BRIFILY



US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary open the White House Conference on Child Care Thursday, in the East Room of the White House. The president pledged to pitch a plan in his State of the Union Address to make child care in America more available and more - AP/UNB photo affordable.

Tremor rocks S Chinese city: An earthquake, measuring 5.3 on the Richter Scale, has hit southern China's Yunnan province, the state Seismological bureau said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The epicentre of the tremor, which struck at 8.24 pm Thursday (1224 GMT), was 10 km northeast of the ancient city of Lijiang, which was badly damaged by a major 7.0 quake in February 1996. "This time, we have no reports of deaths or injury," said a spokesman for the Lijiang Seismology Bureau.

PNG lifts blockade on Bougainville:

military blockade on secessionist Bougainville island was lifted Friday after seven years as rebels and government troops continue to honour a ceasefire. AP reports from Port Moresby.

The blockade is believed to have killed many more Bougainvilleans by preventing the delivery of medicines and food than direct hostilities between the guerillas and soldiers ever did. The commander of the Papua New Guinea Defense Force, Brig.-Gen. Leo Nuia, announced the decision, saying the order included the lifting of all restrictions to travel anywhere in Bougainville.

Quake rattles C Italy: A new earthquake rattled central Italy on Thursday evening reviving panic in towns and villages devastated by a major quake a month ago. AFP reports from Rome.

The tremor which measured between four and five degrees on the 12-point Mercalli Scale, occurred at 1904 GMT along the boundary between Umbria and the Marche provinces. Another tremor shook the same area on Thursday morning followed by several minor aftershocks. There were no casualties, authorities said.

Paintings by Russian masters stolen: Thieves who broke into the apartment of an 81-year-old Russian woman stole 18 paintings from her late husband's unique collection, police said Friday, AP reports from St Petersburg.

The paintings, valued at tens of thousands of dollars, included works by Isaac Levitan, Konstantin Korovin, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Robert Falk and other Russian masters of the 19th and 20th centuries. St. Petersburg police reported. according to the Juterlax news agency and higher southing the

Sunken Russian Nsub retrieved: The Russian Navy has retrieved a decommissioned nuclear submarine which sank in the Russian Far East in May, the Interfax news agency reported Thursday, AFP reports from Moscow.

The 1970s 675-class submarine, which sank at its berth at Petropavlovask-Kamchatsky on May 29, has been towed to new moorings, said local flotilla commander Rear Admiral Alexander Nescheret. Despite the accident, background radiation levels emitted by the vessel remained normal, Interfax reported.

2 OAS officials kidnapped: Marxist rebels kidnapped two Organisation of American States (OAS) officials in Colombia on Thursday, raising the stakes in their campaign to sabotage local elections set for this weekend. Reuters reports from Bogota.

Foreign Minister Maria Emma Mejia made a dramatic radio plea calling on the Cuban-inspired National Liberation Army (ELN) rebels to take her hostage in return for releasing Raul Martinez of Chile, and Manfredo Marroquin of Guatemala. The pair are part of a team of 38 OAS election observers that arrived in the country last weekend. They were seized in a rural area near the town of San Carlos in northwest Antioquia province.

Lenin's statue to be auctioned: CHY authorities in the Estonian town of Tartu have decided to auction off the statue of Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin. setting the starting price at US dollar 15,000, Tartu's mayor said Friday, AP reports from Moscow.

The statue had decorated a town square before the Baltic republic gained sovereignty in 1991. The auction is scheduled for Nov. 7, the day of the 80th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution in Soviet tradition.

Danish queen mother hospitalised: Queen Ingrid, the Danish Queen mother, aged 87, was admitted to hospital Thursday evening after falling and breaking her thighbone, the Court Chamberlian, Soeren Haslund Christensen said, AFP reports from Copenhagen.

The queen mother suffered the fall at Fredensborg Castle, the residence of her daughter Queen Margrethe and Prince Consort Henrik.

Remains of US soldier handed over: North Korea yesterday handed over the remains of a US soldier killed in the 1950-53 Korean War in a brief but solemn ceremony in the border truce village of Panmunjom, witnesses said, AFP reports from Panmunjom.

Indian newsman dies in road mishap: A veteran journalist of north-east India, K C Choudhury, 70, died in a road accident at Agartala Thursday, PTI reports from

Agartala. Choudhury worked for the National Herald and was also associated with many other national dailies for several years. He also worked in Manipur and Shillong. The accident took place Thursday morning when a speeding jeep hit him.

