

BRIEFLY

Shi'ite scholar dead: The world's highest-ranking Shi'ite Muslim scholar, grand Ayatollah Abdol Qassem Al-Khoei, has died at the age of 92, State-run Iraqi Television reported early Sunday, reports BSS.

The television's brief report said three days of mourning would be held. It gave no further details. The grand Ayatollah left a Baghdad hospital two weeks ago after heart surgery.

Maoists kill 15 in Peru: Maoist guerrillas killed at least 15 people and injured more than 12 in an apparent revenge attack on a country village, military spokesmen said on Saturday, reports Reuters from Lima.

Some 200 Shining Path guerrillas with guns and explosives attacked members of the peasant militia of the village of a Pichhuillca in the Andean region of Ayacucho on Friday morning, the spokesmen said.

The attack was only announced after survivors reached hospital in Ayacucho, some 400 km (250 miles) southeast of Lima.

The spokesman said the raid was believed to be a revenge attack for the participation of the village's militia in a national Independence Day military parade in Lima.

Sikh leader shot dead in Punjab: Indian security forces shot dead one of the most wanted Sikh separatist leaders in a shootout in Punjab, the northern states' police chief said Sunday, reports AFP from Chandigarh.

Sukhdev Singh Barrar, Chief of the Babbar Khalsa International, was gunned down while travelling in a car when he refused to stop at a security check post near Ludhiana city late Saturday, Director General of police K P S Gill said.

Babbar was one of the most wanted leaders of Sikh militant spearheading a violent campaign to set up a homeland in Punjab, India's only Sikh-majority province.

3 Palestinians held in West Bank: Israeli Security Services have detained three Palestinians in connection with the deaths of three Israeli civilians and several suspected collaborators, an army spokesman said Saturday, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

He said the Palestinians belonged to a cell called Ezzedine Al Kassam, linked to the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, and were arrested on July 30 at the town of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

The men are suspected of killing a cattle dealer in the Gaza Strip on May 17 and two other Israelis on June 25, said the spokesman.

Israeli security forces found revolvers, ammunition, knives, false identity papers and Hamas leaflets in the apartment used by the men, the spokesman said.

Road mishap claims 3 in Turkey: Three Swedes were killed, 39 people were injured early Sunday when a tourist bus collided with a truck near this Mediterranean resort city, Anatolia news agency said, reports AP from Antalya Turkey.

The accident reportedly occurred near the Antalya airport 10 kilometers (6 miles) from here, the agency said.

Delhi starts celebrating 'Quit India' movement

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: India launched Saturday a year-long celebration of the anti-British "Quit India" movement launched 50 years ago, aiming to revive the anti-colonial spirit to battle present-day ills, reports AFP.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Premier PV Narasimha Rao both called for using the "Quit India" spirit as they addressed a special session of Parliament to mark the 50th anniversary of the movement launched against the British Raj.

We have to labour hard to rid India of terrorism, communal feeling, caste and gender oppression, poverty, ignorance and disease, said Sharma in a speech heard by government and opposition MPs.

"Only then would we, who enjoy the fruits of freedom, be worthy of those of the movement of 1942, added the 74-year-old head of state, who

himself took part in the bitter Indian campaign for independence.

Rao, speaking before him, said the time had come to revitalise a movement similar to the Quit India struggle to face evils which are sapping up the nation's energy.

Both speeches were telecast live nationwide, and Sharma and Rao later joined MPs in observing two minutes of silence in memory of those who died in the independence movement.

The mourners include communists, who in 1942 sided with the Raj after the Soviet Union joined he allies in World War II.

Rao, 71, is to address a huge public rally today in Bombay here "Mahatma Gandhi" gave the "Do Or Die" call in 1942, calling upon Indians to end two centuries of British rule.

400 Bhutanese refugees arrive in Nepal a day

KATHMANDU, Aug 9: High in the Himalayas, a refugee drama pits two small, poor kingdoms against each other, reports AP.

