

Unpaid troops occupy national radio

Army mutiny in Niger: President, Interior Minister arrested

NIAMEY, Feb 28: Mutinous soldiers occupied the national radio in the Niger capital Niamey early Friday and said they had arrested the Interior Minister and the President of the country's transitional legislature, reports AFP.

In a broadcast communique the mutineers said they had not been paid for months and demanded that the government pay them two months' salary arrears. They also called for the dismissal of the army's Deputy Chief of Staff, Major Abou Mamane.

They said they had seized Interior Minister Mohamed Moussa and Professor Andre

Salfou President of the High Council of the republic, the interim legislature set up last year to prepare for democratic elections.

Diplomatic sources confirmed that the two officials were being held by the mutineers, whose action came as interim Prime Minister Amadou Cheffou was away from the capital on a tour of rural areas.

Informed sources said the mutineers had overnight freed an army captain detained for nearly two years in connection with a massacre of Tuareg Tribesmen in May 1990.

The officer, Captain Maliki

Boureima, was held in Kolo Prison about 20 kilometers (12 miles) outside Niamey. He was held responsible for a 'punitive expedition' against the Tuareg Nomads at Tchintabaraden, northern Niger in which up to 60 people were killed.

The soldiers' communique was repeated at intervals, interspersed with military music.

Reliable sources here said senior army officers were to meet Friday to try to work out a settlement to the row over pay owed to the country's 3,000 soldiers, half of whom are based in Niamey.

When he took office last

year, Cheffou conceded that the soldiers were 'ragged, poorly equipped and underfed.' However in December he announced that measures were being taken to remedy by situation.

Cheffou has been out of the capital since Tuesday on a tour of the Maradi region 550 kilometers (340 miles) east of Niamey.

After protests erupted on Thursday, Education and Research Minister Albert Wright, who is standing in for Cheffou, said the government would not negotiate under pressure.

BRIEFLY

US-Kuwait joint exercises: US and Kuwaiti troops will carry out joint training exercises between March 1 and 11, Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams said Thursday, reports AFP from Washington.

About 5,000 US navy sailors and marines will participate in the exercise, Williams said, adding that the US forces would be supported by four ships, including aircraft carriers and tank transport vessels.

The maneuvers would be the fourth joint US-Kuwaiti exercises carried out since the end of the Gulf War, Williams said.

Quake hits in New Guinea: A severe earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale was recorded Friday near Eastern New Guinea, the Hong Kong observatory reported, says AP from Hong Kong.

The quake was recorded at 4.13 a.m. (2013 GMT Thursday), the observatory said, and centered about 370 kilometers northeast of Port Moresby, New Guinea.

The observatory had no further details.

The Richter scale is a gauge of the energy released by an earthquake, as measured by ground motion recorded on a seismograph.

Every increase of one number means that the ground motion is 10 times greater. A quake of magnitude 6 can cause severe damage on land while a tremor of magnitude 7 is capable of causing widespread and heavy damage.

7 missing as CIS copter crashes: Seven people were missing Thursday after a Kamov-KA-27 helicopter belonging to the former Soviet North Fleet crashed in the Barents sea, the Itar-Tass news agency reported, says AFP from Moscow.

Three of the 10 people on board the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) helicopter were rescued, the news agency said, adding that a search was underway for the others.

Itar-Tass said a commission had been set up to look into the accident.

Blast in London rly station: A powerful bomb exploded in a packed central London railway station at rush hour today, wounding about 20 people, British rail officials said, AFP from London says.

A British rail spokesman said the bomb exploded at 8:26 am (0826 GMT) in public toilets of the station's number four platform.

All London rail stations and linked underground stations were closed following the blast for fear that other bombs may have been planted, officials said.

The bombing follows a series of attacks claimed by the Irish Republican Army, although there was no immediate claim of responsibility for today's blast.

Ambulances and firemen were called to the scene within minutes of the explosion.

The blast occurred when the London bridge station was packed with commuters travelling to London from southeastern suburbs in Sussex and Kent.

