

## International

## BRIEFLY



Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams, coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, meets United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan at the UN Wednesday. Williams' organization is the winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

— AP/UNB Photo

**9 die as boats sink in India:** At least nine persons died and 59 were missing when two country boats carrying them capsized in river Bhagirathi near Amuaghast under Suti police station of Murshidabad district Wednesday evening, the DIG, Headquarter, Prasun Mukherjee said yesterday. PTI reports from Calcutta.

He said that the mishap occurred when the two boats, tied together and carrying about 150 people, sank together. About 82 people swam ashore and nine bodies were recovered. Search for the missing persons was on.

**2 quakes shake Taiwan:** Two earthquakes shook southern and eastern Taiwan but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Taipei.

A Central weather Bureau statement said the first quake occurred late on Wednesday and measured 5.3 on Richter Scale. Its epicentre was 45 kms (28 miles) due north of Taiwan's southeastern offshore island of Lanyu and was centred 9.4 kms (5.9 miles) beneath the Earth's surface.

**WFP truck attacked in Rwanda, 8 die:** An attack on a truck belonging to the UN World Food Programme (WFP) left the driver, two civilians and five assailants dead in western Rwanda, officials said Wednesday. AFP reports from Kigali.

Paul Simkin, WFP's spokesman in Kigali, said the truck was part of a convoy transporting food aid to Kibuye prefecture on Monday when it was forced to pull off the road because of mechanical difficulties.

**2 killed in US jet collision:** A US Air Force jet trainer crashed Wednesday, killing its two crew members, after colliding with an F-16 fighter at Edwards Air Force Base in California, the Air Force said. AFP reports from Washington.

The dead were identified as Flight Leader Leigh Alexander Fox of the British Royal Air Force and Lieutenant William Nuz. The T-38 trainer and the F-16 were photographing a B-1B bomber conducting a bombing run.

**Iraq, Sudan to reinforce ties:** Iraq and Sudan Wednesday said they were determined to reinforce bilateral economic, industrial and agricultural cooperation, the Iraqi agency INA said. AFP reports from Baghdad.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Salah Eddine Mohammed Ahmed Karrar, heading a high-level Sudanese ministerial delegation to talk here, brought a message from President Omar Al-Bashir to Iraq's counterpart Saddam Hussein calling for stronger bilateral relations, in said.

**Noted Indian newsman dead:** Veteran journalist and writer Praful Roy Chowdhury died in Calcutta Wednesday night following a heart attack, family sources said. PTI reports from Calcutta.

Roy Chowdhury, 74, is survived by his wife. He had served as special correspondent of Patriot, Delhi in Moscow and was also attached with Pioner, Lucknow for several years. He had also a senior position in the news section of the CPI mouthpiece "Swadhinata" during 1951-63.

**Chopper crash kills 6 in Russia:** Six officers were feared dead after a Russian military helicopter crashed northwest of Moscow, Interfax news agency said yesterday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

A Defence Ministry spokesman confirmed by telephone that a Ka-27 helicopter had come down on Wednesday near Tver, about 150 kms (90 miles) northwest of the capital, but declined to say if there were any casualties. Interfax said preliminary information showed the helicopter had suffered a systems failure at a height of 120 metres (400 feet). It quoted an unnamed ministry official as saying the six officers on board were from a military training centre.

**US newsman wins IAPA award:** US Journalist and Professor Eli Abel on Wednesday received the Inter-American Press Association's grand prize for press freedom, AFP says from Guadalajara.

Abel is former Dean of the Columbia University School of Journalism and the Stanford University Communication department.

**Fijian PM apologises to Queen:** Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka of Fiji has officially apologised to Queen Elizabeth II for the military coup that transformed the Pacific Island group into a republic, AP reports from London.

**Quake rocks Indonesian islands:** A magnitude 5.8 earthquake rocked eastern Indonesia including the tourist islands of Bali and Lombok Thursday, government seismologists said. AP reports from Jakarta.

