

## BRIEFLY

**Murayama in Singapore:**

Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama arrived in Singapore yesterday for a 48-hour official visit, the last leg of a four-nation Southeast Asian tour, AFP reports from Singapore.

Murayama, who flew in from Kuala Lumpur, was met at Singapore's Changi Airport by Trade and Industry Minister Yeo Cheow Tong. He earlier visited the Philippines and Vietnam.

**Deng's condition good:**

Deng Xiaoping, China's 90-year-old paramount leader, still takes a daily walk, according to a Politburo member and bridge partner who gave new reassurances about Deng's condition. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Ding Guangen, head of the Communist Party's powerful propaganda department, told a Hong Kong media delegation: "Comrade Xiaoping's health is very good," the Wen Wei Po newspaper reported. He still sticks to taking a daily walk to build himself up physically, Ding said.

**Kang appears in public:**

North Korean Premier Kang Song-San appeared in public this weekend, belying an earlier speculation that he might have been ousted following the reported defection of his son-in-law, a radio report said Sunday. AFP reports from Tokyo.

Kang was among those at a Pyongyang meeting on Saturday to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the publication of a "historical work" by Kim Jong-Il, heir-apparent to late North Korean President Kim Il-Sung, the Pyongyang radio report, monitored in Tokyo said.

**Moros take 37 hostages:**

Troops Sunday cordoned off an area where Muslim rebels were believed holding a group of South Koreans and Filipinos as efforts were underway to negotiate their release, AP reports from Isulan.

Police said about 30 gunmen from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front seized seven South Korean engineers and 30 Filipinos during a raid Saturday on the Shinsung Construction Corp camp near Carmen, about 910 kilometers (570 miles) south of Manila.

**Hamas kills 2 Israelis:**

The militant Muslim group Hamas said on Saturday its guerrillas slashed the throats of two Israeli construction workers near Tel Aviv, reports Reuters.

It vowed to strike twice more by the end of the year. Israeli police seized 118 Arabs for questioning over the killings, a spokesman said.

**Cleric denounces Cairo confce:**

A leading Iranian cleric said he denounced the UN world population conference to be held in Cairo next month, charging that the forum promotes abortion, Tehran Times said yesterday. AFP reports from Tehran.

Abbas Ali Amid Zanjani, an expert on Islamic law and an MP, said abortion was an "inhuman and un-Islamic practice" which amounted to "murder except in certain cases."

**Indian train mishap kills 3:**

A passenger train rammed into a stationary freight train Sunday in western India, killing 3 people and injuring 49 others, a news report said. AP says from New Delhi.

The injured were taken to a hospital in Sanjan town in Gujarat state, 150 kilometers (95 miles) from Bombay.

**Chinese dissident Wang freed:**

The former student leader of the 1989 democracy movement Wang Dan was released yesterday morning after having been detained for 12 hours by police, he said. AFP reports from Beijing.

The police brought me home at about three in the morning, (1900 GMT on Saturday) but they stepped up the surveillance of my building even further," he said by telephone.

**15 women held at Pak brothel:**

Pakistani police said on Saturday that they had arrested nine Iranian and six Afghan women and five Pakistani men in a raid on a brothel in Quetta in the southwestern province of Baluchistan, Reuters reports from Quetta.

They said the women had no passports or travel documents and several were minors aged as young as 14.

**Argentine Tango singer dies:**

Roberto Goyeneche, one of Argentina's last great Tango singers, died on Saturday in a hospital in Buenos Aires, his family said. He was 68, Reuters reports from Buenos Aires.

Goyeneche's peculiar timing — as if he was chewing on his words, an Argentine critic said — won him fans around the world from Buenos Aires to Tokyo and from New York's Carnegie Hall to Rome.

**Cleric criticises Ramos:**

In an apparent attack on President Fidel Ramos, the Philippines' most prominent cleric has accused the government of corruption and claimed leaders are wasting public funds on perks and travelling, AP reports from Manila.

"Graft and corruption are the order of the day," Cardinal Jaime L. Sin, archbishop of Manila, said during a homily late Saturday at an anti-abortion conference.

