

BRIEFLY

Car bomb attack in Spain:

A car bomb thought to have been planted by the Basque separatists ETA group ripped through a civil guard barracks in northeast Spain yesterday injuring 40 people, Spanish media reported. Reuter says from Madrid.

Spanish national radio said the bomb exploded just after 4:00 am (0200 GMT) in Arnedo, La Rioja province, in northeast Spain, destroying part of the building. The report said none of the injuries were serious. The injured were mostly civilians living near the barracks in the town of 12,000 people. Around thirty cars were damaged.

Blast kills 5 in Algeria:

Five members of a family were killed and two others injured when Islamic extremists hurled a homemade bomb into their home near Algiers, the Daily El Watan reported Thursday, AFP says from Algiers.

It said the victims of Tuesday's attack at Bouinan, 25 kms southeast of the capital, were women and children who were at home while the men were out working.

UNHCR sends aid to Serbs:

Five planes landed at Belgrade Airport Wednesday carrying some 140 tonnes of humanitarian aid for Krajina Serb refugees who have fled Croatia UN officials said. AFP reports from Belgrade.

A spokesman for the UN High Commission for Refugees said the UNHCR had chartered four of the planes the fifth came from Italian aid organisations. They are carrying, food, medical supplies, blankets, baby food and school books.

Liberian warlords begin talks:

Liberian warlords have begun yet another round of peace talks with an impatient international community telling them to really try this time to resolve the lingering conflict, Reuter reports from Abuja.

"I hope this meeting will bring a lasting solution to the Liberian problem" Nigeria's Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi said at the opening of the talks in Nigeria's capital Abuja on Wednesday night.

Avalanche kills 5 on K-2:

Five foreign climbers have been killed in an avalanche on K-2, the world's second highest mountain, a Pakistani army officer said yesterday, Reuter reports from Islamabad.

The officer, speaking by telephone from the northern town of Skardu, said two Spaniards, one American, one Briton and one Cambodian were killed by the avalanche.

Bermudans vote to keep ties with UK:

A solid majority of Bermuda voters chose to reject independence and keep the island as Britain's oldest colony, election results showed early Thursday, Reuter reports from Hamilton.

With 57 per cent of Bermuda's 38,000 registered voters turning out, 73 per cent voted to keep their ties with Britain and 25 per cent voted to become independent, election officials said. The referendum on independence was the first in the history of Bermuda, Britain's oldest colony. The chain of 138 islands and islets came under the British crown in 1684 and achieved internal self-government in 1968.

Hezbollah attacks Israeli post:

Hezbollah guerrillas attacked an Israeli position in South Lebanon Thursday causing casualties, the Iranian-backed group and security sources said. AFP reports from Marjayoun, Lebanon.

A Hezbollah spokesman in Beirut said guerrillas fired rockets at an Israeli Merkava tank in Sojod, in the central sector of the Israeli-occupied "security zone," scoring "a direct hit".



Nurses abandon hospitals to protest India's broadcasting ministry yesterday in New Delhi. They were demanding a ban on a television film 'Doctor of Hearts' in which a doctor spends more time wooing nurses than practicing medicine. — AFP/UNB photo

Chechen rebels start surrendering arms

MOSCOW, Aug 17: Russian forces in Chechnya and their rebel opponents seem to have drawn back from the brink of more major clashes by starting to fulfil the terms of a disputed military deal to end eight months of fighting, reports Reuter.

Just a day after the Kremlin threatened to forcibly disarm separatist fighters, a group of 30 Chechen rebels on Wednesday in the southern village of Zandak handed over dozens of weapons and thousand of bullets and shells.

"It's a start. I just hope the others follow suit," Major-General Yevgeny Skobelev, Deputy Head of Russian troops in Chechnya, told Russian television.

Moscow said it would take tough measures against the

rebels on Monday after they rejected its terms on how to carry out the July 30 military deal.

The rebels agreed to hand over their arms in return for the withdrawal of most of the Kremlin forces sent to crush the region's independence bid last December.

Skobelev told reporters his men had started to pull out and hours later Russian independent television channel NTV reported that a column of more than 100 armoured vehicles and trucks had left the Chechen capital Grozny.

Chechen field commander Asian Maskhadov, who together with Skobelev had watched the Zandak ceremony welcomed the news the Russians were beginning to leave.

China conducts nuclear test

BEIJING, Aug 17: China conducted an underground nuclear blast, its second this year, at its main test site in a remote western desert today, the Foreign Ministry announced, reports Reuter.

