

WORLD BRIEFS

Strike hits France

PARIS: A one-day strike by France's five million public sector employees has brought railways, buses, underground trains, schools, post offices and a host of other services and state-owned firms to a near standstill.

The "Black Tuesday" strike, the biggest in almost a decade, was called to protest against the French Government's refusal to raise the pay of civil servants and workers in key state-owned industries beyond previous commitments.

In Paris, several million commuters were forced to walk or cycle to work as public transport shrank. Transport officials said at least four of the Metro system's 15 lines were closed. On others, the service was cut drastically.

Juror seeks deal

LOS ANGELES: An O. J. Simpson juror, who kept a journal throughout the trial, is trying to sell the material for a book or film.

Lawyer Gary Brown, who is representing juror David Aldana, a Los Angeles truck driver, said: "We are enter-

tain-
taining offers in that area. He has an interest in telling his story."

Mr Brown declined to reveal what the journal contained, but said he was certain Mr Aldana did not violate Judge Lance Ito's admonition that jurors not form any opinions about the case until they reached the deliberation stage.

"He did follow the rules and instructions," Mr Brown said.

Floods kill 11

NICARAGUA: Heavy rains and flooding in Nicaragua have killed 11 people and left more than 2000 families homeless in the past week. Social Action Minister William Baéz said the heaviest damage might not be felt for several weeks or months because of the loss of basic grain crops such as corn and beans.

X-files protests

LONDON: UFO watchers intend to gather at the House of Commons to demand that the British Government publish secret X-files on unidentified flying objects. They believe the Ministry of Defence is hiding from the public a catalogue of sightings and contacts with extra-terrestrial beings. However, a ministry spokesman said there were no such

man said there were no such files to reveal.

Global challenge

LONDON: Virgin Industries millionaire Richard Branson has a race on his hands in his £4 million (\$A8.39 million) bid to be the first to float around the world in a balloon. No fewer than three other teams — American, Swiss and Dutch — have also disclosed that they are also likely to take off in December.

Painkiller cleared

MARYLAND: The US Administration has cleared over-the-counter sales of the drug, ketoprofen, for the relief of headaches, body aches and arthritis. It will be marketed under the name Actron by aspirin-maker Bayer.

Bayer said that it was similar to drugs already on the market but would be useful for people who did not receive adequate relief from those medications.

Freedom for 50

JERUSALEM: Israel has freed the first 50 of more than 1200 Palestinian prisoners due to be released under its West Bank peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Israeli prisons spokesman

Israeli prisons spokesman Moshe Malul said the 50 were convicted criminals who signed agreements to back the PLO peace deals with Israel and to shun criminal activity.