

3-pronged attack on Tamil rebels: 49 killed

COLOMBO, May 29: Army casualties mounted today as a three-pronged military offensive against Tamil guerrillas continued in northeast Sri Lanka, leaving at least nine soldiers and 40 rebels dead, officials said, reports AFP.

Military officials said eight soldiers were killed on the first day of a "limited operation" Thursday when troops backed by the air force and naval gunboats attacked bases of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

One more soldier died from among 44 wounded soldiers admitted to main hospital in North Central Anuradapura where victims are usually flown from the northeastern war theatre, eye-witnesses said by telephone.

About a dozen of the soldiers had their legs blown off after stepping on anti-personnel mines during the advance across rebel lines in the northeast, witnesses said. A military spokesman said an operation to expand the forward defence lines of the main Palaly airbase in the northern Jaffna Peninsula was concluded, but an offensive against LTTE guerrillas continued Friday in northeast Mullaitivu.

Ground troops have advanced up to a bridge in Thondamanaru, about eight kilometers east of their original defence lines in Palaly and where fighting had been fierce Thursday, officials said.

They said at least 40 Tigers were killed in the past 24 hours.

The spokesman said that intense navy shelling and aerial bombardment of the LTTE's naval bases in the northern Jaffna Peninsula is believed to have caused "heavy" LTTE casualties.

Among those targeted by the air force was LTTE's main naval base codenamed Kadal Pura from where rebel units called sea Tigers have launched attacks on Sri Lankan navy boats patrolling the vast coastal stretch of the peninsula.

Newspapers here said the current offensive was a major assault aimed at capturing the town of Jaffna where the LTTE has its headquarters but the reports have been rejected by the military.

The latest fighting came as President Ranasinghe Premadasa was visiting the multi-ethnic Vavuniya township which lies about 144 kilometers south of the Jaffna town.

Pak military gets special power to quell Sind

ISLAMABAD, May 29: The Pakistan central government has granted special power to the armed forces for a period of six months in order to restore law and order in the troubled southern province of Sind, reports Xinhua.

According to an official press note issued Thursday night, the federal government has issued necessary orders to the commander of the fifth corps at Karachi, provincial capital of Sind, to assume the function of public security and maintenance of law and order in the province.

The step has been taken at the request of the Sind provincial government in line with a constitutional provision and following an exhaustive debate in the National Assembly on May 26 and 27, the note said.

According to local press reports today from Karachi, army and paramilitary troops have already taken up positions

throughout the province and the dispatch of reinforcements has been completed for the effective execution of the operation 'clean-up' against terrorist activities.

AFP reports: Pakistan's federal government Thursday signalled the start of a six-month military operation aimed at restoring law and order in the country's troubled southern Sind province.

An official statement here said the government had issued the necessary orders to the commander of army's fifth corps, based in Sind.

The orders were issued at the request of the provincial government, which sought troop deployment under terms of the constitution, the statement said.

The maintenance of law and order is a provincial responsibility, but a province can entrust the function to the federal government or to its officers under Article 147 of the

Constitution. The move follows a two-day parliamentary debate on the situation in Sind where there has been dramatic increase in kidnappings, robberies and incidents of violence and sabotage.

During the debate, the government said the joint operation by troops and paramilitary forces was designed to eliminate banditry, terrorism, sabotage and anti-state activities.

Interior Minister Chaudhury Shujaat Hussain has accused India of abetting violence and subversion in Sind, saying foreign-aided regional organisations were endangering the country's integrity.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto demanded here Thursday that the government of Sind, her home province, be removed and fresh elections be held to resolve the "deepening crisis."

The opposition leader told reporters the provincial gov-

ernment of Chief Minister Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah had "failed" and that it "has no right to continue."

Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) gained a massive vote in rural Sind in the October 1990 general elections, but was defeated at the national level by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Islamic Democratic Alliance.

