

BRIEFLY

'City of dead' found in Egypt: Archeologists have found an ancient 'city of the dead' with 150 burial chambers under the Egyptian port of Alexandria, the Tourism Ministry said Monday. AP reports from Cairo.

The tombs date back to 300 BC and hold human remains as well as "funeral furniture," the ministry said in a statement. The find was made earlier this year as construction workers were digging the foundations for a bridge to link west Alexandria to the desert highway to Cairo. The French archaeologist Jean-Yves Empereur moved in and supervised the excavations with a team of hundreds of workers.

US allows tritium production: The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission agreed for the first time Monday to allow a commercial reactor to test produce tritium, which is used in nuclear bombs. AP reports from Knoxville.

Anti-nuclear groups have condemned the test, saying it would end a long-standing federal policy barring civilian nuclear power plants from making weapons. Federal officials have stressed the tritium produced during the test will not be used in weapons.

11 criminals executed in China: Eleven people found guilty of crimes ranging from murder and theft to drug peddling and forcing women into prostitution, have been executed by gunshot in southern China, an official report said Tuesday. AP reports from Beijing.

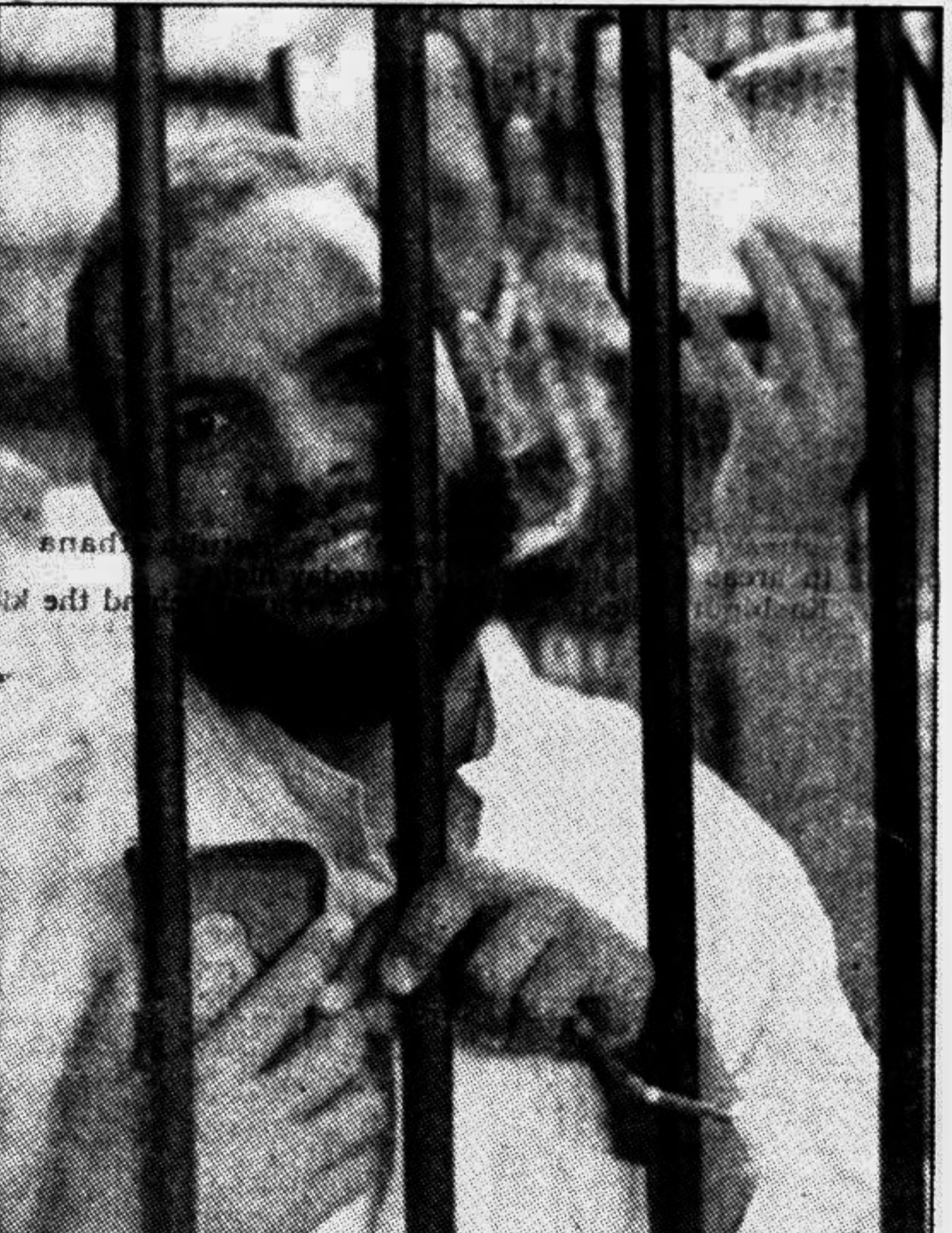
The 11 were executed Monday night after sentencing by the Intermediate People's Court in Shenzhen city, bordering Hong Kong, the Shenzhen Special Zone Daily said. Five other people received suspended death sentences, which can be commuted to life imprisonment with good behavior, or jail terms ranging from life to five years, it said.

