

Rabbani declares truce in Kabul

KABUL, Apr 13: Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani today proposed an immediate end to the factional fighting in Kabul, but not in the northern provinces, reports AFP.

"I declare an immediate and permanent ceasefire inside Kabul along," Rabbani told the 60 to 70 assembled peace delegates, some from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, at the opening session of an Islamic Clergymen's peace delegation.

However, the president firmly stated that he would not

extend his offer to the northern provinces where the Uzbek forces of ex-communist General Abdul Rashid Dostum are under siege by the Mujahideen of Rabbani's strongman, former Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masud.

The focus of this factional fighting is around Pul-i-Khumri, a strategic centre 220 kms (137 miles) north of Kabul, where Dostum has reinforced the defences of his Isma'ili religious sect Allysayyad Jaffar Naderi.

"We are determined to continue the fighting until the final annihilation of the militias in Afghanistan," Rabbani said.

Coupled with Rabbani's tough stand against the northern militias, he also accused neighbouring Uzbekistan of supplying Dostum with military aid in order to undermine the Islamic state of Afghanistan.

"Uzbekistan has sent tanks, aircraft, ammunition and logistical support to Dostum," he claimed.

In Kabul the military situation is complicated by the fact that Dostum is in alliance with Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whom Rabbani called upon to cut ties with the Uzbek warlord.

"The final fate of the militia is in the hands of Hekmatyar, and only Hekmatyar," Rabbani declared in a challenge to his rival.

Rabbani asked his call for a permanent Kabul ceasefire to be taken to Hekmatyar by the head of a provincial peace delegation, Jallaluddin Haqani, who was also present at the Intercontinental Hotel opening session.

Serbs continue offensive against Gorazde OIC calls for extension of air raids to protect 6 safe areas

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Apr 13: The organisation of the Islamic conference Tuesday urged NATO to stage bombing raids to protect all six UN-designated Muslim safe areas in Bosnia, not just Gorazde, reports AFP.

In a statement, the organi-

sation called on the United Nations to endorse such an extension of the raids, saying that they created the six safe zones.

US warplanes operating under NATO command bombed Serb positions outside Serb- besieged Gorazde in eastern

Bosnia on Sunday and Monday.

The Islamic conference reiterated its calls for the world body to exempt the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo from a UN embargo on arms sales to the former Yugoslav Republics.

Reuter adds: Bosnian Serb

leader Radovan Karadzic said today that Serbs would treat UN peacekeeping forces as a potentially hostile force after NATO jets bombed Serb positions around Gorazde in eastern Bosnia.

Karadzic, in a letter to the United Nations Secretary General, reiterated the suspension of Serb relations with the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), announced on Sunday after NATO carried out the first of two air raids against Serb forces besieging the UN designated "safe haven" of Gorazde.

"All our agreements so far, and our good manners which we displayed out of our trust in you, are now a thing of the past since we are forced to regard the behaviour of UNPROFOR as a potentially hostile force," Karadzic wrote in a letter to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali.

Meanwhile Serbian forces continued their offensive against the Muslim enclave of Gorazde in eastern Bosnia throughout the night, radio Sarajevo reported Wednesday.

There was no immediate confirmation from United Nations military sources.

The radio said major concentrations of troops had been seen at Ustipirca, 20 kms (12 miles) northeast of Gorazde, where elements of the army corps from Ulice and special troops from Nis, both towns in Serbia, have arrived with 15 tanks.



US F-18 fighter plane takes off from the NATO military base in Aviano April 12 for a routine flight. The F-18 was used for the April 11 bombing of Serb positions around the besieged Muslim enclave of Gorazde in Bosnia. — AFP photo

'Delhi to sit with Kashmiris if they give up violent campaign'

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: The Indian government is ready for peace talks with Kashmiri Muslim militants if they give up secessionist demands and accept Indian sovereignty, Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan said here Tuesday, reports AFP.

"If the rebels are prepared to come for talks there is no objection," Chavan told reporters.

But the guerillas would have to give up their violent four-year-old campaign for an end to Indian rule over Kashmir before talks can begin, Chavan said in a reiteration of New Delhi's stand.

"Ultimately it has to be within the constitution. Any talks beyond the constitution are ruled out," he added. Chavan's colleague Rajesh Pilot, Internal Security Minister, had said late Monday that the government wanted a political settlement of the issue but would not hesitate to take stern measures to quell violence.

