

## BRIEFLY

**Manmohan Singh visits KSA today:** Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh will visit Saudi Arabia over the weekend, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said on Thursday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

It said Singh, who is scheduled to start a two-day tour on Thursday, will be the first senior Indian official to visit the Arab Kingdom since 1986.

**2 journalists slain in Algeria:** The latest assassinations of two journalists in Algeria was carried out by gunmen who forced them out of their homes, then shot and decapitated them. Algerian television reported on Thursday. AP reports from Algiers.

Ahmed Issaad, a reporter for the state television, and Nasserine Lekhal, a journalist for the state-run daily El-Masa, were earlier reported by security services to have been stabbed to death in Boufarik, south of Algiers.

**Yellow fever kills 300 Nigerians:** A yellow fever outbreak has killed at least 300 people in Nigeria, a news agency said on Friday. AP reports from Lagos.

The News Agency of Nigeria said the outbreak began two weeks ago in the Orsu area of eastern Imo state and spread to neighbouring Orlu area, where at least 50 victims have been hospitalised.

**Teachers' strike in Ukraine:** Thousands of teachers demonstrated outside Ukrainian government headquarters on Friday to protest rising prices and shrinking salaries. AP reports from Kiev.

The three-day strike in Kiev is the most visible sign yet of the increasing unpopularity of an austerity plan President Leonid Kuchma says will eventually put Ukraine on the road to economic health.

**34 die in Kenyan road mishap:** Thirty-four prison warders and another person were killed in Kenya's worst road accident this year, officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Nairobi.

The front wheel of a lorry carrying 64 people, including the warders, headed for an Independence Day parade in Nairobi, burst as it was coming down a hill on Thursday six km northeast of Nairobi, the Home Affairs Ministry said.

**Ortega suffers heart attack:** Former Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, 49, was hospitalised in Cuba after suffering a minor heart attack, his Sandinista party announced on Thursday. AP reports from Managua.

Ortega was in 'satisfactory' condition at a specialised hospital in Havana, the Cuban capital, a party statement said.

**2 get life for racial murder:** Two white men were sentenced to life in prison for killing a Marine because he was black. AP reports from Houston.

Jory Wayne Thomas, 21, and John Carillo, 20, were sentenced on Thursday, a day after they were convicted in the shooting death of Marine Lance Cpl Tarron Dixon. The 25-year-old serviceman was shot to death in 1991 near his Houston home, two days after he returned from five years of tours in Panama and the Persian Gulf.

**51 held for killing elephants:** Authorities have arrested 51 people for killing 16 Asian elephants to obtain their ivory tusks, a blow to the preservation of the endangered animals, an official report said on Friday. AP reports from Beijing.

The elephants were killed in a 240,000-hectare (592,800-acre) nature preserve in southwest China's Yunnan province, the Guangming Daily reported. Asian elephants are native to the sub-tropical southern Yunnan region of Xishuangbanna, but only about 200 still exist nationwide.

**Actor Lionel Stander dies:** Lionel Stander, the gravelly voiced actor whose career spanned the screwball comedies of the 1930s and a supporting role on TV's 'Hart to Hart' a half-century later, has died at 86. AP reports from Los Angeles.

Stander died at his Brentwood home on Wednesday morning from lung cancer, publicist Alan Nierob said on Thursday. At 17, Stander began his acting career on stage, and he appeared in many Broadway plays before turning 30.

**TV evangelist Bakker freed:** Television evangelist Jim Bakker, who was imprisoned for milking his followers out of millions of dollars, is a free man. AP reports from Hendersonville.

Bakker, who did 4 and a half years in prison, a month at a halfway house and four months of house arrest, was released at the stroke of midnight on Wednesday. The fallen preacher, who rose to fame in front of a TV camera, spent Thursday in seclusion at his mountain home in western North Carolina, where he had been living under house arrest.

## Palestinians take control of health, taxation in WB

**RAMALLAH, West Bank:** Dec 2: Yasser Arafat's government on Thursday took control of health and taxation in the West Bank, broadening Palestinian autonomy despite a pall cast on peacemaking by Islamic terror attacks, reports AP.

