

1,000 tons of armour destroyed in Pak ammunition depot blast

RAWALPINDI, June 2 : When a 60-year-old ammunition depot erupted in northern Pakistan at least 1,000 tons of armour rained down on terrified residents, but a senior army spokesman said Saturday it could have been a lot worse, reports AP.

The Pakistan Army ammunition depot that exploded late Friday stored 20,000 tons of military hardware. The army managed to save 95 per cent of the ammunition, the director general of military operations said.

"About 1,000 tons of total storage of 20,000 tons of missiles, rockets and small arms ammunition stored in the army depot blew up as a result of the explosion and fire," Maj Gen Jamsheed Malik told a news conference Saturday.

He said 11 people were killed and 68 were injured in the explosion. Hospital and ambulance officials put the dead at 15.

Six of the dead and 33 of the injured were civilians, said Malik. Five of the dead were army officers.

"It's very difficult to say what caused the explosion," Malik said.

He said 22 soldiers were on duty when the blast occurred. Three were killed on the spot and seven others were still



BADRESHI, Pakistan: President Ghulam Ishaq Khan (2nd from L), Army Chief General Mirza Aslam Beg (C, in uniform), and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (2nd from R) visit June 1, the ammunition depot (background) that caught fire and exploded May 31, causing the death of 12 people, and injuring some 70.

missing. The depot was meant exclusively for use by the Pakistani army, and nothing was stored there for the Afghan mujahedeen," he said.

Pakistan supplies weapons to Afghan rebels, called mujahedeen or Islamic holy warriors, who have been fighting for nearly 13 years to topple successive Communist-style governments ruling their war-weary homeland.

The British, rulers of the subcontinent before 1947, established the ammunition depot in 1930.

Malik said the death toll was kept to a minimum because the depot site is located in a sparsely populated area, covering three square miles (7.8 square kilometers) of undulating countryside. Nowshera is a garrison town of several thousand people. Neighbouring villages are much smaller.

Malik said the depot employs 676 people, none of whom were working at the time of the explosion, which occurred on the Muslim holy day.

"The initial explosion activated a number of sympathetic detonations, during which a number of burning rockets took off," said Malik.

"These rockets fell into the civilian areas, killing and injuring those who live outside the depot," he said.

Most of the people fled in panic and were temporarily housed in makeshift hostels in neighbouring villages.

But Malik said the spent ammunition has been cleared and people have begun returning to their homes.

The panic caused by the explosion far outstripped the damage wreaked by the blast, said Malik.

The explosion was so huge that it was heard on a radius of 15-to-20 kilometers (9-to-12 miles). It caused a great panic forcing people to flee," he said.

"Panic is in the minds of the people since the Ohjri Camp blast," said Malik, referring to an April 1988 explosion at an ammunition dump in Rawalpindi that left several hundred dead and scores more injured.

The SNC is made up of six delegates from the Hanot-backed government in Phnom Penh and six from the Cambodian resistance, which includes the Khmer Rouge and the two non-communist forces loyal to former monarch Prince Norodom Sihanouk and former Premier Son Sann.

The council is to represent Cambodian sovereignty if a peace plan proposed by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to end the 12-year war goes into effect.

Cambodian peace talks begin

JAKARTA, June 2 : Indonesia and France opened a three-day Cambodian peace meeting here today aimed at bringing Cambodia's warring factions closer to a settlement of the long-drawn conflict, reports AFP.

The informal meeting was opened by its co-chairmen, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Alain Vivien, some 45 minutes later than scheduled.

The co-chairmen and the 12 members of the Cambodian Supreme National Council (SNC) sat around a rectangular table, bedecked in white linen and profusely garnished with flowers, in the large function hall of the Hotel Indonesia.

Sources at the Foreign Ministry here said the opening session would be followed by a series of closed-door consultations between the two co-chairmen and the SNC members.

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Off the Record

Monroe would have been eligible for Social Security

LOS ANGELES : Marilyn Monroe, who remains a sex symbol nearly three decades after her death, would have been eligible Saturday to collect Social Security, reports AP.

About 40 admirers marked her 65th birthday at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, where a sandstone sculpture of the star's head was mounted on the wall of the Cinegrill bar, one of her former haunts.

"When Marilyn was a budding starlet we would go there and she would say 'I hope when I'm famous my picture will be on the wall of the Cinegrill,'" said Robert Slatzer, a longtime friend. "Now I can make that dream come true."

