

BRIEFLY

Benazir in Turkmenistan: Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto left Islamabad yesterday for Ashkhabad on a three-day visit to Turkmenistan for talks on strengthening bilateral relations, state-run radio Pakistan reported, AFP reports from Islamabad.

Benazir accompanied by Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali, Defence Minister Aftab Shabaan Mirani and Information Minister Khalid Khair, is visiting Turkmenistan at the invitation of President Saparmurat Niyazov, the radio said.

Indian rebels raid banks, kill 6: Tribal guerillas staged simultaneous raids on two banks in northeastern India and escaped with 2.7 million rupees (90,000 dollars) after shooting dead six customers, press reports said on Wednesday, AFP report from New Delhi.

Bodo security force militants struck a State Bank of India branch and National Socialist Council of Nagaland guerillas stormed a United Commercial Bank office on Tuesday in Sonitpur district of Assam state, the reports said.

Christopher to tour 4 Asian states: Secretary of State Warren Christopher will travel to South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand next month on an Asian tour partly associated with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum summit, the State Department said on Tuesday, Reuter reports from Washington.

Christopher will focus on the recent nuclear accord between the United States and North Korea when he stops in Seoul from November 8-10.

Prince Philip in Mauritius: Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, and his youngest son Prince Edward arrived in Mauritius on Tuesday for a four-day visit, AP reports from Port Louis.

The husband of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will take part in the fifth International forum of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme to be held today and tomorrow.

ROK boat fire toll now 28: Divers found three more bodies on Wednesday, bringing the death toll from a fire on a pleasure boat in South Korea to 28, police said. Two passengers were still missing, AP reports from Seoul.

The bodies were found in Chungju Lake near where the 54-ton ship was consumed by flames on Monday.

Abkhazia clash leaves 2 dead: Fighting between separatist and Georgian government troops in breakaway Abkhazia's Gali region left two people dead and three injured on Tuesday, the Abkhazian Defence Ministry said on Tuesday, AFP reports from Moscow.

The ministry, quoted by Interfax news agency, identified one of the dead as an Abkhazian soldier and the second as a Georgian soldier who was part of an offensive against an Abkhazian base in Gali, which is located on the border between the separatist republic and the rest of Georgia. The ministry said the three injured were Abkhazian soldiers.

DPRK army chief hospitalised: North Korea's powerful military chief, O Jin-U, was hospitalised in Paris on Tuesday, and the South Korean Foreign Ministry said he was suffering from lung cancer, AFP reports from Seoul.

O. 77, the second most powerful man in the Stalinist North after former strongman Kim Il-Sung's son and designated leader Kim Jong-Il, was admitted to Laennec Hospital in Paris.

Policeman shot in Manila: In one of the most brazen attacks in years, suspected Communist rebels shot and wounded a traffic policeman on Wednesday at high noon in one of the Philippine capital's most crowded shopping districts, AP reports from Manila.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack, the fourth against a policeman since Monday. But the Alex Boncayao Brigade, a breakaway Communist faction, said on Wednesday it had launched campaign "in response to public clamor against rampant extortion" by police and soldiers.

44 executed in S China: The South China Province of Guangdong executed 44 people on Tuesday for involvement in prostitution and drug trafficking and convicted more than 200 others for serious offences, the Xinhua news agency said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

It said that 14 of those executed were guilty of organising and forcing others into prostitution and the other 30 were guilty of drug trafficking.

Pakistan destroys \$50m drugs: Pakistani authorities, in a fiery display of determination to combat drug smuggling, on Tuesday burned heroin and hashish with a street value in the West of nearly 50 million dollars, Reuter reports, from Attock Khurd.

More than half a tonne of heroin and more than eight tonnes of hashish were set on fire at Attock Khurd, about 80 km (50 miles) northwest of Islamabad.

Japanese royal couple to tour ME: Japan's crown prince Naruhito and his wife, Princess Masako, will visit four Middle East countries from November 5-15 on their first overseas trip since their wedding, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The itinerary of the royal couple's visit to Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain was approved at a cabinet meeting yesterday.

150 art institutes in China: The number of specialised art institutes has increased to 150 in China from 18 in 1949 when the People's Republic was founded, according to a report by "China Reform News, Xinhua says from Beijing.

