

# BRIEFLY

## Gore may visit China if reflected:

US Vice President Al Gore may visit China next spring if he and Bill Clinton are re-elected, a senior US official said Saturday. AP reports from Beijing.

If it takes place, Gore's would be the highest level visit by a US official since US President George Bush's trip in February 1989. Gore would travel to China for a meeting of a forum on sustainable development, said Eileen B. Claussen, US assistant secretary of state for oceans and international environmental and scientific affairs.

## FARC attack jail, free 41 inmates:

The leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on Saturday attacked a jail in the southwestern state of Putumayo and freed 41 prisoners, prison authorities said. AFP reports from Bogota.

One prison guard was injured in the attack, which took place in the town of Mocoa. Seven prisoners were later recaptured by police.

## 3 more die of dengue in Delhi:

The dengue fever toll has risen to 273 with three more deaths reported in New Delhi, capital of India, in the past 24 hours. Xinhua reports from New Delhi.

The number of total reported cases is 6,999. 194 more cases have been reported to different hospitals in the city, hospital sources said here yesterday. The Director-General of Health Services has been asked to depute teams of experts to the peripheral areas of the capital to oversee the dengue cases there. Each team will include a public health expert from the National Institute of Communicable Diseases as well as medicine and child specialists from union government hospitals in the city.

## Vote counting begins in Malta:

Vote counting began overnight in Malta after general elections Saturday marked by a high turnout. AFP reports from Valetta.

No official estimate of the turnout has been given up to now, but the rightwing ruling Nationalist Party said that according to its count, 97.2 per cent of the island's 274,925 voters had cast their ballots. If confirmed, this would even beat the high turnout of 96.4 per cent recorded in the last general election in 1992.

## Plane mishap kills 5 in Siberia:

Five people were killed and 15 injured Saturday when a Russian Yak-40 airliner made an emergency landing in Siberia, the Interfax News Agency reported. AFP reports from Moscow.

Its report was based on a provisional toll from the Russian Ministry of Defense, Emergencies and Natural Disasters. The accident, at Khanty-Mansiysk Airport, occurred at 8:48 pm (1448 GMT) as the aircraft — for as-yet unknown reasons — hit two helicopters on the runway as it was trying to land.

## Yemeni tribe frees French diplomat:

A French diplomat, kidnapped by a Yemeni tribe last weekend, was freed on Saturday, said the authorities in Ma'rib province, 180 kilometers (110 miles) east of Sanaa, where he was held. AFP reports from Sanaa.

The hostage was freed and turned over to mediators. He now is on the way to Ma'rib City, an official of the Ma'rib governor's office told AFP. He asserted that the diplomat — whose name has not been disclosed since his abduction last Sunday — was in a safe condition, and that he would be taken on to the French Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen's capital.

## Iran frees 150 Iraqi POWs:

Iran said on Saturday that its former foe Iran had freed 150 Iraqi prisoners of war jailed since their 1980-1988 war. Reuter reports from Baghdad.

But the official Iraqi News Agency (INA), quoting a statement by Iraq's foreign ministry, said Baghdad wanted Iraq to account for thousands more POWs.

"Iraq, while it highly appreciates the initiative, stresses that Iran is still detaining 20,000 Iraqi POWs registered by the International Committee of the Red Cross," INA quoted the statement as saying.

## Voting begins in Bulgaria:

Voters went to the polls Sunday in presidential elections marked by the worst economic crisis since 1989, when communism collapsed. AFP reports from Sofia.

Polls opened at 6 am (0400 GMT) and were to close at 7 pm (1700 GMT). Some 6.7 million people were eligible to vote in this Balkan nation of 8.4 million people.

Initial projections were expected Sunday evening and final results Monday.

## Heroin seized, 14 held in Myanmar:

Myanmar's troops have located two refineries and arrested 14 people in heroin raids near the country's border with China, state-controlled media reported Sunday. AP says from Yangon.

The New Light of Myanmar said that a tip-off resulted in military raids Oct 10 and 15 on two heroin refineries in northern Shan State, long a lawless region known as one of the world's major opium-growing areas.

Troops seized five kilograms of heroin and 4,389 liters (1,155 gallons) of chemicals, including chloroform, methylated spirit and acetic anhydride used in the process of turning opium into heroin.



