

# BRIEFLY



Combo of two undated photos of the two French pilots, Captain Frederic Chiffot (bottom) and Lieutenant Jose Souvignet, whose plane was shot down August 30 over Bosnia-Herzegovina. The conference in London Saturday on the reconstruction of Bosnia expressed its solidarity with the French demand of the two pilots immediate release. - AFP/UNB photo

**Benazir to visit Japan in Jan:** Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will visit Japan from January 17 to 21, the Yomiuri Shimbun said yesterday, quoting foreign ministry sources, AFP says from Tokyo. It will be the Pakistani premier's first visit in Japan in three years. Benazir is expected to meet Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama as well as Emperor Akihito.

**Search on for Russia's missing plane:** Helicopters and ships scoured remote areas of Russia's Far East for the fourth day yesterday, searing for wreckage of a missing airline. Reuter reports from Moscow. Local rescue officials told Interfax news agency the search was not concentrated in zone 100 km (65 miles) southeast of Khabarovsk destination of the ill-fated passenger flight with 97 people aboard.

**Quake hits northern Thailand:** An earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter Scale hit northern Thailand causing panic among some residents but no significant damage had yet been reported, local officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok. The epicentre of the quake, which struck at 8:26 pm on Saturday (1326 GMT), was in Phrae Province about 180 km (110 miles) northeast of the city of Chiang Mai, the meteorological department said.

**UAE jet makes emergency landing:** An Emirates airliner made an emergency landing in Tehran early yesterday after a bomb scare, the official Iranian News Agency IRNA said, Reuter reports from Nicosia. The Airbus 300 carrying 180 passengers and crew, made the request to land after receiving threats that a bomb had been planted in the aircraft, IRNA said.

**93 smugglers killed in Iran:** Iranian security forces have killed 93 smugglers and wounded 37 over the past four months, Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Beharati said in remarks published on Saturday, Reuter reports from Tehran. "In the process of struggling with bandits and smuggling caravans over the past four months, security forces killed 93, injured 37 and arrested 144 of them," the Kayhan Daily quoted him as telling a meeting of security and intelligence officers.

**3 UN troops hurt by Israeli shell:** An Israeli artillery shell wounded three United Nations soldiers serving in a peacekeeping force in Lebanon yesterday, Israeli security sources said, Reuter report from Kiryat Shmona. They said the incident occurred north of Marjayoun in Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone. The Israelis were apparently firing on what they thought were guerrillas. The sources did not give the nationalities of the wounded.

**Fire claims 18 women in HK:** At least 18 women were killed when a fire tore through a multi-storey sauna parlour in China's southern Boomtown of Guangzhou, news reports said yesterday. Reuter reports from Hong Kong. The fire broke out at 9 pm (1300 GMT) on Friday as the Guang Tao Ge sauna entertained customers, the official China News Service said.

**2 nurses killed in Bujumbura:** Two nurses died in a grenade attack at a hospital in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, the aid agency Doctors Without Borders said, AP reports from Brussels. The attack Saturday on the Rwagasore hospital came amid continued fighting in the Central African nation between the Tutsi-dominated army and rebels from the Hutu ethnic group.

**Jusuf Habibie re-elected ICMJ head**  
JAKARTA, Dec 10: Indonesia's high-profile Minister for Research and Technology Jusuf Habibie has been re-elected as the head of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), the Jakarta Post newspaper reported today, says Reuter. Transport Minister Haryanto Dhanutirto, Chairman of the ICMJ Electorate Council, announced the result of Habibie's election as well as that of 45 council members to the group's second congress on Saturday, the paper said. The Electorate Council's decision to elect Habibie was unanimous, it said.

## China comes out successful influencing Taiwanese polls

TAIPEI, Dec 10: It fielded no candidates and spent not a cent on campaigning yet, in a sense, China's Communist Party was one of the big winners in Taiwan's parliamentary election, reports Reuter. For the first time, China showed itself capable of bringing telling influence to bear on the electoral politics of Taiwan, its bitter ideological rival situated a bare 220 km (137 miles) off its southeastern coast, analysts said. "This is the best result Communist China could have anticipated," said Alex Chiu, trading manager at a securities brokerage house in Taipei, Capital Securities. Successive intimidatory military exercises this year

## Police launch fresh operation against Tigers

COLOMBO, Dec 10: Hundreds of heavily armed police commandos today launched fresh operations against Tamil Tiger guerrillas in eastern Sri Lanka, officials here said, reports AFP. The police special task force commandos backed by the air force mounted the offensives in Panama, Maha Oya and Batticaloa areas and were moving against positions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), officials said. There were no immediate reports of confrontations but the operations came three days after Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte said they were moving to attack Tamil Tiger targets in the east amid stepped up rebel attacks. On Saturday, two opposition legislators narrowly escaped when LTTE gunmen fired at their van in the Batticaloa district, wounding two other passengers.

