

# BRIEFLY



AIDS activist Jeff Getty (R) poses with his partner, Kenneth Klueh, in their Oakland California home November 27. Doctors reportedly injected Getty with cells from a baboon in an experiment to treat his AIDS condition on Thursday in San Francisco. Getty, 38, will reportedly be the second person in the world to receive a bone marrow transplant from another species. —AFP/UNB photo

**Kim appoints new prime minister:** South Korean President Kim Young-Sam yesterday replaced his Prime Minister Lee Hong-Koo with Lee Soo-Sung, the President of Seoul National University, a presidential spokesman said, Reuters reports from Seoul.

**36 militants killed in Algeria:** Algerian security forces announced Thursday that 36 Islamic militants had been killed over four days in several different raids, AFP says from Algiers.

Three Islamic activists were killed in the working class districts of the Casbah, Eucalyptus and Kouba in Algiers, and 10 others in Chlef, in the west.

**Influenza epidemic in Moscow:** An epidemic of influenza is sweeping Moscow and more than 52,000 people — nearly half of them children — have fallen ill in the last seven days, medical officials told Interfax news agency on Thursday, Reuters reports from Moscow.

The total number of flu victims in the city since the epidemic broke out on November 28 is approaching half a million.

**5 killed in LA road mishap:** A passenger train collided with a pickup Thursday, killing all five people in the vehicle, AP reports from Ponchatoula, Los Angeles.

Two adults and three children in the truck were killed in the accident, Mayor Julian Dufreche said.

**11 kg heroin seized in Phnom Penh:** Narcotics police have seized 11 kilograms (24 pounds) of heroin in two recent busts at Phnom Penh's international airport, police said Thursday, AP reports from Phnom Penh.

Some 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of heroin concealed in departing passengers' luggage was seized Tuesday. It was not clear if anyone was arrested.

**German justice minister quits:** Germany's justice minister quit with tears in her eyes Thursday because her party ended months of opposition to new law-and-order legislation, AP reports from Bonn.

Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger resigned after her fellow Freie Democrats endorsed eavesdropping legislation favoured by the rest of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's three-party coalition.

**10 more killed in SA violence:** Ten people were killed in South Africa's volatile Zulu heartland overnight and an off-duty policeman was arrested in connection with the killing of a teenager, police said yesterday, Reuters reports from Durban.

Police spokesman inspector Vish Naidoo said the killings brought to 60 the number of people killed in political and criminal violence in Kwazulu-Natal province in seven days, down from 92 in the previous week.

## Druk National Congress for democracy in Bhutan

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: Bhutanese refugees in India called on Thursday for the establishment of a parliamentary democracy in their tiny Himalayan homeland and an end to alleged persecution of political dissidents, reports AFP.

The Druk National Congress (DNC), founded last year by Bhutanese refugees in India, held its first-ever news conference here to launch a campaign against what it described as the "brutal administration" of Bhutanese King Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

The DNC said only a democratic government would end the alleged "mindless persecution" of the population in Bhutan and urged Thimphu to respect human rights.

The DNC emphasises the point that it is only right that

Bhutan respect the universal declaration of human rights in its totality and ensure that these rights are protected," said DNC Chairman Rongthong Kunley Dorji.

Dorji said the group, which operates from India and Nepal, was willing to hold talks with Thimphu if the Bhutanese government agreed to hold elections.

"At present all dissidence and political activities are brutally crushed by the regime, and so we operate away from Bhutanese soil," Dorji said, adding the DNC has, however, set up secret chapters in 22 of the country's districts.

The Bhutanese regime currently holds hundreds of political prisoners, the DNC charged.

## Colombo-bound LA flight returns after take-off

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: A Colombo-bound Indian Airlines (IA) flight from Madras returned after take-off to off-load six women suspected of links with Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas, the United News of India said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Police alerted the state-owned airline to the presence of the women, the news agency said. It said they were from a local refugee camp, set up to house Sri Lankan Tamils displaced by the 12-year ethnic war in Sri Lanka.

The flight left for Colombo after a delay of nearly three hours, the news agency said.

## Possible comeback of communists worries Yeltsin's aides

MOSCOW, Dec 15: Boris Yeltsin's wife and his influential bodyguard both went public Thursday with worries about Sunday's parliamentary elections, in which the president's hard-line opponents are poised to do well, reports AP.

