

BRIEFLY

US cultural centre in Seoul attacked:

South Korean students hurled fire bombs at a US cultural centre in Seoul Saturday in the third such attack in a month, a police spokesman said, reports Reuter from Seoul.

"Many of the students were armed with steel pipes and fire bombs. But there was no damage done to the building," the spokesman said.

He said two students were arrested and were being questioned. About 80 students took part in the protest.

EC may recognize Slovenia, Croatia:

Current European Community President, Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, said the 12-member community might recognize the breakaway Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia before the end of the year, reports AFP Saturday from Bonn.

In an interview to be published in Bonn Saturday by the Die Welt newspaper, Lubbers said Germany and Italy's decision to recognize the republics before Christmas would put pressure on other countries of the EC.

Lubbers, who met here Thursday with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said the EC should take stock of the situation before the year end, but added that the Yugoslav question would not dominate the EC summit to be held in Maastricht on December 9 and 10.

Douglas Hurd warns Saddam:

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd warned Saddam Hussein on Friday not to "play politics" with Iraqi lives by refusing to sell oil to buy food, reports AP Saturday from London.

Amidst reports of food shortages, the United Nations has lifted its embargo on Iraqi sales of \$1.6 billion worth of oil but it has insisted the proceeds from oil sales should be spent for humanitarian purposes.

The Iraqi president has said the UN condition amounted to an unwarranted intervention in Iraq's internal affairs.

Hurd told a Conservative Party rally in northern England there was no need for anyone in Iraq to starve.

"Iraq is a bountiful country which could afford to feed itself," he said.

"Saddam Hussein must stop playing politics with the lives of the Iraqi people and implement the UN resolutions to finance food and humanitarian purchases."

Colombian rebels free 4 hostages:

Left-wing Colombian guerrillas have freed three American and a Colombian engineer who had been kidnapped for more than a year, the Defence Ministry said on Friday, reports Reuter Saturday from Bogota.

Gary Sams, Robert Hogan, John Bagby and Ignacio Alonso, a Colombian, were released on Thursday in the Catumbao region, some 400 kms (250 miles) north of the capital Bogota, a Defence Ministry spokesman said. They were in good health, he said.

The left-wing National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group kidnapped the four employees of the US National Tank Company (NATCO) on October 25, 1990 when they were working near Tibu, close to Colombia's border with Venezuela.

30,000 missing in Croatia:

More than 30,000 people have been reported missing in Croatia since the beginning of the civil war there in July, the Croatian weekly Danas said in its latest edition, quoting Croatian Red Cross sources, reports AP Saturday from Belgrade.

The paper said the Red Cross had received more than 40,000 calls from relatives or friends of people missing in the combat zones.

The Croatian Defence Ministry said it also had a list of 5,000 Croats who were doing their military service in the federal army when the civil war broke out and of whom nothing has been heard.

Most of those missing are civilians who refused to leave the combat zones when federal forces intervened there, Danas said.

UK hails release of Chinese student:

Britain welcomed on Friday China's release of a pro-democracy student activist and said he was the second to be freed on a list of Chinese dissidents handed to the Beijing authorities by British Prime Minister John Major, reports Reuter Saturday from London.

We welcome the release of Wang Youcai, a foreign office spokesman said to our knowledge he is the second on the Prime Minister's list to be released.

Wang, who was serving a four-year sentence in a former post graduate physics student at Beijing University, a centre of the 1989 protests crushed by the army with heavy loss of life.

Major submitted a list of names of jailed dissidents, compiled by Amnesty International during a visit to Beijing in September when he criticised China's human rights record.

16 killed in Brazilian plane crash:

An Air Force plane crashed in the Mantiqueira mountains of southeastern Brazil, apparently killing all 16 people aboard, the government said Friday, reports AP Saturday from Brasilia.

The plane, a twin-engine Bandeirante, left this provincial capital at 8:15 am (1015 GMT) for the 600-mile (1,000-kilometer) flight to the city of Guaratingueta, the Air Force Ministry said in a statement.

