

IJI to remain intact : Pak ML

ISLAMABAD, Mar 15: The Pakistan Muslim League (PML), the largest component of the ruling alliance Islamic Jamhuri Ittehad (IJI), Saturday made the decision that the alliance should remain intact, reports Xinhua.

Tamils invite MPs to solve Lankan crisis

COLOMBO, Mar 15: Sri Lanka's dominant Tamil Tiger guerrillas have invited legislators to visit their northern stronghold to find a solution to the island's dragging civil war, Tamil sources here said today, reports AFP.

Red Cross (ICRC) last week, the sources said, adding that the parliamentary committee decided to ask for a 'formal written request' before responding.

The message was the first such contact between the LTTE and legislators appointed to a select committee from all political parties in parliament to hammer out a solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic strife.

But rival Tamil parties said the LTTE invitation was a move to delay a possible gov-

ernment offensive against the Tigers in Jaffna the main bastion of Tamil separatism in the island.

He said the LTTE would like to see a delegation of legislators visiting Jaffna because that may help them to buy time. The Tiger can delay a

military onslaught, but they can't stop it, Sidhathan said. Sidhathan's PLOTE is cooperating with the security forces in their current drive against the LTTE in the island's embattled northeast where the Tigers want to establish a separate state.

Sources close to the select committee said another Tamil group the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), which is opposed to the government as well as the Tigers, were against a Jaffna visit.

The members of the committee themselves have agreed that they would not make public statements about the discussions of their group which was appointed in November. There is no formal deadline for them to come up with a peace package.

However, opposition leader Anura Bandaranaike said his Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was not opposed to travelling to Jaffna and said they would go along with any consensual agreement to end fighting.

Thousands of people have died during the 19-year campaign led by the LTTE to set up a separate Tamil homeland called Eelam.

Both the main opposition SLFP and the government have not put out their own proposals to end the ethnic conflict, but say they will accept any package the parliamentary committee agrees upon.

Fresh fighting in Croatia : 8 more killed

BELGRADE, Mar 15: At least eight people were killed and 15 others wounded in fighting with artillery, mortars and machineguns on Saturday in Croatian trouble spots where UN peace-keeping troops are to be deployed, reports Reuter.

CIA floods Iraq with fake dinars?

LONDON, Mar 15: The CIA is flooding Iraq with fake dinars to undermine that country's economy, according to a report in the Sunday Telegraph, reports AP.

In Washington, CIA spokesman Peter Earnest said the agency would have no comment on the report.

Iraqi authorities are aware of the plan but have not mentioned it to avoid public panic, the Sunday Telegraph said. But the CIA has indications that the Iraqi government is so worried that it is considering printing new notes to replace the denominations, it said.

This would be a stop-gap measure, the newspaper said, because Iraq cannot produce banknotes of a quality that could resist later CIA attempts to forge them.



Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel and Turkish President Turgut Ozal are accompanied by local officials as they visit the damaged city of Erzincan, which was hit by a heavy earthquake, registering between 6.2 and 6.8 degrees on the open-ended Richter scale.

Solomon to meet top S Korean officials today

SEOUL, Mar 15: US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon is to meet tomorrow with top South Korean officials to discuss ways of ensuring that Pyongyang allows early inspections of its nuclear facilities, reports AFP.

'Amnesty report on Philippines distorted'

MANILA, Mar 15: A recent Amnesty International (AI) report criticizing human rights in the Philippines is distorted and incomplete, a government release said Saturday, reports AFP.

Although "much of the human rights abuses AI describes are true," the organisation had failed to make clear such violations were decreasing every year, the report by two government human rights commissioners said.

BRIEFLY

25 children buried in Peru: At least 25 children were buried under mud and rocks when an avalanche swept the small town of Vilcachayoc in the Ayacucho province killing at least 15 of them, police said Saturday, AFP reports from Lima.

\$6 lakh EC aid for quake victims: The European Community (EC) has decided to send some 600,000 dollars worth of emergency aid to victims of the earthquake in eastern Turkey, the European Commission said Saturday, AFP reports from Brussels.

440 Iraqi missiles destroyed: A United Nations official charged with destroying Iraqi missiles with chemical warheads said Saturday that a total of 440 missiles have been destroyed, instead of 400 as previously announced, Xinhua says from Baghdad.

3 soldiers burned alive in Georgia: Supporters of Georgia's ousted president burned alive three government soldiers in their campaign against Eduard Shevardnadze's new administration, officials said on Saturday, Reuter reports from Moscow.

Pope concedes death: Pope John Paul II expressed hope that the international community will come to the aid of earthquake victims in Turkey, Vatican Radio reported Saturday, AP says from Vatican city.

