

Arrested MQM women begin hunger strike

KARACHI, Aug 30: About 120 arrested Pakistani women began a protest fast in police custody on Saturday, a spokesman for their Mohajir National Movement (MQM) party said, reports Reuter.

"All the arrested women have gone on hunger strike today," Ishratul Ebad, a former provincial minister, told reporters.

He said the women's action was meant to protest against

their alleged maltreatment by police. No police comment was immediately available.

Ebad said the women were arrested on Friday after police fired guns and teargas at more than 3,000 women reciting the Quran. He said they were praying for people killed since an army-led crime crackdown was launched in Karachi in June.

"The police have treated the women as criminals."

Fighting impedes relief airlift to Sudan

KHARTOUM, Sudan, Aug 30: Rebels and Sudanese soldiers are locked in a battle for the southern regional capital of Juba and 300,000 hungry, terrified civilians are trapped in the middle, reports AP.

Elsewhere in the south, exhaustion and illness have claimed the lives of at least 5,000 refugees since May.

Because of fighting and rebel shelling of Juba, relief flights from Entebbe, Uganda, were suspended for five weeks and have been sporadic since. Only about 500 tons of corn, beans, medicine and materials for shelter were delivered in a nine-day period. The town

needs 3,000 tons a month.

The UN World Food Programme has warned of a looming disaster in southern Sudan and says the most vulnerable area is Juba, which is held by the government but surrounded by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Relief flights risk being caught in cross-fire unless both sides grant safe passage. The rebels have refused such guarantees, apparently not trusting the United Nations after the Sudan government used planes with the UN insignia to ferry troops to Juba, 625 miles (1,005 km) south of Khartoum.

India accuses Pakistan of interfering in mosque issue

JAKARTA, Aug 30: India today accused Pakistan of interfering in its domestic affairs by expressing concern about a mosque just days before the countries' two leaders are due to meet in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, reports Reuter.

The Pakistani parliament last week passed a resolution expressing concern over the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in northern India, a site which right-wing Hindus say is sacred to their religion.

"The resolutions is an act of interference in India's domestic issues this is something serious"

India's junior foreign minister, R.L. Bhatia, told Reuters.

But he added that Thursday's planned meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif their fourth during a Nonaligned Movement Summit in Jakarta may still stand.

More than 2,000 people have been killed in the past three years in sectarian violence sparked by the dispute over the mosque, which Hindus say is on the site of a

Hindu temple demolished by the Muslim Moghul Emperor Babar in the 16th century.

The contention is disputed by Muslims, who number 100 million of India's total population of 850 million.

Islamic Pakistan will raise the issue of Kashmir, over which the two countries fought two of their three wars since independence from Britain in 1947, at the summit despite an appeal by host Indonesia to avoid bilateral issues.

"It is in the interest of Nam to settle such disputes (but) we do not have any wish to

generate any controversy or sidetrack the main agenda of the Non-Aligned Movement," Pakistani ambassador Tayyab said.

India's Bhatia ruled out any concessions on Kashmir territory, two-thirds of which are help by India and the rest by Pakistan.

India accuses Pakistan of backing Kashmiri separatists. Pakistan denies involvement in the violence there which has claimed about 8,000 lives since it erupted in 1990.

Off the Record



FOR FUNDS: US Democratic Presidential nominee Bill Clinton (R) greets comedian Chevy Chase (L) and actress Cybil Shepherd on Saturday during a fund raising appearance. — AFP/UNB photo

'I was her horseriding tutor'

LONDON: A dashing army officer said to be involved in a second scandal brewing over Princess Diana's love life has denied any romantic links with Britain's future queen, reports Reuter.

James Hewitt, a 34 year old Gulf War veteran who taught Diana to ride, was quoted as telling today newspaper: "I was her horseriding tutor that was all."

"I have heard rumours and read stories but that is all they are. I cannot honestly imagine anything I have done that could possibly be misconstrued," Hewitt told today.

His comments however failed to quash media speculation about the 31-year-old princess, her male admirers and her marriage to heir to the throne Prince Charles.

Several news papers said intimate photographs of Diana and Hewitt looked in an embrace were expected to be published over the weekend. They claimed Diana had written affectionate letters to Major Hewitt while he was fighting in the Gulf desert in 1991.

"Di's horseplay," said the headline in the Star.

Diana's reportedly loveless marriage to Charles has been making front page news all week after a secretly-taped conversation said to involve the Princess and another bachelor was made available by The Sun newspaper on a public telephone hotline.

Fishing boat nets WW II torpedo

HALF MOON BAY, Calif: A fishing boat caught a World War II torpedo in its nets Saturday, the US Coast Guard said, reports AP.