The president, who is recuperating from heart trouble in a suburban health resort, has kept a public distance from the campaign. But the remarks by two in his inner circle were the clearest signs yet of anxiety in the Kremlin.

"We're tired of fighting with (parliament)... Both branches of power should move in one direction," said Alexander Korzhakov, Yeltsin's personal security chief and perhaps closest

## Clinton warns Serbian president US may reimpose sanctions if Balkan accord violated

WASHINGTON, Dec 15: President Bill Clinton warned Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic Thursday that sanctions can be reimposed immediately if the US-brokered peace agreement in the Balkans is violated, reports AFP.

Clinton met earlier with all three Balkan leaders ahead of the Paris signing on Thursday of the peace pact initiated last month in Dayton, Ohio.

"These parties have come together and made peace and I must say that President Milosevic played a critical role in that," Clinton said in a CNN interview in Paris monitored here.

"I had a chance to remind him that he's made other commitments and we expect him to follow through on

them," he added. Clinton acknowledged that it was difficult meeting and shaking hands with Milosevic — considered by many as an instigator of the atrocities committed in the nearly four-year-old war.

"But you don't make peace with your enemies," Clinton said, quoting Yitzhak Rabin and evoking the slain Israeli prime minister's handclaps with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat.

Clinton said he was confident Milosevic would comply with the Balkans peace pact.

"Mr Milosevic has a huge incentive to comply because if he abandons his commitments then there is an automatic reimposition of the sanctions which were very very crippling," he said.

The UN embargo against

Serbia and Montenegro was suspended after the Dayton agreement was reached on November 21.

The president said he spoke with all three Balkan leaders about concerns about ceasefire violations. Four shells were fired at Sarajevo on Thursday and a French helicopter was forced down under fire from Bosnian forces.

"We know that there are tensions," Clinton said adding, however: "We are moving aggressively to deal with that."

Clinton said he was "very pleased" with Wednesday's Senate vote giving qualified support for contributing 20,000 US troops to the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Bosnia.

Reuters adds from Pale:

Bosnian Serb "President" Radovan Karadzic formally ended the state of war on Bosnian Serb territory today but excluded the disputed Serb sectors of Sarajevo.

The Bosnian Serb News Agency SRNA said the status of the Serb areas of the capital, which are due to revert to Bosnian government control under the peace agreement, would be announced later.

SRNA said Karadzic ordered the state of war to be downgraded to "a state of war danger" as a result of the signature of the Bosnian peace agreement in Paris on Thursday.

The statement added: "Regulations for Serb Sarajevo will be established at a later date in cooperation with the city assembly."



Russian soldiers block the road going to the town of Gudermes (east of Grozny) where a group of separatist fighters attacked a Russian military base on Thursday, killing some twelve soldiers official sources announced. The attack comes with the first day of the parliamentary and regional elections in Grozny, capital of the break-away republic of Chechnya. Four candidates were registered for the leadership elections after a year of a bloody war which erupted between Russian army and an independentist group headed by Djokhar Dudaev. — AFP/UNB photo

## US intelligence experts suspect India preparing for its first nuclear test since '74

NEW YORK, Dec 15: US intelligence experts suspect India is preparing for its first nuclear test since 1974 and Washington is working to discourage it, the New York Times reported today, says Reuters.

The newspaper quoted government officials as saying spy satellites have recorded activity at the Pokaran test site in the Rajasthan desert in recent weeks.

Intelligence experts however, could not tell whether preparations were being made to explode a nuclear bomb or whether they involved some other experiment to do with India's nuclear weapons programme, the report said.

"We're not sure what they're up to," an unidentified US official was quoted as saying. "The big question is what their motive is. If their motive is to get scientific knowledge, it might be months or years before they do the test. If it's for purely political reasons, it could be this weekend. We don't know the answers to those questions."

The New York Times quoted Shive Mukherjee, press minister at the Indian embassy, as saying the activities at the nuclear test site were army exercises whose "movements have been absurdly misinterpreted."

In 1974 India exploded a bomb equal to 12,000 tons of

TNT, about the same size as the bomb dropped by the United States on the Japanese city of Hiroshima at the end of the Second World War. India renewed its programme some years later.

Administrations officials told the New York Times they feared any new test would create pressure on neighbouring Pakistan to follow suit. Pakistan has not acknowledged that it has a nuclear weapons programme.

