

## BRIEFLY

## US names envoys to Ukraine, S'pore:

President Bill Clinton said Thursday he will nominate veteran diplomat Steven Karl Pifer to be US ambassador to Ukraine and international industrialist Steven J. Green to be ambassador to Singapore, AP reports from Washington.

In a statement, Clinton also said career diplomat Thomas J. Miller was his choice to be special coordinator for Cyprus, a position that would have the rank of ambassador during Miller's tenure.

Pifer, a California native and member of the foreign service since 1978, was most recently Clinton's senior National Security Council adviser on Russia, Ukraine and Eurasian affairs.

## 7 die in Sumatra boat capsizes:

Seven children were killed after a motor boat collided with a cargo ship in thick haze on the Musi River in the island of Sumatra, police said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

A total of seven people were found dead late Thursday night and all who were on the boat are now accounted for," southern Sumatra police spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Sarjo Sajad told AFP.

There were 47 people on the motor boat that was hit Wednesday by the Indonesian-flagged MV Soopanov, Sajad said.

## UK may abolish death penalty:

Britain could soon abolish the mandatory death sentence for treason and piracy, the last remaining offences for which capital punishment is retained in civil law, a press report said yesterday, AFP says from London.

The Daily Telegraph said Prime Minister Tony Blair wants to end Britain's opt-out from the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights which outlaws capital punishment.

The paper said he is due to attend a Council of Europe summit next Friday in Strasbourg where he plans to agree to a joint declaration banning the death penalty.

## Defence exhibition in Thailand:

A total of 300 arms suppliers from 30 countries will show off their products at two defence exhibitions in Thailand this month, Xinhua reports from Bangkok.

The first, Thai Defence Asia '97, will be held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok on October 16-18 while the second, Thai Defence '97, will take place at U-Tapao Airport in Thailand's eastern province of Chon Buri on October 22-24.

The United States, Spain, Australia, Canada, Germany, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Russia will show their arms, frigates, submarines, armoured vehicles, personnel carriers and tanks, the local press yesterday quoted a Thai Defence Ministry source as saying.

## Russia reacts to US-Japan pact:

Any military alliance in the Asia-Pacific region should be defensive, transparent and not directed at third countries, a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Thursday, Xinhua reports from Moscow.

Commenting on a new joint defence treaty signed by the United States and Japan on September 23, the spokesman said that the agreement specifies the two countries joint military operations against sudden accidents but doesn't implicate the overseas use of the Japan's self-defence forces.

The spokesman added Russia still has to see how the new treaty will affect Russia even though Washington and Tokyo have assured that the "geographic scope" of the US-Japanese joint defence treaty does not cover Russian territory.

## Fresh fighting in Cambodia:

Thailand has shut a border post with Cambodia after fresh fighting broke out between rival factions on the Cambodian side, the Thai military said yesterday, AFP reports from Bangkok.

The border post at An Mah, usually open three times a week, remained shut yesterday after reported clashes between troops loyal to Phnom Penh strongman Hun Sen and Khmer Rouge guerrillas, a senior Thai official told AFP.

There was quite heavy fighting on Thursday and we decided to close the border for security reasons to avoid any possible spillover in Thailand, he said.

## Moderate quake rocks Japan:

A moderate earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale shook Hokkaido island in northern Japan yesterday, but there were no reports of injuries or damage, the Meteorological agency said.

The epicentre of the quake, which struck at 1:46 pm (0446 GMT) was located in Kushiro, the northern city of Hokkaido, some 900 kilometres (558 miles) northeast of Tokyo, the agency said. It said there were no fears of seismic tidal wave from the earthquake.

## Warrants against 19 Mexican cops:

Mexican authorities have issued arrest warrants for 19 police officers accused of killing several young Mexicans in September, the television station Televisa reported on Thursday, Reuters reports from Mexico.

It said the suspects were wanted in connection with the torture-murders of three youths whose mutilated bodies were found near Mexico City, the victims disappeared after a September 8 police raid on a crime-ridden Mexico City neighbourhood. Police declined to confirm the report, but said a news conference had been called at which 19 suspects in the case would be presented to the press.

