**Mubarak cancels New York trip:** Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak cancelled his trip to New York to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. UN spokesman Joe Sills said Friday, AFP reports from United Nations.

The United Nations provided no immediate reason for the cancellation, but threw as speculation it was linked to security risks.

**Ghali's letter of thanks to Claes:** UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent a letter of thanks and support to Willy Claes, who resigned as head of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation on Friday in the midst of a financial scandal, AFP reports from United Nations.

"I would like to express my deep gratitude to you for your invaluable help during trying times," Boutros Ghali said. "Your leadership has been critical in the search for peace in the former Yugoslavia."

**Malaria kills 4 daily in Ethiopia:** Malaria is now claiming more lives in Ethiopia, Xinhua reports from Addis Ababa.

According to a report from the Ethiopian news agency yesterday, malaria epidemic is killing at least four persons daily in Amibara and Gewané Woredas districts of the northern Afar regional state.

**Strong quake hits Mexico:** A strong earthquake rocked Mexico City late Friday, sources in the capital said, but no information was immediately available about victims or damage, AFP reports from Mexico City.

The quake occurred at 8:43 pm (0243 GMT). The size of the tremor was not yet determined. The US geological survey in Boulder, Colorado confirmed that a large quake had hit the Mexican capital, but had no precise information.

**Fahd appoints new minister:** King Fahd of Saudi Arabia has appointed Ibrahim Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Aseah Minister of State, according to a report reaching in Kuwait City Friday from Riyadh, Xinhua reports from Kuwait City.

The Saudi daily Arab News said Friday that King Fahd, in a decree, also nominated Abdullah bin Saleh bin Obeid as Secretary General of the Muslim World League.

**King Hassan meets Rabin:** Moroccan King Hassan conferred with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Friday and told him further steps would be taken soon to normalise relations between the two countries, a diplomatic source said. Reuter says from New York.

Morocco and Israel currently have reciprocal liaison offices.

**Libya seeks UNHCR help:** Called on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Friday to help with the repatriation of expelled African workers, AFP reports from Tripoli.

Instead of criticising Libya, the UNHCR should ensure that these workers are repatriated under good conditions, said the official news agency Jana.

**NZ detains 13 African stowaways:** New Zealand police detained 13 African stowaways who arrived in the south island Port of Nelson on a ship yesterday, the New Zealand Press Association reported, Reuter says from Wellington.

**Farooq Abdullah says Rao favours granting autonomy to Kashmir**

NEW DELHI, Oct 21: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao favours granting autonomy to Kashmir in a bid to end a Muslim separatist drive there, a Kashmiri politician said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Former Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah said after a meeting with Rao here that the Prime Minister was toying with the idea of giving autonomy to the troubled state to restore normalcy.

"The Prime Minister feels that some form of autonomy is essential and its nature could be discussed and decided in due course," Abdullah told the United News of India (UNI) news agency in Jammu, Kashmir's winter capital, Friday.

Abdullah, who had a long meeting with Rao before the

latter left on a three nation tour October 15, said the 74-year-old premier had demanded time to study the issue in depth.

Abdullah, a Muslim, heads the pro-India National Conference Party which once ruled Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state.

Abdullah, who opposes the Muslim secessionist campaign raging in the state since 1989, has sought autonomy to the Himalayan province if he were to participate in legislative election that New Delhi wants to hold in Kashmir.

Muslim militants have vowed to sabotage or boycott the polls. Kashmir has been ruled directly by New Delhi since 1990. The current spell of federal rule expires in January.

India and Pakistan dispute

the ownership of Kashmir and have gone to war twice over it. India accuses Pakistan of farming and training the rebels fighting to end Indian rule in the state. Islamabad has denied the charge.

Reuter added: Four Western hostages held for more than 100 days by guerillas in India's troubled Kashmir region are safe and will rejoin their families soon.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted D.D Saklani, Adviser to the Governor of the Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir, as saying officials had information the four were safe and declaring that "the hostages would rejoin their families."

The United News of India (UNI) quoted Saklani as telling reporters after an official function the crisis would end amicably. Asked how he

could vouch for the safety of hostages, Saklani was quoted by UNI as saying: "we have our own information and there is no reason to disbelieve it."

The news agencies said Saklani did not say when the crisis would be over.

Saklani's statement was the first indication on the safety of the hostages after a long gap. The captors, previously unknown Al-Faran guerillas, have been out of contact since September 19.

Britons Keith Mangan and Paulwells, American Donald Hutchings and German Dirk Hasert were on a trekking expedition in South Kashmir when they were kidnapped early in July. A fifth hostage, Norwegian Hans-Christian Ostroe, was killed by the guerillas.



The President of Colombia Ernesto Samper speaks to journalists during a press conference on Friday after the closing ceremony of the Non-Aligned Nations summit in Cartagena, Colombia. Colombia was chosen as the new head of the Non-Aligned Movement for the next three years. — AFP/UNB photo

**Advani re-elected party chief Crisis in BJP comes to an end**

NEW DELHI, Oct 21: India's Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), hit by rebellion ahead of general elections, ended a crisis today as it re-elected its chief and chose a new man to head a beleaguered state government, reports Reuter.

L K Advani, whose leadership was in question after a rebellion in the western state of Gujarat, was declared elected unopposed for a new two-year term during which he would lead the party to a general election due by June 1996.

The main opposition BJP is the hottest contender for power in New Delhi, but showed its weaknesses when

a big group of state legislators brought the Gujarat government to the brink of collapse.

Advani's crisis was compounded by the fact that he represents Gandhinagar, Gujarat's capital, in the national parliament's lower house, Lok Sabha.

The party's Gujarat lawmakers, after peace efforts by its central leadership, today chose Suresh Mehta to head the government of Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, who bowed out as part of a compromise brokered by senior party leaders.

Atal Behari Vajpayee, seen as Advani's rival, led peace-makers and put a question

mark over Advani's leadership.

Patel was believed to be aligned to Advani and the challenge to him from rebel leader Shankersinh Vaghela was seen as a threat to Advani's hold over the party.

Advani is a member of the right-wing Hindu group, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which inspires the BJP and is known for its committed and disciplined cadres.

The Gujarat rebellion badly bruised the BJP's image as a disciplined party offering to replace the Congress Party led by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao.



US Vice President Al Gore (L) and US President Bill Clinton (R) display Ohio State University football jerseys emblazoned with their names during a student rally on the campus at Columbus, Ohio on Friday. — AFP/UNB photo

**UAE urges Arab states to help end UN embargo on Iraq**

ABU DHABI, Oct 21: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) today urged fellow Arab states to press for an end to the crippling five-year-old UN embargo on Iraq, reports AFP.

Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah said it was time for the 22-member Arab League to heed calls from President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan to remove the sanctions.

"It is time for all Arab states to move to restore Arab solidarity," Abdullah told state-run Abu Dhabi television from New York, where he was to attend celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

"What is happening to the Iraqi people is painful... We can not bear the responsibility of depriving these people although we know there are reasons for such a deprivation," he said.

**Singapore backs Japan for guest status in NAM**

SINGAPORE, Oct 21: Singapore strongly supported Japan's application for guest status in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Foreign Ministry said today, reports Reuter.

Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar told the ministerial session of last week's Non-Aligned Movement summit in Cartagena, Colombia, that Singapore considers it advantageous to have developed countries like Japan associated with the movement, the ministry said in a statement.

Jayakumar said there was an overwhelming majority among the 113 countries in favour of Japan's application.

**Hrawi to support anti-Israeli resistance**

BEIRUT, Oct 21: President Elias Hrawi, fresh into a three-year extension of his term, pledged his support on Friday for the anti-Israeli resistance in southern Lebanon, reports AFP.

The liberation of south Lebanon from the Israeli occupier is national priority and the resistance to this occupation will go on until their withdrawal," he said in an address to the nation.

Six Israeli soldiers were killed last Sunday in an attack on an occupied border zone by Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerillas.

