

Yemenis welcome UN truce call

ADEN, June 3: Yemen's northern and southern rivals welcomed a UN ceasefire call but continued to battle around Aden where northern forces appeared to have gained ground, reports Reuter.

Throughout Thursday, the boom of artillery and anti-aircraft guns could be heard in the southern city from the frontline between attacking northern troops and southern defenders.

Northern forces have tried to advance on at least three fronts to capture Aden and strangle at birth the new democratic republic of Yemen declared by the South on May 21.

Northern forces were reported to have taken the town of Al-Hawtah, 35 km (21 miles) north of Aden, and have advanced at least seven km (four miles) beyond the town.

South Yemen called on the UN Security Council to force the northerners to obey the call for a ceasefire in their month-long war and vowed to fight to defend its capital.

We appeal to the international community to stop this aggression, said a southern government statement.

The northern government in Sanaa said it was willing to put into effect the UN resolution, which it initially opposed saying UN action was an interference in Yemen's affairs.

The government of the republic of Yemen affirms that it is prepared to deal with the resolution in a position spirit and in a way that leads to all parties concerned implementing it in an integral manner," an official statement said.

The carefully worded statement, issued after an emergency cabinet meeting, did not specify that the Sanaa government would stop fighting and start negotiations with the southerners.

Gunmen fire on Yasin Malik's procession: 2 hurt

Tourists ordered to quit Kashmir

NEW DELHI, June 3: A Muslim separatist group has ordered tourists to quit the Kashmir valley immediately, saying Indian troops were planning to kill them and pin the blame on guerrillas, newspapers reported today, says AFP.

The Allah Tigers said in a statement released in the Kashmir summer capital Srinagar on Thursday that all Indian and foreign tourists should leave the troubled valley for their own safety.

The government was "planning to massacre the tourists and then blame it on the Mujahedeen in order to give a bad name to the Kashmiri struggle," Allah Tigers chairman Mehmood-Uz-Zaman said.

"Kashmiris have always welcomed tourists with an open heart," The Asian Age and other newspapers quoted him as saying. "In order to maintain this tradition, we do not want our guests to face any harm".

The orders were not applicable to Indian and foreign journalists and human rights activists, the rebel leader said.

Tourists had begun to return to the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley this summer after four years during which the picturesque region was transformed from a tourist paradise into a virtual ghost state by the Muslim insurgency.

Tourism and sales of handicrafts had been among the biggest money spinners in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state where the separatist drive has left nearly 10,000 people dead since 1989.

India and Pakistan dispute the ownership of Kashmir, Pakistan controls the northern third and India the southern two-thirds, where the separatists are active.

Meanwhile, AP adds from Srinagar: gunmen opened fire on a procession of several thousand people led by a pro-independence militant leader in Kashmir Friday, wounding four people.

Yasin Malik, who was freed on bail from an Indian prison two weeks ago, accused a rival militant group of Muslim fundamentalists of shooting on the crowd.

Marchers scattered in panic as the four people fell with bullet wounds in their legs. Malik said some marchers had recognised the gunmen as two men from the Hizbul Mujahadeen, a pro-Pakistan group.

On Thursday, about a dozen armed men broke into the hospital room where Malik is under care for heart problems and tried to abduct him. The kidnapping was thwarted by neighbours as they were leaving the hospital.

Later that night, the leader of the Hizbul Mujahadeen, Syed Salahuddin, telephoned journalists to condemn the attempted kidnapping and to disclaim responsibility.

The attacks against Malik, leader of the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, came after three people were killed this week in Srinagar, apparently in clashes between militant organisations.

Malik was leading a procession to Martyrs' Cemetery where he said he would go on a hunger strike to demand an investigation into the recent deaths and to urge the fractious militant groups to unite.

Dozens of outlawed groups are operating in Kashmir against Indian security forces, which were sent in 1990 to put down the Kashmiri insurrection. Malik has proposed that they merge into no more than three groups.

Off the Record



New-born elephant bull calf Osh is kept under the watchful eye of his mother Shara at Howletts Wild Animal Park on June 2. This is the first successful birth of a bull calf in the United Kingdom. — AFP photo

Couple's row stops bullet train

TOKYO: A furious row between a married couple brought a Shinkansen bullet train to a screeching halt at Himeji station, western Japan, Thursday, Japanese dailies reported Friday, says AFP.

The couple were arguing on the station platform. The wife suddenly climbed over a 1.6 metre (6.2 inch) high fence and scrambled down on to the railway track, with her husband in pursuit.

