

BRIEFLY

11 miners missing in Australia:

Eleven miners were missing yesterday after an explosion at a cave-in in a Queensland coal pit, mine officials said. AFP reports from Brisbane.

Rescue workers were at the Moura Mine near Gladstone in central Queensland but would have to wait until the atmosphere cleared before entering the pit, police said. The mine is operated by BHP Australia Coal for BHP Mitsui Coal Pty Ltd.

Drugs seized in Colombia:

Colombian police said they seized half a ton of cocaine on Sunday from an Avianca Airlines airliner shortly before it took off for Mexico and Miami. Reuter reports from Bogota.

The drug was concealed inside 12 suitcases smuggled into the hold of the airliner with the help of airline employees, police said, four Avianca employees were arrested.

6 varsity students held in ROK:

Seoul police yesterday arrested six university students in connection with a probe into the beating to death of a suspected campus police informer, police said. AFP reports from Seoul.

The victim, Chon Hui-Ku, 38, a vendor at the gates of the University of Korea, was found unconscious on a sidewalk after being questioned for several hours by students on Thursday, and died on Friday in hospital from internal injuries.

Aid worker abducted in Mogadishu:

A Swedish woman aid worker was kidnapped in southern Mogadishu on Sunday, UN officials said. Reuter reports from Mogadishu.

They did not name the victim, local reports said that the woman working for an agency running a primary education programme had been kidnapped over a labour dispute.

Kuwaiti hanged for raping girl:

A Kuwaiti was hanged on Sunday for his part in the kidnapping and 48-hour gang rape of a 10-year-old Egyptian girl, prosecutors said. Reuter reports from Kuwait.

Mohammad Kuleib Al Rashidi, 28, was described as the mastermind of the gang rape of the girl he and three other people kidnaped on July 11, 1993 as she played by her house with friends. The girl survived the rape.

34 drown in Japan:

More than 30 people drowned as millions of Japanese headed for the coast seeking weekend relief from a torrid heatwave now in its second month, a police spokesman said yesterday. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

Thirty-four people are known to have drowned on Sunday and four were still missing on Monday, the spokesman said.

Bus mishap claims 10 children in SA:

At least 10 children were killed and another 20 seriously injured Saturday when their bus crashed into a rockface in South Africa's Kwazulu/Natal province, public radio reported yesterday.

The children were on their way to a sports meeting when the accident occurred, the radio said.

Typhoon Doug hits Taiwan:

Typhoon Doug has battered Taiwan on Sunday, crippling air traffic and forcing the government to evacuate Chinese fishermen living illegally aboard trawlers off the Taiwanese coast. AP reports from Taipei.

Officials said more than 1,000 Chinese fishermen living in "sea hotels" were provided accommodation in detention centres around the island because of the typhoon, which packed maximum winds of 198 kilometers (122 miles) an hour.

Rabin to meet Arafat at Erez:

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will meet PLO leader Yasser Arafat on Wednesday for the first time since the start of Palestinian self-rule, Israeli radio's Arabic-language service said yesterday. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

It said the meeting would take place at Erez, the main Israeli border crossing to the Gaza Strip enclave handed over by Israel to the Palestinians three months ago under their peace deal.

Germany to set up office in Jericho:

Germany will set up a representative office in Jericho in the Palestinian autonomous region of West Bank on August 8. German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel announced yesterday. Xinhua reports from Bonn.

This will be the first foreign representative office to be set up in the Palestinian autonomous region.

20 die as dam bursts in Russia:

A dam burst following heavy rains in the Ural Mountains, washing away 140 houses and killing about 20 people, the ITAR-Tass news agency said on Monday. AP reports from Moscow.

Four villages were inundated when the dam on the Tiryar reservoir collapsed on Sunday night, said Eleonora Burdina, a spokeswoman for the Ministry for Emergency Situations. Local authorities told ITAR-Tass that about 20 people died. The ministry had no estimate of the casualties, Burdina said.

18 burned to death in Iran:

Eighteen people were burned to death when a tanker truck filled with black tar crashed into a public toilet after hitting two pick-up trucks on a road in northern Iran, newspapers reported yesterday. Reuter says from Tehran.

The victims were mainly customers at a restaurant in Vereak on the road to Firuzkuh east of Tehran.

Turkish jets bomb Kurdish camp:

Turkish jets bombed a Kurdish rebel camp across the border in northern Iraq on Monday, the five such attack since July 26, AP reports from Ankara.

