

# BRIEFLY

**Roh's close aide arrested:** South Korean prosecutors yesterday arrested a close aide of former President Roh Tae-Woo on bribery charges in connection with a multi-billion dollar arms build-up, a prosecution official said, Reuter reports from Seoul.

Kim Chong-Whi, Roh's former chief secretary for security and foreign affairs, was closely associated with huge military purchases during Roh's 1988-93 term in office.

**Wei jailed for 14 years:** China's leading dissident, Wei Jingsheng, was convicted yesterday of conspiring to subvert the government and sentenced to 14 years in prison, Xinhua News Agency said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

Wei was also sentenced to three years deprivation of his political rights, Xinhua said. Xinhua called the verdict a "first ruling" by the Beijing number one intermediate people's court, leaving open the possibility of modifications.

**Tigers massacred over 2,000 civilians:** Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerillas have massacred more than 2,000 civilians since their campaign for a separate homeland began in 1983, the defence ministry's operational headquarters alleged yesterday, Reuter reports from Colombo.

It said altogether there have been more than 5,000 civilian deaths, the vast majority at the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), differentiating between massacres and incidental killing of civilians.

**12 killed in Papua New Guinea clash:** Twelve people have been reportedly killed in a jungle gun battle between separatist guerillas and pro-government fighters on the cooper-rich island of Bougainville, AP reports from Port Moresby, PN Guinea.

The report of Tuesday's killings was published in "The National" newspaper on Wednesday, 24 hours before peace talks are due to start in Cairns, in neighbouring Australia.

**Tajik newsman killed in Nicosia:** A Tajik reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was kidnapped and killed in Tajikistan yesterday, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported Wednesday, Reuter reports from Nicosia.

IRNA said in a report from the Tajik capital Dushanbe that Muhiddin Alimpur, who worked for the BBC's Persian radio service, was "kidnapped and killed by unknown armed persons in Nicosia Tuesday night."

**Huge drug seized in Nicaragua:** A total of 31 kilograms of cocaine, 72 kilograms of marijuana and 233 rocks of crack were seized by the Nicaraguan police and army in a recent anti-drug operation, local press reported Tuesday, Xinhua says from Managua.

According to commander Eduardo Cuadra Ferrer, Deputy Chief of the Nicaraguan police, the operation which began November 25 and ended December 7 was aimed at checking drug trafficking from Central America to the United States.

**17 feared dead in Manila fire:** Some 17 people were feared dead yesterday after a fire aboard a Philippine ferry spread so rapidly that passengers had to jump into the sea without lifejackets, Reuter reports from Manila.

Rescue officials said the death toll was tentative as reports were coming in from several sources and some bodies might have been counted twice.

**Frank Sinatra turns 80:** Frank Sinatra, one of the most revered crooners ever, celebrated his 80th birthday without any of the wild parties that marked his earlier anniversaries, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

Instead, the man known affectionately as "ol' blue eyes" was spending a quiet day at home and planning a family dinner with his wife of 19 years, Barbara, to mark the milestone event.

**King Birendra expands cabinet:** King Birendra of Nepal expanded the cabinet yesterday from 26 members to 44, the largest yet in the Himalayan kingdom, state radio announced, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

The official announcement said five cabinet rank ministers, one state minister and 12 assistant ministers were added to the cabinet headed by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

**Car bomb kills 15 in Algiers:** A car bomb killed 15 people and wounded more than 40 in Algiers on Tuesday, in the bloodiest attack since presidential elections last month aimed at ending violence in Algeria, the country's state run television said, Reuter reports from Paris.

The booby trapped vehicle, parked near a cafe, ripped through the capital's southern Ain Naadja suburb at 5.35 pm (1635 GMT) said security officials quoted by official media.

**Shimon Peres ends US visit:** Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres ended on Tuesday a US visit that showcased his own vision of peace and set the stage for a new American drive to draw Syria back to negotiations, Reuter reports from Washington.

