

# BRIEFLY



Visiting Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (rear left) addresses the opening session of a Contact Group on Kashmir of the 51-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Islamabad, Tuesday. Erbakan joined his Pakistani counterpart Benazir Bhutto (centre front) in rejecting India's plan to hold state elections in Kashmir next month. Benazir, Hamid Al-Gabid the Chairman of OIC (L) listen to Erbakan's speech. — AFP/UNB photo

**Noted Russian astronomer dies:** Viktor Ambartsumyan, one of the great figures of Soviet astronomy, has died in his native Armenia at the age of 87. Russia's ITAR-Tass news agency said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

Quoting an official Armenian statement, Tass said, Ambartsumyan, whose work in theoretical astrophysics and stellar astronomy brought human array of international honours died on Monday at Byurakan, the observatory he founded in 1946 and directed until 1988. He had been seriously ill for several months.

**Strong typhoon hits Japan:** A powerful typhoon slammed into mainland Japan yesterday with two people, including a US marine still missing from the southern island of Okinawa officials said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The two were swept to sea by high waves as typhoon Kirk swept past Okinawa on Tuesday. A Maritime safety agency official said a rescue boat searching for a 30-year-old woman who had gone missing Tuesday morning sighted two men drifting in the sea later in the day.

**Blast kills 7 in Yemen:** Seven people died, including six small children, and eight others were injured when a 30-year-old man buried in the sand exploded at Sa'ada, 170 kilometres (100 miles) north of the Yemeni capital Sanaa, police sources said, AFP reports from Sanaa.

The seventh fatal casualty was a woman, as were all the injured. The shell had been uncovered by the recent torrential rains which have fallen on much of the country.

**Fidel Castro turns 70:** Cuban President Fidel Castro, one of the world's longest-serving leaders, turned 70 on Tuesday in a jovial mood, sharing a birthday cake with children and saying life had been good to him. Reuter reports from Havana.

Dozens of children, some in fancy dress, swarmed around Castro as he visited Havana's Centre for Pioneers, the National Children's Club.

**2 shot dead in Algeria:** An Algerian radio host and his policeman brother were shot and killed in an ambush believed carried out by Islamic fundamentalists, independent newspapers reported Tuesday, AFP reports from Algiers.

Mohamed Gueassab, who hosted a variety show on Radio Koran, and his brother were killed when their car was attacked Monday in the Beau Fraiser district in the hills above Algiers, according to the French-language newspapers Liberte and Le Matin. A third brother was seriously injured, the papers said, quoting staff members of Radio Koran who would not be identified.

**10 killed in Pak coalmine blast:** An explosion in a coal mine in southwestern Pakistan killed 10 workers, according to news reports Wednesday. AP reports from Islamabad.

The explosion, which occurred early Tuesday in a United Mineral Corporation mine outside the Baluchistan provincial capital of Quetta was apparently the result of a buildup of gas, the English-language newspaper The News said. The accident is under investigation but local union members previously complained about lax safety standards in Pakistan's coal mines.

**Polluted water kills 50,000 in world:** At least 50,000 people around the world die every day from diseases caused by water pollution, said scientists gathered in China's capital, Beijing, for the 30th international geological congress, Reuter reports from Beijing.

Water shortages affect 80 countries that have 40 per cent of the world's population and in the next century, half the world's underground water would become contaminated, they said in a report carried by the China daily yesterday.

**28 more held in Indonesia:** Authorities arrested 28 people, accusing them of belonging to a banned leftist group blamed for anti-government rioting last month, the official news agency said Wednesday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The arrests were made Sunday in the tourist resort island of Bali, where the suspects are alleged to have fled after rioting in Jakarta on July 27. Antara news agency said. Police have arrested a total of 152 people since the rioting.

**7 more executed in China:** China has executed seven people for murdering eight drivers and stealing 18 vehicles, newspapers reported yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The seven, from various provinces in northern and central China, were executed Tuesday, according to the vice president of the supreme people's court, Liu Jiachen. The number of people robbing and murdering taxi drivers has been on the rise in some places. The people's courts must deal harshly with those who are guilty of these crimes, he said.