The party has been complaining that its right to govern the province as the single largest group in the Sind assembly was denied through centre-backed political machinations.

Bhutto said it was necessary to hold new elections and hand over power to the "legitimate" representatives of the people.

She called for a social, economic and political package for the people of Sind and warned any army action in isolation would lead to "further frustration" among the masses.

X-rays of Kennedy's body were false?

NEW YORK, May 29: Two US navy medical technicians who witnessed the autopsy of President John Kennedy said on Thursday that autopsy photographs and X-rays recently released by the government have been tampered with and falsified, reports Reuter.

Jerrol Custer who took X-rays of Kennedy's body at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland after his assassination on November 22, 1963, told a Manhattan news conference that the X-rays "are wrong".

He said the released X-rays showed a black hole where the right side of Kennedy's face should be indicating that a portion of the face had been destroyed.

But he said, "there was no damage to his face and no part of his skull was missing on the forward part of his head. These are fake X-rays."

Photographer Floyd Riebe, who took pictures of the body during the autopsy, claims that the photographs released by the government are "phony and not the photographs we took."

After the autopsy was completed, Custer said he was sent to an admiral's office at Bethesda where he was warned to "keep my mouth shut. Nothing was to be said of what I saw, what I did and that if I were to open my mouth, I would wind up in prison."

The news conference was called to rebut articles published last week in the journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) by two navy pathologists who performed the autopsy on Kennedy and who support the official Warren commission findings that

the president was shot twice from behind by a lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. Attention has been focused on a new on the Kennedy assassination in recent months because of the film "JFK", which suggests the facts of the president's death were never fully revealed.

In Los Angeles a grand jury has refused to probe allegations of a cover-up by Los Angeles police in the 1968 assassination of the president's brother, senator Robert Kennedy, a citizen's committee who asked for the investigation said Thursday.



Members of the Kennedy family (L-R) Senator Edward Kennedy, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, John F. Kennedy Jr., Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg and Edward Schlossberg look on as Connecticut governor Lowell Weicker addresses an audience at the Kennedy Library Thursday. Weicker received the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award. — AFP/UNB photo

Foreign pressure will soon blow over: Serbia

BELGRADE, May 29: President Slobodan Milosevic says Serbia has nothing to fear from Western punitive sanctions over the ethnic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and foreign pressure will soon blow over, reports Reuter.

"I don't think there is a citizen in Serbia who is not concerned. There are many reasons for concern, but none for fear because we are doing nothing detrimental to the interests of others," he told Serbian state television on Thursday night.

Serbia dominates the rump Yugoslav Federation following the secession in the past year of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia — all but the latter resisted by Serb-led Yugoslav troops.

Western Europe has imposed a trade embargo against Serbia, accusing it of orchestrating current fighting in Bosnia between Serbs and allied Muslims and Croats. More than 2,300 people have been killed and one million made homeless.

"At this searing stage of enormous pressure, with the balance of power in the world disturbed, some powers are doubtlessly dictating solutions and attitudes towards Yu-

goslavia to destabilise it," Milosevic said. "As an independent and politically, economically and even militarily strong state, Yugoslavia does not suit those

powers that want to destabilise and partition the region.

"Are we witnessing the birth of a new international order in which some countries or peoples have to be servants and other masters?" Milosevic asked. "These people (Serbs) and this country have never been servants to foreign powers."

Milosevic said intense international pressure could not last long. The new Yugoslavia had not lost its allies and friends despite a massive international media campaign against it.

"Since the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, Serbia was the one to strive for the preservation of Yugoslavia and settling of the crisis in a peaceful manner, without questioning the right of other peoples to self-determination," he said.

He said Belgrade would not relinquish ties with Serbs outside Serbia.

He dismissed the possibility that Serb-led Yugoslavia, deprived of significant foreign trade, would not be able to cope with dismal economic conditions at home.

Serbia's economy is reeling under the impact of war in Bosnia and destruction of the former single Yugoslav market.

