

## International

## BRIEFLY

**Avalanche kills 46 in Tajikistan:**

UP to 46 people were killed when an avalanche buried a mountain pass in this central Asian nation, but emergency officials said Thursday they waited some two weeks before revealing the incident. AP reports from Dushanbe.

The avalanche hit the Anzob mountain pass earlier in this month, but the Tajik Emergency Situations Ministry only revealed the incident after abandoning hope of finding more survivors or bodies. No reason for the delay in releasing the news was given. Four people were pulled alive from a blanket of snow up to 12 metres (39.6 feet) deep and 13 bodies also were found, it said.

**UN monitor hurt on Kuwait-Iraq border:**

Assaults opened fire on a UN checkpoint near the Iraqi-Kuwait border, wounding a monitor, AP reports from Kuwait.

The UN observer from Ghana was shot Thursday in the thigh as the unidentified assailants fired on the post from a passing car, the Kuwait News Agency reported Friday. About 200 UN observers patrol the demilitarised zone along the 130-mile (210-kilometre) frontier between Iraq and Kuwait. The zone was created after the 1991 Gulf War, when a US-led coalition drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, ending a seven-month occupation.

**China denies missile sales to Y'slavia:**

China said Thursday that military cooperation forms an important part of its relations with Yugoslavia, but denied that it was willing to sell medium-range missiles to Belgrade. AP reports from Beijing.

During Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's visit last week, China "indicated its willingness to conduct exchanges and cooperation in all areas" of military relations, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said. "A very important part of the bilateral relations between China and Yugoslavia is military exchanges and cooperation," he said.

**Portuguese DPM to resign:**

Portuguese Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Antonio Vitorino said on Thursday that he had offered his resignation from the socialist government because he risked charges of tax-dodging. Reuters reports from Lisbon.

He did not spell out whether Prime Minister Antonio Guterres had accepted the offer, although he implied that he had. "Until this issue is resolved, I shall not be holding any political office," Vitorino told a news conference.

**5 Islamic rebels killed in Algeria:**

Algerian security forces killed five Islamic extremists who were about to carry out a massacre in a town near Algiers, La Tribune newspaper reported yesterday. AFP reports from Algiers.

It said the five were part of a group that was poised to attack Djiloulo, a town outside Larbaa 20 kilometres (15 miles) south-east of the Algerian capital. Another armed militant was killed Wednesday by the security forces in the same area, as were three others last Friday at Douera. Southwest of Algiers. The independent newspaper added.

**Blast leaves 1 dead in Germany:**

A fireman was killed and nine other people were injured. Some seriously, when two rail containers carrying petrol exploded, starting a fire, police in this eastern town said Thursday. AP reports from Elsterwerda.

The 66-year-old firefighter was seriously injured by falling debris and died on the way to hospital. Eight other firemen and a policeman were burned, some seriously.

**Strong quake rocks China:**

A moderate earthquake rocked a sparsely inhabited area in mountainous western China early Friday, but there were no reports of damage or injuries. AP reports from Beijing.

The magnitude 5.0 earthquake struck at 12:17 am (1617 GMT) in the rugged Kunlun mountains along the border between Xinjiang and Tibet, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported. It was the second such quake in two days, following a 5.0 magnitude tremor centred in the Kunlun mountains that hit Thursday morning.

**Journalist killed in Colombia:**

Two gunmen on a motorcycle killed a magazine editor Thursday in Colombia's regional capital of Armenia, authorities said, bringing to seven the number of Colombian journalists murdered this year. AP reports from Bogota.

Jairo Elias Marquez, editor in chief of the monthly news magazine EL Marques, was about to get into his car when he was gunned down in the city 190 kilometres (120 miles) west of Bogota. An Armenia police spokesman told local reporters that Marquez, 40, had received telephoned death threats but that it was not clear from whom.

**Y'slav army officer arrested:**

A Yugoslav army officer and two civilians were arrested Thursday on charges of undermining the country's defensive capacity, the daily Dnevni Telegraph reported yesterday. AFP reports from Belgrade.

The paper said the three, arrested at Nis in the south of the country, were suspected of importing inferior quality materials for use in military equipment of the highest importance for the army.

**5 crushed in Beijing bldg collapse:**

A three-story factory building in eastern Beijing collapsed as it was being demolished, crushing at least five workers, an employee of the building's owner said Friday. AP reports from Beijing.

