34 die of malaria in West Bengal: Altogether 34 people have died of malaria in West Bengal since Jahuary this year, the State Director of health services, Dr Ratish

Das, said Friday, PTI reports from Calcutta. Of these, 27 deaths occurred in the Calcutta municipal corporation area while seven persons died of the disease in the districts, he said, adding that 12 deaths were recorded in October. Dr Das said 1,489 blood samples were tested in the CMC area, 325 of which tested positive. Plasmodium Falciparum parasites were detected in 114 samples.

Hashimoto leaves for KSA: Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto departed Saturday morning for a visit to Saudi Arabia, where he will reportedly seek to expand bilateral ties with Japan's main source of imported oil, AP reports from Tokyo.

The two-day visit is aimed at creating a "comprehensive partnership" with the oil-rich kingdom, Kyodo News agency reported, quoting Japanese government officials. Hashimoto will also outline offers of bilateral cooperation in fields such as environmental protection and education as well as proposing an accord on investment protection, the officials said, according to the report.

Tunisia to amend electoral code: Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali said Friday that opposition parties would be allowed to hold 20 per cent of parliamentary seats following legislative elections scheduled for 1999, AP reports from Tunis.

Speaking on the 10th anniversary of his ascension to power, Ben Ali said Tunisia's electoral code would be changed because the last elections, in 1994, "did not respond to the needs of the current step of political change." In that election - the country's first multi-party vote - Ben Ali's Rally for Constitutional Democracy Party won 144 of 163 seats, with small opposition parties taking the remaining 19.

Clinton chooses his library site: President Bill Clinton chose 26 acres next to the Little Rock River Market to be home to his library after he leaves office. AP reports from Little Rock.

The president visited the site in September. The site was selected from among 30 possibilities in the Little Rock area and the decision was announced Friday. "It will be a library, a museum, it will have an educational component and will house the offices of the president and the first lady and their staffs," said local organiser Skip Rutherford.

Pak court rejects appeal by convicted coup plotters

ISLAMABAD, Nov 8: A Pakistan military court rejected an appeal by four army officers convicted in 1996 of plotting to overthrow the former government of Benazir Bhutto, a military spokesman said Saturday, reports AP.

The four officers were arrested in September 1995 for allegedly conspiring to oust Ms Bhutto's government, including the president and senior military officers, and replace it with strict Islamic rule. Thirty-two

soldiers also were charged. In 1996 a military court convicted the officers of planning to assassinate the country's top military commanders and then turn their guns on Ms Bhutto and the president. They were sentenced to lengthy jail

terms. Several months ago, the officers filed appeals, saying there was no evidence to back their convictions.

But a panel of three army generals on Friday rejected their appeals, said a military spokesman, who could not be named under usual briefing

regulations. "The court found no merit in

their case," he said. The sentence of one officer suffering health problems was reduced from 14 years to seven,

the spokesman said.

Russia asks US to abandon anti-sat programme

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: Russian President Boris Yeltsin has told Washington that Russia once had the ability to down satellites and asked the United States to abandon an antisatellite programme a newspaper reported Friday, says AFP. In a six-page letter to President Bill Clinton obtained by

the Washington Times. Yeltsin wrote. "Let me be frank with you. We are alarmed at the US military's intention to develop a whole gamut of anti-satellite weapons systems.'

"At one time we possessed an anti-satellite capability. We renounced it as soon as we realised the futility (of) a first strike notion," he wrote.

UNSC defers punitive steps until next week

US warns Iraq of possible military action

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: In a rising war of words, the US government warned Friday it was considering military options, including a cruise missile strike, if Iraq carries out its threat to shoot down UN

surveillance planes, reports AP. At the White House, President Clinton declared that the United States and its allies must be "resolute and firm" and that UN inspections of Saddam Hussein's weapon arsenals must resume.