The two countries have fought three wars and their relations have been tense ever since they were formed by the partition of India in 1947 after independence from Britain.

## Court clears way to punish Chun, Roh

SEOUL, Dec 15: South Korea's constitutional court cleared the way today for a special law to punish ex-presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo for their roles in the May 1980 Kwangju massacre, reports Reuters.

The court announced it was dropping an appeal case against a prosecution decision not to indict those responsible for the massacre. That case had stood in the way of a law ordered by President Kim Young-Sam to bring his two predecessors to justice.

"All the proceedings relating to the appeal case ended as of December 14 as the applicants have withdrawn their appeal," Kim Yong-Joon, chief justice of the court, said in a verdict broadcast live on television. Among the applicants were several opposition lawmakers.

## Israel ready to recognise Syrian sovereignty over Golan Heights

JERUSALEM, Dec 15: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher will inform Syria that Israel is prepared to recognise Syrian sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a newspaper reported Thursday, reports AP.

The Israeli position, which could move the stalled peace talks forward, is in a US document of compromise proposals, the Davar Rishon daily reported, quoting a senior Israeli Cabinet minister.

The document will be handed to Syrian President Hafez Assad during Christopher's Mideast trip that begins Friday, it said.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres denied the report on Thursday.

"A senior Cabinet minister could not have known what is written in a document that doesn't exist," Peres told Israel radio.

## Kwasniewski apologises for lying

WARSAW, Dec 15: President-elect Aleksander Kwasniewski apologised Thursday for claiming during his campaign to be a university graduate even though he had dropped out of Gdansk University without receiving a degree, reports AP.

"This is not a good card in my life. I apologise to those who are disappointed," said Kwasniewski to several hundred supporters in the southern city of Kielce, according to reports in the Polish media.

## Sharif rejects Benazir's offer for talks

ISLAMABAD, Dec 15: Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif has rejected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's latest offer for conciliation talks unless her government agreed to hold mid-term elections, reports Reuters.

"This is not too high a price to rid the country of the malaise that has beset it," Sharif said in a reply on Thursday night to Benazir's invitation to talks extended last week.

Benazir had offered Sharif talks for an accord to restore special parliamentary seats for women and repeal a controversial amendment empowering the president to dissolve parliament.

Sharif has rejected similar previous offers from Benazir whom he accuses of misrule and corruption.

"It is my considered opinion that the country cannot get out of the serious economic mess, the grave politi-

cal crises and the alarming situation in Karachi without holding fresh elections coupled with constitutional reforms," he said in his Thursday's reply, copies of which were given to journalists.

Benazir seeks opposition cooperation to get the required two-thirds majority in parliament for the repeal of the so-called eighth constitutional amendment decreed by late military ruler General Mohammad Zia-Ul-Haq and to restore special women's seats in the National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies.

"The issues of women seats and the 8th amendment, though important, take second priority to the burning issues facing the nation today, namely the economic paralysis, the turmoil in Karachi, the total absence of rule of law, rampant corruption and the desperate plight of the common man," Sharif said.

## Off the Record

### Together after a long time

LONDON: Prince Charles and Princess Diana gave an afternoon Christmas party for their staff on Thursday, but the host and hostess arrived separately for the festivities, reports AP.

It was their first public appearance together since Diana admitted in a television interview last month that she had been unfaithful to Charles, and talked about his affair with Camilla Parker Bowles.

He was first to arrive at the luxurious Lanesborough Hotel at the edge of Hyde Park, pausing only to wish waiting photographers a happy Christmas.

Twenty minutes later, the princess arrived and walked briskly into the hotel, ignoring waiting journalists.

Charles and Diana once again sent out separate Christmas cards this year.

The Sun news paper printed Charles's card on its front page. It is a whimsical photo of a cheerful-looking Charles seated on a bench in his garden, flanked by his sons Prince William and Prince Harry who are standing inside huge stone urns. Charles's pet Jack Russell terrier sits in the grass.

There was no indication of what sort of card Diana has chosen.

### Charlie's hat, cane in auction

LONDON: The hat and cane that help make Charlie Chaplin the star of silent comedy fetched \$4,750 pounds (68,720 dollars) at a British auction of film memorabilia on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Chaplin's belongings, which were offered by a descendant of his half-brother Wheeler Dryden, were bought by a private Swiss museum, said Christie's auction house.

