

Thousands of wounded Muslims found trapped in war-torn pockets Dozens dying of hunger in E Bosnia daily

Arjan Singh shot dead

AMRITSAR, Mar 7: The deputy chief of the Khalistan commando force Panjwari, Bichar Singh Sarsera alias Arjan Singh was shot dead by security forces in an encounter near Kapatgarh village under Jhander police station today, reports IPTI.

The chief of the Majitha police district, Mr Paramjeet Singh Gill, said Arjan Singh was involved in about 200 killings in Amritsar, Majitha and Batala police districts.

Police on a tip off, cornered Arjan Singh and his accomplice. But his accomplice escaped during the exchange of fire, police said.

One AK-47 Chinese assault rifle, one Mautzer and ammunition were seized from the place of encounter.

Arjan Singh is the third deputy chief of the outfit to be shot dead by security forces in last five months. Earlier Sukhwinder Goldee and Harminder Sultanwind were killed in separate encounters.

TUZLA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mar 7: UN refugee workers found thousands of wounded Muslims trapped in battle-torn pockets of eastern Bosnia, and a doctor said dozens were dying daily of sickness and hunger, reports AP.

Also Saturday, the commander of UN forces in Bosnia, Gen Philippe Morillon, returned to Sarajevo after a daring mission to the besieged enclave of Cerska. But he appeared to have failed in his goal of negotiating the immediate evacuation of wounded Muslims.

Meanwhile, US Air force cargo planes completed a seventh day of airdrops over eastern Bosnia early Sunday, delivering more than 37 tons of food and medical supplies.

A statement from the military Joint Information Bureau

at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany said that six C-130 cargo planes returned to the base, south of Frankfurt, after dropping 37.2 tons of food and 9 tons of medical supplies in the vicinity of Srebrenica on the Bosnia-Herzegovina border with Serbia.

No incidents were reported during the airdrop mission, the statement said.

Officials of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said 2,200 wounded and sick Muslims had been found in or near Cerska and more than 11,000 people, mostly from Srebrenica, southeast of Tuzla, had requested evacuation.

Izumi Nakamitsu, a UN refugee spokeswoman in Tuzla, said Simon Martell, a World Health Organization doctor in Srebrenica, reported that 20 to 30 of the wounded

were dying daily.

As many as 35,000 could pour out of the region if UN officials managed to negotiate safe passage to Tuzla, said Anders Levinson of the UN refugee agency. Bosnian Serb commanders, however, have blocked evacuation for the past week.

The wounded and others seeking evacuation were located after Morillon set out for the Cerska region Friday, on a mission to secure Serb agreement on safe passage.

Morillon, upon returning from touring Cerska, said: "I hope it will be days, not weeks," before a medical evacuation begins.

But he said Serb commanders had linked any evacuation to permission for Serb officials to come to Tuzla and other Muslim areas to see how Serbs

there are faring and assure that they are allowed to leave as well.

All the Serbs remaining in Tuzla, however, are believed to be supporters of the Muslim-led Bosnian government.

At United Nations headquarters in New York, mediators met with representatives of the warring sides to attempt to forge an agreement on a controversial peace plan. The meeting recessed without agreement and the representatives returned home to discuss the proposals with their cohorts.

The plan calls for dividing Bosnia into 10 semi-autonomous, largely ethnic-based provinces. Only Bosnian Croats have agreed to that aspect of the plan.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina began after ethnic

Croats and Muslims voted to secede from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. More than 130,000 people have been killed or are missing.

Morillon said he planned to negotiate with Sefer Halilovic, the head of Bosnian government forces, and Serbian military leader Gen Ratko Mladic for a cease-fire that would allow an evacuation in eastern Bosnia to begin.

Morillon said 18 pallets of aid dropped by the US military had landed near Cerska at Konjevic Polje on Friday and Saturday, bolstering meager food supplies there. Some parachuted aid also reportedly reached Srebrenica.

