



US President Bill Clinton (L) presents the National Medal of Arts to US actor and director Robert Redford (R) as Hillary Clinton (C) watches during the National Medal of Arts award ceremonies in Washington, DC on Thursday. The Medal of Arts honours individuals and organisations for their contributions to the arts and culture. — AFP/UNB photo

## 29 killed as commuter plane crashes in Michigan

DETROIT, Michigan, Jan 10: A commuter plane crashed into a snow-covered cornfield in rural Michigan south of Detroit Thursday, killing all 29 people on board, airport officials said, reports AFP.

The officials said the plane burst into flames and exploded on impact in a cornfield near Monroe, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) southeast of Detroit.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known. Officials said 26 passengers and three crew were aboard the ill-

fated comair plane. Comair is partly owned by Delta Air Lines.

Authorities said visibility was 1.5 miles (12.4 kilometres) and winds were light at the time on the crash. They added that there had been no prior word of any trouble and the plane just disappeared from radar screens.

They said the plane had been cleared for landing and was on its approach to Detroit about 20 miles (32 kilometres) away when contact was lost.

A spokesman for mercy hospital in Monroe confirmed that there were no survivors aboard the Embraer-120 Brasilia Turboprop, which was bound for Detroit after taking off from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Flight 3272 had apparently been diverted from the Detroit airport to another destination, possibly because of freezing weather in the area, TV reports said.

The area had just received its first major snowfall of the winter season and visibility in

the area was very low.

But it was not clear whether bad weather may have been responsible for the crash.

Emergency vehicles were at the scene and police sealed off the area which was strewn with body parts and mangled, burning wreckage.

Witnesses said the Brazilian-made plane dipped a wing, nosedived and exploded on impact.

"I heard a jet fly very low then I heard a very loud boom" said Tom Marino.

### Major holds talks with Gowda

CALCUTTA, Jan 10: British Prime Minister John Major and Indian counterpart HD Deve Gowda held two hours of talks on a flight between Calcutta and Bangalore today officials said, reports AFP.

The two leaders staged the negotiations on an Indian Air Force plane after taking part in a trade summit in Calcutta which ended on Thursday.

Major, in India at the head of a British trade delegation which is also due to visit Bangladesh and Pakistan, urged Gowda on Thursday during a speech at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) partnership summit '97 to continue opening up the Indian economy to foreign competition.

There were no details of today's talks, although Downing Street said before the trip that Major would discuss with Indian authorities the fate of two Britons who are among a group of four hostages held by Kashmiri separatists since July 1995.

The British premier is due to visit Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, India's sole aircraft manufacturer, in Bangalore and visit British firms Standard Chartered Place and John Brown Engineering. He will also visit a British-backed aid project.

### Police allow students to march thru' Belgrade

BELGRADE, Jan 10: After a daylong standoff police backed down early Friday and allowed student protesters to march through central Belgrade, reports AFP.

Thousands of people reportedly took part in the march, and supporters waved to the students from balconies and windows.

But the celebration was quickly marred after a government supporter drove into a crowd of students, injuring four or five protesters. Police arrested the driver, who apparently drove into the crowd intentionally.

"Following an electoral triumph over Slobodan Milosevic, the estimated 30,000 students had gathered Thursday afternoon and vowed to remain in central Belgrade until police allowed them to march.

Except for Monday's Orthodox Christmas Eve, police have been confining the scope of the daily demonstrations in the capital for several days. The students had promised that starting Thursday, they would no longer retreat when confronted by police.

### Chinese dissident sentenced without trial

BEIJING, Jan 10: A veteran democracy activist who called for the release of China's most dissident has been sentenced without trial to three years in a labour camp, a human rights group said Friday, reports AP.

Human Rights in China, based in New York, also said a Chinese court has sentenced three other dissidents convicted of 'counterrevolutionary' or anti-government acts.

The labour camp punishment given to Wang Ming and the sentencing of Shen Jiangang, Huang Xiuming and Ma Jiangang are part of a government crackdown that has all but silenced China's small dissident community over the past 20 months.

Wang, a 36-year-old light bulb company worker from Chongqing, in southwest China's Sichuan province, was arrested shortly after releasing an open letter last November 16 that called for the release of Wei Jingsheng and other well-known dissidents. Human Rights in China said.

