

## International

**Inkatha to boycott South African all-race polls**

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 13: The Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) resolved Saturday not to contest the country's first all-race election in April and said international mediation was needed to "pull South Africa from the brink of disaster", reports AFP.

The resolution, taken at a special meeting of the IFP central committee at Umlazi, in the heart of Zululand, also warned that failure to bring about a comprehensive multi-party settlement would result in increased violence.

Two other groups, Kwazulu tribal homeland -- the IFP's powerbase and the white right-wing Afrikaner Volks Front (AVF), have also vowed to resist the poll, with AVF supporters warning they will actively disrupt voting.

The three organisations, with Bophuthatswana tribal homeland, in October joined forces as the freedom alliance, united in their demand that federal guarantees be entrenched in the interim constitution that will come into

effect after the April 26-28 Palestinian poll.

Bophuthatswana is also expected to snub the election, with the IFP resolution stating it had already done so.

Alliance leaders claim the government and the ANC have not gone far enough to meet their federalist demands while the government and the ANC say that to make more concessions would be to create a federal state.

After months of wrangling between the alliance, the government and the ANC, talks finally broke down on Tuesday when the alliance said it saw no future in negotiating unless its demands were met.

Addressing right-wing threats of violence, De Klerk said Saturday that the South African defence force had contingency plans to prevent any disruption of the poll.

"We can't allow any minority to disrupt the process," De Klerk told journalists in Bloemfontein, capital of orange free state province.

**Bosnian Serb, govt forces stop surrendering big guns to UN**

SARAJEVO, Feb 13: In a series of ominous signs, government and Serb fighters stopped surrendering their big guns to the United Nations, and peace talks among the warring sides made no progress, reports AP.

The US State Department, meanwhile, ordered the families of American diplomats and government employees to leave Yugoslavia immediately, embassy officials said in Belgrade.

Saturday's decision followed NATO's ultimatum to Bosnian Serbs to withdraw their heavy weapons from Sarajevo by midnight Feb. 20 or face air strikes.

Many in the Serb-dominated Yugoslav government and army support the Bosnian Serbs, the US government apparently worried about the prospect of a backlash against Americans if the air strikes are carried out.

And despite US and Russian pressure on the warring sides, peace talks in Geneva broke up with no progress reported, raising further doubts about

the viability of the Sarajevo cease-fire.

The Bosnian army turned over five guns on Friday but decided to keep the rest for now, saying the Bosnian Serbs had 10 times as many but had turned in only 13.

"The imbalance in weaponry is enormous," said Gen. Jovan Divjak, the deputy Bosnian army commander. "They have many more weapons that we do, so they must hand in many more."

Divjak said the Serbs had withdrawn their big guns from the 12-mile (20-kilometer) zone around Sarajevo, but said some were being hidden or taken to other battle fronts.

Sarajevo was unusually peaceful. French peacekeepers have camped out at six flash-points of the Sarajevo fighting since Thursday, and Friday night was the quietest in months.

