

3 civilians killed in Taliban rocket attack

Kabul warns Islamabad against reconstructing transit road

KABUL, Mar 10: Afghanistan today issued a stern warning to neighbouring Pakistan to abandon a plan to reconstruct a transit road running through Afghan territory without Kabul's permission, reports AFP.

The country's border with Turkmenistan would be used as a trade link with Central Asia. News of the Pakistani plan to repair the roadway — which passes through five Afghan provinces controlled by the Taliban militia — sparked outrage here last week, with officials saying the Kabul government's permission should have been sought in advance.

Afghanistan to have a new transit route," he said. "However we strongly object to the way the Pakistanis are going about this without regard to international norms, although we are willing to fulfill the agreement provided it is implemented in a proper way," he added.

from a six-day official tour of Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, also revealed that the Taliban government had vowed not to support the road reconstruction project or to allow goods to be shipped on it.



A Serbian man hurries to save his belongings from his apartment in a burning building in the Serb-held suburb of Ilidza on Saturday. With three days to go before the Sarajevo suburbs of Ilidza and Grbavica revert to the control of the Muslim-Croat federation authorities, looting, arson, and car-jacking was fast spreading. —AFP/UNB photo

Hainan Airlines plane hijack drama ends

BEIJING, Mar 10: Chinese authorities have ended the hijacking of a Boeing 737 airplane of Hainan Airlines at southern Zhuhai Airport, captured an unknown number of hijackers, airport officials said by telephone today, reports Reuter.

Lankan navy destroy 4 LTTE boats: Several Tigers killed

COLOMBO, Mar 10: Navy troops opened fire and destroyed a rebel arms flotilla in northern Sri Lanka, killing several Tamil Tiger guerrillas, the Defence Ministry said here today, reports AFP.

Sri Lanka has stepped up security against possible raids by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, fighting for a homeland in the north and east.

Several villages near the city, 100 km (60 miles) north-east of Colombo, have been attacked by the LTTE since the rebels broke off peace talks with the government in April last year.

BRIEFLY

OIC's Bosnia committee meets today: A special group set up by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to mobilise help for Bosnia-Herzegovina will meet in Islamabad this week, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Islamabad.

Blast kills 4 in Italy: At least four persons were killed and several injured late Saturday in an explosion followed by a fire in a three-storey building in a suburb of north Italian city of Bologna police said, AFP reports from Bologna.

British defence secy in KSA: British Defence Secretary Michael Portillo arrived Saturday in Saudi Arabia where he is to discuss weapons purchase and other military issues with Saudi leaders, an official said, AFP reports from Riyadh.

NATO chief to visit Russia: NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana will visit Moscow later this month on a three-day trip aimed at boosting relations and overcoming Russian opposition to plans to extend the alliance into former communist Europe, Reuter reports from Brussels.

Israeli blasts death toll now 58: A Romanian labourer died of injuries sustained in a March 3 bus bombing in Jerusalem, raising the death toll in a two-week series of suicide bombings to 58 victims, AP reports from Jerusalem.

Sihanouk may step down soon for illness: PHNOM PENH, Mar 10: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk has been diagnosed with a brain tumor and may soon step down as head of state, national radio and television reported today, says AFP.

IRA plotted to blow up British Parliament: LONDON, Mar 10: The Irish Republican Army (IRA) hatched a Guy Fawkes-style plot to blow up the British Parliament while it was in session by means of an explosives-laden barge on the River Thames, a report said today, reports AFP.

Serb leaders warn NATO-led peace force: ATHENS, Mar 10: In defiant television interviews, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and military commander Gen. Ratko Mladic said the NATO-led peace force would pay heavily if it tries to arrest them for war crimes, reports AP.

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Taiwan condemns China for live-fire war games plan

TAIPEI, Mar 10: Taiwan on Sunday condemned China for planning live-fire war games off the island this week, saying they will seriously endanger Taiwan's air traffic and slow its booming trade with China, reports AP.