The paper said that 30 of these institutes train students of advanced level in the fields of music, fine arts, crafts, opera, dance, film, acrobatics and other comprehensive art forms.

Hillary celebrates 47th birthday

CAIRO, Oct 26: US First Lady Hillary Clinton paid a quick visit to the pyramids today, while her husband, caught in a whirlwind Middle East tour, wished he could reports Reuter.

Hillary spent 30 minutes at a presidential rest-house overlooking the pyramids accompanied by Egyptian First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, who gave her an impromptu history lesson as they looked out from a balcony on to the site.

The two women had a traditional Egyptian breakfast consisting of ful (fava beans), lablab, local cheeses, honey and molasses.

A birthday cake for Hillary followed.

"I'm glad to be here on my birthday," Hillary, who turned 47, told reporters and photographers.

Battle of widows in Lanka's presidential race

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Oct 26: The widows of two slain politicians are running for president next month in Sri Lanka — not an unlikely contest in a region where long-ruling feudal families have given way to political dynasties, reports AP.

On Tuesday, the opposition United National Party chose Srma Dissanayake to replace her assassinated husband as its candidate for president, two days after he and 53 other people were killed at a political rally by a suicide bomber.

She will be running against Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga, the widow of assassinated actor-politician Vijaya Kumaratunga and herself the daughter of two prime ministers.

Dissanayake, a tax expert whose political experience is limited to local government, finds herself in national politics on a wave of sympathy generated by her husband's brutal death.

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka — where feudalism survived even during Britain's colonial rule — political dynasties replaced royal ones when democracy



Chandrika Kumaratunga arrived Sons, daughters and wives of powerful leaders have continued to share the public reverence.

ship of political parties, remaining as elected governors of areas where their families had ruled as princes or maharajahs.

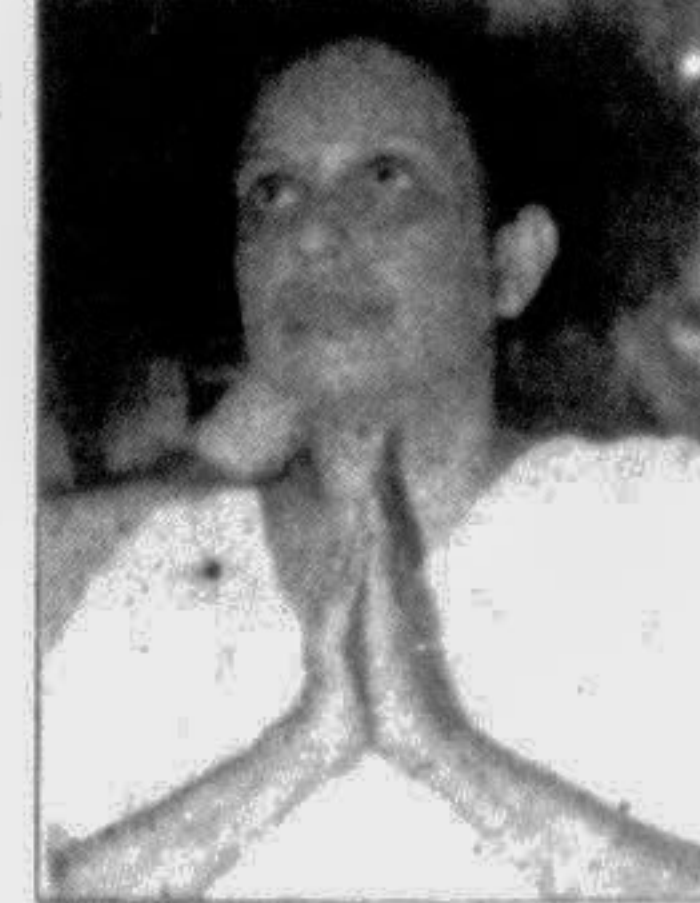
Kumaratunga said she has given much thought to the reasons behind the inherited leadership common in South Asia.

"It's not seen as a dirty thing for the same family to rule over and over again, whereas it would be a joke for the West," she told The Associated Press earlier this year before she became prime minister in August.

"I think it stems mainly from that, the traditional family system," she said.

