

## BRIEFLY



Thousands of Palestinians attend on Wednesday at Yarmuk the funeral of Fahti Shakaki, the Islamic Jihad leader assassinated by suspected Israeli agents in Malta 26 October. Armed Syrian police escorted dozens of cars in the funeral cortege, which carried members of the Iranian-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah. Shakaki was to be buried in the Yarmuk Palestinian camp near Damascus. — AFP/UNB photo

**ROK executes 19 criminals:** South Korea yesterday executed 19 criminals convicted of heinous crimes, including robbery and murder, the Ministry of Justice said, AFP reports from Seoul.

The 19 were put to death by hanging at four prisons across the country, 15 of them at Seoul Prison. "The executions were aimed at showing the government's strong will to eradicate crime... and to establish social discipline," a ministry spokesman said.

**Quake rocks China:** An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale rocked China's northwestern Xinjiang region late on Wednesday, local officials said by telephone. Reuter reports from Beijing.

The tremor struck about 80-90 km (48-54 miles) northwest of the country town of Zhaosu along the border with Kazakhstan at 8:29 pm, officials of the Xinjiang Seismological Bureau said from the provincial capital, Urumqi.

**Colombian rebel leader held:** A leftist rebel leader linked to recent peasant massacres was arrested on Wednesday in Colombia's northwestern city of Medellin, Military officials said, Reuter reports from Bogota.

They said the arrest of Neel Mata 35, Deputy Commander of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels operating in northwestern Colombia capped a month long army search for him.

**Clash leaves 15 dead in Tajikistan:** Eleven Tajik militiamen and four civilians were killed on Tuesday when rebels fired a grenade launcher at a military truck, the government said Wednesday, Reuter reports from Dushanbe.

The rebel attack, in which one civilian was also wounded, took place in a part of central Tajikistan.

**56 die of dengue fever in Jakarta:** Dengue fever has killed 56 people and infected 4,881 others in Jakarta during the first 10 months of this year, the official Antara news agency said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Antara quoted the head of the Municipal Health Office, Aslan Lasman, as saying that the highest number of deaths from the infectious viral disease — 16, occurred in south Jakarta.

**9 killed as plane crashes in Mexico:** Nine people were killed and two injured when a plane crashed near the northern Mexican town of Piedras Negras a local government spokesman said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Mexico City.

## Iraq urges world to step in to end US 'plot'

BAGHDAD, Nov 2: Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan has expressed doubts the UN embargo will be lifted but urged the world to step in to end the US 'plot' against his country, reports AFP.

The UN Security Council, under the yoke of the United States, will not be in a position to end the embargo imposed after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Ramadan told reporters at the opening of a trade fair here on Tuesday.

Ramadan said, "it's a plot hatched by the United States and not an embargo."

But the vice president urged the world community to step in to obtain the lifting of the oil and trade sanctions

for "humanitarian reasons and far from US pressure" as the situation worsened in Iraq.

"The international community is invited to assume its humanitarian role to end the embargo far from the political aims of the American administration," he said.

The United States, along with Britain, is trying "to maintain economic sanctions against Baghdad under inhuman pretexts aimed at serving their interests in Iraq and in the Arab world," he charged.

Ramadan said his country gave priority to those firms which had not suspended their cooperation with Iraq during the Gulf crisis.

## Tigers vow to continue war even if Jaffna falls

NEW DELHI, Nov 2: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers have vowed to continue the guerilla war, even if their northern stronghold of Jaffna falls to advancing government forces, a rebel leader said in a published interview here, reports AFP.

But Anton Balasingham, chief theoretician of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), told the Indian magazine Outlook that the Tigers were ready to talk conditional peace with Colombo.

"Colombo is under an illusion about winning the war," Balasingham said in the interview which took place last month at Jaffna, where the LTTE has set up a de facto independent state since 1990.

"Even if they take over Jaffna, it will not be a military

success," he said. "The Sri Lankan north-east is a vast area and our guerilla movement cannot be crushed in conventional battle."

"The Lankan forces can take over the territory. But they cannot hold on. We will strike back," he told the weekly, whose correspondent reportedly travelled to Jaffna from Colombo.

The magazine hit news stands Thursday.

Sri Lankan troops are advancing on Jaffna which they hope to capture from the LTTE, one of the world's deadliest guerilla groups. The army has sent infantry backed by armoured cars and artillery.

