

## BRIEFLY

## Euro-Parliament president arrives in Tel Aviv

The president of the European parliament Klaus Haensel, arrived here Sunday for an official visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories, AFP reports from Tel Aviv.

He is to speak to the Israeli Knesset or parliament yesterday and meet with Israeli President Ezer Weizman, as well as Foreign Minister David Levy.

Hensh will travel on Tuesday to the Gaza Strip for a two-day visit to the Palestinian territories.

## US Bank reopens new office in Singapore

First Chicago NBD Corp. said Monday it has reopened an office in Singapore to serve as regional marketing headquarters, returning to the city-state after almost 10 years, AP reports from Singapore.

The bank will initially lend up to 150 million Singapore dollars (US \$106 million) to offshore clients under current Singapore regulations. Southeast Asian regional chief Paul Mcgonagle said.

He said the branch will also focus on foreign exchange, trade finance, cash management and other trade-related services.

## Mild quake shakes western India

A mild earthquake shook western India overnight but there were no reports of injuries or damage. The Indian meteorological department said yesterday, Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The tremor, which measured 4.5 on the Richter scale, struck the southern part of Gujarat state at 11:43 pm (1813 gmt) on Sunday, a department official said.

The epicentre was near Surat city, about 200 km (120 miles) north of the financial capital Bombay, the official said.

## Air force plane crash claims 9 in Brazil

A Brazilian air force plane crashed on Sunday in north-eastern Brazil, killing all nine airmen aboard in the second fatal air force accident in two days, the military said. Reuter reports from Sao Paulo.

Air force spokesman Maj. Francisco Lopes Neto told reporters the craft, a Brazilian-made P-95 bandeirante, was en route to a training exercise when it went down near Caruaru, some 87 miles (140 kms) from Recife, capital of Pernambuco state. "All those who died were air force personnel, officers and enlisted men," Lopes Neto said. No one on the ground was hurt.

## 9 miners killed in Moscow

Nine miners were killed and six injured by a methane gas explosion Sunday in a coal mine near Chelyabinsk in Russia's Ural region, ITAR-Tass news agency reported. Quoting the mining company, AFP reports from Moscow.

Around 80 miners were underground at the time of the blast but most were working in other galleries, Tass said. Adding that the bodies of the dead had been brought to the surface. The company said an inquiry had been opened as methane gas detectors installed in the pit had not detected any abnormal concentrations of the deadly gas.

## Tibetan nun jailed for 9 years more

A 19-year-old Tibetan nun imprisoned for pro-independence activities has been sentenced to an additional nine years for refusing to stand in the presence of an official, a Tibet monitoring group reported on Monday. AP reports from Beijing.

Ngawang Sangdrol also shouted "Free Tibet" while she and other prisoners were forced to stand in the rain as punishment for not cleaning their cells at Drapchi prison in Lhasa, the London-based Tibet Information Network reported. She and three other nuns were beaten after the incident, the monitoring group said, citing a source in Tibet who asked not to be identified.

## Indian mortar fire kills five in Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan, Nov 18: Indian mortar fire killed five civilians in the Pakistan-controlled portion of Kashmir at the weekend. Pakistani military and government officials said today, reports Reuter.

A Pakistan army spokesman said three people died on Sunday in Athmugam, 80 km (50 miles) northeast of the Azad (free) Kashmir state capital Muzaffarabad, when a mortar round fired by Indian border forces struck a hotel.

Azad Kashmir's Animal Husbandry Minister, Ghulam Rasool, said a separate mortar attack on Sunday killed two people and wounded 14 in Mirpur village, 35 km (20 miles) northeast of Muzaffarabad.

## Power struggle breaks out in Congress(I)

the battle

"Congress President Sitaram Kesri is waging a proxy war on behalf of Mrs Gandhi," a Rao loyalist told The Times of India newspaper today, on an alleged move to pressure the 75-year-old leader to relinquish his parliamentary post.

"Instead of asking Rao to step down as CPP leader, the combine will try to get its supporters elected to CPP posts and then build pressure on him to quit."

A common slogan on hoardings across the country is: "bring in Sonia, save India." While many admirers have

consistently asked her to join the party think-tank, the powerful Congress Working Committee (CWC).

"Even if Mrs Gandhi does not join the CWC, as is being talked about in Congress circles, her stamp will be most visible in most Congress activities," the official said.

Rao is currently facing trial in three unrelated corruption cases.

