

BRIEFLY

Joshi cremated: As the guns boomed and buglers sounded the last post, the nation Saturday bade farewell to the chief of army staff, Gen Bipin Chandra Joshi, who was cremated at Brar cemetery in New Delhi with full military honours. PTI reports from New Delhi.

To the strains of haunting "auliyan sayne", Abhay Joshi, the army chief's eldest son, lit the funeral pyre as thousands of army, navy and air force jawans reversed arms and officers raised their hands in the last salute to the army chief who strived for total integration among the three services.

Prayer for peace in E Timor: Catholics in East Timor's capital Dili attended mass yesterday and prayed for peace in the troubled former Portuguese colony that has been rocked by week-long pro-independence protests. Reuter reports from Dili, East Timor.

Meanwhile, 29 East Timorese youths holed up in the US embassy compound in Jakarta met representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the first time. The ICRC has said it would help prepare travel documents for the youths if they decide to seek asylum.

Plane missing in Indonesia: A Cessna airplane with a New Zealander and a Canadian aboard was reported missing over the eastern Indonesian province of Irian Jaya, the search and rescue agency said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

The pilot, identified as Brian Pettit of New Zealand and the passenger, Scott Wessler of Canada, were conducting an aerial survey for a gold mining company, said rescue official Joko Tri.

Diarrhoea claims 11 in Sumatra: An outbreak of diarrhoea has killed 11 people and affected 611 others in Sumatra island's Bengkulu province since September. AFP reports from Jakarta yesterday.

The Kompas Daily quoted a government spokesman, Errman Ahmad, as saying that the epidemic hit 44 villages in four districts of Bengkulu, where medicine and paramedics have been sent to check the disease and attend to the ill.

Chilean president in S Korea: Chilean President Eduardo Frei arrived in South Korea yesterday for talks with President Kim Young-Sam on expanding ties between the two countries. Reuter reports from Seoul.

During his three-day stay, Frei will also meet parliamentary leaders and businessmen.

Cracker blast kills 6 in S China: Sparks from a dropped stone ignited the firecrackers a family was making, killing a man and five children in south China, Hong Kong press reports said Sunday. AP says from Hong Kong.

Nine people, including the five children, were making firecrackers inside a house when one child, who also was watching television at the time, accidentally dropped the stone, the reports said. The explosion occurred last Thursday in Heping county in Guangdong province, they added.



Irish Finance Minister Bertie Ahern (L) and outgoing Prime Minister Albert Reynolds wave to the press on Saturday in Dublin. Ahern was elected leader of the Fianna Fail, Ireland's largest political party, and will replace Reynolds, who resigned as Irish Premier November 17. — AFP photo

French workers on strike: Eight thousand people demonstrated in Belfort in eastern France Saturday in support of local factory workers on strike for nearly four weeks. AFP reports from Belfort, France.

Sympathisers came both from the immediate area and from the Alsace region to the north.

24 killed in Algerian clash: Twenty-four people were killed in a clash between armed fundamentalists and security forces, an official statement said on Saturday. AFP reports from Algiers.

The clash occurred on Wednesday in Sidi Abdellah, near Mahelina, 20 kilometers (12 miles) west of Algiers. Fundamentalists killed eight civilians including a 65-year-old woman and two members of the security forces while 14 militants died, the statement said. Four other civilians were wounded.

Blast in Turkish theater: A bomb went off in a pornographic movie theater on Saturday, injuring one person and causing minor damage, police said. AP reports from Istanbul.

Kurdish guerrilla organisation, which fights for autonomy in southeastern Turkey, claimed responsibility in telephone calls to the Turkish newspapers.

5 die as house collapses in Egypt: Five people were killed Saturday, four of them children as their house collapsed after heavy rains in the Nile Delta of northern Egypt, police said. AFP reports from Cairo.

They said the house collapsed in the village of Tala following an overnight downpour.

Ghali greets Mozambicans: Secretary-General Boutros Ghali congratulated the people of Mozambique on Saturday on the successful holding of elections and urged them to embark on the task of national reconciliation. Reuter reports from UN.

The people of Mozambique have exercised their right of voting in the presidential and parliamentary elections in a calm and peaceful atmosphere, he said in a statement.

3 shot dead in Egypt: An Islamic militant and two other people were killed on Saturday in the troubled Malawi region of southern Egypt, police said. AFP reports from Minya.

They said a police unit came under attack from assailants hiding in a sugar cane field near Malawi in Minya province and returned fire.

Norwegians against EU membership

OSLO, Nov 20: Twenty thousand people demonstrated in central Oslo on Saturday against Norwegian membership of the European Union, nine days ahead of a referendum on the issue, a referendum on the issue, a referendum said. Reports AFP.

The demonstrators most of whom had travelled from the centre and north of the country, converged on the town hall in the city centre, causing some traffic disruption but no incidents of violence or vandalism, a spokesman said.

One of the organisers of the no to the European Union rally Ham Kvanmo said the demonstration had been in Norway.