The prime minister was educated at the Sorbonne in Paris during the 1960s when the university was at the forefront of radical student politics. Still, she said she never wanted to be a politician.

lutely literally forced." More than 30 years ago, Kumaratunga's mother, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, became the world's first female



Srma Dissanayake prime minister after her husband, Solomon Bandaranaike, was assassinated by a Buddhist monk.

became prime minister after her husband, President Zia Ur-Rahman, was assassinated.

In India, Sonia Gandhi was offered the leadership of the governing Congress Party when her husband, former Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandhi, was assassinated in 1991.

When she refused, some party leaders spoke about drafting her daughter, Priyanka.

Rajiv Gandhi himself became prime minister in 1984 when his mother, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated. She had taken the premiership long held by her father, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Assassinations of their fathers were the stepping stones to politics for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan and for Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, now the main top opposition leader.



Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas holds up a wooden striker to hit the gong yesterday in Bukit Tinggi, Indonesia at the opening ceremony of the fifth informal workshop on managing potential conflicts in the South China Sea. The workshop is being attended by representatives from eleven Asian countries.

Knesset approves deal with Jordan

JERUSALEM, Oct 26: The Israeli parliament on Tuesday ratified by a huge majority the peace treaty to be signed today with Jordan, reports AP.

The treaty was adopted by 105 votes to three with six abstentions, a parliamentary source said. One hundred and fourteen deputies out of the total of 120 were present for the vote.

Only the right-wing nationalist party Moledat, which has three seats in the Knesset (parliament), voted against the accord.

The peace treaty, only the second between Israel and an Arab state after Egypt, was adopted unanimously Sunday by the Israeli cabinet.

Imelda offers \$30m to victims of Marcos' rule

MANILA, Oct 26: Imelda Marcos announced on Wednesday she had offered 30 million dollars to victims of her late husband's regime but said the offer was rejected by the US lawyer representative them in a class action suit in Hawaii, reports AP.

It was the first time the widow of ousted strongman Ferdinand Marcos has publicly offered a settlement in the 1.2 billion dollars suit on behalf of about 10,000 Filipinos murdered, tortured and imprisoned during her husband's 20-year rule.

In 1992 a US District Court jury in Hawaii found the

Marcos estate liable for damages in the case. This year, the jury set the liability at 1.2 billion dollars. Imelda has appealed the ruling.

Imelda told reporters she made the offer "in the spirit of reconciliation and unity" to the plaintiffs' attorney, Robert Swift, last September.

Swift rejected it, she said. Imelda said the offer still stands.

Swift was in Manila on Wednesday but could not be reached for comment. The offer represents less than 10 per cent of the known Marcos assets frozen in Swiss bank accounts alone.

25 killed as Indian train catches fire

CALCUTTA, Oct 26: At least 25 persons were killed and over 60 others suffered burn injuries when a coach of the Bombay-Howrah express caught fire between Lotapahar and Chakradharpur stations in the early hours today, reports PTI.

Railway officials in Delhi said 17 persons were killed in the accident and the toll is likely to go up as more bodies are extricated from the coach of the ill-fated 8001 train.

A Jamshedpur report quoting official sources put the toll at 25.

The Tatanagar railway manager, S Tripathy, told PTI that the station master of Lotapahar first noticed the fire and immediately informed the divisional headquarters of the railways at Chakradharpur.

The report said the railway personnel at Chakradharpur switched off the power supply to the traction wire and stopped the train, but by 0215 hrs, the fire had engulfed coach number six of the train.

Russian army to be cut to 1.9m by Jan '95

MOSCOW, Oct 26: The Russian army will be cut to 1.9 million men by January 1995 and down to 1.7 million by the end of that year, Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Tuesday in an interview with the agency Interfax, reports AP.

He said the figures were laid down in a decree signed Monday by President Boris Yeltsin, but the president's press service said it had no information on the subject.

The Russian army stood at 2.2 million men in mid-July according to figures provided by the Defence Ministry. The Soviet Red Army numbered 4.5 million men.

Kuwait gives \$4.2m for allied troops

KUWAIT, Oct 26: Kuwait's ruling Sabah family has donated 1.25 million dinars (4.2 million dollar) to help pay the cost of allied support after this month's Iraqi buildup near the border, the official Kuwait news agency (Kuna) said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The Emir of the state, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on behalf of the ruling family, donated 1.25 million dinars in support of the military effort, Kuna said.

Kuwait, apparently dropping plans to impose a defence levy, said on Sunday it would welcome donations to help pay the cost of allied support following recent border tension with Iraq.