Pilot said more paramilitary troops would be deployed across the province and security at military installations

strengthened to foil attacks by Muslim militants, whom India alleges are armed and trained by neighbour Pakistan.

He did not specify the number of reinforcements to be sent to the valley, where

11 Maoist guerillas killed in Bihar

NEW DELHI, Apr 13: At least 11 Maoist guerillas were killed and eight policemen injured in a fierce gunbattle overnight in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

The slain rebels belonged to the outlawed Marxist Communist Centre (MCC) organisation, PTI said, adding that they were gunned down by police in the district of Nawada during a raid.

Eight officers were also injured in the gunbattle. Police said in the state capital Patna.

The raid followed major clashes between MCC activists and other rival groups in Nawada. One of the most crime prone districts in Bihar, where the Maoists holds sway over the impoverished countryside.

thousands of army and paramilitary troops are already battling Muslim guerillas.

Kashmir's ownership is disputed between India and Pakistan, who have fought two of their three wars since their 1947 independence from British rule over the Himalayan territory.

Meanwhile, 12 people died in overnight violence in the troubled state, where labourers employed by the Indian army staged a protest Tuesday against the arrest of two colleagues for an explosion.

Some 1,200 slogan-chanting demonstrators gathered in front of the field ordinance depot in Srinagar, the state summer capital, to demand the release of their colleagues killed in the March 29 blast which killed 15 officers.

"Release our innocent colleagues," they screamed. "We want justice."

Ghulam Rasool, a labourer leading the protest, said the two employees Munir Ahmed and Mohammed Altaf who were arrested Saturday remained in detention for the blast at a key ammunition depot.

5 Israeli bus passengers killed in blast

JERUSALEM, Apr 13: A bomb exploded in a bus as it pulled into a main station in northern Israel on Wednesday, killing five people and wounding 21. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, reports AP.

The blast occurred at about 9:40 am in Hadera, a town just south of the northern port of Haifa, on a bus apparently heading for Tel Aviv.

Yaacov Ganot, commander of northern police, said on Israel radio that five people were killed. Officials at Hilel Yaffe Hospital in Hadera reported treating 21 wounded people, most suffering from light injuries.

The bombing occurred as Israelis marked the eve of Independence Day and Memorial Day for soldiers killed in Arab-Israeli wars. Police were alerted for possible further reprisal attacks for the February 25 Hebron mosque massacre, in which a Jewish settler killed 30 worshippers.

"I can only express deep shock and pain for this terrible thing that was done on such a day," Shahal said on army radio.

7 more killed in Natal

NDWEDWE, South Africa, Apr 13: Unidentified attackers shot and hacked to death seven men who were distributing pro-election pamphlets in Natal Province, police and army spokesmen said Wednesday, reports AP.

The attack Tuesday near Ndwedwe, a black settlement outside Durban, continued a spree of violence despite a state of emergency imposed in Natal to halt unrest linked to South Africa's first all-race election this month.

Army Maj Nick Sendall said 11 black men travelling in a minibus van to distribute pamphlets urging people to vote in the April 26-28 election were attacked in Thafamasi, a rural village about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Durban.

The pamphlets were printed by the Independent Electoral Commission, said Andrew Cox, owner of the company that employed the men to distribute them.

Five people have been arrested, but police refused to provide their identities.

Off the Record



A model wears black leather Apr 12 during a show of the Fall 1994 Liza Bruce collection in New York. — AFP photo

Another Bobbitt copycat case

HARARE: A Zimbabwean woman who severed their husband's penis had received a two-month jail sentence for assault causing grievous bodily harm, reports AP.

Magistrate Misheck Tizora in Chipinge, southeast of Harare, suspended an extra six-month sentence on Shanangurai Tinarwo, 40, on condition of good behaviour over the next five years.

She committed her crime, which lawyers said was unprecedented in Zimbabwean court records, on January 21, at the height of international publicity about the case of Lorena Bobbitt in the United States.

Bobbitt admitted cutting off her husband's penis but said she did it after longstanding abuse. She was acquitted by reason of insanity of assault charges, while her husband was acquitted of a rape charge.

In imposing the sentence Tuesday, Tizora said Mrs Tinarwo acted from "uncontrollable jealousy" after finding her husband, Edward, sleeping with another woman in her home. Tinarwo had told his wife she was "too old for him to continue having sexual relations with her," according to the magistrate.

