

At a glance

A brief look at our world

State

Pennsylvania suffers under wintry storm

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A powerful, early-season winter storm sprinted across the state over the weekend, leaving downed trees, damaged homes and power outages in its wake. Saturday's storm, referred to as an Alberta Clipper because of its origin in Canada, whipped up wind gusts of 75 mph, toppled a 60-foot tall oak tree and flooded streams. In Aston, Delaware County, officials reported quarter-inch hail. No injuries were reported, officials said. But at least 75,000 Philadelphia-area customers lost power over the weekend, PECO Energy Co. spokesman Michael Wood said.

Nation

Jordan murder trial promises to be long

LUMBERTON, N.C. (AP) — He calls himself Lord D. A.A.S. U'alah now, but prosecutors still know him as Daniel Andre Green. He is the young man charged with killing Michael Jordan's father, and his capital murder trial is scheduled to begin today. The trial promises to be long and arduous, with jury selection expected to take up to a month. Prosecutors have summoned two jury pools of 500 each to find people with no opinion of the highly publicized case. Michael Jordan, whose Chicago Bulls play tomorrow in Orlando, is not expected to attend. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty for Green, who turns 21 this month. The defendant has converted to Islam and changed his name, but court documents continue to refer to him as Green.

Space shuttle ferries more equipment

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Space shuttle Atlantis punched through low clouds yesterday on its return mission to Russia's orbiting station, this time with a docking port and construction crew. NASA had feared bad weather at the shuttle emergency landing strips across the Atlantic might delay the flight for the second day in a row, but skies cleared sufficiently at one of the touchdown sites in Spain. Launch managers decided the low clouds over the Kennedy Space Center were no obstruction. Atlantis rose from its seaside pad at 7:30 a.m., after the Russian space station Mir soared 245 miles above. The shuttle slipped into orbit eight minutes later. Atlantis' primary payload is a Russian-built docking port that the five astronauts will attach to the Mir station to make future shuttle dockings safer and easier to accomplish.

World

Nigerian political prisoner executed

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Blindfolded and dangling from a rope, Nigerian playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa spoke eight final words before his body went limp: "Lord take my soul, but the struggle continues." Because of faulty equipment, it took five attempts to hang the anti-government activist in Port Harcourt on Friday morning. At one point, according to the daily newspaper AM News, Saro-Wiwa asked his executioners: "Why are you people treating me like this? Which type of country is this?" The 54-year-old playwright was one of nine Ogoni ethnic minority activists hanged Friday in the southern oil port; several papers reported yesterday that Saro-Wiwa was hanged first. A secret tribunal convicted Saro-Wiwa on Oct. 31 of ordering the murders of four political rivals who were shot at a 1994 political rally. A military ruling council upheld the sentences Wednesday.

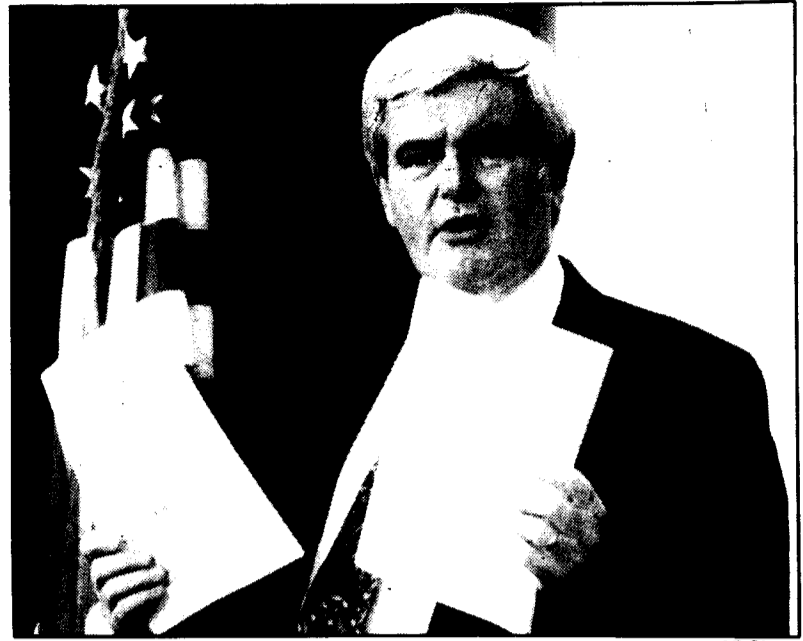
Neither side budges in budget balancing

By ALAN FRAM
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Clinton administration refused yesterday to commit to a seven-year balanced budget as the Republican price for averting the twin crises this week of a partial federal shutdown and a halt to government borrowing. In what amounted to a day of broadcast budget bargaining, leaders swapped conditions for completing a pair of bills allowing the government to continue borrowing and spending money, which President Clinton has threatened to veto. Federal spending authority expires at midnight today and failure to extend it will force nearly half the federal work force to go home tomorrow morning and curtail government services. Borrowing authority also lapses this week, which could rattle financial markets. Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., went on ABC's "This Week With David Brinkley" and

