

BRIEFLY

10 die in Salvadorean jail riot: Ten people died and 16 were injured when hundreds of armed inmates clashed with guards during an attempted mass escape from El Salvador's central prison, authorities said on Saturday, reports Reuters from San Salvador.

More than 100 police and soldiers had surrounded La Esperanza Prison, which houses some 2,300 prisoners about 5 miles (8 km) north of the capital, and had taken control of most of the compound, said Raul Somoza, Deputy Minister of Justice.

Russian border guard kills 3: A Russian guard opened fire on a border post in southern Russia on Sunday, killing three of his colleagues and wounding another six, Itar-Tass news agency said. Reuters reports from Moscow.

It quoted a border guards spokesman as saying the guard had been disarmed and detained. There was no immediate explanation for the incident, in Novorossiysk region north of the Caucasus.

4 die in German plane crash: Two small planes collided on Sunday over a Bavarian lake popular with tourists, plunging into the water and killing four people in the aircraft, police said, AFP reports from Passau.

The victims were two men and a woman from Austria who were flying in one of the planes and a man from the Passau area of southern Germany who was flying alone in the other plane. The aircraft crashed around noon in clear weather and fell into the lake, near Kirchdorf in southern Germany.

Floods claim 187 in Gujarat: Rampaging monsoon floods have killed 187 people and displaced thousands in the western Indian state of Gujarat, newspapers said yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Two girls and a man drowned in the coastal state over the weekend, as major rivers swollen by pounding rains submerged vast areas, the Times of India and other dailies reported.

US suspends aid to Lesotho: The United States government on Sunday suspended all economic aid to the tiny Southern African mountain Kingdom of Lesotho following a royal coup which ousted the government of Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle, AFP reports from Maseru.

The British government earlier warned King Letsie III that it will "reconsider" its aid programme unless he reinstates the elected government in the former British protectorate.

Tunisian train mishap claims 21: Twenty-one people were killed and 89 injured on Saturday when two trains collided in the worst rail crash in Tunisian history, it was announced on Sunday, AFP reports from Tunis.

Tunisian state television showed pictures of the crash at Kalaa-Syihra near Sousse, 150 kilometres (90 miles) south of Tunis. Several carriages had jumped the rails and lay mangled at the trackside.

UN peacekeepers kill 2 Somalis:

UN peacekeepers from Nigeria shot dead two Somalis and captured eight others in Somalia on Saturday when gunmen attacked their convoy outside the southern port Merca, a military spokesman said, Reuters reports from Nairobi.

"The Nigerians managed to kill two of the attackers and captured eight of them," UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) military spokesman Major Richard McDonald told Reuters in Nairobi by telephone.

27 die as Kurds, troops clash: Turkish army troops mounted a weekend offensive against Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey that left 22 militants and five soldiers dead, an official statement disclosed on Sunday, AFP reports from Ankara.

It said the army operations on Saturday and Sunday targeted the regions of Bitlis and Batman, where guerrillas from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have been fighting for independence since 1984.

7 die in Filipino sea battles: Four suspected smugglers and three navy personnel were killed in two separate sea battles in the southern Philippines over the weekend, naval officials said on Sunday, AFP reports from Zamboanga.

Cholera cases double in S Russia: The number of cholera cases has more than doubled in the past week in southern Russia with hundreds infected and more cases being reported daily, Russia's Ministry for Emergency Situations said Monday, AP reports from Moscow.

Eighteen people have died from the intestinal disease since the epidemic broke out in late July in the southern republic of Dagestan, ministry spokesman Karl Smolnikov said.

Egypt hangs 5 fundamentalists: Egypt yesterday hanged five Muslim militants for an assassination attempt on Interior Minister Hassan Al-Ali which killed three people, the official Egyptian news agency reported, AFP says from Cairo.

They were members of the Al-Jihad (holy war) fundamentalist group's military wing Talaah Al-Fatah (vanguard of the conquest).

6 criminals executed in China: The authorities in southern Fujian province have executed six people for murder, robbery and rape, while handing down stiff prison terms to 25 other criminals, the China News Service (CNS) said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Moscow remembers '91 coup victims: Government officials and ordinary Muscovites laid flowers and paid tribute Sunday to the three young men killed three years ago as they helped thwart the attempted Soviet coup, AP reports from Moscow.

Baskets of flowers were laid at the men's graves in Vagankovo cemetery on behalf of the Kremlin, the city and both houses of Parliament.

Another N Korean defects to South: A North Korean man who escaped a Siberian logging camp arrived in Seoul yesterday, becoming the 40th defector from the isolated communist state so far this year, AP reports from Seoul.

Han Hoi Gil defected through an unidentified third country after fleeing a North Korean logging camp in Siberia, the Foreign Ministry said in a terse news release.

