## Belarus president fires top election official

MINSK Belarus Nov 15 President Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday fired a top election official who dismissed as invalid a referendum on expanding Lukashenko's powers because of widespread violations in preliminary voting, reports AP.

The move, signifying Lukashenko's determination to strengthen his authority despite strong resistance, appeared to violate a law that says dismissals from that position may only be made by parlia-

Speaking live to callers on national television. Lukashenko said he had signed a decree removing Victor Gonchar as chairman of Belarus central election commission.

The controversial referen dum, which would greatly expand Lukashenko's already sweeping powers, was set for Nov. 24 but absentee balloting started last week.

Gonchar had called the cir cumstances surrounding the vote a national shame. He said authorities had ordered polls open despite the fact that copies of Lukashenko's constitutional amendments and the rival parliament's proposals hadn't been published yet.

What kind of vote is it if people haven't seen the draft constitution?" Gonchar said last week. "Who would answer for this nationwide stupidity?" Speaking on television.

Lukashenko said that Gonchar's promise to invalidate the voting results was the last straw. "He said he had appointed a mernber of the election commission. Lidiya Yarmoshina, as Gonchar's suc-

# Probe into mid-air collision in India begins

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: The investigation into a mid-air collision over India that killed 349 people was in the hands of a judge Friday, while the civil aviation authority promised to look into delays in upgrading radar at New Delhi's airport. reports AP

Immediately after the crash. Indian authorities had promised an independent judicial inquiry. Thursday, High Court Judge RC Lahoti officially took over the investigation. He will be assisted by experts from

the Civil Aviation Ministry. It could be months before Lahoti released findings, but speculation already had focused on antiquated radar equipment and poor communications.

A Saudi jetliner taking off from New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport Tuesday was supposed to have passed 1 000 feet (300 metres) beneath an arriving Kazak cargo plane instructions the Saudi pilot never confirmed, according to transcripts of conversations between the pilots and a New Delhi airport controller.

The planes collided, scattering burning debris and bodies across farm fields about 60 miles (95 kilometres) southwest of New Delhi.

New Delhi airport con trollers work with radar that does not show the altitudes of planes passing each other, information that could have al-

lowed them to warn the pilots of impending disaster Tuesday. Massachusetts-based Raytheon co. began installing a more sophisticated radar system two years ago, but the Federal Aviation Administration has twice refused to clear the new system for operation.

Certification by the US aviation watchdog is required for such equipment, even when installed in airports in other countries

Civil aviation officials said they would open an investigation into the delays Friday. Raytheon has said such delays are normal as systems are tailored to different airports.

Kazak officials, meanwhile bristled at suggestions their pi-

lots were to blame for the crash. Bories Redkin, an official with the Kazak state committee for emergencies, said pilot Alexander Cherepanov knew English well enough to take instructions from the New Delhi control tower Redkin told the Tass news agency that Cherepanov had recently passed an examination in English.

In addition, the cargo plane's crew had performed regular charter flights to India for a number of years. Redkin said.

Kazakstan's Minster of Transport and Communication Yuri Lavrinenko has contacted US Embassy officials to ask American authorities to help ensure an impartial investigation into the crash. Tass said.

## WB firm to spend more to tackle rural poverty

ROME. Nov 15: The World Bank acknowledged on Thursday it made mistakes in reducing support for Third World agriculture and pledged to spend more to tackle rural poverty.

reports Reuter. World Bank President James Wolfenshon said the multilateral lender had switched back to funnel more money into rural development. But it did not want to get into a "dollar race" by saddling poor nations with ever greater loans.

"We have ... in the last 10 vears reduced our focus (on agriculture), not deliberately but it just happened. And that has now been reversed," he told

reporters at a UN foods summit. "I believe that in terms of poverty alleviation, when 70 per cent of the world's poor are in rural areas it is essential that we give much greater focus to rural development," he said He agreed with a reporter at a news conference who said World Bank spending on agriculture had more than halved to 2.6 million dollars from 6 billion dollars over the past 10 years. But he said he expected the spending to rise "significantly" from there.

The Washington-based bank whose clients are governments outside the industriealised world, said in papers issued at the World Food Summit that raising farmers' incomes was vital to meeting the summit's goal of halving global hunger in 20 years.

