

## BRIEFLY

**7 die in ROK boat fire:** The casualty toll in a pleasure boat fire on Monday in central South Korea rose to seven confirmed dead and 36 injured among the 127 people on board, news reports said. AFP says from Seoul.

South Korean television aired amateur video footage of the fire which showed the whole superstructure of the sleek white craft drifting near the bank of a lake in the central province of Chungchong. The boat was engulfed in flames and a column of dense black smoke billowed into the air.

**Encephalitis kills 13 in India:** Thirteen persons died of encephalitis in different places of Karnal district in Haryana late last week, an official spokesman said yesterday. PTI reports from Chandigarh.

**Quake hits western Japan:** A moderate earthquake with a preliminary magnitude reading of 4.3 rocked two ancient capitals and a major population centre in western Japan Monday morning, a local observatory said. AP reports from Tokyo.

There were no immediate reports of damage or injury from the 11.51 am (0251 GMT) earthquake that hit Kyoto, and Nara, police said.

**2 shot dead in S Egypt:** Suspected Muslim fundamentalists on Sunday night shot dead a seven-year-old girl and a policeman, and wounded five others in southern Egypt, the Interior Ministry said. AFP reports from Cairo.

The gunmen got out of a pick-up truck and opened fire on policemen guarding a police dormitory and a patrol car that happened to be passing by in the town of Malawiyah, in the Minya Province, 241 kilometres south of Cairo, police sources said. They then fled.

**Inmate murders 4 in US:** An inmate at a minimum security prison in rural Alabama brutally murdered four people on Sunday morning, including the prison warden and his wife, prison officials said. Reuter reports from Birmingham, Alabama.

The murders occurred in the pre-dawn hours at the state prison cattle ranch in Greensboro, the officials said. Prisoners are routinely allowed to roam freely around the ranch.

**Filipino mountaineer killed:** One mountain climber was killed and 26 others are missing after Typhoon Teresa caught up with them on Mount Halcon south of the Philippine capital, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Manila.

Air force Colonel Felipe Gaerlan said over radio station DZXL that one of the 27 university students was confirmed dead, but added that details were not immediately available.

**Dubai okays Indian passengers:** The Emirate of Dubai has lifted a ban on the entry of Indian passengers into the United Arab Emirates which it imposed after plague broke out in India in September, an Air India official said yesterday. Reuter reports from Dubai.

**4 die in Riyadh shootout:** Four people died and two others were wounded when security forces stormed a Saudi home to free hostages taken by a group of Filipinos, authorities said on Sunday. AFP reports from Riyadh.

Those killed in the shootout on Saturday were a two-month-old baby, a driver, a maid and one of the hostage takers who had been demanding a ransom of 10 million dollars. The security forces managed to free the other hostages.

**Turkey frees German TV team:** Four people working for the German television channel ARD were released late Sunday after being held for 36 hours while their possessions were searched for material critical of the Turkish regime, German diplomats said yesterday. AFP reports from Ankara.

The four, correspondent Dieter Sinnhuber and his female assistant, both German, and two Turkish cameramen were detained at the north-eastern town of Hopa near the border with Georgia.

**Australian jets collide:** Two Australian Air Force Macchi jet trainers collided in midair yesterday in a remote area north of Sydney but the two pilots ejected safely, an air force official said. Reuter reports from Sydney.

The accident occurred during a routine combat training exercise involving three jets. Group Captain John Kindler said.

**Grand Ayatollah hospitalised:** Iran's 100-year-old Grand Ayatollah Ali Araki, the supreme spiritual guide for Shi'ite Muslims, was hospitalised on Sunday for unspecified reasons, the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported. AP reports from Nicosia.

**7 still missing in Black Sea:** Four people died and seven are still missing after a Russian cargo ship sank in the Black Sea Friday evening, Turkish naval sources said. AFP reports from Ankara.

