

## BRIEFLY



Protesters gather outside the Shell Building in London on Saturday to demand that the company makes a statement on the fate of Nigerian minority rights campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was sentenced to death with eight others after an attack on the company operation in Ogoniland, Nigeria. — AFP/UNB photo

### Manila typhoon toll rises to 588:

The toll in super-typhoon Angela rose to 588 dead or missing, the government's National Disaster Coordinating Center said, AFP reports from Manila.

The typhoon also forced over half a million people into evacuation centers in nearly 200 cities, towns and villages and more than 86,000 houses were destroyed or damaged, it added.

### Polls in Georgia begins:

Georgians began voting to elect a new president and parliament yesterday which they hope can bring stability to their turbulent country, Reuter reports from Tbilisi.

Polling stations opened at 0700 (0300 gmt) across the former Soviet republic of five million and will close at 2000 (1600 gmt) voters will choose from among five candidates for president and elect 225 members to a new parliament.

### APS executive killed in Algiers:

The Algerian Press Agency (APS) said on Saturday its director of financial resources, Ahmed Khalifoun, was shot dead near his home in the Bir Khadem area of the capital Algiers, Algerian Radio reported, Reuter says from Paris.

The radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) said 50-year-old Khalifoun had been working for APS for five years. It did not identify who killed Khalifoun but Islamic militants fighting the army-backed government have targeted many journalists and executives working for state media.

### 1,400 kg of morphine seized in Iran:

Police in northwestern Iran have seized 1,400 kg (3,080 lb) of morphine, an Iranian official was on Saturday quoted as saying, Reuter reports from Tehran.

The newspaper Iran quoted an unnamed senior security official as saying the drugs were seized from "three international drug rings" in West Azerbaijan province which borders on Turkey and Iraq.

### Mastermind of Paris Bombing held:

Abou Fares wanted by French police as the suspected mastermind of a bombing campaign in France and another man were arrested in London Saturday investigators said, AFP reports from London.

A spokesman for British police confirmed the arrest but would not identify the pair.

### Iranians stage anti-US march:

Thousands of Iranians have gathered at the former US embassy in Tehran to mark the 16th anniversary of its seizure by Islamic militants Tehran Radio said on Saturday, Reuter reports from Nicosia.

Large crowds chanting "death to America" marched across Iran to mark the day in what has become a yearly state sponsored event in the Islamic Republic the radio said.

### Portuguese president to visit Gaza:

Portuguese leader Mario Soares became the first president to visit the self ruled Gaza Strip on Saturday when he held talks in Gaza City with PLO chief Yasser Arafat on the Middle East peace process, AFP reports from Gaza City, Gaza Strip.

"It is a great honour for me to be the first president to be invited to Gaza and welcomed at its entrance, Soares said after being met by Arafat at the Erez Crossing from Israel with full honours. Portugal will send a team to join EU observers who will supervise the first Palestinian elections due in January, Soares said.

### Serbs refuse to turn up for talks with Croats

OSIJEK, Croatia, Nov 5: Rebel Serbs refused Saturday to turn up for talks with Croatian negotiators which aimed to avert a new war over the last stretch of Serb-held land in Croatia, Croatian and US officials said, reports AFP.

US Ambassador Peter Galbraith said he would travel to the Serbs' stronghold of Erdut later in the day to see the Serbs to discuss the problem. Saturday's meeting in Osijek was to be the first between Croatian and Serb negotiators since a breakthrough agreement between Croatian and Serbian president is in Ohio last week.

Galbraith who has been co-chairing the talks said earlier Saturday he expected both sides to turn up.

## Rabin was a promoter of peace till his last breath

JERUSALEM, Nov 5: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, assassinated at a peace rally on Saturday, sealed an accord handing over much of the West Bank to the Palestinians last month and was seen as a traitor by hardline Jewish groups, reports Reuter.

He was also reviled by Palestinian hardliners who accused him of giving the green light for last month's killing of Fathi Shaqaqi, head of the radical Islamic Jihad group which opposes Israel's peace deal with the PLO. The 73-year-old former army chief shared the Nobel Peace prize for his 1993 groundbreaking interim deal with long-shunned PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Last year he signed a treaty with Jordan after 46 years of a state of belligerency.

No other Israelis except his Labour Party rival Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, 72, and President Ezer Weizman, 71, have played so large a role in present-day Israeli public life for so long.

