

## BRIEFLY

## Five shot dead in Karachi clashes:

At least five people, including a three-year-old girl, were shot dead in Karachi Saturday in fighting between two factions of the ethnic-based Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) party, officials said. AFP reports from Karachi.

The clashes involved activists of the mainstream MQM led by Altaf Hussain, who is living in self-exile in London, and a splinter group known as MQM-Haqiqi, which is headed by Afaq Ahmed.

Two men and a child were shot dead in the industrial area of Landhi and another two were killed in the Malir district.

**Rain claims 15 in Sind:** At least 15 people were reported dead in Sind province as torrential rain paralysed Pakistan's southern province of Sind, officials and hospital sources said. AFP reports from Karachi.

Another five people were missing, presumed dead, in Hyderabad, sources added.

Rising water levels in the two rivers that flow through Karachi forced hundreds of people to leave their homes. Six people died from electrocution or in rain-related traffic accidents in the city which has also suffered crippling power breakdowns.

## Russia-Estonia talks tomorrow:

Talks between Russia and Estonia on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic Republic will resume in Helsinki Tuesday, a Finnish Foreign Ministry spokesman said Saturday. AFP reports from Helsinki.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has threatened not to pull out the last of the troops remaining from when Estonia was a Soviet Republic by the agreed date of August 31 because of Tallinn's treatment of its Russian minority.

Some Russian troops remain in Estonia, along with some 10,000 former Soviet officers who chose to settle there.

## Solzhenitsyn to address Duma:

Writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn has accepted an invitation to address the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, at the end of his cross-country journey, the Itar Tass news agency said Saturday. AP reports from Moscow.

Solzhenitsyn, considered one of Russia's greatest living writers, was quoted as saying he expected to speak to parliament in the fall.

The invitation was extended earlier this month by speaker Ivan Rybkin.

## Gerry Adams to apply for US visa:

Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein, wants to visit the United States again and plans to apply for a visa, the Sunday Times newspaper reported. Reuter says from London.

Adams' visit to the United States earlier this year upset the British government, which said he used the trip to spread propaganda among US supporters of the Irish Republican Army.

## Rockets hit Kabul: 11 more killed

KABUL, July 17: Forces loyal to Afghanistan's rebellious Prime Minister fired hundreds of rockets at the capital, leaving 11 people dead and at least 40 others wounded, hospital officials said Sunday, reports AP.

The rocket assault Saturday was the bloodiest in weeks, witnesses said.

Four people died when a single rocket blasted a hole in the street outside a string of shops in the once-popular Chicken Street Market, they said.

Rebel Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his Uzbek ally, Rashid Dostum, have been trying for months to unseat their rival, President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The capital of Kabul, relatively untouched during much of the 14-year of communist rule in Afghanistan, has been destroyed by bitter fighting between rival Islamic factions who inherited power from the communists in 1992.

The bloodiest battles have been between forces loyal to

Hekmatyar and Rabbani, former allies during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

They turned their guns on each other after the old communist regime was thrown out, killing thousands of people, most of them civilians, in their bloody battle for power.

It's not clear what sparked Saturday's assault, but in the past few weeks Rabbani's troops have reported some gains into Hekmatyar-controlled areas.

Hekmatyar is demanding Rabbani's resignation, something the president has refused until his rivals lay down their arms.

AFP says: A senior official of state security, formerly the secret police known as Khad during the communist regime, said one of its personnel, a cook, was killed during the rocket attack Saturday by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-islami faction.

"We are a military target. We don't complain when we are hit, but we do complain when civilian areas are targeted," the official said.

## Italian govt heading for crisis

ROME, July 17: The Italian government was heading for a crisis today after Interior Minister Roberto Maroni said he was ready to resign in protest at a decree to curb magistrates' powers of arrest, reports Reuter.

Maroni, the most senior cabinet member from the Federalist Northern League, has asked his party to decide this weekend whether he should stay at his post.

"I am ready to resign my mandate on Monday," he told state television on Saturday.

He asked members of his party, the biggest in parliament which ensures Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's three-party coalition its majority, to reject the decree, under which almost 500 corruption suspects have already been released from jail.

The measure, which

Berlusconi says was approved unanimously by his cabinet, was issued on Wednesday and removes corruption, bribery and a string of other crimes from a list of offences for which suspects can be held before trial in jail.