More than 65,000 ethnic Nepalese have fled to Nepal from Bhutan, a remote, unspoiled region that calls itself the "Land of the Thunder Dragon."

Nepalese have migrated to the fertile valleys of southern Bhutan since the last century, becoming farmers, workers and civil servants. The refugees claim they were subjected to intimidation and cultural discrimination by the Bhutanese.

Bhutan says Nepalese are stirring up trouble, trying to undermine the monarchy that has ruled the insular Buddhist country for 85 years. It says the Nepalese who are Hindus want to gain a larger share of power under the guise of a pro-democracy movement.

UN officials say 400 new refugees arrive every day and are packed into the overcrowded camps of eastern Nepal. Nearly 900 camp residents have died of malnutrition or disease, the Home Ministry reported.

"We are victims of the systematic tactics of the Bhutanese government to drive us out of our country," said Om P. Dhungel, a US-educated engineer who fled Bhutan.

Dhungel said his father was arrested twice last year, accused of giving money to anti-government groups, then expelled from Bhutan. In order to attend school, Dhungel said, his children were required to obtain certificates from the po-

lice that they were not involved in anti-government politics.

Lionel Rosenblatt, president of the Refugees International, a US organization visited the camps in July and said refugees told him of beatings, rapes and evictions.

"The forced exodus is continuing and unless the international community responds the strain will mount on Nepal, which is ill-prepared to receive them," Rosenblatt said.

Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries and cannot afford to care for the refugees. It wants them to return to Bhutan, but the Bhutanese government says they left voluntarily and is particular about who comes back.

Bhutan is as poor as Nepal and survives on foreign aid.

'I won't make decision based on US politics' Bush prefers diplomatic solution to Balkan crisis

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine, Aug 9: President George Bush said on Saturday "all options are open" in getting food and medicine into embattled Bosnia-Herzegovina but emphasised that he would prefer a diplomatic solution to the crisis in the Balkans, reports Reuters.

Bush told a news conference after meeting top military and diplomatic advisers that "the American people must not be led into believing that there is some quick and easy military solution to this problem."

Bush spoke at a poll published in Newsweek magazine said 64 per cent of Americans

given to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

He said he was also pleased that Sarajevo's airport had been opened to allow flights of humanitarian aid to that city's would support either UN-backed air or ground action against the Serbs if charges that Serbian forces have tortured Bosnians in concentration camps prove true.

In addition, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said in a CNN interview on Saturday that only the threat of military action against Serbia would stop the bloodshed.

More than 8,000 people have been killed in the fighting since the Serbs rebelled against an overwhelming Croat and Muslim vote for secession in March.

Democratic Presidential candidate Bill Clinton and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have also urged Bush to take more aggressive action, but the president said he would not be pushed into a reckless use of military force.

"I will not make decision based on American politics," he said.

Bush said he had just spoken to UN Secretary-General

Boutros Boutros-Ghali and that he was pleased that access to the detention camps will be 380,000 trapped civilians.

Bush, locked in a tough battle for re-election, repeatedly sounded cautious about the possibility of injecting American forces into the volatile situation in Bosnia, which he described as a highly complex problem involving "ancient rivalries."

"I don't care what the political pressures are," he said. "I am not going to get bogged down into some guerrilla warfare."

In Bosnia, Serbian civilians have rounded up civilians and put them in detention camps as part of an "ethnic-cleansing" policy aimed at creating all-Serbian areas.