## Indonesia retrieves 40 sea mines:

The Indonesian navy has retrieved 40 sea mines placed in waters off the main island of Java in World War II, the official Antara news agency reported Friday, AP says from Jakarta.

It said two mine sweeper ships were involved in the operation off Palang, about 300 kilometres (185 miles) east of Jakarta. The report did not say whether the mines had been planted by Allied forces or Japanese forces. The latter occupied Indonesia, then the Dutch East Indies, from 1942 to 1945.

## Myanmar officials in S'pore:

Myanmar's intelligence chief and other top officials headed to Singapore on Friday to discuss increased trade and tourism and to sign an agreement on shipping, AP reports from Singapore.

Gen Khin Nyunt, who is Secretary One in the State Law and Order Restoration Council that rules Myanmar, was scheduled to meet with Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. Khin Nyunt is participating in the second round of talks under a Joint Ministerial Working Committee that held its first meeting in Myanmar in January 1996. Periodic meetings are held to review cooperative projects and to consult on economic policy issues that have an impact on trade and investments.

## Jet violates Japan's airspace:

An aircraft briefly entered Japan's airspace of the northern island of Hokkaido, but left before it could be identified, Japan's Defence Agency said Friday, AP reports from Tokyo.

Two Japanese F-15 fighter planes scrambled to pursue the plane after the violation, which occurred at 5:17 pm Thursday (0817 GMT), said agency spokesman Masashi Nozaki. Nozaki said the Foreign Ministry planned to ask Moscow if it was its plane, given Russia's geographical proximity to the area.

## 4 shot dead in Memphis home:

A "mentally challenged" man found sobbing and kneeling in tall grass by a neighbour was arrested in the shotgun slaying of four people believed to be his adoptive family, AP reports from Memphis Tennessee.

"He said, 'What have I done? I killed them. They're going to put me away for a long time,'" said the neighbour, Raymond Neal, who was accompanied by an officer when he approached the man, identified by police as Timothy Prink. Prink, 21, was found Thursday behind the house where the victims were found when police responded to a burglar alarm.

## US Navy chief to visit China:

The US Navy's top officer left Thursday for a five-day visit to China to meet with top Chinese military leaders and watch naval training at sea, AP reports from Washington.

A Pentagon announcement said Adm. Jay L. Johnson, the chief of naval operations, plans to meet with Gen Chi Haotian, the minister of defence; Gen. Fu Quanyou, the chief of the general staff; and top People's Liberation Army naval commanders. He is to arrive in China on Sunday after a stopover in Hawaii.

Johnson will be the second Navy chief to visit communist China; the first was Adm. Carlisle Frost in 1988, according to navy spokesman Cmdr. Frank Thorp.

## Chopper crashes in Azerbaijan:

A helicopter chartered by the state oil company of Azerbaijan crashed Thursday with at least 20 people aboard, authorities said. One person survived and at least three were confirmed dead, AP reports from Baku.

The fate of the remaining 16 or more was uncertain, with rescue efforts continuing well into the night. The Russian-built Mi-8 helicopter plunged into the Caspian Sea east of Baku, the Azerbaijan capital, while it was moving shifts of oil workers, Russian and Azerbaijani news agencies said.

Peace efforts no weakness, says India  
Shelling on Kashmir border ends

JAMMU, India, Oct 3: Indian and Pakistan shelling on the Kashmir border has ended, Indian officials said here today, following several days of artillery exchanges which both sides have blamed on the other, reports AFP.

"There is no shelling going on," an army officer said in this winter capital of the Indian state of Kashmir. There is no even small arms fire.

The official said it was quiet around Kargil, about 525 kilometres (328 miles) northeast of here where 17 Indian civilians were reportedly killed on Tuesday following Pakistani artillery shelling.

Islamabad, meanwhile, claims 20 of its civilians died in the divided territory during "unprovoked" Indian firing.

The Indian Army official said fighting had also stopped in the Baramulla, Kupwara and Uru sectors, Pakistan said late on Thursday that Indian troops had resumed shelling on border villages in its part of Kashmir.

India and Pakistan have disputed the ownership of Kashmir since their independence in 1947. The territory, di-

vided between them by a cease-fire line called the Line of Control, has sparked two wars. Frontier clashes between the armies are common.

