

Bosnian army threatens to use chlorine gas against Serbs

SARAJEVO, June 20: Senior Bosnian army officers threatened Saturday to use chlorine gas against Serbian troops advancing on the Muslim enclave of Tuzla, but the latest ceasefire appeared largely to be holding, reports AFP.

The command of the Bosnian army second corps in Tuzla, northeastern Bosnia,

sent the warning to the UN Security Council, Radio Sarajevo reported.

It set a deadline for the Serbian move against Tuzla to stop by 8:00 am (0600 GMT) today and called for more UN troops to enter Gorazde, another area declared "safe" by the United Nations but the scene of fierce recent fighting.

"We will use the ultimate means for ending the war and thus put an end to both our suffering," the Bosnian army officers warned, according to the radio.

Bosnian Muslims control large chemical factories in Tuzla, where up to 200,000 people are surrounded by Serb troops.

A 10-truck convoy bound for Gorazde will leave Belgrade today and is expected to arrive Monday in the besieged town, 50 kilometres (30 miles) southeast of Sarajevo, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) delegate Tony Land said.

It was only Wednesday that the Serbs let UN military observers enter the enclave, but Land said Serb authorities had finally agreed to a safe convoy route from the north of Gorazde through the town of Rogatica, after proposing an "unsafe" route where there was shelling Friday.

There was mortar fire Saturday in Sarajevo, apparently from Muslim Bosnian army positions towards besieging Serbs, eyewitnesses said.

Meanwhile, Reuter says from London, Muslims in Britain should be given military training to defend themselves against a repetition of the war in Bosnia, a British Muslim leader said on Saturday.

Kalim Siddiqui, leader of the self-styled Muslim parliament of Great Britain, said: "This house must consider ways and means of giving our young men and women training in the art and science of defence."

He told a special session of the parliament called to discuss the Bosnian war: "What has happened in Bosnia will, as certainly as night follows day, happen in other parts of Europe."

Rescind immigration law, protesters demand in France

PARIS, June 20: Thousands of people marched through the streets of Paris and towns across France Saturday demanding that controversial legislation aimed at stemming the tide of immigration be rescinded, reports AFP.

Police said 9,000 demonstrated in Paris against the measures drawn up by Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, but journalists on the scene put the number at more than 20,000.

Demonstrations also took place in some 20 towns and cities in the provinces, including Toulouse, Saint-Etienne, Marseille, Lille and Strasbourg.

The demonstrators held aloft banners reading "down with police thugs and fascist killers" and "1793: Rights of man, 1993: Judicial apartheid."

About 100 organisations called for the demonstrations, including anti-racist groups, immigrant support groups, foreigners' associations, trade unions and left-wing parties.

Unlike recent demonstrations against racism which generally drew immigrants onto the streets, Saturday's demonstrations were marked by the presence of large numbers of native French men and women.

On Friday the National Assembly adopted by 480 votes to 88 a bill which will introduce severe restrictions for foreigners wishing to stay in

France.

Under the measures which will be introduced by the new law, police will be able to check a person's identity for any reason apart from his race, and officials will be able to refer suspicious cases of marriages to the authorities, who have to rule on the matter within 15 days.

250 Somali 'boat people' arrive in Yemen

ADEN (Yemen), June 20: Some 250 Somali "boat people" have recently arrived in Yemen seeking refuge and none of them are followers of fugitive warlord Mohamed Farah Aideded, a UN official said today.

Carlos Zaccagnini told AFP the Somalis arrived in Aden aboard small boats after a five-day trip.

Reports that some of them are partisans of General Aideded are totally unfounded, Zaccagnini, the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

Tawfik Wannas, another UNHCR official told AFP that 100 of the Somalis were temporarily settled in refugee camps in an Aden suburb.

The UNHCR "will examine ways of assisting the refugees," he said.

BRIEFLY

Diarrhoea takes 90 Indonesians:

At least 90 people in Indonesia's easternmost province of Irian Jaya have died from diarrhoea in the last month, a news report said Sunday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The Daily Media Indonesia quoted a local official Yusuf Adipata as saying that the outbreak had affected nine villages since mid-May.

Adipata said the outbreak claimed many lives because of lack of medicines and limited transportation to the stricken areas.

The head of the Irian Jaya Health Office Slamet HS criticized local officials for failing to report the outbreak to his office promptly.

7 Sikh militants killed:

Seven militants were killed and a suspected extremist was captured in Punjab since last night, police said Saturday, reports PTI from Chandigarh.

Three militants belonging to the Babbar Khalsa International outfit were killed in an encounter with the police near village Bibba near Mukisar in Faridkot district Sunday. One of them was identified as Ghanvander Singh who was wanted in 15 cases of killings, extortions and snatching of vehicles.

