

ROK president calls top security advisors' meet DPRK troops enter Panmunjom violating armistice accord

SEOUL, Apr 6: More than 100 North Korean troops entered the Joint Security Area (JSA) of the demilitarised zone on Friday armed with a mortar, machine guns and recoilless rifles, the South's Defence Ministry said Saturday.

A ministry spokesman told AFP the 120 troops entered the area at the truce village of Panmunjom at around 6 pm (0900 GMT) in the evening. Armed with a 61-mm mortar, two recoilless rifles and four machine guns they set up defensive positions and stayed for about two and a half hours, prompting allied forces to reinforce their three observation posts in the area, he said.

Earlier Saturday, UN command spokesman Jim Coles told AFP here that an incident involving North Koreans carrying arms in the Joint Security Area (JSA) had taken place Friday in violation of the military armistice agreement.

The agreement bans troops

on both sides carrying anything but side-arms. Coles described the incident as apparently a training exercise and said it had happened before.

The ministry spokesman said that on February 20 and February 22 last year a group of 30-to-40 troops had entered the JSA armed with rifles. Coles said that the UN command was going to attempt to contact with North Korean People's Army over the incident.

Meanwhile, South Korean President Kim Young Sam today called a meeting of his top security advisors after hundreds of armed North Korean troops entered the Joint Security Area (JSA) of the demilitarised zone.

The national Yonhap news agency said Kim had called the meeting for mid afternoon, but gave no further details. The intrusion Friday night violated the terms of the 1953

armistice agreement which allows only the carrying of side-arms in the Panmunjom Joint Security Area.

Joint command spokesman Jim Coles told AFP here Saturday that the military was not unduly alarmed by the DMZ incident Friday night, which appeared to be reinforcement training by the North's troops.

Coles said the command would attempt to contact the North side through military armistice commission channels over the incident. South Korean and US troops here on Friday upgrade their vigilance status from Watchcon 3 to Watchcon 2 after the North said it would no longer respect the rules governing the DMZ, but did not change their alert status.

Reuters adds from Tokyo, a senior North Korean official at the United Nations said Pyongyang's renunciation of the armistice agreement that

ended the Korean War is aimed at replacing it with a peace treaty. Japan's Kyodo news agency reported.

Kyodo said the officials told the news agency on Friday (New York Time) that Pyongyang "does not want war and he set aside speculation that the North Korean decision will expand military provocation by North Korea's People's Army."

On Thursday, North Korea announced it was giving up its duties under the armistice agreement "concerning the maintenance and control of the military demarcation line and demilitarised zone."

Meanwhile, North Korea, campaigning to end the armistice agreement that ended the Korean War, briefly deployed some weapons just north of the Korean border late on Friday, a United Nations command spokesman said today.

Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia Dole urges Senate to probe into Clinton's approval

WASHINGTON, Apr 6: Senate Republican leader Bob Dole on Friday urged the Senate to probe news reports that president Bill Clinton approved covert Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia in 1994 despite a United Nations arms embargo, reports Reuters.

Dole, his party's presumptive nominee to challenge Clinton in November, said the reports raised questions about whether administration officials were intentionally duplicitous in their dealings with the Congress.

They also raised doubts about whether laws were broken and a covert operation was conducted, Dole said.

He called for a joint investigation by the Senate armed services, foreign relations, judiciary and intelligence committees and said it would be a "top priority" when the Senate returns to work on April 15 after an Easter recess.

At the State Department, deputy spokesman Glyn Davies did not deny the report, which was carried in Friday's Los

Angeles Times and alleged that Clinton "gave a green light" to the secret arms shipments from Iran to Bosnia's Muslim faction.

But he said that despite its opposition to the UN arms embargo — which helped lock in a weapon advantage for Serbs over the Muslims — the administration complied with it.

"We didn't ship any arms to Bosnia or to Croatia. And we abide by those strictures," Davies told reporters.

He added that the independent intelligence oversight board "looked into how the United States had conducted itself, and they concluded that, in fact, no laws were broken."

Davies did not, however, speak to specific allegations in the story and did not suggest its overall thrust was wrong.

Earlier AFP adds: President Bill Clinton approved a secret plan to tunnel arms from Iran to Bosnia in 1994 despite a weapons embargo the United States pledged to uphold, the Los Angeles Times reported Friday.

BRIEFLY

Clinton, Gore attend Brown's funeral: President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore will be at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on Saturday when the remains of commerce secretary Ron Brown and other Americans killed in a plane crash in Croatia are returned, the White House announced on Friday. Reuter reports from Oklahoma.

