

International

Govt, UNITA agree to share power

ABIDJAN, Apr 17: Angola's government and UNITA rebels reached an agreement in principle to share power in the Southern African country and the head of the UNITA delegation said he believed a ceasefire was attainable, reports Reuters.

Jorge Valentim said specific posts would be negotiated later but would have to be positions of real influence. There are key Ministries... Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Interior Administration, all those posts.

Serbs asked to halt onslaught UNSC declares Srebrenica a haven for Bosnian Muslims

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 17: The Security Council has declared Srebrenica a haven for Muslim civilians, demanding that Bosnian Serbs halt their onslaught, reports AP.

The resolution approved by all 15 council members Friday included no enforcement provisions and served as little more than a threat. The council would meet immediately to tighten sanctions of the Serbs' sponsors in the Yugoslav republic of Serbia if Srebrenica falls, a Security Council ambassador said on condition of anonymity.

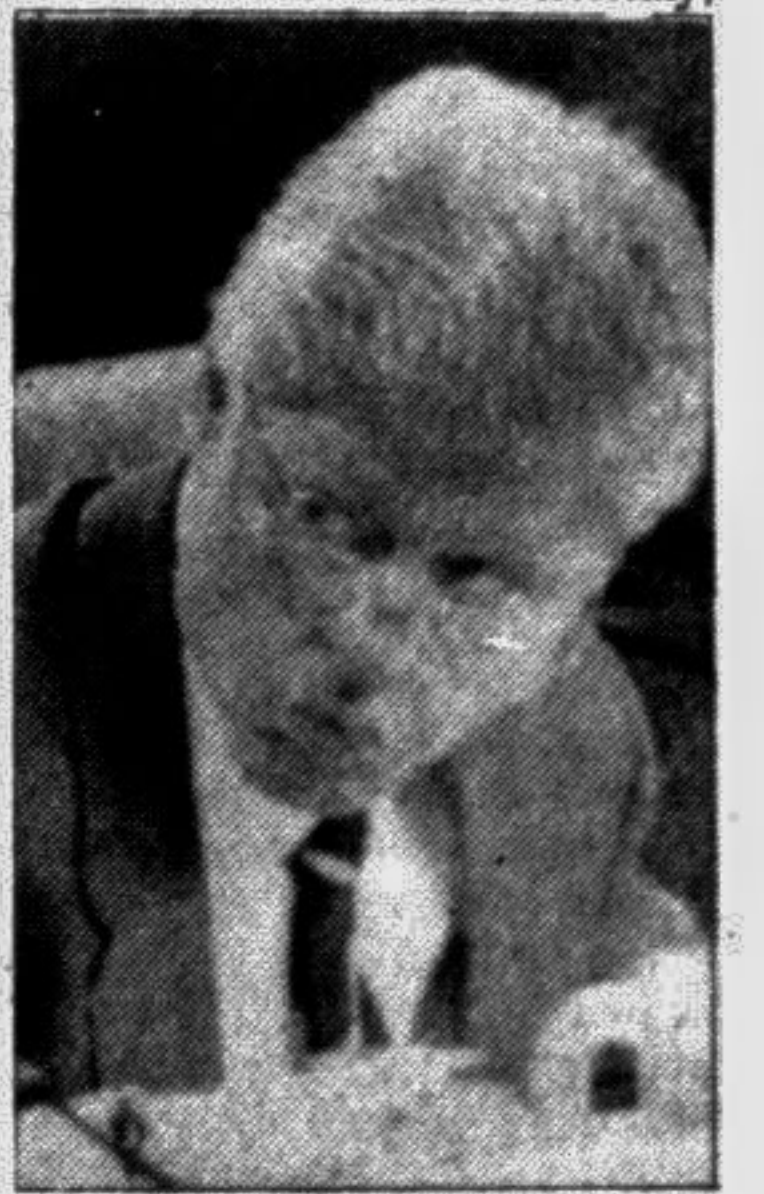
The UN decision-making body hoped that when the council passed the resolution 'the Bosnian Serbs (will) show restraint.' The United Nations, which has some 10,000 peacekeepers in Bosnia, has become increasingly frustrated at its inability to persuade Serbs to stop their advance in the eastern part of the republic in an attempt to bring all areas under Serb control.

UN officials reacted with uncharacteristically frank anger when Bosnian Serbs killed more than 50 civilians in Srebrenica with a ferocious artillery barrage Monday — minutes after their commander swore to respect a cease-fire. In recent weeks, a bid to ferry out Srebrenica's wounded by helicopter was disrupted by shelling, an attempt to bring in a French field hospital was refused, and the UN force commander in the republic, Maj. Gen. Philippe Morillon, was forced to turn back from an attempt to go to Srebrenica to stand in solidarity with civilians there.