German's body found in Angola: The body of a passenger from a German military aircraft which crashed on Saturday off the coast of Angola, was found on Monday, German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe said on television, AFP reports from Bonn.

The minister gave no details about how the body was found nor who had found it. Ruehe said only that the body had been found about 08:00 pm local time and would be brought back to land. The Russian-built German TU-154 aircraft carrying 24 people, is believed to have collided in mid-air with a US C-141 which also vanished in the same area on Saturday.

Ancient mass grave found in Egypt: Archeologists have found an ancient 'city of the dead' with 150 burial chambers under the Egyptian port of Alexandria, the Tourism Ministry said Monday. AP reports from Cairo.

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Dodi's driver to be buried in hometown

PARIS, Sept 16: The long-delayed funeral of Henri Paul, the driver of the car that carried Princess Diana, her boyfriend and himself to their deaths, will take place this weekend, funeral officials announced Monday, reports AP.

The funeral is scheduled for Saturday at Sainte Therese church in Paul's hometown of Lorient, in Brittany in western France.

Paul, 41, assistant security chief at the Ritz Hotel, was legally drunk at the time of the Aug. 31 high-speed crash in a traffic tunnel at the Pont de l'Alma.

He was to have been buried Sept. 6, but the funeral was postponed so that a third blood test, requested by his family, could be performed.

Honduras to name highway after Di

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, Sept. 16: Honduras' second city of San Pedro Sula has decided to name a major new highway after the late Princess Diana, sparking immediate controversy in the impoverished nation she never visited, reports Reuter.

"The mayor decided in a meeting to name the second stage of a nearly completed highway around the city in honour to Princess Diana," Jesus Velez, a city government spokesman, told reporters.

Some prominent citizens of the city reacted angrily to the news, saying the highway should have been named after a figure who had more in common with Honduras, one of the poorest nations in the Americas.

"There are people within Honduras who are more deserving," Luis Garcia, the city's former mayor, told Reuters, he suggested the avenue be named after the late Mother Teresa or Honduras' own sister Maria Rosa, a prominent local nun who works with street children and the handicapped.

Typhoon leaves 6 dead in Japan: Powerful Typhoon Oliwa slammed into Kyushu island in southern Japan early yesterday, leaving at least six people dead or missing and two injured, police and officials said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Heavy rain triggered a landslide in Kakoshima prefecture at the southern tip of the island early yesterday, crushing three houses and five people were unaccounted for. On Sunday, a 62-year-old farmer was killed when a cowshed collapsed on the isle of Tokunoshima south of Kyushu. Oliwa, the 19th typhoon spawned in the northwestern Pacific this year, roared through.

Japan's Fuji TV honoured in US: The achievements of Japan's Fuji Television Network were saluted Monday by the International Council of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, AP says from New York.

The tribute took place at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. Fuji Television is the core company of the Fujisankei Communications Group, Japan's largest media conglomerate. It has held the top rating spot in Japan for 12 straight years. The International Council, which also presents the International Emmy Awards, has previously honored media firms from Mexico, France, Brazil, Taiwan and England.

India to consider new nuclear liability convention

India will "consider" two international treaties regulating the liability and compensation, for accidents in civilian nuclear facilities before taking a final decision on joining them.

