

# Tigers smash army camp, attack air force base in E Lanka

COLOMBO, Mar 6: Tamil Tiger guerrillas smashed an army camp and infiltrated a strategic air base in eastern Sri Lanka today, leaving more than 125 people killed on both sides, officials said, reports AFP.

Dozens of gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) pulverised the Vavunatuva Camp in the district of Batticaloa in a pre-dawn mortar bomb attack, defence officials said.

They said at least 25 soldiers were killed and another 60 seriously wounded in the pre-dawn assault which marked an escalation of rebel attacks in the eastern province.

State radio said more than 100 guerrillas perished when the air force went to the aid of the besieged Vavunatuva Camp and attacked rebel concentrations, the radio gave no figures for military casualties.

The air force itself was the victim of a daring suicide attack by the Tiger guerrillas at the key China Bay base in the neighbouring district of Trincomalee where the rebels destroyed a parked Y-8 type aircraft.

One airman died and six others were wounded in the attack which began just before midnight and lasted about three hours, officials said adding they recovered the bodies of four Tiger suicide cadres.

The rebels also fired at a parked helicopter and damaged the Air Traffic Control Tower at Trincomalee, defence sources said.

In the army camp attack, the military casualties included two women soldiers who died when a mortar bomb hit the "Three Brigade" headquarters, the sources said adding several weapons had been stolen from there.

"There is no questioning of the Tigers overrunning the camp. Troops have also inflicted heavy losses in defending the camp but still the Tiger casualties are not clear," the source said.

Helicopter gun-ships were deployed in the area to bomb suspected rebel positions, officials said.

A Puccara bomber and two helicopter gun-ships were also deployed in Trincomalee to attack possible escape routes of the rebel group which helped the infiltrators to get in to the air base, officials said.

Local officials in Batticaloa, 300 kilometres (160 miles) east of here, said they saw military as well as civilian vehicles rushing wounded soldiers to the main hospital there.

The Tigers launched a similar attack against another small military base on February 2, killing 12 soldiers. On December 11, the Tigers

smashed a police commando post in the region and killed 38 troopers.

The latest Tiger attack on the air force compounded a series of losses suffered by them this year. Two MI-17 helicopters collided last month.

In January, the airforce lost a Y-12 plane, an Israeli-built Kfir supersonic jet and small remote-control spy plane.

Defence officials had expressed concern over a build up of Tiger cadres in the eastern province following their military reversals during army operations elsewhere.

Security forces captured a 77-kilometre (48 mile) highway located with in rebel-held territory in the north-west of the country last month without much fighting.

Tamil Tiger guerrillas attacked the Sri Lankan air force's eastern headquarters early Thursday.

## Flood hits five US states

WASHINGTON, Mar 6: US Vice President Al Gore today toured West Virginia and promised federal assistance to the communities ravaged by the worst flooding on the Ohio river in 33 years, reports Xinhua.

Thousands of people were forced out of their homes as large areas of the five bordering states of West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Tennessee were submerged under flood waters.

Powerful thunderstorms dumped more rain on flood-weary residents of the Ohio river valley today, triggering flash floods.

Indiana Gov Frank O'Bannon has requested federal disaster aid for 13 all Indiana counties bordering the Ohio.

The continued flooding forced the US army corps of engineers to shut nearly 350 miles (588 km) of the Ohio river to all commercial traffic.

The death toll from nearly a week of storms passed 50, with the number of flooding deaths reaching 15 in Kentucky, five in Ohio, five in Tennessee and one in West Virginia.

# Indo-Pak secretary level talks likely on Mar 28

NEW DELHI, Mar 6: An Indian newspaper said today that India and Pakistan would later this month resume the talks which broke down three years ago in acrimony, reports Reuters.

The Asian Age said Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamsah Ahmad would meet his Indian counterpart, Salam Haider, in New Delhi for three days of talks starting on March 28. Both are top civil servants.

