

BRIEFLY

Babri Masjid body concerned: The Babri Masjid committee of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has expressed concern over the prime minister's reported "attempt" to personally oversee the finalisation of Ram Temple trust with the "avowed purpose of converting the disputed Ayodhya site into a temple," PTI reports from New Delhi.

The committee, which met here on Saturday reiterated its demand that Ayodhya dispute be resolved either through a renewed negotiated settlement or a binding court verdict by transferring all pending cases to the Supreme Court under Article 138.

Sinn Fein rally disrupted: Violence broke out Saturday at a protest rally organised by Sinn Fein, political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), in Belfast, according to reports from the Northern Ireland's capital, Xinhua reports from London.

The protest rally was designed to highlight the demand of Sinn Fein and its supporters that British soldier be withdrawn from Catholic areas of Northern Ireland as the IRA has stopped its campaign of violence for more than two weeks.

UK labour dispute may end: A 14-week old labour disputes which had disrupted Britain's railway network may soon be over, newspapers reported on yesterday. Reuter reports from London.

Railway signaller have staged a series of 24 and 48-hour strikes every week since June in one of the bitterest industrial conflicts in Britain in the last decade.

Moi meets Sudanese leader: Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi met Sudan's main Islamic leader, Hassan El-Tourabi in Nairobi yesterday for talks on the long-running civil war in Sudan, one of Kenya's northern neighbours, AFP reports from Nairobi.

State radio said the talks, held at Moi's Kabarak residence in the western rift valley province. The meeting with Tourabi, considered the power behind the throne of the current military regime of General Omar Hassan El-Beshir in Khartoum, raised hopes that a new round of talks aimed at finding a peaceful solution of the Sudanese conflict could be around the corner.

5 killed in Ukraine blast: Three miners and two rescue workers died in a blast in Ukraine's Donetsk coal mining region on Saturday, a security official said. Reuter reports from Kiev.

He said the accident was caused by an underground methane gas explosion but gave no further details.

Teacher arrested in West Bank: Police have arrested a teacher from the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba in the West Bank in connection with an alleged plot to attack Arabs, Israel radio said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

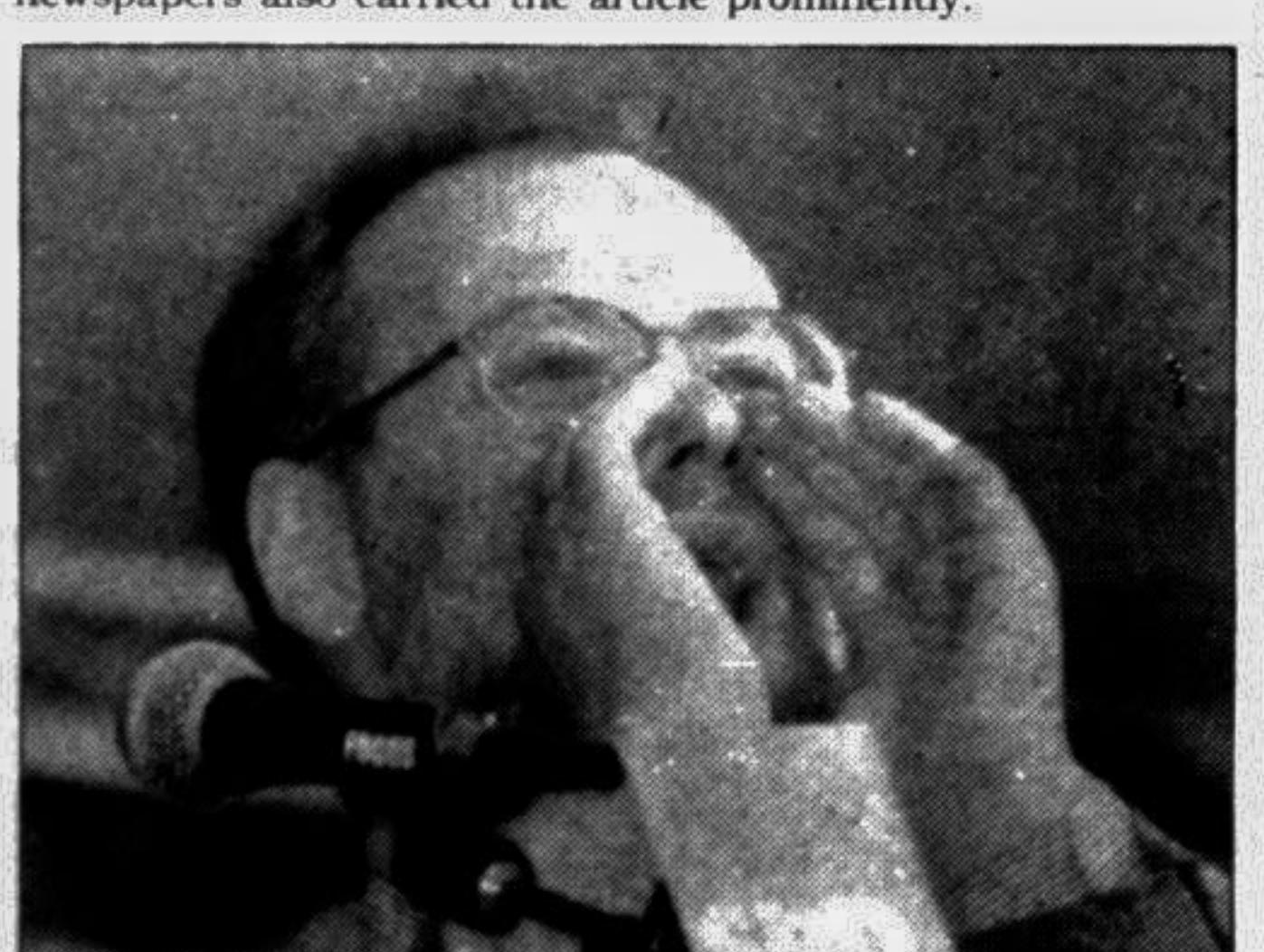
The radio said the arrest of teacher Meir Koren brought to 11 the number so far questioned in the case, eight of the men detained are still in custody, it said.