Meanwhile representatives of the world's two food superpowers answered the question tormenting the assembled media at a food summit on Thursday - what were leaders eating after a day debating hunger?



the Provisional Legislature at the start of an indefinite hunger strike and sit-in protest outside the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on Thursday. The protest came on the eve of Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's visit to the territory to oversee the selection of the first leader of Hong Kong after its return to Chinese rule next July. - AFP/UNB photo

#### Maoist rebels kill 13 cops in India: Maoist guerillas attacked a police station yesterday. killing 14 people in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, the

United News of India (UNI) said. AFP reports from New Delhi. The news agency reported guerillas belonging to the outlawed People's War Group attacked the police station early yesterday morning. Thirteen policemen and a civilian died in the attack in the village of Sirpuru in the state's Adilabad district, UNI

900 still missing in Andhra: More than 900 people are still missing eight days after a cyclone lashed the southeast Indian coast, a senior state government official said on Thursday. Reuter reports from Hyderabad.

Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh state's Chief Minister told reporters that 847 had been killed by the cyclone and 925 were still missing. He also accused the New Delhi government of failing to release enough resources quickly to help Andhra Pradesh overcome the calamity.

Sudanese protest UN resolution: Some 10,000 Sudanese held demonstrations in Khartoum on Thursday to protest against the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1070, Xinhua reports from Khar-

The masses chanted religious slogans during the march which lasted for three hours condemning the US for undermining the Sudanese government. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1070 last August, banning international flights of Sudan's national carrier for its failure to hand over the three suspects allegedly involved in attempts on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia last year.

Blast claims 3 in Nigeria: Three occupants of a Nigerian government car were killed when a bomb planted in the vehicle exploded, local newspapers reported yes-

terday. Reuter says from Lagos. They said the incident included a security official at the airport and an unidentified lady. The official was about to drive home when the car exploded, said Thisday newspaper.

Lord to leave Clinton Admn: Assistant Se cretary of State Winston Lord, the top Asia hand in President Bill Clinton's administration, said Thursday he will Jeave the State Department in January to return to private life, AFP

report's from Washington. "I ain planning to leave, and I informed my superiors of that some tinge ago, no matter now the election came out," Lord told reporters.

lah, and scouts paraded through streets in the West Bank and

Gaza Strip on Thursday to

mark the eight anniversary of

the PLO's declaration of Pales-

to continue until Sunday, mari

they Nov. 15, 1988 unilateral

declaration of independence by

the Palestine National Council.

then the Palestinian govern-

leader Yasser Arafat, students

and scouts paraded the streets

ment-in-exile.

The celebrations, which are

tinian statehood, reports AP.

#### Nigeria slow in response to democracy'

WELLINGTON, New Zealand. Nov 15. Nigeria has been slow to respond to Commonwealth calls for democratization, a member of the Commonwealth's human rights watchdog committee said Friday, reports

New Zealand's Foreign Minster Don McKinnon spoke before leaving for Nigeria as deputy chairman of an eightmember group to monitor human rights in Commonwealth nations.

It was set up during last year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in New Zealand, which also voted to suspend Nigeria from the Commonwealth after the execution of nine activists from the minority Ogoni people, including author Ken Saro-Wiwa.

McKinnon said the visit was the first time Nigeria had agreed that the group could travel there. It had previously held meetings in London and New York.

#### Israeli court for interrogation of Jihad member

JERUSALEM, Nov 15: Israeli Supreme Court Thursday gave the internal security service Shin Beth permission to use "heightened physical pressure" to interrogate a Palestinian prisoner suspected of planning

terrorist attack, reports AFP. The court said it had been convinced that the prisoner. Mohammad Adelaziz Hamdan, held crucial information which would enable future disasters to be avoided.

The court said Hamdan's interrogators should not use methods that were against the law, but imposed no particular restrictions otherwise.

Hamdan, from the West Bank town of Ramallah, is said to be a member of the militant Islamic Jihad which has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against Israel. judicial sources said.

### Anti-drug campaign Manila nets 44 foreigners in 10

months MANILA. Nov 15: At least 44 foreigners have been arrested or killed in an anti-drug campaign in the first 10 months of this year, more than triple the number arrested in all of last year, a

senator said Friday, reports AP. Sen. Ernesto Herrera, an anti-crime crusader, said the arrested foreigners include 18 Hong Kong nationals, five Taiwanese, five Americans, four mainland Chinese, two French. Malaysians and Nigerians, a German, a Japanese and a Swiss. Three Hong Kong nationals were killed by police.

"Our police authorities ... have recently shown remarkable persistence in battling foreign drug traffickers and they deserve praise and full support." Herrera said

#### **Onassis Foundation** acquitted of embezzlement charges

ATHENS, Nov 15: A charitable foundation established by the late Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis has been acquitted of charges that it mismanaged and embezzled millions of dollars, reports AP.

