

# BRIEFLY

## 35 killed in Venezuelan bus mishap:

At least 35 people were killed and 17 injured Sunday when a passenger bus lost its brakes and crashed down an embankment onto the grounds of Venezuela's largest military base, the official Venpres agency said. AP reports from Caracas.

The bus, which was travelling Sunday afternoon from San Felipe, about 185 miles (300 kms) southwest of Caracas, was moving along a highway near the army's Fort Tuana when the accident occurred, said a fire department spokesman.

As the bus approached Fort Tuana, its brakes failed. The bus collided with eight other vehicles before it swerved off the highway and went down an incline and onto an unoccupied section of the headquarters of the military high command. The driver was among 35 people on board who died, officials said.

## Clemency for Honecker sought:

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev called Sunday for clemency for the disgraced former East German President Erich Honecker, who is facing trial in Berlin for the killing of would-be refugees to the West. AFP reports from Moscow.

As he left for Berlin where he is to be made a "citizen of honour", Gorbachev told journalists that Honecker had to be judged according to "the historical circumstances of his time," the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

He noted that at the time the East Germans attempting to flee across the Berlin Wall were shot by border guards. "East Germany was a member of the United Nations, a state with frontiers and a territory, obligations regarding security, which had to defend itself as a state and protect its borders".

Honecker, whose trial opens in Berlin on Thursday, should not be judged in the light of today's Honecker's efforts to bring the German and Russian peoples closer, and his opposition to war. He said account should also be taken of Honecker's age and state of health.

## Kashmiris bomb bus, kill one:

Muslim militants bombed a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims in the separatist-torn northern state of Jammu and Kashmir killing one man and injuring two others, police said Sunday. AFP reports from Jammu.

New Delhi resident Paramjit Singh was killed and his two sons were injured in the bombing.

The bus was taking the pilgrims to the cave shrine of Vaishno Devi, located in the Jammu region of the state, when the bomb went off late Saturday.

Police said militants fighting for the secession of the Muslim-majority state were responsible for the bombing. No groups have yet claimed responsibility.

## Sigua re-elected as Georgian PM:

Tengiz Sigua, who served under Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia before joining the campaign which overthrew him in January, was re-elected as Prime Minister on Sunday, local journalists said. Reuter reports from Moscow.

Sigua resigned as provisional Prime Minister last week following the election of former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze as Georgian leader in national polls. Sunday's overwhelming vote restored a full mandate for the premier.

Sigua quit Gamsakhurdia's government last year just weeks before an armed revolt drove the then president from Tbilisi. Opponents, including Sigua, accused Gamsakhurdia of ruling as a tyrant.

Sigua then served as provisional premier until Shevardnadze was elected unopposed as the Transcaucasian country's leader.

## 9,000 more officials may lose jobs in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Nov 9: As many as 9,000 officials may lose their posts in Nepal's administrative house cleaning, which is aimed at boosting civil service dynamism, honesty and efficiency, analysts here say, reports AFP.

State radio, announced last week that Prime Minister Girtija Prasad Koirala's government had dismissed 290 top-level civil servants, including the Chief Cabinet Secretary Damodar Prasad Gautam.

The cuts were made at the recommendation of the Civil Administration Reform Commission headed by Koirala and based on the fact that the officials had either reached the

age of 58 or served for 30 years, the radio said.

But some of the bureaucrats dismissed had only completed 20 years of service, a cabinet secretary source said.

"Most of these people" were of three categories — inefficient, corrupt or of doubtful character in their loyalty to the Koirala government," he said.

An administrative department official said the cuts would also affect low level officials, while a member of the commission warned its report had advised the government to dismiss "25,000 rank and file civil servants."

# Tough measures taken to deal with rebels, drug traffickers Emergency in Colombia

BOGOTA, Nov 9: President Cesar Gaviria declared a national state of emergency Sunday after leftist rebels detonated bombs and staged a series of weekend attacks that killed at least 30 people and injured about 70, reports AP.

Gaviria made the announcement after calling an emergency Security Council meeting with his Cabinet on Sunday morning to discuss measures to combat Colombia's 35-year-old rebel insurgency and continuing problems with drug traffickers.

Gaviria blasted the rebels and traffickers for their "insensitivity and cruelty" in a nationwide radio and television address Sunday night.

The state of emergency will be in force for 90 days and during that period the government will assume extraor-

dinary powers. Gaviria will be able to order actions against rebels or traffickers without consulting Congress or the courts.

Among Gaviria's other actions: — Radio and television will be prohibited from interviewing guerrilla leaders or publishing statements from terrorists or traffickers that would alarm the general public;

— Foreign companies will lose contracts with the government and be prohibited from doing business in Colombia if they pay ransoms to terrorists or kidnapers;

— Security will be increased for members of the armed forces and police. In the past year, 217 police have been assassinated in terrorist attacks and bombings;

— Rewards will be offered

for information leading to the capture of the leaders of two rebel factions, the National Liberation Army and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Force. There already is nearly a 4 million dollar reward for the capture of escaped drug kingpin Pablo Escobar.

