

# BRIEFLY

**Salvadorean jail riots claim 13:** Thirteen people were killed and 30 injured in two separate prison riots sparked by discontent over living conditions, officials said on Monday. AFP reports from San Salvador.

Three people died in clashes at La Union Prison that lies 183 kilometers (114 miles) southeast of the capital on Monday. That uprising came on the heels of a weekend uprising in a San Salvador jail that killed 10 and injured 23.

**Guatemalan rebels kill 3:** Guatemalan leftist rebels are believed to have killed two soldiers and one civilian in three separate attacks in the western Solola Province, the army said on Monday. Reuter reports from Guatemala City.

Guerrillas allegedly from the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG) attacked a military base in Chupol, early Monday killing the two soldiers and wounding ten others, army spokeswoman Edith Vargas said.

**Abacha appoints army, navy chiefs:** Nigeria's military ruler General Sani Abacha on Monday appointed new army and navy chiefs, an official statement said. Reuter reports from Abuja.

It said Brigadier-General Alwali Kazir, commander of the First Division, was named chief of army staff and Commodore Mike Akhge, flag officer commanding the eastern naval command, was appointed chief of naval staff.

**Japan recognises Rwanda govt:** The Japanese government said on Tuesday it is recognising the new Rwanda government, established last month after bitter internal warring, AP reports from Tokyo.

Foreign Minister Yohei Kono told a news conference that Japan's ambassador to Kenya, Ginko Sato, will send a letter to Rwandan Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Vianney Ndagijimana to laud the establishment of a new Rwandan government.

**Poland, NATO jt manoeuvre in Sept:** The first joint military manoeuvres being held in Warsaw next month as part of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme will include 600 soldiers from 13 countries, the Polish Defence Ministry announced on Monday. AFP reports from Warsaw.

The manoeuvres, code-named "Cooperative Bridge 94" and taking place between September 12-16 in a training field in Biedrusko, in western Poland, will focus mainly on joint exercises in the framework of international peace missions that would be carried out by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

**Java forests razed by fire:** Fires have razed a total of 13,421 hectares (33,149 acres) of forest in central Java since the beginning of the year, a press report said yesterday, reports AFP from Jakarta.

The Kompas daily quoted a spokesman for the central Java unit of the state-owned forestry company Inhutani as saying that fires since June accounted for over 750 hectares (1,853 acres) of burnt forests.

**2 cops shot in New York subway:** Two police officers and a bystander were shot in a crowded subway station on Monday when police from different agencies ended up firing at each other during an arrest, officials said, AP reports from New York.

Two uniformed Transit Authority officers were working the mezzanine of the subway station at Lexington Avenue and 53rd Street in midtown Manhattan. Four plainclothes officers were on a different platform working a pickpocket detail.

**1,118 kg of cannabis seized in HK:** Hong Kong narcotics agents have seized 1,118 kilograms (2,460 pounds) of cannabis worth about 67 million Hong Kong dollars (8.59 million US) — the largest haul in two years, a government spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The cannabis was reportedly found on a deserted beach on outlying Lantau island late Monday, the spokesman said.

**Swedish woman held in Bangkok:** A Swedish woman has been arrested at Bangkok's international airport and charged with trafficking 7.8 kilograms (17.2 pounds) of heroin, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Bangkok.

Eva K Carolina Johnson, 29, was arrested on Saturday while waiting to board a Swiss air flight to Zurich, police said. The heroin was found in a false compartment in her suitcase.

**Guangdong police arrests 60,000:** Authorities in one south China province have arrested more than 60,000 people in a month-long crackdown on drugs, gambling and prostitution, a China-backed Hong Kong daily said on Tuesday. AP reports from Hong Kong.

Police uncovered about 6,500 vice-related cases during the crackdown in Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong and is one of China's fastest growing provinces. Wen Wei Po said.

**4 yrs for blowing up Lenin's statue:** A 22-year-old man was sentenced to four years in prison and fined 75 million roubles (about 35,000 dollars) on Monday for blowing up a bronze statue of Vladimir Lenin, a news agency reported. AP says from Moscow.