Halfway to its destination, the plane went down in remote, rocky terrain, and the first rescue workers reached the wreckage at 4 pm (1800 GMT), the ministry said.

It said the plane was a "total loss," but initial reports could not confirm there were no survivors.

The ministry said the pilot made contact with the control tower in Guaratingueta shortly before the crash and did not indicate anything was wrong.

The passengers included 10 Air Force officers, three civilians and three crew members.

Major hunt for Tamil Tigers

COLOMBO, Nov 30: Security forces continued a major hunt today for the Tamil guerrillas who killed 12 soldiers in eastern Sri Lanka hours after the military launched a fresh offensive in the region, officials here said, reports AFP.

Troops backed by air cover continued their search in Batticaloa district where Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas ambushed and killed 12 soldiers and wounded 11 others Friday, military officials said.

They said at least 30 Tigers were killed immediately after the ambush during a fierce battle between the rebels and army reinforcements rushed to the area from a nearby security force detachment.

"A tractor-load of terrorists numbering about 25 were spotted and engaged by air. Terrorists were seen fleeing in all directions," the anti-guerrilla joint operations command said in a statement.

Chinese Vice Mayor jailed for taking bribes

BEIJING, Nov 30: A vice-mayor of China's scenic garden city of Suzhou has been sentenced to five years in jail for accepting bribes, a newspaper reported today, reports AFP.

Tang Ren, was stripped of his post, was convicted Friday by the city's intermediate court of accepting bribes worth 2,250 dollars, the Shanghai-based daily Wenhui-shao said.

Suzhou is a major Chinese tourist attraction, known for its beautiful gardens dating back to imperial times.

Indian Air Force opens doors for women

NEW DELHI, Nov 30: The Indian air force will recruit its first batch of women employees next year, leaving only the army an all-male defence force, the air force chief announced Saturday, reports AP.



LONDON: Miss World contestants (L-R) Miss S. Korea Tes Hwe Kim, Miss Taiwan Len-Chieh Lin, Miss Japan Junko Tsuda and Miss Singapore Jasheen Jayakode pose for the camera before taking off pose for Puerto Rico for the Miss World Contest 1991. —AFP/UNB photo

Sihanouk off to Thailand to head SNC meet

PHNOM PENH, Nov 30: Prince Norodom Sihanouk left here today for Thailand, where he is to head a crucial meeting of Cambodia's Supreme National Council (SNC), reports AFP.

The Prince told a press conference before his departure that he was "optimistic that the Pattaya III will be successful."

The meeting, to begin in the Thai beach resort of Pattaya on Tuesday, will be the third time the grouping of Cambodia's four warring factions will have met in Pattaya.

The SNC is expected to discuss security arrangements following Wednesday's mob attack on Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan and Son Sen which caused them to flee Phnom Penh.

Off the Record

Bid to sterilise alcoholics

A parliamentary committee in the Russian Federation has proposed sterilising alcoholics, drug addicts and people suffering from sexually transmitted diseases, sources in the republic's parliament said on Friday, reports Reuter.

However, other parliamentary committees due to consider the legislations including one on human rights expressed outrage at the proposal and it was likely to be dropped.

The sources said the committee on maternity and the family had provided for immediate sterilisation in a draft law on family rights in the event of a complaint from a family member.

No further details were available. But such provisions seemed highly impracticable in a country where alcoholism is a problem of nearly epidemic proportions.

Health care is a critical problem with medicines in short supply.

Bush, Barbara buy toys

FREDERICK: Doing their bit for the nation's struggling retailers, George and Barbara Bush shopped at a local mall Friday, buying toys, a compact disc and some sporting goods, reports AFP.

"It's easier to shop out in the country for us than it is downtown," Bush said before making a quick blitz through JC Penney's at the Frederick Towne Mall, about 20 minutes from Camp David, the presidential retreat where the Bushes are spending the holiday weekend.

