

BRIEFLY

Pak concern over Gujrat riot : Pakistan expressed anguish on Saturday at Muslim-Hindu rioting in India in which up to 19 people have been killed, Reuters from Islamabad reports.

A Foreign Ministry statement said the riots were a matter of deep concern and called on the Indian government to protect the life, safety and honour of the country's 100 million Muslim minority.

Alert at two US N-plants : Thousands of gallons of radioactive reactor coolant spilled onto the containment building floor of a Nebraska nuclear power plant, while a transformer exploded near a Pennsylvania reactor. Both plants shut down and alerts were declared but later lifted on Saturday, AP from Omaha, Nebraska said.

Utility officials said there was no danger to the public or workers and no release of radiation from either incident.

In Nebraska, an alert — the second lowest of four federal nuclear emergency classifications — was declared at the Omaha Public Power District's Fort Calhoun Station at 11:55 pm Friday (0355 GMT Saturday) and ended at 6:30 am (1030 GMT) Saturday, utility spokesman Gary Williams said.

The utility called the alert because of the magnitude of the leak, said Joe Gilliland of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

25 killed in Peruvian truck mishap: A crowded truck bringing townspeople back from a religious procession plunged off a cliff in southern Peru, killing at least 25 people, police reported Saturday, says AFP from Lima.

The truck crashed into a ravine near the town of Punco, 745 miles southeast of Lima Friday. Rescue teams including a military anti-subversive patrol reached the isolated scene, some 4,000 metres above sea level, overnight Friday and early Saturday.

Witness said the truck driver misjudged a tight turn, sending the vehicle careening off the highway to crash below. Most of the fatal victims died on impact, and some were left in the wreckage, witnesses added.

Police said there were still people trapped in the truck's frame, and that the number of dead might be revised upward.

Soviet CP opens secret congress: The remnants of the Soviet Communist Party, which was banned after last August's abortive coup, opened a secret congress somewhere in the Moscow suburbs on Saturday, Itar-Tass news agency said, reports AFP from Moscow.

With only 90 delegates from the different parts of the former Soviet Union, the event was a far cry from last year's congress, which was attended by 5,000 delegates a year ago, just weeks before the events that were to lead to the collapse of the communist system.

Tass gave no details of the debates, but the meeting was expected to have focused on a court hearing on Tuesday, which will decide whether the actions of the former ruling party were constitutional.

Malnutrition on rise in Jaffna : An acute malnutrition syndrome is spreading fast in the northern Jaffna Peninsula, the stronghold of Tamil rebels, with more than 1,500 poor children on the danger list, a community medicine expert said reports Xinhua from Colombo.

Dr N Sivarajah, senior lecturer in Community Medicine at the University of Jaffna, said that a recent survey had shown 6.8 per cent of Jaffna's children were acutely malnourished.

The doctor said that the birth weight of children in war-torn Jaffna had also dropped by an alarming margin.

He said that the current food embargo Jaffna was indirectly responsible for the malnutrition crisis among the children as the poor children deprived of the essential protein for their growth as a result of the skyrocketing prices of fish and eggs.

We will get majority : Azad Rao to face no-confidence vote

NEW DELHI, July 5: Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's one-year old minority Congress government will face a no-confidence vote in parliament next week, opposition parties said on Saturday.

The main opposition party, the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said it would move a motion of no confidence when their next session of parliament begins on Wednesday.

A BJP spokesman said the main reasons for the vote were a major financial scandal and Rao's alleged mishandling of separatist violence in the border states of Punjab and Kashmir.

A government Minister said Rao was prepared to answer the opposition's questions. "We are confident of facing

any vote, answering any questions, although we are a minority government," Kumari Selja, Deputy Minister for Education



and Culture, told Reuters. Several opposition leaders have demanded the resignation of Finance Minister

Manmohan Singh, alleging he mishandled a 30-billion rupee (1 billion US dollar) securities scandal.

Police have arrested 25 people who they say are involved in the scandal.

Rao avoided a question on his government's majority status at a news conference last week but a government Minister said the ruling Congress Party would achieve a parliamentary majority soon. It is currently about a dozen seats short.

"We will get a majority very soon, I am one hundred per cent sure," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Gulam Nabi Azad said in a television interview. He did not elaborate.

Congress Party sources said Rao was hoping to win the support of some breakaway

groups from the opposition Janata Dal party.

Rao has had several brushes with the BJP.

The BJP has put up an opposition candidate in the forthcoming presidential election against Vice President Shankar Dayal Sharma, the Congress nominee and likely winner.

The BJP has accused Rao of ignoring the opposition on vital policy issues despite his avowed "consensus approach."