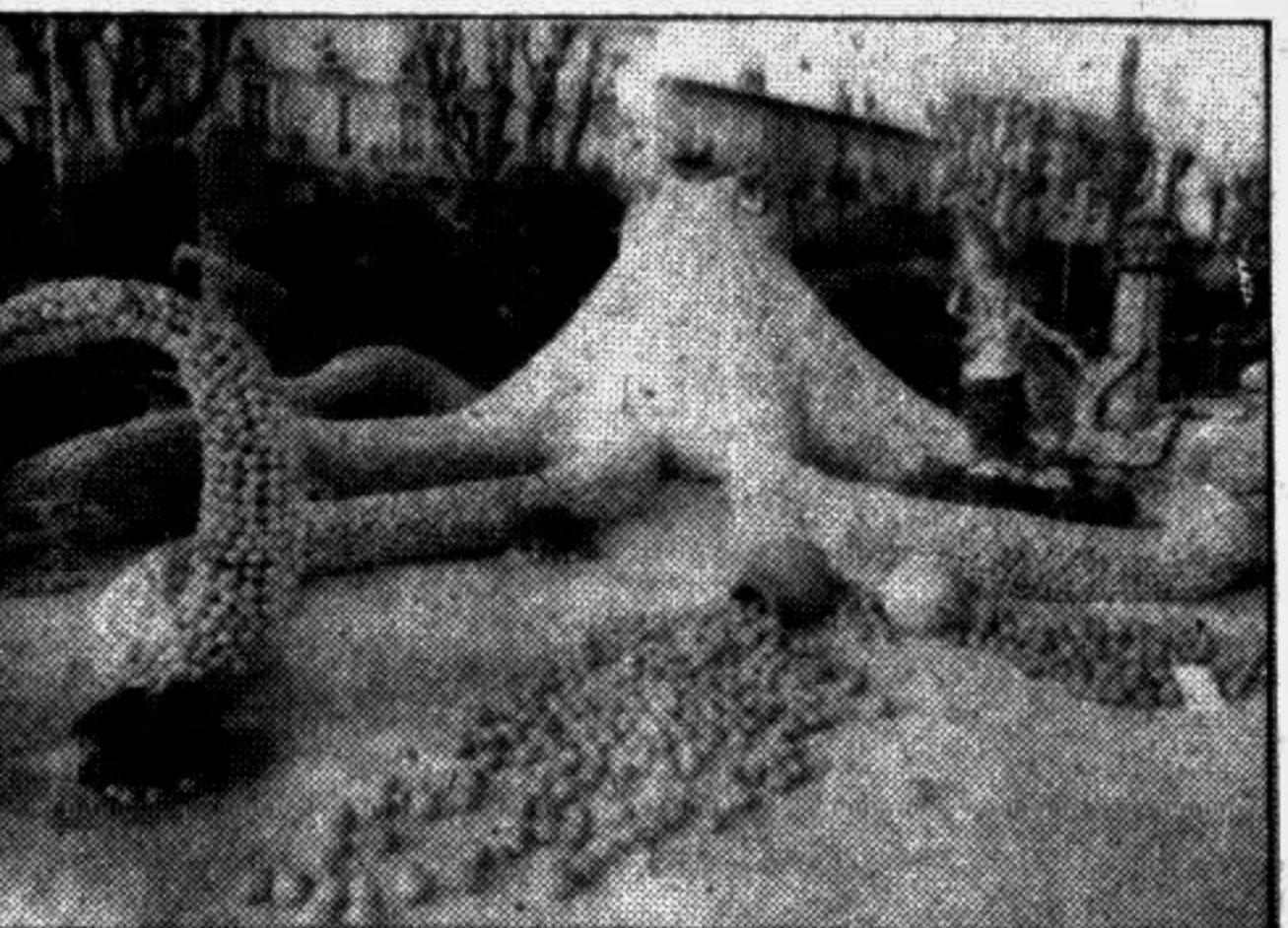
"Michael Rose, the new UN commander in Bosnia, had

peacekeepers spread thinly on the ground -- about 30 at each cease-fire line -- but 150 Malaysian reinforcements arrived in Sarajevo, and Rose said the blue helmets were there to stay.

Milenko Blagojevic, a Serb machine gunner nearby, said that if NATO plans bombed his position, "the people here will kill those French with axes and knives."

A tank shell that landed northeast of downtown Sarajevo afternoon injured two people. About 200,000 people have been killed or reported missing since the war began in April 1992 when Bosnia left the Serb-dominated Yugoslav federation.

Saturday marked a week since a mortar shell explosion at Markale market that killed 68 people, injured 142 and led the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to issue its ultimatum.

**Off the Record**

A giant octopus, made completely from citrus fruit, is displayed Feb 12, as part of the traditional annual citrus festival in France. — AFP photo

**Woman bites driver's arm**

SYDNEY: A 20-year woman bit a taxi driver's arm during an argument early Sunday causing the taxi to veer off the road and crash into a police station, police said, reports Reuter.

The two argued shortly after the woman entered the cab, and as the cabby tried to drive to a police station, he apparently lost control of the taxi when the woman bit him and grabbed the steering wheel, police said.

"The taxi then crashed into the police station, causing major structural damage. One wall was knocked down," the police spokesman said.

The woman, whose name was not released, has been charged with assault and is due to appear in court next month.

The taxi driver was taken to hospital for treatment for a substantial bite wound to his forearm, police said.

