

High-powered body in Lanka to lead war against LTTE

COLOMBO, Sept 6: Sri Lankan President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga today made key changes in the military command structure and set up a high-powered committee to lead the war against separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas, reports AFP.

Wijetunga disbanded the Joint Operations Command (JOC) which earlier coordinated the drive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and had powers overriding chiefs of the army, navy, air-force and police.

A two-page statement from the Presidential Secretariat said the changes were in line with the "reorganisation of the defence establishment" ordered by Wijetunga who is also Defence Minister and Commander-in-Chief of armed forces.

The head of the JOC General Hamilton Wanasinghe was promoted new Defence Secretary replacing Walter

Fernando, a former airforce chief who resigned today due to "personal reasons," the statement said.

The JOC itself is to be replaced by a small unit under the Ministry of Defence and the war effort against the LTTE would be led by a "Defence Coordinating Committee (DCC)" headed by Wanasinghe.

The DCC will include heads of the armed forces, police chief, head of Elite Special Task Force Commandos and the head of the National Intelligence Bureau, the statement said.

The Defence Coordinating Committee will be responsible for preparing strategic plans and providing for the strategic direction of the armed services, police and the special task force," the statement said.

A senior defence official said the changes were aimed at decentralising powers and allowing a greater involvement in service commanders in the drive against the LTTE.

BRIEFLY

US diplomat shot in Mogadishu:

A US diplomat with the US Liaison Office in Mogadishu was shot Sunday, a State Department official said, AFP reports from Washington.

The diplomat was taken to a hospital but his injury was not life-threatening, the official said, adding that he was shot while riding in a vehicle. The identity of the diplomat was not immediately available.

Riot erupts at British prison: A riot erupted at a British prison early yesterday and prisoners lit fires, smashed windows and destroyed furniture, the Press Association news agency reported, Reuter says from London.

More than 100 police rushed to Wymott prison, near Leyland in northern England. The agency said there had been no reports of injuries and no prisoners had escaped.

Some inmates climbed on to the roof of the modern prison, which houses 750 prisoners.

Police and prison officers surrounding the prison and deployed in the grounds were trying to bring the disturbance under control.

2,141 get Amnesty in Iran: Iran's spiritual guide Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday pardoned or cut the prison terms of 2,141 prisoners to mark the anniversary of the birth of Prophet Mohammad (SM), IRNA news agency reported, AFP says from Tehran.

The decree was issued at the request of the Chief Justice, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, it said.

Road mishap kills 6 in Java: A train rammed into a car at an unguarded railway crossing in Central Java, killing a family of six, the Kompas Daily reported yesterday, AFP says from Jakarta.

The car, carrying the Suhartono family from Kendal, Central Java province, was using a railway crossing in west of provincial capital Semarang on Sunday, when the train, from Jakarta, rammed into it, the daily said.

It said Suhartono, his wife, their three children and a maid were killed.

Quake hits Indonesian island: An earthquake measuring six on the open-ended Richter scale has jolted the eastern Indonesian island of Flores, a meteorological official in Jakarta said yesterday, Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The earthquake occurred at sea off Maumere, 1,800 km (1,120 miles) east of Jakarta, in the early hours of Sunday. There were no reports of damage or casualties.

Last December an earthquake and tidal wave killed more than 2,000 people, most of them in Maumere.

48 police officers hurt in Egyptian prison riot

CAIRO, Sept 6: Forty-eight police officers were injured on Sunday when Islamic militant inmates rioted in an Egyptian prison, police said, reports AFP.

The riot erupted when police arrived at Abu Zaabal prison in a northern Cairo suburb and tried to transfer 200 inmates to another prison, police said.

Some 1,300 Islamic militants at the prison ripped out cell bars and threw objects at the police outside the prison building, preventing them from entering and injuring 48 of them, including one seriously.

Security forces retaliated by lobbing tear gas canisters and firing shots into the air.

On August 28 a fight between political and common law prisoners broke out in which three inmates were killed, including a Coptic Christian and

an Islamic militant.

Interior Minister Hassan Alfi said earlier that the government plans to intensify its struggle against Islamic fundamentalists who have been waging terror campaign against the secular authorities.

General Alfi, who was wounded in an August 18 assassination attempt by Muslim extremists, was quoted by the local press Sunday as saying security forces would soon launch a "decisive and disastrous" series of operations "to counter terrorism."

He did not provide any details.