**UN report unveils horrific picture of modern slavery**

GENEVA, Aug 14: A United Nations report paints a horrifying picture of modern slavery, with half a million juvenile prostitutes in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 50 million cases of Indian child labour, and entire Nepalese families held in slavery for generations, says AFP.

The report, made public Tuesday, is based on lengthy investigations by parliamentary deputies and organisations in some 20 countries.

As it appeared, 250 young Indians aged six to twelve demonstrated in New Delhi against child slavery.

An Asian group quoted by the UN report said more than 55 million Indian children are "kept in servitude" although slave labour was officially abolished 20 years ago.

In Nepal, slavery usually occurred in farming through a system of purchase and sale of labourers. This so-called

## Indian political parties blast OIC for opposing polls in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Aug 14: Indian political parties today flayed the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for opposing next month's polls in disputed Kashmir, saying interference in internal affairs would not be tolerated, reports AFP.

But Kashmiri Muslim separatists hailed Tuesday's declaration by a six-member ministerial contact group in the Pakistan capital Islamabad as a welcome step in their fight for self-rule.

"The criticism is ill-founded. The OIC does not appear to know that elections for the parliament were held successfully, peacefully and fairly in May," Jaipal Reddy, spokesman for Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (People's Party), said.

"It is unfortunate that the OIC has fallen prey to the Pakistan misinformation campaign on Kashmir," he said. "I am absolutely certain that the September elections in Kashmir will be free and fair."

The May elections in Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state and where a separatist campaign has claimed more than 12,000 lives since 1989, were marred by charges of rigging and widespread coercion by Indian troops.

## Lenin's main statue removed

ALMATY, Aug 14: The main statue of Vladimir Lenin was removed from the centre of the Kazakh capital Almaty overnight, leaving an empty red granite plinth in former Lenin Square on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The 10-metre (33 feet) 16 tonne statue of iron and bronze reappeared in October Revolution Park on the outskirts of town. But Soviet state founder Lenin had been demoted to a concrete pedestal, his arm pointing at a non-decorative apartment block.

There was no immediate word from the authorities on why the statue had been moved.

But workmen told Reuters their top secret mission had been ordered by the city authorities. They said statues of other Soviet leaders would join Lenin in retirement.

## US aid group defies ban to bring medicine for Iraqis

BAHGDAD, Aug 14: A US aid group handed out badly needed medicines to children's hospitals in Baghdad on Tuesday, defying a US ban on dealings with Iraq for the second time in six months, reports AP.

"It's never a crime to try to prevent a child from suffering," said Kathleen Kelly of the Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness organisation as she and two colleagues delivered the supplies.

Medicine is in critically short supply in Iraq after six years of sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council for Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Food and medicine are exempt from the embargo. But because Iraq's oil exports, its economic lifeline, are cut off, officials say the government does not have the hard cash to pay for such supplies.

## UNSC urges Somalis to move towards peace

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 14: Disappointed that the death of a powerful faction leader has not brought peace to Somalia, the Security Council on Tuesday urged Somali leaders to begin negotiations and reopen transport links in the capital Mogadishu, reports AP.

Council diplomats had hoped the August 1 death of Gen. Mohamed Farrah Aidid would open the door to reconciliation in Somalia. But renewed fighting last weekend between the forces of Aidid's son and successor, Hussein Mohamed Aidid, and rival leader, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, appears to have dashed those hopes.

Following consultations Tuesday council President Antonio Eitel of Germany said the 15-member council was urging all factions to negotiate "an immediate, effective ceasefire" and to begin "serious negotiations" without delay.

Kamiya system had kept entire families in slavery for generations, the report charged.

A Myanmar association reported prisoners and civilians made to do forced labour on infrastructure projects.

Numerous other cases had been reported from Myanmar areas where foreign companies have been prospecting for oil and gas and financing tourist projects.

The UN report said Myanmar local authorities had been making more and more use of forced labour in rural areas in the last four years.

Another contemporary form of slavery was evident in the living conditions of migrant workers employed in Gulf states such as Kuwait, and also in Britain, the Netherlands and

# 10 refugees fleeing Grozny killed

## Russia denies reports on ceasefire with Chechens

GROZNY, Russia, Aug 14: Russian commanders on Wednesday denied reports they had agreed to a ceasefire with Chechen separatists, erasing hopes for a quick end to the bloody battle in Grozny that has left hundreds dead, reports AP.

