

# BRIEFLY

**Threat to kill Rabin:** A group of Israeli extreme right-wingers threatened to kill Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, denouncing him as a "traitor" in a leaflet published yesterday. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The sword of David which only has a few dozen members wrote in the leaflet that "Rabin's destiny is death." Rabin is a traitor who sheds Jewish blood, wants to sell off Jerusalem and has given the assassin (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat rights," it added, according to a report on Israeli radio.

**11 Japanese choked to death:** Eleven elderly Japanese choked to death on New Year's Day on sticky "Mochi" rice cakes and other festive delicacies. The Kyodo news agency reported yesterday. Reuters reports from Tokyo.

Many of the deaths occurred when the victims were eating "Zoni", a soup containing vegetables and Mochi, which are from cooked rice that has been pounded into a sticky paste.

**Saudi army raid Yemeni position:** Saudi army patrols attacked a position inside Yemeni territory on Sunday, a military official in Sanaa said. AFP reports from Sanaa.

The incident took place in the northwestern province of Saada, near the disputed border zone between the two countries. The official, who declined to be named, said there were no casualties.

**Palestinian shot dead:** Israeli troops killed a Palestinian after they were fired on near Hebron in the occupied West Bank early Monday, a military source said. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The incident happened in the village of Beit Auwa as troops and frontier guards were on patrol, the source said.



A Chechen volunteer (L) takes cover behind a Russian tank on Sunday during street fighting in Grozny opposing Russian troops and Chechen soldiers supporting rebel President Djokhar Dudayev. — AFP photo

## Illegal aliens to be jailed in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH, Jan 2: Saudi Arabia warned illegal immigrants and their employers on Sunday that they could face jail terms of up to two years or fines of 100,000 riyals (26,000 dollars), reports AP.

The Interior Ministry urged such immigrants who enter the country for the pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and then stay on to leave the Kingdom as soon as possible. Saudi authorities have deported thousands of Egyptians and Asians in the past few months.

Illegal immigrants will be jailed for two years if arrested or fined 100,000 riyals, while their employers could face a three month prison term or a 50,000 riyal (13,000 dollar) fine, the ministry warned.

The government earlier on Sunday announced taxes on visas for the estimated five million foreigners in Saudi Arabia out of a population of almost 18 million.

## Feud in Tamil Nadu Congress

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: Even people familiar with all the infighting in Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's Congress Party were surprised by the feud that boiled over Monday in one state, reports AP.

Rao plans to attend a conference this week in the southern state of Tamil Nadu on the language, mythology and literature of Tamils, the ethnic minority that controls the legislature.

The state's Congress Party officials have long been bickering with the regional party in power there under the leadership of Jayalalitha Jayaram, a charismatic former film actress. She enraged them recently by not inviting them to the conference.

The Congress Party officials say they will refuse to meet with Rao if he attends the conference as planned on Thursday.

That could be another embarrassment for Rao, whose party lost two important elections in southern India in November and December and which faces five more across India in February.

## Satellite dishes banned in Iran

TEHRAN, Jan 2: The Iranian parliament on Sunday banned all satellite dishes in a move designed to check Western influence in the country, parliamentary sources said, reports AP.

After several months of debate in the country and many parliamentary sessions the majority of the conservative dominated assembly finally adopted a ban on the import and the use of satellite equipments.

It followed an earlier vote to ban the dishes in principle. Hundreds of thousands of dishes have sprung up on Tehran roof tops and other major cities in the past year allowing some three million people to watch foreign television programmes.

Sunday's ruling gives satellite users one month's grace to remove their equipment or face legal action.

## Pak New Year's revellers defy ban: One killed

ISLAMABAD, Jan 2: Muslim activists clashed with New Year's Eve revellers and police in several Pakistani cities, leaving a student dead and dozens of people injured, police and newspapers said Sunday, reports AP.

Police battled members of the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami youth win in Lahore, capital of Punjab state. The student was shot on the steps of a university mosque. Jamaat-e-Islami chief Hussain Ahmed told a protest Sunday in Lahore.

