

Southern Yemeni army warns of civil war

SANAA, 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 Reuters.

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

five suspects had been arrested. Makki is an ally of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, whose General People's Congress (GPC) is feuding with the southern Yemen socialist party of Vice-President Ali Salem Al-Baidh.

Thursday's shooting was condemned by a YSP official. The incident occurred as Makki left a GPC meeting called to discuss fighting which raged for the second day between a northern and a southern armoured brigades at Amran, just north of the capital Sanaa.

The southern spokesman said the southern third armoured brigade was exposed "to total extermination" at the hands of northern troops and tribes loyal to them.

This was in contrast to earlier accounts on Thursday by a southern military source who said the southern brigade was in control of the situation and had seized 30 northern tanks while tribes loyal to the brigade destroyed 13 northern tanks.

The southern spokesman called for an immediate cease-fire, separation of warring units and the immediate lifting of a siege which he said was imposed by northern forces.

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 a 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 Massat, the French representative in the group, said in Sarajevo.

Izetbegovic said on Thursday his government would back a temporary ceasefire for 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.

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 AP.

"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 continue 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.



A Russian-made Scud missile (capable of carrying a 1000-kg warhead some 280 kilometers) and a mobile launcher are on display in Kabul April 28 by the Shiite Harakat-i-Islami faction during their military parade in celebration of the 2nd anniversary of the mujahedeen's capture of Kabul from the Afghan communist regime in April 1992. — AFP photo

Abdel-Rahman gets 7 years imprisonment

CAIRO, Apr 29: An Egyptian court on Thursday sentenced in his absence blind Muslim fundamentalist Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, who awaits trial in the United States for plotting the bombing of New York's World Trade Center, reports Reuters.

The court sentenced Abdel Rahman to seven years hard labour for inciting a riot and attempting to kill two policemen in 1989.

Abdel Rahman, imprisoned in the United States, has lived there since 1990 and faces trial in September with 14 other suspected Muslim fundamentalist on charges of plotting the February 26, 1993, bombing of the World Trade Center.

Bhutanese continue to enter Nepal

KATHMANDU, Apr 29: Bhutanese refugees driven out of their hometowns continued to enter Nepal via Indian territory recently, official newspaper The Rising Nepal reported here today, says Xinhua.

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.

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 leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh also agreed to stop hostilities. But the Armenian response "did not correspond to the latest concrete proposal of Russia", Kazimirov told the Interfax news agency.

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

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.

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

Clinton, Al Gore meet Dalai Lama

WASHINGTON, Apr 29: President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore met Dalai Lama on Thursday and discussed religious and cultural rights in Tibet with the exiled spiritual leaders, the White House said, reports Reuters.

"These issues are of concern to the administration, especially as it reviews the conditions required for renewal of Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status for China," the White House said in a statement following the meeting.

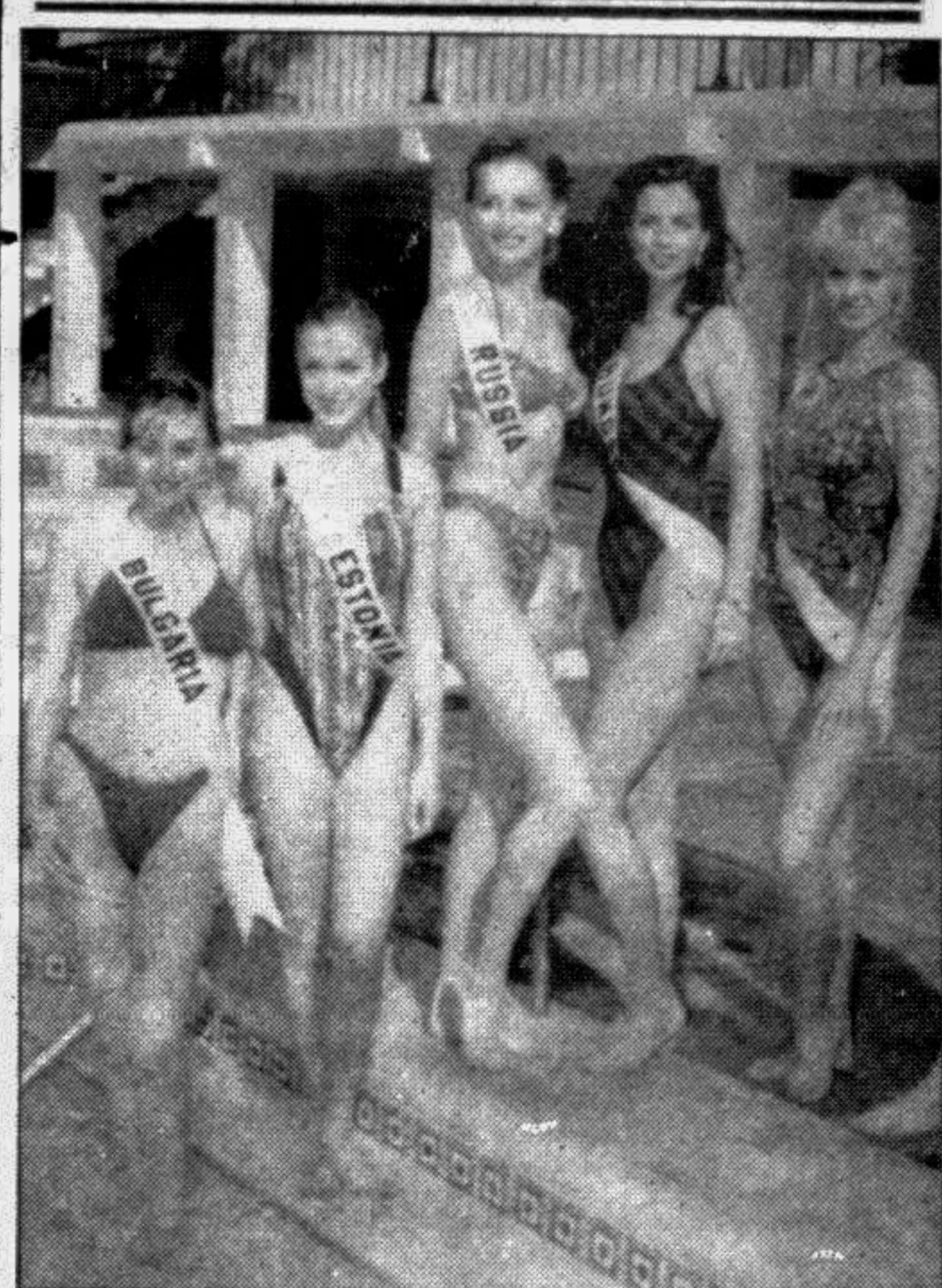
who said Azerbaijan would agree to a cease-fire.