The suicide bomb attack against Alfi left five people dead and 17 wounded. He was wounded in the arm and underwent surgery in a Swiss hospital.

— AFP photo

A revised new shorter Oxford English Dictionary replacing the old 1973 edition is about to roll of the presses with a host of words unknown in the era of the Beatles and Moon-landings, when computers were often bulky machines and a mouse was still just a rodent.

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Publisher (Oxford University Press) bills its work as "the fullest general dictionary of contemporary English" and "The dictionary publishing even of

the decade" after 13 years of research and a three million pound (4.5 million dollar) investment.

But this is no pocket reference book for the poor speller, coming in two fat volumes containing 7.5 million words of text and costing 60 pounds (90 dollar) for the basic set and 70 pounds (105 dollar) for one with a thumb index.

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American street slang, the vocabulary of the disease AIDS, and political fashions like free-market Thatcherism and Reaganomics all make a first appearance among the 500,000

entries in the modern lexicon to be launched on September 7.

"I think that you would find that in the 70s edition there was a very narrow range of words that were new to the post-war world. The bulk of the dictionary reflected a taking-stock of language before the middle of the century," said lexicographer Edmund Weiner who worked on the dictionary.

Traditionalists who regard Oxford English as a standard of gentility may be shocked to find a wide selection of derogatory terms — dweeb (boringly conventional, puny or studious person), scuzz (unpleasant person), gonzo (crazy person), plonker (foolish or inept person) and many more.

There may be some criticism but this reveals an un-

awareness that all current dic-

tionaries include a wide range of slang," said Weiner in an interview. "If you describe language in its current form you have to describe all of it, not decide what is good English and bad English."

But the new word which has really captured Britain's imagination is not an insult, at least not a bad one.

Majorism, defined as the political and economic policies of

British Prime Minister John Major, drew hoots of laughter from newspaper critics who said the explanation was as bland and ineffectual as the British leader's political agenda.

The Independent newspaper

has challenged readers to come up with a better definition of the word, offering a first prize of a trip to Maastricht, the Dutch town where the European Community (EC) drew up its

blueprint for closer union.

Surprisingly, Maastricht does not appear in the dictionary although the much-publicised policy of subsidiarity, the idea of devolving power from EC bureaucrats in Brussels to local level wherever possible, does find a place.

Readers' suggestions for Majorism include, "Morbid love if indecision and false promises," "form of genteel prevarication in politics" and "a nervous disease causing the sufferer to imagine themselves as a world statesman whilst everyone else considers them a standing joke."

Real dictionary entries reflect

a world where science and technology have made laptop a household word and given technical terms like quark, a subatomic particle, some common currency.

Punk, rock and grunge (a musical style characterised by a raucous guitar sound and a lazy delivery) are noted as well as the phenomena of masculinism, a male response to feminism meaning advocacy of men's rights and political correctness, conformity to a body of liberal or radical opinion.

The growth of world markets in the boom 1980s brought big bang, meaning financial deregulation as well as the violent explosion of matter in space, and meltdown to mean a steep drop in value. It was the age of the yuppie (young urban professional) sporting the filofax (personal organiser).

Wardsmiths can also savour

obscure words such as oxicide, the killing of a sheep and the last word in the book zythum, a ancient malt drink.

Guatemalan deputies fire Congress President

GUATEMALA CITY, Sept 6: Guatemalan deputies fired Congress President Jose Lobo Dubon late on Sunday after a chaotic session marked by fist-fights and bottle throwing, reports Reuter.

Lobo had declared the session suspended after it erupted into chaos. But as soon as he walked out, the remaining deputies called in a public prosecutor to declare he had abandoned his post and carried on without him.

The group of 65 deputies unanimously elected Arturo Soto, of the right-wing Guatemalan Republican Front (FGR), as the new House leader and replaced the rest of the 12-member directive committee.

International

Preparations begin to repatriate deportees

Clinton asks 9 Arab states to back Israeli-PLO deal

MIAMI BEACH, Florida, Sept 6: President Bill Clinton has written to the leaders of nine Arab countries asking them to support the Israeli-PLO accord for Palestinian self-rule, an administration official said Sunday, reports AFP.

Clinton was in Florida on Sunday to meet with supporters and inspect the recovery effort from Hurricane Andrew last year.

Meanwhile, preparations began today for the repatriation of around half of the 400

Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip following a spate of attacks in December, culminating in the kidnap and murder of a border policeman.

