shot dead in Colombia: A rightwing death squad killed at least eight people in northern Colombia, near where 22 peasants were recently hacked to death with chain saws, police said on Tuesday, Reuters reports

from Bogota. Police said the latest attack occurred on Monday in Estados Unidos, an impoverished village in a mountainous region of Cesar province.

Quake rattles southern Taiwan: An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter Scale rattled southern Taiwan yesterday but no damage or casualties were immediately reported, the central weather bureau said, AFP says from Taipei.

The temblor struck at 6:27 am (2227 GMT) with its epicentre located 38.1 km west of Taitung.

Blast kills six in Srinagar: Six villagers trying to salvage metal from a military ammunition dump were accidentally killed in explosions, an official said yesterday, AP says from Srinagar.

Three others were injured Tuesday night at Khundroo village when two blasts went off in quick succession, said army spokesman Maj P Purushottam.

12 workers die in Beirut: An elevator plunged 20 floors after its cables snapped, killing 12 workers and injuring three others at a building site in Lebanon on Tues-

day, police said, AP reports from Beirut.

Ten Syrian and two Lebanese labourers were killed instantly after the elevator fell. Two Syrians and an Egyptian were hospitalised with serious injuries.

'Female Nude' sells for \$11m: Pablo Picasso's Cubist "Female Nude" was auctioned for more

than 11 million dollars at a Sotheby's sale late Tuesday, AFP

says from New York. Picasso's mistress, Fernande Olivier, posed for the 1909 painting in Spain. It was estimated at between 10 million and 15 million dollars.

Iraq renews pledge to cooperate with UN

arms inspectors

BAGHDAD, Nov 18: Iraq on Tuesday renewed a promise to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors to pave the way for a full review of its relations with the United Nations, reports

Reuter. "We will do our best to cooperate. We will be patient. We will even try to contain provocations if there are any," Amer al-Saadi, an adviser to President

Saddam Hussein, said. "But naturally there are limits," he told Cable News Network (CNN) in an interview, without spelling them out.

Iraq hopes the comprehensive review promised by the UN Security Council will lead to an end to crippling sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of

Saadi said Iraq would accept inspections of so-called presidential sites in line with a memorandum of understanding signed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz to defuse a crisis in February.

"Everything is aid down, how the Iragis should behave and respond, and what UN-SCOM's mandate is and how it is performed.

lem and no repetition of previous problems because those were still unresolved at that

Iraq averted threatened USled military strikes in its latest standoff with the United Nations by promising on Saturday to resume cooperation with the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) seeking to scrap Iraq's weapons of mass destruc-

#### Russian defence minister postpones visit to India

MOSCOW, Nov 18: Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev has postponed his official visit to India scheduled from November 24 and was expected to accompany President Boris Yeltsin during his visit to New Delhi next month, reports PTI.

Though Kremlin gave no of ficial reason for postponing the visit, the diplomatic sources said the delay was believed to be due to the forthcoming meet of prime ministers of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) scheduled for November 25 where several defence related

leaders summit Gore's remarks sparked sharp rejoinders from the So there should be no prob- matters are to be discussed. Malaysian government and

is lifting sanctions and Baghdad says it deserves to have the bans ended now. But the United States says Baghdad has a long

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 18:

The United States made clear

Tuesday that economic sanc-

tions against Iraq will not be

lifted at the end of a compre-

hensive review of Baghdad's

compliance with UN resolu-

promised to launch a review

when UN weapons inspectors

confirm that Iraq has resumed

cooperation unconditionally -

and Baghdad wants the review

to bring an end to the oil em-

bargo imposed after its 1990 in-

Peter Burleigh told a news con-

ference that the US government

has always viewed the compre-

hensive review as just that — a review of Iraqi obligations and

the many questions it hasn't

lifting as the end result of the

comprehensive review," he said.

bound to irritate and disappoint

Iraqi leaders who, in their own

words, have been looking for a

Hamdoon said Sunday that

Baghdad made a commitment

to cooperate with the inspectors

"provided the work will lead at

some point to the end of the

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18:

Ousted former Malaysian Fi-

nance Minister Anwar Ibrahim

spoke out from behind his

lished today, attacking Prime

Minister Mahathir Mohamad

and urging political freedom in

"For decades, some Asian

leaders have tried to convince

their people that soft authori-

tarianism is necessary for

prosperity, but a new genera-

tion has emerged for whom

such arguments have lost their

persuasion," Anwar wrote in an

article published in the Asian

Asians, political stability is

just as important, but it must be

based on freedom and justice,

not coercion and denail of fun-

damental rights," Anwar wrote.

corruption and sodomy, Anwar

emerged at the core of a bitter

row between the United States

and Malaysia after US Vice

President Al Gore endorsed

Anwar's supporters and urged

political reform in crisis-

stricken nations in a speech

here ahead of an Asian-Pacific

Now on trial on charges of

"To the new generation of

Asia, reports Reuters.