The move completed the initial stage of handing over day-to-day affairs in the West Bank to Palestinians.

It also came amid growing calls in Israel for shutting off Palestinians from Israel because of a series of attacks in which 32 Israelis have been killed since early October.

About 1,000 people gathered Thursday in the northern Israeli town of Afula for the funeral of the latest victim, 19-year-old woman soldier Liat Gabai who was axed to death Wednesday.

A suspect detained Wednesday, Wahib Abu Rub, 24, from the West Bank town

**US, Egyptian students clash in Cairo**

**CAIRO:** Dec 2: Egyptian and US students clashed on Thursday on the campus of the American University in Cairo, and officials later said four Americans involved in the incident were leaving the country, reports AP.

Students and witnesses said the fight started after US embassy officials arrived at the downtown campus to investigate an incident a day earlier near the campus in which four American students allegedly roughed up the Egyptian president of the Student Union, Mustafa Nafaj.

They said some 250 students gathered to demand that the diplomats leave the campus.

## International

## US, allies have mismanaged war in Bosnia: Christopher

**BRUSSELS:** Dec 2: Secretary of State Warren Christopher confessed Thursday that the United States and its allies had mismanaged the war in Bosnia. He said they all have lessons to learn from the debacle, reports AP.

As the NATO foreign ministers moved to expand NATO to countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Christopher found himself cast in the embarrassing role of explaining the

Clinton administration's decision to forego force in favour of diplomacy to try to rein in the Serbs.

"All of us ought to try to learn lessons from the experience in Bosnia," he told reporters, while trying to focus attention on NATO's future rather than the faltering attempt to quiet the conflict in the former Yugoslav republic.

Stoutly maintaining NATO had fulfilled the peacekeeping assignment given to it by the

United Nations, Christopher said the purpose was to expand the alliance and revamp the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a 53-nation East-West group, was to forestall other threats to peace on the continent.

A senior US official put it more bluntly. "While Bosnia is burning we are trying to concentrate on the larger structural issues that may prevent other Bosnias," he said.

NATO's projected expansion

eastward would embrace the territory between Germany and Russia, where two world wars were fought in this century.

On Friday, Christopher intends to get formal approval from France, Britain, Germany and Russia for a new diplomatic initiative to try to draw the Bosnian Serbs into negotiations with the Muslims and Croats in Bosnia.

It calls for a cease-fire around Bihać, the northwestern Muslim enclave that Serbs are pummeling, a pledge to cease hostilities throughout the country for three to six months and then an international peace conference.

The lure for the Serbs, who control about 70 per cent of Bosnia, is an opportunity to press their demand for cross-border political ties to Serbia.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe and British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd made plans to fly to Belgrade next weekend to push the initiative. Christopher's aides said he did not intend to accompany them.

At the same time, NATO is considering contingency plans to withdraw the 24,000 UN peacekeepers now in Bosnia, hundreds of whom have been detained by the onrushing Serbs.

Christopher said an evacuation would require ground troops and the United States "would have a role in that." However, he said President Clinton had not decided specifically what American troops might do to extricate the peacekeepers.

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Christopher paid tribute to the new People's Alliance government at a meeting on Wednesday with Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, who briefed the Commonwealth envoy on the position of peace talks with Tamil rebels, officials said.

The Secretary General expressed admiration for the courage and imagination of the government in embarking on the peace process, a Foreign Ministry statement said.

Anyauku, who arrived here on Tuesday on a four-day official visit, is also due to call on President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her mother Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

During the final week of campaigning, about 30 people, mostly policemen, have been killed in land mine explosions blamed on the group. Three rebels were killed when they tried to disrupt voting on Thursday.

On Friday, three rebels were killed in a gunbattle with the police in Karimnagar province, while three others were killed in as many different encounters elsewhere in the state, United News of India said. The area is about 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) south of New Delhi.

**Police kill 6 leftists in Andhra**

**NEW DELHI:** Dec 2: In renewed fighting between left-wing guerrillas and the police in a southern Indian state, six rebels were killed in separate attacks on Friday, a news agency said, reports AP.