Pak Navy arrest

position United National Party.
"We want to write a constitution which will stand the test of

COLOMBO, Oct 24: The Sri

Lankan government on Friday

formally unveiled a two-year

plan to end the civil war, and

the opposition said it needs

many more months to study the

give more powers to the provinces, including a proposed

new province merging two in

the north and east that are

home to most of the minority

Tamils and the seat of the 14-

year war that has left 50,000

dent homeland for the Tamils,

language and culture. The guer-

rillas say they will not settle for

over the years, the government

and the opposition have not

reached a consensus on the

plant. No date has been fixed for

voting on the power-sharing

pose the creation of a unified

Tamil province in the north

and the east and want the rebels

crushed by the military before

concessions are given to the

time to discuss it," said Ronnie

de Mel, a lawmaker of the op-

"We can't rush this. We need

Some Sinhalese groups op-

Despite several discussions

The rebels want an indepen-

The government wants to

details, reports AP.

people dead.

anything else.

Tamils.

plan to end civil war

58 rebels killed in ambushes

The ruling People's Alliance has accused the opposition of dragging its feet. The alliance has a one-seat majority in the 225-member house, and needs the opposition's support for the required two-third vote for a new constitution. The power sharing plan, which is in the new constitution, must then be passed in a nationwide referen-

"It is very important that we get this plan approved so that the cycle of violence ends." Lakshman Peiris, the constitutional affairs minister, said as he placed a draft of the new constitution before Parliament.

The plan keeps for the central government power over major areas such as foreign relations and the military. The opposition wants to study provisions on finance, land transfer and the powers of police.

Many Tamils don't support the rebel view that a homeland will end discrimination most say they face in jobs and education. The Sinhalese control the government and military, key areas for advancement in an economy just emerging from socialist-style policies.

Another report adds: At least 58 guerillas were killed in three

French President Jacques Chirac, right, greets Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat upon his

Bhandari may lose job as governor

Cong (I) justifies call

for sacking UP govt

They claimed the BJP had

used bribes to win a confidence

vote and said a mass brawl be-

tween politicians in the assem-

bly chamber indicated law and

northern state.

Congress.

order was breaking down in the

mushroom into a national cri-

sis. Gujral's United Front coali-

dozen small leftwing and centre

parties, is kept in power by the

split over the issue, some saving

dismissal of the assembly was

not merited but others fearing

the Congress could topple the

Gujral's Cabinet was badly

tion, made up of more than a

The demand threatened to

arrival at the Elysee Palace in Paris Thursday.

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: India's

Congress (I) Party here today

justified its call for the sacking

of a key Hindu nationalist state

assembly, arguing their reli-

gious agenda was a threat to In-

national crisis this week by

demanding the dismissal of the

Uttar Pradesh government, ac-

cused the Hindu nationalist

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP,

Indian People's Party) of

putting religious ideology ahead

Prakash said: "The stand of the

BJP is communal and that is

well known. They mix religion

with politics which cannot be

a secular nation. Each religion

India's largest party by the

Hindu nationalists in 1996.

earlier this week tried to pres-

sure Gujral into sacking the

BJP assembly in Uttar Pradesh,

the political heartland of the

in India will have to be re-

spected and that is our stand."

"People must be told. India is

The Congress, overtaken as

Congress spokesman Ved

of political policies.

permitted in India."

The party, which sparked a

dian politics, reports AFP.

ambushes by government troops in the northern jungles where the military has been trying for five months to capture a major highway, the mili-tary said Friday.

"Ground troops confirm more than 50 rebels were killed," in the most serious of Thursday's clashes, said Major Kumara Dewage, a military spokesman.

Eight soldiers were wounded on the government side in the battle in the Vavuniya district near the town of Kanagaryankulam, in which the troops poured mortar and machine gunfire on the rebels. Six more rebels were killed a

few hours later in the same area, when their jeep was at-tacked by soldiers, said Maj. Dewage. Two other rebels died in another ambush a few kilometres away at the same time. .
The guerillas did not imme-

diately comment Independent confirmation was impossible because the government does not allow reporters into the area 240 kms north of Colombo. The soldiers have been try-

ing to capture in 70 kms highway through rebel-held territory that could provide overland access to the governmentcontrolled northern Jaffna peninsula. The peninsula is now accessible only by sea and

abandoned, destroyed by end of '99

Mir to be

MOSCOW, Oct 24: The Russian Mir orbital station will fall back to Earth and disintegrate in the lower atmosphere towards the end of 1999, the director of the Russian Space Agency (RKA) Yuri Koptyev said Thursday, reports AFP.

