

BRIEFLY

Pro-IRA woman activist killed:

A gunman opened fire in a hotel bar Friday night, killing a woman activist of the pro-IRA party Sinn Fein and injuring two other people, police reported. AP says from Belfast. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in the lounge bar of the York Hotel near Belfast city centre. The dead woman, Sheena Campbell, 29, was a law student at Queen's University, which is near the hotel, and a member of Sinn Fein. The party support the outlawed Irish Republican Army's guerilla war against British rule in Northern Ireland. Police headquarters in Belfast said in a statement that Campbell, a former unsuccessful Sinn Fein election candidate and a member of the party's national executive, was hit in the neck by a bullet fired by the lone masked gunman and died of her injuries. Police said bullets fired by the gunman also hit another woman and a man in the bar, injuring them. Police said about 30 people were in the bar when the gunman opened fire.

Clashes leave 5 dead in Algeria:

Fighting between Algerian police and armed group has left five people dead and eight others wounded in the past few days at Algiers and at El Bayadh, in the southwest of the country, national radio said Friday. AFP reports from Algiers. Four members of an armed group were killed at El Bayadh, and four wounded, in three days of fighting from Tuesday to Thursday. Four police were also wounded. A person who refused to stop at a road block was shot dead Thursday at Baraki, in the Algiers suburbs, the radio said. Fifty-six people, including a former member of the consultative council of the banned fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), were moreover arrested in the regions of Tlemcel, in the west of the country, and Ghardaia, in the south, the radio added. It did not name the former FIS member.

Sikhs kill 8 in Punjab:

Sikh militants disguised as policemen shot and killed six relatives on a deserted road outside a Punjab village, police said Saturday. AP reports from Amritsar. The victims in Friday's killings were three uncles and three nephews of a Sikh policeman working in the nearby town of Tarn Taran, said senior police superintendent Ajit Singh. He said the guerillas drove up to police officer Kaloo Singh's house at night, roused the sleeping family and took away the six men to a lonely spot outside their village, Panjwar.

UN observers invited to ME talks:

UN observers have been invited to participate in Middle East peace talks. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said Friday. AP reports from United Nations. Boutros-Ghali told the Foreign Policy Association at a luncheon that Foreign Minister Shimon Peres of Israel had invited the UN observers at talks on water supplies, refugees and security. The multinational talks supplement Mideast peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. They are designed to get Arabs and Israelis used to talking to each other about a wide range of issues. Israel had been boycotting the talks but said recently it would participate.



FILES: The winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, Rigoberta Menchu (L), is shown in Managua, Nicaragua, October 17 file photo. Menchu, a 33-year-old Guatemalan peasant leader, fled Guatemala in 1981 after her father, mother and brother were killed by security forces. She lives in exile in Mexico and said she would use the prize money, 1.2 million USD, to further her work for the rights of Guatemalan Indians. — AFP/UNB photo

Peace Prize to help end strife in Guatemala, hopes Menchu

SAN MARCOS Guatemala, Oct 17: Indian activist Rigoberta Menchu said on Friday after winning the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize that she hoped the publicity would help end generations of strife in her native Guatemala, reports Reuter. "Perhaps for the first time, the world is looking at our land. They now know its name," she told thousands of well-wishers in this north-western Guatemala town hours after hearing she had won the prize. Almost the entire population of San Marcos and nearby San Pedro Sacatepequez, some 10,000 people, turned out to greet Menchu, a 33-year-old Mayan Indian whose father, mother and one brother were killed during the civil conflict of the 1980s.

UN team starts inspecting arsenals in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Oct 17: UN weapons inspectors on Saturday began rummaging through Saddam Hussein's remaining arsenals and the team leader said he would visit both declared and hidden sites, reports AP. "We will see how it is proceeding, the inspections are occurring not at the table, but on the sites," team leader Nikita Smidovich, a Russian, said about the level of cooperation he expects. Smidovich said he met with Iraqi military officials late Friday to prepare for the inspections. There is increasing fear of assault by Iraqis who believe the team's visit infringes on their nation's sovereignty. Saddam branded the UN inspectors "stray dogs" seeking to destroy Iraq. On Saturday, team members looked more like weekend hitchhikers as they left the Sheraton Hotel lobby and boarded two buses at dawn. Each carried a backpack and water bottles and each wore a light blue hat with a UN emblem. There was no police presence, but Iraqi secret service agents kept a close overnight watch. Other agents filmed their departure. Smidovich declined to say where they were headed, but an advance party of German helicopter pilots indicated that the team would fly out of Baghdad. The 46 inspectors and four support staff arrived earlier Friday from Bahrain, regional headquarters for the UN Special Commission charged under the Gulf War cease-fire with eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. "We are here on a very important mission... we have a full programme for about two weeks," Smidovich said on arrival. Smidovich said his team's emphasis will be on the ballistic missile area. The weapons commission has been analyzing information provided chiefly by the United States and Britain about as many as 200 Scud missiles that Saddam may still be hiding. Iraq says it already has declared and showed UN inspectors everything it still has related to Scuds.