Earlier this year the two neighbours began a series of diplomatic talks to try to improve relations.

Media reports in Pakistan, however, quoted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as saying negotiations which had been expected to continue next month, would be reviewed following the latest incidents.

Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said Thursday that New Delhi would not tolerate further cross-border attacks by Pakistan. He said he had spoken to Sharif on their telephone "hotline" about the need to stop the clashes.

Islamabad wants a UN-supervised referendum to decide the future of Kashmir, which it believes should have been made part of Pakistan because of its Muslim majority. New Delhi says the territory is an integral part of India.

AP adds: After one of the worst peacetime artillery bat-

ties with Pakistan, India's prime minister says his efforts toward peace should not be construed as weakness.

India and Pakistan reported a total of 39 dead in two days of heavy exchanges across the cease-fire line in the disputed territory of Kashmir. The fighting tapered off by Thursday.

"India always stood for peace with its neighbours and would strive for peace even with Pakistan," Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral was quoted Friday as saying in the Times of India.

But that should not be seen as "a sign of weakness," he was quoted as saying at a public function Thursday. "India will not compromise on its security,"

Each country blamed the other for starting the artillery duel Tuesday and accused each other of targeting civilians. India reported 19 deaths, while Pakistan said 20 of its people were killed over two days.

The fighting began Tuesday when Pakistani gunners pummeled Kargil, a largely Shiite town built on barren moun-

tainsides that had emerged unscathed from previous wars. By Wednesday, the shelling spread along much of the 550-kilometre (330 mile) truce line in Kashmir, called the Line of Control.

India claimed to have destroyed 150 Pakistani army bunkers and to have seen ambulances carry away more than 50 Pakistani soldiers. A Pakistani Defence Ministry spokesman in Islamabad dismissed the claim.

"There is no question of our military positions being destroyed," said the official speaking on condition he was not identified.

Gujral telephoned Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan Wednesday night on a newly installed hot line to urge an end to the shooting.

That was followed Thursday by another call between the chiefs of military operations of the two armies, who have their own hot line. The Hindu newspaper reported. They discussed establishing telephone links between sector commanders, an idea raised earlier by the two prime ministers. The Hindu reported.

## New scheme in India to help end female infanticide

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: A new scheme in India to help end female infanticide and discrimination against girls was given a cautious welcome in the media today, reports AFP.

The Asian Age said the project, based on grant payments to poor parents following the birth of their first two daughters and to help with their education, was a "symbolic recognition" of the problem.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral launched the scheme on Thursday and it is expected to affect around 2.2 million girls. Gujral said it would help end "social evils."

The Age said the payment of 500 rupees (15 dollars) to poor families following the birth of a daughter was "not a small sum". It said the birth of girls was "usually an occasion for mourning" and the money would "ease the pressure on the mother and the child to some small extent."

It added: "In a society where the girl child has no status with female foeticide a common practice, the symbolic gesture of recognition made by the government has a place."

The daily, however, argued that "much more needs to be done." It said further initiatives should be taken by local au-

thorities and more schools for girls should be set up.

"Value based education challenging the mindset against women is a must. The giving or taking of a dowry must be openly condemned."

## Mars pathfinder still operating

PASADENA, California, Oct 3: The Mars Pathfinder is still operating, but NASA is struggling to find ways to communicate with the spacecraft that has now outlived its original minimum design life by nearly two months. It's possible its battery is dead and solar energy will have to be used in the future, scientists said Thursday, reports AP.

After three days of problems communicating with the spacecraft, controllers were able to re-establish enough contact with the lander through an auxiliary transmitter to determine it's still operational, NASA said Wednesday.

Another, similar signal was received Thursday, but again no data was transmitted, Project Manager Brian Muirhead said.

## Diana's bodyguard prepares to leave Paris

## 2nd car was involved in fatal crash

PARIS, Oct 3: As bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones prepares to leave France without giving investigators the big break they wanted, police appeared Thursday to be leaning toward the theory that a second car was involved in Princess Diana's fatal crash, reports AP.

The theory that a small car sideswiped the Mercedes, possibly causing it to veer out of control, is "highly favoured," an official with the national police told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Bolstering the theory further, another high police official said Thursday that police scientists have all but determined that traces of paint found on the Mercedes after the crash came from a Fiat.

