

# BRIEFLY

## Chirac arrives in Tokyo:

President Jacques Chirac arrived in Tokyo yesterday for a state visit aimed at giving a "new impetus" to bilateral ties, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The official part of his visit is to begin Monday with a welcoming ceremony attended by Emperor Akihito and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. This is the first state visit in 14 years by a French president to Japan.

## Czech PM keeps options open:

Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus kept his options open on whether the domination of his Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in this weekend's first round of Senate elections might encourage a quest for a larger mandate, Reuter reports from Prague.

As results for the new upper house came in late on Saturday, Klaus reserved comment on possibly using his party's strength in the Senate races as a signal to seek new elections to the lower house in order to win back a majority government.

## Amiens film award declared:

Japanese director Yoishi Higuchi's film "The Village of My Dreams" won the best-picture prize at the Amiens International Film Festival on Saturday, organisers said. AFP reports from Amiens, France.

Some 37,000 film buffs attended the 16th edition of the festival in the north of France, which this year honoured the work of another Japanese film-maker, Shohei Imamura.

## Russian bldg blast toll may rise:

As many as 100 people were dead or presumed dead yesterday in an apartment block bombing in Kaspiisk, the head doctor at the scene of the catastrophe told AFP.

In addition to 10 confirmed dead, a further 90 were estimated to be lying under the rubble of the building which was destroyed by a bomb Saturday. Doctor Kazanfar Kurbanov said, "We have no hope for them now, he added.

## Russia lost contact with space module:

Monitors tracking the Russian Mars probe launched Saturday said they had lost contact with the module, which was still trapped in earth orbit, AFP reports from Evpatoria, Ukraine.

Scientists at the centre for long distance space communication here told AFP Sunday that they were unsure of the exact orbit or its trajectory.

## Voting begins in Thailand:

Thai voters began trickling into voting stations as the polls opened at 8:00am (0200 GMT) yesterday amid claims of record vote-buying and threats against the lives of political canvassers, AFP reports from Bangkok.

A total of 2,310 candidates from 13 parties were contending for 393 seats, from the previous elections in July 1995. Some 60 per cent of 38.4 million eligible voters were expected to take part.

## 'Hutus setting up bases':

Burundian strongman Pierre Buyoya Saturday charged that Hutu rebels displaced by fighting in eastern Zaire were travelling cross-country and setting up bases in Tanzania, AFP reports from Bujumbura.

I asked for a meeting between the Tanzanian government and a Burundian delegation to ensure that the border is not troubled, he told journalists in Bujumbura after meeting former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in the northern Tanzanian town of Musoma.

## Quake shakes Philippine island:

A mild earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 3.2 shook a sparsely populated southern Philippine island Sunday, but no damage or casualties were reported, AP says from Manila.

The quake was centred in the Philippine Sea, 140 kilometres (88 miles) northeast of Surigao City. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

## Lee renews offer to visit China

TAIPEI, Nov 17: President Lee Teng-hui on Sunday made another offer to visit China on a "mission of peace," but said not getting a response from Beijing was preventing improved ties, reports AP.

Lee told a visiting US Senate delegation he was willing to meet the leaders in Beijing, and Chinese leaders would be "welcoming at any time" if they wished to visit Taiwan.

However, the Chinese Communists' lack of any response whatsoever to this friendly suggestion, even after half a year, is truly regretful, Lee was quoted in a release from the Presidential Office.

An exchange of visits was first proposed by Lee in early 1995, and reaffirmed in his May 20 inaugural address.

Lee told the American senators he was the "actual promoter" of exchanges between the two sides.

After years of hard work, the two sides had created a channel for semi-official talks laid out

## HR body for improved diets to Indian detainees

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: India's apex human rights body has asked provincial governments to improve meals dished out to people in police detention, terming current fare as "woefully inadequate," the Press Trust of India said today.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in a directive to 25 provincial administrations, called for a "rational diet allowance" for suspects lodged in police stations.

"As the diet allowance is very meagre, the police... have to resort to other methods to feed the prisoners," NHRC chairman and former Chief Justice Ranganath Mishra said.

Mishra said the money spent on an individual meal now

ranged from a paltry two rupees (0.05 cents) — or the price of a single king size cigarette — to 10 rupees (.28 cents).

An NHRC team, made up of nutritional and legal experts, recommended vegetarian meals for prisoners, costing a minimum of 16 rupees (.45 cents). It said fuel and cooks' salaries were not included in the figure. Mishra said diet costs had to be periodically reviewed to match inflation.

