

BRIEFLY

36 die in Zimbabwe bus crash: Thirty six people died when their bus crashed in southeastern Zimbabwe late Tuesday, police said Wednesday. AP reports from Harare.

At least 50 other passengers were injured, ten seriously, in the crash in the mountainous Chimanimani region about 400 kilometres (360 miles) southeast of Harare.

4 Rwandan ministers fired: The Rwandan presidency announced the firing of four ministers following the resignation and almost simultaneous sacking of Hutu Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu on Monday. AFP reports from Kigali.

Three of those purged from the Tutsi-dominated cabinet are Hutus, one a Tutsi. The Hutus fired are interior minister Seth Sendashonga, who had resigned Monday evening, according to information minister Jean-Baptiste Nkulyingoma; Nkulyingoma himself, and justice minister Alphonse-Marie Nkubito.

25 shot dead in Colombia: Suspected Marxist guerrillas gunned down about 25 people early Tuesday in Colombia's northwestern region of Uraba, the third massacre in the notoriously violent region this month, police said. Reuters reports from Bogota.

They said the guerrillas raided a banana plantation near the town of Carepa shortly after dawn and rounded up about 25 people heading for work in the field, shooting them on sight.

2 sentenced to death in China: A court in a popular tourist area of China sentenced one man to death for blackmail and beating a tourist to death, an official report said Wednesday. AP reports from Beijing.

The Suzhou Intermediate People's Court also sentenced another man in the same case to death but said the sentence could be committed to life in prison after two years for good behaviour. A third person was sentenced to four years in prison.

Minor Chinese boy commits suicide: A five-year-old Chinese boy committed suicide after watching one of many "educational" films being shown on television to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, the Beijing Daily said Tuesday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The boy, who lived in a Beijing suburb, jumped from the fifth floor of his building after having seen a Japanese soldier cut out the heart of a child, the newspaper said in article entitled "educational films or horror films."

Road mishaps claims 27 in Iran: A truck apparently driven by a sleepy driver collided head-on with a bus in eastern Iran, killing 24 including the driver and seriously injuring 15. The Daily Hamshahri said Tuesday. Reuters reports from Tehran.

In a second accident in Khorasan province, a bus driver and two passengers were killed and 34 were injured, it said.

22 killed in Mogadishu: At least 22 people were killed and more than 150 wounded in three days of fighting between rival militiamen in Mogadishu, the worst bloodshed in the Somali capital for months, hospital officials said Tuesday. Reuters reports from Mogadishu.

The Somali capital was calm on Tuesday after fighting eased overnight between forces loyal to faction leaders Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Mohamed Farah Aideed, residents said.

7 Angolans killed in mine blast: Seven Angolans were killed and 20 were injured when a truck hit an anti-tank mine in the diamond-rich province of Lunda Norte, Portugal's news agency Lusa reported Tuesday. AP reports from Lisbon, Portugal.

The truck was traveling Monday with a convoy escorted by the Angolan army when it deviated slightly from the route and tripped a mine near the town of Dundo, around 950 kilometres (600 miles) east of Luanda.

Flood kills 19 in Thailand: Nineteen people had died and damage had exceeded 48 million dollars by Tuesday from floods in 50 of 76 provinces as Thailand braced for more rain from tropical storm Lois, AP reports from Bangkok.

More than 360,000 families have been affected by the floods, Sak Techachan, an interior ministry official told local television Tuesday. He said that more than 6,000 roads, 571 bridges and 799 dykes had been damaged, and 800,000 acres of agricultural land were underwater.

Downpour disrupts traffic in Delhi: Heavy monsoon rains lashed the Indian capital for hours Wednesday, flooding many streets during the morning rush hour, destroying two homes and injuring two people, AP reports from New Delhi.

New Delhi received 107.7 millimetres (4.3 inches) of rain Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, the most that has fallen in one day since the monsoon began last month.

Downpours fell in some areas of the metropolis for nearly six hours, leaving some streets under knee-deep water that trapped many of the cars and taxis that tried to pass through it.

Seoul disaster death toll 501: As the trial of 25 people charged in connection with the June collapse of a department store opened Wednesday, the city government raised the death toll to 501 from South Korea's worst disaster ever. AP reports from Seoul.

The new death toll includes 64 people who had been listed as missing because their remains had not been found or identified. Many were store employees.