Thousands of Israeli peace demonstrators hold a human chain in center Jerusalem to the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin grave on Mount Herzl Saturday. They call the Israeli government for an immediate withdrawal from Hebron, under the slogan "follow Rabin peace policy."

## Myanmar rulers banned from visiting EU countries

LUXEMBOURG, Oct 27: Myanmar's military rulers will be banned from visiting European Union countries under a package of largely symbolic sanctions to be adopted by EU foreign ministers here today, reports AFP.

The move, aimed at stepping up international pressure on the junta, comes against a background of growing international concern over the de facto house arrest of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the detention of one of her top aides.

The sanctions will require EU governments to turn down visa applications from members of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) or their senior military and security officials. An arms embargo covering munitions and military equipment.

# Clinton plans final-week tug for Democratic Congress

WASHINGTON, Oct 27: President Clinton plans a final-week tug for a Democratic Congress just as more Republicans urge voters to keep that party in power in the legislative branch as a check on a second Clinton term, reports AP.

Clinton's efforts to help Democrats down the ballot will be evident more in action than words. Wary of reminding voters why they stripped Democrats of their congressional majorities just two years ago, the president rarely puts in a direct plug for a Democratic Congress.

But Clinton's travel in the final week will overlap with many races critical if Democrats are to get the 19-seat House and four-seat Senate gains needed to regain majorities. Republicans entered the stretch suggesting things were breaking their way — in part because of Clinton's big lead in the presidential race.

If Bill Clinton's vote were a

# Situation very tense in Islamabad, Pindi amid tight security

## Jamaat supporters waving Quran demand Benazir's resignation

ISLAMABAD, Oct 27: Hundreds of demonstrators waving the Quran, shouting "God is Great" and "death to Benazir Bhutto," gathered Sunday on the outskirts of the federal capital threatening to march into Islamabad to topple the government, reports AP.

"This is the last day of this government," protesters shouted. "We will bring it down today."

But their way was being blocked by huge 18-wheeler trucks parked on all the roads leading into the capital.

Police in riot gear and paramilitary troops, their guns slung over their shoulders, stood guard to head off the rightwing religious demonstrators demanding Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's resignation.

The repressive measures of the government would prove to be the last nail in its own coffin and pave the way for a grand Islamic resolution in the country," said Qasim Hussain Ahmed, chief of Jamaat-e-Islami or Party of Islam, the group staging the demonstration.

Security men at the foreign embassies — all located in Islamabad — warned their nationals to stay in doors.

The Pakistan government is saying things could get out of hand... they are saying exercise extreme caution and if you can just stay in doors," said one embassy security person, who didn't want to be identified.

On the tree-lined boulevard that runs in front of the white marble Parliament building, hundreds of police sat on grassy hillocks and inside the many police trucks parked nearby.

Several police on horse back patrolled the street.

Rolls of barbed wire flanked by police in armoured personnel carriers blocked the main boulevard leading toward the Parliament buildings.

In neighbouring Rawalpindi where Jamaat-e-Islami demonstrators were gathering miles of barbed wire was used to block roads, cordon off parks and most gathering places.

Police on horseback and in jeeps mounted with machine guns patrolled the streets.

Early on Sunday a half dozen students threw stones at

several police-manned barricades before being dispersed.

Most of the stores in Rawalpindi, a congested city of 5 million people, were shuttered and the streets, usually teeming and chaotic, were deserted.

"It's a very tense situation here, anything can happen any time," said Mian Khurshid, a resident of Rawalpindi, just a few kilometres (miles) outside Islamabad.

Benazir earlier warned that the protest march would be stopped. Gatherings of more than four people are banned in Islamabad.

Benazir also said she had information that Jamaat-e-Islami was preparing for a violent showdown with her government.

Although it is a relatively small political party, Jamaat-

e-Islami is considered one of the best organised and is particularly effective in bringing people out on to the streets.

It has control of many of the mosques in Pakistan and uses them as a forum to mobilise its supporters or to foment agitation against the government.

Benazir has tried to take the steam out of the demonstration with the arrest of thousands of its activists and leaders. Jamaat-e-Islami leaders say at least 5,000 of their supporters have been arrested.

In the eastern city of Lahore, the headquarters of Jamaat-e-Islami has been sealed, phone lines disconnected and barricades erected.