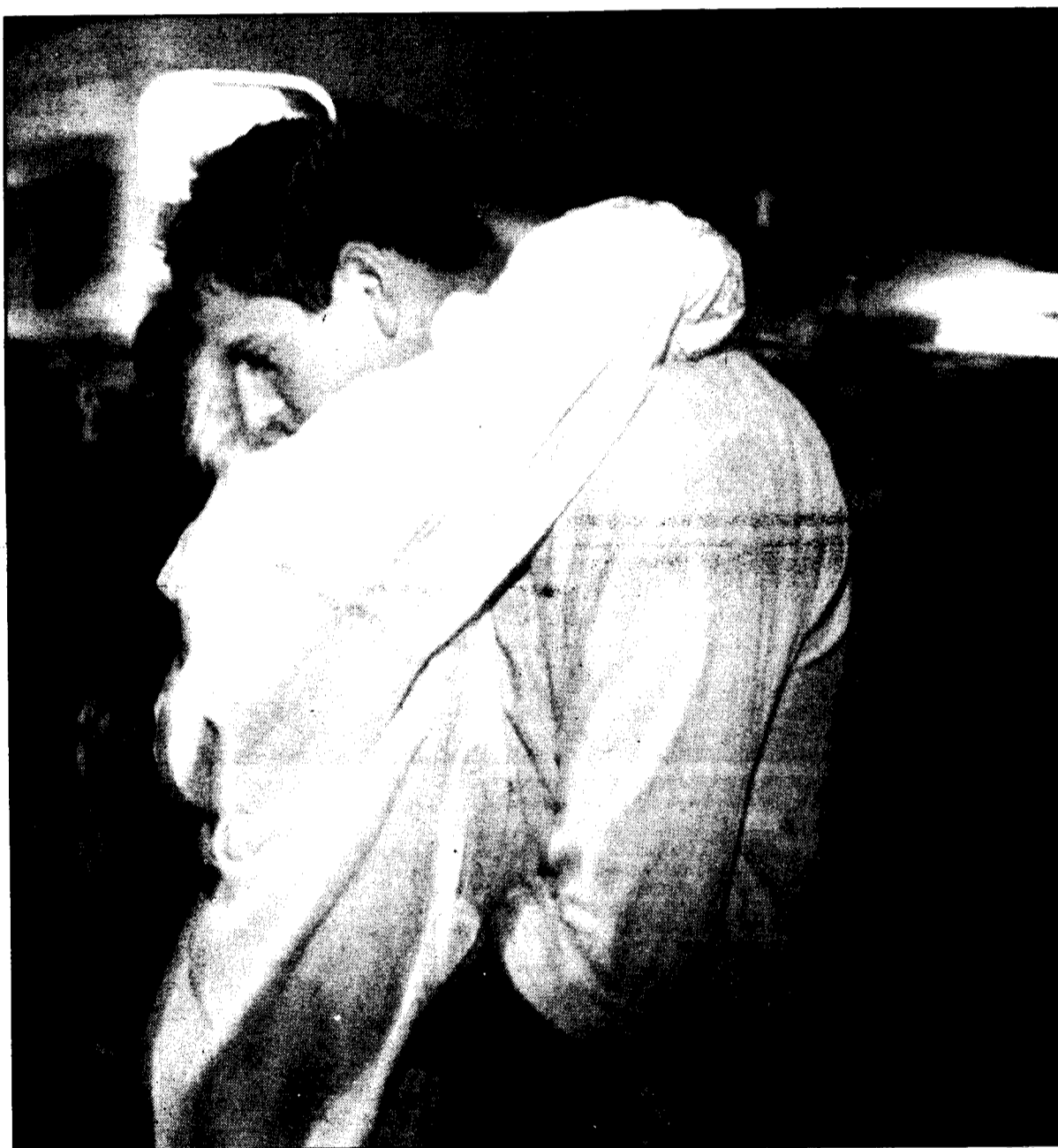
said, "If the president would agree to a balanced budget in seven years, then we could make very good progress" in completing the bills. That sentiment was echoed by House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga. Appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press," he called for "a letter from the president that said, 'I accept in principle getting to a balanced budget in seven years, not the details, but in principle.'" White House chief of staff Leon Panetta wasted little time in turning them down. "That cannot be part and parcel of an agreement" on the two short-term bills, he declared on CBS' "Face the Nation," though he didn't rule out discussing it as part of a long-range budget-balancing deal. Clinton would eliminate the deficit in nine years, but has never definitively rejected a seven-year goal. White House press secretary Mike McCurry said late yesterday afternoon that Clinton desired an Oval Office meeting with congressional leaders today to overcome