The separatists chief spokesman, Movladi Udogov, had said Tuesday night that Russia's top commander in Chechnya, Konstantin Pulikovskiy, negotiated the truce with rebel chief Aslan Maskhadov. He said it would take effect at noon (0800 GMT) Wednesday and mean disengagement of forces and exchanges of dead and wounded.

But Russia's military command in Chechnya said reports of the ceasefire "do not correspond to reality." In Moscow, the Defence Ministry said it knew of no orders to ceasefire, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

The two commanders met Tuesday in hopes of ending fierce fighting that began a week earlier when separatist fighters overran the Chechen capital. The offensive has humiliated Russia's military, and the rebels remained in control of the city center Wednesday.

Interfax quoted Maskhadov as saying he ordered his fighters to stop firing as of noon. And the Russian military command remained upbeat, saying the sides have agreed to maintain radio contact and that another round of talks could take place soon.

But the command said, "The sides did not discuss any particular time to start a truce."

They only agreed to play by the rules. According to the military, that means ending offensive shooting, exchanging the dead and wounded, and providing safe passage for refugees and medics.

Pulikovskiy was even more blunt, saying there was no agreement whatsoever at his meeting with Maskhadov, a usual encounter between two commanders representing the warring sides, the Interfax news agency reported.

Pulikovskiy said there was no change in the tense situation in Grozny. But other Russian reports said the devastated city was mostly quiet, apart from scattered clashes on the outskirts.

Russian commanders in the past have ignored orders to stop fighting and have scoffed at peace negotiations. Rebel leaders have had trouble reining in their field commanders.

AFP adds, at least 10 civilians were killed today when Russian warplanes attacked a column of refugees fleeing the Chechen capital Grozny. Chechen separatist spokesman Movladi Udogov said.



A Chechen boy carries a white flag while crossing with his family the border post of Russian Federal Republic with a placard "Stop, check point, Shooting" on the outskirts of Grozny, Tuesday. Residents are fleeing the city as heavy fighting between Russian troops and Chechen separatist rebels rage on. — AFP/UNB photo

# NATO peacekeeping troops in Bosnia put on highest alert

WASHINGTON, Aug 14: NATO peacekeeping troops in Bosnia have been put on the highest alert because of evidence of possible attacks, the defence department said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"We are prepared for possible attacks" spokesman Ken Bacon said.

"One, we have seen people attempting to survey specific camps, obviously," Bacon said. "Two, we have additional information that leads us to believe that there could be threats against American installations in Bosnia."

So putting those two things together we think it's important to keep our security at the highest possible level."

Bacon would not say if a specific group in Bosnia was

suspected of making preparations for possible attacks.

He said the troops were on the same level of threat alert as US troops in Saudi Arabia have been since the June 25 truck bombing that killed 19 US servicemen.

Another US official said the heightened alert in Bosnia applied to all NATO peacekeeping troops not just US troops.

An AFP report from Zagreb says, Government search teams exhumed six bodies Tuesday from a presumed mass grave containing the bodies of Croats killed by secessionist Serbs in the region of Plitvice, 140 kilometres (90 miles) south of Zagreb, the HINA News Agency reported.