Corruption scandals were largely seen as contributing to the Congress' electoral defeat in its 11-year-old history during the April-May general elections which ended Rao's five-year tenure as prime minister.

## PLO-Israel talks fail

JERICHO, West Bank, Nov 18: Palestinian and Israeli negotiators failed in talks on Sunday in self-ruled Jericho to hammer out a deal on a delayed Israeli troop pullback from the West Bank town of Hebron, officials said, reports Reuter.

"There is not a big change. Israeli chief negotiator Dan Shomron told reporters after the talks at the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government in autonomous Jericho.

The talks are stalemate over Israel's insistence that its troops be allowed to re-enter the 80 per cent of Hebron slated to fall under PLO control if they are chasing suspected guerrillas.

"We hope the Israelis will stop putting obstacles in the

path of progress. We hope they will not try to change anything in signed agreements especially their demand to go freely in Palestinian areas," PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat told reporters.

PLO officials said the Jericho talks were not serious and did not say why negotiating teams would meet again. Shomron said it was possible to reach an agreement soon.

The last bargaining round on Thursday, attended by US diplomats, failed to bring the sides closer together.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has rejected any renegotiation of the Hebron accord, which was signed last year by a left-centre Israeli government ousted in May.

## Opposition claims victory in Serbia's municipal polls

BELGRADE, Nov 18: Serbia's opposition claimed its first victory over President Slobodan Milosevic, saying it won municipal elections in Serbian towns that were traditional bastions of Milosevic's ruling Socialists, reports AP.

Four hours after polls closed Sunday, opposition supporters flocked to a boisterous celebration in downtown Belgrade. The capital itself seemed likely to elect an opposition mayor, the first non-Communist to rule the capital since World War II.

Belgrade is a more traditional opposition city.



Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanging views with Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro at Palazzo Quirinale Palace in Rome on Saturday.

—PID photo

## Participants say

## Growing protests taint Miss World contest

BUNGLER, India, Nov 18: Participants of Miss World 1996 say growing protests by Indian feminists, farmers and Communists against the beauty contest have tainted it, reports AP.

But organizers say the show will go on, despite the protest suicide of a 24-year-old tailor in southern India and scores of demonstrators nationwide.

Miss Costa Rica, Natal Caravel Lurenzo, said she would chronicle her experiences of India after returning home.

"I did not expect this in India, which is known for its peace. It is very disturbing," said the 21-year-old Miss Costa Rica who works in a hotel and wants to become a journalist.

"This is the land of Gandhi... how can they take such an extreme step?" Lurenzo asked and said: "Everybody has a right to protest but not in this form."

Miss Costa Rica is one of the 89 contestants of Miss World housed in a fortified luxury hotel as a precaution against attacks.

The contestants were reacting to an overnight attempt by some 4,000 leftists to breach the security and lay siege to the hotel.

Police used batons and beat back the predominantly-female marchers who chanted: "Death to Miss World" during Sunday's noisy protest. Kelly Webber, Miss United States, said she too was upset and worried.

Miss United States said she was also angry that the protesters have rejected offers for talks with the contest organizers for a settlement.

Miss Australia, Nicolle Smith, said she might not have come for the 19-day competition if she knew Indian protesters would carry out suicide threats.

Miss World International Vice-President Julia Morley said of Sunday's protest: "I am disgusted that women can have this way. There is nothing bad about what we are doing."

"Protesters have a right to protest, but at the same time," it

is our democratic right to hold the show," Morley said.

Some 9,000 extra troops had been added to Bangalore's 14,000-strong police force to prevent violence during the event. India's first international beauty contest.

32 bodies found so far

## Russian PM visits site of bldg blast

MOSCOW, Nov 18: Russia's prime minister flew Sunday to the site of an explosion that killed at least 32 people in a building housing Russian servicemen and their families, reports AP.

As rescuers continued to dig through the rubble, the death toll climbed. By late Sunday, 32 bodies had been found, including those of nine children, the ITAR-Tass news agency said.

