

BRIEFLY

US newsman killed in Bogota : An American journalist who wrote for Time Magazine and United Press International during a two-decade career in Colombia died early Sunday in a car crash, reports from Bogota.

Tom Quinn, 53, and his wife were driving in the capital, Bogota, when their car plunged about 20 metres (65 feet) off a bridge onto a highway below. Quinn died instantly. His Colombian wife, Zulma, was in a coma after surgery at a Bogota hospital. The cause of the accident was not immediately known. It was raining when the 2:30 am accident occurred.

5 shot dead in Mexico : A family of five was found shot to death Sunday in a tourist town in the western state of Michoacan, AP reports from Mexico City.

The bodies of Efrain Rojas Garcia and Candelaria Garcia Velazquez and their children, ages 3, 4 and 6, were found in an orchard in the town of Santa Clara del Cobre, 170 miles (270 kilometres) west of Mexico City, the government news agency Notimex reported. Authorities said the children died of shotgun wounds while the parents were shot with semi-automatic rifles. No arrests were made.

Civilian hurt in Lebanon bombing : A Lebanese civilian was wounded Sunday in a roadside bombing in an Israeli-controlled region of southern Lebanon security sources said, AP reports from Marjayoun. The bomb exploded as a civilian vehicle passed on a road near the mountain town of Kfar Falous, on the northern edge of Israel's self-proclaimed "security zone" in the south. The security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the man suffered moderate injuries in the morning attack. They had no other details. There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, which carried the hallmarks of Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas.

Toddler killed in US shooting : What began with a father's finger gesture at the car that swerved into his lane ended seconds later when a bullet crashed through his rear window and killed his 2-year-old son, AP reports from Nashville, Tennessee.

Donald Cherry Jr. died in a hospital Saturday from the gunshot wound he suffered as he sat in his child safety seat. A group of teen-agers in a white sedan were being sought in the killing. "You don't think about your kids getting shot," said father Donald Cherry Sr. "There are no words to describe what happened."

German foreign minister in Beijing: German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel arrived in Beijing yesterday for a long-delayed visit to put bilateral ties back on track after a row over Tibet, Reuters reports from Beijing.

Kinkel had originally been scheduled to visit China earlier this year but the plans were postponed due to friction over Beijing's policies towards Tibet.

9 killed in bus accident in China: A bus plowed into a truck on an expressway in southern China, killing nine people and injuring five others, it was reported Monday, AP reports from Beijing.

Local police blamed the accident, and another that killed nine people and injured 27 others in August, on inadequate signs and safety barriers and a disregard for traffic rules, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

Zerouale on visit to Vietnam: Algerian President Liamine Zerouale arrived Monday in Hanoi to begin a three-day state visit to Vietnam, AP reports from Hanoi.

Zerouale was welcomed by Vietnamese President Le Duc Anh, who was accompanied by an honor guard at the Presidential Palace. After the brief ceremony, the two leaders met for private talks.

Malaysian FM visits Myanmar: The foreign minister of Malaysia, a strong backer of Myanmar's military regime, has arrived for a goodwill visit and is expected to discuss Myanmar's entry into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), according to official sources, AP reports from Yangon.

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, accompanied by a delegation, arrived Sunday at the invitation of his Burmese counterpart Ohn Gayaw.

Clashes on Tajik-Afghan border kills 5: Russian border guards killed five Islamic rebels in weekend clashes along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan, a Russian military spokesman said Monday, AP reports from Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

A group of seven armed rebels had crossed the Panj River into Tajikistan when they were intercepted Sunday by the Russian guards, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. The report said two of the rebels were killed, two captured and the rest escaped back to Afghanistan. One Russian border guard was reported wounded.

Plane mishap claims 8 in Canada: Eight people died when a twin engine plane crashed on Sunday in the eastern province of New Brunswick, police said, AFP reports from Canada.

The Piper Navajo headed for the US state of Maine from the Quebec island of Anticosti reported mechanical problems before going down, killing all eight people on board, police said.