Faridkot district Police Chief, Mr M K Twari, told PTI, the security forces acting on a tip off intercepted a group of militants who were planning to kill the families of some police personnel in village Thardwala. In the chase and exchange of fire that ensued three militants were killed.

6 Palestinians shot in Gaza:

Israeli troops Saturday shot and wounded five Palestinian women and a child in a market place on the occupied Gaza Strip as they chased stone-throwing demonstrators, Palestinian sources said, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The soldiers opened fire to flush out the stone-throwers who ran away and hid in the market place of Jabalia refugee camp, they said. The army sent reinforcements to prevent further trouble after the women and child were shot.

The sources said 18 Palestinians had been wounded by army gunfire on the Gaza Strip since Friday night.

Egypt to control foreign mail:

The Egyptian authorities have decided to control all foreign mail as part of a crackdown on Muslim fundamentalists unrest, an Interior Ministry official said Saturday, AFP reports from Cairo.

"We have found out that terrorists are receiving instructions to carry out attacks in letters mailed from abroad," the officials said.

In May the authorities decided to restrict telephone and telefax links from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Sudan, as part of the campaign to combat Islamic militants.

Iraqi to die in Kuwait:

The Kuwaiti Security Court Saturday condemned to death an Iraqi for collaborating with the Iraqi authorities during the occupation of the Emirate and acquitted a Kuwaiti man, court sources said, AFP reports from Kuwait.

Walid Jassem Mahdi Al-Majeed, 38, was found guilty of having informed the Iraqi authorities on members of the Kuwait resistance, the sources said.

Kuwaiti Ahmad Al-Hamad, 23, was acquitted.

The Security Court has issued 21 death sentences since February in ongoing trials targeting suspects accused of collaborating with Iraqi forces during the August 1990-February 1991 occupation of Kuwait.

Pak spy held in New Delhi:

A Pakistani spy who has alleged links with Sikh and Muslim separatists in India was arrested in New Delhi as he was on his way to Nepal the New Delhi police said Saturday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Mohammed Sharif, 33, was caught late Friday at the main railway station shortly before he was to leave for the northern Indian town of Gorakhpur, Delhi Police Commissioner Mukund Kaushal told reporters.

AI urges UN to monitor violence in Germany

KIEL, Germany, June 19: Amnesty International has called for the United Nations to station an observer in Germany as police said today that another arson attack on an asylum-seekers hostel injured two foreigners, reports AFP.

The two foreigners were hospitalised with slight injuries after unidentified arsonists used an inflammable liquid to set fire to a hostel in Raifordt, near this North German city, at about 3 am (0100 GMT), police said.

Police were not sure of the injured persons' nationalities, but said one had hurt himself when jumping out of a window to escape the fire, and the other had suffered from smoke inhalation.

Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sanz, said the "rise of racism in Europe and the police's abuse of powers" warranted the United Nations' appointing an observer to Germany to monitor the increasing violence against foreigners, according to an article to be published in Der Spiegel magazine Monday.

The Berliner Zeitung newspaper said today that an arson attack in Solingen on May 29 which killed five Turks had encouraged rather than discouraged violence by rightwing extremists.

Twenty-eight arson attacks have been committed in the two weeks after the Solingen firebombing in comparison



A relative of four-year old Darjan Jovanovic, killed several days ago in a bombardment, kisses his grave marker during a funeral at the Lion's cemetery in Sarajevo Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

Iraq to allow installation of cameras if UN considers lifting embargo

BAGHDAD, June 20: Iraq said on Saturday it was ready to reconsider its position and allow the United Nations to install surveillance cameras at two missile test sites if the world body agreed to examine lifting international sanctions against the country, reports AFP.

The Iraqi delegation at the United Nations, in a statement carried by the official INA news agency, also dismissed a warning issued Friday by the Security Council.

On Friday, the UN Security Council accused Iraq of continuing to violate UN Gulf war ceasefire resolutions and warned that failure to comply

could have serious consequences.

It issued the warning after hearing a report by the head of the special committee charged with disarming Iraq, Rolf Ekeus.

The Iraqi statement said that the warning was based on 'allegations' made by Ekeus.

Ekeus complained of Baghdad's de facto refusal to let international experts install monitoring devices at rocket test sites and to transport chemical weapons-related equipment to a designated site for destruction.

The Iraqi delegation said Baghdad had cooperated with UN resolutions and the

country for the time being, he said.

The team, which arrived June 4 in Baghdad, is led by Nikita Smidovich of Russia. It delayed its departure last week.

Smidovich on Friday described the situation as 'very serious.'

The United Nations said the cameras are needed to check that Baghdad is not producing missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres (90 miles), in keeping with the ceasefire terms of the Gulf war.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is to meet Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister on Tuesday.

