

Over 100 Indians, Lankans expelled from Romania

BUCHAREST, Romania, Mar 2: Authorities expelled more than 100 citizens from Shri Lanka and India in the first large-scale deportation of asylum seekers from developing countries, state television said Monday, reports AP.

The TV showed frontier police ushering 133 people — 94 Shri Lankans and 39 Indians — through the gates of Bucharest's Otopeni International Airport. They were flown to Bombay and Colombo, respectively.

An Interior Ministry spokesman said Monday's deportation was only the beginning of a larger process of deportation.

Shri Lankans and Somalis account for the bulk of some 9,000 illegal aliens who live in this poor east European country.

The foreigners, also including Pakistanis, Chinese and Albanians, have been accused — and some of them convicted — of various crimes, including drug trafficking and weapons smuggling.

The TV report said the government set aside some 56 million lei (dhs 100,000) to pay for the air fares of the deportees and for some deportation procedures.

Some of the aliens, who entered Romania illegally in late 1992, have been tried in various Romanian cities and convicted to up to 2 years in prison, and expulsion from Romania, the TV report said.

Most of the Shri Lankans and Somalis fled civil war in their countries and refused to return, settling in Bucharest and waiting to be granted political refugee status and visas for Western countries.

Pakistan, S Arabia trying an end to bloodshed Afghan army preparing to crush Hekmatyar

KABUL, Mar 2: The military chief of the embattled government asked Monday that a committee of Islamic scholars, lawyers and intellectuals be formed to help end the bloody fighting among Afghan factions, reports AP.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Ahmed Shah Masood also said he was preparing a new offensive to crush Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the other chieftains who have battered Kabul with shells and missiles.

"Not one of them has taken on responsibility for the problems of Afghanistan. When they face problems, they jump in the jeeps and flee to Pakistan, but not one has shown any kind of compassion toward this country," he said.

Masood, Defence Minister in the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, spoke during a four-hour interview at his home, a former guest house of the Communist government.

Masood also attacked Hekmatyar's foreign backers. He mentioned no countries by name, but seemed to be talking about Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, whose fundamentalists have sent Hekmatyar hundreds of millions of dollars.

"We have documents that show that these countries have been giving military and financial assistance to Hekmatyar," said Masood, pulling out identity cards and other documents of Arab mer-

cenaries killed last month fighting beside Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami rebels.

Pakistan and Saudi negotiators have been trying to broker an end to the bloodshed that has killed or wounded tens of thousands of people and destroyed much of the city.

Fighting began almost immediately in April, after a 14-year war ended with the ouster of the Communists and victory for the Islamic factions.

Rabbani arrived Monday in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, for peace talks. Few believe

any truce will last, though, because of the intense hatred between Hekmatyar and Masood. "He is a man looking only for power and he will use any method to get it," Masood said.

"We want a political settlement worked out through negotiations," he said. "But if we have to fight, it will be a quick strike. We are preparing for the second round of fighting and we will make it a very short war."

Discontent has been growing in Kabul over Masood's re-

luctance to wipe out the long-range missiles and rocket launchers used by Hekmatyar's rebels.

On Sunday, after a two-week lull, rockets and mortars crashed into a market, a mosque and a huge apartment complex, killing at least 31 people, half of them children.

After the attack, 200 to 300 demonstrators marched toward the presidential palace, shouting "Death to Rabbani, Death to Masood."



Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif welcomes Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani (L) at his residence in Islamabad on Monday. — AFP/UNB photo

SYDNEY, Mar 2: An Australian current affairs programme yesterday ran excerpts from the so-called "squidgy" tape, a conversation allegedly between Britain's Princess Diana and friend James Gilbey, in which the woman says she fears becoming pregnant, reports Reuter.

"I don't want to get pregnant, says the woman, who is not identified on the tape.

"Darling, that's not going to happen, alright?" replies the man, also unidentified.

"Yeah," says the woman. "Don't think like that. It's not going to happen, darling. You won't get pregnant," he says.

"I watched (British Soap Opera) 'castenders' today. One of the main characters had a baby. They thought it was by her husband. It was by another man," says the woman.

"Squidgy, kiss me. Oh god. It's so wonderful isn't it, this sort of feeling. Don't you like

Oh god! it's so wonderful, isn't it?



it? he says. "I love it. I love it," the woman says.

The squidgy tape got its media tag from a nickname used to address the woman in the conversation when part of the tape was published in Britain last year. Subsequently Princess Diana and heir to the

throne Prince Charles separated. Buckingham Palace said it had no comment. "We said nothing at the time of the original tape and we have nothing to say now," said a palace spokesman.