NZ to donate \$ 270,000 for Cambodia: New Zealand agreed Friday to donate 500,000 dollars (270,000 US) to the United Nations Cambodian Emergency Trust Fund, Foreign Minister Don McKinnon said, reports from Wellington.

In a statement, he said he understood the money would be used to meet immediate humanitarian needs, including vital work in nutrition, health, sanitation, food and shelter.

Albania orders troops to quell food riots

BELGRADE, Feb 28: Albanian Prime Minister Vilson Ahmeti, responding to pleas from local authorities, yesterday ordered security forces to quell riots in towns in the south of the country sparked by food shortages, reports AFP.

Radio Tirana, monitored here, said at least three people had been killed and scores injured in three days of riots in the towns of Lushnja and Pogradec.

demonstrators, radio Tirana said. He said that those responsible for the rioting would be brought to justice.

Twenty-six people have been arrested in Lushnja, but the local police have been unable to control the rioting, according to the radio.

The commercial section of Pogradec has been almost entirely destroyed, according to radio reports.

Police were powerless to hold back the crowds and two young men were trampled to death, a communique from police in Pogradec said. Scores of other people were injured, including 30 policemen.

The Mayor of Pogradec said he had asked for troop reinforcements to be assigned to the town "to restore order."

UN experts fail to locate secret N-plants in Iraq

VIENNA, Feb 28: United Nations inspectors looking for secret nuclear plants in Iraq said yesterday they had failed to locate any hidden material or factories on their latest visit, reports Reuter from Vienna.

also looked for possible water intake from the Tigris river which would have been the signal of underground activity of that kind, but were totally unsuccessful in locating any evidence to support the existence for this installation, he said.

Zifferero added that inspectors had also searched another site for clandestine heavy water production.

"But we couldn't find any evidence of this kind of activity," he said.

IAEA officials said the team's latest visit was successful in concluding work at a number of sites already inspected on previous visits, but they declined to give further details.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) official Maurizio Zifferero said the inspectors, who visited Baghdad earlier this month, followed detailed intelligence handed to the United Nations about the location of an underground plutonium factory.

"The information pointed to the existence of a cavity housed underneath an existing military establishment," Zifferero told a news conference in Vienna.

"We went there, explored the site very thoroughly. We

Political parties to boycott polls in Congo

BRAZZAVILLE, Feb 28: The Congolese Front for the Defence of Democracy, an umbrella group of some 60 political parties, on Thursday said it would boycott an upcoming series of elections, reports AFP.

In a communique, the group said its parties had decided against submitting candidates for Congolese elections, which begin March 15 with a constitutional referendum and will be followed by local and senatorial elections in April. Legislative and presidential elections are to be held later in the year.



PAI.IN, president of the Cambodian Supreme National Council (SNC) Prince Norodom Sihanouk (L) and leader of the Khmer Rouge guerilla faction Khieu Samphan greet each other during the former's visit to this Khmer Rouge controlled area. Sihanouk is on an eight-day tour of rebel-held areas of Cambodia. —AFP/UNB photo

'Decision to award 'Bharat Ratna' politically motivated'

Forward Bloc demands fresh probe into Netaji's disappearance

CALCUTTA, Feb 28: The Forward Bloc yesterday decided to launch a state-wide movement to press for immediate revision of the decision to posthumously confer 'Bharat Ratna' on Netaji and for institution of fresh inquiry into his mysterious disappearance, reports PTI.

Deprecating the Narasimha Rao government's 'sinister move' to "denigrate" Netaji by conferring the award posthumously, the party's all-India General Secretary, Chitta Basu, MP, said that such a decision "runs counter to the former Prime Minister,

Morarji Desai's Lok Sabha statement in 1978 on doubts over acceptance of Shah Nawaz Khan and the Khosla Commissions' inquiry, reports on Netaji.

Basu, who was speaking at a citizen's convention organized by party's State Committee, demanded that the centre "come out with all relevant facts to substantiate its contention that Netaji is dead as the government should bear all legal and constitutional responsibilities to inform the countrymen about Netaji's whereabouts."

