

BRIEFLY

Christopher to visit Balkans:

Secretary of State Warren Christopher will travel to the Balkans in mid-August, a month before September 14 elections scheduled in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A State Department official said, AFP reports from Washington.

Christopher, after a stop in Geneva, will arrive in Sarajevo August 12 for a three-day visit in the region, a department official said Saturday. The Secretary next will travel to Belgrade, then on to Brioni, Croatia, where he was to meet with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, the official said.

ROK, DPRK to hold border meeting:

South and North Korean Red Cross officials will hold a border meeting this week to discuss the issue of returning the bodies of two Northerners found in the Yellow Sea, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Seoul.

North Korea sent a telephone message Saturday suggesting Red Cross delegates from the two sides meet Tuesday at the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Red Cross officials in Seoul said, the North's message came in response to South Korea's call last week for a border contact to arrange for the return of the two North Korean seamen fund floating off the west coast between July 26 and 29.

Burundi army chief meets Mobutu:

Burundi's new military chief Jean Bikomagu has held secret talks over the past week with Zairean president Mobutu Sese Seko at Mobutu's holiday home in southern Portugal. A Lisbon weekly reported on Saturday, Reuter says from Lisbon.

Expresso quoted sources in Mobutu's security service at his home in the Algarve as saying a Bikomagu was accompanied by Burundian politicians Mathias Hitimana a Tutsi, and Nicholas Mayugi, a Hutu. It gave no details of the talks. Zaire shares a border with Burundi and both are former Belgian colonies.

Floods claim 13 more in Bihar:

Flood toll in Bihar Saturday mounted to 74 with 13 more deaths reported as swirling water inundated fresh areas, aggravating the situation in Darbhanga, Saharsa and Sitamarhi districts in Bihar. PTI reports from Patna.

State relief and rehabilitation department sources said 13 more people died since on August 2 taking the toll to 74 so far. The worst-affected Saharsa district had registered the largest number of 18 deaths followed by Sitamarhi (14), Madhubani and Khagaria (12 each), Kisanganj (6), Araria (five) Katihar (three), Samastipur (two) Sheohar and Purnea (one each).

2 Peruvian lieutenants detained:

Peru's army has detained two lieutenants for allegedly trying to sell grenades military sources said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Lima.

"We are investigating whether this is a case of arms trafficking or is simply an isolated case, a military tribunal source said without giving more details. The arrest form part of a growing corruption scandal surrounding the country's armed forces, which have long been suspected of involvement in illegal trade."

Vote on N-plant in Japanese town:

President in the northern Japan town of Maki went to the polls yesterday to vote in the country's first-ever referendum on plans to build a nuclear power plant. Reuters reports from Tokyo.

The referendum stems from Tohoku Electric Power Co's plan to build an 825 megawatt nuclear plant in the town, one of six plants planned across the country in the next decade to meet electricity needs.

The Sunday Times says

US plans to seize Karadzic by airborne raid

LONDON, Aug 4: American intelligence sources say the United States is planning to seize Radovan Karadzic in an airborne raid, a British newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

The Sunday Times quoted unidentified intelligence sources in the United States and Britain as saying the American military is poised to seize the Bosnian Serb leader at his base in Pale and take him to The Hague, Netherlands, to face trial on charges of ordering the massacre of Muslim civilians.

The report said undercover agents and equipment have been put in place for the mission, which would be a heli-

Hamas calls for popular uprising against PA

JERUSALEM, Aug 4: The Islamic militant group Hamas called Saturday for an uprising against the Palestinian Authority (PA) and more anti-Israeli attacks after Palestinian police killed two men this week in the autonomous areas, reports AFP.

The Islamic resistance movement Hamas accused Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA) of "selling out to Israeli occupiers" and "depriving Palestinians of their rights" by serving the interest of the Jews.

A Palestinian died Wednesday after being tortured by police while in detention in the West Bank town of Nablus, and a Hamas member was shot dead Friday by Palestinian police during a riot outside the prison in Tulkarem.

Hamas considers the events in Tulkarem and Nablus as the beginning of a popular uprising against the Palestinian Authority (PA), the statement said.

Southeast Asian refugees embrace Christianity in America

HOUSTON, Aug 4: In unparalleled numbers, Southeast Asian refugees are abandoning their native religion to embrace Christianity in a movement testing the boundaries of interfaith relations in America, reports AP.

From coast to coast, in a basement of a Lutheran church in Minneapolis, in a suburban home in Fresno, California, in a Quonset hut in Houston, the nation's religious majority is winning over its first major immigrant group.

"There is only one God. Who believe in him go to heaven," said the Rev. Phoutha Phothiansane, a former Buddhist, after the Sunday evening service at the First Baptist Lao Mission in Houston. "Who don't believe in him go to hell."

It was never this easy in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam or Cambodia.

