

Southern Yemeni army warns of civil war

SANA, Apr 29: Southern Yemeni military sources, warning of catastrophe if clashes between rival northern and southern military units were allowed to continue, want a cease-fire declared immediately, reports Reuter.

Hundreds of combatants have been killed so far in the fighting, according to unconfirmed reports.

A spokesman for the Aden-based Defence Ministry warned in a statement on Thursday night of a possible spread of fighting to other parts of Yemen "igniting a destructive civil war."

A southern military source said "the escalation of the military clashes is a bad omen of a bloody catastrophe."

Deputy Prime Minister Hassan Makki survived an assassination attempt on Thursday as he left a political party meeting called to discuss the military clashes that threaten the end of a four-year union of northern and southern Yemen.

Three of Makki's bodyguards were killed but he escaped with gunshot wounds to the shoulder and leg and his condition in hospital was reported to be good.

The Interior Ministry said

US asks Rwandan govt to stop fighting

WASHINGTON, Apr 29: The United States called Thursday on the Rwandan government to do everything possible to end the ethnic bloodletting that has left an estimated 100,000 people dead, reports AFP.

"We call on the government and the military leaders to do everything in their power to bring an immediate end to these savage acts," said State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly.

The government must make it clear to all Rwandans that attacks on civilians are unacceptable and will not be tolerated," she added.

Shelly's comments came as fighting continued to rage in the African country. The headquarters of the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front in the capital Kigali came under intermittent mortar and artillery fire.

But the exchanges were

shorter and less intense than on Wednesday, said a UN spokesman speaking by telephone from the capital Kigali.

The three-week ethnic and political bloodbath triggered by the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana in an April 6 plane crash has cost at least 100,000 lives, according to the Red Cross.

Many of those hacked or clubbed to death have been members of the minority Tutsi tribe which dominates the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front.

But opposition supporters from the president's majority Hutu group have also been slaughtered in gruesome machete attacks by extremist militiamen and presidential guards.

Half the population urgently need help, said Philippe Gaillard, the Red Cross Chief in Kigali.

US Congress votes to end Bosnia arms embargo

Alija proposes temporary truce to settle disputes

BELGRADE, Apr 29: Bosnian Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic on Thursday proposed a new temporary cease-fire in Bosnia in order to seek a comprehensive settlement of the crisis, reports Xinhua.

He made this proposal in the Sarajevo while meeting the newly established 'contact group' on Bosnia, which consists of Russia, the European Union (EU), the United States and the United Nations.

After visiting Bosnia, the group, set up early this month in London, will prepare a report within a week for a ministerial meeting of the US, Britain, France, Germany and Russia.

This new group, headed by Lord Owen, an EU envoy for Bosnia, will also meet Bosnian Serb and Croatian leaders.

The task of the group is to ensure two-to-three-month peace in Bosnia, map out a comprehensive settlement and draw up a plan for the division of territory.

Reuter adds: Western and Russian mediators met Bosnian Serb leaders at Pale outside Sarajevo today to discuss an overall ceasefire in Bosnia, witnesses said.

Seven members of the newly formed mediation contact group arrived at the Serb stronghold from Sarajevo where they met Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic on Thursday.

The first thing on the agenda, as we see it on our side, is to have a cessation of hostilities as soon as possible," Jean Pierre Mssat, the French representative in the group, said in Sarajevo.

Izetbegovic said on Thursday his government would back a temporary ceasefire of two to three months to allow time for peace negotiations to settle territorial disputes.

But the Serbs, who control 70 per cent of Bosnia, have insisted on a permanent truce accord.

Bosnian Muslim officials say

a permanent ceasefire could allow the Serbs to hold on to captured land while stalling on a final peace settlement.

The mediation group consists of senior American, Russian, French, German and British diplomats.

AP from Washington reports: Congress voted its support for an end to the arms embargo on Bosnia Thursday and removed a cap on arms sales to Taiwan in approving a 13.5 billion dollars bill to fund US foreign operations.

The bill passed by a voice vote in the House after Senate approval earlier, also creates Radio Free Asia, authorises 1.3 billion dollars for international peacekeeping and backs President Clinton's lifting of the Vietnam trade embargo.

The measure authorises 7 billion dollars for fiscal year 1994 and 6.5 billion dollars for 1995 to fund the State Department and related agencies.

The Bosnia provision urges but does not require Clinton to provide arms to Bosnia's Muslims in their battle against Serbs despite a UN embargo on arms sales to former Yugoslavia. Clinton has called for a multilateral lifting of the embargo but has said a unilateral lifting would undermine other UN actions.

A stronger Bosnian measure sponsored by Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan, with some Democratic support, would lift the embargo, forcing Clinton to accept or veto it. That bill is expected to be considered next week.

The Taiwan provision ends a 12-year commitment to reduce arms sales to the country whose territory is claimed by China. It states that the Taiwan Relations Act, in which the United States promises to ensure that Taiwan has a sufficient self-defence capability, takes precedence over subsequent US directives.