"China has all along exercised utmost restraint on nuclear testing and the tests it has conducted are extremely limited in number," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian, who confirmed the test through the official Xinhua news agency.

The explosion took place at the Lop Nor nuclear test site in western Xinjiang at 9:00 am (0100 GMT) and created a shock that registered 5.6 on the open-ended Richter scale, the Australian Geological Survey Organisation said from

Canberra.

The blast was the equivalent of 20 to 80 kilotonnes of conventional explosives, the Australian seismologists said.

It was at least the 43rd nuclear explosion at Lop Nor since tests started there in 1964, they said.

China last tested a nuclear device at Lop Nor on May 15 days after Beijing joined non-nuclear states in agreeing to an indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Reiterating China's position, Chen said Beijing could cease nuclear testing once a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) came into force and said he hoped the pact could be signed by the end of 1996.

China stands for the complete prohibition and

through destruction of nuclear weapons," Chen said.

"Its possession of a small number of nuclear weapons is solely for the purpose of self-defence and poses no threat to any other country," he said.

Beijing wants to conduct at least one more test this year and three more in 1996, arguing they are needed because China's testing programme lags far behind the other nuclear powers — the United States, Britain, France and Russia.

China has unilaterally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons under any circumstances and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon state or nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Chen said.

Reuter adds: A Greenpeace activist who helped pull off an unprecedented anti-nuclear protest in Beijing called China's underground nuclear blast on Thursday a disaster for international efforts to pass a comprehensive test ban.

Meanwhile, Britain is resigned to further nuclear testing by China and France and was not surprised by China's latest underground test, the foreign office said today.

Another report says, Japan lodged a strong protest against China's latest nuclear test today, saying Tokyo seriously regretted the timing of the blast and hinting it could further cut aid to China because of the test.

40 killed in Iranian road accidents

TEHRAN, Aug 17: Forty people were killed and 20 others seriously injured in two separate road accidents in northeastern Iran, newspapers reported here today, says AFP.

The first involved a head-on collision between a truck and a bus on Shahrud-Zabzevar road on Wednesday, leaving 22 dead and 13 injured.

Another head-on collision between a bus and a truck took place on the same day near Gorgan in Mazandaran province. Sixteen bus passengers and the two drivers were instantly killed.

Minutes later a minibus crashed into the wreck of the two vehicles lying on the road, leaving several of its occupants injured.

Emergency in Colombia

BOGOTA, Aug 17: President Ernesto Samper, whose government has been thrown into crisis by charges that his election campaign was partly financed by drug traffickers, declared a state of emergency on Wednesday to fight what he described as a growing spiral of violence across Colombia, reports Reuter.

The measure effective immediately, was announced by Samper in a nationwide speech. He said it would allow the government to crack down on the common criminals, drug lords, leftist guerrillas and right wing paramilitary groups who have created a "situation of generalised violence" in Colombia.

S Korean oil tanker leaves for North

SEOUL, Aug 17: A tanker left South Korea for the communist North today carrying 20,000 tonnes of fuel oil as part of a nuclear deal between Pyongyang and Washington, reports Reuter.

A spokesman of Yukong Ltd said the Chinese registered tanker Wei Shan Yu left the port of Ulsan headed for the North Korean port of Sonbong.

Yukong won a contract from the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) to ship 40,000 tonnes of bunker oil to the North.

Under the 4.5 billion dollar deal, Pyongyang will be provided with two light water reactors and interim supplies of fuel oil in exchange for shutting down its existing nuclear facilities.

The KEDO consortium was created in March to implement the Geneva accord under which North Korea's plutonium producing reactor at Yongbyon will be replaced by light water reactors that cannot easily convert fuel to weapons grade material.



Pilots of the Concorde Captain Claude Hertz (R) and Capt. Michel Dupont (C) pose for photographers in the arrivals hall of JFK airport in New York Wednesday. The Air France Concorde Flight 1995 broke the around-the-world speed record with a time of 31 hrs 27 mins and 49 seconds. — AFP/UNB photo

US wants Jordan to sever economic ties with Iraq

WASHINGTON, Aug 17: The Clinton administration wants to persuade Jordan to sever most of its economic ties with Iraq to put new pressure on the Baghdad government, The Washington Post reported today, quoting senior US officials, reports Reuter.

The Post said a high-level US delegation departed on Wednesday for Jordan's capital Amman to tell Jordanian officials that Washington is trying to convince Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to sell oil to Jordan to replace oil now supplied by Iraq.