Clinton said a decision on military action would wait until after a UN diplomatic delegation returns Monday from Baghdad and the United States consults with its allies. The diplomats have been unable to persuade Iraq to back down on an order expelling US members of UN weapons inspection

"I think it is important to be resolute, and I think it would be a mistake to rule in or out any particular course of action at this moment," the president told reporters gathered in the Roosevelt Room.

Clinton said he expects agreement among the allies. " have seen no indication that any of our allies are weakening on this," he said. "Everyone seems to be united in their determination.

In Baghdad, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz claimed Friday that the United States has used the UN spy

planes to gather information for attacks against Iraq. and declared: "I simply cannot accept that. "When a strange plane enters the Iraqi airspace, it might be

facilities," he said Department State spokesman James P Rubin said that even though the United States has already gone "the extra mile with diplomacy" Aziz would be given a visa to hold meetings at the United Nations.

shot by the fraqi anti-aircraft

Rubin said additional UN sanctions to heighten pressure on Baghdad may be considered next week. Clinton, however, said he

saw no reason to believe that

Saddam was bowing to threats of sanctions or military action. Asked if he saw any reason to hope that Saddam would comply with demands that UN weapons inspections resume, he

said. "No. I don't."

A senior Pentagon official told reporters that if Iraq shot at a U-2 — the high-altitude US reconnaissance plane used for UN inspection missions - it would be considered an act of war and met with a military re-

The flights, suspended amid Irag's threats to expel Americans weapons inspectors, are expected to resume next week. Rubin said.

"We have made it clear that any attempt to shoot them

down would be a serious mis-take," the State Department spokesman said, adding: "Iraq is responsible for the personnel and equipment that are doing the international community's business in Iraq. And it would be a serious mistake to put those lives and equipment in jeopardy."

Defence Secretary William Cohen said in an interview with CNN that is would be a "very big mistake" for Saddam to target the UN surveillance flights, but he declined to specify what military steps might be taken.

The defence secretary said it would be possible to increase sanctions against Iraq, including putting travel restrictions on Iraqi officials, or even providing "less relief" to the Iraqi people, apparently a reference to the oil-for-food programme that the international body has approved.

The UN inspection team "has been very successful, and that is part of Saddam's problem," Cohen said, noting that it had discovered that Iraq was developing a long-range missile that could reach from Baghdad "all the way to Paris."

Neither Clinton nor the Pentagon official indicated US military action was imminent. However, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. said a range of military options has already been discussed, including the use of possible Tomahawk cruise missile strikes.

AFP from United Nations adds: The UN Security Council on Friday deferred any punitive action against Iraq until next week after Iraq refused to drop a threat to expel US arms inspec-

In Washington US President Bill Clinton urged the international community to stand "firm and resolute" towards Iraq to prevent President Saddam Hussein from producing weapons of mass destruction violation of a UN ban.

Noting that UN envoys dispatched by UN Chief Kofi Annan were returning to New York from Baghdad, Clinton said that once they had reported back, "then the international community must decide what to

In comments to reporters here British Ambassador Sir John Weston also stressed that UN envoys would first have to report fully to the council.

And then the council will have to meet again very quickly after the weekend for the next steps, he said.

Annan is to brief the council on Monday on the results of his mission's talks in Baghdad on Friday, after his three envoys failed to persuade the Iraqi leadership to rescind a decision to expel the inspectors, he handed the matter back to the Security Council.

Illegal immigrants to pay fine to remain in US

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: Illegal immigrants who have taken steps to legalise their status would be allowed to pay a dirs 1,000 fine and remain in the United States while the US government processes their paper-work under a deal pending before congressional negotiators, reports AP.

The proposal is circulation among US House and Senate conferees who are finalising legislation that funds the departments of Commerce, Justice and State.

That deal would grandfather anyone with a pending immigrant visa application as of the date the bill becomes law, allowing them to pay dirs 1,000 and remain in the country while their paperwork is completed.

But it shuts the door to any illegal immigrants who may wish in the future to legalise their status while remaining in the United States.