North Korea boycotts UNC meet

PANMUNJOM, Korea, May 29: North Korea today boycotted a meeting called by the United Nations Command (UNC) here to protest an infiltration attempt by three North Koreans who were shot and killed in the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas last week, reports AFP.

The five-member UNC delegation led by South Korean army Major General Hwang Won-Tak waited in vain in the military armistice commission's conference room astride the military demarcation line at this truce village, but the North Korean delegation did not show up.

North Korea has said the incident was fabricated by South Korea with the aim of wrecking a reconciliation dialogue now under way between the two Koreas.

Pakistan may buy Russian planes instead of France

ISLAMABAD, May 29: The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is considering to buy Sukhoi 27 fighters from Russia instead of the proposed Mirage 2000 planes from France, local newspaper The News reported, says Xinhua.

A Pakistan evaluation team, which recently visited Russia, has proposed to buy 60 SU-27s with an option for 40 more over six to eight years, with immediate transfer of rebuilding technology and ultimately production capacity.

Pakistan initially planned to buy 40 French Mirage 2000s, but the deal is fizzling out due to price reasons.

12 Timorese rebels surrender

JAKARTA, May 29: Twelve members of a rebel group fighting against Indonesian rule in East Timor have surrendered to the military, the official Antara news agency reported Friday, reports AP.

Antara quoted the local military commander Brig. Gen. Theo Syaefi as saying that the rebels could not survive in the jungle because they could no longer steal food with the tightened security around local farms.

The report did not say where and when the rebels surrendered.

Off the Record

Woman to protect Miyazawa

TOKYO: A slim, demurely-dressed police sergeant took up new duties on Thursday as the first woman security guard assigned to protect the Japanese Prime Minister, reports Reuter.

Behind 30-year-old Tomoko Suzuki's mild exterior, however, is a crack shot and a skilled exponent of Aikido, a Japanese martial art.

She reported for her first day of work in a light blue suit and white blouse.

"It is the new 'soft security' trend," a security force spokesman said. "Who wants always to have just big, strong men around?"

Suzuki is only the fifth woman to join the "SP", the security police detail which guards state VIPs.

Demand for SP protection soared after a leading politician narrowly escaped assassination in March. Police will be out in force to guard government and opposition figures in July during a nationwide election campaign.

"We are opening the doors to women like the rest of the world has already done," the Security Police spokesman said.

"Everyone thinks she is so extraordinary because she's the first woman to be appointed to the Prime Minister's residence. That shows how far behind Japan is."

Suzuki herself said on television: "I would like to fulfil my responsibilities with my female traits of kindness and sensitivity."

Because of outdated regulations

BEIJING: The Cold War appears not to have ended for some Americans, reports Reuter.

The US Embassy in Beijing has barred a Russian rock musician from playing at a party because of outdated regulations on fraternising with east bloc citizens, diplomats said.

US marine corps regulations still include a list of countries with whose nationals servicemen are forbidden to socialise. Russia is on the blacklist, a diplomat said.

"The band fell a foul of marine corps regulations," a diplomat said. "These regulations may be outdated, but people are still very cautious about changing them."

Marine organisers of the party, scheduled for Friday in the embassy cafeteria, told the band their superiors had barred the entry of the band's 24-year-old Russian keyboard player.

The band also includes an American, an Italian, a Japanese and a Singaporean.

The band, called the dependents because two of its members came to China after their wives were assigned here, cancelled the engagement.

Days of cheap sex over

MANILA: The days of quick, cheap sex for foreign tourists in the Philippine capital could soon be over, if the city's tough new mayor has his way.

Former police chief Alfredo Lim, who was elected in the May 11 polls and takes office on July 1, wants to turn Manila's Ermita red-light district into a "Mini-Disneyland" as part of a massive facelift for the grimy, crowded city.

"This place has become a seedy place," the retired general told AFP at his campaign center, an Ermita penthouse overlooking the bar zone. "We don't need this kind of business."

