

BRIEFLY

14 die in Indonesian boat capsizes: A total of 14 people died and another was missing after their boat overturned in rough water in the eastern Indonesian strait of Lamakera, a newspaper said here today, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The boat which only holds a permit for fishing and had a crew of four, was ferrying 58 passengers between Wairerang on Adonara island in the Lesser Sunda islands to neighbouring Solor island, when rough seas overturned it Tuesday, the Sura Pamburuan said.

Local fishermen rescued 47 people, including the captain and the three other crew members, the daily said. The crew were being questioned by police.

6 killed in French plane crash: Six people, including several policemen, were killed when a single-engine tourist aircraft crashed into the garden of a small house in Adainville, near Paris, Wednesday afternoon, police said, AFP reports from France.

The aircraft's five occupants — border policeman Christian Trybou, Border Police Secretary Sophie Normandin, two Parisian policemen and the pilot — were killed, along with a 12-year-old boy who was on the ground near the house.

The aircraft crashed after 10 minutes in the air, officials said. One eyewitness said: "I saw a plane turning round in circles: I thought it was maneuvering."

Israeli soldier stabbed to death: A Palestinian on Wednesday stabbed an Israeli soldier to death at a checkpoint between the Gaza Strip and Israel before being captured, a military spokesman said, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The assailant was identified by Palestinian sources as Lyad Salem Hussein Al-Ahrir, a 20-year-old Islamic Jihad Militant from Gaza city. The hardline group is opposed to the September 13 Israel-PLO autonomy deal.

The Palestinian attacked the reservist at a food stall at the Nahal Oz crossing on the east side of the strip. He slit his throat and grabbed his weapon, the military spokesman said.

Serbs abduct three Macedonians: Three Macedonian border guards were abducted by Serbs on Wednesday while patrolling the UN-guarded border with Yugoslavia, the Macedonian Interior Ministry said, AP reports from Skopje.

Five unidentified armed men in jeeps with Serbian registration plates, crossed the border from Serbia, forced the three Macedonians into the vehicles and drove back, the statement said.

The border is guarded by a 750-man UN peacekeeping battalion which includes about 300 US soldiers.

Pope's condition improves: Pope John Paul II, recovering from a shoulder fracture, made an unusual Wednesday appearance from his balcony over St. Peter's Square, AP reports from Vatican City.

The pontiff had cancelled his regular general audience at the Paul VI auditorium because of the injury, suffered during a fall last week.

"I would not like to deprive myself of the joy of greeting, even if briefly, all those who have come to Rome to meet the successor of Peter," the Pope told thousands of pilgrims.

85 Kurds held in France: French police rounded up 85 suspected Kurdish radicals believed to have links with an anti-Turkish government group in a pre-dawn sweep in at least a dozen communities across France Thursday, AP reports from Paris.

The suspects were believed to have ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, an insurgent group fighting the Turkish government in an attempt to set up an independent Kurdish state.

Forty people were detained in Paris, included the suspected No 1 and 2 officials representing the organization in France, a police source said.

Police seized accounting books, international documents and material that could have links to Molotov cocktail attacks in recent weeks against the Bosphorus Bank in Paris, the source said on condition of anonymity.

Ernest Shonekan resigns Nigeria returns to military rule

LAGOS, Nov 18: Nigeria returned to military rule when its unelected civilian leader, Ernest Shonekan, threw in the towel after just 82 days in office in the face of mounting domestic problems, reports Reuter.

General Sani Abacha, the most powerful military officer in the country, took over as head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces after Shonekan resigned on Wednesday night.

The interim government which Shonekan, a lawyer and industrialist, led was put together by former military ruler Ibrahim Babangida. Babangida, who had been in power for eight years, left his oil exporting nation in crisis when he annulled an election which was held in

June to choose his civilian successor.

Billionaire businessman Moshood Abiola, who was widely believed to have won the June election, has vehemently opposed the government of Shonekan, a fellow Yoruba, and last week he won a court ruling declaring the administration to be illegal.