Several leaders, including Liaqat Baluch, a Jamaat member of the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament,

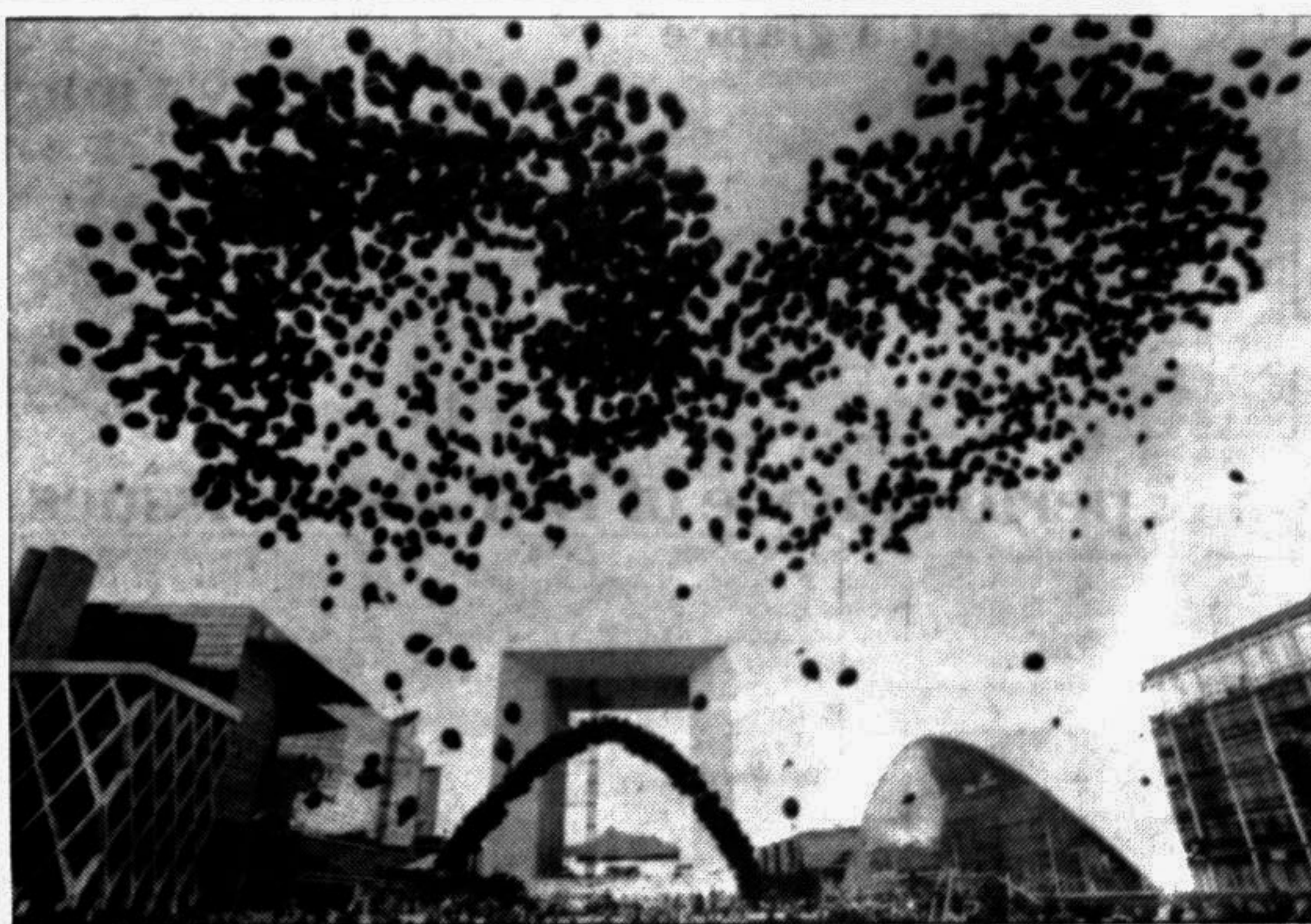
were arrested, said Musafar Shamsi, a Jamaat-e-Islami spokesman.

Earlier AFP says, Pakistan's major fundamentalist Islamic party has accused the government of planning bloodshed to stop a mass sit-in outside Parliament in Islamabad today, a protest aimed at toppling it.

The leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Party made the allegations a few hours before the sit-in was due to begin.

JI Party chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed claimed government agencies had hatched a "plot suggesting bloodshed" to thwart the sit-in.

Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar has warned that security forces would not allow the protesters to besiege Parliament or disrupt peace in the Pakistani capital.



Hundreds of balloons fly in the Paris sky over the Eiffel Tower Saturday. 45,000 balloons, a number corresponding to the people affected by AIDS in France, each one sold 20 FF (4 USD), are supposed to be launched over Paris by the French anti-AIDS association VLS. — AFP/UNB photo

# US envoy trying to bridge gaps between Israel, PA over Hebron

JERUSALEM, Oct 27: Talks over an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron resumed this weekend and a Palestinian negotiator said a deal could soon be reached if Israel offered "practical responses" to concerns over security arrangements, reports AP.

US mediator Dennis Ross had spent much of Saturday working behind the scenes trying to bridge gaps between Israel and the Palestinians over Hebron. Ross met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday and visited Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in his Gaza office on Friday.

Formal negotiations re-

sumed late Saturday in Tel Aviv, Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel said.

Jibril Rajoub, Arafat's West Bank security chief, said differences remained on security issues, and that if Israel can answer these concerns "then it could be wrapped up tonight." He said Arafat and Netanyahu could meet as early as Sunday to finalise a deal.

In Jerusalem, about 10,000 Israelis carrying torches marched to Netanyahu's office Saturday to press for a quick withdrawal from Hebron, a city of 94,000 Palestinians and 450 Jewish settlers.

The marchers carried torches and banners reading

"Give back Hebron."

Demonstrators also carried posters of Yitzhak Rabin,

marking the first anniversary of the prime minister's assassination by a Jewish opponent of land-for-peace agreements with the Palestinians. Many of the marchers paid tribute to Rabin's grave.

Three people at the rally site were arrested for instigation, including one man who burned a photograph of Rabin. Police spokesman Shmuel Ben Rube said.

Disputes over Hebron centre on demands Israel says are necessary to protect the safety of Jewish settlers.

# Dostum forces launch fresh air raids on Kabul

KABUL, Oct 27: Residents of the shattered Afghan capital awoke Sunday to the thud of bombs and staccato bursts of anti-aircraft fire mixed with the wailing sound of Koran recitation, reports AP.

Fighter jets belonging to the anti-Taliban alliance screamed in low over Kabul dropping several bombs that rattled the city. There were no immediate reports of fatalities.

The early morning bombing raids that coincided with the dawn prayers of devout Muslims followed at least two bombing raids late on Saturday.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

One of the bombs that hit a park Sunday left a 12-foot-wide crater. The concussion shattered windows and left metal awnings twisted.

In the neighbourhood residents swept away the glass. Some were removing a tree which the bomb had split, to use

as firewood. Black-turbaned Taliban fighters, carrying assault rifles, surveyed the damage.

Another bomb hit the combined military and civilian airport on the northwestern edge of the city, witnesses said.

The airport is still open and just one hour after the anti-aircraft fire ended a domestic aircraft landed.

The Taliban, an army of religious students who now control two-thirds of Afghanistan, moved three Russian-made jet fighters from the military side of Kabul airport to the civilian side last week.

Taliban jets also have been bombing north of Kabul where soldiers belonging to an anti-Taliban alliance are dug in.

There were unconfirmed reports Sunday that anti-Taliban forces had launched a fresh wave of fighting around Hussein Kot, roughly 20 kilo-

meters (12 miles) north of Kabul.

The recent bombing raids on Kabul follow reports that the Taliban army has opened fresh fighting in western Afghanistan against troops loyal to northern warlord Rashid Dostum.

The Taliban say it has gained control of western Badkhis province, while Dostum's spokesman in neighbouring Pakistan said the "fighting is going on." He denied that Dostum "has lost any territory."

Since the Taliban entered Kabul on September 27 most of the fighting has been waged north of the capital, where troops loyal to ousted military chief Ahmad Shah Masoud are deployed.

Dostum, who commands the second largest fighting force after the Taliban, also has soldiers north of the Afghan capital.

# Saturday's attack on gunboat

## Troops step up patrol, mount search for Tigers

COLOMBO, Oct 27: Sri Lankan security forces stepped up patrols and mounted a search for suspected Tamil guerrilla boats after the rebels sank a gunboat together with 12 sailors, officials said today, reports AFP.

Patrolling was intensified to track down boats of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) off the north-eastern coast after Saturday's suicide attack against the navy, officials said.