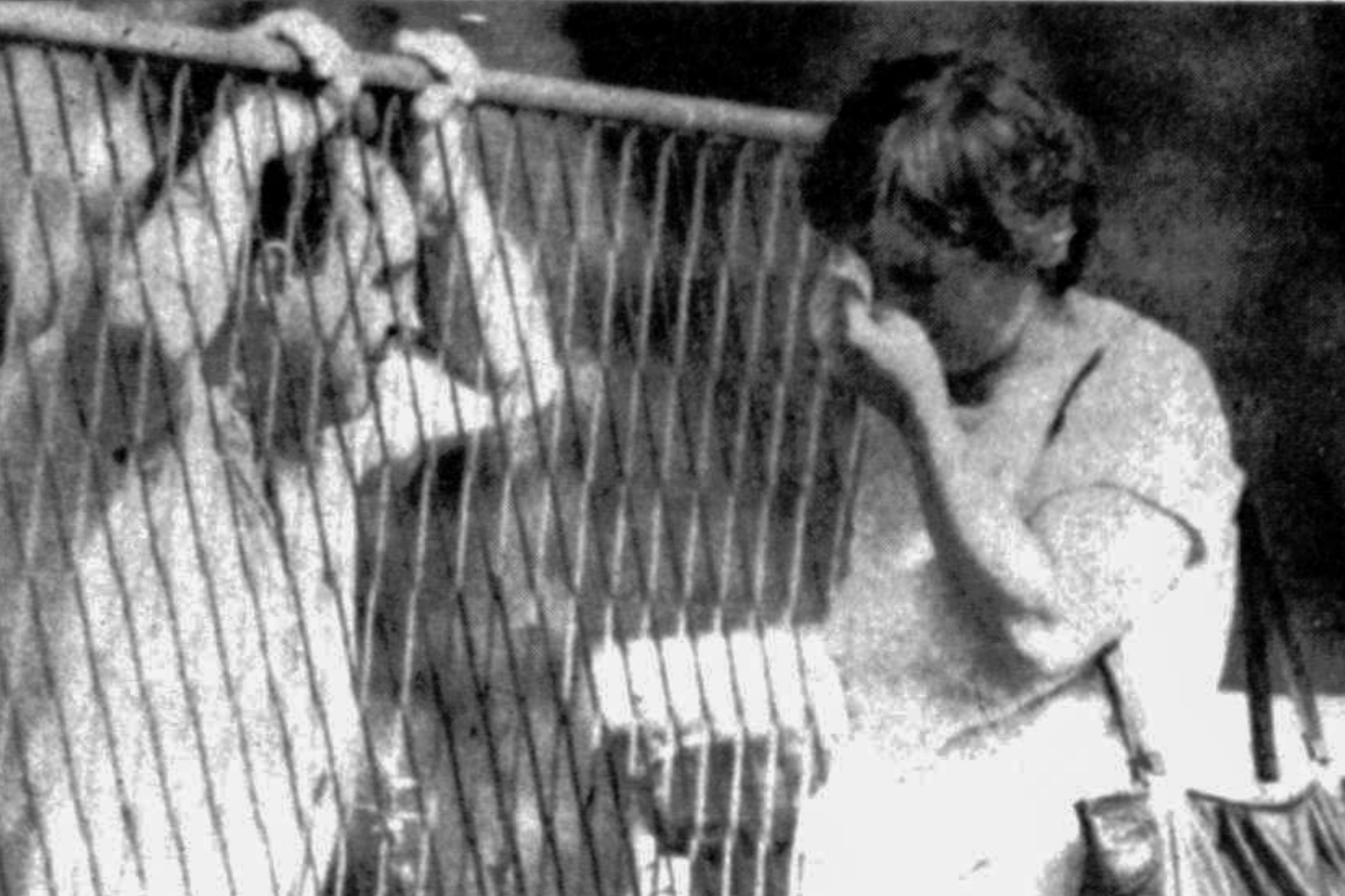
Bush said the United States was working with members of the UN Security Council on "the substance of a resolution which would enhance our collective ability to deal with the situation."

Earlier in the week Bush pressed for quick passage of a UN resolution authorising use of force if needed to get humanitarian aid into Sarajevo, but he acknowledged there were some differences within the Security Council over how the resolution should be worded.

Key allies Britain and France were reported resisting such a resolution but Bush insisted there was no fundamental differences with its allies.

"I don't think anybody wants to go forward to use force," he said.

Nonetheless, he said that "nothing is ruled in or out" and that he and his advisers discussed a "wide array of actions we can take in cooperation with our allies."