The captain of the fishing boat Sierra Madre said the device was about 5 feet (1.5 meters) long and 20 inches (50.8 cm) wide with four fins, said Coast Guard spokesman Bryan Bender.

Navy bomb-disposal experts confirmed the device was a World War II torpedo, Bender said.

A buoy was attached to the device, which will be kept in the ocean south of San Francisco and watched overnight by a crew on a Coast Guard cutter, Bender said. He said the torpedo might be exploded later.

Children paid to give 'Hitler salute'

ROSTOCK, Germany: Police said US and French television crews paid German children to give the straight-armed 'Hitler salute' on Saturday during a march against racist violence in the east German city of Rostock, reports Reuter.

"Residents told us that French and US television teams offered the children and teenagers money to give the Hitler salute," police spokesman Gunter Maechler told Reuters. He did not identify the television crews.



FILES: Photo dated June 10 in Moscow shows Russian President Boris Yeltsin, flanked by Russian Defence Minister Pavel Gratchev (R), addressing the press after forming a military council. According to a Russian newspaper, Gratchev participated in secret meetings called by former KGB Chief Vladimir Kryuchkov to plan the August coup bid last year. — AFP/UNB photo

Italy agrees to give asylum

Ethiopian plane hijackers surrender

ROME, Aug 30: The hijacking of an Ethiopian airlines plane ended on Sunday when five men who had forced the aircraft to fly to Rome from Cairo gave themselves up, ANSA news agency said, reports Reuter.

The Italian news agency said the hijackers and crew left the Boeing 727 at 6.45 am (0445 GMT), just over four hours after the plane landed at Rome's Ciampino military airport.

Police said earlier that Italy had agreed to the hijackers' request for political asylum.

Ciampino airport began returning to normal shortly after

dawn as police and special forces, which had sealed off the airfield during the night, started to pull out.

Mario Esposito, Rome airport's security chief, said the five hijackers had told Italian officials they were political dissidents.

He told journalists he believed the men, who seized the plane after it left Addis Ababa on Saturday, had grenades.

The hijackers allowed the plane's 66 passengers to disembark in the Red Sea republic of Djibouti before flying to Aden, in Yemen, Cairo and Rome.

He said the offer of asylum

was made after the hijackers had asked to stay in Italy.

"We accepted their requirement and the leader of the hijackers is now conferring with his comrades," he told reporters.

Before Rome, the hijacked plane had landed in Djibouti, Aden in Yemen, and in Cairo.

It was the third Ethiopian Airlines plane to be hijacked to foreign airports in a year.

In the two previous incidents — hijacks to Djibouti last November and to Nairobi in April — the hijackers were former security men in ousted Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam's administration.

7 Lankan bus passengers killed in blast

COLOMBO, Aug 30: A bomb exploded in packed bus in northeastern Sri Lanka Sunday, killing at least seven passengers and injuring 16 others, the military said, reports AP.

The military blamed Tamil separatist for the slayings at Trincomalee, about 235 kilometers (146 miles) northeast of Colombo.

The bus, with about 75 passengers, was ready to leave for Kandy when the bomb, believed to have been activated by a time device, exploded.

Trincomalee, a multiethnic district has an equal number of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims.

BRIEFLY

Blast at Togo minister's home:

A bomb ripped through the home of a high-ranking minister of the transitional government Saturday in the latest attack on opponents of President Gnassingbe Eyadema, reports AP from Lome.

Cabinet Chief Raphael Houyenga was not at home at the time of the attack. His daughter was slightly injured, said the officials.

Gunfire was heard just prior to the explosion, but the identity of the assailants was unknown.

Eyadema, stripped of his powers last year by Togo's national conference, has resisted efforts by the transitional government to hold democratic elections. He says the country isn't ready.

Parliament dissolved in Guyana:

President Desmond Hoyte dissolved Parliament Saturday and set long-delayed national elections for October 5 in this English-speaking South American country, Reports AP from George town Guyana.

Hoyte announced the election date at a rally following a one-day special congress of his governing people's National Congress.

Thousands cheered as Hoyte took credit during his seven years in office for establishing a stable democracy and turning the economy around.

Recent public opinion indicate Hoyte's party, which has been the parliamentary leader since 1964, is trailing the Marxist peoples Progressive party of former colonial premier Cheddi Jagan.

Somali faction opposes UN plan:

The most powerful clan militia in Somalia said Saturday it opposes a UN plan to send more troops to protect food deliveries for more than a million starving Somalis, Reports AP from Mogadishu.

Aid workers worried that without support from Gen Mohamed Farrah Aidid's United Somali Congress, the arrival of the troops would spark new fighting in the ravaged country.

