

BRIEFLY

Manila denies visa to Tibetans :

The Philippines government has denied visas to two Tibetans who were to attend a conference in Manila on human rights in China, human rights groups said Friday. AP reports from Manila.

In denying their visas, the Philippines Embassy in New Delhi, India, told Gedun Rinchen and Tempa Tsering that their presence in the Manila conference would be "too sensitive," Amnesty International and Forum Asia said. Rinchen, a Tibetan, was allegedly tortured while detained by Chinese authorities in Tibet. He was due to deliver a paper describing his detention and human rights work.

Ide new leader of Sakigake :

A former health minister was chosen yesterday as the new leader of New Party Sakigake, the smallest member of Japan's governing three-party coalition, party officials said. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

Shoichie Ide will succeed New Party Sakigake president Masayoshi Takemura, a former finance minister who resigned after a rebellion by young members of the party earlier this week.

The leader of the rebellion, Sakigake chief secretary Yukio Hatoyama, has announced he will leave Sakigake to form a new political party by mid September.

UN to keep HR monitors in Haiti :

The United Nations agreed Thursday to keep a civilian force in Haiti for another six months to monitor human rights and help train police. AP reports from United Nations.

An international force of monitors — 32 from the United Nations and 32 from the Organisation of American States is in Haiti to monitor rights and help train police and establish an impartial judiciary system.

The 185-member General Assembly agreed to extend the mandate for the UN monitors without a vote.

25 militants held in Egypt :

Police said Thursday they had arrested 25 suspected Muslim militants, and said the group was plotting to kill police and was receiving arms training in the desert outside Cairo. AP reports from Cairo.

The suspects, members of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, the Islamic Group, were seized Tuesday in 10th of Ramadan City northeast of the capital, said police sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Islamic Group has been the main force behind a four year campaign of violence aimed at toppling Egypt's secular government and installing strict Islamic rule.

China passes law on elderly :

Children must support their elderly parents or face penalties under a law passed Thursday by China's legislature. AP reports from Beijing.

The Law on Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Elderly says that providing economic and spiritual support for parents is part of Chinese tradition, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Xinhua did not specify what penalties might be imposed on those who don't adhere to tradition. The law allows parents in financial straits to get subsidised legal assistance to file a lawsuit.

5 of a family killed in Malaysia :

Five members of a family, including a three year old girl, were killed to death in a village in Gurun, police said Thursday. AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Two other family members were seriously wounded in the early morning attack in Kampung Sungai Rotan, about 300 kilometers (180 miles) northwest of here.

Police in Gurun were searching for a man from the same village with a history of mental illness, the national Bernama news agency reported.

Bus mishap claims 9 in Nepal :

Nine people back from a pilgrimage were killed near the Nepali capital of Kathmandu on Thursday when their jeep plunged into a river about 300 meters below the highway, the local press said yesterday. Xinhua reports from Kathmandu.

Seven of the passengers died on the spot, police said. One survivor was bounced out of the vehicle and managed to cling to a tree, said the report.

Eyewitnesses were quoted as saying that the visibility was extremely poor because of a thick fog and rain in the valley when the accident happened.

Kurd factions agree to join US-brokered peace talks

NICOSIA, Aug 30: Two rival Kurdish factions battling each other in northern Iraq for nearly two weeks have agreed to attend US-brokered peace talks planned for Friday in London, reports AP.

However, one of the two — the Kurdistan Democratic Party — reiterated its claim that the other group — the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan — was responsible for the recent flare-up of fighting in northern Iraq.

The PUK has repeatedly disavowed its pledges to the ceasefire, by initiating large scale attacks, the KDP said in a statement faxed to The Associated Press in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The KDP will refrain from any offensive action but will respond in self-defence if attacked, the group added. The PUK, in a statement also faxed to the AP in Nicosia, did not comment on the KDP charges, but said it hoped the London meeting would help ensure the continuation of the

Violence won't stop or delay Bosnia polls: Clinton admn

WASHINGTON, Aug 30: Violence flare-ups in Bosnia such as a Serb police attack Thursday on Muslim refugees were expected but won't stop or delay national elections next month, the Clinton administration said, reports AP.