4 die in Taiwan air mishap: A navy ship has accidentally shot down an airplane during an exercise, killing the four people, the navy said Sunday. AP reports from Taipei.

The twin-engine Learjet-35 was being used to tow dummy targets Saturday when it was hit by US-made MK-15 guns from a ship and plunged into the sea near Chipen Beach in Taitung, southeastern Taiwan, it said.

Bid to stop Chinese price hike: The central government announced yesterday it would start inspections nationwide to try to stop price increases and tax evasion, AP reports from Beijing.

The announcement by the State Council, China's Cabinet, was made in a front-page article in the People's Daily, accompanied by an editorial that hailed the drive as an important part of economic reform. Other major national newspapers also carried the article prominently.



Despite the malfunctioning microphones Rudolf Schäping, the German Social Democratic Party leader and chancellor candidate in the upcoming elections, brings his message through to the audience during the last leg of his election campaign tour to Schwerin in Germany on Saturday. — AFP photo

Ramos opposes invasion of Haiti: Philippine President Fidel Ramos said on Saturday his government would not give military support to a US-led invasion of Haiti but would assist peacekeeping operations after democratic rule is restored there, Reuter reports from Frankfurt.

"We are not supporting the invasion but we will be supporting, as we have done in the case of Cambodia. The peacekeeping efforts after the military operations shall have been finished and after democracy shall have been restored to Haiti."

Voting begins in HK: Voting began Sunday in Hong Kong's first fully democratic elections, despite bitter Chinese opposition to the political reforms that made them possible, reports Reuter from Hong Kong.

More than 750 candidates are contesting 346 seats on district boards, the lowest of Hong Kong's three tiers of representatives government.

Pope defends traditional family: Recharged by the welcome of Italy's sunny south, Pope John Paul II on Sunday made clear that the Church's campaign to defend traditional family structure would continue even after the UN population conference, AP reports from Lecce.

"You know how much we insisted... that the recent international conference in Cairo should recognise in the family the sanctuary of communion and life, and ensure its protection against every attempt to upset its natural structure," the Pope prayed.

Khmers allege interference: The Khmer Rouge guerrillas yesterday alleged that foreign interference on the side of Phnom Penh was behind an upsurge in fighting in Cambodia, AFP reports from Bangkok.

In a broadcast monitored in Bangkok, Khmer Rouge Radio said the government in Phnom Penh was doomed to fall because the guerrilla war was spreading throughout the country. Quoting a communiqué from the Khmer Rouge "government" spokesman, the radio said the foreigners coming to Cambodia to get involved in the war "must accept full responsibility for all the consequences."