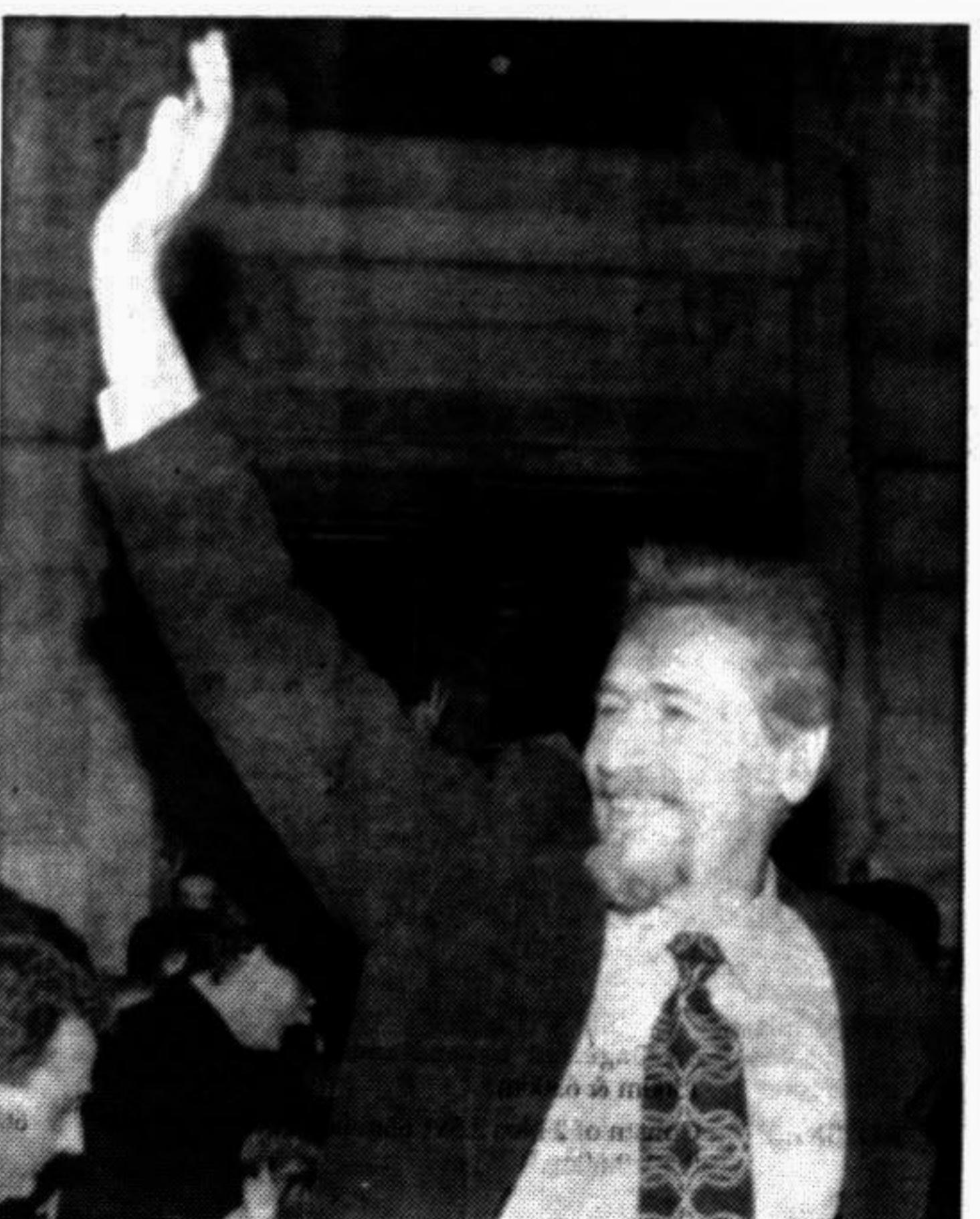
Dozens of people were rescued alive, but about 24 people were believed still missing, and rescue work continued into the night, ITAR-Tass said, quoting Emergency Situations Ministry official Vasily Yurchuk, who was on the scene.

The pre-dawn explosion Saturday destroyed at least 41 of the apartments in the building in Kaspitsk, a town on the Caspian Sea in Dagestan, a southern Russian republic neighbouring Chechnya.

President Boris Yeltsin sent his condolences to the victims and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin flew to Dagestan on Sunday. "I took the news hard," Yeltsin's message said, according to ITAR-Tass.

Officials have said that one or more bombs planted in the basement likely caused the explosion.

"Witnesses heard two explosions before the building collapsed," Maj Gen Vsevolod Chernov, the military prosecutor for the Caucasian Military District told the Interfax news agency.



Romanian Democratic Convention leader Emil Constantinescu, 57, waves to the crowd yesterday after exit polls of the second round of the presidential elections credited Constantinescu with 54 per cent of the vote, comfortably ahead of incumbent Ion Iliescu, 66, a former communist.