A court in Vladikavkaz, the capital of Russia's strife-torn North Ossetia province, found Vladimir Lenin guilty of vandalism for destroying the nearly 50-year-old monument in the centre of the city. Interfax said.

**Murayama in Manila:** Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama arrived in Manila on Tuesday on the first leg of a four-nation Asian tour marked by controversy over Japan's wartime accountability. AP reports from Manila.

President Fidel Ramos was to hold welcoming ceremonies at Malacanang Palace, and later the Japanese leader was to visit the shrine of the Philippine national hero Jose Rizal. Murayama was also to meet with Senate President Edgardo Angara and House Speaker Jose de Venecia and attend a state dinner hosted by Ramos.

**Israel arrests 12 Hamas men:** Israeli security forces have arrested 12 Palestinians accused of belonging to the militant Islamic group Hamas, the army said on Monday. AP reports from Jerusalem.

They were seized in Sunday night raids in two villages near the town of Jenin in the northern West Bank, an army statement said. It did not specify any charges against the men.

# Opposition demands withdrawal of Indian troops from Somalia

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Indian opposition today demanded the immediate withdrawal of Indian troops serving with the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia, following the killing of seven soldiers a day earlier, reports AFP.

Members of three opposition parties in parliament also urged Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao to convene an all-party meeting to decide if the Indian army should continue to be in Somalia.

Vijay Kumar Malhotra of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said the 5,000-strong Indian contingent, the largest in Somalia, should be called back.

He was supported by Digvijay Singh and Inder Kumar Gujral of the rival factions of the centrist Janata Dal and E Balanadan of the Communist

Party of India (Marxist). The opposition demand followed the death of seven Indian soldiers and injuries to eight others in an ambush on Monday in the central Somali village of Burleego.

Somali gunmen firing mortar and anti-aircraft weapons staged the attack, taking to 106 the number of UN peacekeepers killed in Somalia since May 1993.

An Indian Defence Ministry spokesman said the troops fought back "with great valour," and reinforcements which rushed to the scene destroyed one of the attackers' armed vehicles and captured another.

Balanadan said the Indian army should have never been sent to Somalia. "It was done to aid the American designs," he charged.

Gujral, a former foreign minister, said the Indian soldiers had died for a cause about which "we have doubts. I cannot understand why India contributed troops in an area where the country has no vital interests."

Two members of the ruling Congress (I) Party, however, defended the Indian decision to send soldiers to Somalia.

Earlier, an Indian Defence Ministry official expressed "deep concern" over the killing of the soldiers. He said: "The attack is a matter of alarm and deep concern to us."

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, the Security Council and Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali condemned the attack as "treacherous and cowardly."

Boutros-Ghali said in a statement the attack was de-

plorable because the UN was carrying out a mandate to "assist the Somalis in re-establishing their political institutions and achieving peace and stability."

Security Council President Yuli Vorontsov of Russia told reporters members had been stunned by the news and that they "condemn this action in the strongest way."

Somalis said they suspected Aided's Habre Gedir militia men were behind the ambush on the Indians.

Habre Gedir forces have in recent weeks seized several southern and central areas of Somalia including the port of Merca and the remote outpost of Belet Huen, where they captured a company of Zimbabwean soldiers and killed one of them.



Two supporters of an independent candidate in the Syrian general elections for the Council of the People, Mohammed Zarkali, set up a banner showing his name on Monday in Damascus. The elections will be held August 24-25. At the rear is a banner showing a portrait of Syrian President Assad. — AFP photo

# Lankan politicians ordered to surrender illegal arms

COLOMBO, Aug 23: Sri Lanka's new government under Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga moved today to disarm politicians who had been issued with weapons by the previous administration, reports AFP.

The State Minister for Defence in a statement said it would consider an amnesty for those who surrender firearms, but politicians detected with illegal weapons would be prosecuted under the penal code.

Security sources said police had already launched a house-to-house search for illegal armaments in areas where there was violence in the run-up to last week's parliamentary election won by Kumaratunga's People's Alliance party.

The previous United National Party administration had given thousands of automatic rifles to its members during an anti-government uprising in 1988 and most of the guns were not returned after the rebellion was crushed in 1990.