International

New wave of 'ethnic cleansing'

Bosnian Serbs expel 700 Muslims

SARAJEVO, Sept 18: Bosnian Serbs expelled 700 Muslims in a new wave of "ethnic cleansing" and kept up their pressure on Sarajevo, reports Reuter.

The city has been without electricity, water and gas since Thursday because the Serbs have cut off supplies in a move reminiscent of the darkest days of the siege of the Bosnian capital.

United Nations plans to take tougher measures against the Bosnian Serbs because of their rejection of the latest international peace plan prompted fears they were retaliating against Sarajevo, diplomats said.

The embattled city's hospitals bore the brunt of the utility cuts.

We have no water or electricity and we are running the generator for emergency cases only in the surgery theatres, said Dr Meldiana Omerbegovic, a surgeon at the Kossevo hospital. A senior UN official went to the Bosnian Serb's capital of

Pale near Sarajevo on Saturday but was unable to secure a resumption of supplies.

The clearances have not been given, said UN spokeswoman Olafre Serb.

In the latest bout of ethnic cleansing, about 700 Muslims, mostly women, children and the elderly fled Serb-held territory in northern Bosnia on Saturday evening, according to United Nations and Bosnian government official.

Eleven buses with about 50 persons each crossed into government territory at 5:45 (1545 GMT) tonight, a UN source told Reuter.

Three other buses crossed earlier, we think with men of military age, all were reported to be Muslims and we estimate about 700 came from the Banja Luka area in total today.

The latest expulsions brought to more than 6,000 the number of Muslims driven from their homes in Bosnia by Serb forces since mid July.

A Bosnian government official said Serbs had told him

that 6,000 Muslims would be present in the coming weeks.

The big powers want the Security Council to freeze foreign trade, finance and travel for the Bosnian Serbs.

The major powers said the sanctions against Yugoslavia should be eased to allow international air travel and sports and cultural links for an initial 100 days while international monitors check the border to negotiate.

They also urged the UN to ease sanctions against Yugoslavia in return for its imposition of a military blockade to punish the Bosnian Serbs for opposing the peace deal.

There was concern the Bosnian Serbs would respond by activating a threat from their leader Radovan Karadzic, to deprive Sarajevo's 380,000 inhabitants of vital services.

Karadzic President of the self-styled Bosnian Serb Republic warned recently he would squeeze the city so tightly that even a bird would not get into it.

Serbs control the flow of gas and electricity to Sarajevo and road access. Water cannot be pumped without electric



Former US President Jimmy Carter (C) talking to the press at the Port-au-Prince Airport after arriving on Saturday. Carter leads a delegation which will attempt peaceful solution to the Haiti crisis.

— AFP photo

GCC FMs discuss ME peace process, Gulf situation

RIYADH, Sept 18: Gulf Arab foreign ministers met here Saturday to discuss developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Gulf, reports AFP.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states would pledge financial support for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

The GCC countries follow with interest the development of the peace process, notably in the Palestinian track, he said in an opening speech at the meeting of GCC foreign ministers.

He said council members — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United

Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — hoped to see "fundamental progress" in negotiations between Israel and Syria and Lebanon.

The minister also outlined obstacles in the way of lifting international sanctions against Iraq.

The UN Security Council decided on Wednesday to renew its economic embargo on Baghdad, in force since Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

The crux of the problem is Iraqi recognition of Kuwait the release of all Kuwaiti prisoners of war, the payment of war damages and commitment by the Baghdad regime not to carry out or support any act of

terrorism or sabotage," Prince Faisal said.

In his speech, he urged Yemeni leaders to "continue political dialogue to secure stability and prosperity" in Yemen.

All GCC members except

Qatar implicitly recognised a breakaway state declared by southern Yemeni leaders during the two-month civil war against northern forces loyal to Yemen's president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Both Iran and the Emirates reasserted their claims to three strategic islands this week. The UAE says Iranian troops occupied the Tumb islands in 1971 and annexed the UAE part of shared Abu Musa.

Renewed violence in Algeria

ALGIERS, Sept 18: Algeria was rocked by renewed violence Saturday, with the killing of Ali Laib, a leading figure in the Islamic Society Movement (MSI-Hamas), gunned down in the eastern town of Constantine, reports AFP.

Ali Laib was at least the 19th civilian victim of Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), a move which had sparked hopes of a truce in the unrest sweeping the North African country.

Another member of the moderate party — Abou Djara Soltani — was injured in the attack.