A few days later Shonekan faced the full wrath of labour unions when workers embarked on a general strike to protest against a huge rise in fuel prices in a country, Africa's most populous, that has become accustomed to cheap petrol supplies.

"In the light of recent events, and after due consideration of all the facts, I am left with no

alternative but to take the most honourable and dignified step of resigning with immediate effect," Shonekan, 57, said in a statement read by an announcer on state television.

The statement said he made his decision after consulting on Wednesday with military chiefs including Abacha who is 50 (correct).

"They expressed serious concern about the general uneasiness in the country and apparent lack of stability over the past few months, the statement said.

"They spoke about restiveness in the rank and file in the military."

Shonekan's resignation was announced on radio while reporters were waiting for a news

conference that had been called on Wednesday night by Abacha. Diplomats said it was too early to speculate on what Abacha's programme might be but they said it was possible senior officers wanted the general to clear up the political impasse precipitated by Babangida when he annulled the election.

The unity of Nigeria, which has 88 million people from more than 250 ethnic groups, has been under severe strain since the annulment.

Abiola is the first Yoruba to have apparently won Nigeria's presidency through an election and his ethnic group in southwestern Nigeria has felt deeply cheated by the annulment.

Shonekan's resignation was announced on radio while reporters were waiting for a news



Thousands of supporters of Somali warlord Mohamed Aidede congregated Thursday in a stadium of the Somali capital to witness the first public appearance of Aidede since the United Nations abandoned its hunt for him. — AFP photo

Aidede appears in public

MOGADISHU, Nov 18: Somali faction leader Mohammed Farah Aidede appeared in public for the first time since June today, a day after the UN said it was no longer hunting him for the murder of several dozen UN peacekeepers, reports Reuter.

"We welcome the resolution of the Security Council to change the law to capture General Aidede, he told thousands of cheering supporters at a former military parade ground in his south Mogadishu stronghold.

Aidede arrived in a motorcade of battered cars bristling with militiamen wielding rifles and grenade launchers who beat back chanting crowds to let the warlord through to his dais.

Boats carrying Tigers bombed: 50 die

COLOMBO, Nov 18: Air force jets bombed boats carrying Tamil rebels in northern Sri Lanka, killing at least 50 people, the Defence Ministry said Thursday, reports AP.

The rebels were trying Wednesday to cross the lagoon dividing Tamil-controlled Jaffna Peninsula from mainland Sri Lanka, said a ministry spokesman, who cannot be identified under briefing rules.

Air force fighters also strafed suspected guerrilla targets in the jungles of northern Sri Lanka in their counter-attack on rebels who captured and ransacked a key military base last week before fleeing the scene on Sunday. There were no immediate reports of

the number of casualties in the bombing of the jungle areas.

The battle for the Pooneryn base, which the military uses to guard the Jaffna lagoon, left more than 700 soldiers and sailors dead, and an estimated 500 Tamil rebels were killed.

The rebels are reportedly holding about 60 soldiers, including some officers, captive in their underground prison camps.

About 19,000 people have been killed since the Tamils began their war for an independent homeland in the north and the east 10 years ago, complaining of discrimination by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and the military.

AFP adds: Security forces Wednesday moved to reestablish a naval base smashed by Tamil Tiger guerrillas during an assault on a military complex where more than 2,000 people were killed or wounded, military sources said.

Clearing of mines and booby traps was underway at the Naghivanthurai Naval Base within the Pooneryn facility "which was retaken from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) over the weekend, the sources said.

Troops were moving slowly to clear mines and re-establish the navy base, they said. "We don't expect any resistance

because the Tigers have withdrawn. But we are still facing sporadic mortar attacks."

The navy lost five patrol jet-boats at Naghivanthurai base when the LTTE overran it during a four-pronged attack Thursday.

Security force casualties are yet to be announced officially, but defence sources estimated 600 soldiers were killed or are missing.

About 500 navy and army personnel, including new recruits, were wounded in the action, the worst defeat inflicted on the security forces since the LTTE launched its campaign in 1972.