Ermita is Manila's answer to Bangkok's Patpong, a garish strip of bars, massage parlors, motels and eateries off Manila bay. Sex is the main commodity and thousands of dollar change hands nightly.

Lim plans to launch the clean-up by cancelling the licenses of 350 alleged fronts for prostitution, forcing them to shift to "decent and lawful" business, or move elsewhere.

They have to pay for uniforms, boots

LA PAZ: The Bolivian army is so short of funds that from now on officers from Sergeant to General will have to pay for their own uniforms, army Commander Moises Shriqui said here Thursday, reports AFP.

In addition, uniforms and boots to the country's conscripted troops — some 18,000 young men who are called up for obligatory military service each year — will now be issued only once a year instead of twice as it currently does.

The government last week agreed to a 12 per cent pay raise for middle-ranking officers after they threatened to "confine themselves to barracks" if their demand was not met.

Germany rejects Chilean stance over Honecker

SANTIAGO, May 29: Chile on Thursday said former East German ruler Erich Honecker has the right to state his case to a Russian court before a decision is made on whether he must be expelled from Moscow's Chilean embassy, reports AP.

Germany has rejected that Chilean stance, saying Honecker should be expelled from the embassy and turned over to Russian authorities, which have promised to send him Germany to stand trial.

A Government statement issued on orders by President Patricio Aylwin said Chile does not want to prevent Honecker from being tried in Germany, and does not want to shelter Honecker indefinitely at the embassy.

Honecker, 79, sought refuge at the embassy last December 11 to escape expulsion to Germany. He faces manslaughter charges for giving shoot-to-kill orders for East Germans trying to flee to the West during his years in power.

The government issued the statement in response to remarks Wednesday by German Deputy Foreign Minister Ursula Seiler-Abbring, who is in Chile attending an international conference.

She said she had delivered a letter to Aylwin from German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in which he stated that after formal charges were filed against Honecker, "the moment has come to put an end" to his stay at the embassy.

ASEAN meet begins July 24

MANILA, May 29: Laos and Vietnam will take the first step towards becoming full members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) during a ministerial meeting in Manila in July, Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus said today, reports Reuter.

Representatives from the two communist Indo-China countries are scheduled to sign the treaty on amity and corporation during the 25th ASEAN ministerial meeting to be hosted by the Philippines on July 24-29.

BRIEFLY

US plane crashes in Malaysia: A US air force F-18 Hornet fighter plane flying out of Singapore crashed in Malaysia's southern state of Johor Friday, a police official said, reports Reuter from Kuala Lumpur.

The officer-in-charge at the Johor police operations room said one pilot had been rescued by the Singapore Air Force and another was missing after the crash near Kota Tinggi town.

There were no reports so far of casualties on the ground, he said.

"The plane was one among six flying from Paya Lebar (in Singapore) to Japan," he said. This is the second crash in Johor in three months by a US military plane flying out of Singapore.

A US marine Corps AV-8 Harrier crashed in Johor on March 6 while flying from Singapore to Iwakuni, Japan, but the pilot ejected to safety.

200 leave Yangon for Mecca: A total of 120 Myanmar hajj pilgrims out of 200 left Yangon for Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on Thursday for a pilgrimage, according to an official report Friday reports Xinhua from Yangon.

They were seen off at the Yangon airport by Myanmar Minister for Religious Affairs Maj-Gen Myo Nyunt and other government officials.

The rest 80 hajj pilgrims is leaving Yangon for Mecca Friday.

2 Palestinians killed in battle: Israeli soldiers killed two Palestinians Thursday in a gun battle near the West Bank town of Jenin, the army said, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

A spokesman said an army patrol ran into the two armed Palestinians outside the village of Silat al Harithiya in the northern West Bank and opened fire when one of the suspects levelled his arm at them.

The dead were identified as Omar Ali Abu Hassan, 26, and Hani Haled Hamad, 24.

