

International

Thatcher for air strikes against Bosnian Serbs

WASHINGTON, May 5: Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said on Wednesday air strikes against Serbian positions in Bosnia and partially lifting the embargo to allow arms to Muslim forces are necessary to end the war in Bosnia, reports AFP.

"Air strikes are effective, as long as they are not on a small scale, hedged with political hesitations and qualifications," wrote Thatcher in an article published in Wednesday's New York Times.

Thatcher said if airstrikes had been carried out in the summer of 1991 the war would not have carried on, she said the West is now faced with a far more complex and dangerous situation, trying to protect weakened Muslim positions.

Thatcher said the international community must now mount repeated, large-scale air attacks on Bosnian-Serb posi-

Fierce fighting continues Emergency declared in Yemen

SANAA, May 5: President Ali Abdullah Saleh declared a 30-day state of emergency today following worsening fighting between his supporters and their southern rivals, the official Yemeni news agency reported, reports AFP.

The aim was to "bring to heel separatists" within the southern Yemeni Socialist Party led by his rival, Vice President Ali Salem Al-Baid, it said.

A US special envoy, Robert Pelletreau, arrived Wednesday to try to defuse the crisis which is pitting forces from the former North Yemen, loyal to the president, against those from the old South Yemen, who back his Vice-President.

The two have been at loggerheads for months and the dispute is threatening to degenerate into a civil war which could split the country only

four years after they united.

Meanwhile, Reuters adds: Fierce rocket, artillery and tank battles raged in several areas of Yemen early today and a northern spokesman said loyal troops were under siege in Aden, capital of the former Marxist South Yemen.

Political sources in Sanaa said the country's three-party coalition government met on Wednesday night to consider whether it should offer its resignation to pave the way of a new administration in the face of the deepening crisis. There was no immediate indication if any decision had been taken.

The northern spokesman said that "secessionist forces launched an attack against (northern) central security units in Aden using tanks, armour and various weapon fire after encircling their camp."

He said the attack was still in progress three hours later.

The central security camp is close to Aden international airport. It has been at the centre of the friction, with Aden demanding that it be moved far from the airport and Sanaa authorities rejecting any shifting of the camp.

The first confirmed reports of fighting came on Wednesday when southern and northern spokesmen said fighting flared up in the northern town of Dahmar, 100km (60 miles) south of the capital Sanaa.

An official of the southern Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) in Dahmar, said: "Rockets, artillery and tank fire are being used in the battle started by northern troops."

A northern spokesman later said "the forces of aggression at Al-Anad (in the South) are ferociously attacking (the

northern) second brigade in Radfan. There is no doubt that southern Vice-President Ali Salem Al-Baid... has declared war against the people and all those who are with unity."

Unconfirmed reports in Sanaa said fighting had also spread to the northern oil-producing region of Marib and Yarin close to the former border with South Yemen.

The northern spokesman said "efforts are under way from all directions and by a multinational military commission to put a final end to the fighting and ward off the spread of human and material losses."

Eyewitnesses in Aden said earlier on Wednesday that residents were panicking in the streets of the city after hearing artillery shells exploding.

Off the Record



Sweden's top-model Helena Christensen kisses American singer Ray Charles, after she gave him the Lifelong Contribution to the Music Industry Award, May 4 during the World Music Awards ceremony in Monte-Carlo, Monaco. — AFP photo

Photographer fined for harassing whales

HONOLULU: A commercial photographer who sold footage to television's "Witness Video" of a pilot whale biting his assistant was fined 10,000 dollars for whale harassment, reports AP.

The fine, the maximum possible in a whale harassment case, was levied Tuesday against Lee Tepley.

Tepley, an experienced underwater photographer, should have known better than to violate the Marine Mammal Protection Act by chasing the pod of whales, said Hugh J Dolan, the federal administrative law judge who fined him.

Tepley and assistant Lisa Costello steered a powerboat toward a group of whales in 1991, allowing Costello to swim with the mammals. She was petting one when it bit her thigh and briefly held her 40 feet (12 metres) under water.

Tepley sold his video for 5,000 dollars. Fisheries agents filed charges against Costello after seeing it broadcast.

Charges against Costello were dropped when she agreed to cooperate with investigators.

