

**9 soldiers killed as Tigers attack army post**

COLOMBO, Mar 16: Tamil Tiger guerrillas attacked an army post in northeastern Sri Lanka today, killing nine soldiers and wounding 10 others, officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stormed the military post at Hetambeweni in the Welioya district, about 200 kilometres (120 miles) north-east of here, in the pre-dawn raid.

"We have lost nine soldiers," local military officials said.

There was a fierce fire fight and the Tigers, too, may have suffered heavy losses.

The latest attack came a day after the LTTE's naval unit, the Sea Tigers, attacked a government boat and killed eight security personnel in the northwestern region of Manar.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a protracted campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions.

**22 die in Chinese bus plunge**

BEIJING, Mar 16: A bus plunged over the edge of a 120 metre (400 ft) cliff in south-western China, killing 21 people and injuring six more, the Sichuan daily newspaper said in a report seen in Beijing today, reports Reuters.

The driver of the bus was one of 17 people killed when the bus drove off the road and over the cliff in Qianjiang, a country in southwestern Sichuan province on March 9, the newspaper said.

Local people tried to rescue the passengers, but four of them later died, it said.

The cause of the accident was under investigation, it said.

**CIA, Cuban agents review shootdown data**

WASHINGTON, Mar 16: Senior CIA officials met with Cuban intelligence officers in New York last month to share data proving that two planes shot down by Cuban jets were over neutral waters, according to a newspaper report Friday, reports AP.

The Washington Post said in its Saturday editions that the meeting was held to counter Cuban Foreign Minister Robert Robaina's statement that the US civilian planes were over Cuban waters.

"Robaina was saying he would produce incontrovertible evidence," an unidentified US official told the Post. "When our evidence was deployed, we didn't hear anything more."



US President Bill Clinton (R) admires a shamrock, a traditional St. Patrick's Day gift, given to him by Irish Prime Minister John Bruton (L) at the White House in Washington DC on Friday. Clinton and Bruton were expected to discuss methods to preserve Irish peace during a meeting, after it has been threatened by a recent wave of Irish Republican Army terrorism. — AFP/UNB photo

**Over 16,000 missing in Iraq under Saddam govt: UNHRC**

GENEVA, Mar 16: More than 16,000 people are missing in Iraq under President Saddam Hussein's regime, according to a report submitted to the UN Human Rights Commission at its annual session here Friday, reports AFP.

An 18-page report presented by special rapporteur Max Van Der Stoep said Iraq was responsible for systematic human rights violations, including summary executions, torture, amputations and rape.

The report said Saddam spent more than 25 million dollars on Italian marble to build "the world's largest mosque, and that luxury goods for the inner circle still arrive on order via Jordan within 36 hours."

Power continues to be held in Iraq by that "inner circle" and Saddam himself, a situation which offers no guarantees for the protection of human rights, the report said.

Murders and arbitrary arrests continued last year without any undertakings by the Baghdad government to improve the situation, it added.

"Iraq is not among the 53 countries represented at the annual UN meeting. Last year's referendum confirming Saddam as president — with a 99 per cent majority — was "a mockery which in no way reflects the genuine will of the people," the Belgian Van Der Stoep said.

"On the subject of disappearance, it is to be noted that Iraq remains far and away the state with the largest number of cases," his report said, adding that 16,131 cases of missing persons were still "unresolved."

Death sentences were being handed out indiscriminately with pickpockets and money-changers being executed, it said.

The UN rapporteur said he

**EU for an end to arms shipments to Afghanistan**

BRUSSELS, Mar 16: The European Union on Friday called for an end to arms shipments to Afghanistan and urged neighbouring states not to interfere in the war-torn state's internal affairs, reports AFP.

In a statement released here the 15 EU member states urged all parties to the conflict to "stop hostilities and allow the free passage and distribution of humanitarian aid to civilians."

The 15 said they were "deeply worried by the continuing fighting in this war-torn country," particularly the shelling and air raids on the capital Kabul, and its surrounding area.

had received a list of more than 80 names of opponents of Saddam who were poisoned by Thallium, and added that the assassination last month of two returned defectors, General Hussein Kamel, and Colonel Saddam Kamel, and the glorification of their murderers, "demonstrated the true nature of the regime."

Amputations continue to be practiced on hundreds of army deserters who have one or two ears cut off, with some also having their forehead branded. One doctor said 150 amputations had been carried out in January 1995 alone.

Among the torture methods, Van Der Stoep highlighted torture with bottles, jets of sulphuric acid, rape and electric shock.

Baghdad has still given no explanation on the more than 600 cases of Kuwaitis and other nationalities who disappeared during its occupation of the neighbouring Gulf Emirate in 1990-91.

The report said the general food and health situation continues to worsen "as a consequence of the government of Iraq's intransigence on the oil for food 'formula' proposed by the UN."

