

International

**BRIEFLY**

**GCC FMs meet in KSA:** Foreign Ministers from the six Gulf Arab states met in Saudi Arabia yesterday to unify their response after last week's missile strikes against Iraq by the United States, their key Western ally. Reuter reports from Dubai.

Oman's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdullah told reporters the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates formed a committee to draw up its position on Iraq. He said after a round of talks late on Saturday that an official statement would be issued Sunday, but that the group supported the coalition led by the US which last week extended a no-fly zone in southern Iraq to its 33rd parallel.

**Fujimori's top aide resigns:** A top aide to President Alberto Fujimori has resigned, citing a desire to return to private life. AFP reports from Lima.

Jaime Yoshiyama Tanaka, the head of the Ministry of the Presidency who held his post since last November, stepped down to concentrate on business, according to radio and television reports late Friday. But he may have been squeezed out by the return of the president's brother, Santiago Fujimori, who had been one of Fujimori's two most powerful aides from 1990-1995. He was ousted last year and returned recently.

**Road mishap claims 10 in Pakistan:** Ten passengers were killed and 60 injured yesterday when a crowded bus overturned in Pakistan's Punjab province, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) news agency reported. AFP report from Islamabad.

The bus, which was on its way to Stalkot from a village in eastern Pakistan, and 15 of the injured were in serious condition, it added.

**Israelis hold peace march:** Thousands of Israelis held simultaneous peace demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv on Saturday evening. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

In Tel Aviv about 2,000 people gathered at Yitzhak Rabin Square, renamed after the Prime Minister assassinated last year by a right-wing Jew for his peace moves with the Arabs. The protesters held torches and stood in the formation of the word "shalom", the Hebrew word for peace.

**US woman astronaut sets record:** NASA astronaut Shannon Lucid has set a record for the longest spaceflight by a woman, thanks to technical problems on Earth and a hurricane in the Atlantic. AP reports from Cape Canaveral.

As of Saturday, Lucid had spent 169 days aboard the Russian space station Mir. She probably won't be home for another few weeks. "I will only be happy for Shannon Lucid," said Russian cosmonaut Yelena Kondakova, who set the previous record aboard the space station Mir last year. "It proves that women can work in space as long as men."

**Actor Michael Collins Awarded:** A controversial film about Ireland's struggle to shake off British rule, scooped the top prizes in the Venice Film Festival on Saturday when "Michael Collins" won both the Golden Lion and the best actor awards. AFP reports from Venice.

"Michael Collins" was directed by Neil Jordan and starred Irish actor Liam Neeson who won the best male actor award. The Venice festival is one of the three main European film festivals. The jury was chaired by Roman Polanski.

**'Dallas' producer Katzman dies:** Leonard Katzman, executive producer of Texas oil family saga "Dallas" on US television and director of other shows that spanned the Golden Age of television to the present, has died. He was 69. AP reports from Los Angeles.

Katzman, who had just celebrated his birthday on Monday, died at his Malibu home on Thursday of an apparent heart attack, his son Mitchell said Saturday. "Dallas" premiered in 1978, and ran through May 1991, entertaining a worldwide audience with its tales of lust and treachery amid oil rigs and sprawling cattle ranches. The "Who Shot J.R.?" episode on Nov 21, 1980, was the most-watched single show in US TV history until the final episode of "MASH" on Feb 28, 1983.

**Arafat to visit Japan:** Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is to leave Gaza City Tuesday for an official three-day visit to Japan, a Palestinian source said, AFP reports from Gaza City.

The source said that Arafat had initially planned to travel to Japan on Monday. Arafat is scheduled to hold talks with Japanese leaders during which he intends to discuss his first meeting last Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the source said. He will discuss a detailed list of points on the peace process and also bilateral relations, the source said. Arafat is scheduled to leave Japan Thursday.

**35 drowned in Hyderabad:** Thirty-five people in a wedding party drowned when a lorry they were travelling in plunged into a river in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

Police said the accident occurred on Saturday when the lorry, carrying about 70 people, fell off a bridge, 400 km (250 miles) south of Hyderabad, the state capital.

**Sanctions on Cuba, Libya, Iran EU FMs talk how to react to US plans to punish its foes**

TRALEE, Ireland, Sept 8: EU foreign ministers, divided in their support for President Bill Clinton's bombing of Iraq, today discuss how to react to Washington's plans to punish its foes in Cuba, Libya and Iran, reports Reuter.

