

Tigers massacre 11 Muslims in Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 19: Suspected Tamil guerrillas Thursday massacred 11 Muslims in a dawn raid on a village in eastern Sri Lanka, officials said, reports AFP.

A massive army hunt for the killers began immediately. A military spokesman told reporters here that Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas were responsible for shooting dead 11 civilians and wounding six others in a village in Medirigiriya in Sinhalese-dominated Polonnaruwa district.

The military had earlier put the death toll at six. "All victims were Muslims. Most of those living in the area are farmers," said Colonel Sarath Munasinghe. He said two women were among the dead.

"A major hunt has been launched by the army to find the killers," an official said by telephone from neighbouring Anuradhapura district.

Local officials said at least two Tigers were killed in the gun-battle with security forces assigned to guard the Sinhalese village which is close to jungle areas where Tiger guerrillas are known to have their hideouts.

Officials said six missing

police who were part of the village security unit during the dawn rebel attack had been accounted for. They had reportedly lost their way during an exchange of fire with the LTTE guerrillas.

The LTTE has in the past carried out attacks on Sinhalese and minority Muslim villagers in the northeast in a bid to drive them out of the region and set up an exclusive homeland for Sri Lanka's two million minority Tamils.

Two more Lankan ministers resign

COLOMBO, Sept 19: Two more ministers resigned from the government Wednesday expressing solidarity with a ruling move to impeach President Ranasinghe Premadasa, dissidents said, reports AFP.

The defectors, Ravindra Smarawera and Ariyaratne Jayatilake, both holding junior ranks, joined to senior ministers who quit the cabinet on August 30 in a campaign to oust Premadasa.

US spreading false information to justify fresh attack : Iraq

I am fed up with Saddam's evasion of aerial inspections : Bush

SALT LAKE CITY, Sept 19: President Bush is making clear to Saddam Hussein that Iraq will face U.S. warplanes again if he interferes with United Nations helicopters inspecting weapons facilities, reports AP.

"He knows better than to take on the United States of America," the president says.

Bush has a plan ready to send helicopter gunships to escort the U.N. helicopters and airplanes as needed for additional cover, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

The President also has agreed to Saudi Arabia's request for Patriot anti-missile missiles to be placed as a defense against possible Iraqi aggression, the White House said.

Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the United States believes Iraq still has several hundred Scud missiles like those used against Saudi Arabia and Israel during the Gulf war.

Bush said he was "plenty fed up" with Saddam's evasion of inspections required by the U.N. cease-fire resolutions, which require elimination of Iraq's mass-destruction capability.

"We intend to see that these resolutions are complied with. He's not going to question our resolve on this," the President told reporters Wednesday during a stop at the Grand Canyon in Arizona at the start of a three-day Mtern swing.

Iraq responded Thursday by accusing the United States of using the issue to justify renewed attacks.

This controversy is a fabrication because Iraq had previously accepted the use by the U.N. inspection team of helicopters, if this did not threaten Iraq's and the team's security, government-run Al-Jumhuriya newspaper said.

The daily, in an editorial carried by the Iraqi News Agency and monitored in Nicosia, accused Washington of "spreading false information... to justify its resumption of aggression against Iraq."

Al-Jumhuriya said the matter of the helicopters was still being negotiated by Iraqi officials and the U.N. Security Council.

Bush was flying on Thursday to Portland, Ore., and Los Angeles for political fundraisers.

The President and other officials sought to play down the pending resumption of armed conflict with Iraq.

"I don't think Saddam wants any of that... I'm confident he doesn't," Bush said. "He knows better than to take on the United States of America."

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney called the moves "contingency planning." The United States had not set a specific deadline for Saddam to comply with the cease-fire, he added.

Bush has spoken to other members of the U.N. Security Council about ways to ensure

the inspections go forward, and military planners have "examined options," including using helicopters and other support to protect the inspections, Fitzwater said.

"There has been no decision to deploy these U.S. forces," however, the spokesman added.

National Utility adviser Brent Scowcroft said, "There would need to be an executive order" if Saddam stops hindering the inspection teams. Iraq's nuclear facilities are to be inspected and destroyed under the U.N. cease-fire resolutions that ended the Gulf war.

A Nicosia report adds: Iraq accused the United States on Thursday of the issue of U.N. helicopter flights by weapons inspectors to justify the military attacks, but stopped short of refusing to comply with U.N. truce terms.

