

# BRIEFLY

**China executes 60 more :** Sixty people have been executed in the central China province of Hubei in recent days, the Hubei Daily reported. Reuter says from Beijing.

The paper, received in Beijing yesterday, said they were sentenced at public meetings in 11 cities for offences including murder, robbery, the trading of people, rape, theft of electrical equipment, the theft and killing of draught farm animals, the destruction of farm production and train robbery.

**18 held with drugs in Britain :** Customs officers in Britain have arrested 18 people and seized 2.7 tonnes of cannabis worth 6.5 million pounds (9.7 million dollars), officials said Saturday. AFP reports from London.

Officers arrested 11 people in London and the port of Littlehampton on Friday after seizing the cannabis from a fishing boat which had picked the drugs up from a freighter arriving from the Caribbean island of St. Vincent.

**81 hurt in US school bus crash:** Eighty-one people on their way to a high school marching band competition were injured Saturday in a rear-end collision between two buses. No one was seriously hurt, AP reports from Missouri.

The buses, carrying members of Susquehanna Township High School's marching band, were driving to Lackawanna County Stadium as one bus ran into another that stopped suddenly, said Mooste Police Officer John Chiller.

The two buses were following each other, taking the students to the Atlantic Coast High School Marching Band Championships, when a truck carrying band equipment stopped in front of one of the buses, witnesses said. All of the injured, mostly high school students, were treated and released from five different hospitals, authorities said.

**Road mishap claims 27 in Mongolia :** Twenty-seven people have killed and at least 10 injured in a road accident in central Mongolia, Itar-Tass news agency reported on Saturday, AFP says from Moscow.

It said an overloaded post office lorry overturned on a mountain road, which was slippery because of freezing rain and snow. The agency did not say when the accident happened.

**Two arrested in Cairo :** A Syrian and an Egyptian were arrested Saturday in Cairo on charges of printing and distributing a pro-Muslim fundamentalist publication, the police said, AFP reports from Cairo.

Security officers seized 6,000 copies of a book promoting Muslim extremist ideology from the Syrian publisher, Abdel Wader Mahmud.

They also arrested an Egyptian printer, Salah Abdel Hamid Issa, who was accused of printing the book.

**Indonesia kills 70,000 dogs :** Indonesian authorities have killed about 70,000 dogs suffering from rabies in East Java in the past six years, the Antara news agency said Sunday, reports Reuter from Jakarta.

Provincial health official Sutraggono, quoted by the agency, said the dogs were destroyed to prevent the deadly disease being passed on to people, and following complaints from tourists.

## Fresh UN sanctions against Libya unjustified: OIC

DUBAI, Nov 14: The 51-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference described as unjustified the tightening of UN sanctions against Libya over the Lockerbie airliner bombing, reports Reuter.

The OIC, which groups most of the world's Islamic states, urged in a statement on Saturday night a peaceful settlement to the issue before the sanctions come into force on December 1.

The UN Security Council on Thursday tightened sanctions to force Libya to hand over for trial two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland.

The sanctions freeze Libyan assets abroad and ban the supply of some oil equipment to the north African nation.

Libya, already subject to sanctions including a ban on

air traffic, denounced the new measures and said it was urging the two suspects to stand trial in Scotland.

"OIC member states are committed to combating the pernicious phenomenon of international terrorism and have strongly condemned the loss of life resulting from the Lockerbie disaster, the statement said.

"However, imposition of sanctions against the people of Libya is unjustified especially as the government of Libya has extended its full cooperation to resolve the issue by peaceful means," it added.

It expressed the OIC's solidarity with the Libyan people. The blast killed 270 people.

Another report says: Libya said it said no plan to close its borders with Egypt and Tunisia to protest against tighter UN

sanctions over the Lockerbie airliner bombing, Algeria radio said.

The radio, which earlier said Tripoli would close its borders for three days from midnight on Saturday, quoted a Libyan foreign ministry spokesman as saying the report was unfounded. It gave no source for its earlier report.

The UN Security Council on Thursday tightened sanctions because Libya's refusal to surrender two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland.

It froze Libyan assets abroad and banned the supply of some oil equipment to the north African nation. The new sanctions go into force on December 1.