The Jamaat-e-Islami students and workers were targeted because they tried to save the nation from the ills of the western culture," Ahmed told the Lahore rally.

Thousands of New Year's

revellers defied a ban on public and private parties in Punjab, imposed by the provincial governor after Jamaat-e-Islami threatened violence to combat what it views as a decadent Western practice.

Punjab is home to 60 per cent of Pakistan's 120 million people. Crowds sang and danced in Lahore and in the southern port of Karachi at midnight Saturday. Police reported fistfights but no serious injuries in Karachi.

While tens of millions of Pakistanis are living in poverty and Muslims throughout the world are suffering, a certain section of our society is following in the footsteps of the western culture by celebrating the New Year," Ahmed said.

Jamaat-e-Islami is

KARACHI, Jan 2: The man known as "Father Teresa" for his relief-work in Pakistan has decided to return home after his sudden departure for London last month amid fears for his life, aides said, reports AFP.

The bearded 66 year old Abdus Sattar Edhi had left the country expressing anguish over the unrest in Karachi.

He said he feared he might be assassinated and the blame might be placed on some ethnic or religious group in an attempt to fuel the Karachi violence, which claimed more than 700 lives in 1994.

Edhi "changed" his decision to stay out of the country on the urging of his wife Bilquis and will return this week. His private secretary, Syed Anwar Kazmi, told AFP.

The social worker had also been receiving appeals from many Pakistanis, Kazmi said.

The couple began their welfare work out of their own

## 'Father Teresa' decides to return home

home in 1948. They established the Edhi Foundation in 1966, which has grown into the largest social work organization in the country of 120 million people. Its assets include 5,000 volunteers and more than two billion rupees (66 million dollars).

There are more than 350 emergency centres and Edhi homes giving shelter to more than 8,000 homeless people, mentally retarded people, elderly, women, children and abandoned babies.

Edhi's fleet includes more than 500 ambulances, two air-craft and one helicopter ambulance, transporting bodies and ailing patients from remote areas to the city hospitals.

About 90 per cent of the casualties in Karachi City, frequently troubled by factional clashes and sectarian violence, are handled by Edhi ambulances. Emergency Edhi centres are located every 25 kilometers on major highways. They deal with more than 70 per cent of the victims of accidents throughout Pakistan, Kazmi said.

In 1993 alone, the Edhi centres arranged funerals for 2,928 unclaimed bodies. It transported 832 bodies in Karachi while its divers recovered 178 bodies from the Arabian Sea.

The foundation has also arranged the adoption of more than 26,000 abandoned babies to childless parents in and outside Pakistan.

There is no official patronage and the entire operation is based on public donations. Whenever he is in need, Edhi personally comes out on the streets on a begging mission.

## No date yet been set for Lankan talks

COLOMBO, Jan 2: Sri Lankan authorities were awaiting a response from separatist Tamil Tiger Guerrillas to resume stalled peace talks even as both sides continued their attacks, officials here said Monday, reports AP.

The two sides have stayed in touch, but no date has been set for resuming talks aimed at ending the drawn out ethnic conflict which has claimed over 30,000 lives since 1972.

The government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga told the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that it wants to revive the negotiations as soon as possible, an official source said.

Our delegation is ready and the chopper is ready to go to Jaffna to start the talks. But we are waiting for the green light

from the Tigers' the source said.

But the source discounted local press reports which said the government was planning to open the second round of talks with the LTTE Monday. Jaffna is the LTTE held northern peninsula of Sri Lanka.

The government sent a fresh message to the LTTE on President Kumaratunga's return to the country Saturday, after a brief holiday in the neighbouring Indian Ocean atoll nation of Maldives, the source said.

An earlier report says: Separatist Tamil guerrillas attacked a Sri Lankan army bunker, killing two soldiers, and lost at least four of their own fighters in separate New Year's day confrontations, the military said today.

## Move to cement Bosnian truce

SARAJEVO, Jan 2: Seizing perhaps their best chance to end almost three years of fighting, the United Nations and Bosnia's warring parties are moving swiftly to cement a four-month truce, reports AP.