Maroni said he was ready to step down hours after Berlusconi confirmed he would back the decree to the halt.

"I may be courting unpopularity but I will do everything in my power to empty the prisons of everyone held there against the universal principles of human rights," Berlusconi said.

"No citizen should be imprisoned without first being convicted. In Italy, in the second republic, justice must return to being a model of civility," he told reporters in Trieste.

## Japan sweltering in its harshest heatwave

TOKYO, July 17: Japan has been sweltering in its harshest July heatwave for years, and beer and air conditioner makers are celebrating, reports Reuter.

Tokyo temperatures topped 30° Celsius (86° Fahrenheit) on 13 of the first 17 days in July. Most years it goes above 30 only 14 days in the month. Other areas also have reported record highs.

In Kyushu island to the south-west of Tokyo, 100,000 fish died from the heat near a dam in Oita prefecture when surface water temperatures tipped 30°C (86°F).

BOMBAY, July 17: A sex and porn film scandal involving politicians, industrialists and teenage girls has rocked Maharashtra, India's most industrialised state, reports AFP.

Lurid details of the racket have been splashed across the front pages of newspapers in Bombay, Maharashtra's capital, for several weeks.

Police stumbled on the scandal while interrogating a suspect picked up for alleged involvement in the March 12, 1993 serial bombings that killed some 300 people in Bombay.

The investigation led to Jalgaon, a town of 250,000 people some 310 miles (500 kilometres) north of here which is best known as India's banana capital. Nearly a quarter

## Serbs urge parliament to reject int'l peace plan

BELGRADE, July 17: Bosnian Serb leaders on Sunday urged their parliament to reject an international peace plan and called on Bosnian Serbs to prepare for all-out war, reports AP.

A rejection by the parliament, which meets Monday, would almost certainly lead to intensified fighting and possibly to a withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from the former Yugoslav republic.

Bosnian Serb Deputy Premier Vitimir Popovic said the plan, drafted by the United States, Russia and West European countries is "absolutely unacceptable for the Serbian people and should be rejected in its entirety," the

Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA reported.

"If the international community presses us into a corner and demands 'yes' or 'no' from us... then the reply of our deputies and our people will be 'no'," SRNA quoted Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic as saying.

The comments indicated that nationalist deputies dominating the Bosnian Serb assembly were likely to reject the plan on Monday, the eve of a deadline set by the so-called contact group. World leaders have urged acceptance, warning of a broader Balkan war if the Serbs say no.

Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic has already

said he will recommend that his parliament accept the plan when it meets Monday. Bosnian Croats have also accepted, their news agency HABENA reported.

The plan would give 51 per cent of war-torn Bosnia to the recently-founded Croat-Muslim federation and 49 per cent to the Serbs.

But Serbs currently occupy some 70 per cent of Bosnia and are loathe to give up land they have won in the 27-month war that has left 200,000 people dead or missing.