**Murderer wants to be called 'Hi Hitler'**

FORT LAUDERDALE: A white supremacist wants permission to wear a Ku Klux Klan robe and be called "Hi Hitler" at his murder trial, reports AP.

Donald Leroy Evans is accused of strangling Ira Jean Smith, a Fort Lauderdale prostitute, in 1985.

In motions filed Friday, Evans asked to be allowed to wear the Klan robe, and for his name to be changed on all court documents to "the honourable and respected name of Hi Hitler."

According to courthouse employees, Evans thought Adolf Hitler's followers said "Hi Hitler" rather than "Heil Hitler."

**Beatles coming back**

LONDON: The three surviving members of the Beatles will get back together for a concert in New York that will be broadcast worldwide, a newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

The Mail on Sunday, quoting an unnamed source, said Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr will be in Central Park later this year. They will be joined on stage by the late John Lennon's sons, Julian and Sean.

Publiscists for the musicians could not be reached for comment.

**Russia, Iran vow to settle Nagorno-Karabakh issue**

MOSCOW, Feb 13: Russia and Iran have voiced "deep concern" over the escalating fighting in the Azerbaijani breakaway enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and pledged to work together to settle the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict, Reuter.

A brief Foreign Ministry statement published by Tass said the American side had initiated Saturday's call.

"A frank exchange of opinions was conducted on the latest turn of events in the Bosnian conflict and on the search for ways to unite efforts for a political settlement, both around Sarajevo and in Bosnia as a whole," the statement said.

Its diplomatic wording suggested the two men had differed on some issues.

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The curfew was relaxed from 0600 hours in all the affected areas. Barring parts of Baupurwan, Cooli Bazar and Latouch road areas.

The army, paramilitary forces, and police JAWANS were patrolling the city.

The district authorities were keeping a strict vigil over the situation.

The city bus service, tempos, taxis and rickshaws were playing on the roads.

The six-year conflict in the Armenian-dominated territory was discussed in talks here Saturday between Russian President Boris Yeltsin's special envoy in charge of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Vladimir Kozimirov, and Murtaza Bang, the director general of the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

The fighting, which has claimed 20,000 lives since 1988, has intensified since the start of a major Azerbaijani counter offensive in mid-December to roll back territorial gains made by the Armenians last year.

Russia and Iran agreed that "a solid and lasting settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh can only be achieved through peaceful means," which includes the liberation of occupied territories, restoration of energy and transport links and the return of refugees.

ITAR-Tass news agency quoted the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying Saturday that "the growing internationalisation of the conflict harms a peaceful settlement and threatens regional stability."

The trio, released Saturday, were greeted by Foreign Ministry officials at Charles de Gaulle airport after a regular Air France flight from the Yemian capital, San'a.

"Yes, they treated us fine," Brigitte Fontaine, 42, a cardiologist, told reporters before the trio were whisked away.

"They didn't harm us in any way."

The ex-captives appeared to be in good health.

Ms Fontaine, retired agriculture teacher Henri Neslot and his wife, Jeanne, both 72, were kidnapped Jan. 23 while on a group-tour of the Arabian peninsula country.

**Lankan navy attack Tamil boat, 1 killed**

COLOMBO, Feb 13: Sri Lankan navy craft attacked and destroyed a Tamil guerrilla boat off the island's northeastern coast, killing one rebel and capturing another, a military spokesman said today, reports AFP.

Navy boats opened fire after intercepting the small vessel belonging to the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) close to the Mullaitivu coast Saturday, the spokesman said.

It was not known how many travelled on the LTTE craft but one Tiger guerrilla was confirmed killed and another rebel was taken prisoner after he survived the naval fire, the spokesman said, adding the LTTE boat was a wreck.

The navy has frequently attacked LTTE boats operating off the northeastern coast and has stepped up surveillance in the area following a spate of LTTE attacks on navy craft last year.

**BRIEFLY****Pope to visit Sri Lanka:**

Pope John-Paul II has accepted an invitation to visit Sri Lanka in 1995 to canonize Rev. Fr. Joseph Vaz as the country's first saint, local newspapers reported Sunday, exports AP from Colombo.

The invitation to the spiritual head of the world's 900 million Roman Catholics was handed over last week by Sri Lanka's Attorney General Tilak Marapana who was sent as special emissary to the Vatican, the Sunday Island newspaper said.