The pilot asked to land at the Charlo, New Brunswick, airport after reporting mechanical difficulties but crashed into a field a few kilometres (miles) from the airfield, bursting into flames, according to police.

GCC annual summit in Dec in Qatar: Gulf Arab states are to open their annual summit on December 7 in Qatar, the head of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) announced on Sunday, AFP reports from Muscat.

Jamil Hujaila quoted by the Omani News Agency (ONA), declined to specify if Bahrain would take part. "Efforts are underway to protect solidarity within the GCC," he said.

Chechnya blames Russia for stalling peace process

OREKHOVO, Russia, Oct 21: Chechen rebel leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev accused Russia on Sunday of stalling on the peace process and on economic reconstruction in the shattered breakaway republic, reports AFP.

"The Russians are preparing to pay nothing," Yandarbiyev told a meeting with elders in this southwestern Chechen town. "They'll say that they have no money and will not pay anything."

A joint commission, which is to oversee the peace process Chechnya until elections are held, "talks a lot, but does nothing concrete" the separatist leader said.

Yandarbiyev also confirmed he had signed a decree appointing former rebel chief of staff Aslan Maskhadov as prime minister of a provisional government due to run Chechnya until the election, which separatists have said will take place on January 27.

The coalition government held its first meeting under Maskhadov on Saturday in the eastern Chechen town of Argun, he said. Interfax News Agency said the meeting had concentrated on preparations for the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Yandarbiyev also expressed concern over the appointment in Moscow of former parliamentary speaker Ivan Rybkin to replace Alexander Lebed as Russia's top Chechnya negotiator.



Algerian director Merzak Allouache shows his trophy during prize giving ceremony at the biennial Carthage festival of Arab and African cinema in Tunis Sunday. Allouache was awarded the festival's top prize, the Golden Tanit, worth 8,000 dollars, for his film "Salut cousin" ("Hello cousin"), which describes the dilemma of Algerians fleeing the civil war in their own country, but unable to integrate in France. — AFP/UNB photo

International

Hashimoto hopes to assume Premiership

Top 3 parties discuss forming coalition



Prime Minister and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader Ryutaro Hashimoto (L) is congratulated by LDP Secretary General Koichi Kato Monday at party headquarters after the LDP boosted its strength in the general elections and achieved its election target of 235 seats in the 500-seat lower house fell short of a majority. — AFP/UNB photo

Sri Lankan forces destroy LTTE naval base

COLOMBO, Oct 21: Sri Lankan security forces destroyed a northern Tamil rebel naval base in an air-land-sea assault on Sunday, killing or wounding up to 40 rebels, military officials said today, reports Reuters.

The navy lost two boats and five sailors while landing troops during the raid on the Punnutuduvai 'Sea Tiger' base about 320 km (200 miles) north of the capital Colombo, they said.

"We hammered the base in a combined operation, a military spokesman said. "Troops withdrew after destroying the base."

Five sailors, including two officers, were killed and five soldiers wounded during the assault, he said.

The spokesman said he was not immediately aware of rebel casualties but a navy official said up to 40 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels were believed killed or wounded during the four-hour battle.

Earlier AP says, government troops dropped by air and sea deep within rebel territory overran a Tamil Tiger seaborne base in northern Sri Lanka on Sunday and killed at least 15 guerrillas, military officials said.

At least five sailors were killed and 28 soldiers and sailors were wounded in fierce fighting at the rebel base near Ponnathoddavai village at the southern tip of the Jaffna Peninsula, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

About 150 elite army commandos were landed by helicopter on the land side of the base at dawn, while another group of army and navy commandos swarmed ashore from navy craft on the other side.

The five sailors died when one small naval patrol craft was hit by rebel rockets and destroyed, said the officials.

Details of guerrilla casualties were not immediately known, but the military intercepted messages from the rebel defenders, calling for help from nearby bases, saying at least 15 of them had been killed. It was not known how many rebels were on the base, 290 kilometres (180 miles) north of the capital, Colombo.