"We've got a little toy department to look at to get some stuff for the grandchildren," Bush said. "Slime" is the name of it, I believe.

While Mrs Bush went off in search of the goopy Slime, the President stayed behind to hunt for sporting goods.

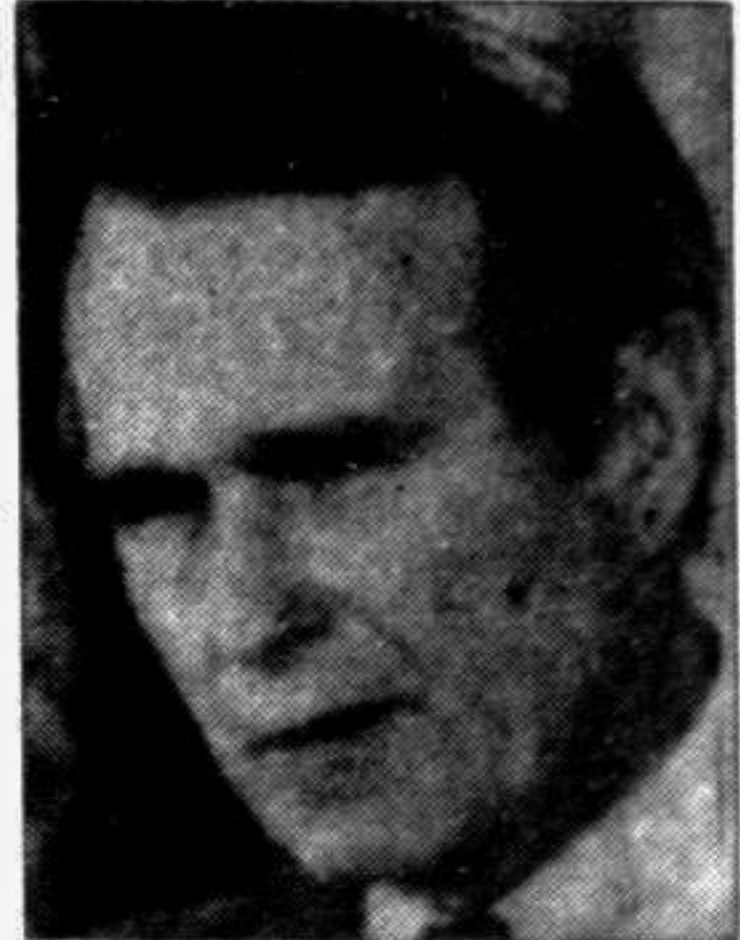
Bush picked out four pairs of athletic socks and pulled out a \$20 to pay for the \$15 purchase. He joked that he usually doesn't carry cash.

Then he headed to the second floor to look through the children's department, paying cash for a \$13 toddler's sweat suit decorated with a Houston Oilers design, the football team of Bush's adopted hometown.

Bush told the salesman he needed to cut his shopping trip short because of the mob scene that erupted. Shoppers squealed, clapped and scrambled to get close enough to ask for his autograph.

Tim Farrell, the Penney's children's department manager, who waited on the president, said the encounter boosted his confidence.

"There won't be a customer I can't handle now," he said.



Caretaker indeed

LEICESTER: A judge sentenced the former head of a children's home to life in prison Friday for a series of sex attacks on teenagers in his care, reports AP.

A jury earlier had found Frank Beck, 49, guilty of 17 counts of rape, sodomy, attempted sodomy, indecent assault and actual bodily harm against teenagers while in charge of three children's homes in Leicestershire County between 1973 and 1986.

Judge Edwin Jowitt sentenced Beck to five life terms and 24 years, to run concurrently.

"It's quite clear that, not only as long as you yourself retain any sexual potency but also as long as you are capable of gaining any satisfaction from contemplating sexual activity between young people, you present a substantial danger to any young person with whom you come into contact," Jowitt told Beck, who denied the charges.

Health Secretary William Waldegrave announced a national enquiry into the way staff are selected to work in Britain's children's homes, where youngsters are placed when their families cannot care for them.

