

# BRIEFLY



Helen Sprott, left, and Janey Walker, editors for the United Kingdom's NVC Arts for Channel 4, pose in New York on Monday with their international Emmy Award for excellence in broadcasting outside the United States. The award, for best Arts Documentary, was given for the show, "Dancing for Dollars: The Bolshoi in Vegas" about the disastrous trip the ballet company, that was once the pride of the Soviet Union, made to Las Vegas in October 1996.

— AP/UNB photo

**ICRC volunteer killed in Congo:** A Red Cross volunteer was killed in an exchange of gunfire between police and renegade militia members in this war-torn capital, officials said Monday. AP reports from Brazzaville.

The victim, who was not identified, was killed Saturday as he went to save a civilian who had been wounded in the fighting, said Delphin Kibakidi, a spokesman for the local Red Cross organisation. The new government of Gen. Denis Sassou-Nguesso has vowed to eliminate the private militias — despite the fact that he came to power at the head of one such group, the Cobras. He has said he would create a "true republican army."

**Pak national beheaded in KSA:** Saudi Arabia yesterday beheaded a Pakistani man for killing a compatriot, raising to 121 the number of people executed in the conservative Islamic kingdom so far this year, Reuter reports from Dubai.

An Interior Ministry statement read on state-run Saudi Television said the man was executed in the holy city of Makkah after an Islamic court found him guilty of killing another Pakistani by hitting him on the head with a hammer.

**6 Peruvian soldiers killed:** Guerrillas ambushed an army patrol in Peru's northern Amazon jungle, killing six soldiers and wounding seven, the military reported Monday. AP reports from Lima.

One guerrilla died and an undetermined number were injured in the attack Sunday in a remote stretch of jungle in La Povola district in the department of San Martin, 465 kilometres (290 miles) northeast of the capital, Lima, according to an armed forces news release. Guerrillas opened fire on the soldiers and, after a gunfight, retreated carrying with them "an appreciable number of wounded," the military statement said. The soldiers were riding in a truck at the time of the attack.

**Cabinet dissolved in Niger:** The president of Niger announced Monday he was dissolving the year-old government led by Prime Minister Cisse Amadou, AFP reports from Niamey.

"I have decided, counting from yesterday, to discharge the entire government team," General Ibrahim Barde Mainassara said in a radio broadcast. He said he came to his decision after studying the country's problems, which he said ranged from the threat of famine, security problems, classroom unrest, civil servants' pay and the actions of opposition parties.

**3 killed in South Lebanon:** Israeli troops killed three guerrillas in its South Lebanon occupation zone Monday, the Israeli army said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The three were killed in a clash in the western district of the zone a day after Israel said guerrillas killed at least eight Lebanese civilians in fire directed at the Israeli occupied area. It was not immediately clear which guerrilla group the Israelis had engaged.

**Violence claims 5 in Colombia:** Unknown assailants shot to death five people near the town of Urrao in the northwestern department of Antioquia, police reported late Sunday. AFP reports from Bogota.

Among the dead was Juan Esteban Flores, a Colombian Communist Party member and a member of a local ruling body. Police also said that a government helicopter was fired on Sunday as it conducted a humanitarian mission near the rural community of Anorí northeast of Medellin. No one was hurt in that incident.

**Student leader jailed in ROK:** A provincial court sentenced a radical student leader to six years in prison Tuesday for violating national security laws banning pro-Communist activities, AP reports from Seoul.

Kim Wi-won, 24, headed Hanchongryon, a student group responsible for many violent anti-government, anti-US protests. It was outlawed by the government in 1996 for its pro-North Korean activities.

**Russian held for spying:** A naval officer in Russia's Pacific Fleet who writes for a military newspaper has been arrested on suspicion of spying for Japan, Russian news agencies reported Monday. AP says from Moscow.

Capt. Grigory Pasko, a correspondent for *Boevaya Vakhta* (Combat Vigil), was arrested Sunday in the Far East port of Vladivostok after returning from Japan, ITAR-Tass and Interfax said.

**'Russia is open to cooperation in civilian use of atomic energy'**

MOSCOW, Nov 25: Russia's atomic energy minister said that his country is open to cooperation in the civilian use of atomic energy with any country that agrees to abide by international accords, Interfax said Monday. reports AFP.

Viktor Mikhailov said that "this fully applies to Iran" as well to any other country which has put its nuclear programme under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Interfax said citing the transcript of a conversation with US officials.

Mikhailov also dismissed comments made by former security chief Alexander Lebed alleging that security around Russia's nuclear arsenal was insufficient and has resulted in the theft of some nuclear components.

"One of our nuclear weapons or components of nuclear weapons have been lost."

**US officials term Albright's South Asia trip fruitful**

WASHINGTON, Nov 25: Even though US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was preoccupied with the Iraqi crisis during her South Asia trip last week, administration officials and analysts here say that much was achieved during the abridged visit, according to India Abroad News Service.

