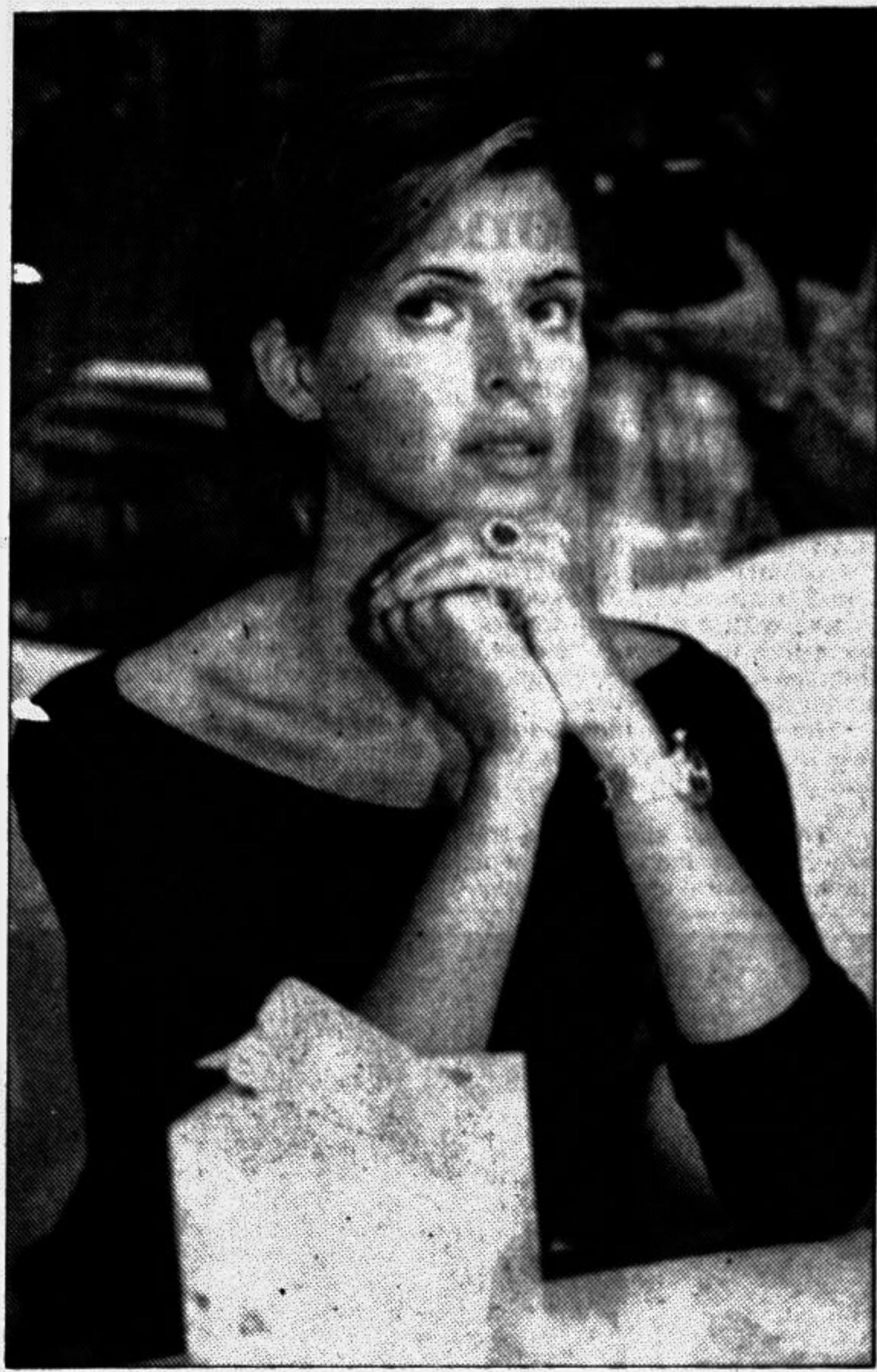


International



American model Kelly Fisher, 31, wearing the engagement ring that Egyptian fiance Dodi Al-Fayed gave her, sits during a news conference in which her attorney Gloria Allred announced July 14 that she filed a breach of contract suit against Al-Fayed. Dodi Al-Fayed has been linked with Princess Diana after the worldwide published "kiss photo". Fisher gave up her modeling career in anticipation of her impending marriage to Al-Fayed.

— AFP/UNB photo

Fayed to contest Fisher's breach of contract suit

LONDON, Aug 16: Millionaire Egyptian playboy Dodi Al Fayed, whose romance with Princess Diana made him an instant celebrity, will contest a breach of contract suit brought by an American model who claims she was his fiancee, reports Reuter.