Rivals used Indian pilots in bid to kill me: Hekmatyar

CHARASIAB, Afghanistan, Aug 22: Afghan faction leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who survived a recent multiple jet strike on his residence, Sunday accused his rivals of using Indian pilots in the attempt to kill him, reports AFP.

"They were not local pilots, they were Indians," Hekmatyar told AFP in an interview at his Charasiab headquarters some 25 kms south east of Kabul.

The Hezb-i-Islami faction leader also claimed Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani's airforce were sending jet engines to New Delhi for servicing.

"It is very clear that Indians are supporting them, with cash, pilots, technicians and repairing their aircraft," charged Hekmatyar.

Another report from New Delhi adds: The Indian govern-

ment said on Monday that it was not backing the Kabul regime in its war against faction leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and denied that Indian pilots had tried to assassinate him.

"This allegation is totally false, totally false," Minister of state for external affairs Raghunandan Lal Bhatia told AFP. "We are in no way involved in (the fighting in) Afghanistan."

"The government of India wants that Afghans should settle their differences themselves without any external interference. India wants a united, independent Afghanistan," he said.

Bhatia's comments followed charges on Sunday by Hekmatyar, who survived a multiple jet strike against his personal residence earlier this

month, that his rivals were using Indian pilots in an attempt to kill him.

Contrary to reports from the state media Hekmatyar was not physically disabled in the jet strike nine days ago — the Hezb leader appeared for his 30-minute interview without any sign of limp or stutter, dispelling claims of severe leg and vocal injuries. "I was absolutely untouched. I was not wounded at all," Hekmatyar countered.

The Hezb leader, whose current bout of fighting in a bid to topple Rabbani has gone on for eight months non-stop, said his home was targeted by five jets with around 16 high-explosive bombs, 15 air-to-surface rockets and two cluster bombs.

"We were a total of 30 people," said Hekmatyar. "Not one

got wounded, except a guest who was hit by a flying stone."

He said his anti-aircraft defences "were on active duty" but the attack "came suddenly" and was over quickly.

Hekmatyar said his men were armed with the famous American made stinger surface-to-air missiles which had significantly contributed to the defeat of the Soviet army during the 1979-89 war.

But, the missiles were not fired, he said, without explaining why.

Hekmatyar denied accusations from the Rabbani government that he is supported by various elements in neighbouring Pakistan.

The Hezb leader stated that "this terrorist activity (the bombing raid on his home) is a symbol of their weakness, and predicted an imminent defeat for his rivals."



French General Jean Claude Lafourcade (R) salutes Colonel Tadele Gabreslost, commander of African units in the UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) on Sunday in Cyangugu, during a ceremony marking the handing over of the security in the area to Ethiopian blue helmets. — AFP photo

France withdraws from Rwanda

BUKAVU, Zaire, Aug 22: France withdrew from Rwanda at the end of its humanitarian mission and frightened Hutu refugees desperate to flee into Zaire caused chaos at a closed border port, reports Reuters.

After hours of confusion on Sunday, refugees abandoned the closed Ruzizi-1 border bridge in a hailstorm and took a riverside trail as world spread rapidly that another crossing was open 12 km (eight miles) downriver.

There was a standoff at Bukavu Ruzizi bridge on Sunday morning when Zairean paratroopers pushed and shoved angry refugees and fired into the air to stop them storming across.

The atmosphere improved as the day wore on. At nightfall hundreds of Hutus were on the move after local leaders had spread the news that the Zaireans had agreed to open Ruzizi-2, a little-used bridge further south.

S Korea-US war games begin

SEOUL, Aug 22: South Korean and US forces, including the Seventh Fleet, began today war games which North Korea said are designed to prevent a breakthrough in its talks with Washington, reports Reuters.

A South Korean Defence Ministry spokesman said the Seventh Fleet would take part in the computerised military exercises for the first time to test its operational control of the South Korean navy during a war.

"South Korea and the United States have agreed to appoint the commander of the Seventh Fleet as the commander of the naval component of the joint US-South Korean forces at the time of war," he

said. North Korea denounced the exercises, codenamed Ulchi Focus Lens, as a plot to undermine a deal with the United States to end confrontation over its suspected nuclear arms programme.

The South Korean

Curfew relaxed in Colombo

COLOMBO, Aug 22: Shops and offices opened and more vehicles plied the roads of the Sri Lankan capital Colombo today as curfew was relaxed after last week's parliamentary elections, officials and witnesses said, reports AFP.

spokesman said the Seventh Fleet would not be deployed around the Korean peninsula but a computer link-up would be arranged for simulated war games.