Off the Record

He is behind gays

WASHINGTON: Gay and lesbian activists who met with President Clinton in the Oval Office described him as friendly, supportive and firm in his commitment to fight discrimination, reports AP. They said he was behind them in their struggles, even if he doesn't attend next week's gay rights march in Washington, and that he expressed confidence he will be able to get the ban on gays in the military overturned.



Lottery cancelled for gun symbol

WASHINGTON: Local lottery officials cancelled a 250,000 dollar drawing Friday after a Washington resident objected to having pistols pictured on the tickets, reports AP. Jon P Peterson complained in a letter published in The Washington Post last Monday that the gun symbol was not appropriate for a city 'sometimes called the murder capital of the nation.'

Yes, we've no bananas

WASHINGTON: Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa used humour and the lyrics of an old American song Friday to shrug off a recent comment by President Clinton that may have offended some Japanese, reports AP. Clinton was asked twice by Japanese reporters at the White House Friday to explain his comment to Russian President Boris Yeltsin that Japanese negotiators often say yes when they mean no.

They survived for six-day on chocolate bars

MOSCOW: Four British climbers survived for six days on chocolate bars and melted snow after they blundered down the wrong side of Europe's tallest mountain, reports Reuters. The group, looking thin and weather-worn but otherwise unharmed, told a news conference on Friday they started heading down the north face of Mt Elbrus to escape driving snow and biting 80 km per hour winds at the summit. But their adventure holiday turned into a nightmare when they lost radio contact with their base further down the south face of the mountain.

BRIEFLY

Bush ends Emirate trip: Former US President George Bush left Kuwait late Friday after a three-day visit and a hero's welcome as the Emirate's liberator from Iraqi occupation, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

Bush who was on his first visit to the Emirate, was awarded the mubarak medal, Kuwait's highest distinction, by its ruler Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah who praised him as the key player in the Liberation of Kuwait.

Pope gives \$3 lakh for Bosnians: Pope John Paul on Friday gave a 300,000 dollar cheque to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to help Bosnian war refugees, Reuters from Vatican City says.

A Vatican statement said the Pope had made the donation in response to an appeal from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for contributions to help victims of the war in Bosnia.

The Pope and Boutros-Ghali discussed the fighting in Bosnia, as well as conflicts in the Middle East and the Caucasus, during a 45-minute meeting, the Vatican said. It gave no details.

28 Palestinians shot at in Gaza: Israeli soldiers on Friday shot and wounded 28 Palestinians, two of them seriously, during clashes in the occupied Gaza City Strip, Palestinian sources said, reports AFP from Gaza.

The clashes erupted during demonstration to mark the fifth anniversary of the death of Palestine Liberation Organization official Khalil-al-Wazir known by his Nom 'De Guerre' as Abu Jihad.

The worst fighting occurred in Gaza City, where troops opened fire several times on youths throwing stones, the sources said.

CIA chief pays secret visit to Egypt: CIA Director R James Woolsey paid a secret visit to Egypt this week meeting with President Hosni Mubarak to discuss the extent of Iranian support for militant Islam in the region, official sources said Friday, AP reports from Washington.

Woolsey, who assumed office in February, was on an orientation tour of several Middle Eastern and European countries, including Israel and Italy, said one source who spoke only on condition of anonymity.

The CIA routinely declines to discuss the director's travels for reasons of security.

An official familiar with his tour said Woolsey was particularly interested in hearing Egyptian officials' assessment of the extent to which radical Islamic forces are gaining influence around the Middle East with the military and financial support of Iran.

Haitian army rejects US plan to restore democracy

HAITI, Apr 17: A UN mission to restore democracy to Haiti ended in failure Friday, with army chiefs rejecting a US backed plan, reports AP.

'We proposed a definitive solution of the Haitian crisis. Unfortunately, we did not get a positive answer', UN envoy Dante Caputo, an Argentine diplomat, told reporters at the airport at the end of four days of negotiations.

The situation is complicated, but with will and a co-operative spirit, a solution can be found', he said.

Looking drawn, he then boarded a jetliner to New York.

An army source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the military remained open to a slower-paced, negotiated solution.

The source said Caputo came to Haiti accompanied by American threats to cut air traffic to Haiti and mobilize 5,000 UN peacekeepers unless the army high command stepped down and let ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide return within 60 days.

The source said army chiefs did not believe Washington would follow through on the threats or that Aristide would carry out a promised amnesty to leaders of the military coup that overthrew him in September 1991.

Caputo said he would consult with the secretaries-general of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, which have sent more than 100 human rights observers to Haiti as a first step toward bringing back democracy.

