

Israel's separate budget for occupied areas

JERUSALEM, Feb 28: Israel will publish a separate budget for the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip for the first time in 15 years...

Croats close supply routes for Muslims

ZAGREB, Feb 28: The Bosnian Croat military command said today it had closed supply routes between Croatia and Bosnia for Muslim forces...

The planes took off from Rhein-Main Air Base outside Frankfurt on Saturday evening, dropping leaflets at four points and returned to the base early Sunday.

It was some rocket fire and some artillery. Nothing at all being shot at us. The giant C-130 Hercules turbo-prop airplanes flew more than 10,000 feet (3,300 metres) above the Bosnian countryside...

Off the Record

Brazilian women make love eight times a month

WASHINGTON: Surveys conducted throughout the world are asking married women how many times they have sex, and the results show some wide differences among countries, reports AP.

Surcharges are un-Islamic

ISLAMABAD: Pakistanis angry about being fined for not paying their phone bills on time have won a small theological victory: The experts say the surcharges are un-Islamic, reports Reuter.

Two bottles of century-old Crimean wine on auction

TOKYO: Two bottles of century-old Crimean wine bearing the crest of the last Russian Tsar were sold for 2.1 million yen (17,800 dollar) each at an auction in Japan, the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper reported on Sunday, says Reuter.

'Fifty Fifty' a welcome change

SANTA ANA: Robert Hays, best known for his goofy role in 'Airplane' and its sequel, has a sterner image as a veteran mercenary in his new movie 'Fifty Fifty', reports AP.

India ups space budget

NEW DELHI, Feb 28: India's space programme, which has been hit by US sanctions, got a big financial boost in the budget announced in Parliament on Saturday, reports Reuter.

BRIEFLY

UN envoy for truce in Angola:

United Nations special envoy on Angola, Margaret Anstee, called Saturday for a nationwide truce in fighting between government forces and UNITA rebels...

Anstee is with a U N delegation which has been waiting in the Ethiopian capital since Friday when a second round of peace talks was due to start.

A UNITA representative in Lisbon said the delegation was trapped by fighting in Huambo.

Bomb rips a Filipino airport:

A powerful bomb ripped through the Zamboanga International Airport building early yesterday leaving 15 people injured, one of them seriously, police in this southern city said, reports AFP from Zamboanga.

The force of the blast caused the airport's ceiling to collapse. Three of the injured were policemen assigned to guard the airport terminal and one of them was listed in serious condition, senior police superintendent Vicente Dumput said.

No foreign tourists were known to be among the casualties, Dumput added.

A senior police official said Muslim separatist guerrillas had planted a two-kilogram (four and a half pound) explosive at the pre-departure lounge, which was filled with passengers waiting to board two domestic flights.

69 feared drowned in Amazon:

Sixty-nine people were feared drowned after a freight ship collided with a tree and went down in the Amazon River, coast guard officials in the Peruvian city of Iquitos said Saturday, reports AFP from Lima.

The cargo ship Shandy was carrying at least 120 people, and 40 passengers and 11 crew members were pulled from the Amazon by early Saturday, the navy's coast guard service said.

Rescue workers searched for the estimated 69 passengers still unaccounted for in the accident, which occurred late Friday after most of the passengers had gone to sleep.

The body of Jorge Lozano, 55, was pulled from the river — the only confirmed fatality.

Taiwanese plane missing:

A plane owned by Taiwan's domestic Formosa Airlines with six people aboard was overdue on a flight from Taipei to the offshore Orchid Island, airline officials reported Sunday, says AP from Taipei.

Two of the four passengers were Japanese nationals, identified as S. Aotani and K. Ikebe, the airline reported. The other four, including two crewmen, were Taiwanese.

Officials said the 20-seat plane left Taipei's domestic Sunghuan airport at 9:53 am. (0153 GMT) and was scheduled to arrive at Orchid Island an hour later.

The airline tried to contact the plane after it was discovered that the Orchid Island airport had been closed because of inclement weather but was unable to contact the crew, the officials said.

10 more die in Lankan violence:

Shri Lankan troops stormed a Tamil guerilla hideout in eastern Sri Lanka, killing eight rebels and shot dead two more in an ambush in the same region, a military spokesman said yesterday, reports AFP from Colombo.

