

LTTE says Delhi has no jurisdiction to outlaw movement

COLOMBO, Aug 13: Sri Lanka's dominant Tamil Tiger guerrillas Wednesday rejected an Indian ban and said New Delhi had no jurisdiction to outlaw their separatist movement, reports AFP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in its first public response to New Delhi's action against it said the ban was "null, void and inoperative in law."

New Delhi outlawed the Tigers on May 14 after accusing the group of assassinating former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and training secessionist forces in South India to destabilise the country.

The LTTE in a statement issued from its London office said it made submissions Thursday to India's unlawful activities (prevention) tribunal

arguing that it was not within the territorial jurisdiction of New Delhi.

"The International Secretary of the LTTE denied that the objective of the LTTE was to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India...."

"The LTTE was a combatant in an armed conflict against the Sri Lankan government which had sought to establish its oppressive rule over the Tamil people through genocidal measures," the statement said.

Colombo currently battling the LTTE in the island's northeast after 14 months of peace talks ended in June 1990 leading to renewed bloodletting in which nearly 3,000 security personnel and thousands of others have died.

UNHCR will try to stop ethnic cleansing

Serbs warn of growing violence in Bosnia



SARAJEVO: Two children hug before their departure from Sarajevo August 12. Serbian forces have agreed to give safe passage to about 350 women and children to leave Sarajevo in a UN convoy.

SARAJEVO, Aug 13: Serb leaders warned of growing violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina as the United Nations prepared to sanction the use of military force to safeguard relief supplies to the beleaguered former Yugoslav republic, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva warned on Wednesday that Serb forces intended to drive up to 28,000 Bosnian refugees into Croatia and said it would send representatives into the area to try to stop them.

"We will not be accomplices to the despicable policy of ethnic cleansing," said UNHCR spokeswoman Sylvina Poo. "We want to increase our visibility a lot because people don't get up to dirty tricks when the international community is watching."

As world leaders sought a new way to end four months of brutal ethnic war in the region, leaders of Bosnia's Serbs interpreted the UN's latest draft resolution on possible use of force, to be put to a vote today, as further evidence of anti-Serb bias in the international community.

"The use of force, as history shows so abundantly, could only provoke more violence and suffering in spite of its humanitarian excuse," Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said.

Serb and Muslim leaders in Bosnia gave their joint blessing to the evacuation of more than 300 women and children from Sarajevo on Wednesday, raising hopes of a mass exodus of civilians from the besieged capital.

A convoy of four buses was escorted out of the city by UN armoured personnel carriers and safely crossed Serb lines on its way to the Adriatic port of Split.

But the warring parties were bitterly divided over the prospect of UN relief convoys shooting their way, if necessary, into besieged cities such as the Muslim stronghold of Gorazde to the South-East of Sarajevo where 70,000 people have been trapped since the start of the war.

So far relief supplies have been restricted to Sarajevo, and even there the airport has had to close periodically because of heavy fighting.

Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic, lacking the military resources to hold his recently-recognised republic together, has welcomed outside intervention.

The Serbs, who are fighting to have that recognition overturned and now control two thirds of Bosnian territory, say any outside intervention would be tantamount to a direct attack against them.

"The mistake of the premature recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be corrected by a new mistake... military intervention which will necessarily benefit one side," another statement by Bosnian Serbs said.

Some independent observers agreed outside intervention, even for humanitarian purposes, could prove dangerous.

Off the Record

Now they can shake hands

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has ordered Malaysian women serving the government overseas to shake hands with foreigners at official functions after receiving reports that Muslims were not doing so.

A circular issued by the Prime Minister's department late last month was directed mainly at ethnic Malay women officers and the wives of Malay officers sent overseas on government duty, Bernama news agency said.

Ethnic Malays who are almost exclusively Muslims make up a little over half of Malaysia's 18 million people. Many cover their heads with scarves while a few veil their faces much in the style of conservative Arab women.

"Some Muslim women both married and single feel it wrong to touch the bodies particularly of men who are not their relatives," a senior government official said, adding: "This is, however, the minority view."

The circular said that heads of government departments should advise their women representatives abroad to shake hands with foreigners but did not specify what action would be taken against women refusing to comply.