This measure is necessary not only from the perspective of observance of human rights of the prisoners in police lock-ups but also to curb a long standing malpractice in police stations, he said.

Deaths in police custody are reported quite frequently.

# International

## 'Washington needs to shift policies for improving ties with Beijing'

BEIJING, Nov 17: China said today the United States was trying to contain it and that Washington needed to shift policies to improve ties, reports Reuter.

In an attack aimed just days before the arrival of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, China also accused the United States of being "self-righteous" and "alienating" in its foreign policy.

"Only when the United States drops the idea of containing China, removes ideological bias against China and stops basing its foreign policies purely on its own economic interests can we expect significant progress in bilateral ties," said the business weekly.

Contrary to Washington's stated policy of maintaining contact with China, the United States was employing a strategy of containment based on a security defence chain linking South Korea, Japan, the Philip-

pines and Thailand, said the newspaper, published by the official China Daily.

The newspaper was quoting Chen Bingqai, an economist at a think-tank linked to the state planning commission.

The US secretary of state is scheduled to arrive in China on Tuesday in the first senior-level contact between the two nations since the re-election of US President Bill Clinton.

It is part of an effort aimed at repairing relations strained by a series of disputes ranging from Taiwan to human rights to trade and arms proliferation.

The most serious damage to ties was inflicted when China held war games and unarmed missile tests off Taiwan early this year, prompting the US to send two aircraft carrier groups near the island in a show of force.

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The newspaper quoted Chen as saying the United States, relying on its economic and military might, was becoming increasingly high handed in international affairs, "and its own foreign policy has become extremely self-righteous and alienating."

Without a policy shift, the United States could be expected to continue blocking China's long-stalled entry into the world trade organisation and further turbulence was likely in trade and economic relations.

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An expanded US-Japan security pact signed this year was in fact a cover for a resurgence of Japanese militarism, according to the newspaper.

Diplomats in Beijing said this was a theme heard most frequently from China's armed forces.

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## HIV cases in E Asia, Pacific will rise to 473,190 by 2000: WHO

MANILA, Nov 17: More than a quarter of a million people in East Asia and the Pacific are estimated to have contracted with the HIV virus which leads to AIDS, and the total will rise to nearly half a million by 2000, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said today, reports AFP.

Injecting drug users continued to dominate the mode of HIV transmission in China, Malaysia and Vietnam.

The incidence in Australia is seen to "continue to drop in 1996," while those of New

## Hotel fire claims 17 in Istanbul

ISTANBUL, Nov 17: At least 17 people died in a fire that broke out at a hotel in central Istanbul early today, the state-run Anatolian news agency reported, reports Reuter.

The region only reported cumulative totals of 59,926 HIV cases and 11,067 AIDS infections as of August 31, 1996.

The worldwide estimates as of mid-1996 are more than 22 million HIV cases and more than seven million AIDS cases.

The WHO Western Pacific Office here warned of "increasing epidemics of heterosexual

transmission" in Papua New Guinea and Cambodia, with the latter now having "one of the highest estimated number of people with HIV per capita in Asia and the Pacific."

WHO regional director Han Sang Tae said in a statement that the majority of HIV infections in the Western Pacific are now acquired through heterosexual contact, with injecting drug use a "growing problem."

He said some countries seem to be succeeding in slowing down the epidemic after the WHO began lobbying governments to develop national prevention and control programme in 1988.

The WHO report said the very high level of HIV incidence experienced by people with hemophilia in Japan was effectively eliminated by the introduction of mandatory screening of blood products.

Zealand are on a general down trend despite a slight increase in the first half of 1996, the statement said.

A "limited indication of HIV epidemics" were seen in Brunei, Hong Kong, Laos, Macau, Mongolia, Singapore, the Pacific islands countries, Japan, the Philippines and South Korea.

The WHO's geographic division does not include other Asian countries with high levels of reported HIV and AIDS cases such as Thailand, Myanmar and India.

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According to initial reports, 41 people were hurt in the blaze which began around 4:00 am (0200 GMT) in a seven-storey, three-star hotel in Istanbul's Laleli district.

Anatolian said mostly Ukrainian tourists were staying in the hotel at the time.

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in the hotel.

The air strikes came as army troops relocated one of their elite fighting units in the adjoining district of Ampara in a bid to seek and destroy suspected Tiger positions in the area, officials said.

Ground troops in the islands embattled northern and eastern regions have been placed on red alert for possible bomb attacks by the Tigers to mark the 42nd birthday of rebel Supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran on November 26.

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