

BRIEFLY

Fire at UN HQs in Sarajevo: A serious fire broke out at the UN headquarters building in Sarajevo yesterday and the former civic telecommunications centre was evacuated as UN and city fire fighting teams rushed to the scene. Reuter reports from Sarajevo.

There was no immediate word on the cause of the blaze, which threatened the UN's main communications centre, a field hospital, administrative offices and soldiers' quarters.

AMU students forced to vacate hostels: Faced with electricity and water supply disconnection, nearly 8,000 students have vacated hostels at the violence-ridden Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) during the past two days. PTI reports from Aligarh.

Another 4,000 are likely to leave the hostel in the next 48 hours, according to an AMU spokesman. Special trains were arranged to enable students to reach their homes, he said, adding the whole exercise was aimed at weeding out undesirable elements.

3 die as Pak mosque collapses: Three people including a child were killed and one seriously injured when the roof of a mosque under construction collapsed in Lahore, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said yesterday. AFP reports from Islamabad.

The mosque's construction foreman and a builder were inside the building, in Pakistan's Punjab province, on Thursday, when the roof caved in and killed them. Falling masonry also killed one child playing inside the building and injured another, APP said.

KSA returns bodies of 5 Americans: The bodies of the five Americans killed in a bomb attack on a US military building in the Saudi capital were flown home Thursday, their embassy said. AFP reports from Riyadh.

An embassy spokesman said the bodies were repatriated on board a US military aircraft after Ambassador Raymond Mabius and several other US officials paid their respects in a service at the airport. He did not specify if the flight was headed for Washington.

Roh's former bodyguard held: State prosecutors yesterday arrested the former bodyguard of ex-President Roh Tae-Woo on several offences including bribery, Reuter reports from Seoul.

The arrest came one day after Roh was put in jail, also for bribery. Prosecutors say Lee Hyun-Woo was actively involved in helping Roh amass a 654 million dollar slush fund.

Chechen police kills 3 rebels: Chechen police killed three people and wounded several others on Thursday as they fought off an attack on a checkpoint near the capital of the rebel region. ITAR-Tass news agency said. Reuter reports from Moscow.

The clash was the latest in a string of incidents that have marred efforts to resume peace talks and preparations for elections next month. Chechen police are loyal to the region's Moscow-installed authorities.

5 Sudanese expelled by Libya die: Five Sudanese expelled by Libya died on the long desert trek home where 100,000 others have been held up en route due to outbreaks of violence with Libyan authorities, an official said in Khartoum Thursday. AFP reports from Khartoum.



Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office at the White House on Thursday, US President Bill Clinton announces he will propose new legislation to Congress to reopen many government operations and end the budget impasse. Clinton said he would veto a Republican plan because he believes it will be bad for America. — AFP/UNB photo

Libya asks Arabs to cut diplomatic ties with US

CAIRO, Nov 17: Libya on Thursday demanded that Arab countries cut diplomatic ties with the United States if it ever implements its decision to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, reports AFP.

"We expect Arab nations break off relations with the US by Arab League resolutions requiring an end to ties with any country that recognises Jerusalem as Israel capital and moves its embassy there," a Libyan official said.

Libyan Unity Minister Jomaa al-Fazzani told the press that the Arab reaction to the US Congress decision forcing the move by May 1999 had been "feeble".

Diplomatic relations between Tripoli and Washington have been broken since May 1981.

lated to American decision," Fazzani said after meeting with League Esamat Abdel Meguid in Cairo.

He slammed the Congress decision as a "violation of UN resolution 487 condemning any change in the status of Jerusalem," which Israel annexed in its entirety in 1967.

League sources said Abdel Meguid had contacted the head of the Arab Parliamentary Union to hold an emergency session of the body in Jordan to respond to the Congress decision.

Abdel Meguid also sent messages to the president of the International Parliamentary Union, currently the Egyptian Speaker of Parliament Fathy Surur, stressing "the need for an international response," the sources said.