Libya, already subject to sanctions including a ban on

air traffic, denounced the new measures and said it was urging the two suspects to stand trial in Scotland.

A total of 270 people were killed in the Lockerbie blast. The latest Algerian radio broadcast was monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Libya shares land borders with Algeria, Sudan, Chad and Niger but these are in the desert. Access to the main cities of Tripoli and Benghazi is through Tunisia to the west and Egypt to the east.

Libya's Jana news agency said demonstrators in Sirte, 400 km (250 miles) east of the capital, protested on Saturday against the new sanctions. They chanted angry slogans condemning the "policy of threats and ultimatums by the west," Jana said.



French UN force commander General Maurice Quadri (R), hands over command of the region to Indian General, Mono Bhagat, commander of the Indian UNOSOM contingent during a ceremony held in Baidoa, west of Mogadishu Saturday. Some 1,100 French troops are to leave Somalia by December 15 after 11 months of service. —AFP photo

### France hands over command of a Somali city to Indian troops

BAIDOA (Somalia), Nov 14: French UN force commanders in this southwestern Somali city handed over command of the region to their Indian colleagues at a military ceremony here Saturday, reports AFP.

The ceremony was attended by General Maurice Quadri, commander of the French UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) troops, and General Mono Bhagat, commander of the Indian UNOSOM contingent.

Turkish General Cevik Bir, UNOSOM commander, and US Admiral Jonathan Howe, UN special envoy to Somalia, were also present.

Following an Indian army orchestra rendition of the French and Indian national anthems, the French flag was lowered and the Indian flag was hoisted.

### Abkhaz Speaker seeks Russian peacekeepers

MOSCOW, Nov 14: Speaker of the Abkhazian separatist parliament Vladislav Ardzinba has asked Russian President Boris Yeltsin for peacekeepers and military observers for his breakaway republic, Itar-Tass reported today, says AFP.

Ardzinba made the request, in a telegram, because of the "very large concentration of Georgian troops, tanks and artillery" on the border between the breakaway region of Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia, near the river Inguri, the agency said.

Meanwhile Alexander Kavtsidze, Georgian Leader Eduard Shevardnadze's special representative on the Abkhazian conflict, accused supporters of former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia of attacking Georgian government troops from Gali in Abkhazia.

He said Gamsakhurdia loyalists were "killing and taking civilians hostage, looting and burning down houses," in a statement carried by Tass.

In the past few days there have been new clashes along the border.

### US giving in to Rabin's demand, says Syria

DAMASCUS, Nov 14: Syrian state radio Saturday accused the United States of "favouritism" toward Israel, and condemned US President Bill Clinton's pledge to maintain Israel's military edge over its neighbours, reports AFP.

The radio said Syria had already "suffered from the partial relations" between the United States and Israel, and asked: "is it reasonable for Washington to satisfy Israel's requests for military and economic assistance... just to please Tel Aviv?"

Following talks with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Washington Friday Clinton said he had "renewed America's unshakable pledge to maintain and enhance Israel's qualitative security edge."

He also reaffirmed his commitment to work with Congress to maintain Israeli aid at its current levels.

Rabin welcomed Clinton's pledge "to maintain our qualitative edge through the supply of advanced aircraft, the lifting of technological barriers."

Syrian radio said Rabin was "demanding a price for a peace

which has not yet been established," and it was "incomprehensible that the United States is giving in to Rabin's demands, including those contradicting the UN conception of peace."

Syria has demanded a pledge from Israel that it will withdraw completely from the Golan heights, seized in 1967 and annexed in 1981, while Israel wants a commitment from Syria for "total peace" with open borders and diplomatic ties before debating the scope of a withdrawal from the heights.

Syrian information minister Mohammad Salman said Saturday the US administration was "serious in its search for peace" and could "pressure Israel into implementing international resolutions."

Salman, quoted by the official news agency Sana, said Israel was trying to reach separate agreements "opposed to the UN initiative based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338," which call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

## Islamic groups accuse West of colluding with Serbs

LONDON, Nov 14: Leaders of worldwide Islamic movements accused western countries Saturday of colluding with the Serbs to wipe out the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AFP.