Generals from the Muslim-led government and rebel Bosnian Serb armies met with the UN commander for Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose, at Sarajevo's airport for four hours on Sunday, the first day of the truce.

Both sides agreed to set up regional commissions to monitor developments in three government held towns: Sarajevo, Tuzla in the northeast and Gornji Vakuf in central Bosnia.

A government delegate also said there was agreement to open a civilian road out of Sarajevo closed by the Serbs last summer. But UN spokesman Lt. Col. Gary Coward said "nothing has been fixed."

It was Bosnia's most optimistic New Year's Day since war erupted in April 1992, when Serbs rebelled against a Muslim-Croat vote for independence. More than 200,000 people are dead or missing, and millions have been driven

from their homes.

We have a very promising start. Rose said after the meeting. "We covered a lot of ground. We made some very good decisions which will take the agreement forward."

Rose hopes to capitalise on the momentum Monday. He planned to travel to Mostar to explain the government Serb truce to Bosnian Croat leader, Kresimir Zubak, who is not

## 3 beauticians die in Taipei fire

TAIPEI, Jan 2: Three women died when a fire swept through a beauty parlour dormitory in Taipei early today, report Reuters.

The three, and three more who were hurt, were all trainer beauticians, said a policeman on state television. They were carried out of the dormitory after the 40 minute blaze was put out.

It was the first major fire after the opposition Democratic Progressive Party Mayor Chen Shui Bian took office last week

## Off the Record

### Elephant flies to Nairobi for treatment of pneumonia

NAIROBI: A sick baby elephant injured in a stampede in Kenya's southwestern Masai Mara game park was evacuated to an animal orphanage near Nairobi in a light passenger aircraft. The Standard newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

The week old calf, named Atong, was discovered by Kenya wild life service veterinarians at death's door in the park. Pilot Douglas Morey, who had just landed at a Marua strip, was asked to fly the young elephant to Nairobi national park for emergency medical treatment.

Atong, who sat next to human passengers during the flight, was suffering from pneumonia and had been badly bruised.

I was worried about the smell and thought the passengers might object to... the sudden outbursts of sporadic trumpeting, said the pilot, but the passengers were delighted, he said.

### Gays demand India to annul laws on homosexuality

NEW DELHI: Gay activists from traditional and conservative South Asia are demanding that India repeal a law that makes homosexuality punishable by 10 years rigorous imprisonment, reports AP.

The demand was made Saturday at the end of the first-ever conference of gay men in the region at a secret venue near the western metropolis of Bombay.

The conference had to be shifted to a secret venue because of a threat from Hindu extremists who say homosexuality is immoral.

The conference also demanded that homosexuals be recognised as part of Indian society. Ashok Row Kavi, the chief organiser said Sunday.

We need sex education in schools and to tell students that homosexuality existed in ancient India," he told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from Bombay.

The 5 day conference, attended by about 70 gay men from the region, demanded that the Indian Penal Code be amended to remove the law that prescribes jail for "any carnal intercourse against the order of nature."

We are not asking for legalising homosexuality yet, but it should not remain a criminal offence," Kavi said.

Kavi estimates that there are about 50 million gays in India alone. But barring a few vocal activists, most of them want to remain anonymous because of the stigma attached to being homosexual.

## It is nothing but fictionalised version

LOS ANGELES: Lyle Lovett figures he got his 15 minutes of fame when he married Julia Roberts, reports AP.

"I think I have definitely peaked in terms of pop culture," the singer said in Sunday's Los Angeles Times. "I don't think anything I'll do in my life on a public level will be as newsworthy."

Lovett said he focuses on the "reality" of his relationship with Roberts and not media reports that the 18-month marriage may be shaky.

"I'm married to this girl and I am in love with her," he said. "We have a relationship that doesn't get played in the tabloids... What you hear about is a fictionalised version."

## Republicans take over Congress tomorrow

WASHINGTON, Jan 2: Power officially begins slipping away from Democrats on Wednesday when Republicans take over the Senate and House of Representatives and set their sights on the White House for 1996, reports AP.