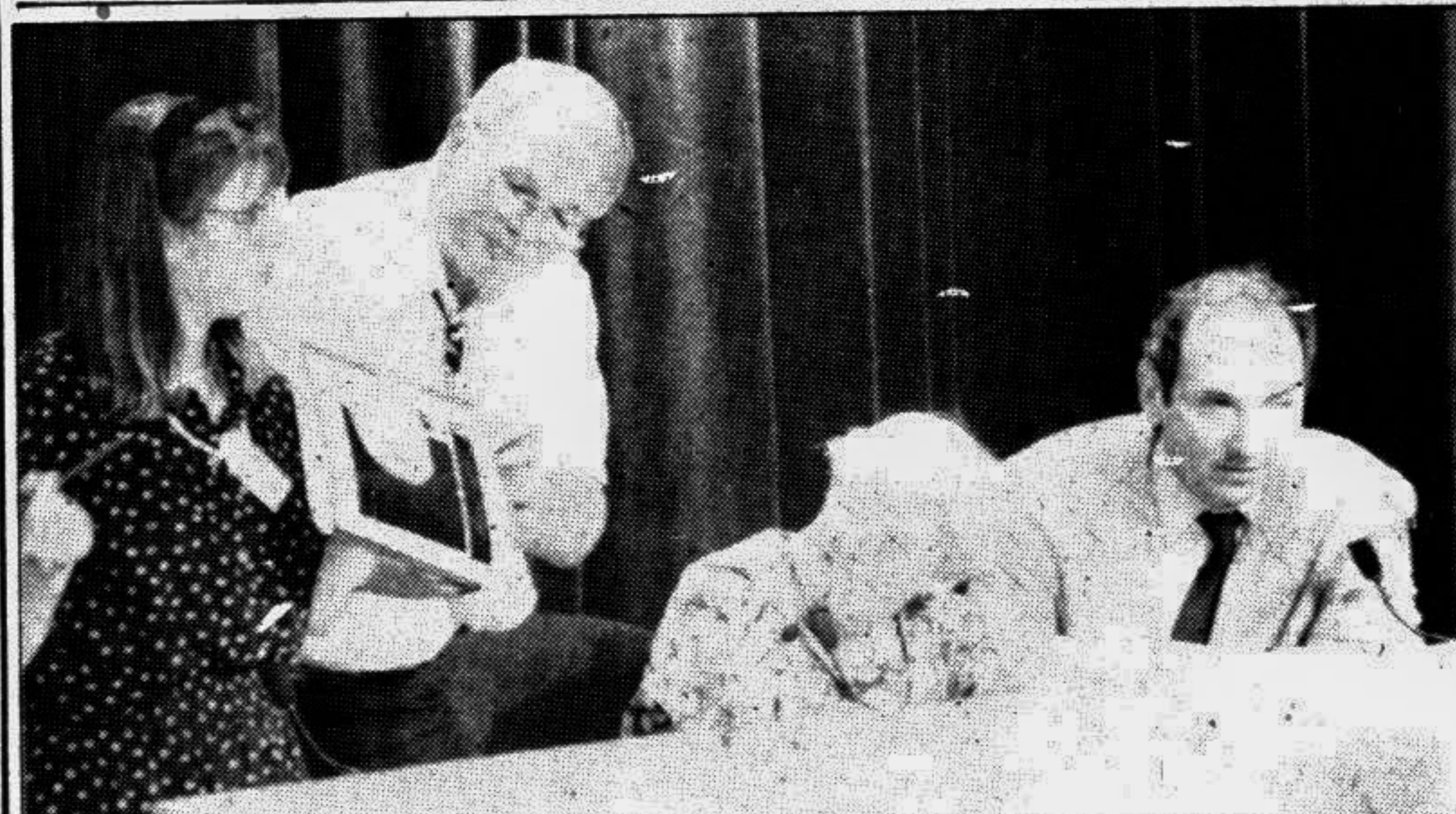
The United States has led a drive to lift a UN arms embargo against the Bosnian government if the Serbs say no.

Momcilo Krajisnik, a senior Bosnian Serb leader, said in an interview televised in Belgrade late Friday that Bosnian Serbs, "right to unite with Serbia and Montenegro" — the only republics remaining in Yugoslavia — was not negotiable.

The war began after Bosnian Serbs rebelled over a decision by majority Muslims and Croats to declare Bosnia independent from Yugoslavia.

The warring sides were given until Tuesday to accept the partition proposal which denies Serbs, at least initially, the right to unite with Serbia.

If the Bosnian Serbs reject it, the arms embargo could be eased and UN sanctions on Serb-led Yugoslavia tightened.



Drs Carolyn (C) and Eugene Shoemaker (2nd L), flanked by Dr David Levy (R) look at the first image of the Shoemaker Levy 9 comet impact with Jupiter during a press conference on Saturday at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, MD. Dr Heidi Hammel (L) of the Institute interrupted the press conference to present the photo of the impact. — AFP photo

## Rwandan rebels reach Gisenyi Hopes of ceasefire fade

KIGALI, July 17: Hopes of a ceasefire in Rwanda faded late on Saturday as rebels said they had reached the northwestern town of Gisenyi, former seat of the self-declared Hutu government, reports Reuter.

The Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) said in a radio broadcast its soldiers had reached Gisenyi near the Zairean border and appealed to government troops to surrender.