Morillon said he "did not see any signs of massacres" in the parts of Cerska he was able to visit and that the situation there was less dramatic than

had been feared.

But UN refugee officials said Morillon did not visit many outlying areas where ham radio operators reported that entire villages had been set ablaze.

Morillon said he saw many shelled and gutted homes during his one-hour visit of the Cerska area, but no dead bodies.

"I am an old soldier," he said. "I have experience with the smell of death, and I didn't smell it here."

Morillon did say conditions were dire, however, in Srebrenica, where 5,000 refugees from Cerska have fled.

He said he had been told that in Srebrenica, cut off from relief convoys since December, children and elderly people were dying of hunger. He said the city, now holding some 60,000 people, would become the main target of UN concern.

Pawar assures rule of law in Maharashtra

BOMBAY, Mar 7: Sharad Pawar, who took over as Chief Minister of Maharashtra yesterday for the fourth time, has assured the people that the rule of law would prevail and he would tour the state after the ensuing budget session of the assembly to infuse confidence among masses, reports PTI.

At a meeting with members of "Mantralaya and Vidhivalamb Vartahar Sangh (MVS)" (Mantralaya Reporters' Association), today he said it was his responsibility to bring back the 'pre-riot' atmosphere to Maharashtra.

During his state wide tour he would discuss the situation with bureaucrats, police officials, including present and former commissioners of Bombay and some other officials and partymen, he added.

Mr Pawar began his first day at Mantralaya by garlanding the portrait of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at the main entrance.

BRIEFLY

US marine commits suicide:

A US marine committed suicide and two French soldiers were killed in a road accident in Somalia, a US military spokesman said on Sunday.

Navy Lieutenant Lydia Zeller told Reuters the marine shot himself through the head on Saturday night at the main military compound in Mogadishu.

"It was suicide but I have no further details. His name will be released by the Department of Defence in Washington", she said.

Zeller said two French soldier also died on Saturday night when their vehicle rolled off a road and overturned.

Quake shakes Japan:

A moderate earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale shook northeastern Japan Sunday but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, the Meteorological agency said, reports AFP from Tokyo.

The epicenter of the quake, which occurred at 9:36 AM (0036 GMT), was some 80 kilometers (50 miles) underground of the coast of Fukushima prefecture, 200 km (125 miles) northeast of Tokyo, the agency said.

Mulroney to be replaced in June:

Canada's Conservative Party will choose a successor for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in a June 9-13 conference in Ottawa, the party announced Saturday, reports AFP from Ottawa.

Front runners include Defence Minister Kim Campbell, Environment Minister Jean Charest and Communications Minister Perrin Beatty.

The new leader of the Conservative Party will automatically replace Mulroney, whose popularity levels sank to record lows in the past year. He announced on February 24 that he was resigning.

Campbell, 45, is favoured to replace Mulroney, although polls taken before the announcement that he would resign showed that the Conservative Party ranked third overall nationally.

2m Ugandans may have HIV by '93:

More than 2 million Ugandans are likely to have the virus that causes AIDS by the end of this year, health authorities warned, reports AP from Kampala.

The Uganda AIDS Commission, a government organization that coordinates efforts to curb the spread of the deadly disease, sounded the warning Friday.

Dr Nelson Ssewankambo said the numbers would continue to rise if Ugandans did not make greater efforts to practice safe sex.

Ssewankambo said the number of people with the virus would more than double to 4.3 million in the next 20 years.

Tremors at Pinatubo:

Mount Pinatubo, whose eruption two years ago altered world weather patterns, rumbled with more than 30 quakes and scientists said Sunday tremors appeared to be growing stronger, reports AP from Manila.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology registered 27 high-frequency and six low frequency quakes at Pinatubo during the 12 hours ending at 6 am Sunday (2200 GMT Saturday).

In a statement, the institute said the low-frequency harmonic tremors recorded since last month, which indicate movement of magma toward the surface of the volcano, were stronger and on occasion approached maximum intensity.