The government will strengthen the witness protection programme for foreigners and locals who are frightened to testify against drug barons.

Gaviria also announced his administration would punish local officials who negotiate with insurgents.

"I know that all of Colombia is waiting for firm action against the terrorists, against the murderers and kidnapers, against this band of delirious fanatics who failed to read in the papers about the

end of Communist totalitarianism," Gaviria said.

Earlier Sunday, the president said: "It's now the hour to confront, without truces — in the military, judicial and legislative fields, and with the support of citizens — those who have become the worst criminals of the country."

Leftist rebels of the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinator movement began the bloody offensive on Saturday, killing 26 policemen who were protecting oil drills at a petroleum field in southern Colombia.

Drug dealers have increasingly targeted police. 20 officers have been killed the past 10 days in retaliation for the death of Brances Muoz Mosquera, Escobar's security chief.



BERLIN: A young boy holds up a placard reading "Hatred of foreigners — without me" as he joins November 8, with about 300,000 people, the first officially organised rally against racism since the Federal Republic was found in 1949. —AFP/UNB photo

## Koreas nuclear talks postponed till Nov 18

SEOUL, Nov 9: South Korea on Monday accepted a North Korean proposal that their talks on a nuclear inspection dispute be postponed until next week because of joint US-South Korea military exercises, reports AP.

South Korea's chief nuclear negotiator, Song Ro-myung, sent a telephone message accepting a North Korean proposal that the talks originally scheduled for Tuesday, be postponed until November 18.

Last week, North Korea unilaterally postponed the talks one week to protest joint US-South Korea military exercises that began last Tuesday. The one-week exercises ended on Monday.

The Communist North said the military exercises could not be compatible with an inter-Korea reconciliation accord adopted early this year. It said it would boycott all inter-Korea dialogue except for nuclear talks.

North Korea has accepted limited nuclear inspections by the International Atomic

Energy Agency but South Korea is demanding deeper inter-Korea inspections to dispel worries that its northern rival is developing nuclear weapons. The two sides have been unable to agree on rules for inter-Korean inspections under a nuclear arms ban agreement adopted nine months ago.

Seoul officials believe that IAEA inspections are not thorough enough because they cover only facilities reported by the host country.

Despite the reconciliation accord adopted in February, relations between the rival Koreas still remain chilly, largely because of the nuclear dispute.

In Monday's letter to his North Korean counterpart, Choe U Jin, Gong reconfirmed a South Korean plan to resume joint "Team Spirit" military exercises with the United States next spring.

The exercises have been held annually since 1976 to prepare for a possible attack

# AIDS to kill two million in Asia

NEW DELHI, Nov 9: An AIDS epidemic in Asia will kill two million people by the end of this decade, a global expert on the killer disease said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

"The familiar epidemic snowball is taking shape before our very eyes," said Dr Michael Merson, director of the World Health Organisation's global aid programme.

"By the year 2000, close to two million adults in this region will have died of AIDS," Merson said in a speech prepared for delivery at the opening session of the second international congress in AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

"During that year alone, some half-a million HIV-in-

fectured people will develop AIDS and require care."

More than 1.5 million men, women and children in Asia and the Pacific have been infected with the HIV virus, the precursor of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

That figure may not "sound frighteningly large" when compared with the seven million cumulative infections in sub-Saharan Africa. "But unlike Africa, Asia is at the early stage of the pandemic," Merson said.

Cumulative infections in India totalled half-a-million at the end 1991 and may reach a million by the end of 1992, "a doubling time of one year," he said.

The statistics show that Asia and the Pacific "have the same mix of transmission routes as we have seen in other parts of the world, Africa included."

Unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners is the most common way of contracting the disease in this region, as it is elsewhere in the world, he said.

Who estimates that some 70 per cent of the newer cases of the HIV virus were transmitted through heterosexual partners.

The social and economic costs of AIDS go far beyond the inevitable strain on already inadequate health care systems in the region.

"AIDS strikes selectively at young and middle-aged adults.

Their deaths will cut vast holes in the family safety net, and millions upon millions of people, including AIDS orphans will fall through," Merson said.

By the turn of the century, HIV-infected women in the region will have given birth to some four to eight million children who will become orphans on their mother's death, he said.

The Asia-Pacific region still has a chance to avoid the worst-case scenario, although the window of opportunity is closing quickly, Mesons said.

# Mahathir desires to serve for another term

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 9: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has ruled out retirement and says he will serve as long as he is healthy and wanted by his United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) reeling from bitter infighting ahead of party polls next year, reports AFP.