Before the election, Chandrika's People's Alliance and political allies accused the governing United National Party of using these weapons to intimidate their political opponents.

Twenty-four people were killed in street fighting in the month before the election that brought Chandrika to power and ousted the United National

Party for the first time in 17 years. From 1987 to 1990, the government armed politicians with pistols, rifles and shot-guns to help protect them from People's Liberation Front radical trying to topple the government.

However, earlier attempts to retrieve these weapons have failed, the officials said.

The Socialist Peoples' Alliance has pledged to end ethnic violence in the country by holding unconditional talks with the Tamil rebels who have been fighting for a separate homeland for 11 years.

# Lankan minister vows to solve refugee problem within one year

COLOMBO, Aug 23: Sri Lanka's new Rehabilitation Minister Mohamed Ashraff said on Monday he planned to work himself out of his job by ensuring that there would be no more refugees in the island within one year, reports Reuter.

"My policy is to abolish this ministry as early as possible," he told his first news conference after his Muslim Congress and its ally, the People's Alliance, won a narrow victory in last week's general election.

# PRD will form govt in Chiapas if ruling party wins polls

SAN CRISTOBAL De Las Casas, Mexico, Aug 23: Opposition leaders in a restive southern state say they will set up a rival local government if official results confirm a win for the ruling party, reports AP.

Election in Chiapas state, a poor region the government fought armed rebels earlier this year, coincided with Sunday's nation vote for President and the legislature.

Preliminary results in Chiapas gave wide lead to Eduard Robledo Rincon of the Institutional Revolutionary Party's candidate for governor. With 45 per cent of precincts counted, Robledo was leading with 49.1 per cent of the vote to 31.5 per cent for Amado Avendano Figueroa of the leftist Democratic Revolution Party or PRD.

But if the official results don't give him victory, Avendano will call a popular assembly to replace the state Congress, write a new state constitution and call new elections, his wife and party leaders said.

On Sunday, the PRD will launch demonstrations and other acts of civil disobedience through December 8, the

day, the governor-elect takes office. Avendano's wife Concepcion Villaforte said. Avendano, 60, was unable to campaign after being hurt at traffic crash last month, and Villaforte took over for him.

# Rampant rigging in Mexican polls alleged

MEXICO CITY, Aug 23: Mexican and foreign observers said vote fraud and irregularities, especially in rural areas, tainted Ernesto Zedillo's apparent presidential victory, reports AP.

A coalition of some 380 non-partisan Mexican organisations monitoring the vote said there were "serious irregularities" in a substantial number of polling places.

"Zedillo won the election. However, we have elements to suspect how he won the election," said Sergio Aguayo, a leader of Civic Alliance, Mexico's largest electoral monitoring coalition.

Election workers permitted people to vote more than once in 9 per cent of the polls, according to Alliance observers at 731 polls. Aguayo said.

Avendano has aligned himself with the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army and its demands for democracy, justice and improved social services, especially for the state's impoverished Indian peasants party leaders said.

There was no immediate response from the armed rebels, who promised to withdraw into the mountains and stay out of the way on election day — though they have called for widespread civil disobedience to protest any electoral fraud.

Domingo Lopez Angel, Federal deputy candidate for the PRD, told a rally in the plaza that the state election were wracked by widespread fraud.

"We have to defend our vote yes or no?" he asked the crowd of more than 1,000 people.

"Yes," the crowd shouted back.

Although many Mexicans say Sunday's elections were fairer than past ballots, thousands of people in Chiapas were prevented from voting.

A nationwide shortage of absentee ballots was especially acute in Chiapas because many peasants were displaced.

# 4 dissidents held in Myanmar

YANGON, Myanmar, Aug 23: Four people, including three prominent critics of Myanmar's military junta, have been arrested on charges of having links with rebel groups and giving false, anti-government information to foreign media and diplomats, an official newspaper reported Tuesday, says AP.

The Myanmar Ahlin Daily reported that opposition politician Khin Maung Swe, writer San San-Nwe, and journalist Sein Hla Ol were implicated by a dental surgeon who was caught with anti-government pamphlets in his luggage on his way from Yangon to Bangkok on July 2.

