

Fresh fighting unless Serbs stop attacks, warns Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Dec 25: The Bosnian government threatened today to torpedo a day-old ceasefire and resume fighting unless Serbs stop attacking from neighbouring Croatia, reports AP.

Leaders of the Muslim-led government also said there would be no further peace talks with Bosnian Serbs until the assaults in the embattled region of Bihac in the north-western part of the country stopped.

Most of Bosnia appeared calm one day after the start of the newest truce, but UN officials reported fighting south of Velika Kladusa, in the so-called Bihac pocket.

The attackers apparently were Croatian Serbs and their rebel Muslim allies, two groups that did not sign the one-week ceasefire agreement Friday between the government and Bosnian Serbs. The truce took effect Saturday.

The government, however, blamed the fighting in part on Bosnian Serbs.

If those attacks don't stop, I am stating that there will be no ceasefire and that our

army will respond on other fronts," President Alija Izetbegovic told state radio.

The government asked for an urgent UN Security Council meeting on the Bihac fighting, the report said. Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic said Bosnian Serbs, wearing Croatian Serb and rebel Muslims insignia, were involved in the attacks.

Ganic said he asked the United Nations to call for NATO air strikes against Serb positions. That request was unlikely to be met.

The United Nations has become increasingly reluctant to call for NATO firepower, and the Western allies have backed away from using force to bring peace to Bosnia.

In another threat to the ceasefire, Serbs in western Bosnia declared a general mobilisation "because of danger of Croatian aggression," the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA reported. Croatian soldiers apparently are helping Bosnian Croats in their fight with the Serbs.

The first phase of the truce, brokered during two days of

talks last week by former US president Jimmy Carter, lasts from December 24 to December 31 and is meant to give the warring parties time to work out a wider, four-month cessation of hostilities.

UN officials presented the first draft of the four-month cease-fire agreement to both sides on Saturday. UN officials were expecting replies as early as Sunday, along with more negotiations.

But Ganic said there would be no talks until the Bihac region attacks stopped, and Izetbegovic said there would be no second phase at all until peace came to Bihac.

Izetbegovic said joint overnight provocations by rebel Serbs in Croatia and separatist Muslims intensified after day-break Sunday. And he said he considered the ceasefire not respected if those forces — who are allied with Bosnian Serbs — continued their attacks.

"We are warning that if there's no cease-fire, there will be no negotiations on the cessation of hostilities," Izetbegovic said.

Violence tearing greater human family: Pope

VATICAN CITY, Dec 25: A weary Pope John Paul II tempered the Catholic Church's joy at Christmas today by recalling conflicts bloodying much of the world, with new flareups on the holiday, reports AP.

As he has done for other Christmas in his 16-year-long papacy, John Paul turned part of his traditional message from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica into a lament for places where the peace associated with the day.

The pope's speech was prepared in advance, but violent events of the day seemed to make his words ring louder.

Near the main entrance to Jerusalem, an Islamic militant blew himself, wounding 12 people.

In Algiers, passengers on a French jetliner were hostages of Muslim militants, who killed at least two people.

As I look at families in the light of Christmas, I cannot but turn my thoughts to the greater human family, unfortunately torn by persistent forms of selfishness and violence," the pope, 74, said, clearly tired after midnight Mass in

the basilica, a private Mass at dawn in his chapel, and another public service in the basilica late-morning Sunday.

"What are we to say of Sudan with its 'forgotten' war and of Algeria, where murderous violence holds the whole people hostage? And the very land where Jesus was born, does it not continue to be a theater of conflicts and a place of division?" the pope wondered.

He also mentioned the fighting in ex-Yugoslavia, "tearing apart the Balkans," as well as civil war or tensions in Angola, Rwanda and Burundi.

Zail Singh

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Singh was president during the height of the 10-year Sikh rebellion for independence in the northern state of Punjab led by militants who claimed Sikhs were discriminated against by the majority Hindus.

In 1984, the Indian army, acting on orders from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, stormed the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sikhism's most sacred shrine, where rebel lead-



Zail Singh

ers had established their command headquarters.

He was criticized by his own community for supporting Mrs Gandhi, who was assassinated later that year by two of her Sikh bodyguards.

