



A sand sculptured castle, twice as tall as himself is made by Alexei Timofeyev, a Russian participant of the International Festival-contest of Sand Sculptures in the Olympic complex in Krylatskoye district of Moscow, Friday.

— AFP/UNB photo

International

60 more combatants killed in latest fighting

Lanka firm to pursue political settlement to Tamil crisis

COLOMBO, July 28 : Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister said Sunday the government is determined to pursue a political settlement to the 13-year-old civil war despite the upsurge in violence, reports AP.

The government's determination to go ahead with the political process has not diminished ... The fact that we lost one military base does not change anything," Lakshman Kadirgamar told a news conference.

AFP adds: Sri Lanka may opt for international mediation to resolve the protracted civil war if Tamil guerrillas renounced their goal for a separate state. Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said today.

Kadirgamar told foreign correspondent here that third party peace brokers would have no role to play as long as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) remained firm in carving out a homeland in Sri Lanka's north and east.

"All evidence now points that they (Tigers) are for a separate state," he said. "They have only one agenda: A separate state, nothing else. That for Sri Lanka is not negotiable in violence, reports AP.

If there was any indication that the LTTE would be prepared to settle for anything less, that would have been different," said Kadirgamar, a high-profile Tamil minister in the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

"If the LTTE wanted a sincere dialogue, a settlement, then we would consider international mediation," he said. "It may not be useful, but we could consider it." Kadirgamar's comments came a week after the rebels overran a major military garrison in the northeastern town of Mullaitivu, reportedly massacring more than 1,200 soldiers in the worst rout for Sri Lanka.

The minister admitted that the Mullaitivu debacle was "a very serious blow."

But he said: "The fact that we have lost one base does not mean very much in the long-term strategy."

Kadirgamar said Sri Lanka would go for negotiations again with the LTTE only if the group renounced violence, laid down a substantial quantity of arms and agreed to a time-bound framework for dialogue.

The minister said the LTTE's fundraising in Western countries, which are home to hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils, helped the Tigers to boost their military strength.

Fundraising and front organisations is a very serious matter," he said.

There are huge fundraising operations in the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Australia. The figures running to millions of dollars.

"I have been pleading with Western governments to stop them. The answer I get is they (Tigers) are not engaged in illegal activities. Western gov-

ernments ask for evidence that the money is used to buy arms.

"We cannot give evidence. The arms are not being raised here. We only have the end results."

Earlier report says, Sri Lankan security forces were today digging in at a key northern town captured from Tamil Tiger guerrillas after heavy fighting that left nearly 60 combatants dead, according to official figures.

Dread of soldiers were setting up bunkers and fox holes at the town of Paranthan after advancing 10 kilometres (six miles) into territory held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), officials said.

Army lines had now moved within six kilometres (four miles) of the town of Kilinochchi where the Tigers moved their political headquarters after losing their main bastion of Jaffna to the military this year.

wheel and start from scratch and go back to square one" in the peace process, Mussa said at a conference in Washington Friday.

"It is up to all parties involved in the peace process to stand against attempts to remove it from the framework of peaceful resolution," Mussa said, underlining Egypt's "complete commitment to a land for a space formula."

"Israel must adopt policies and measures assuring its commitment" to peace, Mussa said before leaving for the US last Monday ahead of Mubarak's visit. "The United States has an important role in this context."

Mussa insisted Washington must have an active role despite presidential elections in November, saying the US cannot be "paralysed or impotent" nor "enjoy a weekend for four or five months" from the peace process.

But US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, on a tour last week that took him to Syria, Jordan and Israel, ruled out US pressure on Israel to change its stance.

Mubarak for exerting US pressure on Israel to move ME peace forward

CAIRO, July 28 : Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will seek to bring American pressure to bear on Israel's new hardline government to move forward the peace process during his visit to the US starting today, reports AFP.

Mubarak, who meets President Bill Clinton in Washington on Tuesday will present the Arabs' case to the main sponsor of the peace process after Clinton heard Israel's viewpoint from its right wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in early July.

The Egyptian President's visit will focus on what can be done to resume negotiations on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese tracks as fast as possible," Foreign Minister Amr Mussa said, quoted by the Egyptian daily Al Akhbar Saturday.

Netanyahu has raised Arab protests since his May election by seeming to jettison the land for space principle with his "policy of no's", refusing a withdrawal from the Golan Heights or the possibility of a Palestinian state.

"We are not ready nor would it be wise to reinvent the

BRIEFLY

ULFA kills 2 in Assam:

A senior Indian military official and a civilian were killed yesterday in an ambush by tribal militants in the far eastern state of Assam, police said. AFP reports from Guwahati.

Separatists of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) opened fire on a group of military officers inside a zoo, killing an officer and a civilian on the spot, police said.