VARAZDIN, Croatia: Before getting onto the train to Germany August 07, a refugee woman cries while saying farewell to her husband, who refused to leave his country. More than 2500 refugees arrived in German cities August 08. — AFP/UNB photo

Clinton backs relief efforts in Somalia

LITTLE ROCK, Aug 9: Democratic US presidential nominee Bill Clinton said Saturday he supports the United Nations Security Council decision to expand relief efforts in the east African country of Somalia, reports AP.

Clinton said in a news release that he supported the Security Council decision, including a decision to provide security for relief workers and supplies.

"I also urge President Bush to take the lead in galvanizing the United Nations to find ways to end the tragic civil war that is the principal cause of the crisis in Somalia," Clinton said.

The Clinton press release was issued after Bush, at a news conference in Kennebunkport, Maine, had cited the situation in Somalia as another example of a situation that concerned him because of human suffering.

UN team begins arms inspection

BAGHDAD, Aug 9: UN experts today began their first day of inspection for weapons by leaving the area of the ministry buildings to which the Iraqi authorities had refused their access, reports AFP.

The head of the team, Russian Nikita Smidowitch, told reporters on leaving his hotel that he had no fixed programme for the day.

The 22 members of the team will split up into groups "when on site," he said, without stating the nature of the weapons they were looking for, whether chemical, nuclear, ballistic or biological.

"We have our standard operational procedure under which we will operate," Smidowitch said before getting into a white four-wheel drive vehicle bearing the blue United Nations emblem.

Escorted by Iraqi security forces, the UN inspectors' convoy then left the hotel, leaving the area where the ministries are situated, an AFP correspondent witnessed without being able to follow them to their destination.

Thursday, the Iraqi government said that the inspectors would not be permitted to enter the ministries, which it regards as symbolising Iraqi sovereignty, but that they could go "anywhere else."

The United States, Britain and France protested against this restriction.

According to Smidowitch, the inspection mission which arrived in Baghdad Friday from Bahrain was expected to have returned to its Baghdad hotel around six .pm Sunday (1400 GMT).

UK to provide \$ 4.80 lakh for Kenyan polls

NAIROBI, Aug 9: The British government has agreed to provide 15.25 million shillings (about 480,000 US dollars) to assist the forthcoming general elections in Kenya, reports Xinhua.

A press release issued by the British High Commission to Kenya on Friday said that Britain would also grant office machinery worth more than 1.2 million shillings (about 37,000 dollars) to the electoral commission of Kenya.

Further funding for the first multi-party elections in the east African country would be provided by the British Government through the European Community, it added.

About 7.8 million Kenyans registered as voters during the voter registration exercise which ended on July 20. So far, no date for the general elections has been announced.

Islamic scholars accuse Benazir of opposing Sharia

Saddam praises military chiefs

Britain opposes use of force in Bosnia

ISLAMABAD, Aug 9: Pakistani Islamic scholars accused Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto on Saturday of blasphemy for opposing the proposed introduction of strict Islamic Law and asked her to repent, reports Reuters.

A pro-government group, headed by Religious Affairs Minister Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, attacked Bhutto in a resolution for rejecting a proposed constitutional amendment to enforce the Islamic code of Sharia.

Under Sharia Law, convicted thieves can have their right hand cut off. Murderers and drug traffickers can be beheaded under the code.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif told newspaper editors

last Sunday he planned to bring in the amendment soon to enforce Sharia, declared Pakistan's supreme law through an earlier constitutional amendment by parliament last year.

Many orthodox mullahs called the earlier amendment weak as it side stepped their demand for an Islamic judiciary controlled by them that could over rule parliament.

One religious party left Sharif's ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) last May accusing him of failing to enforce Islam. Bhutto, speaking to a public rally on Thursday in the northern town of Mingora, rejected the proposed amendment.

Niaz's Nifaz-I Sharia (enforcement of Sharia) working committee group asked Bhutto to withdraw what it called her words of blasphemy.