Off the Record

Ever young Mickey turns 65

LOS ANGELES: Mickey Mouse may be forever young, but the cartoon rodent's birth as an American icon occurred 65 years ago this week and his native city is celebrating, reports AP.

Walt Disney Co. on Tuesday kicked off its 65th global birthday party or parties with dozens of children singing "Happy Birthday" to a giant mouse at City Hall as Mayor Richard Riordan declared Thursday "Mickey Mouse Day."

The mouse, who went from mischief-maker to corporate symbol, was silent during the ceremony, keeping his trademark frozen grin and occasionally offering a three-fingered wave.

Riordan presented the character with a proclamation. "So Mickey, thank you for your 65 years. I'd like to thank the person who you helped make famous, Walt Disney," said Riordan, who also thanked Disney chief Michael Eisner and the Disney family.

The late Walt Disney conceived the character on a train ride from New York to Los Angeles. Mickey Mouse became popular after the November 1928, release of his third cartoon, "Steamboat Willie," the first animated feature with synchronized sound.

The mouse went on to appear in more cartoons and comic strips, spawned a huge souvenir industry and became the symbol of Disney's entertainment conglomerate.

The mouse went through many other changes over the years. "He started with rubber hose-like arms and legs and they gave him a body," said Robert Tieman, a Disney archivist. "Then he got eyebrows, then eyeballs with pupils in them. Without eyeballs he was real limited as to the facial expressions he could do."

Over the years his head has gotten just a little bit bigger, making him look more childlike and innocent," Tieman said. "It takes away from the little imp, mischievous figure he was in the '40s."

To further mark the passage of years, Disney theme parks in California and Florida are throwing parties for thousands of needy children. Children will also be feted at Disney parks in France and Japan.

Sex scandal stemming from Scud attacks

JERUSALEM: Israeli police say they have uncovered a sex, lies and measuring tape scandal stemming from Iraqi Scud missile attacks during the 1991 Gulf War, reports Reuter.

A government insurance appraiser took bribes and also demanded sex from dozens of women in exchange for approving false property damage claims, police said on Thursday.

Several women, they said, slept with him in the hope of receiving government payouts ranging from 7,000 dollar to 20,000 dollar. The appraiser and several other suspects have been arrested.

Infant beaten to death by a boy of four

MONTGOMERY: An infant died after allegedly being beaten, kicked and hit by a 4-year-old boy at a day care home. Police were considering whether to bring criminal charges against the 4-year-old, reports AP.

There's a question of whether someone of that age could be charged," said Deputy District Attorney Teresa Harris. The victim, 8-week-old Randall E. Robinson, died from a fractured skull, police said.

Day-care operator Myra Plaskett told police when she went to the baby's crib on Tuesday, he was not breathing. Mrs. Plaskett's 4-year-old grandson was in the crib with the baby said police Capt. Wyatt Gant.

"The 4-year-old has admitted to biting, hitting and kicking the 8-week-old," Gant said. The baby was taken to a hospital by paramedics and pronounced dead.

Counting the grandson, seven children were in the home, Gant said. Mrs. Plaskett's license, issued in 1989, was suspended Tuesday by the Montgomery County Department of Human Resources. Mrs. Plaskett did not comment.

10 fundamentalists to die in Algeria

ALGIERS, Nov 18: The Algerians special court sentenced 10 Muslim fundamentalists to death Wednesday in a trial of 47 suspects accused of murdering six policemen in the Algerian capital, reports AFP.

Meanwhile authorities said that 30 leaders of Islamic groups out of 59 identified had been killed by the security forces since new measures against "terrorism and subversion" were adopted in September last year.

Eight of those sentenced to death were among nine of the defendants being tried in their absence. The court acquitted 10 of the defendants and sentenced the others to terms ranging between 20 years and 10 months in jail.

The defendants were accused of ambushing a police car in the old Casbah district of Algiers the night a state of emergency was imposed on February 9, 1992, amid escalating violence between Muslim extremists and the security forces.

A month earlier, the army intervened to bring about the cancellation of the second round of general elections the subsequently outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

In a separate case of Tuesday, the same court—sit-

ting in Medea south of Algiers—sentenced to death 37 people, 30, in their absence, for involvement in 21 murders.