The paramilitary personnel were on a visit to the zoo and was accompanied by an unarmed guard," a police spokesman said. "The militants were hiding inside the zoo and had prior information about the officers' visit."

Karasin made Russian deputy FM:

President Boris Yeltsin appointed Foreign Ministry spokesman Grigory Karasin deputy foreign minister, the presidential press service said Saturday. AP reports from Moscow.

Karasin, 46, is a career diplomat who served at Soviet embassies in Senegal, Australia and Britain before becoming the head of the Foreign Ministry's Africa and the Middle East department and later its chief spokesman.

Russian guards kill Chinese:

Russian border guards killed a Chinese man during a class with 12 Chinese who had crossed into Russian territory in the Far East, a report said Saturday. AP reports from Moscow.

The Chinese had gotten off a boat and were moving into Russian territory in the Khabarovsk region when they were stopped Friday by Russian guards, the federal border service told the Interfax news agency. The Chinese resisted with knives, according to the border service.

Gunmen kill 2 cops in Algeria:

Gunmen in Algeria shot dead two policemen in the centre of the capital Algiers, witnesses said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Paris.

Two Algerian policemen were shot dead by a group of gunmen at around 14:00 hours in Tanger Street, at the centre of Algiers," one witness told Reuters by telephone. There was no official statement about the killing. Security forces cordoned off the area but it was not known whether they made any arrests, the witnesses said.

Storms kill 74 in southeast Asia:

Two storms in southeast Asia have killed at least 74 people in the past week, most of them in the Philippines and Vietnam. AP reports from Taipei.

Typhoon Gloria, which killed three people in Taiwan and 30 in the Philippines before being downgraded to a tropical storm, lashed China's southeast coast near Xiamen with sustained winds of 49 mph (79 kph) on Saturday. Gloria had packed sustained winds of 69 mph (111 kph) on Friday. In Vietnam, the confirmed death toll from Tropical storm Franklin rose to 41, the official Vietnam News Agency said Saturday. It said 224 people were injured. Property damage was estimated at about 91 million dollar.

Quake rocks northern Greece:

An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter Scale shook southern Albania and northern Greece damaging some 200 homes and slightly injuring five people police said on Saturday. AP reports from Athens.

Late on Saturday, minor aftershocks measuring around three on the open-ended Richter Scale were continuing, according to Vassilis Papazatos, professor at the Geophysics Institute at Salonica University.

Blast kills 6 in Mexico:

An apparent propane leak triggered explosions at a gas-processing plant, propelling fireballs and smoke into the sky. Six people were killed and 39 wounded, a plant official said Saturday. AP reports from Mexico City.

A convoy of ambulances, fire trucks and other rescue equipment rushed to the Cactus petrochemical complex, about 400 miles (640 kilometres) southeast of Mexico City, hours after Friday night's explosion. The national oil company Petroleos Mexicanos -- known as Pemex -- sealed off the plant Saturday. Pemex blamed the explosions on a propane leak. It said the accident did not affect neighbouring villages.

Fire in ship kills 5 crews in US:

Five cruise ship crew members were killed and dozens of passengers injured Saturday in a fire that broke out in the laundry room of the vessel off Juneau, Alaska, authorities said. AP reports from Washington.

The blaze on the Universe Explorer, owned by World Explorer Cruises, was confined to some of the crew's quarters and some of the passenger quarters may be got heat and smoke damage. Juneau fire chief Merrill Sanford said by telephone. The nationalities of the crew members were not immediately known, but most of the 750 passengers were US and Canadian nationals Sanford said. Authorities were looking in to the fire's cause.

Iran, Bosnia sign Memorandum:

Iran and Bosnia signed a memorandum on economic cooperation Saturday concluding a three-day visit by Iranian vice president Hassan Habibi, AP reports from Sarajevo.

The memorandum which covers trade and economic cooperation and civilian air traffic was signed by Habibi and Bosnian Prime Minister Hassan Muratovic.

Mubarak off to USA:

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak left Cairo yesterday for a three-day visit to the United States, airport sources said. Reuter reports from Cairo.

Mubarak, who is due to meet US President Bill Clinton in Washington on Tuesday, is expected to discuss hopes for the Middle East peace process after his talks earlier this month with Israel's hardline Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu's refusal to trade occupied Arab land in return for peace has angered Arab and threatened to derail five years of US-sponsored peace talks.

Explosion rocks Grozny:

A powerful explosion, near to the building of the pro-Russian Chechen government on Saturday rocked the Chechen capital Grozny, Interfax news agency reported, adding that no one was hurt. AP reports from Russia.

According to initial reports from the Interior Ministry, the blast was probably caused by a mine hidden in an uninhabited house.

Streets of the breakaway capital were deserted at the time of the blast which occurred at around 8:00 pm (1600 GMT).