The newspaper said the three were members of the National League for Democracy, the opposition party that won a landslide victory in a 1990 general election but was prevented by the junta from assuming power.

Amnesty International called on Myanmar authorities two weeks ago to make known the whereabouts of the three dissidents, provide them with internationally recognised conditions of detention and either press criminal charges against them or release them.

The newspaper said the arrests were sparked by the seizure of pamphlets from dental surgeon Khin Zaw Win.

# Off the Record

## Youth eats 9,500 peppers to impress Guinness almanac

NEW DELHI: An Indian youth who attempted a variety of stunts for a mention in the Guinness Book of World Record ate 9,500 peppers in the hope of achieving fame at last, the Press Trust of India reported Monday, says AFP.

Parthasarathy chewed and washed down the peppers with water in five minutes before a big audience in the southern town of Coimbatore Sunday, PTI said.

It was his 83rd bid to impress the publishers of the Guinness almanac.

The local hero had in the past gulped down 510 bean seeds, swallowed 35 eggs in 15 seconds, eaten a kilogram of ice and pushed a mustard seed along a half kilometre route with his nose, it added.

None of these feats won him fame. Indians have grown the world's longest moustache and nails, sat on a treetop for weeks on end and walked backwards to be recognised as achievers.

The erstwhile royal family of Jaipur state is credited by the publishers as staging the world's most expensive wedding. Jaipur's Dowager princess, Maharani Gayatri Devi, is also recognised as holding the largest margin in a parliamentary election.

## Men kissing men in public banned

ANKARA: The Turkish town of Adana has banned men kissing other men in public, on the grounds that it is not very sanitary — although other mixes of kisses are deemed all right, reports Reuter.

"It is unhygienic for two men to bring their cheeks together in Adana's summer heat of 40 degrees (104 Fahrenheit)," said Zeki Eker, an official at Adana municipality in southern Turkey, on Monday. "Just imagine what could happen with all that sweat. Besides, it is against our religion."

People in mainly Muslim Turkey traditionally kiss friends of either sex on the cheek in greeting and men embracing or holding hands is a common sight.

Eker said the municipality had put of posters to try to boost the campaign, started in January when the mayor refused to kiss male wellwishers during his pre-election rounds.

"Such kissing was banned as a result of that campaign. We don't interfere with women kissing women or men and women kissing," Eker said, without explaining how this combination avoided the effects of the summer heat.

## Therapy on wheels for the time-starved

NEW YORK: You've heard of the one-hour photo and dry cleaning services, of manicurists and hairstylists who attend the too-busy at home. Add to that therapy on the run for those without the hour to spend on a couch, reports AP.