Four bodies were dug out from under the rubble after the brick building, formerly the Wandong Medical Equipment Factory, fell in with a huge crash Thursday afternoon, said Zhang Danshi, a Wandong employee. "People living nearby felt shaking like an earthquake," the Beijing Evening News said. The newspaper said five people were crushed in the collapse.

**5 missing in Russian chopper crash:**

Five people were missing and believed dead after a Russian rescue helicopter searching for a fishing vessel crashed into the Black Sea during a storm, officials said Friday. AP reports from Moscow.

The Mi-8 helicopter with a crew of three and nine rescue workers aboard was trying to rescue four fishermen near the port of Sochi. The aircraft crashed shortly after the crew spotted the boat about three kilometers (two miles) from the shore and reported its whereabouts, said Emergency Situations Ministry spokesman Viktor Beltsov.

**Cuba permits more foreign priests:**

With Pope John Paul II's visit approaching, Cuba has announced it will allow 57 more foreign priests and nuns to help the island's small corps of Roman Catholic religious workers, AP reports from Mexico City.

The announcement was made Wednesday night on Cuban state television, which also broadcast a programme commemorating President Fidel Castro's visit to the Vatican a year ago. The 28 priests and 29 nuns will come from Colombia, Spain and Haiti. Church authorities in Havana told reporters, who spoke later by phone with The Associated Press in Mexico City.



A view of a gold foil-covered solar observatory satellite in the front of payload bay of the Space Shuttle Columbia during its second day in orbit Thursday, as seen in this image from television. The Spartan solar observatory satellite was scheduled to be released on Thursday, but was delayed one day because of now-corrected problems with another solar study satellite currently orbiting the sun that will take concurrent readings. — AP/UNB photo



Under the cry of "Allahu Akbar" "God is Great" around 300 opposition members holding signs during a sit-in for the first pro-Iraqi and anti-US states rally Thursday in Amman, Jordan. The crowd carried banners calling for the lifting of sanctions from Iraq and attacking the US and its policy, saying "US is our enemy," down with the US aggression against Iraq. — AP/UNB photo

## US sends 32 more jets to Gulf to keep pressure on Iraq

WASHINGTON, Nov 21: The United States said on Thursday it was sending 32 more fighter jets and bombers as well as patriot anti-aircraft missiles to the Gulf to keep pressure on Iraq to cooperate with UN arms inspections, reports Reuters.

The Pentagon said 12 F-15 fighters, 18 F-16 fighters and two B-1 bombers would arrive in Bahrain over the next few days, along with a Patriot battery and about 100 US troops to operate it to protect the air expeditionary force.

The planes are in addition to six F-117A Stealth fighters and six B-52 bombers sent to the region earlier on Thursday. They will bolster the US military force within striking distance of Iraq to 281 warplanes and 22 navy ships.

The White House and the Pentagon stressed that the recent US military buildup near Iraq was continuing unabated to make sure Baghdad followed through on a promise to end a confrontation with the UN and allowed American and other arms inspectors back into the country.

Navy Capt. Mike Doubleday, a Pentagon spokesman, warned that Baghdad should stop shifting its air defence missiles and radar around in a "no-fly" zone in southern Iraq because such activity was a threat to allied

warplanes policing the zone.

He said the present active movement of such defence violated a warning to Baghdad not to increase potential threats to allied jets. The warning followed missile and bombing strikes against Iraqi anti-aircraft defences in the southern zone last year.

The US military force in the Gulf region includes the navy aircraft carriers Nimitz and George Washington, each with 50 attack jets. About 120 US Air Force planes are based in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

"We are pursuing the diplomatic route to resolve the issue, but we are doing it from a position of strength," Doubleday said.

"This (increased force) will provide us with all the resources we need to carry out any missions that are given to us," Patriot missiles were used to intercept Scud missiles fired by Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War. There are Patriot missile batteries in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Defence officials said some parts of a Patriot battery were already in Bahrain but the firing unit being sent from the United States would make it operational.

AFP adds: The United States said Thursday a Russian campaign to lift sanctions against

Iraq remains a long way from reality because of Baghdad's interference with UN weapons inspections.

Gearing up for an aggressive drive at the United Nations, US officials asserted Washington's view that Iraq must comply with all UN resolutions and demonstrate a "pattern of compliance" over time for a lifting of sanctions to be envisaged.