The Peoples War Group, an organisation fighting for poor farmers, has carried out a series of attacks to disrupt Thursday's voting to elect a new legislature in Andhra Pradesh state.

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**Actor Richard Gere and supermodel Cindy Crawford**

The pair announced their breakup in a statement issued on Thursday by their public relations firm.

"This personal and painful decision was made between us in July," they said. "Since that time we have been trying to work things out, but due to the recent conjecture in the press, we have decided to make a statement at this time."

Last month, a British tabloid published a photo of a woman hopping over Gere's garden wall. But model Laura Bailey said she was visiting a friend next door.

Gere, 45, and Crawford, 28, married three years ago. There have been recurring rumours that each of them is gay and their marriage troubled.

In May, the couple published a full-page ad in the Times of London, proclaiming their heterosexuality and their commitment to one another.

**New lease of life for 'special child of God'**

**JOHANNESBURG:** Mumbo Sapo was so disfigured by burns when he was barely a year old that his family left their Zambian village and raised him in isolation in the forest, reports Reuter.

Spine was deformed, his ad grew attached to his left shoulder, he could not close his eyes and his lower lip knitted itself to his jaw, baring his teeth. No outsider could understand his attempts to speak.

Now at the age of 14, he has had three operations at a South African hospital with more to follow and surgeons charmed by his infectious new laugh hope he will be able to lead a normal life.

"He is a special child of God. His survival so far has been a miracle," spokeswoman Marlene Parsons of Johannesburg's privately run Gaden City Clinic said on Thursday. "We want to help him have an independent adult life."

As a little child he had received no treatment for the burns he suffered when he fell into a cooking fire in Muchombo village in eastern Zambia. His disfigurement was so severe his family were hounded out of the village. Parsons said.

**Lisa Presley denies media reports**

**LONDON:** Lisa Marie Presley denied reports on Thursday that she and her pop superstar husband, Michael Jackson, are divorcing after six months of marriage, reports Reuter.

In a statement issued through her publicists in New York, Presley said the reports appeared in US and British newspapers on Thursday were false.

"Once again the media is being very irresponsible and spreading false rumours," said the daughter of rock 'n' roll king Elvis Presley. "Michael and I are very happily married and very much in love."

## Off the Record

### Hollywood's 'most beautiful couple' breaking up

**LOS ANGELES:** Leading man Richard Gere and supermodel Cindy Crawford, whose marriage three years ago made them perhaps the most beautiful couple in Hollywood, have separated, reports AP.



Actor Richard Gere (L) and supermodel Cindy Crawford

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**New Mexican president vows to check corruption**

**MEXICO CITY:** Dec 2: Ernesto Zedillo began his term as Mexico's president by vowing to clean up the justice system, fight poverty, strengthen democracy and renew efforts to end an Indian revolt in southern Mexico, reports AP.

Zedillo, who rose from youth as a shoeshine boy to earn an economics doctorate from Yale, was sworn in Thursday before 1,500 Mexican and foreign officials at the Chamber of Deputies.

He received the green, white and red presidential sash from former President Salinas de Gortari to begin a six-year term at the helm of this nation of 90 million.

"We think he will be a good president," said Carmen Valencia, a 60-year-old housewife. "He came from below and understands poverty."

Not everyone agreed. About 80 protesters among

the protesters had emerged from a peaceful gathering by about 10,000 at the Monument of the Revolution in downtown Mexico City. They shouted "Out with Zedillo!" and called for an end to the 65-year rule of his Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI.

Zedillo, 42, said one of his first acts would be to introduce a constitutional amendment for a "profound transformation" of the justice system, now subservient to politicians and often accused of corruption.

He also vowed to balance the overwhelming power of the presidency by strengthening congress and local governments.

**Nepali Cong urges new govt to bring political stability**

**KATHMANDU:** Dec 2: The former leader of the Nepali Congress (NC) party has urged the new communist government to place priority on fostering political stability and national consensus on important issues, the state-run news agency, the RSS reported today, says AP.

"Without political stability in the country, solution to other problems cannot be found," the RSS quoted Ganesh Man Singh as saying.

"There are many different problems before the new government and they are all serious, but political instability is the most serious," he said.

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