"We call upon all those soldiers... and citizens who have fled to Gisenyi or other areas, to give themselves up to the RPF forces and return to their homes, instead of continuing to listen to those who have cheated them and have launched a war which they cannot fight," said rebel radio Rwanda, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

UN military sources would not comment on the Gisenyi reports, which contradicted RPF military commander Major-General Paul Kagame's assurance that his troops would

halt five km (three miles) outside the lakeside town. A ceasefire promised to the United Nations' special representative in the blood-soaked central African state on Friday failed to come into effect.

Meetings were being held late on Saturday at the UN's Kigali headquarters after UN force commander Major-General Romeo Dallaire returned from Goma in neighbouring Zaire where he met government forces' Chief Major-General Augustin Bizimungu.

The UN special representative, Shahryar Khan, told reporters: "There is obviously a delay (to the ceasefire declaration)."

AP reports from Goma: Hampered by poor preparation and limited resources aid agencies are scrambling to cope with the enormous exodus of refugees from Rwanda, who have been trekking into Zaire at the rate of 10,000 an hour.

They face daunting challenges, including a shortage of

"drinking water, few suitable sites for camps and the possibility of epidemics. The only thing that could make it worse is a natural disaster, and a nearby volcano has been bubbling lava for weeks."

The outpouring of Hutu refugees of Rwanda continued Saturday at a slower pace than during the two previous days, when an estimated 350,000 to 500,000 people fled into Zaire.

No updated figures were available, but officials said the total number had reached at least 400,000, including 2,400 wounded government soldiers. Other estimates say the total has surpassed 500,000.

The Tutsi-led rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front has advanced to within 12 miles (20 kms) of Gisenyi, just across the border from Goma, said French Col. Didier Bolelli. Gisenyi was the site of the interim government until most of its top officials fled two days ago.

The rebels broke their promise to the United Nations to ceasefire, UN representative Shahryar Khan said Saturday.

## China hopeful of better ties among S Asian states

BEIJING, July 17: Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen today expressed the hope that South Asian countries will enhance friendly and good-neighbourly relations and make joint efforts for peace and stability, reports PTI.

This is very important for peace in the world, Qian told PTI at the airport prior to his departure for a tour of India, Nepal and Thailand where he will attend the South-East Asian countries' regional forum.

Replying to a question over New Delhi's concern over weaponry into the region in a way that upsets the balance against India, Qian said as a neighbour of South Asia, China has "great interest in peace and stability in South Asia."

## Russia's border accord with 3 C Asian states

MOSCOW, July 17: Russia and three central Asian states signed an agreement on the joint security of their southern borders, Itar-Tass news agency reported on Saturday, says Reuter.

The head of Russia's border guards Colonel-General Andrei Nikolayev signed the deal with the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan after a two-day visit to the Tajik capital, Dushanbe.

Nikolayev told a news conference the new agreement was in the interests of Russia and the central Asian states and would "promote the strengthening of the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States," Tass said.

Russia and Tajikistan also signed a bilateral agreement on military transits, the agency said.

About 25,000 Russian border troops are stationed in Tajikistan to help provide stability and repel guerrilla attacks across the frontier with Afghanistan.



Undated file combo photo of Australia's Kellie Wilkinson and Britain's Dominic Chappell (R) who are reportedly dead, British television news reported on Saturday. The couple along with a British tourist friend Tina Domyne were kidnapped in Cambodia three months ago, by thought to be Khmer Rouge guerilla. — AFP photo

## Three abducted foreigners feared killed

SYDNEY, July 17: The Australian government said today it feared two Britons and an Australian kidnapped in Cambodia in April by suspected Khmer Rouge guerillas were no longer alive, reports Reuter.

"I can confirm reports that strong evidence has now emerged that Kellie Wilkinson and her two British travelling companions, Dominic Chappell and Tina Domyne, who were abducted in Cambodia three months ago, are no longer alive," Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said in a statement.

Evans said Cambodian police had recently recovered fragmentary human remains and clothing near a guerrilla camp in Southern Cambodia.

Cambodian authorities have said they feared the three were dead and relatives say they had been told to prepare for the worst.

## Off the Record

## Clinton was regular consumer of cocaine, marijuana?

LONDON: US President Bill Clinton was a regular consumer of cocaine and marijuana when he was Governor of Arkansas, and also took part in wild parties, the Sunday Telegraph reported, quoting witnesses, says AFP.

The main evidence in a "series of exclusive interviews" came from Jane Parks, 41, who lived next door to Clinton's brother Roger in Little Rock for two months in 1984.