Balasingham, a former journalist, told Outlook that the LTTE was stronger now than in 1987, when Indian troops struggled for weeks to

take control of Jaffna from the Tigers.

"As a guerilla movement, we do not attach any metaphorical or symbolical importance to any place," Balasingham said. "We attach importance to mobility. The LTTE will not talk from a position of weakness."

"Military pressure will not force us to talk. Concentrating only on the north actually means that the island's east is virtually free for us. We are not going to keep quiet there."

Balasingham dismissed Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's proposals to grant autonomy to the Tamils as a way to end the conflict.

Meanwhile, schools were closed across Sri Lanka today as intense battle raged between government forces and Tamil Tiger separatists for

control over the northern town of Jaffna, officials said.

The cabinet headed by President Chandrika Kumaratunga decided to advance the December holidays by one month amid threats from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) against children, an official said.

The closure ordered applied to international schools, too, but principals said they were calling emergency meetings of parents to decide if their institutions, catering mainly to foreign students, should remain closed.

"Intelligence reports say tigers may try to kill students to provoke a backlash against Tamils. If that happens, troops will have to be withdrawn from the battle front to maintain law and order here," a police official said.

## ANC claims victory in local polls

PRETORIA, Nov 2: President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) today claimed victory throughout the country in South Africa's first democratic local government elections, reports AFP.

The ANC's Mohammed Valli Moosa, speaking at the National Election Task Force's Operations Centre here, said his party had taken away massive chunks of support from Frederik de Klerk's conservative National Party.

Another AFP reports says the ruling African National Congress (ANC) was victorious in the first towns to report results early today in local government elections.

President Nelson Mandela's ANC won control of the small towns of Gatsrant and Malgiesburg, the provincial government of the

central Gauteng province announced.

The two towns were the first of the 688 local authorities to report their results, although major cities including Johannesburg and Pretoria were expected to announce results later today.

The ANC won six of 10 seats in Gatsrant, with three going to the white rightwing Freedom Front and one to a community organisation.

In Malgiesburg, the ANC won four of the five seats, the other going to the formerly-ruling National Party (NP), which is expected to garner the second highest number of votes countrywide behind the ANC.

The NP said it had won six of the 10 seats in the tiny free state province town of Verwoerddam, the others going to the ANC, but this was not confirmed by election authorities.

## Civil war flares anew in Burundi

KIGALI, Nov 2: Burundi's civil war has flared anew with the government accusing Tutsi soldiers of slaughtering 253 Hutus in a remote northern region, where surviving villagers have fled into the hills, reports Reuter.

Presidential cabinet chief Mames Bansubiyeko said soldiers chasing rebels killed the villagers in remote Fangara region in the troubled north of the tiny central African country.

We don't have details but it appears it was the military, he told Reuters in Rwanda's capital by telephone on Wednesday.

A statement from the President's office said soldiers acted without military authorities knowledge in the raid which came hot on the heels of a rebel attack on nearby Gashoho region.

## Kissinger meets Rao in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Nov 2: The former US Secretary of State, Dr Henry Kissinger, met the Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, here this morning and exchanged in broad terms the perspective on contemporary world affairs, reports PTI.

Welcoming Dr Kissinger's visit to India, the prime minister expressed the hope that his interaction with people in different walks of life would help bring about better understanding between opinion makers in the two countries, official sources said.

The two leaders earlier met in March last and felt they should renew contacts for exchange of views.

Their discussion broadly covered various aspects of international affairs, including the impact of the Cold War.

## Democrats attack Republican Sen for blocking bill

WASHINGTON, Nov 2: Democrats attacked Republican Senator Jesse Helms on Wednesday for blocking a bill allowing the United States to continue aid to the Palestinians and voiced concern about the message Washington was sending to the Middle East, reports Reuter.

Legislation waiving US restrictions on the Palestine Liberation Organisation expired at midnight on Tuesday, but the bill to renew it joined a growing list of ambassadorial appointments and treaties frozen by Helms because of a dispute with the administration over his proposals to reorganise the State Department.

"I'm very concerned about the implications, it sends an extraordinarily bad message to the Middle East, Senate Democratic leader Thomas Daschle told reporters



Miss World contestants — Inger Ebel of Norway (L) and Yasmin Bilkis from Bangladesh — yesterday relax on the golf course at Sun City. Miss World Pageant will be held on November 18. — AFP/UNB photo

## Indian aviation experts hope to launch indigenous AEWS by '97

BANGALORE, India, Nov 2: Indian military aviation experts hope to launch an indigenous Airborne Early Warning System (AEWS) by 1997 in line with its plans to build up the country's wartime defences, sources said today, reports AFP.