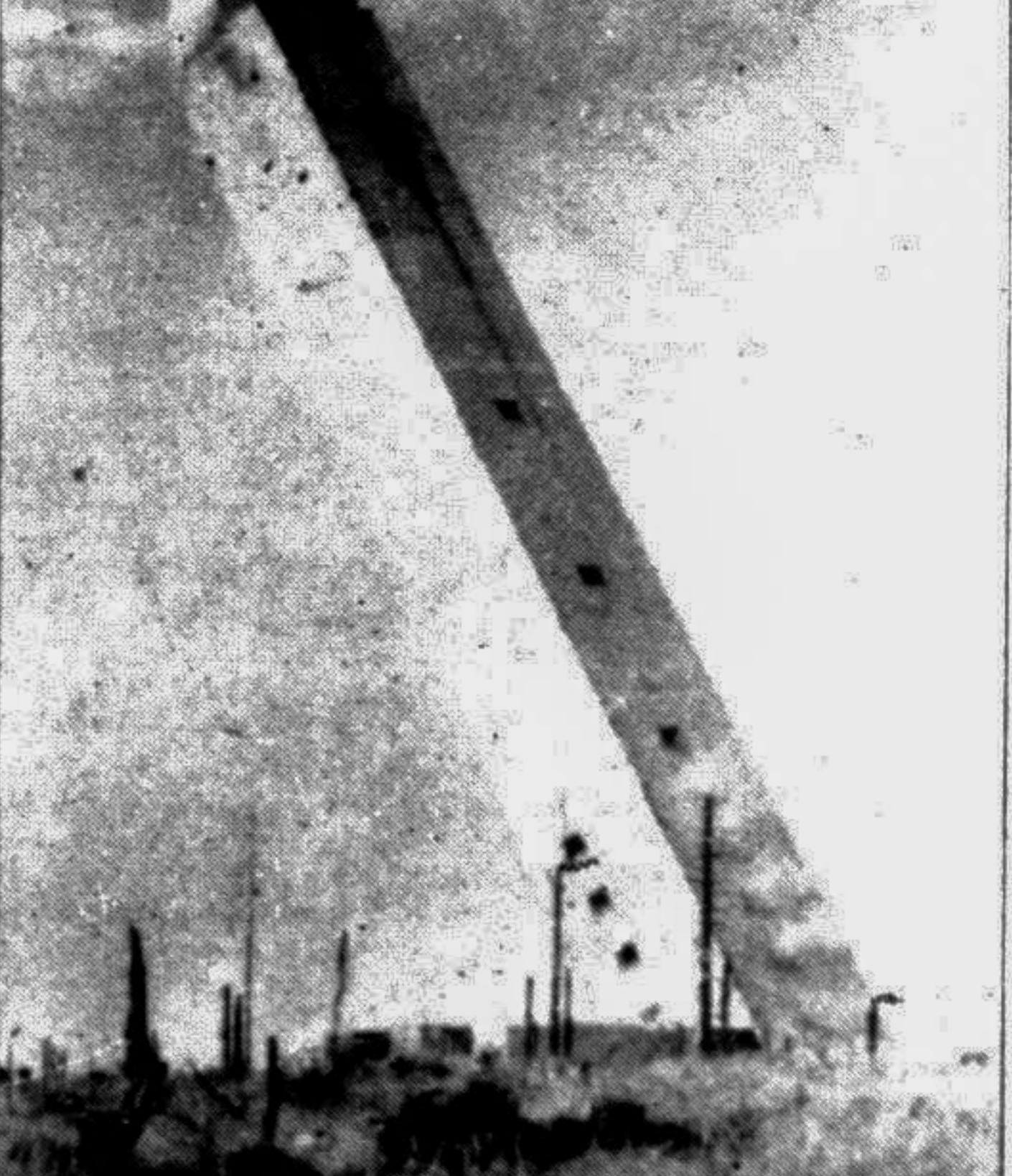
In a telling example of 1990s time-starved living, a new service set up by two New York psychologists offers therapy in a van — anywhere.

Clients can buckle up and talk about themselves to a trained psychologist while a chauffeur drives them to and from work, around the block, even en route to the airport or a business appointment.

The practice now has 40 clients, four vans and a staff of six trained in therapy ranging from Gestalt to cognitive behavioral, said Shelly Lenox, one of the founders.

Susan Anderson, a client since Mobile Psychological Service PC hit the road in April, is the perfect candidate. A single mother with two young children and a fast-paced job as a merchandising director in the apparel industry, she was struggling through a divorce.

"Therapy was important and beneficial but I didn't have the time anymore," said Anderson, who leaves home in a New York suburb at 7 a.m. and returns at 8 p.m.



The "NATO Tower" long-time Braunschweig landmark goes down to shatter on the ground after explosive devices were detonated within the building on Monday. The former US watch-tower was constructed in 1972 but has not been in use for the past three years. — AFP photo

# Argentine assembly approves new constitution

BUENOS AIRES, Aug 23: A special assembly approved on Monday a new constitution that will allow President Carlos Menem to run for re-election next year. Reports AP.

The vote by a show of hands, in the provincial capital of Santa Fe, 480 kilometers (300 miles) northeast of Buenos Aires, ends three months of debate on issues ranging from abortion, to the British held Falkland Islands.

One of the amendments approved earlier allows presidents to serve consecutive terms and reduces the term from six to four years. Under the change, Menem can run in elections the government is planning for May 14, 1995.