The Le Matin daily reported meanwhile that 17 policemen had been assassinated on Wednesday at Bouira, south east of Algiers.

Fresh fighting casts doubt over Tajik truce

The anti-rebel operation, launched by government forces was continuing, the radio said.

The official Itar-Tass news agency said two Russian border guards died on Saturday from their wound after an explosion during a recent clash with the rebels.

Tass also said a Tajik Security Ministry officer was kidnapped after an ambush on a mountain road near Dushanbe.

Tass announcing the agreement gave no details on the timetable. Opposition members demanded UN peacekeeping forces, to monitor the ceasefire and supervise the 25,000 strong Russian peacekeepers in Tajikistan.

Deaf dancer wins Miss America Pageant

ATLANTIC CITY, Sept 18: A deaf dancer from Alabama won the 68th annual Miss America Pageant on Saturday, becoming the first woman with a disability to win the crown, reports AP.

Heather Whitestone, 21, was the only contestant to win two preliminary competitions in the swimsuit and talent categories.

Whitestone was born with hearing but lost it after a reaction to a diphtheria-tetanus shot when she was 18 months old.

She seemed not to realise she'd won when the first runner-up was announced. Then she started to cry and ducked her head to receive the crown from the outgoing Miss America, Kimberly Aiken.

Birendra goes to France — a country he described as "an important partner in Nepal's development efforts" in an interview with AFP — with his own nation's democracy experiencing new strains.

The King referred to the political turbulence in the interview, saying he was determined changes made in his country should take hold.

The observance of the constitution is a basic prerequisite to consolidating democracy.

The consolidation of parliamentary democracy calls for a political culture that respects and observes democratic norms and values," said the King. "Our efforts are directed towards this end within the framework of our present constitution."

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— AFP photo

As she returned to the stage after walking down the runway, she signed, "I love you."

Her winning the Miss America competition will give inspiration to deaf children that they can also fulfill their dreams of who they want to be, whether it be Miss America or a lawyer or a teacher," said Sherry Duhon, a spokeswoman for Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the world's only liberal arts university for the deaf.

Whitestone enchanted the judges with her talent routine, a 2 and 1/2 minute ballet performed to the song, "Via Dolorosa." Although she can't hear the music, she counts beats in her head, and synchronises her dance moves to reflect changes in pitch.

— AFP photo

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— AFP photo

India, Pakistan agree to combat drug trafficking

NEW DELHI, Sept 18: India and Pakistan have agreed to establish contact points in the level of secretaries and it is proposed to be a regular feature. The Indian side was led by the revenue secretary Sivaram and the Pakistani side by secretary, narcotics, Dil Jan Khan.

Rebels declare red alert in Mexico

MEXICO CITY, Sept 18: Armed Zapatista rebels have declared a state of red alert in southeastern Mexico after accusing the army of violating the terms of a January ceasefire Mexican newspapers reported Saturday.

Our troops are ready to resist the assault, and they have received orders to defend our territory to the bitter end, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) said in a statement delivered to a journal and other newspapers.

Tamil rebels capture 24 civilians

COLOMBO, Sept 18: Tamil rebels seized four boats with 24 civilians in Sri Lanka's northwestern coast less than two weeks after agreeing to help start stalled inter-Korean talks aimed at defusing nuclear tensions, the Yonhap news agency reported Sunday, says AP.

The proposal was sent to South Korean President Kim Young-sam on Friday, and Kim was expected to back Carter's plan, the national news agency said, quoting an unidentified high-ranking presidential official.

It was not known whether North Korea has agreed to the visit of Carter, who is expected to meet Kim Jong Il, the presumed new leader.

If the trip materialises, it would be Carter's second visit to North Korea, and the first time that a high-ranking foreigner meets Kim Jong Il, the presumed new leader.

In June, Carter held two days of talks with President Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang, helping to arrange a series of accords aimed at resolving suspicions over the Communist North's nuclear programme.

But the first-ever inter-Korean summit, one of the agreements brought back by Carter, was put on hold after Kim Il Sung died July 8 of an apparent heart attack.

US-North Korea talks on replacing North Korea's outdated nuclear plants with modern and safer reactors also appear near a stalemate, with North Korea refusing a South Korean-built replacement plant.

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The woman's brother-in-law and other relatives had arranged her marriage in a bid to get access to property left by her late husband, the agency quoted police as saying.

It said police had registered a case against six people after she complained, but no one had yet been arrested.

Funeral or festival?

LAGOS: A