the impasse. But he issued a condition: Republicans must first erase a provision from the temporary spending bill boosting monthly Medicare premiums in January, rather than letting them fall as under current law. Gingrich defended the higher premiums, saying Clinton's preference to reduce them is "totally irresponsible" because officials say Medicare will go bankrupt in seven years unless savings are found. The increases are a key part of the GOP's plan to squeeze savings from the system, and letting the premiums fall would make it politically harder to boost them later. The tough talk left it highly likely that 800,000 federal employees would be sent home tomorrow, when most agencies' authority to spend money expires. Also looming is the expiration Wednesday of the government's ability to borrow money, although Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has said he would avoid an unprecedented default by using money in some of



House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia meets reporters Friday to discuss the ongoing budget proceedings. Despite internal Republican differences, the House passed temporary spending and borrowing bills, escalating a veto showdown with President Clinton.

the government's cash-heavy trust funds. The latest day of bipartisan intrinsigence came as GOP House and Senate bargainers tried to hammer out the final pieces of their plan for cutting taxes, trimming spending and overhauling Medicare and other social programs on the way to a balanced budget by 2002. That measure, which Republicans hope to bring to the House and Senate floors on Wednesday, also faces a veto by Clinton, who says its spending and tax reductions are too steep. Yesterday's focus, however, was the veto battle between Clinton and Republicans over short-term borrowing and spending authority.



A young Israeli couple embrace during a mass peace rally held yesterday to honor slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Tel Aviv. The site, Kings of Israel Square, will be renamed Yitzhak Rabin Square.

Serbs give up Croatian lands

By JULIJANA MOJSILOVIC
Associated Press Writer

ERDUT, Croatia — Rebel Serb leaders agreed yesterday to submit the last of their holdings in Croatia to government authority, averting the risk of renewed war in the former Yugoslav republic. "This is a historic signing," said U.S. Ambassador Peter Galbraith. "For the first time in this conflict an issue has been solved by a signature and not by a bullet." The agreement, signed in this Serb-held town in eastern Croatia in the presence of Galbraith and chief U.N. envoy Thorvald Stoltenberg, averted the risk of a new outbreak of fighting and a collapse of broader Balkan peace talks underway in the United States. "The agreement provides for a peaceful solution. I generally hope

that this will have a contagious effect for the whole area," Stoltenberg said. The two negotiators left immediately for the Croatian capital of Zagreb, where the government was expected to sign it later yesterday. Croatia had threatened to attack the remaining bit of Serb-held territory, known as eastern Slavonia, if rebels refused to accept the plan. Such an attack on territory that borders Serbia could have drawn in the Serb-led Yugoslav army on behalf of the Croatian Serbs. In a show of force, the Croatian army had moved crack troops and heavy artillery toward the front line over the last several days. Witnesses also reported seeing a large column of Yugoslav army troops and guns headed toward the Croatian border late Saturday night. In May and August, Croatian troops recaptured most Serb-held

territory taken in a 1991 war, and sent about 180,000 Croatian Serbs fleeing. The United States had warned Croatia not to attack again and was scrambling to secure a peace deal as soon as possible. The two sides agreed Oct. 3 on basic principles for the return of the territory, but had disagreed over how long the transition should be. Serbs wanted a three-year period of U.N. monitoring. Croatia insisted on no more than one year, and had asked for a NATO presence, similar to that which would enforce peace in neighboring Bosnia. Galbraith and Stoltenberg refused to discuss details of the agreement. But chief Serb negotiator Milan Milanovic said it called for a one-year transition period, with the possibility of a one-year extension "if either side demands."