The two Gulf countries halted trade with Jordan in retaliation for its refusal to break with Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War.

Jordan last week granted asylum to two senior Iraqi

defectors and Washington hopes Jordan's King Hussein will cooperate more fully in the US effort to bring down Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

One official termed last week's defections "a unique opportunity" to try to isolate the Iraqi regime further.

Iraq's economy is already suffering under an economic embargo imposed by the United Nations at the end of the Gulf War.

Saudi Arabian diplomats have told Washington they are actively considering a resumption of trade with Jordan. The Post said, quoting American officials.

The new Jordan initiative is being led by Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau and special assistant to the President Mark

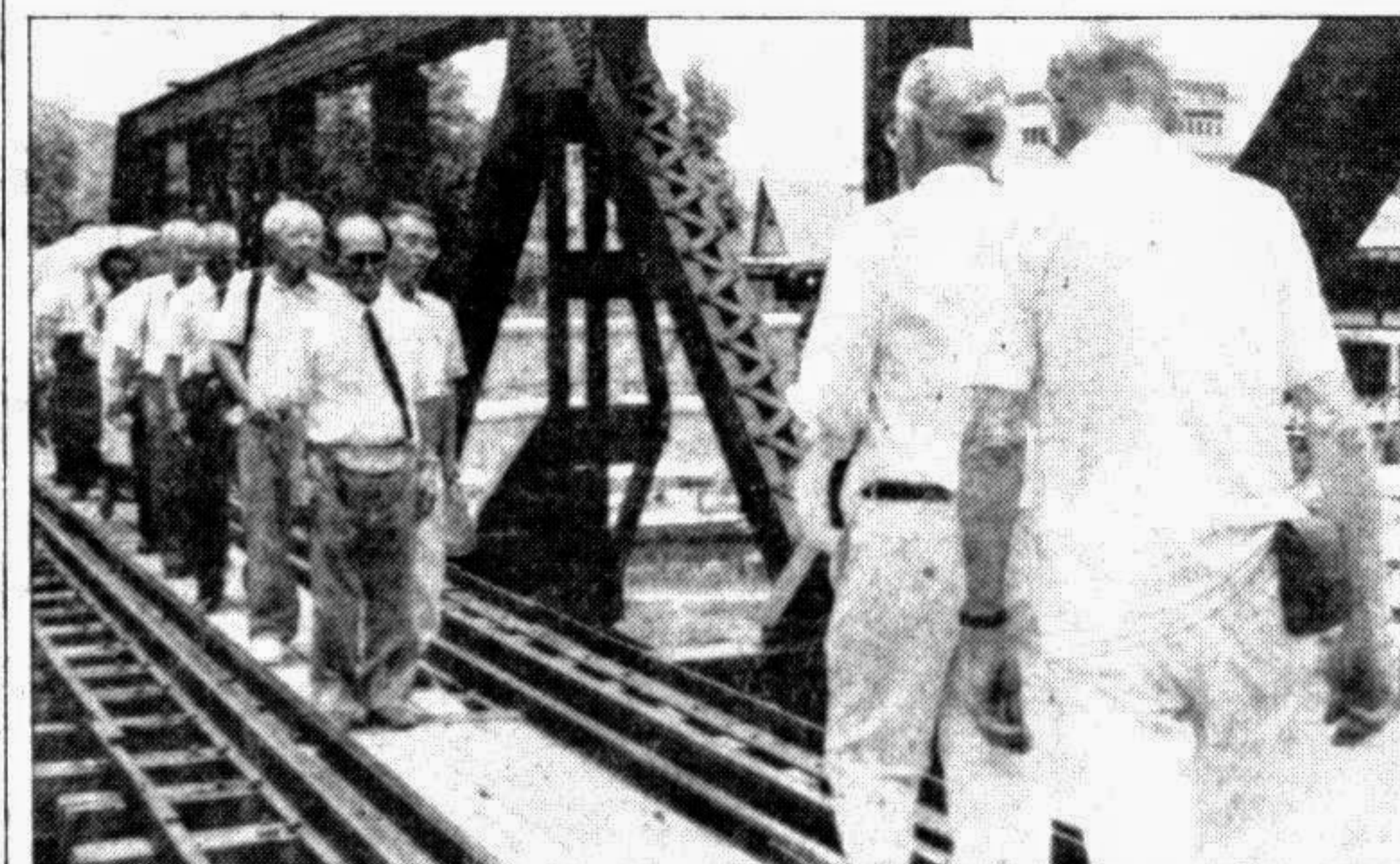
Paris, who will arrive in Amman this week.