Quebec referendum likely on Oct 30: A referendum on Quebec's independence from Canada will likely be held October 30, Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau said Tuesday. AFP reports from Quebec City.

"That's the most likely" date, Parizeau said following a caucus of his Parti Quebecois, which is seeking sovereignty for the French-speaking province.

1 executed in Saudi Arabia: A Saudi man was executed by sword on Tuesday for a variety of crimes including circulating an aphrodisiac drug, a Saudi Arabian Interior Ministry statement said. Reuters reports from Dubai.

The execution, carried out in the Mecca area, brought to 148 the number of people executed this year in Saudi Arabia, whose interpretation of Islamic Sharia Law demands public execution by sword of rapists, murderers, drug smugglers and violent armed robbers.

10 more executed in China: Ten more criminals were executed last week in the southern Chinese city of Guiyang, Hunan province, the Guizhou daily said, AFP reports from Beijing.

The 10 criminals had been found guilty of murder, rape and theft, according to the paper received in Beijing yesterday. Four of them had been linked to a gang which carried out highway robberies, it added.

Banned Indonesian writer awarded: The wife of banned Indonesian writer Pramudya Ananta Tur has gone to Manila to accept Asia's most prestigious literary prize on Thursday, but another Indonesian winner has also gone to return his award in disgust. AFP reports from Jakarta.

Pramudya's wife Maemunah Thamrin went to Manila to receive the Ramon Magsaysay award for journalism, literature and creative communication arts and a 50,000 dollar prize for her husband, the family said.

France to go ahead with N-tests amid disapproval of EC partners

PARIS, Aug 30: France will go ahead with a series of nuclear tests from September 1 that it believes are essential to guarantee the credibility of its nuclear deterrent in 20 years' time, reports AFP.

The seven or eight underground tests, each of between 10 and 150 kilotonnes, or up to eight times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb, will be staged on the Mururoa atoll in French polynesia in the teeth of opposition not only from pacific nations but amid disapproval from many of France's European community partners, notably Germany.

French military experts say Paris could have done without new tests for a new warhead due to go into service in 1996, but they are essential to guarantee the deterrent credibility of a new generation warhead — code-named TN-N (New Nuclear Warhead) — planned to be ready in 20 years' time.

That was the argument put to French and international journalists who accepted an unprecedented invitation to visit Mururoa and a second test site on Fangataufa atoll recently to explain why new French President Jacques Chirac had ordered the new two billion franc (400 million dollar) programme, ending a three-year moratorium decided by his socialist predecessor, Francois Mitterrand.

Jacques Bouchard, director of military applications at France's Atomic Energy Commissariat, said the first of the tests, which may take place on September 1, was intended to validate the TN-75 150 kilotonne warhead.

The warhead will be deployed from mid-1996 on France's strategic nuclear submarines, which are regarded as the most credible element of the country's deterrent. Bouchard conceded that

this first test was unnecessary from a purely scientific point of view and that the TN-75 could have been installed on the new six-warhead M-45 missile that will equip strategic submarines, starting with the triumphant.

Bouchard said a "certain number" of TN-75s had already been built, without giving a precise figure, but added that the French military had requested the nuclear test as an additional guarantee for the remainder.

He added that development of the TN-75's successor, the TN-N, would require scientific data from the new series of tests, the last to be carried out by France and which are to be completed by May, 1996.

The Mitterrand moratorium led French scientists to resume TN-N development from scratch, expecting to be entirely dependent on simulation, but Bouchard said the new tests would permit defini-

tion of parameters for the future warhead and provide a basis for analysis of the results of simulation in the future.

France is way behind the United States in developing simulation techniques, but is building a giant laser called megajoule in the Landes region, in the southwest of the country, capable of reproducing the heat of a nuclear explosion in the laboratory.

Meanwhile AFP adds: At least 35 MPs from Australian state and federal parliaments plan to leave Saturday for French polynesia to join international protests against France's nuclear testing programme, organisers said today.

The MPs, whose plans to sail to the Mururoa atoll test site were scrapped when they failed to find a suitable boat, will join another 75 MPs from Japan and about 20 parliamentarians from 10 European countries.



US President Bill Clinton talks with reporters on Tuesday in front of the Rancher Restaurant in Jackson Hole, Wyoming after the NATO ordered air strikes against Serb positions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The attacks were in response to the shelling of a market place in Sarajevo August 28. — AFP/UNB photo

Too many Antacid tablets can cost your life

CHICAGO, Aug 30: Swilling antacid or taking too many tablets for your upset stomach could cost you your life reports AP.