A successful launch will place India among a dozen countries which possess similar defend-and-strike systems, said sources from the Defence Research and Development Organisation, which is building the AEWS.

"India could also export the AEWS to countries that cannot afford the American E-2C or the E-3A Sentry," a senior expert said here on conditions of anonymity.

"Besides, the spin-offs from this venture could be

utilised for various other projects in the defence and civil aviation sectors," he added.

The Indian AEWS is designed to track aircraft and missiles from a distance of 200 kilometres (120 miles) and coordinate counter-measure offensives by air, sea and ground forces, the expert said of the project launched in the 1980s.

"Presently 30 million dollars are sufficient for this project, but we would need more funds when we decide on a platform for the system," the source said in Bangalore, hub of India aeronautical industry.

The state-owned defence manufacturing agency has narrowed down the choice of platform to the Boeing 737 of the United States or Russia's

Illushin-76, other sources said.

Lockheed aeronautical systems is also in the race to sell its C-130 to serve as the platform to the Indian AEWS, but the sources here said future supplies of spares from the US corporation could become a problem.

"We can build an operational AEWS in two years time in if we receive the required support from the manufacturer of aircraft," one official source added.

India has speeded up its AEWS project to counter Islamabad's planned acquisition of E-2C Haweyes as part of a 370-million dollar military package cleared last month by the US Senate for the Pakistani army.



Triple exposure portrait of Dr Ross Menzies, psychologist and director of the University of Sydney's Anxiety Disorders Clinic, posing at the Sydney campus on Wednesday. Menzies has developed a cure for chronic worrying, pioneering the technique of attentional control therapy which greatly increases a person's concentration and reduces the likelihood of worrying thoughts entering the mind. — AFP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

## Absent-minded nation!

WASHINGTON: More than half of American high-school seniors failed a basic test of US history, Education Secretary Richard Riley said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

"This test says when measured against high standards, our children don't know enough - and that's probably right," Riley said in a statement that also included the results of a nationwide test of some 22,500 public and private school students.

Known as the nation's report card, the history assessment showed that 57 per cent of 12th grade students performed below the basic level of achievement in history, according to a test administered in 1994.

Performance was a bit better for students in fourth and eighth grades, where 36 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively, flunked the history test.

Among the fourth-graders, 2 per cent were at or above the advanced level in history, for eighth- and 12th-graders, only 1 per cent were at or above the advanced level.

The questions were geared differently to the different age groups, the Education Department said, with the high-school seniors asked such large-scale questions as why the great awakening of the 1730s was important or why many leaders in Great Britain supported the confederacy in the civil war.

## Inner thoughts of a lonely prince revealed

LONDON: A recording of Prince Charles playing the part of the Shakespearean character Prince Hal was released today when a CD containing 20 of his favourite excerpts from Shakespeare went on sale, reports AFP.

The audio-book, called the "Prince's Choice," is likely to excite speculation about the inner thoughts of the heir to the throne.

The selection includes scenes focussing on the loneliness of high office, the yearning to be king, the pain of losing a wife and the act of betrayal.

In the introduction, Charles says he found himself wondering in amazement at Shakespeare's insight into the mind of someone born in this kind of position.

"It is about the loneliness of high office, the responsibilities, stresses, which afflict all those who shoulder great burdens, run industries or schools — or perhaps nurse invalided relatives," he added.

In the audio-book, Charles plays Prince Hal as he realises he will be King and must sever his friendship with the hedonistic Sir John Falstaff, played by the actor Sir Robert Stephens, who first came up with the idea of the book.

Other excerpts include Hamlet's famous soliloquy "to be or not to be," Macbeth's despair after the death of his wife and Iago's treacherous trick to destroy Othello's marriage to Desdemona.

The royalties from the book and the audio-book CD and tape will be paid to a company whose net profits go to the Prince of Wales' charities trust.

## Germany emerges as major arms exporter

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 2: Germany has become a major weapons exporter, far surpassing France and Britain in most categories and exceeding leading exporter United States in several, an annual UN arms register published on Wednesday said, reports Reuter.

The register was established under a 1991 General Assembly resolution which asked member states to provide details of exports and imports of seven categories of conventional weapons or weapons systems.

The latest report, the third in the annual series, covered the calendar year 1994 and included information from 84 of the world body's 185 members. There

was no data from Russia or from most Middle Eastern countries.