Haider, reached by telephone at his residence in the Indian capital, declined to comment on the report, which was based on an interview with Pakistan's High Commissioner (ambassador) to India, Riaz Hussain Khokhar.

Khokhar could not be reached for comment.

A spokesman for the Indian Foreign Ministry travelling with Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral in Mauritius told Reuters he could neither confirm nor deny the report.

The last round of bilateral talks between the South Asian neighbours was held in January 1994 and bogged down in differences over the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir, since they gained independence from Britain in 1947.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming and training separatist guerrillas fighting Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir state, where police and hospital officials say more than 20,000 people have died in insurgency violence since 1990.

Pakistan says it provides only moral and diplomatic support.

Following Nawaz Sharif's election as Pakistan's Prime Minister last month, India and Pakistan have exchanged letters expressing a desire to resume bilateral talks.

Pakistan said on Saturday that it hopes for an early resumption of talks and was willing to discuss a troop pullout from the disputed Himalayan glacier, Siachen.

Gujral wrote to his Pakistani counterpart, Gohar Ayub Khan, at the weekend, welcoming Pakistan's suggestion that foreign secretaries from the two countries should meet in March.

Pakistan has insisted that the two sides discuss Kashmir, India has said it is keen to narrow differences over less contentious issues to help improve the overall climate between the longtime foes.

## BRIEFLY

**Clinton telephones Kohl:** US President Bill Clinton on Wednesday telephoned German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to discuss the security issues of Europe, Xinhua reports from Washington.

The two leaders also talked about the upcoming US-Russia summit scheduled in Helsinki on March 20-21. White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters. During their summit, Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin are expected to discuss the European security and Russia's economic reform.

**Grandson of ex-Labour PM joins Tory:** Lord Attlee, grandson of Clement Attlee, Britain's first post-war Labour prime minister, said Wednesday he has joined John Major's governing Conservative Party. AP reports from London.

The move was a much needed boost for a party that is trailing badly behind the main opposition Labour Party in the opinion polls with a national election just weeks away.

**Canada may deport 64 Nazis:** Canada may be about to deport 64 suspected Nazi war criminals living there, a government minister told the House of Commons in a debate on Britain's War Crimes Act Wednesday night. AP reports from London.

Defending the act against critics who say it should be dropped because too much time has elapsed since World War II for war crimes suspects to get a fair trial, Kirkhope said: "In Canada, 64 suspects have been identified and they may be deported. If that occurs, it may be possible that some of them may arrive in Britain, as the last country of embarkation."

**Ex-president of ROK hospitalised:** Former South Korean president Roh Tae-woo was transferred from prison to a military hospital early yesterday for treatment for a kidney stone in his urinary tract, television reports said, AFP reports from Seoul.

Yonhap Television News (YTN) said Roh was taken to a military hospital here from his cell in the Seoul detention centre, where he has been incarcerated for more than a year on charges of mutiny and corruption. He was expected to remain in the hospital until late Friday, YTN said.

**5 Germans kidnapped in Yemen:** Yemeni kidnappers on Wednesday seized five German tourists in the country's southeastern province of Hadramaut, a Yemeni security source told Reuters in Sanaa.

The kidnappers, who did not identify themselves, telephoned local authorities and asked them for a 12 million mark (7 million dollars) ransom to release them," the source said without giving further details.

**Walesa to teach at ROK university:** Former Polish President Lech Walesa will lecture on labour relations at a South Korean university beginning this May, school officials said Thursday. AP reports from Seoul.

Walesa was named an honorary professor at Seoul's Korea University and will lecture twice a year at the university's graduate School of Labour Studies until early 1999.

## Multan train accident Driver was suffering from high blood pressure

MULTAN, Pakistan, Mar 6: The driver of a runaway Pakistan train which derailed killing 127 people told investigators that he was advised not to drive at night, sources in a railway's inquiry into the accident said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Driver Khalid Islam, 52, whose engine ploughed into an emergency barrier Monday, derailed six crowded carriages in a pre-dawn train disaster, said he was suffering from high blood pressure and suspected cancer.