Other fans were expected to make the annual pilgrimage Saturday to her grave in the Westwood section of Los Angeles.

Earlier this week, Marilyn "wannabes" and spectators swarmed around the Mann's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood to compete in a look-alike contest.

Since the 36-year-old Monroe died in 1962 in her Brentwood home from a drug overdose, dozens of books have been written about her, her relationships with John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert, and her marriages to baseball star Joe DiMaggio and playwright Arthur Miller.

Her first husband, retired Los Angeles police officer Jim Dougherty, who married Norma Jean Baker when she was 16, predicted she would have lost her famous hourglass figure by now.

"Monroe's mother was a chubby little gal," he recalled. "So she probably would have gotten fatter as time went by."

Slatzer said he commissioned the three-dimensional portrait, titled "Legend," from artist Bill Mack and donated it to the hotel. Before the hotel was remodeled, pictures of stars used to decorate the bar's walls, he said.

Slatzer, who claims to have been married to Monroe for five days in 1962, said he will share in the cost of placing a single red rose beside the portrait every day, said hotel spokeswoman Jan Walner.

"The hotel is the perfect place to have her memento," Walner said. "It's a living reminder that she was here and spent time here."

Marilyn Quayle not worried over water

WINSTON-SALEM, (North Carolina) : Marilyn Quayle says she's not worried about the quality of drinking water at the vice president's residence in Washington, reports AP.

"We don't drink bottled water," the wife of Vice President Dan Quayle said in an interview Thursday. "We drink from the tap."

Water at the White House and other residences President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, lived in over the years is being tested for toxins because of the unusual coincidence that the Bushes developed Graves' disease.

The couple lived in the vice presidential mansion when Bush was vice president during the administration of former President Ronald Reagan.

Mrs Quayle said it was worth checking the water and she presumed "it will be ruled out."

"We've had people calling us ... saying you'd better check your water," said Mrs Quayle, who was in North Carolina to speak at the 20th annual convention of the National Association for Search and Rescue.

"I'm not worried about the president at all," she said. "He's doing great. I don't worry about Dan assuming the presidency. OL course, we don't want anything to happen to the president."

Rock n' Roll!

DENVER : Robinson of the Black Crowes rock band walked out of a convenience store with two cases of beer and spat at a customer when a clerk refused to sell him beer because it was after midnight, police said, reports AP.

Robinson, 24, was cited for petty theft and assault, both misdemeanors, when police went to his hotel after responding to a complaint of a disturbance at a 7-Eleven early Thursday. He faces a June 13 court appearance.

The band, which played in Denver on Wednesday night, has sold more than 2 million copies of its debut album, "Shake Your Money Maker."

Robinson became irate when the store clerk refused to sell him beer after midnight, an illegal act in Colorado, police said.

Elizabeth Juergens, a waitress, said she was in the store with a companion who pointed out Robinson, and "I said, Who are The Black Crowes?"

She said Robinson whirled around and began verbally abusing her.

"He spit ... at my hair, and his bouncers pulled him out," she said.

Robinson then walked out of the store with two cases of beer without paying for them, but a member of his entourage returned and gave the clerk 20 dollars, police said.

Soviet miners wrest gains after strike

MOSCOW, June 2 : The reports on progress in the miners' strike reminded one of war communique from the fronts of World War II, reports IAN.

The situation kept changing every day: Some mines discontinued operations, while the miners of others went down to produce coal. This was usually done by order of the strike committees: Coal was sent for heating the cities and to plants, where a stoppage could have irreparable effects. And everywhere, this should be emphasised, the mines were cared for so as to be able to resume coal production immediately after the strike ended.

The Kuznetsk coal-fields: 80 coal-industry enterprises fully or partially on strike. Seven mines operate without shipping coal, while another five are shipping coal to only those enterprises where it is indispensable.

The Donetsk coal-fields, the largest coal-producing area in the Ukraine: 74 mines are at a standstill, two are operating, without shipping coal to consumers, however.

The Vorkuta coal-fields in North Russia: 12 mines stand idle.

The Urals area: 14 mines and quarries on strike.

Sakhalin Island: Six mines stand idle.

The demands of the miners on strike

This time, the striking miners had no need to spend many hours at rallies to work out their demands, as was the case in the summer of 1989, during the first miners' strike. They had a clear idea of their objectives and those of their

Miners' collectives shall be granted the right to sell seven per cent of power-generating and coking coal out of the actual quantity of coal produced on the domestic and external market at agreed prices. It has been estimated that miners will from now on be independent suppliers of nearly 40 million tons of coal a year.