Damascus was unimpressed. "The words of Peres about moving the peace process forward are welcome but we need to see if there is anything new regarding full withdrawal from the Golan Heights", a senior Syrian official said in Damascus.

**10 more killed in SA violence:** Ten more people have been killed in South Africa's volatile Kwazulu-Natal province, pushing the death toll in criminal and political violence to 46 in six days, police said yesterday, Reuter reports from Durban.

They said however the killings were down from the 67 people reported during the same period last week.

**Castro seeks Japanese help:** Cuban President Fidel Castro yesterday appealed to Japan for help in lifting the US trade embargo against his country, Japanese Foreign Ministry officials said, Reuter reports from Tokyo.

Castro, in Tokyo on his first-ever visit, told Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono that Cuba was suffering from the loss of trading partners with the demise of the former Soviet bloc and the US embargo, the officials said.

**Cuba won't abandon socialism:** Castro

TOKYO, Dec 13: President Fidel Castro said in an interview aired today that Cuba will not abandon socialism but rather follow the footsteps of its socialist partners China and Vietnam in opening up its economy, reports AFP.

Rather than discarding socialism, Cuba will seek to make its system "more efficient" he said in the brief interview with Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) hours after his arrival late Tuesday.

Castro added that US President Bill Clinton was a "progressive man" but he criticized right-wing US legislators.

# US accused of intervening in Pak internal affairs

ISLAMABAD, Dec 13: Pakistan on Tuesday accused the United States of intervening in its internal affairs by expressing concern over violence in the city of Karachi, reports Reuter.

The US State Department on Monday urged Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government and the ethnic Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) to resume talks to end violence which has killed more than 1,800 people this year in Pakistan's largest city.

"The comment was an interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan and was not in keeping with the principles governing relations between friendly countries," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

"We are deeply concerned by the escalating cycle of violence in Karachi and particularly by the sharp increase in reported extrajudicial killings, extortion and custodial deaths by security forces," State Department spokesman said in Washington.

The Pakistani spokesman said "strong measures had been taken within the parameters of law to control violence perpetrated by terrorists."

But he said there have been no custodial deaths or extrajudicial killings. Action has been taken where there

have been police excesses.

Thousands of people turned out on Tuesday to mourn two murdered relatives of MQM leader Altaf Hussain in Karachi, where police said six more people were killed in fresh violence.

The spokesman said the murder of Hussain's half-brother and a nephew on Saturday and that of a brother of Sindh Province Chief Minister last month had been a setback to the government's efforts to bring normality to Karachi.

AFP from Karachi adds: More than 15,000 wailing mourners condemned Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and vowed to take revenge for the killings of Nasir Hussain, 62, and Arif Hussain, 28, the brother and nephew of Altaf Hussain, a leading ethnic activist from the opposition Mohajir Quami Movement.

The two were tortured before being executed. Their bodies were discovered late Saturday night.

Mourners carried a banner that read "We will not rest in peace until we have avenged the death of our martyrs."

Six people, including the four gunmen, died in violence throughout the day Tuesday.

Authorities feared militant groups would use the funeral of the slain men as an opportunity to attack the government and security forces.



The two French pilots liberated by the Bosnian Serbs, lieutenant Jose Souvignet (2L) and Captain Frederic Chiffot (2R), are greeted by French President Jacques Chirac (C) and French Defence Minister Charles Millon upon their arrival at Villacoublay military airport on Tuesday. — AFP/UNB photo

## UNGA calls for an end to N-tests

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 13: The UN General Assembly on Tuesday called for an immediate end to nuclear tests and deplored those already conducted by adopting a resolution aimed at France and China, reports Reuter.

The vote was 85 in favour and 43 abstentions on the resolution that strongly deplores current nuclear testing and strongly urges and end to all nuclear tests. The document did not mention France and China by name.

While the resolution was adopted easily, reflecting the international outcry against France's resumption of nuclear testing it obtained 10 fewer votes than it had in a key assembly committee vote last month.