Air force jets and naval gunboats pounded other rebel bases in the area, preventing rebel reinforcements from arriving.

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 21: A pro-India political activist and six members of his family were killed in the Kashmir Valley today when a powerful bomb blew up their house, police said, reports AFP.

The victims included Ghulam Hassan Nadaf, a member of Kashmir's ruling National Conference Party which swept last month's assembly elections, a police spokesman said here.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack on the house in the Anantnag district, but police officers blamed Muslim separatists campaigning to end Indian rule over the Himalayan state.

The militants had previously issued death threats against pro-Indian politicians. More than 15,000 have died since 1989 in Kashmir during the separatist drive.

Relatives appeal for release of Westerners

Nat'l Confce activist, 6 of his family members killed

Meanwhile, relatives of four Western tourists abducted by Muslim separatists in the troubled Himalayan state of Kashmir today appealed for their release following a report they are still alive.

On Saturday Kashmir's new Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah said he had information that the hostages, held for 15 months now, were still alive and that he knew their location.

"We do know that we, their families, are very concerned and frightened for their safety, so please don't force them to spend another winter in the mountains," they said in a joint statement.

Ross meets Arafat amid signs of progress in Hebron talks

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip, Oct 21: US mediator Dennis Ross travelled to Gaza for an unscheduled late-night meeting with Yasser Arafat amid indications that a breakthrough is near on an Israeli pullout from the West Bank town of Hebron, reports AP.

"I believe we have made progress," said a smiling Ross, emerging after the 90-minute meeting after 3 am (0100 GMT) Monday. "There are still differences. I hope we will see results soon... We are working around the clock."

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were to resume talks later Monday at the Israeli Red Sea report of Elat. But Palestinian officials, speaking anonymously, said the sides agreed to move the talks to Jerusalem. No Israeli confirmation was available.

Israel Radio said the sides have concluded agreements on all security aspects of the pullout and only minor issues regarding the civilian administration of the city remain to be resolved.

"We are very close to wrapping up an agreement," Brig Gen Zakariye Baloushe, the Palestinian intelligence chief, told The Associated Press Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he hoped for "speedy resolution" but would not predict when it might come.

Israel was supposed to pull out of Hebron, the last West Bank town it controls, in March. But Shimon Peres, who was then prime minister, delayed the pullout after a series of terrorist attacks by Islamic militants in Israel.

Netanyahu, who won May elections, delayed the pullout further, demanding tougher security arrangements for the 450 Jewish settlers who live in the city of 94,000 Arabs. Netanyahu, who as opposition leader had fought his predecessors' peacemaking with Arafat, also refused initially to meet the Palestinian leader.

Netanyahu and Arafat finally met on September 4 and agreed to begin talks on Hebron. But the issue dragged on, and three weeks ago Palestinian frustration exploded in riots in which 79 people were killed and Israeli and Palestinian troops traded deadly fire.

Ross, who has been mediating throughout the past two weeks of talks aimed at saving the peace process, arrived unexpectedly at Arafat's Gaza office after midnight. Arafat greeted him and the two did not speak to reporters. Also present were most of Arafat's top aides, including his deputy Mahmoud Abbas and the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat.

All-party support sought

Benazir proposes fresh anti-corruption measure

ISLAMABAD, Oct 21: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto proposed a new anti-corruption measure to Pakistan's Parliament on Sunday, seeking all-party support and promising that she herself would be the first to submit to scrutiny, reports Reuters.

The bill would permit public servants from president to provincial legislators, senior officials judges and military officers to be summoned before a parliamentary committee in which opposition and government have equal weight.

If the committee finds a case to answer, corruption charges would be tried by two High Court Judges who could impose prison sentences up to seven years, levy fines, confiscate ill-gotten property, and disqualify those convicted from office.

"I offer myself to be the first person to face accountability," Benazir told Parliament.

She said she wanted all accusation raised by the opposition against herself and her businessman husband Asif Ali Zardari fully investigated so that others could not complain of discrimination.