State Legislature looks at gun laws

By PAMELA SAMPSON
Associated Press Writer

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania may soon have a revised version of a new gun law that supporters say would resolve confusion over when criminal background checks would take effect for people buying rifles and shotguns. Lawmakers may meet today to consider changes drafted by a leg-

islative committee convened to resolve technical problems with the law. The Uniform Firearms Act of 1995, which went into effect in October, was heralded as a model gun law for states wanting to curb firearms violence while preserving the rights of gun owners. But shortly after the act became law, gun dealers criticized its vagueness and lawmakers conceded

some fine-tuning was in order. A conference committee of six lawmakers was assigned to take on that task. The conference committee may meet today and adopt the report recommending changes to the gun law. If that happens, the Senate could vote to approve the report the same day, said Stephen MacNett, counsel to Senate Republicans.

Israeli security had knowledge of plot

By DAN PERRY
Associated Press Writer

TEL AVIV, Israel — In the latest evidence of a stunning intelligence failure, the Shin Bet security agency acknowledged yesterday that it had advance information about the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In a highly unusual move, the secretive agency sent a fax to Israel's Army radio saying authorities were told of a plot in June by a friend of Yigal Amir, who confessed to shooting Rabin. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the fax. In other developments yesterday: —Amir's brother Hagai, appearing in court, said he received weapons from a sergeant in an elite army unit, who is the seventh person arrested in the killing. A judge ordered Hagai Amir held for 12 more days. —As the official mourning period ended, more than 200,000 Israelis streamed into Tel Aviv's newly renamed Yitzhak Rabin Square in a defiant replay of the Nov. 4 peace rally where Amir shot Rabin. The demonstrators carried flags, candles, cardboard doves and signs reading "Enough Death." It was believed to be the biggest gathering ever in Israel. —Israeli troops began pulling out of the West Bank town of Jenin, carrying out the Palestinian self-rule agreement signed by Rabin and Yasser Arafat in September. The pullout is to be done today.

—The ruling Labor Party picked acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres as its new leader, replacing Rabin. Meanwhile, the Shin Bet acknowledged that Shlomo Halevy, a friend of Amir, provided an accurate description of the assassin after being told of plans to kill Rabin by a mutual friend. Halevy told his army commander of the plot but did not reveal Amir's name or say that he knew him, pretending instead that he overheard two men discussing the plot in a bus station bathroom, the Shin Bet said. Halevy said one of the plotters was 25, short, black-haired, a member of the militant Jewish group Eyal and a student at Bar Ilan University — a description that fits Amir. Security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Halevy's information was turned over to the Shin Bet, but after a superficial check, the agency decided to ignore it. Israel radio reported that Halevy learned about Amir's plot from a Haifa woman, identified as Hila Frank. The radio said she was questioned and released by police Saturday. Theories that Rabin was the victim of a right-wing plot were bolstered yesterday when police told a magistrate's court in Tel Aviv they had evidence linking the detained army sergeant to the assassination. Hagai Amir, the gunman's 27-year-old brother, told the court he received weapons from the soldier, Eric Schwartz, but returned them.

Key witness to testify in Senate White House probe

By PETE YOST
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Early in the Whitewater affair, a White House lawyer obtained confidential documents from a key facet of the investigation, hastily returning them after the Justice Department launched a probe to determine how presidential aides used the material. For five or six days in mid-November 1993, then-Associate White House Counsel Neil Eggleston had a report that detailed a series of defaulted federally backed loans by David Hale, a Little Rock judge who was emerging as a central figure in Whitewater. The report by the Small Business Administration triggered a criminal investigation of Hale, who was indicted just two months before the White House obtained the information from the SBA, according to documents reviewed by The Associated Press. At the time, Hale was alleging publicly that he had been pressured in 1986 by Clinton, then the Arkansas governor, to make an improper SBA-guaranteed loan of \$300,000 to the Clintons' Whitewater partners.

The loan, which was never repaid, is at the heart of White-water prosecutor Kenneth Starr's criminal investigation. Hale has since pleaded guilty to federal charges, and is Starr's most important cooperating witness. Three people familiar with the matter, including a White House source, said yesterday that Eggleston obtained the documents after being told by his boss, counsel Bernard Nussbaum, to look into the fact that the SBA was about to turn over material on Hale's company to Congress. All three sources spoke on condition of anonymity. Eggleston's actions mark the third known time the White House has obtained confidential information from an ongoing investigation of Whitewater. Eggleston is scheduled to testify tomorrow before the Senate Whitewater Committee about getting the documents from the SBA and what he did while he had them. When he returned the report to the SBA Eggleston said he had copied an attachment to the report detailing Hale's various loans, but insisted he had "shredded" the copy.