A station attendant spotted them and signalled an emergency to stop the bullet train which was only two minutes from the station.

The train was delayed until the couple were back on the station platform. The incident also delayed two other Shinkansen trains, holding up about 1,000 passengers.

Hyogo prefectural police said the husband's 30, was a company employee.

The couple were released after being given a formal reprimand by station officials, police said.

Speculations over Elvis Presley's death

MEMPHIS: A doctor is reviewing Elvis Presley's medical records to see if the king of rock 'n' roll died of heart disease as his death certificate says, reports AP.

There has long been speculation that drug abuse hastened Presley's death in 1977 at age 42.

Diane Denton, a spokeswoman for the Tennessee Department of Health, said Thursday she hoped the review would be completed within a few months.

While the review may shed new light on Presley's death, its primary purpose is to look into the practices of the Memphis medical examiner, Jerry Francisco, said Vasco Smith, a member of the Shelby County Commission. The commission, which is the country lawmaking board at Memphis, requested the review.

Francisco ruled that Presley died of heart disease. But court testimony over the years indicates Presley was a long-time abuser of prescription drugs.

If misinformation was knowingly included on Presley's death certificate, reviews of other decisions by Francisco could be called for, Smith said.

"This case was chosen because it seem to be such a blatant violation of many of the principles involved in doing an autopsy," he said.

Francisco was out of his office and unavailable for comment. He has long maintained that his ruling in Presley's death was accurate.

Presley died August 16, 1977 at his Memphis residence, Graceland. His former personal physician was acquitted in 1981 of charges he over-prescribed drugs for Elvis and others.



Pengshan to reveal secret for long life

BEIJING: A Chinese county whose oldest settler is a 110-year-old blind storyteller plans to reveal its secret for long life, an official report said Friday, reports AP.

Pengshan county, in Sichuan province, southwest China, is famed because its inhabitants live for an unusually long time, the Xinhua news agency said.

It said the number of people over 100 years of age in Pengshan is 17 times the national average and higher than any county nationwide, with the oldest being Xie Hongxing, a 110-year-old blind storyteller.

Pengzu, a legendary Chinese figure said to have died at age 880, is believed to have lived in Pengshan and to have left secrets for longevity. They include deep breathing exercises, tonics, nourishing food and a system of sexual practices, Xinhua said.

Pengshan now plans to build a "Longevity Town" that will put Pengzu's longevity secrets on display, Xinhua said.

BRIEFLY

5000 Ethiopians die in 2 months:

More than 5,000 people have been killed by famine or related diseases in a single province of Ethiopia over the past two months, state television said, Reuter reports from Addis Ababa.

Regional administrators in southern Omo province disclosed the figure during a visit by Prime Minister Tamirat Layne on Thursday, the broadcast added.

More than a million Ethiopians, mostly in the north of the country, perished in a famine 10 years ago that commanded global attention.

Quake shakes East Java:

An earthquake measuring 5.9 on the open-ended Richter scale rocked areas of Indonesia's East Java on Friday but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, the Jakarta meteorological agency said, Reuter reports from Jakarta.

"We have not received any reports of casualties or damage," a spokesman for the meteorological and geophysical agency said.

He said the quake struck at 1:17 A.M local time (1817 GMT) on Friday morning. Its epicentre was in the Indian Ocean, about 140 miles (225 km) south of Malang, East Java.

Leghari meets Mitterrand:

Pakistan President Farooq Ahmed Leghari in Paris had a short meeting with French President Francois Mitterrand on Thursday before leaving for home, AFP reports from Paris.

He said they had discussed nuclear non-proliferation and West Asian regional issues, including Afghanistan, Kashmir and the Gulf, and relations between France and Pakistan, including the supply of Pakistani nuclear power plants.

Leghari arrived in France Wednesday from New York on a private visit.

ICRC for ban on "inhuman" arms:

The International Committee of the Red Cross called Thursday for a ban on the some types of "inhuman" weapons currently being developed, a statement said, AFP reports from Geneva.

In particular the ICRC is concerned about laser weapons which can blind, arms using microwave and infrared technology, and allegedly non-lethal chemical weapons.

The call for the ban came after an ICRC organised meeting of experts Tuesday and Wednesday to consider the dangers of certain types of weapons, some of which have already been produced.

US tourist shot dead in Jamaica:

The husband of a Florida television news anchor celebrating his second wedding anniversary was fatally shot and stabbed as his wife watched in an apparent robbery attempt in their hotel early Thursday, AP reports from Kingston, Jamaica.