Germany said it exported 181 battle tanks, 1,170 armoured combat vehicles, 546 large calibre artillery systems, 24 combat aircraft, 20 attack helicopters, 18 warships (nine of them demilitarised) and 1,020 missiles or missile launchers.

Of the armoured combat vehicles, 252 went to the United Nations for peace-keeping operations.

By comparison, France said it exported five battle tanks, 72 armoured combat vehicles, no large artillery systems, two aircraft, one attack helicopter, no warships and 56 missiles or launchers.

## Colombia orders arrest of its envoy to Egypt

BOGOTA, Nov 2: Colombia ordered the arrest of its Ambassador to Egypt on various charges on Wednesday, including abuse of authority while he served as the country's envoy to India, reports Reuter.

A statement from the office of Prosecutor General Alfonso Valdovinos said authorities had ordered the immediate arrest of Ambassador David Sanchez Julio for crimes he is accused of committing against Colombian Embassy personnel in New Delhi between 1991 and 1993.

The crimes including abuse of office, misrepresentation in public documents and abuse of authority.

## 'Dead zone' in Mexican Gulf — a threat to key US fisheries

HOUSTON, Nov 2: A growing "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico has sounded alarm bells among scientists and public officials who fear it is doing serious harm to one of the United States key fisheries, reports Reuter.

The zone, in which there is no oxygen in the water and therefore no aquatic life, appears annually off the coast of Louisiana and Texas, but its size has increased dramatically in recent years. Researchers who range across the Gulf each summer measuring what is essentially a sea desert recently found that the dead zone covered 7,000 square miles (11,200 square km), the largest ever.

That was a 1,000 mile (1,600 km) jump from 1993 and 1994 when the dead zone was found to have dou-

bled in size compared to the worst previous year, according to scientists who have been studying the phenomenon for more than a decade.

"It scares me to death, and what really worries me is that no one can tell me how we're going to stop it," said State Land Commissioner Garry Mruro who directs Texas coastal policies.

The dead zone is a seasonal event that appears in the spring, grows in the summer and dissipates in the autumn when changes in the weather usually stir up the warm placid Gulf.

Scientists believe it is the result of a massive plankton bloom caused by an influx of man-made nutrients that flows into the Gulf from the

Mississippi River.

The plankton, tiny organisms fed by nitrates and other contaminants that wash in from fertilised farm fields, sewage plants and a variety of other sources bloom die and fall to the sea bottom where their decomposing remains deplete oxygen in the water.

"The dead zone" is how mother nature deals with the influences that man puts into it, said Jerry Mambretti a marine biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. It is also, he says, "literally a dead zone."

"When we're in the heart of it and pull a normal shrimp trawl through it the only thing we catch are the ex-skeletons of dead crabs," Mambretti told Reuters. The dead zone increased

dramatically following the 1992 Mississippi River floods, which poured unprecedented amounts of water and contaminants into the Gulf said Nancy Rabalais, a professor with the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium.

Scientists also say the zone has grown because of several years of unusually warm weather, which dampens cold water currents that disperse the dying plankton but even without the Mississippi floods and the balmy weather the dead zone has grown steadily because of an ever-rising level of contaminants in the river, they said.

The Mississippi drains 41 per cent of the United States watershed Rabalais said. As human activity has increased

along the river and its tributaries so has pollution.

A recent report by the Coast Alliance, a Washington based conservation group, said the level of nitrates in the Mississippi has doubled since 1950. Nitrates are found in fertilisers and industrial and human waste.

The "dead zone", Rabalais said, is not a human health problem but it does have the potential to affect fisheries. Already she said, "For very long periods, over very large areas, shrimpers don't catch anything."

The Coast Alliance report said the Gulf's fishing yield fell dramatically in the decade between 1983 and 1993. About 40 per cent of the annual US commercial fishing yield comes from the Gulf of Mexico, experts said.

## US-ROK vow to hold exercise

SEOUL, Nov 2: US and South Korean military chiefs, agreeing that North Korea still posed a threat to the South, vowed today to pursue annual joint manoeuvres and strengthen defence preparedness by updating equipment, reports AFP.

The agreement came at an annual high-level military meeting led by General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, and his South Korean counterpart, Kim Dong-Jin, a military commander.

Shalikashvili pledged a strong US security commitment to prevent war on the peninsula, saying top priority would be given to modernising the equipment of the 37,000 US troops in South Korea, it said.