

BRIEFS

Despite aid, 2000 Somalis dying a day
PARIS, Aug 21: Despite new aid to Somalia, French doctors and U.N officials warned Thursday of vast areas where people chew filthy rags and goatskin to survive, dying at a rate of 2,000 a day.

Mills closure affect workers
CALCUTTA, Aug 21: Around 55,000 workers have been affected by the closure of 17 jute mills all over the country in past few months.

German banks earn record profits
FRANKFURT, Aug 21: Rising interest rates and soaring demand for credit in the first full year of unification gave German banks record profits of 27.3 billion mark (18.69 billion dollar) in 1991.

Germans won't work longer hours
FRANKFURT, Aug 21: German trade unions united in angry rejection of a leading employer's proposal that Germans should work longer hours to boost the country's competitiveness.

Life back to normal in Alaska
ANCHORAGE(Alaska), Aug 21: Businesses reopened and stranded travelers jammed the airport Thursday as Anchorage got moving again after the city was blanketed with corrosive ash from the summer's second eruption of Mount Spurr.

Iraq pays gold for Australian wheat
CANNBERRA (Australia), Aug 21: Iraq paid gold bullion for Australian wheat after the government of Saddam Hussein, fettered by United Nations trade sanctions, could not raise enough cash.

Congo leader for reviving economy
BRAZZAVILLE(Congo), Aug 21: This former French colony's first democratically elected president and its outgoing Marxist leader are urging all sides to work together to revive the bankrupt economy.

Iraq bans import of consumer goods

BAQHAD, Aug 21: Iraq banned the import of most consumer goods and gave hard-pressed traders three months to clear them from their shelves, reports Reuter. Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh warned merchants, their number diminished by the reported executions of 42, "profiteers" late last month, that "stern punitive action will be taken against violators".

Wheat, flour, rice, sugar, tea, cooking oil, legumes, baby milk and clothes, frozen meat and fish, eggs, tomato paste, razors, soap, batteries, tyres and optical glasses can be imported. AFP adds: Iraq Wednesday announced a ban on the import of luxury goods in a bid to stop the drain on its hard currency and counter the effects of a UN-imposed economic embargo.

Saddam Hussein warned that the country should count more on its own resources to beat the two-year-old economic embargo imposed in the wake of the invasion of Kuwait. Iraq's hard currency earnings have been hit by the ban on selling its oil abroad and the embargo has also prevented the country from drawing on its currency reserves held abroad.

Bush short on new steps to balance budget

HOUSTON, Aug 21: President Bush ducked the tough decisions needed to cut the budget deficit that lies at the heart of American's economic woes by giving responsibility for stemming the red ink to the US taxpayer, analysts said, reports Reuter. In his speech Thursday to the republican party, which was long on attacks on democrat challenger Bill Clinton but short on new steps to balance the budget, Bush proposed allowing Americans to label up to 10 per cent of their taxes for deficit reduction.



Although Bush promised to offset any tax cuts with reductions in government spending, analysts said that it would be far easier to accomplish the former than the latter.

German-Russian firms sign contract to convert arms for peaceful use

SCHROBENHAUSEN(Germany), Aug 21: German and Russian firms formed the first joint venture between the two countries to convert arms to peaceful purposes, spokesmen for both sides said, reports Reuter. This could also be the biggest such joint venture in the world, a German industry spokesman said of the contract, signed in this town near Munich after a year of negotiations.

of munitions from bullets to missiles would take about 10 years. German spokesman said they hoped the deal would pave the way for even bigger joint ventures in arms conversion, an increasing market now that the east-west conflict is over, military budgets are being cut and governments are implementing agreements to scrap large numbers of weapons. They said Arta had been commissioned to destroy about five million tonnes of conventional munitions in Russia, where an estimated 70 million to 80 million tonnes of ammunition were stored by Soviet military leaders.

Canada suspends wheat sale to Russia

WINNIPEG, Manitoba, Aug 21: The Canadian Wheat Board has suspended all sales to Russia because the former superpower is seriously behind in its payments, reports AP. The decision was reached after consultation with federal government, board official Bob Roehle said. The suspension will remain in place until such time as they get their payment problems under control and provide us with a plan of action for dealing with their outstanding arrears, said Roehle.

TOKYO, Aug 21: The prolonged slowdown in Japan's economy is forcing many companies to consider the unthinkable cutting the workforce, reports Reuter. Thousands of company staffs are working part-time or not at all and firms have no way to using them productively, analysts and officials said on Friday. If the economy continues to slow, companies may be forced to fire some of their workers, said a top executive of a Japanese machinery maker.