Lee Norris Rayham, a 32-year-old urban issues advocate from Orlando vacationing in Kingston, died immediately of a bullet wound to his neck, police said. His wife, 31-year-old Lisa Myers of WESH Channel 2 in Orlando, wasn't hurt.

Police were questioning a street merchant and a labourer in connection with the 1 am attack at the seaside Bell Mall guest house near the town of Runaway Bay, some 65 miles (105 kms) north of Kingston on Jamaica's northern coast.

SA develops battle tank:

South Africa has developed a main battle tank whose speed reaches more than 70 kilometers per hour on the open road and which can stop in 6.8 seconds when going 56 kmh, Xinhua reports from Johannesburg.

According to the latest issue of the South African national defence forces Paratus magazine, "This latest South African innovation compared favourably with its German and American counterparts."

The 58-ton tank, now in demonstration form, has not been seen in public, though former Defence Minister Kobie Coetsee was shown its capabilities.

Y'slav pilot dies in jet mishap:

One pilot was killed instantly and the other parachuted to safety late Wednesday night after two Yugoslav Air Force planes collided in mid-air, an air force statement said Thursday, Xinhua reports from Belgrade.

The two Mig-21 fighter jets were on a regular training flight when they crashed over Bijelo Polje after what the air force said was pilot error. It gave no further details.

Indian heatwave death toll 161:

The death toll from a heatwave sweeping northern India has risen to 161, with the mercury rising as high as 49 degrees Celsius 120 degrees Fahrenheit, the Press Trust of India said on Thursday, Reuter reports from New Delhi.

Victims of heat stroke included an old woman and a six-year-old girl walking from a village bus stop to their hut near the Rajasthan capital, Jaipur, the news agency said.

New Delhi, which saw its hottest day for half a century on Monday at 46C (114.8F) continued to bake at 43.8C (120.1F) three degrees C (nearly five degrees F) above normal.

Almost 1 million prisoners in US

WASHINGTON, June 3: There are almost one million convicts in US prisons, reports Reuter.

The number of inmates in overcrowded state and federal prisons in the United States swelled by more than 65,000 in 1993 to a record 949,000 prisoners, according to a Justice Department report.

The report by its information-gathering unit, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, found a 7.4 per cent increase last year in the state and federal prison population, continuing a trend dating back to 1980 of more criminals behind bars.

China tries to make Tiananmen crackdown Day a non-event

BEIJING, June 3: With thousands of uniformed police, phalanxes of plainclothes security and one foreign monarch, China's communist rulers on Friday bent every effort to ensure the fifth anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown remained a non-event, reports Reuter.

Beijing's Tiananmen Square, where five years ago tanks and troops swept down on unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators, was awash with flags and flooded with security to mark a state visit by Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk.

Foreign and Chinese



Hillary Clinton (L) gestures as she poses with (left to right) Italian Minister of Agriculture Adriana Polibortone of the National Alliance, Tullia Zevi, chairwoman of the Jewish community in Italy, and actress Sofia Loren during their meeting at Villa Taverna, the US embassy in Rome on Thursday. — AFP photo

Israel masses tanks along border with Lebanon

ZARIT, Israel, June 3: Israel massed tanks and artillery on its border with Lebanon today in a tense standoff with guerrillas who hit back after a deadly air raid by firing rockets into the Jewish state, reports Reuter.

Guerrillas defied stern Israeli warnings and fired a fresh volley of Katyusha rockets into the Jewish state early Friday, the sixth barrage since Israeli aircraft launched their bloodiest air raid for seven years on Thursday.

The Israeli army had cautioned the guerrillas they would be "hurt many times harder" if they resumed the rocket attacks.

In Lebanon, security sources said Lebanese troops and Hizbullah guerrillas went on alert as the Israeli armoured column advanced to the border.

The first rockets slammed into Israel on Thursday hours after Israeli jets blasted a pro-Iranian Hizbullah training camp in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, killing dozens of Muslim guerrillas.

The Katyushas caused no injuries, but Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and top generals sternly warned of retaliation.

Rabin said, although, there were no Israeli casualties, the attacks violated understandings that had ended a week long Israeli air, sea and land bombardment of Lebanon last July.

That onslaught, in which about 150 people, mainly civilians, were killed, followed rocket attacks on northern Israel.

Rabin told Israel television on Thursday that if attacks continued "we won't let this pass quietly."