In 1967, Rabin the warrior led Israel to victory in the six-day war over Jordan, Egypt and Syria and brought Palestinians under Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza.

Now as prime minister a generation later, he has taken strides towards peace at an equally swift and surprising pace. Explaining his readiness to hand over occupied land to Palestinians, Rabin told Israel's Maariv newspaper in an interview: "We want to have a Jewish state and not a bi-national state. The gravel-voiced former general came to power in

1992 vowing to speed up peace moves. For more pragmatic than visionary, he said Israel had to take calculated risks for peace. He vowed to topple psychological barriers.

Yet many were baffled when it emerged that he had approved the secret deal with the PLO — an organisation Israeli governments had for years branded a terrorist group seeking the destruction of the Jewish state.

"What can we do? Peace you don't make with friend, but with very unsympathetic enemies. I won't try to make the PLO look good. It was an enemy, it remains an enemy, but negotiations must be with enemies," Rabin said months ago.

When Rabin shook Arafat's hand on the White House lawn in 1993, critics accused him of breaking every important promise he had ever made, supporters praised him for bold leadership. But

but it was sometimes hard to tell. Was he a hawk or a dove? Rabin was born in Jerusalem, British-ruled Palestine, in 1922. He joined the Jewish paramilitary underground at age 18. After World War II, he helped free illegal Jewish immigrants in Palestine and in 1946 the British jailed him for six months in the Gaza Strip.

Rabin left the army after 27 years to enter public life in 1968, first as ambassador to Washington and, from 1974 to 1977 as Israel's only "sabro" or native-born prime minister.

His first government fell amid a scandal over an illegal foreign bank account held by his wife, but Rabin remained powerful enough in the Labour Party to win the defence minister's job in a coalition formed in 1984.

When in 1987 Palestinians of the occupied territories launched a popular uprising for independence, Rabin responded with an iron fist policy. He vowed to fight with "might, power and beatings."

But he also pushed for peace with Palestinians, drafting plans put forward by hardline Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Their coalition crumbled in 1990 when Shamir refused to go the distance.

In 1992 Rabin came back to smash Shamir, putting former generals in the front line of a tough campaign that portrayed Labour as the party of both peace and security.

Entering office, Rabin offered to meet his Arab enemies in their capitals and froze much new Jewish settlement in the occupied territories.

## Tamil Tigers poised to lose control of Jaffna Town

COLOMBO, Nov 5: Tamil Tiger guerrillas are poised to lose control of Jaffna Town in Sri Lanka's north to the army, but the dragging separatist drive will go on indefinitely, Tamil sources say, reports AFP.

The loss of the town will, however, be a severe setback to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which is facing its biggest military challenge in nearly eight years, Tamil politicians here said.

"Jaffna Town will definitely fall," said Dharmalingam Siddharthan, who heads the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), which too had once fought for a separate homeland alongside the Tigers.

Other Tamil sources and military analysts say the thousands of army troops massing barely 4.5 kilometers (three miles) from Jaffna town might be preparing to wrest it from the rebels in a final decisive battle.

Jaffna town is where Tamil militancy originated in the 1970s, and it has been the capital of a *de facto* independent state the LTTE has run in the Jaffna peninsula and parts of Sri Lanka's mainland north since 1990.

The LTTE has vowed to defend the town to the last man. But Tamil sources, who closely monitor the ethnic conflict, say the guerrillas may not withstand a determined army indefinitely.

On Friday, in an indication of things to come, the LTTE said it was withdrawing its string of administrative offices from Jaffna town to the peninsula's south to escape the army dragnet.

"The fall of Jaffna will be a major blow to the Tigers," said Siddharthan, who is on the LTTE's hit-list. "It has been their main source for funds as well as recruitment. It will be a major setback."

The LTTE regime in the Sri Lanka north includes its own police and courts and has been a source of embarrassment to Colombo, which unleashed its troops on October 17 and quickly captured a large area in Jaffna.

But Tamil sources warned that the LTTE's campaign for a homeland called Eelam in

Sri Lanka's northeast would not die even if Jaffna town, the symbol of Tamil nationalism, fell to the military.

"The LTTE will continue a classic guerrilla war," said K Premachandran of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), a former rebel group and now a political party.

"Even with just 3,000 men, the LTTE can be a formidable guerrilla force," said Premachandran, who belongs to Jaffna. "But Jaffna's fall will be a major setback to the LTTE."

