

### Chandrika appeals for peace with Tamils

COLOMBO, Aug 19: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga today appealed

which she said was driving the country to the brink of disaster, reports AFP.

Kumaratunga, 50, in a message to mark the second anniversary of her taking office said the objective of her government's war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was peace.

"We are meeting the armed attacks of the LTTE with a well planned military campaign. But military means alone cannot solve the minority problems of Sri Lanka," Kumaratunga said. "Our only goal in this war is peace."

She said the biggest achievement of her government was the capture of the northern town of Jaffna where the LTTE maintained a de facto state for five years till they were driven out after a series of operations since October.

However, she made no reference to the military's worst setback in losing a garrison of 1,488 men.



for peace and unity to end the protracted Tamil separatist war

### BJP expels 8 ministers, 3 MPs in Gujarat

GANDHINAGAR, Aug 19: In a major crackdown on the dissidents in Gujarat, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party expelled eight ministers and three legislators from the primary membership of the party for anti-party activities, reports PTI.

The ministers who were dropped and expelled from the ministry headed by Suresh Mehta and BJP were Transport Minister C K Praulji, Panchayat Minister Atmaram Patel, Minister of State for Panchayat Rajitish Jhala, Minister of State for Ports Umesh Rajyaguru, Minister of State for Sports and Cultural Activities Vithalbal Radadia, Deputy Minister for Transport Vipulchaudhary Deputy Minister for Education Mansingh Chauhan and Deputy Minister for Rural Development, Madhubhai Thankur.

Patel Chauhan, who were expelled from the party were immediately dropped by the Chief Minister from his council of ministers and recommended to the State Governor Krisnapal Singh to drop them.

Three MLAs who were expelled by the party are Kirit Patel (Visnagar), Vithalbal Shah (Jehgam) and Jorubha Chauhani (Mandal).  
AFP adds, India's Hindu Nationalist Party was in a crisis today in the western province of Gujarat after a group of dissidents formed a rival group, casting a shadow on the state government.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) asserted that it would overcome the split, but would not take back dissident leader Shankersinh Vaghela who was sacked last week.  
"Some people may go with him but it will not have any effect on the Gujarat BJP in the long term," BJP spokeswoman Suhma Swaraj said.

Vaghela was thrown out of the party for indiscipline and there will be no compromise on that issue," she told AFP.

Her comments came after several Vaghela supporters dismissed from the BJP formed the "Gujarat Janata Parishad" Sunday and vowed to take on the Hindu nationalist group.

The BJP one of India's most disciplined parties, has been in turmoil in the industrial state of Gujarat since Vaghela revolted early this year, almost bringing down the state government.

Vaghela has announced that the new party would be formally launched at a massive rally in the Gujarat capital Ahmedabad today which he said will be attended by more than 250,000 supporters.

### NATO troops blow up 1st batch of illegal Serb munitions

SARAJEVO, Aug 19: NATO troops blew up the first batch of hundreds of tonnes of contraband Serbian munitions today, implementing Operation Volcano despite a firestorm of Serb criticism and at least one threat, reports Reuters.

The first small detonation was set off at about 0800 (0600 GMT), said a NATO source who asked not to be named.

The operation is proceeding smoothly. Six blast holes have been dug and all units are in place.

The collection and destruction of munitions found illegally stored in Margetici, near Sokolac, on August 5 is expected to take most of the week.

NATO sources said engineers are burying the material in pits under a metre of earth to force the blast down and contain the sound and debris.

NATO troops upgraded their protective clothing because of a threat made in a note written in English and handed to a NATO patrol in Sokolac on Saturday evening.

In addition to the written threat, Operation Volcano triggered a howl of protest from Bosnian Serb authorities on Sunday.

### 63 shot dead in Algiers

CAIRO, Aug 19: Armed fundamentalists killed 63 people including women, elderly people and children, on a road between Meassila and Batneh southeast of Algiers, the Arab daily Al-Hayat said today, reports AFP.

The massacre was carried out by a commando unit of at least 100 men who had set up a false roadblock on the road and stopped two buses packed with civilians, the newspaper said, quoting witnesses.