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Under terms of the allied-imposed truce after Iraq was driven from Kuwait in February, U.N. observers were to oversee the dismantling of long-range missiles and any chemical, nuclear or biological weapons.

Some inspectors have said that they would be better able to conduct surprise inspections of facilities if they use U.N. helicopters. Iraq at first insisted that only Iraqi helicopters be used, but then said Monday that the U.N. helicopters could be used only under certain conditions.



GRAND CANYON, Arizona: US President George Bush talks to reporters September 18 at the Grand Canyon. Bush said, "I am plenty fed up" with Saddam Hussein's resistance to UN aerial inspections and will send US warplanes to escort UN officials if necessary. —AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Quake hits Guatemala : 7 killed : A powerful earthquake struck Guatemala on Wednesday, killing at least seven people, injuring scores of others and causing extensive damage, authorities said, reports Reuters from Guatemala.

The quake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale struck at 3:48 am local time (0948 GMT) and was centered, in a rural area 100 km (60 miles) southwest of Guatemala city.

The tremor, felt in the capital, was followed by at least 15 aftershocks according to a report.

In San Miguel De Pochuta, 65 kms (40 miles) west of the capital 85 per cent of the town people's small houses (abode) collapsed in the quake killing at least five people and injuring 60, government reports said.

Protest against Indian atrocity : Kashmir Women demonstrated Wednesday against what they called repression of their people in the Indian-administered portion of their region, reports BSS.

Shouting "Indian dogs, leave Kashmir," about 50 women marched to a United Nations office in Kashmir to deliver a memorandum demanding a plebiscite to determine the wishes of Kashmiri people.

Their document also called upon the United Nations to send a team to Indian-controlled Kashmir to report on the Human Rights situation there.

More than 2,500 people have died since early 1990 in violence linked to a militant separatist campaign in India's only Muslim-majority state.

Plea to boycott anti-Islamic marriages : Muslim religious leaders have given a call to the community to boycott marriages performed in violation of the Islamic Laws, reports PTI.

A resolution to this effect, adopted at a Round Table conference organised by the All India Jamat-ul-Mashaikh this week, was released in Hyderabad Wednesday.

Nine Muslim religious heads told a press conference that the city girl Ameena's marriage with an old Arab was a result of soul-sapping poverty of the girl's parents. Expressing concern over what they called blowing out of proportion of the Ameena episode, they alleged that certain forces were creating ground for introduction of common civil code.

Two Koreas membership in UN tragic : North Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister said on Wednesday that the membership of two Koreas in the United Nations was tragic because it represented international recognition of the Peninsula's division.

Membership by both the north and south is a tragic event. Such a phenomenon should not last long, said first deputy foreign minister Kang Sok Ju in an interview with Reuters in United Nations.

He said the entry of both countries into the UN on Tuesday, meant that the division of the Korean Peninsula would be legalised internationally.

He said Pyongyang would continue to strive towards reunification and he hope that Korea would re-enter the United Nations as a single state in the near future.

Croatian Defence Minister resigns : Croatia's Defence Minister Luka Bebic resigned on Wednesday and has been replaced by his deputy Gorko Susak, Zagreb Television reported in Yugoslavia, reports AFP.

Bebic presented his resignation to Croatian President Franjo Tudjman who immediately appointed Susak.

Susak is also minister responsible for Croatia's overseas the television report said.

The official Croatian station did not give any reason for Bebic's departure, which was also reported by the Tanjug news agency in Belgrade.

Zahir Shah's nationality restored : Afghan President Najibullah restored Afghan nationality on Wednesday to exiled former King Zahir Shah and 22 members of his family, official Kabul radio said, reports Reuters.

The broadcast monitored in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, said the Soviet backed President had repealed a 1978 decree depriving the former royal family of Afghan nationality.

Zahir Shah 77 has lived in exile in Rome since he was ousted in 1973 in a coup by his cousin Mohammed Daoud who was then toppled and executed in a Marxist coup in 1978.

Afghan nationality was also restored to Zahir Shah's wife, former Queen Homaira their four sons and a daughter.

Afghan ambassadors abroad have been instructed to issue passports to members of the former Royal Family to facilitate their return home, the radio said.

Call to withdraw US troops from Subic : Two US Senators have called on President George Bush to begin planning an immediate pullout of US forces from the Subic Bay Naval Station in the Philippines, reports Reuters from Washington.