But peace is nowhere to be found in Kabul.

Thai forces won't allow Cambodians to cross border

BANGKOK, Apr 17: Thai border forces have vowed to disarm any Cambodians and to push them back into their own country if they try to cross into Thailand, a news report said today, reports AFP.

Armed Services Chief of Staff Visit Arthumwong said no more Cambodians, either armed guerrillas or civilians, would be allowed to cross the Thai border, the English-language Bangkok Post reported.



A refugee holds her crying child on Friday in Lukavac, Bosnia as she narrates tales of horror after fleeing the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica. —AFP/UNB photo

Human Rights Group says 99 Kashmiris killed in police hands

SRINAGAR, India, Apr 17: A Kashmir-based human rights group on Friday said it had identified 99 people who were killed in police custody in the first three months of this year and added that the actual number of victims could be higher, reports Reuters.

The Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Movement comprising lawyers and independent Indian activists, said as many as 127 Kashmiris may have died while in police hands between January and March and another 36 have been killed so far in April.

Police in Srinagar, summer capital of India's Jammu and Kashmir state on Friday returned three bullet-riddled bodies of youngmen to their relatives saying they were Muslim militants killed in an encounter with Indian security forces.

The relatives, attending a funeral for the three, said two of the dead were militants of the pro-Pakistan Hezb-Ul-Mujabdeen and the third a government employee.

They said all three were captured by police on Thursday and shot dead in custody.

Meanwhile, six people were shot dead by Indian troops on the India-Pakistan ceasefire line in the north western Kupwara sector of Kashmir. Police said the six youths were returning after training at a camp in Pakistan for anti-Indian guerrillas.

Pakistan denies regular Indian charges that it trains and arms anti-Indian militants. Alleged custody deaths have been at the heart of separatist violence since last week.

Today, hundreds of protesters flooded Lal Chowk and burned down a building being used as a barracks. Fighting erupted between militants and security forces and dozens of houses and shops were burned.

Residents alleged the security forces doused them with petrol and set them ablaze. The government has promised an inquiry.

Police said at least 36 people were killed over the weekend. They put the toll since the beginning of April at about 120 in a major surge of violence in a rebellion that has cost some 11,500 lives according to police and hospital reports, since Muslim separatists launched an open revolt in 1990.

On Tuesday, paramilitary police used batons, tear gas and shots in the air to disperse hundreds of demonstrators alleging that five people, whose bodies were taken to police headquarters by security forces, had been killed in custody.

India acknowledges that some human rights abuses have occurred, but it says those found guilty have been punished and that most of the charges are militant propaganda.

Major international human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Asia Watch, however, have backed Kashmiri allegations of murder, torture and rape by the security forces.

Fresh vow to ensure CIS future

MINSK, Belarus, April 17: Leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, thrown onto the defensive by political turmoil in Russia, its largest member state, made new pledges to ensure the grouping's future, reports Reuters.

'Rumours of the collapse of the commonwealth have been fully dispersed,' Russian television said after a one-day CIS summit on Friday in Minsk, the Belarus capital.

Commonwealth leaders put economic, military and political differences behind them to throw their weight behind Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his free market economic reforms.

'What happened matched my expectations,' Yeltsin told a news conference. Everybody said, 'we need the CIS.'

Yeltsin, one of eight leaders at the summit, faces a tough battle on April 25 when a referendum asks Russia's 107 million voters if they support him and his reforms.

He arrived in Minsk after being laughed out of court by Moscow industrialists when he claimed that his government was succeeding in fighting inflation.

He left with unexpected support from fellow commonwealth heads, some of them clearly afraid that defeat for the Russian leader could create even more tensions with Russia and lead to attempts to rebuild the Soviet Union in some form.

Armenian fighters bomb two Azeri towns

MOSCOW, Apr 17: Three Armenian fighter aircraft bombed the towns of Fizuli and Agdam in the South and east of Azerbaijan Friday, while land clashes left a number of people dead and wounded, Itar-Tass reported, says AFP.

Attacks by an MIG-23, a MIG-25 and a SU-25 were followed by land attacks by Armenian troops on the two towns, the agency reported from the Azerbaijani capital Baku.

The attack on the region of Fizuli, which Armenian forces have been trying to seize control of for the last few days, was repulsed by Azerbaijani fighters, the agency said.

The agency, monitored by the BBC in London, said the Armenian forces suffered casualties and lost equipment.

'When we entered the city, all of Baku was under our control. If we had wanted to capture power, we could have,' said Defense Minister Ahmed Shah Masood, whose forces joined with rebel Communist soldiers to bring down the Soviet-installed regime.

'But we didn't want to monopolize power. All those who fought in the war against the Communists had a right to participate in ruling Afghanistan,' Masood said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

But not all rebel groups seem interested in peaceful coexistence.