The war games are command post exercises designed to improve cooperation between UN and South Korea for "contingency operations," a US military spokesman said.

The annual two-week exercise, which also involves 36,000 US troops stationed in South Korea, are the 19th in a series.

North Korea says joint US-South Korean military exercises are rehearsals for northward invasion and demanded they be scrapped.



Former UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar (C) walks with his wife Marcela Temple through the neighbourhood of Villa El Salvador in Lima, Peru on Sunday. Perez de Cuellar unexpectedly announced on August 21 that he would run next year for the presidency of Peru. — AFP photo

44 killed in Moroccan plane crash

RABAT, Aug 22: A Moroccan airliner crashed in the Atlas Mountains near the southern Moroccan seaside resort of Agadir on Sunday night, killing all 44 people on board, the Civil Aviation Authority said, reports Reuters.

A spokesman said the passengers included 16 foreign tourists, among them eight Italians, some French nationals and a Kuwaiti prince and his wife. Their identities were not immediately available.

The European Aerospace ATK-42 propeller-driven aircraft was carrying 40 passengers and a crew of four on a domestic flight from Agadir to Casablanca, the spokesman told Reuters.

PLO, Israel open talks on transfer of powers in WB

CAIRO, Aug 22: Palestinian and Israeli negotiators today opened what they hoped would be their last round of talks on an early transfer of powers to the Palestinians in the West Bank, focusing on budget and taxation issues, the top negotiators said, reports AFP.

"We are going to finish this agreement on early empowerment," said Nabil Shaath, who is heading the Palestinian delegation in the talks.

"We had agreed in Alexandria that we conclude this week so we are staying here day and night," Shaath added, referring to talks last week in the northern Egyptian city.

"I am optimistic that this is the last session," said General Danny Rothchild, who is heading the Israeli negotiating team.

Off the Record



Photo showing a commemorative bronze plaque, on sale at a Beijing bookstore on Sunday, of Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping who celebrates his 90th birthday on August 22. — AFP photo

Deng's birthday passes with little fanfare

BEIJING: China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, turned 90 Monday, but the auspicious event passed with little fanfare, official or otherwise, reports AP.

Several major newspapers carried front-page file photos of Deng and commentaries praising his contributions to the nation, but none said explicitly that today was his birthday.

They did carry lengthy articles that make it clear that despite the absence of public fanfare, the pragmatic policies of China's "general designer" or "great architect," as Deng is sometimes called, clearly remain the official line.

Over the past 10-some years, China's economic development has been so fast, the changes so momentous, Deng Xiaoping's name can't be separated from that, the official People's Daily said in a front-page editorial that also carried a 1984 file photo of the chain-smoking Deng with a cigarette.

Diana dogged male friend with silent phone calls?

LONDON: Princess Diana hit back today at allegations in the weekend press that she dogged a male friend with silent telephone calls, reports AFP.

In a rare interview, she told the daily Mail there was "absolutely no truth" to claims that she made calls in 1992 and 1993 to London art dealer Oliver Hoare, who reportedly acted as a go-between the Princess and Prince Charles in a bid for a reconciliation — they separated in December 1992.

The tabloid News of the World reported Sunday that police had traced several calls from Diana's apartments in Kensington Palace to Hoare's home for several months either side of the separation.

The paper said Diana herself had made the silent calls, while other papers reported that one of her staff had done it. Police at Scotland Yard refused to comment.

"What have I done to deserve this?" the Princess told the paper. "I feel I am being destroyed. There is absolutely no truth in it."

She said of Hoare: He is a friend, he has helped me. They are trying to make out I was having an affair with this man or had some sort of fatal attraction... it is simply untrue and so unfair.

She warned: "Do you realise that whoever is trying to destroy me is inevitably damaging the institution of the monarchy as well?"

Justifying her decision to challenge the claims by talking to the press, she said: "What should I do? Close my ears and eyes to it all?"

Conservative parliamentarian Sir Teddy Taylor demanded a police inquiry into the leak about the phone calls.

"Leaks of this sort are becoming normal practice," he said. "I think these leaks are filthy and disreputable."

7-year-old Mercedes driver!

HONG KONG: Police said Monday they charged two Hong Kong parents who let their seven-year-old son drive their Mercedes without a licence or insurance, reports AP.

Michael Shek, a primary school student who said he wants to race formula One cars when he's older, was reported to police Sunday after he was spotted driving around the car park outside his home, Hong Kong newspapers said.

Michael's father, businessman Shek Lin-seng, told the Hong Kong Standard that his son was an excellent driver who always asked for the keys before taking the Mercedes for a spin.

"He amuses himself driving from one level of the car park to the next level and back. He knows how to handle the gears, the brakes, everything," the newspaper quoted Shek as saying.