NOODLES VS HAMBURGER: A girl is fed noodles at a vendor's stall August 20 outside the new MacDonald's restaurant. Though the US hamburger chain does a booming business, many Chinese pass up its fare for more familiar and expensive dishes. — AFP/UNB photo

Shares soar, dollar up in Tokyo

TOKYO, Aug 21: Share prices soared over six per cent Friday on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, continuing a rally spurred by government promises of help for ailing financial institutions. The US dollar edged up against the yen, reports AP. The 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average rose 949.12 points, or 6.22 per cent, to close at 16,216.88, its highest finish since July 17.

Japanese companies may trim staff size

TOKYO, Aug 21: The prolonged slowdown in Japan's economy is forcing many companies to consider the unthinkable cutting the workforce, reports Reuter. Thousands of company staffs are working part-time or not at all and firms have no way to using them productively, analysts and officials said on Friday. If the economy continues to slow, companies may be forced to fire some of their workers, said a top executive of a Japanese machinery maker.

10,000 Greeks march to protest austerity plan

ATHENS, Aug 21: Some 10,000 Greek workers marched to parliament in central Athens on Thursday to protest against a government-imposed austerity programme, reports Reuter. The March was called by the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) which groups 78 labour federations. Its more than a million members are employed throughout the private and public sectors.

The government hiked petrol prices by 40 per cent this month and increased taxation on interest for bank deposits from 10-15 per cent. Government officials said the measures are expected to yield some one billion by the end of the year but will push inflation to 15 per cent from 12 per cent which was the target for 1992.

G-7 deputies meet soon to discuss world economy

WASHINGTON, Aug 21: Deputy finance ministers from the Group of Seven will hold a regularly scheduled meeting this month that is likely to focus on the fragility of the world economy, the dollar and Tokyo stocks, monetary sources said, reports Reuter. The meeting, which one source said would take place on August 28 and 29 in Paris, is also likely to discuss Russia's economic woes and ways to ease its foreign debt burden. Deputies from the G-7 — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — traditionally get together before the September meeting of the International Monetary Fund(IMF) and World Bank to discuss economic issues.

Cabinda — an oil enclave in Angola faces new threat

CABINDA, Angola, Aug 21: Oil from Cabinda province kept the economy afloat through a devastating 16-year civil war and made Angola the second-largest petroleum producer in black Africa, reports AP. The war is over, but Angola's oil riches are under a new threat from a revived separatist movement that is turning increasingly to violence. "We want independence, and if we don't get it, there will be armed struggle," said Arthur Tchibassa, a spokesman for the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda. "Cabinda will never be at peace."

Francisco. Company spokeswoman Kim Lan Conrad said the Americans are not in danger because the Malongo base is well guarded. During the Angolan civil war, Cuban troops allied with the Marxist government defended American oil workers from possible attack by the forces of UNITA, the US-backed rebel group. The wider conflict, which ended last year, overshadowed the activities of Cabindan separatists.



The separatists are divided into several factions and can field only about 750 active guerrillas, but have wide support among the population. They operate from bases in the deep tropical forest of Cabinda's interior. "They are few, but determined," said Paulino Madeca, Roman Catholic bishop, who favors a referendum on Cabinda's future. "I'm worried things are going to get worse." Portugal made Cabinda part of its Angola colony in the 1930s, half a century after gaining control of the territory in a treaty with local rulers. Angolan officials accuse neighboring countries, including Congo, Zaire and Gabon, of supporting the separatists because of their own designs of Cabinda's oil riches. France also has been accused of supporting the separatist, some of whom want to replace Portuguese with French as the official language. Both the Angolan government and UNITA, the former rebel group that became a political party, say they are willing to negotiate statute of autonomy for Cabinda within Angola. The separatists say they will accept only full independence, however, and have ordered a boycott of September elections that will give Angolans their first chance to choose a government. Oil companies hope the Angolan cease-fire will allow exploration along the 41,513 kilometer coast, on shore and off. EIP-Aquitaine of France already operates off the northwest coast and Texaco, a US company, produces oil from Angolan fields near the mouth of the Congo. Petrofina of Belgium operates in northwestern Angola and in the Kwanza River basin near Luanda, the capital. Angola's oil production has increased nearly fourfold in 10 years.

China's foreign debt reaches \$60b

BEIJING, Aug 21: China's foreign debt reached 60.66 billion dollar last year, up 15.2 per cent on 1990, the State Administration of Exchange Control announced Friday, reports AP. Most of the debt, about 50.26 billion, is medium and long-term, said the administration, cited by Xinhua news agency. In 1991 the ratio of debt servicing to overall debt was eight per cent, well below the widely acknowledged critical level of 25 per cent, said Xinhua. Government debt accounted for 24 per cent of the overall total, monetary organisations 52 per cent, Chinese enterprises 15 per cent and foreign capitalised companies nine per cent. Despite last year's rise in debt, experts noted that it was well below the 27.2 per cent increase recorded in 1990 and said Beijing should not have any problems repaying it.