The president also vowed that Lebanon would not back ranks from Syria in the Arab-Israeli peace process, "despite Israeli pressure to disassociate the two tracks."

**India to formally seek UNSC seat next week**

NEW DELHI, Oct 21: India will formally seek permanent membership of the UN Security Council when Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao addresses the UN General Assembly next week, Business Standard said today, reports Reuter.

India's candidature will be supported by Brazil, which in turn will carry some 28 Latin and Central American nations with it, the newspaper said, naming some African and Asian countries among other supporters.

It said Rao, speaking at the United Nation's 50th anniversary celebrations at New York on Tuesday, will press India's case as a country representing a sixth of the world's population, underlining it is Asia's biggest nation after China.

China is already a permanent member of the council.

The newspaper said Russia may offer tacit support to India in a secret vote. It said the United States wants only Germany and Japan as part

of an effort to expand the council, which now has five permanent and 15 non-permanent members.

The newspaper mentioned Africa's Uganda, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Senegal among expected vocal supporters for India's bid to enter the council. Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in East Asia, and Nepal, Mauritius, the Maldives and Seychelles from closer home.

Besides Brazil, it mentioned Bolivia and Surinam among Latin American supporters, expected to openly back India's claim.

India has been actively seeking to enter the elite UN body through some subtle lobbying centred around its military support offered during recent peacekeeping operations in former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda.

Rao made an unusual nationwide address on television last year to mark the beginning of the UN's 50th anniversary celebrations.

**Off the Record**

**Di's mom converts to catholicism**

LONDON: The mother of Diana, Princess of Wales, Frances Shand Kydd, announced Friday that she had converted to catholicism and hinted that she had received the "total support" of her daughter, reports AFP.

Kydd told a Scottish television channel that she had decided to join the church of Rome after attending mass at the Catholic cathedral of Oban, on the west coast of Scotland, over a six-year period.

The other members of her family had been unsurprised at the decision and assured her they were "really happy," she said.

"One of my family said: 'Oh Mum, tell the world you have my total support,'" Kydd said, though she declined to say clearly which of her children she was referring to. The clear suggestion from the tone of her interview was that the commendation came from princess Diana.

The conversion was celebrated at the church of Morar on the Isle of Skye, off Scotland's west coast.

Rumours ever the past year have suggested that Princess Diana, estranged wife of the heir to the British throne Prince Charles, has herself developed a growing interest in Catholicism.

Catholics are barred from the British throne, and although the final outcome of the Wales's marriage has not yet been determined and epousal of Catholicism on the part of the Princess of Wales could further complicate the constitutional arrangements that might have to be made in the event of a royal divorce.

**Missile guided warship frees 10 sea turtles**

WASHINGTON: A US warship went out of its way to free 10 sea turtles snarled in an abandoned fishing net in the Indian Ocean this week, the navy said on Friday, reports Reuter.

It said a helicopter based on the guided missile frigate curts spotted the entangled turtles on Tuesday and the ship, 80 miles (130 km) away, changed course and sailed to the scene.

A crew in an inflatable boat cut the net and freed 10 3-foot (one metre) 100 pound (45 kg) turtles believe to be leatherbacks the navy said. It said an 11th turtle was already dead.

**Award for killing birds**

NAIROBI: More than 20 million birds have been killed in Ethiopia to reduce crop damage, Ethiopian radio said Saturday, reports Reuter.

Certificates had been awarded to those who took part in the operation, it added.

The radio quoted Husayn Ali, a bird expert at the Ministry of Agriculture, as saying the birds were killed by spraying chemicals.

**Fresh attack in Chechnya**

**Rebels, troops accuse each other**

MOSCOW, Oct 21: Separatist fighters and Russian troops on Friday accused each other of launching fresh attacks in rebel Chechnya and said the assaults put fragile peace talks at risk, reports Reuter.

The spokesman for separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev told Ekho Moskvy radio station Russian helicopters fired rockets at the mountain villages Serzhen-Yurt and Beni Khutor on Thursday.

Moviadi Udugov said there were many civilian casualties and a Chechen delegation would investigate the site.