The present LTTE strength is estimated at some 10,000 fighters. Thousands of people have died in the LTTE's protracted separatist drive.

## Over 55000 Egyptian, US troops to hold war games

CAIRO, West Air Base, Egypt, Nov 5: More than 55,000 troops, mainly from Egypt and the United States, will take part in the Middle East's biggest joint war games next week in a mock Desert Storm attack, military officials said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The two countries will stage coordinated amphibious landings on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, paratrooper landings in the desert, helicopter strikes behind "enemy" lines and a largescale land offensive to repel an imagined aggressor.

The officials said exercise Bright Star, held every two years since Egypt signed a US-brokered peace deal with Israel in 1979, will be joined for the first time by troops from France, Britain and the

United Arab Emirates. "This is a rare opportunity for US to conduct combined exercises. The only other comparison is with Desert Storm," lieutenant-colonel Thomas Nickerson told a news briefing at a desert air-base west of Cairo.

The United States led the large multinational force which recaptured Kuwait from Iraqi troops in the 1991 Operation Desert Storm.

Egypt, a keystone of Washington's military alliance in the Arab world, gets 1.4 billion US dollar in annual US military aid.

Nickerson said this year's Bright Star was the largest joint exercise launched by the US army central command, which covers North Africa to Afghanistan.

## JKLF slams plan for holding polls next month BNP describes govt bid to grant autonomy to Kashmir 'shocking'

NEW DELHI, Nov 5: The Indian government said today the decision to grant greater autonomy to strife-torn Kashmir would help rapid progress in the state, but the main opposition party described the announcement as "shocking," reports AFP.

"The package announced by the Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao will help in fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, which for the last many years is in turmoil," said Ved Prakash, spokesman for the ruling Congress (I) Party.

Rao, who is the West African country of Burkina Faso, said in a message late Friday that New Delhi would "strengthen autonomy in view of the aspirations of the peo-

ple of Kashmir" but reiterated that the disputed state was an integral part of India.

Rao also reiterated the government's intention to hold early polls in Kashmir. India's Election Commission is slated to announce the dates soon.

"The people of Kashmir want peace and the elections in mid-December will bring a popular government to look after their interests," Prakash said.

India's main opposition party, Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) said the Congress (I) Party's decision to grant greater autonomy to strife torn Kashmir was "shocking."

"It is a conspiracy against the nation, hatched in se-

crecy deliberated in dishonesty and announced on a foreign soil," said Sushma Swaraj, spokesman for the BJP.

Swaraj said Rao has surrendered to the secessionist demands of the militants who were fighting for a separate state.

"The people and the opinion leaders of the country will defeat this conspiracy," Swaraj said in a statement.

Reuter adds from Islamabad: The leader of a militant group fighting for an independent Kashmir on Saturday condemned India's plan to hold elections next month in the two thirds of the Himalayan region that it controls.

## 4 more killed in Karachi violence

KARACHI, Nov 5: Four more people including an activist of the opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) were shot dead Saturday in fresh outbreak of violence in Pakistan's commercial centre Karachi police said, reports AFP.

The MQM member identified as Sohail Ahmed Butt, 20, was killed in a gun battle with security personnel in a downtown area police said with security personnel in a downtown area police said.

In the volatile Orangi area in western Karachi bullet riddled bodies of two unidentified people one of them a woman, were found police said.

## Iranian Speaker calls for lifting UN ban on Iraq

DOHA, Nov 5: Iran's Parliament Speaker, Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri, called Saturday for the lifting of five years old UN sanctions on Iraq as he ended a visit to Qatar, reports AFP.

"The Iraqi people are the victims of the embargo, Iran is not at all happy with this embargo because of the suffering endured by the Iraqi people," Nategh Nuri, quoted by the official Qatari news agency QNA.

The UN imposed oil and trade embargo on Iraq took effect after the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

## Arizona varsity introduces Bengali study programme

CALCUTTA, Nov 5: The Arizona State University, USA, in cooperation with the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, has introduced a Bengali study programme under an agreement signed recently, reports PTI.

The programme, to be centred in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences in the Arizona State University, will offer direct and inter-disciplinary courses in Bengali language, literature and history, socio-economic development of Bengal, modern political thoughts in Bengal and Bangladesh and spiritual movements of Bengal.

Other elements of the programme include exchange of professors, scholars and students between the Arizona State University and West Bengal and Bangladesh, exchange of books, holding of seminars and exhibitions.