Security forces in Algiers did not confirm the massacre, which would be the worst in the country since 1992.

### Students begin fainting as ROK police intensify war of nerves

SEOUL, Aug 19: Weary students began fainting today as thousands of riot police intensified a war of nerves, trying to end a six-day holdout by radical youths occupying two Seoul campus buildings, reports Reuters.

Ambulances rushed six students, some unconscious, to hospital after they were carried out of the buildings at Yonsei University in western Seoul, witnesses said.

"Four of them were female students. They must be suffering from dehydration and exhaustion," one witness said.

Thousands of riot police outside the two buildings have cut off supplies to the students since early Saturday to pressure them into ending their demonstration for reunification with communist North Korea and surrendering.

### Court orders Arafat govt to free university students

JERUSALEM, Aug 19: The Palestinian Supreme Court ordered Yasser Arafat's government on Sunday to release 10 university students jailed without charge since March, reports AP.

The Palestinians attorney general, meanwhile, accused human rights groups of conducting "an organized campaign" against Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

The students from Ramallah's Bir-Zeit University were jailed in a roundup of about 900 Islamic militants conducted at Israel's urging after four suicide bombings killed 63 people inside Israel in February and March.

About 300 suspected militants remain in Palestinian prisons, but only about 50 of them have been charged.

Palestinian lawyers filed an appeal in June saying the students continued detention violated Palestinian law and normal procedures of due process.

Attorney Khader Shkirat said he expected the students to be released late Sunday night. No confirmation was immediately available from the Palestinian Authority.

### Gunmen kill 18 Shiite Muslims in Pak Punjab

ISLAMABAD, Aug 19: Gunmen opened fire on a group of Shiite worshippers Sunday in a small village in central Punjab province, killing 18 people and injuring 100 others, a Shiite leader said, reports AP.

killed when some of the mourners attending the outdoor funeral prayer returned fire.

It's not unusual in Pakistan for people to carry weapons, particularly in the countryside.

The gunmen leapt out of a van, sprayed the crowd with bullets, grabbed their dead comrades, jumped back in the vehicle and drove off, according to the Associated Press of Pakistan.

All of the gunmen wore masks, the news agency said.

Police officials so far have refused comment, but there was speculation the killings could be revenge for last Wednesday's shooting deaths of 12 militant Sunni Muslims belonging to Sipah-e-Sahaba or Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet.

After those killings in the southern port city of Karachi, many group members blamed Turabi's Shiite organisation, a charge he denied.

### Peace in Somalia Pro-Aidid faction rejects UN offer to mediate

MOGADISHU, Somalia, Aug 19: An official of Somalia's most powerful faction Sunday rejected the possibility of a UN-sponsored reconciliation conference of warring factions in Somalia, reports AP.

In a letter to the Security Council, Jama Mohamed Ghalib, the self-styled foreign minister in Hussein Mohamed Aidid's self-declared government, said that an offer from the United Nations to mediate constituted "interference in the internal affairs of Somalia."

Ghalib was reacting to the August 13 council resolution which urged the warring Somali factions to hold peace talks following the death of faction leader Gen. Mohamed Farah Aidid. The council suggested the UN might mediate such a conference.

Some UN diplomats apparently saw Gen. Aidid's death as a new possibility for peace talks in Somalia.

Aidid, who died of gunshot wounds August 1, was considered by the United Nations and the United States as an obstacle to peace.

Aidid's son, Hussein Mohamed Aidid, succeeded his father August 4 as the interim president of Somali Republic, which is not recognized by Gen. Aidid's Somali rivals or any other country except Sudan and Libya.

Ghalib claims the transitional government — formed by 16 pro-Aidid factions last year — is the only legitimate representative of the Somali people and says there is no need for reconciliation conferences.