The air strike took place in the Sinaj region, some 15 kilometres (9 miles) from the Turkish border, the military said.

The statement said the air strike caused casualties but it did not give details.

King Hussein hosts Rabin:

Jordan's King Hussein hosted Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin yesterday at his palace in the Red Sea resort of Aqaba. Reuter reports from Aqaba, Jordan.

The two men shook hands warmly when they met. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher joined them moments later in a white, open-air pavilion overlooking the gulf of Aqaba.

It was the first time an Israeli leader had met the king publicly in Jordan after years of clandestine contacts.

Kurds kidnap 2 Finnish tourists:

Kurdish separatist guerrillas kidnapped two Finnish tourists in southeastern Turkey over the weekend, officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Ankara.

They are still missing, said an official of the emergency rule governor's office in Diyarbakir. He said the tourists were abducted in broad daylight at a guerrilla roadblock on the highway between the provincial capital of Tunceli and the town of Pulmurur.

Rainstorms kill 8 in China:

Severe rainstorms in two counties of Ningxia region in northwest China left eight people dead and nine missing, the Xinhua news agency said yesterday. Reuter reports from Beijing.

It said the storms struck Yanchi and Zhongning counties early last Friday, destroying more than 1,370 rooms in homes, office buildings and schools and washing away 410,000 kg of grain. It gave no other details.

14 die in Turkish road mishaps today:

A total of 2,653 people were killed and 45,056 others injured in the 109,000 traffic accidents in Turkey in the first six months this year, according to official figures released yesterday. Xinhua reports from Istanbul.

The figures showed that an average of 14 people die per day in traffic accidents in Turkey.

India rules out early resumption of peace talks with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: India today ruled out an early resumption of its stalled peace talks with arch rival Pakistan amid new friction in their usually bitter relations, reports AFP.

Minister of State for External Affairs Ragunandan Lal Bhatia said Islamabad was trying to link future talks to their dispute over Kashmir and had set preconditions not acceptable to India.

Bhatia said in reply to parliamentary questions that one of the preconditions related to the number of troops India should deploy in the Himalayan state, where Muslim militants are fighting for an end to Indian rule.

He said Islamabad also wanted talks to include the po-

ssibility of holding a plebiscite in Kashmir to determine whether its inhabitants wanted to stay with India or join Pakistan, a proposal India rejects.

Bhatia said "no further action is contemplated at the moment" to resume the dialogue.

The minister said India had in January proposed steps to normalise ties, including an agreement to maintain peace along the line of control dividing Kashmir into Indian and Pakistani zones, but received no positive reply.

The proposals followed the last round of talks between the foreign secretaries of the two countries at the start of the year.

"We expressed our readi-

ness to draw a schedule for further talks. Pakistan however was unwilling to commit itself to any time-frame for further talks", Bhatia said.

His remarks came amid a new low in relations between the two countries, which have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two of them over the Kashmir dispute.

India last week claimed to possess "irrefutable" proof of Pakistan's complicity in the March 1993 serial bombings in Bombay which killed more than 300 people.

The claim, which followed the arrest of a key suspect in the bombing here, was dismissed by Pakistan.

In July, the two govern-

ments announced the withdrawal of two embassy tanks patrolled the national highway in Kashmir today in preparation for a Hindu pilgrimage that Muslim guerrillas have threatened to sabotage, witnesses said.

Tanks were seen at four places on the highway in the south Kashmir town of Anantag, which pilgrims have to pass on their way to the holy Amarnath cave, located 15,000 feet (4,545 metres) above the sea level, the witnesses said.

The deployment of tanks and intensified patrols along the highway followed a guerilla threat Saturday.

Thirteen of the victims are supporters of the People's Alliance, the coalition opposing the ruling United National Party, said Dharmasiri Senanayake, general secretary of the opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Two were ruling party activists.

On Thursday, a governing party leader shot and killed an opposition activist in Galgamuwa town of central Sri Lanka. Two days later, another UNP politician fatally stabbed a rival activist during a clash in a Colombo suburb.

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Nepali left parties to begin agitation Aug 11

KATHMANDU, Aug 8: Nepal's six left parties in a 13-day joint programme on Sunday urged Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and his caretaker government to resign and have an all-party government installed, reports Xinhua.

The 13-day joint programme from August 11 to 23 includes local demonstrations and mass meetings on August 11, countrywide torch-lit demonstration on August 13, a nationwide bandh (strike) on August 14, burning the prime minister's effigy countrywide on August 18 and a mass rally and public meeting in Kathmandu on August 23.

