

# BRIEFLY

**18 die in Tamil Nadu bus mishap:** Eighteen passengers died and 26 were hurt when a bus slammed into a tree in southern India yesterday, the United News of India (UNI) said. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The accident occurred at Kanniloli in the North Arcot Ambedkar district of the state of Tamil Nadu, near the town of Vellore, 150 km (95 miles) from the state capital of Madras, it said. UNI said the crash occurred when the driver tried to avoid an approaching truck.

**Zahir Shah to visit Pakistan:** The former Afghan King Zahir Shah is expected to arrive in Pakistan in the next two weeks to play his role in settling the Afghan issue, Xinhua reports from Islamabad.

Local press quoted Syed Hamed Gilani, deputy leader of the Royalist National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), as saying that Zahir Shah's son-in-law Sardar Abdul Wali will accompany his father-in-law during the visit.

**Bus mishap claims 15 in Brazil:** Fifteen people were dead 13 injured and 16 listed as missing after a bus carrying 44 members of a Brazilian Christian group plunged into a river Saturday, officials said, AFP reports from Rio De Janeiro.

The bus which was ferrying members of the Christian rationalist sect from Sao Paulo to Rio for a book-launching ceremony, crashed through a protective barrier when a truck ran it off the road, according to a survivor.

**Ghali meets Ugandan President:** UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni met Saturday for talks on a possible regional peace conference, aimed notably at the Rwandan refugee crisis, AFP reports from United Nations.

They discussed the situation in Rwanda and in particular the question of refugees as well as the current efforts to facilitate their return in Rwanda, UN spokesman Joe Sill said.

**8 killed in Philippines:** A 16-year-old killed eight people, including a four-year-old girl, after stealing an M-16 rifle and going on the rampage in the hospital where he worked north of Manila, police said yesterday, AFP reports from Olongapo.

Edgar Fernandez took a rifle from the hospital owner Diosdado Diminado and began firing on people in front of the building. On top of the eight dead, three people were wounded as panic gripped the area for almost five hours.

**Swiss electors cast final votes:** Swiss electors cast their final votes yesterday in a parliamentary election expected to reinforce deep divisions over whether to join the European Union but leave the present government in power, Reuter reports from Zurich.

**Polls campaign begins in Algeria:** Algeria's presidential election campaign began yesterday amid fears of increased violence from Islamic radicals trying to stop military-backed head of state Lamine Zeroual gaining electoral credibility, AFP reports from Algiers.

One candidate for the November 16 poll has been killed, along with a former minister and many journalists in the run-up to the elections, in which Zeroual is seen as the favourite against three rivals.

**Sihanouk returns home:** Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk returned home yesterday after cataract treatment and several weeks of rest in China, Reuter reports from Phnom Penh.

The king and queen Monieath were met by parliament chief Chea Sim, government ministers and diplomats. "My left eye is cured. Only the right eye needs further treatment and will be operated on next year," Sihanouk told a local journalist.

**ANC, FF to hold talk next month:** The African National Congress (ANC) and the rightwing Freedom Front (FF) Party are to hold talks on white self-determination after next month's municipal elections, the parties said Saturday, AFP reports from Johannesburg.

"Both parties approach this issue with the determination to find a solution that will be in the best interest of the country's the SPA news agency reported, citing a joint statement.

**Attack on press freedom condemned:** The Egyptian journalists' union on Sunday condemned the arrest of a leading official as an attack on press freedom and charged the government was sabotaging efforts to amend a controversial press law, AFP reports from Cairo.

In a statement issued after an overnight emergency session of the board of the journalists' union, they denounced the "brutal aggression against the freedom of journalists."

**Ivory Coast holds election:** Traditionally stable Ivory Coast holds its first election since the death of its founding father Felix Houphouet Boigny today after unprecedented political unrest which has killed at least eight people, Reuter reports from Abidjan.

President Henri Konan Bedie, one of two candidates in the presidential polls but widely acknowledged as the certain winner, has ordered in troops to protect voters after a call by boycotting opposition parties to disrupt polling.

**1 lakh Zimbabweans to die of AIDS:** At least 100,000 Zimbabweans will die of AIDS-related diseases within the next 18 months, Health Minister Timothy Stamps said at the weekend, Reuter reports from Harare.

"I am not trying to be alarmist, but this is the reality we are facing. We are burying them (AIDS victims) at a rate of 300 every week," Stamps told the independent Sunday Gazette newspaper.

At least 100,000 people will die of this disease within the next 18 months. At present ... 25 to 30 bodies of victims of AIDS are put (daily) into mortuaries of Harare and Mpilo.