NICOSIA, Aug 9: President Saddam Hussein on Saturday praised military chiefs who retook territory from Iran during the 1980-88 war, the official INA News Agency reported, says AFP.

According to INA, monitored here, he said not one of the main commanders of the army who fought the war had been guilty of historic errors.

According to the Iraqi opposition, Saddam purged the army several times after the war. One officer thought to have fallen victim to the purge was General Maher Abdel Rashid, known as the conqueror of FAO, who retook the Peninsula from the Iranians in April 1988.

Saddam was speaking after meeting his most senior officers on the fourth anniversary marking the end of the war, which Baghdad says it won.

LONDON, Aug 9: The British Government maintained Saturday its opposition to the use of force by the international community to end the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AFP.

In an interview with the Domestic News Agency Press Association, Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hogg said: "The only objective that would justify a massive use of force would be the achievement of a peace settlement — and there is no prospect of the use of force achieving a peace settlement."

Moreover, Hogg added, the use of force under a United Nations umbrella would prevent the UN from performing its role as peacekeeper. Hogg said it was very important that convoys are provided with sufficient military escorts to ensure their safe passage.

But he added, "I do not think they can operate without the agreement of the competent local authorities."

Hogg last week visited several west European capitals to prepare for the enlarged international conference on the former Yugoslavia to be held in London from August 26 to 28. He is due to go to Brussels this week and then to east Europe.

European Community and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries were reportedly shown mounting solidarity Friday for a plan to provide armed cover for aid deliveries to Bosnia.

Election fever sweeps Lebanon after 20-year

BEIRUT, Lebanon, Aug 9: In this city more accustomed to bullets than ballots, Nihal Hussein had an unannounced visit from a group of strangers the other night, reports AP.

They offered to give her five children scholarships. There was only one condition: Mrs. Hussein, her husband and their three children who are over 21 should vote for their benefactor, Ahmed Traboulsi.

Traboulsi is one of the scores of candidates campaigning for Lebanon's first general elections in 20 years, to be held on three consecutive Sunday's from August 23 to September 6.

Mrs. Hussein, 42, a middle-class Shiite Muslim, dismissed the visit with a laugh. "It's just like the old days," she said.

In Lebanon, "the old days" mean a time when people elected a Parliament. A time before Syrian and Israeli troops carved up the nation. A time before 15 years of civil war left 150,000 people dead. A time before a president, a president-elect, a prime minister and other politicians were assassinated by bombs.

The election is for a 128-seat Parliament — half-Christian, half-Muslim, to more accurately reflect the

makeup of this country of 4 million people. It would end the automatic supremacy the Maronite Catholics have enjoyed since Lebanon's independence from France in 1943.

The new Parliament is expected to carry out more political reforms stipulated in the Arab-brokered peace agreement that ended Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war.

Nearly all the country has been swept up in an election fever far more intense than before. Only the Christian heartland in east Beirut and north of the capital remain aloof.

Right-wing Christian leaders have denounced President Elias Hrawi's intentions to hold general elections before the 40,000 member Syrian army withdraws from Beirut and other major cities.

The fear that elections with the Syrians in control of two-thirds of Lebanon's territory would produce a rubber-stamp, pro-Syrian Parliament.

Hrawi, a Syrian-backed Maronite Catholic, signed reforms in September 1990 in which the Syrians don't have to leave Beirut until after the capital votes.

The election is to be conducted on three separate days to give the Lebanese army time to the shift its troops to provide security.

Syrian-patrolled north Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley are to vote first, on August 23. Beirut and the nearby Chouf Mountains, also under Syrian sway, are to vote August 30. South Lebanon, which is divided between Syrian and Israeli spheres of influence, is to vote September 6.

So far no one is running in the Christian enclave, but Beirut candidates have until August 15 to file. Elsewhere in Lebanon, every day brings a new batch of contenders lawyers, doctors,

businessmen, economists and engineers. Few of them belong to the old families of all faiths who traditionally controlled Lebanese politics.