The proposal requires a constitutional amendment, meaning Benazir does not have the votes in Parliament to pass it without opposition support.

It would apply to holders of public office since July 5, 1977, the day General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq overthrew Benazir Bhutto's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was later executed.

Zia ruled Pakistan for 11 years and until his death in a still unexplained plane crash.

Blast kills 7 in Kanpur

NEW DELHI, Oct 21: Seven people were killed on Sunday in a blast at a firecracker factory in the northern Indian industrial town of Kanpur, the Press Trust of India said, reports AFP.

Some 100 children, normally employed at the illegal factory in a residential area, were saved as they were at another house watching television, Kanpur police official Arun Kumar said.

The news agency said the victims, members of one family, were burnt to death when the crackers accidentally caught fire from a cooking stove.

Kumar said the ages of the dead ranged between two and 50. The owners were making crackers for the Hindu festival *Dussehra*, due early next month.

Qatar settles dispute with ousted Emir

DOHA, Oct 21: Qatar announced Sunday that it has settled a dispute with its ousted Emir over billions of dollars in missing state funds, reports AFP.

Qatar has agreed to stop legal action against Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, who was overthrown by his son Sheikh Hamad in a bloodless palace coup last year, in return for settling the accounts, the Justice Ministry said.

UN evacuating aid staff from eastern Zaire

KIGALI, Oct 21: The United Nations has started to evacuate humanitarian staff from eastern Zaire, where government troops are battling Banyamulenge ethnic Tutsis, the head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Rwanda said today.

Omar Bakhter told Reuters the evacuation operation which commenced late on Sunday had already moved 20 humanitarian staff out of the war zone. Bakhter could not say whether the operation, which is still continuing, would also involve non-UN staff.

Ethnic warfare involving the Banyamulenge, Tutsis who came to Zaire from Rwanda at the end of the 18th century, has intensified in and around the eastern Zairian town of Uvira, aid workers said.

Off the Record

Monkeys' reign of terror!

NEW DELHI: A 12-year-old boy jumped to his death from the terrace of a two-storey house here after he was attacked by seven monkeys, the police said Sunday, reports AFP.

The victim, identified as Kalu, was seriously injured after the fall at Khari Boli district on Saturday and died in hospital, a police spokesman said. The boy was sleeping when he was attacked.

The Hindustan Times newspaper quoted residents as saying monkeys had spread terror in Khari Boli region "and people are afraid to come out of their houses."

Hordes of monkeys frequently invade residential districts in the Indian capital.

Lesbian pursues legal fight

BRISBANE, in a case believed to be the first of its kind in Australia, a lesbian is fighting in the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Tribunal for the right to have access to donor sperm clinics, reports AP.

The woman, who cannot be named under court order, alleges discrimination by two infertility specialists, their clinic and the state government.

Testifying before the tribunal Monday, the woman, in her mid-20s, said that since moving to Queensland with her partner almost three years ago she had spoken to many lesbian women who, like her, were desperate to become pregnant and had learned that no clinic in the state would treat them.

She said she was fighting for all lesbians who were turned away from clinics and had to arrange their own private donors, risking AIDS contamination.

Masood accuses Pakistan of backing Taliban

PARIS, Oct 21: Afghan military leader Ahmad Shah Masood accused Pakistan of backing the Taliban Islamic militia and said the United States was going along with it, in an interview published here today, reports AFP.

"The problem is that the Americans have no real policy in the region. They are relying entirely on Pakistan," the military chief of the government ousted from Kabul by the Taliban last month told the right-wing daily Le Figaro.

The Pakistanis have told the Americans the Taliban would restore stability and drug trafficking, and that thanks to them, Afghanistan would no longer be a haven for international terrorists," Masood said.

Pakistan has denied backing the Taliban.

Pakistan wants an Afghanistan that is under its heel or else completely destroyed," Masood said. "Its policy is being dictated by the army and especially the ISI," Islamabad's Military Intelligence Service.

He had been asked how Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, a woman, could support the Taliban, who have ordered women to stay at home.

