

International

BRIEFLY



German "Bundeswehr" private 1st class Gildner (R) kisses his wife (R), during the farewell ceremony for German UN troops with their 10-day baby in a pram, prior the soldiers' departure from the military part of the Cologne airport to Split in Croatia, Tuesday. 164 German soldiers were given a farewell by German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe, before flying to Split where they are scheduled to replace the German personnel of a German-French MASH.

ROK ruling party changes name: The ruling party of South Korea President Kim Young-Sam changed its name yesterday, signalling a desire to break with a corrupt past after the arrest and detention of two former heads of state, Reuter reports from Seoul. The Democratic Liberal Party will now be known as the New Korea Party, a party statement said.

Cold wave claims 165 in Russia: A total of 165 people have died in Moscow because of the cold weather since the beginning of this November, including two last night, Interfax quoted Moscow Public Health Bureau sources as saying, Xinhua reports from Moscow.

In the 24 hours between 8 O'clock in the morning of December 4 and the same time the following day, 13 people were taken to hospital because of injuries caused by the freezing cold.

Saudi leaders visit King Fahd: Several senior Saudi leaders visited King Fahd in hospital late Tuesday, the official SPA news agency said, AFP reports from Riyadh.

The 74 year-old king has been in hospital since Thursday, officially suffering an illness caused by overwork, but doctors have said he has suffered a blood clot on the brain.

US peace envoy meets Peres: US peace envoy Dennis Ross met Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres on Tuesday to brief him on his talks in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, shortly after flying in from the Syrian capital, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Peres's office confirmed the short meeting but said there would be no statement about it. Ross trying to get Syrian Israeli peace negotiations on track ahead of 1996 Israeli and US elections.

Japanese ex-labour minister held: Japanese prosecutors formally arrested former Labour minister Toshio Yamaguchi yesterday, news reports said, AFP says from Tokyo.

The reports, carried by local news agencies and television stations, came less than two hours after Japan's lower house voted to lift the parliamentary immunity of the 55-year-old lawmaker.

Plane crash kills 4 in Queensland: Four people were killed yesterday when their single engine aircraft crashed in the Australian state of Queensland, police said, Reuter reports from Brisbane.

The Cessna 182 aircraft was circling the town of Kolan, about 20 km (12 miles) south west of Bundaberg on the central Queensland coast, before it crashed, a police spokesman said. Police have not released any details about the pilot or passengers.

Clashes leave 5 killed in S Lebanon: An Israeli soldier and four guerillas were killed in a clash in the occupied security zone in south Lebanon yesterday, security sources said, AFP reports from Marjayoun, Lebanon.

Another Israeli soldier was wounded in the clash after guerillas attacked an army patrol in the buffer zone near Talloussa in the central sector of the zone.

Peres meets Hussein: Jordan's King Hussein held talks today with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres on his first visit to Amman since succeeding assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, officials said, AFP reports from Amman.

The two leaders were to review "the course of the Middle East peace process, prospects for progress in Israel's stalled peace talks with Syria and Lebanon as well as the implementation of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty," officials said. Peres' visit to Amman came amid renewed American efforts to jumpstart peace negotiations between Syria and Israel.

No-confidence motion rejected in French parliament

PARIS, Dec 6: The French parliament easily rejected a no confidence motion in Prime Minister Alain Juppe's government on Tuesday over disputed social security reforms amid national strike and demonstrations, reports Reuter.

The socialist motion was supported by only 88 members of left wing opposition parties far short of the minimum 284 votes needed to pass in the National Assembly.

The motion was submitted in protest at Juppe's proposed reform of the indebted French social security which call for higher taxes health cost controls and later retirement age.

LTTE kills 23 constables Chandrika offers amnesty to Tamil Tiger guerillas

COLOMBO, Dec 6: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga today offered an amnesty to Tamil Tiger guerillas in a national address to mark the military victory in taking the rebel bastion of Jaffna, reports AFP. Kumaratunga said security forces had successfully completed the first phase of a campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by capturing Jaffna after a 50-day battle. "My message to the LTTE is lay down arms and end violence, the government will offer you an amnesty and safety," Kumaratunga said on state television. She urged thousands of Tamil civilians who fled the fighting in north of the island to return to their homes and

promised to return civil administration to Jaffna which had been under rebel control for five years. The President said the army offensive was against "LTTE terrorism and separatism," which had claimed over 50,000 lives in Sri Lanka in the past 23 years. "We have re-conquered the right of all people to live in peace and unity... Our struggle was to prevent the division of our land," said Kumaratunga. The military was ready to meet any challenge from the LTTE, she said adding that the offensive which claimed the lives of some 508 security personnel and an estimated 1,925 rebels, was part of plan to implement a political settlement.