The Arab robes worn by Peter O'Toole in "Lawrence of Arabia" sold for 12,375 pounds (19,000 dollars), well above estimates.

The gold-plated statuette, billed as the sale centrepiece, drew bids of 8,000 pounds (12,280 dollars) half the estimated price.

## Chechen rebels seize bldgs in Urus-Martan town

GROZNY, Russia, Dec 15: Chechen rebels seized several buildings in the town of Urus-Martan today, the second day of national and local elections in the region, a senior Russian official in the breakaway province said, reports Reuters.

Vladimir Zorin, deputy head of the Moscow administration in Chechnya, told reporters in Grozny the rebels held a communications centre and a school in Urus-Martan, 20 km (13 miles) to the southwest of the Chechen capital.

Interfax News Agency said the rebels had captured police and military headquarters and also cut a road leading from Grozny. It said its correspondent was at the scene.

The agency did not say whether any fighting was go-

ing on in the town.

The attack was the second in as many days. On Thursday, a group of independence fighters infiltrated Chechnya's second biggest city, Gudermes, and Russian troops were expected to try to oust them today.

A Russian military report published by Itar-Tass News Agency said 15 Russian soldiers had been killed and 41 wounded in the last 24 hours in Chechnya. Most of them were clearly the victims of the fighting in Gudermes.

The upsurge in violence has overshadowed the first two days of national and local elections in the separatist region. Moscow has billed the voting as the only alternative to renewed bloodshed in Chechnya while some of the rebels have vowed to disrupt it.



Heads of government from Southeast Asia (L to R) Khamtay Siphandone of Laos, Fidel Ramos of the Philippines, Suharto of Indonesia, Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, Goh Chok Tong of Singapore, Banharn Silpa-archa of Thailand, Vo Van Kiet of Vietnam, Than Shwe of Myanmar, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen of Cambodia, and Sultan Mohamad Bolkiah of Brunei pose on Friday before starting a landmark summit in Bangkok. — AFP/UNB photo

## Anti-communist demonstration in Indonesian House

JAKARTA, Dec 15: Around 200 Indonesians, including mothers and children, staged a noisy anti-communist demonstration inside parliament today, reports Reuters.

Singing patriotic songs and unfurling banners deriding communism, members of the Solidarity Movement of Democratic People demanded government action against communists.

One protester said government bodies should be free of those involved in the 1965 coup attempt.

are making promises they can't keep.

Polls say communists and other hard-liners opposed to Yeltsin's free-market and democratic reforms are poised to do well in the race for the 450-seat State Duma, parliament's lower house.

Our Home is Russia, the party led by Yeltsin's Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, is bunched with several other big parties behind the Communists, the polls say.

Although the Duma's powers are limited, the results could reshape the political environment and set the tone for presidential elections in June.

If healthy, Yeltsin is expected to seek a second, five-year term. Korzhakov said Yeltsin would decide in February.

"When we criticise the president, we don't think what would happen if he decides not to run," Korzhakov said. "Can you imagine what would happen?"

"What?" asked interviewer Vladimir Pozner.

"Something bad will happen," Korzhakov said.

Aides said Thursday that Yeltsin taped an address to be aired on national television Friday evening, the last day of televised campaigning.

the parliamentary elections, because it is he who will have to work with the new deputies."

"His soul is aching about how the election race is going," she said, in televised comments. "We are all tired of the deputies' sweet songs and promises. Certainly, there will not be the well-being that they are promising."

Mrs Yeltsin has increasingly appeared in public to defend the president since he was hospitalised for heart trouble in October, but she has said little about the elections.

Before his hospitalisation in October, Yeltsin told a news conference that a Communist victory had to be

prevented.

Yeltsin plans to vote at the sanatorium, where aides said he has lost 10 kilos (22 pounds) Interfax and ITAR-Tass reported.

Chernomyrdin, who flew to Paris on Thursday to sign the Bosnia peace treaty, said in response to Interfax's questions that he fears his party will be accused of rigging the vote if it does better than expected Sunday.

"The very thought of such nasty tricks as election-rigging makes me sick," Chernomyrdin was quoted as saying. "I am certain there will be nothing of the sort."

The higher the turnout, the better the chances are thought to be for reformers.