He said another village, Achkoi-Martan, was virtually blockaded and he renewed

criticism of the new Russian military leader in Chechnya, General Anatoly Shkirko.

But the Russian Military Press Centre in the Chechen capital Grozny told Interfax News Agency that rebel fighters had shot at a column of Russian troops as it left Serzhen-Yurt on Thursday, killing one soldier and injuring another.

The head of the crack interior Ministry troops in Chechnya said some 100 Omon troops had been killed in attacks by Chechen fighters over the last three months and authorities should bring in a state of emergency.

**Taliban rocket market near Kabul, 8 killed**

KABUL, Oct 21: Eight people were killed in a rocket attack on a central Kabul market today as a UN mediator discussed peace prospects with embattled Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, reports AFP.

At least seven people were injured when two Egyptian-made Sakr rockets fired by Taliban militiamen besieging Kabul slammed into the bazaar area of the city, military officers said.

One landed harmlessly near a mosque but the other fell in the middle of a street crowded with people doing their morning shopping, they said.

Government troops sealed off the area following the

blasts, which occurred just one kilometer (half-a-mile) from the presidential palace.

An officer on the scene said the rockets had apparently been fired by Taliban fighters at Rabbani government troops perched on a strategic nearby hill but had overshoot their targets.

The Taliban, or "students of religion," have so far refrained from targeting residential or shopping districts in Kabul and today's attack was the first for months on the downtown area.

The attack came just hours after the arrival here of Mahmoud Mestiri, head of the UN peace mission for Afghanistan.

**Suu Kyi is now more spiritual**

RANGOON, Oct 21: In six years of house arrest, Aung San Suu Kyi spent much of her time in meditation, reading and quiet reflection. Since her release on July 10, her days have been a flurry of meetings with political allies and supporters, reports AFP.

Those who knew her well before 1989 say she is more spiritual now. She is also, understandably, more guarded as she feels her way forward in relations with the authorities.

So far, Myanmar's military rulers have allowed Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) colleagues a certain latitude.

Visitors to her lakeside compound are photographed and their identities checked

but there is no physical obstacle to such contacts.

The ruling junta has also apparently chosen to ignore the very political meetings which fill Aung San Suu Kyi's days, as well as the crowds that continue to flock to her gate where she speaks to them at weekends on subjects ranging from their economic hardships to politics and public morals.

In an interview this week, she said the NLD was working hard to rebuild and reorganise after five years of disarray. Although the party won general elections in 1990, the junta refused to hand over power and jailed key NLD leaders.

"I think, first, we've got to get the dialogue started, and



then we can think about other things," Aung San Suu

Kyi told AFP.

Pouring tea in her sparsely-furnished sitting room, the woman who came to symbolise the pro-democracy movement acknowledged the path toward dialogue with the junta was not easy.

"We've got to establish trust and find common ground," she said. "Initial stages of the dialogue would mainly be confidence building."

Implicit in her remarks was the understanding that real dialogue had not yet begun — although she refused, as she has steadfastly done for three months now, to discuss the state of contacts with the government.

**85 thousand Okinawans stage anti-US protest**

GINOWAN, Japan, Oct 21: UP to 85,000 Okinawans, many more than expected, chanted slogans from another era such as "yankee go home" today in the biggest-ever protest against US bases on this battle-scarred Japanese island, reports Reuter.

The protest, sparked by the alleged rape by three US servicemen of a 12-year-old schoolgirl, tapped into resentment at the subtropical island's role as the main base for American troops in Japan.

It was staged at a time of increasing tension between the world's two most powerful economies which are embroiled in disputes about a trade war and economic spying.

Organisers said demonstrators numbered 85,000, far more than the forecast 50,000. Police had no official figures.

The rally adopted by acclamation a resolution condemning the United States for an "occupation mentality."

"Such brutal crimes, which have been repeatedly committed by US military personnel, clearly show decline of discipline by US forces and indicate the deep-rooted occupation mentality that has lasted to his day," the resolution said.

Young Japanese in just a swimsuit joined, national politicians wearing business suits in a grassy park in this port city.