Decision is a triumph for Arafat

PLO okays participation of Palestinians in ME talks

TUNIS, Oct 17: The PLO's Central Council on Saturday voted in favour of the US arranged Middle East peace process, opening the door for the Palestinian negotiating team to attend a new round of talks with Israel in Washington next week, reports AP. The decision of the 80-member watchdog assembly was a triumph for Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat, who called for the meeting. He had hoped to silence radicals demanding that the Palestinians abandon stalled peace talks. But in the longer term, the decision could widen the schism in Palestinian ranks unless progress is made quickly toward settlement with Israel.

At Israel's insistence, the PLO has been physically excluded from the peace process begun in Madrid a year ago. But it is known to influence the 14 negotiators, most of whom attended the council debate at a Palestinian school in a Tunis suburb. "It is a message of peace from the Palestinians to the entire world," a smiling Arafat, 63, declared as the council ended its two-day meeting. Earlier, one of the larger PLO factions walked out of the meeting, refusing to vote in the final session. Another faction rejected the meeting's outcome. The argument was over the Council's political statement, a four-page document giving negotiators team a new mandate

to pursue autonomy talks with Israel. The radicals argued that it was pointless to remain in the process when Israel rejects most Palestinian demands: Autonomy leading to a state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip; withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, including east Jerusalem; and the right of refugees to return. Israel has offered limited autonomy for the 1.7m Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip. The final statement said the Palestinians agree to a "short, interim phase of autonomy... to allow the transfer of authority under international supervision to an elected Palestinian legislature that will practice full sovereignty over the land

and the resources, including water." It said any settlement must take into account the "right to return," a reference to 3.5 million Palestinians living in diaspora, and stressed that the PLO would resist efforts to settle refugees in Arab countries. The ultimate goal is "an independent Palestinian state that will be confederated with Jordan," the statement said. "We cannot sit idle and watch the council adopt a compromising policy that will push the Palestinians into a settlement at the expense of their rights," declared Najj Salameh of the Syria-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine before he and his comrades walked out.

Yeltsin, Gates talk security issues

MOSCOW, Oct 17: Central Intelligence Agency Chief Robert Gates was received at the Kremlin Friday by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the first time a head of the US intelligence agency has been so honoured, reports AP. Gates and Yeltsin discussed security issues along with Russian Security Minister Viktor Barannikov and the head of External Security Services Yevgeny Primakov, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. "This is the first time such a meeting has been held. No CIA chief has ever before been received by leaders either of Russia or of the Soviet Union," Yeltsin said. The Russian President said the intelligence services of the two countries could cooperate "in the fight against international crime and the drugs trade, as also in controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction, above all nuclear weapons."

Pindi denies links with Sikh militants

NEW DELHI, Oct 17: The Pakistani High Commission here denied Friday that its nationals were involved in the Sikh militant campaign in the Indian state of Punjab, a day after police killed two men alleged to be Pakistanis there, reports AFP. The high commission (embassy) statement said the death of the alleged Pakistanis was "no more than a crude and transparent attempt to implicate Pakistan," adding the passports reportedly carried by the two slain men were fake. The Punjab police Thursday shot dead a top Sikh militant, Talwinder Singh, who was a Canadian national, and two alleged Pakistanis in a gun battle earlier in the day in Jalandhar district. The state police chief, Kanwar Pal Singh Gill, said the two suspected Pakistanis, who he said were residents of Lahore, could have been agents of Pakistan's intelligence service. The statement said the "so-called evidence in the shape of Pakistani passports and identity cards provided by the Punjab police to substantiate its allegations can hardly stand up in a court of law. "Such documents can be obtained or forged or even taken away forcibly from bona fide Pakistani nationals (visiting India). Even in a hypothetical situation, no agent provocateur would carry? his identification documents," it said. New Delhi accuses of arming Sikh separatists in the northern state of Punjab, which borders Pakistan. Islamabad denies the allegation.

