

BRIEFLY

Arafat cancels Egypt trip: PLO chairman Yasser Arafat cancelled a planned trip to Egypt yesterday and may visit Alexandria next week, a top PLO official said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath said Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Arafat held a long telephone conversation on Sunday night during which it was decided.

Robert Mugabe in South Africa: Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe arrives Tuesday in South Africa on the first official visit by an African head of state to that country since the collapse of apartheid and the accession of President Nelson Mandela, AFP reports from Harare.

8 children die in US house fire: Eight small children, left at home without supervision, died in an early morning house fire on Sunday. An 8-year-old girl escaped the flames unharmed, AP reports from Carbondale.

The victims, all relatives ranging in age from 5 months to 7 years, were found dead inside, said Assistant Chief Harry Threlkeld of the Carbondale Fire Department.

40 Hamas activists held in Gaza: Palestinian police arrested 40 leaders and activists of the radical Hamas group today as Israel threatened to suspend the peace process after attacks which left one person dead and 10 wounded, reports AFP from Gaza City.

Palestinian police arrested 10 of the group's leaders in an overnight sweep which a Hamas spokesman in Amman denounced as a "dangerous development".

Over 90 people held in Mexico: Mexican authorities have arrested more than 90 people while investigating reports of armed groups in the poor states of Michoacan and Oaxaca but found no evidence of new rebel organisations, the Interior Ministry said on Sunday, Reuter reports from Mexico City.

Algerian journalist kidnapped: Continuing to target the press in Algeria's Muslim insurgency, the military wing of a banned Islamic fundamentalist organisation said it kidnapped a senior Algerian journalist on Sunday, AP reports from Algiers.

The group kidnapped Brahim Taouchicht, director of the magazine Horoscope, the Islamic Salvation Army said in a communique delivered to a western news agency.

Cholera claims 14 in Russia: A cholera outbreak in the southern Russian region of Dagestan has killed 14 people and a further 478 people are suffering from the disease, Interfax news agency said yesterday, Reuter reports from Moscow.

Interfax quoted an official at Russia's Emergencies Ministry as saying 40 tonnes of disinfectant had been sent to Dagestan, a semi-autonomous republic in northern Caucasus, to help tackle the outbreak.

UNHCR worker killed in Burundi: Gunmen burst into a dinner party at a UN field worker's home in northern Burundi and opened fire, killing the worker and wounding several people, officials said Sunday, AP reports from Geneva.

The field worker was identified as Jose Lopez Herrera, 36, a dual French-Nicaraguan national. He had been working for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for four months.

9 police officers murdered in SA: Gunmen murdered nine police officers in four days, including a sergeant mowed down Sunday night in an attack on an isolated police station near Cape Town, authorities said, AP reports from Cape Town.

Police have always been targeted in violence-torn South Africa, but the slaughter of officers has reached new heights in 1994 despite the election of a government representing the country's black majority.

CPI leader Sukumar Gupta dead: Veteran communist leader, journalist, freedom fighter and writer, Sukumar Gupta died at a city nursing home yesterday after a protracted illness. He was 84, PTI reports from Calcutta.

He is survived by his wife and a daughter, according to Nandagopal Bhattacharjee, CPI's State Council Secretary.

Gupta, who won the Soviet land award in 1983 for his book 'Karl Marx' was among the pioneers of the communist movement in the country.

Shining Path activists kill 3: Three people were shot dead in an early morning attack in Lima Sunday by Shining Path rebels and soldiers shot four rebels overnight in a separate incident, law enforcement officials said, AFP reports from Lima.

Shining Path activists fatally shot three workers in the Cruz de Motupe shantytown of the Peruvian capital and left guerilla propaganda in the homes of the victims, said police.

1 killed in Russian fighter crash: A 26-year-old Russian air force captain was killed when his Sukhoi-27 fighter plane crashed on a training flight near the far east city of Khabrovsk, Interfax said yesterday, reports AFP from Moscow.

80 die in Chinese coach crashes: Two coach crashes in China left 80 dead, according to press reports received yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Fifty people were killed, including 10 children aged under 10, when a vehicle carrying 70 people plunged 300 metres off a small mountain road in Yunnan province on July 29. In Xinjiang province, in the west, another coach going from Aksu to Yining turned over on August 9 killing 30 people.