After he left office, he apologized to the Sikh community for failing to protect the Golden Temple from the armed forces, of which he was nominally the supreme commander.

Towards the end of his tenure, Singh became embroiled in a public feud with Mrs Gandhi's son, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, over not being kept informed about matters of state.

An Indian president is largely ceremonial and the power is concentrated with the prime minister. But the president must give his assent to all legislation.

Born on May 5, 1916, in the village Sandhwan in Punjab, Singh trained to become a Sikh priest, earning him the title of 'Giani' or 'the learned'. Sikhism emerged in the 16th century in India, and its turbaned followers are renowned as fighters and farmers.

He entered public life by joining the independence movement against British colonialists and later became a prominent leader of the Congress Party in Punjab.

He became a member of the federal parliament in 1980 and was home minister until he was nominated by Mrs Gandhi as the Congress Party's presidential candidate.

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Two Chechen fire-fighters try to extinguish a blaze at a house after bombing in Grozny on Saturday. — AFP photo

'Protect interests of small shareholders'

By Staff Correspondent

The Small Share Investors Association, a newly formed organisation to protect the interests of the shareholders, yesterday called for strengthening the foundation of the country's stock market to consolidate the recent gains.

Addressing a press conference at the National Press Club, the secretary general of the association, Kabir Hossain, also urged the authorities to take adequate steps to protect the interests of the shareholders.

He urged the authorities to formulate new measures to keep a major portion of the primary shares reserved for the local investors to meet the increased demand, while noting that a large percentage of shares of listed companies issued this year was given to foreign investors.

He felt that the government should also provide a fund of Tk 1,000 crore through the banks to the small investors to enable them to buy more shares.

Mamun Mahbub, joint secretary of the association, said there were more than five times over subscription for the initial public offerings of a number of companies who offered shares in the stock market during 1994. A record 17 companies were listed with the Dhaka Stock Exchange

during that period.

Established recently to what they said, protect the interests of small investors, the Association suggested off-loading government shares in different multinationals and in the oil and gas sectors to meet the demand of new issues in the stock market.

It also called for opening separate share departments in the banks and come up with their excess liquidity for providing funds to the small investors.

Emphasizing on regular annual general meeting by the issuers and timely payment of dividend, the association urged the Securities and Exchange Commission to be alert while allowing the companies to float shares.

Brushing aside the idea of setting up another stock exchange, the association leaders demanded revision of "old rules" of the Dhaka Stock Exchange to make it "a modern and dynamic exchange."

"We want to see an active stock exchange as a protector of the interest of small investors," said Maruf Hossain, President of the association.

Association leaders Akhter Hossain, Nasir Hossain, Tapas Kumar Chowdhury and Shahim Ahmed were, among others, present at the press conference at Jatiya Press Club.

Grozny

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until Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev renounces the tiny republic's declaration of independence made three years ago as the Soviet Union was collapsing, Moscow also demands that Dudayev's supporters surrender their weapons.

The invasion has cost Yeltsin public support and many of his pro-reform allies.

A senior Russian official urged President Boris Yeltsin to stop a "crazy massacre" of civilians as the body count in the conflict rose after fresh Russian air raids on Saturday.

Human Rights Commissioner Sergei Kovalev, a presidential appointee, suggested that Yeltsin was being manipulated by supporters of the military campaign.

Housewife commits suicide in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 25: Kushina Begum, 25, wife of Abu Jafar Akond and mother of two children committed suicide by taking insecticide last night in her husband's house at Kismat Moukathi village under Laukathi Union of Patuakhali district.

She was admitted to the Patuakhali sadar hospital in a critical condition. But after some time doctor declared her dead. The cause of her committing suicide is yet to be ascertained.



The hijacked French A300 Airbus sits on the runway yesterday whilst airport employees approach the aircraft to replenish food supplies and take away rubbish. — AFP photo

Last-minute parleys

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The source said they might also have discussed the present political situation.

An Opposition source, however, said that they were not optimistic about the last-minute parleys with the ruling party. "As of today resignation seems to be inevitable," the source, an AL leader, said.

He said only if any dramatic development takes place during the next two days, the threatened resignation can be averted.