## Lanka to reactivate civil defence forces LTTE blames troops for attack on civilians

COLOMBO, Oct 22: Rebel Tamil guerrillas charged Sunday that Sri Lankan troops were attacking civilians, as the military claimed killing at least 106 rebels during its latest offensive in the north, reports AFP.

"The government troops (on Friday) continued to launch artillery shells on the residential areas," the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in a statement received here from the group's London office.

The statement said thousands of civilians were being forced from their homes the military denied troops had targeted civilian areas.

Rebels had earlier claimed that some 50,000 civilians had fled their homes following the latest military strike launched five days ago in the Jaffna peninsula, the main rebel stronghold.

The LTTE said it counter-attacked after an army advance, destroying a tank and an armoured personnel carrier and killing "several soldiers."

The military said troops had killed at least 106 tiger militants and lost four of their own men in fierce battles that raged Friday. Another 200 LTTE rebels were wounded, a military spokesman said.

Security forces also captured the Achiehelu Government Hospital that had been in LTTE hands during Friday's advance, the spokesman said.

The latest casualties raised to 66 the number of security personnel killed in the offensive while LTTE casualties for the same period rose to 196 dead, according to military estimates.

The heavy fighting in Jaffna followed the LTTE

slaughter of 73 Sinhalese civilians in the east.

Reuter adds: Sri Lanka is to reactivate civil defence forces to counter the threat from the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a cabinet minister said today.

The decision was announced a day after the separatist LTTE massacred 66 villagers in the east and two days after they blew up two key oil installations in the capital.

Another AFP report says: Security has been tightened at the main international airport, railway station and other "sensitive" facilities here following Friday's attack by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), military officials said.

"The situation is under control. We have also tightened security at sensitive installations. From now on

there will be frequent search operations in Colombo," a military spokesman said.

LTTE guerrillas blew up the Kolonnawa oil reservoir and the nearby Orugodawatte crude oil complex, causing huge fires and leaving at least 22 security personnel and four LTTE cadres dead.

The fire at Kolonnawa was brought under control with help from Indian fire-fighters but the crude oil complex still burned out of control this afternoon, officials said.

A night curfew that was imposed in the capital was lifted at dawn today after a day of sporadic gunbattles between troops and suspected LTTE militants holed up here, police said.

Police Inspector General WB Rajaguru said that residents need not fear since all LTTE cadres, who carried out the attack "were either arrested or killed."



Munire Acim (C), a journalist for the Turkish daily Hurriyet, is flanked by her brother (R) and aunt (2nd L) upon her arrival on Bosnian territory in Sarajevo after being released from a 15-day Bosnian Serb detention, on Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

## Russia shells Chechen villages

MOSCOW, Oct 22: Several people were killed and others wounded in Russian shelling of the villages of Orekhovo and Stary Achkoi, southwest of the Chechen capital Grozny, a Chechen peace negotiator quoted by Interfax News Agency said today, reports AFP.

The official, who declined to be named, said federal artillery fire struck the villages late Saturday.

The villages lie in Achkoi-Martan district, just west of Roshni-Chu, where three

people, two of them small children, died Friday night when their house was hit by Russian tank fire.

A spokesman for the Russian military command in Chechnya confirmed that Russian artillery fired at Orekhovo and Stary Achkoi Saturday, but he said it was in response to attacks by Chechen separatists. He said he had no information on any casualties.

The Russian military command said federal forces had come under fire from separatists 50 times in the

past 24 hours and three Russian soldiers were wounded.

The attack on Roshni-Chu killed the father of a family, his five-year-old son and two-year-old daughter. The mother and a second daughter were seriously injured.

Earlier Vyacheslav Mikhailov, head of the Russian delegation, said peace talks between Moscow and Chechen separatists would resume in Grozny next Tuesday after a two-week suspension.



French President Jacques Chirac (foreground) listens to his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin during a joint news conference on Saturday after their meeting at the Elysee Palace. The two said they agreed on international issues including a peace accord for Bosnia, extending NATO membership of eastern Europe, and European security. — AFP/UNB photo

## UAE border guards seize 54 Asians

ABU DHABI, Oct 22: United Arab Emirates (UAE) border and coast guards have seized 54 Asians who tried to enter the oil-rich Gulf country illegally, officials said today, reports AFP.

The 54 Iranians, Pakistanis and other Asians were captured late Thursday in mountains overlooking the northern city of Ras Al-Khaimah after an eight-hour chase that involved the airforce, the coast guard officials said.

The intruders had come by sea apparently from Iran, which has become a springboard for Asian immigrants sneaking into the UAE in search of jobs.

Police records showed more than 25,000 illegal entrants, mostly Iranians, Pakistanis and Afghans, had been captured over the past two decades.