'9th round of ME talks worst'

WASHINGTON, June 20: Palestinian negotiators are accusing the White House of siding with Israel in the midweek peace talks here and undermining their bargaining strength, reports AFP.

President Bill Clinton's administration has been far from impartial, said an official with the Palestinian delegation to the tenth round of the peace talks.

"The change of administration has been very bad for us," he said privately.

"We are not so naive as to think the Americans would be impartial, but we did believe they would try to keep a balance between us and the Israelis," he said.

Palestinian spokeswoman Hannan Ashrawi said, "The Americans who said they would act as partners in the whole peace process completely went over to the Israeli side at the ninth round of talks," from 27 April to 13 May.

The ninth session was the worst," the Palestinian source said.

"We agreed to take part because the Americans made us a

number of promises, but they hardly kept any of them."

He said, Washington promised that Palestinians expelled from the occupied territories since 1967, or those expelled in December, would be allowed to return and that elderly and ill prisoners would be released.

Also, the United States vowed to play an active, but impartial role in the talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the source said.

Palestinian-US relations fell into crisis after the ninth round of talks.



JAKARTA: President Suharto (L) displays UNESCO's Avicenna gold medal he just received from UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor (R) for his outstanding contribution to education development, at the Istana Negara Palace Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

Winnie criticises multi-party democracy talks

JOHANNESBURG, June 20: Winnie Mandela, estranged wife of ANC President Nelson Mandela, on Saturday criticised multi-party democracy talks, saying they were discredited and unrepresentative of black South Africans, reports AFP.

"I am not opposed to negotiations in principle, but I am opposed to the selling of my people in the name of negotiations," Mandela, newly-elected chairperson of the powerful Civic Association Black Township Residents, told a Metalworkers Union Congress.

I am still the President, says Elchibey

BAKU, June 20: Azerbaijan's President Abulfaz Elchibey, who fled his capital as army rebels closed in, has defiantly declared he is still in charge of the country, reports Reuter.

"I am in touch with the situation in the country and I am still the President," Elchibey told reporters on Saturday in a town in Nakhichevan enclave where he took refuge on Friday.

The former nationalist dissident, elected President of the oil-producing trans-Caucasian state a year ago, fled Baku by helicopter after two weeks of advances across the country by army rebels bent on forcing his resignation.

Off the Record

Child resembles gorilla

SRINAGAR (Rajasthan): A freak child looking like a gorilla was born at a private maternity home here, reports PTI.

The child had double the size of normal head, big eyes, long hands touching his knees and long black hair on back.

It was a case of still birth and early delivery—only six months old.

Cardiff Singer of the World

CARDIFF, Wales: Danish soprano Inger Dam-Jensen was voted Cardiff Singer of the World on Saturday, beating four other international finalists to take the prize in the Welsh capital, reports Reuter.

The 29-year-old singer's victory was the climax of a week-long contest in which competitors from 25 countries fought out a battle of operatic arias.

Dam-Jensen, a member of the Royal Danish Opera, received a trophy, 5,000 pounds (7,500 dollar) and a recital contract. She performed pieces by Richard Strauss and Mozart, completing her 20-minute performance with Handel's "Let the Bright Seraphim" prize of 1,000 pounds (1,500 dollar) for his lieder singing.

Among the seven-member judging panel were Australian soprano Dame Joan Sutherland, US Mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne and French Baritone Gerard Souzay.

Crawford's Oscar Award sold

NEW YORK: The only Oscar Awarded to Hollywood legend Joan Crawford in her 45-year career was sold to a private collector at auction on Saturday for 68,500 dollar, the first such sale of an academy award presented to a major star, reports Reuter.

The Oscar was awarded to the late actress for her performance as a housewife who turns into a successful businesswoman in the 1945 film "Mildred Pierce."

The sale by Christie's auction house was for five times the pre-sale estimate of 8,000 to 12,000 dollars.

The sale of the Oscar statuette is frowned upon by the Academy of the Motion Picture, Arts and Sciences. The academy's President Karl Malden said last year that the awards "should not become objects of mere commerce."

Crawford's Oscar was part of a wide range of items from her estate including congratulatory telegrams, personal effects and bound scripts of a number of her films.

The "Mildred Pierce" script, based on the novel by James M. Cain, had been estimated to fetch 200 to 400 dollar and sold for 7,475.

"The interest in the property from the estate of Joan Crawford has been tremendous," head of Christie's collectibles department, Joshua Akr said.

Sun rotation proportional to sunspot activity

WASHINGTON: New research suggests that the more sunspots the sun has, the faster it spins, according to findings released on Thursday, reports Reuter.