Off the Record



Miss World contestant Yulissa del Pino Pinochet of Chile cools off at Sun City, South Africa on Tuesday before the finals of the pageant which will be held here Nov 19.

Diana looks for new apartment

NEW YORK: Princess Diana is shopping for a 3.5 million dollar apartment in one of the city's costliest addresses, Trump Tower, The New York Post reported Wednesday, says AP.

Quoting unnamed sources the paper said the Princess of Wales is anxious to close the deal on a 12-room apartment on an upper floor of the ritzy Fifth Avenue building.

She looked at videotapes of floor plans for several apartments in Trump Tower while she stayed at the Carlyle Hotel last week.

A spokeswoman for Buckingham Palace told The Post it was "pure speculation" to suggest the Princess is eyeing the posh apartment house.

Her in-laws, the British royal family, have an apartment in the same building, according to the Post.

An unnamed source insisted to the paper that Diana wants to move quickly.

The Post said the Princess was steered toward the tower by British composer and producer Andrew Lloyd Webber, who already has an apartment there.

Webber reportedly stressed that tight security and hidden passageways enable residents to come and go unnoticed.

Should the Princess relocate to Trump Tower, her neighbours would include newlyweds Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley, Steven Spielberg, Johnny Carson, Sophia Loren, Elton John and the Sultan of Brunei.

Apes face extinction threat

LONDON: Gorillas and chimpanzees — mankind's closest genetic relatives — face extinction in Africa because of hunters who kill them for their meat, an international animal protection group charged on Tuesday, reports AP.

Hunters kill 3,000 chimpanzees and 600 gorillas in the Congo Republic alone each year, said a statement from the World Society for the Protection of Animals, an umbrella body for 300 protection groups worldwide.

"If these levels of hunting are allowed to continue, man will literally eat the Great Apes of Africa to extinction," the society said.

Precise killing figures were not available for the whole of Africa, said society spokesman Jonathan Owen.

There are only between 100,000 and 200,000 chimps in central and western Africa and under 50,000 gorillas, the society said. All are classified as endangered.

Hunting the apes for food is ancient practice, but killings have dramatically increased because recent logging operations have opened up previously inaccessible rain forest to hunters, Owen said.

"It has become much more of a threat than hunters hunting for subsistence," Owen told The Associated Press.

Gorilla carcasses sell for about 30 dollars each, a fortune for African hunters.

The threat to the animals has also increased because of the reader availability of the 12-gauge bullets needed to down the apes.

Virtually all countries in the region ban the hunting of the endangered species, but lack the means to enforce the ban, Owen said. The society is lobbying wealthier countries to help maintain the anti-hunting laws.

Turkey denies entry to AI researcher

LODNON, Oct 26: The Turkish government has refused to admit an Amnesty International researcher into Turkey to collect information on human rights violations, the London-based human rights organisation said today, reports AP.

This ban contradicts the "policy of openness relating to human rights issues" promised in a public statement made by the Turkish government in January and comes in a year

which has brought an unprecedented volume of reports of human rights violations committed by security forces," said amnesty in a statement.

It continued: "By denying our researcher access to Turkey, the government is choosing to hide and to deny the torture and killings carried out by its police and gendarmerie rather than confront its worsening human rights violations and take the necessary steps to end the violations."

Amnesty International said "legal and extra-legal" methods were being used to prevent information-gathering in south-east Turkey.

It said the press there had been under severe attack from both sides in the conflict, and that officials of the Turkish human rights association had been harassed, threatened, detained, tortured, and, in some cases, abducted and killed.

Aristide asks parliament to okay nominee for PM

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 26: President Jean-Bertrand Aristide asked parliament on Tuesday to endorse his choice for the prime minister's post, businessman and political moderate Smark Michel, reports AP.

Michel, 57, confirmed by both houses of the legislature would replace the acting prime minister Robert Malval who is to stand down.

The nomination was announced by the speaker of the lower house of parliament, Frantz Robert Monde, who was informed of the choice in a letter from Aristide.

Michel, who served briefly in Aristide's former government as Trade and Industry Minister, was viewed as potentially able to bridge the gap between Aristide backers who mostly live in abject poverty and the country's tiny economic elite.

The United States reacted with approval to the appointment and said it was