Spokeswoman Ginny Terzano told reporters travelling with the president to mark the first anniversary of the truck bomb blast in Oklahoma city that both Clinton and Gore would make remarks at a late afternoon ceremony at Dover when the remains of the 33 American victims of the crash arrive. She said the White House was making every effort to get family members of the crash victims to the ceremony.

China to try Taiwan businessman: Chinese authorities are to try a Taiwanese businessman on a charge that he spied while Chinese troops held military exercises, a newspaper in Hong Kong said Saturday. AP reports from Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong standard said Chou Hien-hsiang was detained by China's state security agency last month in southeastern Fujian province, where he has investments. The newspaper said Chou will be tried on a charge that he gathered state secrets while Chinese troops held war games in Fujian last month. Spying is punishable by death in China in "especially serious" cases.

Briton, Indian get life term in Lanka: A Sri Lankan court has sentenced a Briton and an Indian to life imprisonment for smuggling heroin and hashish into the country, court officials said Saturday. AP reports from Colombo.

Glen Michel, 29, of Stanford, England, and Nagamattu Thangavel, 38, from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, were sentenced on Friday by high court judge P. Wijeratne in Negombo, a Colombo suburb. Police say the two were not working together, although both had arrived from Madras on the same flight on December 11, 1994.

Li cancels Netherlands visit: Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng cancelled an official visit to the Netherlands in mid April because The Hague reportedly has plans to sell submarines to rival Taiwan, the Ming Pao daily said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Sources in Beijing were quoted by the independent Chinese-language newspaper Ming Pao as saying that Li's visit to the Netherlands, on April 13, was cancelled because China was "very unhappy" over The Hague's "ambiguous attitude" over Beijing's concerns on the sale of submarines to Taiwan.

Israeli jet makes forced landing: An El Al Israeli passenger jet made an emergency landing Friday at Queen Alia International Airport, two days ahead of the opening of commercial flights between Jordan and Israel, AP reports from Amman.

The Boeing 747, on a scheduled flight from Paris to Tel Aviv, landed at the Amman airport at 7:15 am (0515 GMT) due to bad weather and heavy fog. It stayed on the ground for three hours, then resumed its flight to Israel when conditions there had improved, an airport source said.

The number of people on board the plane was not known.

Opposition activists held in Nigeria ahead of UN visit

Lagos, Apr 6: The day before, a United Nations visit to an old-rich Nigerian state, military authorities on Friday began arresting political activists accused of plotting to stir up trouble, reports AP.

The arrests were reported Friday in Lagos This Day newspaper and confirmed by a government spokesman. The number of people detained was not known.

A four-member UN team is scheduled to tour Ogoniland, in the southern state of Rivers, to gauge Gen. Sani Abacha's commitment to ending military rule in 1998, as he has promised.

The team also plans to investigate circumstances of the trial of the late Ogoni leader Ken Saro-Wiwa — who with eight supporters was hanged in November after being convicted of murder.

Some 500,000 Ogonis live in an oil producing area that

many say has been wrecked by pollution from the lucrative and powerful oil industry. Human rights groups have denounced Saro Wiwa's trial as a sham meant to quiet the Ogoni's demands for compensation.

The executions resulted in Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth, an organisation of Britain and its former colonies.

Government spokesman Fidelis Agbiki said Friday that Ogoni activists had planned to disrupt the UN visit by staging rallies in support of Saro Wiwa. He said the Ogonis had recruited university students to take part in the rallies, but he gave no other details.

On Thursday, the UN team met with Kudirat Abiola — the wife of Nigeria's best-known political prisoner, Mushohod Abiola — and with foreign diplomats, including US Ambassador Walter Carrington.

9 more Tigers killed in Jaffna

COLOMBO, Apr 6: Security forces killed nine more Tamil Tiger rebels in a fresh battle as fighting escalated across Sri Lanka's embattled northern and eastern regions, officials here said today, reports AFP.

My troops shot dead the nine members of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Walkkalam sector of the Jaffna Peninsula on Friday, hours after the Tigers killed 18 police commandos in the east of the country.

Deven sources said a total of 95 automatic assault rifles were recovered from nearly 150 LTTE men and women killed in the Walkkalam sector in the past one week.

We have sorted out the Tigers who were still hiding in Walkkalam, chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said.

The military wrested control of Walkkalam after nearly 50 days of fighting ending in December.

In a statement sent here from its London office, the LTTE said it killed seven soldiers in a surprise attack against security forces at Walkkalam. It gave no other details.