The material aired yesterday was part of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "Four Corners" programme entitled "a right royal affair."

The programme looked at the political and social reasons why the squidgy tape was first uncovered and why it was not published in full.

Reporter Deborah Richards said in the programme that the "Eastenders" comments, which had already been mentioned publicly, had not been put into context.

The true import was concealed. In context the 'castenders' reference sits in very deep waters indeed," Richards said.

Brazil's Finance Minister resigns

BRASILIA, Brazil, Mar 2: President Itamar Franco Monday named his third finance minister in five months in office, after Paulo Haddad resigned due to disagreements with Brazil's leader over anti-inflationary strategies, reports AP.

Haddad, who had been appointed on December 17, said he quit because of "profound discrepancies" with Franco.

"I prefer to be faithful to ethics, not to power," he said. Franco immediately replaced Haddad with Eliseu Rezende, the president of the state electric company Eletrobras.

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Off the Record

It was not as lusty as it sounds

WASHINGTON: There he was, President Clinton, back on trendy MTV — promoting community service, taking pizza and the Beatles, reflecting on the dangers of being president, reports AP.

And perhaps wooing some young voters along the way. In a chatty 10-minute interview shown Monday night on the cable TV music channel, Clinton related how a White House steward recently walked into his bedroom and caught the First Couple in bed.

But, the president added quickly, "It wasn't as lusty as it sounds."

He said the steward "honestly" thought the Clintons were already out of bed. The steward was asked to use a different door next time, Clinton said.

He also admitted that he occasionally will "sneak around and eat" some pizza, even though the Secret Service doesn't like him to eat order-out food, because of safety concerns.

Asked by interviewer Tabitha Sorenson if he ever considered hosting a Beatles reunion at the White House, Clinton, a fan of the former British rock group, smiled and said he hadn't thought about it, but, "It's not a bad idea."

Clinton, 46, also noted that Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger, who turns 50 on July 26, is "taking good care of himself."

In a more somber moment, Clinton conceded that he occasionally considers the threats he faces as president.



Gays to join St Patrick's Day parade

BOSTON: A state appeals court judge upheld a ruling Monday allowing a gay and lesbian Irish group to march in the annual St Patrick's Day Parade through South Boston, reports AP.

In an impassioned decision, Massachusetts Court of Appeals Judge Frederick L. Brown likened attempts to exclude the gays to bigotry, which he called "an obscenity."

"As a human being, not as a judge, I pray that one day hate and fear as well as discrimination... will, like the dinosaur, be only a distant memory," Brown wrote.

The Irish American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Pride Group of Boston is seeking to march for the second consecutive year over the objections of the sponsor, the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council.

Suffolk Superior Court Judge Hiller Zobel ruled last year — and again in February — that the gay group could march in the 92-year-old parade because it was a public event.

St. Patrick's Day is March 17 but Boston's parade is March 14.

He is back on the stump

WASHINGTON: Far from fading into the sunset with his 19 million presidential votes, Ross Perot is back on the stump, carving himself a role in reducing the US deficit and reforming the government, reports AP.

Already this year, the 1992 independent candidate has barnstormed through Florida, Maine and Texas to promote his watchdog group, United We Stand America.

And Tuesday, Perot was to give a careful to the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, a House-Senate panel that will recommend ways to streamline the legislative branch.

Next week, Perot says he'll travel to Colorado, New Mexico and California.

And on March 21, Perot will conduct United We Stand America's first televised town meeting to discuss government reform. Perot said the group is composed of "idealistic, selfless patriots" who will become powerful enough to make demands of government officials.

Perot already has praised President Clinton's February 17 economic speech to Congress, but contends Americans still don't have accurate numbers on the administration's deficit-cutting programme.



Deportees reject 6-point US proposals

LEBANON, Mar 2: Palestinian deportees rejected a reported six-point US proposal to end the crisis over them and resume Middle East peace talks, reports Reuter.

Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi, leader of the 396 deportees banished to a South Lebanon no-man's land 11 weeks ago, said the proposal as reported by Palestinian sources weakened their position.

"Presenting the six points are a waste of time for Israel's benefit and are aimed at dissolving our case, especially if Resolution 799 is linked to these points," he told reporters.

He reiterated the Security Council should take steps to implement its resolution, which demands the immediate return of the deportees to the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Resolution 799 was passed one day after the Palestinians were expelled on December 17. Israel refuses to imple-

ment it. "We warn of practices aiming at giving Israel more time to win ground at the expense of the suffering of the deportees and their families," said Rantisi at the deportees' makeshift camp.