In fact, the violence level has been surprisingly low so far, said a State Department official just returned from a fact-finding trip to the region.

Asked at a Thursday briefing whether widespread violence could break out in the weeks preceding this election, Robert S. Gelbard said, "Well, we're in the weeks preceding the election. Haven't seen any real blood yet."

"My own guess would be that some of this (trouble) will be

disipated due to the postponement of the municipal elections," said Gelbard, an assistant secretary of state specialising in illegal narcotics and crime matters.

General elections are scheduled September 14. Disputes over registration and other particulars forced international organisers this week to postpone indefinitely local balloting that was to have been held at the same time.

The Clinton administration has a lot riding on the vote, diplomatically and interationally. Its diplomacy fashioned the agreement last fall ending Bosnia's 3 and a half-year ethnic war and establishing the peace process culminating in the elections. In his campaign

for re-election in November, Clinton is presenting Bosnia as a showcase of his foreign policy.

On Thursday, Bosnian Serb police surrounded Mahala, a village in Serb-controlled territory north of the capital Sarajevo, and clubbed and shot at Muslims trying to return to homes they were driven from during the war.

Gelbard said international peacekeepers responded quickly with helicopters and ground troops, quelled the trouble without having to resort to force and arrested dozens of attackers.

"I will not stand here and tell you that we expect that there will be no incidents similar to this now or in the future, including on Election Day," Gel-

bard said. Earlier report says: Calling elections in Bosnia "a sham in the making," Bob Dole said Thursday that President Clinton should urge their postponement until there can be free and fair balloting.

"If held under present conditions, the elections would be a fraud with an American seal of approval, the Republican presidential candidate said in a letter to Clinton, who is running for reelection as a Democrat.

"Dole said opposition candidates have been intimidated, refugees have been unable to return to their homes and war criminals are roaming free. 14,

Manila-MNLF initial peace accord



JAKARTA, Aug 30: Philippine peace negotiators initialed an historic agreement today to end a bloody Muslim-Christian confrontation in the south of the country dating back centuries, reports Reuter.

Government chief negotiator Manuel Yan and Nur Misuari, chairman of the Muslim Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), initialed the accord witnessed by Indonesia President Suharto at Jakarta's Freedom Palace.

The peace agreement will be formally signed by Philippine President Fidel Ramos and Misuari in Manila on Monday.

The accord is aimed specifically at ending a 24-year Muslim separatist movement of Mindanao as their ancestral homeland, although they are now outnumbered three to one by Christian migrants.

Tensions between the two religious groups to go back four centuries to the arrival of the first Christians in the area.

Earlier AFP says, Filipino negotiators have agreed on a draft peace agreement for the southern Philippines and will initial it later Friday.

— AFP/UNB photo

Arafat's call for mass prayers at Al Aqsa mounts tension

JERUSALEM, Aug 30: Two thousand Israeli police officers were deployed in Jerusalem on Friday following a call by Yasser Arafat for mass prayers at the Al Aqsa Mosque to protest Israel's stalling in the peace negotiations, reports AP.

The call was meant to test Israel's claim that it ensures freedom of worship in the disputed city, said Faisal Hussein, the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem. Under Israel's six-month closure of the West Bank and Gaza, most Palestinians have been barred from entering Jerusalem.

It came a day after Palestinians held a four-hour protest strike in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the first open confrontation

since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office in June.

The hard-line government has antagonised Palestinians with its plans to expand Jewish settlements and its refusal to resume substantive negotiations.

Police, ordered to reinforce checkpoints and entrances to the city, expected about 100,000 worshippers, mostly from East Jerusalem, Israeli police minister Avigdor Kahalani said.

Danny Naveh, secretary of Netanyahu's Cabinet, warned that "any deterioration to violence — any escalation — is likely to reduce our will to move

the peace process forward."

While the deterioration of the peace process — and internal corruption and human rights abuses — has eroded Arafat's support among Palestinians, Thursday's strike showed a people united in anger.