Meanwhile, in another development, BNP Dhaka city unit at a meeting yesterday decided to launch a massive mass

Highway robbers loot Tk 5 lakh

PABNA, Dec 25: At least 15 people were injured and Tk five lakh was looted by armed highway robbers who swooped on several trucks, blocking the Pabna bypass road Saturday night, reports UNB.

Police said an armed group of about 25 dacoits halted 12 trucks carrying cattle and looted the cash from the cattle traders.

Traffic on the road was disrupted till 2 pm today as the truck drivers blocked the road putting their vehicles across demanding measures to check highway robbery.

Of the injured, seven were admitted to the Pabna Sadar Hospital where condition of Abdul Khaleque, 35, Afzal, 40 and Firoz, 25, were said to be critical.

contact drive from tomorrow to strengthen the party activities and explain the present political scenario to the people through processions, public rallies and personal contacts, reports BSS.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar attended the meeting, held at the BNP central office, as chief guest while BNP City Unit President and Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali was in the chair.

The presidents and general secretaries of all the thana units of Dhaka City BNP attended the meeting.

It was observed in the meeting that the people had already begun to refuse the anti-constitutional activities being pursued by some opposition parties to disrupt the development activities of the BNP government and discourage foreign investment in the country.

The speakers also expressed their firm opinion that the BNP would be able to complete its tenure to implement its 19-point programme through the political process.

Fire kills 4 in Tokyo

TOKYO, Dec 25: Four people were killed in a fire at an eight-story building in downtown Tokyo Saturday afternoon, police said, reports AP.

Police and fire department officials said 21 others were injured in the fire.

Hijacked Malawi plane lands in Nairabi

NAIROBI, Dec 25: An Air Malawi Boeing 737 hijacked Friday by deportees from Zambia landed in Nairobi early today after dropping off the last of the deportees in Abidjan, reports AFP.

The plane remained at Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, airport officials said.

Staff at the crew's hotel said they checked out this morning but did not say where they had gone.

The aircraft was chartered by Zambia Thursday for 105 passengers including a group of around 80 illegal West African immigrants from nine separate countries that the government wanted to repatriate.

After arriving at its first stop at Lagos, Nigeria, early on Friday morning, four Nigerians were allowed off the plane. The aircraft was chartered by Zambia Thursday for 105 passengers including a group of around 80 illegal West African immigrants from nine separate countries that the government wanted to repatriate.

The shots ringing around their ears, the passengers scurried back aboard and Lagos authorities removed the aircraft boarding steps.

Fearing a return to Lusaka, the passengers then took over the flight and ordered the crew to fly them to their home destinations.

The Midnight File

CIA warns of possible shift in Russian govt

BOSTON, Dec 25: A US intelligence report warns that Boris Yeltsin's military campaign against secessionist Chechnya may prompt a significant shift in Russia's power structure, the Boston Sunday Globe reported. The memo from Moscow said the power shift likely would come in the next few days, if it came at all, the newspaper reported, citing a unidentified Central Intelligence Agency source, reports AP.

Chemicals caused ozone loss: A US satellite has confirmed that man-made chemicals have caused the ozone hole over the South Pole, scientists said on Monday, AFP reports from Washington.

"This data confirms that chlorofluorocarbons are the major source of chlorine in the stratosphere and are responsible for ozone loss," said Mark Schoeberl, project scientist for NASA's Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite.

Suicide bomber injures 12 in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, Dec 25: An Islamic militant blew himself up near the main entrance to Jerusalem today wounding 12 people including five soldiers, police said, reports AP.

Palestinian police sources and family members said the bomber was a former Palestinian policeman.

The Christmas Day blast outside the Binyanei Ha'oma convention center scattered debris across the main western road into Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, forcing it shut during rush hour. The explosion occurred at 6:20 am.

Police commissioner Assaf Hefetz said only luck prevented a deadlier explosion.

Izzeddine al-Qassem, the militant wing of the Islamic group Hamas, claimed responsibility in a statement faxed to The Associated Press. Hamas has claimed most of the recent attacks, many of them bombings, that left 32 Israelis dead since October 1.

The statement said the

bomber, identified as 25-year-old Ayman Radi of Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip, tried and failed to board a bus carrying soldiers and then set off 10 kilograms of dynamite he was carrying, it said.