Secretary to the Catholic Bishop's Conference, Rev. Placidus de Silva, confirmed an invitation had been accepted but said no date had been finalized.

The Sunday Times newspaper reported the visit, the second by a Pope, is likely to be in mid-January. In 1970, Pope Paul VI was in Colombo for a few hours.

**Venezuela frees 23 army officers:**

Venezuela's new President Rafael Caldera, in a move to shore up support in the armed forces, Saturday ordered the release of 23 officers jailed for two bloody coup attempts in 1992, Reuter reports from Caracas.

The presidential order freed half of those still held in the two putches that killed hundreds of people.

Most of those arrested in the February 4 and November 27, 1992, uprisings were pardoned or released by the previous government, which argued lower ranking officers were merely following orders by coup plotters.

**293 Red Army men in Afghan jail:**

Some 293 Red Army soldiers are still being held prisoner in Afghanistan five years after Moscow withdrew from its southern neighbour country, Russian Deputy Defence Minister Boris Gromov said Saturday, AFP reports from Moscow.

Two thirds of the troops are Russian nationals, Gromov told a news conference marking the fifth anniversary of the end of the nine-year Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan on February 15, 1989.

Gromov said no organisation had been tasked with tracking the prisoners and only 15 had been freed over the last two years.

**Hosokawa returns home:**

Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa returned home today after holiday talks with US President Bill Clinton in Washington, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The two leaders failed to reach an agreement on bilateral trade and economic issues, with Hosokawa rejecting US demands to set numerical targets for cutting Japan's chronic trade surplus.

**Manila fires 1000 police officers:**

The Philippines has sacked more than 1,000 police officers for corruption and other offences since President Fidel Ramos ordered a clean-up of the force in 1992, officials said yesterday, Reuter reports from Manila.

More than 1,500 others were subjected to disciplinary action, police personnel chief Ernesto Bulan said in a report.

The 1,071 officers dismissed since Ramos took office in June 1992 were involved in criminal activities, such as extortion and kidnapping for ransom, or were habitually absent, he said.

**3 Chinese abducted in Yemen:**

Gunmen in Yemen have kidnapped three Chinese experts working on a road construction project and demanded that the project be stopped, the Xinhua news agency said yesterday, Reuter reports from Beijing.

In a report from Sanaa, it said three gunmen seized the three on Saturday at the work-site, 47 km (29 miles) from the city of Jaffha.

The three are the head of a technical team for the Jaffha-Maareb construction project, the chief engineer and the assistant project manager, said.

**55 fundamentalists go on trial in Algeria**

ALGIERS, Feb 13: Fifty-five Islamic fundamentalists went on trial in western Algeria Saturday charged with "terrorist" offences and smuggling weapons into the country, judicial officials said, reports AFP.

The group, which officials said operated out of Maghnia on the border with Morocco and which includes 22 defendants being tried in their absence, is charged with smuggling arms into the country and helping repatriate via Morocco Algerians who fought for Afghan guerrilla groups against Soviet troops.

The trial is being heard in Quran before one of Algeria's three special courts responsible for trying terrorism and subversion cases.

The group is charged with forming armed terrorist groups, holding and selling weapons and explosives, and threatening the security of the state.

**Indian press divided over allowing foreign publishers**

India Ltd., publishers of the fortnightly India Today, to bring out a local edition of Time Magazine.

Media baron Rupert Murdoch's visit here last week touched off speculation that he may be planning a newspaper venture, but he scotched the possibility saying he had enough newspapers for one man. Murdoch said he was more interested in television.

The controversy comes at a time when satellite television is expanding its reach in this country of 890 million people.

Led by the Hong Kong-based Star TV, in which Murdoch acquired a majority stake last year, foreign networks are beaming news and entertainment into more than 20 million Indian homes.

Critics have bemoaned its entry a "cultural invasion from the skies," but have been powerless to prevent its growing popularity.

But Vishwa Bandhu Gupta, publisher of Weekly Sun said for foreign competitors on Indian soil would only damage domestic business growth.



A newsstand owner displays foreign newspapers Feb 12 in New Delhi amid a raging debate in the press over whether overseas publishers should be allowed to bring out Indian editions in line with economic openness. The debate has divided the press.

+ AFP photo