

UNPROFOR commander says Manipulation of UN troops in Bosnia no longer acceptable

PARIS, Jan 3: French General Jean Cot, commander of UN forces in the former Yugoslavia, warned on Sunday he would no longer accept the manipulation and humiliation of the 30,000 men under his command, reports Reuters.

"It is no longer acceptable that the different parties to the conflict, particularly the Bosnian Serbs, use the forces I have the honour of commanding as pawns in their political game," he told France-inter radio.

Interviewed by telephone from Zagreb, the head of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), said his men were being increasingly humiliated and placed under constraints and restrictions. He

gave no examples.

"I solemnly declare that I do not want the talks in Geneva to continue as if the force of 30,000 men I command here did not exist," he said.

"Secondly, I am going to toughen our position here," he said, adding that he obviously did not envisage was as his mission was to protect three million men and women who were suffering from hunger.

Last week, the UN commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Francis Brigueumont, slammed the Security Council and the European Union, saying they should spend less time passing resolutions and more on sending sufficient peacekeepers.

Arafat under fire from PLO, Jordan and Israel

NICOSIA, Jan 3: PLO chief Yasser Arafat, who basked in the glory of his self-rule accord four months ago, is now under growing fire from his own organisation, Jordan and Israel as he tries to turn the deal into reality, reports AFP.

PLO members are pressing Arafat to stop taking key decisions alone, while Jordan faults him for not cooperating in peace moves and Israel accuses him of failing to honour deals struck by his negotiators.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sent a message Sunday to Arafat's headquarters in Tunis warning there would be no more autonomy talks in Egypt if the PLO did not keep its word, his spokesman Gad Ben Ari said in Jerusalem.

"It is unthinkable that understandings reached at such a high level are not respected by

the PLO and a re-haggled over. It is impossible to trust the word of PLO leaders," Rabin charged.

The Palestinians had called for new talks in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Tabu today following recriminations over whether any agreement was reached during negotiations in Cairo last week.

Israel announced Wednesday that the PLO accepted a draft document in Cairo on joint control of border crossings and doubling the size of the Jericho enclave to 60 square kilometres (25 square miles).

But the PLO denied it and Arafat is reportedly insisting on no Israeli presence at points where Palestinians will cross into the autonomous areas from Jordan and Egypt.

57 killed as Indian peasants clash with troops in Mexico

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico, Jan 3: Armed Indian peasants battled government troops for a second day in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas Sunday in an uprising that has left at least 57 people dead, officials said, reports AFP.

Thirty of the fatalities — 24 Indians and six soldiers — occurred in a rebel assault on a military base near this town popular with tourists and in a clash on a nearby road, the Defence Ministry said in a statement issued in Mexico City.

Bloody clashes between rebels and government forces were also reported in the town of Ocosingo, located 35 kilometres (24 miles) from here, with unconfirmed reports of 50 dead.

On the road, which leads out of San Cristobal, the bodies of 14 Indians were seen lying

near a mini-van in which they had been riding. Its windows had been shot out, and at least 50 soldiers lined the road after the clash, responding to guerrilla gunfire from a nearby hill.

Ten of the victims were wearing combat fatigues, and the rest wore civilian clothes.

Tourists from Europe and South America scrambled to get out of San Cristobal, located 700 kilometres (430 miles) southeast of Mexico City, as military helicopters flew overhead. The town's two radio stations closed down, fearing they would be seized by guerrillas.

The official news agency Notimex reported that the guerrillas kidnapped a former Chiapas governor, General Absalon Castellanos, and his wife, accusing the general of harassing Chiapas Indians.

Earlier a government official

who refused to be identified said two days of violence in five towns had left 22 policemen and four civilians dead in those towns. The official offered no casualty breakdown.

The rebellion began Saturday when several hundred members of a previously unknown group named for Indian leader and revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata — the Zapatista National Liberation Army — seized San Cristobal and four other towns to draw attention to the Indians' poverty and what they term repression of native peoples.

Their attacks, in which they seized town halls and other government buildings, marked Mexico's first organised rebel activity in some 20 years.

Three Roman Catholic bishops in Chiapas offered Sunday to mediate between the Mexican government and the Indian rebels.

Meanwhile the Mexican government reiterated its willingness to negotiate after armed Indian peasants battled government troops for a second day Sunday.

Early today government troops were nervous about fresh attacks.

