

Journalist fired for challenging Bush

SAN ANTONIO, Mar 1: A TV reporter who challenged president Bush at a recent drug summit was fired a day after...

JKLF vows to cross line of control

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, Mar 1: The pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) vowed here Saturday not to budge from its plan to attempt another crossing of the border into Indian-held Kashmir...

by the UN after the 1948 Indo-Pakistan war. The JKLF independence slogan is widely represented in Pakistan, but opposition parties have condemned the use of force against the Kashmiri marchers.

He said the Kashmiris could decide to unite with Pakistan after gaining independence and that he would be first person to salute the Pakistan flag.



RAWALPINDI: Amanullah Khan, leader of the JKLF speaks at a press conference. — AFP/UNB photo

was launched here at a ceremony chaired by Pakistan-controlled Kashmir high court Chief Justice Abdul Majid Malik.

Quazi Hussain Ahmed, Chief of Pakistan's influential fundamentalist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, said in a statement Saturday that calls for an independent Kashmir were an international conspiracy.

Meanwhile, Reuter reports from Islamabad: Pakistan said on Saturday India had increased repression in the disputed state of Kashmir to fight a Muslim revolt and asked the international community on Saturday to put pressure on New Delhi.

An official statement said the Pakistani government and people had been shocked by what it called the desecration

of a sacred Muslim shrine by Indian forces in Srinagar, summer capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, on February 21.

The government of Pakistan once again calls upon the international community to take cognizance of the escalating repression by Indian occupation forces in Srinagar and other parts of Jammu and Kashmir, it said.

The international community must fulfill its moral obligation by preventing India from persisting in its fascist crackdown and genocidal practice of state terrorism against the people of Kashmir.

More than 6,000 people have been killed during the two-year revolt in the two-thirds of Kashmir which is ruled by India.

Lankan troops capture another Tigers' camp

VAVUNIYA, Sri Lanka, Mar 1: Government troops captured another Tamil Tiger rebel camp in northern Sri Lanka, after killing at least six guerrillas military officials said Sunday reports AP.

One soldier was killed and two injured as 3,000 army men who have been on operation since last Monday, advanced towards the west and north of Vavuniya town, said Lt Gen Denzil Kobekaduwa, commander of the northern province.

The general said rebel casualties could be between 30 to 40. Six bodies of rebels were found in one of the camps.

They cannot face our fire power, Gen Kobekaduwa told a group of journalist Vavuniya town, 210 kilometers north-east of Colombo.

A curfew has been imposed in the districts of Vavuniya, northwestern Mannar and northeastern Mullaitivu since Thursday.

Iraq slates UN Council as US tool

BAGHDAD Mar 1: Iraq, under fire once again over its weapons of mass destruction, has accused the United States of trying to deny it a fair hearing when it puts its case to the UN Security Council for keeping missile-making equipment, reports Reuter.

Iraq's Foreign Ministry, denouncing the Council as a US tool, said the condemnation of Baghdad's refusal to permit the destruction of the missile equipment under the terms of the Gulf War ceasefire was unfair, hasty and American-inspired.

It said Iraqi officials would still travel to New York in March to explain their view that the equipment should be converted to civilian, non-military uses.

But it added "America created a delicate and fabricated atmosphere prior to the arrival of the delegation to wreck and distort the Iraqi stand before the delegation could put the matter before the Security Council."

Iraq says it has complied

with the UN's Gulf War ceasefire terms by scrapping its most lethal weapons and in return wants the world body to drop economic sanctions in force since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraqi radio said the delegation would raise that matter with the Security Council in New York.

The Council condemned Iraq's refusal to allow a UN team to destroy the missile equipment, which UN sources said would be used to give added range to Scud missiles.

It gave Baghdad less than two weeks to send delegates to New York to explain its position and comply fully, with Gulf War accords setting out proposals to scrap Iraq's most dangerous ballistic chemical and nuclear arms.

The Security Council statement, which threatened unspecified "serious consequences", followed Iraq's refusal to meet a Friday deadline to allow the team to destroy the equipment, the team left Iraq on Saturday.

The Iraqi foreign Ministry

denounced the Security Council as a tool of US policy, this statement like other ones clearly shows how the United States has turned its tool, the Security Council and its resolutions and statements into cheap political means to achieve imperialist aims.

On Friday, Baghdad said in a letter to the UN that the equipment could be used in the oil industry and other areas and said it could be modified for peaceful civilian purposes.

AFP from Nicosia says: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, facing the risk of renewed allied military action after rejecting UN calls to destroy missile parts, on Saturday met officers of the country's Elite Republican Guards.