About 50 representatives of several Islamic groups attended a two-day conference in London on the war in Bosnia organised by Britain's self-styled Muslim parliament.

The organiser of the self-appointed "parliament", Kalim Siddiqui said, "The liquidation of Islam and Muslims in Bosnia was not only essential for the survival of Serbia, it was necessary for the purity and progress of the entire western civilisation."

"This is one reason why the West is conniving at Serbian atrocities."

It is only when we understand that we can begin to understand why all western governments tacitly, often openly, aided the Serbs."

Among the organisations taking part were the radical Middle East Islamic groups Hezbollah and Hamas, and the Algerian community in Britain, close to Algeria's banned fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

Siddiqui also condemned the widespread rape of Muslim women in Bosnia.

"The Serbs developed rape as a weapon of warfare," he said, calling for "appropriate punishment for those guilty of atrocities."

The conference is due Sunday to discuss how such atrocities can be punished.

Siddiqui also seized the opportunity to denounce the author Salman Rushdie as a criminal for his novel "The Satanic Verses" which caused an outcry among the Muslim community following its publication.

He has consistently supported the death decree pronounced on Rushdie in 1989 by former Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Muslim "parliament" was created — without elections — in January 1992 as a pressure group to defend "the political identity" of the Muslim community in Britain.

Meanwhile the Iranian official agency said Saturday that Britain refused a visa to top Iranian leader Ayatollah Ahmad

Jannati who was to take part in the conference.

Reuter adds, clashes between troops of the Muslim-led Bosnian army and Croat HVO militia forces were reported around the central Bosnian town of Fojnica, local media said today.

Muslim-controlled Sarajevo radio accused the HVO of mounting attacks on the town, while Croatian radio said the HVO had repelled Muslim forces, inflicted heavy casualties and captured several villages.

### 'Indonesians have no right to criticise my lifestyle'

JAKARTA, Nov 14: Dewi Sukarno, widow of Indonesia's first president, has lashed out at Indonesia over criticisms of her lifestyle following publication of a book of nude photographs of her, reports Reuter.



Dewi Sukarno. The Attorney-General's office last week banned the book from mainly-Muslim Indonesia, saying it could cause unrest and

defame the name of the late President Sukarno.

Dewi, in an interview published on Sunday in the biggest-selling daily Kompas, said the Indonesian people had no right to criticise her by using Sukarno's name.

"The Indonesian people can criticise my life principles but they have no right to use Bapak's (SUKARNO's) name because they had abandoned him," Dewi, 53, was quoted as saying.

"He died in despair and sorrow."

Her arrival in Jakarta on Wednesday provoked protests. One senior official called for her to be sent back to her birthplace Japan, where the book was published recently.

The book prompted widespread comment, most of it critical. But some newspapers sympathised with the former geisha girl, who has been largely ostracised in Indonesia since Sukarno's death in 1970.

Sukarno married Dewi in 1962. She changed her name from Naoko Nemoto to the one he gave her — Ratna Sari Dewi

### 26 die in West Bengal boat capsized

NEW DELHI, Nov 14: Twenty-six people, most of them women and children, drowned when the fishing boat on which they were travelling to a festival capsized and sank near Calcutta, domestic news agencies reported on Sunday, reports Reuter.

They said most of the victims were inside the boat, which turned over after passengers on deck panicked and dashed to one side of the vessel when it swung in a cross current.

Most of those on deck escaped.

### NPA guerillas ambush military jeep, kill 5

DARAGA, Philippines, Nov 14: Three soldiers, a pregnant woman and her two-year-old son were killed and six others wounded today when communist guerillas ambushed a military jeep near this eastern town, police said, reports AFP.

The jeep was attacked by about 30 New People's Army (NPA) guerillas on a highway as it drove back to camp from the Daraga market. The woman was the wife of a soldier who was not in the group, Daraga police chief senior Inspector Benjamin Suratos said.

Three soldiers, a boy and two men in a nearby van were wounded, Suratos told reporters.

The NPA is the armed wing of the banned Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which has been waging a guerilla campaign for 24 years.