"NATO's expansion will be a mistake," MOSCOW, Oct 22: NATO's expansion to include former eastern bloc states would be "one of the biggest mistakes western politicians could make," Russia's first deputy Defence Minister Andrei Kokochin said Saturday, reports AFP.

"The consequences of such a decision would be dramatic in the short term as well as in the long term," he was quoted as saying by the news agency Itar-Tass.

Kokochin's stance appeared to be aimed at raising the stakes on the eve of the October 23 summit talks between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his US counterpart Bill Clinton near New York.

**KSA identifies suspect of blast in mosque**

DUBAI, Oct 22: Saudi Arabian authorities today identified a man they suspect of a bomb attack on a mosque in the kingdom which killed six people, reports Reuter.

The official Saudi press agency accused Abdullah Bin Mohammad Bin Said Al-Amri of carrying out Friday's attack on the mosque in remote southeastern part of the desert country.

SPA reported the governor of Asir province Prince Khalid Al-Faisal as saying two men seen having breakfast with the alleged bomber, known as Ibn Muammar, were arrested, but the assailant himself had not yet been caught.

# Off the Record

## Mao's painting fetches highest price

BEIJING: An oil painting of the late Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung was auctioned off for 6.05 million yuan (737,800 dollars), the official Xinhua News Agency reported Sunday, reports AP.

The report described it as the highest price ever for a Chinese oil painting on the block, but did not explain whether that was only at auctions held in China or worldwide.

The painting was bought by an anonymous Chinese entrepreneur on the opening day of the China Guardian 95 autumn auction Saturday. Xinhua said without giving any details of the bidding.

The painting dates to the 1966-76 ultra-leftist Cultural Revolution and helped push the cult of personality surrounding Mao to a fevered pitch. It shows Mao, in his 20s, on a trip to a coal mine in central China's Hunan province to start a general strike.

## Group wedding culture in China!

GUANGZHOU: China's first international group wedding ceremony was held in this capital city of south China's Guangdong province, with over 200 couples of brides and bridegrooms from China, the United States, France, Japan, Canada, and the regions of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, attending.

The oldest bridegroom in the group is over 60. The wedding attracted several thousands of spectators Saturday.

Guangzhou Mayor L Zil U said that the thrift group wedding has been encouraged by the city government, and today's occasion is one of the steps to build Guangzhou into an internationally well-known metropolis.

A couple from Paris said that they were interested in feeling the differences of wedding culture.

## 'Clinique's' secret settlement

LONDON: The cosmetics firm Clinique has secretly paid a customer 75,000 pounds (120,000 dollars) compensation for an allergy caused by one of its products the Sunday Times reported, reports AFP.

It said that Marie Smith, 41, suffered permanent damage to her face, which became discoloured around the eyes and irritable in the sunshine after applying a Clinique skin cream.

The paper said the firm paid up on condition that Smith did not speak to the press but a source with the company had revealed the case.

## Did Marco Polo go to China?

LONDON: Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller whose 13th century visits to China were Europe's main source of information on the Far East for hundreds of years, may have made his travel stories up, a new book says, reports Reuter.

Dr Frances Wood head of the British Library's Chinese Department, says in her book that Polo never went near to China and that his famous accounts of journeys in the far east were fabrications, Friday's Times newspaper said.

Despite claiming to have spent 17 years in China and to have served the Emperor Kublai Khan, Polo failed to record distinctive sights and experiences that would have struck a visitor of the time, Wood argues.

There is no mention of the Great Wall, or porcelain, or tea, or the fact that the women had their feet bound, she says in her book "Did Marco Polo Go To China?"

Polo's "Description Of The World" published in 1298 was ghost-written by Rusticello, a popular romantic writer, who shared a prison cell with Polo after the Genoese invaded Venice.

The accounts were Europe's primary source of information about the far east until the 19th century.

But Wood says, that although Polo may have travelled as far as Constantinople (now Istanbul) the rest of his stories were based on hearsay. Previously published information and other secondhand sources.

## Gift for living Buddha

BEIJING: The Chinese government has given a luxury car to the designated "living Buddha" — a 12-year-old who is too young to drive, reports AFP.

Garamaba Ogyain Chilai, the 17th Living Buddha, is shown in the weekly Beijing review receiving a gleaming Toyota 4500 at celebrations last month of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the autonomous region of Tibet.

"The gift was intended to inspire preaching by the young Buddha," said the magazine received here Sunday. It said he was the first person in China to receive such a car from the government.

Beijing Review did not say who would use the car as the Buddha is too young to get a driver's license.

## Camera mania

BEIJING: At least one out of every nine cameras sold in the world has been purchased by the Chinese people, said a front page story in Friday's Economic Daily, reports Xinhua.