Netanyahu has refused to meet with Arafat or to commit himself to Israel's overdue troop pullout from Hebron, the last West Bank city under Israeli control.

Reuter adds: An aide to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a top PLO official failed in fresh talks to make progress on any issue, a Palestinian spokesman said today.



Parts of the wreckage of the Nvukovno Airlines Tupolev 154 lay on the shore of the Svalbard archipelago after it crashed while approaching Longyearbyen Airport on Thursday. All 141 passengers including the 12 crew members are feared to be dead. The Tupolev 154, which took off from Moscow, was a charter flight carrying mostly Russian miners and their families. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record



US actress Gina Gershon smiles before her press conference on Thursday to launch her film "Bound" of the brothers Larry and Andy Wachowski at the International Film Festival in Venice.

Hillary keeps her promise

CHICAGO: When Hillary Rodham Clinton makes a campaign promise, she keeps it, reports AP.

Mrs Clinton, basking in improved poll ratings since her Tuesday speech at the Democratic National Convention, had promised she would dance the Macarena on Thursday. Sure enough, as balloons and confetti floated to the United Center floor after her husband's acceptance speech, the now-familiar Latin dance beat boomed from the sound system.

Tipper Gore, the wife of Vice President Al Gore, was among the first on stage to join in. Mrs Clinton was hidden by the crowd, but she, too, appeared to be moving to the music.

A few minutes later, the president and his wife went backstage, out of microphone range, but within earshot of a reporter's shouted question.

"The first question, directed at the president, suggested he comment on the events of the day," he waved, smiled slightly and moved away.

Next, someone asked Mrs Clinton.

She smiled sharply, paused for a beat — and with much swiveling of her hips, started the arm motions of the hot party dance. She kept it up 10 seconds, then disappeared.

Spy camera at auction

LONDON: A miniature Nazi German spy camera, no bigger than a matchbox, sold at auction in London on Thursday for 5,175 pounds sterling (7,500 dollars), Christie's said, reports AP.

Made in 1939 with a German Eagle design, the camera was purchased by an American collector, the auction house said.

50 feared dead in Malaysian landslide

KUALA LUMPUR Aug 30: About 50 people were feared killed when rain triggered landslide Friday swept away flimsy huts on a hill in central Malaysia, officials and Malaysian news reports said, says AP.

Bernama news agency said eight bodies have been found, including one of an ethnic Chinese. Another person was found trapped in a car.

It said dozens of houses were swept away into a river near the foothills in the remote jungle Kampar district in Perak state, 200 kilometres (120 miles) north of Kuala Lumpur.

The area is largely inhabited by a native community, one among the 18 indigenous tribes who live in jungles and reservations.

Known as "Orange Asli" or "original people the aborigines number 90,000. Malaysia's 20 million are mostly Malays.

Lebed to try again to strike deal with Chechen rebels

GROZNY Aug 30: Security Chief Alexander Lebed is trying again to strike a deal with Chechen separatists, but the public rebels are arguing like they've already won the war, reports AP.

Lebed planned to return to Chechnya on Friday for another round of talks with separatist leaders and he hopes to come back with a joint statement on the principles of a peace agreement.

The war is over but we need to create conditions that will prevent a relapse, Lebed told reporters. This comes next.

Under the pullout agreement Lebed signed last week, disheartened Russian troops continued to withdraw Thursday from Grozny, which the rebels overran this month. Rebel units also were leaving the ravaged Chechen capital but as victors.

Firing submachine guns into the sky and shouting for joy, about 200 rebel fighters perched on captured Russian tanks and trucks displayed their weapons — everything from rocket-propelled grenades to a sword as they left the capital.

Joint Russian Chechen military units were enforcing the peace, but the large-scale Russian withdrawal has even emboldened the rebels to try to reestablish their own government.

"The political questions haven't been resolved, but we already have our government," rebel commander Ruslan Gelayev said. "We don't need to wait for a new one."

In Moscow, Lebed told reporters he'd spoken with President Boris Yeltsin by telephone, but he refused to discuss the conversation.