Alleging that reports of both

the inquiry committees were self-contradictory and 'primarily based on ready witnesses', Basu said that the government should initiate collection of documents on Netaji from the war records and archives in the US, Britain, Croatia, China and Japan in co-operation with the countries concerned.

Basu said that his party had already submitted "A bunch of documents on Netaji to the Prime Minister" and he has agreed to ask the External Affairs Ministry to seek information on the previous inquiry process into Netaji the

Forward Bloc, he added, would once again urge the centre to initiate another inquiry process to unravel the mystery over Netaji's whereabouts on the basis of Morarji Desai's Parliament statement on August 28, 1978."

Subrota Bose, nephew of Netaji and son of the late Sarat Chandra Bose, who was present at the convention, announced his decision to join the Forward Bloc, saying "government's decision to award Netaji with Bharat Ratna is politically motivated, having mala fide intention and fraught with dangerous consequences."

US to monitor trials of Timor massacre

WASHINGTON, Feb 28: The US government and human rights groups on Thursday welcomed Indonesian action against military officers for a massacre in East Timor. But the rights advocates said Indonesian repression continues, reports AP.

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, Claiborne Pell, said he would urge US officials to monitor trials of the soldiers as well as 13 civilians charged with subversion in the Nov. 12 incident.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the US government was "encouraged by the Indonesian government's serious efforts to make amends for what it acknowledged was an excessive use of force by military units."

A government commission said 50 people died in the massacres, with 90 others missing or in hiding. Human rights group say the death toll was about 200.

Representatives of Amnesty International and Asia Watch told Pell's Committee that it is the first time Indonesia, in what they said is a long history

of human rights abuses, has ever responded by disciplining or trying military officers.

The Jakarta government announced earlier in the day that three army officers had been fired and four others will face trials in the military attack on a demonstration supporting East Timor independence.

Geoffrey Robinson, Amnesty International researcher, told the committee that the London-based organization welcomes the "unprecedented announcement" but said "it has left important questions unanswered and has raised others about the government's intentions."

Robinson said as many as 200,000 East Timorese — or one-third of the population — have been killed since Indonesia invaded and annexed the former Portuguese colony 16 years ago.

"Only the ill-informed or the dishonest would seriously claim that the human rights situation has substantially improved in recent years," he said, citing abuses in East Timor and Indonesia.

Sidney R. Jones, executive director of Asia Watch, said the

action against military officers is "unquestionably welcome," but she said most of the bodies of those killed in the massacre have not yet been found and the outcome of the charges is yet to be seen.

She said other executions have occurred in East Timor since the massacre, including reported execution of witnesses.

Free-lance writer Allan Natrn, who witnessed the massacre while on assignment for The New Yorker magazine, told the committee he saw soldiers march toward the demonstrators, raise their rifles and fire in unison at the crowd.

"It is clear that what we witnessed was a deliberate act of state, Natrn said.

Committee Chairman Sen. Claiborne Pell said he would support a cutoff of all aid to Indonesian for human rights abuses.

Pell said Indonesia's occupation of East Timor is as illegal as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. He said the United States should only recognize Indonesian control over the area if Timorese approve it in a UN-supervised referendum.

Lankan court upholds expulsion of two MPs

COLOMBO, Feb 28: The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the decisions by the governing United National Party to expel two of its lawmakers who were involved in a failed move to remove President Ranasinghe Premadasa from office, reports AP.

The 3-member bench headed by justice Mark Fernando unanimously decided that the lawmakers had violated the constitution of their party by participating in moves to impeach Premadasa.

Split in Likud party

JERUSALEM, Feb 28: Divisions have surfaced in Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud party ahead of Israel's general election on June 23, reports Reuter.