For a spelling mistake!

BOMBAY, Apr 6: A woman slit open her six-year-old son's stomach because he misspelled the word 'forty', Indian newspapers reported Saturday, says AP.

The 35-year-old resident of the western Indian city of Bombay attacked her son as she helped him prepare for his senior kindergarten examinations because he spelled the word as 'forty', the Times Of India and Indian Express reported.

The woman had a history of mental illness, the newspapers said but did not elaborate.

The boy's intestines spilled out of his abdomen and his grandmother rushed him to hospital. His condition is still critical.

Fighting leaves 14 Taliban men killed in Afghanistan

KABUL, Apr 6: Fourteen Taliban warriors were killed in an intense artillery and rocket battle with Afghan government troops south of besieged Kabul, Defence Ministry officials said today, reports AFP.

The militants died under intense cannon and rocket barrages from the government side during a firefight which lasted most of Friday, the officials and frontline officers told AFP.

"Our artillery hit Taliban posts and troops during the skirmish, killing 14 of them according to intelligence reports," a defence official claimed.

No independent confirmation of the Taliban death toll could be obtained from here as the road linking the two opposing front lines has been sealed to all traffic. The government frequently reports scores of Taliban killed in action.



A Chechen woman carries food as she walks past a building that was destroyed by Russian air force in Shalazhy village on Thursday. Russian jets and artillery pounded Shalazhy, Goiskoye and other Chechen villages in an offensive against separatist rebels which made President Boris Yeltsin's plan appear doomed.

— AFP/UNB photo

HR commission frees 140 bonded labourers in Pakistan

KARACHI, Apr 6: "More than 140 bonded labourers — virtual slaves found in chains and shackles — were freed by anti-slavery activists in southern Pakistan, a human rights worker said Saturday, reports AP."

Acting on a tip from one freed labourer, independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan investigated a feudal landlord in southern Pakistan's Karang village in Sind province.

The human rights activists on Friday discovered dozens of labourers, the vast majority women and young children, working in sugarcane fields while armed guards looked on.

Several human rights workers fled the farm when the guards fired their guns into the air, informing the local authorities, the activists returned to the farm

with more than 50 police officers.

A month ago a peasant escaped from the farm and contacted us," said Shakeel Pathan, the human rights commission regional director.

After he escaped the other workers were put into chains to keep them from running. Although all of the farm's bonded labourers freed on Friday, Pathan said the landlord, Abdul Rehman Marri, was not arrested.

"He should have been arrested, but the landlords here control so much power there is little the police can do," Pathan said.

Many of the freed labourers had been working without pay for Marri for 25 years, Pathan said.

More than 70 per cent of Sind's provincial assembly is controlled by feudal landlords,

who continue to use bonded labour despite federal legislation banning the practice.

More than 1,000 labourers have been freed in Sind since the beginning of 1995, Pathan said, but thousands more are still enslaved.

Most of the bonded labourers are low caste Hindus who have little legal recourse in Islamic Pakistan.

"Hundreds of landlords control the land and make their own laws in this area," Pathan said.

Many poor villagers end up working as bonded labourers when they are unable to repay small loans to landlords.

In 1992, the federal government passed the Bonded Labour Act, which prohibits the use of any forced, unpaid labour. It also forbids landlords from lending money to villagers.



Children model clothing by Mickey's Stuff for Kids, a Disney copyrighted company on Friday at a fashion show in an upscale Beijing department store.

— AFP/UNB photo

Despite Ukraine's demands to quit Russian fleet to stay in Sevastopol

SEVASTOPOL, Ukraine, Apr 6: The commander of the long-debated Black Sea Fleet said Friday that the Russian fleet would retain its base in Sevastopol, despite Ukrainian demands that the Russians give up the Crimean port city, reports AP.

"The Russian fleet will be made up of two navy forces, which will be based in Sevastopol and Novorossiisk," Adm Viktor Kravchenko told journalists at the base. "The Russian fleet will continue to be in Sevastopol."

Kravchenko did not indicate whether this signified an official, final decision between the two countries on the city, which has been a major sticking point in negotiations on the coveted fleet.

The Ukrainian defense ministry said Friday it had not heard of an official decision on

the matter. Sevastopol is located on Crimea, a Ukrainian peninsula with a majority Russian population.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, both Russia and Ukraine claimed jurisdiction over the fleet, and have been arguing over it ever since.

The Russian and Ukrainian navies have begun dividing some equipment, but have not been able to reach agreement on Sevastopol.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin said he postponed a long-awaited trip to Ukraine this week because Russian and Ukrainian defence officials failed last week to resolve where the fleet would be based.