Workload causes her breasts to shrink

BANGKOK: A blue movie actress helping the Thai government's election promotion programme says, the workload has caused her breasts to shrink more than two inches (five cm), threatening her chance of future roles, reports Reuters.

Kwanpirom Lin, who has starred in several erotic films, told reporters earlier this week that she had lost about six kg (13 pounds) while attending political rallies to urge people to vote in the September 13 general election.

But what worries her is that the size of my breasts has grown smaller, from 35 1/2 (90 cm) to 33 inches (84 cm). The Today Edition of the nation newspaper quoted her as saying.

"I'm afraid it will be difficult for me to get a job if they're small," she said.



LONDON: "Frog," an eleven-week old baby Celebes monkey sits nervously in her keepers hands here August 12 at the Chessington World of Adventure. "Frog" lost her mother at birth and has been hand reared by her keeper. A spokeswoman said that if the monkey had been born in the wild, her chance of survival would have been very slim.

22 killed as floods grip Sind villages

KARACHI, Aug 13: Monsoon rains pounded southern Sindh province, killing at least 22 people, flooding entire villages and destroying vast tracts of farmland, government officials said Thursday, reports AP.

Meteorologists in Karachi said 144 millimeters (six inches) of rain fell in 12 hours ending at 6 A.M. (0100 GMT) Thursday.

Karachi, Pakistan's largest city of 9 million, has been battered by rains since Monday. Overflowing rivers stranded hundreds of office workers Wednesday and closed several schools.

One witness said four children were hurt when an ambulance ferrying them home skidded off the road into a water-clogged cutter.

Another witness said several dozen offices workers were rescued shortly after midnight Thursday from their water-logged buildings.

The slums of Karachi were the hardest hit, said several rescuers.

Fragile mud-homes and huts made of corrugated cardboard and tin shacks were washed away leaving thousands homeless. Residents slogged through knee-deep water to reach higher ground.

Ex-Japanese soldier admits Korean women were 'treated as animals'

SEOUL, Aug 13: A former Japanese soldier who rounded up Korean women to serve as forced prostitutes during World War Two testified on Wednesday they were treated as animals.

"I am here to help the Koreans receive compensation from the Japanese government. I realise I should first apologise but words alone can't express it all," said Seiji Yoshida.

Young women were dragged from their mothers and fathers and torn from their children to be transported to battlefield brothels, he said.

"The women were forced to serve the sexual needs of the Japanese soldiers. They were treated like animals," Yoshida, 78, told a news conference.

"The sight of Japanese soldiers approaching would send entire Korean villages into panic."

Several victims of Japan's wartime atrocities attended the news conference.

Tempers rose as some elderly men, former slave workers forced to labour as part of Japan's wartime machine, demanded Yoshida apologise properly for Japan's misdeeds.

Expressing regret was not enough, one old man shouted.

"The sight and just the mention of Japan still gives me the shivers. This man (Yoshida) says he's sorry but it's difficult to trust the Japanese," a 67-year-old woman, abducted from her home and forced to work as a "comfort woman" for Japanese troops, told Reuters.

Male and female victims alike sobbed silently as they

listened to the frail former soldier speak.

"It had to do it because at the time it was my duty to do so," said Yoshida, who arrived in Seoul on Tuesday for a four-day visit.

Shame has forced many of the elderly former sex slaves to keep their suffering secret.

Noh Chung-Ja now 73, said she was only 17 and due to marry in five days, when Japanese soldiers came to her house.

"As I was screaming for my mother, about three Japanese soldiers grabbed me and forced me to get into a truck. That was when I became a sex slave to serve the soldiers," Noh said, tears streaming down her face.

"Now at 73, I have no children. The money is really not that important but I want the Japanese government to pay me for the work they forced me to do," she said.

Some former victims took to the streets to demand compensation and denounce Japan for once against harbouring military ambitions.

They were among about 100 elderly South Koreans, heavily outnumbered by riot police, who banged gongs and drums in a protest outside the Japanese Embassy in central Seoul.

Emperor Akihito should apologise to Korea, the crowd yelled.

Researchers believe up to 200,000 women, most of them Korean, were forced to become "comfort women," a Japanese military euphemism.

The Japanese government has acknowledged the recruitment of comfort women but has refused compensation, saying there was no proof the women were forced.