"If Israel does not agree that deportations are illegal then the problem will still be pending," he added.

Palestinian sources said on Saturday the United States was trying to nudge Israel and Palestinian negotiators into a six-point deal to resume Middle East peace talks stalled by the expulsions.

The sources said one of the points, assembled last week by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Israel, was the accelerated return of the deportees "in compliance with" 799.

They also include a "binding commitment" from Israel not to carry out more deportations, a US... statement that deportations are illegal and a US... commitment that

the Jewish state will fully implement 799.

Rantisi said the deportees were opposed to implementation of 799 being linked to the other points in the US suggestions.

Christopher's proposals contradict resolution 799 calling for our immediate and safe return," Rantisi said. The exile men demand they all go back together and reject a phased return.

"We are surprised at the US stand... Christopher talks of heading towards resolving the deportees' case despite the fact that resolution 799 exists but implementing it has been delayed," he added.

Christopher said on Sunday he thought Arabs would agree to resume peace talks with Israel in April and there would soon be developments to ease the obstacle caused by the expulsions.

Human rights bodies warn of medical catastrophe in Kashmir

WASHINGTON, Mar 2: Violence and terrorism threaten India's embattled Kashmir region with a catastrophic breakdown of medical care: two US human rights organisations are warning, reports AP.

A campaign of terror against civilians including members of the medical community by Indian government security forces is mainly to blame, they said, but militant Muslim separatists and insurgents, some backed by Pakistan, are also at fault.

Physicians for Human Rights, based in Boston, and Asia Watch, of New York and Washington, urged the India government to grant immediate access to the International Committee of the Red Cross for medical and humanitarian relief needed to stave off a civilian medical and health

crisis. Their 60-page joint report released on Sunday is based on a fact-finding mission to Kashmir last October. It contained interviews with physicians and other health workers describing terror, widespread torture and shootings by soldiers in anti-insurgency sweeps.

Indian security forces involved in counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir have committed human rights abuses with impunity and have routinely violated international humanitarian laws which require that medical workers, as well as the wounded and sick, be protected," it said.

Security teams were accused of blocking ambulances trying to carry wounded people to emergency treatment and ejecting wounded from hospitals, sometimes ripping off their bandages or discon-

necting them from life-sustaining treatment.

Such treatment violates medical ethics and neutrality and international codes acknowledged by India, including Geneva convention provisions entitling the sick and wounded to humane treatment without regard to their status in a conflict, the report said.

"By attempting to excuse such gross violations as legitimate means of law enforcement, the government has signalled that these abuses are condoned," it asserted.

Indian government comment and rebuttal were incorporated into the report, including a charge that Muslim terrorists in "a blatant misuse of religion" have forced an exodus of nearly 250,000 innocent people from Kashmir in the past three years in a case of "ethnic cleansing at its worst."

BRIEFLY

DPRK won't bow to IAEA demand:

A North Korean official said Tuesday that his government will never allow the special inspection demanded by the International Atomic Energy Agency, AP reports from Beijing.

North Korea's ambassador to China, Chu Chang Jun, told a news conference that the agency's demand was based on fabricated information supplied by the United States.

"It is a gangster-like act which cannot be tolerated in any case," he said. "We cannot but take counter-measures to defend our country's sovereignty."

Asked what measures were being considered, he said, "Wait and see."

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN watchdog agency, says that analysis of material from six inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities revealed "major inconsistencies" in the Communist government's claims regarding the quantity and quality of nuclear material it has.

Woman dies in Cairo mishap: A paralyzed woman was cut in two in an elevator shaft in Cairo Monday, press reports said Tuesday, AFP reports from Cairo.

The incident occurred when the lift activated after nurses had pushed the woman's gurney only halfway in. Her husband and 12-year-old daughter witnessed the accident.

The woman, 35, had been admitted to the Kasr El-Aini Hospital in Cairo for examination.

Myanmar frees 5 Thai loggers: Myanmar soldiers released five Thai loggers from an army camp in Myanmar jungle yesterday a day after the Thai military handed over two Myanmar soldiers held in Thailand, a Thai officer said, Reuter reports from Mae Sot.

The loggers had had to pay a small fine for illegal entry into Myanmar the officer said.

The Myanmar army arrested nine Thai workers last month after the two Myanmar soldiers were seized carrying arms on the Thai side of the border.

Four of the loggers were later released after their relatives paid ransoms to the Myanmar soldiers.

