

### Bofors scandal comes back to haunt Gowda govt

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: A scandal involving the purchase of artillery from Sweden that reopened last month after the Indian government brought down the current government of Prime Minister P V Narayana Murthy, reports AP.

The probe into the scandal reopened last month after the Indian government brought down the current government of Prime Minister P V Narayana Murthy, reports AP.

Now, it has increased the strain in relations between the Congress Party, which was governing at the time of the 1986 purchase, and Gowda's minority government, which relies on Congress support for its survival.

began questioning several former army generals.

Li Gen Hridaya Kaul, who was part of the team that evaluated the 155 mm howitzers, said former army chief Krishnaswami Sundarji falsely testified to lawmakers that Bofors guns could evade Pakistani radar.

Kaul told police that Pakistan never had such radars and that the army chief may have lied to the parliamentary team to favour the Swedish gun.

Sundarji on Thursday denied those allegations in the Indian Express newspaper.

### China greets Nawaz Sharif

BEIJING, Feb 6: China today extended congratulations to Nawaz Sharif on his victory in Pakistan's general election, reports Xinhua.

Asked to comment on Nawaz Sharif's victory, Foreign Ministry spokesman Tang Guoqiang said: "Nawaz Sharif, President of the Pakistan Muslim League, is an old friend of the Chinese people, and we extend our congratulations to him on his victory in the general election."

"It is believed that during his tenure of office, the existing friendly relations and cooperation between China and Pakistan will certainly be further strengthened and advanced," the spokesman noted.

## UN suspends operations in Rwanda after killings

KIGALI, Rwanda, Feb 6: The United Nations is evacuating staff and most aid groups are scaling back their missions in Rwanda as mourners bid farewell to human rights monitors slain in a suspected Hutu rebel ambush, reports AP.

A brief memorial service was held Wednesday for Graham Turnbull, a Briton, and Sastra Chim-Chan, a Cambodian, at Kigali airport before their bodies were loaded onto a plane to Nairobi, Kenya, for flights home.

"This is a very sad way to see our colleagues go back home," said Omar Bakhet, chief of the UN mission in Rwanda. "The only way to honour them is to continue our mission here in Rwanda."

Turnbull, 36, and Chim-Chan, 34, and two Rwandan aides were shot to death Tuesday in Karengera, 180 miles (290 kilometres) southwest of Kigali. A third Rwandan in their entourage died hours later of gunshot wounds. The murders in Rwanda were interpreted as Jean-Bosco Munyaneza and Aimable Nsongurua and project assistant Agrippin Ngabo.

The United Nations ordered all its workers to suspend operations in western Rwanda and move to Kigali. It recommended

other foreigners do the same.

Bakhet also announced increased security for aid workers in the rest of the country, including a dusk-to-dawn curfew and armed government soldiers posted at aid agency compounds.

In Geneva, the Red Cross said it was withdrawing most of its aid workers from Rwanda.

Twenty-five delegates would leave for Kenya in the next two days with only a skeleton staff of six remaining in Kigali, the international Red Cross and Red Crescent societies said.

Elizabeth Wagley of New York-based Doctors for the World said their mission in Rwanda remains "in suspension. Once we find out who the perpetrator were, we'll be able to make a decision" whether to go back.

But she indicated that's not likely soon. The group had a four-member operation until January, when three staffers from the Spanish affiliate were killed.

UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said in New York that the United Nations "has decided to continue its relief operations in Rwanda but has asked the government of Rwanda to provide military escort for its personnel travelling outside of Kigali."

Samantha Bolton of Doctors

Without Borders said her group is scaling back in Rwanda but couldn't provide up-to-date figures.

"We're scaling back to a skeletal staff and being extra careful on the security level," she said.

CARE was the exception.

Wendy Driscoll, spokesperson for Atlanta-based CARE, said: "For the moment, we have no plan to suspend our activities. We have been there a long time. We know how bad it can get. Everyone knew it would happen."

Now is not the time to abandon the Rwandan people. Now is the time they need our help. We'll stay there as long as we possibly can."

