

BRIEFLY

Kansai Airport opens: Japan's new Kansai International Airport was inaugurated yesterday with the hopes of providing a lift to the regional economy and becoming a major Asian hub. AFP reports from Osaka.

About 800 people, along with four national ministers and crown prince Naruhito, attended the inauguration of the 1.5-trillion-yen (15-billion-dollar) airport on a man-made island in Osaka Bay, a week before its first commercial flight.

Russia launches satellite: Russia launched a military satellite from the Baikonur space complex in neighbouring Kazakhstan. The ITAR-Tass news agency reported Monday. AP says from Moscow.

The Kosmos-2290 satellite was launched Sunday night and entered orbit "almost exactly according to plan," it said. There were no further details available. Baikonur was the Soviet Union's main space launch facility, but has been at the centre of a dispute between Russia and Kazakhstan since the Soviet breakup in 1991.

Russia stops oil shipment: Russia suspended crude oil shipments to Ukraine along its main pipeline after a leak developed in the Volga River region, officials said Monday. AP reports from Moscow.

A spokesman for Russia's Ministry of Emergency Situations said it was not immediately clear how long it would take crews to repair the damaged pipeline, located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) northeast of the town of Pugachev.

4 bandits held in Morocco: Four suspected bandits belonging to a gang whose latest robbery rekindled tensions between Morocco and Algeria have been identified as residents of France with origins in both North African countries, AP reports from Rabat, Morocco.

The Interior Ministry announced late Sunday that four suspects had been taken into custody and a fifth fled to Algeria since last week's robbery at a Marrakech hotel, where two Spanish tourists were killed by indiscriminate gunfire.

The attack, attributed to gunmen with Algerian accents, prompted Morocco on Friday to order entry visas for all Algerians.

8 killed in Iraqi Kurdistan: Eight people have been killed in further clashes between rival Kurdish groups in Iraqi Kurdistan despite a ceasefire call from their leaders, officials said in Arbil yesterday. AFP reports from Iraq.

"There is still heavy fighting," said Ganeem Jawad, an official from the Iraqi National Council (INC), a coalition opposed to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. It includes the two main feuding Kurdish groups — Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

Shenzhen bans gambling: Authorities in China's special economic zone of Shenzhen have passed a law that completely bans gambling and includes harsh penalties such as re-education in labour camps. It was reported yesterday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

Gambling has grown rampant in China's richest special economic zone, and the new law also includes fines of between 5,000 to 30,000 yuan (862 to 5,172 US dollars), the Hong Kong branch of the China news service said.

Walesa criticises UN: Polish President Lech Walesa has criticised a United Nations population document's stand on abortion as simplistic and short on ethical values. Reuter reports from Warsaw.

"Such delicate matters as the passing-down of life and the family as well as society's moral and material development have been dealt with in a simplistic and superficial manner," Walesa said in a letter to participants of next month's UN world population conference in Cairo.

Tito Jackson's ex-wife drowns: The ex-wife of Tito Jackson, older brother of pop star Michael Jackson, drowned in a swimming pool, authorities say. AP reports from Los Angeles.

Delores Martez Jackson, 39, who divorced Toriano "Tito" Jackson in 1988, was pulled from the pool early Saturday by an unidentified boyfriend.

Talks on IRA truce: Leaders of two parties which got most of the Catholic vote in Northern Ireland said Sunday that Britain must be ready to respond positively if the IRA calls a halt to violence. AP reports from Belfast, Ireland.

John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, and Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein, the party that supports the IRA, met amid intensifying speculation that the IRA is on the verge of a ceasefire.

9 extremists killed in Algeria: The Algerian security forces killed nine Islamic fundamentalists in clashes late last week, officials said on Sunday. AFP reports from Algiers.

The officials said security forces killed two fundamentalists close to the university at Bab Ezzouan, an eastern suburb of Algiers, on Saturday, killed another man at Hydra, close to Algiers and three at Delys in eastern Algeria.