Kohl meets Yeltsin today: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl will meet President Boris Yeltsin in Moscow today for talks on the war in ex-Yugoslavia and Russia's domestic situation, official sources said, AFP reports from Moscow.

The Foreign Ministry said Monday that the two leaders would meet in a presidential residence during Kohl's brief stopover in Moscow on his way home from South Korea, according to the Interfax News Agency.

The talks would cover world affairs, particularly the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and the coming Tokyo summit of the Group of Seven most-industrialised nations, reported Interfax.

A German embassy spokesman said Kohl would like Yeltsin to give him a detailed account of Russian internal affairs.

Sihanouk off to Beijing: Prince Norodom Sihanouk left Cambodia for Beijing yesterday to attend the funeral of his aunt who died there this week, AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

The aunt Norodom Ket Kanha, lived in exile in Beijing and died Monday at her age of 91, royal palace officials said.

Prince Sihanouk boarded a special Kampuchea Airways plane and was seen off by Prime Minister Hun Sen and Cambodian People's Party President Chea Sim, as well as members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the opposition factions.

The prince was due to have a medical checkup in the Chinese capital and return to Cambodia at the end of the month, the palace officials said.

'Algerian forces resume torture in prisons'

LONDON, Mar 2: Amnesty International said Tuesday that torture of prisoners by Algerian Security forces, which virtually ceased after 1989, has become widespread again following declaration of a state of emergency last year, reports AP.

The organization has received dozens of testimonies of torture and spoken to victims, their families and doctors, the independent, London-based human rights group said in a report.

A growing number of nations tend to buy advanced arms

WASHINGTON, Mar 2: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director James Woolsey says "a growing number" of nations are seeking advanced weapons, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the "missiles to deliver them," Reports USIS.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has "serious and far-reaching implications for global and regional security and stability," Woolsey told Senate members of the governmental affairs committee February 24.

As international awareness grows, he noted, weapons seeking countries "are becoming more clever in devising networks of front companies and suppliers to frustrate export controls and buy what would otherwise be prohibited to them."

Woolsey singled out North Korea as posing the gravest concern — both for its development of weapons of mass destruction and as a key supplier of weapons to Iran and Syria.

Even if North Korea permits IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) access at two suspected nuclear-related sites, he said, the possibility exists that it could still develop "small nuclear weapons capability elsewhere clandestinely."

China is another major "proliferation concern... as an alternative supplier when western export controls make technology and weapons more difficult to acquire," he explained.

Asked about a February 24 Washington Post report that China may have revived and expanded its offensive germ weapons programme he responded that the intelligence community has felt for some years that "this capability may exist in China."

Regarding China's relationship with Pakistan, Woolsey noted that Beijing has consistently regarded a nuclear-armed Pakistan as

a crucial ally and a counter might to India. "The director also pointed out that both India and Pakistan, which have the capability to assemble components of a small number of nuclear weapons "in a short period of time," may pose "the most probable prospect for future use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons."

Woolsey said the Middle East is an area of special proliferation concern for the intelligence community as well, since almost half its nations have, or are believed to be developing, weapons of mass destruction.

Iran despite its signature on the NPT — is attempting to acquire nuclear technology that is inconsistent with peaceful uses of nuclear energy, he said. It will take Iran about a decade to produce its own nuclear weapons, Woolsey suggested, unless "it receives critical foreign assistance for its development programme."

Iraq, whose weapons of mass destruction programmes were damaged during the Gulf War, has struggled to maintain elements of its key programmes, "hoping to out-wait" United Nations weapons inspectors and rebuild its weapons infrastructure.

As for Libya, he said, it is working on a second chemical weapons production facility "even as it publicly proclaims its good intentions."

The CIA director also noted that the collapse of the former Soviet Union "has raised new opportunities for determined nations to gain access to sensitive technology and material."

"We are facing a sophisticated Hydra of suppliers," he said, because for every intercepted shipment new suppliers seem to appear, willing to manufacture, broker, sell, and transport materials to any and all clients, no matter how dangerous or unsavory.

Mitterrand starts polls campaign

PARIS, Mar 2: The campaign for March 21 French legislative elections officially opened Monday with President Francois Mitterrand refuting claims that the days of his flagging Socialist Party are numbered, reports AP.

An alliance of conservatives is expected to sweep the two-round voting for a new National Assembly which ends March 28.

A record number of candidates — 5,319 — are contesting the 577 seats.

Polls consistently have shown the Socialists hovering around the 20 per cent mark.