

## BRIEFLY



Ken Wiwa, son of condemned Ogoni human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, pleads for Nigeria's expulsion from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) at a press conference in Auckland Thursday. Only hours earlier Nigeria's military dictator General Sani Abacha confirmed the death sentence on Ken Saro-Wiwa. — AFP/UNB photo

**KSA to send ambassador to Jordan:** Saudi Arabia's first ambassador to Jordan in five years will arrive on Saturday, reflecting a further improvement in ties since the strains of the 1990 Gulf crisis, a Jordanian official said on Wednesday. Reuter reports from Amman.

Jordan approved the nomination of Abdullah Al-Sudairi, a cousin of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd as envoy to Jordan in September. He has served as ambassador to Bahrain and Kuwait.

**Firefighter killed in Tokyo:** A firefighter was killed yesterday, four others were hurt and another firefighter and a factory worker went missing in a fire that broke out at midnight at a large warehouse in Saltama prefecture, north of Tokyo police said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The 43 year old firefighter who died fell from the two story building in a beverage can factory complex while trying to extinguish the blaze, police said. The fire was still raging more than nine hours after it had started.

**Plane hijacker held in Athens:** An Ethiopian man who hijacked an Olympic Airways Boeing 747 airliner with 110 passengers on board was arrested at Athens Airport early yesterday police said. Reuter reports from Athens.

"It is all over. He has been arrested," a police spokesman said. The spokesman said special police units raided the plane and arrested the man, who had threatened a female member of the crew with a knife. No injuries were reported.

**Japanese princess in Brazil:** Japan's Princess Sayako was touring Brazil to mark the 100th anniversary of the friendship treaty between the two countries. AFP reports from Brasília.

Brazil is home town of the largest communities of ethnic Japanese outside Japan, numbering around 250,000.

**Quake shakes Sulawesi island:** Three offshore earthquakes measuring between 5.3 and 5.6 on the Richter scale shook the Indonesian island of Sulawesi in the past 24 hours, an official from the Meteorology and Geophysics Office said yesterday. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The Jakarta-based official told Reuters the first quake, measuring 5.6 on the Richter Scale, occurred on Wednesday at 23.01 pm (1601 GMT) in the Celebes Sea about 80 km (50 miles) northeast of Tolitoli in northern Sulawesi.

**Gunmen kill 1 in Cyprus:** Gunmen shot dead a nightclub owner in the Cyprus town of Limassol on Wednesday night the latest killing in a series of unsolved murders and bomb attacks there. Reuter reports from Nicosia.

Police said unknown gunmen opened fire with automatics on nightclub owner Menelaos Athinis, 44, as he was driving his car along a road in Central Limassol port and tourist centre on the South Coast of the Mediterranean island.

**Mahmoud Mestiri in Islamabad:** United Nations special envoy Mahmud Mestiri arrived in Islamabad Wednesday after meeting Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani in Kabul while Pakistan urged the embattled Kabul government to hand over power unconditionally. AFP reports from Islamabad.

A spokesman for Mestiri denied rumours that the envoy has suspended his mediation efforts and said he was vigorously continuing his mission.

**Hezbollah attacks SLA posts:** Hezbollah guerrillas yesterday launched a series of attacks on Israeli troops and allied militiamen in the South Lebanon "security zone" without causing casualties, security sources said. AFP reports from Beirut.

Israel's trained and financed South Lebanon Army (SLA) said there were no casualties in the early Thursday morning attacks, during which guerrillas fired mortars and rockets at SLA and Israeli outposts in several sectors of the zone.

**Strong quake hits Iran:** An earthquake powerful enough to cause heavy damage in a populated area hit northeastern Iran yesterday but there was no immediate report of any loss of life or damage, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported. Reuter says from Nicosia.

## 5 Israelis held in connection with Rabin murder

JERUSALEM, Nov 9: The number of Israelis arrested in connection with the killing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rose to five on Thursday, police said, reports Reuter.

"Two more suspects, Dror Adani, 26, of Beit Hagai, and Ohad Skornik, 23, of Tel Aviv, have been arrested in connection with Rabin's murder," police spokesman Eric Bar-Chaen said.

On Monday Israeli law student Yigal Amir, 25, confessed to assassinating Rabin at a Tel Aviv peace rally on Saturday.