A clause in the old charter stating that the president and vice president must be Roman Catholic was struck from the new text.

# Perennial debate on 'how many people the planet can support'

MANILA, Aug 23: The perennial debate about just how many people the planet can support has got more heated as government leaders, demographers and activists prepare to gather in Cairo for a big international conference on population next month, reports IPS.

On one side are the neo-Malthusians who believe that even the optimistic forecast of 8.7 billion human population by the year 2030 will put so much pressure on resources and natural systems that the viability of the earth's biosphere will be irreversibly undermined.

Conservative economists scoff at this apocalyptic vision and say there is nothing to worry about. They point to falling birth rates worldwide as a sign that population growth will soon stabilise and even if it does not, scientists will find

ways to produce more food. The population versus resources debate is as old as history, but some say the present academic impasse has affected decision-making and delayed intervention when it is needed most urgently.

"Here is a nightmare for democratic politics: what action to take on vital questions where experts disagree violently," writes Nathan Keyfitz of the Austria-based International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.

For academics, the debate ahead of Cairo boils down not only to mechanisms to control human over-breeding, but whether we are over-breeding in the first place. What is the optimum number of humans, and are we reaching the limit?

This debate is made more complicated because of socio-religious issues like global

inequalities, over-consumption, contraception and women's rights, and how they affect growth in the first place.

By taken just the planet's carrying capacity as a key determinant, those who warn of fishless seas, larger ozone holes, sea level rise, biological holocaust and water famines make a persuasive argument by simply pointing to the environmental degradation of the earth's poor, overcrowded regions and the effects of affluence on the biosphere.

Food production worldwide needs to grow three times in the next 50 years to keep up with population growth. But global food production per capita stopped growing in the 1980s and grain harvests have actually been shrinking since.

For whistle-blowers like Lester Brown of the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute, the signs are omi-

nous. In nearly all 90 countries where food production is falling, populations are rising. "Even in agriculturally advanced nations, there just isn't much more farmers can do," Brown says.

The scenario looks scariest in Asia where population is growing faster than the production of its staple crop, rice. According to the food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), two out of every three children in south Asia are underweight because they are hungry.

In absolute numbers there are already twice as many hungry and undernourished children in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan than in the whole of Africa.

"The spectre of famine has not touched the Asian continent in the way it has blighted Africa, but we ignore the warnings at our peril," Peter

Usher of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) told a recent conference on food production here.

The last time mass starvation threatened south Asia 20 years ago, scientists came up with miracle "green revolution" grain seeds that starved off famine. But newer hybrids and genetically-altered super rice will not be ready for at least another ten years.

Says Mahbub Hossain of the Philippine-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), "The re-emergence of the food crisis in south Asia is a real possibility unless rice research succeeds in making a breakthrough in high-yielding varieties."

If demographers might add, if nothing is done to bring down population growth rates there, Asia already has 3.3 billion people — sixty per cent of the world total. At present

rates, it will hit five billion by the year 2025.

In population conferences in Bucharest in 1974 and Mexico City in 1984, third world leaders forcefully put development ahead of birth control. Today, the roles are reversed.

Most developing countries worried by their demographic momentum are strongly pushing birth control. Population increase, they argue, is retarding development gains that are needed to lower births.

Ironically, it is the conservative economist who is now putting economic growth ahead of population. Fulfilling the unmet need for contraceptives, they say, will not solve the problem as long as parents have economic reasons to have more babies.

But here is where equity comes in: 15 per cent of the world's population is earning 79 per cent of its income.

# Russians fire warning shots at Japanese boats

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia, Aug 23: A Russian patrol boat fired warning shots at three Japanese fishing vessels in Russia's Far East on Tuesday, one week after a Japanese fisherman was wounded in another border incident, reports AP.

The Japanese boats turned back after the shots were fired, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported, quoting officials with the Pacific Border District.

Russia has repeatedly accused Japanese fishermen of poaching in Russian waters, particularly near the Kuril Islands.

The dispute over the islands, which Russia seized from Japan in the final days of World War II, is the main obstacle to improved relations between the two nations.