The vessel, the 'Surve', sank in a violent storm off the Turkish coast near Kanyarca at around 11:00 pm (21:00 GMT). Fifteen crew members were able to reach the shore in a liferaft.

**11 die in Brisbane bus mishap:** At least 11 people, most of them members of a widows' club, were killed yesterday when a bus carrying them on a shopping trip plunged down a steep embankment 13 km north of the Australian city of Brisbane. Reuter reports from Brisbane.

**New Israeli dy army chief:** General Matan Vilnai, Israel's southern region commander, has been appointed army deputy chief of staff and will take up his duties on January 1, officials said on Sunday. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Vilnai, born in Jerusalem in 1944, is a veteran of the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars and the Lebanon campaign. His main task as chief of southern command was the suppression of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.

**Honduran tanker sent to Kuwait:** A Honduran tanker suspected of breaking the UN embargo on Iraq was diverted to Kuwait on Sunday for investigation. AP reports from Kuwait.

The tanker, Al-Mahrousa, carrying 3,000 gallons of fuel, entered Kuwaiti waters on Sunday afternoon, said Col Musab Najm, a spokesman for Kuwait's Defence Ministry. Najm said earlier that the tanker's crew admitted loading the fuel at the Iraqi port of Basra.

**Ruling party wins regional polls in Spain**

VITORIA, Spain, Oct 24: The ruling Basque National Party (PNV) won regional elections in the Basque country in Spain on Sunday while the support for the political wing of the illegal, separatist ETA movement fell, exit polls said, reports AFP.

The PNV won 26.3 per cent of the vote gaining 19 or 20 seats in the 75-seat regional parliament in Vitoria, according to an exit poll announced at the end of voting by Spanish RTVE television.

The station said support for the PNV had slipped since it won 22 seats in 1990 with 28.3 per cent of the vote.

# PLO agrees to crack down on Muslim radicals

CAIRO, Oct 24: Israel and the PLO agreed at talks today to fight Palestinians terror groups and move ahead with their peace accord jeopardised by the Islamic group Hamas which killed 22 people in a Tel Aviv bomb attack, reports Reuter.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, speaking after eight hours of talks in Cairo which lasted until the early hours of today, said Israel would also try to look into its closure of the West Bank and the Palestinian self rule areas of Jericho and Gaza, imposed in response to the Tel Aviv

attack.

"The general conclusions we reached are that the parties are going to fight violence and terror which are endangering peace," Peres told a news conference.

"We don't want to slow or harass the economic development of the Palestinian authority... and in spite of the horrible events that took place, we decided to go ahead with the peace process, to continue our negotiations," he said.

Hamas, which opposes the PLO-Israel peace accord, has attacked Israeli targets three

times since October 9.

"We have asked the Palestinians to fight terror and they said they are... determined to do so," Peres said.

Asked what measures Israel asked the Palestinian authority to take to crush Hamas, Peres added: "Well, you don't fight terror with flowers."

"We told the Palestinians

we don't expect you to be 100 per cent successful but we expect you to be 100 per cent determined and clear on where you stand on terrorism," asked if there was room for negotiation with Hamas.

Peres said: "the problem with

Hamas is not its voices but its noises. The cartridges they are firing and the people they are killing."

Peres said in a joint PLO-Israeli statement the Palestinian delegation, led by Nabil Shaath, presented "the harmful effects of the closure on the Palestinian people and economy and pressed Israel to lift it."

Shaath, who flew to Madrid immediately after the Cairo talks without giving a news conference, warned Israel that collective punishment would keep the peace "explosive."

## Arms for Myanmar rebels seized in Thailand

THA PHRAYA, Thailand, Oct 24: Thai border units today seized a truck loaded with heavy weapons and ammunition destined for ethnic Burmese guerrillas, as it entered the country from Cambodia, a police official said, reports AFP.