Off the Record



Five Miss Universe contestants from eastern Europe (from L to R) Nevena Marinova of Bulgaria, Eva Maria Laan of Estonia, Inna Zobova of Russia, Szilvia Froilan of Hungary and Joanna Brykczynska of Poland pose for photographers in their swimsuits at Manila Hotel April 29. — AFP photo

1 lakh children pick Jackson as the best role model

NEW YORK: Rock star Michael Jackson, voted the best role model by 100,000 children, made a rare public appearance to accept a Children's Choice award, reports AP.

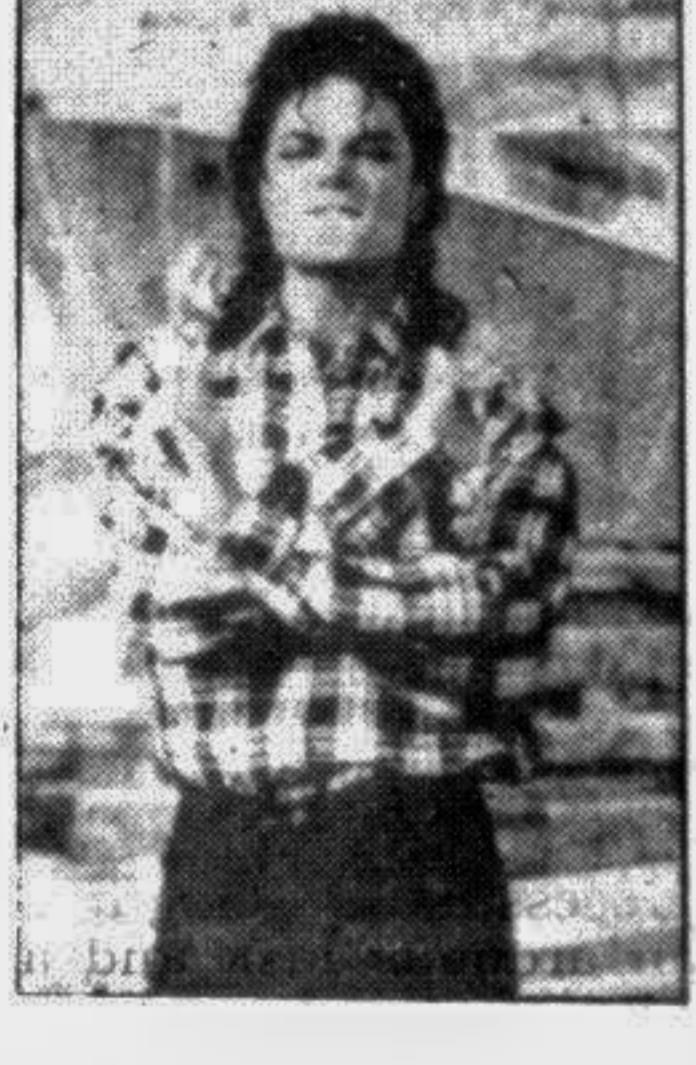
Hundreds of children squealed and chanted, "Michael, Michael" as Jackson received the award Thursday while flanked by 30 youngsters.

"I am deeply honoured," said Jackson, who blew kisses, giggled and bit his lower lip as the crowd cheered.

"We love you Michael!" a man shouted from the audience.

"I love you too," Jackson replied. "I love you all."

The award was sponsored by Body Sculpt, a non-profit group that uses physical fitness to keep youngsters away from drugs. The award is based on questionnaires filled out by children ages 8 to 16 in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.



Authorities are investigating allegations Jackson molested a 13-year-old body.

Body Sculpt's president, Vincent Ferguson, said the allegation doesn't bother him one bit. "And it doesn't bother the children," he said.

Amy Fisher's love letter outsells Nixon's card

NEW YORK: A letter from Amy Fisher brought in more than a business card autographed by Richard Nixon, while a document signed by President Lincoln fetched the highest price of all at an auction, reports AP.

The sale was held Thursday by Herman Darwick Autograph Auctions.

Fisher's letter, which Darwick described as a "love letter," was written to a woman with whom the teenager was imprisoned after being arrested for shooting Mary Jo Buttafuoco, her lover's wife. It sold for \$500 dollars.

A Nixon card with the address of the New York City office he used in the early 1980s sold for \$400 dollars. The auction catalogue issued a week before the former president suffered a fatal stroke, estimated the signature would fetch only \$200 dollars.

A Civil War shipping document signed by Lincoln went for \$11,000 dollars.

The buyers' identities were not disclosed.

Daughters murder mother for her strictness

HARRISONBURG: A 12-year-old girl was convicted of helping her sister and boyfriend stab their mother to death the night before the girls were due to start military school, reports AP.

After a closed trial, the jury found Wednesday that Stephanie Fries was an accessory to second-degree murder in the 1993 death of her mother, Marilyn.

"We were pleased that they at least found that she did not commit the crime itself," said Stephanie's lawyer, Danita Alt.

Marilyn Fries, 35, was stabbed 16 times in the back and neck in the family's home.