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"The holding of such a conference or conferences is therefore groundless and out of the question," he said in the statement. "The Security Council is earnestly requested to curb the UN's destabilization programme and to give the Somali Transitional Government a change

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### Pro-Moscow leader ready to talk peace with Russians

MOSCOW, Aug 19: An uneasy ceasefire appeared to be holding in Chechnya, despite mutual recriminations as the pro-Moscow leader in the independence — seeking region prepared to discuss peace efforts with Russian ministers, reports Reuter.

Doku Zavgayev flew to Moscow on Sunday and told Interfax news agency he would meet security supremo Alexander Lebed, who is involved in a bitter power struggle with Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov over handling of the 20-month conflict.

Zavgayev, who denies that his own position is in doubt, said he might also hold talks with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Russian forces lost control of the Chechen capital Grozny after separatist fighters launched an offensive on the city on August 6 and killed

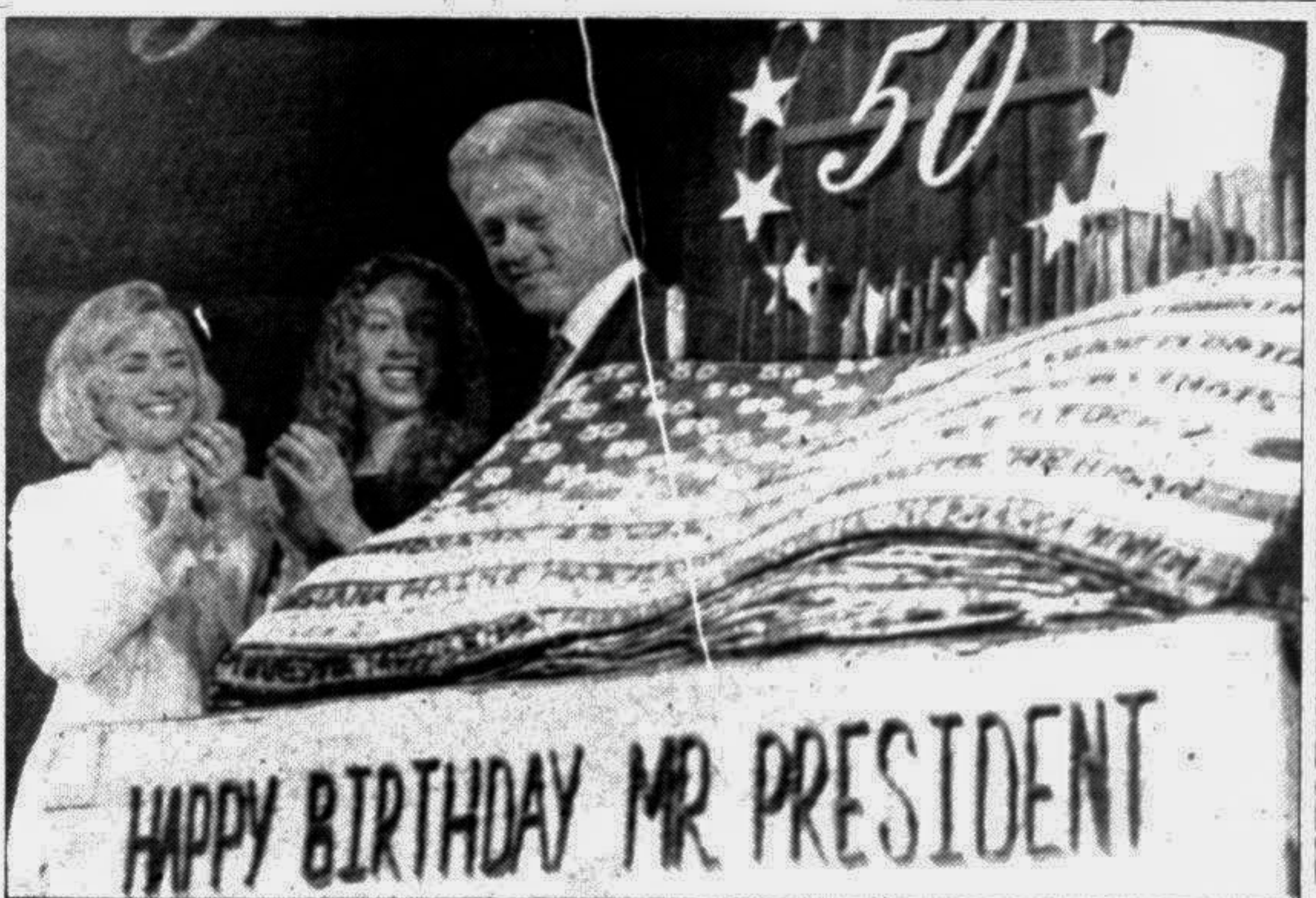
hundreds of Russian troops in the heaviest fighting in 18 months.

