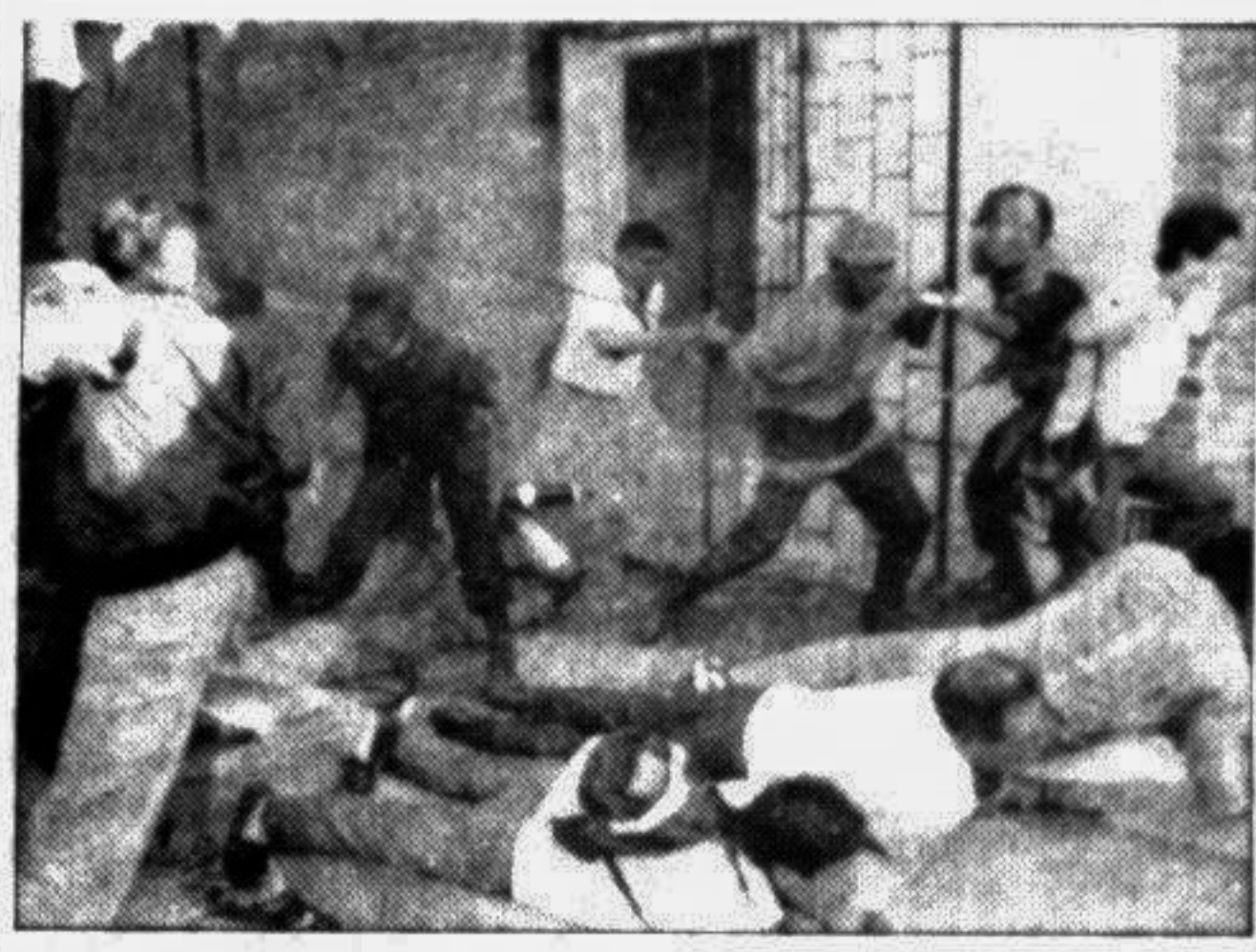


BRIEFLY



Anti-riot police and ex-combatants clash outside a government office on Thursday in San Salvador after the police stormed the building to free 27 hostages. The ex-combatants had taken the building to demand pensions and other payments promised to them in the 1994 peace accord ending 12 years of civil war. Ten hostages had been released before troops entered the building.

12 die in Kashmir bus plunge: At least 12 people were killed and 51 injured when a bus plunged into a 350-metre gorge in the northern Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, the United Nations of India (UNI) said on Thursday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The news agency said six women and three children were among the dead. The bus skidded off the road on its way to Doda, near Jammu, the state's winter capital, UNI said.