**Quake hits Algeria:**

A "powerful tremor" hit western Algeria yesterday causing widespread panic in an area where an August 18 quake killed more than 170 people and made thousands homeless, Algerian state radio reported, Reuters says from Tunis.

The radio, quoting a correspondent in the Mascara region, gave no details of the strength of the quake or whether there were any injuries or damage. The earlier quake measured 5.6 on the open-ended Richter scale.

**Papua govt talks with rebels:**

Papua New Guinea has agreed to an agenda for peace talks with secessionist rebels on its Bougainville province, officials from both sides said. AFP reports from Port Moresby.

Senior members of the government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) concluded a round of talks in the Solomon Islands on Saturday, a joint statement from the meeting said.

**Kurds scared to return home:**

Clashes since May in northern Iraq have left thousands of Kurdish refugees in neighbouring Iran too scared to return to their homes. UN officials said on Saturday. AFP reports from Arbil.

Only 200 Iraqi Kurdish families have returned to northern Iraq so far this year, although the United Nations set up a programme to support 50,000 returning refugees from Iran.

**200 extremists held in Oman:**

Omani security forces have rounded up more than 200 Islamic militants in a series of raids which began in May. Western diplomats in Muscat said on Saturday. AFP reports from Nicosia.

Politicians, soldiers, academics and students were among those arrested, the diplomats told by telephone.

**Kenya sacks many doctors for striking**

NAIROBI, Aug 28: Kenya's government said today it had sacked most of the 3,000 public-sector doctors who began a strike in June that has virtually closed down state hospitals, reports Reuters.

Dennis Afande, permanent secretary for health, sent letters to individual doctors, saying they had been fired for deserting their duty with effect from June 16 when the strike began.

Strike leader Givan Atoka said the dismissal was illegal and he would contest it in court.

**Maharashtra politicians, gangsters partners in crime?**

BOMBAY, Aug 28: The recent murder of a Hindu lawmaker here in India's financial heart and capital of Maharashtra state, has again sparked charges that local politicians and gangsters are, literally partners in crime, reports AFP.

Ramadas Nayak, the chief of the Bombay chapter of India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on Thursday outside his house in an upscale suburb.

The killers sprayed 54 bullets into Nayak, triggering a

**Kumaratunga govt suspends arms deal with Russia**

COLOMBO, Aug 28: Sri Lanka's new government has suspended a controversial arms deal with Russia for armoured vehicles, gunboats, helicopters and transport aircraft. The Independent Sunday island newspaper reported, says Reuters.

It said Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, whose People's Alliance (PA) won a narrow victory in the August 16 general election, had cancelled further payments on the 73 million dollar deal and ordered an inquiry.

Government officials were not immediately available for comment.

Military sources said the equipment was ordered by the previous government for a major offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels, fighting for independence in the island's north and east.

The Sunday Island said an unnamed state bank had already made an initial payment of 10 per cent of the cost of the package, although the payment did not have the approval of Parliament or the Finance Ministry.

It said the previous government had organised a foreign loan to finance the deal.

Six BNP infantry fighting vehicles, of a total of some 200 armoured vehicles on order, were airlifted to Sri Lanka from Russia for training purposes two weeks ago, military sources said.

PA spokesman Dharmasiri Senanyake, now the Minister of Information, Tourism and Aviation, said before the election the party might not honour the deal if it was voted into power.

AP adds: Sri Lanka's consti-

tution automatically makes the president in charge of the defense ministry. Wijetunga faces a presidential election in November.

Kumaratunga ordered an investigation into the contract and said only 10 per cent of the money has been paid to Russia so far.

Kumaratunga's campaign

against the 17-year UNP rule focussed on what she called rampant corruption in the government and kickbacks to government ministers.

She also alleged the UNP government was not keen to end the 11-year ethnic war, which has left 34,000 people dead, because cabinet ministers were making money on

arms deals.

On Friday, Kumaratunga on Friday postponed ratification of a rupees 14 billion dollar 291 million dollar deal signed by the previous regime for five A-340 aircraft from Airbus Industrie of France for the state airline, Air Lanka, amid criticism of the way the deal was rushed through.