He said Mir, which has been manned without a break since 1986, would be abandoned once the international Alpha Space Station becomes operational.

Mir which has been orbiting at an attitude of 400 km since 1986, will be allowed to descend to a lower orbit before being abandoned. Once it reenters the atmosphere, it will burn up before reaching the ground, Koptyev said.

He said the whole operation would be controlled to ensure there was no danger to people on the ground.

"We consider that exploitation of Mir will end around mid-1999, certainly before the end of that year," he said on NTV television.

But putting an end to the exploitation of a complex weighing 140 tonnes is not that simple. It is not enough just to turn the engines off and let it fall just anywhere", he said

The descent and fall back to earth of Mir will last nine to ten months. The station will continue to be manned permanently as long as it is above an altitude of 200 km, he said. After that it will be abandoned and allowed to descend to

Japan's prospects for UNSC seat threatened

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 24: Japan's prospects for a permanent Security Council seat have been threatened by a campaign led by the Italians and Tokyo isn't even the main target, reports AP.

On Wednesday, Italy and a group of countries submitted a resolution in the General Assembly which would effectively delay a decision on council reform for at least one year.

The United States and several other major countries have called for granting Japan along with Germany and some developing countries - a permanent seat in recognition of Tokyo's economic and political influence around the world.

Supporters of council reform would like the issue resolved by the end of the year.

But the Italian resolution, co-sponsored by Canada, Egypt Guatemala, Lebanon, Mexico Pakistan, Gatar, Syria and Turkey, would refer the issue of council reform back to the Open-Ended Working Group, which has been wrestling with the issue for nearly four years. Each of the co-sponsors has

different reasons for signing on to the resolution which have nothing to do with Japan.

Canada announces immigration targets for '98

OTTAWA, Oct 24: Canada, one of the favourite destinations of immigrants announced on Thursday immigration targets for 1998 that are little changed from 1997, reports

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Lucienne Robillard said Canada would aim to admit 200,000 to 225,000 immigrants and refugees next

That is 5,000 more than the range for 1997, but the midpoint is in fact less than the 215,000 that the government now projects will show up in Canada this year.

Even more were admitted in 1996, an above-target 225,000. "Our immigration plan is based on the humanitarian

values of welcoming and caring that characterises us," Robil lard told a news conference. "It also reflects our desire to

make the most of the undeniable economic and cultural benefits that newcomers bring to this country."

She said internal polling by the government shows that openness by Canadians to immigration has increased somewhat over the past year as the economy has improved.

Catholic priest gave last rites to Diana

LONDON, Oct 24: A Catholie priest today spoke of how he gave Diana, Princess of Wales, the last rites after her car crash in Paris, reports AFP.

Father Yves Clochard-Bossuet, 46, told The Mirror newspaper he was at Diana's bedside in a Paris hospital at 4

"She was already dead. prayed for her soul. I was alone with her for four hours. I could not believe I was in front of her.

As resident priest at the Pitie Salpetriere Hospital in Paris where Diana's body was taken, he had been summoned in the early hours on Sunday, Aug 31, after the crash.

Father Bossuet, said he struggled to believe that he had been called to give the sacrament — which can be given to

the dying of any Christian denomination — to Diana. "She said nothing and couldn't have said anything. To say otherwise is stupid and dis-

honourable."

invited to London confce chief Syed Ali Shah Geelani, JK Muslim Conference president Prof. Abdul Ghani and People's Conference chairman Abdul