Man did it to avoid alimony

FORT LAUDERDALE: A man convicted of hiring hitmen to kill his ex-wife so he could get out of paying a 180,000 dollars divorce settlement should be spared the death penalty, a jury voted Wednesday, reports AP.

The jury recommended Paul Hamwi, 48, be sentenced to life in jail, with a minimum of 25 years served before he is eligible for parole.

Prosecutors say Hamwi didn't want to pay a 180,000 dollars divorce settlement, so he had his wife killed, leaving their 18-month-old daughter to die in her crib of dehydration.

He was acquitted in the death of his daughter.

Hamwi, of Aspen, Colo, was convicted of first-degree murder in the 1983 killing.

The jury also said it recommended a similar sentence for Hamwi's co-defendant, Paul Michael Serio, 47, of White Settlement, Texas. The jury had previously decided on a life sentence for Serio but it was sealed until Wednesday.

BRIEFLY

Thai MP accused of smuggling: A member of parliament of Thailand has been accused of involvement in smuggling more than 47 tons of marijuana into the United States between 1977 and 1987, Xinhua reports from Bangkok.

The office of the drug enforcement administration in Bangkok said on Wednesday the dealings had earned the MP, Thanong Siripreechapong, about 10.3 million US dollars in profit.

Thanong is an MP of the Chart Thai Party, the largest opposition party in the Thai parliament.

Vietnamese PM to visit Myanmar: Vietnam's Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet will visit Myanmar in the near future, Myanmar authorities announced yesterday, Xinhua reports from Yangon.

At the invitation of senior General Than Shwe, chairman of the Myanmar State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar. The Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Vo Van Kiet will pay an official friendly visit to Myanmar.

Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet will be accompanied by Madame Vo Van Kiet and others. Myanmar Deputy Foreign Minister U Nyunt had visited Vietnam in April this year.

Chinese plane hijacker sentenced: A court has sentenced a Chinese businessman to 10 years in prison for hijacking a Chinese jetliner to Taiwan last December, officials said Thursday, AP reports from Taipei.

They said Gao Jun, 25, from China's Shandong province, was sentenced Wednesday by a district court for commandeering a Northern Airlines' MD-82 on December 8 by wielding a knife.

While in detention, Gao attempted to commit suicide by swallowing a toothbrush, a screw and two small batteries.

Gao told reporters: after the hijacking that he commandeered the plane because he wanted to live in Taiwan.

Germany lifts arms ban on Turkey: Germany on Wednesday lifted an arms embargo imposed briefly on Turkey amid allegations that German weapons were being used to crack down on Kurdish separatists, AP reports from Bonn.

Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said photographs purporting to show German armored vehicles in action in Turkish Kurdistan were unconvincing. The embargo was imposed on Turkey after human rights activists presented the photos to the Foreign Ministry on April 12.

Germany has sold and transferred hundreds of millions of marks worth of arms to Turkey, but the contracts prohibit Turkish security forces from employing the weapons against internal foes.

The photos were they only evidence the government examined in deciding that the arms contracts with Turkey were being respected, said government spokesman Dieter Vogel.

11 children die in SA bus collision: Eleven children and their driver died Thursday when their school bus collided with a passenger bus, police said, AP reports from Johannesburg.

Witnesses reported the crash occurred after the school mini-bus tried to overtake other vehicles on a highway linking Johannesburg with the sprawling township of Soweto.

Only two children aboard the mini-bus survived, said Sgt. Andy Pieteke of the Johannesburg police. Thirteen passengers from the crowded municipal bus were hospitalized in critical condition.

Queen Elizabeth's niece to marry: Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, 29-year-old daughter on Princess Margaret, has become engaged to longtime boyfriend Daniel Chatto, AP reports from London.

Buckingham Palace announced Thursday that Lady Sarah, Queen Elizabeth II's niece, would marry Chatto, but didn't announce when or where the wedding would take place.

Lady Sarah, an artist, is the daughter of photographer Lord Snowdon, who was divorced from Princess Margaret in 1978. Her brother David, furniture designer Viscount Linley, was married last year to heiress Serena Stanhope.

Sihanouk dismayed by killings of soldiers' wives

PHNOM PENH, May 5: King Norodom Sihanouk said on Thursday he was dismayed by the "very cruel" rapes and decapitations of up to 10 wives of government soldiers by Khmer Rouge guerrillas in northwest Cambodia, reports AFP.