China, India pledge to resolve decades-old border dispute

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: India and China have pledged to strengthen economic ties and resolve a three decades-old border dispute, the Foreign Ministry said today during an upbeat visit by a powerful Chinese official, reports Reuter.

"No force can separate India and China," the ministry quoted Qiao Shi, the head of China's parliament, as telling the leader of India's lower house late on Thursday.

The five-day visit by Qiao, one of the seven most powerful men in China's top decision-making Politburo, is the first to India by the chairman of the National People's Congress.

Foreign relations analysts said the visit, which was marred at the outset on Wednesday by protests by Tibetan refugees, was part of

a warming trend in bilateral relations.

There is a steady improvement in Indo-Chinese relations," said Bhabani Sen Gupta, executive director of the Centre for Research on International Change.

But there was no indication Qiao lent any support to India's drive to win a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) or to join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, Sen Gupta said.

Qiao met President Shankar Dayal Sharma, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee and lower house speaker Shivraj Patil on Thursday before leaving for Agra today. After Agra he was to visit Bangalore and Bombay.

Business relations were high on the agenda of his meetings, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

"What we have achieved together, particularly in the economic and commercial fields, is satisfactory but there is much potential for expanding our relationship in this area," the ministry quoted Qiao as saying.

"We must exchange what we have for what we need," he said. "The prospects for such cooperation are very encouraging."

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "China and India are exploring each other economically. There is a great potential for trade. This process, put in cold storage for a long time, is warming up."

Qiao and Mukherjee discussed a bilateral agreement, reached during a visit to China by Rao in 1993, to seek "border peace and tranquility".

In August, Delhi and Beijing agreed to pull back their troops from four border posts in India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, parts of which are claimed by China.

The decision followed two years of talks to ease tensions along the 4,000-km (2,500-mile) Himalayan border, cause of a brief war between the Asian giants in 1962.

Mukherjee, according to the ministry statement said he hoped "the two sides would proceed to ultimately resolve problems arising out of the border dispute, which is complex and requires time and patience, to mutual satisfaction."



Heads of delegations of different countries pose for photographers on Thursday at the 50th anniversary celebrations of UNESCO. — AFP/UNB photo

Clinton to send new plan to Congress to end budget impasse

WASHINGTON, Nov 17: President Bill Clinton said yesterday he would send a new plan to Congress to end the budget impasse and reverse the partial government shutdown, standing by his threat to veto the Republican budget bill, reports AFP.

The leaders of both chambers of Congress immediately dismissed Clinton's offer, saying that his budget policies were based on inaccurate economic data and that they had a "moral obligation" to press their case for a balanced budget.

"If I were to sign their seven-year plan, in effect I would be approving these (social spending) cuts," Clinton told reporters at the White House. "I won't do that

because I believe it would be bad for America."

The Republican-controlled Congress late Thursday fired back to the president's desk another temporary spending extension to keep the government running while lawmakers work to finish appropriations bill for fiscal 1996, which began October 1.

Clinton vetoed the first such extension, called a continuing resolution, on Monday, triggering the shutdown of much of the federal government Tuesday. He said it included unacceptable provisions, mainly increased payments by the elderly for federal health care assistance.

He also has threatened to veto the latest resolution, which sailed through the Se-

nate late Thursday on a 60-37 vote. The resolution would fund the government through December 5. A similar extension was passed by the House of Representatives late Wednesday.

Clinton said he would not sign the measure because it would unfairly oblige him to accept the Republicans' seven-year timetable for balancing the budget and their economic data.

Senate majority leader Bob Dole, taking the Senate floor after the vote, challenged Clinton to show "good faith by signing this bill."

"There is nothing in this bill which would hamstring the president... it just says we are going to balance the budget in seven years."

Japan welcomes China's annual defence report

TOKYO, Nov 17: A top Japanese government spokesman today welcomed China's first release of an annual defence report on arms control, calling it a step "to increase transparency," reports AFP.