National security adviser Sandy Berger went one step further by saying that the withdrawal of UN inspectors six days ago meant that any debate on sanctions would be postponed until the experts were able to reconstitute their work.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein "has set back the date by which, in my judgment, one can imagine UNSCOM completing its work," Berger said, referring to the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraqi disarmament.

Thomas Pickering, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, commented: "The notion that there should be some timetable. Perhaps imposed on the UN rather than on Iraq is in my view putting the cart before the horse. It is up to Saddam to comply."

A senior administration official, who asked not to be named, said "We are a long way from even addressing that question" of lifting sanctions.

## Tigers' 15 yrs of love-hate relationship with Delhi

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas, at the heart of India's political turmoil, have had a love-hate relationship with New Delhi spanning almost 15 years, reports AFP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), blamed for the 1991 assassination of former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi, allegedly received training and weapons from successive Indian governments from 1983.

The charges have been denied by India but have been widely documented. The LTTE itself has admitted to accepting weapons as well as financial help from New Delhi.

The LTTE was a small group with barely 50 full-time members when it ambushed and killed 13 Sri Lankan soldiers in the island's north in 1983, triggering a bloody anti-Tamil pogrom in Colombo.

India, home to some 55 million Tamils of its own, denounced the anti-Tamil violence and began a massive but secret operation to fund, arm and train five Tamil militant groups from Sri Lanka.

The LTTE, led by charismatic founder-leader Velupillai Prabhakaran who is today wanted by both India and Sri Lanka, was one of them.

The group maintained propaganda offices in the southern Indian cities of Madras and Madurai, from where it claimed responsibility for guerrilla attacks in Sri Lanka.

It also had numerous training camps located across the Indian state of Tamil Nadu,

which is separated from Sri Lanka by a narrow strip of sea.

According to Tamil and Indian government sources, around 1,200 Sri Lankan Tamil rebels were trained by New Delhi in secret camps between September 1993 and July 1987. Many belonged to the LTTE.

It costs \$ 761,000 to raise 7 kids!

UNDATED, Nov 21: How much does it cost to raise seven kids? About dollars 761,000, the US government estimates, reports AP.

No, there isn't a category for septuplets in the Agriculture Department's report. But the agency does estimate that it would cost a middle-income Midwestern family about dollars 108,708 to raise each child to age 18 in a family of three or more children.

That would come to dollars 760,956 for Kenny and Bobbi McCaughey.

The biggest expense is housing, at dollars 35,435 per child, followed by food at dollars 19,103 and transportation at dollars 16,516.

Child care and education would cost dtrs 10,302 per child, clothes an additional dollars 7,715 and health care dollars 7,322, the report estimates.

The report, Expenditures on Children by Families for the urban Midwest, assumes some savings from having more than one child. The estimate for raising an only child is dollars 175,000.

During the period, the LTTE expanded to become a battle-hardened group of some 3,000 men and women fighters. It also destroyed other Tamil groups engaged in the campaign for a Tamil homeland.

In July 1987, India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement to try and end the separatist struggle. India deployed its soldiers in Sri Lanka's Tamil majority north and east to disarm the LTTE.

The LTTE, however, took on the Indian Army in October 1987, leading to a bitter hit-and-run guerrilla war that continued until the Indian soldiers returned home in March 1990 after suffering nearly 1,200 casualties.

The Tamil Tigers had, meanwhile, opened peace talks with Colombo. But once the Indian Army quit Sri Lanka, the LTTE resumed its battle for homeland against Colombo.

Within weeks, it had taken control of large areas of Sri Lanka's north and east and set up a de-facto Tamil independent state in the northern Peninsula of Jaffna.

"On May 21, 1991, former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi, who had sent the Indian troops to Sri Lanka in 1987, was blown up by a woman suicide bomber at an election rally in Tamil Nadu.

India blamed the LTTE for the killing, the Tigers denied involvement the following year. The Indian government outlawed the group and carried out a sweeping crackdown in Tamil Nadu.

## UN weapons inspectors arrive in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Nov 21: UN weapons inspectors arrived in Iraq from Bahrain today after Baghdad reversed a decision to expel US members of the team, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The team of about 75 weapons experts working for the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), including six US inspectors, arrived at Habbaniya airport, west of Baghdad, flying aboard a special flight.

The team took the bus bound for Baghdad, the witnesses added. The UNSCOM team, charged with disarming Iraq, had been pulled back to Bahrain after Baghdad expelled the US members on November 13.