Wall Street journal.

prison walls in an article pub-

light at the end of the tunnel.

"We don't see the sanctions

Burleigh's comments were

Iraq's UN Ambassador Nizar

But Deputy US Ambassador

The UN Security Council has

tions, reports AP.

vasion of Kuwait.

answered.

Sanctions against Iraq

way to go. Baghdad curtailed weapons inspections August 5 and banned them entirely on October 31, demanding a comprehensive review that would set a clear timetable for the lifting of sanctions. The Iraqi government lifted the ban and agreed to unfettered inspection Saturday, as the US was about to launch massive airstrikes.

Burleigh stressed that while the council has focused on Iraq's compliance with resolutions demanding the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, the Unites States is also demanding its compliance with resolutions calling for an accounting of missing Kuwaitis, looted Kuwait property and government archives.

To show that the United States considers the fate of Kuwaiti prisoners "an extremely important issue" for Iraq to resolve, Burleigh called a sudden news conference and brought along Ibrahim Al-Shahine, vice-chairman of the Kuwait National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs.

Burleigh stressed that Iraq must comply with all UN re-For Iraq, the end of the story quirement before sanctions can

In an article from behind prison walls

Anwar Ibrahim urges political

freedom in Asia

dismayed many Asia-Pacific

Economic Cooperation (APEC)

leaders and delegates, who

feared the feud would distract

from APEC's efforts to cope

with the region's economic cri-

economic discourse from be-

hind prison walls," Anwar

wrote." But these are not nor-

mal times in Malaysia, nor in-

hathir's argument that foreign

currency speculators were to

blame for the crisis which last

year brought the regions' "eco-

nomic miracle" to an abrupt

lurking in the shadows, waiting

for any opportunity to make a

countries themselves? Do we

not take the individual and

collective responsibility for our

problems, just as we have taken

credit for our successes in the

at speculators and blaming un-

realistic demands set by inter-

national agencies of last resort,

Asian nations would do well to

"We in Malaysia are as guilty

put their own houses in order.

"Instead of pointing fingers

fast buck," Anwar wrote.

last decade?

"Yes, there were dark forces

"But what of the affected

Anwar also criticised Ma-

deed, in much of Asia.

"It is not normal to conduct

won't be lifted: US end, and he dismissed Baghdad's suggestion that sanctions should be lifted incrementally

in proportion to Baghdad's

compliance. There's no issue about incremental lifting of sanctions. It's not allowed under the resolutions. And as far as I know. there's no member of the council arguing for incremental lifting of sanctions," Burleigh said.

The Iraqis have charged the United States with misinterpreting UN resolutions to prolong the process of lifting sanc-

The comprehensive review envisioned by the Security Council will be divided in two parts, the first focusing on disarmament and the second on other issues, including Kuwaiti prisoners.

The Iraqis want an oil embargo - which they consider the most punishing - lifted after weapons inspectors verify that they have eliminated their nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the long-range missiles to deliver them.

But even though some Security Council members might support this alternative, Burleigh ruled it out and demanded Iraqi compliance with all UN resolutions.

as anyone else in the region," he

said. "In the case of Malaysia, it

is unfortunate that Dr. Ma-

hathir Mohamad has descended

from his pedestal to promote

the worst kind of subsidy men-

tality among his cronies and

cleaning," Anwar said an

"Asian renaissance" must in-

clude "not only political trans-

parency and better corporate

governance, but also reforms to

society and culture and respect

for human rights, the environ-

ment and the independence of

several other APEC members

have expressed concern over

whether Anwar will get a fair

The United States as well as

Anwar dismissed controls

on capital controls as "at best a

temporary measure and said

they could not be used to artifi-

cially cocoon a country from

the realities of the market

dismay and criticism abroad

for his abrupt imposition of

currency controls in Septem-

Mahathir provoked investor

Anwar took issue with those

who argue that politics have no

Calling for an "Asian house

the super rich.

the judiciary.

place at APEC.

#### Benazir presents agenda for nat'l survival

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18: Pakistan's opposition leader and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has vowed to frustrate all efforts to convert the country into a theocratic, authoritarian and bankrupt state and presented her own agenda for

national survival, reports PTI. The chief of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) also demanded dismissal of the Nawaz Sharif government and holding of fresh elections to fulfill the demands that are genuine, democratic, patriotic and progres-

Accusing Sharif of pursuing a policy which would lead to an authoritarian rule in the country and convert Pakistan into a theocratic state, Benazir presented a nine-point alternative agenda for the survival of the country faced with unprecedented crises of existence.