## UAE plans ban on marriage to foreigners

DUBAI, UAE, Dec 13: A governmental body is drafting a law that would make it illegal for United Arab Emirates citizens to marry a foreigner, a newspaper reported Tuesday, reports AP.

The Gulf News, an English-language newspaper, said statistics showed that 30 per cent of all marriages in the UAE involved a foreign partner and that up to 60 per cent of these marriages end in divorce.

The oil-rich United Arab Emirates relies heavily on foreign workers; in fact, 75 per cent of the country's 2.2 million people are expatriates.

The fund provides UAE men with a loan of 70,000 dirhams (19,000 dls) if they marry a woman from the emirates. Those who marry a foreigner get nothing, but this has not proved incentive enough in many cases.

## Tamil Tigers trying to smuggle in chemical weapons

COLOMBO, Dec 13: Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebels, who lost their northern Jaffna stronghold last week, were trying to smuggle in chemical weapons to fight government forces, military sources and a local newspaper said today.

"We had some intelligence that the Tigers were trying to smuggle in a shipment of arms," a military officer told Reuters.

He said navy patrols had been alerted to be on the look out for the rebel arms ship, suspected to be carrying chemical weapons.

The officer also said air force planes were also deployed on maritime reconnaissance to prevent rebel attempts to smuggle arms.

The Tigers are known to have a fleet of ships they use to bring arms to the waters off Sri Lanka's eastern seaboard where the weapons are unloaded into small boats and taken to guerilla jungle bases.

The independent "Island" newspaper quoted army intelligence sources as saying that a ship carrying a large amount of artillery and mortar shells filled with an inflammable chemical had set sail for Sri Lanka from a port in Turkey last week.

The sources told the pa-

## Iraq closer to resolve arms dispute with UN

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 13: Iraq's deputy prime minister said Tuesday his country is closer to resolving its weapons dispute with the United Nations, and he hopes the Security Council will respond by lifting sanctions imposed after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, reports AP.

"Our assessment of the situation is that a great progress has been made in this regard," Tariq Aziz said after a "brief but constructive" meeting with Security Council President Sergey Lavrov of Russia.

"We hope that the next report of the special commission would reflect this great progress, and we hope that the Security Council would react to this great progress in a fair manner," he told reporters.

Aziz did not say what progress had been made, but said Iraq still rejects a UN plan that would allow Iraq to sell limited amounts of oil

## Permanent UNSC seat for India

WASHINGTON, Dec 13: The Clinton administration's view that India should not be given a permanent seat in the UN Security Council in the next round of expansion, remains unchanged, reports PTI.

The US favours Japan and Germany for permanent places in the Security Council, according to George Ward, the acting Assistant Secretary of State for International Organisation Affairs.

Clarifying his country's stand on the issue, Ward said at a press conference here that the US view remained unchanged despite talks between the Indian and the US governments.

"India has played an extremely important role in the UN both on the economic,

## ROK endorses nuclear contract with DPRK

SEOUL, Dec 13: South Korea on Wednesday endorsed a tentative international agreement to provide rival North Korea with two modern reactors promised under a historic 1994 nuclear accord, reports AP.

A cabinet meeting, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Rha Woong-bae, approved the agreement reached in New York over the weekend between North Korea and a US-led international consortium, government officials said.

The agreement also needs approval by three other concerned governments — the United States, Japan and North Korea — for signing, tentatively scheduled for later this week, said the officials at the Unification Board, a government ministry.

"From our viewpoint, the agreement is acceptable, because it guarantees our central role in designing and building the plants," said Kim Kyong-woong, a government spokesman.