The institute said it was unclear whether this would lead to a lava emission or an explosive eruption of the volcano, 110 kilometers (60 miles) north of Manila.

Earthquake rattles HK:

A strong earthquake struck early yesterday in the Santa Cruz Islands region, the royal observatory in Hong Kong said, the third major quake in the Southwestern Pacific Ocean within 24 hours, reports AFP from Hong Kong.

Rebecca Phipps, a spokeswoman for the US Geological Survey, said in Washington that there were no reports of casualties or damages in the sparsely populated islands.

Measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale, it followed a severe earthquake of 7.0 in the same region, about 2,100 kilometres (1,320 miles) northeast of Brisbane, Australia, early Saturday.

Another strong earthquake of 6.7 on the Richter scale was reported by the observatory Saturday some 1,070 kilometres (670 miles) southeast of Fiji, the observatory said. There were no immediate reports of any casualties from that quake, some 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles) from the Santa Cruz Islands.

7 more killed in Lankan violence

COLOMBO, Mar 7: Gunmen opened fire on a crowd near the Sri Lankan capital, wounding eight shoppers in the latest outburst of gang warfare that has killed seven people in a week, police said today, reports Reuters.

One of the victims of Saturday's shooting is in critical condition, police said.

The spate of violence began on Monday when four gang members armed with 9mm pistols entered a slum beside one of Colombo's canals and shot dead four men from a rival group.



JERUSALEM: Palestinian youths hurl rocks at Israeli border guards during heavy clashes in the Shawfat refugee camp on Saturday. Clashes erupted as a general strike was declared to commemorate the day of the "Islamic Jihad uprising in Palestine". — AFP/UNB photo

Proposals to close 30 US military installations

WASHINGTON, Mar 7: The Army, Navy and Air Force have presented Defense Secretary Les Aspin with suggestions for closing about 30 major military installations in the United States, senior Pentagon sources said Saturday, reports AP.

Aspin faces a March 15 deadline for deciding whether to accept, reject or modify the list and must send it to the Independent Base Closure Commission.

That independent panel will examine the proposed closures and hear testimony about them before deciding to accept or change the list by a June 30 deadline.

After examination by President Clinton, the final list goes to Congress, which must accept or reject it as a package.

The sources, speaking on condition they not be identified by name, said the military services are still negotiating with Aspin about the suggested closings. Therefore no final list will exist until Aspin reveals it.

The Navy is expected to take the biggest hit given that it had proposed "that more than a dozen major installations be closed and another half dozen be realigned", one source said. Realignment can mean reduction or shifting of military offices and assets to other military sites.

Some of the realignments would mean moving installations that are in high-cost urban areas to lower-cost federally owned sites in order to save rent and other expenses.

The Army offered up right to 10 bases for closing while

the Air Force suggested about half a dozen sites, the sources said.

The closure list is expected to incite major outrage on Capitol Hill and in the communities near which the bases are located.

But given Clinton plans to slash 122 billion dollar from defense over the coming years, such closures are deemed absolutely necessary. Clinton also wants to reduce the current 1.8 million dollar men and women in uniform to 1.4 million and cut 95,000 civilians from the 1 million non-uniformed workers in the Defense Department.

The closings are expected to begin within two years under the current service recommendations, the sources said.

UN Council takes resolution on Cambodia today

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 7: The UN Security Council will adopt a new resolution as early as Monday to support the electoral process in Cambodia, which culminates with May elections for a Constituent Assembly, reports AFP.

The announcement was made by Security Council President Terence O'Brien of New Zealand late Friday following consultations.

The resolution on Cambodia, O'Brien said, seeks to encourage the process already set in being by the Paris accords and to maintain everything on track in Cambodia with a view to the elections being held there in May.

The elections are scheduled to be held under UN supervision from May 23 to May 27.

China was expected to vote in favour of the draft resolution, which notes that the Security Council will confirm the results of the poll once they have been declared free and fair by the United Nations.