Recording his statement before an inquiry committee probing the crash, he said he submitted the medical report to a senior railway official in his hometown of Rohri in southern Sindh province last week.

Counter to medical advice Islam was put on night duty, the sources said.

A preliminary report by the railway officials said the Zulfikar Express derailed at the Mehrashah rural station near Khanewal, 50 kilometres (30 miles) from here, after it was diverted when its brakes failed.

The rescue teams Wednesday removed the engine which had bogged down in the sand, and cleared the track of the mangled coaches.

The railway administration meanwhile distributed cheques of 100,000 rupees (2,500 dollars) to the heirs of each of the deceased and 50,000 rupees to every passenger who sustained injuries.

## Trial of Zardari, 18 others begins inside jail

KARACHI, Mar 5: The trial of the husband of ousted Pakistani premier Benazir Bhutto and 18 police and intelligence officers accused of killing her estranged brother opens Thursday inside a Karachi jail, court sources said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Government officials said it was decided to hold the trial inside the prison where Asif Ali Zardari has been languishing since Benazir was dismissed as premier in November for security reasons.

Benazir and lawyers of Zardari have protested the move saying it was contrary to the principles of justice.

"It is an attempt to deny my husband a fair and public trial," Benazir said, claiming the government wanted to prevent independent observers, human rights groups and journalists from attending the hearing.

"If there is any security problem, then the media should be allowed to cover the proceedings," she told reporters on Tuesday.



Guarded by an armed Italian soldier some ground staff of the southern Italian Air base Galatina check an elderly Albanian "Mig" fighter near a hangar, in Italy, in which two Albanian pilots had fled their country Tuesday. The two pilots on Tuesday, landed on the Italian base and asked for political asylum. The two-seated "Mig" fighter plane is of the sort manufactured in China and used by the former Soviet airforce in the 1950s. — AFP/UNB photo

## Yeltsin warns Europe not to provoke Russia

MOSCOW, Mar 6: President Boris Yeltsin warned Europe today not to provoke Russia over NATO's eastward expansion and promised that Moscow would take a major step this year towards integration with its western neighbour Belarus.

Yeltsin reaffirmed Moscow's call for a wide ranging treaty governing Russian-NATO relations with full legal weight and said he would work towards this meetings with European leaders and at this month's summit with US President Bill Clinton.

But the Kremlin leader, who created a Russian-Belarusian "community" last April, said further integration with the former Soviet state of 10 million which separates Russia from Poland and Lithuania would be his foreign policy priority this year.

"I remind you: without Russia, and even more so against her, no one in Europe has yet been able and will ever be able to create an effective system of security."

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"The times are getting critical for Europeans", he said.

## Egypt to take over all mosques, preachers

CAIRO, Mar 6: The Egyptian government, fighting what it calls religious extremism, plans to control the country's 55,000 mosques and all Muslim preachers within five years, the Minister of Islamic Affairs said, reports Reuters.

In its first 14 months, the present government has taken over 9,000 private mosques and the process will continue at a rate of 6,000 a year. Religious Endowment Minister Mahmoud Hamdi Zakzouk told a news conference on Wednesday evening.

The people who run the remaining 30,000 private mosques have started applying for licenses for their preachers under a law passed earlier this year, he added.

## 7 shot dead in Vlore UK, Germany accused of backing Albanian president

LONDON, Mar 6: Top Albanian opposition leader Kreshnik Ceka accused Britain and Germany of "having given President Sali Berisha enough oxygen to be come a dictator", in a newspaper interview published here today, reports AFP.

"Whereas some Western countries such as Italy and the United States have put serious pressure on Berisha to form a broad-based coalition to solve the national crisis, the British government has largely supported him," he told The Times.

Certain forces on the right wing of the ruling Conservative Party seemed prepared to back Berisha even when he used the feared secret police to enforce a state of emergency, said Ceka, who is leader of the Democratic Alliance.

"I regret to say the same is true of some sections of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Party in Bonn," he added.