Eight others were acquitted by the court, and the remaining 65 defendants in that case were sentenced to prison terms varying from life to three years.

That group were accused of killing five policemen in the Laghouat region, and the murders of 16 others including 12 security officials. They were also charged with a sabotage attempt on an Algerian-Italian gas pipeline.

Arafat to meet Scandinavian leaders

OSLO, Nov 18: PLO leader Yasser Arafat will meet with leaders of Norway, Denmark and Sweden next week to discuss the Middle East peace process and financial details of the Israeli-Palestinian accord, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

Arafat's first stop will be in Norway on November 25 where he is to discuss specific projects related to the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organisation peace accord that calls for Palestinian self rule in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho.

Congress okays Clinton's gay policy

WASHINGTON, Nov 18: President Clinton's compromise "don't ask don't tell" policy allowing homosexuals in the military got Congress's final approval Wednesday in the Senate, reports Reuter.

The Senate approved 77-22 a 261 dollar defence authorisation allowing Clinton to carry out the policy and sent the bill to the president to be signed into law. The house approved it Monday.

The bill also repeals a post-World War II ban against women serving on US warships.

Congress had repealed a similar law prohibiting women from flying warplanes but is following a presidential commission recommendation that women not fight in ground warfare.

The authorisation for US defence programmes next year also releases 4 billion dollar for a maximum 20 radar evading B-2 stealth bombers and allows the Pentagon to buy up to six more troubled C-17 cargo planes, if problems are fixed.

The 261 billion dollar authorisation is 2.5 billion less than Clinton asked and 13 billion dollar less than this year's allocation.



Getting a little golf practice at Sun City in South Africa are Miss Singapore Desirre Chen (L) with Miss Korea Seoung Yeon Lee here on Wednesday. The finals are scheduled at the resort on November 27. — AFP photo

130 fishermen feared dead in Pak cyclone

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18: Some 130 fishermen are feared drowned as 15 boats capsized in the open sea during a tropical cyclone that hit Pakistani coastal areas over the weekend, it was reported today, says AFP.

The official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) quoting Wali Mohammed, Manager, of the fishermen's society said reports of sinking of at least 15 boats with 161 fishermen on board have been confirmed.

Sources in the Fishery Department said among the people listed missing some 30 were either rescued or managed to return safely. All others were feared drowned.

Wali Mohammed said at least 10 fishermen were drowned in one incident when their boat was caught in high tides.

Eight others had drowned earlier Monday near Ormara in Baluchistan province when their boat was blown onto rocks.

The cyclone developed in the gulf of Oman Saturday and reached the coastal areas of Karachi. However it passed after turning into a depression late Monday, sparing Karachi.

The cyclone also caused severe damage to Gawadar port and a coastal town in southern Sindh province.

Israel deploys more troops in Gaza, WB

JERUSALEM, Nov 18: Israel has increased the number of troops in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip to stem a rise in violence, but security sources said on Thursday they doubted the reinforcement would help, reports Reuter.

"There has been an increase in troop strength but it's nonsense," an Israeli security source said. "You know and I know that more troops don't prevent these kind of attacks."

On Wednesday, an Arab stabbed a soldier to death in Gaza, bringing the death toll since the signing in September of the Israel-PLO peace deal to 12 Israelis and 20 Palestinians.

An army spokesman declined to comment on the increased troop strength, saying: "We never relate publicly to deployment of forces."

Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories demonstrated at the entrances to the Gaza Strip on Thursday but troops prevented them from blocking roads.

After earlier attacks on Israelis, settlers rampaged through Arab towns.

Activists of the PLO's Fatah faction in the West Bank town of Ramallah, angered over the settlers' actions and perceived army indifference, issued a

leaflet this week calling for attacks against them.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal said Israel had demanded the PLO deal with the activists.

Another report says the senior PLO official who delivered a petition demanding major reforms said PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had replied to the criticism of his leadership. "I conveyed the document to Chairman Arafat which focuses in its demands on improving the leadership performance," Suleiman Najab, PLO executive committee member, told Reuters late on Wednesday.