Crackdown on Nigerian political parties

ABUJA, Oct 17: Nigeria's military rulers have cracked down on political parties and cancelled fraudulent presidential primaries, casting doubt on the viability of a planned January handover to civilians, reports Reuter. Military President Ibrahim Babangida reaffirmed a commitment to democracy in a statement on Friday that placed the onus of timing and fair play on the National Electoral Commission (NEC). He announced the immediate dissolution of all executive bodies in the two army-created parties vying for power and the cancellation of recent staggered primaries after what he called "gross irregularities." The decisions announced after a two-day meeting of the Armed Force Ruling Council (AFRC) in Abuja are likely to

receive fairly broad domestic support but do little to dampen uncertainties in Africa's most populous nations, analysts said. "I don't think it will have much effect economically. It is more of the same. Uncertainties persist," a senior Lagos-based western banker said. Implicit in General Babangida's remarks was a pledge that the military would not step aside until it was satisfied that acceptable leaders had emerged in a country dogged by religious and ethnic rivalries, and corruption. "The greatest challenge to the transition to civil rule is the issue of a nationally acceptable political leadership with content and conviction to carry the whole country alone

the lines of political stability, unity and progress," he said. In a stern statement, Babangida allowed the 23 candidates who contested the now cancelled primaries to stay in the race despite fraud implications. It had been widely anticipated that most or all of the candidates, who also fought earlier primaries cancelled in August, might have been banned from politics for up to 10 years under a military decree. "The AFRC, in realisation that our democratic experience is a learning process, had resolved to allow all of them to engage in fresh contest along with others that might wish to join as soon as the machinery of the parties is cleansed," Babangida said.

New Kuwaiti cabinet announced

KUWAIT, Oct 17: Kuwait's Emir announced a new cabinet today which included a new Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and six elected members of parliament, Kuwait Radio reported, says Reuter. The cabinet included a new Oil Minister Ali Ahmed Al-Baghlh, a member of the parliament elected on October 5, who replaced Hamoud Al-Rqobah. The Radio named the new Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister as Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, replacing Sheikh Salem Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The ministers of defence, interior, finance, cabinet affairs and water and electricity were unchanged. Saud Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah replaced Badr Jassim Al-Yaqoub as Information Minister.

Off the Record

A bare-breasted woman in a children's puzzle

NASHUA, NH: Cartoon character Waldo is embroiled in a controversy of his artist's making. It seems Waldo may be at a nude beach, reports AP. Eileen Godfrey, a mother of two, said she was outraged when she spotted a bare-breasted woman in "Where's Waldo on the Beach?" "I just never expected this in a children's puzzle," she said. "How can they say 'for ages 5 to 12' and put a naked woman on it?" The popular "Where's Waldo?" series of books, puzzles and other merchandise encourages children to find hidden figures in crowded scenes. The merchandise is sold throughout the world. In the puzzle purchased by Godfrey, a topless female sunbather is doused with cold water and rises up on one arm, exposing a breast.

A 24-hour show of dissatisfaction

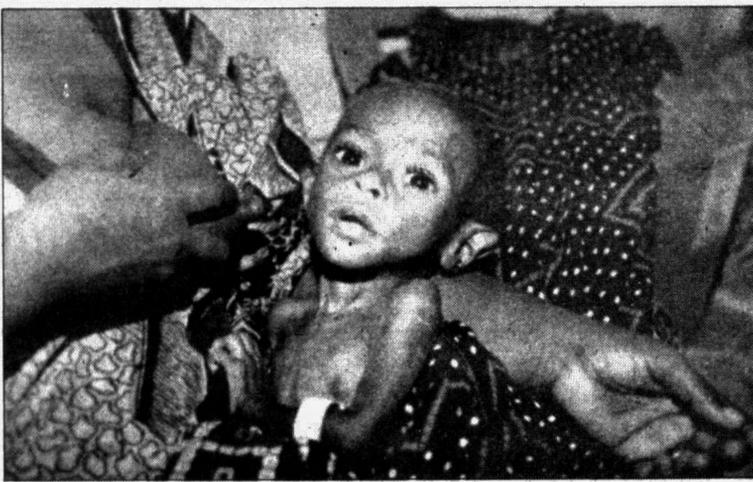
PALUEL, France: A nuclear plant maintenance worker unhappy with his job brought the reactor in this Normandy town to a halt for 24 hours to show his dissatisfaction, plant officials said Friday, reports AP. The Thursday incident, the first of its type in the history of the French nuclear programme, had no effect on the safety of the 1,300-megawatt reactor, the officials said. "We just lost 24 hours of production which we had to furnish by more expensive means," said one official, speaking on condition of anonymity. The employee, unhappy with his lack of advancement, shut down the plant in the space of a half-hour by pressing emergency halt buttons in three of the reactor's four turbo-alternator groups located in separate buildings. The fourth was already turned off. In so doing, he closed off the vapor admission system, the officials said.

Royal family behaves like film stars?

SYDNEY: The British royal family should stop behaving like film stars, media magnate Rupert Murdoch said Friday, reports AP. In an interview on television network Channel Nine's "A Current Affair" programme, Murdoch rejected suggestions that some of his newspapers, which scrutinize the ups and downs of the House of Windsor, are trying to bring down the monarchy. "I think if anything we have helped them get themselves into the 20th century," Murdoch said. "I think they have got to be more realistic. They have got to be more open. You can not in this day and age, with television, hide away and come out and behave like a film star on certain days and not on the other six days of the week." "People are more educated. This is a democratic age and the monarchy has to behave accordingly. If they are going to be role models they really have to live those roles."