"It is high time Britain and Germany cut off his air supply," he said.

Ceka added that the armed uprising in the south of the country "could be ended tomorrow if Berisha agreed to a cross-party coalition."

Meanwhile, seven people have been shot dead over the past 24 hours in Vlore, the stronghold of an insurrection against the Albanian government, hospital officials said today.

Another eight people with gunshot wounds were hospitalised and 10 more received treatment for minor injuries, the officials said from Vlore.

The death toll from shootings in Vlore now stands at 25 since Friday when rioters raided army weapons depots.

AP adds: Protests that rose from the ashes of Albania's get-rich-quick schemes and exploded into rebellion have exposed a deep north-south divide in this impoverished Balkan land.

Not only are north and south inhabited by distinct ethnic groups, but their economies have been determined by differences in geography, and when their inhabitants look abroad they look in different directions.

The collapse in 1990-1991 of the harsh communist rule that isolated Albania from the outside world and minutely regulated the lives of its citizens has brought the two regions into greater contact — and conflict.

# 'Setting up new homes in Arab lands violation of law, UN resolution'

CAIRO, Mar 6: Setting up Jewish settlements in any Arab lands, including east Jerusalem, is a violation of international law and UN Security Council resolutions, Osama Al-Baz, political advisor to the Egyptian president said today, reports Xinhua.

It also contradicts with Israel's commitment to the agreements on the transitional phase, Baz told reporters following the talks between President Hosni Mubarak and visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who arrived here today.

During the meeting, Mubarak has failed to convince Netanyahu of complications and difficulties that might arise in future peace talks if Israel is bent on building 6,500 Jewish homes in Har Homa, a tree-covered hill in east Jerusalem, taken by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

Both the Palestinians and Israelis should avoid taking any measure unilaterally which can derail the final status negotiations," Baz said.

Under Palestinian-Israeli agreements and relevant UN resolutions, such issues as Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, pending border problems and economic cooperation are left to the final status, he said.

Meanwhile, the United States yesterday criticised Israel for its shutting down of four Palestinian offices in east Jerusalem, saying the move was 'very difficult to understand.'

It was the second time in a week that the Israeli government was under US criticism. The first was when President Bill Clinton accused Israel of building 'mistrust' by its decision to establish 6,500 Jewish homes in east Jerusalem.

This time, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said, as the president and the secretary of state have both said, this is a time when it is very important that the Middle East parties take steps that will build confidence between them.

It is therefore very difficult to understand why the Israeli government made such a decision at this time when there is a

very difficult environment in the relationship with the Palestinians," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the closure of the four Palestinian offices Tuesday on the pretext that the operation of the offices violates peace agreements with the Palestinians.

AP adds, Yasser Arafat is getting some sympathy from former US presidents Jimmy Carter and George Bush, who both criticised Israel during the Palestinian leader's first visit to America's heartland.

President Carter went so far as to say that the United States should encourage Benjamin Netanyahu to negotiate with Arafat, adding that the Israeli prime minister's policies have harmed the Mideast peace process.

"I don't think there's any doubt it has moved backwards since he was elected," Carter said.

Later, in Houston, Arafat spoke at Rice University and then met privately with George and Barbara Bush. The former president said later that he agrees the peace process is at a critical stage, especially with regard to the settlement in east Jerusalem.

"I just hope that Israelis heed President Clinton's advice on that," Bush said.

Clinton has said that Israel's decision to build Jewish housing in the Arab sector of Jerusalem "builds mistrust."

The visits gave the Palestinian leader a taste of small-town America. In Plains, Georgia, he shared cookies and coffee with Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, picked up a key to the city and addressed about 250 people at Plains High School.

Arafat gave Carter a carved gill and Mrs. Carter a colorful jacket. Carter reciprocated with a copy of one of his books.

"When I was president all the leaders would come here. We're very honored to have you," Carter said after they emerged from their home.