Parks told the newspaper she heard through the adjoining wall the Clinton brothers discussing the quality of marijuana or cocaine they had used. She also said that the future president received girlfriends in his brother's apartment and "some of them looked very young."

The paper said Parks' husband, a former policeman, kept a file on the activities in the apartment, which was stolen from their home last year. Two months later he was shot dead, but not before leaving copies of the file with reliable people in Little Rock, the Sunday Telegraph said.

Another witness was quoted as saying Clinton had smoked marijuana at a party in 1984 where cocaine was also circulating freely.

Sally Perdue, who claimed earlier this year to have had an affair with Clinton, was quoted as saying she had seen him snorting cocaine.

Clinton has admitted smoking marijuana while studying at Oxford, England, but claimed he did not inhale and denied breaking US law in the United States.

The Sunday Telegraph said Clinton used drugs between 1972 and 1986, when he was a law teacher, Arkansas attorney-general and state governor. It wondered how Clinton funded his alleged cocaine habit on a "modest" salary of 35,000 dollar.



Australia's Georgina Danahy, 22, waves on Sunday after winning the 1994 Queen of the Year International Pageant. Georgina beat 23 other candidates to win the contest in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photo

## Hezbollah attacks Israeli outposts

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon, July 16: Iranian-backed guerrillas fired rockets and grenades at Israeli and allied militia outposts in South Lebanon Sunday, but no casualties were reported, says AP.

In a communique released in Beirut, Hezbollah or Party of God, claimed responsibility for the attack, which was staged as US Secretary of State Warren Christopher prepared to fly to the Middle East for peace talks.

Hezbollah, Iran's main ally in Lebanon, has vowed to wreck the US-sponsored Middle East peace negotiations. It advocates the destruction of Israel.

Security sources said the pre-dawn assault targeted an Israeli position in Tallouseh

and another manned by the South Lebanon Army militia at Baraachit in the central sector of an enclave Israel occupies as a "security zone" in south Lebanon.

Israel retaliated with tank and 155 mm howitzer fire on Shi'ite Muslim villages facing the attack scene.

Hezbollah said "the enemy suffered considerable losses in lives and equipment." But Israeli security sources disputed that claim.

SLA militiamen earlier raked a suspected infiltration squad with tank fire in the slopes of mount Hermon on the eastern sector of the Israeli-held enclave. No casualties were reported in that exchange, the sources said.

## Sex, porn film scandal rocks Maharashtra

of the bananas cultivated in India are grown there.

Deepak Jog, then chief of the Jalgaon district police, told reporters and citizens groups last month that between 500 and 1,000 teenage girls and women may have been victims.

He said they had been trapped and blackmailed by local politicians from the ruling Congress Party and the right-wing Hindu opposition group the Shiv Sena (Shiva's army). The ruses used were simple.

His disclosures predictably caused an uproar in the city. Local citizens' groups and women's organisations took to the streets, leading protest marches and sit-ins in which several thousand people took part.

But local congress party bigwigs were furious and Jog lost his job.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar said only about 50 women had been victimised and promised severe punishment for those responsible.

The culprits will not be spared," Pawar told angry opposition lawmakers in the state legislature. He said police had arrested 31 people.

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The chief suspects, Pandit Sankar and Raju Tadi, two Jalgaon city Congress lawmakers, would allegedly rape

teenage girls and adult women who approached them for jobs or other help, he said.

The sexual acts would be photographed and videotaped. The victims would then be blackmailed into luring other girls into the racket, which had grown to include the sons of local industrialists.

The video cassettes and photographs did brisk business on the porn film circuit and were available in all major towns of the state.

Jog told reporters this had been going on for more than a decade. Most of the women were raped and filmed in a motel across the street from the city police station.

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## Columbia overrun with baby news

SPACE CENTER, July 17: The space shuttle Columbia is suddenly overrun with baby news, reports AP.

Astronaut Donald Thomas found 18 newly hatched Japanese red-bellied newts when he checked on three female adult newts and about 100 eggs in two aquarium tanks early Sunday.

Before that only two of the 144 newt eggs carried into orbit July 8 had hatched.

"The little baby newts are pretty active," Thomas said. "They're swimming around their little egg chambers pretty good."