Lebed has not made his peace plan public, but it is said to offer the Chechens a chance to vote on their republic's political status.

ROK riot police raid 16 varsity campuses: 164 held

SEOUL Aug 30: Thousands of riot police today raided 16 university campuses and hauled off 164 students in the third day of a massive hunt for radical leaders accused of leading violent demonstrations last week, reports AP.

In the pre-dawn sweep, police also seized eight truckloads of firebombs, steel pipes and propaganda materials including videotapes showing former North Korean leader Kim Il-sung, who died in July 1994.

They searched major campus strongholds but failed to arrest any radical student leaders, a police spokesman told reporters.

In the past three days, police have raided some 60 universities and colleges nationwide and rounded up 766 students in the crackdown, triggered by last week's violent protests at Seoul's Yonsei University.

The crackdown has been ordered by President Kim Young Sam who branded the Federation of Students Councils (Hanchongryon) pro-North Korea.

C'wealth lawyers condemn HR abuses in Nigeria

VANCOUVER, Aug 30: Lawyers from the British Commonwealth condemned human rights abuses in Nigeria on Thursday but stopped short of a demand to shun colleagues there, reports AP.

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association executive council called for Nigeria's military regime to restore democracy and the independence of its courts.

Nigerian legal activists Olawale Fapohunda had asked the organisation to blacklist lawyers who help the regime repress human rights.

"We have neither the guns nor political and economic power to fight dictators," Fapohunda told a raucous session at the Commonwealth lawyers conference earlier Thursday. "We are advocates, not soldiers, but we can sanction our own."

Clinton enters fray against Dole saying 'hope is back in America'

CHICAGO Aug 30: In a rousing convention finale, President Clinton appealed for a second term Thursday night by offering himself as a champion of working families ready to lead America "into a new century of new challenge and new promise," reports AP.

Accepting the Democratic nomination for a second time, Clinton took credit for reviving the economy while cutting the deficit, welfare rolls and crime — and for holding the line against Republican budget cuts.

"Hope is back in America," Clinton declared in a 66-minute acceptance speech that ended with Chicago's United Centre hall in a celebratory frenzy. 150,000 balloons and an endless rain of confetti streaming down on delegates convinced the White House would be theirs for four more years.

lead" the world he said, in charting foreign policy for a second term.

Clinton said he would continue a strong partnership with a democratic Russia and, without listing countries, promised to bring Central Europe's democracies into NATO.

US experts are at record levels he said, but pledged in the next four years to break down more barriers in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Clinton also called for ratification without delay of treaties to further reduce nuclear arsenals and ban nuclear testing and poison gas "once and for all."

as partner to Republican proposal to cut back in health benefits, education and environmental protection.

Clinton accused Dole of pushing a "risky" 548 billion dollar tax cut plan that would balloon the deficit or require even deeper budget cuts than Republicans proposed last year.

Instead, Clinton proposed a more modest package of targeted tax incentives he said would help pay for vocational or college education and encourage businesses to give jobs to welfare recipients. He said his tax cuts were "paid for line by line, and dime by dime" in a budget he would propose.

Several national surveys suggested Clinton led by 15 points or more as he officially opened his campaign against Dole. Looking to keep the momentum, he was embarking Friday with Vice President Al Gore on a two-day bus trip modeled on their 1992 post-convention journey.

A state-by-state look at the Electoral College map only underscored the strength of Clinton's position: Not only does Dole trail in California and across the industrial Midwest, Clinton is competitive, if not ahead, in many Southern and border states considered must-win territory for the Republicans.

Clinton's speech was the finale of a Democratic convention remarkable for its show of unity.

But while Democrats were in an upbeat, confident mood, the embarrassing resignation of Clinton's top campaign strategist, Dick Morris, distracted from a convention celebration that also included renomination of Vice President Al Gore.

Join us in the cause that



US President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore (L) wave to delegates at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, on Thursday. Clinton accepted the nomination as presidential candidate for the November 1996 elections. — AFP/UNB photo