"If the party wants me to serve for another term, it is my duty to offer myself for the presidency," Mahathir said late Sunday after UMNO closed a three-day annual assembly, its last before triennial party polls next year.

Analysts said that Mahathir, 67, is almost certain to be returned unchallenged as UMNO president, a position that will

automatically ensure that he keeps the premiership at least until 1996.

Mahathir attacked unnamed party leaders on Friday and again Sunday for adopting "dirty tactics" to win support ahead of next year's polls, adding that the intense infighting could destroy UMNO, the senior member of Malaysia's ruling National Front coalition.

Mahathir told reporters that in keeping with party tradition, his deputy Gahar Baba, who is also 67 years old, would succeed him if he stepped down.

"Under UMNO tradition the deputy succeeds the president. That's the way it should be," he said.

# Off the Record

## Space is tight at governor's mansion, not in White House

WASHINGTON: Yes, President-elect Clinton, we know space is tight at the governor's mansion in Little Rock. You only have two bedrooms, so visitors stay in the guest house out back, reports AP.

Such arrangements won't be necessary in your new home, the White House.

There are at least 10 bedrooms in your private living quarters, according to the curator's office — more if you decide you don't need all the third-floor sitting rooms.

And while it may not be on the grand scale of a European palace, the White House is for your relaxation, such as it is, there's a movie theater that seats 46, a heated outdoor pool, a one-lane bowling alley, tennis courts, a putting green, a half-basketball court and a horseshoe pitch (George Bush put that in. It doesn't have to be permanent).

There's also 96 full-time employees on hand to cater to your needs. There are chefs, maids, doormen and housekeepers — even a staff photographer who'll take pictures of you by the hundreds.

Four calligraphers stand ready to elegantly inscribe the invitations to your dinners. And a florist keeps fresh flowers in the house's many vases.

## Robodoc performs an operation

SACRAMENTO, California: A robot has taken part in surgery for the first time in the United States, doctors at a California hospital said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The automaton, named "Robodoc", took part in a successful operation at Sacramento's Sutter General Hospital on Saturday to replace a patient's hip, the hospital said in a statement. "The hospital said it was the first surgery in US medical history to use robotics technology in an active capacity."

A hospital spokeswoman said the operation may also have been a world first.

The hospital said the patient was in stable condition on Sunday, but gave no details about the patient, who had requested privacy.

"Robodoc" — a seven-foot (2.1 metre) high articulated arm with a drill — performed part of the surgery, drilling close-tolerance holes in a femur to anchor an artificial hip joint. The drill was guided by computerised medical imaging equipment.

## Meditation under water to find future PM

NEW DELHI: A former air force pilot who became a Hindu holy man emerged from a sealed tank where he claimed to have stayed four days submerged in water. Critics said it was a hoax, reports AP.

About 5,000 devotees chanted hymns on Sunday when organizers rolled back a plastic tarpaulin covering a nine-foot-deep water-filled pit to reveal Kapil Adwait, popularly known as Pilot Baba, floating face down near the surface.

"I have mastered the art of surviving in conditions akin to that in the womb," Adwait told the crowd in the New Delhi park.

Instead of speaking about Hindu spiritualism, Adwait quickly turned to politics, saying his meditation under water was intended to find India's future prime minister. He then endorsed a local politician of the governing Congress Party.

## I didn't inhale

LITTLE ROCK, Ark: During the presidential campaign, Bill Clinton's "I didn't inhale" caveat about a college experimentation with marijuana was often the subject of mocking jokes. As the victor, it's Clinton who is joking now, reports AP.

The president-elect was photographed Saturday with a big cigar in his mouth as he golfed with a friend. On Sunday, as he spoke with passersby during a walk around his Little Rock neighbourhood, one woman asked Clinton what his doctor would say about cigar smoking.

"Oh, I didn't smoke it," Clinton said.

"You didn't inhale?" laughed a man standing on the sidewalk.

Clinton cracked a broad smile and repeated the line, "I didn't inhale."

He said someone at the golf course had given it to him as a victory cigar.

"I never smoke those things," he said. "I'm allergic to them. Besides, that's a bad example."

# Kurds kill eight army commandos in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Nov 9: Kurdish separatists in southeast Turkey killed eight army commandos who were on a mission to crush separatists on both sides of the Turkish-Iraqi border, informed sources said Sunday, reports AP.

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) forces on Saturday attacked a police post near Gorumlu village, in Sirkak province, killing eight commandos in a parachute unit from Kayseri air base in central Turkey, the sources said.

Seven civilians were killed meanwhile when rockets hit and burned their homes during a clash between PKK separatists and security forces in Cizre, west of Sirkak, witnesses said.

It was not clear who fired the rockets.