We resolve to frustrate all efforts aimed at turning Pakistan into a theocratic, authoritarian, adventurist, unitary, jingoist and bankrupt state, she said in the agenda, the second major alternative proposed by her since her party was routed in the February 1997 polls and PML assumed power.

Benazir's government had been dismissed midway through its five-year term by the then President, Farooq Leghari, in November 1996 amidst charges of corruption and deteriorating law and order

situation. Benazir, who is facing a number of corruption charges. also termed the Sharif government as a coterie of corrupt gangsters who have usurped the rights of the oppressed people and all the federating units.

UNSC condemns continuation of violence in Burundi

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 18: The UN Security Council condemned the escalating cycle of violence in Burundi and called for a cease-fire and swift punishment for those guilty of recent massacres, reports AP.

"The council condemns all attacks against civilians and reiterates the need for all parties to respect human rights and humanitarian law, and reminds the government of its responsibility to protect all its citizens," the council said Tuesday in a press statement.

After a briefing on the recent violence committed by both rebel forces and government troops, the council said it endorsed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's condemnation and call for an immediate end to all attacks.

Deputy US Ambassador Peter Burleigh, the current council president, said members welcomed the government's announcement that it will investigate the massacre of innocent civilians by government troops in early November.



Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, and US Vice President Al Gore walk a pass in a tropical garden toward a luncheon during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit at Cyberview Lodge, Kuala Lumpur's southern retreat, Wednesday.— AP/UNB photo

Impeachment hearings start today

## House Judiciary yet to finalise procedures

WASHINGTON, Nov 18: Just a day away from impeachment hearings into president Bill Clinton's conduct, House Judiciary Committee Republicans are still sparring with Democrats over what the format should be, reports AP.

One contentious point has been settled: Clinton's attorneys will get no more than 30 minutes to question the leadoff witness, Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr.

Rep Henry Hyde, the committee's chairman, also rejected a White House request for more than one lawyer to cross-examine Starr, and warned the administration that questions into Starr's tactics would not be permitted when hearings begin Thursday.

"The fact that the committee approved rules allowing your participation demonstrates the extent to which it wants to be fair to the president," Hyde wrote White House Counsel Charles FC Ruff in a sternly worded letter late Tuesday night. White House lawyers, the Illinois Republican said, would get 30 minutes to question Starr.

White House lawyers had insisted they needed 90 minutes to cross-examine Starr.

Troops guard Indonesian parliament

Democrats claim Starr's conservatism has coloured his four-year, multifaceted investigation of Clinton and his referral to Congress detailing 11 possibly impeachable offences, including perjury and obstruction of justice, involving the president's affair with Monica Lewinsky

"It is the guiding principle of our adversarial system that truth emerges most clearly from the interplay of direct and cross-examination," Ruff had written.

Meanwhile, Judiciary Committee Republicans expect to receive Clinton's answers to their 81 questions about the president's conduct to land on Capitol Hill as soon as Wednesday, sources close to the panel

Clinton has not yet made a final decision on how to answer 81 questions about his conduct submitted by Hyde, according to a source close to the president. But a consensus appears to be building around the notion of providing answers that refer to the president's previous statements or testimony. It would be a strategy similar

to that used by Clinton during his August 17 grand jury testi-

### Israeli parliament supports Wye deal

### US-brokered peace deal appears to be back on track

JERUSALEM, Nov 18: The US-brokered Israeli-Palestinian peace deal appeared to be back on track on Tuesday after Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met Israel's demand to retract warnings over possible renewed armed struggle, reports Reuters.

Israel's 120-member parliament gave the land-for security accord overwhelming support ratifying the deal by a 75-19 vote with nine abstentions hours after the two sides halted a war of words that had flared in recent days. "I ... reiterate that any prob-

lems concerning final-status negotiations will be resolved through amicable and peaceful ways and through negotiations. but not through any other means," Arafat told a news conference.

"We will continue to cooperate to confront any violence and the use of force," he said in remarks which Palestinian officials said had been coordinated with Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Ben-

by chairman Arafat," Netanyahu told reporters in Israel's parliament.