There were no reports of casualties or major damage.

**2 Hungarians seized in Chechnya:** Two Hungarians belonging to a religious aid group have been kidnapped in the breakaway Caucasus republic of Chechnya, the Russian Orthodox Church told Interfax yesterday. AFP reports from Moscow.

**'Laws needed to combat discrimination against Muslims in Britain'**

LONDON, Oct 23: Discrimination against Britain's 1.5 million Muslims is growing and new laws are needed to combat it, a report to the government said Wednesday, reports AFP.

"Islamophobia is a real phenomenon in our society. It's a rather ugly world, but I think it describes an ugly reality," Gordon Conway of the Runnymede Trust told BBC radio.

"It's getting more explicit. It's getting more extreme. It's getting more dangerous," he warned.

The report, which was presented to Home Secretary Jack Straw, challenges the view that relations between native Britons and Muslims coming chiefly from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, are relatively harmonious.

Many Muslims "live in poor housing, they have poor education. There's a very high level of unemployment. Over 50 per

cent of British Muslims in inner cities are unemployed — much higher than the white male population," Conway said.

The trust's report called for urgent and "substantial measures" to confront the problem.

But Straw immediately ruled out legislation. He said he had given careful consideration to what he called a "difficult and sensitive" issue but had no plans to legislate.

Race legislation is not the answer to the particular problem of the Muslim community and religious legislation may not be the answer either."

His view was challenged by the deputy leader of Britain's self-appointed Muslim Parliament, Jahangir Mohammed.

"Laws actually do change attitudes." It sets the tone for society on what is acceptable behaviour. At the moment with religious discrimination, it's a field day. Any one can have a go at Muslims," he said.

## Lankan army claims war nearing final stage

## Parliament opens debate on power-sharing today

COLOMBO, Oct 23: A power-sharing plan aimed at ending Sri Lanka's 14-year-old civil war will be presented in Parliament on Friday, a government minister said Thursday, reports AP.

"All of us must understand that the very survival of the country is at stake," Lakshman Peiris, the constitutional affairs minister, told reporters.

Peiris said debate will start on Friday but no date has been fixed for voting on the plan, which is part of a proposed new constitution.

The draft constitution promises wide autonomy to provinces is being opposed by both Tamil and Sinhalese groups on this small island country off the southern tip of India. A Tamil separatist war has killed more than 50,000 Sri Lankans since 1983.

A section of the majority Sinhalese community favour ... defeating the rebels militarily before offering any concessions to minority Tamils. The guerrillas say they won't settle for anything less than a separate homeland.

On Thursday, Peiris said the government strategy was to weaken the Tamil rebels militarily and bring the moderate

Tamils to the negotiating table. Everyone must understand that war alone is not the solution. We have to offer a political alternative as well, and this is exactly what we are trying to do," he said.

Tamils, who constitute 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18 million people and have a language and culture distinct from that of the Sinhalese, claim they are discriminated against by the majority. The war began in earnest after 1983 ethnic riots in Colombo in which hundreds of Tamil civilians were killed by Sinhalese nationalists.

Though not all Tamils embrace the rebels' extreme solution, many feel they are denied opportunity by the Sinhalese. The Sinhalese dominate the government and military, key areas for advancement in an economy just emerging from socialist-style policies.

Another AP report adds: The Sri Lankan military is on the verge of defeating Tamil rebels after a bloody, drawn-out battle in the north, the defence ministry claimed Thursday.

Brig. Sarath Munasinghe, the defence ministry spokesman, said the army was

preparing to launch the 'final stage' of its offensive to open a road link between the Tamil-dominated north and the rest of Sri Lanka.

This is our immediate aim and when we secure the road, we will not take much time to finally crush the terrorists," Munasinghe said.

The Sri Lankan government bars reporters from the front line, making it difficult to obtain independent assessments of claims from either side.