A report by the Leicestershire County Council, which runs the county's children's homes, found that Beck had been allowed to continue working with children despite four separate police investigations into complaints of alleged abuse.

Police charged Beck with assault in 1982 but he was acquitted.

The reports also found that although Leicestershire County Council had passed on complaints about his behaviour to police, it allowed Beck to take a foster boy into his home.

Beck resigned from his position in 1986 after he was suspended over an allegation of sexual harassment by a fellow member of staff.

Shark on rampage

OLOWAHU: State officials suspended a search for a shark that killed a woman swimming near her home after a search team was threatened by a group of native Hawaiians who consider sharks gods, reports AP.

Marti Morrell died after being attacked Tuesday by a 15-foot (five-metre) shark. Two Maui fishermen hired by the state to search for the shark quit Thursday and officials suspended the search shortly afterward.

"I am no longer involved in this project," said James Stegmuller. "There is heavy opposition from the Hawaiian community regarding this effort."

Stegmuller and Steve Thompson said they were threatened Wednesday night by a group of men who threatened to hurt them if they killed any sharks. Many native Hawaiians view sharks as personal or family gods.

State officials said the hunt would not resume before Monday.

Beaches in the Olowahu area of Maui, which were closed after the attack have been reopened, but a Coast Guard warning to boaters remained in effect Friday.

Fundamentalists kill 3 policemen in Algeria

ALGIERS, Nov 30: Muslim fundamentalists killed three policemen Friday at a desert border post by slashing their throats and fled with their weapons, according to the Defence Ministry and witnesses interviewed on TV, reports AP.

Meanwhile, in a suburb of the capital, Algiers, gunmen in a crowd of Muslim fundamentalists fired on security forces, seriously wounding one officer, state-run television reported Friday.

There are increasing signs of unrest as the December 26 parliamentary elections approach — the first multiparty legislative vote since Algeria gained independence from France in 1962.

The shooting incident in the Algiers suburb of Kouba occurred Thursday night, state television reported. It said some men fired at security forces who were trying to disperse a crowd that had surrounded an office of the war dead — victims of the Algerian war for independence. There was no explanation of why the crowd had gathered.

Kouba is the site of one of two Algiers mosques used by fundamentalists belonging to the Islamic Salvation Front to spread their call for an Islamic state. It was a focal point during unrest last June that prompted the government of President Chadli Benjedid to declare a state of emergency that lasted until September.

The attack on the border post — in the town of Gueinar near the Tunisian border and close to the hometown of an Islamic Salvation Front leader — occurred at dawn, officials said.

Grave concern over human rights violation

UN assembly seeks early release of Suu Kyi

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 30: The General Assembly's social committee adopted without a vote on Friday a resolution expressing concern at information on the grave human rights situation in Burma and stressing the need for rapid improvement, reports Reuter.

The resolution's preamble specifically mentioned by name this year's Nobel Peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since July 1989 and welcomed repeated calls by the UN Secretary General for her early release.

Her National League for Democracy won a landslide victory in a May 1990 general election but the results were ignored by the junta ruling Burma, also known as Myanmar.

Although the resolution was

fairly mild and was further softened before being approved, it was the first one dealing with the human rights situation in Burma to be adopted by the assembly's social committee.

The resolution, which now goes to the assembly plenary for endorsement takes note of assurances by the Burmese government that it will take first steps towards the establishment of a democratic state and looks forward to the early implementation of this commitment.

The resolution insisted by Sweden, also expresses concern at the information on the grave human rights situation and stresses the need for an early improvement of this situation.

It urges the Burmese government to allow all citizens to

participate freely in the political process in accordance with the principles of the universal declaration of human rights.

An expression of concern at the continued deprivation of liberty of a number of democratically elected political leaders was omitted from this paragraph during private negotiations.