The Interior Ministry said in a communique released in Mexico City that it was "ready for a political dialogue" with all sides to get the situation back to normal.

Hundreds of peasants calling themselves the Zapatista Army of National Liberation seized five towns in southern Mexico on Saturday to draw attention to their poverty and protest against the alleged "genocide" of native peoples.

The uprising had left at least 57 dead by Sunday, according to a government toll.



Indian Foreign Secretary Jyotindra Nath Dixit (R) and Pakistani counterpart Shaharyar Mohammed (L) with his aides during last session of talks in Islamabad yesterday. The two-day talks between the rival neighbours on the Kashmir dispute ended here without a compromise.

Teresa suffers blackout at church

CALCUTTA, India, Jan 3: Mother Teresa said she was fine today after suffering a momentary blackout during Sunday prayers, reports AFP.

"Don't worry, I am okay," the 83-year-old Roman Catholic missionary, whose faltering health in recent months has been a source of anxiety to her millions of admirers, said on the telephone.

The Nobel laureate was in the front row during prayers in Calcutta's St. Mary's church when she swooned. She was quickly lifted up by two nuns of her missionaries of charity who were sitting next to her and taken home.

The blackout lasted barely a minute. It triggered a spate of calls at mother house from anxious admirers who were informed that the Albanian-born nun had recovered. A doctor attended her and pronounced her to be in good health.

Mother Teresa said it was the first time that she has suffered a blackout but said it had not affected her.

"I don't know what happened," she told AFP. Perhaps it was the blessing of Jesus, a gift of God."

Egypt backs PLO in its dispute with Israel

AMMAN, Jan 3: Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa today backed the PLO in its dispute with Israel, saying talks between the parties in Cairo last week had produced a proposal but not an agreement, reports Reuters.

Israel has refused to resume negotiations with the PLO on implementation of a self-rule accord for the occupied territories unless it accepts a document it maintains was agreed in the Cairo talks. The PLO denies there was any agreement.

There was more than one document and more than one paper arrived at between the Palestinians and the Israelis," Moussa said on arrival in Amman for talks on Middle East peace negotiations with King Hussein.

Cambodian leader in Bangkok for talks with Khmers

BANGKOK, Jan 3: Cambodia's leader has arrived on a surprise visit for talks with representatives of the rebel Khmer Rouge, a Thai official said Monday, reports AP.

Prince Norodom Ranariddh, Cambodia's first premier, seeks to persuade the guerrilla group to enter peace talks with the government, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Cambodian Defence Minister Tea Chamrat also join in the meeting, the official said.

The Khmer Rouge says it supports King Norodom Sihamoni, but has continued to attack the forces of the government headed by his son, Ranariddh.

Japan should help resolve global conflicts: Ogata

TOKYO, Jan 3: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Sadako Ogata said Japan should play a greater role in world efforts to resolve conflicts in places like Bosnia, press reports here said today, reports AFP.

"It is also my hope that Japan will demonstrate leadership in situations where international political solutions are required," Ogata was quoted by daily newspaper the Asahi Shimbun as saying.

"For that purpose, I would like to see Japanese leaders make on-site tours of conflict areas such as Bosnia," she added.

The number of refugees worldwide has risen to between 20 million and 25 million, she said, adding the UNHCR was unable to help all of them.

The organisation's budget has grown consistently from 800 million US dollars in 1991 to 1.1 billion dollars the following

year and 1.3 billion dollars last year.

This year, "we will have to come up with a budget of 1.1 billion dollars, but it is very difficult to get this much money because of the world economic



Sadako Ogata

slowdown," she said.

Japan, a candidate for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council which now includes Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, is the second largest contributor of funds to the United Nations after the United States.

In 1993, Tokyo paid 127 million dollars, or 12.45 per cent, of the organisation's total budget.

During a visit to Japan by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the end of December, Tokyo announced it would raise its contribution to 13.5 per cent beginning in 1995.

Japan has participated in UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Mozambique, but its involvement remains sensitive at home where use of force to resolve international conflicts has been banned since 1945, shortly after the end of World War II.

Afghan war continues

ISLAMABAD, Jan 3: Fighting spread to northern provinces in Afghanistan as the struggle for power in Kabul entered its third day today, Afghan diplomats and government opponents said, reports AFP.