"We still have a long way to go in winning the battle and bringing peace," she said. "Let us not crow over our military victory. After all, all wars are finally won through dialogue." Another AFP dialogue says: A suicide attack and an ambush on police by Tamil Tiger guerillas in eastern Sri Lanka killed at least 23 constables, defence sources said today. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) tried to drive a truck packed with explosives Special Task Force (STF) police camp in Batticaloa late Tuesday and fought with troop reinforcements, a defence source said. "The truck exploded as a sentry opened fire and stopped it," the official said, adding that four STF commandos were killed. It was

not immediately clear how many rebels were in the truck. Tiger guerillas also ambushed police reinforcements who rushed to aid the STF commandos, killing at least 19 of them, the sources said. The air force was called in to attack Tigers who brought reinforcements across the Batticaloa Lagoon. A helicopter gunships attacked rebel boats, killing or wounding an unspecified number of Tigers. The fighting came barely three hours after Deputy Defence Minister Anurudha Ratwatte hoisted the national flag in the former rebel stronghold of Jaffna in the island's north on the 50th day of a major offensive.

Fourteen bonded labourers freed in Sindh

KARACHI, Dec 6: Political activists freed 14 bonded labourers from five years in a landlord's private jail in southern Pakistan, a spokesman for the activists said, reports Reuter. Punhal Saryo, a spokesman for the Jeay Sindh Tarraqi Passand Party, told reporters in the city of Hyderabad late Tuesday that party workers had rescued the labourers from a jail near Piaro Lund village in the southern province of Sindh. He said the labourers, four of them women, had been held against their will for the last five years and had not been paid for farm work. The women alleged they were raped repeatedly by sons of the landlord, the spokesman said.

GCC blasts Saddam for suffering of Iraqis

MUSCAT, Dec 6: Gulf Arab leaders were set to condemn President Saddam Hussein for the suffering of his people and the continuation of UN economic sanctions in a tough final communique at their annual summit here today, reports AFP. The draft text being studied by the six Gulf leaders accuses Baghdad of "stubbornly refusing initiatives from the international community aimed at easing the suffering of the Iraqi people." The leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates and Oman were set to adopt the communique at the end of a three-day summit.

Chun launches hunger strike in prison

SEOUL, Dec 6: Jailed ex-president Chun Doo-Hwan is refusing food in protest against incumbent President Kim Young-Sam's breach of his promise not to punish him, his aides said today, reports AFP. "Mr Chun has launched a gradual hunger strike since he was jailed on early Sunday," Chun's lawyer Lee Yang-Woo told journalists. "We persuaded him not to launch a crash hunger strike for health reasons, and he agreed to phase it over several days," Lee said. Chun has been refusing to eat meals and drinking only milk and barely tea, triggering concern among prison wards at Anyang Prison, local press reports said. "It is not because my father has lost appetite that he does not eat," Chun's eldest son, Chun Jae-Kook, told reporters after visiting his father on Tuesday.



US President Bill Clinton (R-front) signs a proclamation Tuesday during ceremonies in the Old Executive Office Building, designating December 10 as Human Rights Day. Surrounded by members of Bosnian refugee families who were invited to Washington DC for the ceremonies, Clinton focused on US efforts to alleviate human suffering and promote human rights, peace, and security in Bosnia. — AFP/UNB photo

Rabin's confessed assassin charged: Trial on Dec 20

TEL AVIV, Dec 6: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's confessed assassin, law student Yigal Amir, was formally charged in a Tel Aviv Court with premeditated murder to and his trial set for December 20, reports AFP. Judge Menahem Ilan also ordered Amir, 25, who admitted to shooting Rabin at Tel Aviv peace rally on November 4, held in custody until the end of the trial. The judge ordered the trial to begin on December 20 to give defence lawyers time to examine the charges. They were filed under "Case 498: The State of Israel against Yigal Amir." One of Amir's two lawyers, Mordehai Ofri, said he did not oppose his client's detention but wanted his conditions to be improved.