The ambush Tuesday on five men in two clearly marked UN vehicles horrified the aid community in Rwanda. The attack was the latest in a series against foreigners in Rwanda.

Besides the death of the three Spanish aid workers, a Canadian Roman Catholic priest was killed in another attack in January. UN officials have reported at least four other recent attacks that have targeted foreigners.

Rwandan officials blame the attacks on Hutu insurgents opposed to the Tutsi-controlled government in Rwanda.

### Fujimori says Meetings with MRTA rebels underway

LIMA, Feb 6: Peru's President said meetings were underway to kickstart talks with rebels holding 72 hostages, while his top interlocutor called on both sides to "improve their language and attitude," reports AFP.

In a campaign-style tour of a working class Lima neighbourhood, President Alberto Fujimori that a "logistics group" was working to set up a meeting with Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels holding 19 Japanese, one Bolivian and 52 Peruvian hostages.

"We hope to set up a schedule for these preliminary conversations," he said.

Fujimori, along with Anyacucho archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani, returned from Washington on Tuesday after meeting with US President Bill Clinton in Washington and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in Toronto.

Cipriani, who has regularly visited the Japanese Embassy residence as a go-between, appeared to criticise both sides on Wednesday in urging them to "improve their language and attitude" to resolve the seven-week crisis.

Cipriani, a personal friend of Fujimori, acknowledged for the first time Wednesday that his role went beyond the pastoral.

"From an informal exchange of ideas have come up some alternatives that could lead to a peaceful resolution."

## 300 bodies of Srebrenica massacre handed over to Bosnia authorities

TUZLA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Feb 6: War crimes investigators handed over more than 300 bodies exhumed from mass graves linked to the Srebrenica massacre to the Bosnian authorities on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Amor Masovic, head of the War Crimes Commission in the Muslim-Croat Federation, one of the post-war Bosnia's two entities, said the bodies had been exhumed from mass graves at Pilica and Lazete and the cause of death was gunshot wounds.

The 303 bodies were handed over in the eastern town of Kalesia and taken to a morgue in the northern town of Tuzla, where the local authorities will continue the identification process.

Pilica and Lazete, in eastern Bosnia, were two of the mass grave sites linked to Srebrenica which were excavated by experts working for The Hague-based International War Crimes Tribunal last year.

Some 154 bodies were found at another site in Cerska and a further 33 at Nova Kasaba. Digging and taken to a morgue in the northern town of Tuzla, where the local authorities will continue the identification process.

and former army commander general Ratko Mladic, both living at liberty in Bosnia Serb territory, have been indicted by the tribunal over the massacre.

The tribunal's experts exhumed mass graves to provide evidence to help with The Hague's war crimes prosecutions. Once the autopsies have been carried out, the bodies are handed over to relevant authorities.

### Goldman praises verdict blaming O J Simpson for killings

SANTA MONICA, Calif, Feb 6: Fred Goldman said on Tuesday he was enormously grateful and thankful for the civil jury verdict blaming O J Simpson for the killings of his son Ronald Goldman and Simpson's ex-wife Nicole, reports Reuters.

"Our family is grateful for this verdict of responsibility, which is all we ever asked for," he said following the jury's decision.

"We finally have justice for Ron and Nicole," said Goldman through tearful eyes. "We're enormously grateful and thankful," he said praising his legal team for its dedication during the trial.

## BRIEFLY

**3 Tibetans killed in India:** A respected Tibetan scholar and two of his students have been killed in an attack near the Dalai Lama's Seat of Power in India, newspapers said yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

Police have arrested five unnamed Tibetans for questioning over the triple murder in the hill town of Dharmasala Tuesday, the United News of India (UNI) reported. The news agency did not speculate about the motive, but the Indian express said the murders could have been caused by a dispute over the Dalai Lama's leadership of the Tibetan community.

**1m illegal immigrants in Russia:** There are almost one million illegal immigrants in Russia, Tatyana Regent, head of Russia's Federal Migration Service (FMS), said on Wednesday Xinhua reports from Moscow.