## Security tightened Weapons found near Colombo

COLOMBO, Nov 21: The discovery of a cache of explosives and big guns near Colombo has prompted the Sri Lankan military to step up security in the capital, police said Friday, reports AP.

Colombo has been attacked twice in the last two months by rebels fighting to carve out an ethnic Tamil homeland on the Indian Ocean island nation. Police said the weapons found this week in Chilla, 70 kilometres (43 miles) north of Colombo, may have been stored by rebels planning another assault.

Soldiers in full combat uniform were posted at all road intersections around Colombo and police were checking vehicles at random following the discovery. Guards at all important installations were nearly doubled, with soldiers manning machine gun positions behind sand bags.

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Tuesday's discovery came after police interrogated a Tamil man. The report was made public Friday after explosive experts from Colombo visited Chilla and examined the seized explosives.

Police said the cache included 20 kilograms (44 pounds) of high explosives, 16 grenades, three Claymore mines, one rocket launcher, one T-81 grenade launcher and five jackets laden with explosives, a hallmark of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The jackets are worn by Tiger suicide bombers.

## 13 killed, 14 hurt in Kashmir road mishap

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: At least 13 people were killed and 14 injured when a bus plunged into a gorge in the Himalayan state of Kashmir in northern India, the Press Trust of India said today, reports AFP.

Officials said the accident happened on Thursday in the southern Kashmir district of Doda when the bus hurled down a 300-foot (90 metres) gorge when the driver lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a sharp curve.

Witnesses said the stretch where the accident occurred was a badly damaged dirt road.

## Election likely to divide Bosnia even further

SARAJEVO, Nov 21: A peace agreement signed two years ago seeks to create a single country out of Bosnia's two wartime foes. But an election this week-end may in effect divide Bosnia even further, into three parts, reports AP.

Serbs, who control 49 per cent of the country, voted in internationally monitored elections Saturday and Sunday for their 83-seat parliament. The contest is a struggle between two feuding factions — one loyal to war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic and one led by President Biljana Plavsic.

The two halves of the Serb-held territory are connected only by a small corridor, and neither side is able to impose its will on the other. In the end, the election is likely to drive them farther apart.

About 30 parties are running. Because of the large number of refugees who will vote abroad, no results will be announced until about Dec. 10.

The pro-Karadzic Serb Democratic Party, based in Pale, east of Sarajevo, won an absolute majority in 1996. However, it has been stripped of one of its main tools — its television station — and looks likely to lose support. International officials shut down Pale TV because of what they charged was inflammatory reporting.

The extreme nationalist Radicals are likely to gain, and the question is whether the two of them together can win a majority.

Plavsic has been building her own political organisation since dissolving the current parliament.

Complicating the election, many Muslims who fled what are now Serb-held sections of the country, are registered to vote there. Halid Genjac, an official of the main Muslim party, the Party for Democratic Action, predicted his party would get about 20 per cent of the vote and indicated his party could support Plavsic.

If no side gets a clear majority, a long period of negotiations over building coalitions is likely — leaving Bosnian Serb politics a muddle.

The low-key campaign sharpened Thursday just before the beginning of a 24-hour pre-election silence.

In Pale, leaflets appeared displaying the luxury homes that Karadzic and his senior aides allegedly own. It was not known who distributed them, but the message fit nicely with Plavsic's campaign against corruption in the Karadzic camp.

At a rally in the contested northeast town of Bijeljina, Plavsic said the pro-Karadzic group led by Momcilo Krajcinik, the Serb member of Bosnia's three-man presidency, is pushing Bosnian Serbs into "hopelessness and fear."

The pro-Karadzic group is balking at the Dayton peace agreement, while Plavsic, despite being an ardent Serb nationalist, works more closely with international officials.

Dayton does not prevent us from recovering the country, putting thieves in jail, and linking with Europe and the world," Belgrade's BETA news agency quoted her as saying in Bijeljina.

## Hashimoto responds to infidelity allegations

TOKYO, Nov 21: Japan's prime minister moved Friday to squelch rumors that he may have compromised national security by having an affair with a Chinese woman years ago, reports AP.

The relationship between the woman and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto has been targeted by opposition politicians on the basis of reports in the tabloid press.

The reports not only call the woman a mistress of Hashimoto, but also claim she is a Chinese government spy and suggest Hashimoto's relationship with her may have been a breach of national security.

