

Clashes leave 53 dead in Rwanda

KIGALI, Jan 27: Ethnic and political clashes in northern Rwanda have killed 53 people in the last five days, the government said Tuesday, reports AP.

Prime Minister Disman Nsengiyaremye said in a statement the casualties were among minority Tutsi tribesmen, who oppose President Juvenal Habyarimana, as well as opposition party members.

The killings began Thursday by supporters of the president, who belong to the majority Hutu ethnic group, according to sources in the prime minister's office.

Nsengiyaremye said at a news conference carried on state-run radio that the attacks occurred in the president's home region.

There were no immediate reports of deaths among the president's supporters and no official word on what sparked the violence.

But Habyarimana's supporters are opposed to a January 9 agreement between the government and the insurgents. They believe the rebels got more representation in a proposed interim government than they deserve.

The Hutus consider all Tutsis sympathizers of the rebel Rwandese Patriotic Front.

The rebels are predominantly Tutsis who fled to neighbouring countries after losing to the Hutus in bloody power struggles more than 30 years ago.

They began returning to their homeland in 1990.

Iraqi troops have scattered to avoid air strikes

CAMP DOHA (Kuwait), Jan 27: Thousands of Saddam Hussein's troops have scattered in southern Iraq to avoid US and allied air strikes, the US Commander here said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Since the first air strikes against Iraq on January 13, two Iraqi divisions have moved out of their barracks to areas around Basra, according to General Robert Frix, the head of the US Task Force sent to Kuwait as a deterrent this month.

The allies targeted Iraqi air defence systems, including missile batteries and not Iraqi troops.

US experts have also gathered intelligence which shows Iraq has no intention of firing scud missiles on Kuwait. "At this time" even though it is capable of doing so, Frix added.

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Several batteries of US patriot anti-missile missiles were deployed last week as a precaution.

"If you feel you're going to come under attack, you disperse," Frix said during a meeting with foreign journalists at the US army base here for the 1,100-strong unit of the 1st cavalry division.

"You don't put your eggs in one basket," he said.

The General, a Gulf War veteran, said the troop movements were strictly for protection and represented no threat at all to Kuwait, which Iraq invaded August 2, 1990 and occupied for seven months until US-led forces drove them out.

There has been "No major ground force threat" to Kuwait at least the past six months, Frix said.

The troops moving to areas around the southern Iraqi port of Basra were from a mechanised infantry division and an armoured division, he said.

The remarks came despite Saddam Hussein's renewed claims on Kuwait and Kuwaiti anxiety during the recent crisis.

Although only 1,400 US troops — 1,100 in the task force and 300 additional special forces — are on the ground in Kuwait, Frix said Kuwait could easily be defended because of massive allied air power in the Gulf.

"If I felt threatened, I would be able to ask for more resources," he said referring to an estimated 200 allied warplanes in Saudi Arabia and 75 warplanes on a US aircraft carrier.

"You can't create armies overnight," he added.

At the same time, allied

military intelligence has extensive capabilities to monitor ground troop movements that would give advance warning.

Aircraft will be used to support ground units in upcoming military exercises with Kuwaiti troops, he added.

Frix added that Kuwaiti troops — estimated at 20,000 — have made major improvements since the Iraqi invasion.

"When the (allied) air strikes started, they had a general defence plan and executed the general defence plan and went into the field with confidence," he said.

This was not the case at the time of the invasion.

But they still need to improve further and must also acquire "newer weapons systems."

"You can't create armies overnight," he added.

Azeri PM resigns

MOSCOW, Jan 27: Azerbaijan's Prime Minister Raim Guseinov resigned on Tuesday and was succeeded by his Deputy, Itar-Tass news agency said, reports Reuter.

Azeri President Abulfaz Elchibey issued a decree replacing Guseinov with first Deputy Prime Minister Ali Masimov, the 40-year-old head of the State Economics and Planning Committee.

Tass quoted the decree as saying Guseinov had offered to resign but gave no details. Officials in the former Soviet republic could not be contacted to confirm the report.

It seemed likely that Guseinov, one of the team who took power after the Azeri popular front deposed former President Ayaz Mutalibov last May, could have been a victim to internal politics.

The popular front consistently pressed for full independence from Russia and rest of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which Azerbaijan formally left in October.

Ghali committed to UN reforms

UNDATED, Jan 27: Secretary General Boutros-Ghali remains strongly committed to UN administrative and fiscal reform, his spokesman said January 26, reports AP.