Killing of Israeli soldier hampers peace move in Gaza

GAZA, Nov 20: The killing of an Israeli soldier and rifts between the PLO and the militant Muslim group Hamas have tempered initial optimism that a marathon mediation effort will end bloodshed in the seething Gaza Strip, reports Reuter.

Hours after Hamas urged its guerrillas to avenge the Friday killing of 13 Gazans in a spasm of inter-Palestinian violence in the Strip, its gunmen sprayed automatic fire at the Israeli army Netzarim checkpoint in Gaza on Saturday, mortally wounding one soldier.

Earlier on Saturday, Arab-Israeli troops guarding a Jewish settlement opened fire on stone

throwing demonstrators at Netzarim, fatally wounding a 17-year-old.

Hamas, the vanguard of opposition to the Israeli-PLO peace deal on Palestinian self-rule, broadcast claims of responsibility for the killing of the soldier over loudspeakers in Gaza City.

Though Hamas and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA) have both taken steps to cool tension on Gaza, they still blame each other for what Hamas calls the "massacre" that erupted at a main Gaza mosque on Friday.

For much of Saturday, Arab-Israeli legislators and PLO offi-

cials shuttling between the sides were optimistic that agreement could be reached.

But the talks ran around as the PA rejected a basic Hamas demand that the Palestinians accept responsibility for the Friday killings.

The clashes have confronted the PA with its gravest crisis since it assumed control of the Gaza Strip last May.

An Israeli cabinet minister warned Arafat on Saturday that bloody internal strife in the Gaza Strip, if unchecked, could block the next phase of the peace deal.

Perhaps mindful of Arafat's plight, Prime Minister Yitzhak

Rabin told Israeli reporters during his US tour that the Gaza clashes were strictly an "internal Palestinian affair" and the less Israeli officials said about it publicly, the better.

Both spoke before the guerrilla attack at Netzarim, an army checkpoint where three Israeli officers were killed in an Islamic Jihad suicide bombing earlier in the month.

Mediator Abdul Wahab Darawshe, an Arab member of Israel's parliament, told Israel's army radio, "I'm afraid that any spark could reignite the situation in Gaza."

The PA accused Hamas and unnamed "outside parties" of firing at police during the

1000 arrested in Iraq

NICOSIA, Nov 20: The Iraqi authorities have arrested more than 1,000 people around the country, including several army officers, the opposition said on Saturday, reports AFP.

In a communiqué released in Nicosia, the Iraqi National Congress (INC) an opposition coalition of Arab and Kurdish groups named only General Mohammad Mazlum Al Duleimi, commander of Al-Bakr Air Force Base north of Baghdad, among those rounded up.

Most of the arrests took place in Baghdad, Mosul and Ramadi, the coalition, which is based in Kurdish-held northern Iraq, said in a statement sent to AFP in Nicosia.

The INC did not say when the arrests took place.

Demolition to celebrate Seoul anniversary

SEOUL, Nov 20: The Seoul city government today dynamited a huge apartment complex that once housed thousands of foreigners in the South Korean capital, reports Reuter.

The spectacular demolition, broadcast live on television, used 500kg (1,100 lbs) of explosives to level the 17-storey Namsan apartment complex in just a few minutes.

City officials said the complex, which thousands of diplomats and expatriates called home until earlier this year, was an eyesore.

The demolition was part of a festival marking the 600th anniversary of Seoul becoming the national capital.

Seoul plans next year to wreck the imposing Japanese-built national museum building, which many Koreans still consider a symbol of hated Japanese colonial rule earlier this century.

Demolition work is to begin on August 15, 1995 — the 50th anniversary of Korea's liberation at the end of World War II.



Miss World 1994, Aishwarya Rai of India (C), First Princess Basetsane Makgalemele of South Africa (L) and Second Princess Irene Izquierdo of Venezuela on Saturday pose for photographers after the crowning at Sun City. — AFP photo

Tamil Tigers plan to use jets in suicide attacks

COLOMBO, Nov 20: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatist guerrillas are trying to acquire very light aircraft to use in suicide attacks on security forces, air force officials said today, reports Reuter.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have already trained some rebels as pilots, the officials said, adding the air force had recently bombed an airstrip the LTTE was building near its northern stronghold, the Jaffna Peninsula.

The makeshift strip was bombed three months ago in the northern Kilinochchi area, south of Jaffna, they told Reuters.

The LTTE is thought to have trained some of its fight-

ers as pilots in unidentified Western countries that are home to many Tamil expatriates and refugees, they said.

The rebels were trying to acquire microlight sports aircraft from the same countries, the officials added.

The independent Sunday Island newspaper reported that 20 pilots from the LTTE's air arm, known as the "Air Tigers", had finished their training in assembling and flying single-seat microlights. The pilots are expected to arrive soon in Jaffna, it said.

Military officials said two rebels, believed to have been trained as pilots, were killed when they infiltrated the Palayai Airbase in Jaffna earlier this year.