A Hindu priest rubs holy ash on the forehead of new Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga on Saturday at a temple at Kandy in Sri Lanka. On Kumaratunga's left is junior Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte. —AFP photo

**9 killed in Pak tribal battles**

QUETTA, Pakistan, Aug 28: Nine people were killed and 15 wounded on Saturday in tribal gunbattles in the Pakistani city of Quetta, the provincial capital of the southwestern province of Baluchistan, police said, reports Reuters.

They said fighting erupted between two feuding tribes in a wealthy area of central Quetta, not far from the home of Baluchistan's Chief Minister, Zulfiqar Magsi.

Paramilitary frontier corps and police cordoned off the area, which was later reported calm, but tense.

Police said those killed included three grandsons of Nawab Akbar Bugti, a former Chief Minister of Baluchistan, which is a province renowned for its warlike tribal traditions.

The clash between the Bugtis and the Raisanis tribe flared outside a house where elders from both groups had gathered to offer condolences to a bereaved local politician.

The Bugtis and the Raisanis are not traditional enemies, but police said they had fallen out in May and fought one pre-

vious, smaller battle in Quetta.

Hospital sources said four of the wounded were in serious condition.

Meanwhile, AFP reports: Police have arrested a provincial official and 10 armed followers after fierce gunbattles

**Floods claim 50 in Moldova**

CHISINAU, Aug 28: Severe flooding in the former Soviet republic of Moldova has killed at least 50 people and caused colossal damage. Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli said today, reports Reuters.

The central part of the Republic has already been declared a disaster zone and the death toll looks set to rise as rescuers reach more villages.

The Republic was plunged into mourning today, just a day after celebrating the third anniversary of its independence from the former Soviet Union.

Moldovan tricolour flags, with black ribbons attached, flew at half-mast from most buildings in the capital Chisinau. Radio and television stations broadcast funeral liturgies from local churches.

between rival tribes left nine people dead here, officials said today.

The authorities also banned feudal lords and tribal chiefs from bringing armed guards to this southwestern city as part of efforts to stem fresh tribal violence after Saturday's clashes.

The chieftains had earlier got permission to enter Quetta with four armed guards each. But the concession has now been withdrawn after the second clash within the city limits in two months, officials said.

After three hours of gunbattles, in which close relatives of both Bugti and Raisani died, the federal troops moved into the troubled area. Police raiding fortified tribal homes arrested gunmen from both camps.

The sources said those arrested in overnight swoops included provincial industries Minister Lashkar Raisani, along with at least 10 other members of his heavily armed tribe.

About a dozen members of the Bugti tribe have also been arrested, they said, adding that the two clans harbour old enmity.

**Israeli cabinet okays powers to Palestinians**

JERUSALEM, Aug 28: The Israeli cabinet today unanimously approved a deal transferring civilian powers to Palestinians on the West Bank allowing them to run their own affairs for the first time, government sources said, reports AFP.

The accord already approved by the Palestinian self-rule authority is due to be signed Monday in Erez, in the autonomous Gaza Strip.

It transfers civilian powers to the Palestinians in culture, youth and sports, international cooperation, education, health issues, social welfare, tourism and financial affairs.

The accord marks the start of the second phase of self-rule launched with the May 4 autonomy accord in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

PLO chief negotiator Nabil Shaath is due to sign the accord with his Israeli counterpart General Danny Rothchild.

**Islamic confce begins in UK**

SHEFFIELD, England, Aug 28: Some 2,000 Muslims gathered here today in Britain's second major Islamic fundamentalist conference since Israel blamed the movement for a spate of anti-Semitic terrorism last month, reports AFP.

Organised by the United Kingdom Islamic Mission (UKIM) around the theme, "The Prophet's Message for the Western World," the conference billed speakers representing radical Islam from several Muslim countries.

Key among them were Rashed Ghannouchi, leader of Tunisia's Annabha movement in exile in London for three years, and Qazi Husain Ahmad, head of Jamaat-Islami, one of Pakistan's two Islamic fundamentalist parties.