President Boris Yeltsin appointed Lebed as his special envoy in the region and gave the Security Council, of which Lebed is secretary, sweeping powers to halt the bloodshed.

Lebed's contacts with the separatist leaders last week led to a loose ceasefire which was consolidated at talks on Sunday between representatives of the rival commanders in the region.

But Lebed faces stiff opposition from Kulikov, whom he accuses of mishandling the conflict and blocking the path to peace. He asked Yeltsin on Friday to sack Kulikov, but Kremlin sources were quoted as saying that the minister's job was safe.

The outcome of the Kremlin infighting remained as unclear as the future of Chechnya.



US President Bill Clinton (R), his daughter Chelsea (C) and wife Hillary look at his 50th birthday cake on Sunday at a reception in New York. President Clinton will later attend a gala at Radio City Music Hall in New York to celebrate his birthday. — AFP/UNB photo

### Demands for PM's removal intensified King Hussein blames 'Iraqi sympathisers' for rioting

AMMAN, Aug 19: Jordanian Army units took control of roads leading to the capital and other major cities today following riots over bread prices which King Hussein blamed on "Iraqi sympathisers" reports AFP.

The southern town of Karak, where the violent protests reported on Friday, remained under the authority of the army meanwhile and telephone links between the town and the rest of the country had not yet been restored.

An indefinite curfew declared by the army in Karak, some 180 kilometers (110 miles) south of Amman, has lifted for two hours today to allow residents to do their shopping and then reimposed, officials said.

Earlier report says: King Hussein blamed people linked to Iraq for two days of rioting

that followed his government's decision to double bread prices, but he said the disturbances, the worst in Jordan since 1989, had now been contained, reports Reuter.

"The situation is totally under control, everything has been very quiet in the country," he said in an interview shown on state-run television on Sunday night.

But people in the ancient fortress town of Karak, confined by a curfew and army troops after the riots erupted there last Friday, rejected allegations of foreign involvement and said the King's dismissal of their concerns would only fuel resentment.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher said Karak would remain under curfew and those suspected of violent protests were being rounded up.

The King said in the television interview: "I believe there were foreign parties involved in the riots and our investigation is going to show all of that."

In a separate interview, he explicitly linked the unrest to Iraq, Jordan's one-time ally. "I think, sir, some of these people (in the riots) are known to be people who were either educated in Iraq or had sympathies toward Iraq," he said.

His statement was the most direct accusation against Iraq since riots broke out three days after the government doubled the price of bread, a staple food for the poor who form a majority of Jordan's 4.2 million people.

AP adds: Three days of violence sparked by a sharp rise in bread prices have intensified pressure on Jordan's prime minister to step down.



Some Lebanese women protest on Sunday against the closure of a polling station at its reglementary time in the Shi'ite suburb of Beirut, arguing that they were already waiting inside the station to vote. Lebanese voters turned out in force yesterday for the first parliamentary elections in four years despite Christian opposition calls to boycott the polls in protest at Syria's dominant role in the country. — AFP/UNB photo

### BRIEFLY

#### Mandela to quit as ANC chief in '97:

Nelson Mandela will step down as president of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in 1997, the ANC's national executive body said in a writers statement Sunday, AFP reports from Johannesburg.

The ANC will hold elections for the next ANC president, as for other official positions, in December 1997, the statement said. Mandela informed the ANC's national executive committee of his decision during a three-day meeting in Johannesburg which ended on Sunday, the SABA news agency said.