Masood repeated an earlier statement to the French Sunday paper journal *Du Dimanche* that he was prepared to have direct negotiations with the Taliban provided they evacuated Kabul.



Religious Taliban fighters take cover Sunday as they fire with a multi-barrel rocket launcher at the position of ousted government forces near Oala Murad Beg, 15 km North Kabul. — AFP/UNB photo

Rebellion for democracy dying in Myanmar jungles

TEAKAPLAW, Myanmar, Oct 21: After watching the army gun down hundreds of his fellow students eight years ago, Naing Aung fled with thousands of others to the thick jungles of eastern Myanmar to wage a guerrilla war for democracy, reports AP.

But with Myanmar today perhaps even further from democratic rule, the revolt is withering, its energy sapped by disease, defections and defeat on the battlefield.

"No one expected it would take such a long time to fight for democracy," said Naing Aung. "But revolution is not that easy."

Naing Aung, 33, speaks without a hint of sadness. Diminutive and deceptively fresh-faced, he has weathered eight punishing years in the bush and today serves as chairman of the All Burma Students Democratic Front, the main student rebel group.

Naing Aung and other Democratic Front leaders spoke to The Associated Press recently at a meeting that mended a five-year split between two rival rebel factions.

"We had at least 10,000 members in 1988 Now, we have only about 2,000 left," Naing Aung said.

Even that figure may be high. In September, Myanmar military dictatorship announced the surrender of more than 80 rebels.

The Democratic Front issued a statement suggesting the guerrillas surrendered in one clash with government troops but only when outnumbered and out of ammunition. But the message was that the loss was serious.

The 60 rebel leaders at the reconciliation meeting represented the hard-core remnants of a fighting force that once expected to spearhead the overthrow of a hated regime.

Instead, Myanmar they have become little more than a sideshow as Myanmar's real battle lines run down University Avenue in Yangon, home of the nation's best known democracy activist, Aung San Suu Kyi.

In 1988, troops shot thousands of demonstrators in pro-democracy protests that saw Suu Kyi emerge as leader of Myanmar's opposition. She later endured six years of house arrest and won the Nobel Peace Prize, but the ruling generals still refuse any accommodation with her.

Still, in the long run, her struggle with the junta is more likely to damage the regime than a flagging, backwater guerrilla war.

Eight years ago, there didn't seem much option. The students more accustomed to carrying books than guns, took up arms in the expectation that the generals could not last.

Reality was a ruthless teacher.

During the first year, many rebels died from malaria and other diseases. Hundreds more were expelled from their refuge in Thailand after Myanmar's junta promised they wouldn't be harmed; their fate has never been made clear.

Others despaired of military life and melted back into Myanmar and some went abroad to continue their studies.

Those who remain are committed, tough survivors, operating from remote camps many hours hike over mud tracks from Teakaplaw, a border town. They say they've grown used to the privations of

camp life, though some have teeth rotting from lack of dental attention.

"Eight years ago, I was an English literature student at Yangon University," said Aung Naing Oo.

Another two years and I would have completed my degree."

Now, Aung knowing Oo's skills in English facilitate his job as the Democratic Front's foreign secretary.

Fleeting traces of student life remain — like the moment two guerrillas pulled out acoustic guitars during the meeting and led a dormitory-style sing-along.

"I think my family misses me and wants me back to be with them," said Aung Naing Oo.

The Front's general secretary "I just want my family to know that I am here and I am happy, healthy and doing

well."

Back in Yangon, his old schoolmates have families of their own. Aung Naing Oo, who was in his last year of medical school in 1988, does not. Nor do the other rebel leaders.

Their hardest moments may lie ahead. Their main ally, the Karen National Union, appears to be on the ropes. That is the main force of ethnic Karen rebels and has been the strongest military opponent of the junta.

The Karens, who have been fighting the central government in Yangon since 1948, lost their "capital" of Manerplaw in 1994 to a Burmese army assault. The military, which has greatly increased its strength in manpower and equipment since 1988, appears to be preparing a major offensive for the impending dry season.