Amir has been remanded in custody along with his brother Hagai, 27, and Avishai Raviv, head of a shadowy militant group called Eyal.

WASHINGTON, Nov 9: Some Washingtonians call it the most intensely watched 'noncampaign' in American history, yet it ended before it started Wednesday, when retired general Colin Powell told the world he did not have the 'passion and commitment' to run for presidency.

Ending nearly three months of speculation, he said he simply lacked the fire to make the sacrifices required to be a presidential candidate.

"Such a life requires a calling I do not yet hear, and for me to pretend otherwise would not be honest to myself, would not be honest to American people," he told hundreds of reporters. photo

## Bill to transfer US embassy to Jerusalem okayed

WASHINGTON, Nov 9: Legislation calling for the transfer of the US Embassy to Jerusalem within four years has become law, less than a week after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was gunned down in Tel Aviv, reports AFP.

The bill, passed by overwhelming majority in Congress two weeks ago despite a veto threat by President Bill Clinton, was enacted Wednesday without his signature.

But the bill was significantly weakened from earlier proposals though it calls for moving the embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv by mid-1999. The bill allows the president to postpone the move indefinitely in six month installments if he deems it necessary to protect national interests.

## 'Poverty claims 12.2m children every year'

MEXICO CITY, Nov 9: Extreme poverty has claimed the lives of about 12.2 million children under five every year and made 2 billion people suffer from malnutrition in the world, according to the statistics released here Wednesday by the Pan-American Health Organisation (PHO), reports Xinhua.

PHO official Jose Luis Zeballos urged that changes be made in the current development model. Otherwise, "marginality and the economic and social exclusion of a large part of the world population will get worse," he said, adding that peace and social stability will be jeopardised.

## Sri Lanka to raise defence spending

COLOMBO, Nov 9: Sri Lanka will raise its defence spending to 38 billion rupees (745 million dollars) in 1996 from 32 billion rupees (627 million dollars) this year, Deputy Finance Minister G L Peiris said today, reports Reuter.

Peiris, presenting the annual budget, blamed the steep rise in defence spending, originally estimated for 1995 to be 24 billion rupees (470 million dollars), on the intensified war against Tamil rebels seeking a homeland in the island's north and east.

"In the midst of escalated hostilities in the north and the east, this budget is formulated under severe resource constraints as defence expenditure is expected to remain high during 1996," he said.

## Palestinians expelled from Libya seek UN help

CAIRO, Nov 9: About 200 Palestinians expelled by Libya and blocked at the Egyptian-Libyan border since the beginning of October have pleaded to the United Nations and humanitarian organisations to help them return to Palestine, reports AFP.

We urge the United Nations the High Commissioner for Refugees Human Rights organisations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to help us return to our country Palestine, said a letter carried by the refugees by travellers from Libya.

The Palestinians who lack the proper travel documents have been stuck at a makeshift border camp in the no man's land between Egypt and Libya.

photographers and supporters gathered in historic Alexandria city, across the Potomac river off the White House.

Speaking at the gathering, the 58-year-old war hero ruled out being the GOP's vice presidential nominee, but said he might consider an appointed government position.

Many Republican, even Powell critics, said the retired general still was almost certain to be considered the number 2 spot on the GOP ticket.

National surveys "has shown that as a Republican candidate, Powell would immediately overtake or at least pose a strong challenge to front runner Bob Dole.

With Powell's announce-

## BJP heads for convention today to show strength for '96 polls

BOMBAY, Nov 9: Tens of thousands of activists from India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday headed for a convention which their leaders plan as a show of strength for a launch of their drive to win power in the 1996 polls, reports Reuter.

Around 150,000 people are expected for the three-day BJP plenary which begins on Friday in Bombay. The city's sprawling Racecourse has been taken over for the meeting, and roads and railways into India's commercial capital are clogged with extra travellers.

"We thought that the party is 15 years old and a Lok Sabha (parliament's lower

house) election is due, so instead of organising massive demonstrations, let the plenary session be an occasion for a massive show of strength from all over the country," BJP president Lal Krishna Advani told Reuters.

Advani said the key issue at the plenary would be national security. A BJP national executive meeting on Wednesday was scathing in its criticism of the Indian government's defence policies, accusing it of being supine and failing to protect the country's vital interests.

"Our analysis of current situation is that national security has been jeopardised principally because of the rampant corruption and criminalisation of politics that has taken place," Advani said.