The official INA news agency gave no indication on the nature of the gathering that came one day after Iraq refused to allow United Nations weapons experts to begin the destruction of components used to make ballistic

missiles. Gulf and other diplomats have warned that Iraq could be the target of a new allied military action after it refused a Friday deadline by the United Nations Security Council to destroy long-range missile parts.

The Council has extended the Friday deadline for another few days but it nevertheless told Iraq it could face "serious consequences" if it failed to comply unconditionally with UN resolutions.

It did not outline which steps might be taken against Baghdad if it continued to resist UN demands. "It's very serious. The credibility of the UN is at stake and the military option is more than a possibility," one diplomat in the Gulf said.

France's UN Ambassador, Jean-Bertrand Lemaire, said in an interview with France-Info radio that if Iraq failed to comply by UN resolutions "a certain number of actions will have to be taken, including actions of a military nature as a last resort."

Sweden rejects Libyan request

Sweden has rejected a Libyan request for it to host the trial of two Libyans suspected of blowing up a Panam jet over Scotland, killing 270 people, reports Reuter.

A Swedish Foreign Ministry spokesman Sunday said Sweden had received Tripoli's request last Monday through the United Nations special emissary to Libya, reports Reuter from Stockholm.

"Libya has inquired (if Sweden) could consider staging the trial", said spokesman Claes Jernaeus, adding that the Swedish government had decided to turn down the request.

It was rejected partly because Sweden thinks a trial should be held where the crime took place, Jernaeus said.

Palestinian shot dead: A Palestinian was shot and killed late Saturday when Israeli troops on patrol opened fire in the village of Rafah in the South of the occupied Gaza strip, a military source said, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The soldiers, alerted by gunshots, thought a Palestinian suspected of collaborating with Israel was being attacked. They saw a masked man running away and opened fire in his direction, the source said.

The dead man was not identified. The incident took to 865 the number of Palestinians shot and killed in incidents involving Israeli troops and settlers since a Palestinian uprising began in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories more than four years ago, according to figures compiled by AFP, based on Palestinian reports.

Over 13,000 arrested in Pretoria: More than 13,000 people have been arrested in a nationwide crime sweep that began Friday night, South African police said late Saturday, reports AFP from Pretoria.

Around 20,000 policemen, police reservists, traffic officers and soldiers took part in the blitz, which was condemned operation visibility.

Some 7,000 people were arrested Friday night and another 6,000 Saturday on charges ranging from drunken driving, possession of drugs and prostitution to rape, robbery and murder, a police statement said.

One hurt in London blast: One person was slightly injured as a bomb went off near officials buildings in central London late Saturday, police said, reports AFP.

The blast came a day after a bomb planted by the banned Irish Republican Army (IRA) injured 28 people at a main railway station in the city, police said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's blast, which occurred near the royal courts of justice and the public records office.

The device blew out several windows, including those of a burger king restaurant at the corner of survival street and high holborn.

3 IRA men held in France: Police arrested two IRA men who returned Saturday from France, where they had served four years in prison for arms smuggling, reports AP from Dublin.

James Doherty, 47, and James Coll, 40, were arrested under Irish anti-terrorist laws and were being questioned about Irish Republican Army arms shipments from Libya, police said.

Doherty, Coll and three other Irishmen were arrested aboard the Eksund 11 off the French coast Oct 30, 1987. Customs agents found 150 tons of arms aboard the freighter, including surface-to-air missiles guns and explosives.

French authorities said the weapons were loaded at the Libyan fort of Tripoli with the full knowledge of Libyan authorities, Ireland's Offences Against the State Act permits suspects to be held for up to 48 hours without charge.

14 feared buried in Jerusalem: At least 14 people were killed and 14 more were feared buried under the rubble of an Arab East Jerusalem coffee house which collapsed on Saturday, police said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

"I'd say it's very hard to think that anyone is still alive," Jerusalem police chief Haim Albaldess said at the scene on Sunday. "Beyond the 14 bodies... there is an estimate of a similar number yet to be recovered."

Army disaster crews, emergency workers and volunteers were still digging into the wreckage after dawn, more than 13 hours after the cafe crumbled when a cemetery wall fell on its roof.

At least 20 people were injured, police said. Albaldess said nearby buildings might also be in danger of collapse after being undermined by rain and snow during Jerusalem's harshest winter for decades.

14 fundamentalists held for killing in Algiers

Algiers, Mar 1: Police have arrested 14 Islamic fundamentalists on charges of killing seven policemen in Algiers Casbah, or old city, between February 8 and 10, national television reported Saturday, reports AFP.