The two Democrats, Harry Reid of Nevada and Paul Simon of Illinois, said in a Senate resolution they introduced on Tuesday it was in American best interests to abide by the Philippine Senate's decision to reject a new US base treaty.

"The President, in honouring the decision of the duly elected representatives of the Filipino people, should begin planning an immediate withdrawal from our naval facility at Subic Bay," the resolution said.

There was no immediate indication if or when the Senate might vote on the resolution, which would not compel the administration to take any action.

Philippine President Corason Aquino has said most Filipinos favour keeping US forces and plans to call a referendum, possibly in December, to override the Philippine Senate vote.

US lauds Bangladesh's support to curb drug trafficking

From Rahman Jahangir

WASHINGTON, Sept 19: The United States has lauded support of Bangladesh to global efforts to curb illegal drug trafficking and assured the South Asian country of more US assistance in the days ahead to tighten the noose around the smugglers.

This was stated by Robert C. Bonner, Administrator of powerful US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in an international workshop on drug abuse and addiction here. The workshop is being participated by 23 media representatives from all over the world including Bangladesh.

Bonner said his office is aware of the serious drug situation in Bangladesh and the United States will henceforth

turn its attention to the countries of South Asia since Burma, by producing poppies, is still the major supplier of Marijuana and heroin. "I am happy that Bangladesh had lost no time in signing the UN convention against illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances which became effective on November last year.

The convention contemplates that signatory nations will pass domestic laws providing for drug asset removal, the control of essential and precursor chemicals as well as drug conspiracy laws so that the drug kingpins can be prosecuted, not just the drug couriers.

Bonner, who virtually spearheads international ef-

orts to contain drug barons both in Asia and Latin America and who is always guarded by FBI agents for security reasons, told this correspondent that recent laws passed in Bangladesh are quite stringent to deal with the drug traffickers. "What is needed at the moment is more tightening of entry and exit points in the country," the DEA chief pointed out.

Since December 1988, only 49 nations have ratified the UN convention.

Bonner urged all nations that have not yet ratified the UN convention to do so without any further delay. "Of the 22 nations represented here today, I am pleased to say that 12 — that is over half your nations — have ratified the UN

convention. "Ratification of this UN convention is one of the most positive actions a nation can take to signify that it seriously desires to address the worldwide drug problem that it desires to be part of the solution, not part of the problem," Bonner said.

Saying that no country now is immune from drug menace — from the crime, death and destruction, loss of productive citizens and the corruption of governmental institutions — that are the direct result of drug abuse and trafficking, the DEA administrator called upon all affected countries to pool their energies together to fight the menace. "And in the common fight, the United States will always remain an active partner," he added.

Maoist rebels kill abducted Indian official

NEW DELHI, Sept 19: Maoist guerrillas shot dead an abducted Indian official today (Thursday) in Assam when security forces stormed a rebel stronghold to rescue the hostage, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

PTI identified the slain hostage as BP Srivastava, an engineer working with the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), and said the abductors shot him at close range when the troopers stormed a house in the north-eastern state.

Srivastava was one of seven Indian hostages being held by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a rebel group demanding the release of all its jailed members in a swap for the hostages.



SEOUL: Radical students carry crates of firebombs, ready to prevent combat police from attacking Sungsim Hospital September 18, where the body of Hong Guk-Won, shot to death by police, rests. —AFP/UNB photo

Clamour for open trial of Soviet coup plotters

MOSCOW, Sept 19: The clamour grew Wednesday for an open trial for those accused of plotting the coup against President Mikhail S. Gorbachev, who himself is suspected by many Soviets of taking part in the conspiracy, reports AP.

"If the junta is tried in secret, it will mean that somebody needs this secrecy and it is to someone's advantage," wrote Georgy Ovcharenko in Wednesday additions of the Pravda newspaper.

The matter is under inves-

tigation by two official bodies, both of them more or less under the control of Russian Federation President Boris N. Yeltsin, who led the resistance to the putsch.

A Russian Federation legislative panel is conducting a semi-closed "tribunal" on the botched Aug 18-21 coup attempt, and the Russian prosecutor is preparing criminal cases against 14 people arrested on treason charges. Three top officials committed suicide after the coup, including one member of the junta

that sought to grab power.

The prosecutor's office has not set a trial date. Nor has it announced whether it will conduct an open trial along the lines of western criminal procedure, a show trial reminiscent of the Soviet court proceedings during the totalitarian 1930's, or a secret trial in which the verdicts and sentences would be announced after closed hearings.