The draft resolution says the Security Council expresses its readiness to support fully the Constituent Assembly and the process of drawing up a constitution and establishing a new government for all Cambodia.

Collor, 6 others won't go to prison, says Attorney general

SAO PAULO, Mar 7: Deposed President Fernando Collor De Mello and six others accused in an influence-peddling scandal will not go to prison or be required to reimburse the state for any misused funds, the Attorney General said Saturday, reports AFP.

Attorney General Aristides Junqueira said the accused do not have criminal records and will therefore benefit from a law that concedes them a series of benefits.

Junqueira filed criminal charges with the supreme federal court against Collor, his former campaign Treasurer Paulo Cesar Farias, and six others accused in an influence-peddling scandal that forced Collor out of office December 29.

The Brazilian senate found Collor guilty of massive corruption in the case, in which millions of dollars in payoffs that Farias collected from businessmen were used to pay the president's personal expenses.

But speaking during a debate at the University of Sao Paulo, Junqueira said, I'm not going to fool people by saying that they will go to prison, because they won't. Junqueira said Collor, Farias and his accomplices will not be tried until 1994 because the Brazilian legal process is slow.

I think that the accused will be found guilty, charges are based on documented evidence, but they will not go to prison, he said.

Huambo falls to UNITA

LUANDA, Mar 7: The Angolan rebel movement UNITA said it had captured the central city of Huambo on Saturday after a bitter two-month battle which dominated the country's renewed civil war, reports Reuters.

UNITA said in a communique broadcast by its radio station Vorgan that the last government positions in Huambo was now in full control.

There was no immediate government reaction to the announcement, which if confirmed would be a major boost for UNITA.

Late-night news bulletins on state radio made no mention of the UNITA claim.

"After 55 days of fierce combat the city of Huambo has fallen to UNITA, said a rebel communique read out on

Vorgan.

The radio said the statement was signed by general Demostances Chilingutilla, UNITA's military commander in Huambo.

It is a Saturday night party. The Angolan people are celebrating the victory in Huambo, said an elated Vorgan radio announcer.

Diplomats said they would not be surprised if Huambo, Angola's second largest city in the central highlands, had fallen to UNITA.

Government forces there had been beaten back to a small area around the provincial governors' palace where they were exposed to heavy artillery bombardment, they added.

The garrison had been isolated for several weeks and President Jose Eduardo Dos

Santos told Reuters on Friday that the troops were being supplied only by airdrops.

A government military relief column has been inching towards Huambo from the coast since late January, but diplomats and aid workers said it was still more than 100 km (60 miles) away and was making slow progress.

Huambo has great political importance for UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) being the capital of the large Ovimbundo tribe which provides the backbone of UNITA's support.

Diplomats said the fall of Huambo would give UNITA a political boost which might tempt it back to peace negotiations from a position of strength.

Off the Record

Virginity is very attractive

BRUSSELS: Human rights campaigners urged the United Nations on Saturday to help stamp out a sex industry that traps increasing numbers of child victims each day.

"The situation is becoming more and more serious. More children are being sacrificed (in the sex industry)... quick action needs to be taken now," Wassyla Tamzali, head of the UN cultural body UNESCO's women's rights section, told Reuters.

Delegates to a conference in Brussels on the trafficking of women said a new UN convention was needed to tackle the world's oldest profession and replace inadequate, outdated UN policy on the subject.

Doctor Duong Quynh Hoa, head of the paediatrics, development and health centre in Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam, said children as young as 10 years old were sold for prostitution in Vietnam.

"Virginity is seen as something very attractive and alluring. The younger the better... don't think that children as young as three or four are out of this trade," she said.

13 year-old makes his babysitter pregnant

TOPEKA: A 13-year-old boy who got his 17-year old babysitter pregnant is liable for child support, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled, reports AP.

The court on Friday rejected Shane Sayer's appeal that he was legally unable to consent to sex because he was younger than 16. It ordered him to pay child support to Colleen Hermesmann for her 3-year-old child, Colleen.