## Lankan troops consolidate positions at northern bases

COLOMBO, Jan 10: Government troops beat back sporadic Tamil rebel attacks Friday and continued to consolidate positions at two northern military camps where a major battle left 60 soldiers dead and 232 wounded, military officials said, reports AP.

The rebels fired mortars and rockets as troops hunted for missing soldiers and also for guerilla mines and booby traps at the army camps at Elephant Pass and Paranthan, officials said.

No fresh details of military casualties were released Friday, but the death toll from Thursday's attack is to increase in the attacks which the military claimed was "successfully repulsed."

The military claimed intercepts of rebel radio transmissions indicated 500 guerillas were killed or wounded in the fighting, but a rebel spokesman in London, Anton Raj, dismissed the government claim as false.

"The Sri Lankan government routinely exaggerates LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) deaths and conceals its own deaths to maintain the sagging morale of its troops," Raj said in a telephone interview.

The rebels however did not issue details of the attacks, which military officials claim was not a success for the guerillas.

More than 3,000 rebels are reported to have staged the at-

tack in human waves, forcing soldiers to destroy six or seven long-range artillery guns before they fell into the hands of the guerillas, said military officials speaking on condition of anonymity.

The rebels had also managed to sever the link that troops from Elet Pass have with Paranthan in the south. But reinforcements, supported by warplanes and helicopter gunships, launched a counter attack and regained the link nearly 11 hours later, officials said.

Elephant Pass camp is strategically located, linking the mainland with the northern Jaffna peninsula that government troops captured earlier last year.



A wounded man is carried into the hospital in Tel Aviv after two bombs exploded in a poor neighbourhood of south Tel Aviv injuring at least 10 people on Thursday. A police official said that the attack was probably a terrorist attack. — AFP/UNB photo

## Ist UN trial of Rwanda genocide suspect opens

ARUSHA, Tanzania, Jan 10: A former Hutu mayor used the respect his position commanded to order the killings of 2,000 Tutsis, prosecutors argued in opening a UN tribunal's first case against a suspect in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, reports AP.

Jean-Paul Akayesu, who went on trial Thursday, has pleaded innocent to 12 counts of torture, murder and genocide in the April 1994 killings at his Taba village. A half-million Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus died in Rwanda during that summer of state-organized slaughter.

Akayesu originally had been protective of Tutsis in the area under his control, keeping vil-

lagers calm even as killings spread across Rwanda. Prosecutor Yacob Haile Mariam told the three-judge panel of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Eventually, Akayesu was faced with a choice to support the genocide or lose his job, Yacob said.

After the April 18, 1994, killing of a Tutsi teacher Taba, Akayesu attended a meeting of Hutu residents to urge the extermination of all their Tutsi neighbours, Yacob said.

Beaten into years of submission and unquestioning obedience by a strong authoritarian state, the peasants obeyed orders to kill their

neighbours, sometimes their relatives, their wives and their children," Yacob said.

As a signal to begin the massacres, Akayesu and Hutu militiamen publicly executed eight men as they begged and pleaded for their lives, the prosecutor said.

"The Tutsis' faith in Akayesu was misplaced," Yacob said. "Instead of being shielded, they were hacked, killed and buried in several mass graves."

Expert witnesses, videotapes of killings and testimony from journalists and aid workers will show that the massacres at Taba were part of "widespread and systematic murders," he said.



A local boy passes by cars piled on top of each other after the Guadalquivir River overflowed its banks and flooded the Andalusian town of Alcala Del Valle on Thursday following heavy rainfalls in southern Spain. — AFP/UNB photo



US Vice President Al Gore (L) and Speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich laugh before the start of a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC on Thursday. In a constitutionally required ritual, the results of the votes cast by the members of the electoral college in the 1996 presidential campaign were opened and counted before the members of the Congress. — AFP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

### Grapes can help prevent cancer

WASHINGTON: A natural substance found in grape skins and some vegetables could help prevent cancer, says a new study to be published Friday in Science magazine, reports AFP.

Researchers say 'resveratrol' has successfully prevented the three main stages of skin cancer in mice: when the tumor starts growing, when it becomes malignant, and when it spreads.

The study was carried out by the University of Illinois.