Only about 10,000 of them had applied to FMS for legal residential status, and very few of the applicants would be qualified because of the rather strict examination and verification process, Regent said. FMS predicts that there will be 2.8 million immigrants in Russia by the year 2000.

**Fire ruins 2000 rare books in Russia:** A fire at a saint Petersburg library early Wednesday destroyed nearly 2,000 rare books dating from the 16th to 19th centuries, the Interfax news agency reported, AFP reports from Moscow.

Saint Petersburg Governor Vladimir Yakovlev said the city was prepared to help the Pulkovo observatory rebuild the library and repair books which were not destroyed in the blaze. He also appealed to the Federal government for help to repair the damage.

**S Korean navy chopper missing:** A South Korean navy helicopter carrying four crewmen was missing over central South Korea Thursday while on a routine mission, the Defense Ministry said, AP reports from Seoul.

The US-made UH-60 disappeared from radar screens at mid-morning while on its way to Seoul from Pohang, a port 180 kilometres (112 miles) southeast of the South Korean capital, it said.

**Chernomyrdin arrives in US:** Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin arrived at Andrews air force base near Washington Wednesday for a three-day visit to Washington and Chicago, a Russian Embassy official said, AFP reports from Washington.

Chernomyrdin was greeted by Vice President Al Gore at the airport before heading to Blair House, the official residence for foreign guests.

### India likely to acquire arms, tech from Italy, Israel

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: India is likely to acquire armament and state-of-the-art technology from Italy and Israel in the near future, the Hindustan Times said today, reports Xinhua.

According to the prime Indian newspaper, the groundwork for arms trade is likely to be done by Defence Secretary TK Banerji, who left for a ten-day visit to the two countries Tuesday.

Senior officials of the Indian Air Force and the Defence Ministry were part of his entourage.

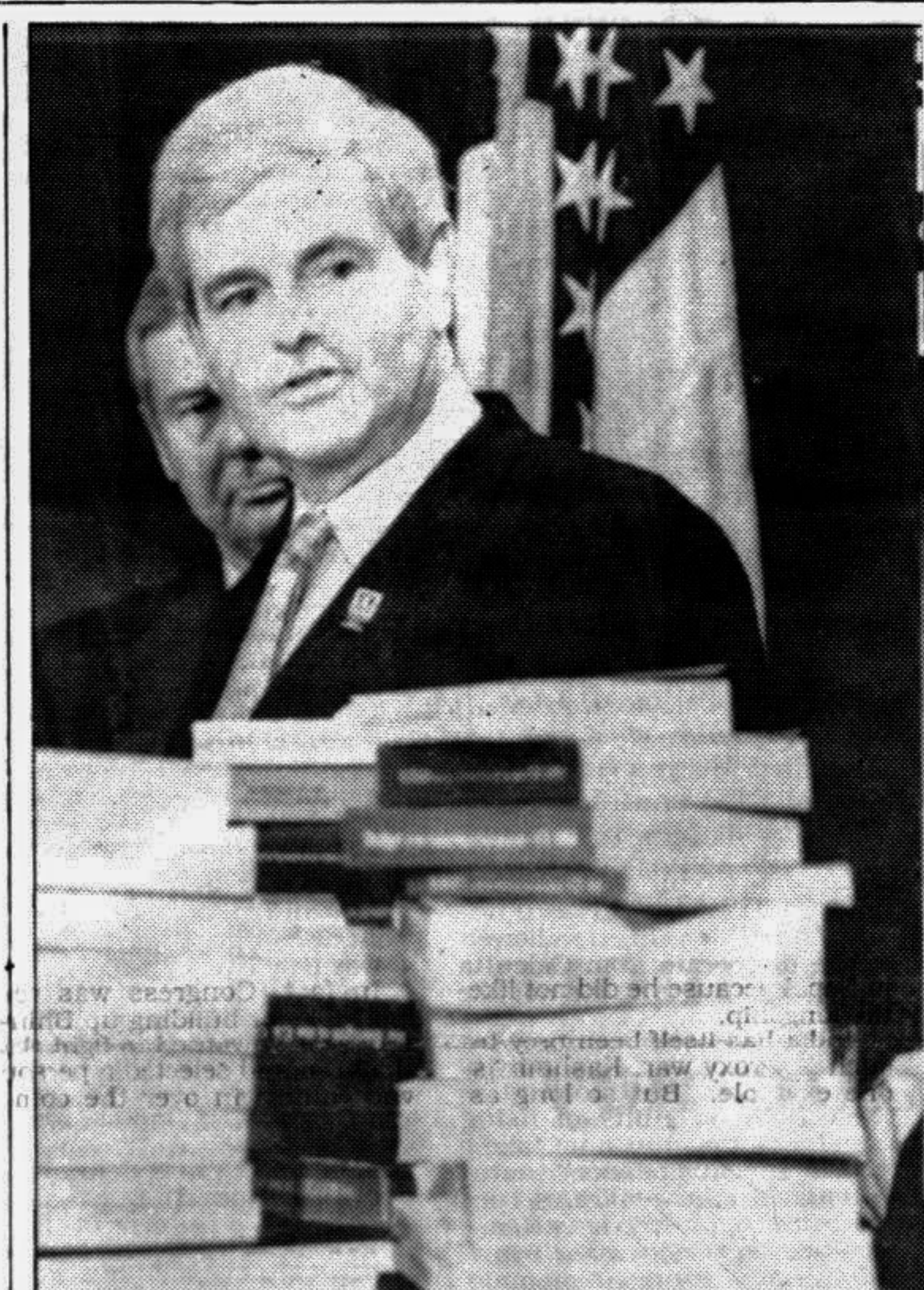
The delegation would take part in the first meeting of the joint committee of Indo-Italian defence cooperation.