Fourteen deaths, 31 hospitalisations and four cases of disability linked to magnesium poisoning have been reported since 1968, researchers from the US Food and Drug Administration reported in the August issue of the American Medical Association's Archives of Family Medicine.

"Maalox and Mylanta people just drink them like water," said Dr Man C Fung, lead author of the report.

Over 5m North Koreans hit by worst flood

SEOUL, Aug 30: Improvised North Korea, already beset by serious food shortages, claims recent floods have affected 5.2 million people and caused 15 billion dollars in damage, the UN said Wednesday, reports AP.

Analysts say the crisis, even if exaggerated by the North to attract help, was serious enough to have long-term implications for the communist country, which touts self-reliance as the linchpin of its political and social philosophy.

Madeleine Moulin-Acevedo of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva said North Korea has sought aid for the first time from her department. It wants emergency food and medicine, along with help rebuilding roads, railways and communication links.

A team of four a department official and disaster relief experts from Sweden, Denmark and Finland were to begin assessing the damage Wednesday. Ms Moulin-Acevedo said.



Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic (L) and vice leader Nikola Kolijevic brief the press following a meeting of the self-styled parliament in Pale Tuesday during which the Bosnian Serbs voted to accept a US peace plan for the former Yugoslavia. — AFP/UNB photo

Adhikary to face opposition's challenge

KATHMANDU, Aug 30: A day after the supreme court threw out the government order to dissolve parliament, Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikary said Tuesday he is ready to face the opposition's no-confidence motion against his rule, reports AP.

Opposition parties also prepared to vote out the minority communist government, which has been in power for barely nine months in this Himalayan nation.

The communists were accused of running a totalitarian government. Opposition parties that had kept it in power since November decided instead to withdraw support.

Iran blasts US military buildup in Gulf region

NICOSIA, Aug 30: A senior Iranian official criticised the latest US military buildup in the Gulf region, saying Washington was robbing Arab states of billions of dollars under the pretext of offering them protection, reports AP.

Mohammad Javad Larjani, deputy chairman of the foreign policy commission in Iran's parliament, called the buildup in response to recent instability in neighboring Iraq "very suspicious."

The United States has deployed warships and thousands of extra troops to the area since the August 8 defection to Jordan of a senior member of Saddam Hussein's inner-circle. It has held joint exercises with Jordan and brought forward schedule war games with Kuwait.