Inkatha vows to defy ban on weapons

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 17: The Inkatha Freedom Party vowed Saturday to defy the government and ANC by marching through Johannesburg to protest a ban on tribal weapons, reports AP. Police urged the Zulu-dominated group to leave, its spears, knives, clubs and other so-called cultural arms at home to avoid confrontation, but it was unclear how the weapons ban could be enforced. Inkatha said it expected about 50,000 people, led by Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, to march to the city's main police station in a major show of force Saturday. The government in the past has issued vague restrictions on weapons in public, but police rarely have enforced them and often face strong resistance when they try to disarm people. The march was aimed at defying the government and riling the ANC following their recent agreement to ban traditional weapons at political gatherings. Such a ban was a key demand of the ANC to restart political negotiations with the government. Inkatha considers tribal weapons part of its Zulu culture and argues that ANC supporters also carry weapons at rallies. The ANC, engaged in a bitter-power-struggle with Inkatha, says Zulu weapons are not cultural but are offensive and used to intimidate ANC members. It says ANC members need to arm themselves in self-defense.



BAIDOA, Somalia: A wet-nurse breast-feeds a baby suffering of starvation, October 14, in a feeding center in Baidoa (south-east of Somalia). Hundreds of people are still dying of starvation everyday in this area. — AFP/UNB Photo

Military court upholds Guzman's life sentence

LIMA, Oct 17: The nation's highest military court has upheld the life sentence imposed on Shining Path leader Abimael Guzman, closing a chapter on the hemisphere's most violent insurgency, reports UNB. The decision Wednesday by the Supreme Military Tribunal turned down the second and last appeal allowed Guzman's defence, putting to rest any minimal hope Guzman may have held for finding a legal loophole to freedom.

Fall of a Kingmaker unfolds ugly drama of Japan's politics

TOKYO, Oct 17: Gangsters, radical rightists, and the most powerful politicians in the land. In Japan, such are the stars of a bizarre but strangely familiar drama of political collapse that unfolded this week, reports AP. With the political world in turmoil after the resignation Wednesday of ruling party kingmaker Shin Kanemaru, the denouement of Japan's latest scandal won't be known for some time. But public anger remains high over reports of shadowy alliances between Kanemaru,

other politicians and organized crime, all of it part of the backroom politics that determines the fate of prime ministers in Japan. Only the outlines are known, but the script of the drama runs like this: Act I. The year, 1987. Enter Noboru Takeshita, a savvy power baron locked in a still too-close-to-call race for the country's highest elected office — the Prime Ministership. Scan scene around Takeshita's home. The sounds of loudspeakers mounted on

ultra-rightist trucks echo through the quiet residential district. They are attacking Takeshita. Fade out. Cut to Shin Kanemaru, a veteran lawmaker who had helped Takeshita take over the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's largest faction from former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka. Zoom in on his telephone. Act II. Shortly after. Headquarters of the ultra-rightist Nihon Kominto, or Japan Imperial Subjects' Party. After taking a phone call from an underworld boss, the

Kominto leader, himself an ex-gangster, orders the anti-Takeshita campaign ended. Change of scene. Outside prime minister's official residence, newly installed Takeshita and his Cabinet pose for an official photograph of the new administration. Act III. The present. Outside the wrought iron gates of a large home in one of Tokyo's most exclusive neighborhoods, Kanemaru is mobbed by hordes of reporters awaiting his impending departure from public office. They, and the public, are accusing

him and Takeshita of consorting with gangsters. Fade to black. So goes the story that has dominated newspaper stories, television news shows and Japan's political world for weeks. On Wednesday, with 'don' Kanemaru's real-life departure from Parliament, they got their climax. It is a climax that leaves much unanswered. Was there a payoff? Why were the rightists targeting Takeshita? So far, Kanemaru and Takeshita have refused to comment, and the leader of the rightist group

and the alleged gangster fixer, Susumu Ishii, are dead. One possible explanation for the attack on Takeshita was simple extortion. Right-wing groups and gangsters sometimes publicly harass businessmen and politicians to force payoffs, and Takeshita was known as the most successful fund-raiser in party history. Further answers may come from the ongoing trial of one of Kanemaru's top financial backers, the former head of a mob-linked trucking company.

UN warns Somalis not to block troops deployment

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 17: The Security Council on Friday warned Somalia's warring factions not to disrupt aid shipments or deployments of soldiers to protect them but did not specify any enforcement measures, reports AP. Also Friday, the UN envoy for Somalia said 750 of 3,000 new troops authorized by the council could be allowed in the country "hopefully soon."