He said the general elections, which are due by June, should be a stocktaking of India's first 50 years of independence, most of it with the ruling Congress Party at the helm.

Advani said Congress had failed in its commitment at independence in 1947 to work to end poverty, ignorance and disease and should be thrown out of power.

The BJP was also planning to use the convention to attack Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's handling of the economy. Conventional wisdom is that Rao's market reforms, are one of the main successes of his five-year tenure as prime minister.



The Prince of Wales confers fellowship of Royal College of Music on former Beatles star Paul McCartney for distinguished services to music at the Royal College of Music in London Wednesday. — AFP/UNB photo

## Rabin murder raises question about gun control in Israel

JERUSALEM, Nov 9: Hundreds of thousands of Israelis are allowed, even encouraged, to arm themselves against Arab attacks, reports Reuter.

But following Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination by a Jew with a licensed gun, Israelis are asking whether gun control should be tightened.

The killer, 25-year-old law student Yigal Amir, shot the prime minister at close range with a Beretta handgun.

Authorities who granted him a licence only checked his health and absence of a criminal record despite his links to a militant group, a police spokesman said on Wednesday.

An angry Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein reflected on Wednesday on the

hostile climate among groups opposed to the government's peace policy in the weeks leading up to Rabin's murder at a peace rally on Saturday night.

"There were thousands of people here with guns, here, just four weeks ago, outside the prime minister's office. I happened to stumble into that demonstration and it was a very unpleasant experience," he told army radio.

Rubinstein, a law professor, hinted at new laws the government would consider to curb extremist groups.

"There is no right to demonstrate with a gun. You will not find in the constitution of any country the right to demonstrate with a gun. We have gone too far," he insisted.

An Interior Ministry offi-

cial said some 300,000 civilians carried firearms in a population of five million.

A spokesman for Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank estimated every third Israeli adult carried a gun, while among settlers the figure was one of every two.

Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres vowed on Wednesday to crack down on "extremist elements... forcefully, and with all the means at our disposal."

But past promises to curb militants ended with little action.

"The fact civilians have so many guns is connected to the general atmosphere and to the Israeli ethos, according to which security is above everything and the more guns there are in the hands of Jews, the more security."



Former US Defence Secretary Robert S McNamara (l) shakes hands with Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap, who was Vietnamese Communist Army Commander in Chief during the Vietnam War. This is the first meeting between the two men since the Vietnam War. McNamara is a member of a US delegation led by the Council on Foreign Relations currently on a four-day visit in Hanoi to discuss a proposed conference on the Vietnam War to take place sometime next year. — AFP/UNB photo

## Powell says he 'lacks the fire' to run for presidency

From Masud Hasan Khan

ment, White House aides also breathed a sigh of relief. At this early date, polls showed Powell easily beating Clinton in a head-to-head match up, something none of the GOP candidate could do.

Clinton missed seeing Powell's announcement on television Wednesday because he was in a meeting and heading for tea with visiting Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

"I am sorry I disappointed you," Powell said in a poignant tribute to the thousands of everyday Americans who had urged him to run, in person, through letters and by joining draft Powell efforts.

However, he promised to play a moderating role in the Conservative-dominated Republican party.

He also said he plans to stay active in public life, working to heal racial divisions and help children.

Since his retirement as Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman in 1993, Powell has been the subject of wide speculation about his political future.

He fueled speculation by refusing to completely rule out a presidential bid, while dropping tantalizing hints that he might be interested.

Now, the battle for Republican nomination is back to the fight over who will be the chief challenger

to Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole.

With Colin Powell on the sidelines, Dole is the prohibitive favourite to capture the GOP presidential nomination, according to political observers here.

The rest of the field fights to see who will be Dole's main challenger — but there is a large undecided factor, they point out.

Reacting to Powell's decision, Senator Christopher Dodd, D-Conn, co-chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said the "vicious conservative attacks on Powell proved that the GOP is a 'pup tent' rather than 'big tent' political party that Republican National Chairman Haley Barbour wants it to be.

## Off the Record

### Van Gogh's last painting sold at \$27m

NEW YORK: One of the last paintings by Vincent Van Gogh, "Sous Bois" (the thick), was sold for 27 million dollars last Wednesday night at Sotheby's auction house, reports Reuter.

The green and yellow painting of a forest was completed about five weeks before the Dutch artist committed suicide in 1890.