The UN's special envoy to Somalia said Saturday the international body would proceed slowly and win the support of warring factions before sending any additional troops.

Meanwhile, a US airlift to help save Somalis from starvation continued smoothly for a second day.

The United Nations estimates that 1.5 million people are in danger of dying, and that another 4.5 million require food and other emergency assistance.

14 killed in Egyptian bldg collapse:

A seven-story apartment building collapsed Saturday, killing at least 14 people and injuring 30 others, police reported, says AP from Cairo.

An unknown number of bodies remained in the wreckage, police said.

The collapse was blamed on the age of the building. No further details were immediately available.

Quake jolts Japan:

An earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter Scale jolted central and northeastern Japan early today, NHK public television reported, says Reuter from Tokyo.

NHK quoted Tokyo police and fire department officials as saying there were no reports of damage or casualties caused by the earthquake, which struck at 4:20 am (1920 GMT Saturday).

The meteorological agency said the epicentre was off the Pacific coast and 320 km (200 miles) below sea-level.

Grenade blast kills 3 in Philippines

MANILA, Aug 30: Three people were killed and 45 others injured after an unidentified man lobbed a grenade into a school party in the central Philippines, police said, reports AFP.

The grenade ripped through a student party held Friday night at the Akian polytechnic school in Kalibo town on the island of Panay, about 335 kilometres (208 miles) south of Manila.

Most of the victims were students and no suspects were identified or arrested, the Philippine national police said in a statement.

Rightist extremists go on rampage in German cities

ROSTOCK, Germany, Aug 30: Rightist extremists went on rampages outside homes for refugees in 10 eastern German towns and cities, police and television reports said Saturday. There were scattered outbreaks of violence in Rostock during a leftist-sponsored march to show solidarity with asylum-seekers, reports AP.

At times the demonstrators squared off against police, who pushed them back during a series of angry confrontations. Other demonstrators rushed out to push those confronting police back into the crowd.

However, there were no reports of the widely feared riots.

The problems are evidence of the growing resentment to-

ward refugees flooding into the country, especially in former East Germany, where unemployment is high. The influx of refugees this year may double the 1991 record of 256,000.

Shortly before midnight Saturday, Eberhard Lindenburg, a supervisor in the Rostock police operations center, said, "Right now the situation is quiet. There are no major disturbances."

Police said they had arrested 90 people, including those taken into custody before the march got under way.

Meanwhile, in Bonn and in the university city of Marburg, several hundred marchers also took to the streets to show their solidarity with the refugees.

Most of the attention was

focused on Rostock, the site of five nights of extreme rightist riots that started a little more than a week ago.

Police said, 13,000 marchers, including foreigners and Rostock residents, rallied outside the refugee shelter where the trouble started.

They chanted "Foreigners stay. Kick out the Nazis. Never again Auschwitz," as the march got under way.

The crowd also included some leftist streetfighters. About 3,000 police and border patrol troops were on hand to keep order.

Organizers said the march got off to a late start because police had stopped buses carrying up to 3,000 leftist demonstrators on main highways leading to Rostock in or-

der to search for weapons.

The buses were let through after numerous weapons were confiscated and 65 people were arrested, police said.

Some protesters shot flares at police helicopters hovering over the march.

Local residents denied being the racists or fascists that some of the marchers accused them of being.

One resident, 34-year-old Harald Fuessel, said: "We have nothing against foreigners. The problem here was Gypsies. They camped on the lawn." The Gypsies in the shelter came from Romania and had been seeking political asylum in Germany.

Fuessel said people in Lichtenhagen merely wanted the refugee centre closed but

then the conflict "went in another direction. It was leftists versus skinheads and nothing to do with the local situation."

"Racism is growing and we're trying to do something against it," said one leftist protester from Berlin who identified himself only as Martin. He said the leftists' goal is to provide a safe climate in Germany for refugees and others.

That goal seems increasingly difficult with the extreme right turning to violence and politicians hamstringed by endless squabbling.

Resentment against foreigners led to the rioting in Rostock, the once-proud shipbuilding centre now hit by about 17 per cent unemployment.

Police in other eastern German cities reported overnight disturbances. Ger-many's ZDF television said right-wing extremist rampages spread to 10 towns and cities.

Cottbus police in East Germany said they drove back about 200 rightists who tried to attack a refugee home late Friday. The attackers set fire to three cars and 15 were arrested.

In Spremberg, south of Cottbus, police said about 15 skinheads threw stones at an asylum shelter and beat up a Pakistani who was returning there.