The Marxist-led left front alliance has supported Sharma's candidature for the presidential poll on July 13 but it has opposed Rao's plans to liberalise India's moribund economy.

Rao aims to transform India's socialist economy into a vigorous free market system.

Accord to deploy peace-keepers in Georgia

MOSCOW, July 5: Negotiators agreed on Saturday to deploy peace-keeping forces within 10 days in a breakaway region of Georgia where hundreds of people have been killed in ethnic fighting, Itar-Tass news agency said, reports Reuters.

The news marked a potential breakthrough in the conflict over South Ossetia, which wants to break away from Georgia and unite with neighbouring north Ossetia, part of Russia.

Ossetian separatists and Georgian nationalist forces have been fighting in the Transcaucasian region since

late 1990 — one of the deadliest ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

Itar-Tass said negotiators from Russia, Georgia, and North and South Ossetia decided to form joint peace-keeping forces and set up an observers group and a mixed control commission with "absolute power to adopt decisions in the conflict zone."

The peace-keeping forces would consist of between 500 and 1,500 men each from Russia, Georgia and the Ossetian side. Reserves comprising between 300 and 900 men from each of the three sides would also be formed.

Calm returns to city 12 relief planes arrive in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, July 5: Twelve planes carrying humanitarian aid for the 300,000 residents of Bosnia-Herzegovina's besieged capital Sarajevo landed here Saturday as calm returned to the city after a night of sporadic fighting, reports AFP.

Meanwhile the Bosnian Defense Minister announced that a single army was to be formed, grouping the republic's Bosnian territorial defense units and local Croat forces.

And in Belgrade demonstrators seeking the resignation of the Serbian government over its perceived responsibility for the continuing war in Bosnia prepared to surround the television centre.

UN peacekeepers at Sarajevo Airport said 12 aircraft from at least seven European nations had touched down by mid-afternoon and that more were expected later.

An airlift has been underway since a Canadian battalion of UN forces secured the airport Thursday.

A journalist from a local daily, Oslobođenje, said aid was mainly being distributed to refugees, soup kitchens, and worst damaged districts.

Journalists here complained they were prevented

from reporting on the aid arrival by Serbs at the last checkpoint before the airport while the same forces allowed UN convoys to pass through.

Twelve planes landed Friday, the Tanjug news agency said, quoting UN commander at the airport Raymond Hauben.

The agency said the aid was

distributed by the Red Cross to humanitarian organisation in Sarajevo.

The airlift came as life began to return to the city Saturday after a three-month long siege by Serbian forces who have been fighting Muslim Slavs and Croats.

People ventured out into the streets and the city's bus services, which resumed Friday, was still running, despite an incident in which a bus was hit during fighting early Saturday.

However, by late afternoon the streets began to empty again as the rumble of distant shooting became more insistent.



SARAJEVO: A man digs a grave at cemetery in central Sarajevo near Kosevo Hospital on Saturday. Makeshift cemeteries have sprouted around the besieged Bosnian capital as Serbian forces hold the neighbourhoods where official cemeteries are located. — AFP/UNB photo

Punjab police to wipe out Sikh leadership by Sept

CHANDIGARH, India, July 5: The police chief of Punjab state, where a 9-year-old Sikh separatist campaign has claimed 13,000 lives, has said he plans to "eliminate" the militant leadership in the next 3 months, reports AP.

"We have set for ourselves a target to eliminate entire top leadership of Sikh militants by September ... to have a total grip on the situation," Director General of Police K P S Gill told The Tribune newspaper in an interview published Sunday.

In its stepped up battle against the terrorists, the Punjab police killed 903 Sikh militants this year. At least 1,174 civilians fell to militants' bullets also.

"The end of tunnel is in sight now," Gill, a Sikh himself, said of the police successes.

This is the first time that Gill spoke on record of his plan to eliminate Sikh militants in the northern state.

Sikh militants have been fighting since 1983 to set up an independent Sikh nation in the rich farming state.

More than 13,000 people have been killed in Sikh militancy and police actions in the strategic state, bordering Pakistan, India's uneasy neighbour.

The militants accused the

police of arresting their colleagues and killing them in staged encounters.

Sikh militants claim that Hindu dominated federal government had been muzzling their religion and culture.

Sikhs make up about two per cent of the population nationwide, but they are in a slight majority in the Punjab. Hindus are 82 per cent of India's 844 million people.

Gill said the recent success of security forces came through with the help of citizens. "We had tremendous flow of information coming in."

Bush in Warsaw

WARSAW, July 5: US President George Bush arrived here today on the first leg of a European tour which is to take him to Munich for the Group of Seven (G-7) summit and to Helsinki for a meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), reports AP.