This would allow Iraq to sell four billion dollars worth of oil a year — under UN supervision — to allow it to buy badly needed supplies of food and medicine.

**US official says Iranian fighters in Bosnia — a 'potential threat' to IFOR**

BRUSSELS, Mar 16: Some 150 Muslim fighters, mostly Iranian who are still in Bosnia are "a potential threat" to US soldiers in the Implementation Force (IFOR), a US official said on Friday, reports AFP.

"We believe these camps house Iranians who are going to attack NATO installations... they represent a potential threat to our soldiers," said the official, who is accompanying US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on a European tour.

"With 60,000 NATO troops they don't need a handful of Iranians... we have done a lot for the Bosnians, the least they can do is get those 150 people out," the official who asked to remain anonymous added.

Christopher arrived in Brussels late Friday for Saturday talks with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and the alliance's military chief George Joulwan on NATO enlargement.

Christopher is due at a summit in Geneva on Monday with leaders of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia aimed at maintaining the momentum of the peace process in the former Yugoslavia.

The official said Christopher would reiterate the importance of implementing fully the US-brokered peace accords initiated in Dayton, Ohio in November last year and signed in Paris in December.

In particular, he would emphasise the need to apply the clauses on judging war criminals and call for the departure of all the foreign fighters who came to the mainly-Muslim

government's aid during the war. Under the terms of the peace accords, non-Bosnian fighters should have left before January 20.

According to the official, the United States is not pressing for the departure of Muslim fighters who have acquired Bosnian nationality through marriage, but all the others should leave.

He reiterated that the United States would not apply the 100 million dollars worth of equipment and training it has promised to Bosnia until the Muslim fighters have left.

However, he rejected the idea backed by the Republican majority in the US Senate, to link their departure to US aid for the reconstruction of Bosnia.

lives up to its commitment," he said, adding: "The European Union was very quick off the mark to disburse its contribution."

On the contentious issue of NATO eastwards enlargement, which Russia considers a threat to its security, the official acknowledged "we have a clear disagreement with Russia."

Meanwhile, the head of Bosnia's security agency, who is believed to have close links with Iran, has been moved to another post, official radio reported Friday.

Bakir Alispahic has left his job as head of Bosnia's shadowy agency for research and documentation "because he is moving to a new post," the radio said.

**India slams Pakistan for acquiring N-arms tech**

NEW DELHI, Mar 16: India yesterday slammed archival Pakistan for allegedly acquiring nuclear weapons technology and said it was further proof that the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was flawed, reports AFP.

A foreign office spokesman expressed India's "great concern" over reports of "accumulated evidence" that Islamabad had acquired 5,000 specialised magnets from Beijing for use in gas centrifuges to enrich uranium.

He said it was "well-known" that Pakistan had been covertly acquiring nuclear technology and ballistic missiles.

In a reference to the United States, the spokesman criti-

cised NPT member states for failing to "invoke sanctions against Pakistan despite evidence it was seeking to develop nuclear weapons."

The Clinton administration last year asked the US Congress to allow a one-time waiver of an amendment barring sales of military equipment to Pakistan, a move which has drawn criticism from India.

India says a resumption of US weapons sales to Pakistan will escalate tension and fuel an arms race in the troubled region.

"Our concerns regarding supplies of critical nuclear technologies to Pakistan have also been conveyed to China."

**Russian warplanes bomb Chechen villages**

URUS MARTAN, Russia, Mar 16: Russian warplanes today bombed a string of rebel villages in southwest Chechnya, a day after President Boris Yeltsin announced he had formed a peace plan for ending the 15-month-old war, reports AFP.

The planes made four bombing runs in the space of an hour early this morning over Bamut, Stary Achkhov and Orekhovo, three rebel bastions nestled in the first foothills of the Caucasus mountains, about 40 kilometres southwest of the Chechen capital Grozny.

The shockwaves of the bombs could be felt in Urus Kartan, a town 20 kilometres away, an AFP correspondent

said. The planes, flying at high altitude, could not be seen. Russian forces regularly use Sukhoi-278 dive bombers as well as the heavier strategic Tupolev-22 bombers against the rebels, who want independence for their tiny Muslim republic.

The latest attacks came despite Yeltsin's announcement Friday that he and his top advisors had come up with a still secret plan to end the war peacefully.

Meanwhile, an air and artillery assault on the southwestern Chechen village of Bamut, which began Wednesday, was coming to an end, Russian military officials said.

**Cosmonauts take space walk outside Mir**

MOSCOW, Mar 16: Two Russian cosmonauts took a space walk outside their Mir station on Friday to set up and test a new crane, reports AP.