"We conclude that the issue of consent to sexual activity under the criminal statutes is irrelevant in a civil action to determine paternity and for support of the minor child of such activity" the court said.

Shane's lawyers had claimed he could not be held liable for child support because he was unable to consent to sexual intercourse.

Life is wonderful.

PINTLALA: George Bush says life's been great since he left the White House, reports AP.

But things have been a "little different" since he and his wife, Barbara, moved back to Texas from Washington, the former president added.

"I make the coffee, Barbara makes the beds, and we're right back to square one where we got married when we were 20 years old," said Bush. "She does the cooking and I do the dishes and life is absolutely wonderful."

Bush spoke briefly at Pintlala Baptist Church on Saturday after participating in the Eagles of Angling tournament organized by Ray Scott, founder of the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society. The tournament was the fourth and final in a series that raised \$1 million for the church.

It was Bush's fifth trip to Alabama to fish in Scott's well-stocked, 55-acre (20-hectare) lake, and his first since losing the presidency. Scott's estate is about 15 miles (25 kilometers) south of Montgomery.

Bush declined to assess President Clinton's performance, and he only made a fleeting reference to politics.

"Some of my sophisticated friends in Washington, DC, I don't think quite understood the feeling I have for friends and sports and life," he said. "And I've concluded after having been president of the United States that it's family, friends and faith that mean everything."

Bush was one of about 45 fishermen participating in the tournament, with a minimum 5,000 dollar entry fee to raise money for the church.



7 more killed in Lankan violence

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The spate of violence began on Monday when four gang members armed with 9mm pistols entered a slum beside one of Colombo's canals and shot dead four men from a rival group.

Castro ready to negotiate life with US not revolution

HAVANA, Mar 7: Cuban President Fidel Castro has said that if the price for the United States to lift its economic embargo against Cuba is his departure from power, he would be ready to negotiate this with Washington, reports Reuters.

Fidel Castro would negotiate his life but he would never negotiate the revolution, socialism or the sovereignty of the nation. "Castro told ABC News's Diane Sawyer in an interview screened by Cuban Television on Friday night.

"If the price of the blockade (being lifted) was me, it would be very easy," he said. He was replying to public comments by US officials that a normalisation of US-Cuban relations would be difficult while he remained in power.

"Castro does not matter, he is ready to give his life for the revolution," said the 66-year-old President, who has led Cuba since the 1959 revolution.

But he questioned whether US President Bill Clinton would respect Cuba's socialist political

system if he left power. And he stressed any decision on his departure could not be taken by him alone, without consulting the nation.

The interview lasting more than two hours was the full version of a February 25 conversation with Sawyer, a brief part of which was shown by ABC in the US on Thursday night.

While Castro made clear he could not see a swift normalisation of communist-ruled Cuba's relations with the US, he displayed a friendly and open attitude towards Clinton.

I have no kind of personal conflict with Clinton it's a new administration, he said. He added the US President appeared to be intelligent, a man of peace and ethic and that he reminded him of the late President John F Kennedy.

He urged him to follow a world policy of peace and cooperation because the problems of the Third World cannot be solved by cannon fire.

Castro predicted Clinton would face pressure from right-wingers in his administration to maintain a hostile policy towards Cuba, including the economic embargo.

"The embargo is a kind of Gordian knot, as complex as it is cruel. I'm not sure Clinton has Alexander the Great's sword to be able to cut it," he added.

Fundamentalists kill 2 cops in Egypt

CAIRO, Mar 7: Suspected Muslim extremists on Saturday killed two policemen and wounded a third in separate clashes in southern Egypt, officials said, reports AP.

In Aswan, gunmen killed a policeman guarding a church and seriously wounded another before seizing the security men's weapons and fleeing, a police officer said.

In Assiut, a stronghold of Muslim extremists 200 miles (320 km) south of Cairo, another policeman, identified as Ahmed Ibrahim Mansour, died in a shootout with suspected extremists.