Foreign Minister David Levy accused the Prime Minister's supporters of banding together with hardline Housing Minister Ariel Sharon

Off the Record

Muslims kiss, serenade Imelda

MARAWI, Philippines: Muslims kissed and serenaded Imelda Marcos Thursday when she brought her Presidential campaign to the 'Islamic Heartland' of the southern Philippines where her husband once fought a bitter war, reports Reuter.

Hundreds of Muslims sang the former First Lady's favourite love song, 'Dahil Sa Iyo' (Because Of You), when she landed at the airport. Thousands more cheered her when she drove into Marawi city to address an election rally.

Marcos, who returned to the Philippines in November after nearly six years' exile in the United States, is one of eight candidates vying to succeed President Corason Aquino in May elections. Aquino is not standing for a second term.



Moms can identify newborns by touch

NEW YORK: Mothers are so attuned to their babies that most blindfolded moms in a new study could identify their newborns by just feeling the backs of the infants' hands, researchers say, reports AP.

Nearly 70 per cent of mothers who had spent at least an hour with their newborns since birth could later choose their own child out of three sleeping babies, researchers said.

That's far better than the 33 per cent one would expect by random guessing, researchers said.

The women apparently had learned identifying features of their babies' skin during routine contact, because they were not allowed to study their babies specifically to prepare for the experiment, said study co-author Marsha Kaitz.

Kaitz, a psychology professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, presents the work in January's issue of the journal Developmental Psychology with co-authors at the university and the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre in Jerusalem.

"It's pretty amazing, it's pretty exciting," said Tiffany Field, Director of the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine.

Dr Michael Yogman, an assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, called the study "a pretty impressive piece of work."

Most participating mothers said they used the texture or temperature of the infants' hand.

Researchers are now studying whether fathers can recognize their babies by touch, Kaitz said.

Remains of Lenin to remain in Moscow

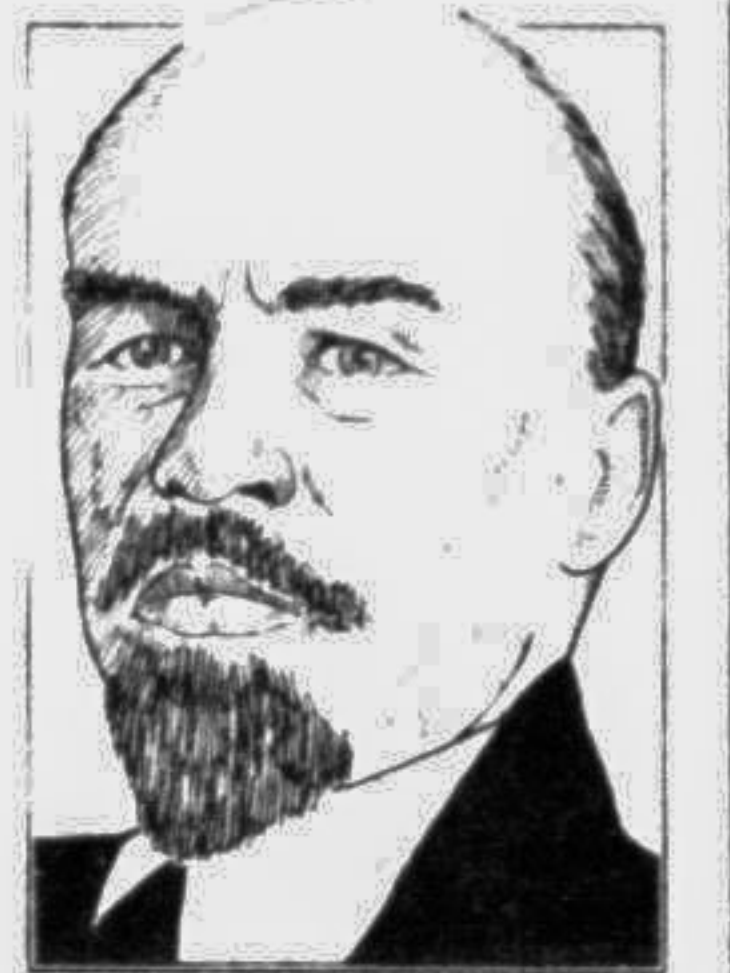
MOSCOW: The mummified remains of Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, will not be sold or sent abroad on tours, spokesman for the new Ministry of State Security Andrei Chernenko said Thursday, reports AFP.