#### 1st round of polls end in Lebanon:

Lebanon's first round of parliamentary polls has ended after a hot battle in the Christian heartland, Reuter reports from Beirut.

Government candidates traded charges of bribery, intimidation and gangsterism with opponents who accused them of sacrificing Lebanon's sovereignty. Counting continued overnight and official results were expected on this morning.

#### Russia 1 plane crash kills 10 aboard:

A Russian cargo aircraft carrying a crew of about 10 crashed near Belgrade's Srebin airport early yesterday, and it was feared there were no survivors, the airport control tower said, AFP reports from Belgrade.

The Ilyushin-76 plane crashed in a field near the airport west of the capital and burst into flames. The aircraft had lost contact with the control tower and all its navigation instruments were out of action.

#### Yeltsin may be sent abroad for surgery:

Russian President Boris Yeltsin's health is so poor that the Kremlin is considering sending him to Switzerland for double-bypass surgery, the magazine reported, quoting an unnamed source, AFP reports from Washington.

In its latest edition, the magazine also said it obtained a copy of a July medical report ordering "urgent measures" because Yeltsin's heart was clogged by blocked arteries. The situation worsened in part because Yeltsin gave up his prescribed medicine and went on a drinking binge, Time quoted a source close to Yeltsin's security service said.

#### HK film-maker wins Silver Leopard:

Hong Kong film-maker Clara Law took the Silver Leopard prize for new cinema at the Locarno Film Festival on Sunday with an Australian production, "Floating Life," organisers said, AFP reports from Locarno.

Top honours at the 49th edition of Switzerland's biggest festival went to French director Claire Denis for "Nemets et Bons," whose lead actor Valerie Bruni-Tedeschi and Gregoire Colin were also honoured with prizes.

#### 2 newsmen remanded in Madrid:

A Madrid court on Sunday remanded in custody two journalists from the pro-Basque separatist newspaper Egin suspected of involvement in a bomb attack on a textile factory, judicial officials said, AFP reports from Madrid.

The two, Fernando Alonso and Andoni Murga, were being investigated for alleged involvement in an attack on August 15 against a textile company at the northern town of Salvatierra, regional government officials added. Following a police raid on the Egin editorial offices in Hernani town on Sunday regional authorities also said that documents "related to possible targets" of the Basque militant separatist group Eta had been seized.

### Clinton's decision — a bitter blow to anti-landmine supporters

BERKELEY, California, Aug 19: President Bill Clinton's capitulation to military opponents of a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines was a bitter and unexpected blow to those who favour outlawing the use of all landmines, reports IPS.

In his decision last month, Clinton declared that the United States would discontinue using so-called "dumb" mines (those which remain lethal indefinitely) except in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. It would also continue to use "until viable and humane alternatives are developed" — so-called "Smart" mines that self-destruct after 120 days.

At the same time, Clinton vowed that the United States would support negotiations toward an international agreement to ban all anti-personnel landmines.

Laudable as these measures sound, however, they represent a sizable step backward from present policy.

In the weeks preceding Clinton's announcement, many observers expected the United States to join the more than 35 nations that have imposed bans on landmines, and use its immense political influence to generate an unstoppable momentum. In anticipation of such a decision, Germany (whose arms industry is a prime source of landmines) was reportedly considering its own ban.

By making a glaring exception in the case of Korea, Washington gave Germany, and many other nations, still sitting on the fence the chance to create exceptions for their own.

"This is not a ban," declared Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy after the announcement. "A ban does not make an excep-

tion for the place you want to use them."

Leahy was the chief sponsor of a one-year moratorium on US landmine production and use passed last year by Congress, which the Pentagon is seeking to reverse. Some in the department even resist efforts to develop improved mine-clearing technologies, arguing that the army shouldn't be involved in humanitarian programmes.

Almost alone among the many efforts to eliminate obsolete and unnecessary weapons systems from a still extravagant Pentagon arsenal, the international campaign to ban landmines has achieved a remarkable degree of consensus.