Their deaths brought to 907 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers since the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories began in December 1987, according to a toll compiled by AFP from Palestinian sources.

First Heart transplant in Iran: Iranian surgeons successfully carried out the first heart transplant operation in Iran, the official Iran News Agency lma reported Thursday, AFP says from Tehran.

The 35-member surgical team led by Abbasqoli Daneshvar, Director at the Tabriz Medical University's Heart Surgery Centre, this week replaced the heart of a 24-year-old man with that of a car accident victim.

The patient suffered from a congenital heart malfunction, lma said.

"The operation carried out in 6.5 hours was one of the rarest cases in the world in which the patient survived," Daneshvar was quoted as saying.

He said his team was preparing for a second transplant operation.

3 Maoists shot dead in Lima: Police fatally shot three Maoist rebels who tried to ambush them in their patrol car in Lima's northern outskirts, authorities said, reports AP from Lima.

The Shining Path guerrillas were killed after they fired on the vehicle with automatic weapons Thursday night, said a police bomb squad expert on condition of anonymity. The incident took place in a poor area where the Shining Path has considerable influence.

The rebels have mounted a dozen major attacks since security forces put down a prison uprising by the guerrillas in early May that left at least 40 inmates dead. Rebel attacks have continued despite President Alberto Fujimori's crackdown since he dissolved Congress and shut down the judiciary on April 5.

Perot overtakes Bush, Clinton in California

PHOENIX (Arizona), May 29: President George Bush Thursday kicked off a campaign tour of the west, announcing new programmes to help ease the transition of U S military personnel and defence workers to a post-Cold War economy, reports AFP.

"I am committed to ensuring that the vast talents of former defence personnel can be put to productive use in private life," Bush said in an address to a local branch of the American Legion in Phoenix, Arizona.

Bush said he was allocating one billion dollar over five years to help retrain former soldiers and defence industry workers, expand education benefits and provide early retirement pay for selected Defence Department employees.

Bush's announcement came only five days before the June 2 presidential primary in California, home to great many defence contractors whose

orders from the Pentagon have plummeted since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

California also was among the state's worst hit by the economic recession in the United States.

Bush was scheduled to spend Friday and Saturday in California, where he is running a distant second in the race for President behind taxes billionaire Ross Perot, according to a Mason-Dixon poll released Thursday.

The poll showed 41 per cent of those surveyed backing Perot, who has yet to formally declare his candidacy, 24 per cent supporting Bush and 22 per cent behind Democratic candidate Bill Clinton.

The Bush Administration plans to demobilise 25 per cent of U.S forces before 1995 and close bases throughout the United States and Europe. By year's end, there also will be 300,000 fewer men and women in uniform and

100,000 fewer civilian Defence Department employees than in 1989.

More than 100 weapons programmes have been cancelled. Some analysts have predicted that some 1.4 million defence jobs will be lost in the next three years.

The Pentagon had already announced a 7.1 billion dollar programme to help defence personnel with job retraining, employment assistance and severance payments. The one billion dollar announced Thursday was to supplement that fund.

One feature of the new Bush transition is a 90-million-dollar programme to train former military and civilian defence workers to teach their specialty in hopes that they will help fill the shortage of math and science teachers.

The Bush plan would also include education scholarships, offering 12,600 dollar in student grants to mil-

itary personal who voluntarily leave the forces after six years of service.

"There is a benefit to the end of the Cold War and that is there will be substantial defence savings made possible in this new environment," Bush said.

But he repeated his opposition to further cuts proposed by Democratic legislators, saying the military "slim-down" must be managed in a rational manner.

"Never in this history of man has the world been a benign place," Bush told graduates of the U.S Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, in a speech Wednesday aimed at reassuring conservatives who distrust Bush as too moderate.

"Defence, international security, who's going to keep the hand on the tiller, it's very important," said Bush campaign spokeswoman Torie Clarke.