Moros still hold 7 Koreans: Muslim guerrillas have freed 30 Filipino construction workers held captive near Cotabato but still hold seven South Korean engineers, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Philippines.

Government representatives were negotiating with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for the release of the remaining hostages, Brigadier General Renato Garcia and Norodin Matalam, Governor of Maguindanao Province, told reporters.

5 DEA men missing in Peru crash: Five Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents were reported missing after their plane lost contact with air traffic control and crashed in the dense jungles of Peru, a spokesman said Sunday. AFP reports from Washington.

It does look bleak from the air, said DEA spokesman Bill Ruzzamenti when asked if there were any survivors on the twin engine plane that was travelling from Santa Lucia on Friday when it crashed.

Korean priest found dead: A Korean Presbyterian minister was found shot dead in his church office on Sunday, his hands bound in front of him and his body partially burned, police said. Reuter reports from New York.

Jong Kyu Kim, 41, was discovered by his wife and her brother. There was a small calibre bullet wound to his back as he lay face up in the first floor office of the church building, police said.

Rwandan soldiers kill 6: Soldiers from the former Rwandan government killed six civilians in an incursion from across the border in Burundi where they are based, state radio reported on Sunday. AFP says from Kigali.

The radio quoting defence authorities in the southern district of Butare, said only that the attack occurred recently and gave no details of the ethnic group the victims were from.

Shanghai farmer jailed: A Shanghai farmer given a suspended jail sentence for growing opium, poppies in his backyard, insisted he used the plants as medicine for his chickens, pigs and fish, a report said. AFP says from Hong Kong.

The farmer was given only a one-year suspended jail term and fined 200 yuan (35 US dollars), the Hong Kong branch of China News Service said, because he admitted growing opium and claimed it was for consumption only by his ailing animals not by humans.

Fighting near Mexico border: Fighting broke out near Mexico's border as a UN mediator in Guatemala City tried to crack up peace talks again between the government and the Guatemalan rebels, authorities said Sunday. AFP reports.

Insurgents from the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (GNRU) attacked a military patrol wounding two soldiers near Las Palmas, Huehuetenango, some 375 kilometers (233 miles) west of here, the army said.

International

War may turn more violent in Bosnia

Serbs reject int'l peace plan

PALE. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Aug 29: Bosnian Serbs have deepened their self-imposed isolation, voting overwhelmingly against a peace plan endorsed by friends and enemies alike, according to preliminary referendum results released Monday, reports AP.

Referendum officials said more than 90 per cent of those voting over the weekend rejected the plan that was put forward by the United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany.

There were reports of voting irregularities. But there was no question that the majority of participants, subjected to extensive anti-peace propaganda by the Bosnian Serb leadership, had rejected the proposal — endorsed not only by Bosnia's Croats and Muslims but also by Russia, a traditional Serb ally, and Serbia, main supporter of the Bosnian Serb war effort until recently.

Fears deepened that the 28-month Bosnian war — which has already left 200,000

dead or missing — would turn even more violent with the defiant rejection.

The United States has warned that continued Bosnian Serb refusal to accept the plan could prompt the lifting of a UN arms embargo on the Muslim-led government, handicapped by Serb weapons superiority.

But Bosnian Serb officials remained defiant.

"We could have expected nothing but overwhelming 'no' at this referendum," said Dusko Kozic, premier of the self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb state. "There was no way they could have accepted the suicidal plan."

The head of the electoral commission, Ratko Canar, said that the turnout at the referendum was over 90 per cent of 1.2 million eligible voters.

He said that at some voting stations "more than 100 per cent" of those who were on the voting lists cast their bal-

lots. He explained that even refugees voted.

Official and final results will be announced on Wednesday at a session of the Bosnian Serb self-proclaimed parliament.

