

International

BRIEFLY

Japan to develop new fighter: The Japanese Defence Ministry and aircraft makers plan to develop a new fighter by the year 2008, the economic daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported yesterday. Reuter says from Tokyo.

Nihon Keizai Shimbun said the plan called for a consortium of makers to produce a successor to the McDonnell Douglas F-153 fighters now produced under license in Japan, and the current mainstay of the country's air force.

Chamorro to sign new law: President Violeta Chamorro said Friday she would sign a new law to increase civilian control over Nicaragua's armed forces. Reuter reports from San Jacinto Nicaragua.

The law would allow the president to accept or reject candidates for army chief as nominated by the 30-member military council of top officers.

Bandits hijack truck near Delhi:

Bandits hijacked a truck in a village near New Delhi, got rid of the cargo and fled with the vehicle. AP reports from New Delhi.

The truck was packed with thousands of live chicken headed for the slaughter house, the Economic Times newspaper reported Saturday.

Lesotho govt to be reinstated: Lesotho's King Letsie and ousted Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle said his government would be reinstated. Reuter reports from Maseru.

It was agreed the process of restoring the government should start immediately. Mokhehle told Reuters after his meeting with the King.

Ukraine-Russia's 17 accords:

Ukrainian and Russian ministers moved closer on Friday to concluding a friendship pact between the two most important former Soviet Republics and agreement on other key issues including the division of the Black Sea Fleet. Reuter reports from Kiev.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Shokhin told reporters after a day of talks that 17 accords were virtually ready to be signed.

12 to contest Mozambique polls:

Twelve contenders registered for Mozambique's presidential elections before the deadline on Friday night, electoral officials said. Reuter reports from Maputo.

They include incumbent President Joaquim Chissano and former Renamo rebel leader Alonso Dhlakama.

Demonstration near White House:

Hundreds of Vietnamese-Americans demonstrated Friday to press the Clinton administration to make human rights a condition for further thawing in relations with Hanoi. Reuter reports from Washington.

Chanting "human rights for Vietnam" a throng of some 400 to 500 demonstrators that extended for several blocks marched from Capitol Hill to Lafayette Park across from the White House.

Japan to press for SC seat: Japan will continue to press for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council but if successful will not play a military role, Prime Minister Tomiochi Murayama said yesterday. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

He was speaking after a UN committee on Friday virtually ensured that Japan would not achieve its goal of a seat for years to come.

Yacyreta dam turbines operate:

Argentina and Paraguay Friday activated the first turbine of a long-delayed pound 10 billion hydroelectric dam. Reuter reports from Buenos Aires.

By the time all its 20 turbines are operating, in 1998 the Yacyreta Dam will have a 2,700 megawatt capacity, supplying 40 per cent of the electricity needs of Argentina — South America's second largest nation — and much of Paraguay's. Built on the river Parana on the two countries' border, the dam started functioning 21 years after construction began, and 13 years late.

Juppe supports Chirac: French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe on Friday issued a spirited endorsement of Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac in next May's presidential election. AFP reports from Bordeaux, France.

Juppe, secretary general of the center-right rally for the republic (RPR), recently said the party would soon have to choose either Chirac or Prime Minister Edouard Balladur as its standard bearer in the campaign.

Courier service for US voters: Free courier service to help Americans abroad cast absentee election ballots in November was announced Friday. AP reports from Washington.

The service will be operated by DHL Worldwide Express, which has 1,500 offices throughout the world, and the Federated League of Americans Around the Globe (FLAAG).

Cholera claims 67: A cholera epidemic in western and northern Sierra Leone has claimed 67 lives, including those of 21 children, since the start of August, a Health Ministry official said Friday. AFP reports from Freetown.

Dr Sheku Tejan Kamara told a press conference that biological analyses had confirmed the outbreak, which had affected more than 1,200 people, with Freetown itself hit by some 20 cases.

Sikhs allowed to wear knives: Sikhs should be allowed to wear ceremonial knives, as their faith dictates, at school if other students can be protected from possible harm, a federal appeals court ruled Friday. AP reports from San Francisco.