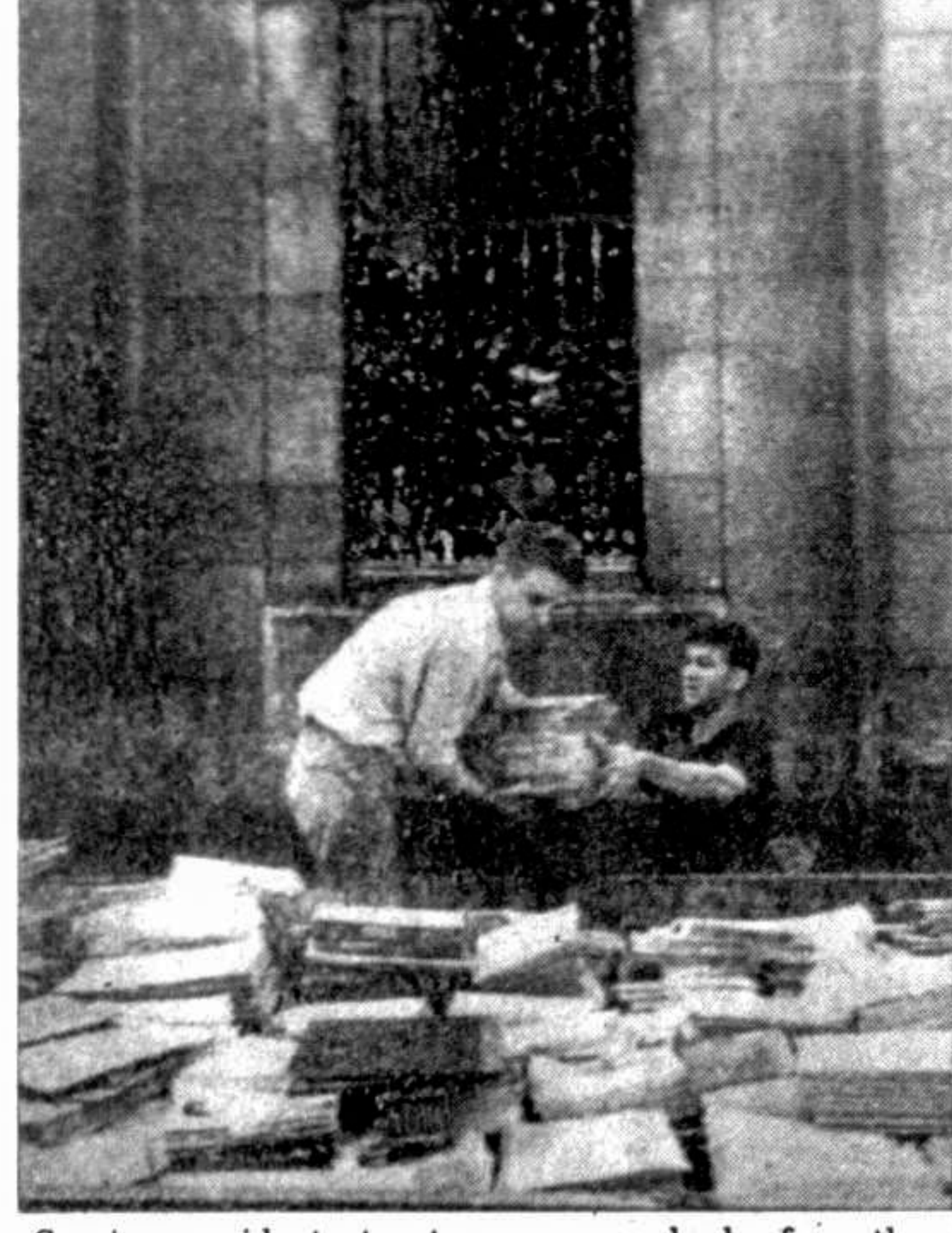
Rightist radicals also broke windows in a refugee home in the town of Greifswald. Police said four people were arrested. No injuries were reported.

Bush-Clinton popularity gap narrowing

WASHINGTON, Aug 30: Two polls released Saturday showed the popularity gap between Democratic Presidential nominee Bill Clinton and President George Bush narrowing to six and 10 percentage points, reports AP.

A time magazine-Cable News Network (CNN) poll showed Clinton with 46 per cent support against 40 per cent for Bush. A poll by the same organisations a week earlier, during the Republican convention, gave Clinton 47 per cent and Bush 36 per cent.

A Gallup-Newsweek poll out Saturday showed Clinton with 49 per cent and Bush with 39 per cent.



Sarajevo residents try to save some books from the basement of the national library in Sarajevo Saturday. The historical library building of the Bosnian capital was partly destroyed and burned by shelling. — AFP/UNB photo