—AFP/UNB photo

## Crash of TWA Flight 800

## FBI probes into report of Pak co-pilot's seeing 'streak of light' in sky

NEW YORK, Nov 18: The FBI said on Sunday it was investigating a report that the co-pilot of a Pakistani plane saw "something unusual in the sky" on Saturday while on a flight path similar to that taken by TWA Flight 800, which crashed just after take-off last July, reports Reuter.

Pakistan International Airlines Flight 712 had just taken off from John F Kennedy Airport on Saturday evening when the co-pilot reported seeing "a streak of light" coming from the left hand side to the right hand side of the airplane. The pilot of the jet told WCBS local radio in a telephone interview.

The pilot himself did not see the streak of light. He told the radio station from Frankfurt, Germany, the plane's destination, that his co-pilot said the light "was about three to four miles (4.8 to 6.4 km) ahead of the aircraft and above the jet."

The pilot radioed back the report to a control tower in Boston, since they had already flown out of range of the New York Tower, and US government agents met the crew upon their arrival in Frankfurt.

Joseph Valiquette, spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in New

York, said on Sunday, "we are aware of the report and the FBI is attempting to determine what, if anything was observed. As of right now, nothing has been resolved."

"That is always a possibility. There were meteor showers forecast to happen in this area on Saturday evening and into early Sunday morning," he said.

Earlier this month, former White House spokesman Pierre Salinger, created a storm when he said he had been given a government document that he believed proved a US missile accidentally shot down TWA Flight 800. He suggested the US government covered up charges that a navy missile accidentally destroyed the Boeing 747.

Crash investigators angrily denounced Salinger's remarks as "unadulterated nonsense." Salinger acknowledged his information was at least second hand and had been on the internet for months, but he said he stood by his story.

President Le Duc Anh is not well and as doctors required he rests, General Secretary Do Muoi will be in charge of receiving Korean President Kim Young-sam, a Foreign Ministry statement said.

Responding to inquiries from journalists, the Foreign Ministry said Anh would not be able to meet with his South Korean counterpart when he visits later this week.

"President Le Duc Anh is not well and as doctors required he rests, General Secretary Do Muoi will be in charge of receiving Korean President Kim Young-sam," a Foreign Ministry statement said.

Valiquette said there was a meteor shower in the New York area on Saturday evening that could explain the sighting.

"That is always a possibility. There were meteor showers forecast to happen in this area on Saturday evening and into early Sunday morning," he said.

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Also on Sunday, the New York Daily News reported that a missing fuel pump was the most likely cause of the crash of the TWA jumbo jet in July. The paper said investigators were seeking a fuel pump, the size of a 12-ounce (340 grams) soda can, that they believe may be the source of the explosion.

## Last 2 bodies of Delhi jet crash recovered

NEW DELHI, Nov 18: The last two bodies of the 349 victims of the world's deadliest mid-air collision have been recovered from the debris of a Saudi jumbo jet, Indian officials said today, reports Reuter.

Two bodies were pulled on Sunday from the wreckage of the Saudi airlines Boeing 747 which crashed with 312 people last Tuesday after colliding with a Kazakh cargo plane.

An official in Charkhi Badri town, 80 km (50 miles) west of New Delhi, said the bodies of two Indian nationals were the last remaining victims from the Saudi aircraft, and that they were being ferried to their hometowns in northern India.

Passports and some personal belongings were found near the bodies, helping emergency workers identify the victims, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

AP adds from Dubai: Relatives of the sole Saudi passenger on the Saudi Arabian airliner involved in last week's mid-air disaster over India have refused to claim the body, saying they do not recognise it, a newspaper reported Sunday.

The wife of Majdi Arkoubi says the body does not have her husband's distinguishing marks, the daily Asharq Al Awsat said.

Regarding whether MESA is playing any role in promoting a better understanding in the US of the Middle East and Islam, Professor Kazemi said: "MESA is an academic organisation and our job is to educate. But we try not to keep it just purely an academic operation. That is very important for us. And we educate through our students who go to other various institutions... and through our publications. We also try to the secondary schools to help them... to provide them information and speakers about the Middle East."

Issues connected to Islam and Islamic radicalism, to the peace process as well as the problems the American government had or may have in the Gulf. There is a lot of interest in the Middle East.

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Indian women dressed and painted as Hindu demonesses yesterday stage a protest against the Miss World beauty pageant in the southern Indian city of Bangalore where the competition is being held. Many political and feminist groups are protesting against the event maintaining that the contest is vulgar insult to womanhood.

—AFP/UNB photo

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