Particularly from the United States, making financial offers for Lenin's remains or offering to organise an auction to sell them.

The spokesman could not refrain from characterising the offers as "garbage."

Lenin's body was previously guarded in its mausoleum in Red Square by the KGB (secret police), but that duty has now been taken over by the new Russian security services.

Russian newspapers have recently carried various suggestions on what should be done with Lenin's remains, with some officials saying he should be buried in St. Petersburg, formerly known as Leningrad.



Beware of 'Great Cakes' recipe

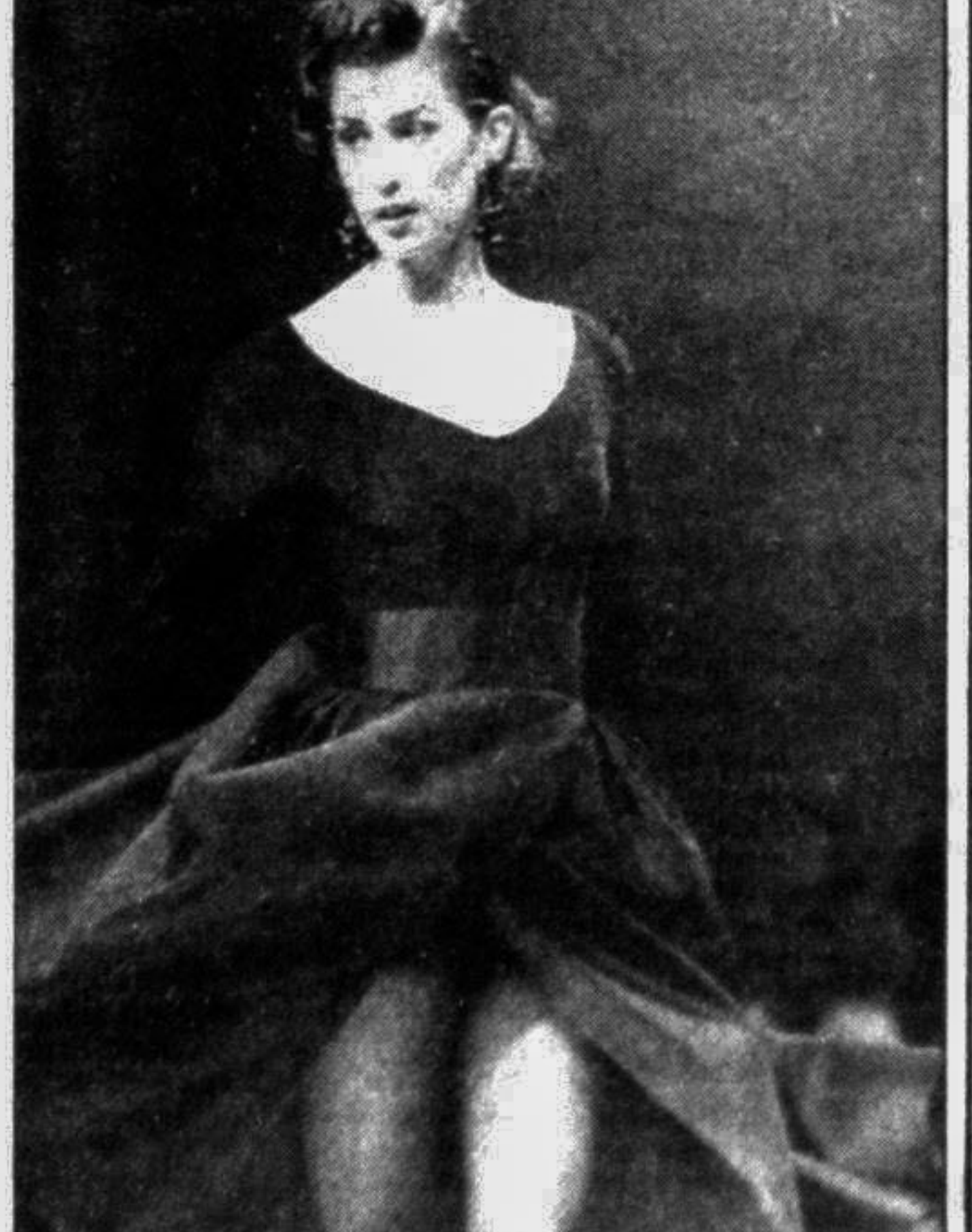
NEW YORK: It may look good enough to eat, but don't. That was the warning Thursday from a book publisher that recalled its "Great Cakes" recipe collection because it suggested decorating the desserts with lilies-of-the-valley, reports AP.