"Whether there will be a witch hunt here or whether the norms of law will be obeyed is anybody's guess at

this point," said Jert Laber, executive director of the New York-based Helsinki Watch.

"I think it will be Helsinki Watch's job to defend the coup leaders if they do not get a fair hearing," said Laber, visiting Moscow for a human rights conference. "They way in which the deposed Communist leaders are treated will set a pattern for the Soviet Union.

High treason carries a maximum penalty of death by firing squad.

"One of the main tasks of the defense is to prevent the

Off the Record

Tomorrow arrives for Gone With The Wind

ATLANTA: Tomorrow has finally come for Scarlett O'Hara. Rhett Butler is dumping her — again — only this time he'll pay her \$500,000 to stay out of his life forever, reports AP.

Scarlett will never go hungry again with that kind of money. But can she live without Rhett? Thousands of die-hard fans of "Gone With The Wind," awaiting the answer to that and other questions, have already reserved copies of the book's long-awaited sequel, "Scarlett."

Others aren't so anxious to see the book arrive in stores next Wednesday. Five writers recently denounced "Scarlett," written by Alexandra Ripley, in essays published in the Atlanta Journal — Constitution.

Other people have proposed their own sequels, including one in which Scarlett becomes a "Mommie Dearest" character who is exposed by her children.

Meanwhile, the Clayton County town of Jonesboro — the real-life model for the first book's Tara, the place where Rhett wooed Scarlett amid plantation splendor — is ignoring the whole thing.

"In the new 'Gone With The Wind', attention is drawn away from Clayton County, away from the true roots of Margaret Mitchell," said Allison Scholly, marketing coordinator of the county's Convention and Tourism Bureau.

Mitchell's family hired Ms. Ripley to write the sequel and hopes it will help raise \$1.5 million to restore the dilapidated Atlanta house in which Mitchell, who died in 1949, wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

'Don't make a fuss about Yang's health'

BEIJING: China's President, 84-year-old Yang Shangkun, is ill with a cold and there is no need for concern, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday, reports Reuters.

"President Yang has caught a cold and is receiving medical care," Wu Jianmin told a regular briefing. Yang's ill health has forced him to miss an official appointment.

Asked when Yang would resume his official duties, Wu said: "I'd like to advise you not to make a fuss about President Yang's health. He has just caught a cold. Everybody catches colds."

Yang had been in Beijing's main 301 military hospital for about three days with a high fever, government sources said Thursday.

He was exhausted after travelling abroad, they said. Yang made an official trip to Mongolia at the end of August, and has travelled recently in China.

The chairman of China's parliament told a delegation of European members of parliament there was no need for concern about Yang's health.

"He isn't ill, he is just a little old had tired," Britain's Michael Hindley quoted Wan Li, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, as saying.

Tug of war over treasure anchor

CHRISTIANSTED, St. Croix: A custody battle is brewing between treasure hunters and the federal government over a 500-year-old anchor that may have belonged to Christopher Columbus or Spanish explorer Juan Ponce De Leon, reports AP.

The anchor now lies in shallow water off St. Croix's north shore.

Sunken Treasure, Inc., a Fort Meyers, Fla. salvage company, Wednesday filed a claim to the anchor and remains of a ship believed to be a Spanish vessel dating back to the late 1400s or early 1500s.

Company President Don Johnson said the find could be priceless and is offering to give the anchor to the University of the Virgin Islands and a percentage of any treasure to the local government.

"I can't seem to convince the government this is a win-win situation here for everybody," Johnson said, adding that the exploration could lead to the discovery of platinum bars which were used as junk metal in the late 1400s.

The important issue is whether people have the right or should bring up any artifacts within Virgin Islands territorial waters — especially in the Salt River area," William Cissel, chief of interpretation and resource management for the park service, said Wednesday.

"They would be in violation of federal law if they were to remove anything whatsoever from the area," Cissel said, adding that the Virgin Islands working jointly to preserve the wreck and keep it untouched.

"I have informed Sunken Treasure they should not underestimate the resolve of either the territorial or the federal government in protecting these resources the people," Cissel said. Cissel said he would contact the US Attorney's Office to ensure that two applicable federal laws were "scrupulously adhered to."

When asked how Israel would choose between continued settlement and the \$10 billion in US loan guarantees it wants for absorbing Soviet immigrants, he said: "We don't believe there should be a choice like that."

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