Malaysian ruling alliance loses by-elections

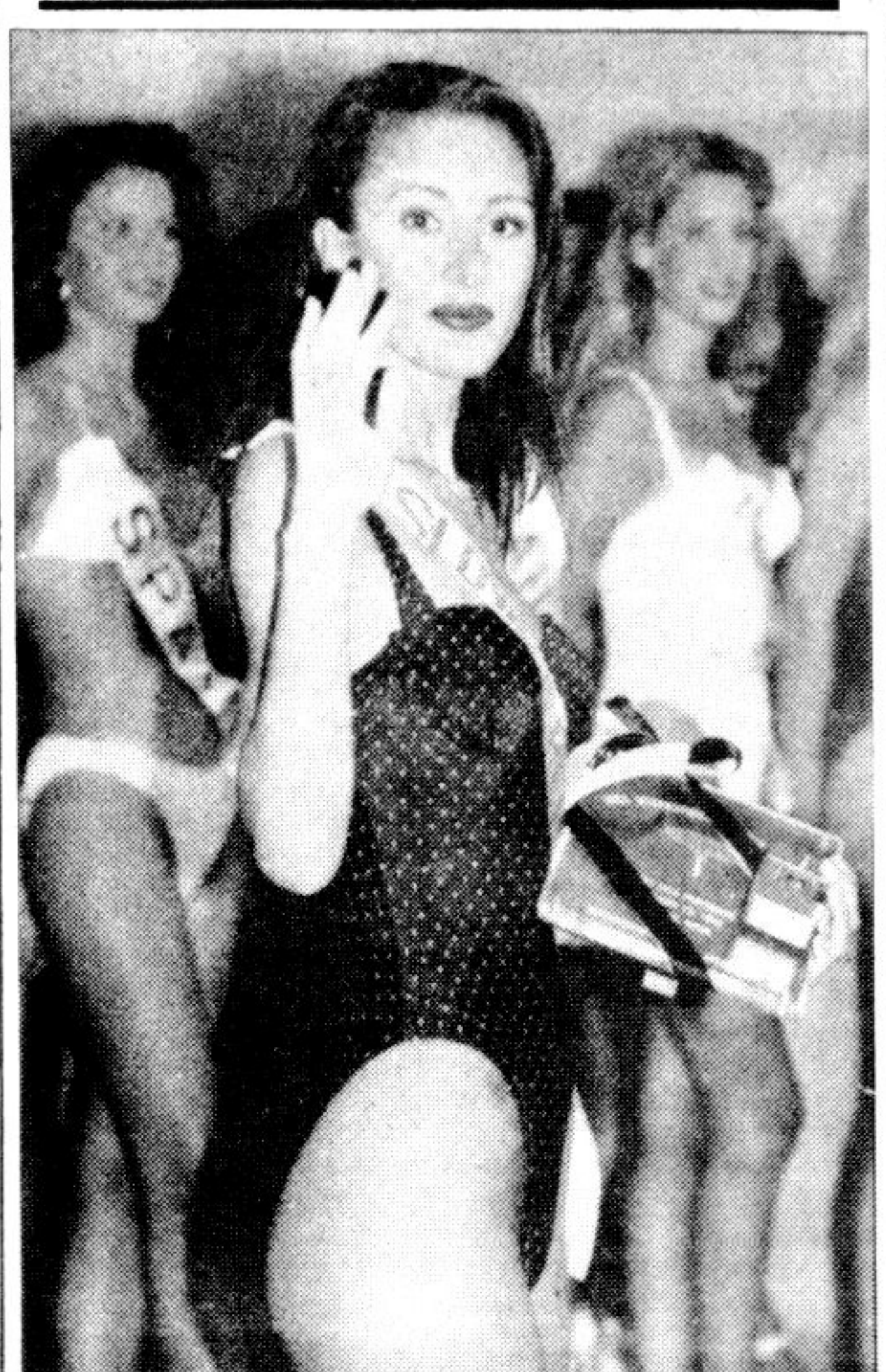
KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's National Front coalition failed once again to defeat a bitter rival in a prestigious by-election to Parliament, according to results announced Wednesday, reports AP.

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah defeated the National Front candidate, Hussein Ahmad, by 4,746 votes in the Gua Musang constituency in northeastern Malaysia, the Election Commission said.

The Front spent thousands of dollars and sent almost all its cabinet ministers to campaign for Hussein in a bid to defeat Razaleigh, who has represented Gua Musang since the last 30 years.

Razaleigh was once the finance minister in Mahathir's Cabinet and a former member of his United National Malays Organisation, the main component of the 14-party National Front.

Off the Record



Model Jana Slukova, 19, of Slovakia waves to photographers after she was elected Miss Photogenic during the photo session of the Miss International beauty pageant '95 in a Tokyo hotel on Tuesday. — AFP/UNB photo

... fall 'n love all over again

LONDON: For a year, he wrote to his sweetheart every month but never got an answer and finally assumed she no longer cared. For a year, she waited, and when no letters arrived she assumed he was dead. They were both wrong, reports AP.

Cynthia Smith's mother, believing Thomas Groves to be unworthy of her daughter, intercepted his wartime love letters and destroyed them.

All but the last one, which for reasons never to be explained, she hid away.

It was not until after the mother's death 13 years ago, according to newspaper reports in London Tuesday, that the surviving letter surfaced, and eventually found its way to its intended.

The dormant 50-year-old romance was rekindled, and the couple plans to wed in November.

Cynthia, then 17, met Thomas, then a 19-year-old RAF fitter, when his bomber squadron was stationed near her home in Cambridgeshire in 1942, and they dated for a year until he was transferred to Gibraltar. They were married in 1940.

Cynthia married, had children, and was widowed in 1980.

Thomas married, had children, and was widowed two years ago.

When the mother died in 1982, the hidden letter surfaced and, thanks to an aunt, eventually found its way to Cynthia, by then Cynthia Statham.

She burst into tears, but assumed it was all long over. Then, earlier this year on a lark she asked a friend to make discreet inquiries about Thomas.