Gunmen abduct Salvadorean ex-VP: A former vice president of El Salvador, Pablo Abergue, was kidnapped along with one of his daughters, police and relatives said on Sunday, Reuter reports from San Salvador.

Unidentified gunmen posing as traffic police seized Abergue, 65, and his daughter, Sandra Gaudalupo, as they drove on a highway in the southern part of the capital, a police spokesman said.

Zhirinovskiy denied German visa

BONN, Aug 15: Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on Monday turned down a visa request from the Russian radical right leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who had planned to visit various German cities, reports AP.

The government can refuse entry to foreigners who "damage or threaten the interests of the German republic," Kinkel said in a news release.

Zhirinovskiy, dubbed the "Russian Hitler" by Germany's tabloid press, has unnerved German officials by at times threatening to use nuclear weapons against Germany, at other times speaking of dividing up the continent with the Germans.

He visited Germany briefly last December after winning Russia's parliament elections, but subsequent visa requests have been turned down

World's most-wanted terrorist Carlos the Jackal arrested

PARIS, Aug 15: Carlos the Jackal, the most wanted terrorist of the past 20 years, has been arrested in Sudan and turned over to French agents, authorities said Monday, reports AP.

Sudan's Interior Minister, Al-Tayeb Ibrahim Mohammed Khier, said Carlos, born Illich Ramirez Sanchez, was arrested in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, carrying a false diplomatic passport.

The French interior ministry said the Venezuelan-born terrorist was in the custody of the DST, France's counter-intelligence agency.

At the height of his notoriety, Carlos the Jackal was a flamboyant gun-for-hire and revolutionary with a taste for the good life.

Carlos, in his 40s, began his terrorism career in 1970, when he joined the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Since then, he was involved

50,000-strong police force deployed Lanka tightens security to prevent election violence

COLOMBO, Aug 15: Thousands of police fanned out into the provinces Monday and troops were placed on alert at military bases in Sri Lanka's northeast to prevent violence during Tuesday's parliamentary polls, officials said, reports AFP.

The heavy deployment of security forces and police in the provinces and the Sri Lankan capital was part of massive safeguards implemented following rebel threats to disrupt the elections, officials said.

The tight security arrangements were put in place after 19 people were killed during one of the bloodiest election campaigns in Sri Lanka's history, prompting fears that there could be more violence after polling ends.

"Our men will be providing security to polling booths, as well as keeping the peace. Orders have been given to deal with troublemakers, whatever party they belong to," said a senior police officer.

A 50,000-strong police force have been deployed for the elections, with 38,564 manning 9,535 polling centres in 22 districts, 1,440 candidates from 13 parties and 26 independent groups are vying for 225 parliamentary seats.

Troops checked vehicles entering Colombo for bombs made by separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerillas, who have been blamed for previous bomb strikes in the city.

An island-wide curfew is to

be imposed following the poll to defuse any tensions during the announcement of election results, police said. Bars were also ordered closed for six days beginning Monday.

In a joint statement, the general secretaries of leading parties called on their supporters to "eschew violence" and cooperate with law enforcement officers.

"In taking stock of various incidents that have taken place in many parts of the country from nomination day up to now, we cannot say that we behaved ourselves in the best traditions of this peaceful nation," the statement said.

Troops in the embattled northeast have also been bracing for attacks by Tamil guerillas following clashes that left some 70 dead among government and Tamil forces in the region last week.

Military spokesman Brigadier Genunu Kulatunga said the latest violence in the region could be linked to the polls, but added that troops were prepared to counter any rebel threats "before, during or after the elections."

"It is possible those incidents were part of their strategy to destabilise and create fear among voters in Tamil areas. The Tigers may try to disrupt (the polls) since they have said so, but we can meet any threat," Kulatunga said.

LTTE forces, on Friday raided a police post on government-held Mannar Island off the northwestern coast. Ten policemen died in that attack.



Election officials carrying ballot boxes under police escort leaving Colombo for the provinces on Monday. — AFP photo

Accord to expand Palestinian powers in West Bank soon

JERUSALEM, Aug 15: Israel and the PLO, meeting this week to accelerate peace moves said on Sunday they are near agreement on expanding Palestinian powers in the occupied West Bank, reports Reuter.

"I believe we are close to a conclusion. We have a very intense week," Uri Savir, Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, told Israel radio.

Having handed over Jericho in the West Bank and most of the Gaza Strip to the PLO, Israel is due to transfer power in five spheres of life in the rest of the West Bank in what is known as "early empowerment."