In parliamentary elections, which were held every four years before things fell apart, parties hardly existed except as names of convenience for the powerful clans. The patriarchs, or warlords, of those clans built their power blocs before and after the elections.

This biggest change this time is among the Shites, who have long been at the bottom of the social, political and economic ladders despite their ever-increasing numbers.

Off the Record

BBC buys Thatcher

LONDON: Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will work exclusively with the British Broadcasting Corp to produce a documentary of her political life, according to the BBC, reports AP.



The four-part documentary will include exclusive interviews with Thatcher and leading politicians with whom she dealt during 11 years at 10 Downing Street until her forced resignation in November 1990, the BBC announced Saturday. The series is scheduled to be shown next year.

The deal for an undisclosed amount was signed Tuesday, the BBC said.

Thatcher has also signed a contract with Harper-Collins to write her memoirs.

Singaporeans have nothing to learn from others

SINGAPORE: Singaporeans are patriotic and smug, thinking well of themselves and finding it difficult to admit they can learn anything from others, a survey by Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) showed August 9, reports AFP.

Singaporeans felt that their tiny city state should be the role model for the world and that former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was the world's most admirable premier, according to the survey published in the Sunday Times.

Forty-eight per cent of the 403 people aged 15 and above surveyed held Singapore up as a model country for the whole world, followed by the 14 per cent who selected Japan and 13 per cent who selected Switzerland.

The US came a distant fourth with only seven per cent of respondents naming it.

Half of those surveyed said Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister for 31 years, was the person they most admired. Parents, with nine per cent of the votes, came second.

US President George Bush came in fourth with three per cent of the votes, hard on the heels of Singapore's President Wee Kim Wee, who polled four per cent.

One in three thought there was nothing Singapore could learn from other countries. But other countries could learn from Singapore how to keep their environment clean and green, along with how to maintain political and economic stability, racial harmony and good housing and transportation policies.

Fans riot after Guns N' Roses concert cut short

MONTREAL: Heavy metal fans went on a rampage late Saturday after a sold-out rock concert by Guns N' Roses and Metallica was cut short, police and witnesses said, reports AP.

Police said at least three police and 10 rioters received minor injuries, and at least 12 people were arrested.

James Hetfield, lead singer of Metallica, was hospitalized Saturday night after suffering second-degree burns when a stage prop exploded.

More than 200 helmeted police wielding riot clubs chased rioters through streets around the Olympic Stadium and fired tear gas into the crowd inside. They began to regain control of the mob early Sunday.

"They're breaking everything, there are cars overturned, some on fire," said Montreal police officer Claude Forget.

Witnesses in the crowd of 53,000 said the riot erupted as concert-goers left the stadium. Most fans milled around the site, but about 2,000 began throwing things at outnumbered police, overturning cars and smashing windows.

Uncensored show after 72 years

CHICAGO: Seventy-two years after censors banned pioneer filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's "Within Our Gates," the sometimes violent, sometimes caustic look at black life has been shown without cuts in the city where it was made, reports AP.

Micheaux, a native of rural southern Illinois, moved to New York after his run-in with the Chicago Board of Censors in 1920.

The movie he wrote, produced and directed was filmed in Chicago in 1919, the year of the city's worst race riots. The all-white censor board banned the 1920 premiere of the black filmmaker's second movie because it considered certain scenes too inflammatory.

Two scenes considered inflammatory depicted a lynching of a sharecropper family and a black Baptist pastor as a secret foe of racial progress.

2 marines killed as US copter crashes in Kuwait

KUWAIT, Aug 9: Marines conducting war games in Kuwait suffered their first casualties Sunday with the death of a two-man helicopter crew in a crash, the Navy said, reports AP.

Their AH-1W Cobra helicopter crashed at about 2 am (2300 GMT Saturday) at a training site eight miles (12 kilometers) south of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border, according to a statement released by the US Navy's Central Command office here.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation.