

**BRIEFLY**



Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (R) speaks with General Rupert Smith (L), commander of the UN forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, during a ceremony at the Bosnian Presidency. Saturday celebrating the Independence Day of Bosnia-Herzegovina. — AFP/UNB photo

**Russian MP killed in Chita:** A member of Russia's lower house of parliament was killed on Saturday night, ITAR-Tass news agency reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

It named him as Sergei Markidonov, 34, a representative from the Siberian region of Chita who was elected in 1993 with the Liberal Russia's Choice Party. The agency did not say how he had been killed but that a criminal investigation had been launched.

**10 miners die in Kazakh blast:** At least 10 miners died in an explosion at a coal mine in Kazakhstan and the death toll is expected to rise to 13, officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Alma Ata.

Rescue teams have recovered 10 bodies and are looking for the bodies of three others believed to have died, officials said. The duty officer for the State Commission for Emergencies in the Karaganda region, where the explosion occurred late on Friday, said another five were in hospital with serious injuries.

**3 Jews held in Jerusalem:** Three ultra-orthodox Jews protesting a demonstration organised by secular Israelis were arrested Saturday, police said. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Militants from the left-wing Meretz Party organized, with police authorisation, a vehicle convoy along Bar Ilan boulevard, which passes through the ultra-orthodox quarter of Mea Shearim.

**Zeroual to take oath today:** Algerian President Liamine Zeroual will take the oath of office at 10:00 a.m. (0900 GMT) on Monday, the President's office announced. AFP reports from Algiers.

Zeroual will make an address to the nation to be broadcast live over state radio and television before accepting the wishes of the government and diplomatic corps, the office said Saturday in a statement.

**20 executed in Haikou in China:** Twenty Chinese accused of various crimes including murder and rape, have been executed in the southern Chinese city of Haikou, a report said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The 20 had been sentenced to death several hours before they were executed in the city on Hainan Island, the Hainan daily said. Seven others were sentenced to death Friday in two other cities on the island, the newspaper said.

**Benazir visits Egyptian Embassy**

**US explosive experts to help probe Nov 19 blast**

ISLAMABAD, Nov 26: American explosive experts have arrived in Pakistan to help intelligence agencies investigating the November 19 bombing of the Egyptian Embassy which killed 16 people and injured 60, a government official said today, reports Reuter.

The US experts will help the joint Pakistani-Egyptian investigating team probing the incident, a senior Interior Ministry official said.

He said Pakistani intelligence agencies have traced the vehicle used by the suicide bomber.

The Mazda pick-up bearing registration number AKA-1400 was purchased in Punjab province's Attock city, which borders north Western Frontier Province, he said.

"The vehicle was purchased by some dark-complexioned African Arab from Attock," he said. "Originally red in colour, the Arab buyer changed its colour to dark blue."

He said the vehicle changed hands many times before it was used in bombing the embassy. "We are now searching for the last buyer," the official said.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Saturday visited the devastated site and assured Egyptian ambassador Mohammed Noaman Galal that her government would make all efforts to find, punish and extradite those responsible for the blast, the state-run APP News Agency said.

**Elite army gearing up for final assault**  
**Chandrika rules out snap polls**

COLOMBO, Nov 26: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga today ruled out snap elections, amid speculation that a military victory against Tamil Tiger guerrillas may lead to early parliamentary polls, reports AFP.

Kumaratunga also told the state-run the Situmina newspaper that she would press ahead with political reforms to resolve the country's protracted ethnic conflict which has claimed more than 50,000 lives.

"We have no intention of going for an early election," Kumaratunga said. "We want to complete the full term for which the people elected us." The next parliamentary elections are due in 2000.

Both government and opposition leaders have been discussing the possibility of Kumaratunga calling a sudden election to improve her fragile one-seat majority in the 225-member Parliament. Analysts had expected to government to make use of the army's imminent capture of Jaffna, the bastion of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), as a rallying call to win the support of the majority Sinhalese community. Kumaratunga unveiled a political package in August envisaging greater autonomy to Tamils, the country's largest minority, but has been unable to push it through parliament for lack of majority support. She has also failed to keep her election pledge to scrap the all-powerful presidency

and revert back to the Westminster-style parliamentary democracy which Colombo dropped in 1978. Kumaratunga insisted in Sunday's interview that she still plans to carry out this reform.

"We have no intention of maintaining the presidency," she said. "We will change it as soon as possible."

Constitutional reforms require a two-thirds majority which her People's Alliance lacks.