However, more than half of China's camera market is occupied by imported cameras as indicated by a survey by the daily newspaper in the Beijing market.

China's camera industry started in the late 1950s. In 1988, China produced nearly three million cameras with many of them sold well in the overseas market.

With large number of imports, especially smuggled cameras, the home-made camera production enterprises have been suffering from deficit since 1990 with a stock of one million cameras. Many of these enterprises have been closed down or switched to other production, according to the paper.

A country with 17 million scientific and technological workers and nearly 10,000 scientific research institutions which can send rockets into the orbit, China is able to and must work together to invigorate the domestic camera industry, the paper said.

## Gaddafi meets int'l media Tuesday

CAIRO, Oct 22: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who is expelling thousands of Palestinians and other foreign workers, will hold a news conference in Tripoli on Tuesday, the Cairo Bureau of the Libyan news agency JANA said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

In a letter telefaxed to Reuters, JANA said it would arrange transport for local and foreign journalists who wanted to cover what it called Gaddafi's "international news conference."

Gaddafi, who rarely meets the international media, held a news conference earlier this month at a camp near the border with Egypt that houses hundreds of Palestinians he expelled.

# Million Man March widens racial gap

WASHINGTON, Oct 22: As hundreds of thousands of African-American people returned home after rallying in the US capital, some questions have begun to emerge in the minds of the Americans.

People have begun to ask what happens next? What the black Americans would really do at home once they have attended the march? Is integration of black, white and all other shades have become an endangered American dream?

The participants of the Million Man March have observed Monday, a day of atonement. Tuesday was a day to think about the work ahead.

Sponsors of the October 16 rally, which drew an estimated four lakh people,

have said they are now charting a plan for a summit meeting to help develop a political agenda for the black men.

They have also announced the establishment of a fund to support black business and a task force to attack social problems.

But race relation experts see these steps as symptoms of a ever widening gap between blacks and whites in the US and point out that America is actually becoming what its founding fathers had feared the worst — two nations separated by colour.

Walters Mears, a columnist for the Associated Press, wrote that the Monday's demonstration has posed a serious challenge to all US integration measures since the civil rights movement of

1960s.

Timing of the Million Man March was important too. The rally took place at a time when congressional districts, earlier shaped to create black-majority constituencies, are being contested in five southern states.

The Affirmative Action that allows integration and equal opportunity for all minorities is under siege.

Congressional efforts to rewrite the laws of welfare, medical aid and the "willful amnesia" by the white com-

munity to problems of the minority groups are being criticised.

The Million Man March was also different from other black-initiated civil rights demonstration, in its own way.

The rally that took place

in front of the Lincoln Memorial in August 1963 was attended by white activists in large numbers.

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr's historic "I have a dream" speech transcended all racial barriers.

But the Million Man March was entirely an all-black event, and the main speaker Louis Farrakhan's reputation is widely criti-

cised for being a hater and anti-semitic.

Journalist Arthur Spiegelman has commented that a generation after Dr Martin Luther King Jr called for integration of black and white in the US society, the nation seems again on the brink of the racial divide.

Marshall Frady, the author of Rev. Jesse Jackson's upcoming biography, and others experts on race relation are warning that the danger signs of a sharp racial division are multiplying.

"We are on the brink of something really disastrous, may be on the brink of a total racial meltdown that leads not to violence but to the inability of people to function together and move forward," Jack White of the Time Magazine wrote.

## News Analysis

## Myanmar has turned to 'teak wood diplomacy'

YANGON, Oct 22: China and the United States had their "ping-pong diplomacy" in the 1970s which signalled their desire to improve relations, reports AFP.

Now Myanmar has turned to "teak wood diplomacy" in an effort to bolster its shaky relationship with the western giant whose world is law when it comes to obtaining access to international development funds.

Senior officials of the forestry department said Myanmar had made a gift of 40 tonnes of valuable teak decking to a project to restore the battleship US North Carolina — the home state of influential conservative senator Jesse Helms.

Another 137 tonnes of decking were sold "at friendship prices," they said, "in

the hope of creating good feelings" between Myanmar and the United States.

The former colonial power, Britain, has also been receiving Burmese teak.

Officials said Yangon has also sold 20 tonnes of teak decking a year since 1991 for the renovation of the HMS Victory, the flagship of British Admiral Horatio Nelson when he beat the French in the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The ship is in dry dock at Portsmouth, England.

About 60 per cent of the world's natural teak forests are in Myanmar, according to international estimates.

Officials have set an annual maximum extraction quota of 350,000 tonnes of teak, but the actual cut hovers between 250,000 and 300,000 tonnes.