The hardest-hit area, western Kabul, is engulfed in suburban warfare between Shiite and Sunni factions that have

inflicted damage with more verve than they ever mustered against the Communists.

The warring factions have been encouraged by Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, the three Islamic countries that provided the financial, military and moral support for the rebels during the war. Those countries now are competing to become the dominant force in the neighbouring Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union.

And thousands of foreign Muslim militants who came to Afghanistan to help fight the invading Soviet army have emerged even more militant. They are determined to use Afghanistan as a base to carry Islamic fundamentalism to other parts of the world.

Pak ulemas protest crackdown on Arabs

ISLAMABAD, Apr 17: A grouping of Pakistani religious parties staged rallies in several major towns Friday to protest a recent crackdown on Arabs living in the northwestern region bordering Afghanistan, reports AFP.

The Muttahida Ulema Council organised the demonstration after Friday prayers and witnesses put the number of participants at several hundred in the cities of Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar.

Sources in Peshawar, capital of North West Frontier Province, said the operation had slowed down after more than 200 Arabs were rounded up.

Ninety eight Arabs were detained when they could not produce valid papers, while the rest were released.

The operation was lunched in response to reports that Arabs, who had participated in the 14-year anti-communist war in Afghanistan, were abetting terrorist activities in Pakistan.

No official figures were given about the number of people still being held in custody.

It was also not clear whether those in custody for staying illegally in the country would be deported.

Speaking to a rally in Peshawar, the provincial chief of the fundamentalist Jamaat-Islami (JI) party, Maulana Gohar Rahman, demanded that the government call off the operation immediately.

The new government, led by new Prime Minister Abdoulaye Sekou Sow, includes among its 22 ministers, members of two parties previously in opposition. The previous government in this former French colony consisted of 19 ministers from five parties.

President Alpha Oumar Konare named Sow as Prime Minister Monday, two days after the collective resignation of the government of Younouss Toure.

Living with gun has become a way of life in Afghanistan

KABUL, Apr 17: Life in the war-scarred streets of the capital seems so surreal, as children fly their kites in the weed-infested parks, their laughter drowned by the bursts of nearby machine-gun fire, reports AP.

New govt formed in Mali

BAMAKO, Apr 17: Mali's Presidency Friday unveiled a new government after the resignation of the previous administration in the wake of violent student demonstrations in Bamako, reports AFP.

Living with gun has become a way of life in Afghanistan

Euphoria followed the Muslim rebels' victory over the Communist rulers in the 'holy war' that started with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. But the glue of Islamic righteousness that held the resistance together before the Red Army withdrew in 1989 quickly came apart. Hopes for peace were dashed by the bombs and bullets that led to more destruction and bloodshed in Kabul in one year than during the entire 14-year civil war. More than 5,000 people are dead, 20,000 have been injured and nearly 1 million people — half of Kabul's population — have fled to safer ground. Homes, shops and mosques have been destroyed. Kidnapping, looting, rape and armed robbery are common. Schools and universities remain closed and the country's best doctors, lawyers and teachers have left. Despite a dozen cease-fires and endless promises to share power, the nine top rebel leaders appear no closer to peace than they were on April 28, 1992, the day the Communist surrendered power. 'Living with the gun has become a way of life,' said Saeed Habib, a 23-year-old rebel soldier manning a checkpoint at Kabul's southern entrance. For thousands of years, Afghanistan was one of the great crossroads of Asia. Mighty imperial armies, nomadic tribes and camel caravans crisscrossed its deserts and mountains in search of riches and religion. Today, Afghanistan lies in ruins, drifting into anarchy, isolation and backwardness. Farms, vineyards and terraced hillside fields have reverted back to wilderness, littered with millions of mines that will take decades to clear. Kabu, is a microcosm of a country in which the fragile ethnic and tribal patchwork is quickly unraveling. A mile-high (1.5-kilometer-high) city is divided among the well-armed, rival rebel factions fighting for a greater share of power and territory. The invisible boundaries shift daily. Innocent people are snatched off the streets by sentries who simply didn't like the way they dressed, their facial features or the way they pronounced certain words. 'When we entered the city, all of Kabul was under our control. If we had wanted to capture power, we could have,' said Defense Minister Ahmed Shah Masood, whose forces joined with rebel Communist soldiers to bring down the Soviet-installed regime. 'But we didn't want to monopolize power. All those who fought in the war against the Communists had a right to participate in ruling Afghanistan,' Masood said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. But not all rebel groups seem interested in peaceful coexistence. The hardest-hit area, western Kabul, is engulfed in suburban warfare between Shiite and Sunni factions that have