The assailant's brother Talal, 21, said, "My brother proved that Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian state and no one can prevent us from entering Jerusalem."

Palestinian police sources said the assailant was a member of the PLO police. Hamas sources said he joined the group out of guilt over his role in putting down riots in Gaza last month in which 15 Islamic militants were killed.

Marwan Kanafani, spokesman for Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said the autonomy government was investigating whether the attacker belonged to the PLO police.

"The Palestinian Authority and chairman Arafat condemn this criminal act that took place on the holiest day of the birth of Jesus Christ," said a statement by Arafat's government. It conveyed "sincere hopes" for the victims' recovery.

Japan not ready to let troops join UN forces

TOKYO, Dec 25: Japan is not ready to let its troops join United Nations-led military forces, Japan defence agency chief Tokuchi Tamazawa said today, reports AFP.

"We have to be cautious in lifting the freeze," Tamazawa said on television when he was asked about the scheduled review of the UN peacekeeping cooperation law next year. "As I understand, it's too soon."

Japan passed the law in 1992. It allows Japanese troops to join non-combat duties under UN peacekeeping missions, while banning the use of Japanese soldiers in UN-commanded military forces. The law is to be reviewed late next year.

"The dispatch of (Japanese troops) for UN peacekeeping operations should be limited," Tamazawa said. "I don't think that just any peacekeeping operations under the name of the United Nations necessarily contribute to the international community."

Japanese soldiers served in UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Mozambique. Japan also dispatched its troops to Zaire this year to help in relief efforts for Rwandan refugees.

Text book

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the ministries concerned. In another development, the industries ministry has recently asked KNM authorities to make all efforts to increase production at the mills to face the crisis.

A high official of the NCTB, who wanted not to be named, told this correspondent that the publishers had already been authorised by the board to draw papers at government subsidised rate from the mills but they complained that KNM could not meet their requirements.

He, however, said the books now being printed would be available in markets by late January. But, it might take up to the end of February to complete the printing of books to meet the total requirement.

NCTB sources also said that unlike in other years, price increase of textbooks by 15 to 50 paise, this time, might result in prices rise of average textbooks by Taka one or even more.

NCTB sources said, textbooks for primary school students have been published well ahead of the scheduled time as papers were imported and costs made from foreign grants.

To realise money

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of the money. They also banged the door of the house.

The neighbours, being alarmed by the noise, went to the house. The four youths fired shots, and left the place immediately, police said.

Mahmud, who was inside the house was hit by one of the bullets.

Feasibility study on Rupsha bridge next month likely

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is expected to commission a feasibility study on the proposed Rupsha bridge in Khulna next month, reports UNB.

An agreement to this effect has already been signed between the government and the ADB, official sources said.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will lay the foundation stone of the long-cherry bridge over the river Rupsha on December 30.

The foundation of the bridge will be laid at Labonchora, a few kilometers downstream from the Rupsha ferry ghat. An inter-ministerial meeting last month decided to shift the site to avert traffic jam.

The bridge is likely to cost between Tk 350 crore and Tk 500 crore, officials said. But the correct estimate will be known after the completion of the ADB study.

The government has been desperately seeking funding support for the Rupsha bridge, an election commitment of Begum Zia to the people of Khulna. There has been no assurance yet.

Japan has been approached to provide financing for the project, but yet without any firm response.

Seismic survey

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December next. The total cost of the survey and drilling in the first year has been estimated at 1.5 million dollars.

The two companies signed an agreement with the government for the exploration in Block-16 on May 5 last after prolonged negotiations from August 1992. The deal allows them to explore an 881 sq km area covering the Kutubdia gas fields.

The accord also says that the companies will have to invest at least 2.1 million dollars in the next three years for survey.

They would invest another 10 million for drilling at least two wells in the next four years.

Hasina

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last to visit Hasina at 29 Minto Road. They discussed with her the forthcoming congregation.

Family sources said the Opposition Leader would hand over the charge of the Minto Road residence to the PWD engineer and ministry official concerned this morning.

Hasina's husband Wazed Ali Miah and their son and daughter were present when she moved to her new residence.

Seven police guards have started their round-the-clock duty at the new residence.