That is significant because witness accounts have spoken of a small dark car in front of the Mercedes before it crashed, and police found pieces of a tail light coming from a Fiat Uno in the tunnel, mixed with pieces of the Mercedes' headlight.

Rees-Jones, the 29-year-old bodyguard who was the sole survivor of the Aug. 31 crash, was questioned for a second time Thursday by police, who

reported he'd taken "a step forward" in recalling the crash. But he still didn't remember the accident itself.

Specifically, the bodyguard was able to describe the moments after the Mercedes left the Ritz Hotel, and before it arrived at the Rue de Rivoli a block away, a police official said.

That could shed some light on the behaviour of paparazzi tailing the Mercedes.

A hospital spokesperson, meanwhile, said Rees-Jones was likely to leave France Friday for Britain.

"It's probability," the spokesperson at the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital said on condition of anonymity, adding that a final decision "depends on the opinion of his doctors."

Embassy officials said no timetable had been set.

Because Rees-Jones is a witness and not a suspect, investigators cannot prevent him from leaving. They could travel to Britain to question him again — if he agrees.

In any case, the bodyguard appears not to have given police the key information they need to crack the case. That informa-

tion seems to be coming more and more from physical evidence.

The "second-car" theory holds that the Mercedes, speeding towards the tunnel, had to swerve to avoid a car probably entering the approach road from the right. The Mercedes then brushed the car and lost control, the theory goes.

In examining the theory, police are looking at the following clues:

— The witness accounts.

— The tail light and headlight shards.

— The paint traces, found on the Mercedes' front right side and on its side-view mirror. The revelation Thursday that the paint probably came from a Fiat made this evidence more important.

Skid marks found in the tunnel. Judicial sources say 19 metres (yards) of marks were found leading up to the third pillar — veering to the left, which would support the idea that the Mercedes was swerving to avoid a car. Then, another set of skid marks 32 metres (yards) long was found, they say, leading to the 13th pillar, where the Mercedes crashed.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, left, and Jordan's King Hussein, centre, visiting Sheikh Ahmed Yassin the founder of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, in his hospital bed in the King Hussein Medical Centre in Amman on Thursday. Yassin, 61, was released from Israel's Ayalon Prison on Wednesday and taken by Jordanian helicopter to Amman, where he was hospitalised. — AP/UNB photo

## King Hussein denies reports of deal with Israel on Hamas leader

AMMAN, Oct 3: King Hussein denied reports Thursday that Israel released the founder of the militant Hamas movement as part of a swap for two alleged Israeli secret agents jailed in Jordan, reports AP.

"There is no deal. A deal is usually this for that. None of this has happened," Hussein said after visiting Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in an Amman hospital, along with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Yassin, 61, who is quadriplegic and nearly blind, was freed Wednesday from Israel's Ayalon Prison in a wheelchair and flown to Amman.

Yassin's lawyer said Thursday that his client would return to his Gaza Strip home after recuperating on Jordan.

The statement was the clearest indication yet that Israel will allow the Hamas leader to return to his homeland. Yassin's return is a highly sensitive issue among his followers, who would be enraged if he is forced to stay out of Palestinian territories.

Yassin has written documentation "from Israeli authorities that his release was

not a deportation and that he will be allowed to return to his home in the Gaza Strip," attorney Abdel Malik Dahamash told The Associated Press.

The Israeli document was signed by the commander of the Israeli army's southern region, Dhamash said.

Yassin had served eight years of a life term for ordering the killings of Israeli soldiers and Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Israel radio described Yassin's release as part of a swap for two suspected Israeli secret service agents who are jailed in Jordan for the attempted assassination of another Hamas leader, Khalid Masha'al in Amman last week.

But Jordan's state minister for information, Samir Mutaw, said Thursday that the two suspects would be brought to trial and released only if found innocent. He did not elaborate.

The two suspects, who carried Canadian passports, attacked Masha'al as he entered his Amman office, injecting him with a toxic substance.

Masha'al was discharged Thursday after being hospitalised for eight days with breathing problems doctors blamed on the poison. He was taken to an undisclosed safe house.