An overwhelming majority of the more than 80 nations gathered here for a high level conference organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) voted in favour of a protocol to amend the 1963 Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and a new treaty setting up a global fund to compensate victims of nuclear accidents.

An Indian official said New Delhi would consider both the conventions. "Now our scientists will study them to analyse the compensation amounts mentioned are low or high. The final decision will be taken by the Cabinet," he told India Abroad News Service.

The weekend vote capped seven years of negotiations to make operators of nuclear facilities responsible for a large array of damages inflicted by nuclear accidents and increase compensation for victims.

However, the environmental group Greenpeace, the only international non-governmental organisation (NGO) allowed to attend the conference, said the amount of over \$800 million to be made available as compensation - a slight improvement from the present level - is still too little considering the damage a nuclear accident could cause.

The new Supplementary Funding Convention (SFC) will set up a global fund of an extra 300 million Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to which member states have to contribute. Countries with nuclear plants have to pay according to their nuclear power generation - at the rate of 300 SDRs per MW. Half the fund amount is meant for compensation outside the borders of the country of nuclear accident, but claims have to be brought before 10 years from the date of the accident.

Sixty-four countries voted for the liability convention, New Zealand voted against it while Turkey and Saudi Arabia abstained. The voting pattern on the SFC was similar.

The two instruments, along with a convention dealing with radioactive waste and spent fuel management, which was finalised a week earlier, will open for signature by countries later this month when the IAEA holds its annual general conference here.

The amendment to the Vienna Convention takes effect three months after five nations have ratified it while the SFC will enter into force three months after ratification by five countries, with a minimum of 400,000 MW power generation capacity.

Neither India nor Pakistan has ratified the Vienna Convention. Nor has any other Asian country, except the Philippines. Diplomats and IAEA officials hope the revised version of the Vienna Convention and the SFC will attract more countries.

The amendments to the Vienna Convention seek to expand the scope of its application and increase the liability amount. It still holds the operator of a nuclear plant liable for any accident, something that has come in for flak from experts who want to see the mostly West-based nuclear reactor building firms also to be responsible.

The amendment however increases the limit the operator can be held liable from five million dollars (at present rates about \$45 million) to 300 million special drawing rights or SDRs (about \$420 million). But it still excludes the operator from any claims if the accident was caused by some natural disaster, terrorist attack or civil war.

The amendment also seeks to increase the deadline for seeking compensation from 10 to 30 years from the date of the accident. But operators are liable to pay for just loss of life, personal injury and damage to property and many remain sceptical of whether the clause of environmental and other new damages identified would work in practice. Compensation for such damages is left to a court to decide on.

Such new damages include harm to the environment and the costs of preventive measures, said Simon Carroll, a Greenpeace expert at the conference. Greenpeace was allowed to participate in the experts group meetings and then in the conference, but just as an observer.

Military nuclear facilities have also been kept beyond the purview of the protocol, something India has repeatedly criticised. "How can you talk about concern for human safety and then exclude military installations?" asked one Indian diplomat. Greenpeace official Carroll agreed in his speech to the conference.

The protocol and its clauses are valid for damages wherever they occur. But a signatory can restrict its application by denying compensation to countries which have nuclear power plants but have not ratified the protocol from compensation.

— India Abroad News Service

The weekend vote capped seven years of negotiations to make operators of nuclear facilities responsible for a large array of damages inflicted by nuclear accidents and increase compensation for victims.

UN chief hopes for swift approval of reform proposals

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 16: A key session of the UN General Assembly opens today, with UN chief Kofi Annan hoping for swift approval of his reform proposals by the 185 member states, reports AFP.

But overshadowing the 52nd General Assembly session is the issue of the world body's dire financial situation, with deepening resentment here about Washington's continued failure to pay its UN arrears, threatening the world body's very existence.

"It's going to be a clash of the titans," one UN ambassador predicted Monday.

Outgoing UN General Assembly president Razali Ismail on Monday dismissed Washington's offer of paying roughly 900 million dollars out of a total 1.5 billion owed to the United Nations as "half a loaf."

"Members should consider very seriously whether this half a loaf is acceptable or not," he told diplomats.