Grachev called Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian on Wednesday to ask him to use his influence to persuade the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh to accept the offer.



Margherita Bazzani, 93, and her 24-year-old husband Andrea Pezzoni, pose for photographs following their marriage at Bardineto near Genoa, Italy April 28. Pezzoni is a pastry chef and the couple plans to open a cake shop. — AFP photo

Off the Record



Five Miss Universe candidates 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 boy.

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 Darvick Autograph Auctions.

Fisher's letter, which Darvick 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 550 dollars.

A Nixon card with the address of the New York City office he used in the early 1980s sold for 480 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 held Fries down while Camellia repeatedly plunged an 8-inch (20-cm) knife into her mother's body, attorneys 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.

Mandela rules out ban on Afrikaner Resistance Movement

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 29: African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, answering like a president-elect in a round of interviews Friday, ruled out a ban on pro-apartheid neo-Nazis and said he might raise taxes to pay for South Africa's vast development needs, reports AP.

Mandela, interviewed by The Associated Press and other news organisations on the morning after voting ended for most South Africans, said the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, or AWRB, should not be subjected to any "extraordinary measures" even though police have linked AWRB members to terror bombings

that killed 21 people this week.

Thirty-one white extremists, including senior AWRB members, were arrested in connection with the bombings. On Thursday, an arms cache was seized at a right-wing farm near Pretoria, and AWRB leader Eugene Terre'Blanche told reporters his followers would fight on "until we die or have won."

Mandela, however, spoke of the AWRB's insignificance as a threat to his vision of a non-racial South Africa.

"Up to now they've remained a tiny minority, and I think one would be giving

them too much importance if you banned them," said Mandela, whose own ANC blossomed into a mass movement during the time it was banned from 1960 until 1990.

"It is better to deal with organisations like that above ground," he said. "I think that they are really a police matter."

Mandela joked he had to leave behind his colourful loose-fitting campaign shirts now that the election was over. He wore a muted grey suit, white shirt, bright red tie and burgundy sweater vest.

After the grueling election campaign, Mandela appeared weary but full of old-world

cordiality. For instance, he declined to start the interview until he had shaken hands with each of the small number of photographers and technical workers present.

Offering a glimpse of toughness that he might bring to the post of president, Mandela said he would not tolerate insubordination within a future coalition government, which is to be made up of all parties that get more than 5 per cent of the vote in the election.

"If I am the president, I am the president," said Mandela, when asked how he would treat a minister following narrow party interests. "No minister is going to do something

which is contrary to the decision of the government of national unity."

As the expected president, Mandela would be in charge of allocating portfolios to parties entitled to be in the Cabinet.

"Every minister whether he comes from the African National Congress, from the National Party or some other organisation is there to carry out the decided policy of the government."

Asked what would happen if the ANC's reconstruction and development plan would cost much more — as some critics have alleged — than the 39 billion rands (dls 11 billion) the ANC estimates, Mandela indi-

cated he would raise taxes rather than cut back on the plan. This would hit mainly at the white minority, the biggest earners.

"Everybody is bound to pay a fair tax — everybody. That is the principle in every country. The basic policies set out in the (plan) is the minimum policy which we have to address the basic needs of the peoples. It is inconceivable that any time we will cut down on that policy," he said.

However, he added that his aim remains "to have a tax system which is fair, which is low, so as to encourage investors."

Insurgents abduct 3 in Tripura

AGARTALA, Apr 29: Suspected insurgents killed one and kidnapped two persons while six others were injured in separate incidents during the past twenty-four hours in Tripura, police sources said here today, reports PTI.

A group of heavily armed insurgents clad in olive green uniforms faired a tribal hamlet, Bhagyamoni Roaja Para under Manu police station of North Tripura district and kidnapped three persons at gunpoint.

The police launched a combing operation in the area,