Confirming the departure March 1 of Undersecretary General for Administration and Management Dick Thornburgh, UN spokesman Joe Sills said that the secretary general wanted to "give every assurance of his interest" in continuing the UN reforms after Thornburgh leaves.

Sills' comments were in response to an article in the Washington Post which said Thornburgh wrote to Clinton transition officials in December urging them to quickly nominate a replacement or risk losing US influence over efforts to reduce UN waste, fraud and abuse that have been spearheaded by the United States and other Western nations.

The reforms at the United Nations in terms of staffing, budget, and management started before the arrival of Mr Thornburgh and will certainly continue after he departs, Sills said. "The person responsible — and the only person with overall responsibility — is the secretary general. Reforms are very much in his hands."

Havel elected Czech President

PRAGUE, Jan 27: Vaclav Havel was elected President of the Czech Republic today by the new nation's parliament, reports AFP.

Havel, the former President of the United Czechoslovakia which gave way to two independent states on January 1, was elected to a five year

Off the Record



Big debate is raging across the United States over implant of silicon breasts and its after effects. There are conflicting opinions and varied experiences of the women who underwent surgery for a number of reasons including correction of deformity. Photo shows a woman with implant silicon breasts who is 'doing fine.' There are about 2 million women in the US with implants.

— Star TV photo

It was all play-acting

MANILA, Jan 27: A 13-year-old high school student killed a friend as they re-enacted a fight scene they had seen on television, police reported Wednesday, reports AP.

Reynald Panaduan of suburban Kalookan City stabbed neighbour Henry Palanas, 12, in the chest Tuesday night with the cold away knife of a nail clipper, officers said.

"I did not intend to do it. I thought the knife was not folded out," Panaduan told police. "It was all play-acting. I would stab him and he would play dead just like what we saw on TV."

Doctors said the knife punctured the heart of Palanas, who died while being treated at a hospital.

Homicide investigator Alfredo Orbeta said Panaduan was released to his parents' custody pending further investigation.

Free air tickets to homosexuals

JERUSALEM, Jan 27: A court gave a gay El Al airlines flight attendant a chance Tuesday to demand free tickets for his partner, in the first ruling recognising the rights of Israeli gay couples, news reports said, according to AP.

The labour court in Tel Aviv said the flight attendant was entitled to claim free tickets if he can prove his partner lives with him permanently, the national news agency Itam said. A hearing was scheduled for March to let him present evidence of the relationship's stability.

El Al gives free tickets to the domestic partners of heterosexual employees who cannot marry for some reason, such as religious authorities ban on marriages by people of different religions.

The ruling Tuesday was the first time an Israeli court recognised the right of homosexuals to live as a couple and receive benefits granted to heterosexual couples, Israel television reported.

The television report did not give the flight attendant's name. An El Al spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

I'll do what my husband asks me to do'

NEW YORK, Jan 27: Hillary Rodham Clinton got a quick start Tuesday on her job heading her husband's health care task force, pursuing advice from award-winning health care volunteers, reports AP.

She also worked New York school kids, one of whom declared she was pretty, wonderful "and I think she's powerful."

Mrs. Clinton picked up community service award on her first trip outside Washington as first lady, and used the occasion to question other winners of the award whose projects involve health care for children.

The Lewis Hine award was for her service to children over the years.

Mrs. Clinton said she met informally with the Hine health care winners to "learn more about the programmes, why they've been singled out, get their advice about what will work."

Drug trafficking in Europe may increase again

BRUSSELS, Jan 27: Drug trafficking in Europe is likely to increase again in 1993, mainly on the Balkan routes and through East European countries, the Customs Co-operation Council said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

More than 4,500 kg (9,900 lbs) of heroin were seized in Europe in 1992, more than 50 per cent up in 1991, principally along the Balkan route, the 126-nation Council said in provisional figures issued on Tuesday.

It said customs and police also found 12,000 kg (26,400 lbs) of cocaine in the first 10 months of the year, up from, 9,974 kg (21,900 lbs) in the whole of 1991.

Already in 1991 cocaine seizures had increased a massive 85 per cent and heroin by 13 per cent, the Brussels based council said.

The problem with heroin is that it is penetrating Europe by the Balkan route. It comes from Turkey and passes through Yugoslavia and Germany.

Georges Davrou Deputy Director of the Council's Technique Directorate told a news conference.

He said it was difficult to control drugs smuggling through eastern European countries because it was done mainly with lorries and routes were diversifying quickly.

Davrou said Greece and Italy were traditional routes but Georgia and the former east Germany were emerging as prime channels for drug trafficking.

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