Security forces raided a small camp of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Thikilwaddai in Batticaloa district Saturday, killing eight LTTE cadres and destroying four vehicles, the spokesman said.

"One of our soldiers was injured in the exchange of fire. Other Tigers had abandoned the camp. Our men found cyanide capsules and large stocks of food in the camp," the spokesman said.

Troops ambushed and killed two more Tiger guerillas in nearby Perillavclli area on the same day, the spokesman said.

Swede killed in rocket blast:

One person was killed and three were injured when a rocket exploded on Saturday at Sweden's Esrange Space Exploration Centre near Kiruna in the Arctic circle, police said, reports Reuter from Sweden.

Swedish news reports said the rocket, believed to be an Orion type, was due to be launched next week in a German project to measure the ozone layer.

"It looks as if it was a powerful explosion. Part of the building has been destroyed," Kiruna fire brigade chief Torsten Flygare said on Swedish Radio.

Russia, Kazakhstan to create common defence zone

MOSCOW, Feb 28: Russia and Kazakhstan, the two largest former Soviet republics, agreed Saturday to create a common defence zone, said a spokesman for Russian President Boris Yeltsin, reports AP.

Vyacheslav Kostikov said the treaty on military cooperation and the joint use of military potential would be ready within a month. Kostikov's statement, carried by the ITAR-Tass news agency, provided no details on the content of the treaty.

The decision came in talks between Yeltsin and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the statement said.



MOGADISHU: A soldier checks a Somali for weapons at a control point on Saturday in Mogadishu as the city returned to calm after three days of anti-foreigner violence. — AFP/UNB photo

Kuwait's Chief of Staff resigns

KUWAIT, Feb 28: Military sources said Saturday they expect the government to announce soon the resignation of Kuwait's Chief of Staff, a prince who has been widely blamed for the military chaos during the Iraqi invasion, reports AP.

Reports in both Al-Anba and Al-Watan newspapers Saturday said Maj. Gen. Jaber al-Khalid al-Sabah already had resigned and was likely to be replaced by his deputy, Maj. Gen. Ali al-Moumin.

The reports have been circulating publicly since about a week ago, when the general is believed to have tendered his resignation to the crown prince, Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Defence Minister Ali al-Sabah has refused to comment on the reports, as have the generals involved.

"I know nothing about it. And I am sure I will be the last to know," al-Moumin said.

No reason has been reported for the resignation. But several military officers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Parliament had let it be known it would stall dir 12 billion in appropriations of rebuilding the military if Jaber remained at its head.

Jaber is the only senior officer left from the officers in charge when Iraq invaded on August 2, 1990.

The military which had refused to put its staff on alert in order to avoid provoking Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, collapsed in less than a day.

Officers had said previously that the last order issued by Jaber was for them to drop their weapons and run. Hundreds were captured and interned by the Iraqis.

Junior officers in both the air force and the army circulated petitions in the months after the war demanding the resignations of about 50 senior officers.

Military sources said they expected the government to announce Jaber's resignation as early as Sunday.

Parliament already has embarrassed Sheikh Saad's government by unveiling several multi-billion-dollar financial scandals and has started an investigation into the invasion.

Elected in October, it was the first Parliament since the ruling Al-Sabahs suspended the elected body in 1986.

Illegal N-arms export to help Iraq, Libya

Bush may be forced to testify

HOUSTON (Texas), Feb 28: Former President George Bush can be forced to testify about an Iraqi national who may have helped set up illegal export schemes to help Iraq and Libya develop chemical weapons programmes, a judge ruled, reports AP.

District Judge Elen O'Neill on Friday agreed to order Bush's deposition. He will be asked about Ihsan Barbouti, who reportedly died of a heart ailment in July 1990. As part

of a civil suit filed on behalf of Rig Structures Supply Company and three former Barbouti associates James Olen Groves, Bob McCurdy and Arthur Valent.

But some people believe reports of Barbouti's death have been cooked up, and that he feigned death and went into hiding. Lloyd's of London, the insurance FIR, has refused to pay his life insurance claim.