Exhumation work began Monday at several sites in the

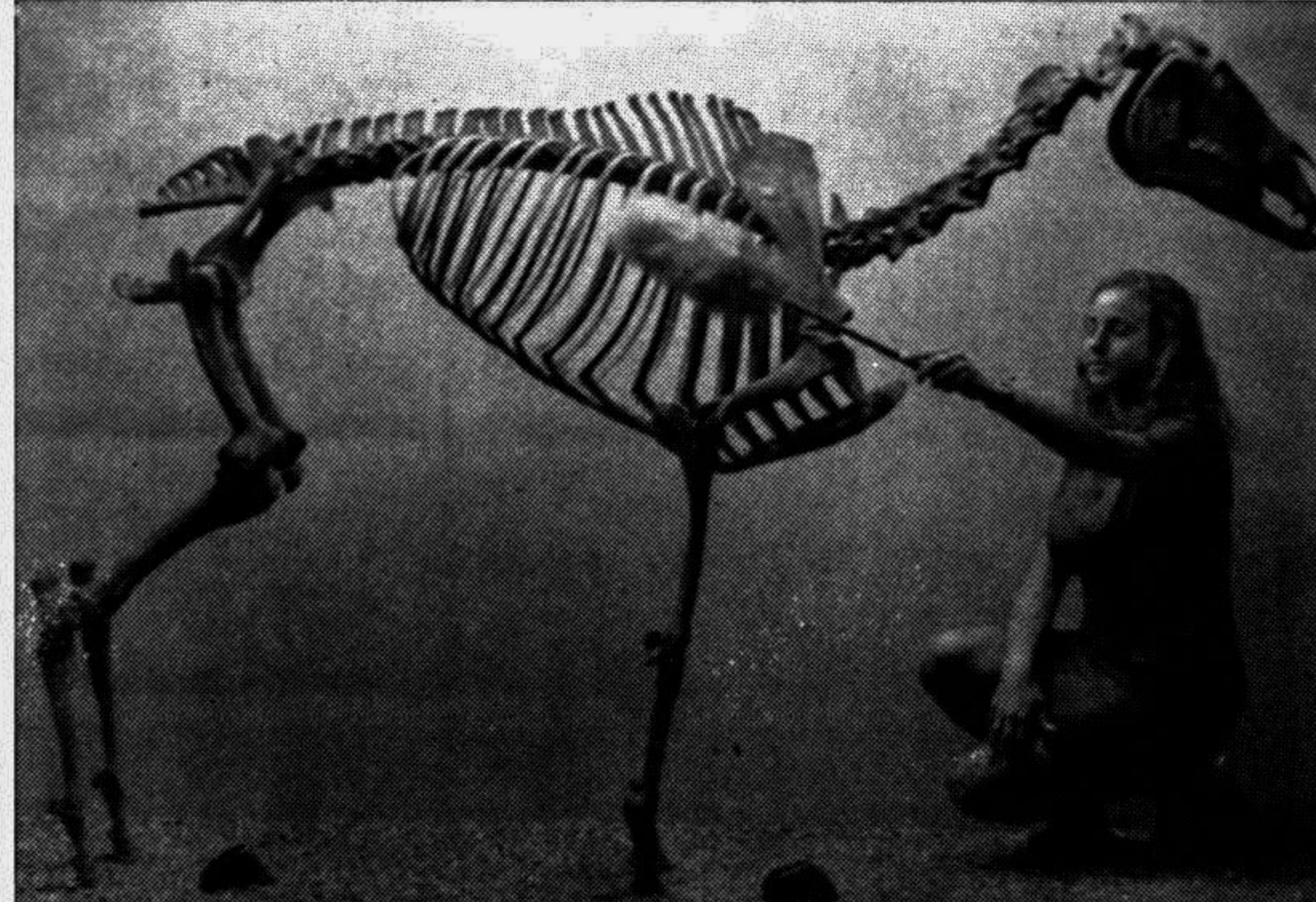
Plitvice National Park, overrun by Serb forces in the early stages of the conflict that began in the summer of 1991 and regained by government forces in a lightning offensive last August.

The remains of the six victims, found at Poljanak, near Plitvice, will be buried Wednesday, HINA said.

The agency did not indicate whether international observers were present at the exhumations.

On Monday search teams found five bodies at Smoljenac, a few kilometres (miles) from Poljanak.

AP adds, security has been tightened at US military installations in Bosnia partly because officials detected unauthorised people monitoring US camps



Marengo, Napoleon Bonaparte's favourite horse gets its annual clean at the National Army Museum in London Tuesday. The horse was shipped to England after the Waterloo battle as horses were considered great trophies. — AFP/UNB photo

## PDP quitting Thai coalition government

BANGKOK, Aug 14: The Palang Dharma Party (PDP) announced today it was quitting Thailand's coalition government, destabilising further the already fragile administration of Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa, reports AFP.

PDP leader Thaksin Shinawatra, a deputy premier in Banharn's administration, issued a statement saying that the party would withdraw from the government with effect from today.