Anti-Japanese sentiment runs high in South Korea, especially around the August 15 anniversary of Korea's liberation in 1945 from 35 years of harsh Japanese rule.

Tokyo's decision to contribute troops to United Nations peace-keeping mission abroad has angered many Koreans.

Japan may boost public funding to combat AIDS

TOKYO, Aug 13: Japan is expected to boost public funding to combat AIDS next year to 10 billion yen (80 million dollar), almost five times the budget for the current year, news reports said today, reports Reuters.

Sikhs gun down 9 more in Punjab

AMRITSAR, Aug 13: Sikh militants gunned down nine relatives of policemen Thursday in a continuing series of killings to avenge the death of one of their guerrilla commanders, police said, reports AP.

Since Monday, militants have killed 56 policemen or their relatives following the weekend death of Sukhdev Singh Babbar, described by the government as the most wanted Sikh terrorist.

Targeting policemen's families appeared aimed at demoralizing the police and persuading Sikhs to quit the force.

Bolstered by the negotiated surrender of 71 militants on Wednesday, the Punjab state government that was elected last February has claimed success in curbing insurgency.

Rabin expects real progress in next round of ME talks

WASHINGTON, Aug 13: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin warned Wednesday that the Middle East peace process would be long and slow, but that he expected real progress in the next round of talks, reports AP.

"I don't expect that in a period of two or three years one can solve all the parts of the Arab-Israeli conflict," Rabin warned in an address to the National Press Club.

But, he said, Arab and Israeli negotiators could take a "first meaningful step" during the sixth round of bilateral talks in Washington this month.

Rabin, who has been in the United States for nearly a

Fierce fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh

MOSCOW, Aug 13: Azeris and Armenians fought fierce battles on Wednesday over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, reports Reuters.

Each side blamed the other for the latest outbreak of fighting in the mountainous enclave largely populated by Christian Armenians but lying inside Azerbaijan's borders.

The Armenian news agency Armenpress said Azerbaijan's national army launched an offensive in the enclave's northern Mardakert district, scene of some of the bloodiest fighting in the conflict between the two former Soviet republics.

This morning, after powerful rocket and artillery shelling of a number of villages of the Mardakert district in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijani army formations began moving in the direction of the villages of Aterk and Chapar," it said.

The pro-Armenia agency reported that the local Armenian forces had abandoned Chapar and another village, Octavan.

The Azeri Turan Agency said Armenian forces attacked Azerbaijan's Kazakh and Akstafinsky border regions on Tuesday night — it said eight people were killed and 27 wounded in a massive artillery battle preceding the attack.

At least 2,000 people have been killed in four

BRIEFLY

PLO founding member dies:

Abdelkrim Hamad Kats, a founding member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, has died of natural causes at 65, the PLO reported Wednesday, reports AP from Tunis.

The large announcement by the Palestinian news agency Wafa did not say where or when Hamad Kats died. Palestinian sources said he would be buried in Tunis, but they did not know when.

Hamad Kats, who went under the nom de guerre Abu Adnan, was also a founder of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the eight PLO factions.

He was a member of the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian parliament-in-exile. There were no details on survivors.

Russia-Lithuania talks end:

Talks between Russia and Lithuania on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic state which began in Vilnius Tuesday ended Wednesday without any compromise on a timetable, reports AFP from Vilnius.

But the two sides have begun studying Russia's proposal to have its troops out of Lithuania by the end of 1994, according to the leader of the Lithuanian delegation, Česlovas Stankevicius.

The head of the Russian delegation Viktor Issakov reiterated that Lithuania's demand that the troops be out by the end of the year was unrealistic.

Earthquake hits Japan:

An "intense" earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale was recorded in the Pacific Ocean off Japan on Wednesday, the Royal Observatory said, in Hong Kong, reports AFP.

In a statement early Thursday, it said the quake's epicenter was about 420 kilometers (260 miles) southeast of Tokyo, and occurred about 1.42 PM Tokyo time (2242 GMT).

There were no reports of damage from Japan.

Rebels kill 7 in Peru:

President Alberto Fujimori decreed Wednesday that guerrillas accused of violent crimes will be tried in military courts for treason, and the army reported that a rebel ambush killed six soldiers and a civilian, AP says from Lima.