Earlier, in New York, Arafat met with Jewish leaders and talked privately with the UN Security Council. Afterwards, the council debated Israel's decision to build the 6,500-unit Har Homa housing development.

European representatives circulated a draft resolution calling on Israel to avoid moves that threaten final talks on the status of the holy city, part of which the Palestinians want as a future capital.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu address reporters on Wednesday during a press conference in Cairo. The two leaders decided to reactivate a joint economic committee to boost relations between the two countries. — AFP/UNB photo

## ROK opposition sweeps by-polls

SEOUL, Mar 6: South Korean opposition parties won landslide victories in both of two parliamentary by-elections today, raising hopes that they might win the presidential election in December through an alliance, reports AFP.

In a district in the western port city of Incheon, Cho Han-chun of the main opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCP) won 42,503 votes or 57.3 per cent, election managers said.

Cho easily beat his closest rival Cho Han-jang of the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) who received 24,070 votes or 32.5 per cent.

Lee Tae-sup of the second opposition United Liberal Democrats (ULD) triumphed in a district in the central city of Suwon with 28,780 votes for 52.9 per cent, overwhelming NKP's Lee Chung-ho who got 16,018 votes or 29.5 per cent.

Commentators attributed the opposition's success to public resentment against the ruling camp caused by a massive loans-for-kickback scandal surrounding the Hanbo business group and a fiasco over labour law reforms.

Alliance of the two opposition parties also contributed to the surprise victory, the said.

**Joint research programme for breast cancer treatment**

COLLEGEVILLE, Pa, Mar 6: Rho-Poulsen Cancer Research Inc. and the Alberta Cancer Board Tuesday announced the creation of the International Taxotere Breast Study Group, a worldwide research collaboration headed by Dr. Jean-Marc Nabholz of the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, says a press release received in Dhaka.

Slated to begin in April 1997, the five-year programme will investigate Taxotere-based chemotherapy combinations. The studies are designed to measure survival and disease-free survival in women with early-stage breast cancer, and could lead to a new standard in breast cancer treatment.

# US, ROK cancel jt war games this yr to ease tensions

SEOUL, Mar 6: The United States and South Korea have cancelled joint war games this year to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula, Seoul announced today after diplomats from the rival Koreas met in New York, reports Reuters.

Pyeongyang had bitterly denounced "team spirit" military exercises as preparation for an invasion.

US and South Korean officials met North Korean representatives in New York on Wednesday for a briefing on proposed four-way peace talks for the Korean Peninsula. The talks would also include China.

The decision to channel team spirit is part of efforts by our two governments to build confidence and to create an atmosphere conducive to the reduction of tensions on the peninsula," the South Korean Defence Ministry said in a statement.

It added the decision would have no impact on the defence readiness of US and South Korean forces.

After the New York meeting, the United States said it was hopeful the isolationist North would join talks aimed at securing a lasting peace to replace a truce that ended the 1950-53 Korean war.

It was the first time diplomats from the two Koreas had sat together to discuss peace.

The head of the North Korean delegation said the approximately four hours of discussions took place "in a sincere atmosphere."

In Washington, US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters that "there were no breakthroughs but the United States is hopeful that today's talks will lead to North Korea joining the formal four-party talks."

The talks were proposed last April by President Bill Clinton and South Korean President Kim Young-sam.

AP adds: South Korea today described a joint briefing to North Korea held in New York on proposed peace talks as "meaningful" and "positive."

Today's briefing was very meaningful because the relevant parties got together to discuss the promotion of the talks for the first time since South Korea and the United States made the proposal on April 16, 1996," a foreign ministry statement said.

Although the North did not make it clear whether it will accept the four-party talks, we find it a positive development that the North listened carefully to the explanation... with a sincere attitude."

The briefing was held in New York on Wednesday.

Earlier AP says, American officials joined North and South Korean diplomats in "historic" discussions on proposed peace talks that would formally end hostilities on the divided Korean Peninsula.

It was the first time in 25 years that diplomats from the two Koreas met face-to-face to discuss holding peace talks.