The battle for the 76-kilometre (47-mile) highway, launched on May 13, has resulted in the deaths of more than 2,000 soldiers and rebels, according to government figures. The military met fierce rebel resistance, and has so far cleared about 30 kilometres (19 miles) of the highway.

The road through rebel-held jungles links southern Sri Lanka to northern Jaffna peninsula, which the army seized from Tamil rebels in 1995. Without control of the road, the military has had to use risky sea and costly air transport to supply thousands of soldiers and nearly half a million Tamil civilians in Jaffna.

## Congress won't withdraw support to Gujral govt

NEW DELHI, Oct 23: The Congress today termed as 'unfortunate' the union cabinet's reversal of its decision to dismiss Kalayan Singh ministry in Uttar Pradesh but indicated that there was no immediate move to withdraw support to the United Front government, reports PTI.

"There is nothing like that," the party spokesman, VN Gadgil, said when asked specifically whether the party would consider withdrawing support to the six-month old Gujral government in the wake of the union cabinet reversing its recommendation for president's rule in Uttar Pradesh and dissolution of the state assembly.

The Congress president, Sitaram Kesri, had demanded imposition of president's rule in Uttar Pradesh alleging that the Kalayan Singh government had managed to secure a trust vote by 'fraudulent means'.

Meanwhile, the rebel Congress MP, Mamata Banerjee, today said that the United Front government, which reversed its decision to recommend president's rule in UP, had lost credibility and the Prime Minister, IK Gujral must resign.

### 4 rebels killed in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Oct 23: Soldiers shot and killed four suspected guerrillas early Thursday in the northern state of Kashmir, army sources said, reports AP.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said soldiers had surrounded a house after receiving a tip it was a hideout for militants fighting for Kashmir's secession from India. The house was in Katarial, a village about 180 kilometers (about 100 miles) northwest of Jammu, the state's winter capital.

The militants were killed in a gunbattle that lasted for nearly two hours, the sources said. The house was damaged by fire, apparently sparked when explosives stored inside were accidentally set off.

### Suu Kyi makes political trip outside Yangon

YANGON, Oct 23: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi this week travelled on her first political trip outside the capital since being released from house arrest two years ago, opposition sources said today, reports Reuter.

A division-level official of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party said the 1991 Nobel Peace laureate went to town on the outskirts of Yangon on Tuesday to organise the youth NLD wing and speak to supporters.

"Aung San Suu Kyi, accompanied by NLD Chairman U Tin Oo, central executive committee member U Soe Myint and some elected NLD representatives, went to Thakata township on Tuesday morning," the official told Reuters.

He said Suu Kyi's trip went off without any interference from authorities.

### \$ 2.583 b UN budget announced

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 23: Secretary General Kofi Annan unveiled a slimmed-down budget of 2.583 billion dollars for the two-year period 1998-99 but said it still included additional money for economic and social development, reports Reuter.

Presenting his first budget yesterday since taking office last January, Annan told the general assembly's administrative and budgetary committee it represented a reduction in real terms of 124 million dollars.

But it had still been possible to increase resources available for economic and social development by about 56 million dollars, compared with the 1996-97 budget, he said.

Annan's budget-trimming is only one aspect of a package of reforms designed to reinvigorate the United Nations but which are being closely scrutinised by various UN bodies jealous of their own prerogatives.

United Nations general assembly of the World Tourism Organisation.

"Imagine your holiday brochure picturing beaches submerged, shore lines eroded, and ocean views not only through windows but in your basement as well," she told the Congress.

Dowdeswell said that some of today's island destinations might not just disappear from the tourist map, "but from geographic map altogether."

Scientists believe that global warming, caused by emissions of "greenhouse gases", especially carbon dioxide, is raising the sea level, threatening coastal regions with massive flooding. Fossil fuels such as oil and coal are the principal source of carbon dioxide.