Michael Jackson wins MTV award: American Michael Jackson was voted best male singer and Iceland's Bjork took the female vocalist prize at the MTV Europe Music Awards in Paris on Thursday. Reuter reports from Paris.

"Take That of Britain" won the live performance award. Dog Eat Dog of the United States received a prize for best newcomer and U2 of Ireland was the best group.

Ghali to begin Ghana tour Sunday: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali will begin a four-day visit to Ghana on Sunday during which he will have talks with President Jerry Rawlings on Liberia's peace process and other issues, the government said. Reuter reports from Accra.

A statement said the talks with Rawlings, current head of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which helped broker a Liberia peace deal in August, would be wide-ranging.

Leptospirosis kills 10 in Nicaragua: Ten more people have died from an epidemic that has now killed at least 26 since it surfaced in Nicaragua last month, the Health Ministry said on Thursday. Reuter reports from Managua.

The disease is known as leptospirosis and is a bacterial infection caused by the urine of some mammals, most likely rats in this case.

Quake hits Egypt, Israel & Jordan: Parts of Egypt, Israel and Jordan were rocked by a strong tremor on Thursday, a day after an earthquake shook the Middle East and killed at least 10 people. Reuter reports from Cairo.

No serious damage was immediately reported. A spokesman for Josephat Hospital in the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat, is hardest in Israel by the tremor, said 30 people were treated for shock.

7 killed in SA road mishap: Six Swiss tourists and a German woman died Thursday and 33 other people were injured, five seriously, in a bus accident near Riversdale southwest of Cape Town, police said. AFP reports from Cape Town.

The tourists were on a tour of the Cape region when the bus overturned on a slippery road in driving rain.

Earthquake rocks NZ's South Island: An earthquake registering 5.9 on the Richter Scale rattled a wide area of New Zealand's South Island yesterday but no significant damage was reported, AFP reports from Wellington.

AI fears Suu Kyi supporters may be facing torture in jail

BANGKOK, Nov 24: Amnesty International has reported the arrest in Yangon of three supporters of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and said it fears they may be facing torture, reports AFP.

In a statement received here today, the London-based human rights group said the three were representatives of the National League for Democracy (NLD) youth organisation attending a weekend address by Aung San Suu Kyi outside her home last Saturday.

"Amnesty International fears that three young men arrested in Yangon on November 18, 1995 may be facing ill-treatment or torture in detention and may have been arrested solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association," it said.

The three, named as Maung Aye, Toe Aung and

Myo Zaw, were charged the next day with assaulting police officials and preventing civil servants from carrying out their duties, and were reportedly tried on November 20.

Amnesty quoted unofficial sources as saying the charges were "exaggerated and are a pretext to detain political activists." The outcome of the trial was not known.

The arrests came after the three and an unidentified fourth person - who was briefly detained and released - had tried to convince police to remove barricades in front of the house. Amnesty said.

Aun San Suu Kyi has spoken to crowds outside her family compound every weekend since her release from six years of house arrest in July, but last weekend police officials were present and put up barbed-wire barricades for the first time

Algerian court confirms result of Nov 16 polls

ALGIERS, Nov 24: Algeria's Constitutional Court on Thursday confirmed the outcome of the November 16 presidential elections that returned Liamine Zeroual to power with 61.01 per cent or 7,088,618 votes, reports AFP.

Turnout was 75.69 per cent, council president said Bouchair said in making the announcement at the Djennane el-Mithak state residence.

Zeroual will be Algeria's sixth president. A date for his inauguration has not yet been set.

Women still rely on charms, herbs for contraception

SYDNEY, Nov 24: If a gynaecologist recommended wearing a yak bone necklace or using a crocodile dung pessary to prevent unwanted pregnancies, he or she would be called a quack, reports Reuter.

But to the women in ancient Egypt in 1000 BC, or even to some Nepalese women today, this does not seem so fanciful.

"We tend to think contraception started in the 1960s but in fact various forms of contraceptives have been available for centuries," said Megan Hicks, a senior curator at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum, who has spent four years compiling an exhibition of contraceptives throughout the ages.

Army to recruit 10,000 new troops Lankan troops tighten siege on Tamil bastion of Jaffna

COLOMBO, Nov 24: Thousands of soldiers backed by tanks and armoured cars today tightened a siege on the Tamil rebel bastion of Jaffna, the military said, reports AFP.

Troops carried out a pincer movement Thursday to trap fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Jaffna town, officials said.

