

BRIEFLY

Mobutu won't travel to SA: Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko will not travel to South Africa this week for a much expected meeting with rebel leader Laurent Kabila on ending Zaire's civil war, his son and spokesman said on Monday. Reuter reports from Kinshasa.

Apparently President Mobutu doesn't want to travel to South Africa. He prefers somewhere else, "Nzanga Mobutu told Reuters. It's a long flight and he's still convalescing. Mobutu, 66, had prostate cancer surgery in August and is still receiving treatment, although he looked in fair shape at his last public appearance a few days ago.

Ex-Philippine president Macapagal dies: Former Philippine president Diosdado Macapagal, who lost his relection bid to Ferdinand Marcos some 30 years ago, died of illness in a Manila hospital on Monday evening. He was 86. Reuter reports from Manila.

His doctor, Gary Lopez, said yesterday that Macapagal suffered from heart failure, acute kidney failure and pneumonia. He went into hospital on Monday morning. Macapagal served as the Philippine president from 1961 to 1965. He was defeated during his reelection bid by the late president Marcos, who ruled the country for the next 20 years.

Road mishap kills 19 in India: Nineteen people were killed when a bus fell off a bridge in pouring rain near the western Indian city of Aurangabad, the United News of India (UNI) reported yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

Eighteen others were injured in the accident late Monday. The survivors included the driver, who said he lost control of the vehicle because of poor visibility.

18 executed in China: Eighteen convicted criminals have been executed in southern China for crimes including murder, rape, and armed burglary, a report said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

They were immediately taken to an execution ground on Monday after a court upheld their convictions at a public hearing held in the border city of Shenzhen, the Express daily said. The hearing at Ronggang Middle School was attended by 10,000 people, the report said.

4 killed in Colombian prison riot: As many as four inmates were killed and 18 seriously injured in a prison riot late on Monday in southwest Colombia, local media reports said. Reuter reports from Bogota.

The Radionet News Network quoted a government official in Popayan, provincial capital of Nariño province, as saying the bloodshed occurred when guards moved to quell an uprising involving as many as 1,500 inmates in an overcrowded jail. But other reports said no more than two inmates had been killed in the latest of more than a dozen full-scale prison riots to break out in Colombia since the start of the year.

Brazilian youths burn Indian to death: Five teenagers set fire to an Indian chief sleeping at a bus stop and burned him to death a day after a national commemoration for indigenous people, AP reports from Brasilia.

Galdino Jesus dos Santos, a chief of the Pataxo tribe, died early Monday at the Asa Norte hospital. Ninety-five per cent of his body was burned, hospital officials said. The governor of Brazil's federal district, Cristovam Buarque, decreed three days of official mourning and called for "the most rigorous punishment possible."

Grave site found in Honduras: A farmer digging foundations for his house in northern Honduras turned up a grave site containing the skeletal remains of six bodies, AP reports from Tegucigalpa.

The mass grave, located in an area where an army battalion was based in the 1980s, may contain more bodies, police said Monday. Local police in the northern city of Trujillo, 185 miles (300 kilometres) north of Tegucigalpa, said they would continue excavations at the site. The grave was found Saturday by Ovidio Antonio Espinoza while he prepared to add a new room to his house in the town of Jirico, about 13 miles (20 kilometres) east of Trujillo.



Diana, Princess of Wales, is presented with the first rose to be named after her at the British Lung Foundation offices in central London Monday. It is expected that sales of the rose, which goes on public display for the first time at the Chelsea Flower Show next month, will raise thousands of pounds for research into lung diseases. — AFP/UNB photo

BONN, Apr 22: With increases in teen-age suicides, child prostitution, sexual abuse and poverty, millions of children in the former Soviet bloc are suffering from the region's transition to capitalism, UNICEF said in a report released here Monday, reports AP.

The 170-page study is the most detailed of how children are faring behind the former Iron Curtain eight years after the revolutions of 1989 raised hope for a bright future.

The report is unsettling. "With the elimination of authoritarianism and the introduction of demand-led market economies, there were great hopes that the needs of children would be better met in the short term," says the report.

"These hopes have been largely betrayed," says the study, which was presented to journalists by John Donohue, an American who is director of UNICEF's efforts in the former Soviet bloc.

One big reason for the problems is that public systems for child welfare that were dismantled or drastically reduced after communist dictators were overthrown have not been replaced, Donohue said.

"In countries like Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, the public child protection system has virtually collapsed," the report says.

Another reason is that families are struggling with costs that have soared over the past few years.

UNICEF, which is the UN children's agency, called on countries of the former Soviet

bloc to implement greater protections for children.

"There has been a staggering increase, across the region, in the number of families living in poverty" since 1989, Donohue said.

More than 60 per cent of Russian families with children under age 7 are living in poverty, up from 39.7 per cent in September 1992, the study says.

Across Central Europe, says the report, the number of children living in poverty has ballooned to 2.5 million from 1 million in the past several years.

Throughout the former East bloc, there are more children living in orphanages and other state institutions — about 1 million — than in 1990, the study says.

In Poland, the study says,

"In 10 out of 14 countries for which data are available, the rates of infants and toddlers in institutional care have risen since 1989," the report says.

Some of the child-care institutions are marked by "sub-human conditions," Donohue said.

The plight of children is generally worst in the former Soviet Union, but children are also suffering in countries that are starting to achieve prosperity, the study says.

"Even in the Czech Republic, a country with more coherent reforms, stronger family benefits and community services and declining rates of children in infant homes, the proportion of older children in public care has risen since 1990," the study says.

Police in Budapest estimate there are 200 to 500 girl prostitutes in the Hungarian capital, "with many more working the roads and highways throughout the country," the report says.

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