"We very much welcome the move as a step to make clear its stance on arms control and security, and increase transparency," Chief Cabinet Secretary Koken Nosaka told a news conference.

He said Japan would study the lengthy report, entitled "China: arms control and disarmament," in which Beijing justifies its security policy, including thorny issues such as defence spending and nuclear test programmes.

Iran denies any link with Riyadh car bomb blast

NICOSIA, Nov 17: Iran strongly denounced hints at a possible role in a car bomb explosion that killed six people, five of them Americans, in the Saudi capital Riyadh and said it had no connection whatsoever with the blast, reports Reuter.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi "categorically dismissed as seditious the recent allegations of the US ambassador in Riyadh, and said Iran has no connection whatsoever with Monday's bomb blast in the Saudi capital," the official Iranian News Agency (IRNA) reported on Thursday night.

'UN sanctions amount to a war of genocide against Iraqis'

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 17: Iraq said here Thursday that continued UN sanctions against it amounted to a "war of genocide" against its population, reports AFP.

The UN Security Council upheld the sweeping economic sanctions imposed on Baghdad in 1990 at its regular review meeting on November 8, after new disclosures failed to satisfy its concerns about Iraq's programmes for weapons of mass destruction.

The Council reiterated its offer to allow Iraq to swap a limited amount of oil for food and medicine, which Baghdad has repeatedly rejected. Iraq

has said it will accept the offer, known as resolution 986, only if the terms were changed.

"It is high time for the Security Council to take concrete decisions to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people and terminate this on-going genocide against the people of Iraq," a statement released here from the Iraqi mission to the United Nations said.

"The continuation of a comprehensive package of economic sanctions against Iraq that includes in de facto the supply of food stuffs and medicines, by denying re-

venue resources, is tantamount to a war of genocide," it said.

The Iraqis distributed data showing that an average of 122,500 citizens have died for various reasons every year since the sanctions were imposed in 1990, compared to only 27,334 deaths in 1989. It did not say how many deaths were incurred in fighting the Gulf War nor how those numbers affected the yearly averages.

"The nutritional situation of the children under five years of age is particularly alarming," the statement said, citing malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies.

Experimental drug raises hopes for treatment to prevent AIDS virus

WASHINGTON, Nov 17: An experimental drug has protected monkeys exposed to an AIDS-like virus, raising hopes of creating an emergency treatment to prevent the AIDS virus from establishing itself in exposed humans, scientists said Thursday, reports Reuter.

If the leap can be made from monkeys to humans — and that has not yet been proved — one of the most promising areas for the drug is in preventing women from passing the virus to their babies during labour and childbirth, scientists said.

It could also be a lifesaver for health care or rescue workers pricked with a contaminated needle or sprayed with AIDS-tainted blood. It may even help rape victims avoid infection, said Che-

Chung Tsai, lead author of the report appearing in Friday's edition of the Journal Science.

"This data is very encouraging," Tsai, a pathologist and veterinarian at the University of Washington Regional Primate Research Centre, said in a telephone interview.

PMPA, as it is called, "is the most effective drug we've seen," he added.

PMPA is one of the new anti-viral compounds known as nucleotide analogues. Like azt, the best known anti-AIDS drug, it blocks an enzyme needed for HIV cells to reproduce.

The treatment worked when begun up to 24 hours after exposure to Simian Immuno Deficiency Virus (SIV). And unlike other AIDS drugs, there are no signs yet the

virus mutates to resist the drug, Tsai said.

PMPA is licensed to Gilead Sciences, a biotechnology company in Foster City, California. The company said in a statement on Thursday it was conducting additional pre-clinical testing preparation for human trials.

PMPA was given to 25 monkeys for four weeks. The researchers experimented with different timetables, starting the injections from two days before exposure to 24 hours after exposure to SIV, a monkey virus similar to HIV that causes AIDS in humans.

It safely blocked infection in all of the treated monkeys, and they stayed virus free during a year of follow up.

In contrast, a control group of 10 monkeys were all

infected within three weeks.