UN's costliest operation: PHNOMPENH, Mar 15: The United Nations largest and costliest peacekeeping operation ever got off the ground Sunday with the arrival of its civilian and military chiefs Yasushi Akashi and General John Sanderson, reports AFP.

Fundamentalism haunts Muslim world like ghost of Hamlet's father: LAHORE, Mar 15: It was peculiar to see Afghan Pakols - the woolen caps typically worn in Peshawar and Kabul - on the heads of protesters in the capital of Algeria.

Hong Kong Food Festival begins: HONG KONG, Mar 15: The 1992 Hong Kong Food Festival, an annual event attracting large crowds of both tourists and local residents, opened at the New World Plaza in Kowloon today, reports Xinhua.

Leadership crisis in Nagorny-Karabakh: YEREVAN, Armenia, Mar 15: Tens of thousands of people in Nagorny-Karabakh are suffering because the lack of political leadership over the forces on the ground has made it unsafe for aid workers to begin operations in the disputed enclave, according to relief officials here, reports AFP.

Sino-Uzbekistan jt communique to climax Karimov's visit: BEIJING, Mar 15: China and Uzbekistan issued a joint communique yesterday in Beijing to climax the three-day state visit of Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, reports Xinhua.

Off the Record: Edward Kennedy to marry Washington attorney: BOSTON: US Senator Edward Kennedy announced Saturday he'll marry Washington attorney Victoria Reggie, no date was set, reports AP.

How livable is Buffalo?: ALBANY: How livable is Buffalo? Not very, especially when compared to Honolulu, according to a new book that ranks Hawaii's capital No 1 among the nation's 100 most livable cities, reports AP.

Playing piano is like selling tooth paste: LONDON, Hungarian pianist Janos Solymos compares his art to selling toothpaste, reports AP.

Dirt kills the girl: BURLINGTON: A 3-year-old girl who was pulled alive from under a ton of dirt at an excavation site after being buried for 15 to 20 minutes died Friday, authorities said, reports AP.

Bush to sweep aside Buchanan in Tuesday's primaries

FLINT, Mich, Mar 15: Polls showed President Bush would sweep aside Republican challenger Patrick Buchanan in Tuesday's primaries, while Democrat Bill Clinton appeared ready to clear his field of rivals, reports AP.

The three Democratic candidates and Republican challenger Patrick Buchanan were campaigning in Flint over the weekend before the primaries here and in Illinois.

An Illinois survey released Saturday by the Gallup Organization, for the Chicago Sun-Times and WFLD-TV found Bush at 79 per cent to 15 per cent for Buchanan with 6 per cent undecided.

showed Clinton and Tsongas would each run about even with Bush in Illinois if the general election were now. Democrat Paul Tsongas promised to revive America's manufacturing base. But he was peppered with questions about his opposition to banning the permanent hiring of striker replacements. And his audience wanted to know about his support of a free trade agreement with Mexico that critics say will cost Americans manufacturing jobs.

'We took a long time for Americans to get around to quality,' Tsongas said. 'The main thing you have to do is build automobiles here that can compete.'

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While Azerbaijani and Armenian officials have been working closely with humanitarian aid groups to secure help for the people of Nagorny-Karabakh, they have at the same time admitted that they have no way of giving even minimal guarantees for the safety of relief workers in the territory.

Relief officials say the presence of heavily-armed forces on the ground acting without any apparent overall political guidance or even a disciplined military chain-of-command has led to chaotic but violent tightening and has so far prevented aid workers from setting up operations in the enclave.

The war is driven as much by psychological factors in individuals as it is by broader, collective goals, said one French aid worker.

BEIJING, Mar 15: China and Uzbekistan issued a joint communique yesterday in Beijing to climax the three-day state visit of Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, reports Xinhua.

It noted that the two sides signed agreements related to diplomatic consultations, scientific and technological cooperation, education and public health, tourism, sports, railways, land and sea transportation, agriculture, and banking.

Amor admitted that two attempts this year to negotiate an agreement to allow ICRC supplies and personnel to be sent to Stepanakert had fallen through for safety reasons but ICRC officials were currently involved in urgent talks on securing an overland route between the city of Agdam in western Azerbaijan and Stepanakert.

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Off the Record

Edward Kennedy to marry Washington attorney

BOSTON: US Senator Edward Kennedy announced Saturday he'll marry Washington attorney Victoria Reggie, no date was set, reports AP.

Reggie, 38, is a longtime friend of the Kennedy family, the senator's spokesman Paul Donovan said. A partner with a Washington law firm, Reggie has two children by another marriage. She was divorced in 1990.

'I love Vicki and her children very much,' Kennedy, 60, said in a statement released Saturday. 'I've known her for many years. We began dating last June, and she has brought enormous happiness into my life. I look forward to our marriage and our life together.'

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