The proposal falls far short of what the Senate wanted. Earlier this year, senators voted to permanently extend a 1994 programme that lets illegal immigrants related to US citizens and those with pending visa applications pay the fine and remain here.

But advocates of the programme found themselves stymied by several key House conservatives who staunchly oppose the permanent exten-

If Congress doesn't continue the programme in some form, illegal immigrants would have to travel to US consulates over-

seas to file for legal permanent residence. By exiting the United States to get their green cards, they could find themselves barred from returning for up to 10 years under sanctions included in last year's immigration law.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez D-Ill, said it would be "regrettable" if Congress doesn't give people a grace period after the legislation is enacted. Yet, reflecting the mixed views in immigrant advocacy circles regarding the deal, Gutierrez said the proposal is nonetheless a victory for

immigrants. "That is not to be taken lightly in a Congress which has often been hostile to the concerns of immigrants," he said Friday.

Immigration and Naturalisation service offices in Los Angeles and Chicago on Friday reported large crowds of people seeking to apply for legal status in advance of any cutoff.

By some estimates, as many as 3 million undocumented immigrants could be helped under the measure. The measure's author, Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, pegs the number at slightly under 1 million.

While the congressional negotiators hadn't wrapped up their often contentious talks Friday night, the immigration provision did not appear to be among the unresolved issues.

Smith "expects the language that he presented to the appropriators to be the final language," spokesman Allen Kay said. "He has no reason to believe otherwise."



Each couple of brides and bridegrooms co-nibble and apple at a mass wedding beside the noted scenery spot West Lake in Hangzhou, capital of eastern Zhejiang province, in China Friday. 106 youths are to link their happiest moment in life with the lake and the red apples.

- AP/UNB photo

Kim vows to back fair polls

SEOUL, Nov 8: South Koran President Kim Young-sam said today he would try to prevent mudslinging in the country's presidential election campaign, and he vowed to back fair polls. reports Reuter.

"I will use all the government's powers to change this campaign climate where defamation and distribution of false information is committed" Kim said in a nationally televised address.

Kim quit the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) on Friday to ensure a fair presidential election and concentrate on running the country. He is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term in the December 18 elec-

He left the party he founded after NKP presidential candidate Lee Hoi-chang demanded he leave. But political analysts said

Kim had in fact jumped into a power struggle between the NKP and party renegades who have formed the rival new party by the people.

The opposition has accused President Kim and the presidential blue house of backing the new party and its candidate Rhee In-je who defected from the NKP in September.

Kim, who enjoyed wide popu-

of his close aides in jail. Prosecution rests its murder case against Kasi

larity at the beginning of his

term, has been reduced to a

lame duck following a scandal

this year which landed several

FAIRFAX, US, Nov 8: The prosecution rested its murder case on Friday against Mir Aimal Kasi, who is charged with killing two men and injuring three others in a shooting rampage outside CIA headquarters, reports Reuter.

Jurors were dismissed until Monday as lawyers for the prosecution and defence discussed the wording of instructions to the panel. Kasi's lawyers called no wit-

nesses in this phase of the trial. but did not formally rest their case. The case is likely to go to the jury on Monday following instructions from Virginia Circuit Judge J Howe Brown and closing arguments.

Kasi, 33, of Quetta, Pakistan, has pleaded not guilty to 10 charges stemming form the attack outside the US spy agency's headquarters in McLean, Virginia, on January 25, 1993.

Former prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto gestures as she addresses an audience during a speech at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government, Friday in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Benazir, who is currently leader of the opposition Pakistan People's Party, lived in Massachusetts while attending Radcliffe College in the 1970s.

- AP/UNB photo

50 killed as fighting erupts in northern Iraq

ANKARA, Nov 8: More than 50 guerillas have been killed in the past two days of fighting between rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, an Iraqi Kurdish group said Friday, reports AP.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP, said that fighters of the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or PUK, launched nine attacks Wednesday and Thursday on its positions near the town of Degalah, 40 kilometres (25 miles) east of main Kurdish city Irbil.