Before his release, Masha'al said "It is evident that the Israeli Mossad wanted to get rid of me." He added that the attack will not deter "us from continuing our struggle."

Jordanian officials identified the two Canadians as Shawn Kendall, 28, and Barry Beads, 36. The names were transliterated from Arabic.

One official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said another Canadian, identified as Guy Eris, 30, also is believed to have taken part in the attack, but escaped. Eris may have fled the country on a different passport, the official said.

Police were looking for two other suspects who are also believed to hold Canadian passports, said other security sources who also demanded anonymity. It was not clear what role they played in the attack.

## Advani says United Front coalition will collapse anytime

SURAT, Oct 3: BJP president, LK Advani, yesterday said the United Front government at the centre and the Rashtriya Janata Party ministry in Gujarat would collapse anytime as the congress which supports them from outside, would realise that it is marginalised by the ruling parties.

Talking to reporters here, Advani said a party which supports a government from outside would lose its popularity if the ruling party did not give it due importance.

He claims that BJP would come to power in the state and at the centre as it was the only party that could provide a stable government.

He said people have faith in BJP and they would accept senior party leader Atal Behari Vajpayee as their prime minister in the next general elections.

He said BJP would not try to topple the Gujarat government headed by the state chief minister Shankarsinh Vaghela, betrayed the party. He alleged that the Vaghela government was totally corrupt.

## Canada recalls ambassador to Israel

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 3: Canada is recalling its ambassador to Israel to protest the use of forged Canadian passports in an apparent assassination attempt by two suspected Israeli spies, the Canadian foreign minister said Thursday, report AP.

Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy said Canada had determined the passports were forged and that neither of the men were Canadian nationals.

The two men were arrested last week in Amman, Jordan after an apparent attempt on the life of a top official of the extremist group Hamas.

Axworthy, who is in New York to attend the UN General Assembly debate, spoke to Israel's deputy foreign minister to relay word of the Canadian protest.

He is to meet the Jordanian foreign minister later Thursday.

"We've been in touch with Israeli officials and indicated our very serious concern about what took place," Axworthy told reporters.

"We recalled our ambassador, which in terms of our relationship is a very serious step to take," he said.

Khalid Masha'al, political chief of the militant Palestinian movement, was assaulted outside his office in Amman last Thursday in what Hamas said was a botched assassination attempt by Israel's secret service, Mossad.

## US weighs sale of nuclear power technology to China

WASHINGTON, Oct 3: The possibility that president Bill Clinton will give the approval needed for the sale of American nuclear power technology to China is under active consideration within the administration, US Commerce Secretary William Daley said Thursday, reports AP.

Daley told reporters that he would discuss the issue, along with potential sales of a host of other exports from Boeing airplanes to telecommunications equipment, during coming meetings with Chinese officials.

"Our companies are at the cutting edge of technology in nuclear energy," Daley said during a briefing on his Oct. 3-10 trip to Beijing and Hong Kong.

We fully understand the need to check the proliferation of (nuclear) material, but at the same time, we would like to be in a position of advocating on behalf of US businesses," he said.

Daley will be the third top administration official to visit China in preparation for the visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Washington later this month.

Daley said the administration has made no final decision on the sale of nuclear technology to China. But congressional sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said there was a growing likelihood that Clinton will make a favorable

announcement during Zemin's visit.

US nuclear reactor companies, confronted with declining domestic demand, have been clamoring for approval to enter the Chinese market. China has plans to build 20 new reactors

in coming years.