As Diana left for a holiday in Greece with a family friend, Al Fayed denied the claims by model Kelly Fisher that she was with him.

Fisher said she was Al Fayed's fiancee until pictures of him kissing Diana appeared in newspapers around the world. Fisher, the lawyer for the model, felt "emotionally left at the altar."

Al Fayed, whose father owns the opulent Harrods Department Store in London, promptly fought back after the claims were made in Los Angeles.

His publicist Pat Kingsley said: "He was not engaged to her, he did not promise to marry her. He had considered her to be a friend whom he had gone out with before."

Earlier this year in January or February, their relationship changed from a romantic one to a friendly one. Fayed's attorney is going to answer the lawsuit next week and Fayed will be

denying everything that it says."

Princess Diana went for her morning walk out in sweat T-shirt and lycra shorts at a London gym on Friday without saying a word to reporters.

Then she went off on holiday to Greece with one of her closest friends, Rosa Monckton. But she did use a Harrods private aircraft — a Gulfstream let in the store's gold and green livery — for the flight to Athens.

The press interpreted this as an endorsement of her continuing relationship with the playboy whose name has been linked with a string of beautiful women.

British's royalty-obsessed tabloids had a field day with the latest bizarre twist in the romantic saga that would do credit to the most imaginative of soap opera scriptwriters.

The Sun splashed a front-page picture of Al Fayed arm in arm with Fisher and inside carried the results of a telephone poll by its readers — they voted five to one for "Di to dump Dodi."

Readers who sent in humorous limericks — dubbed "Di and Dodi odes" — were given 30-pound (47.7 US dollars) prizes for the best ones.

BRIEFLY

Efforts to curb AIDS in SA failing:

Government efforts to curb the spread of AIDS are failing, the Department of Health said Friday, AP reports from Pretoria.

Despite significantly increased funding for programmes aimed at reducing the rate at which the virus spreads, recent evidence suggests that we are not succeeding," it said in a submission to the Presidential Review Commission. As a result, a recent review of the government's initiatives to fight the increase of HIV infection decided a coordinated strategy is needed. It will be launched Aug 29.

65000 Bosnians back from Germany:

About 65,000 Bosnian refugees living in Germany have voluntarily gone home so far this year, with most receiving some financial help to do so, officials said Friday, AP reports from Bonn.

The number of Bosnian refugees and asylum seekers has dropped from about 345,000 on January 1 to about 280,000 at the end of July, Interior Minister Manfred Kanther said in a statement. During that period, 37,274 returnees got aid of up to 1,800 marks (1,000 dollars) per family for the trip, and 34,018 received up to 1,350 marks (750 dollars) per family from Germany once they arrived in Bosnia to help them get started. Some families may have received payments from both funds.

2 Muslims killed in Bosnia: Two Muslim woodcutters were shot and killed Friday in an ambush near the former front line with Serbs, police reported — a clash that could further raise tensions in Bosnia, AP reports from Sarajevo.

Four other men originally reported missing by the Muslim-Croat federation were later found safe, a UN official said. The NATO-led peace force and international police in Sarajevo were looking into the reports. "We are checking it," said Liam McDowell, a spokesman for UN police monitors. "These are very serious reports."

Gunmen kill 15 villagers in India:

Gunmen fired automatic weapons into the straw huts of two northeastern Indian villages overnight, killing 15 people in an attack police blamed on separatist tribespeople Saturday, AP reports from Gauhati.

The victims, all ethnic Bengali fishermen and farmworkers, were killed as they slept in their homes in Khairabari and Mesuri, neighboring villages about 140 kilometers (90 miles) west of Gauhati, the capital of Assam state. The police blamed the Bodo Security Force, which as vowed to drive minorities out of a region they say should be an independent homeland for Bodo tribespeople. Police accuse the group of killing more than 300 people from other ethnic groups in recent years.

Emeka to meet Mandela, Nujoma:

Commonwealth Secretary General Emeka Anyaoku will hold talks with President Nelson Mandela of South Africa and President Sam Nujoma of Namibia from 20-25 August, his office said Friday, AP reports from London.

His visit to southern Africa is part of preparations for the Commonwealth Summit in October in Edinburgh and immediately follows a series of bilateral discussions Anyaoku is holding in Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia. The visit will focus on enlarging the commonwealth and on trade between members.

Nine Tamil refugees killed

LTTE accuses army warplanes of bombing church

COLOMBO, Aug 16: Tamil Tiger guerrillas said Saturday that government jets bombed a Catholic church in northern Sri Lanka, killing nine Tamil refugees inside, reports AP.

A military spokesman in the capital said they were unaware of such an attack.

"Our planes were sent to bomb identified rebel positions in the north yesterday," said Major I. Dewage.