Defence officials said two officers and 10 sailors were killed in the daring attack off the coast of Trincomalee, a staging post for allied troops during World War II.

"The Tigers used suicide cadres to ram a boat packed with explosives against the Dvora gun boat P-457," a local official said. "There would have been at least two terrorists on board the suicide craft."

Officials said a flotilla of about 10 Tiger boats had put out to sea Saturday to isolate the navy craft and eventually sink it together with all 12 people aboard.

Investigations were today to see whether the rebels were on a mission to attack the Port of Trincomalee, the main launching pad for action against Tigers in the north-east.

"They are making a tremendous attempt to infiltrate the harbour to cause more damage," a local official said.

The latest round of fighting known as "Eelam War III," started in Trincomalee when the LTTE called off six months of talks with the government and sank two gun boats berthed inside the port in April last year.

Tiger guerrillas have staged similar attacks against the navy in the region since then.

# Zaire sends fresh troops into its eastern region

BUKAVU, Zaire, Oct 27: Zaire sent fresh troops into its eastern region where fighting with advancing Tutsi rebels has put up to 500,000 frightened Hutu refugees and Zairean civilians to flight, reports Reuter.

Soldiers in new uniforms appeared on the streets of Bukavu, capital of Zaire's south Kivu province, on Saturday and young militiamen wearing red bandanas and armed with nailed clubs, blocked roads or rode around on trucks.

The United Nations, which has airlifted its aid workers out of Bukavu and the war zone, called for an emergency mission and an international conference to prevent the conflict spreading throughout Central Africa.

A UN statement, issued in the name of human rights investigator Robert Garreto of Chile, appealed to Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi to refrain from all acts and declarations that aggravate an escalation of deadly violence and confrontation.

Zaire, host to over a million Hutu refugees from Rwanda and

Burundi, has accused the Tutsi governments and armies now in power there to helping their kinsmen by backing their rebellion with soldiers and weapons. Rwanda and Burundi deny the charge.

Rwandan troops are crossing into Zaire, south Kivu Governor Kyembwe Wa Lumuna told Reuters on Saturday. He said they were crossing via a hydroelectric dam on the border about 18 km (11 miles) south of Bukavu.

The Tutsi rebels, from the 300,000-strong Banyamulenge community which migrated from Rwanda 200 years ago, accuse Zaire of denying them citizenship and harassment to make them leave.

Military sources and state radio in Burundi said the rebels had captured the town of Uvira at the northern end of lake Tanganyika after two days of battles with Zairean forces.

Aid workers in north Kivu said Tutsi fighters had also seized the town of Rutshuru, 50 km (30 miles) from Goma city, the capital of north Kivu province.

# New York Times endorses Clinton as best candidate

NEW YORK, Oct 27: The New York Times endorsed President Bill Clinton in its Sunday edition, calling him the best candidate for the presidency and saying he has grown in the job, reports Reuter.

"He is clearly the candidate of hope and progress in this race," an editorial said. "No one can doubt his commitment to using government to spur the economy, protect the environment, defend the cities, promote racial justice and combine compassion with fiscal prudence," it said.

The Times said choosing Clinton was easy because of Republican candidate Bob Dole's "halting campaign."

# 'Naples — crime capital of Europe'

ROME, Oct 27: Naples is the crime capital of Europe, according to a study by the Eurispes social think-tank and Italy's tax police, cited in the Italian press on Saturday, reports AP.

Murders in Italy's third largest city, after Rome and Milan, are running at 3.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, more than anywhere else on the continent, it said.

Car thefts, at 1,312 per 100,000 inhabitants, is greater than in New York City, where the rate stands at 1,300.

The range of other kinds of thefts recorded in Naples is vast, the report said, including purebred dogs, artificial limbs, eyeglasses (spectacles), and in one case even a bus.

One disturbing aspect is the proliferation of loan sharks, who prey on 600,000 families and individuals of all walks of life who must turn to them after losing their credit worthiness at retail banks.

The study also focused on the scope of the local mafia known as the Camorra in the southern seaside city.

# Off the Record



# TV show shocks Madonna

ARLINGTON, Virginia: What shocks Madonna? Tabloid TV, reports AP.