Najab said Arafat sent back comments but he declined to disclose them.

The document was drafted last week by Palestine Liberation Organisation members who support the PLO-Israel peace accord but fear Arafat is failing to implement it properly.

Any flaws or loopholes in performance will make the Palestinians lose out of their chance of benefiting from the agreement, Najab said.

"I see rightful demands in the document signed by leading Palestinian figures that have a lot of respect," he said.

Libya ready to burn oil wells to defy UN action: Gaddafi

CAIRO, Nov 18: Moammar Gaddafi said Wednesday that Libyans are ready to burn the nation's oil wells to defy a United Nations' decision to increase sanctions against the country, reports AP.

"We are prepared to go in a mass march, millions-strong, to burn the oil wells, the oil fields and the oil ports in front of the world," the Libyan leader said in a speech broadcast by Libyan radio.

The UN Security Council last week voted to impose tougher sanctions on Libya.

Croat leaders accuse own militia unit of massacring Muslims

ZAGREB, Nov 18: Leaders of Bosnian Croat military forces, the HVO, have accused one of their own units of massacring Muslim civilians in the central Bosnian village of Stupni Do in late October, a newspaper report said today, reports AP.

The newspaper Vecernji List said it was the first time that Bosnian Croat authorities had made such an accusation since war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992.

HVO officials from Vares, which was captured by mainly Muslim Bosnian government troops in early November, have charged that the mass killings in Stupni Do were carried out by a special HVO unit from Kiseljak led by Colonel Ivica Raic, according to the paper.

Bosnian authorities have made similar accusations, and United Nations troops who searched the village found the bodies of 25 people who had been either shot, mutilated or burned.

An HVO delegation from Vares last week came to Zagreb, capital of the Croatian republic, to brief authorities here on the fall of their town, located in central Bosnia. The team also met with the US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, Vecernji List reported.

The HVO officials told the paper Colonel Raic first dismissed all civic leaders in Vares. His partisans then carried out the massacre in Stupni

Do and arrested 200 Muslims, as well as some Croats accused of collaborating with government forces, the delegation told the newspaper.

"This triggered a reaction from Muslims forces and spread fear in the Croat community in Vares, which had lived peacefully alongside Muslims for centuries," one of the HVO officials was quoted as saying.

The HVO delegation said Raic then ordered the mass exodus of Croats from Vares and commanded his troops "to burn all key facilities, police headquarters, the mayor's office, the bakery, the silo, the headquarters of the HDZ (the Croatian political party), the Ponikve hotel and the HVO offices."

Bosnian Croat political authorities last week said they had sacked Raic after he had ordered the expulsion from Kiseljak of personnel working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Meanwhile, fighting continued Wednesday between Bosnian Croat forces and Muslim-led troops around the heavily contested town of Gornji Vakuf in central Bosnia.

British officers at a nearby base called it one of the heaviest offensives launched by the Bosnian Croats, backed by Croatian forces, and one UN military source said the town had taken the heaviest fire in six months in the last three days.

"Based on the military information we have we believe it is the heaviest fire Gornji Vakuf has had for the last six months," a UN source said, but he was unable to say if the UN had run patrols in the area where 550 rounds fell on Monday.

But other sources suggested the report might be a bit exaggerated by a UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) British battalion newly arrived on the site.

UN military sources said 190 rounds from mortars, tanks and artillery were fired around the town Wednesday, which lies on the strategic "route diamond" supply road coming up from the south.

10 killed as school van hits truck in England

WARWICK, England, Nov 18: Ten children and a woman teacher, all from the same school, were killed early Thursday when their van hit a stationary road repair truck and burst into flames, reports AP.

The nighttime accident on the M40 motorway near Warwick in central England, 75 miles (120 km) northwest of London, was west Europe's third multiple-fatality road accident in eight days.

Warwickshire fire brigade's assistant divisional officer Jim Beeston estimated the age of the dead children at 13 or 14.