### Netanyahu, Arafat to meet on Sunday

GAZA CITY, Feb 6: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will meet Sunday, after an earlier summit was delayed by Israel's deadliest military accident, a senior Arafat aide said, reports AFP.

"After a request by the Israelis, the summit has been delayed. It will be held on Sunday at the Erez crossing" between Israel and the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip, Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP.

Netanyahu declared a national day of mourning Wednesday after 73 soldiers were killed in a collision between two army helicopters over the Lebanese border the previous night.



US Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich speaks in support of a balanced budget amendment Wednesday at the Capitol in Washington DC. US President Bill Clinton, who is against the amendment, announced Wednesday in Atlanta, GA plans for a balanced budget that nearly doubles spending on education. — AFP/UNB photo

### Bill recognising opposition's victory sent to Serbian parliament

BELGRADE, Feb 6: The Serbian government Wednesday sent parliament a bill recognising opposition victories in disputed local elections, the state-run news agency Tanjug said, reports AFP.

Parliament is not currently in session so the government asked it to convene for a special one, the agency said, quoting the Information Ministry.

Official Radio Belgrade said this session would be held next Tuesday.

President Slobodan Milosevic, facing 11 straight weeks of pro-democracy street protests, instructed his prime minister Tuesday to submit a bill recognising a string of opposition wins that his government had initially annulled.

### Punjab goes to polls today

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: The northern Indian state of Punjab, rocked for years by a Sikh rebellion, goes to the polls Friday to elect a provincial legislature widely expected to be dominated by a Sikh-Hindu alliance, reports AFP.

Some 15.2 million voters are due to pick 117 candidates for the state assembly amid tight security across India's grain bowl.

More than 25,000 people died in a decade-long secessionist campaign for a Sikh homeland called Khalistan ("land of the pure"), which also claimed the life of former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

## Off the Record

### Miss Hawaii wins Miss USA pageant

SHREVEPORT, Louisiana: Miss Hawaii has been crowned new Miss USA following a pageant in which TV celebrity George Hamilton asked the finalists how they would deal with weight gains of Miss Universe-like proportions, reports AP.

"Miss Universe has recently been the subject of a lot of press attention about her weight," Hamilton said as the finalists emerged from a sound-proof booth. "If this happened to you, how would you handle it?"