He asked that Amir, who is being held in solitary confinement, be able to see family members and have books like other prisoners. Prosecutor Pinna Gai said they had more than enough evidence to convict Amir, including his confession and ballistic tests of the bullets fired at Rabin. His brother Hagai, 27, and friend Dror Adani, 26, were also to be brought before the court today and charged with making, possessing and carrying illegal weapons and conspiracy. According to the charge sheet published late Tuesday the three dreamed up and rule out numerous ways of killing Rabin over past two years until Amir finally gunned him down at point

blank range at a November 4 peace rally. After the signing of the 1993 declaration of principles for Palestinian Autonomy the accused decided to prevent their implementation by carrying out attacks against leaders in charge of the peace process, the charge sheet filed by police said. The then foreign minister Shimon Peres now the new premier was also targeted. The most bizarre plan was to drill a hole in the water pipes into Rabin's home in Ramat Aviv near Tel Aviv and insert in nitroglycerin to blow up the place. The three alleged conspirators had also thought of using a rifle with a telescopic lens or parking a booby-trapped car along the route taken by on his car.

Japan's military spending worries China

BEIJING, Dec 6: China expressed concern today about rising Japanese military spending and said the situation was smiler to that on the eve of World War Two, reports Reuter. Tokyo's defence spending ranks second only to the United States, hitting dollars 50 billion in 1995 and surpassing that of Britain and France combined, Xinhua News Agency said in a hard-hitting commentary. With 160 mainstay vessels, Japan's navy eclipses those of Britain and Italy combined, said Xinhua, the official mouthpiece of China's communist government.

Japan's 1200 tanks outnumber those of Britain and France combined, while its 13 army divisions outnumber Britain's. "For 50 years, Japan has never ceased expanding its military. Its military budget has increased by the year," the commentary said. The Japanese military was no longer just defensive in nature, Xinhua commentator Da Jun wrote. He said there had been a resurgence in Japan of the belief that Japanese are superior to other races. "In their eyes, not only are various Asian countries backward and unworthy of atten-

tion. Even European countries and the United States are no match for Japan," the commentary said. "History is a mirror," it added, saying that the same mentality was prevalent in Japan before World War Two. "There are some similarities in the situation today with that before the war. The course that Japan follows definitely cannot be ignored," it said. State media was full of warnings against resurgent Japanese militarism ahead of the 50th anniversary of Tokyo's August 15, 1945 surrender which ended World War Two.

First round of Egypt's polls Courts cancel results of 40 constituencies

CAIRO, Dec 6: Administrative courts on Tuesday ordered the results of the first round of Egypt's general elections to be cancelled in 40 of the country's 222 constituencies after complaints about fraud, court officials said, reports AFP. The interior ministry is appealing against the verdicts, which came on the eve of Wednesday's run-off second round. Opposition parties, who failed to gain any seats in the first round, complained of widespread vote rigging. The constituencies involved are in the regions of Suez, Port Said, Ismailiya, Shargiya, Dakhlia and Damietta, while a Cairo administrative court was still pondering other complaints late Tuesday. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) was credited with 123 out of 137

decided seats in the first round, while independents, mostly former NDP members, took the remaining 14. Another 307 seats are up for grabs in Wednesday's poll, 66 of which are contested by opposition parties. Each constituency has two seats. The brother of Prime Minister Atef Sedki said Tuesday that he lost his seat into Ukh, north of Cairo, because of fraud sanctioned by the government. Adesedki, an NDP candidate, said in a letter to the government daily Al-Akhbar: "they set me up to prove the elections were fair." He lost his seat to a pro-NDP independent, whose supporters he said threatened his own followers and rigged the voting. The US State Department urged Egypt on Monday to look into charges of vote fraud.

Off the Record

'One of the richest finds of Roman gold ever made'

LONDON: A man using a newly-bought metal-detector discovered a hoard of 126 Roman gold coins, including some from the reign of the Emperor Nero, in a field near Oxford, The Times reported Wednesday, reports AFP. "This is one of the richest finds of Roman gold ever made in this country," Roger Bland, a curator at the British Museum in London, told the paper. The coins cover roughly a century from A D 64 and were buried in a pot shortly before the death of the Emperor Antoninus Pius in A D 161, according to The Times. The local man — who wishes to remain anonymous — made the discovery in March this year and took the coins to a local auction house which contacted the British Museum.