"We are now digging in," chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said. "We are going to stay put. No one can come in or go out of Jaffna. The Tigers can either surrender, take cyanide or jump into the sea."

At least 17 soldiers were killed and 93 wounded in fierce fighting on Thursday to

complete the blockade of Jaffna, capital of a de facto state the LTTE had run in the north of the country since 1990. Munasinghe said.

He said an estimated 100 rebels were killed and more than 150 wounded in the fighting. Security forces launched operation rivrasa (sunshine) on October 17 with the aim of capturing Jaffna.

Official figures show that 457 security personnel and 1,750 rebels have died since the start of the operation to dislodge the Tigers from Jaffna.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Thursday said the first phase of the operations were coming to an end. She thanked security forces

and expressed condolences to families of troopers killed in action.

President Kumaratunga said the end of the war with the LTTE would not bring peace to Sri Lanka where more than 50,000 people have died in the Tamil homeland struggle since 1972.

"We must negotiate a lasting political solution and then and only then, can there be peace for our people," Kumaratunga said. "The end of the war does not mean peace."

Military officials said soldiers were still 2.5 kilometres (1.5 miles) away from the city centre after making a spectacular entry into the municipal limits of Jaffna by

capturing Nallur on the eastern edge of the town on Monday.

It was not immediately clear if the army would be able to sustain its 35,000 soldiers in the Jaffna Peninsula without the vital air-bridge. Monsoon rains has also prevented the navy from operating boats in rough weather.

The only land route to the Jaffna Peninsula remains under rebels control.

Reuter adds: The Sri Lanka army will recruit 10,000 new troops to consolidate its hold on the northern rebel areas where elite commandos have cut off the key Jaffna town before storming it, a military spokesman said today.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (L) and the Israeli Ambassador to Germany Avi Primor (R) congratulate each other after both jointly received the German Media Prize, which was awarded posthumously to late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Baden-Baden on Thursday. Standing at centre is the organiser of the event, Karlheinz Koegel of the Baden-Baden Media Institute Media Control.

Crackdown on asylum seekers may harm race relations in UK

LONDON, Nov 24: A new British law designed to crack down on bogus asylum seekers could lead to thousands of people being made homeless and harm race relations, the official Commission for Racial Equality said today, reports Reuter.

Under the proposed law, to be discussed by Parliament soon, people who claim asylum after entering Britain, rather than immediately they arrive, would not receive welfare benefits.

The commission, a statutory body charged with promoting good race relations, said the government has already stated that when the

law takes effect next January, at least 7,000 existing asylum seekers could lose their benefit entitlements.

It said bodies which look after the interests of refugees feared many of these people, plus many who applied for asylum in the next two months, would be unable to afford housing.

"The refugee council has estimated that, if these regulations are put into effect, about 8,000 asylum seekers, most of them in London, may be out on the streets after January 8 with no money for food," the commission said.

"Among them will be pregnant women, children

and elderly and disabled persons," it said in a published submission to the government's social security department.

"This sudden increase in the homeless and destitute population will be very visible. The people concerned will all be foreign and many will be black. In our view, this will have very bad results for race relations," it added.

The government says the new law is needed because of an alarming rise in applications for political asylum, which reached some 4,500 in October compared with an average of 2,000 a month in 1994.



The Princess of Wales (R) smiles at Solange Martinez Garcia (C), 5, and her mother Mercedes (L) at the Garrahan Hospital in a suburb of Buenos Aires during her visit on Thursday. Solange is recovering from an operation on a brain tumor. Princess Diana is on a four-day visit to Argentina.

Sihanouk won't leave country

PHNOM PENH, Nov 24: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk has cancelled plans to leave the country over the arrest of his half-brother, who stands accused of plotting to kill Prime Minister Hun Sen, officials said today, reports Reuter.

The royal "cabinet told our Press Department that he would not go. I don't know the reason," said Information Ministry spokesman Sieng Lapresse. Palace officials refused to comment.

The Cambodia Daily newspaper quoted an unnamed adviser to the king as saying his decision reflected his "determination to respond positively to the wishes of the people."

The official said pleas urging Sihanouk to stay had been delivered to the palace on Thursday as the king was getting ready to leave for China today in apparent protest at the government's arrest of Prince Norodom Sivivuth.

540,000 Polish protest victory of Kwasniewski

WARSAW, Nov 24: Poland's Supreme Court said today that 540,000 people had lodged protests challenging ex-communist Aleksander Kwasniewski's presidential election victory, reports AFP.