The men are suspected members of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups which are violently opposed to the Middle East peace talks, which were suspended for four months after the expulsions.

Their return begins as Israel

and the PLO are on the verge of mutual recognition and signing a historic deal for Palestinian autonomy starting in the Gaza Strip, a Hamas hotbed, and the West Bank city of Jericho.

Israeli Defence Ministry spokesman Oded Ben Ami told

that 189 deportees would be

brought back to the occupied territories in the coming days, but he could not give an exact date. The majority will be im-

prisoned.

"These 189 people will all be back before September 17, Ben Ami said.

Israel announced last month it would bring back around 200 of the men by mid-September and the rest by the end of the year.

The deportees voted to accept the deal, dropping a demand that Israel comply with a UN Security Council Resolution calling for their immediate return in one group.

Rantissi told that we know the names of around seventy per cent of those authorised to return, and we expect the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to give us the full list."

The deportees, who were dumped on a snow-swept hill side on December 17, will hold a farewell gathering on Tuesday

followed by a meeting with members of Palestinian and Lebanese groups who backed them during their ordeal.

Ghali deplores killing of 7

Nigerian troops

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 6:

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali deplored on Sunday the killing of seven Nigerian soldiers in Somalia, saying the attack again showed the need to disarm Somalia's warring factions, reports Reuter.

Boutros-Ghali said in a statement that the "United Nations and the international community remain committed to the objective of restoring peace and stability to Somalia".

Gunmen loyal to warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed killed the seven Nigerian troops

The Secretary-General deplores the incident," said Boutros-Ghali, adding that he expressed his condolences to the Nigerian government and to the families of the brave peacekeepers".

The anger was triggered by a clash between cameramen and bodyguards Sunday outside a toy store that had been cleared of shoppers so that Jackson could go on a shopping spree.

It was only the second time Jackson was known to have left his hotel. He first ventured out on Saturday night to give a concert, and was due back at Taipei Municipal Stadium Monday night for his final performance before flying to Japan on the fourth leg of his "Dangerous" world tour.

"Even a superstar like Michael Jackson should not trample consumer rights just to serve his own shopping needs," said Chang Lo-Chi, president of the Consumers Foundation.

She told reporters that even the US first lady would not insist on clearing a store so that she could shop in private.

Jackson lay low in hotel room

TAIPEI: Michael Jackson lay low in his hotel room preparing for his final concert in Taiwan Monday, while newspapers, consumer groups and politicians fumed at the superstar's offstage shopping style, reports AP.

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Success at times saddens designer of AK-47 Rifle

LONDON: The Russian designer of the Kalashnikov Ak-47 Rifle says the worldwide success of his creation at times makes him weep with sadness, reports Reuter.

"Whenever I see on television my weapon being used to shoot on the wrong side, if I can say that, I feel tears in my eyes," Dr Mikhail Kalashnikov said in an interview with Britain's Press Association News Agency issued today. The AK-47, the most successful rifle in history, is a favourite weapon of guerrillas and mercenaries, there are more than 55 million of them around the world.

The reason really is that it was designed by a soldier keeping in mind this was a weapon for a soldier, said 74-year-old Kalashnikov, whose latest project is a hunting rifle based on the AK-47.

He thought of the original design, renowned for its simplicity and reliability, while recovering from shell wounds in a military hospital during World War Two when he was a sergeant in the Soviet Army.

UN unreliable as world policeman: Thatcher

BANGKOK, Sept 6: Bosnia's tragedy shows that the United Nations cannot be relied upon as a world policeman, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said Monday.

"Humanitarian aid cannot stop the massacres and the ethnic cleansing," she said at a luncheon given by Citibank, sponsor of her visit to Thailand.

She said Belgrade has been allowed to gain from aggression, and unless this is reversed, other aggressors throughout the world will be encouraged.

"The second general lesson from the tragedy of Bosnia," she said, "is that international organisations cannot be relied upon in the last resort to enforce what is right. The euphoric talk, of which so much was heard just a year or two ago, of the United Nations as an

effective arbiter and world policeman has been shown to be just that — and no more."

Mrs Thatcher said the end of the Cold War and a more cooperative China had strengthened the Security Council, but the use of force requires the engagement of strong states in a cause which their people are prepared to defend.

"The leading nations of NATO did not lack the means to stop what happened in Croatia and Bosnia, they lacked the will. But if we cut defence too far, we will shortly lack the means as well," she said.

She said the West, especially the United States, must keep its military superiority.