In December, a juvenile court judge convicted Stephanie of second-degree murder. Her 14-year-old sister, Camellia, and Stephanie's 15-year-old boyfriend, Shawn Roadcap, were convicted of first-degree murder.

All three appealed, and were retried in county court. A jury convicted Camellia and Shawn of first-degree murder on April 15.

All three were convicted as juveniles, and cannot be imprisoned past their 21st birthdays. Stephanie's sentencing was set for June 2.

At Stephanie's trial, authorities played a tape recording that they said was Shawn's confession that he and Stephanie had Fries down while Camellia repeatedly plunged an 8-inch (20-cm) knife into her mother's body, attorneys said.

BRIEFLY

Tareq Aziz to visit NY in May:

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz will come to New York next month for another round of talks on Baghdad's compliance with UN resolutions on the scrapping of its weapons of mass destruction and future monitoring of its arms potential, Reuter reports from United Nations.

Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, head of the UN special commission in charge of dismantling Iraq's arsenals, said Thursday the talks were arranged during a visit to Baghdad from which he had just returned.

A UN source said Aziz was expected to arrive in New York May 10 and to remain until about May 19. His visit would coincide with the Security Council's next periodic review May 17 of Iraq's compliance with the weapons provisions of Gulf War resolutions.

Tijuana police chief killed: Gunmen assassinated the chief of police of Tijuana and killed a passenger in the chief's car Thursday night, AP reports from Tijuana, Mexico.

Municipal Police Chief Jose Federico Benitez Lopez and the passenger were both shot at about 9 pm, said Officer Leopoldo Gonzalez of the Tijuana Police Department.

The assailants, believed to be two men, escaped in vehicles, police said. The shooting occurred in the La Mesa section of Tijuana near the US-Mexico border with California.

2 shot dead in N Ireland: Police said early yesterday a man was shot dead in Northern Ireland hours after they imposed tighter security to try to stem an upsurge in sectarian violence in the British province. Reuter reports from Belfast.

They gave no details about the victim, was the 20th person killed in violence in the North this year and the ninth in the past eight days.

Protestant gunmen had killed a Catholic man before dawn on Thursday, their second victim in 12 hours.

Child killer to die in US: A man convicted of shooting a 9-year-old girl to death in a bungled burglary was sentenced Thursday to die by injection, AP reports from Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Jerome Martinez, 30, was convicted of first-degree murder last week. The jury also could have recommended life in prison. Martinez broke into a house in Rio Chama in northern New Mexico last year, then shot Vanessa Valerio and her mother, Annette, when they surprised him. Valerio was shot in the neck at close range. She wept as she told the trial jury how she lay bleeding from the wound and heard another gunshot. "I heard my Nessie fall," she said.

AIDS epidemic threatens Indonesia

WASHINGTON, Apr 29: Indonesia faces an AIDS epidemic by the end of the decade unless it steps up prevention programmes and receives greater outside assistance, a US Congressman says. reports AP.

Without those steps, the world's fourth most populous country could find up to 3 million of its 185 million inhabitants infected with the virus that causes AIDS in six years, Rep Jim McDermott said Thursday.

Russian bid to broker truce in Nagorno-Karabakh fails

MOSCOW, Apr 29: Russia's latest attempt to broker a cease-fire in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh has failed, despite positive answers from the warring sides, a Russian envoy said Friday, reports AP.

Vladimir Kazimirov, President Boris Yeltsin's special envoy to Nagorno-Karabakh, said Azerbaijan had definitely accepted the cease-fire offer earlier this week.

On Thursday, the Armenian capital, a Foreign Ministry official reported that fighting was continuing Friday and said Azerbaijan was to blame, the Itar-Tass news agency reported.

Russia's latest cease-fire initiative stemmed from a meeting this week between Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and Azerbaijani parliament Speaker Rasul Guliev.

The hostility between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis goes back centuries. Nagorno-Karabakh — a region about the size of long Island, New York, or half as large as Cyprus — is a flash-point because its inhabitants are predominantly Armenian but it is located inside Azerbaijan.

The dispute exploded in 1988, when the Karabakh parliament voted to break away from Azerbaijan. In the past year, Armenian forces seized the entire enclave and then advanced into Azerbaijan proper, capturing many towns and villages. Two successive Azerbaijani governments

blamed for the defeats, have fallen.

Kazimirov said Russia's latest mediation effort involved a proposal for an immediate cease-fire without pre-conditions. He said Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership insisted on an earlier proposal that envisaged a gradual disengagement of forces, creation of buffer zones and deployment of international observers.

In Yerevan, the Armenian capital, a Foreign Ministry official reported that fighting was continuing Friday and said Azerbaijan was to blame, the Itar-Tass news agency reported.

Fighting continued Friday in the mountainous region, where six years of war have taken 15,000 lives and created a million refugees.

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It is only within one day this month that a group of 284 Bhutanese people have entered Nepal as refugees from Bhutan with "orders from the government to leave the country instantly on April 15," the daily said.

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