Most of the protest, which call for the ballot Sunday to be annulled, said Kwasniewski had falsely claimed to have taken higher education courses, while others alleged falsification of election results.

Court spokesman Judge Krzysztof Kauba said it would rule by December 9 on the strength of the allegations rather than their number, although that would not be ignored.

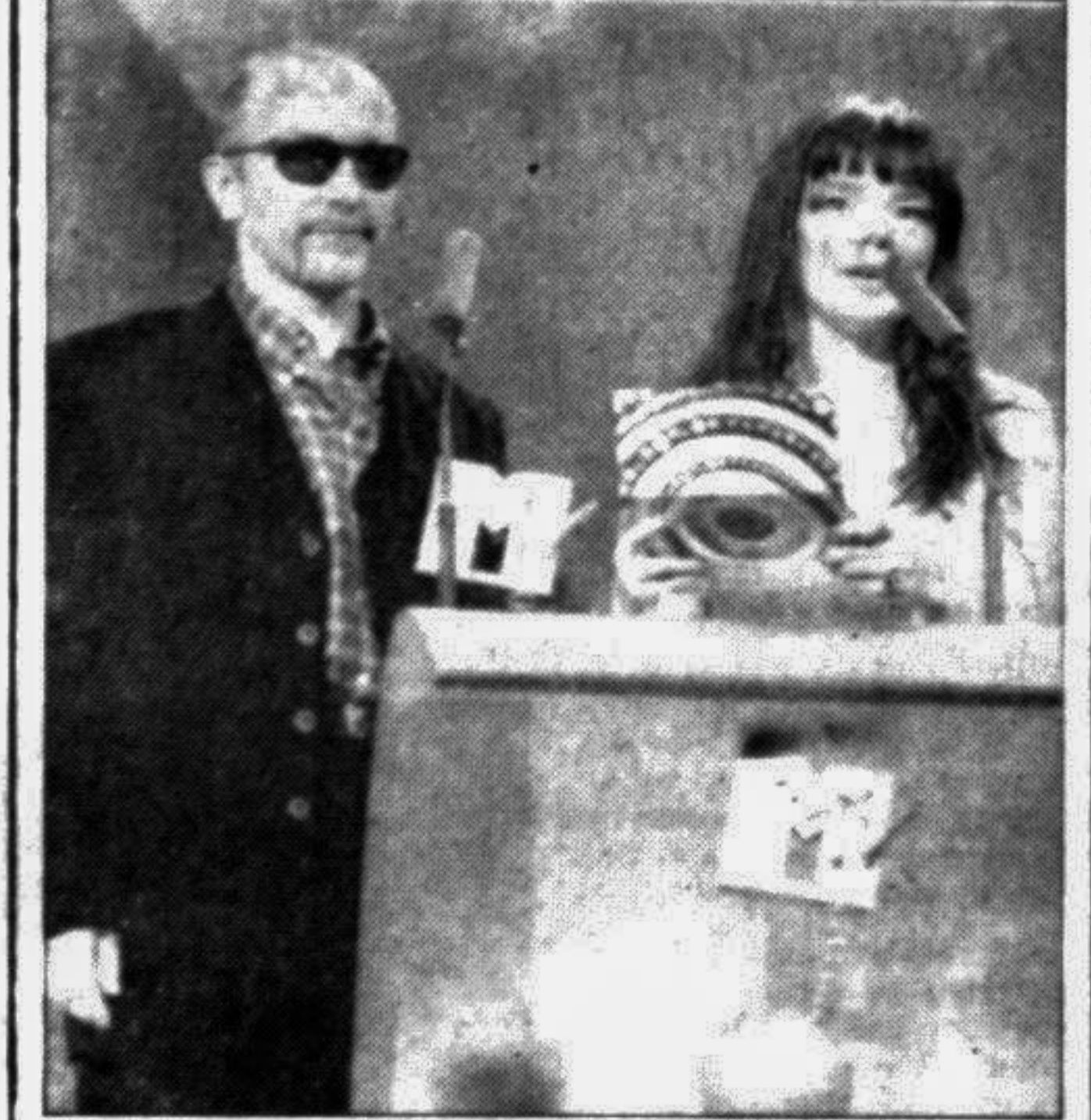
25 countries to join peacekeeping force for Bosnia

SKOPJE Nov 24: US Defence Secretary Williams Perry said during a visit to Macedonia on Thursday the 25 countries had so far stated that they would send troops to join the 60,000 strong peacekeeping force for Bosnia, reports Reuter.