The ministers, holding informal two-day talks under Ireland's EU presidency, are expected to discuss how to retaliate against planned US trade sanctions on the three states which might affect European companies.

EU states are angry that two pieces of US legislation will impose sanctions on non-US companies operating with Cuba, Libya and Iran in contravention of free trade laws.

"We will be reviewing what retaliatory measures are open to us," said one senior EU official. "There are a number of things we could do that must be discussed."

European states are angered that their own companies risk becoming embroiled in Ameri-

can attempts to punish Iran and Libya for its alleged support for terrorism and Cuba for its failure to democratise under communist strongman Fidel Castro.

The sanctions are enshrined in two pieces of US legislation—the D'Amato Act, which targets Iran and Libya, and the Helms-Burton Laws, which are aimed at Cuba.

The EU has threatened to take the Cuba law to the World Trade Organisation, set up to promote the freeing of world commerce and an end to protectionism.

The EU review follows intensive EU discussion on Saturday which failed to give Washington backing for its attacks on Iraq to punish Saddam Hussein for an incursion into Kurdish areas.

Instead EU ministers called on Iraq to withdraw from "safe havens" set up for Kurds after the 1991 Gulf War and said it backed the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in the region.

**Turkish troop movement shocking: Arab League PUK asks US to intervene urgently in northern Iraq**

NICOSIA, Sept 8: A Kurdish rebel group claimed it was under fierce attack by Saddam Hussein's forces and a rival Kurdish faction Sunday. The group asked the United States to intervene urgently, reports AP.

There was no immediate confirmation of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's claim, sent by facsimile to The Associated Press in Nicosia from its office in a suburb of Washington, D.C.

The PUK's claims about fighting in the last week have often been shown to be accurate. It was not possible to verify information Sunday in the urged area where telecommunications are minimal.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was ousted a week ago from Irbil a major Kurdish city in northern Iraq. A rival Kurdish faction, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP took over control of Irbil with the help of Iraq's army.

The PUK statement said that at 8 am (0400 GMT) Sunday, Iraqi and KDP forces, "supported by tanks and heavy artillery, attacked Kurdish positions at the junction of Degala, southeast of Irbil. Fierce fighting is reported in the area."

The statement said Iraqi and KDP forces were trying to break through PUK lines to capture Kuysanjaq, a city of roughly 80,000 residents 50 kilometres (30 miles) southeast of Irbil.

"We call on the US and its coalition partners to intervene urgently to halt the Iraqi aggression and end this onslaught against the Kurdish people," the PUK statement said.

The United States launched cruise missiles at Iraq last Tuesday and Wednesday after Saddam defied the Western allies' decree that northern Iraq was a "safe haven" for Kurds. AFP adds from Cairo. The

Arab League Saturday said it was against a Turkish troop movement in northern Iraq and wanted to be informed of Ankara's intention of setting up a buffer zone on the Iraqi side of their border.

"The Turkish movements north of the borders are shocking and raise questions. We want the Turkish government to clarify to us the reality of the situation," League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid said.

"We have not been officially informed of anything and are disquieted by news from press agencies on Turkish movements," there, he told journalists before leaving for Yemen.

He said he had strongly condemned Tuesday the US missile attack on Iraq, launched in retaliation for Baghdad's military incursion into the northern-Iraq, Kurdish "safe haven".

**Christopher says US attack on Iraq aimed at teaching Saddam a lesson**

LONDON, Sept 8: Punitive US missile attacks on Iraq were aimed at teaching President Saddam Hussein a lesson not to use force to get what he wants in the region, US Secretary of State James Christopher said today, reports AP.

Christopher told the BBC that the US military action "seems to have stopped the invasion of the north" launched by Saddam against the Kurds in northern Iraq.

"Our aim was to make him pay a price for the aggression," Christopher said, adding that "force is the only language he knows."

Christopher said that despite claiming success against the Iraqi leader the United States reserved the right to take further action if necessary.

He also said that despite strong reservations expressed by many US allies over the missile attacks Washington could still count on a majority in its favour in the UN Security Council.



Extreme-Left activists of the National Democratic Front held an anti-Indian protest in front of the Central Secretariat Office in Kathmandu on Friday. Some 300 of the demonstrators protesting against a river treaty between Nepal and India were arrested. — APP/UNB photo.