Small island nations will be severely affected by global warming. Bangladesh and Maldives will be among those to feel the heat.

## Mandela calls for end to UN sanctions against Libya

CAIRO, Oct 23: South African President Nelson Mandela, hailed as a saint by Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi, called for an end to UN sanctions as he visited Libya despite US objections, reports AP.

Mandela arrived in the North African nation on Wednesday to a hero's welcome by thousands of Libyans, including tribesmen on decorated horses and schoolchildren who showered him with rose petals.

Mandela drove from neighbouring Tunisia to the Libyan border in a limousine and transferred to an air-conditioned bus for the drive to the Libyan capital, Tripoli, where he was greeted with huge and kisses by Gaddafi.

Gaddafi repeated his longstanding offer to try the two Pan Am bombing suspects either in Libya or in a third country, a proposal Britain and the United States have rejected, insisting that their courts try the suspects.

Earlier, as Mandela's motorcade arrived in Tripoli, thousands of people chanted "Mandela! Mandela!"

The Libyan television broadcast showed Gaddafi and Mandela walking together with their fists in the air before listening to each country's anthem.



South African President Nelson Mandela, left, with his Libyan counterpart Col. Moammar Gaddafi on his arrival in Tripoli Wednesday. In the background is Gaddafi's house which was attacked by US fighters on April 15, 1986.

— AP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

### Gorillas to the rescue!

YAOUNDE: A pack of about 60 gorillas took an African village in Cameroon by storm to rescue a young gorilla captured alive by a local hunter, the weekly paper, L'Action, reported Wednesday.

The government-owned paper said the gorillas invaded Olamze on the border with Equatorial Guinea last week looking for the infant gorilla, who had been taken away earlier in the day by the reputed local hunter Ntsama Ondo.

Shortly before midnight, the gorillas entered the village in single file, ignoring the gunshots fired by villages to scare them away, before retiring.

The next night they came back, and this time, according to L'Action, they angrily beat on the doors and windows of the dwellings.

Faced with the determination of the gorillas to recover the captive youngster, and learning who was responsible for the pack's anger, the village chief ordered Ntsama Ondo to release his prey.

### Building-on-wheels

DETROIT: In a record-breaking performance, an old theatre was being moved on wheels five blocks through downtown Detroit, USA, on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The 2,750-ton Gem Theatre 20th Century Club will enter the record books as the heaviest building ever moved on wheels once workers complete its 564 metre-journey to a new location.

Working since mid-September, crews have raised the building 3m — in the air and placed it on 72 dollies — each equipped with a 50-ton jack and eight pneumatic tires. Six bulldozers and excavators and 610m of cable are being used pull the 30.5m structure to a new home.

## US Congress extends immigration provision by 2 weeks

WASHINGTON, Oct 23: The US House of Representatives on Wednesday approved a two-week extension of a temporary provision allowing undocumented foreigners to continue to live and work in the United States, reports AFP.

By a voice vote, the house voted to extend the measure, passed by Congress in 1994, which allows illegal aliens to remain in the United States while taking steps to normalise their residency status here, after paying a fine of 1,000 dollars.

The provision, initially approved for a period of three years, also puts in motion the application process for the coveted "green card" or US residency permit.

Some 345,000 immigrants have benefited from the measure in the last two years.

The prospect that the law

could expire has provoked a wave of panic among the immigrant community.

Hundreds of thousands of undocumented residents could face deportation, which would split up families with some members who are illegal immigrants and others who are legal.

The panic is even greater thanks to a new law in place since the end of September, designed to encourage would-be immigrants to apply in their country of origin for US residency status.

Under that legislation, anyone who has spent more than six months illegally in the United States must leave and not return for three years, an illegal stay here of more than a year merits a 10-year ban.

It is virtually certain that many of those sent back would not be allowed to return for several years.

## US announces plan to stabilise greenhouse gases from 2008

BONN, Germany, Oct 23: UN diplomats