The 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals said a California elementary school must make "all reasonable efforts" to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of three youngsters who have not attended school since January.

Bolivia's drug kingpin held: After eluding authorities for years, the man believed to be Bolivia's biggest drug kingpin is behind bars — nabbed during a simple security check. AP reports from Bogota.

The United States on Friday sought the extradition of Antonio Percy Roca, who is accused of masterminding the smuggling of tons of cocaine into the United States.

Brain damage victim gets \$28.6m: A man who suffered brain damage after using a common asthma drug made by Key Pharmaceuticals Inc. has been awarded 28.6 million dollar in damages. AP reports from Portlant.

In a separate verdict, the jury awarded 22.5 million dollar to a doctor who had sued the company for damage to his reputation. Paul R. Bocci III, 24, lost his short-term memory ability as a result of a toxic reaction to the drug, called Theo-Dur.

One to die in Singapore: Singaporean Tan Yew Lee has been sentenced to death by hanging for drug trafficking, a High Court official said yesterday. AFP reports from Singapore.

Tan, 35, was found guilty of possession of 13 packets of heroin, weighing a total of 1.4 kilograms (3.08 pounds), late last year.

Mexican drug rings leader held:

The government said Friday it has arrested the leader of one of Mexico's largest drug rings, which critics had claimed was connected to senior political figures. AP reports from Mexico City.

Deputy Attorney General Mario Ruiz Massieu held a news conference to announce the arrest of Juan Garcia Abrego. He was identified as chief of the Gulf Cartel, which allegedly shipped narcotics from Colombia along Mexico's east coast to the United States.



Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams (R), General Secretary Lucilla Bhreathnach (C) and Vice-President Martin McGuinness hold a press conference on Friday in Dublin. In a statement read before the press conference, Adams called for a withdrawal of British troops and police from Catholic areas of Northern Ireland.

— AFP photo

Five more killed in rocket attacks

UN fails to hold Afghan meet

ISLAMABAD, Sept 3: A preliminary meeting of the main Afghan factions due to take place Friday was cancelled because President Burhanuddin Rabbani's group refused to talk with Uzbek leader Rashid Dostum, the United Nations said. reports AFP.

A statement said representatives of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Shi'ite Wahdat faction had also been due to attend the UN-sponsored meeting along with various "neutral" parties.

"The special mission very much regrets the failure to hold the joint preliminary meeting, thus indicating that the commitment to peace is not yet sufficiently strong and widespread to overcome inevitable obstacles," the UN statement said.

UNB adds: The mediator, Mahmoud Mestiri, sounded out the rival factions for several weeks but failed to get them to the bargaining table for talks on ending fighting that has left their homeland wrecked and with no functioning economy

Rabbani's faction has firmly opposed the presence at such a meeting of Dostum's representatives, highlighting the Uzbek leader's former communist affiliations.

Reuter adds: Rocket attacks on the Afghan capital Kabul killed five people and wounded eight overnight and on Friday, government controlled Kabul Radio reported.

The radio monitored in Islamabad, said about 90 rockets struck residential areas of the city under the control of President Rabbani.

UNB adds: The mediator, Mahmoud Mestiri, sounded out the rival factions for several weeks but failed to get them to the bargaining table for talks on ending fighting that has left their homeland wrecked and with no functioning economy

or government.

"Despite numerous meetings, compromise proposals and formulas, it was in the end not possible to hold this joint preliminary meeting," he said.

Mestiri said he will try to enlist a "number of Afghan independent groups and personalities" to spur peace efforts. He did not elaborate but this could include expatriate Afghans and members of the pre-communist governments.

Most analysts say the rival sides could continue fighting for years because of the weapons they received from their former Western backers and the arsenal inherited from Afghanistan's deposed Communists.

Viewed as saviors of Islam when they overthrew the old communist regime in Kabul in

April 1992, the Mujahideen, or Islamic warriors, are now seen by most Afghans as power-hungry mercenaries.

President Rabbani's troops control Kabul, but renegade Prime Minister Hekmatyar sends rockets into the capital from bases on the southern outskirts.