Another report says, hundreds of Sri Lankan elite army commandos were gearing up today for a final assault to capture the Tamil rebels bastion of Jaffna after a series of ferocious battles, defence sources said. The commandos fanned out from the army's defence lines enforcing a siege on Jaffna Town, where an unspecified number of fighters from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were believed to be trapped, the sources said. AFP adds from Vakarai Tamil Tiger guerrillas, unfazed by their dramatic reverses in northern Sri Lanka, have taken over vast areas in the east of the island, ensuring sleepless night for the army. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas have confined the army to the main towns and a key highway in the coastal district of Batticaloa to emerge as masters of a sprawling area recently vacated by soldiers.

**BJP to slam Rao for pledging more autonomy to Kashmir**

NEW DELHI, Nov 26: India's ruling Congress (I) Party faces scathing opposition criticism in parliament tomorrow for its aborted move to hold early legislative elections in the troubled state of Kashmir, reports AFP.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) said today it would censure Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's government for promising greater autonomy to Kashmir in a bid to hold polls by December. More than 12,000 people have died in Kashmir in separatist-linked violence since 1989. The northern province has been under direct federal rule since 1990. BJP leader Jaswant Singh said his party would introduce an adjournment motion on Rao's "political package" for Kashmir, when parliament reconvenes tomorrow. Rao announced the scheme in the West African country of Burkina Faso on November 4, on the first leg of his three-nation tour. "We will censure the government on the mishandling of the Kashmir issue," he said. "We will also bring up the question of allowing the state to call its governor and chief minister, president and prime minister as it would encourage separatism. "Kashmir is clearly not ready for elections," he said. India's autonomous Election Commission turned down a proposal by the Indian cabinet, following Rao's promise of greater autonomy to Kashmir, saying the situation would not warrant free and fair elections.

**Karadzic for 'renegotiation' of peace deal**

LONDON, Nov 26: Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic today repeated calls for "renegotiation or clarification" of the US-brokered peace deal, saying the agreement would turn Sarajevo into the Beirut of Europe, reports Reuter.

"Bosnian Serbs in the city of Sarajevo ... will require special status," Karadzic said in a live British television interview.

"What is wrong with the Dayton agreement is that it has created a new Beirut in Europe. It is going to bleed for decades. It is going to be very bad, may be the worst place in Europe, because now this is a divided city," he said.

The peace deal, initiated last Tuesday after hard negotiation in Dayton, Ohio, would place large Serb-held areas around Sarajevo in Bosnian government control, reunite the city and restore key communication routes to the outside world. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic brokered the terms of the treaty on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs.

**Rocard, Mcnamara join Keating's anti-N crusade**

CANBERRA, Nov 26: Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating today enlisted former military chiefs, government leaders and a Nobel peace prize Winner in his crusade to rid the world to nuclear weapons, reports Reuter.

The 15-member Canberra Commission named by Keating includes former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard, former US Defence Secretary Robert Mcnamara, former British military chief Michael Carver and 1995 Nobel Peace Prize Winner Joseph Rotblat.

The commission is charged with helping to chart Australia's ambitious campaign to abolish all nuclear weapons.

**Taiwan blames China for creating tension**

TAIPEI, Nov 26: Taiwanese officials today described China's latest military exercise as an attempt to create tension before the island's parliamentary elections, reports Reuter.

President Lee Teng-Hui, without referring directly to the exercise, urged people to "sincerely stick together" in adversity.

Kao Koong-Lian, acting chairman of the cabinet's mainland affairs council, the Taiwanese body responsible for China policy, said: "In a nervous period like this China really should not, and has no need to, create a tense atmosphere."



Leaders of the French Green Party, Dominique Voynet (4th from left), and of the leftwing trade union "Force Ouvriere" (Workers Force), Arlette Laguiller (4th from right), march November 25 in Paris, with tens of thousands of people to support women's right to a job, free contraceptives and abortion. — AFP/UNB photo

**30 civilians killed, 140 injured**

**Taliban jets carry out biggest ever bombing raid on Kabul**

KABUL, Nov 26: Taliban militia jets carried out the biggest bombing raid ever on Kabul today, killing at least 30 civilians and injuring 140, witnesses and defence officials said, reports AFP.

At least nine of the dead and 50 of the injured were children, hospital sources said. Residents said it was the worst air attack they had known throughout Kabul's long years of suffering.

Taliban jets dropped nine bombs in largely residential areas in or near the centre of the besieged Afghan capital around 10:00 am (1130 BST), defence ministry officials said.