Diplomats say their government leaders and representatives are certain to complain about the biggest UN contributor attaching conditions to the payment of dues, in their speeches to the General Assembly from next week.

They will also petition US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at meetings in New York.

But asked why, despite all the anger, governments were not prepared to take further action against Washington, a senior diplomat acknowledged.

"None of us are prepared to put our bilateral relations on the line for the multilateral."

Delegations are also divided on how to approach Annan's reforms, after Annan urged the Assembly to consider the proposals as an overall package.

Xinhua adds: Razali Ismail, president of the 51st General Assembly of the United Nations, on Monday yesterday called on member states to unite and make real efforts for the on-going reforms and strengthening of the world body.

In a closing address, Razali said that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's reform package put forward in mid-July "Deserves our full and expeditious attention without being diverted attention from the UN's real functions and charter responsibilities."

"If the UN is to survive, it has to transform itself from an organisation serving only the interests of states to one serving the interests of peoples living in an interdependent and global society," Razali pointed out.

The 51st session of the UN General Assembly closed its final meeting yesterday. The 52nd annual session began today with its focus on overhauling the UN machinery.

Annan, who came to office on January 1, 1997, has since been making reform efforts to enable the world body to better confront the challenges of the new millennium.

"I would hope that the leaders will come to the Assembly convinced that the most important issue before them is reform," the secretary-general told a recent press conference.

Vaccine against lyme disease

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept 16: A vaccine against lyme disease has proven safe and effective in a clinical trial, a researcher said on Monday, reports Reuter.

"The vaccine works and the vaccine is safe," lead investigator Leonard Sigal said of the vaccine, developed by a subsidiary of the Rhone-Poulenc group.

The subsidiary, Pasteur Merieux Connaught, said preliminary results showed that the vaccine reduced the occurrence of lyme disease in a clinical trial involving 10,306 adults.

John Zahradnik, director of clinical affairs at Pasteur Merieux Connaught, said the promising results of the trial had led the company to prepare to submit a product license application to the US Food and Drug Administration.

Lyme disease is spread to humans by ticks from deer and is prevalent in the northeastern United States and Canada, it usually starts with a rash and in some cases can lead to heart, joint or neurologic disease.

Colombian army bombs rebel positions

BOGOTA, Colombia, Sept 16: The military bombed leftist guerrilla positions in southern Colombia on Monday as part of an operation aimed at trapping top rebel leaders, authorities said, reports AP.

Hundreds of soldiers were mobilised to the remote area near Yari, 185 miles (300 kilometres) southeast of Bogota against what was believed a major stronghold of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the nation's largest rebel group.

A television news programme reported Sunday that rebel leader Jorge Briceño, who goes by the nom de guerre Mono Jojoy, was caught up in the fighting and radioed for help Sunday from nearby rebel units.

Bogota's El Tiempo newspaper said Raul Reyes, another FARC commander, was also in the area.

A spokesman for the army's fourth division, Col. Ricardo Contreras, said the operation, including aerial bombardment, was launched after military intelligence obtained information that rebel leaders might be in the area.

The FARC said in an e-mail communique that an unnamed member of the rebel secretariat was in the area when bombing began on September 4. It said the military campaign had delayed a rebel response to a government proposal for peace talks.

President Ernesto Samper on Monday brushed off calls by the FARC to suspend the attack.

"There will be no retreat from the military operations," Samper said. "We are committed to the operations as we are to searching for peace."

Two Samper-appointed peace envoys issued a report last week recommending the army agree to demilitarise a rural area to encourage peace negotiations. But the envoys said they did not know when the FARC might respond.

Colombia's leftist rebels have mounted their most determined effort in a more than three-decade-old insurgency to disrupt October 26 nationwide municipal elections, killing at least 24 candidates and kidnapping hundreds more.

Contreras said the army believed there were rebel casualties in the Yari operation, but he did not know how many. He said two soldiers were wounded.

Its very bad here... tell number two (another rebel unit) to get here. We need them here," said a man believed to be Briceño in the intercepted radio transmission obtained by TV-Hoy news.