In the space of just four years, a coalition of 38 national governments, 450 organisations, and prominent individuals — including Pope John Paul II and Persian Gulf War

hero General Norman Schwarzkopf — have united in an appeal for a comprehensive global ban on the production, sale, and use of landmines.

President Clinton himself keeps a landmine on his Oval office desk, claiming the gesture is a testament to his conviction that they should be abolished. Yet when he had it within his power to propel a global ban toward rapid realisation by joining 38 other nations (including major US allies) that have already enacted unilateral bans, he backed off with the feeble explanation that he simply couldn't risk a breach with his chief military advisers.

Landmines occupy an ambiguous role in the arsenals of the many regular and irregular armed forces that utilise them. Justified as "defensive weapons" that protect borders from invasion without attacking adversaries, they have in fact

been widely used in far greater numbers as offensive weapons — to depopulate entire regions, disrupt agriculture, obstruct transportation, and damage economic assets.

More than any other single weapon, landmines accelerate modern warfare's pernicious trend toward the targeting of civilians. Indeed, combatants are generally well-protected from landmines, as in Bosnia, where sophisticated mine detectors and de-mining devices precede every NATO sortie.

Landmines kill or maim an average of 25,000 civilians each year, not on the battlefield but the croplands of unsuspecting farmers in Cambodia, Angola, Vietnam, Afghanistan and other areas of former, or current, conflict. More than 100 million landmines lie buried in 64 countries in the developing world where they are triggered by the mere footfall of a peas-

ant, farmer ploughing his field or a barefoot child at play.

Landmine activists have made an impressive headway on this issue in part because the manufacture and sale of landmines — they cost as little as three dollars a piece to manufacture — don't generate as many jobs or create as potent a political lobby as, say, B-2 bombers or ballistic missile defences. Despite their growing sophistication, landmines are seen as weapons of the last war but not the next, a less interesting technology than their potential replacements.

For several years, the Pentagon has been experimenting with a wide range of "non-lethal weapons" that it claims would supplant destructive landmines with various devices that temporarily stun or disable would-be attackers without causing them permanent harm.

### Off the Record

#### Ghost train

NEW DELHI: A train engine travelled 110 kilometres on its own through southern India, and was only brought to a halt after workers blocked the tracks, a newspaper reported yesterday, says AFP.

The diesel-operated engine began moving suddenly late Saturday near the town of Medak and then picked up speed and raced away, to the horror of its two crew members who had stepped off for a rest, the Indian Express said.

The panic-stricken driver alerted the nearest railway station, and officials flashed emergency messages throughout the region. The engine was stopped near Nizamabad by placing logs and iron staves across the tracks.

#### Soft-hearted lion

BEIJING: A high strung lion in a South China zoo was so shocked at the sight of water pouring into its cage that it keeled over and died, becoming the latest victim of widespread flooding, reports Reuter.

The Lu Zhou city zoo has lost 82 animals — a quarter of its total — since floods submerged 90 per cent of its cages last month, the Beijing evening news said on Sunday.

Staff at the zoo tried to move the animals or raise the ground level in the cages but many of the beasts were too frightened and uncooperative, the newspaper said.

Devastating floods swept across central and southern China last month, killing at least 2,700 people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless.

#### Man who vowed to live for long turns 114

SAN RAFAEL, California: When Christian Mortensen, then 90, rolled into his retirement home on an over-sized tricycle in 1972, he vowed to stay for a long time, reports AP.

"I'm Danish and I'm here to stay," Mortensen remembers telling the staff at the Aldersly Retirement Community in San Rafael, about 15 miles (25 kms) north of San Francisco. And stay he did.

Now though to be the oldest man alive, Mortensen celebrated his 114th birthday Friday.

#### Miraculous

PRAGUE: Two Chinese men were tied up and thrown from the ninth floor of an apartment block in Prague on Sunday afternoon but both appear to have survived, the Czech news agency CTK reported, Reuter reports from Prague.

Police and medical authorities would not elaborate on the report. There was no indication of a motive for the attack.

CTK said police were called to reply, a district of gray and white communist-era tower blocks, by a report that people were being held at gun point.