If the talks go well, the team will fly on to Riyadh and Kuwait city, officials told the paper.

For the past four years Jordan has been Iraq's only link to the outside world.

AFP adds from United Nations, the United States, Britain and France told Iraq Wednesday that it should cooperate with the United Nations and disclose full information concerning its germ-warfare programme, diplomats said.

The UN representatives from the three countries made the statement to Iraqi envoy Nizar Hamdoun on the eve of a key visit to Baghdad by Rolf Ekeus, head of a UN Special Commission in Iraq Disarmament (UNSCOM).



Two Australian former prisoners of war (R) march across the famous bridge over the river Kwai to meet with the Japanese lead group of war veterans August 15 in Kanchanaburi, western Thailand, to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. — AFP/UNB photo

Lanka rules out fresh talks with LTTE

COLOMBO, Aug 17: The Sri Lankan government ruled out today third party mediation or further discussions with Tamil Tiger rebels to try to find a peaceful solution to a 12-year ethnic war, reports Reuter.

Justice Minister G L Peiris said the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighting for a homeland in the north and east, had been given several invitations to talk peace and had "repeatedly refused to react."

"Now the government is at war with the LTTE. In those circumstances we cannot confuse the picture by entering into any process of negotiation," Peiris told a press conference. "That is unfair by the country and unfair by the armed forces... for that reason the proposals have not been officially sent to the LTTE."

President Chandrika

Kumaratunga announced a peace package this month, offering widespread devolution to the country's minority Tamils who have long complained of discrimination in land, language and education.

Peiris denied that plans to allow the central government to disband any of the eight new regional councils in times of emergency amounted to any dilution of the devolution package which the LTTE officially rejected last week.

The government invited the LTTE to view the proposals before they were announced. The LTTE answered by breaking a ceasefire and resuming hostilities.

Last month the army launched a major offensive against the LTTE, capturing 78 sq km (30 sq miles) of rebel-held territory in the jagged northern Jaffna Peninsula.

"We are still dominating those areas," said military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe, adding that there were limited operations being launched every day.

"Very soon you will see certain effective measures and change in tactics which I cannot spell out now."

An LTTE suicide bomber blew up 24 people in the capital this month and Colombo police chief G B Kotakadeniya said "dwelling houses" had been set up in the city to harbour other would-be bombers.

"The LTTE is doing its best to disrupt the social and economic life of Colombo City. That is their main target," he said. "They would rather like that to happen that fight the army in the north."

"Infact they have been

planning this for quite a long time, and I know that many dwelling houses have been started in Colombo City for the purpose of harbouring operatives.

AFP adds: The airforce bombed and destroyed an airfield of the Tamil Tiger guerrillas set up in side a thick jungle in northern Sri Lanka, a military spokesman here said today.

The aerial strikes were carried out in the past two days in the Iramadamu area where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) maintained a one-kilometre long runway, the spokesman said.

"We have bombed and damaged to such an extent that the airfield cannot be used unless the terrorists start extensive repair works, military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe told reporters here.

KSA to go on with Islamic law despite criticism

DUBAI, Aug 17: Saudi Arabia will continue its application of Islamic law, said a Saudi newspaper today in reaction to criticism of the rising number of beheadings, reports Reuter.

Al-Yawm newspaper said in an editorial that applying Islamic law in a just way to both nationals and expatriates was an integral part of the country's social and political foundation.

"The kingdom does not allow anybody to compromise its laws and regulations. It also demands that all expatriates respect its laws," the paper said. "The kingdom's implementation of Sharia is an inevitable duty."

Turkey warned Saudi Arabia on Wednesday not to execute any more Turks after

four were beheaded last week for trying to smuggle in drugs.

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, on a visit to the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, said Turkey was considering withdrawing its ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has said executions would go ahead in accordance with Islamic law which demands the public execution by the sword of rapists, murderers, drug smugglers and violent armed robbers.

Up to 141 people have been beheaded in Saudi Arabia this year, mostly for smuggling drugs. The kingdom has repeatedly warned that it would punish drug traffickers as part of its fight against the trade.

Special envoy in Kashmir to help free hostages

SRINAGAR, Aug 17: An Indian government special envoy met with senior Kashmir officials here today to discuss securing the release of four Western tourists held by Muslim separatist militants, officials said, reports AFP.