Lee Teng-hui accused Beijing of destabilising prosperous East Asia. Officials said the 6,600 square mile (17,000 sq km) rectangle designated for the air and sea exercise is close to Taipei's busiest air corridor connecting more than 300 flights daily. The corridor links Taipei and Hong Kong with Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and the United States.

port. Kaohsiung on its southern coast, will be little affected, but freighters sailing between Hong Kong and Shanghai will have to divert eastward. The rectangle lies off the southeast Chinese coast and is 30 to 45 miles (50-70 kms) from the Taiwanese islands of Quemoy and the Pescadores.

EU puts pressure on China to improve its HR record

PALERMO, Sicily, Mar 10: The European Union is putting pressure on China to improve its human rights record or face embarrassing international criticism, reports Reuter.

Confessed war criminal tells about Srebrenica massacre

PARIS, Mar 10: "Don't kill us! Our families will bring money," in chilling detail, a confessed Bosnian Serb war criminal describes the massacre at Srebrenica, where hundreds of Muslims begged for their lives only to die in a barrage of bullets, reports AP.

Tribunal based in the Hague, Netherlands, come to Belgrade on Tuesday to discuss the case with Yugoslav officials. Tribunal investigators also want to question Radoslav Kramenkovic, 29, a friend of Erdemovic who served with him in a special 80-man commando unit.

men missing from Srebrenica, an Eastern Muslim enclave that fell to the Serbs last July. Erdemovic told Le Figaro for its weekend edition that about 1,200 men, mostly Muslims, were gunned down in a 24-hour killing frenzy last July 20.

But when a second bus pulled up and its passengers were forced to stand before the bodies of the first victims, some carried out: "Don't kill us! Our families, who are in Austria, will bring money," Erdemovic recounted.



US President Bill Clinton (R) and Vice-President Al Gore approve an Internet demonstration from Ygnacio Valley High School students Luke Rockwell (L) and Julie Allen on Saturday in Concord, California. Clinton and Gore kicked off Net Day '96 to get classrooms connected to the Internet. —AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

To mark Int'l Women's Day HELSINKI, Finland: Female lawmakers stripped, beat themselves with birch switches and dipped into the icy Baltic Sea to celebrate their foremothers, who were the first women in Europe to receive the vote, reports AP.

Piece of bomber coming home after 51 yrs MONTCLAIR, Virginia: For 51 years, Stephen Stofko has remembered how his B-17 bomber pitched violently after it was hit by German anti-aircraft fire, and the incredible noise as it spun toward the ground, reports AP.

On Friday, 51 years to the day after Stofko and eight of his fellow crew members bailed out and were taken prisoner by Nazi forces, he will get another look at what little is left of that plane.

The tail section, with its insignia and identifying numbers still clearly visible, will go on display at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base museum in Dayton, Ohio, said curator Charles Workman.

Stofko, then a 20-year-old bombardier, and his fellow crew members were based in Italy as part of the 15th Air Force. On the day they were shot down, on Stofko's 12th mission, they had been sent to bomb one of Nazi Germany's last oil refineries.

The only crew member who didn't escape the crash was Sater Sanchez, a veteran of 65 previous bombing missions. Stofko says he didn't know the other nine crewmen before the flight and spoke only briefly with Sanchez before they boarded.

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Russia claims regaining control of Grozny

GROZNY, Russia, Mar 10: Russian authorities claimed they were regaining control of the Chechen capital Grozny today, but snipers remained active after another night of clashes with separatist rebels, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, an Interior Ministry representative in Grozny said he had no confirmation of a report on Russian television that the Chechen rebels' top military commander, Aslan Maskhadov, had been wounded, Interfax reported.

The rebels, using small arms and hand-held anti-tank weapons, wiped out Russian positions throughout the southern half of the city within hours of their infiltration and surprise attack Wednesday.

The Russians immediately hit back with artillery rockets and helicopter gunships and there were fears of heavy civilian casualties in the bombardment. Officials at the only fully functioning hospital, which is cut off from much of the city, told AFP on Saturday that more than 60 people, mostly civilians, had been treated for wounds and another 10 or more had died in hospital.



File photo dated November 5, 1989 shows US Comedian George Burns (L), seen with actress Brooke Shields as they attend an event sponsored by the Museum of Broadcast in New York in honour of Burns' work in radio and television. Burns died on Saturday at the age of 100 at his home in California. —AFP/UNB photo