Yuri Onufrienko and Yuri Usachev left the spacecraft at 4:04 Moscow time (0104 GMT), and spent more than four and a half hours outside it, according to mission control spokesman Valery Lyndin.

Mission control was unable to get in touch with the cosmonauts because of communications problems, but instruments showed they completed the walk and were safely back

inside the station, he said.

The cosmonauts removed a folded crane from the station and mounted it on the station's central module. Unfolding the crane to its full 12-metre (13.2 yard) length, they tested its use as a bridge to one of the side modules.

They came back into the Mir at about 8:40 Moscow time (0540 GMT), and according to the instruments, the outer hatch was closed from the inside, Lyndin said.

While the cosmonauts were outside the station was controlled by a computer on

board, he said.

The crane is the second mounted on the Mir. The first, on the other side of the station, has been used to haul weights and shift equipment, and also help the cosmonauts get around outside the craft.

The modules are by now bristling with research equipment, antennae and solar cell batteries, and it would be very hard to move about without using the cranes as bridges.

Onufrienko and Usachev will make four more space walks to mount new solar cells

and research equipment, he said. During one walk, they will test construction parts for later use in building the international space station Alpha, that will replace the aging Mir.

The Mir has been orbiting Earth for a decade.

The two cosmonauts began their five month stay on the space station in late February. A third crew member, American astronaut Shannon Lucid, will join them for a planned 140-day stay — a US endurance record — after catching a ride on a US shuttle to be launched next Thursday.

**Farmers go on rampage, loot fertiliser**

JHENIDAH, Mar 16: Farmers of the district gheraoed the TNOs and went on a rampage at Shaikupa thana headquarters on Thursday demanding supply of agri-inputs including fertiliser at fair prices, reports UNB.

Short supply and price hike of fertiliser across the country sparked agitation among the farmers which is affecting the current IRR-Boro cultivation.

Witnesses said several thousand farmers under the banner of Krishak Sangram

Samity gheraoed TNO offices of Sadar, Shaikupa, Hari-nakunda, Kaliganj, Court Chandpur and Moheshpur for about two hours from 12 noon.

The samity demanded adequate supply of fertiliser and other agri-inputs including insecticides and diesel used as fuel of shallow and deep tubewells at fair prices.

In Shaikupa, about 500 farmers stormed the Thana Complex and damaged offices of TNO, Agriculture Extension Department, Cooperative and

Social Welfare. They also ransacked at least a dozen empty shops which usually sale fertiliser and other agri-inputs.

Earlier, on March 1, a group of farmers forcibly took away 600 bags of urea from the shops of Bataibazar in Shaikupa thana paying Tk 250 per bag.

In Sirajganj, farmers looted 24 bags of fertiliser from a boat near Solizana area in Chauhalli thana on Friday. Police said several farmers

gheraoed the fertiliser loading boat bound for Sirajganj town and looted the urea fertiliser.

Besides, some angry farmers snatched away Tk 20,000 from a fertiliser trader when he denied to sell fertiliser on credit.

The angry farmers also beat Delwar Hossain, the businessman of Bezzati bazar of the Sadar thana. He was given first aid from Sadar hospital.

A case was lodged with the local police.

**Students submit memo to Rangamati DC**

RANGAMATI, Mar 16: Local Chhatra Oikya Parishad has demanded immediate step to rescue the three people abducted a month ago, reports UNB.

Parishad leaders submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of the district on Wednesday to press the demand.

They said Mohammad Jasimuddin, Mohammad Delwar Hossain and Mohammad Ishaque were kidnapped from Bagarchhari thana of the district on February 13.

The parishad brought out a procession and held rally at Bagarchhari thana headquarters on Wednesday demanding immediate release of the kidnapped people.

Presided over by Jalal Uddin, the rally was addressed, among others, by Alamgir Hossain, Jahangir Alam, Moinul Hossain and Ashkur Rahman Manik.

**Jhalakathi pourashava takes up 62 dev schemes**

JHALAKATHI, Mar 16: The pourashava authorities have taken up 62 development schemes for ensuring civic amenities to the dwellers, reports UNB.

The schemes are being implemented under the Annual Development Programme at a cost of Tk 1.30 crore.

Of the programme, 24 schemes have been taken on road development, 14 on pucca drain construction, 7 for construction of kutcha road, 6 for construction of bridges and culverts, 4 for halting river erosion and 7 for development of sweeper colony, slaughterhouse and staff quarters.

Work on the most of the schemes has already been started and the rest of the work are expected to be completed by June next.

**Sudden change in air direction in Bay**

COX'S BAZAR, Mar 16: The air stream has started changing its direction early this season resulting in swelling of the Bay of Bengal in the wake of gusty and stormy wind, reports UNB.

The wind normally gets its changing direction on arrival of the month of Baishakh that starts from mid-April, but this year it has already got it more than a month ago.