The Khmer Rouge were taking revenge on the wives of soldiers fighting with the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) which used to be allied with the Khmer Rouge and changed side to fight on the side of the new government following UN-organised elections in May 1993.

"The Khmer Rouge burned down hundreds of houses and raped the young wives of the KPNLF soldiers who were sent to Pailin," the King said.

"According to refugees, the newly displaced persons coming from the region, they beheaded them in a very cruel fashion, the ladies there," King Sihanouk told journalists.



Palestinians express mixed feelings of joy and anger towards Israeli soldiers in Jericho May 4, after the autonomy agreement signing ceremony in Cairo between Israel and the PLO. — AFP photo

Palestinians celebrate new era of self-rule

GAZA CITY, May 5: Palestinians stepped into a new era of self-rule in Gaza and Jericho after 27 years of Israeli occupation, cheering the arrival of PLO police commanders and the release of Palestinian prisoners, reports AP.

But the signing on Wednesday of the Palestinian self-rule agreement after months of torturous negotiations left important issues unresolved and the changeover was expected to be rocky.

Still, the prospect of autonomy and an eventual Palestinian state produced remarkable displays of goodwill in areas torn by six years of violence.

Newly freed Palestinian prisoners posed for pictures and shook hands with Israeli soldiers, and some people released doves. Children in the West Bank town of Jericho showered an Israeli police car with flowers.

Israeli soldiers shouted "Shalom" at passing Palestinian cars.

"This is the beginning of the changes we will see on the ground soon. It's the beginning of the translation of the historic agreement," said Col Maher Fara, a spokesman for the Palestinian police force that will patrol the autonomous

Key facts about Gaza, Jericho

JERUSALEM, May 5: Here are key facts about the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, reports Reuter.

Gaza Strip
Population: About 750,000 Palestinians and 4,000 Jewish settlers according to Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 1992 figures. Other estimates put the number of Palestinians at one million. About half the Palestinian population are refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

Area: 36.3 square km (1.36 square miles) on the Mediterranean coast and the Egyptian Sinai Desert.

Economy: GNP is estimated at around 800 million dollars. Per capita income is around 800 dollars.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the local economy.

About 4,000 Palestinians work for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which aids Palestinian refugees.

Religion: Almost all of Gaza's Palestinians are Sunni Muslims.

Modern history: In 1948, the Gaza Strip, a rectangular area along the southern coast of the Mediterranean sea was cut off from the rest of Palestine after the founding of the Jewish state.

Egypt retained the area and administered it until Israel occupied it during the 1967 Middle-East war.

In 1987, a road accident sparked massive demonstrations in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp, giving birth to the Palestinian Intifada or uprising.

Although supporters of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat remain the dominant power in the conservative and traditional Gaza Strip, Muslim fundamentalists in the Islamic resistance movement Hamas have been gaining strength.

The group, born after the outbreak of the uprising, has enough strength to create difficulties for PLO rule in the Gaza Strip.

Jericho area
Population: About 25,000 Palestinians, of whom 14,000 live in the town of Jericho, village of Uja'a and two small refugee camps Aqbat Jaber and Ain Al-Sultan.

Area: About 60 square km (23 square miles) located adjacent to the Jordan River.

Language: Arabic

Economy: Farming, tourism are the main sources of income for Palestinians in Jericho.

Religion: 95 per cent Sunni Muslim, 5 per cent Christian.

Manila supports Cairo Accord
MANILA, May 5: The Philippines supports the self-rule accord between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel. Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo said Thursday, reports AP.

Romulo said the agreement signed Wednesday is a crucial segment of the process by which the Palestinian people will one day realize full and total statehood.

He called it a significant development for the attainment of peace in the Middle East.

Rockets pound Kabul: 130 hurt

KABUL, May 5: Rival Islamic leaders pounded the shattered capital of Kabul with hundreds of rockets for a second day Thursday, wounding at least 130 people, hospital officials said, reports AP.

It was not immediately known whether anyone was killed.