In a decision published Thursday, an Athens magistrate's court dismissed a lawsuit filed by Thierry Roussel. the former husband of the shiptycoon's daughter

#### Preparations for multinational force for Zaire accelerated UNITED NATIONS, Nov 15: will secure the airport, and a four month mandate rather

The Canadian general tapped to lead a proposed international force to Zaire said his troops would protect aid shipments but would not try to disarm Hutu extremists preventing the refugees from returning home. reports AP.

The Security Council meets Friday to decide whether to authorise the force to help feed about 1 million mostly refugees displaced by ethnic fighting in eastern Zaire

Most had gone to eastern Zaire from Burundi and Rwanda two years ago after ethnic slaughter in their homelands. Planning for the mission ac-

celerated Thursday after Presi dent Clinton agreed "in principle" to provide American troops to the Canadian-led operation.

But differences over details of the mission, including how long the force would remain in Zaire, have delayed final approval. UN officials said the Americans wanted ceasefire around Goma, where US forces

than the six months favoured by Canada

Lt. Gen. Maurice Baril, who will lead the force, said the troops will help civilian organisations feed the refugees, protect civilian humanitarian organisations and "facilitate the voluntary return of refugees

"However, it must be understood that the multinational force will neither have the mandate nor the capability to perform certain of the tasks such as conduct forced entry operations, be responsible for overall repatriation and integration of refugees, intervene in factional or local conflict or deal with territorial disputes or separate for the refugees and disarm extremists to secure parametres of the camps, or provide police forces inside those camps," Baril said.

He hoped that contributing nations will not add conditions to their contributions that will render their troops somewhat less on the ground."

In Washington, the Pentagon said the United States wants warring factions in Zaire to promise a ceasefire before US and allied troops agree to move in. There was still fighting during the day within a few kilometres of where the multi national force plans to start

We aren't anticipating a combat operation," spokesman Kenneth Bacon said at the Pentagon "What we would like is a pledge by the sides that there will be a ceasefire.

Clearly frustrated by the pace of planning. Canadian deputy Foreign Minster Gordon Smith said "it is of the highest urgency that the force be deployed" quickly

There are enormous risks in this. Smith said. There's no question about that. We are fully cognizant of them. We think the risks are worth tak

Smith said disarming the extremists would provoke a "level of violence" which "would really be very high

### Mladic accuses politicians of conducting purge of army

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Nov 15: Bosnian Serbs fired mili tary brass accused civilian leaders on Thursday of conducting a political purge of the army, reports AP.

The confrontation that began over the weekend when Bosnian Serb President Biljana Playsic announced the firing of military chief Gen. Ratko Mladic appeared no closer to a solution.

An ultimatum that Playsic reportedly issued for Mladic to step aside by Thursday apparently was ignored. Playsic said that Mladic, who has been indicted for war crimes for his conduct of the Bosnian conflict. could not longer be effective.

In a statement faxed to The Associated Press in Belgrade. the general staff that remains loval to Mladic said civilian authorities were "afraid of the personal authority of Gen. Mladic.

Mladic, an old-time Communist military commander of the former Yugoslav army, is thought to be close to Serbian

President Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic is at odds with Bosnian Serb civilian authorities. After first supporting them, he abandoned them and negotiated the Dayton peace

The sacked officers charged that Playsic wanted to put loyal people in charge of the army.

deal on their behalf.

It was a pure political cleansing of the army." the statement said. "Gen. Mladic was never interested in political power... even when there were clemands that the army take over the country.

The dispute between Bosnian Serb military and civilian authorities has been simmering throughout the war, but Mladic survived earlier attempts by former leader Radovan Karadzic to replace him.

This time. Mladic and his aides set up checkpoints around their stronghold of Han Pijesak, 50 kilometres (30 miles) northeast of Sarajevo. They reportedly detained about 30 people, including the deputy premier and defence minister.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had a 45-minute talks with Indonesian President Soeharto at her hotel suite in Rome yesterday where the two leaders discussed bilateral issues. PID photo

## Clinton to meet Chinese president during 12-day Asian trip

WASHINGTON, Nov 15: President Clinton will meet with China's president during a 12day trip to Asia, seeking increased stability in the two countries' often stormy and turbulent relationship, reports

"Over the past year. I believe we've turned a corner in the relationship and dealt with some very difficult issues." Samuel Berger, the deputy national security adviser, told reporters Thursday. The visit, in the Philippines,

will be Clinton's fourth with Chinese President Jiang Zemin at neutral locations. Berger said there remain no plans as yet for more formal state visits in each other's capitals. Secretary of State Warren

Christopher will meet with Chinese official in Beijing prior to the Philippine meeting. however. It will be only the second time Christopher has visited Beijing in Clinton's four years as president. Berger said Clinton also will press other Asian leaders for

concrete progress on more lib-

eral trade policies during the

trip's centerpiece event, a meet-

Clinton leaves Friday for a · weekend vacation in Hawaii. then flies to Australia for a state visit. He attends the APEC meeting in Manila, where he meets with Jiang, then follows with a state visit to Bangkok, Thailand.