The plan would reduce Serb holdings to 49 per cent of Bosnia from the 70 per cent they have seized. A federation of Bosnian Muslims and Croats, who have accepted the plan, would get 51 per cent.

Bosnian Serb leaders say the division would leave them with an unviable state and prevent them from uniting with Serbia, the largest of two remaining republics in Yugoslavia. The quest for such a union was the reason they rebelled in April 1992 as Bosnia broke from the old Yugoslav federation.

The referendum was widely considered irrelevant by an outside world weary of Bosnian Serb intransigence.

Even neighbouring Serbia branded it a crude attempt by Bosnian Serb leaders to foist

responsibility for a bad decision onto ill-informed voters.

The referendum marks the second time Bosnia's Serbs have been asked to vote on a peace plan. In May 1993, Bosnian Serb officials said 96 per cent of 1.2 million voters rejected a plan that would have divided Bosnia into 10 cantons.

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic cut off supplies to his former proxies in Bosnia early this month after Bosnian Serb leaders denounced the plan.

Milosevic is regarded as the chief instigator of the war in Bosnia, and supplies sent by Serbia have been crucial to Bosnian Serb dominance of the conflict.

But now Milosevic wants an end to more than two years of crippling trade sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia for its role in the conflict.

Peace plan supporters say sanctions cannot be lifted until Bosnian Serbs accept the proposal without conditions.

China to get US flood prediction technology

BEIJING, Aug 29: The United States has agreed to provide to China advanced flood prediction technology intended to help minimize the damage from the widespread flooding that strikes each summer typhoon season, reports AP.

Meanwhile, Chinese officials have announced plans to separate the amount of government money earmarked for disaster prevention, following recent floods that have killed more than 1,800 people and caused more than 8 billion dollars in damage.

US Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, in Beijing to promote US business and for talks with Chinese officials, announced the agreement Monday to provide flood prediction know-how to Chinese water resource managers.

Benazir to open Islamic FMs' confce Sept 7

ISLAMABAD, Aug 29: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will inaugurate the three-day seventh Islamic Conference of the Foreign Minister (ICFM), here on September 7, reports AFP.

The extra-ordinary meeting of the ICFM — convened by Pakistan — will address urgent and critical issues confronting the Ummah including the continuing excesses and repression of the Kashmiri people, situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, cause of Palestine and Al-Quds, Al-Sharif, besides strife in Afghanistan.

The closing session of the conference will be held on September 9, which will adopt the document. It will be followed by a joint press conference to be held by Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali and OIC Secretary General Dr Hanif Al-Gabid.

Riyadh won't attend Cairo conference

CAIRO, Aug 29: Saudi Arabia will not attend the UN Conference on Population and Development, which is due to be held here early next month amid a controversy in the Muslim world, the organisers said Sunday.

The Saudis officially announced today that they are not coming. UN spokeswoman Van Kanpen told AFP. She said she did not know the reasons.

A Saudi embassy official in Cairo said he was unaware of any such decision.

An Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman also said Egypt had not been advised, but pointed out that the UN were usually informed first.

13 militants killed in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR, Aug 29: Indian troops shot dead 13 Muslim militants in a raid on a village and two civilians were killed in separate incidents in Kashmir's upsurge of separatist violence, police and army officials said today, reports AFP.

The guerillas' deaths sparked a protest strike near the site of a gunbattle between the soldiers and the Kashmiri separatists, police said in Srinagar, the turbulent state's summer capital.

Army troops raided a village in northern Baramulla district on Sunday to flush out Muslim guerrillas sheltering in houses there. A fierce gunbattle followed.

Nine guerrillas of the Hizbul Mujahideen separatist group were slain in the Shirapur village clash. Soldiers found a machinegun rocket launcher, seven assault rifles and ammunition.

Village resident staged a protest strike today saying the soldiers dressed in civilian clothes for the Shirapur raid, had stolen valuables and molested women before killing the Hizbul fighters.