"This is the strongest evidence so far that the rate of rotation varies and that it is related to sunspot activity," Martin Woodard, a research fellow in Astrophysics at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, told Reuters.

Woodard found that at the peak of sunspot activity, the high latitudes of the sun rotated about 20 miles (32 km) per hour faster than when the sun had low sunspot activity, during which time it rotated at about 2,000 miles (3,219 km) an hour. In any heavenly body, the velocity of rotation varies according to latitude.

Sunspots, which when viewed from earth appear as small dark patches, come and go in 11-year cycles, with the number of sunspots creating midway through the cycle.

Pak customs arrest 2 heroin smugglers

KARACHI, June 20: Pakistani customs authorities arrested a Kenyan woman and a Tanzanian man trying to smuggle heroin out of the country on flights to Nairobi, officials said today, reports AFP.

The woman, identified as Zainab Kassam, was arrested at Karachi airport after customs officers, acting on a tip-off, found 13.5 kilograms (29.7 pounds) of heroin concealed in her hand luggage, the customs officials said.

The Tanzanian, identified as Umer Rashid, was also arrested at the airport Saturday trying to board a Nairobi-bound flight with 400 grams (14.1 oz.) of heroin, they said.

West points at Islamic fundamentalism as global threat

LONDON, June 20: Across the western world, the finger is pointed at a supposed new threat to global security that is taking over from central Asia to Algeria, from the streets of Paris to the deserts of Sudan: Islamic fundamentalism, reports IPS.

But many Muslim commentators and Third World analysts argue that the hysteria of the media and certain governments create a dangerously false impression about Islam in general and Islamic fundamentalism in particular.

Fundamentalism is growing, they say, but this is due more to the spread of poverty and the social disaffection it breeds than any master plan for world domination hatched in Tehran.

It is important to define the term fundamentalism, says Zaki Badawi, Chairperson of the Imams and Mosques Council in London. In many countries, government choose to label rebellion as fundamentalism.

Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, rejected that Iran was stirring up Muslim fundamentalism unrest, but he said his country would continue to support "Muslim causes" around the world.

"People in Egypt, Algeria, Sudan and other Muslims elsewhere cannot be separated from Islam," he said.

Badawi and others say Islamic radicalism is a home-grown problem—an expression of revolt against repres-

sive, and often corrupt governments that are failing to attack poverty. They say its adherents speak out against the developed world's policies in their countries that contribute to the preservation of inequality.

"There has been a general failure of the Third World to right itself in the post-colonial period," says Abdel Salam, a consultant on Sudan for the London-based human rights organisation "Africa Watch."

"This failure has created a lot of economic and social problems and life has become very difficult for the people of these countries," he adds.

Fundamentalism as an ideology has grown out of this weakening.

At present, 1.1 billion people— one-fifth of the world's population— live in absolute poverty, earning less than 420 US dollar a year. In many of these countries, fundamentalism of every sort—not just Islamic—has struck roots.

A report issued in mid-March by the British Aid Organisation Action also says the figures for people in absolute poverty is overruling population growth and could reach 1.5 billion by the year 2000.

But absolute poverty is not an automatic precursor to religious extremism, say political analysts, explaining that the equation is more complicated, says Middle East expert Eberhard Kinler. Fundamentalism emerges

among the economic losers in society. They're not necessarily people living in absolute poverty, but they feel they're losing out economically.

Once fundamentalism takes root, governments of the world move in to target it as a threat. Yet the key difference between religious influence over political life and political influence over religious life is being deliberately misrepresented.

If we analyse what the western press affirms every day, says Tunisian analyst Fawzi Mellah, "we discover that it wants to create a great Muslim demon to confound and frighten public opinion."

He adds that as part of this propaganda campaign, often

fuelled by simple ignorance and prejudice, the expressions 'Islamic integralism'— as developing in Sudan and Egypt—and Islamic fundamentalism are being used as though they were synonymous.

"Integralism is a religious theory according to which Islam must be understood as a whole and not in a partial way," says Mellah. "It is a theological doctrine which has nothing to do with the political position of the believers."

Mellah describes fundamentalism as a right-wing political position that uses the doctrines of Mohammed (peace be him) "to see to it that the world... lives according to the social formulae of the 7th century."

Bus mishap takes 28 in Brazil

SAO PAULO, June 20: Twenty-eight people, including five children, have died in the worst accident in the history of the super-highway linking Sao Paulo to Rio De Janeiro, Brazil's Globo TV reported on Saturday, says Reuter.

The accident, which took place on Friday night outside Sao Paulo, occurred when a truck crossed a dividing line of the highway and slammed into the side of a commuter bus.

A total of 28 people, including the driver of the truck, were killed instantly, Globo said. Another three people are in hospital, still unconscious, and may not survive, Globo said.