US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, left, shakes hands with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, right, while Lebanese President Elias Hrawi looks on at the Presidential Palace in Baabda, 3 miles southeast of Beirut, Monday. Albright arrived on an unannounced visit at the end of a regional tour aimed at getting Arab-Israeli peace negotiations back on track. — AP/UNB photo

Kelley dishes dirt on Windsors in 'The Royals'

NEW YORK, Sept 16: With interest in all things royal and British at a peak after Princess Diana's death, the timing is morbidly perfect for the release of "The Royals," Kitty Kelley's look at the lives and scandals of the House of Windsor, reports AP.

The book, due in US stores Wednesday, gives the British Royal Family the same tell-all treatment dished out to Frank Sinatra and Nancy Reagan in Kelley's earlier unauthorised biographies.

Diana is not unscathed — but comes off better than some of her in-laws. "She certainly emerges, vulnerabilities and all, as the one person who can lay claim to royalty," Kelley said in an interview Monday.

"The Royals," which relies heavily on unidentified sources, details Diana's doomed marriage to prince Charles; suggests that the 97-year-old Queen Mother Elizabeth II is illegitimate and that queen Elizabeth II was conceived by artificial insemination; and portrays the Queen's sister, Princess Margaret, as an anti-Semite and the Queen's husband, Prince Philip, as a racist.

Though Diana's death in an August 31 car crash in Paris occurred after "The Royals" had been printed, the death and the outpouring of grief it provoked have affected plans for marketing the book.

People magazine cancelled an excerpt for which it had paid \$25,000, citing the "tragic circumstances." Meanwhile, publisher Warner Books sped up the publication date by six days.

"The Royals" is not being published in Britain, where the law makes it easier to show libel and win large sums in damages than in the United States.

"Too much of it would have had to be deleted" for the book to be released in Britain, Kelley said, adding that decision should not be interpreted as a lack of faith in her material.

"I feel very confident in this book. Every word," she said.

Kelley said events of the last few weeks had not altered her belief that the British monarchy will endure. Even in death, she said, Diana continues "to breathe life into this moribund institution" by serving as an example of what the British want from the Royal Family.

The author said she attempted to give an "unblinking view" of the Windsors that includes both their scandals and their more positive achievements.

As examples of the latter, she cites Prince Charles' devotion to philanthropy, Prince Andrew's "dignity in the face of disgrace" after his divorce from Sarah Ferguson, and Prince Philip's public chivalry and devotion to the Queen.

Blair's three-pronged plans to change Britain

LONDON, Sept 16: Prime Minister Tony Blair today gave the first taste of an ambitious three-pronged programme for changing Britain, to be unveiled at this month's Labour Party conference, reports AFP.

In an interview with the independent, the recently-elected prime minister raised the curtain on plans to "create a country that can hold its head high as the model of what a 21st century developed nation should be."

Three key elements would be used to focus the forthcoming Labour conference, he told the daily.

These would be a competitive economy based on high skills and the creativity of a well-educated workforce. A society "where we are getting rid of this idea of an underclass, a set of people apart from the rest of society," and an end to what he saw as the previous Tory government's isolationism in world affairs. "All those things are achievable," Blair said.

"It is possible for us to create a country of greater opportunity, provided we set aside some of the problems we have had in the past and provided the Labour Party and the Labour government is concentrated on addressing the real concerns of people rather than slipping backwards. But he warned that would mean difficult and hard decisions.

The reform of the welfare state was one area of change which had still to be decided, Blair said, but indicated that the private sector could be involved in its reform.

"The basic principle is that the role of government is to organise proper levels of social provision," he said.

"Some may be done directly through the private sector, some through the public sector, some may be done through a combination of both."

The prime minister indicated this could apply to pensions and further education.

Environmental factors may be the cause

Cancer cases among US children mark sharp rise

WASHINGTON, Sept 16: Environmental factors are probably to blame for sharp rise in cancer cases among US children, cancer specialists meeting here said Monday, reports AP.

In recent years, new cases of testicular cancer among US children from birth to age 14 have jumped 60 per cent, brain cancer cases 50 per cent, brain cancer cases 30 per cent, and leukemia cases 10.7 per cent, according to figures released at the conference on cancer and the environment.

The increases are so rapid to reflect genetic changes and better diagnostic detection is not a likely explanation," Dr Philip Landrigan said at the conference. "The strong probability exists that environmental factors are playing a role."