Taliban seize key base from Hezb-i-Islami

ISLAMABAD Aug 4: The Islamic Taliban militia said today that it had seized a key post in eastern Afghanistan from the pro-government Hezb-i-Islami faction, reports Reuter.

A Taliban spokesman said Islamic warriors had killed 25 Hezb-i-Islami fighters and captured 55 when they stormed their rivals' base at Tabout, about 45 km (28 miles) west of Urgun in Pakista province, on Friday.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted him as saying the Taliban had attacked the base after Hezb-i-Islami ignored appeals from local leaders to stop it down.

The assault followed a recent surprise attack by Hezb-i-Islami in the area in which five Taliban fighters were reported killed, AIP said.

Hezb-i-Islami spokesman Gul Mohammad Gulraiz denied that Tabout had fallen and said fighting was going on near Urgun.

Anti-Aidid group retakes Hoddur

MOGADISHU, Aug 4: The Rahanwein Clan today announced the recapture of Hoddur, some 350 kms (200 miles) northwest of Mogadishu, in the first fighting reported in Somalia since the death of warlord Mohamed Farah Aidid on Thursday, reports AFP.

A Rahanwein Resistance Army spokesman said the clan's militiamen had recaptured the town after a battle with militiamen of Aidid's faction, but other sources said Aidid's men had abandoned the town and fled.

They had taken it from Rahanwein last February.

Aidid, who died on Thursday a week after being wounded in a battle in Mogadishu, captured Baidoa from the Rahanwein in September last year at the head of a column of 600 men.

Baidoa, northwest of Mogadishu, is the main town of the fertile Juba river valley in this largely arid horn of Africa nation.

7 more bodies found from TWA flight wreckage

SMITHTOWN, New York, Aug 4: Investigators have retrieved seven more bodies from the wreckage of TWA flight 800 in the Atlantic, as divers focused on bringing up the recently discovered cockpit, officials said Saturday, reports AP.

In total, 191 bodies have been recovered from the crash that killed all 230 people on board, said Robert Francis, Vice Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

Authorities are trying to recover the cockpit, discovered Friday by remote camera and considered a potential key to unraveling the mystery of what caused the Paris-bound plane to explode several kilometers (miles) offshore from here in the Atlantic July 17.

James Kallstrom, the FBI Director in charge of the on-site criminal investigation of the crash, said he hoped the cockpit soon would be brought to the water's surface.

Though there are strong suspicions that a bomb downed the plane, investigators have not ruled out a missile or mechanical failure.

Danish air force plane crashes: 9 killed

COPENHAGEN, Aug 4: A Danish Air Force plane carrying the head of the country's armed forces crashed on approach at the Faeroe Islands foggy airport Saturday, killing all nine people on board, reports AP.

The Israeli army also sealed off the Palestinian self-rule areas after the attacks in February and March.

The deaths of the two men sparked bloody riots and demonstrations in the two West Bank towns, and Arafat ordered a quick trial of the three policemen accused of torturing the prisoner.

They were sentenced to lengthy prison terms with hard labour on Saturday by the Palestinian Supreme Security Court in Jericho.

For centuries, American churches sent missionaries into the farthest reaches of Asia, seeking converts to Christianity. Mostly, they failed. But what Christian churches could not do overseas, they are accomplishing at home among the multitudes who have emigrated from the overwhelmingly Buddhist nations of Southeast Asia.

The conversions begin in the refugee camps, where missionaries mix with Christian relief organizations helping people find new homes. They continue here as Christian sponsors to clothe, feed and shelter refugees — then invite them to church.

To most Christians involved in refugee resettlement, everything they do — from guiding immigrants to a better life in a new land to setting them up in their own churches — is a sign of God's love.

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In Fresno, the Rev. Phonkeo Keovilay, a Cambodian Men-

International

Kumaratunga's estranged brother calls for nat'l govt

Troops mount fresh onslaught against Tigers in north

KILINOCHCHI, Aug 4: Hundreds of soldiers backed by tanks and air cover mounted a fresh onslaught today against Tamil Tiger guerrillas in northern Sri Lanka in the first to capture the rebels' political headquarters, officials said, reports AFP.

Government troops launched the much-awaited offensive from the town of Jaffna further to the north following a series of government military operations begun in October, officials said.

The Defence Ministry said that troops had advanced about one and a half kms during the first few hours of the offensive.

"Troops continue to advance amidst resistance. Terrorists continue to offer resistance with mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms," the ministry said adding that ground forces were being given close air

cover.

In a statement from its London office, the LTTE said 200,000 Tamil civilians were displaced from Kilinochchi and the refugees were facing a serious food shortage.

The LTTE had relocated its political headquarters at Kilinochchi after being driven out of the town of Jaffna further to the north following a series of government military operations begun in October, officials said.

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cover.

Opposition legislator Anura Bandaranaike in remarks published today said his sister was "disorganized" and unable to provide leadership to the military drive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas or to revive the economy.