Discussing the Clinton-Jiang meeting, Berger emphasised the progress the United States and China have made in the last year on a range of contentious questions, including

### 20 missing, 65 hurt in Egypt

CAIRO, Nov 15: Twenty people were missing, including 14 foreign tourists, and 65 were injured after a cruise ship ran a ground in the Nile in southern Egypt late Thursday, according to the latest toll given early today by police, reports AFP.

Nine Czechs, five Slovaks and six Egyptians were still unaccounted for eight hours after the tragedy which occurred at around 6:00 pm (1600 gmt) Thursday off the town of Edfu. ing of leaders of Asia-Pacific about 800 kilometres (500 Economic Cooperation Forum miles) south of Cairo.

Chinese naval maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait, and an agreement protecting US intellectual property.

"That progress demonstrates that we can work together and work through our differences, as great powers must," Berger said.

Also in Manila, Clinton will meet with Prime Minister Ryu taro Hashimoto of Japan and South Korean President Kim Young-sam.

"The last four years have put the US-Japan relationship on the best footing that has existed. I believe, in many years. through a new security charter. a range of market-opening agreements, now a declining trade deficit." Berger said

He said Clinton and Hashimoto will discuss the US military presence on Okinawa and "ways to modernise the relationship between our militaries," as well as economic and

trade issues. In his talks with South Korea's Kim, Clinton will discuss prospects for his proposed fourparty initiative to involve the United States and China in improving relations between South Korea and communist North Korea.

## Off the Record

#### Tree becomes home sweet home for him

JAKARTA: An Indonesian man, 67, has been living in a tree for the past seven years on Sulawesi Island, Antara news agency reported, says Xinhua.

Seven years ago, the report said. La Nene, of Waramber village, southeast Sulawesi, set up a platform on a cashew nut tree some 20 metres above the ground, covering it with an old mat, and then lived in it.

His wife and children regularly feed him, the agency said. "It is my fate," the bearded, white-haired man said from his platform when asked why he has remained there for so long. The man's eldest son, La Tegi, told Antara that his father climbed up the tree after he had a dream seven years ago and has

not come down since. However, Tegi said his father was sane and healthy in body

### Peep into darker side of Einstein

JERUSALEM: The popular image of Albert Einstein in that of a benign, benevolent, white-haired genius. A genius who gave the world the Theory of Relativity, who helped little children with their match homework and who was a pacifist, even as his research helped lead to the building of the atom bomb, reports

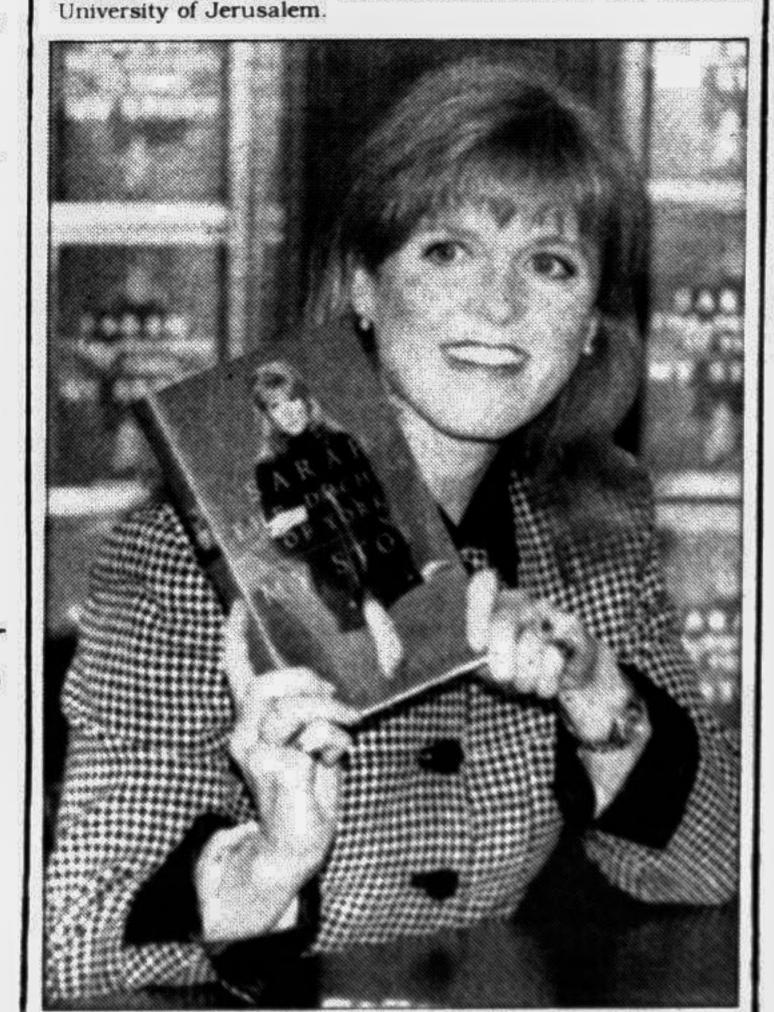
His relationship with his first wife gives a different picture. Hundreds of letters displayed earlier this months revel him as a domineering husband who treated Mileva Einstein, once a brilliant physics student, as a servant.