Some 80000 new cancer cases are diagnosed each year among children in the United States.

While cancer is on the rise, the mortality rate is declining because of better treatment, experts said. Cancer remains the second most likely cause of death among young people after accidents.

Landrigan said that in the past few decades, some 75,000 synthetic chemical components have been developed and introduced in the environment.

First trip to ME ends Situation worse than expected: Albright

SHANNON, Ireland, Sept 16: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, said here Monday after a first tour of the Middle East that lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians was "even worse" than she had expected, reports AP.

"The crisis of confidence was not a helpful act," she said during a stopover in Shannon on her way home from the six-day tour which took her to Israel, the Palestinian territories, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Lebanon.

But Albright said she felt "heartened" by the concessions which Israel had made since her visit. "We are moving in the right direction. These steps are helpful," she said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised Sunday to lift an internal blockade on the West Bank and pay millions of dollars owed to Yasser Arafat's cash-strapped Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli government also announced it would veto a controversial Jewish settlement project in an Arab district of occupied East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as the capital of a future state.

But she said the eviction on Sunday of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers in historically Arab East Jerusalem was "not a helpful act."

Xinhua from Paris reports: Albright on Monday asked Israel to "go further in making peace with the Palestinians, and the Israeli army to proceed with significant redeployments in the West Bank."

"We encourage the Israeli government to go further, to present other concrete measures and then give back the form to the peace process," said French foreign ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt.

The spokesman appealed to Israeli authorities to impose a complete freeze on Jewish housing projects in Arab lands, stop seizing Arab lands and destroying the Arabs houses, stop confiscating identity cards of Palestinians.

White House terms idea of retaliation against Paula Jones 'certifiably crazy'

WASHINGTON, Sept 16: The White House denied that it had Paula Jones singled out for an IRS audit, calling the idea of such retaliation "certifiably crazy," reports AP.

"It's inconceivable to me," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said in response to a question on whether the White House pushed for the IRS investigation after Jones rejected a settlement of her sexual harassment suit against President Clinton.

"We do dumb things from time to time, but we are not certifiably crazy," McCurry said. "So don't imagine for a minute we did. We don't even call the IRS to find out how they do those sorts of things literally."

Jones, a former Arkansas state employee, filed a lawsuit claiming that Clinton, then governor asked her for oral sex in a Little Rock hotel room in May 1991. Clinton has denied Jones' accusation, saying he does not remember meeting her.

Jones and her husband, Stephen, received notice last week that they would be audited for their 1995 tax return, according to Susan Carpenter-McMillan, Jones' adviser.

Citing taxpayer confidentiality, the Internal Revenue Service declined Monday to give details on Jones' case. But IRS spokesman Frank Keith dispelled the notion of using audits as retaliation, saying "When we select a tax return to be examined, we make that selection for tax purposes."

Clinton's private attorney, Robert Bennett, called the suggestion that the audit was meant to harass Jones a "tactical move," to try to delay Jones' case. He said he agreed to talk by phone Tuesday with Carpenter-McMillan's husband, William McMillan, Jones' interim legal representative.

Train disaster in India Police arrest 2 track repairmen

BHOPAL, India, Sept 16: Police in central India have arrested two workers who were part of a railway crew who removed tracks for repair without telling their superiors, an official said Tuesday, reports AP.

Ram Vilas Paswan, India's railway minister, had told reporters Monday he held the crew chief responsible to the accident. The death toll from Sunday's accident stood at 82 Tuesday, with another 234 people injured, according to Police Inspector general Surendra Singh.

Singh said the crew chief was not one of the two men arrested early Tuesday. The two have been charged with committing rash and negligent acts leading to death.

Singh said that maximum penalty for the charge was two years imprisonment plus a fine, but he added it was likely that the two would be charged with several other counts as the investigation into the accident proceeded.

Paswan said the crew removed 10 metres (yards) of faulty track and was trying to repair it after 5:30 in the evening without informing railway authorities.

As per rules, no major repair can be undertaken after 5:30 in the evening. But he (the crew chief) continued the repairs without informing the railway station," Paswan said.

The entire work gang of 13 fled after the accident. The 11 still on the run and are being sought by the police. Railway officials suspended the workers in absentia.