Earlier this month an international conference of Islamic fundamentalists drew more than 6,000 to London's huge Wembley Stadium, where some Arab leaders were castigated for their ties to the West.

That conference, held shortly after car bomb attacks on the Israeli embassy,

and opposition parties.

The agreement was never implemented.

Nyijimanzai said the former Rwandan armed forces should be fused with the forces of the RPF which swept to victory in July, leading to the installation of a new RPF-backed government.

"We should be treated as refugees but we are seen as soldiers and no-one wants anything to do with us," the colonel said.

"We entered Zaire in chaos," and "we have no intention of restarting a war," he added.

The soldiers' main concern was "subsistence and survival."

The RPF has said it would be willing to allow soldiers of the former government army to return to Rwanda provided that they leave their weapons behind them.

**Ousted Rwandan troops ready to return home**

PANZI (Zaire), Aug 28: Troops from the ousted Rwandan army, supporters of the former regime in Kigali, are ready to return to Rwanda if they could be guaranteed their safety and allowed to join the new army, a senior officer at the Refugee camp here said Saturday, reports AFP.

Colonel Theonase Nyijimanzai, leading what he termed the "Rwandan military detachment in Panzi" said "We want to go home as soldiers and join the new army. We don't want to go home on an individual basis."

"In fact, if we go home, the people will follow. That's why we just have safety guarantees."

He said the guarantees included implementation of the 1993 Arusha accord which set out the basis for power sharing between the mainly Hutu regime in Kigali and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)

booming land prices had made things worse.

"The financial importance of Bombay has shot up with Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar planning to make Bombay into another Singapore. Poor people who lived in slums have to be pushed out so that developers can make money," he said.

"That is where criminals come in handy to politicians." Pawar, a former Defence Minister and a previous aspirant to the Prime Minister's office, has been accused of shielding corrupt politicians and making money from Naor

were directly involved with the underworld.

"That is our tragedy as a people," he said.

His criticism reflect the general disenchantment with allegations of a criminal-political nexus fighting to wrest control of the city's lucrative real estate, protection, gambling, prostitution, drug and smuggling rackets.

The bearded journalist, who was arrested in April for calling state lawmakers "hypocrites and liars" for eulogising a slain colleague with proven criminal links, said

**Afghan group threatens to kill UN mediator**

ISLAMABAD, Aug 28: Mahmoud Mestiri, the former Tunisian foreign minister leading UN attempts to end the Afghan conflict, has received death threats from an Afghan group, diplomatic sources said here today, reports AFP.

Mestiri is in Islamabad, and Pakistani authorities have stepped up security around him, the sources said.

The United Nations office in Islamabad refused to confirm or deny the reports.

The name of the group threatening Mestiri was not known. A diplomat said: "This is an attempt to undermine the peace process that the United Nations is getting underway."

"They are trying to warn the United Nations to stay out of this," the diplomat added. Mestiri started the UN

peace initiative earlier this year. But it is an open secret that certain Afghan faction leaders are hostile to his aims. They are determined to see a military solution to the factional battle for power in Kabul and do not want the United Nations involved.

In a recent report to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali, the Tunisian mission leader recommended that a transitional administration acceptable to all sides be set up before elections are held.

Rival factions have been fighting for power in Kabul since the fall of the Communist government in April 1992.

More than 12,000 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands of people have become refugees from the renewed conflict.

**Pakistan to renounce N-arms if India does**

ISLAMABAD, Aug 28: Pakistan, repeating an offer it first made 12 years ago, said yesterday it was still willing to renounce nuclear weapons if India did the same, reports Reuters.

"The government of Pakistan remains ready to jointly renounce nuclear weapons with India," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif told a rally in the Pakistani-held part of Kashmir on Tuesday that Pakistan had an atomic bomb and any attack on it by India would set off a nuclear holocaust.

His statement provoked an uproar at home and abroad, particularly in neighbouring India, which said it would seek international action to halt

Pakistan's nuclear programme. Pakistan officially says it has the capacity to make nuclear bombs, but has decided not to. India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, also denies having a nuclear arsenal.

Neither country has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, though Pakistan says it will if India does.