Resveratrol blocks an enzyme that is essential in the process leading to cancer, the authors of the study say.

The substance has no apparent toxic effect in humans.

Researchers do not know what the exact function of resveratrol is in plants. They say the substance could belong to a group of products that help plants fight the effects of environmental stress or carcinogens.

One of the theories is that the grapes may have large quantities of resveratrol to be able to resist fungicidal infections.

### Caution for misuse of antibiotics

OTTAWA: The rampant misuse and over-prescription of antibiotics have resulted in increased resistance to the drugs and in making people sicker, a group of Canadian doctors warned, reports Xinhua.

Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria directly or halt their multiplication. The miracle drugs of the 1930s, launched with the introduction of penicillin, are now considered on many fronts to be enemies.

"People are dying today because they're developing infections that we don't have effective therapies for," said Dr. Gary Garber, a researcher with the Canadian infectious disease society.

Antibiotic resistance is a major public-health issue around the world, added Dr. Ronald Grossman, Chairman of the New Awareness Campaign to set doctors and consumers straight about proper antibiotic use.

## Japanese PM in Indonesia Hashimoto wins support to fight terrorism

JAKARTA, Jan 10: Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto won support today for a tough stance against terrorism during a visit to Indonesia, as the Peruvian hostage crisis dragged on, an official said, reports AFP.

Hashimoto held a 90-minute meeting with Indonesian President Suharto today, one day after arriving on the third leg of a five-nation Southeast Asian tour.

The leaders agreed to "not relent to terrorism, and hope for cooperation and exchange of intelligence information to deal with terrorism problems in the future," Indonesia's State Secretary Mudianto told reporters.

In Peru's capital Lima, 20 Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement rebels are holding 74 hostages including Japanese ambassador Morihiro Aoki after seizing his residence on December 17.

Hashimoto is travelling with a task force that will keep him updated on the situation in Lima.

"After the Peruvian crisis is resolved he [Hashimoto] would like to report back to ASEAN countries... to create a network to exchange information... regarding terrorism," said a senior Japanese official who declined to be named, at a press briefing.

## Netanyahu, Ross hold further talks on Hebron deal

TEL AVIV, Jan 10: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US peace negotiator Dennis Ross held further talks on a Hebron deal under the shadow of Tel Aviv bombings that wounded 13 people, reports Reuters.

Army radio said the session ended in the early hours of today without any breakthrough.

Israeli police said they believed Arabs planted the nail-packed bombs that blew up in Rubbish Bins near Tel Aviv's central bus station on Thursday.

Netanyahu, visiting the wounded in hospital, pledged to respond with "extreme severity" if it emerged the bombers came from Palestinian self-rule areas.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blasts, a week after an off-duty Israeli

soldier shot into a crowd of Palestinians in the West Bank town of Hebron, wounding seven Arabs. Militant Muslim groups vowed to avenge the attack.

The bombs exploded several kilometres from Netanyahu's Tel Aviv office while he met Ross, struggling to end an Israeli-PLO impasse over a deal on Hebron and dates for further pullbacks in the West Bank.

"We raised various ideas but the conversation was cut off by the attack and for this reason I have nothing to announce to you," Netanyahu told reporters at Tel Aviv's Ichilov Hospital.

Netanyahu and Ross resumed their meeting later, a sign that Israel was taking no action for now to slow or stop diplomatic efforts to clinch a Hebron deal.

## American Airlines pilots threaten strike

FORT WORTH, Texas, Jan 10: After rejecting a contract approved by their union board, American Airlines pilots are threatening to strike if the company doesn't make more concessions, reports AP.

The Allied Pilots Association, which represents some 9,300 American pilots, met Thursday to decide its next step after 61 per cent of its members rejected a proposal a day earlier.

Union spokesman Wally Pitts said the 18-member board hoped to finish a final draft of demands Friday.

"This is really it," he said. "The pilots have spoken and overwhelmingly have said that we want several changes or we will strike."

The union's five-member negotiating committee, which worked out the deal pilots turned down, resigned, and a

new committee was nominated.

The pilots' rejection of the contract put on hold American Airlines' plans to buy 103 new Boeing jets, worth \$1.6 billion.

The four-year deal, which offered modest pay increases and stock options, was drawn up last September after 27 months of negotiations. The union board approved it Nov 28.