Perry told a news conference that the mainly NATO force would be deployed in Bosnia very quickly after the signing of a peace agreement, and within weeks there would be enough troops on the ground there to carry out essential tasks.

The peace agreement reached by the Bosnian Croatian and Serbian presidents in Dayton, Ohio on Tuesday is expected to be signed in Paris early next month.

Off the Record



Singer Bjork of Iceland (R) smiles on Thursday after receiving the Europe Music Awards for best Female Artist at the Zenith Concert Hall in Paris. Standing at left is the Edge, the guitar player of the Irish group U2.

More Pharaonic chambers discovered

CAIRO: Archaeologists have discovered a further 24 chambers in Egypt's biggest Pharaonic tomb in Luxor's valley of the kings, a US expert said Wednesday, reports AFP.

A total of 91 chambers have now been found in the tomb built for the many sons of Rameses II, which was discovered in May, archaeologist Kent Weeks said.

"Apart from the 67 funeral chambers found in May, two corridors with 12 chambers have been discovered in recent days by an American and Egyptian team, said weeks, a professor at the American University in Cairo.

"Hundreds of incomplete statures and sarcophagi and parts of mummies have been found there."

Also found were tablets with the names of Rames II and four of his sons, as well as inscriptions saying that the tomb was built in the 19th year of the Pharaoh's rule.

Bid to find theoretical companion of Eve

LONDON: Researchers reported on Thursday they were homing in on the genetic "Adam," the male forebear of all humankind, reports Reuter.

Two separate teams of scientists reported in the science journal Nature that they had run computer analyses of the chromosome, which only men have, to find the theoretical companion of "Eve".

The Eve hypothesis, first published in 1987, turned the world of evolution science upside down with the suggestion that human DNA could be traced back to a single female. This "Eve" would have lived in Africa about 200,000 years ago.

According to the theory, modern humans evolved in one place at one time and then migrated around the world. Rival theories maintain that humans evolved independently in several places.

Molecular biologists traced "Eve" by charting backwards the regular mutations in DNA, there are a certain number of mutations in each generation, and if they follow a consistent pattern, can be tracked.

Eve was easier to find because of mitochondrial DNA - a form of DNA passed down intact through the female line. Finding "Adam" would be harder because men don't pass on their mitochondrial DNA.

Instead, scientists looked at the Y chromosome. Humans have two chromosomes - women have two X chromosomes and men have one X and one Y chromosome.

Michael Hammer of the Laboratory of Molecular Systems and evolution at the University of Arizona said he estimated that human Y chromosomes took on their unique characteristics at about the same time as "Eve" appeared.

Delhi to regret soon for its deeds, warns Al-Faran

SRINAGAR, Nov 24: Al-Faran guerrillas holding four Western hostages in Kashmir said on Thursday the Indian government would soon regret for its actions if it did not release jailed Kashmiri separatists, reports Reuter.

"If the government does not meet our demands as early as possible they will be sorry," the kidnapers, who have already killed one hostage, told government negotiators.

The guerilla threats were relayed by official sources who said that negotiators had a 10 minute exchange with the guerillas by telephone or radio on Thursday afternoon.

The kidnapers asked for a radio and said they would contact the authorities again on Saturday.

After Al-Faran captured the tourists in July, it demanded the release of 22 jailed separatists, including three members of Harkat-ul-

Ansar, a Pakistan-based Muslim militant group, in exchange for the hostages.

It later softened its demand, asking for the release of 15 separatists including Harkat-ul-Ansar members.

Indian authorities have been in regular touch with the guerilla since November 9, when contact was re-established after a gap of more than 50 days.

Al-Faran sent a handwritten statement on Thursday to some newspapers in Kashmir's main city Srinagar to deny it was bargaining for the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, a leader of the Pakistan-based militant group Harkat-ul-Ansar.

It described the story, which Reuters received this week from a senior official, as "mere propaganda of the Indian government" and insisted: "We still stand by our earlier demands."

Hashimoto may become Japan's PM before polls

TOKYO, Nov 24: A senior Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) official said today that he hoped LDP leader Ryutaro Hashimoto would assume the premiership before Japan's next general elections are held, possibly as early as June, reports AP.

The remarks by Kochi Kato, secretary general of the biggest party in the coalition government, came only days after Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama vowed to stay on in his current position, dashing expectations that he might step down after last weekend's summit of Asia-Pacific leaders in Osaka.

Hicks said she hoped to take the exhibition, "taking precautions, the story of contraception", throughout Australia and even overseas after a year's run in Sydney.