Troops have been pounding Tiger concentrations of



US President Bill Clinton (C) signs the Food Quality Protection Act Bill into law during a ceremony in the Old Executive Office Building in Washington on Saturday. Five of the youths looking on are from farm families and the others study the environment at their elementary schools.

— AFP/UNB photo

Gowda govt faces allegations of Cong leaders' phone tapping

NEW DELHI, Aug 4: The fragile coalition government of H D Deve Gowda was rocked today by allegations that the personal telephones of senior Congress (I) leaders were being tapped by federal detectives, reports AFP.

The Asian Age newspaper claimed to have obtained a document showing the telephones of former prime minister P V Narasimha Rao, and 14 other Congress leaders were being tapped by federal detectives on the orders of the prime minister's office.

"The only criteria that has been applied in the illegal decision to place wiretaps on telephones is proximity to Rao," it said. "Not a single leader of the Congress who is against Rao is being tapped."

Rao, who has been dogged by scandal is under increasing pressure to relinquish the leadership of the 111-year-old Congress (I) Party after leading

it to its worst electoral rout in the April-May elections.

Rebel party leaders within Rao's Congress Party have stepped up demands for his resignation from the post of party president after he was implicated in the scandals, most recently being accused of fraud in a cheating case involving a Hindu mystic.

An Indian businessman, Lakhshmi Pathak, has accused Rao of allegedly helping jet-setting Hindu guru, Chandraswami, defraud him of 100,000 dollars.

The senior Congress leaders whose telephones are being tapped include former home minister S B Chavhan, former external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee and former welfare minister Sitaram Kesari.

We can agree on so much in the measure that would help what we are already doing.

Clinton said. "Let us move forward with illegal immigration enforcement legislation without this misguided measure."

Clinton's objections were focused on a compromise by a

Off the Record

Green tea useful weapon in reducing cholesterol

HONG KONG: Chinese green tea is a useful weapon in reducing cholesterol and may be a key to preventing heart disease, according to a study by the University of Hong Kong, reports AFP.

Studies on rats at the university's pharmacology department showed that green tea had an active lipid-lowering ingredient which reduced cholesterol levels by about 25 per cent.

Lipids are organic compounds, including fatty acids and oils, which are insoluble in water.

Pharmacology doctorate student Teddy Yang said catechin, a group of compounds contained in the tea leaves, lowered the absorption of cholesterol while promoting its excretion.

The study also showed that the effect of catechin in reducing cholesterol levels were more effective than drugs available on the market.

Yang, a doctorate student, said that fat from meat, seafood and egg yolk tended to raise cholesterol levels in the blood and liver, and that too much cholesterol in the blood could cause heart disease.

Catechin is most concentrated in non-fermented green tea, followed by jasmine tea, and semi-fermented oolong tea.

Spielberg's dreamworks

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia: Summer in the Slovak capital of Bratislava was less sleepy than usual this year, and a good deal more profitable — thanks to Steven Spielberg, reports AP.

Spielberg's DreamWorks studio chose Bratislava and a former Soviet military base nearby as locations for its first move, "The Peacemaker," a thriller, starring George Clooney and Nicole Kidman, about the theft of Russian nuclear material.

Car chases, bombings and other thrills enlivened a city that had known such phenomenon only from the post-Communist criminal underworld. Parts of the Old Town were made over to look like Vienna, where Clooney and Kidman track down Russian informants. A communist era industrial complex housed a "Pentagon" war room.

Living and filming in Bratislava, an old Austro-Hungarian city, cost a fraction of what Vienna would. Streets could be closed at will, publicity manager Bob Werden said.

Yet the more cosmopolitan Austrian capital is just an hour's drive away — Vienna's best informed gossip column said Kidman and husband Tom Cruise dropped 15,000 dls in a boutique on one visit.

Dropout Tyson tells kids to stay in school

ERLANGER, Kentucky: High-school dropout Mike Tyson is telling kids to stay in school, reports AP.

The brawny heavyweight boxing champion told a group of Kentucky kids living in children's homes to exercise their brains with school work and reading.

"The same thing that makes the muscles in your arm strong is what makes your brains strong," he said Friday while flexing a muscle.

The visit was part of Tyson's community service work required for his parole in the rape of a Miss Black America pageant contestant.

Three years in prison made him re-evaluate his priorities and shift God and his Muslim faith to the top of the list, Tyson said.

He spent about two hours at the Children's Crisis Network in Covington and also visited an 11-year-old boy who has undergone several operations to remove tumours in his ears.

Clinton asks Congress to spare children of illegal immigrants

WASHINGTON, Aug 4: President Clinton is urging the Republican-controlled Congress to pass legislation cracking down on illegal immigration without "kicking children out of school and into the streets," reports AP.

"If the immigration bill contains this provision, I will veto it," Clinton said in a letter Saturday to House Speaker Newt Gingrich.