**'Israel ready to move quickly on peace with PLO'**

LONDON, Sept 8: Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said today Israel was prepared to move quickly on peace with Palestinians but action must be reciprocal, reports Reuter.

Following talks in London with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who urged Israel to take "concrete steps" after a breakthrough meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Levy said: "The question of reciprocity is fundamental."

Levy told a joint news conference with Christopher: "We will go as quickly as it takes to ensure success and to ensure reciprocal agreements."

Christopher and Levy met at the US ambassador's residence ahead of talks in Washington on Monday between Netanyahu and President Bill Clinton. Christopher, who was returning to Washington later today, will attend that meeting but Levy is not expected to be there.

**Normalcy restored after violence in Kashmir polls**

SRINAGAR, India, Sept 8: Kashmir was calm today with shops and vendors doing brisk business, a day after 11 people were killed as thousands of voters braved death threats in the first state elections in a decade, reports AP.

Shoppers and traffic returned to the streets of Srinagar after a tense Saturday when the city observed a strike to coincide with polling in 26 of the 87 Kashmir assembly seats under tight security.

More than half the 1.3 million electorate in the Himalayan state voted Saturday despite boycott calls by Muslim separatists, waging a dragging bloody war to end Indian rule.

Eleven people were killed in scattered violence across the northern state. But officials said only four of them were re-

lated to the poll, the first since March 1987 to pick a government in Kashmir.

Two brothers were killed when Muslim militants lobbed a grenade at a polling station, while a civilian died in firing between the rebels and Indian troops elsewhere.

One villager was reportedly killed in alleged firing by Pakistani troops on the long Kashmir border.

There were no reports of violence in Kashmir early today.

The Border Security Force (BSF) said it arrested two Muslim militants in Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, overnight Saturday. They were identified as Latif Haq of Al Umar group and Al Jihad's Mushtaq "cobra".

"Even the (India-Pakistan) border is quiet," a Kashmir official said, referring to alleged Pakistani firing and shelling on Saturday that he claimed was aimed at sabotaging the elections.

Kashmir's chief Election officials' Jallil Khan, a Muslim, said he was delighted that no polling officer or candidate was slain despite death threats by Muslim separatists.

The poll percentage is encouraging, government spokesman Ashok Kumar said. The elections were held free and fair. Voting was incident-free despite militant threats.

There were only half-a-dozen street protests in the polling areas, and newspapers reported that few voters alleged coercion by security forces, unlike in the May parliamentary election when there were widespread complaints.

**15 troops killed in clash in Sudan**

CAIRO, Sept 8: Fifteen Sudanese soldiers were killed and five others wounded in an attack by a northern opposition group in Sudan, a group of the Forces of the Alliance said in a statement Saturday, reports AP.

A group of the Forces of the Alliance led an operation in eastern Sudan near the border with Eritrea and killed 15 government troops and wounded 15 others Friday, the statement in the Arab daily Al-Hayat said.

This group took control of a government position for several hours before safely returning to their bases, it said.

The group, led by former general Abdel Aziz Khaled, includes a number of former Sudanese military officers who left the country after general Omar Al-Beshir's coup in June 1989.

The forces of the alliance, which operates out of Eritrea, also said it has several times attacked government troops.

**US troops cut Referendum begins in Okinawa**

NAHA, Japan, Sept 8: Residents of Okinawa voted in a referendum today on whether the huge US military presence on the southern Japanese island should be reduced, reports Reuter.

No problems were reported at the 302 polling stations across the island, which opened at 7 am (2200 GMT Saturday) and were to close at 6 pm (0900 GMT). There are 900,000 eligible voters.

The referendum, the nation's first on any subject, gives residents a chance to vent years of frustration over the concentration of US military forces on the island.

It is expected to deliver a resounding vote in favour of streamlining the US presence. Only a few ultra-nationalists have been against the idea.

Okinawa governor Masahide Ota, who wants all US forces removed, cast his ballot early in the morning at the provincial capital of Naha.



Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota (R) speaks to reporters after he voted in a historic referendum on the future of US military bases on the island of Okinawa yesterday at a polling station in central Naha. Although the outcome of Japan's first-ever prefectural referendum on the US military presence is not legally binding, it is being closely watched in Tokyo and Washington. — APP/UNB photo

**'300 MQM members held' Strike cripples life in Karachi**

KARACHI, Sept 8: A strike called by opposition parties crippled life today in Pakistan's commercial capital Karachi, with one person reported killed in the early hours, says AFP.