Bush is scheduled to spend less than five hours in the Polish capital. He is to hold talks with President Lech Walesa and attend mass at a Warsaw cathedral with his wife, Barbara.

Truckers step up roadblocks in France

PARIS, July 5: Truckers angered over new drivers' license regulations stepped up their blockades of French highways Saturday, as traditional summer vacation departures began, reports AP.

Two people were killed in an accident near Montpellier in the south and another person near Fontainebleau south of Paris when cars collided at night with trucks parked on major roads.

The accidents "show the very dangerous nature, with respect to public safety, of the barricades now in place on roads and highways," Interior Minister Paul Quilès said.

About 150 roadblocks were set up across France, in particular across highways leading to Paris, Lyon and Toulouse, creating havoc among holiday travelers and truckers from elsewhere in Europe trying to deliver cargoes.

Dixit won't attend Colombo meet

COLOMBO, July 5: Indian Foreign Secretary J N Dixit will not attend the Foreign Secretaries' meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, beginning here today, an official source said, reports Xinhua.

India will be represented by former envoy to Colombo Lakhan L. Merotra, an Indian diplomatic source here said. However, he did not explain the reasons for Dixit's non-attendance.

Dixit who once served as Indian envoy in Sri Lanka also did not attend the special meeting of SAARC Foreign Secretaries held here in late April this year.

13,000 cholera cases in Guatemala

MEXICO CITY, July 5: The number of cholera cases in Guatemala has increased by 60 per cent this year and reached a total of 13,000, according to a report from Guatemala City yesterday, says Xinhua.

Official sources revealed that more than 800,000 Guatemalans are considered bacteria-bearers without symptoms, who are human transmitters of the bacteria, the report said.



WARSAW: Polish Deputy Hanna Sochocka of the Democratic Union Party being greeted at Warsaw Airport on Saturday on her arrival from London after eight parties agreed to propose her as the next Prime Minister following the failure of Waldemar Pawlak to form a government. Sochocka, 46, is a law professor at Poznan University. — AFP/UNB photo

Ramos inherits most backward army in Southeast Asia

MANILA, July 5: Fidel Ramos, the first career military man to be elected President of the Philippines, has inherited the most backward, poorly-equipped military force in the Southeast Asian region, reports AFP.

Ramos, who has promised to modernize the military, takes power just as US forces are withdrawing and there are signs of a regional arms race in the offing.

His officers admit they cannot handle the country's external defense but the cash-strapped government, still reeling from recession, lacks the funds to boost the military's capabilities.

The problem was emphasized during the airforce anniversary Thursday.

The newly-installed president assured the airmen they would have the planes, the weapons and the equipment to match your competence, your patriotism and your courage. But at the same forum airforce officials admitted they have only two combat-capable 1960-vintage F-5s to handle air defenses.

The Philippine Navy, which has to guard a coastline twice as long as that of the United States, is also in poor shape,

about half of its 34 ship fleet dates back to World War II, and 17 of these ships are due to be scrapped by 1995.

Ramos has said that both the airforce and the navy must make a "quantum leap" just to catch up with the neighbours, which will be difficult, as most of them are in far better financial shape than the Philippines.

He also did not say where the funds would come from except to warn that "bletting and sacrifices" would be needed.

Military officers say bringing the military to par with the rest of the region will cost at least five billion dollars, but the 1992 defense budget of former president Corazon Aquino amounts to only 19.5 billion pesos (750 million dollars).

Rightist opposition senators said Friday they would oppose an increase the military budget because the country had other, more pressing needs.

In the past, the Philippines could afford to let its external defense capabilities lag because it enjoyed the protection of two large US military bases

in the country.

The presence of Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base also entitled the Philippines to generous US military aid packages, allowing Manila to focus on fighting a nation-wide Communist guerrilla movement.

Ahmedabad riot claims two more

AHMEDABAD, July 5: Two more persons including a senior official of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) were killed by bombs in Naranpura and Amrawadi areas of the city, as sporadic incidents of violence continued to rock different parts of the city till late last night, reports PTI.

The death toll in the four days of violence in parts of the state, a sequel to the clashes during the annual Rath Yatra procession here on Thursday last, has mounted to 23.

Indefinite curfew continued to remain in force in the worst-affected areas of Daria-pur and Shahpur in the walled city and in Siddhpur town Mehsana district.

The situation in other parts of Ahmedabad remained peaceful.

Yemeni minister survives car accident

AMMAN, Jordan, July 5: Yemeni Housing Minister Mohammed Ahmed Salman has survived a car accident with only minor injuries, officials reported Sunday, reports AP.

A security official, who cannot be named under police rules, said the collision, occurred Saturday night in the western Dead Sea region.