Senior PLO official Nabil Shaath, asked by Israel televi-

sion, the negotiators could finish their work by month's end, said.

"Absolutely, I think we should as soon as possible." Palestinians had expected an agreement last week. Savir said the main obstacle was the handover of responsibility for the direct taxation of the West Bank's nearly one million Palestinian residents.

The negotiations on the early transfer of the powers are at a very advanced stage and what remains mainly are the negotiations on the transfer of power on the matter of direct taxation, Savir said.

The moment this matter, that is the money matter, will be settled, I believe the way is paved for the transfer of the five powers, he said.

The five powers outlined in an 11-month old peace deal, are education, health, social affairs, taxation and tourism.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat decided last week to accelerate peace move.

Another report from Gaza adds: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin went to the Gaza Strip today and accused Palestinian leaders there of not making a serious effort to prevent attacks on Israelis.

The Islamic resistance movement Hamas, which opposes the Israeli-PLO peace deal, claimed responsibility for the two attacks on Sunday on a Gaza Strip road linking an Israeli checkpoint to Jewish settlements.



A group of hopefuls pose for pictures during a break in rehearsals for a nationwide search for an Elvis Presley look-alike in London. The winner will be taking part in a special show being put on by a British TV shopping channel that will be packed with Elvis memorabilia being brought together by fans from around the world. Presley died on August 16, 1977. — AFP photo

Rocket attack on Kabul: 10 killed

KABUL, Aug 15: Ten people were killed and 16 others seriously injured today when a salvo of rockets fired by forces opposing Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani slammed into the capital, official reports said, according to AFP.

Police at the Shah-I-Naw precinct headquarters said the 26 casualties were victims of just one rocket which exploded on the pavement not far from the local meat and fruit bazaar, shattering the early morning calm.

Eyewitnesses, who were seen hosing blood from the pavement after the incident, said five people had been killed on the spot.

Shocked passers-by complained bitterly about the continuing war, now in its eighth consecutive month in Kabul, showering equal blame on all the Mujahideen factions involved.

Serbs, Muslims sign accord to halt sniping in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Aug 15: Bosnia's rival Serbs and Muslims signed a UN brokered accord on Sunday to halt sniping in Sarajevo within 24 hours and pledged to patrol high risk areas with UN peacekeepers to stop marksmen who disobey, reports Reuter.

"The sides shall undertake within 24 hours to issue publicly orders which explicitly forbid sniping activities against military personnel, civilians and UN personnel in the Sarajevo region," the agreement said.

The two sides also agreed verbally to end shooting attacks around Sarajevo airport which have shot down the UN's humanitarian airlift to the city, a UN spokesman said.

"There was no immediate word when the air bridge would resume.

The threat was contained in a letter bearing his fingerprints, verified by French police. It was the first proof in six years that he was alive.

Later that month, a bomb exploded aboard the Paris-Toulouse express, killing six people and wounding 15. The French blamed Carlos.

In April 1982, a bomb exploded in a rush-hour crowd just off the Champs Elysees, killing a pregnant woman and wounding 63 other people.

On New Year's Eve, 1983, bombs exploded in Marseilles' main railroad terminal and on

reports said he was the leader of a Libyan hit squad sent to kill President Reagan in 1981.

In March 1982, Carlos threatened to strike against the French government unless it freed two of his suspected agents, Bruno Breguet, a Swiss, and Magdalena Kaupp, a West German terrorist, who were arrested the previous month in Paris.

One hostage was Ahmed Zaki Yamani, then Saudi Arabia's oil minister, who later called Carlos a "ruthless terrorist who operates with cold-blooded, surgical precision."

By 1981, Carlos reportedly was organising covert operations for the Syrian government aimed at overthrowing the Iraqi government. Some

Off the Record

Benevolent Benazir

KARACHI: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has intervened to try to save 21-month-old Siamese twin girls, who are joined at the head, reports AP.



Since their birth in October 1992, Nida and Hira have been lying in a hospital bed here because their family is too poor to afford the 150,000 dollars it would cost to separate them. Their father, Anwer Jamal, earns 70 dollars a month working for a courier service.

Several weeks ago Benazir read a newspaper story about the twins and offered to pay for the surgery, which is expected to take place in the next few months in the United States or Britain, said Dr Iqtidar Hamid Bhatti, a leading neurosurgeon.