Fujimori announced those accused of rebel actions that involved explosives or result in deaths, and those caught with materials used for building bombs, will be charged with treason.

Bodies of 9 Tamils recovered:

Soldiers recovered the bodies of nine Tamil civilians, increasing the death toll to 34 of villagers killed by unidentified men in eastern Sri Lanka, military officials said Thursday, AP reports from Colombo.

The victims, including women and children, were hacked to death with machetes and knives at Milantenna village in Batticaloa district Sunday night, officials said.

One killed in ROK chopper crash

SEOUL, Aug 13: One passenger died when a tourist sightseeing helicopter crashed today into the sea of a South Korean island in Asia's second fatal helicopter crash in two days, reports Reuters.

A police spokesman said nine other passengers and two flight crew were rescued from the sea close to the town of Sogwipo, South Korea's favourite honeymoon resort on the Southern Island of Cheju 450 km (180 miles) south of Seoul.

There were no foreigners on the helicopter. We are still not sure what really happened.

Khieu Samphan threatens violence against Vietnamese

BANGKOK, Aug 13: Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan has threatened more violence against ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia unless UN peacekeepers expel them, a leading regional magazine said today, reports Reuters.

Khieu Samphan's comments in an interview with the Far Eastern Economic Review appeared to be the first direct threat of violence against Vietnamese from a senior Cambodian figure.

It follows recent massacres of Vietnamese settlers which the UN peace-keeping force in Cambodia has been powerless to prevent.

Khieu Samphan referred to

a comment by Charles Twining, the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh, that his worst nightmare would be to see Vietnamese corpses floating down the Mekong River.

"UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia) must understand the urgency of resolving this problem of the Vietnamese settlers who are part of the Vietnamese occupation plan to swallow Cambodia," Khieu Samphan said.

"If the Cambodian people cannot see a peaceful resolution to the problem they will seek other means. So Ambassador Twining's nightmare might become a reality," he said.

there is no evidence of a significant Vietnamese troop presence.

Hanoi's troops invaded Cambodia in 1978 to oust Pol Pot's ultra-communist regime after a series of Khmer Rouge attacks on border villages. They fought an inconclusive Bush war against the guerrilla alliance until their official withdrawal in September 1989.

UNTAC officials estimate the Vietnamese population at about 200,000 people. Some of these are recent immigrants seeking manual work they cannot find in their own poor

Thailand frees 25,000 prisoners

BANGKOK, Aug 13: About 25,000 prisoners throughout Thailand were released on Wednesday under a special amnesty decree in honour of the queen's 60th birthday, reports Xinhua.

Under the decree, about 53,000 other prisoners had their sentences commuted. The prisoners set free included foreigners.

That corrections department Director-General Chamnien Chavanapong told the local press before the release that there are 90,000 prisoners in Thailand this year. It is believed that the number in the next year will remain unchanged.

The Khmer Rouge, who slaughtered whole Vietnamese communities during their reign of terror in the 1970s, are citing the Vietnamese issue as their main reason for reneging on the peace plan which they and two other guerrilla groups signed with the Vietnamese-installed Phnom Penh government in last October.

The guerrilla group now refuses to lay down its weapons because it says Vietnamese troops are still fighting in Cambodia and that at least one million Vietnamese have settled there.

UNTAC, which is overseeing the peace process, says

country and which Cambodians are loathe to do.

Most of the prostitutes in the capital are Vietnamese. In other communities, notably the fishing trade, the Vietnamese are often second or third generation residents of Cambodia. Whether these people will get to vote in elections scheduled for next April or May is a big concern for the political opposition.

The Khmer Rouge have countered their blood-stained history by preaching a fervent nationalism based on the historical enmity between the two neighbours.

UNTAC Chief Yasushi Akashi

has accused them of "sowing racial hatred" but foreigners in Phnom Penh say the message nevertheless has some appeal to Cambodians.

In July nine Vietnamese settlers, including a seven-day-old baby, were murdered by unidentified soldiers in a raid on a village near the Vietnamese border; UNTAC officials said.

Other killings have also been reported.

Vietnamese civilians were also slaughtered in purges under the US-backed Lon Nol Regime which fell to the Khmer Rouge in 1975.