The agreement, if approved by all, will end more than three years of tough ne-



Angela Maxey opens a "peace bomb" containing photos of Bosnian school children as US President Bill Clinton watches during a ceremony on Tuesday at the White House in Washington DC. The ceremony was in honour of US humanitarians who have aided peace efforts in Bosnia. — AFP/UNB photo

# Off the Record



Singer Michael Jackson waves to fans as he walks out of Beth Israel-North Hospital in New York on Tuesday after recovering from a serious illness. — AFP/UNB photo

## It's her time to have a baby!

NEW YORK: Madonna's biological clock isn't ticking, ticking, ticking. It's RINGING, RINGING, RINGING!, reports AP.

She told ABC television in an interview for broadcast Wednesday night that it's time to have a baby but that pregnancy will have to wait just a bit while she makes the movie "Evita," which begins filming in January.

So who will be the lucky sperm provider?

"After the movie I'm going to put a couple of ads in The New York Times, Village Voice, who knows who's going to apply for, you know, that fatherhood thing," the 37-year old entertainer joked.



## Cuba won't abandon socialism: Castro

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# ASEAN charting united course for the 21st century

BANGKOK, Dec 13: Finally freed from the Cold War divide, Southeast Asian leaders are returning to long-cherished goals to chart the course of political, economic and security integration for the 21st century, reports AP.

On Friday, for the first time, one meeting room will hold the leaders of all 10 countries of Southeast Asia, including military-ruled Myanmar, democratic Thailand, the Sultanate of Brunei, and Communist-ruled Vietnam. Not long ago, many were battlefield enemies.

Seven nations belong to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, world leaders in economic growth: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, Singapore and Vietnam. They will gather with three outcasts whom they hope to bring into the fold by the year 2000 Myanmar Laos and Cambodia.

"We have always believed that ASEAN should comprise all 10 Southeast Asian countries," said Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, as he listed, year by year, ASEAN's progress in regional integration since its founding in 1967. "That dream is now coming close to realisation."

A unified Southeast Asia

means global clout, said Thai Prime Minister Banham Silpa-archa: "Our voice will be heard louder, our views will be increasingly sought, and collective action will be widely recognised."

The summit lasts one hour, 50 minutes. Then the leaders all sign a document they hope will last forever the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. It bans the possession, production and control over nuclear weapons but allows foreign vessels to transit without requiring proof that they do not carry such weapons.

ASEAN has invited the five declared nuclear powers — the United States, China, Britain France and Russia — to sign a protocol, but at least some have refused for now. The United States wants better assurances on the right of transit and on compliance with the treaty. China worries that the treaty may prejudice its territorial claim to South China Sea islands that the zone covers.

No ASEAN member is anywhere near nuclear weapons capable, — or ever voiced a desire to acquire them. But not far from the region, real nuclear threats exist. To the east is the di-

vided Korean peninsula and giant China; to the west, the India-Pakistan conflict.

The treaty's main importance may be its symbolism in a region where symbols are all-important. It declares the unity and the unprecedented opportunities that lie ahead for Southeast Asia.

When ASEAN was born, Indonesia confronted Malaysia over its alleged territorial ambitions and the US war raged in Indochina. The new grouping set three major goals: economic, social and cultural development; guarding regional stability against big power rivalry; and resolving disputes among members.

But ASEAN members could afford to do little else but try to stick together to guard their borders. ASEAN backed US forces in Indochina in the 1960s and 1970s. Its security fears grew after the insurgents seized power in all three Indochinese countries in 1975 and Vietnam invaded Cambodia in late 1978.

All changed in the late 1980s. Indochina lost its major allies as the Soviet bloc collapsed. Vietnam pulled out of Cambodia to focus on market reforms.

## 'Peace possible under new Russian leadership'

GROZNY, Dec 13: Rebel Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev said today peace in his breakaway region was only possible under new Russian leadership and he added that the fighting was just beginning, reports Reuter.

Speaking to reporters in his mountain hideout, Dudayev said there would be no winners or losers from the Chechnya fighting. "The war is entering a new phase. The war is just beginning. You will be a witness to it," he said.

Dudayev, a wanted man in Russia, said peace talks were essential.