There was no independent confirmation of Friday's incident at Vavunikulam, 250 kilometers (155 miles) north of the capital Colombo.

The government does not allow reporters to cross into rebel-held areas and the area has no telephones. Relief agen-

cies which operate in the war-torn north, said they had no information yet.

A four-year-old boy and five women were among those killed when two Israeli-built Kfir jets bombed the church, the rebels said in a statement faxed to news agencies from their London offices. The name of the church was not given.

Fifteen people were wounded, the rebels said. The civilians had taken refuge in the church because of recent fighting.

Government warplanes and artillery have been pounding rebel positions in the area since 20,000 troops, backed by battle tanks and helicopter gunships, started an offensive three

months ago to capture a vital highway.

The military has so far captured a quarter of the road, but has been slowed by rebel counter-attacks.

The rebels are fighting for a homeland for minority Tamils, who account for 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 18 million people, claiming they are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and military. More than 48,000 have been killed since war began in 1983.

In June 1995, 125 Tamil civilians were killed in the northern Jaffna Peninsula when a warplane bombed the church of Saints Peter and Paul during a military offensive.

Funeral of five activists held

Sinister 3rd force of apartheid active: Mandela

of the Witwatersrand.

No arrests have been made in cases linked to "Third Force" activities.

Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, blames much of the organised crime in South Africa on a "Third Force" of corrupt policemen and security elements from the former apartheid government. Their primary motivation, according to Mbeki, is to undermine a democratic South Africa.

"That's ridiculous," said Mark Malan of the independent Institute for Strategic Studies. Organised crime is motivated by economic interests, not political ideals.

The five ANC officials were shot to death in KwaZulu-Natal.

province, where more than 10,000 people have died in violent clashes between political groups in the past 10 years.

The murders came two days after local elections and were believed to be linked to a dispute with an ousted local ANC official.

Other violence often blamed on a "Third Force" includes a street war between drug gangs and a Muslim vigilante group in Cape Town earlier this month.

Justice Minister Dullah Omar refused to answer questions from The Associated Press about specific investigations or the relocation of some policemen accused of involvement in "Third Force" activities.

Discovery completes test of Japan's prototype robot arm

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Aug 16: Crew members of the Space Shuttle Discovery finished testing a Japanese prototype robot arm on Friday and took a last look at Comet Hale-Bopp as they neared the end of their orbital research, reports Reuter.

The mission has been going great," Shuttle Commander Curt Brown said. "We've completed eight days of very intense payload operations. It's going to be one of the shuttle missions we can look back on and be very, very proud of."

A 5-foot-long (1.5 metre) Japanese robot arm got an extra workout on Friday to complete tests that were delayed because of computer and communications glitches on Wednesday.

The 100 million dollar mechanical marvel is slated to tend to experiments and

equipment mounted on the exterior of a Japanese laboratory module in the proposed international Space Station.

Although the arm's orbital workouts during the mission were frequently stalled by a over sensitive safety system and other minor problems, the astronauts said they were pleased with its performance.

"I'd give it an A-plus," astronaut Jan Davis said. "It's really been fun. We sort of feel like test pilots up here trying out the arm."

Mission control celebrated the successful checkout of the arm by 8 playing the astronauts "Mr. Robot" by Styx.

"If we weren't dancing before, we certainly are now," astronaut Steve Robinson said. "We are celebrating here tonight by eating curry rice."

His speech surprised many attending the conference since the UN Security Council in June threatened Iraq with new sanctions if Baghdad continued to obstruct the work of inspectors from UNSCOM.

Follow principles of transparency in declaring arms, Iraq urges ME

GENEVA, Aug 16: Iraq's representative to the UN on Thursday called on neighbouring Middle Eastern countries for greater transparency in declaring weapons of mass destruction in their possession.

Administration sources said the President would most likely visit India in March 1998, after Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's trip to India and the rest of South Asia in November.

Commerce Secretary William Daley is also slated to visit India some time later this year, and his trip could precede Ms Albright's visit or take place immediately after she returns.

New Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Rick Inderfurth will visit South Asia next month.

"I very much hope to visit India during this term in office," Clinton said in a videotaped message to over 1,200 Indian Americans attending a

Clinton will visit India, Pakistan in '98

Tribute to India," banquet, which was the highlight of India's 50th independence anniversary celebrations in Washington.

Mrs Hillary Clinton, who was chief guest at the banquet organised by the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NIFA), was more specific.

"Tonight, I am pleased to announce that the President will travel to South Asia next year, including India and Pakistan," she said.

"I know he will enjoy his trip to India as much as Chelsea (her daughter) and I did, and I am looking forward to my next visit next year." The First Lady and daughter visited India and the other South Asian nations, including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, two years ago.