"Sous Bois", which had been estimated at 10 million dollars before the auction, attracted the fourth-highest price of any Van Gogh painting sold at auction.

It was the highest price for one of his paintings since "Portrait of Dr Gachet" sold for 82.5 million dollars in 1990, becoming the most expensive painting ever sold at auction.

The identity of the phone-buyer was not immediately released.



Van Gogh, Self-portrait

### Frozen human eggs for careerist women

LONDON: British scientists believe they are close to successfully freezing human eggs, which would allow career women to postpone having babies until their forties or even later. The Times reported Thursday, says AFP.

"We could say a year, we could say three — it all depends on how well things go," Professor Martin Johnson, who has been working on the project for five years at Cambridge University's anatomy department, told the paper.

The freezing of sperm and embryos has been possible for some ten years, but eggs are more difficult proposition. The technique has been perfected for mouse eggs, but Professor Johnson declined to predict exactly how long it will be before women are able to set up a store of their own frozen eggs.

Johnson told the paper he believes there would be many advantages in freezing eggs.

Apart from those pursuing a career, he said "there are women who have an early menopause, or who have radiotherapy for cancer which destroys their eggs."

The main problem facing Johnson's team has been the fact that the process of freezing eggs also damages them. They have now overcome this, and when human eggs have been frozen and thawed they appear "very close to normal," according to Johnson.

## C'wealth urges Nigeria to spare 9 HR activists

AUCKLAND, Nov 9: British Prime Minister John Major and the Commonwealth's top official appealed to Nigeria's military rulers today to spare nine human rights activists sentenced to hang for murder, reports Reuter.

Nigeria's army rulers drew swift international condemnation for confirming the death sentences on the eve of a summit of the 52-nation Commonwealth in New Zealand.

Major and New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger condemned the verdicts as unjust.

"It seems to me... that this was a flawed judicial procedure. The sentences are not just, Major said.

"I believe the Nigerians should exercise clemency. I very much hope they will exercise clemency and I would

be very surprised indeed if that were not a general view amongst colleagues in the Commonwealth."

New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger said it would be "quite appalling" if the sentences were carried out. To flout the Commonwealth in that way would send all the wrong signals."

The nine activists from the volatile and oil-rich Ogoniland region were found guilty of murdering four moderate regional chiefs after what human rights groups have denounced as a political show trial.

Ken Wiwa, son of condemned writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, said calls for clemency were not enough and urged Commonwealth governments to abandon their "softly - approach."

## Anti-nuclear protesters denounce Major as traitor

AUCKLAND, Nov 9: More than two thousand anti-nuclear protesters staged a rally today denouncing British Prime Minister John Major as a traitor and urging him to withdraw his support for French nuclear testing in the Pacific, reports Reuter.

Trade union leaders from several countries joined Maori sovereignty activists, politicians, Greenpeace campaigners and others at a lunchtime "major outrage" rally in Auckland, where Commonwealth leaders were gathering for a summit.

"Major's positive support for French testing shows absolute contempt for the anti-nuclear views and traditions of New Zealand and New Zealanders," Jim Anderson, leader of the left-wing Alliance Party told the crowd.

"And Major should remember that New Zealanders lost far too many sons and

daughters for the militarism of Europe to put up with this nonsense," he added, referring to his country's role in both World Wars.

A double bed draped with the French flag was set up beneath the rally's stage. Wearing striped pyjamas and masks of Major and French President Jacques Chirac, two protesters cuddled and kissed each other, embraced a blow-up bomb and climbed into bed.

Dozens of others donned protective clothing, wore John Major masks and carried "major outrage" banners.

Some dressed in death like garb and carried strieved skulls hoisted on long poles.

Police accepted a letter from protesters expressing New Zealanders' and Pacific Islanders' outrage at resumed French nuclear with New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger.

## Kashmiri leader's brother killed in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, Nov 9: Unidentified gunmen in Srinagar shot dead the brother of a top Muslim politician whose party administers the Pakistan-held zone of divided Kashmir, police said today, reports AFP.

Indian officials identified the man as Mohammad Sultan Bhatt, brother of Abdul Ghanji Bhatt, who heads the Muslim conference, the ruling party in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

The politician's brother was killed late Wednesday night by several masked gunmen in Sopore, a village in the Indian zone of Kashmir, the police said.