The PUK attacked in collaboration with the Turkish Kurd rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK, the KDP said in a statement.

The KDP said its guerillas repulsed the attacks, killing a total of 45 PUK and PKK combat-

Fourteen KDP guerillas were killed and 28 wounded, the KDP statement admitted. The PUK and KDP, who have

uneasily shared control of the

Kurdish autonomous zone in

northern Iraq since 1991, re-

sumed fighting in October after observing a US-brokered ceasefire for 12 months. PUK and PKK rebels formed when the KDP began supporting Turkish forces in cross-border operations against the separatist PKK guerillas, who have bases in north Iraq.

spokesman dismissed the KDP report as "exaggerated" and described the latest fighting as regular skirmishes.

pening to cover the deployment of Turkish tanks," Barham Saleh, told The Associated Press bureau in Cairo by telephone.

have moved into Salahuddin and Shaqlawah," he said, referring to towns close to Irbil that are under KDP control.

spokeswoman said she had no information about the past two day's clashes in northern Iraq. but confirmed the Turkish Kurd

in the region, including the PUK, have been fighting against the Turkish army and the KDP. who are collaborating," Mizgin Sen said in a telephone interview from Cairo.

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 8:

As the crisis with Iraq ratchets

up, the focus shifts to a divided

UN Security Council short on

fresh ideas. Several compro-

mises have been proposed to re-solve the crisis. So far, all have

The 15-member council

meets Monday to hear from UN

envoys who failed to convince

President Saddam Hussein to

h k down. But the final out-

one depends heavily on what

r esident Clinton will accept

and whether Washington will

act alone with force if neces-

For the moment, Clinton

seems willing to wait for the

council to decide how to get the

Iraqis to rescind their order ex-

pelling American members of

been shot down, reports AP.

Washington does not rule out discussion on Kashmir **Aziz Haniffa writes from Washington**

US Secretary of State Ali Jinnah.

Madeleine Albright's chief spokesman James Rubin re-Kashmir issue would not come up for discussion when Albright visits India later this month.

theme of her trip."

Earlier, senior officials had said that Albright would not be Czechoslovakian diplomat, had acclaimed books on Kashmir in the 1950s, during which he travelled to Kashmir and spent Pakistani leader Mohammed

Rubin said Albright would November 16 to attend the ecothen take wing to Pakistan.

She is slated to spend November 18 and 19 in India. during which she is expected to squeeze in a trip to Agra to see the Tai Mahal and then take off to Dhaka, Bangladesh, for half a day on November 20 before turning around and heading off to Vancouver, Canada, to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Co-

Rubin said, "The precise schedule is still being worked out." He said, "In Pakistan, she will encourage the government's commitment to democratic development, human rights, religious tolerance and work with the Pakistani government to end the conflict in Afghanistan."

will be continuing our dialogue on strategic issues begun last month by Under Secretary (of

State for Political Affairs Thomas) Pickering, celebrating our shared democratic heritage and advancing our objectives on environmental issues, particularly global warming."

In Bangladesh, the spokesman said, "she will encourage the further consolidation of democracy, promote further progress on development women's empowerment and child labour issues." Administration sources ac-

knowledged that the global warming issue would be a priority item on her agenda as much as the other issues, because of its immediacy vis-a-vis the Climate Change summit later this month in Kyoto. Japan.

Wirth, testifying before the House Subcommittee of Energy and Power about the status of the international climate change negotiations, said, "Unless the developing countries meaningfully participate, the United States will not assume binding obligations."

India Abroad News Service

Milosevic warns NATO Bosnian peace deal must be handled impartially

BELGRADE, Nov 8: Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic warned NATO Friday that implementation of Bosnia's peace accords must be handled with impartiality and without the West imposing solutions, reports AFP.