Heavy downpour in ROK: 71 dead or missing

SEOUL, July 28 : At least 71 South Korean soldiers and civilians were dead or missing today after two days of heavy downpour that triggered a spate of landslides and left some 31,000 people homeless, officials said, reports AFP.

Flood bulletins were issued overnight in villages along northern border rivers, sending tens of thousands of people fleeing into the mountains and high ground shelters.

President Kim Young-Sam flew back from a summer holiday and called an emergency meeting of top aides on how to cope with the disaster, which weathermen said also hit North Korea.

A huge area of Paju county, north of Seoul, was flooded after a dam was destroyed, unleashing mudslides over dykes.

Television showed soldiers and police officers in inflatable boats amid the rooftops of submerged houses to rescue trapped villagers in Munsan, Paju and other northern counties.

Rebels keep on rocketing

Afghan radio criticises Hekmatyar

ISLAMABAD, July 28: Afghanistan's state radio, in a surprise move, broadcast veiled criticism of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar on Saturday as rebels kept on rocketing Kabul at the start of a new UN envoy's peace mission, reports Reuter.

President Burhanuddin Rabbani chaired a defence high council meeting to discuss defence and security after at least two more people were killed and four wounded by rocketing overnight and on Saturday.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, lamented that 181 people were killed and 290 wounded by the rocketing on Kabul in one month after Hekmatyar took over as prime minister under a peace pact with Rabbani.

Vital airport still under Aideed's control

MOGADISHU, Somalia, July 28: Somalia's self proclaimed president appeared in control Saturday of a vital airfield and nearby town despite claims from rival factions that they had captured both strategic sites, reports AP.

A radio station operated by Gen Mohamed Aidid out of his south Mogadishu stronghold said Aidid's forces held the Balidogle airport, 60 miles (95 kilometres) west of Mogadishu, and the town of Aigoo, 20 miles (32 kilometers) west of the capital.

Representatives of African Airlines, which operates passenger and cargo flights between the airfield and Kenya, confirmed the radio's report.

Earlier broadcasts on a radio station operated by Aidid's rival Ali Mahdi Mohamed, who controls north Mogadishu, claimed Ali Mahdi's forces had captured the airport and Aigoo.

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Three fasting inmates died Saturday before the deal was reached, and another 100 were in critical condition — some of them past the point of saving, human rights workers who recently visited the prisoners said.

After holding firm against the inmates' demands for more than two months, government leaders finally agreed to send 102 political prisoners back to jail closer to the site of their trials, negotiators said.

The hunger strikes at Turkey's prisons are over, proclaimed negotiator Mukadder Basoglu.

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"We completely condemn any kind of terrorism against civilians anywhere," said the Authority's planning and international affairs minister Nabil Shaath.

Israel, the target of an attack that left 18 people dead at the Munich Games of 1972, when Palestinians seized Israeli athletes, sent its condolences to Americans.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, said "terrorism has no borders and must be fought without compromise," according to a statement from his office.

200 detained after PDI HQs raid

Troops patrolling streets of Jakarta after rioting

JAKARTA, July 28: Troops patrolled the streets of the Indonesian capital Jakarta on Sunday a day after the worst rioting in over two decades but there were no immediate reports of fresh violence, reports Reuter.

Soldiers armed with rifles guarded the Salemba district in central Jakarta, the worst hit area during Saturday's rioting and other parts of the city.

But traffic flowed freely through the district, past the charred shells of about 10 buildings gutted by fire. Spectators gathered to see the effects of the rioting, but there was no sign of tension.

Antara news agency quoted army chief General Feisal Tanjung as saying 176 people were arrested on Saturday, when protesters rampaged after police stormed and took over the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) from political activists.

Witnesses said that what had started out as a political protest appeared to have degenerated into lawless violence with thousands of people roaming the Salemba area.

In Salemba rioters trashed and torched the offices of the Army Women's Command, gutted a nine storey building housing part of the Agricultural Department and set ablaze five bank branches, two car showrooms.

Witnesses said the rioting continued into the night. Some said it was the worst violence they had seen in the city since riots triggered by anger over a wave of Japanese investment in Indonesia in 1974.

Police seized the PDI headquarters on Saturday after a two hour battle with activists who had occupied the building in support of Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's late founding president Sukarno, who was ousted as party leader by government-backed rebels last month.

Megawati criticised the takeover in a statement issued on Saturday but did not refer to the subsequent rioting.

AFP adds: Nearly 200 people were detained after an onslaught on the headquarters of an opposition party degenerated into Jakarta's worst riots in a quarter of a century, police said here today.

Some 181 people have been detained from the riots Saturday. Jakarta police told journalists Sunday morning.

Off the Record

Tiger attack at TV station

CINCINNATI: A male Bengal tiger about to appear on television mauled a 7-year old girl Saturday as he was being led down the TV station's hallway. AP reports from Cincinnati.

Lilly Maynard was in fair condition with injuries to her face and scalp.