In an April 1914 letter to her, Einstein makes a list of demands, including that she serve him three meals a day in his room. The marriage was troubled, and he also listed conditions under which he would tolerate her presence.

"You will expect no affection from me and will not reproach

me for this," he wrote. "You will promise not to denigrate me in the eyes of the children, by word or deed. This letter is one of 430 displayed earlier this month in Jerusalem and New York. Unknown to scholars until their 1986 discovery in a Los Angeles bank vault, the letters will be soldat

Christie's auction house in New York on November 25. "What is new in this collection are the letters dealing with his estrangement from his first wife," said Zeev Rosenkranz, curator of the Albert Einstein Archives at the Hebrew



Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, smiles as she holds a copy of her new book at a New York City book store on Thursday. Ferguson is in New York promoting and signing copies of the new book "My Story". - Reuter/UNB photo

#### Palestinians celebrate declaration of independence RAMALLAH, We'st Bank, Nov optimistic that the Hebron reof the West Bank cities of Radover of control appeared to be of last year, when Israel pulled have been struggling to iron out 15: Fireworks lit up the skies in its troops from five West Bank deployment would be implemallah. Nablus, Qalqilya and nearing completion. an agreement on a troop rede-Jenin, as well as in Hebron, the the West Bank town of Ramal-

Israeli occupation. "This is a very emotional celebration because even though we declared our independence in 1988, this is the first time we really celebrated because Ramallah is liberated. said Amira Abdallah, 35, who came out to watch the fireworks with her five children.

last West Bank city still under

Red green and white fireworks — the colours of the Palestinian flag - swirled over Heeding calls by Palestinian the center of Ramallah, which becan e autonomous at the end

Pictures of Arafat and Palestinian flags swung from buildings, and from the small hands of hundreds of children watching the glowing skies. Earlier, crowds bought popcorn an candy and watched performers doing the Dabke traditional folk dance and sing traditional Palestinian songs in an open

In Hebron, where redeployment has been repeatedly delayed since March, celebrations took on added significance as talks to implement the han-

Hundreds of scouts from elementary and high schools marched through downtown

"The day of our independence, the day of our freedom," read a yellow banner carried by the marchers, who wore the green berets of the Palestinian police and scarves in the colors

Unlike at other Palestinian celebrations, Israeli troops with assault rifles and plainclothes Palestinian security agents watched the procession. Israel and the Palestinians

of the Palestinian flag.

ployment from the problematic city, where some 350 Jewish settlers and 150 seminary students live among 130,000 Palestinians. Talks went late into the

close to an agreement, they said it was unlikely to be completed before the anniversary Friday. "We will not allow the nonprogress in the talks to stop us from celebrating, said Hebron

Mayor Mustafa Natche.

Mohammed Balgis, a resident of Ramallah, said he was

mented soon, and that the Palestinians would have their sought-after Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Israel's hard-line government opposes. night Thursday, and although "These celebrations come at officials said the sides were a time when most of the Pales-

> sooner or later leave Hebron. leave the rest of the West Bank. "Next year, we will be cele-

tinians are liberated," said

Balgis, 40. "Despite the pace of

negotiations," Israel will

brating independence in an independent state," he added hopefully