Everything possible for a rejected lover

HONG KONG: Six people died when a rejected suitor blew himself up in a South China city street on Monday, the China News Service (CNS) reported, says Reuter. Two civilians and three police were killed along with the man himself. A policeman and a number of passers-by were injured, CNS said. The explosion occurred around lunchtime when police responded to a report that a man with dynamite was harassing a woman employee at a fast food shop in Shaopoguan, Guangdong province, the agency said. The man "went berserk" and triggered a fuse attached to his fingers when the police arrived.

Germans' favourite pastimes are ...

HUMBURG, Germany: Resting, sleeping and doing nothing are the favourite leisure pastimes of Germans, according to a study published Tuesday by the ABT Leisure Research Institute, reports AFP. The study found that leisure activities and social engagements had lost their attraction over the last 10 years, although the institute saw growing opportunities for sport, do-it-yourself and computer enthusiasts. Contrary to their image, "computer-freaks," estimated to number seven million in Germany, were not shy and lonely "nerds," but more enterprising than the average, the study also found.



Some 50,000 people demonstrate in Bordeaux Tuesday in defence of employment and social security. The black smoke in background comes from burning tires. — AFP/UNB photo

Big hustle over India's overcrowded Satellite TV market

BOMBAY, Dec 6: Four years ago, there was only one Satellite TV channel, today there are 20 foreign and domestic satellite channels jostling for space in India's competitive, overcrowded television market, reports IPS. But they are learning it is not enough to have a satellite up-link, talented programmers and a library of popular films, they have to woo the thousands of cable operators to reach an audience. The battle for an audience is not being fought in geostationary orbit but on the ground where cable operators are literally slugging it out for control of the turf. "The whole industry is now a jungle," says Roop

Sharma, President of the Cable Operators Federation of India who likens the present situation to "the wild west." "Cable operators are fighting with each other, even killing each other for existence," she says. Four murders have already occurred among small operators when one cable crossed another's boundary. "Most TV sets in India cannot receive more than 16 channels and there are at least 20 channels fighting to be aired and more starting up every day," Sharma adds. Most homes, even in middle-class metropolitan areas of New Delhi, are not willing to invest in the set-top boxes which would increase the number of channels.

Cable operators decide which 16 channels to air. "The task of the broadcaster would therefore be to create sufficient subscriber demand to be part of the first 16, which will not be easy," notes Jasbir Singh Kohli of the Cable Association of India. Each time a new channel comes on air — seven were launched in the last six months alone — it is the cable operators who have to weigh up the possibility of angering subscribers already turned into certain channels and replacing the early birds with new ones. Sony TV of Japan which has ploughed a massive investment into its new Hindi channel, Sony Entertainment Television (SET) launched

amid great fanfare in early November, was hardly watched because cable operators could not or would not make space for it. Mostly made up of one-man operations with a rooftop bristling wish dish antennae and up to 3,000 wired homes, cable operators are small businesses. Some 30,000 cable operators serve about 15 million homes in the country. Most do not want to invest large sums on hardware. Subscribers appear to back the small cable operators: they would rather pay lower subscriptions for fewer channels than high rates for 20-plus channels. Things turned particularly nasty this year when Siticable

owned by a Hong Kong based Star TV subsidiary, in Network owned by the powerful London-based Indians the Hindujas, and First India Technologies Limited (FITL) owned by the New Delhi based Hindustan Times newspaper by passed the small cable operators altogether and began to wire up huge areas in major cities. The logic is obvious for big operators who found many of the small cable companies quite willing to put on their more popular channels which attracted mass audience, but not the smaller niche channels which had smaller audiences but attracted advertising. Control of cable meant the larger programmers did not

need to rely on the small operators to beam all their channels. In particular pay TV channels — the ultimate aim of many foreign satellite channels — are virtually out of the question in such an environment. In January Siticable launched 40 control rooms across cities with the capacity to distribute 30 channels each. In-Network reportedly controls some 15,000 connections in Bombay and a number of networks in Delhi but has slowed down ambitious expansion plans to franchise small operators to its system. The entry of the big cable players unleashed a major turf war, with at least four murders

Israel closes prison in WB

JERUSALEM, Dec 6: Israel closed a prison near the West Bank Palestinian town of Hebron as part of its redeployment under a peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Israeli army said on Tuesday, reports Reuter. The Palestinian prisoners, however, were not freed but transferred to jails in Israel. In the framework of the redeployment the detention facility in Dahariya in Hebron (district) was closed and the prisoners were moved to detention facilities of the army and the prison services inside the green line (Israel proper) an army statement said.