The NPA mounted the attack after the insurgent leadership backed off from proposed peace talks with the Philippine government, which had been due to start in Vietnam on November 15.

## Egypt, US begin joint military exercises

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt, Nov 14: Egypt and the United States on Saturday began joint military manoeuvres west of here, after a four-year hiatus, involving thousands of troops from both countries, military officials said, reports AFP.

Some 6,500 US troops, backed by tons of equipment and weapons which have been arriving since mid-October at this northern port and Cairo's military airports, are participating in the five-day manoeuvres code-named "Bright Star".

They are to stage the exercises, aimed at countering an offensive launched by an "enemy" country against Egypt's international borders, in the Al-Hammam region, a stretch of desert coastline along the Mediterranean.

Token military units from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are also to participate, according to the English-language newspaper Al-Ahram weekly, quoting Egyptian sources.

They said the number of American soldiers was increased from previous joint manoeuvres at the request of the Egyptian military command "in order to realise the maximum benefit from the exercises."

The US troops and brought new weaponry that was to be tested for use and efficiency on desert terrain, the sources added.

"This year's exercise is part of a larger programme of military cooperation between Egypt and a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Britain, France and Italy," Al-Ahram weekly said.

It said Egypt and Saudi Arabia were planning their first naval manoeuvres in the Red Sea in January.

## Bandits kill 20 Somalis

MOGADISHU, Nov 14: Bandits killed 20 Somalis and wounded 15 others in the bloodiest attack in recent months by ruthless gangs roaming the country, an Italian UN military source said today, reports AFP.

The latest attack gave rise to a warning today by UNOSOM spokesman captain Tim Medavitt of an "increase in banditry."

The attack on a convoy of lorries Friday night as it headed north out of Mogadishu came after two similar attacks the same day in which an Italian soldier and a UN civilian employee were killed.

Italian forces sent to the area Saturday morning managed to recover four of the lorries stolen on the road linking Mogadishu to Belet Huen, in the Balad region, some 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of capital. They also made a number of arrests.

The convoy was travelling unescorted and was attacked by an unknown number of bandits who opened fire on the drivers. Also late Friday night an

Italian soldier with the UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) was killed in northern Mogadishu, and American UN worker Kai Lincoln died from wounds inflicted earlier in the day by Somali bandits in the south of the country.

A ceasefire between the US-led UNOSOM troops and forces loyal to wanted warlord Mohamed Farah Aided has been in operation since early October, after bloody clashes in which more than 70 UN soldiers have been killed and hundreds of Somalis since June.

UN military officials also warned Saturday that Islamic militants — possibly Hezbollah fundamentalists with expertise in car bombing techniques — had arrived in Somalia and could launch terrorist attacks on US or other contingents of the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia.

UNOSOM's military spokesman Major David Stockwell said UN and US forces were boosting security to protect against possible attacks.

## Off the Record

### Jackson goes into hiding

LONDON: Journalists here launched a manhunt Saturday to track down elusive pop-star Michael Jackson as he went into hiding, after admitting being addicted to painkillers, reports AFP.

Dozens of photographers gathered outside the Dorchester hotel in London and a private clinic Saturday night, while earlier in the day a Swiss television crew hired a helicopter to fly over Gstaad, where his friend, the actress Elizabeth Taylor, has a luxury chalet.

Rumours about Jackson's imminent arrival started flying early Saturday morning in London when a Boeing 727 landed in Luton airport from Mexico, where Jackson had been due to perform Friday.

He cancelled the remainder of his "Dangerous" tour Friday making revelations about his addiction in a taped statement released by his publicist in Los Angeles.

He said the pressure of child molestation allegations against him drove him to abuse prescribed painkillers.

Taylor descended alone from the jet at Luton and made out to the waiting press corps that Jackson had also got off in Britain.

### 113 days with poisonous snakes

JOHANNESBURG: Two South Africans are preparing separately to try to break the world record for staying in a cage with poisonous snakes, which now stands at 113 days. South African state radio SABC reported Saturday, says AFP.

Jean-Pierre Wittstock, a police sergeant, will settle into his cage on Monday in a snake park in Durban in southeastern Natal Province with 40 snakes, including potentially deadly Green Nambas and Egyptian cobras.