The six left parties are the main opposition which include the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the Unity Center, the Nepal Communist League, the

Workers and Peasants Party, the United People's Front and the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal).

The six left parties have launched a series of programmes since the House of Representatives (Lower House) was dissolved by King Birendra on July 11.

Muslim rebels free Filipino priest

MANILA, Aug 8: A Filipino Roman Catholic priest kidnapped by an Islamic fundamentalist group in the southern Philippines has been freed unharmed, a legislator said today, reports AFP.

Congressman Eduardo Erisita said in a message on military radio to Vice President Joseph Estrada, aired over radio station Dzh here,



The holy relic, a hair from the Prophet's beard preserved in a case, being displayed by a clergyman during a brief ceremony on Saturday at the Hazratbal Mosque in northern Kashmir, soon after the removal of bunkers and formal take-over of the mosque by a Muslim trust. Thousands took part in ghusul (purification) of the shrine and offered special prayers. — AFP photo

Kabul asks UN to monitor flow of foreign military aid to rivals

ISLAMABAD, Aug 8: Afghanistan today called for the stationing of United Nations observers to monitor the flow of foreign military assistance to rival factions engaged in a bloody struggle for power, reports AFP.

The UN should appoint its observers and devise a mechanism to monitor the war-ravaged country's borders, Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani's special envoy Masood Khalili told a news conference here.

Khalili retreated Kabul's

line that its northern neighbour Uzbekistan was helping the militia of ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam.

"The flow of foreign military help is worrying us," he said. The former communist general Dostam staged an abortive coup against Rabbani on January 1 and fighting has been raging since then. Rabbani's arch foe Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the Hezbe-Islami faction has been fighting alongside Dostam to topple the administration in Kabul.

More than 4,000 people

have died and 21,000 been injured in the fighting so far.

In February, with the fighting at its peak, Dostam had planes refuelled in Uzbekistan while military convoys comprising tanks and weapons arrived at the rebel general's base from the former Soviet republic, Khalili said.

Khalili denied as "absolutely incorrect" reports from the rival groups that Rabbani's faction was receiving military help from Pakistan's traditional rival India.

15 Lankans killed in pre-polls violence

COLOMBO, Aug 8: At least 15 people, mainly opposition supporters, have been killed in clashes during one month of campaigning for the August 16 general elections, opposition politicians said Monday, reports AP.

Thirteen of the victims are supporters of the People's Alliance, the coalition opposing the ruling United National Party, said Dharmasiri Senanayake, general secretary of the opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Two were ruling party activists.

On Thursday, a governing party leader shot and killed an opposition activist in Galgamuwa town of central Sri Lanka. Two days later, another UNP politician fatally stabbed a rival activist during a clash in a Colombo suburb.

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Riyadh denies hiring Migs to bomb N Yemeni forces

RIYADH, Aug 8: Saudi Arabia on Sunday denied a British newspaper report that it had hired up to 12 Mig-29 warplanes flown by Russian pilots to fight in the Yemeni civil war, reports AFP.

An official spokesman quoted by the Saudi news agency SPA said: "The Sunday Times should not have published such a report which is utterly groundless."

The Sunday Times, quoting the US intelligence service, said the Saudis paid "millions

Sihanouk seeks help for flood victims

PHNOM PENH, Aug 8: Cambodian head of state King Norodom Sihanouk has appealed for outside help after the worst flooding in three years killed six people and left 35,000 homeless, the royal palace said today, reports Reuter.

In northwest Batambang Province, 187 houses were swept away by the floods killing six people, a government spokesman, Eng Teasim, told a news conference at the Ministry of Information today.

of dollars" to the Russian pilots, who bombed the North-Yemeni forces.

The jets were based at Al Rayyan Airbase near Mukalla, South Yemen's second largest city, and returned to Russia when the civil war ended in July, the paper quoted the CIA as saying.

The Sunday Times said "the presence of Russian armed forces acting as hired guns in a foreign war is causing concern in Washington."

"When the Russians were first confronted with the American intelligence they denied all knowledge of the operation," the paper said, but "now they claim that if such an operation did take place it was without official sanction."

An unnamed US intelligence source told the paper: "In many ways that is even worse, as it raises questions about Russian President Boris Yeltsin's ability to control his own military."