Independent confirmation of responsibility for the raid was not immediately available. But the Taliban, which is fighting to take control of Kabul from President Burhanuddin Rabbani, has admitted it carried out some previous air attacks on the city.

The jets dumped a 1,000 kilogram (2,200 pound) bomb on a central suburb, killing 12 people instantly and obliterating a string of houses, witnesses said.

Another 500 kilogram (1,100 pound) charge, smaller cluster bombs and

250 kilogram (550 pounds) explosives fell on other areas, leaving more devastation, witnesses said. "It has lost my children, my home and all my possessions for no reason at all," screamed a woman lawyer who returned home from work to find an enormous crater and piles of debris.

"I have studied for 24 years so my family can be massacred like animals in our own home — we've had enough," she screamed at local cadres who came to inspect damage in the Qala Falah Ulla Khan area.

**Off the Record**

**Elizabeth may reign for 20 yrs more**

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth will probably live and reign for another 20 years, becoming the longest surviving monarch in British history, insurance acturaries predict, reports Reuter.

Three experts on life expectancy told the independent on Sunday newspaper that the Queen's son and heir Prince Charles would probably only get to reign for 13 years — compared to Elizabeth's expected 60 years on the throne.

"I would expect the Queen to be able to reign for another 20 years," Andrew Wilson, actuary for Watson Wyatt's team of insurance assessors, told the newspaper.

"Although her current life expectancy is 89, I wouldn't be at all surprised if she lived to be 90-plus." Actuaries estimated life expectancy based on a person's current age, their lifestyle and family history. The non-smoking 69-year-old Queen, with her pampered existence, access to medical care and 95-year-old mother, possesses all the pointers to a long life.

Queen Victoria and King George III both lived to be 81 but the actuaries say the odds are that Elizabeth will easily outstrip that age.

**Do you want to know, how Red Sea was formed?**

WASHINGTON: Scientists on Thursday said they now understood how the Red Sea was formed 34 million years ago, a finding that gives insight into how continents break apart, reports Reuter.

In an article appeared on Friday in the Journal Science, researchers outline evidence that Africa and Arabia tore apart in two rapid "pulses". That finding by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Laboratory contradicts the long-held view that a small tear in the African continental crust bit by bit moved northward, creating a separation with what became Arabia.

The Penn's Goma-Omar and Columbia's Michael Steckler found by studying the geology of the region that the great rift threw up steep cliffs on either side of what became the Red Sea.

At the same time, it set off volcanism — a massive swelling of molten rock from the earth's interior at the south end of the sea.

The same process is thought to have created the Atlantic Ocean starting 200 million years ago as the supercontinent Pangea rifted and became Africa, North America and South America.

"Fission track analyses indicate that the Red Sea initially opened simultaneously along its entire length. Two distinct pulses of uplift and erosion characterised the early stages of rifting in the Red Sea throughout Egypt and in southwestern Saudi Arabia," Omar and Steckler wrote.

**Iraq publishes list of destroyed weapons**

BAGHDAD, Nov 26: Iraq published on Saturday a long and detailed list of weapons it claimed to have destroyed to satisfy all UN requirements and called for lifting the crippling economic embargo against it, reports AFP.

The inventory of destroyed nuclear biological and nuclear weapons was announced shortly before the arrival here on Monday of Role Ekeus, head of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSOCM) on disarming Iraq.

Iraq has satisfied all its obligations under Clause J of UN Resolution 687, the official INA news agency said.

In the nuclear area Iraq has destroyed 450 machines and equipment 4,000 tonnes of metallic products and 1,100 tonnes of lead minerals as well as a 50,000 square metre (540,000 square foot) factory, the news agency said.

It added that Iraq had "obtained in Russia 280 containers of nuclear combustible materials." Iraq said it also destroyed 75 chemical warheads 8,000 chemical bombs for planes and 77,000 chemical artillery shells. Another 13,000 pieces of artillery were destroyed alongwith three million litres (800,000 gallons) of compounds used to create chemical agents and 500,000 litres (130,000 gallons) of actual chemical agents as well as seven production factories, the agency said.

Five hundred machines and pieces of equipment used in the production of chemical agents were also eliminated, the agency said.

As for Iraq's suspected biological weapons programme, INA said it was started in 1986 for "uniquely defensive reasons but was destroyed in 1990.

**Ramos hopeful of reaching accord with MNLF**

MANILA, Nov 26: President Fidel Ramos said today on the eve of talks with Muslim rebels that his government was optimistic of reaching a peace agreement ending a 23-year revolt for Muslim self-rule in the southern Philippines, reports Reuter.