Woman assassin of Rajiv yet to be identified

COLOMBO, June 2 : The suspected woman assassin of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is yet to be identified, reports PTI.

Official sources said, the high level CBI team investigating the killing was checking all possible leads including the report that the human bomb could be the daughter of a school teacher of Vavuniya in northern Sri Lanka.

According to all indications available so far, the investigating organisations here as well as in India, the suspicion is pointed towards the involvement of LTTE, the source said.

Meanwhile, a senior Sri Lankan Tamil leader belonging to a non-LTTE group today asserted that he had seen the assassin in northern Jaffna peninsula about four years ago.

List of traitors submitted to court Palestinians involved in anti-Kuwait activities

KUWAIT, June 2 : The first prosecution witness to take the stand in Kuwait's collaboration trials said on Saturday he had a secret list of staff of a pro-Iraqi newspaper and the prosecutor demanded the court make an example of them, reports Reuter.

Police Captain Abdullah al-Tourjhi handed the list to the court saying that it contained the names of 24 people, mostly Palestinians and Iraqis, who worked for the pro-Baghdad newspaper Al-Nidaa during Iraq's occupation of the Emirate.

Prosecutor Salah al-Mossa'ad told the five-judge martial law court it should show no leniency.

"They chose the tyrant of

Iraq (President Saddam Hussein) as their Imam and Prophet," he said.

"When the whole world stood as one man against the tyrant, these traitors were propagating his regime. The prosecution urges the court to be severe with them and punish them with maximum penalties."

The newspaper was Iraq's mouthpiece in Kuwait during much of its seven-month occupation of the Emirate.

It ceased publication in January shortly before the United states and its Allies launched the six-week Gulf war which ended with the rout of Iraq's occupation army and its ejection from the Emirate.

One defence lawyer, Dokhi al-Hosban, in an emotional plea for justice, said the judiciary was the last hope of the people in the Emirate after the ravages of the Iraqi occupation.

"Our judicial system is our last pride. We lost everything

and we are only left now with our judiciary," he added.

Kuwait says 200, mostly non-Kuwaiti people will stand trial for alleged collaboration. If convicted, they could be hanged. The heaviest sentence has so far been 15 years' jail. Verdicts in Al-Nidaa case will be announced on June 15.

Earlier in Saturday's eight-hour hearing, another defence lawyer, Emad Al-Seif, clashed with the prosecution witness.

He said the police captain's testimony was crucial to the fate of the defendants — a Kuwait woman, 14 Jordanians of Palestinian origin, five Iraqis, one stateless Arab resident of Kuwait and a Palestinian with Egyptian-issued refugee travel documents.

Lebanese Ahmed al-Husseini, the alleged Editor of Al-Nidaa and the former Managing-Editor of Kuwait's Al-Qabas daily, is at large together with Jordanian Mohammed Arafat. They are being tried in absentia.

72 Tibetans held outside Chinese embassy in Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 2 : Indian police detained 72 Tibetans after a noisy but peaceful protest Friday outside the Chinese embassy against alleged arrests and killings of their compatriots in Tibet, reports AFP.

The 57 men and 15 women were driven away in police vans after the brief demonstration during which the Tibetans shouted slogans demanding that the Chinese vacate their Himalayan homeland, witnesses said.

The demonstrators waved Tibetan flags and held placards denouncing alleged arrests and killings last week of an unspecified number of Tibetan protesters by Chinese security forces in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa.

A statement issued by the Tibetan Freedom Movement, which organised the protest, said the "brave men and women were arrested and some were bayoneted to death" when they shouted slo-

gans in Lhasa's streets May 25 and 26.

The alleged atrocities reportedly occurred after the May 23 celebrations in Tibet of the 40th anniversary of what Beijing calls the "peaceful liberations" of the region.

There had been no previous mention of arrests and killings on May 25 and the Dalai Lama's office here said only that Chinese paramilitary forces stabbed on Tibetan demonstrators to death in Lhasa on May 26. The charge has been denied by Chinese officials in Beijing.

The Tibetan Freedom Movement said in an open letter to Chinese Premier Li Peng that Tibetans in Lhasa had risked their lives and chanted pro-independence slogans, undeterred by a large number of Chinese security personnel.

"A police spokesman said the detained Tibetans would be released later."