An exchange of letters followed, then phone calls, then a meeting on VE day.

Tragedy of a frog prince

BANGKOK: In Thailand, where royalty are surrounded by both mystery and reverence, palace intrigue doesn't get better than this, reports AP.

Officials said Wednesday the Police Hospital has done an autopsy to see if what the Thai tabloids say is true — that a prince, 60, was poisoned by his young wife and the chestnut vendor with whom she was having an affair. The officials refused to reveal the results of the autopsy.

Prince Thitiphan Ukol died Tuesday in a Bangkok hospital after nine days in a coma. He was the grandson of King Chulalongkorn, who ruled from 1868 to 1910. Thailand's current King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the 9th king of the same dynasty as Chulalongkorn.

The doctor who treated the prince at Vichayudh Hospital, Manoon Leechawengwong, said that when the prince arrived there, his heart had stopped and his brain suffered lack of oxygen. He never regained consciousness.

"He died of unnatural causes," the doctor said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "I suspect he was poisoned."

The prince's wife, Mom Chalasai Ukol, 25 — widely known by her nickname "Look Pla," or Baby Fish — had said she found him unconscious on the floor of his palace. The prince's suspicious relatives requested an autopsy.

The mass-circulation newspaper Thai Rath (Thai Nation) said Look Pla was abandoned in a hospital as a baby, and the prince adopted her when she was four. Gossip was she became his mistress when she was 14. She took care of his children born to a former wife.

Late last year, the prince — whose nickname is "Gop," or Frog — married Look Pla in a grand wedding, the newspaper account said. He gave her a long, passionate kiss. Atop the cake were figures of a frog kissing a fish.

The prince was quoted as saying: "I've met so many women in my life, but I never found anybody like Look Pla."

My wife need not be beautiful. Nor does she need to be a good cook. But she has to be great in bed. Look Pla is my Number One in this regard."

Children's involvement in war increasing

CAIRO, Aug 30: Children are more and more becoming involved in war, whether as soldiers or victims, a trend which can only be stopped by making armed violence against children a war crime, a UNICEF conference here has said, reports AFP.

Over the bloody course of the 20th century, the victims of war have changed. In the early 1900s, 90 per cent of war casualties were armed soldiers, now 90 per cent are women, civilians and children.

"As our children inherit the 21st century there must be a new ethic which makes children untouchable in war,

Graca Machel, who is writing a UN global report on the impact of armed conflict on children, said on Tuesday.

"It takes a change in attitude not to recruit and train children as soldiers, not to rape women and girls, not to spread landmines around," Machel told a press conference closing a three-day UNICEF conference in Cairo.

The conference on children and war in the Arab world was one of six "consultations" Machel has organised to help her in her report, due to be submitted to the United Nations General Secretariat in 1996.

"There must be greater promotion of the concept

that children cannot be touched in conflicts," Rami Khouri, the conference rapporteur, said, reading from the recommendations.

"Anyone who violates this ethic should be seen as committing a crime against humanity," he said.

The conference, attended by more than 60 regional experts and United Nations officials, also recommended that the rape of women and girls in wartime be considered a war crime and called for a ban on the production of landmines.

Eighty per cent of the mines' victims are women and children Khouri said.

"Most of the permanent members of the Security Council are producers of landmines. Italy, South Africa, Zimbabwe and so many other countries are as well," Machel said.

Statistics on armed conflicts paints a grim picture for children, especially in the Middle East, where 65 per cent of the population are under 25 years old and 1.5 per cent of the population are soldiers.

Some 100 million civilians, including women and children, in the Arab world have been affected by war since 1945, UNICEF Regional Director Sarojini Vittachi said.

Presently Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and Djibouti all have children under great risk due to war or armed conflict, she added.

The Middle East has the highest density of landmines per square kilometre (square mile) in the world, while Africa has the highest total number of mines on its soil, experts said, without specifying figures.

But organisers underlined that more research is needed on the effects of war on children after Machel finishes her report, the first in-depth survey of the subject.

"The truth is we don't

know how many child soldiers there are in the region," said Vittachi. "We greatly need more information and documentation."

The experts called on governments and media to start teaching the idea that children are "zones of peace" and urged the creation of rehabilitation programmes that will help child soldiers return to the life of a normal youth.

"Violence against children must be seen as something other than just something that happens in a war," said Thomas Hammarberg, a technical advisor to the study.