He welcomed Arafat's commitments to reach a permanent peace agreement with Israel through peaceful means alone his rejection of violence and his

pledge to "cooperate against vio-

jamin Netanyahu, who had put

a West Bank land handover due

later this week on hold, called

"I certainly view in a posi-

tive light the statements made

the statement a positive step.

lence and terror." A statement from the Prime Minister's office said Israel wanted assurances that Palestinians had published a decree against anti-Israeli incitement and one against possession of

illegal weapons.
But a top PLO official said details of the redeployment had been finalised.

"The Israeli government ts going to implement the first stage of the further redeployment on Friday," the official, who declined to be identified, told Reuters.



An old South Korean Confucian demonstrates with other protesters to oppose a government bill allowing "same-name marriages" beside the National Assembly in Seoul 1998. For centuries, the country has banned marriage among people Wednesday, - AP/UNB photo with same surnames. A banner says opposing same-name marriages.

#### as it promises to enact reforms buildings and 97 cars were da-JAKARTA, Nov 18: Thouin a sedition inquiry. maged or set afire. The Jakarta Post newspaper reported.

sand of troops guarded Indonesia's Parliament Wednesday as its Speaker promised it would enact political reforms opposed by students in deadly clashes with the military last week, reports AP. Later about 300 students

marched through downtown Jakarta. They protested the reforms and denounced the shooting of demonstrators by troops and police.

In a speech that opened a new session of the legislature, Speaker Harmoko warned that any delay to the reform process could "trigger new problems" in the sprawling Southeast Asian nation, now beset by political and economic turmoil. He said parliamentary elec-

tions in May or early June 1999 would be "based on honesty and justice, and would be direct, open to all, free and secret." Sixteen people, including

eight students, were killed last week. Security forces fired plastic bullets at protesters. Other people, including some police, died when rioting broke out in parts of Jakarta. Hundreds were injured.

City authorities said 123

Military commander Gen

Wiranto took out advertisements in several national newspapers expressing his "sincere condolences" for last week's deaths. Opposition and students

have demanded that Wiranto resign as armed forces chief and defence minister in the wake of the shootings. "We hope that their souls are

accepted at God's side and for all the families that they left behind, may God give them patience and strengthen their souls to face this hardest of situations," the advertisement

It was the worst violence since riots killed 1,200 people in May, forcing then autocratic President Suharto to quit after 32 years in power. "For those who died outside

the Parliament we deliver our condolences and hope that the deaths will prove to be meaningful in the long term," Harmoko said.

Police have questioned more than a dozen opposition figures. including two retired generals,

Suharto's successor and onetime protege President B J Habibie has alleged that the student protests had been orchestrated by conspirators wanting to topple his 6-month-

old government. The Jakarta Post quoted police as saying those questioned were suspected of subversion, which carries a maximum penalty of lifetime imprisonment. Last week's bloodshed

erupted after tens of thousands of students tried to march on the green-domed legislature where the 1,000-member People's Consultative Assembly approved a range of political reforms sponsored by Habibie.

These reforms will now be enacted by the 500-member Parliament, which makes up half of the assembly but is now sitting in its own right.

The process to make the reforms into law is expected to take several months, and Harmoko called on Indonesians to give the Parliament a chance to implement the changes in line with the constitution and not to be provoked by "irresponsible parties."

### South Africa won't allow Tamil Tigers to open its office

COLOMBO, Nov 18: South African President Nelson Mandela has assured Colombo that he will not allow Tamil Tiger separatists to open offices in his country, the Sri Lankan government said Wednesday, reports AP.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar when he met with South African leaders in Johannesburg earlier this week, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement in Colombo. The Sri Lankan government

The assurance was given to

took up the issue after intelligence reports said that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were planning to shift operations from London to South Africa. The reported LTTE move

came after Britain enacted new anti-terrorism laws that would make its operations illegal. Earlier laws had no scope to prosecute a group for its actions outside Great Britain. The new was enacted primarily to deal with Northern Ireland issue.

Africa has a large number of Tamils immigrants, a section of whom supports the LTTE's 15-year-old campaign for a separate homeland for the minority Tamils of Sri Lanka.

# Asians look to sky for spectacular meteor storm

KADENA AIR BASE, Oki- years. nawa, Nov 18: Star-gazers In Kanagawa prefecture across Asia huddled outside in the predawn chill Wednesday to admire luminous flares of red and white streaking through the skies during the greatest meteor shower in decades, re-

ports AP. NASA sent up research planes from this US Air Force base in southern Japan in an attempt to glean hints about the origins of life on Earth and the planet's relationship to the

From Thailand's highest peak to the neon-drenched streets of Tokyo, people in Asia — where the meteors burned brightest — lifted their eyes to a magnificent spectacle of nature as the storm reached its climax in the direction of the constellation Leo.