"It is Pakistan which has cause to be concerned about India's refusal to renounce nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles," the foreign ministry spokesman said.

He said a joint ban would help lower tensions created by what he called "India's brutal repression in Kashmir and its aggressive military and political posture towards Pakistan."

**Off the Record****Romantic novelist objects to erotic pictures**

LONDON: Romantic writer Barbara Cartland is against that Russian publishers have spiced up her coy novels by adding erotic pictures, Sunday's People newspaper said, reports Reuters.

"They are cheap, disgusting and appalling con-tricks," the prolific British author said of the pirated hardback editions.

The books, with pictures of pouting nude women on the covers and inside, are being snapped up by Russians who expect a saucy read but instead get tame tales of romance full of glances and odd kisses, but no steamy encounters, the paper said.

"They must think that the only thing that sells is hot sex but they are wrong," said 92-year old Dame Barbara, step-grandmother of Britain's Princess Diana.

"I'm very upset because I am trying to help young people to get away from this type of sex and back to romance."

**Lose weight or end up losing grades**

SINGAPORE: More school children in Singapore have become fit and trim since the government launched an anti-obesity campaign targeting the mini state's 41,374 fat pupils, reports AP.

Singapore's fondness for campaigns reached classrooms in 1992 when the trim and Fit Programme was started with a twin agenda: regular physical activity and proper nutrition in schools.

Since then 4,044 overweight kids have reached acceptable weight categories, according to a survey in May, the junior Education Minister, Sidek Saniff, said on Saturday.

Elaborate public campaign are a way of life in Singapore and few other governments use them as relentlessly to change behaviour or raise civic consciousness.

The anti-obesity programme involves teachers, school snack bars and parents. The last proved the most recalcitrant. Many did not cooperate in getting their children to attend Trim and Fit activities regularly, Sidek said at a seminar for programme coordinators.

Earlier this month the government used another recent survey to issue a warning to overweight students: Lose weight or you might end up losing grades.

The survey of all Singapore students found that 15 per cent to 19 per cent of those at the bottom of the class were fat. But among the top students only 4 per cent to 7 per cent were overweight, which means they were at least 20 per cent heavier than the average for their height and age.

Sidek said beginning September 3 the government will organise a series of seminars for parents of overweight children.

**Britons fed up with reading about royal troubles**

LONDON: Britons are content to have a monarchy, but a poll commissioned by a Sunday newspaper found that they are sick of reading about it, reports AP.

Eighty per cent of the respondents in a poll for the Independent on Sunday newspaper said they were "fed up with reading about royal troubles." However, 66 per cent said the monarchy should continue indefinitely.

Sixty-eight per cent of the sample said they think Prince Charles and Princess Diana should get a divorce.

The poll was based on interviews with 1,122 adults in 54 locations in Britain on Friday, and had a margin of error of 3 per cent.

**Iraqi FM ends Sino-Pak visits**

AMMAN, Aug 28: Iraq's foreign minister was heading home to Baghdad Sunday after visiting Pakistan and China to rally support for lifting crippling UN trade sanctions, reports AP.

Adel Ibrahim, a spokesman for the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, said Mohammad Sahal's tip to Islamabad and Beijing were "mainly to discuss the worsening economic situation in Baghdad as a result of the sanctions."

The sanctions were imposed four days after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

by gangsters and his public meetings describing corruption in high places draw huge crowds.

"The politician pretends to be the saviour of the people but actually preys on them. They are looting us," he said.

Julio Ribeiro, former police chief of Bombay and the troubled northern state of Punjab, said, an unholy nexus between politicians, police and criminals worked to the benefit of all three partners.

"It only comes under scrutiny and attack when some traumatic event occurs," he added.

property deals in Bombay.

Just a day before Nayak was killed, senior Bombay police officer Ulhas Joshi told the High Court that Pawar had "often obstructed action against big-time criminals."

His latest accuser is Govind Khairnar, a top-level city official, who was suspended last month for "embarrassing the administration" following a crusade against the criminalisation of politics, which turned Khairnar into a folk hero.

Khairnar is guarded round-the-clock by seven armed commandos following attacks