According to a member of the Swedish delegation, this prompted most members of the European Community to withdraw their sponsorship although the last-minute adherence of a number of additional countries meant the resolution was sponsored by more than 30 delegations.

Speaking before the resolution was adopted Burma's UN representative Kyaw Min, said the UN Human Rights Commission was considering

the situation in Burma while his government had accepted visits by an independent expert appointed by the commission's Chairman.

Burma, therefore, felt it inappropriate for the present resolution to be adopted since it could prejudice the independent expert's impending report.

Min also called the resolution unbalanced, saying some provisions were based on "unsubstantiated and politically motivated allegations emanating mainly from unsavoury anti-government and anti-people elements who are in league with armed terrorist groups."

The Burmese representative said the resolution tried to dictate to his government how democracy should be established in Burma

Tel Aviv hints at possible compromise

ME talks in Washington even without Israel: Bush

WASHINGTON, Nov 30: Israel on Friday hinted at possible compromise over resumed Middle East peace talks as President George Bush insisted that the next round would open in Washington next Wednesday whether the Israelis showed up or not, reports Reuter.

Israel's Ambassador in Washington said his government was reviewing suggestions that might allow peace negotiations with the Arabs to go forward next week.

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, opening the door to a compromise, said Israel would consider sending a low-level

advance team to the Washington talks if "someone" — apparently the US hosts — proposed the idea.

After meeting US officials at the state department, ambassador Zalman Shoval told reporters in Washington it was time for the Americans to stop negotiating and for Arabs to talk directly to Israel about dates and venues.

Israeli sources told Reuter that if an understanding could be reached that dates and venues for future talks would be negotiated directly between Israel and the Arabs the second round of talks could go forward on December 4.

There might be some way

of compromising on the date as well as on the venue of coming here to Washington if the main principle of direct bilateral negotiations is not undermined," one Israeli source said.

Israel has been isolated over its demands for a delay in resuming the historic talks, launched a month ago in Madrid. Syria and the Palestinians have already said they would show up in Washington next Wednesday, whether Israel did or not and Lebanon and Jordan have also accepted US invitations.

Ambassador Shoval said Israel was "going to look at all the possible positions and all

the possible suggestions." Adding: "we have never said the date was the main issue. We have always said the main issues was direct communication."

Israel's three sets of bilateral negotiations are with Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

AFP from Amman adds: The United Nations must become more involved in the quest for peace in the Middle East, King Hussein of Jordan said Friday ahead of a new round of direct Arab-Israeli talks.

Although the United Nations is not a direct participant in sponsoring negotiations between the different parties, it cannot however limit itself at this level to a marginal role, the king said.

One of the most obvious signs of Israel's attitude of contempt for the peace efforts is its insistence on keeping the United Nations outside the diplomatic moves that are part of the current peace process, he said.

The organisation has the role of silent observer in the peace process, sponsored jointly by the United States and Soviet Union, because of Israeli opposition to a more active UN role.

Following the Madrid conference, the United States has invited Israel, the Palestinians, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria to resume bilateral talks in Washington next Wednesday.

Reuter adds: Israel's Ambassador to the United States said on Friday his government was reviewing suggestions that might allow peace talks with Arabs to go forward next week and insisted a dispute over dates was "not the main issues."

After 90 minutes of talks at the state Department the envoy Zalman Shoval, was asked by reporters if it still was possible Israel might be represented when bilateral talks with Syria, Lebanon and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation open on December 4.

Well, as things look now, we are going to look at all the possible positions and all the possible suggestions, he said.

We have never said the date was the main issue. We have always said the main issue was direct communication between Arabs and Israelis, he replied.

Another report of Reuter says: The Security Council on Friday unanimously approved another six-month renewal of the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which serves as a buffer between the Syria and Israeli armies on the Golan Heights.

The 1,330-man force, comprising contingents from Austria, Canada, Finland and Poland, was established in May 1974.



KARACHI: Benazir Bhutto attends a meeting of All Parties Conference (APC) of opposition leaders Saturday. —AFP/UNB photo