US providing food, water to Asian would be immigrants

WASHINGTON, Aug 16: The State Department said on Friday that US officials were providing food and water for dozens of Asian would be immigrants on a ship detained off Mexico but declined to discuss diplomatic efforts to resolve the case, reports Reuter.

The US Coast Guard continues to provide humanitarian aid to the Asian migrants aboard the vessel Lapas Number 3, which was intercepted last Tuesday by the Coast Guard, spokesman James Rubin told a State Department news conference.

He said US policy was to prevent illegal immigrants coming to the country and Washington wanted to make clear to "alien smugglers" that they "would be wise not to try to send their illegal cargo" to America.

Asked what diplomatic steps Washington was taking with

Mexico, he said, "I am advised that the success of our ability to pursue our policy is greatly improved by the minimalism with which I speak about it from this podium."

The 50-foot (50-metre) vessel was intercepted by a crew from the Coast Guard Cutter Tybee after it was spotted by aircraft. And was, boarded Wednesday by four officers of the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service.

INS and Coast Guard officials, who said the passengers were undocumented Asian migrants, went to the scene 30 miles (48 km) of the Baja California Coast. The ship reportedly was flying a Mexican flag but its registry was not clear.

The Coast Guard Cutter Midgett is still on the scene to attend to the health and safety of those on board the vessel.

West African leaders vow to enforce blockade against Sierra Leone

ACCRA, Aug 16: West African leaders vowed Friday to use force if necessary to uphold sanctions against Sierra Leone's military junta, which took power in a bloody May 25 coup, reports AP.

After two days of discussions, a special committee of the Economic Community of West African States, or Ecowas, also called for international help in enforcing sanctions and trying to return the ousted civilian president to power.

The committee members, who are the foreign ministers of Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Guinea, acknowledged that a blockade of Sierra Leone's port has failed to prevent shipments of fuel, rice and other necessities from reaching the capital of Freetown.

The blockade was imposed shortly after soldiers led by Maj. Johnny Paul Koroma

ousted the government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.

Nigerian troops sent into Sierra Leone to pressure Koroma to give up power have taken control of the airport, preventing commercial air traffic, but they have not enforced the port blockade apparently for fear of sparking violent clashes that could engulf the capital.

That could change if a full Ecowas summit to be held later this month in Abuja, Nigeria, agrees to support the use of force as outlined by the foreign ministers.

Nigerian Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi acknowledged that any settlement of the Sierra Leone crisis would also have to take into consideration the coup leaders' demands that Nigeria release former Sierra Leone rebel chief Foday Sankoh.

Residents of South Mombasa carry along their belongings as they flee the region Friday

which for the past two days has been the scene of gun battles and property destruction. Twenty-five people have been killed or are missing since an armed group began terrorising the population of this Indian Ocean port city.

— AFP/UNB photo

A bitter independence anniversary on Indo-Pak border

Neelesh Misra writes from Punjab

Thousands of Indian enthusiasts, who gathered at the country's main border post with Pakistan during a special independence bash, found no takers for their greetings across the barbed wires.

Over 6,000 people defied security guards to join some 2,000 people with security passes and marched up to the Wagah post, shortly before midnight on August 14-15, in what was described as the largest ever congregation at an Indian border position. But many participants went away with bitter experiences.

Thousands of people clogged the moonlit road leading to Pakistan on the night of August 14, when ordinary Indian and Pakistani citizens were scheduled to meet at the border post for the first time since Pakistan was carved out of India in 1947.

The meeting, which was aimed at melting away bitter

and young girls sat huddled at a pavement on the side of the road.

In one part of the huge crowd, a group of drunk rowdies ripped off the clothes of a girl, pushed around her friend and tried to molest scores of others, watched helplessly by security guards. Several people were injured as furious jostling among the participants resulted in minor stampedes.

There could have been a major stampede here. There could have been a riot here. There could have been a major security risk," said Mr S. Adhavan, secretary of the South Asian Fraternity, a voluntary group with membership across the South Asian region, which organised the event with the New Delhi-based Centre for Democracy.

The huge crowd of Indian enthusiasts went out of control soon after they reached the border in scores of cars, trucks, jeeps and other vehicles, shocking the organisers, who had hoped for a presence of 2,500.

Hundreds of girls, children and old people scurried for cover as groups of local bullies made passes at women and physically molested them in several bouts of midnight revelry. Long after the incidents stopped, children

guests from Pakistan sang feet-tapping Punjabi nationalist songs from a makeshift stage built along the No-Man's Land, beneath glittering lights and high voltage music.

The verses of the singers from India and Pakistan, cheered by the mainly Punjabi audience, spoke of hope of going back to the undivided Punjab state split during the 1947 partition, and of wiping