V K Jain, a secretary in the Home Ministry, and members of the Kashmir government's crisis management group explored ways to bring about an end to the seven-week ordeal of the four Western hostages, they said.

Jain arrived in Srinagar, the Kashmir summer capital, on Wednesday with a "special brief" to help the Kashmir administration secure the release of the four captives, according to Indian government sources.

Al-Faran, the rogue Muslim separatist group which beheaded a Norwegian hostage over the weekend and threatened to kill the four other tourists, is demanding the release of 15 Muslim militants from Indian prisons.

The Indian government has publicly ruled out a swap to secure the freedom of the hostages, but sources close to the authorities said a "covert deal" could be worked out involving the release of five Kashmiri Muslim militants.

The Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley was paralysed today by a general strike for the third consecutive day. Shops, offices, banks, schools

and markets were closed and traffic was off the roads, witnesses said.

Today's strike was called by a pro-Pakistan Muslim separatist group, the Al-Fatah force, to mourn the death of former Pakistani President Mohammed Zia ul-Haq in a plane crash on August 17, 1988.

UNSC lifts arms embargo on Rwanda

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 17: The UN Security Council approved Wednesday a one year suspension of the arms embargo on Rwanda in response to a plea from the country's new Tutsi-led government, reports AFP.

The Council unanimously lifted the ban until September 1, 1996. It was imposed in May 1994 against the previous Hutu-led government.

The new Rwandan government make the request for fear of a new offensive by Hutu militias based in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, notably Zaire, Kigali, backed by Non Aligned countries in the Security Council and by the United States, had hoped to win an outright lifting of the embargo.

Rwandan officials claim they are being penalised by a measure that was intended to sanction the previous government.

Off the Record**It's all in the head**

LONDON: British doctors reported today that they had discovered why diets don't work — it's all in the head, reports Reuter.

Dieting upsets the level of chemicals in the brain, which in turn gives people an urge to over-eat, EM Clifford and colleagues at Littlemore Hospital in Oxford found.

They cited studies on rats showing that those lacking the ability to use the neurotransmitter serotonin in become overweight. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that help carry electrical signals along a nerve.

The doctors tested 12 women aged 20 to 39, and found that those on a restricted diet of 1,000 calories a day had lower levels of the essential amino acid tryptophan, which the body uses to make serotonin.

"Thus, during dieting, subjects are likely to experience urges to overeat which will compromise efforts at continued food restriction," they wrote in the science journal Nature.

Guilty of incest

LIVERPOOL, Canada: A judge found a mother, her two sons and a daughter guilty of incest Wednesday, saying the four adults had no constitutional right to have sex with each other, reports AFP.

In announcing his decision in this Nova Scotia town in eastern Canada, Judge Hiram Carver said incest was and would remain a crime. The four adults could each spend up to 14 years in prison for their crimes.

It was revealed during the trial that the mother had sexual relations for two and half months last year with three of her sons, including one minor who was not prosecuted.

One of the sons was prosecuted for having sexual relations with his half-sister over an eight-year period, up until late last year. The lawyer for the accused maintained that moral arguments did not warrant criminal prosecution.

But the Judge, saying incest was an attack on the family, ruled that in this case, the rights of the society as a whole were more important than individual rights.

70 pc of poor are women

PARIS, Aug 17: Women constitute 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people who live below the poverty level worldwide, according to a report by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), reports AFP.

Around 828 million women are currently engaged in economic activity. When they earn wages, they earn on average some 30 to 40 per cent less than their male counterparts.

Women get 10 per cent of banking credits allocated in the world, the UNDP said.

Women account on average for 10 per cent of deputies in parliaments across the world.

In South America, 10 per cent of deputies are women, in the Arab world women account for four per cent of deputies, in Asian countries 19 per cent, and in Scandinavian countries 30 per cent.

Women account for some six per cent of ministers worldwide and take 4.4 per cent of Nobel Prizes.

One-third of families worldwide are headed by single women.

Women account for two-thirds of the world's illiterate population.

Around 500,000 women die every year from problems associated with childbirths. Around 30 per cent are adolescents.

Some 300 million women lack means to plan their pregnancies. Estimates suggest that 100,000 women die from illegal abortions each year.

Some two million women and girls suffer sexual mutilation every year.

One-third of women living in Norway, the United States, the Netherlands, and New Zealand have suffered some form of sexual abuse during their lives.

Chechen rebels start surrendering arms

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