The 104th Congress born of the Democrats dizzying November 8 election reverses will remain in power until President Bill Clinton's current term ends in January 1997.

For two years, Clinton will have to get his programmes past Republican majorities in the 100 chambers with their party controlling 53 of 100 Senate seats and 231 of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives.

And it will be Republicans who determine the legislative schedule, preside over committee and decide which bills even get voted on.

The White House will be able to veto laws it opposes and probably can make them stick to override vetoes. Republicans will need to garner a two thirds vote in both the Senate and House of Representatives.

This White House-Congress balance of power is not unusual in the United States in 28 of the 48 past years, the White House and Congress have been controlled by different parties.

But usually it has been the Republicans controlling the White House and Democrats dominating Congress.

As of Wednesday, the situation will be reversed. Clinton is only the third Democratic President in the 20th century. Harry Truman and Woodrow Wilson were the first two — to share power with a Republican legislature.

## Most of Russians have no confidence in Yeltsin?

MOSCOW, Jan 2: Almost two thirds of Russians have no confidence in President Boris Yeltsin, according to a poll taken on Christmas eve, two weeks after Russian troops moved into the breakaway republic of Chechnya, reports AP.

The public opinion foundation poll, made public on Sunday by independent NTV television, found that 65 per cent of 1,500 people polled gave Yeltsin the thumbs down with just 13 per cent having confidence in him. A further 16 per cent were undecided.

## Germans still divided over anniversaries of May 1945

BONN, Jan 2: A year of painful anniversaries of events half a century ago has begun for Germany, threatening to widen the country's political split over how to take the defeat in World War II, reports AP.

The anniversary of the unconditional capitulation of Adolf Hitler's forces to the Western and Soviet allies falls on May 8, but it will be the climax to a series of dates to be commemorated.

These include the beginning of the final Soviet offensive from the East on January 12, the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in Poland on January 27, and the

## 9 policemen shot dead in Egypt

ASSIUT (Egypt), Jan 2: Suspected Muslim militants hauled nine policemen off buses and shot them dead in separate incidents in southern Egypt today, security sources said, reports Reiter.

The four incidents took place within one hour of each other near the Nile valley town of Mallawi, the sources said.

The gunmen ordered the policemen from buses as they were on their way to work. They shot them in front of horrified passengers, wounding at least three civilians when bullets penetrated the vehicles, the sources said.



Bosnian Serb army commander General Ratko Mladic (L), Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (C) and UN special envoy Yashuji Akashi exchange documents after they signed a global four-month truce on December 31. — AFP photo

take part.

Government spokesman Dieter Vogel however told AFP last month. "It goes without saying that we will mark both the end of the war and liberation from national socialism (the Nazi creed), at the same time as honouring the memory of the dead."

Rudolf Scharping, leader of the main leftist opposition party, the Social Democrats, and the head of Germany's Jewish community, Ignatz Bubis, agreed that May 1945 should be marked as the end of "fascist oppression."

But for Alfred Dregger, leader of the majority Christian Democrat group in the lower

house of parliament, "there is really no reason to celebrate."

In an interview with the weekly magazine Woche, Dregger recalled that Germany's surrender was followed by the expulsion of 14 million people from former German-held territory, of whom two million died, the loss of East Prussia and the Sudeten lands of Czechoslovakia, and a communist dictatorship for half the country.

Nearly four million German and Austrian soldiers were killed fighting for Hitler between 1939 and 1945 and a similar number of civilians. For many surviving veterans the end of the war was nothing but

a defeat, a bitter pill which had to be swallowed.

Germany itself, left out of last year's commemorations by the wartime allies of the D-day landings which led to the liberation of Western Europe, is still struggling to overcome suspicion about its modern international role.

Amid debate about the involvement of its troops as United Nations peacekeepers, the country began Sunday a two-year term as one of the revolving members of the UN Security Council.

There is strong pressure in some quarters to reward its economic clout and political importance in Europe with a permanent seat.