Though widely ignored by the mainstream domestic press and most of the public, the sensational allegations came at a time when Hashimoto's standing with voters has taken a nose dive.

Hashimoto's once lofty approval ratings have sunk as a promising economic recovery has soured and promised administrative reforms have been jettisoned.

The Office of the Prime Minister responded Friday by denying the allegations and stating no investigation of the charges is merited, according to a copy of a letter which was obtained by The Associated Press.

The letter was addressed to Shingo Nishimura, a member of the Japanese opposition New

Frontier Party who grilled Hashimoto about his relationship with the woman earlier this month in Parliament.

Known as a conservative "China hawk" for his hard line on communist China, Nishimura dismissed the prime minister's response.

"I don't believe a word of it," he said in a phone interview, pledging to renew his call for an investigation of the allegations.

## S Korea, Russia sign agreement

SEOUL, Nov 21: South Korea and Russia on Thursday signed an agreement in Moscow for co-operation in military technology, defence industry and logistics, Seoul's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said today, reports Reuters.

The ministry said in a statement that South Korea's vice-minister of defence, Lee Jung-Rin, and his Russian counterpart, Nikili Mikhailov, signed the agreement.

The agreement would help enhance cooperation in the production, design and testing of weapons and equipment and in purchase and sales of weapons between the two countries, it said.

According to the agreement a committee would be established to support companies in both nations involved in joint projects.



Britain's Prince William, left, and Prince Harry with Zara Phillips, daughter of Princess Anne, arrive at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich southeast London Thursday. A lunch in the honour of the Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip's golden wedding anniversary was held at the Naval College. — AP/UNB photo

## Misfortune grips Pak villagers on Indian border

HERPAL, Pakistan, Nov 21: Heralp is in most respects a typical village. It has the misfortune, however, of sitting along Pakistan's uneasy border with India, and 72 of its people have been killed last year by bullets and artillery shells, reports AP.

Like most villagers in eastern Punjab province, the breadbasket of Pakistan, the people of Heralp are farmers. But at least 500 acres (200 hectares) of some of the most fertile land sits idle because of an Indian security tower just 100 yards (metres) east.

"When anyone goes in the field, the Indians start firing at us," said one resident, Fatimah Noor.

The only school in Heralp was closed in June after an artillery shell exploded in the school yard. No one was hurt.

Several of the simple cement houses in the village are riddled with holes from machine gun bullets. Villagers say they are too afraid to expose themselves to Indian guns by going on the roof to repair the damage.

Skirmishing between Pakistani and Indian troops has been practically a daily ritual since 1947, when Britain left the subcontinent and gave the two countries their independence.

Kashmir, a former princely state, was divided between India and Pakistan by the departing

British and has been the flash point for two of the three wars between them. The border remains one of the world's tensest.

The 10,000 villagers in Heralp say they are the forgotten victims of the conflict, their problems ignored by their leaders. Few expect peace talks between India and Pakistan to bring a lasting peace soon.

"We have a miserable life here with all the constant firing," said a 70-year-old woman who gave her name only as Faisal.

"We simply don't believe it matters to them. If Sharif and Gujral lived in this village, may be things would be different," she said.

Her teen-age son, Afzal, was killed earlier this year by an Indian shell, along with the family's buffalo. Afzal was bringing in the crops when the shell hit.

"Now without my son and without the buffalo, my family can't earn a single rupee," she said.

Other villagers crowded around Faisal, lifting up their pant legs and pulling back sleeves to show bullet and shrapnel wounds. Most families have lost at least one family member.

Noor Fatimah had tears in her eyes when she described the day last June when her 18-year-old son was shot and killed while plowing the family's plot of land near the border. Her husband was critically wounded when an artillery shell exploded next to him in April.

Fatimah's family wants to move, but they cannot find anyone who wants to buy their farm.

Many young men used to work in Sialkot, an industrial town 60 kilometres (40 miles) to the west. But army roadblocks mean the villagers have to travel an extra 50 kilometres (30 miles) on dirt roads to get to work.

Hundreds have lost their jobs. Many others simply gave them up, too worried about leaving their families alone should a major clash erupt like the artillery duel that killed 39 people in another Pakistani village in October.

The roadblocks also make it hard for villagers to get medical help when people are wounded. No doctor lives in Heralp and the closest hospital is in Sialkot.

Fatimah, 55, wants things like they were in her childhood just after Pakistan and India gained their independence, when people on both sides of the new border remained friendly and moved freely back and forth.