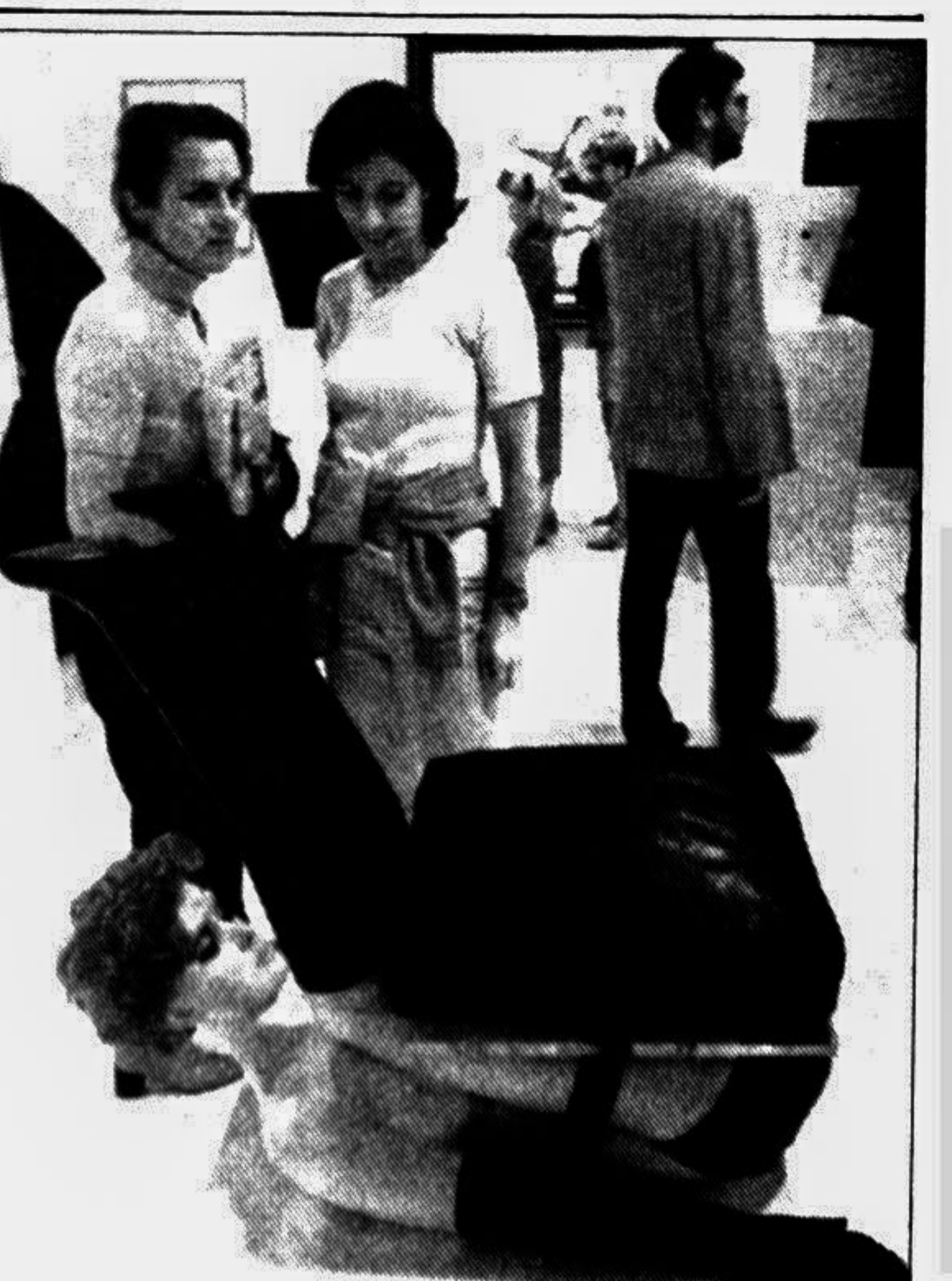
For US power companies to compete for this business, Clinton must certify that China has stopped selling weapons technology to other nations, such as Pakistan and Iran. If Congress did not vote disapproval of this certification, then US companies would have a green light to proceed.

A group of 62 members of the US House of Representatives, led by Rep. Edward Markey wrote Clinton two months ago urging him to reject lobbying by the nuclear power industry.

"We do not believe that there exists substantial evidence that China has adopted export controls that are effective at halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," they told Clinton.

Daley said one of the issues he would raise in his meetings was what further assurances the Chinese might be willing to provide that they are implementing proper safeguards against nuclear proliferation.

Daley said he would discuss China's bid to join the World Trade Organization but expected no breakthrough on the United States has continued to block China's application on grounds the country has not done enough to remove extensive trade barriers that keep American products out of the country.



Visitors look at British artist Allen Jones's sculpture "Woman," at the Federation for Contemporary Art's fair in Paris, Thursday. Some 138 art galleries from 15 countries are taking part in the 7-day exhibition. — AP/UNB photo