Iran has smuggled 400 guards into Bosnia, says US

WASHINGTON, June 3: Iran has smuggled nearly 400 revolutionary guards into Bosnia to help Bosnian Muslims organise terrorist groups in the former Yugoslavia, said US intelligence services Thursday.

"They have either arrived by now or will soon in the former Yugoslavia," an intelligence source told AFP.

The focus of their activities will be in the former Yugoslavia, Western Europe is not a target, he added.

According to the Washington Times between 350 and 400 instructors were secretly deployed in May along with shipments of arms and explosives.

Mandela hints at referendum on 'whiteland'

PRETORIA, June 3: South African President Nelson Mandela hinted on Thursday at the possibility of a referendum to test white Afrikaner opinion on a separate homeland.

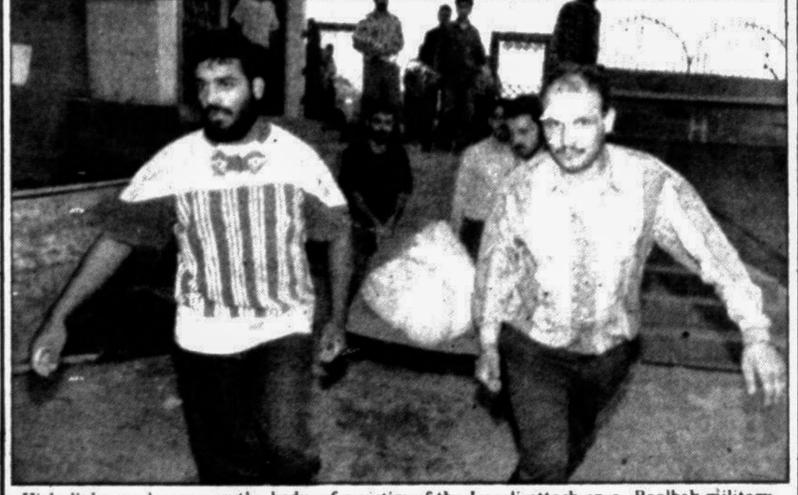
"We want to allow Afrikaners themselves to express themselves on this issue," Mandela told Reuters in his first interview with an international news organisation since his inauguration last month.

But he added: "We have made them no commitment on this question."

He said the attitude of his national unity government, which came to power after the country's first all-race elections on April 26-29, would depend on the response of Afrikaners.

"If the majority of Afrikaners say, 'We do not want a volkstaat (homeland), we will take a different view,' he said.

He said the government would be guided by the desires of the community.



Hizbullah members carry the body of a victim of the Israeli attack on a Baalbek military training camp into a hospital in Beirut on June 2. — AFP photo

China tries to make Tiananmen crackdown Day a non-event

tourists, many of the latter actually radio-equipped security agents, thronged the vast square while banks of fountains sprayed into the air in front of the forbidden city's Tiananmen gate.

The capital's university district, birthplace of the 1989 protests, was also brimming with police officials in place to ensure Sihanouk's security during a visit to a high-technology development zone.

International hotels were ordered to pull the plug on satellite reception of the US news network CNN to prevent file pictures of the bloody June 3-4 conflict from being beamed back to Chinese television sets.

And the official People's Daily, mouthpiece of a leadership which has vowed to nip any signs of western-style democracy in the bud, devoted its front page to a cabinet report on how Chinese women have advanced in life.

Security always tightens dramatically in Beijing during the run-up to the anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown, where hundreds if not thousands of people died at the hands of the People's Liberation Army.

This year's elaborate effort to make sure the capital stays

Confce on E Timor: Manila lifts ban on foreigners

MANILA, June 3: The Philippine government today symbolically lifted a ban on foreign delegates to a controversial human rights meeting on East Timor as the conference drew to a close in Manila, reports AP.

President Fidel Ramos had imposed the ban last week amid threats of political and economic reprisals from Indonesia, which annexed the former Portuguese territory in 1976.

The Immigration Bureau also restored today the cancelled visas of 10 foreigners.

tight security is an admission of that fact, and of the leadership's uncertainty of its support among its own people.

Parties have been cancelled, orders promulgated discouraging contact with foreigners, and an unadulterated diet of good news fed over Chinese media in an attempt to keep emotions in check.

Sihanouk, who for years had maintained a residence in Beijing and is a frequent visitor to the capital, provided his long-time backers with a convenient excuse to increase security in Tiananmen itself by scheduling a state visit for the day of the anniversary.

This year's exceptionally

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