

BRIEFLY

UN troops kill 4 Somalis: Four Somali gunmen were killed and several others wounded in an exchange of gunfire with Zimbabwean troops serving in the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia, a UN military spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from Mogadishu.

There were no casualties among the UN troops during the fire fight which occurred on Friday in the town of Balad, north of Mogadishu, the spokesman said.

2300 arrested in Rwanda: The new Rwandan government has arrested up to 2,300 people in connection with massacres during the country's recent bloody civil war, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced Friday. AFP reports from Kigali.

Over the past nine days authorities have arrested almost as many people as they did in the previous two months, said Marjolaine Martin, joint head of the ICRC delegation in Kigali. The ICRC said the figures were compiled by its own staff. Martin added that most of the prisoners visited by the ICRC were in Kigali, Butare, Gitarama and Kibungo.

Change in China's plans: China will not hold a military parade as part of its celebration of the 45th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic, a newspaper said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The Communist Party central committee has called for widespread celebrations on October 1, especially in the capital, but has decided against a military parade, the Legal daily said.

UNITA accepts UN peace plan: The UN Security Council on Friday said it would not consider further sanctions against UNITA because the Angolan rebels have formally accepted a UN peace plan, AP reports from United Nations.

In a non-binding statement, the 15-nation council said it considers a letter from UNITA "as constituting the required formal acceptance by UNITA of the complete set of proposals on national reconciliation...."

Vietnam claims Spratly: Vietnam has restated its claim to sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, rejecting a Chinese statement this week that the archipelago in the South China Sea was Chinese territory. Reuter reports from Hanoi.

The Spratlys, potentially rich in oil, are also claimed wholly or in part by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan.

Pak army in rescue operation: Pakistani troops and navy divers were enlisted in a massive operation on Friday to rescue thousands of people stranded by floods in the Dadu district of southern Sind Province, officials said. AFP reports from Karachi.

Conditions in Dadu became more dangerous after a breach in an embankment at Manchar Lake. More than 70 divers, along with boats and other equipment, were rushed to the area on Thursday to help rescue workers and troops move local residents to safer regions.

Abiola needs medical help: Jailed Nigerian opposition leader Moshood Abiola needs urgent specialist medical help and will not be able to attend the resumption of his treason trial, the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) said in a statement on Friday. AFP reports from Lagos.

The opposition leader's health had shown a "sudden deterioration," the association said without specifying the nature of the illness.

Bid to escape UK prison foiled: Prison and police officers recaptured six inmates, including five IRA men, after an armed breakout bid from Britain's maximum-security prison, authorities said Saturday. AP reports from London.

The escapees were spotted late Friday cutting through an inner fence of Whitemoor prison about 110 miles (170 kms) north of London in rural Cambridgeshire.

Contact lost with satellite: Contact was lost on Friday with a satellite launched into orbit from French Guiana by a Western European Ariane rocket for the US communication giant AT & T a spokesman for the company said. Reuter reports from Paris.

"There is a problem, we've lost contact with the satellite," the spokesman told Reuters in Paris. The Ariane 42L rocket had blasted off at 9:29 pm (0029 GMT on Friday) from the European Space Agency (ESA) launch centre in Kourou on South America's northeast coast.

Japan to send 480 troops: Japan plans to send more than 480 self-defence force members to Africa starting September 16 for three months on a humanitarian mission to help Rwandan refugees. Jiji press reported on Friday. AFP says from Tokyo.

The news agency said the defence agency was scheduled to dispatch the soldiers to the Zairean town of Goma to engage in medical treatment, water supply and air transport.

7 pc of Lebanese die in war: Between 150,000 and 200,000 people or seven per cent of the population were killed in the 15-year civil war in Lebanon, according to an official report published in the press on Friday. AFP says from Beirut.

About 10 per cent or 300,000 people were also wounded in the fighting and half of them left with permanent side-effects, said the report from the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs.

Palestinian shot in Hebron: An Israeli settler opened fire in the streets in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron on Friday, wounding a Palestinian in the head, Palestinian sources said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The gunman stopped his car in a commercial district and fired his pistol in several directions. One bullet hit 25-year-old Hetam Mahmud Abu-Rayyan in the head, the sources said.

5 executed in Saudi Arabia: Two Pakistani drug smugglers and three Saudi murderers including a man who burned his father to death in a locked car, were executed in Saudi Arabia on Friday. Gulf news agencies reported. Reuter says from Dubai.

The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said two Pakistani men, named as Dalbar Mohammad Qol and Ali Nawaz Mohammad Aziz Amir Ali, were executed in the port of Jeddah after being convicted of smuggling heroin into the Kingdom.

40 hurt in Burundi blast: Some 40 people were injured, some seriously, when a grenade exploded on Friday in the central market of the Burundian capital Bujumbura, police said. AFP reports from Bujumbura.

Police said they did not know who lobbed the grenade into a part of the market where spare parts for cars and ironmongery are sold.