Witnesses said the protests spread to several Baramulla villages after the gunbattle.

Shirapur residents said Sunday's toll was higher than nine and added that there were casualties on both sides in the first major flare-up this month between soldiers and Muslim rebels in Baramulla.

Four other Muslim guerrillas were shot in separate gunbattles elsewhere in the northern state, a Defence Ministry spokesman said. Two civilians were also mowed down during the past 24 hours in Kashmir.

Almost 10,000 people have died in India's only Muslim-majority state since 1989 when Muslim-led insurgency took hold in the partitioned Himalayan province bordering Pakistan.

India, which holds the southern two-thirds of the state, accuses Pakistan of arming and training the Muslim guerrillas. Islamabad denies the charge but extends moral and diplomatic support to the anti-Indian rebellion describing it as the Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for self-determination.

Off the Record

Thousands jam streets to get a piece of prison wall

COLUMBUS, Ohio: About 5,000 people caused a traffic jam trying to get a piece of the rock — not the Gibraltar, but the wall that once surrounded the Ohio Penitentiary, reports AP.

A line of cars stretched for seven blocks Saturday as people waited to get a free chunks from the wall and a certificate of authenticity.

Officials had to call off the giveaway about two hours before the scheduled ending because of the crowd.

"There definitely will be another opportunity for people to get a piece of rock," said Gretchen Hull, spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Administrative Services, which owns the wall.

A date for a second giveaway was not set. But officials aren't concerned about running out of rocks — about 9,000 tons of limestone are still on the grounds.



Carrying a balloon printed with "Welcome Back" Chelsea Clinton, daughter of President Bill Clinton, walks down a street in the Town of Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard after attending church on Sunday. This is the second year the US First Family has vacationed on the island off the coast of Massachusetts. — AFP photo

Pak diplomat refused entry into Gaza

JERUSALEM, Aug 29: Israel refused to let a Pakistani diplomat visit the Gaza Strip on Sunday, because the Islamic state doesn't recognise Israel, reports AFP.

Both Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres decided to bar the ambassador's entry, saying he could enter only if Pakistan recognised Israel, the report added.

Pakistan planned to coordinate a visit by Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Gaza next week, while on the way to the World Population Conference in Cairo.

Its draft resolutions, which suggest that abortion should be made safe and information on safe sexual relationships be made available to everyone, has angered Muslim leaders and the Vatican.

Meanwhile, AFP adds: The Palestinian autonomous authority in Gaza protested to Israeli on Sunday following an Israeli decision to stop a senior Pakistani diplomat going to the Gaza Strip.

Nabil Shatah telephoned Israeli officials on Sunday, saying that Pakistan's ambassador to Cairo was waiting at the Rafah crossing with Egypt for permission to enter Gaza.

Both Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres decided to bar the ambassador's entry, saying he could enter only if Pakistan recognised Israel, the report added.

The ambassador planned to coordinate a visit by Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Gaza next week, while on the way to the World Population Conference in Cairo.

According to the television report, Palestinian negotiator

Cairo confce to discuss women's issues

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 29: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has said his government will not order mass arrests of members of banned Islamic group, adding that only leaders will be targeted, reports AP.

There is "no need to arrest the followers as they are not as important as the leaders" who are stubborn and are defying the ban on the sect, Mahathir told reporters on Sunday night.

The formal outlawing of Al-Arqam on Friday has raised fears of a widespread crackdown on the messianic sect, which has about 100,000 fol-

lowers, including 10,000 hardcore members.

The government says the group has become a threat to national security and public order.

Police have been given sweeping powers to curb activities of Al-Arqam, which has outgrown its image of a religious sect to become a 118-million dollars international business conglomerate.

Although Islamic revivalism in Southeast Asia is the group's founding philosophy, Al-Arqam also owns 417 companies in Malaysia alone, including food, textile, retail outlets, property, technology services and a fleet

of taxis.