Rebel govt pledges new era of democracy

Arms store explosion leaves hundreds killed in Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA, June 2 : Hundreds of people were blasted or burned to death when an ammunition dump exploded on the outskirts of Addis Ababa on the last day of Ethiopia's civil war, it was learned on Saturday, reports Reuter.

A vile stench hung over hundreds of incinerated corpses strewn around a deep crater when reporters reached the disaster site in the western suburb of Shagole. The area was swarming with looters.

Rebels captured the capital last Tuesday. The arms store exploded on the same day after government troops left

Shagole. "It was a terrible, big blast at about noon on Tuesday," said Giuseppe Osella, an Italian who lives nearby. "I believe more than 1,000 died here."

AFP adds : Ethiopia's new Acting President Meles Zenawi promised Saturday to lead his famine-stricken, impoverished country away from dictatorship and civil war into a new era of democracy.

Meles addressed diplomatic corps hours after arriving in Addis Ababa from London via Sudan, pledging to hold a conference by July 1 at which all political parties would have a say in choosing a new, broad-based government which will

rule for one year until democratic elections can be organised.

Meanwhile, the former rebel groups which seized control of Addis Ababa on Tuesday will rule for a month until the conference, he said.

"As head of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), I will head the administration", Meles said.

He said his priorities were to restore law and order and resume relief operations to save some seven million people threatened by a famine that could be worse than the 1984-85 famine that killed a million people.

Relief officials say the recent upsurge in fighting and a breakdown in law and order in eastern and southern Ethiopia have disrupted their operations.

"We want a peaceful and democratic transition," said Meles, a 36-year-old former medical student who dropped his studies to fight the brutally repressive rule of military strongman Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu's 17 years in power ended when he fled to Zimbabwe last week as rebels closed in on the Ethiopian capital.

BRIEFLY

Neo-Nazi leader killed : The leader of a Neo-Nazi organization, Ratner Sonntag, was killed Friday night in a street shooting in Dresden, according to a Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA), reports Saturday, says Xinhua from Bonn.

Sonntag, 36, was the founder of the organization in Dresden, the capital of Sachsen state, and was described as the spiritual father of the extra-rightists.

Police said 50 to 60 right-wing youths gathered before a cinema in the city Friday night. At midnight, Sonntag and another man left by car. The other man got out of the car further along the street and killed Sonntag with a gun, police said.

Police are searching for the killer.

Landslide kills 7 in Indonesia : A landslide has buried a family of seven in the western Indonesian Province of North Sumatra, Press reports said in Jakarta Sunday, reports AFP.

The Kompas Daily said the landslide occurred in Sibohu village following heavy rain late Wednesday, burying a nearby hut housing a family of nine.

Two members of the family were rescued by neighbours while seven others were found dead, Kompas said.

14 killed in Mexican bus mishap : A bus overturned on a highway in the Mexican state of Morelos on Saturday, killing 14 people and injuring 26, a Red Cross spokesman said, Reuter from Mexico City says.

The bus crashed between the town of Cuatla and Cuernavaca, 70 km (45 miles) south of Mexico City. The Red Cross said 10 passengers were killed instantly and four more died in hospital in Cuatla.

The official news agency Notimex quoted Highway Police Chief Egenaro Barreto Martinez as saying the bus driver was apparently driving too and lost control of the vehicle on a sharp bend.

Pilgrims on the tomb of Khomeini : Some 350,000 pilgrims from Iran and abroad have converged on the tomb of Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini for the second anniversary of his death, the Iranian News Agency Iran reported on Saturday, Reuter says from Nicosia.

Muslims from Pakistan and the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan were pouring into Iran to mark the June 3 anniversary and Iraqis Afghans and Muslims from Lebanon, Syria, India and Turkey had gathered at the shrine in the sprawling Behesht-e-Zahra Cemetery on the outskirts of Tehran, it said.

"More than 20,000 such guests are expected to join the million of Iranian commemorating the sad demise of the founder of the Islamic Republic," it added.

Arafat warned Rajiv of plot: Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat warned former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of a plot to kill him a month ago, the British newspaper Observer reported Sunday, Reuter says from London.

It quoted Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar as saying Arafat had warned Gandhi of a conspiracy against his life. Shekhar who had met Arafat at Gandhi's funeral said: He told me of the warning when he came to pay his condolences.

"Unfortunately it was not the time or place to discuss the matter in detail."

Shekhar also confirmed that Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or Tamil Tigers, were the prime suspects for the assassination, the newspaper said.

Gandhi was killed by a bomb on May 21 as he visited India's southern Tamil Nadu state for an election rally.