Police Colonel Santhawat Thawatana, deputy superintendent of police of this border town, said the arms cache included a 75-millimetre recoilless gun with three rounds; a Russian-made heavy machine gun with 79 rounds, 51 AK-47 assault rifles with magazines and 249 82-millimetre mortar shells.

The two men in the truck, both Thais, confessed that they had been hired by another Thai to collect the weapons from Cambodian soldiers at the border, Santhawat said.

The arms — concealed in the truck's water tank — were to be resold to insurgent Burmese guerrillas.

## Aristide chooses new PM

PONT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 24: Hoping to win over business leaders wary of his populist past, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has reportedly picked one of their own as his prime minister, reports AP.

Within days, Aristide will announce his selection of Smaïk Michel, 57, a longtime associate who served briefly as Aristide's commerce minister in 1991, a source close to the government said late Sunday on condition of anonymity.

Aristide dropped his first choice for prime minister, interim Foreign Minister Claudette Werleing, because her leftist beliefs inspired vigorous opposition.

Aristide's selection of close but inexperienced associates for his first Cabinet alienated the business community, and some in the middle and upper classes remain wary of the president's intentions.

# Off the Record



Miss Vietnam 1994, Nguyen Thu Thuy, waves after winning the title on Sunday in Hanoi. 18-year-old Thuy is a student at Hanoi Foreign Affairs School.

— AFP photo

## Ming Ming returns home

LONDON: Ming Ming, the Chinese panda who refused to mate, returned home to Beijing yesterday, reports Reuter.

London Zoo tried to mate her with Bao Bao from Berlin Zoo but the fur flew and keepers had to intervene with fire extinguishers to separate the warring pandas.

Ming Ming was accompanied home on her 5,000-mile (8,000-km) journey by zoo director Jo Gipps and keeper Michael Carmen.

"We have had pandas at the zoo for 20 years and I've looked after Ming Ming for the last three years," Carmen said. "I hope there will be a panda at London Zoo but I cannot see there being one in the foreseeable future."

"There is no point in her staying here on her own," he added. "It's best she gets back to China and into the breeding programme."

## Diamond studded wedding gown

SINGAPORE: Diamonds are forever. Or at least for a day. Reports AP.

When celebrity TV actors Yang Libang and Li Nanxing get married November 11, the bride's flowing off-white wedding gown will be studded with about 500 diamonds worth about 2 million Singapore dollars (1.4 million US).

"I will have to keep looking at the floor to make sure none of the diamonds drop off," said Li, who has been voted the Most Popular Male Actor three times.

The jewellery will be loaned by a local shop, which also is giving the bride — for a day — rubies, sapphires, soft sea pearls and aquamarine pearls, the tabloid New Paper reported Saturday.

Insurance is expected to run into tens of thousands of dollars.

Some 1,200 people are expected at the wedding and reception. Singapore television's Chinese drama division will stop all filming that night so all staffers can attend the glittering wedding.

The bride will wear seven other outfits that day, including a gold-coloured miniskirt and a fire-engine-red long gown. One of Li's jackets will be studded with 36 diamonds, the New Paper said.

## Algerian militants set ablaze passenger train

ALGIERS, Oct 24: Suspected Islamic militants intercepted the Trans-Maghreb Express from Algiers to Tunis and set it on fire in a recent attack near Setif, the daily *Liberte* (freedom) reported today, reports AFP.

The paper said the gunmen stopped the train at Hamman Ouled Yelles about 200 kilometers southeast of Algiers late on Friday and made the passengers get out before setting fire to the carriages.

The security forces said the 17 suspected fundamentalists had been killed in operations across the country.

Security sources also reported that suspected fundamentalists had stabbed Mohamed Arezki Chaib, the prosecutor for the Tighzirt region 100 kilometres east of Algiers, to death on Saturday.

Chaib, 44, had been kidnapped the same day on the road from Tighzirt to Dellys. His body was found late Saturday at the nearby town of Benchoud.

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