Muslim rebels set afire 8 schools in Algeria

TUNIS, Aug 22: Algerian Muslim militants have set fire to at least eight schools in the past three days, stepping up a campaign on arson after warning students and teachers early this month to stay away from centres of education, reports Reuters.

Algeria's official news agency APS said two schools in the capital were set ablaze late last week, along with two high schools in Boumerdes Province some 40 km (25 miles) east of Algiers.

Four classrooms were damaged by fire in Bouria 90 km (60 miles) east of Algiers. 10 set ablaze in the western province of Chlef on Friday and 11 more burnt in the town of El Tarf the same day.

The militants also set fire to a school in the eastern

province of Constantine while the floors of the National Institute of Physical Sciences in the provincial capital were destroyed by fire on Saturday night, APS quoted officials as saying.

Education Minister Amar Sakhrri was quoted as saying that armed Muslim militants groups had set ablaze more than 400 schools across the country over the past two years — the bulk of the time in which Muslim fundamentalists have been battling to overthrow the government.

The Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) early this month told students and staff to stay away from schools and universities on pain of unspecified punishment and said any institutions which stayed open would be blown up or burnt.

'Singapore must defend family values'

SINGAPORE, Aug 22: Singapore must defend and strengthen Asian family values to avoid the social and economic ills plaguing Britain and the United States, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong told a National Day rally on Sunday, reports Reuters.

"America's and Britain's social troubles, a growing underclass which is violence-prone, uneducated, drug taking, sexually promiscuous, is the direct result of their family unit becoming redundant or non-functional," Goh said.

"Our institutions and basic policies are in place to sustain high economic growth. But if we lose our traditional values, our family strength and cohesion, we will lose our vibrancy and decline. This is the intangible factor in the success of East Asian economies."

To reinforce the strength of the family, Goh said the government would give a grant of Singapore dollars 30,000 (US 19,850 dollars) to help adult offspring buy public housing near their parents.

Goh also said the government had decided to revoke the right of unwed mothers to buy public housing direct from the Housing Development Board (HDB). In the future they would have to buy them on the higher-priced resale market.

"HDB currently allows unmarried mothers to buy HDB flats direct as well as on the resale market. One thousand unmarried mothers have done so," Goh said.

"This rule implicitly accepts unmarried motherhood as a respectable part of our society. This is wrong. By removing the

stigma, we may encourage more women to have children without getting married."

About one in three children in the US are born out of wedlock versus one in 100 children in Singapore.

Heavy reliance on welfare programme such as aid to single mothers can have disastrous consequences for an economy, Goh said. He noted one US programme for single and jobless mothers costs US taxpayers some US dollars 34 billion per year.

Compassion or criminals could also be misguided, he said. Singapore's tough crime laws came under international scrutiny earlier this year when American teenager Michael Fay was jailed and flogged with a rattan cane for spray painting cars.

"When Michael Fay was

carried for vandalism, the US media accused us of being barbaric (but) we know from experience that strict punishments deter criminals," Goh said. Despite his concerns over values, Goh said he was "reasonably confident" Singapore would continue to do well for the next five to 10 years.

The economy grew 9.9 per cent last year and 10.5 per cent in the first six months of 1994. The World Bank says Singapore has the eighteenth highest per capita income of 230 countries in the world, ahead of Hong Kong and New Zealand.

"The region is booming. We are seeing the greatest transformation in human history since the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century," Goh said.

Russia, Germany hold talks on N-material smuggling

MOSCOW, Aug 22: Russia and Germany held high-level talks on Saturday on alleged smuggling of radioactive materials out of Russia, as Bonn warned that future aid to Moscow may be linked to its cooperation on the issue, reports AFP.

German intelligence chief Bernd Schmiedbauer and his Russian counterpart Sergei Stepashin held five hours of talks accompanied by officials from the Atomic Energy, Interior and Foreign Ministers.

Russian counter espionage service (FSK) spokesman Alexander Mikhailov indicated afterwards that the mood of the talks was conciliatory rather than confrontational.

The "working atmosphere of the meeting contrasted radically with the accusatory

tone of the Western mass-media. He told the Interfax agency saying delegates would rest Sunday and resume their discussions on Monday.

The meeting came after 350 grammes of plutonium and several hundred grammes of lithium-6, used to make hydrogen bombs was seized in Munich aboard a Lufthansa aircraft arriving from Moscow on August 10.

For the past week Germany has said the plutonium seized in Munich came from Russia, the magazine Der Spiegel reported that the material was from the Bieliars nuclear power station in Siberia.

Moscow disputes the charge, on Saturday Mikhailov told Interfax the plutonium found on the Lufthansa aircraft was "probably not" from Russia.