But Bhatti said the twins share both the skull and brain. "One of them is most likely to die on the operating table, while the other has only a poor chance at survival," he told The Associated Press.

Jamal wants to go ahead with the operation. The twins were among triplets and their sister is healthy. The Siamese twins are lively and quick: to smile unless they want to be moved or played with, the nurses say. Then they howl.

"I have faith in God that both my daughters will survive the surgery," said Jamal. "And if that is not possible then I will leave it to the doctor to decide which one will live."

But some at the National Institute of Child Health, where the twins are being treated, oppose spending the money on an operation that has only a slim chance of success.

Thousands of children die every year in this country because of lack of proper hospital facilities and medicine," Dr. Zeenat Isani, head of the institute, told the Associated Press.

"It is much better to invest the money in the hospital which could help save hundreds of lives."

Snakes to rid city of rodents

TEL AVIV: The Tel Aviv authorities, facing a plague of rats mice and moles in the city, have found a new ally in their battle against rodents — black snakes, reports AFP.

A snake breeder Yosef Cohen, has offered the services of 12 of his non-venomous stock to the public, the municipality said Sunday.

The snakes will be a rapid deployment force, returning to their cages promptly after each operation to avoid scaring the public.

Cohen said his method was preferable to setting traps for rodents or baiting them with poisoned food which could equally harm domestic pets.

Rao wooing Muslims ahead of state polls

NEW DELHI, Aug 15: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, wooing Muslims ahead of state elections, said today he had doubled the strength of an anti-riot police force and approved a finance corporation for India's minorities, reports Reuter.

Rao, delivering an Independence Day speech on nationwide television, said 10 Rapid Action Force (RAF) battalions comprised of majority Hindus and minority Muslims had been formed — twice as many as the government had promised last year.

The special RAF police force is seen by Muslims as a protection against Hindu militants, India's ordinary police forces are usually dominated by the Hindu majority.

The RAF was originally formed following 1992 ethnic riots sparked by a dispute over a shrine in the northern town of Ayodhya. Some 2,500 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in the violence.

Analysts say Rao's ruling Congress Party is keen to win back Muslim supporters, alienated by its perceived indifference towards Hindu militants, ahead of elections in 10 of the nation's 26 states later this year and in early 1995.

Lacing his Hindi language speech with expressions from the Muslim minority's Urdu tongue, Rao said the government had approved a fund to improve business opportunities for Muslims and other minorities.

Choppers spray chemicals over ROK students rally

SEOUL, Aug 15: South Korean police deployed helicopters today to spray chemicals over students taking part in an outlawed pro-unification rally, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

"We don't know what it is. But if it gets on your skin, it burns and hurt," said one witness as he showed several small white dots on his red shirt.

Two helicopters continuously sprayed the chemicals over students as some ran for cover and others used umbrellas to cover their heads.

There were no violent clashes reported at the rally. Earlier, thousands of students battled with riot police, who fired hundreds of volleys of tear gas and charged into the Seoul national university campus to break up the rally.

Reports said about 100 students and police were injured during the clashes, which began on Sunday night.

"It was really bad. There were about five students beating up this one policeman. There must have been serious injuries on both sides," said one witness.

Riot police used tear gas and charged into the Seoul National University campus on Sunday night after thousands of students opened the outlawed pro-unification rally.

Police failed to break up the rally on their first attempt and charged the campus again early on Monday as students fought back with iron and stones.

Defying a massive police presence and waving colourful banners, more than 10,000 students had massed at the campus for Sunday's rally called to mark the 49th anniversary today of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule.

Kuwait buys 218 US tanks

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 15: Kuwait has sent a military delegation to the United States to take delivery of a first batch of M-1A2 Abrams main battle tanks, the Arab Times daily said today, reports AFP.

Kuwait ordered 218 of the advanced tanks from the General Dynamics Land Systems division last year at a cost of two billion dollars.

The delegation left Sunday but the Arab Times did not specify how many tanks are included in the first batch. Delivery was initially set to start this month to be completed by late 1995.

The M-1A2 is an advanced version of the M-1A used by the US army in the January-February 1991 Gulf War that freed Kuwait from a seven-month Iraqi occupation.

Before the August 1990 Iraqi invasion, the Kuwaiti army relied on 150 M-84 tanks, a Yugoslavian-built model of the Soviet T-72.