The situation is not beneficial for Palang Dharma to continue working with the government," the hand-written statement by Thaksin said.

# Pitched battles in Seoul

## Rok students barred from marching towards DPRK

SEOUL, Aug 14: Hundreds of South Korean students fought pitched battles in Seoul with riot police blocking them from marching towards the border with North Korea today, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

A police spokesman said about 18,000 riot police had been deployed outside university campuses and along the road leading to the border to stop students from heading for Panmunjom.

Police said an estimated 5,000 students gathered at several Seoul campuses and tried to join about 2,000 students at Yonsei University.

Yonsei is about 40 km (25 miles) from the border pillar of Panmunjom, where about 1,000 North Koreans rallied to call for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula, divided since the end of World War II. Seoul's Korea Broadcasting System reported.

Two South Korean students who went to the communist North last Saturday to attend a festival promoting the reunifi-

cation also attended the Panmunjom rally, it said.

The two from Hanchong-gwon, a nationwide council of radical university students, have said they will try to cross the heavily fortified border along with 100 North Korean students to attend a similar festival at Seoul's Yonsei University.

North Korea's radio said the North Korean students had asked the South to allow their passage through Panmunjom and guarantee their safety.

At this moment in Panmunjom, the 100-member delegation of the North and overseas branches of the national alliance of youth and students for the country's reunification is waiting to pass through Panmunjom to participate in the sixth grand reunification festival due to be held in Seoul, the radio, monitored by British Broadcasting Corporation, said.

Panmunjom is the only crossing point along the four-kilometre (2.5-mile) wide demilitarised zone.

# Off the Record

## Gloomy mothers produce babies with low IQ

BEIJING: Women who are unhappy during pregnancy are more likely to produce babies with low intelligence quotients (IQ), the Xinhua news agency quoted a group of Chinese scientist as saying Tuesday, reports AFP.

If a pregnant woman becomes upset, she may secrete excessive amounts of the hormone catecholamine, which can damage the foetus nervous system and affect its IQ, researchers at Wuhan Tongji Medical Science University said.

Choking during pregnancy can deprive the foetus of oxygen, also leading to a low IQ, the researchers said. Statistics show one in every 100 Chinese children has a low IQ.

## Protest with a difference!

SAO PAULO: Four black students at the University of Sao Paulo launched a nude protest against the state school for failing to keep its commitment to set aside 10 per cent of graduate and doctoral slots for blacks, reports AFP.

The disrobed demonstrators, members of the pro-quota committee for blacks of the USP, charged that the university's reneging on the accord was racist, and promised to protest once a month until their demands were heard.

"The lack of blacks here is shameful," said Newman Saitana, one of the protesters.

The committee charged that only one per cent of the USP's 50,000 students are black, and that of the 6,000 professors, only 12 are black.

# Republicans blast Democrats

## Clinton accused of betraying American values

SAN DIEGO, Aug 14: The Republican coalition launched a fierce assault against President Bill Clinton on Tuesday, accusing him of breaking promises, abusing power and betraying American values, reports Reuter.

The strident attacks alternated with attempts to promote the conservative party's other side and show its compassion for children the elderly and the infirm.

Nowhere was that double-edged message more apparent than in the keynote address by New York Congressman Susan Molinari, who frequently referred to her three-month-old baby Susan Ruby, while also savaging Clinton as a man "who

promises one thing and does another."

The party's presidential nominee-in-waiting Bob Dole watched the evening's proceedings from his hotel suite, after a day of practising his Thursday acceptance speech.

But his wife Elizabeth and running mate Jack Kemp attended the convention session, arriving to a raucous welcome.

Even the fiercely partisan speaker of the house, Newt Gingrich, was not immune from the wave of compassionate conservative ideas that swept the convention as the party tried to erase a mean-spirited image and attract women voters turned off by its hardline social policies.

# India, Iran threaten to veto Nuclear tests ban talks in crisis in Geneva

GENEVA, Aug 14: Negotiators have called a cooling-off period rather than risk total collapse of talks on a nuclear test ban treaty, as India and Iran threaten to veto the proposed pact, reports AP.