"Rockets were falling everywhere. Right next to me three of my friends were wounded," said Mohammed Zohir, a 22-year-old fighter loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Since January 1, presidential troops have been waging a fierce battle with forces loyal to renegade Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who says he wants Rabbani to resign and hold elections.

At least 1,500 people — mostly civilians — have been killed in the ferocious fighting. It has reduced entire neighbourhoods to rubble and has sent an estimated 500,000 residents fleeing for safety.

A teacher, who gave his name only as Daoud, said a rocket landed in his bullet-riddled apartment in south Kabul and injured his three children. One of the children was in serious condition with shrapnel wounds the other were treated and released.

"Why can't they stop fighting? I am begging them to stop," he said.

About 5 lakh flee Rwanda to escape massacres

NAIROBI, May 5: At least 489,000 people have fled Rwanda to escape massacres that have ravaged the country in the past one month, the international medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said Wednesday, reports AP.

About 265,000 of the refugees have massed in Tanzania alone, creating the largest makeshift refugee camp in the world at Benako, where between 150,000 and 200,000 have now gathered on a single site, according to a MSF statement released here.

As a result, MSF flew 40 tonnes of sanitary and medical equipment to Kampala in neighbouring Uganda on Sunday for the border refugee camps in Tanzania, while two other Cargo planes will leave Europe on Wednesday and today to bring another 80 tonnes of medical aid to Tanzania.

These will include tent hospitals, feeding centres, shelters, blankets, water equipment and medical supplies, the statement said.

The majority of the refugees now in Tanzania are Hutus, who have led the southward advance of the mainly-Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels, while another 15,000 are Tutsis.

Between 54,000 and 57,000 Rwandan/Tutsis have found refuge in Burundi, while

China executed 1400 last year, says Amnesty

LONDON, May 5: China last year executed more than 1,400 people for crimes ranging from embezzlement to murder, according to Amnesty International, reports AP.

Amnesty said in a statement released Thursday that at least 2,564 people were sentenced to death in 1993 in China and 1,419 of those sentences were confirmed to have been carried out.

The organisation, which opposes capital punishment in all circumstances, called it "the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment."

"Even these figures probably fall drastically short of the true number, which is considered to be a state secret" by Chinese officials," the London-based human rights group said.

Amnesty said the executions peaked during particular times of year, such as June 26, when the state specifically targets drug traffickers.

World will never accept DPRK with N-weapons: Hata

PARIS, May 5: Visiting Japanese Premier Tsutomu Hata said on Wednesday the world would never accept a North Korean with nuclear weapons but urged international leaders to keep the door open to negotiations with Pyongyang over nuclear inspections, reports AP.

During talks with President Francois Mitterrand, the newly installed Japanese premier said the international community should speak "with one voice" on the issue of inspections of North Korea's controversial nuclear sites, said Hata spokesman Kishichiro Amae.

Pyongyang had to understand that "The world will never accept that it has nuclear weapons," he said.

But Hata had stressed that the international community, while maintaining pressure on North Korean authorities, had to "reserve a place for negotiations" on the issue.

North Korea is refusing to allow nuclear inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to take samples of spent fuel from its controversial Yongbyon nuclear power station.

The IAEA believes the sampling of used fuel material at the five megawatt reactor is crucial to prove that the North Koreans have not diverted fissile material to military ends.

For his part Mitterrand said Pyongyang should abide by its obligations as a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Japanese premier also said Tokyo was keen for China to announce the size of its defence budget, adding that such a move could allay fears by showing Beijing did not represent a military threat in the region, Hata's spokesman said.

On the disputed Kuril islands in Russia's far east, French officials confirmed that Japan was ready to boost its aid to Moscow once a peace treaty between the two had been signed and the islands returned to Japan.

Tokyo has resisted pressure to put its financial muscle behind Russia's economic reform programme because of the dispute over the fur islands, occurred by the Soviet Red Army at the end of World War II and which Japan insists must be returned before normal relations are restored.

The wide-ranging talks also touched on moves to widen the domestic Japanese market to foreign competition.

"It is not healthy for one country to have a trade surplus," said Hata, cited by Amae, adding that "we will make an effort to open up our market."



Contestants of the Miss Universe pageant pose, in their swimsuits during a shot for the pageant's television show May 5 in Manila. They will compete for the 1994 Miss Universe crown on May 21. — AFP photo