She severed her husband's penis with a kitchen knife after knocking him unconscious with a log. The other woman escaped through window.

Doctors successfully reattached the organ. Zimbabwe laws that formerly gave women the status of juveniles were repealed by President Robert Mugabe. Women's organisations have launched a nationwide campaign for equal rights and opportunities, but they did not make the Tinarwo case a rallying point.

Letter to dead patient

VICTORIA: A hospital foundation in this Canadian province is under fire for mailing a fund-raising letter praising the excellent care at local hospitals to a patient who died in one of them, reports AP.

"It's a tasteless, tasteless thing to do," said Linda Reid, a health critic with the Opposition Liberal party.

On Tuesday, the party cited the letter mailed by the Greater Victoria Hospitals Foundation as an example of a breach in laws designed to protect citizens' privacy.

Reid said the hospital society had no business using its files on patients to send out requests for donations. The foundation mailed letters to an unknown number of former patients.

"As a former patient... you have experienced the excellent care and services offered by our community hospitals," the letter said. "Please help us continue to provide a superior standard of patient care by making a donation... so we can ensure that we always have the proper tools available when you or your loved ones come to us again."

The letters were supposed to go only to patients who had routine or minor surgery, Reid said. But one was received by the family of someone who died while in a hospital, and they were upset getting it, she said.

Melanie Mahlman, the foundation's executive director, said it regrets any concern the mailing may have caused.

Night-time curfew for children

NEW DELHI: A psychopath who reportedly has sodomised and strangled six children has prompted the army to impose a night-time curfew for children on a military base, reports AP.

Police do not know the identity of the criminal in Lucknow city who has been killing boys in the last two months.

All the bodies were dumped in areas where legislators and local VIPs often go, making some of them nervous about how the investigation will affect their reputations in the community.

Authorities at the city's military camp are taking no chances; they have ordered all kids to be indoors by 8 pm.

The order came this week after military police reportedly found the sixth body dumped near a golf course in the area of the base. The Pioneer newspaper reported Wednesday.

Autopsies have shown that the boys' groins had been mutilated during the attacks.

The state police chief, Ved Prakash Kapur, said the criminal may be trying to defame the government. But no other curfews have been imposed in the north Indian city.

Couple in their 80s survives honeymoon from hell

CANBERRA: Elderly newlyweds Ralph and Edna Hughes have survived the honeymoon from hell: a wedding trip to Rwanda, reports AP.

The Australian couple, both in their 80s, married last year after a long romance. They were visiting the Central African republic on an extended honeymoon when anarchy erupted.

Both Seventh Day Adventists, the couple sought refuge at a church orphanage 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the capital Kigali for five days before joining other westerners in a 20-car armed escort out of the country.

"The most horrible thing I saw was when they stormed into the place and grabbed two fellows... they killed one man and it was a wonder they didn't kill the other one too," Hughes told the Australian Broadcasting Corp after both were airlifted to Kenya.

"In the village places, they'd rush out with big slashing knives... we didn't know what was going to happen. But we finally got through," he said.

BRIEFLY

Blast kills 11 in China: A driver fixing a stalled bus triggered a blast that killed 11 passengers and injured 23 near China's coastal Qingdao City, an official newspaper said, Reuters reports from Beijing.

Six of the 11 dead were burned beyond recognition in the April 4 explosion in Shandong province, Shanghai's Xinmin Evening News said in a report seen on Wednesday in Beijing.

Four of the 23 injured were in serious condition, including a 75-year-old passenger, the report said.

Mubarak's visit to Japan postponed: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's visit to Japan, originally scheduled for April 18, was postponed, Egypt's official Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported Tuesday, Xinhua says from Cairo.

The postponement is due to the recent political developments in Japan, MENA quoted a Foreign Minister statement as saying.

A new date for the visit will be set later, according to the statement.

The Japanese Prime Minister announced his resignation on April 8 and his successor has not been chosen yet.

Arafat in Strasbourg: Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat arrived in the French city of Strasbourg yesterday to address the Council of Europe for the first time, airport officials said, Reuters reports from Strasbourg.

Arafat was due to address the parliamentary assembly of the 32 nation council, which promotes democracy and human rights, at 11.30 am (0930 GMT).