Novorossiisk, the second base Kravchenko named, is on Russian territory on the Black Sea's eastern coast.

Arafat apologises for raiding WB university

NABLUS, West Bank, Apr 6: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat apologised Friday for a police raid on a West Bank university campus that set off widespread protests against his government, reports AP.

"This was a mistake and I hope you will forgive it," Arafat told 500 people in the courtyard of An Najah University, standing in the same spot where his security forces fired tear gas and clubbed students last weekend.

The raid was part of a crackdown on Islamic militants during which Palestinian police arrested more than 900 followers of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups. The arrests were in response to four suicide bombings in Israel between February 25 and March 4.

41.5m people were dependent on int'l humanitarian aid in '95

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 6: Civil wars have increased the number of people dependent on humanitarian aid by 60 per cent in the past 10 years, and the numbers are unlikely to decrease significantly this century, reports AP.

That is the finding of a study by the US intelligence community and distributed this week to United Nations agencies responsible for planning and managing international relief operations.

It found that 41.5 million people worldwide were dependent on international humanitarian relief for their survival in 1995, down from a record high of 45 million in 1993.

The number of persons in need of humanitarian assistance has increased almost 60 per cent in the past 10 years,

the study said. "Large scale humanitarian emergencies erupted during this period — in places such as the Balkan states, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia — while long-standing crises such as Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique and Sudan persisted."

Despite the decline, US officials believe the figure is expected to remain in the tens of millions for at least the next few years because civil wars in Afghanistan, Burundi, Sudan and elsewhere show few signs of resolution.

"The number is likely to remain at a high level," said one US intelligence analyst, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The international community is going to have to get used to this."

Unlike the millions who fled their homes in past wars

in Europe, Korea, Cambodia and elsewhere, most of those now dependent on international aid remain in their own countries.

In 1995, for example, the study estimated there were 22 million "internally displaced" people worldwide, compared with 16 million refugees — those who fled across international borders to escape fighting.

Helping "internally displaced persons" is often more costly and dangerous because relief workers must get supplies to people trapped in war zones.

From a humanitarian standpoint, the most severe crises are occurring in Afghanistan, Sudan and Bosnia-Herzegovina, each of which has resulted in about 14 million people dependent on international aid,

according to the study.

Although conditions in Bosnia are expected to improve because of the 1995 peace agreement, US officials see no quick end to the fighting in Sudan and Afghanistan.

Less intensive conflicts persist in Somalia, Burundi, Liberia, Chechnya, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka, each of which could flare up and displace thousands more.

In several countries, hundreds of thousands of people still need humanitarian aid even though long term conflicts have been resolved. The study estimated that 300,000 Cambodians, or about 5 per cent of the country's population, still need help because of sporadic fighting between government and rebel Khmer Rouge, which signed a peace pact in 1991.

Even though the 30-year civil war ended in Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1991, the study estimated between 3 and 4 million Ethiopians still depend on aid because their countries have not gotten back on their feet economically.

Drought has prevented Mozambique from rebounding from the effects of the civil war there, which ended in 1993. Although the fighting in Mozambique has largely ended, only 5 per cent of the arable land is under cultivation and industry is operating at only 20 to 40 per cent of capacity.

Despite a peace agreement in Angola, the 20-year conflict drove away so many farmers that only 20 per cent of the country's farmland is under cultivation. US officials said the study

was compiled by American intelligence analysts from findings.

The study, which US officials said was compiled by intelligence analysts from findings by several government and international relief agencies, also identified several trouble spots that could erupt and create a new humanitarian crisis, either because of civil conflict or natural disasters.

They include Nigeria, a country of 100 million people and diverse ethnic and religious groups. The study also cited Cuba, which could face a major crisis if it were hit by a strong hurricane, and Bangladesh, whose 128 million people live in one of the most hazardous natural environments on earth — vulnerable to floods and typhoons.

Bhutan for solving refugee issue with Nepal

KATHMANDU, Apr 6: Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpho Dawa Tshering, has expressed confidence that with cooperation from the Nepalese side a major breakthrough on the Bhutanese refugee issue is possible, the Kathmandu Post reported today, says PTI.

It is our government's policy to solve the problem and I am sure with the cooperation from esteemed counterpart we will be able to make a breakthrough in the talks. Tshering told reporters on his arrival here for the foreign ministerial talks on the refugee problem. With mutual understanding and accommodation and political will, there is no problem we can't resolve, he said.