P J enterprises, purportedly a Barbouti-controlled

company has alleged in a lawsuit that it was defrauded by the three former associates, who in turn filed a lawsuit against Barbouti.

Bush spokesman Andrew Mancu said he would consult with a lawyer for the former president but had no further comment. Bush's testimony could be taken in May, according to Brian Bro, an attorney for some of the parties in the case.

Barbouti and his oldest son, Haidar, are under investigation by the federal government for using Houston, Texas, companies to export petroleum technology to Libya and Iraq for military use.

In a related civil case, the Department of Justice filed court documents describing the elder Barbouti as "the designer, prime contractor, and chief procurement agent" for a chemical weapons plant at Rabta, Libya.



ZAGREB: A young Muslim boy, a refugee from embattled Bosnia-Herzegovina, looks through the window of his barracks as he waits for humanitarian aid to arrive at this refugee camp on the outskirts of the Croatian capital. — AFP/UNB photo

Angola secretly recruits South Africans to fight UNITA

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 28: The Angolan government is secretly recruiting members of South Africa's elite special forces as mercenaries to fight against Pretoria's former ally, the rebel UNITA movement, a report claimed today, says AFP.

The Johannesburg Sunday Times said agents of the Luanda government were recruiting members of the soon-to-be-disbanded 32 battalion, which consists of Angolans who fought with the South African defence force against Namibian guerillas.

Also recruited were members of controversial covert units which carried out dirty tricks against anti-apartheid activists, the newspaper said.

A third of women in the developing world are using modern family planning methods in China, where the government tries to prevent couples from having more than one child, the level is 71 per cent.

A US Commerce Department report released last week points to the same fertility trends, and it also notes rises in life expectancy throughout much of the Third World as health efforts improve.

The report, "Population and Health Transitions," says many nations are in a healthy, demographic transition, with the adult, working population growing more rapidly than the number of babies being born.

Fertility rate drops in Third World

1990s to four today. The surveys also show a bigger-than-expected demand among women for birth control. The women were asked intimate questions, including frequency of lovemaking, and revealed details not always reflected in government programmes.

A reproductive revolution is spreading across much of the developing world," says a study being released Monday by Johns Hopkins University's Population Information Programme. It says awareness of contraception is now nearly universal and use of condoms

and other birth control methods is rapidly rising. "But there is still a long way to go," the report says, noting that surveys show about 20 per cent of Third World women would like to avoid pregnancy but are not using birth control.

Though dramatic, the declining fertility rates are still well above the level of 2.1 children per family needed to stop rapid world population growth, and also far above the levels of developed countries.

Fertility has fallen over a much shorter period of time than experts predicted, but an average of

four children is still twice the replacement rate," said Bryant Robey, principle author of the Johns Hopkins report.

World population is increasing and headed for 6 billion. United Nations projections show 97 million more people a year until the year 2000.

"The problem is that while each mother is having fewer children, there are more mothers," Robey said in an interview. "If the fertility rate hadn't fallen, we'd really be in a boom."

Recent surveys taken with US Agency for International Development funding show

African women, too, want to prevent births, Robey said. "People used to say and believe that Africa was somehow different and fertility wasn't going to decline in Africa," Robey said. But the new surveys show significant declines in Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe. The surveys were the first since a worldwide fertility study in the 1970s.

Plea to lift US sanctions on Vietnam

HANOI, Feb 28: Vietnam's leader, Do Muoi, has urged US President Bill Clinton to lay to rest America's bitterness over the Vietnam War, normalise diplomatic relations with Hanoi and lift a nearly 30-year-old trade embargo, reports Reuter.

Muoi, General-Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, told Reuters in a rare interview on Saturday that Clinton ought to find it easier than some other Americans to turn a new page with Hanoi since he had openly opposed the Vietnam War as a young man.

Washington said the sale violated the missile technology control regime, which seeks to halt the spread of rocket technology, particularly to the development world.

India denies that the technology used by its space agency has anything to do with a Defence Ministry missile testing programme.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao said last year the export ban could delay its satellite-manufacturing project.

India has successfully test-fired and intimidate range missile known as Agni, capable of delivering a warhead over 2,500 km (1,550 miles). It has also successfully test-fired a short-range, surface-to-surface missile.