Debate on confidence-building steps

Leaders from both Kashmirs

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Promi-

nent leaders from Jammu and

Kashmir and Pakistan-occu-

pied Kashmir (POK) have been

invited to a conference in Lon-

don to debate on confidence-

building measures and Kash-

miris' role in promoting the di-alogue between India and Pak-

The desirability of all Kashmir political institutions

for coordination and the return

and resettlement of displaced

people are also expected to come

up for discussions during the

three-day meet scheduled to be-

meet include J and K Chief Min-

ister Farooq Abdullah, former

Sadr-i-Riyasat Dr Karan Singh

and former union minister

cussing methodologies for

searching a solution to the

Kashmir issue, according to the

invitation from the conference

organisers, Friends of Kashmir

and All Party British Parlia-

mentary Kashmir Group.
Prominent leaders invited

for the conference from Jammu

and Kashmir include CPI-M

leader Mohammad Yousuf

Tarigami. state BJP president

Vaid Vaishno Dutt and Jammu

and Kashmir Democratic Fo-

The secessionist leaders

from the state invited for the

meeting include Hurriyat Con-

ference chairman Umar Fa-

rooq, people's League chief

Shabir Shah, JKLF president

Yasin Malik, Jamaat-e-Islami

rum president Bushan Bazaz.

The meeting is aimed at dis-

Prominent invitees to the

istan, reports PTI.

gin on November 28.

Mufti Mohammad Syed.

Ghani Lone. The invitees from POK include POK Prime Minister Sultan Mahmood Chowdhury Muslim Conference president Sardar Abdul Qayoom Khan, JKLF chairman Amanullah Khan, Liberation League presi-dent Justice Abdul Majeed Malik, Muslim League president Gen (retd) Mohd Hayat Khan and JEI president Abuul Rashid

6 killed in Kashmir violence

AP adds from Jammu: An explosion in a bus in Kashmir's capital Friday killed three pas-sengers and wounded 12 others, police said, reports AP.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. which occurred as the bus was crossing a river bridge on the outskirts of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir state.

Also Friday, army sources said a military patrol engaged in a fierce fire fight with suspected Kashmiri separatists along India's border with Pakistan that killed one army officer and two guerillas.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the battle broke out late Thursday near Surankote, about 210 kilometers northwest of Jammu, the state's winter capi-

UNSC threatens Iraq with new sanctions

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 24: The United States and Britain convinced the Security Council to agree to threaten Iraq with new sanctions unless it discloses information on banned weapons programmes. But it was Iraq which felt like a winner, reports AP. Although nine of the 15

council members voted for the resolution Thursday, five abstained: Russia, France, China, Egypt and Kenya.

US and British diplomats had been saying for days that they considered maintaining council unity paramount. Otherwise, they feared Iraq would be emboldened to step up defiance of the international community.

In the end, the Americans and British ended up with neither unity nor the new sanctions in the form they had originally wanted.

The resolution expresses the "firm intention" of the council to ban Iraqi military and intelligence officials from travelling abroad unless Baghdad cooperates fully with UN weapons in-

In the meantime, the council will draw up a list of those Iraqis by name who would be affected by the ban. "This resolution represents a

strong but measured response of the Security Council to the continued failure of the Iraqi government to cooperate" with the Unites Nations, US Ambassador Bill Richardson said. But Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf,

who was at the United Nations for the vote, hailed the decision by five countries — including three permanent members not to support the resolution. "This resolution, in fact, re-

flects the pre-decision of only two permanent members to impose their own sick motives and norms on the Security Council." al-Sahhaf said. "Those norms are against international law."

The United States and Britain had wanted the council to impose the travel ban immediately but effective April 12 if the next six-month report by UN inspectors showed continued Iraqi obstruction.

Off the Record

Biggest apple of all time

DETLING, England: With apologies to New York, the biggest apple of all time has been unveiled at a farm show in England weighing three pounds 11 ounces (1.9 kg) and measuring 53 cm in diameter, report AFP. Farmer Alan Smith showed off the Howgata wonder fruit at

Mardenshow at Detling in southeast England. "The apple is the one bright spot in what has been a pretty grim season," he said.

The previous world champion apple was grown in Oregon in the United States in 1994 and weighed three pounds four ounces.

Most popular Internet site

LONDON: Sex is by far the main motivation of Internet users, according to a survey published in the latest number of the British magazine Web, reports AFP. Every two seconds, an Internet user asks to consult a site

concerned with sex. Web said the survey showed that the four most popular code words chosen by people consulting the "yahoo" index, were 'sex', 'chat', and 'playboy' in that order. But the magazine said this could change when people started

exploiting the potential of the Internet for other purposes. "Sex will always be a part of the Internet but its importance will be significantly reduced over the next couple of years. Shopping will be far more popular than sex on the Internet by 2000," the magazine said.