The petite and fragrant flower is poisonous. Symptoms after ingestion can range from upset stomach to irregular heartbeat and other circulatory problems, said Ballantine Books.

"No amount of lilies-of-the-valley is considered safe to eat," the publisher said.

Ballantine said it had received no reports of anyone eating the flowers and getting sick.

The publisher said it recalled all copies of "Great Cakes" held by wholesalers and bookstores. Consumers who bought the book are asked to cross out the reference to the flower on page 499.



PARIS, A model displays a long black organza and red Muslim silk skirt worn with a black tight-fitting jersey top as part of the 1992-93 Autumn/Winter collection by Dominique Morlott for Lanvin, shown in a preview in Paris. —AFP/UNB photo

Heavy fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh

MOSCOW, Feb 27: Armenian and Azerbaijan fighters ignored an Iranian-brokered truce Thursday and resumed shelling each other's positions around Nagorno-Karabakh, leaving new casualties, officials and reports said, reports AP.

Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian sent a message to the leaders of 14 countries, including the United States, urging them to dissuade Azerbaijan from forming its own army and to help achieve a peace plan.

The brief cease-fire was among the few formal truces achieved in the bloody, four-year confrontation over the

mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly Christian Armenian region lying within Muslim Azerbaijan.

The conflict goes back centuries but flared in 1988 after ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh began demanding to be united with Armenia. More than 1,000 people have died in the fighting, which has defied Russian mediation efforts.

The truce began at 9 am (05.00 GMT) but was broken by midday as Azerbaijani forces fired on Armenian cities and Armenian militants attacked Azeri towns.

Russian and Kazakh leaders had shuttled through the re-

gion late last year and triumphantly announced a cease-fire and negotiating process, both of which went largely unheeded by the warring parties.

Armenian presidential aide Levon Doskuyan told the Associated Press that Azerbaijani forces attacked the predominantly Armenian region of Askeran to Nagorno-Karabakh on Thursday morning.

Doskuyan, quoting the Armenian national security service, claimed that Azerbaijani fighters were backed by Soviet-built tanks, personnel carriers and Mi-8 attack helicopters. He said

they were firing from Agdam, an Azerbaijani city across the Nagorno-Karabakh border inside Azerbaijan proper.

The Interfax news agency said thousands of Azerbaijani troops were involved in the operation. President Ayar Mutalibov last week ordered a partial mobilization of reservists and has stressed his country's intent to form its own army.

Doskuyan said Azerbaijani forces also shelled Stepanakert, the territory's capital, leaving an unknown number of casualties. From the other side, Azerbaijani presidential spokesman Vagif Rustamov claimed that

Armenian forces had attacked Agdam on Thursday, using artillery and machine gun fire. He said Armenian forces also were attacking other Azeri towns including Khodzhal, site of heavy fighting on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The fighting erupted as Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati continued his mediation effort. Velayati on Thursday afternoon postponed a visit to Shusha, an Azerbaijani town in Nagorno-Karabakh, after the shelling resumed.

The Interfax news agency said Velayati, who arrived Monday in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, had been unable to visit Nagorno-Karabakh.