Since last few days, vast areas on the coastline have been experiencing a wind from the southern direction, having sometimes gusty and stormy.

The early changing wind blows over the beach at a speed of 35-40 kilometres per hour, as registered here on Wednesday, Met officials said.

Sea fishermen observed that the sudden flow of such an air would make the Bay of Bengal too wild and stormy, although it usually remains calm and tranquil in the early winter.

The sea begins to swell when air stream changes according to its astronomical rule as a consequence of which the season's norwester creates

**147 schemes under food for work in Jhenidah**

JHENIDAH, Mar 16: Some 1478 metric tons of wheat have been sanctioned for implementing 147 schemes in six thanas under Food for Works programme in the current dry season, reports UNB.

District Relief and Rehabilitation office sources said under the programme, earth filling, construction and reconstruction of roads, culverts, raising of fields, pond and canal digging have already been started.

Of the total, 354 metric tons of wheat have been sanctioned for 38 schemes in Sadar while 250 mts for 22 schemes in Shaikupa, 212 mt for 20 schemes in Hari-nakunda, 246 mts for 15 schemes in Kaliganj, 109 mt for 14 schemes in Kotchandpur and 307 mt for 38 schemes in Moheshpur thanas.

A smooth sunshine, the most essential requirement for salt production, is not present amidst deep fog as well as continued typical air, said some producers.

"Monsoon bearing water vapour is coming toward the shore and, as a result, gusty wind blows," said Monjurul Haque Khan, a Meteorologist, predicting further rainfall at the end of this week.

**Undersized bricks**

PATUAKHALI, Mar 16: The brickfield owners of the region here have been making undersized bricks cheating the buyers in the name of standard size brick, reports UNB.

According to the local buyers, some brickfield owners are producing brick 8 to 9 inches in length, 4 inches in breadth and two and half inches thick while the standard size brick should have a length of 10 inches, a breadth of 5 inches and thickness of 3 inches.

But the brick manufacturers of the region are alleged to have been paying no respect to standard size of brick. Besides, brickfield owners are violating the Brick Burning Ordinance in different areas of the district, it is alleged.

It is learnt that thousands of tons of firewood are being used in the brickfield per day to manufacture bricks. As a result, timber and fruit-bearing trees are being indiscriminately felled every day throughout the season causing environmental hazards.

**22 killed, 157 injured in Jhenidah in two months**

JHENIDAH, Mar 16: At least 22 people were killed and 157 more injured in 23 separate incidents in Jhenidah district during the last two months.

Six persons were killed when a Chuadanga-bound night coach dashed a roadside tree and fell into a ditch near Jhalakathi on Jhenidah-Chuadanga road in the first week of January. The dead were identified as Rabiul, 28, Jahurul Islam, 25, Chandu Mia, 26, Jagu, 22, Jamat Ali, 35 and Hamidul Islam, 28. Forty-five others were also injured in the accident. On January 8, Abdus Sobhan, 25, of village Mathpara in Kotchandpur thana was killed under the wheels of a Khulna-bound train Kapatakha Express near Beluher.

Alauddin, 32, a worker of a bread factory crushed to death under the wheels of a Kushtia-bound truck near Bhatia bazar in Shaikupa thana at about 8 am on January 10.

Another report says, Ebadat Hossain Biswas, 25, was beaten to death at village Shahbaria in Shaikupa thana on January 6. Ebadat was beaten up as he tried to steal a cow at night, local people said.

At least 10 persons were injured when a Khulna-bound night coach fell down in to a roadside ditch near Bishotkhal in Sadar thana on January 12.



Inhabitants of Jahajmara, Hatiya, using this bamboo bridge for years but no step has yet been taken to develop it. — Star photo

**Prices of essential commodities increase**

From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Mar 16: The prices of different essential commodities have shot up in the district abnormally.

Short supply of fuel has pushed up its price over two-fold.

One litre petrol is now being sold at Taka 60 as against the government rate of Taka 13.70, diesel at Taka 50 as against Taka 14 and kerosene at Taka 30 as against Taka 13. It is also alleged that cash memos are not given to the buyers after purchasing the fuel at higher price from the pumps. Filling stations at

Moulvibazar town are now closed for want of stock as oil tankers cannot moving due to the opposition's non-cooperation programme.

Besides this, medium and low varieties of rice are being sold at Taka 18 and 16 per kg respectively in the markets as against 13 and 11 earlier. Prices of other commodities are as follows — atta at Taka 13 per kg, onion at Taka 35, salt at Taka 10 (loose) and Taka 14 (packet) per kg, sugar at Taka 36 per kg, soyabean at Taka 55 per litre, musur pulse at Taka 40 to 45 per kg. Per 'bira' (56 pieces) betel leaf is being sold at Taka 25 as against Taka 7.

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