Among the 14 people arrested in the Algiers region in the past few days were some suspected of carrying out two separate attacks, one on a police station in the Casbah, in which at least one person died, and the other at a naval repair yard in which paramilitary policeman and two of the assailants were killed.

Azerbaijan reaffirms its claim to Nagorno-Karabakh

BAKU, Azerbaijan, Mar 1: Azerbaijan, in mourning after suffering heavy losses in savage fighting with Armenia, has accused its neighbour of genocide and reaffirmed its claim to the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, reports Reuter.

Azeri President Ayaz Mutalibov declared three days of mourning on Saturday as the government announced that at least 1,000 Azeris had been killed in fighting over the town of Khojaly.

Khojaly a crime another act of genocide by Armenian separatists against the Azerbaijani people," he said in a message of condolence to victims' families.

Armenia denied inflicting such heavy casualties in the struggle for Khojaly, which its fighters captured on Wednesday. Whatever the true figures, it was clear that Armenia was gaining the upper hand as the two sides ended possibly the bloodiest week in their four-year conflict.

Until this week it was estimated that 1,000 people had died in the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave inside Azerbaijan but populated mostly by Armenians.

An Azeri Presidential Adviser said on Commonwealth television news: "I would like to say that Karabakh was, is and will continue to be Azerbaijan. There can be no discussion of this."

Armenia maintains it has no territorial claim to Nagorno-Karabakh but seeks self-determination for the region's inhabitants. Armenia and Azerbaijan are former Soviet republics and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In Baku, national flags with black mourning trim fluttered from buildings. Weeping men, beating their chests, gathered at the Martyr's Garden near the city centre, where 47 fresh graves of victims had been dug and more were being prepared.

Some people voiced bitterness against Mutalibov. "Mutalibov is a traitor," said 65-year-old army volunteer Melik Davi, who has two sons fighting in Karabakh.

Turkey asked foreign governments to use their influence with Armenia to prevent any bid to settle the conflict by military means.

The conference on security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE) called for an immediate halt to the fighting, which has reduced whole towns to ruins and prompted thousands of refugees to flee across snow-covered mountains or in motor road convoys.

In Moscow, armed forces spokesman Valery Mantlov said commonwealth troops would complete their withdrawal from Karabakh in the shortest possible time.

He warned that the soldiers, reduced to virtual



MANILA: President Corazon Aquino (C) rallies support for her presidential candidate former defence secretary Fidel Ramos (R) and running mate Governor Emilio Osmena (L) during a campaign rally here in this central Philippine city of Bacolod. — AFP/UNB photo

Move for truce in Somalia underway

NAIROBI, Mar 1: A senior UN envoy said after talks on Saturday with warring parties in the Somali capital Mogadishu that his peace mission was working on the technical details of a truce to end more than three months of fighting, reports Reuter.

Sporadic artillery fire was heard in Mogadishu, where more than 5,000 people have been killed in fighting since November, as the latest efforts to establish a truce got underway, a local journalist said.

But UN Under Secretary General James Jonah said the city seemed relatively calm.

There seemed to be far fewer arms about than previously, Jonah told reporters in Nairobi after his talks in Mogadishu.

Jonah, leading a team from the UN The Organisation of African Unity and The Islamic Conference Organisation said a UN military expert had remained in Mogadishu to work on the technical details of a truce.

Jonah, due to return to Mogadishu today for further talks declined to elaborate on that or to give details of his talks with the capital's two rival warlords.

The reporter in Mogadishu said the two self-declared interim President Ali Mahdi Mohammed and General Mohammed Farah Aided — had accused each other at separate talks with the peace mission of failing to respect a truce.

During the talks, Ali Mahdi reiterated his demand for a UN peace-keeping force to monitor and reinforce a ceasefire and to allow distribution of desperately needed food and

medicines. Aided, who controls much of Mogadishu, has until now rejected the idea of an international peacekeeping force.

Somalia a poor desert country in the horn of Africa, has been torn by fighting since January last year, when rebels of a Hawiya Clan-based group ousted dictator Mohammed Said Barre.

Ali Mahdi declared himself interim leader but his authority was never recognised as other clans fought for zones of influence.

Fierce fighting erupted in Mogadishu in November when Aided, also a Hawiye but from a different sub-clan launched an all-out attack on Ali Mahdi's forces.

More than 25,000 people many of them civilians have been injured in the fighting

King Hussein to meet Bush shortly

DALLAS, Texas, Mar 1: Jordan's King Hussein will meet President George Bush in Washington shortly to discuss Middle East peace efforts and other issues, US and Jordanian officials said yesterday, reports Reuter.