Ramos, in a statement released by the presidential palace, said the Philippines was determined "to bring the peace talks to a successful conclusion" after more than two years of negotiations.

Government negotiators led by Ambassador Manuel Yan are to hold a third-round of talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) starting tomorrow (Monday) in Jakarta, Indonesia is mediating the negotiations.

**Indian SC allows patients to sue doctors for malpractice**

NEW DELHI, Nov 26: India's medical fraternity is outraged by a Supreme Court ruling allowing patients to sue doctors for malpractice which consumer groups say is the only cure for the ailing health-care system, reports AFP.

The judgement, which comes in the wake of several scandals and cases of negligence in state-run and private hospitals, has been largely welcomed, but doctors say it will push up the costs of treatment tremendously.

The 65-page verdict said patients could seek damages for "deficient treatment" under the consumer protection act but excepted doctors at free medical facilities, saying no "financial transaction" was involved.

The 90,000-strong Indian Medical Association vowed at a meeting here on Friday to fight the act, saying: "we have to abide by the law, but agitation is our right."

Samiran Nundy, editor of the National Medical Journal of India, said the act will protect the patient but it will also increase the cost of medical care and allow lawyers to make hay. "Doctors will shy away from taking cases," he said. "It is very difficult to defend something which goes wrong with medical treatment done in good faith," Nundy added. "Doctors here have to work under severe constraints with skeletal infrastructure. We are always cutting corners. "It is a luxury we cannot afford in India, where the government cannot support health services by itself. I advocate a middle path of better monitoring and a medical

tribunal to try malpractice", Nundy said. India's health budget is seen by experts to be grossly inadequate with just 6.7 billion rupees (209 million dollars) allocated for fiscal 1995-96 upto March. Many say the ruling was long overdue given the corruption, inefficiency and lack of accountability in even premier hospitals like the state-run All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Two patients admitted to AIIMS went blind after cataract operations last month because the theatre was not sanitary, a former national sportsman was crippled after simple surgery and a leading fashion designer's attempt to look good have scarred him for life.

Couturier Jatin Kochhar, whose two attempts at plastic surgery left him with a

pockmarked face and bulbous nose instead of an aquiline nose and a firm chin, said he feels like hiding all the time.

Hari Shourie, the founder of common cause, a consumer protection group, said "the argument that the act will usher in medical insurance and defensive medicine is redundant."

"We are also demanding punitive action for frivolous or malicious complaints," he said. "I would like a stiff fine of say 100,000 rupees (3,125 dollars) and imprisonment."

Alok Mukhopadhyay, director of the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) described the November 13 ruling as a "landmark judgement."

"It is the only way we can control the anarchy in private medical practice and bring medical mercenaries to heel," he said. "There is an unholly nexus between doctors, drug companies and laboratories," Mukhopadhyay said. "We have forgotten the Hippocratic oath."

Government-run insurance companies, anticipating a spurt in law suits, have upped premium rates for medical practitioners from 125 rupees to 4,000 rupees this year. Prathap Chandra Reddy, founder and head of Apollo Hospitals, India's largest private medical chain, says he was a victim of greed twice — including a suit filed by former national table tennis champion V Chandrashekar. Chandrashekar claimed to have been crippled after simple knee surgery in 1984 at the Apollo Hospital in Madras. He was awarded 1.7 million rupees (53,125 dollars) in damages by the Madras High Court in May 1993. "At the time of the judgement, Chandrashekar was seen everyday running across the Madras Turf Club grounds like a bullet," Reddy alleged. "We paid up because litigation is expensive and time-consuming."

"I agree there should be more accountability since most of the 400,000 doctors in our country, 70 per cent of whom hold government jobs, have advantaged from subsidised medical education," said Indrajit Choudhury, a top Health Ministry official. "But we don't want a situation like in New York where oestericians now don't want to deliver babies for fear that they might be sued 12 years later for a defect in the left foot," said Nundy, head of surgery at AIIMS.

**Syria still firm to recover Golan Heights**

WASHINGTON, Nov 26: Syria is still determined to recover the strategic Golan Heights, and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said he was willing to meet with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to discuss it, reports AFP.

"We know what Syria wants — the Golan Heights. But we don't know the price it is willing to pay, he said in an interview with the weekly magazine US News and World Report.

"We've had peace with Egypt all these years but it didn't fully develop the way we thought. This means economic and diplomatic ties, water and tourism, he said. "Rabin said it was 'essential' that he meet with the Syrian leader.