They said clashes between rival Mujahedeen factions had spread to bases in the north although Kabul remained the key battleground, pitting forces of former communist General Abdul Rashid Dostum allied with other Mujahedeen factions against troops loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

There were no immediate details of casualties in the latest fighting but there have been unconfirmed reports of hundreds of dead and wounded in two days of fierce

clashes in the capital, where artillery shells and rockets have rained down on the city streets.

Sources in the Hezb-i-Islami faction headed by Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a fierce rival of Rabbani, said government troops had attacked Dostum's militia in northern Faryab and Kunduz provinces.

Fighting was also reported near the river port of Sher Khan Bandar in Kunduz, as well as Balkh and the important northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif which is mostly controlled by Dostum's Uzbek militia.

The Afghan embassy in Islamabad confirmed that government troops were engaged

in "serious fighting" against Dostum forces in Faryab as well as Shibarghan.

An Afghan diplomat said government troops had inflicted "a lot of damage" on opponents to the regime but would not give details.

He said the Mazar-i-Sharif airport was under government control and no Dostum plane could take off.

The Pakistan government has appealed for a ceasefire.

Dostum's Uzbek troops, in a switch of loyalties, helped the Mujahedeen topple the Moscow-backed communist regime of then President Najibullah in April 1992. It is still not clear what prompted his decision to switch loyalties again.

UNDP, UNHCR evacuate Mogadishu offices

MOGADISHU, Jan 3: Two UN aid agencies evacuated their Mogadishu offices Monday as humanitarian groups confronted a wave of attacks throughout Somalia, reports AP.

The UN Development Programme and High Commission for Refugees emptied their shared compound two days after an unidentified attacker threw a Molotov cocktail at a nearby building.

UNHCR protection officer Lawrence Mwangi said the agencies had received further threats that prompted the evacuation. He did not elaborate.

Other parts of the city also saw tensions rise during the day.

Machine gun fire could be heard near the line that divides the competing militias of South and North Mogadishu, although the source of the firing could not be determined.

And across town outside the compound that serves as the command centre for the 33,000 UN and US troops in Somalia, Turkish guards backed by American soldiers held a tense face off with a crowd of Somalis who had gathered in the hopes of securing work with the UN.

The crowd, which had heard rumours that employment would be offered during the morning, grew restless and blocked the main road past the compound when the jobs failed to materialise. The

Turks fired tear gas before moving armored personnel carriers and infantrymen into the street.

"All of us are jobless — we're not politicians," said one of the Somalis present, 20-year-old Hassan Ali.

Eventually, the situation settled down and the UN troops pulled back to their usual guard posts. No injuries were reported.

The entrance is a common flashpoint for crowds upset with the UN for political or economic reasons.

During the last few weeks, however, the city had been quite calm with both Somalis and UN officials waiting to see what happens after March 31, when the American and most

other Western UN troops pull out of the country.

But recently there have been a series of attacks on aid agencies, which often operate with armed Somali guards instead of UN military protection.

Aside from the fire-bombing of the UNHCR and UNDP compound, which caused no injuries, three gunmen attacked a UN World Food Programme compound in the southern city of Baidoa Saturday, killing a Somali guard and gravely wounding a Somali driver.

On Christmas Eve, two Somali aid workers were injured when grenades were thrown into the Baidoa offices.

Off the Record

Over-worked tiger grabs keeper by the throat

SHANGHAI: A Chinese circus tiger, over-worked during the New Year's holiday, grabbed its keeper by the throat after she pushed it to perform on too many tricks, reports Reuters.

Trouble started when the woman lost her temper with the tiger after it bit a lion in front of a crowd at the Guangzhou zoo, the Yangcheng Evening News reported.

After being forced to climb a ladder and jump through a hoop, the tiger pounced, punching two big holes in the keeper's neck.

"What have we brought up our daughters for?"

MOSCOW: Ultra-nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy said on Sunday the brothels of western Europe were full of Russian prostitutes — "A monstrous, revolting thing," reports Reuters.

"I was in Europe and what a disgrace," Zhirinovskiy said in an interview shown on Moscow's 2X2 television channel. "All the brothels are full of Russian women. What have we brought up our daughters for?"

"This is a monstrous, revolting thing — in two and a half years, to turn the country into a dustbin, into a latrine and push young people into prostitution. It's time to smash all this as quickly as we can," he said.

Disgruntled employee blows up self and 60 others

BEIJING: A disgruntled employee at an explosives factory in southern China blew up his workshop, killing himself and 60 others, including four military officials, an official report said, according to AP.