He said a taxi skidded, collided with the minister's 1991 BMW automobile and hit a nearby electric pole. The taxi driver, Ali Mohammed al-Harassi, 38, died instantly.

The minister, who was accompanied by his wife and four children, was taken to a nearby hospital where he and his family received first aid and were released.

Goebbels' diaries give new insight into Nazi tyranny

LONDON, July 5: The first complete copy of the diaries of Joseph Goebbels, propaganda minister to Hitler, show the two men rejoicing in attacks on Jews, the Sunday Times reported, reports AP.

The Independent newspaper reported Friday that the diaries were discovered a few weeks ago by a Munich historian in the Central Government Archives in Moscow.

Vladimir Kozlov, deputy chairman of the Russian Archive Committee, has confirmed the documents are genuine.

In one revealing passage, Goebbels rejoices in "Kristallnacht," the night in November 1938 when many Jewish homes and businesses were attacked, the newspaper said.

The Sunday Times said it will begin serializing parts of the diaries on July 12. Meanwhile, police on Saturday

arrested five protesters during scuffles outside a meeting addressed by a controversial right-wing historian contracted to transcribe the diaries for The Sunday Times.

Others protested outside the London home of David Irving, who has argued that Hitler did not know about the Holocaust.

The Sunday Times has said it will not allow itself to be influenced by Irving's "revisionism."

The Independent said the diaries were stored on 3-inch by 5-inch (7.6 by 12.7 centimeter) photographic plates, contained in 92 small yellow boxes.

The Sunday Times said they include Goebbels' account of the Sudeten crisis leading up

to Hitler's meeting with Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister; the Polish crisis and outbreak of war in 1939; the purge of "unreliable" Nazis in the "Night of the Long Knives"; Hitler's reaction to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the failed plot to kill him.

"It's gargoyle's-eye view of the Third Reich," it quoted modern history professor Norman Stone as saying, after examining transcripts of the diaries.

Of Germany's invasion of Poland on Aug. 31, 1939, Goebbels reportedly wrote: "It feels good to be in battle. Everything around us is in the Reich chancellery) is quite still. Fate will take its course during this night ..."

Off the Record

Life-long journey across continents

NEW YORK: Carlos Fuentes has spent his life travelling across continents and cultures. Now, he's sojourning across centuries, reports AP.

In "The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World," the celebrated Mexican writer explores the history of the Spanish-speaking people since Christopher Columbus' first voyage to the Americas in 1492.

The book travels from cave homes of prehistory in Altamira, Spain, to the graffiti-covered walls of East Los Angeles.

Fuentes makes the history of Spanish America come alive with the stories of kings and peasants, soldiers and priests, martyrs and dictators, acknowledging both the positive and negative that evolved from Columbus' voyage.

"There was good and bad in the encounter between Europe and the New World," the Mexico City resident said, during a telephone interview in New York. "But it was out of this clash that we were born."

Throughout the book, Fuentes emphasises the multicultural heritage of Spanish-Americans: European, African, Amerindian. And he underscores his belief that individual cultures constantly evolve, thriving only when exposed to other cultures.

"Isolation means death," Fuentes writes in a chapter about the influence of Hispanic culture on the United States. "Encounter means birth, even rebirth."

"The Buried Mirror" evolved from a five-part bilingual series of the same name that Fuentes narrated for the Discovery cable television channel and the BBC.

Life begins anew at 60

LOS ANGELES: Once a leading lady for her late husband, Laurence Olivier, and other English greats, Joan Plowright now has a versatile career with a wide variety of roles, reports AP.

She played the American mother who plotted with Tracy Ullman to murder Kevin Kline in "I Love You to Death" and the stern Polish-Jewish mother in "Avalon".

Her new film is the English-made "Enchanted April," in which some Brits find their lives transformed on a vacation to Italy.

"My character is a dragon lady at the beginning, a lady who has opted out from life," she said. "Because she's a widow and 60, she figures she's no longer of any use to the world, and she's going to live in the past. She's going to think about better times, and better men."

"Enchanted April" based on a novel by Elizabeth Von Arnim, is further evidence of the English fascination with Italy, from Keats and Shelley to E.M. Forster.

"It's the scenery, it's the sun, it's so very different from England," Miss Plowright theorised. "We suffer from the damp and the fog and the cold. And I suppose the English tend to be more sensual in Italy. They begin to lose their inhibitions."

'He may never know his father'

DUBLIN, Ireland: An American divorcee said in a letter published Saturday that she hasn't heard from the Irish bishop who fathered her son since the affair became public. But she thanked the Irish people for being "a source of solace and strength," reports AP.

In the letter to the Irish Times, Annie Murphy said her 17-year-old son Peter may never know his father, but he would know the Ireland she loved through the people who had written expressing their support.