The one-day strike was called by 10 opposition parties to protest against the alleged killing on Thursday of an activist from the ethnic-based Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) by police. Today is a normal working day in mainly Muslim Pakistan.

Police said they found a body of a civilian in the eastern district of Malir early today while a group of militants torched three vehicles overnight elsewhere.

Security was tight with paramilitary rangers and police out in major parts of the port city.

Police said around 15 MQM members had been detained overnight for allegedly burning vehicles, although press reports put the number at around 300.

Witnesses said public transport remained off the roads in most parts of the city, but private vehicles were seen playing the roulette.

Major shopping centres were closed, with retailers in many areas also shutting their shops. Thin attendance was reported in government and private offices, while educational institutions were also affected.

The parties behind the strike included the MQM, the fundamentalist Jamaat-E-Islami, the Awami National Party and the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

The protest followed the killing of an MQM activist, Mohammad Farooq, here on Thursday.

The opposition said police shot him dead in cold blood after arresting him, while police claimed he died in a gun battle with officers.

**Russian troops begin pulling out of Chechnya**

GROZNY, Russia, Sept 8: Russian troops began pulling out of Chechnya on Sunday, the first wave in a major withdrawal that will remove several thousand servicemen from the war-torn republic, reports AP.

The pullout was part of a breakthrough peace accord reached last month by national security chief Alexander Lebed and top separatist commanders.

The 133rd tank battalion, which had taken part in most major fighting in Chechnya since the war began in December 1994, began leaving Sunday for its permanent base outside St. Petersburg, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Scores of servicemen were awarded medals in a somber farewell ceremony at the Russian base in the Chechen village of Khankala, just southwest of Grozny, the shattered capital.

Some 200 troops and 24 tanks will leave Grozny by train Sunday, with other units to follow in the next few days.

Li Gen, Vyacheslav Tikhomirov, the top Russia commander in Chechnya, thanked the battalion for "honestly performing its duty and displaying courage and heroism," the Interfax news agency reported.

The latest attempt at solving this armed conflict peacefully was our third so far. There will be no fourth," he said.

President Boris Yeltsin endorsed the peace plan this week — after withholding his approval of the deal for days — but said he opposed the speedy Russian troop withdrawal it called for.

A Russian army official said the withdrawal's first stage will involve 4,500 army servicemen and an unspecified number of interior troops, Interfax reported.

The Russian general staff said last week some 11,000 Russian servicemen are concentrated at five bases around the

**Off the Record**

**Jackson takes Stalin's place!**

PRAGUE, Czech Republic: Michael Jackson has taken Stalin's place, reports AP.

A 10-foot (3-metre), 4,600-pound (2,100-kilogram) statue of the King of Pop has been erected on the same spot where a statue of the Soviet dictator once stood.

The temporary statue can be seen from the Intercontinental Hotel, where Jackson is staying while preparing for the first shows in his latest world tour.

Jackson visited children at an orphanage but refused to reveal himself to hundreds of fans waiting for a glimpse outside his hotel.

**Unmarried nursing candidates must be virgin!**

VISAKHAPATNAM: Andhra Pradesh government has ordered a probe into the alleged virginity test conducted on the nursing candidates seeking admission to the famous King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam, reports PTI.

A three-member committee comprising the Visakhapatnam Joint Collector, Ms Poonam Malakondaiah and two doctors, began the inquiry into the matter Saturday.

The committee would submit its report to the state government," official sources said.

The controversy started after a student from west Godavari lodged a complaint with the police that the hospital authorities were refusing to accept the certificate issued by the Mandal revenue officials stating that the candidates were unmarried. The hospital authorities instead conducted virginity test.

However, the hospital sources said that the test conducted were routine as per the medical guidelines laid down by the director of the medical health.

**She hadn't slept in 31 years**

HANOI: A woman from Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam claimed she hadn't slept in 31 years and had twice attempted suicide because of her condition which doctors say is "extremely rare," reports AFP.

Nguyen Thi Le Hang said she abruptly stopped sleeping in 1965 when her first child was born, a report in the Ngoul Lao Dong newspaper said Sunday.