## Preparations for India's general election begin

NEW DELHI, Dec 10: Preparations for India's Lok Sabha (lower house) general elections have begun at the ruling Congress Party's headquarters here. The party has devised a three-point programme of harmony, stability and development with which to fight its rivals, the Congress Party sources said here today, reports Xinhua. Congress president and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is understood to have directed party MPs and workers to spread the message throughout the length and breadth of the country, the sources said.

## Americans in KSA urged to be cautious

WASHINGTON, Dec 10: The State Department on Saturday urged Americans in Saudi Arabia to be extremely cautious citing a message from the US Embassy in Riyadh that said it had unconfirmed information that more bombings may be targeted against Westerners, reports Reuter. Following an explosion last month at a US military centre in Saudi Arabia the embassy in Riyadh said it had unconfirmed information that additional bombings may be planned against Western interests in Saudi Arabia including facilities and commercial centres occupied and or frequented by Americans. The statement said such attacks could occur anywhere in the kingdom. It urged that Americans in the country be vigilant of their personal security and surroundings at all times and under all circumstances and should report any suspicious activities to the embassy or nearest US consulate.

## 'US troops to end Bosnia mission within a year'

WASHINGTON, Dec 10: President Bill Clinton has said flatly the deployment of 20,000 US troops in Bosnia will end within a year even if there are signs of hostilities resuming among Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, reports Reuter.

"If that is the case, we should still terminate the mission... it means we gave them a chance to make their peace and they blew it," he told the CBS news programme "60 minutes" in an interview to be broadcast on Sunday.

Clinton spoke late on Friday, shortly before US troops flew into southwestern Hungary to set up a staging post for the American soldiers who will join the 60,000-strong NATO peacekeeping force in Bosnia.

# Afghan jets bomb major Taliban base: 27 killed

KABUL, Dec 10: Afghan government jets have bombed a major Taliban stronghold outside of the besieged capital Kabul, killing 27 of the Islamic warriors, the Defence Ministry said Sunday, reports AFP. Jets staged three air raids on the strategic base near the village of Charasyab, 25 kms (15 miles) south of Kabul — and near one of the three major frontlines hemming in the city — late Saturday, a ministry spokesman said. "We noticed unusual Taliban movements in the area and decided to strike in order to protect the city," an official said. No independent verification of the number of casualties caused by the raid was immediately available here. The bombing came as

about 16 rockets fired from Taliban positions to the south of Kabul struck the city centres and the airport area, causing no casualties and little damage, the official said. He said damage and injuries were only avoided because the Soviet-built weapons landed either in deserted areas of the city or in gardens or parks. The barrage was the first in several days on the war weary Afghan capital, battered by six weeks of almost daily rocket and bomb attacks on civilian zones of the city. The salvos started again after a lull of several months when the Taliban, who have already seized 11 of the country's 32 provinces, arrived on the outskirts of Kabul in October vowing to

take the city. More than 25,000 civilians have been killed in factional fighting and in mine blasts in and around Kabul since 1992, while the world looked on, aid agencies and observers here say. AP from Islamabad reports: Three months after its embassy and diplomats were attacked and beaten, Pakistan is sending its ambassador back to Afghanistan, but this time not to the capital, Kabul. Ambassador Qazi Humayun, who was severely beaten in September by a raging mob in Kabul, has returned to Afghanistan to help establish a temporary embassy in the eastern city of Jalalabad, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Sunday.