Only days before the treaty was to have been sent to the UN General Assembly for approval, negotiators huddled in a dozen different groups Tuesday to try to mend growing rifts on the proposed pact.

India's Ambassador Arundhati Ghose said he had "the feeling the situation was completely blocked."

Jaap Ramaker, a Dutch diplomat who chairs the treaty negotiating panel, abruptly adjourned formal proceedings Tuesday.

US Ambassador Stephen Ledogar said it looked as though the treaty was going to be vetoed, "so the chairman chose a cooling off period." He said he was not sure what

could be done to salvage the situation.

After a late night session the situation remained at impasse.

Pressured by strong public feeling at home India remains the biggest obstacle to the treaty, diplomats said.

India wants the five declared nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — to promise to eliminate their arsenals within a specified time frame. Many other delegations consider the position unrealistic.

India's refusal to sign the treaty has set off a chain reaction: Other countries say nations like India which are believed to have the ability to build a nuclear bomb, must sign or the treaty will be worthless.

India, in turn, has complained this week that it is a violation of its sovereignty.

# UN report unveils horrific picture of modern slavery

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The report, made public Tuesday, is based on lengthy investigations by parliamentary deputies and organisations in some 20 countries.

As it appeared, 250 young Indians aged six to twelve demonstrated in New Delhi against child slavery.

An Asian group quoted by the UN report said more than 55 million Indian children are "kept in servitude" although slave labour was officially abolished 20 years ago.

The report said Indian legislation demanded that a worker himself must give proof of his slave condition. However, it said, it was practically impossible since such workers were usually illiterate and unable to present valid proofs to a court.

In Pakistan there had been 774 cases of employers convicted for exploiting child labour. An Islamabad official was quoted as saying that rehabilitation centres helped child labourers and watch committees had helped to release numerous workers held in a state of slavery.

In Nepal, slavery usually occurred in farming through a system of purchase and sale of labourers. This so-called

Kamiya system had kept entire families in slavery for generations, the report charged.

A Myanmar association reported prisoners and civilians made to do forced labour on infrastructure projects.

Numerous other cases had been reported from Myanmar areas where foreign companies have been prospecting for oil and gas and financing tourist projects.

The UN report said Myanmar local authorities had been making more and more use of forced labour in rural areas in the last four years.

Another contemporary form of slavery was evident in the living conditions of migrant workers employed in Gulf states such as Kuwait, and also in Britain, the Netherlands and

Greece, the report said.

The report, to be submitted to a UN human rights sub-committee later this month, said the principal victims of this kind of slavery were women, whose employers demanded that they reimburse the costs of their travel and of immigration formalities.

The most frequent abuses consisted in the employer confiscating the employees' passports, in lack of payment for months at a time, and in physical violence.

Such immigrants did not usually have residence or work permits and were kept in a state of total dependence on the employer, the report continued.

Official statistics quoted included 690,000 immigrant

domestic employees in France and 600,000 in Spain.

On child prostitution, the UN report described prostitution among children as young as seven or eight in Brazil.

In Sao Paulo some half million prostitutes were aged 16 to 18.

The report also condemned attempted illegal adoptions, quoting a case of British citizens who had offered apparently humanitarian assistance to a Romanian orphanage, but turned out to be paedophiles.

It also described how in Sudan the army of the National Islamic Front dragged tens of thousands of children away from the families and took them as slaves to the north of the country.

# To round up illegal foreign workers Israeli police to set up detention centre

JERUSALEM, Aug 14: Israeli police are to set up a detention centre to round up illegal foreign workers for deportation in a bid to cope with their rising numbers, a police spokesman said Tuesday, reports AFP.

"The creation of a detention centre has become necessary because of the scale of the problem. There is not enough space in prisons for illegal workers," spokesman Eric Bar Chen said.

Bar Chen also said a special police unit would be set up to crack down on illegal immi-

grants. Police believe there are 100,000 foreigners have legitimate work permits.

Israeli authorities are becoming increasingly worried about the number of foreign workers who now make up 10 per cent of the workforce, fearing that they may be a source of social unrest because of their miserable living conditions.

An inter-ministerial committee earlier this month proposed expelling between 6,000 and 24,000 illegal aliens each year.