The next step might be up to the National Mediation Board, which has overseen the dispute.

Pitts said the panel could order American and the union back to the negotiating table or declare an impasse in talks and offer the two sides binding arbitration.

If either side rejects binding arbitration, a 30-day cooling-off period could be followed by a strike or lockout, or American could impose terms of the rejected deal, according to federal labour rules.

## Gunmen kill 16 cops, 2 civilians in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, India, Jan 10: Suspected left-wing guerillas killed 16 policemen and two civilians Friday in a pre-dawn attack on a police station in southern India, police in the state capital said, reports AP.

More than 60 activists of the outlawed People's War Group surrounded the police station at Karakagudem village, 350 kilometres (220 miles) south of Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh state, and blew up the building with explosives after a 30-minute gun battle, police said.

## 'Ghosts of war' may return, warn Bosnian Serbs

BRCKO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jan 10: Bosnian Serbs marked Thursday's fifth anniversary of their declared independence with a warning: The "ghosts of war" will return if Serbs lose control of this hotly contested city, reports AP.

The future of Brcko remains unresolved more than a year after the Dayton peace accord ended Bosnia's 3 1/2 year war. International arbitrators have until Feb 15 to decide who will control the northern city.

Muslims said the Bosnian Serbs' decision to celebrate in Brcko while the city's fate is being discussed amounted to "a provocation."

Serbs captured the formerly Muslim-dominated city in ore? [A]2K1992 and consider it a crucial link between their territory in east and west Bosnia. Muslims want Brcko because it is on the Sava River border with Croatia and provides crucial road, rail and river links to the rest of Europe.

Biljana Plavsic, president of the Serb-controlled half of Bosnia, had warned last month that the Serbs will go to war if arbitrators award Brcko, about 75 miles (120 kilometres) north of Sarajevo, to the Muslim-Croat federation.

On Thursday, with top Bosnian Serb political and

military leaders among 300 guests in the old communist House of Culture, she urged the world to take the threat seriously.

"I sincerely hope that nobody in the international community will be careless enough not to comprehend what an unjust solution can bring about: total collapse of the Dayton peace agreement and destruction of... efforts we have made to make peace possible," she said.

"So once again I urge all those involved in the tration process not to play games with the issue of Brcko and not to invoke the ghosts of war in this

region."

Plavsic and other speakers strongly criticized a proposal to have Brcko (pronounced BIRCH-koh) controlled by a neutral international administration. Doing so would cut Serb territory in half, she said.

"I wish to say clearly that Brcko is Serb and it must remain Serb," she said to loud applause.

Aljiza Izetbegovic, the federation's Muslim co-president, said last month his government wouldn't start a war over Brcko — but would win if fighting broke out. He also warned that "chaos would definitely occur in case of an unjust decision."

Muslims charge that Serbs killed up to 5,000 people in camps after overrunning Brcko in 1992, and say allowing them to hold onto it would legitimize the "ethnic cleansing."

Ismet Grbo, spokesman for Izetbegovic's Muslim Party of Democratic Action, said Thursday in Sarajevo that for the Serbs old a ceremony during arbitration "is more of a provocation than a real need for an anniversary celebration."

The Serbs first declared their own state within Bosnia, called "Republika Srpska," in January 1992, three months before the Bosnian war started.

While the Serbs achieved limited autonomy under the Dayton accord, their dream of an independent state has not been realised — nor has the original Serb dream of uniting all Serb lands in former Yugoslavia.

American soldiers and other troops from the NATO-led peacekeeping force maintained a low-key presence in the city during the day. An American base, Camp McGovern, is a few miles outside Brcko.

Brcko's deputy mayor, Radislav Bogicevic, said Brcko's population is now more than 50,000, including 30,000 Serb refugees.

## Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz leaders sign treaty

BISHKEK, Jan 10: The leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan today signed a treaty on "eternal friendship" boosting cooperation, including military ties, between the three Central Asian states, reports Reuters.

The presidents of the three former Soviet republics told a joint news conference after the signing ceremony in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, that the treaty was "objectively prompted by history itself."

"Our becoming closer is objective... some 400 years ago there were no Kazakhs, Uzbeks or Kyrgyz."