Seven other Islamic factions, with regularly shifting loyalties, are involved in the conflict.

Mestiri began his peace mission last April. He has crisscrossed Afghanistan to meet with dozens of leaders and thousands of ordinary Afghans in an attempt to end the bloodshed.

Foreign UN workers have left Kabul. In July, they pulled out of the western city of Herat after bombing raids there.

US-Cuban talks resume today

NEW YORK, Sept 3: US and Cuban negotiators intend to meet again Sunday and American officials reported progress in negotiations to stop the exodus of thousands of refugees sailing towards Florida in rickety rafts, reports Reuter.

American officials described the talks that began Thursday as making progress in reaching a deal on sharply increasing the number of US visas for Cubans if Havana agrees to stop the flight of refugees.

Todate the United States has only allowed in about 2,700 people a year, while Cuba insists a 1982 agreement allowed for thousands more. Washington is also considering

other measures to admit more Cubans.

A US official said an agreement was "do-able" but that many details still needed to be worked out.

The spokesman for the US delegation, David Johnson, told reporters Friday the negotiations covered a "through-in-depth discussion to possible solutions to the continued uncontrolled outflow of Cubans and the US proposals to replace that outflow with a standard, predictable, dependable legal migration programme."

Cuba has denied it allowed prisoners to join the latest exodus.

French student gang-raped in Chandigarh

NEW DELHI, Sept 3: A French student was gang-raped by men believed to be police officers after she was kidnapped from the home of friends in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh, newspaper reported here Friday. says AFP.

Five or six police acting as bodyguards for a politician allegedly seized the 20-year-old, from the home of her Kenyan friends on the night of August 31 and raped her in another house, the Hindustan Times and other dailies said.

One of the Kenyans was quoted as saying that the abductors were armed with AK-47 assault rifles.

The woman escaped from captivity the next morning and told her student friends she had been raped, but, under pressure from the police, she charged her abductors only with a less serious count of molestation, the newspaper said.

The French embassy said it was aware of the case but could not confirm the girl's nationality.

Police sources in Chandigarh, capital of the state of Punjab, said the woman's complaint was under investigation.

Moscow welcomes troops returning from Germany

MOSCOW, Sept 3: The Russian capital held festive homecoming ceremonies on Saturday for the last troops returning from Germany, complete with a military parade, orchestras and even diehard Communists demanding that the soldiers head back to Berlin, reports AP.

The train carrying the soldiers who withdrew from Germany August 31 arrived early in the day to the Belorussky train station, famous as the site to which victorious Soviet troops returned after World War II.

Off the Record

Twin producing village!

SAO PAULO, Brazil: A farm village in southern Brazil may very well be the country's largest twin producer, according to the doctor who delivered most of them over the past 25 years, reports AP.

Of the approximately 300 people who live in Linha de Sao Pedro, 54 are twins. Dr. Anencir Flores da Silva said Friday, According to the World Book Encyclopedia, twins occur once in 89 births.

Linha de Sao Pedro, about 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) southwest of Sao Paulo, was settled nearly 100 years ago by seven German immigrant families.

"They brought with them a gene pool strongly predisposed to twins and since intermarriage among the families was the rule, there are twins all over the place," Da Silva said.

"The genetic heritage of the village has been kept intact because no other family ever settled there," he added.

Two 30-year-old men are the oldest pair of twins alive and a one-year-old pair of twin girls is the youngest, Da Silva said. None of the village's 27 pairs are identical.

13-yr-old murderer

HIGH BRIDGE: A 13-year-old shot and killed an 11-year-old boy who refused to apologize during an argument with another boy, prosecutors said Friday, reports AP.

Jacob Tracy, who was sitting in his bedroom, was shot once in the chest at point-blank range by the youth, who was not identified because he is a minor, said county prosecutor Sharon Ransavage.

The teenager, who fled but then telephoned the police emergency number to report the shooting, was charged Friday as a juvenile with first-degree murder. New Jersey state law does not allow anyone under 14 to be tried as an adult.

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