Roberta Aitchison, left, with meter maids Alicia and Annette who are at the centre of a court battle with a rival meter maid proprietor. The meter maids pose with their boss in Surfers Paradise, Queensland, Australia, Wednesday. Verbal abuse and threats have been made between the two rival proprietors and the court battle continues to decide which meter maid outfit will win - AP/UNB photo

C'wealth won't expel Nigeria, may impose new sanctions LAOS, October 24: The murder.

Commonwealth of nations will not expel Nigeria but may impose new sanctions on it, the organisation's Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku said in London on Thursday, reports Xinhua.

"The exclusion of Nigeria is not on the table, it is not one of the recommendations of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Groups (CMAG)," he was quoted by the News Agency of Nigeria as saying. Anyaoku's comment came

on the eve of the Commonwealth summit of heads of state in Edinburgh. Scotland today, which is to decide on Nigeria's membership of the 54-nation body The Commonwealth sus-

pended Nigeria's membership in November 1995 after its government executed author Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other minority activists on charges of

The Commonwealth then directed the CMAG to investigate and monitor Nigeria's human rights record so that it can decide at its next summit two years later whether Nigeria should be expelled for good.

As the deadline draws near and consultations between CMAG and Nigeria seem to have yielded positive results. There is a fear among some Nigerians that their country might be expelled after all.

Anyaoku explained that the decision not to expel Nigeria was taken in the light of the local government elections on multi-party basis last March. which has been generally regarded as free and fair. He, however, said the Edin-

burgh summit may impose new sanctions on Nigeria. It is understood that both Britain and Canada have been pressing for further sanctions.

25 Indian fishermen KARACHI, Oct 24: Pakistani officials on Friday jailed 25 Indians caught fishing in Pak-

istan waters off the country's southern coast, authorities said, reports AP. The fishermen, six of whom were minors, were picked up by Pakistan Navy patrols a day. earlier in the Arabian Sea, 144

kilometres southeast of the port city Karachi. The navy also confiscated four motorized fishing boats, authorities said. Hostile neighbours India

and Pakistan commonly arrest fishermen who cross into their territorial waters. But Thursday's arrests were the first major round-up since July, when the two countries

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since the subcontinent gained independence from Britain 50 years ago.

exchanged almost 400 detained

fishermen.

Untied Front if it did not com-The United Front, however, ended two days of talks by backing the regional assembly. The Congress has since pledged to

jral coalition. Prakash added the current BJP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh had also been in power in 1992 when Hindu fanatics destroyed the Babri Mosque at the

continue its support for the Gu-

claiming it was built on the site of a former Hindu temple. "When Kalyan Singh was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

northern town of Ayodhya,

-AP/UNB photo

he was responsible for the razing of the Babri Mosque," he said. Around 2.000 people mostly Muslims, died in ensuring religious riots engulfing In-

Newspaper editorials today predicted that Congress would try to present itself as the champion of religious minorities in an attempt to save some face following its Uttar Pradesh defeat

AP adds: The state official who recommended a Hindu nationalist government in northern India be dissolve may instead lose his own job, a newspaper reported Friday.

Guiral's Cabinet, which had acted on the recommendations of Uttar Pradesh's federally appointed Governor Romesh Bhandari, then reversed itself and allowed the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in a controversial confidence vote to stand.

Truce between Israel, Hamas possible: Yassin

LONDON, Oct 24: A "temporary truce" between Israel and the radical Palestinian Movement Hamas is possible. Hamas' spiritual leader said in interviews published here today, but the establishment of a Muslim state of Palestine with Jews — a tolerated minority remains the ultimate goal, reports AFP.

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, in remarks published in the Times and Independent newspapers, said his immediate goals were the same as those of Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Authority: Sovereignty over the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. For a period of time in the

history of the region, yes. could accept this position," he said in Times. in the independent he said he could offer Israel a "temporary truce" if it accepted all

Bank and recognise a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem," he told the newspa-"If we get our rights the war will go on."

a Palestinian state could not greater intensity.

In both papers he refused to describe various bomb attacks by Hamas in Israel as suicide attacks, calling those who carry them out "martyrs".

Hamas' demands.

"There could be a temporary truce if they remove all that remains of the occupation, including the settlements. They must release all Palestinian prisoners, open a safe passage between Gaza and the West

will end. If we don't, the war But Yassin emphasised that

live alongside Israel forever and eventually the conflict would flaure up with even