They denied that her drastically shortened itinerary in South Asia, which was cut down to two days, meant that Albright, the first US Secretary of State to visit India after a gap of 14 years, could not hold substantive discussions in Islamabad or New Delhi.

A State Department official denied that Albright's discussions in New Delhi were superficial or cursory because she was distracted by the UN standoff with Baghdad. "She carried out the core appointments on her schedule," the official told IANS.

The official's views were echoed by former diplomat and eminent analyst Dennis Kux, author of the much acclaimed "India and United States: Estranged Democracies."

Kux also noted that "The main thing is that she got there

What she cut out, the trip to Agra in particular, would have involved a significant portion of her stay in India, but not the important meetings," the official asserted.

What had to be remembered was that "She did make the trip out there and that says something — that she is serious about a dialogue (with New Delhi)," the official pointed out, adding that with the fast moving developments in the Gulf region at that time, Albright could well have cancelled her trip.

The fact that she did go in spite of all the other pressures, even though it had to be shortened unfortunately, does demonstrate that South Asia is an important area for us," the official emphasised.

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Kux also noted that "The main thing is that she got there

(to South Asia) and you can draw something from it that the U.S. is serious (about South Asia)."

He recalled how in 1981, then Secretary of State Alexander Haig had cancelled a scheduled trip to South Asia when the crisis in Poland had begun unfolding.

Albright's long-planned South Asia trip was meant to build a new relationship with key South Asian capitals. While trying to keep her schedule intact, she was also scrambling to shore up support in the Security Council and around the Arab world for Washington's stand on the Iraq crisis.

In seven days Albright raced through eight nations, dropped Bangladesh from her trip, scrapped several high-profile appearances in India and Pakistan, and flew through the night three times.

"What you had was a bit of bad luck all the way around. Her worrying about Iraq, you had Nawaz Sharif in a consti-

tutional crisis, you had the government of India collapsing," Kux said.

"So I wouldn't put it just on the American side. For the Americans, while they are trying to pay more attention to South Asia, other things keep cropping up," Kux added.

"India and Pakistan are so wrapped up and so caught up in their own domestic problems that it is pretty hard for them, even if they wanted to, to engage with the U.S.," he said.

Kux noted that every time senior U.S. officials travelled to Islamabad or New Delhi, the two capitals were in the throes of some domestic crisis or another.

He noted half facetiously that if Albright had stayed a day longer in either Islamabad or New Delhi, "Then Nawaz would have had to cancel the meeting" and Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral would have been shown up as a puppet at the mercy of Congress Party chief Sitaram Kesri.

All the big newspapers — The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Times — which normally devote an entire page once a week to South Asia, ignored Albright's date with South Asia. There were also no analyses or commentaries subsequently.

The only part of her trip which found some mention was the day she spent in Pakistan. But the report by New York Times correspondent Steve Erlanger, who accompanied her, was dated Nasir Bagh in Pakistan, 25 miles (40 km) from the Afghan border, where Albright met Afghan refugees and issued her harshest criticism yet of the Taliban and its treatment of women and children.

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Only five of the 21 paragraphs in the report mentioned Albright's talks in Islamabad with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Foreign Minister

Gohar Ayub Khan.

In a report from Geneva, where Albright had dashed from New Delhi for a meeting with foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to deal with the Iraq crisis, Washington Post's diplomatic correspondent Thomas W. Lippman noted that many of Albright's senior aides never even left their hotel during her less than 24-hour stay in New Delhi.

"Rushing out of their hotel in New Delhi to board Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's flight to Geneva, two of her senior aides grumped that it was the first time they had left the building during her entire stay in the Indian capital," Lippman wrote.

"All their time, they said, was spent making phone calls and sending faxes to set up (the Geneva meeting). Up all night, they never even saw the Red Fort or the Moghul emperors, Delhi's most prominent tourist site," Lippman narrated.

**5 lakh govt employees in Assam begin strike**

GUWAHATI, India, Nov 25: At least 500,000 government workers in the far-eastern Indian state of Assam today began a crippling four-day strike to demand a steep pay rise, officials said, reports AFP.

Government offices, schools and colleges and state-run shops were closed across the oil-and-tea-rich state despite a stern warning by the Assam government to the protesters.

Charan Deka, Secretary General of the Union of State Workers leading the strike, said: "We know the hardship caused to the people as a result of out strike, but the authorities are to be blamed."

Deka said government employees in Assam were paid about 35 per cent less on average than their peers in other Indian states.

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Mas, who died in Miami on Sunday aged 58 from complications of lung cancer, headed the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF), the most powerful and influential of the Cuban exile organisations opposed to Cuban President Fidel Castro and one-party communism.

Barredo said that although Mas was undoubtedly an influential figure in Cuban exile politics, the anti-Castro lobby in the United States was a wider force, incorporating not just exiles but also members of the US Congress.

The Assam government Tuesday ordered strikers to re-

turn to work immediately.

"If the order is not complied with, the government shall take serious disciplinary action against all employees," a spokesman said.

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