The statement from the Yugoslav presidency, quoted on Yugoslav radio, followed a meeting between Milosevic and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana.

Solana, accompanied by supreme allied commander General Wesley Clark, arrived in Belgrade from the Bosnian capital Sarajevo as part of a day-long visit to the region.

His tour was intended to put pressure on Milosevic to do more to meet his commitments under the Dayton Peace Accords that he signed in 1995 to end the Bosnian war NATO officials

However, Milosevic's statement said that all questions regarding implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords would have to be "solved through agreements, cooperation and confidence without partiality and imposing solutions."

UNSC renews air, arms embargo against Libya UNITED NATIONS, Nov 8:

The 15-member UN Security Council on Friday renewed an air and arms embargo against Libya for failing to hand over two Libyan suspects wanted in connection with the Lockerbie bombing, diplomats said, reports AFP.

The decision to keep the sanctions in place came at the Security Council's regular four monthly review.

The move came despite intensified Libyan lobbying, and after the British government proposed the dispatch of observers to Scotland to counter Libyan accusations that a Scottish trial would not be impar-

Libya has been under a UN arms and air embargo since 1992 for refusing to hand over the suspects wanted in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland which killed a total 270 people.

resisted surrendering the two to Britain or the United States, on the grounds that a fair trial would not be possible.

In recent months they have won considerable Arab and

But Libyan authorities have

African backing for their proposal for the trial to be held in a "neutral" country, but this has been rejected by Britain and the United States.

Libyan Ambassador Abuzed Dorda called for an open Security Council meeting this week to discuss the deadlock, but the proposal was rejected. Western

as head of Intl Commission on Missing Persons

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: Former Senator Bob Dole took over on Friday as head of the International Commission on Missing Persons, and pledged to do his utmost to help relatives of 40,000 people missing in the Balkans learn their loved ones fate, reports Reuter.

"We cannot bring those who were squandered (in the Bosnian war) back to life, but we can ease the burdens on those who survived by letting them know what happened to their loved ones, by bringing those responsible to justice and by never letting this happen

US tightens security at

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: After finding security lapses in its weapons complex, the US Energy Department announced Friday it was tightening safeguards at several of its nuclear

site" but revealed security shortcomings at a number of weapons facilities. The investigations by the de-

nesses" in security at the Pantex more in California.

Global warming Officials meet ahead of Kyoto

TOKYO, Nov 8: Two days of meetings by senior officials began Saturday, just weeks before the start of a major UN-sponsored conference on global warming next month in Kyoto. Japan, report AP.

"It's the most important conference in the world today and we must get agreement in Kyoto and that's what it's about," said Britain's Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott. "It's about our children's future and that is most important to all of us."

tend the informal ministerial meeting Japan is hosting ahead of the Kyoto conference, which runs from December 1 to 10. Ministers from more than

ported.

the UN weapons inspection. team. The Americans fear that unilateral action on their part 20 countries were discussing will serve only to widen divinarrowing their differences on sions in the coalition that the reduction of greenhouse gas

"We believe that this is hap-

party was fighting the KDP.

an alliance earlier this year

In Washington, a PUK

"Twenty-six Turkish tanks

In London, a PKK

"PKK and all the other forces

fused to rule out that the "I wouldn't rule out that the subject comes up," Rubin said, "but it's certainly not a central

Rubin, who was announcing the dates of Albright's trip to South Asia, was asked if Kashmir would be part of her agenda during her talks with Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and senior Indian officials or if all the discussions would centre only on bilateral issues.

visiting Kashmir during her trip, even though her father Josef Korbel, a former written one of the most highly several days in India and Pakistan and talked to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and

leave for Doha, Qatar, on nomic summit of Middle East nations on November 17 and where she is expected to spend a

operation (APEC) summit.