Video footage of the pop diva at her Los Angeles home with newborn daughter Lourdes Maria and the baby's father, Carlos Leon, has been aired two nights on the syndicated "Hard Copy" show. It prompted a scathing statement published Friday in USA Today.

"I'm fully cognizant that when one is a public figure, having one's picture taken goes with the territory of fame," Madonna wrote.

"But when I'm in the confines of my own home, my sanctuary, I can't help but feel violated by the invasion of my privacy... my daughter is not a public figure. She is a week-old child who does not deserve to be exploited this way."

The video, apparently shot from a neighboring house, includes shots of Leon getting the paper and flowers getting delivered.

# Nobody does it better but Jackson

KUALA LUMPUR: Michael Jackson gyrates, he thrusts, he sings — and there are still those who think nobody does it better, reports AP.

The entertainer arrived Saturday and was greeted by 800 happy fans, just under the 1,000 people who showed up a day earlier to protest his concert appearances as immoral, anti-Islamic and a bad influence on young people.



"How can Michael's concert be immoral and have a bad effect on youth?" asked Dinesh Sai, 17, who was at the airport for Jackson's arrival.

"If that is immoral what about all sorts of things on Internet, movies and songs? Then everything should be banned and what would we have left?"

only modest House gains when Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan won 49-seat re-election landslides, and in both years, 1972 and 1984, the Republican Party lost Senate seats.

And in these three re-election landslides, Reagan's 59 per cent was the lowest percentage of the popular vote. Assuming Clinton maintains his lead over Dole, many strategists expect him to barely crack 50 per cent on Election Day, some believe Ross Perot will do well enough to again deny the winner a popular vote majority.

In northwest Pennsylvania, freshman Republican Representative Phil English has worked feverishly to move from highly vulnerable to being favored for re-election in a Democratic district where Clinton leads Dole by a wide margin.

"But if Republicans go to sleep and my opponent can tie himself to Clinton, there is a real chance he can pull off an upset," English said.

Such steps are not so much a test of whether other Democrats can ride into office hanging on Clinton's coattails but rather a helpful luxury afforded by his double-digit lead over Dole. But, even as he looks for a giant margin of victory by revisiting Texas and Florida in the final week, Clinton will also put his personal prestige on the line for Democratic candidates.

In the week ahead, Clinton will visit competitive Senate races in Illinois, Minnesota and Colorado, and campaign in House contests in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and California. Visits to Washington and Oregon are likely, as is a trip home to Arkansas, which has a close Senate race.

"The main thing is continuing to make sure we lock down our 270 electoral votes — that is the overriding concern," said White House political director Doug Sosnik. "But we're looking for the overlap with congressional races."

In places like Illinois and Minnesota, where Clinton leads handily, Republicans don't dispute that the president might help Democratic candidates with a late-campaign visit that boosts turnout.

But in a year in which he has consistently led the White House race, there is little evidence of long Clinton coattails. "Swing voters are the target at this point of the campaign," said Republican pollster Bill McInturf. "Among them, every time Clinton stops being the guy who is on your side and starts being the head Democrat, he takes a drubbing."

In any event, recent history suggests limits on the coattails of presidents seeking a second term.

term promises have been fairly modest, enacting most would require a Democratic Congress. And Democratic committee chairman also would be less eager than their Republican counterparts to investigate Clinton administration ethical lapses.

Confident that his re-election is at hand, Clinton last week restructured his roughly 1.5 million dollars weekly advertising budget with an eye on helping targeted congressional races. He is buying heavily in Washington and Oregon, for example, despite healthy leads. Oregon has a tight Senate race and a handful of congressional seats are up for grabs in Washington.

Beyond his own campaign funds, Clinton helped raise 10 million dollars for Democratic House and Senate campaigns in the past few weeks, and has authorized additional party money to be redirected from his campaign to congressional races.

vote of enthusiasm, then Republicans in the House and Senate would be in big trouble," Republican pollster Neil Newhouse said. "But many voters don't trust him. So it leaves them wide open to a pitch to balance their vote at the top with a vote for Republicans for Congress."

Indeed, many Republicans in tight races are arguing that progress in reducing the deficit and reforming welfare would be at risk if Democrats regained control of Congress. These Republicans recall the tax increases and big-government health care plan advocated in the first two years of Clinton's term.

"Don't turn back the clock," was the final-week slogan for Republican candidates suggested in memo from Republican pollster Frank Luntz to House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

Although Clinton's second-