Velupillai Prabhakaran is wanted for Gandhi's murder in 1991, and the trial is pending his capture.

The military believes the rebels may even be trying to hijack air force helicopters.

The Sunday Island said parts for assembling at least five single-seat light aircraft might have already arrived in northern Sri Lanka in the middle of this year, along with an arms shipment.

It quoted an unidentified former Tamil militia leader as saying the Tigers planned their first airborne suicide attack in the nearby Indian state of Tamil Nadu to kill witnesses in the trial for the murder of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Tamil Tiger chieftain Velupillai Prabhakaran is wanted for Gandhi's murder in 1991, and the trial is pending his capture.

Sharif's father leaves hospital

ISLAMABAD, Nov 20: Mian Mohammad Sharif, the aged father of opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, was discharged from Pakistan Institute of Medical Science (PIMS) and left for his home town Lahore Saturday night, reports Xinhua.

Two senior doctors of PIMS also accompanied him to Lahore, the capital of the Punjab province.

IRA hardliners plan to restart bombing campaign

LONDON, Nov 20: Hardliners in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) are planning to break away and restart a bombing campaign in Britain and Northern Ireland that ended with the IRA ceasefire of September 1, the Sunday Times reported, says AFP.

The breakaway faction has formed a skeleton command structure and appointed key military commanders who are ready to direct the campaign, the paper said, quoting British security officials.

Rao needs to win in Karnataka and in his home state of Andhra Pradesh to keep his hold on the Congress Party in Delhi.

The COFT poll said the rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has never won power in any southern state, was the single largest party with a chance of getting 60 to 70 seats.

The centrist Janata Dal may gain 55-65 seats and the breakaway Karnataka Congress

Party of former Congress leader S. Baigarappa is expected to be the fourth contender with 25-30 seats.

Congress officials deny the state polls, including Goa and Sikkim which held elections earlier this month were rigged in favour of Rao's three main

old rule.

But they admit that defeat in the states could slow down his economic reforms programme.

Rao is projecting the reforms as the main agenda of his rule.

The poll said support for the Congress in Karnataka was the highest at 29 per cent, followed by BJP's 24 per cent.

Several other opinion polls have predicted a hung assembly in Karnataka where elections will be held on November 26 and December 1.

An earlier AFP report states that main opposition, the Congress, Friday backed an election commission's censure of two federal ministers for trying to swing votes ahead of key state polls and urged the ministers' removal.

Zaire bans formation of Hutu govt-in-exile

NAIROBI, Nov 20: Zaire has banned the formation of a government-in-exile on its territory by defeated Rwandan Hutu officials, Zairian radio reported on Saturday, says AP.

The Rwandans have also been told to halt all political activities in Zaire, the broadcast quoted Communications and Press Minister Masegabio Nsanzu as saying.

It was monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

Nsanzu said Zaire was only prepared to grant Rwandans political asylum for humanitarian reasons while waiting for another country to take them.

Accordingly, no Rwandan government-in-exile can be allowed to operate on Zairian territory, Nsanzu said.

The Zairian ban came as top

Support for Congress falls in Karnataka

BANGALORE, Nov 20: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's Congress Party has lost substantial support in the southern Karnataka state where it is fighting crucial assembly elections in the next two weeks, an opinion poll said.

The poll by Delhi-based Current Opinion and Future Trends (COFT), made available to Reuters today, said the Congress would win 55 to 60 seats in the 224-member assembly, a sharp fall from its three-fourths majority in the 1989 elections.

Rao needs to win in Karnataka and in his home state of Andhra Pradesh to keep his hold on the Congress Party in Delhi.

The COFT poll said the rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has never won power in any southern state, was the single largest party with a chance of getting 60 to 70 seats.

The centrist Janata Dal may gain 55-65 seats and the breakaway Karnataka Congress

Off the Record

Museum boiling over Faberge egg

MOSCOW: A private museum in Moscow is boiling a diamond-encrusted Faberge egg made for a czar has slipped through its hands, reports AP.

Christie's auctioned off the "Winter Egg" last week in Geneva for 5.5 million dollars to anonymous buyer.

But the Russian National Museum says the world famous auction house got its signals scrambled. The museum was willing to pay 6 million dollars maybe even more — but it was not allowed to bid.

Both the Moscow Times and Segodnya said Saturday the privately owned museum would sue to reopen bidding on the treasure.

"It was a total scandal," museum director Alexander Ivanov told the Moscow Times.

Christie's barred the museum from bidding because it did not have adequate guarantee of payment.

A Russian bank guaranteed payment, but the auction house insisted on a Western bank, the reports said.

The Moscow Times portrayed the situation as a bit of a mix-up. Segodnya suggested some sort of plot to keep the treasure from returning to its homeland.

The jewelled egg was made for Czar Nicholas II by the renowned Faberge jewellers. The Czar presented it to his mother, Empress Maria Fyodorovna, on the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty in 1913.

If not for the bank problem, the museum would have been a welcome bidder since it was willing to pay so much for the egg, the financial director of Christie's International