Cheng Siew Kee (C) 23-year-old winner of the Miss Singapore Chinatown 1995 contest poses with 1st runner-up, 21-year-old Teo Hui Ping (R), and 24-year-old Khoo Poh Leng (L), during the finals Saturday. Siew Kee won a prize package of USD 58,571 including USD 10,714 in cash. - AFP/UNB photo

# Israel hands over Tulkarm town to Palestinians

TULKARM, West Bank, Dec 10: Israeli troops withdrew from the West Bank town of Tulkarm after 28 years early on Sunday handing it over to the PLO, eyewitnesses said, reports Reuter. Thousands of Palestinians celebrated as the last Israeli jeeps left Tulkarm the second West Bank town to be handed over under a peace deal signed in Washington in September. As Israeli army jeeps left the military headquarters compound in pouring rain, people raised Palestinian flags on the building. Hundreds of people then swarmed into the building to see rooms where some of them had been held as prisoners under the Israeli occupation. "Tulkarm is now liberated and under the control of the

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) took control of the town, the second West Bank town to be handed over under a peace deal signed in Washington in September. Israel seized the whole of the West Bank during the six-day war in 1967. As Israeli army jeeps left the military headquarters compound in pouring rain, people raised Palestinian flags on the building. Hundreds of people then swarmed into the building to see rooms where some of them had been held as prisoners under the Israeli occupation. "Tulkarm is now liberated and under the control of the

Palestinians," a PLO police officer said as the last of the Israeli jeeps cleared the town, which has an Arab population of around 20,000. Under the PLO-Israeli peace deal, Israel is due to evacuate six West Bank cities, before the end of this year. It began the process with Jenin in November. The first group of 51 Palestinian policemen who entered Jericho late on Saturday began immediately to perform their duties by directing traffic and maintaining order. A total of 360 additional policemen set off early on Sunday from Jericho for Tulkarm.



A first group of 111 soldiers of the US 29th Support Group, part of the US peacekeeping troops for Bosnia, walk below the wings of C-130 'Hercules' military transport planes as they arrive on the Hungarian Taszar Air base Saturday morning. The US soldiers will be temporarily accommodated at the barracks of Taszar to prepare the mission of about 3,000 troops, scheduled to arrive in Hungary middle of next week. - AFP/UNB photo

# Congress dissident to work for party's unity

MADRAS, Dec 10: Former union minister R Prabhu, MP, who was earlier appointed treasurer of the Congress (I) leaders like Vijaybhaskar Reddy Rajesh Pilot and Vasant Sathe regarding unity. He told reporters here shortly after distributing saarees and note books to the poor to celebrate Sonia Gandhi's birthday, that ND Tiwari and others should not have created a split and formed a separate party. Prabhu said the country would survive only if the Congress (I) existed, and the Congress (I) would be strong and win the next Lok Sabha polls only if Sonia Gandhi took over the party pres-

dentship. Asked if he still continued to be a member of Tiwari's party as he had not attended its recent convention Prabhu asked where is the question of accepting Tiwari as my leader when I do not approve of the split. Prabhu said he was in touch with various Congress (I) leaders like Vijaybhaskar Reddy Rajesh Pilot and Vasant Sathe regarding unity. The various factions of the Congress should unite and save the country from the present ill like communalism and casteism he said adding that Sonia Gandhi was not an individual but represented the Nehru legacy which overcame evil forces in the interest of the country. Prabhu said it was shameful that a file pertaining to the Jain Commission was mission

# Off the Record

## Di looks like a gladiator?

LONDON: "Gladiator" with a "thick neck"? Not the usual adjectives used to describe Princess Diana, reports AP! Sophie Rhys-Jones, Prince Edward's girlfriend, says too many hours in the gym are beginning to show on Diana, the Daily Mirror reported Saturday. "She's beginning to look like a gladiator," Rhys-Jones was quoted as telling friends. "Her neck looks quite thick now. She's put on three quarters of a stone (10.5 pounds/4.7 kilograms) in just muscle." Royal anger at Diana for going public with her marital woes last month has rubbed off on Rhys-Jones, the Daily Mirror said. But the 30-ish publicist, who is tipped to marry Queen Elizabeth's youngest son next year, should watch out: the same Buckingham Palace officials Diana calls the "enemy" are none-too-fond of Edward's choice either. An unnamed palace official described her as "underbred and pushy," the newspaper said.



## Sad tale of an ideal headmaster

LONDON: The headmaster of an inner-city London school died on Saturday after being stabbed in the chest trying to save one of his boy pupils from a gang of youths, reports Reuter. Philip Lawrence, 48 and a father of four, raced out of his school in Maida Vale, west London, when he saw bandana-wearing youths attack one of his pupils as he left school on Friday. Lawrence was stabbed once in the chest. He was rushed to hospital after open-heart surgery at the scene, but died eight hours later. Teachers have complained that attacks on teachers are on the increase. But union officials said they could not remember another fatal attack on a teacher. "I'm speechless. This is completely out of the ordinary. This just doesn't happen," said Ray Warren, a governor Lawrence's school, St George's Roman Catholic School. It was an ordinary, inner city London school, which has its usual mix of all kinds of people from every nation, every race. Teachers unions said they wanted security patrols introduced at some schools. "Unfortunately, I have been predicting for several years that it would only be a question of time before a teacher was killed in this kind of situation," Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the Nasuwt Union.