Neither traditional medicine nor modern tranquilisers had helped the woman, now 54 years old to sleep. Instead, she followed a special diet to prevent growing too thin and kept busy at night with housework.

A doctor at Bach Mai Hospital in Hanoi, told AFP "this case was extremely rare in Vietnam," but that he had heard about similar cases a few years ago in China.

"My greatest wish is to leave my body to science," Hang said.

**Return from death**

NEW DELHI: Indian pilgrim Rattan Dutta did not get the welcome he expected when he returned home after surviving a Himalayan disaster that cost around 240 people their lives, reports AP.

His family took one look at him, then slammed the door in his face, the United News of India (UNI) reported today.

His neighbours and friends, meanwhile, fled in panic and covered behind locked doors.

Dutta, it turned out, had been declared dead days before by an official list of the victims of last month's Amarnath pilgrimage tragedy in Kashmir.

**EU endorses call to combat sexual abuse of children**

TRALEE, Ireland, Sept 8: European Union foreign ministers on Saturday endorsed calls for new EU-wide laws to combat the sexual abuse of children and heard a pledge for proposals on the table by the end of the month, reports Reuter.

Diplomats said Belgian Foreign Minister Erik Debycke had spoken to his colleagues at an informal meeting about the child sex and murder scandal that has shaken his country to the core in recent weeks.

The ministers agreed that EU justice and home affairs ministers would discuss the issue of paedophilia at a meeting in Dublin on September 26 and 27.

**Turkmen refugees flee Irbil in wake of Iraqi assault**

ZAKHO, Iraq, Sept 8: Turkmen refugees who fled to this town on the Iraq-Turkey border to escape an Iraqi offensive said that Saddam Hussein's soldiers arrested dozens of their people, killing at least two, reports AP.

Thousands of Turkmen, a semi-nomadic tribe, live among Kurds in northern Iraq under the US-protected "no-fly" zone.

Saddam sent tanks into the area a week ago to oust an Iranian-backed Kurdish faction from Irbil, about 185 miles (300 kilometers) south of Zakho. Soon after, Iraqi secret police started rounding up Turkmen, the refugees said.

The Iraqi government denied Saturday that its forces had detained Turkmen in Irbil. These are rumours prepared by circles with evil political aims,

the Information Ministry said. But Mehmet Kemal, who fled Irbil on Tuesday, said: "They took 53 Turkmen away — at least those are the ones we know."

Kemal said two of them, leaders of the Iraqi National Turkmen party, were executed. The party is banned as part of Saddam's effort to subdue potential rebellion.

Hasan Ozmen, a representative of the Iraqi National Turkmen party in Ankara, Turkey, told The Associated Press that about 300 Turkmen were detained after Iraqi troops stormed Irbil.

Kemal said the two party leaders were among 96 people executed in Irbil after Iraqi forces stormed the city.

Mass executions have been reported by many Irbil residents and by Iraqi opposition groups, but no witnesses have been found.

Irbil, the largest city in the Kurdish enclave of northern Iraq, was quiet Saturday. Guerrillas from the Iraq-allied Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP, patrolled the city in pickup trucks mounted with anti-aircraft guns.

The KDP teamed up with Saddam to push the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan out of Irbil. The KDP now controls PUK installations in Irbil, including the television station.

Saddam's incursion into the enclave prompted the United States to retaliate with missile strikes against air defense tar-

gets in southern Iraq on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The United States and Western allies established the "safe haven" to protect Kurds after they made a failed uprising against Saddam following his defeat in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Turkmen make up 14 per cent of Iraq's 18 million people, while the Kurds account for 19 per cent. At least 100,000 Turkmen moved to the protected enclave in the last two years to escape Iraqi oppression.

Saddam does not tolerate dissent of any kind. He may have targeted the Turkmen because the Iraqi National Turkmen Party belongs to the Iraqi opposition umbrella group, the

**'US should abandon adversarial stance towards China'**

BELIJNG, Sept 8: The United States should abandon its adversarial stance towards China which has led to "avoidable" disputes in bilateral relations, former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger was quoted as saying today, reports AP.

Kissinger, who as Richard Nixon's security advisor secretly visited China in 1971 to pave the way for a rapprochement between Washington and Beijing, said a lesson could be learned from that particular page in history.

"If we could cooperate then, it should be a lot easier to cooperate from now on," press reports quoted Kissinger as saying before he left Beijing after attending an international symposium in the capital.