Both will try to stay at least 120 days inside the cage.

### Kiss of death

CAIRO: A villager who attempted to imitate traditional Egyptian snakehandlers by putting the head of a snake in his mouth died after the reptile bit him, a newspaper reported Saturday, says AP.

Nazih Mohammed Abu-el-Gheit was in Desouq, a town in the Nile delta 135 miles (220 kilometres) northeast of Cairo, to visit a famous mosque where a Muslim saint is interred, the newspaper Al-Messa wrote.

Abu-el-Gheit was sidetracked by street entertainers performing with live snakes. Sneaking among the onlookers, he picked up a snake and tried to put it in his mouth. It bit him twice, on the lip and tongue.



### Iran denies plan to produce missiles

TEHRAN, Nov 14: Iran yesterday denied that it was planning to produce cruise missiles with Syria's cooperation or financing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in manufacturing a version of scud missile, reports Xinhua.

An informed source at the Defence Ministry denied a report to that effect carried by London Times Friday, the Iranian official news agency Irna said.

Despite their good political relations, Iran and Syria have never had any joint plan to produce sophisticated cruise missiles, the source said.

## Rabin calls for continued autonomy talks with Palestinians

JERUSALEM, Nov 14: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has called for continued autonomy talks with the Palestinians following PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's unprecedented condemnation of the murder of an Israeli settler, reports AFP.

"After the publication by the head of the PLO of a communique condemning this attack we must continue negotiations to implement the autonomy accord" for the occupied territories, Rabin said late Saturday in Washington, where he is on an official visit.

His remarks came as Israeli and Palestinian sources in Cairo said an eight-member Israeli-PLO working group would resume discussions Monday in the Egyptian capital.

Both Rabin and US President Bill Clinton had demanded an official denunciation by the Palestine Liberation Organisation of the October 29 murder on the West Bank.

US and Israeli officials insisted that condemnation of Misrahi's killing was required under terms of the historic September 13 PLO-Israeli accord granting covering autonomy to Palestinians currently under Israeli occupation on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In a statement carried by the official Palestinian news agency Waafa, Arafat said Saturday, "we vehemently condemn the murder of Israeli settler Chaim Misrahi."

He stressed that the kidnapping and stabbing of

Misrahi and been carried out without the knowledge of PLO leadership, which he said would investigate the assault and take "necessary measures."

Arafat also demanded that all Palestinians "respect the agreement to halt violence in order to safeguard the peace process."

Clinton welcomed the PLO statement, which marked the first time Arafat had publicly condemned a Palestinian attack on Israelis on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I think it is a very positive sign... that will enable them to work together and implement the (autonomy) accord," Clinton said.

Rabin warned that "the goal of the Palestinian terrorists op-

posed to the peace process is to provoke an end to the negotiations."

"The real test for Yasser Arafat will be a halt to violence and terrorism by Palestinians loyal to him."

An Israeli military spokesman said the five Fatah militants were caught near the West Bank town of Ramallah "several days ago" and were suspected of Misrahi's murder.

The incident sparked a wave of demonstrations and violence by Jewish settlers.

No Fatah members had been accused of killing an Israeli since the signing of the autonomy accord in Washington September 13.

Four days before the signing, Arafat wrote in a letter to Rabin,

"the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violations."

In a related development Palestinian sources in Cairo, along with Israel's Ambassador to Egypt David Sultan, reported that an eight-member Israeli-Palestinian committee would meet there on Monday.

The same working group, which met in Cairo on Monday and Tuesday of last week, will try to iron out differences on Israel's planned military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, where Palestinian self-rule will

### Fahd pardons 239 Filipino prisoners

DUBAI, Nov 14: Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has pardoned 239 Filipino prisoners in the kingdom in response to a plea from their embassy, the Philippines Ambassador Abraham Rasul said today, reports Reuter.

The embassy sent the plea to the king in January 1993, he told Reuters, adding that details of their release and return home still had to be arranged.

Diplomats in the kingdom said the prisoners had been jailed for offences like drinking alcohol, which is banned in the conservative Muslim kingdom, embezzlement, theft and adultery.