He was also due to hold a news conference at 2.45 pm (1245 GMT) before leaving again later in the afternoon.

4 Palestinians shot in Jericho: An Israeli civilian shot and wounded four Palestinian students in front of their school in the occupied West Bank town of Jericho on Wednesday, a student said, Reuters reports from Jericho.

A 16-year-old youth who was wounded in the shoulder by bullet fragments said an Israeli civilian in a petrol truck sprayed bullets at the students in front of a high school and fled.

The Jericho hospital confirmed four student were admitted but said they were hit by rubber bullets. The shootings occurred before a bomb killed six people on an Israeli bus in the central town of Hadera.

ROK's chief Buddhist monk resigns: The chief monk of South Korea's largest Buddhist order resigned Wednesday, ending two weeks of violence that resulted in hundreds of arrests, AP reports from Seoul.

"I apologise to the people for the... confusion," Suh Uihyun, chief of the Chogye order, said in announcing his resignation. Almost 80 people were reported injured in the protests against him.

Dissidents have welcomed the resignation and announced that an emergency meeting of senior monks would be held this week to select Suh's successor.

Quake shakes Oregon: A magnitude 5.5 earthquake shook southern Oregon and northern California Monday night. There were no immediate reports of injuries, AP reports from Portland.

Preliminary estimates from the University of Washington Geophysics Department places the quake's epicentre between Klamath Falls, in southern Oregon, a Yreka, in northern California.

The area is sparsely populated and there were no immediate reports of injuries. But the quake reportedly smashed at least one storefront window in Klamath Falls and was blamed for scattered power outages in the region.

Commons' committee backs democratic reforms in HK

LONDON, Apr 13: Plans by Hong Kong governor Chris Patten for democratic reforms despite Chinese opposition won backing Wednesday from the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Select Committee, reports AP.

"To be seen to give in to China would have undermined the authority of the governor and the government of Hong Kong to such an extent that the stability of Hong Kong, and perhaps financial stability too, would be at risk," it said in a report.

The all-party committee supported the British govern-

ment's refusal to water down the planned democratic reforms and do a deal with China "which could appear shabby and inadequate."

But it noted that many critics regard the planned reforms as too little and too late.

The committee called for the establishment by law of a human rights commission for Hong Kong.

It said that after 1997, when Britain's lease expires and the colony reverts to Chinese rule, Britain will not be able to guarantee much protection to the people of Hong Kong.

Heavy fighting in Rwandan capital

KIGALI, Apr 13: Fierce fighting erupted in the centre of Rwanda's blood-soaked capital Kigali at dawn today after rebels closed in under cover of darkness, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

Fighting started at 5:00 am local time (0350 GMT) with government forces and Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels battling with artillery, mortars, anti-aircraft tanks and recoilless cannon.

Witnesses said the parliament building where a 600-strong rebel contingent was stationed under a shattered peace accord between the

mostly Tutsi rebels and the Hutu-dominated government took several direct hits.

Rebel reinforcements apparently infiltrated overnight on Tuesday from just outside Kigali, Awash in tribal bloodshed since the Hutu president was killed last Wednesday, and moved in on government positions at day break.

Army helicopter gunships pounded rebels advancing on the headquarters of the paramilitary gendarmes at a Kacyiru in the northeast of the capital.

As the rockets were unleashed, rebel positions per-

pered the sky with anti-aircraft fire.

Journalists staying in the downtown hotel Mille Collines reported windows were shattered by the thud of heavy shells landing all around.

Red Cross officials said hospitals were flooded with casualties.

Thousands of Rwandans were reported to be fleeing the country to neighbouring states. One journalist said she saw an eight-mile river of people heading out of the capital, gripped by tribal bloodletting and renewed civil war.

Thousands have already fled into Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire.

The UN force in Rwanda (UNAMIR) reported the evacuation of foreign nationals was virtually complete and it has been possible to obtain safe-conduct passes from all the combatants.

The RPF, meanwhile, continued to refuse to negotiate with any other factions and the only remaining radio station operating in the city was urging action against foreigners, which the UN said was particularly unwelcome.



Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi (C) poses with former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (R) and former British Foreign Secretary Lord Peter Carrington (L), the former UN mediator for the former Yugoslavia, April 12 in Johannesburg. A seven-member international delegation arrived in South Africa Tuesday to help break deadlock over multi-racial elections. — AFP photo