"In India," Rubin said, "she

Divided UNSC short on ideas how to resolve crisis in Iraq cancelled inspections when the Americans are turned back. Butler has refused, arguing

> thority of the Security Council of the United Nations," Butler said Friday. "I don't think the Security Council of the United Nations has faced a more serious challenge, maybe since it was created

tion issue. That was the reason those countries - along with Egypt, Kenya and China - refused to support a resolution last month

privately the council should

close its investigation into Iraq's nuclear programme, which the International Atomic Energy Agency says has "probably" been dismantled

missiles which the Iraqis bought from the former Soviet Those findings, French and Russian diplomats say privately, should encourage the council to declare Iraqi compli-

They argue that such a move would encourage Baghdad to show greater cooperation in areas such as biological and chemical weaponry and convince them that disarming is the only way to remove sanc-

mats maintain that would be tantamount to rewarding someone for breaking the rules.

Even French and Russian diplomats admit privately that it would be hard for them to argue for flexibility as long as Baghdad defies the United Nations.

This was behind Secretary-General Kofi Annan's decision to send a diplomatic mission to Baghdad. Before the envoys left, UN sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the en-voys would try to find a facesaving way for Baghdad to back down - perhaps on the promise of a full hearing of its grievances

Thursday of the five permanent council members - the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China - Chinese Ambassador Qin Huasun suggested that governments 'with influence in Baghdad" should send envoys to appeal to Saddam. But the United States and

N-facilities

laboratories and facilities. The measures include more guards. new alarm systems and additional training, reports AP. Energy Secretary Federico Pena said two internal reports found "No immediate danger to nuclear material at any DOE

partments Office of Oversight and the Office of Security Affairs found "exploitable weakweapons facility in Texas, the Rocky Flats facility in Colorado, and two weapons laboratories - Los Alamos in New Mexico and Lawrence Liver-

conference

Prescott was in Tokyo to at-

drove Saddam's forces from Kuwait in 1991. emissions, Kyodo News re-"We have to counsel with our

sary.

allies." Clinton told reporters. "We have to give them a chance to be heard and see what we're going to do. Clinton said the council agrees that inspections must re-

sume "on terms that the United

Nations decides, not on Saddam

Hussein's terms. That may be all on which the council agrees. Russia, France, Egypt and China oppose using force. Fur-

ther economic measures are a non-starter against a country already under the strictest sanctions in UN history. Imposed in 1990 after Iraq invaded Kuwait, they ban almost all trade with Iraq. There is almost no support

for curbing a programme that

lets Iraq sell limited amounts of oil to buy food and medicine. On Friday, US and British diplomats sounded out council colleagues on three punitive op-- An immediate travel ban against Iraqi officials who have

blocked arms inspections;

views on the sanctions, making them more difficult to lift; Tightening loopholes on use of equipment that can be used for both military and civilian purposes.

- Cancelling periodic re-

There was no reaction from other council members. Iraq's compliant that the Americans have been too inflexible in opposing Saddam's government has sympathy among some council members. American officials have sug-

gested that they will never agree

to lifting all the sanctions until

Saddam Hussein is out of

UN sources, speaking on

condition of anonymity, say some of them have urged the chief weapons inspector. Richard Butler, to keep the American inspectors in Baghdad but not send them along on inspections. That way, the United Na-

tions could continue its inspec-

tions, since the Iraqis have

barred only the Americans. So

far, the United Nations has

that Iraq must not dictate "This is fundamentally a very serious challenge to the au-

Even before the latest crisis, the Russians and the French had been suggesting that the council should offer incentives to the Iraqis rather than threaten them over the inspec-

threatening to ban Iraqi officials from travelling abroad to punish them for non-compli-Russian and French diplomats, for example, have said

Butler has also said he has accounted for all but two or three of the 187 long-range

ance in those areas and offer a "carrot," perhaps even a loosening of sanctions.

tions entirely. But US and British diplo-

On Friday, UN spokesman Fred Eckhard acknowledged that approach apparently failed During a closed meeting

Britain refused.

diplomats said. Dole takes over

again" he said at a news confer-