Bush's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, told reporters the two leaders will "compare notes on the peace process and how to move it along."

Scowcroft said they also will talk about how to deal with Iraq.

In Amman, Jordanian officials said Hussein would meet Bush in Washington in the next two weeks.

They said the talks will deal with the peace process and other issues including US economic help for Jordan.

Off the Record

Grammy winner on trial

KINGSTON, Jamaica: Grammy Awards winner Shabba Ranks has been ordered to appear in court on March 3 to face an assault charge, reports AP.

The popular Jamaican dance hall disc jockey, won a Grammy Award for his reggae music album "As Raw as Ever." The album went gold in the United States last year. Ranks, whose real name is Rexton Gordon, is alleged to have assaulted fisherman Lloyd McKenzie at the Greenwith Town fishing beach last year.

When the case was to be heard in the Half-way Tree Court on Tuesday, but Shabba Ranks's lawyer, Tom Tavares-Finson, told Resident Magistrate Charles Berry that the defendant was out of the country.

McKenzie did not turn up in court either, and the case was set for trial on March 3.

He wants to have more children with Bening

NEW YORK: Warren Beatty says he's enjoying his new role as a father, and wants to have more children with actress Annette Bening, but the perennial Hollywood playboy remains ambiguous about any possible marriage plans, reports AP.

"I wouldn't have guessed quite the level of happiness that it brings you," Beatty said in an interview with David Frost. Kathryn Bening Beatty was born January 8. Asked whether he'd like more children, Beatty said: "Oh, lots. So would Annette."

And what about a trip down the aisle? "I'm very interested in being a father and what one might call, you might call, I might call, a husband," Beatty said.

Beatty and Bening co-starred in the movie 'Bugs,' which recently received 10 Academy Award nominations, including best picture and best actor.

From receptionist to Miss Lanka

COLOMBO: Hiranthi Devapriya, a 20-year-old girl receptionist, was crowned Saturday night as Miss Sri Lanka for the Miss Universe '92 contest to be held in Bangkok in May, reports Xinhua.

The olive complexioned, doe-eyed beauty defeated 13 other finalists for the crown and won the favour of a panel of seven judges as well as thunders of applause from the audience at a glittering pageant in Colombo.

Apart from the title and a trip to Bangkok, the new beauty queen wins 20,000 rupee (400 US dollar) in cash, 300 US dollar, and 25,000 rupee (500 US dollar) worth of a wardrobe and lots of gift vouchers.

The delighted girl said, "I will give the prize money to my mother. She spent a lot on me."

Bawdy procession of Gays

SYDNEY, Mar 1: More than 400,000 spectators lined the streets Saturday to watch a bawdy procession of more than 70 floats in Sydney's annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade, reports AP.

Some 3,000 marchers, including a group called 'Proud parents of Gays and Lesbians,' wound their way up traditionally Gay Oxford Street to the Sydney Showgrounds. The event was orderly and police reported no arrests.

The parade stopped for several minutes in memory of those who have died of AIDS, volunteers, including television personalities and members of the New South Wales state Parliament, helped to collect money for AIDS research.

The parade resumed with a burst of fireworks that illuminated the wild costumes of many of the marchers.

The Rev. Fred Nile, a member of the state Parliament and a self-proclaimed morals campaigner, had vowed to hold a vigil along the parade route to pray for rain. Nile did not show and the weather was clear.

Serbs boycott vote

SARAJEVO Yugoslavia, Mar 1: Muslims and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina began casting ballots Saturday in an independence referendum, but Serbs boycotted the vote, calling it illegal. Three deaths were reported in election-day violence, reports AP.

Montenegro, meanwhile prepared to vote Sunday on whether to form a new, smaller Yugoslavia with its ally Serbia, Montenegrin President

Momir Bulatovic said he would step down if voters reject the plan for a joint state with Yugoslavia's largest republic.

In ethnically tense Bosnia, Serb leaders warned the two-day vote could trigger bloodshed because they want to stay within the fractured Serb-led Yugoslav federation.

Serbs went to divide Bosnia along ethnic lines. But Muslims, who make up 44 per cent, and Croats, who account for 17 per cent, say Bosnia must be independent with its borders intact.

European Community countries and the United States fear any fragmentation of Bosnia could throw the republic into a civil war worse than the fighting that killed thousands in neighbouring Croatia since that republic declared independence last June 25.

In Croatia, where a UN-sponsored cease-fire has been largely holding for almost two months now, four people were killed and nine wounded in an attack by Serb-led forces on the eastern Croatian stronghold Vinkovci late Friday, defense officials said Saturday.

If the Bosnian referendum produces the expected majority for independence,