"There isn't a weight restriction as far as I'm aware. I would probably lose the weight. I would try to be healthy and handle it in a healthy way," said Miss Tennessee to scattered applause.

"I think I would take a good hard look at myself, and I'd look from the inside out, and I would know that I'm the same girl that won the crown that day and it wouldn't really matter what I look like on the outside because I won," Miss Hawaii, Brook Lee, said to big cheers from the audience.

"Well I think it's difficult for any woman to handle weight fluctuations... but I saw Miss Universe compete and she had an inner beauty come through," said Miss Idaho, also to cheers.

Miss Hawaii succeeded Ali Landry as Miss USA. The title comes with more than \$170,000 in cash and prizes, and a chance to compete in the Miss Universe pageant in May.

### Teens under 18 can't smoke

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's under 18 years old (U18) will be banned from smoking, chewing tobacco or possessing cigarettes from next month, the health minister has said, reports AP.

Convicted offenders will be fined 1,000 (400 dols), Minister Chua Jui Meng was quoted as saying by the New Straits Times newspaper on Thursday. Teenagers who admit their offense to authorities will be let off with a 50 ringgit (20 fine dols), he said.

Chua said the government is concerned that tobacco-using youngsters may graduate to drugs.

He quoted a study by the United States Food and Drug Administration as saying that 90 per cent of teenagers who didn't smoke until 19 also did not pick the habit later.

A recent survey by Malaysia's National University of 885 drug addicts at rehabilitation centres showed that 90 per cent of them had smoked cigarettes in their teens. Chua was quoted as saying.

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## Offensive enters its 3rd day Forces advance deep into Tiger's territory

COLOMBO, Feb 6: Security forces pushed deep into Tamil Tiger territory in Northern Sri Lanka as their latest offensive entered its third day Thursday, officials here said, reports AFP.

There was little resistance from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to government forces backed by tanks, artillery guns and air force planes, a Defence Ministry spokesman here said Thursday.

"The offensive resumed this morning," the spokesman said. "Overnight there were no reports of fighting. The operation is now in progress."

There was no immediate word from the LTTE about the latest action by the security forces in the northern district of Vavuniya but said in a statement from its London office that the air force was bombing civilian targets.

A Sri Lankan Puccara

bomber launched three missiles in succession on a populated area of the northern Kilinochchi district causing extensive damage, the LTTE statement said without giving casualties.

The Defence Ministry said troops had advanced nine kilometres (5.5 miles) into enemy territory by Wednesday afternoon since launching the offensive codenamed 'Edi Bala' on Tuesday.

"A number of known enemy targets in the area were taken on by the air force and artillery fire. The navy is supporting the operation by dominating a certain sector of the sea," the ministry said.

By Wednesday afternoon the Tigers hit back hard firing long-range mortar bombs and artillery guns at a key military garrison in the northern Elephant pass area. There were no immediate reports of troop casualties.

## Khmers oppose US proposal to rebuild key border road

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Feb 6: Hardline Khmer Rouge guerrillas on Thursday criticised a US proposal to help rebuild a key border road, calling it an excuse for economic exploitation, reports AP.

The United States has expressed interest in helping rebuild the highway linking Pailin, a former Khmer Rouge stronghold near the Thai border, and Battambang, the country's second largest city, 250 kilometres (155 miles) northwest of Phnom Penh.

Pailin fell under government control after the faction of guerrillas controlling it defected last year. The town had long served as the commercial center for the Khmer Rouge, a transit point through which gemstones and timber were smuggled for sale in Thailand.

The plan to build the road is a plan to rob timber, gems and land from the area," the Khmer Rouge said in Thursday's broadcast from their clandestine radio station.

It charged that Vietnamese communist "puppets" and Western nations wanted development in the area for their own gain.

The guerrillas are estimated to have about 1,500 hardliners still holding out at the group's last major stronghold in Anlong Veng in the north.

The Khmer Rouge were ousted from power in 1979 by a Vietnamese invasion which installed a client regime that ruled the country until 1992. Members of the former client regime are now part of the Cambodian People's Party, a partner in the current coalition government.

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