"Such complete protection with no toxicity is unprecedented in the monkey model of AIDS and suggests a potential role for PMPA in preventing HIV infection in health care workers or others accidentally exposed to the virus," Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said in a statement. His government agency helped fund the research.

The experiment showed that the drug stopped SIV from establishing itself in the monkeys. It did not show how effective it would be as a treatment in animals already infected, although some preliminary animal research in California and Washington is showing some promise in that area as well.

France, China targeted UNGA committee slams all current N-tests

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 17: A key General Assembly committee on Thursday voted 95 to 12 with 45 abstentions on a resolution, aimed at France and China, deploring all current nuclear tests, reports Reuter.

The vote in the Disarmament and International Security Committee which includes all UN members means it will be endorsed by the General Assembly's plenary next month most likely without debate.

Although the resolution was adopted easily it obtained less than the crushing majority that had been expected, with many states abstaining or not voting among the UN's 185 members.

None of the five acknowledged nuclear powers voted in favour. France, China and

Britain voted against the resolution while the United States and Russia abstained.

The resolution was sponsored by more than 30 countries, most of them from the Pacific or Latin America. The sponsors also included South Africa, Ukraine and Norway. It "strongly deplores" current nuclear testing and "strongly urges" the immediate cessation of all nuclear testing.

France last month staged its third nuclear test in the South Pacific since September, fulfilling President Jacques Chirac's vow to conduct a final series of checks on France's nuclear arms before ending tests forever. Three more tests are expected before next May. China has conducted two tests since May.

Off the Record

Out of excitement ...

ALGIERS: Two women anxious to vote in Algeria's first contested presidential election, gave birth in the excitement of the polling on Thursday, the official news agency APS said, reports Reuter.

One in the small community of an Ousera Inedjefa province south of Algiers just had time to accomplish her electoral duty before bring a baby into the world, it said.

She was rushed to hospital.

Another woman gave birth in the polling centre in Tebessa town near the border with Tunisia but her baby arrived before she had time to vote, the agency said.

Catching malaria via needle stick!

LONDON: A British nurse caught malaria after he accidentally pricked himself with a needle when treating a six-year-old Ghanaian boy with the disease, reports Reuter.

It was the first recorded case of anyone catching Malaria, normally transmitted by mosquitoes, via "needle stick."

In a letter to the Lancet Medical Journal on Friday, a doctor from London's hospital for tropical diseases said the 27-year-old nurse had been treated for fever, sweats and a headache.

He had never had clinical malaria and had not travelled to malaria-prone countries. But he had sustained a needle stick injury with a non-sterile needle while treating the boy.



Actress Sharon Stone, 37, laughs after she jumps on her star during a dedication ceremony on Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame in Hollywood, California on Thursday. Stone's latest movie "Casino" with co-star Robert DeNiro premieres November 16 in Beverly Hills in California. — AFP/UNB photo

Syria wants to quicken peace talks with Israel

OSAKA, Japan, Nov 17: Syria has told the United States it wants to accelerate peace talks with Israel following Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said today.

In an interview with Reuters and Newsweek, Christopher said he planned to send US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross to the region shortly to assess the prospects for progression the stalemated "Israel-Syria negotiation" track.

In the two weeks since Rabin was gunned down by a fundamentalist Israeli Jew who opposed the peace process, "one of the positive elements is that the Syrians have taken this moment to say the track should be accelerated," Christopher said.

He said he was informed of the view directly by Syria.

Christopher said he found it "interesting" that the Syrian response to the assassination "has not been in personal terms to Rabin but has been in terms of the peace process."

But "whether this can be translated into real progress, I don't know," he said.

Christopher, who was in Jerusalem with President Clinton for Rabin's funeral last week, said Ross will go back in the relatively near future when the new Israeli government get settled... and brief the new team on the status of negotiations. He gave no specific date.

"Then we'll see where we go from there," Christopher said.

Israeli-Syrian negotiations focus on the Golan Heights which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Middle East War.