## Iraq sees CIA 'fingerprints' on seizure of missile parts

BAGHDAD, Dec 10: Iraq said on Saturday it saw the "fingerprints" of the CIA on the seizure of missile parts in Amman that Jordan said were destined for Baghdad, in violation of sanctions, reports Reuter. "Any follower (of the weapons shipment news) will not miss the fact that the American Central Intelligence Agency has clear-cut fingerprints in this fabricated operation," the official Al-Jumhuriya newspaper said. "The party who fabricated this propaganda stories is known to us," it added. Diplomatic sources had told Reuters that the Jordanian authorities seized equipment at Amman Airport in November which was for missile guidance systems destined for Iraq after a tip off by US intelligence. The propaganda campaign on the alleged smuggling operation has raised a lot of questions, amongst them why the party which has let these

materials enter Jordan has not made a fuss about them until now," Al-Jumhuriya said. "The announcement of the shipment was chosen at a time when the propaganda campaign against Iraq has calmed down and the good cooperation between Iraq and the special commission has deepened," the paper added. The announcement of the alleged smuggling through Amman comes only few days after the official heading the UN commission in charge of Iraqi disarmament, Rolf Ekeus, briefed the Security Council on his recent visit to Baghdad where he received more information about Iraq's past weapons programmes. The commission must testify that Iraq's banned weapons have been all destroyed before the Security Council will consider lifting the five-year-old trade sanctions.

## Zhirinovskiy blamed for breaking law

MOSCOW, Dec 10: Russia's electoral watchdog on Saturday accused ultra nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of breaking the law by inciting people to violence on national television. ITAR-Tass news agency said, reports Reuter. Tass said the Central Electoral Commission had asked the state prosecutor to review comments by Zhirinovskiy in a broadcast on December 6 in which he called for punitive strikes against Chechen villages. The commission which monitors the campaign and can alert the courts to any irregularities warned Zhirinovskiy

President Lee, the current front-runner for inaugural, direct presidential elections next March, shows no sign of backing away from his condition that China's communists must espouse Western-style democracy before reunification can take place. Lee, Taiwan's first president to be born here rather than on the mainland, remains popular with the 85 per cent of Taiwanese who are native to the island. Analysts warned, too, that while China's tactics have clearly scared some voters here, they have only increased the hostility that many others feel towards the mainland.

lators with China in the past two years," commented the mass circulation United Daily News in an editorial on Sunday. The newspaper and analysts said the negative commercial impact of strained ties with China convinced many voters to endorse the New Party platform of restoring harmony with this trading nation's second biggest export market. Trade and investment with China have slumped and Taiwan's stock market has tumbled to a level 31 per cent lower than at the start of this year, mainly because of Beijing's sabre-rattling since July. Beijing has regarded Tai-

wan as a renegade province since defeated Nationalist Party leaders took refuge there in 1949 at the end of the Chinese Civil War. Bent on reunification, it threatens to attack Taiwan if this island drops a pledge to reunify and goes for independence instead. Enraged by the landmark visit that President Lee Teng-hui made to the United States in June, China retaliated with missile tests near Taiwan which caused severe jitters among this island's business community. Saturday's election demonstrated that ordinary voters too have become somewhat more reluctant to support pro-independence

politicians. The main pro-independence opposition, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), won four new seats to gain a total of 54. This fell short of the 60 forecast and the DPP also saw several party leaders voted out of parliament. "There is nothing good about this," DPP chairman Shih Ming-teh said after the results came out. Before the poll he had predicted that China's threats would hit DPP support. But while China's actions have had a palpable political effect here, analysts cautioned that Beijing's dream of reunification seems just as far off as ever.

which underscored Beijing's threat to attack Taiwan had the effect in Saturday's polls of boosting votes for an opposition party preaching reconciliation with China, analysts said. The New Party, which also wants Taiwan to reunify with the mainland, tripled its representation in parliament, gaining 21 seats in the 164-seat legislative Yuan. The ruling nationalists, China's old archrival, suffered their biggest ever electoral blow but clung on to a wafer-thin overall majority of 85 seats, down from a previous 92. "The most important influence to the results of the elections came from the re-