Quake hits S Philippines: A moderately strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.6 rocked the southern Philippines Saturday, but no casualties or serious property damage were reported. AP says from Manila.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the quake struck at 12:54 pm (0454 GMT) off the coast of Davao Oriental Province, about 65 kilometers (40 miles) east of the town of Banganga and about 1,025 kilometers (640 miles) southeast of Manila.

Muslims to continue struggle: A Tajik Muslim opposition leader rejected the government's offer to take part in presidential elections, pledging to continue the armed struggle, news reports said on Friday. AP says from Moscow.

Meanwhile, opposition forces continued to battle government units and the Russian soldiers who support them.

International

India slams views on Kashmir

Islamabad misleads OIC: Delhi

NEW DELHI, Sept 10: India on Friday slammed the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) for its views on Kashmir, saying its arch-foe Pakistan had misled the Muslim nations' group, reports Reuter.

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) appealed to India on Friday to open talks with Pakistan to settle their dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Secretary-General Hamid Al-Gabid, addressing a news conference at the end of a three-day Foreign Ministers' Conference of the 51-Nation OIC, also urged India to release political prisoners in Kashmir.

A resolution adopted by the conference condemned what it called "the continuing massive violations of human rights of the Kashmiri people" in the two-thirds of the region ruled by India, where New Delhi is

fighting a separatist revolt by rejecting the OIC's views.

Pakistan has blatantly misused its position as the host country to mislead the member states of the OIC and divert attention from Pakistan's record of supporting terrorism and directed against the political unity and territorial integrity of India," Singh said in a statement.

He accused Pakistan of using the OIC forum to generate false propaganda that relations between India and Pakistan and the "true representatives" of the Kashmiri people to promote a just and peaceful settlement of the issue.

It urged India to allow international Human Rights groups to visit Kashmir, where police and hospitals have reported more than 17,000 deaths in the insurgency since early 1990.

The Islamabad conference decided to set up a contact group on Kashmir at the

address bilateral issues, including issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir, in a dialogue with Pakistan....," he said.

India-Pakistan have fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir, since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

The Islamabad conference asked Gabid to establish contact with India and Pakistan and the "true representatives" of the Kashmiri people to promote a just and peaceful settlement of the issue.

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United Nations to coordinate member states' efforts for "promoting the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people."

Singh said there were several OIC members who respected India's territorial integrity and rejected terrorism and interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

India reciprocates such sentiments and looks forwards to working with those nations to enhance our mutual cooperation," Singh said.

New Delhi regard the whole of Kashmir as an integral part of India. But Islamabad wants the predominantly Muslim Kashmiris to decide in a UN-mandated plebiscite whether to join Islamic Pakistan or Hindu-Majority India.

Some of the Kashmiri militant groups seek to reunite Kashmir into an independent state.

Bosnia urges US to lift ban unilaterally

ISLAMABAD, Sept 10: Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said here today he was hopeful the United States would unilaterally lift an arms embargo, reports AP.

"A champion of democracy, will not like to go on record as having kept the embargo on a country which is a victim of fascist aggression," Silajdzic said before his departure after attending a major Islamic conference here.

"The embargoes are illegal, unjust," he said, adding "we have the commitment from the US government to work on lifting it multilaterally or unilaterally."

The Bosnian leader said the multi-ethnic American society was more responsive to the problem in the war-torn republic compared with the "intertia" shown by Europe which seeds Bosnia as a "nation state."

Bosnia has always been a mixed society of three ethnic

groups, Silajdzic said. The arms ban had produced "only negative results and destruction," he said and asked: "Why keep it then?"

It is the duty of the international community, the UN Security Council and each of its five permanent members to end the embargo and uphold the legal, human and international right of Bosnian people to defend themselves," he said.

He said Bosnians accepted the proposed peace plan although it was unjust, stressing that all conflicts, including Indo-Pakistan, Kashmir dispute, should be resolved in a spirit of compromise. Bosnia should be made a "model" for resolving similar problems and situations that may arise in the world in future he said.

Silajdzic praised the decisions in support of his country taken by the extraordinary meeting of foreign ministers of Islamic states in Islamabad, which ended Friday.

Protest against killing in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Sept 10: Thousands of people came out on the streets of the state capital and shops downed their shutters on Saturday to protest the killing of a teenager reportedly by paramilitary troops, reports AP.

US ambassador to China Stapleton Roy was summoned by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu, the news agency said, providing no further details.

On Thursday the ministry's spokesman, Shen Guofang, called the US move to increase informal ties with Taipei, "interfering in China's internal affairs," which could seriously damage Sino-US ties.

Washington on Wednesday announced, for the first time since the United States officially recognised the People's Republic of China 15 years ago, its intention to reconsider Taiwan's political status. Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province.

China summons US ambassador to lodge protest

BEIJING, Sept 10: China summoned the United States ambassador in Beijing today to strongly protest Washington's decision to upgrade its relations with Taiwan, the official, Xinhua news agency reported, says AP.