Society sources said, inclusion of Bengali studies will enhance global awareness for the 30,000 under-graduates at the university as part of its efforts to strengthen and broaden academic programmes offered at the university.

## Off the Record

'They only meant in cinema, not in real life'

BOMBAY: Mega star Amitabh Bachchan has fervently appealed to the country's youth not to emulate him in his roles involving reckless driving and stunts on the roads, reports PTI.

"They (stunts and reckless driving) are only meant in cinema, not in real life, he remarked at a function Friday night to release a book on road safety follow the laws," he added.

In most cases, duplicates are used. Moreover, every precaution is taken while shooting. Amitabh, who has announced his return to his movie career, explained.

The Hindi cinema's best loved hero, who has recently set up Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited, urged for establishing driving schools under government control and strict laws for issuing driving licences to help reduce road accidents.

In his foreword to the book "You Live Only Once," a teenager's guide to road safety, authored by Dr P S Pasricha, the IGP (traffic) Maharashtra, Amitabh wrote, "often we (in films) are shown driving vehicles without our hands on the steering wheel and are shown performing impossible and dangerous tricks on the roads. This must never be attempted in real life."

## Jackson's premiere of 'Earth Song'

DUISBURG, Germany: Thousands of screaming German fans watched a performance of their visiting idol Michael Jackson relayed live onto two large outdoor screens on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Jackson, 37, performed the world premiere of his latest single "Earth Song," due to be released on Monday, live on German ZDFG television in a venue in the western city of Duisburg.

About 10,000 fans, who did not manage to get tickets for the US superstar's appearance on a German game show "Wanna Bet?" (Western Dazz?) gathered outside to watch his first European TV appearance, ZDFG television said.

The show presented by star host Thomas Gottschalk attracts on average 13.65 million viewers in Germany a week.

It also featured Andrew Lloyd Webber and other celebrities, who had to guess if contestants could actually perform bizarre stunts they claim to master. Jackson did not join Gottschalk's couch guests.

The singer, who witnesses say was not accompanied on arrival in Germany by his wife Lisa Presley-Jackson, may stay in Europe until November 27 for the European MTV award, his record label Sony said. But it gave any details of his itinerary.

## Govt sends food to Jaffna for war fleeing Tamils

COLOMBO, Nov 5: The Sri Lankan government is sending 6,000 tonnes of food to thousands of Tamils fleeing their homes in the island's north as fighting nears the main rebel town of Jaffna, the government said Saturday, reports Reuter.

A ship carrying 1,000 tonnes of flour will reach Point Pedro at the tip of Jaffna Peninsula in three days. Two more vessels are being loaded with flour, rice and lentils, it added.

Western relief agencies and diplomats estimate the number of refugees to be between 300,000 and 400,000 many of them waiting to cross the peninsula's eastern town of Chavakachari and seek shelter on the mainland.

They fear of an all out attack by the army on Jaffna town, where the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam (LTTE) have been running a virtual mini state of their own for nearly a decade, is fuelling the exodus.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali said "humanitarian assistance on a significant scale will be essential to minimise suffering."

The Chief Minister of the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, J Jayalalitha, urged the Indian government to intervene with Colombo.

The government accused the LTTE in its statement of "manipulating the people of Jaffna," and "overtly calling upon civilians to stage a contrived exodus."

The Tigers have been fighting a 12-year war with the government for a homeland carved out of the north and the east for the island's minority Tamils. More than 50,000 people have died in the war.



Israeli girls cry next to the site of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin late on Saturday, a few moments after a Jewish extremist fired three bullets at the premier, two of which hit him in the upper body, as he was walking down the steps of Tel Aviv City Hall shortly after addressing a rally "For Peace-Against Violence" in Tel Aviv. — AFP/UNB photo

## Andreotti faces trial on charges of editor's murder

PERUGIA, Italy, Nov 5: A judge today ordered seven-times Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti to stand trial on charges of complicity with the Mafia in the murder of a journalist 16 years ago, reports Reuter.

Andreotti, already on trial in Sicily for alleged links with the Mafia, has been charged by magistrates with complicity in the 1979 shooting death of Mino Pecorelli in Rome. Judge Sergio Matia set the trial to begin on February 2 in Perugia.

Matia also indicated former Foreign Trade Minister Claudio Vitalone and Mafia bosses Michelangelo La Barbera, Pippo Calò and Gaetano Badalamenti, Andreotti and Vitalone have denied wrongdoing.