The PKK's news agency also said from Germany that its fighters killed 17 police officers and shot down a helicopter overnight Friday in an ambush near the city of Sirkak.

There was no official confirmation of the incident.

Meanwhile, Turkish forces fighting inside Iraq stopped their attacks against PKK rebels in the Kaftanin area, just northeast of Zakho, but pursued them further east toward the Turkish-Iraqi-Iranian border, informed sources said.

The sources provided no details.



WASHINGTON: Vernon Jordan Jr, the head of US President-elect Bill Clinton's transition team, tells reporters November 8 that he has no time to talk. Jordan was leaving NBC's Washington studio after appearing on "Meet the Press." —AFP/UNB photo

## 55 FIS activists arrested

ALGIERS, Nov 9: The 55 members of an alleged terrorist group set up by the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front have been arrested by police in the eastern city of Constantine, Algerian radio reports, says AFP.

Security services meanwhile said they had arrested 29 other people in various parts of the country on suspicion of "subversion or terrorism".

The Constantine operation took to more than 700 the number of fundamentalists said to have been arrested since the beginning of October, when new laws against "terrorism and subversion" came into force.

There was no precise indication of the activities of those arrested in Constantine.

## Travel ban on Gorbachev goes

MOSCOW, Nov 9: The Russian government on Sunday ended a foreign travel ban on Mikhail Gorbachev and the former Soviet president said he hoped this was the end of the matter, reports Reuter.

"I don't think it will happen again," he told reporters at Moscow airport, before flying to Berlin with his wife Raisa and daughter Irina.

The government refused to let Gorbachev, 61, visit Italy last month because of his refusal to testify at constitutional court hearings into the banned communist party.

# Soul-searching starts for Republicans rattled by defeat

WASHINGTON, Nov 9: Sobered by their abrupt fall from power, Republicans are arguing vehemently among themselves over what went wrong and how to get back in sync with American voters, reports AP.

They are a party at a crossroads of ideas, of generations, of leadership.

There are deep philosophical divisions among the factions trying to commandeer the party and among the men dreaming of the 1996 White House race. And while the election of a new party chairman in January could offer some hint of a new GOP direction, the ultimate resolution is four years down the road when primary voters will pick a new standard-bearer.

The intervening years promise a continual struggle among pragmatists, ideologues and those simply disillusioned with the old guard. Already there is sharp debate.

Has the party adopted too much of the religious right social agenda or not enough? Has it strayed too far from supply-side, trickle-down economics or not far enough?

Moderate Labour Secretary Lynn Martin, in the running for party chairman, squared off against conservative strategist Angela Bay Buchanan last week in a typical confrontation.

Buchanan, who managed her brother Patrick's presidential campaign, said Republicans won't win again until they reinforce their

conservative base. She has called for a new chairman who opposes abortion and supports "traditional values."

"We can't be out there pandering to different groups," Buchanan said Friday on a TV talk show. "What we need as a party is to stand for something."

Martin, who supports abortion rights, said the GOP already stands for something — individual rights and limited government — and can't behave like a church dictating what people should believe.

She criticized the convention and, by implication, its controversial "family values" pitch. "You can't build a party on hate," Martin said. "You have to go back to the people's agenda."

Younger Republicans who study public opinion for state-level races are convinced the "people's agenda" has moved from no-new-taxes to quality-of-life issues such as education, health care and dependent care for children and the elderly.

"Dependent care makes a lot of sense to me because I'm raising my children and worrying about my parents. These issues make sense to me because I'm living them," said Republican pollster Bill McInturff, part of the Baby Boom generation.

"There probably are Republican solutions to these issues but they haven't been powerfully communicated to the electorate," he added. A campaign strategist also

of Baby Boom vintage said the party had become "a little stale" after so much time in power. Voters are caring about things that have slipped us by, it's harder for the older generation to understand that," said the strategist, who insisted on anonymity.

Jim Pinkerton, a young Bush campaign adviser, said he and many others "agitated for a more activist, Jack-Kemp-like approach to domestic policy," but were rebuffed. He called the Bush administration "intellectually bankrupt... no longer functional or viable."

That was one of the milder GOP assessments of the administration and the campaign. Inept, frustrating, stupid and pathetic were some of the others.

## 16 opposition MPs boycott Vanuatu parliament

PORT VILA, Nov 9: All 16 opposition MPs boycotted the parliament of the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu when it resumed or its second session here, Monday, forcing the speaker to adjourn for lack of a quorum, reports AFP.

Speaker Alfred Masseng registered the presence of 30 members of premier Maxime Carlot's Union of Moderate Parties and its junior coalition partner, the National United Party of former premier Walter Lini, and adjourned the session until Thursday.

Hawke said the economic team was "out of step with the things that should be done" and Bush's advisers were out of touch with the widespread perception of a poor economy.