The November 26 blast at the factory in Hunan province is one of the more spectacular examples of growing violence in Communist China, where social controls have eased as the nation's economy has opened up.

Tan Zhixin, a worker at the Nanling Chemical Plant in Shuangpai County, blew up his workshop after his request to become a factory driver was rejected, the Beijing Youth News said in its weekend edition.

Royal jewels to be moved from N-proof bunker

LONDON: Britain's crown jewels are to be moved from their nuclear-proof bunker in the Tower of London to a spacious new home above ground, reports Reuters.

The jewels, one of the most popular tourist attractions in the British capital, are being transferred because the bunker is too small to cope with the ever-growing number of visitors, a tower of London spokesman said.

The jewels' new home will be a glass air-conditioned display in the Tower's Waterloo barracks complete with a moving walkway to prevent lozings.

The crowns, sceptres and orbs, including what is billed as the world's largest diamond, will be just an arm's length away from the tower's two million annual visitors.

ROK for early solution of nuclear crisis

SEOUL, Jan 3: President Kim Young-sam called for an early resolution of the dispute over North Korea's alleged nuclear weapons programme Monday, calling it "a matter of absolute urgency," reports AP.

"North Korea's nuclear problem, upon which the survival of our people hinges, must be settled early this year," Kim told a meeting of senior presidential officials.

Kim's remarks came amid reports that the United States and North Korea have come closer to agreement on breaking the deadlock over suspicion that Pyongyang's Communist leadership may be developing nuclear bombs.

South Korean officials say they are more optimistic than ever before that the prolonged nuclear tensions with North Korea may ease soon, possibly in one or two months.

North Korean President Kim Il Sung expressed hope in a new year's message that the nuclear problem would be resolved in talks with the United States but warned that his country would never give in to threats of sanctions.

North Korea, a hard-line Stalinist state, says its nuclear programme is for peaceful energy development, but it has refused full inspections of nuclear facilities, raising suspicions that it is developing nuclear weapons.

The US Central Intelligence Agency said in a classified report that the North is believed to have already developed one or two atomic bombs.

After a series of informal talks in New York, the United States and North Korea both have reported progress toward resolving the nuclear tension. Seoul officials said a breakthrough was made at the latest US-North Korea meeting last week.

South Korea's national Yonhap news agency, quoting an unnamed government official, reported Monday that resolution of the nuclear dispute would bring drastic changes in inter-Korea relations.

"The United States and North Korea have virtually agreed on a package deal to resolve the nuclear issue," Yonhap quoted the official as saying.



Children inspect the carcass of a 19-meter-long beached whale on the Porges beach in France Jan 2. Authorities called in specialists to determine the cause of the mammal's death.

US military officials plotted to kill Saddam

NEW YORK, Jan 3: Military intelligence officials plotted to kill Saddam Hussein as he traveled from Baghdad to Kuwait in the months before the Gulf war, according to a new book on commando forces in the Army and Navy, reports AP.

The plan called for Army Delta or Navy Seal Team 6 commandos to shoot down Saddam's helicopter with shoulder-fired Stinger missiles after spy satellites determined he had boarded the aircraft, according to "The Commandos: The Inside Story of America's Soldiers," by Newsweek defense correspondent Douglas C.

Waller. Saddam was considered impregnable in Baghdad, but once a month he traveled to Kuwait City, usually by helicopter from Baghdad to Basra, then by motor home to Kuwait, Waller said.

Gen Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Defence Secretary Dick Cheney were "intrigued by the idea of some type of American force targeting Saddam," Waller wrote in an excerpt published in the Jan 10 issue of Newsweek.

But US Central Command Chief Gen H Norman Schwarzkopf thought the scheme was harebrained," Waller wrote.

Saudi Prince in Casablanca

Saudi Arabain Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz arrived in Casablanca Sunday evening for a private visit during which he is due to meet Morocco's King Hassan II, AFP reports from Rabat.

Prince Abdullah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard, was welcomed by a number of officials, including Driss Slaoui, an Advisor to the Moroccan Monarch.

The private visit is scheduled to last a few days. Abdullah makes regular trips to Morocco, where the Saudi Royal family owns a number of residences.

4 Filipinos hacked to death

Four men armed with machetes hacked four merchants to death and hijacked the boat carrying them to a market on a southern island, police said Tuesday. AP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

The attackers also got away with 150,000 pesos (dhs 5,300) and a cargo of fruit and dried fish after the Monday incident, police said.