US ambassador to China Stapleton Roy was summoned by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu, the news agency said, providing no further details.

On Thursday the ministry's spokesman, Shen Guofang, called the US move to increase informal ties with Taipei, "interfering in China's internal affairs," which could seriously damage Sino-US ties.

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Madame Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Sept 10: The widow of late nationalist leader General Issimo Chiang Kai-Shek flew to Taipei today and was greeted at the airport by President Lee Teng-Hui and ruling Nationalist Party leaders, reports Reuter.

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, who is believed to be 95 and lives in seclusion in the United States, returned to Taiwan to visit a niece now in hospital in Taipei with cancer.

A smiling Madame Chiang, dressed in a navy blue traditional cheongsam, accepted a bouquet of yellow orchids from the President and his wife before shaking hands with premier Lien Chan and other party vice-chairmen.

She flew to Taiwan with her husband after the defeat of the nationalist forces by the communists in 1949.

NATO war games from tomorrow

WARSAW, Sept 10: Senior NATO and eastern European military leaders will gather in Poland Monday for joint military operations organised under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's partnership for peace agreement, reports AP.

US General William Carter and Polish General Zygmunt Sadowski will direct the joint manoeuvres, organised under the programme agreed earlier this year to involve eastern countries more closely in NATO operations.

During the Korean War, the North insisted that truce talks take place at Kaesong, an ancient Korean capital occupied by the communist armies.

UN negotiators had to drive there under a white flag of truce, which gave the appearance that UN forces were arriving under a flag of surrender to seek terms. The talks were later shifted at US insistence to the neutral border village of Panmunjom.

US officials say relations won't be normalised unless North Korea lets inspectors to dispel suspicions that it has been secretly building nuclear weapons, reports Reuter.

Polish President Lech Wałęsa will be present on September 16, when exercises end.

Thirteen countries will take part.

Off the Record

Plants bleed when cut!

LOUGHBOROUGH, England: A botany professor accused vegetarians on Friday of being cruel to plants when they stuck into a bowl of salad or slice a juicy tomato, reports Reuter.

"If you cut a lettuce you are being awfully cruel," Professor Malcolm Wilkins of Glasgow University said in a speech about plant sensitivity to a British science conference.

Wilkins said plants are sophisticated organisms which "bleed" a clear liquid when cut. Plants are sensitive organisms. But students tell me they are vegetarians because they don't like animals being killed," he said.

"Say to them you are perfectly happy to slice up a tomato or cucumber ... where is your logic?"

Wilkins told the conference at Loughborough University in central England that plants are much more sophisticated than people think and some emit crackling noises inaudible to the human ear when they need water.

Transferred for kissing

KUALA LUMPUR: An immigration officer who kissed a foreign journalist after she arrived in Malaysia has been transferred from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport pending a further investigation, officials said, reports AP.

Immigration Department Public Relations Officer Mohamed Aris Chonin told reporters Saturday that the officer had confessed to kissing Galina Petounina, 36, from Kyrgyzstan when she arrived here nine days ago to attend a UN conference.

Petounina had complained to the Malay Mail afternoon daily that when she arrived the officer kept one portion of her arrival card, saying he would deliver it to her personally at her hotel room.

She protested, but he went to her room later to deliver the card and talked to her for about 30 minutes, after which he asked her to kiss him, Petounina said.

She thought it was the local custom and complied, and he returned the kiss.

Later a conference official told her it was not a custom and she complained to the Malay Mail, which carried the report.

Italians prefer spaghetti after making love

ROME: Italians are no longer content to smoke a cigarette after making love — these days they prefer to tuck into a plate of spaghetti, according to a study of sex and food, reports Reuter.

"Nowadays after sex it's more important to eat than to have a smoke ... and what people like is spaghetti," Roman psychologist Willy Pasini, author of the survey, said on Friday.

Pasini also said a woman in love would lose her appetite while a man became more ravenous.

He told the newspaper Corriere Della Sera this was not the only difference he discovered.

"Italian men think a good dinner is enough to seduce a woman, while women expect a man to know how to talk as well," he said.

Tajik Muslim rebels seize strategic town

DUSHANBE, Sept 10: The Tajik Islamic opposition seized control of a strategic town in central Tajikistan following fighting in which at least 20 government soldiers were killed and 20 disappeared. Russian military officials said today, reports AP.

The opposition seized the town of Tavildara, 150 kilometres (100 miles) east of Dushanbe and took control of the road between Dushanbe and Monsomolab.

The capture of the town will force the government forces to fall back towards the Kulab region, the Russian official said.

Cairo confce fights against female circumcision

CAIRO, Sept 10: The UN population conference has taken up the fight against the traditional practice of female circumcision, which leaves two million young girls scarred for life each year, reports AP.

All said Pakistan had repeatedly denied such reports in the past and added: "They insist saying it again and again so what can we do about it."

He accused the Western press of