"It's wonderful," said Toshiaki Kogai, one of hundreds of Japanese who watched the storm from a park just south of Tokyo. "I never imagined it would be like this.

In Tokyo and many other Japanese cities, public offices and private businesses heeded a government plea to dim their lights to enhance viewing of the storm, which peaks every 33

(state) near Tokyo, a 19-yearold trade school student died when she fell off the handrail of a bridge to the concrete below while trying to see the cascading stars with her friends, po-

Minori Suzuki fell 15 metres to her death when she tried to grab her shawl as wind blew it away, they said. Though the night remained

bright in the capital area, meteors could be seen every two or three minutes at the height of the shower. Some appeared to fizzle as

they fell. Others looked like moving dots. Each brought many a wish. "I only wish I could think up wishes faster," said Ikue Oe, a housewife out watching the storm with her husband in the

In the United States, the best seats were wherever the sky was darkest and clearest. The crowds that gathered at sites in the Mojave Desert in

Tokyo suburb of Yokohama.

California early Tuesday were enthusiastic. Sandra Macika, 36, of San Jose saw about 30 meteors. "I

could see in front of me big



A meteor streaks through the sky above Mount Fuji in Fujinomiya, west of Tokyo, early Wednesday. - AP/UNB photo

streaks of light falling on the of both comets and meteoroids highway," she said. One group was camping out in the Sandhills of central Nebraska, getting away from city

lights.

"We're catching an average of two or three meteors a minute, one of the best meteor showers I've seen in quite some time." Daniel Glomski said early Tuesday morning.

In northern Thailand, tens of thousands of tourists swarmed to Doi Inthanon, the Southeast Asian country's highest peak at 2,565 meters (8,464 feet), and Doi Suthep, another mountain with a famed Buddhist temple on top. But clouds and lightning

hindered the viewing. The view was clearer in Norway, where rescuers were swamped with calls from people who spotted what they thought were red distress flares fired from ships in trouble off the southern coast.

"The meteors really changed color, and sometimes they were bright red, so I can understand that people associated them with distress rockets," said rescue leader Ben Vikoeren. NASA sent up two research

planes to study the composition

- and perhaps learn something about the beginnings of life on Earth in the process. "We have a very unique opportunity here to get some in-

may have arisen," said NASA astrobiology specialist Gregg Schmidt. Some scientists believe the elements necessary for life on Earth may have been brought here by corners or meteorites.

formation about the way life

The NASA planes will provide scientists with data to determine the cosmic debris' molecular composition — and find traces of any organic material it may carry.

The shower is caused by the earth's passage through the long tail of the Comet Tempel-Tuttle. It is called the Leonid shower because the meteors appear to come from the direction of the constellation Leo. Though the Leonids occur every November, they are usu-

comet speeds through the inner solar system and sheds swarms of particles as it nears the sun.
"The 1833 Leonid shower started a religious revival based on what people saw," he said.

ally not particularly spectacu-

lar. But every 33 years, the

## Hun Sen assures political freedom to exiled leaders

PHNOM PENH. Nov 18: Cambodian leader Hun Sen has guaranteed the safety and political freedom of all politicians. trying to ease the fears of his rivals that they can return to the country and not be arrested or killed, reports AP.

The assurances were aimed especially at Sam Rainsy. leader of a vocally anti-Hun Sen opposition party, who was forced to take refuge in the UN offices in September to evade arrest after Hun Sen accused him of being behind a plot against his life.

Sam Rainsy and the 14 members of parliament from his party have been holed up overseas for two months. But a deal reached between Hun Sen and his chief rival. Prince Norodom Ranariddh, on forming a new government last week has opened the door for their re-

turn. In a letter to King Norodom Sihanouk, the prince's father and Cambodia's head of state, dated Monday, Hun Sen said that guarantees of safety ex-

tended to Ranariddh applied to all politicians.

I would like to reaffirm the duties and responsibilities of the royal government in guaranteeing security for all politicians as well as their liberty in the conduct of political activities in accordance with the laws in force," said the letter, broad-

Rich Garella, a Sam Rainsy Party spokesman, expressed caution Wednesday over Hun Sen's guarantees, saying the Cambodian leader "continues to leave himself loopholes." Sam Rainsy had written to

cast on television Tuesday.

Sihanouk over reports that he was under investigation by a Phnom Penh court on a allegations that members of his party in league with Khmer Rouge guerillas had fired a rocket at Hun Sen's motorcade September 24.

Hun Sen's assurances come a week before the first session of Cambodia's new parliament. Ranariddh Sam Rainsy had contested the results of the legislative elections in July.