Riyadh supported the Southern Yemeni rebels with cash and arms, and "intelligence suggests that the Saudis are arming, training and funding the defeated rebels who sought refuge in Saudi Arabia," the Sunday Times commented.



Tipper Gore, wife of US Vice-president Al Gore, holds a Rwandan infant suffering from cholera at MUYANO refugee camp in Goma on Sunday. — AFP photo

Third World women more vulnerable to STD than men

YOKOHAMA, Japan, Aug 8: Women must communicate better with men about sex and take a more active role in protecting themselves against AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD), experts said today, reports Reuter.

"We must induce, encourage communication of sexual matters between men and women," Zena Stein, co-director of the HIV Centre for Clinical and Behavioral Studies of the New York State Psychiatric Institute, told an international conference.

"There are still too many ingrained taboos over this in all communities," Stein said.

Stein and other experts attending the 10th international conference on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

said women were far more vulnerable than men to the sufferings caused by STD, especially in the developing world.

"It is also striking how much greater the STD burden is on women than on men," said Peter Piot, director of AIDS Research at the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"First, the complications ... of STD affect women far more than men, and secondly, women have less access to STD care," he said.

He said the persistently high level of STD in many developing countries reflected falling health policies and the lack of effective STD control programmes, which leave millions of infected people, particularly women, untreated and

at risk of complications.

"Basically, STD have rarely been approached as a public health problem, but rather as a problem for a small group of blameworthy individuals," Piot said.

The view held by men in many cultures that they have the right to dominate sexual relationships, including the privilege of using or not using a condom, was one reason men do not use condoms more often to protect their partners, Stein said.

"The next possibility is for the woman explicitly to take responsibility and for the man to accept to transfer the role," she said.

She said it was with this in mind that many women had

warmly greeted news of the development of a women's condom, now available in Europe and the United States.

"The main focus is to prevent sexual transmission," said Michael Merson, head of WHO's AIDS programme. "It is providing information to everyone who is sexually active or will become sexually active, and getting them condoms."

"Prostitution, particularly in Asia, was also a focal point," Merson said.

"I recognise that commercial sex work is an issue that needs to be discussed openly," he said. "And denial in this region is as strong as anywhere else we have seen."

Yun-Fong Ngeow of the

London confce calls for single Islamic state

LONDON, Aug 8: A conference of 8,000 Muslims in London on Sunday backed calls by its organisers for the establishment of a single global Islamic state and demolition of the state of Israel, reports AP.

Some speakers called for the overthrow of Saudi Arabia and Iraq on grounds that political opposition is not allowed there.

The conference at Wembley arena was organised by the Muslim Unity Organisation which represents a number of Muslim groups from around the world devoted to achieving a unified Muslim state.

One of the speakers, identified only as Dr Mohammad Malkawi, told the conference: "Islam is a supreme system. It will exist on its own." He said Muslim rule could not co-exist with any other system such as socialism, capitalism or democracy.

A series of resolutions announced by the organisers at the end of the conference included one stating: "All regimes in the Islamic world have no legitimacy in Islamic law."

Another declared that "there is no peace for the state of Israel until the state of Israel is demolished" and call-

ed all negotiations and agreements with Israel illegal.

Another resolution announced by the organisers condemned international organisations such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as "tools in the hands of the superpowers and unacceptable in Islam."

The audience backed the resolutions with cheers. Participants stood up from their seats raising their fists stamping their feet and shouting "God is great."

Reporters were barred from interviewing delegates, and television crews and press photographers were only briefly allowed into the conference.

The BBC described it as one of the biggest gatherings of Muslims ever held outside the Middle East, with speakers from countries as far apart as Pakistan and Bosnia.

News reports described those listening to them as mostly young British Muslims, most of whom are of Asian immigrant descent.

The London newspaper The Guardian quoted an unnamed speaker from Pakistan as telling the conference: "Yes, we are fundamentalists. But we are not terrorists."

Samper sworn in as Colombian President

BOGOTA, Aug 8: Ernesto Samper was sworn in as Colombia's new President on Sunday, replacing Cesar Gaviria in a ceremony held under tight security amid fears of a guerrilla attack, reports AFP.

Samper took the oath of office minutes before his Vice President, Humberto de la Calle. About 18,000 soldiers and police were deployed here for the swearing-in ceremony because of fears that the guerrillas could try to disrupt the inauguration.

Samper, who narrowly escaped death in a rebel attack five years ago, has said his top priority is ending guerrilla warfare that has plagued Colombia for 30 years.