

International

Russian PM talks with Annan over phone
Refugee crisis worsens as Macedonia says 'no'

BLACE, Macedonia, Apr 3: Macedonia announced today it could no longer accept more Kosovo refugees and called on its neighbours and the European Union to help shelter a massive wave of ethnic Albanians, reports AP.

Saying its fragile democracy and economy were at stake, the Macedonian Security Council said that its army would act to prevent the illegal entry of any more refugees.

"It was assessed that the security situation in the country could be seriously endangered because of the huge wave of refugees from Kosovo, which are more than 50,000," the council said after an all-night meeting.

But it stopped short of saying Macedonia would seal its borders with neighboring Yugoslavia to all travellers or turn back any asylum seekers.

With another 50,000 refugees waiting to enter, the statement said "this council concluded that the Republic of Macedonia cannot objectively accept such a huge number of refugees."

Gen. Trajce Krstevski, chief of the Macedonian general staff, announced a partial mobilisation of the 12,000-member armed forces for controlling the frontier.

Macedonia, a former Yugoslav republic, has large Serb and ethnic Albanian communities and fears the tensions which exploded into open conflict in Kosovo could sweep this country.

The council — made up of President Kiro Gligorov, Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski, and senior Cabinet members — decided to accept only those refugees for which the international community had organised entrance into another country.

The council also appealed

for the international community to provide urgent humanitarian assistance for the refugees already in Macedonia "with the aim of preventing the humanitarian catastrophe."

The announcement came as the UN High Commissioner for refugees said the number of refugees packed in a small field in this river valley in the no-man's land straddling the border with Yugoslavia reached 65,000 today.

As dawn broke, dozens of heavily armed police officers arrived at this border crossing, where refugees are packed into an area about the size of three football fields. Most came from the Kosovo provincial capital of Pristina on at least 12 trains over the past two days.

UNHCR spokeswoman Paula Ghedini denied reports that international aid agencies were not supplying enough food and blankets to keep people warm, but did say local authorities had been overwhelmed by the sheer number of arrivals.

"It is bigger than we had prepared for. Macedonians had been prepared for 2,000 or 3,000 per day, she said."

She said UNHCR, working with the Macedonia Red Cross, had supplied the camp with 40 metric tons (44 US tons) of food Friday and another 20 tons (22 US tons) Saturday. Over 20,000 loaves of fresh bread were handed out, as well as 47,000 blankets, she said.

Tens of thousands of people milled around or squatted in the rain early Saturday as temperature hovered about 10 degrees above freezing. More than a dozen sick babies were taken out of the camp, while a couple of Red Cross tents were packed with more than two dozen sick people.

Ghedini said local officials were moving to speed up a registra-

tion process that would allow the refugees to be relocated in just constructed accommodation camps or with local relatives.

Kosovo refugees have also been pouring into Albania, where they now number about 120,000.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov discussed the Kosovo crisis with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, once again voicing Moscow's opposition to NATO attacks, the government said today.

Annan had requested the talk with Primakov, which took place by phone late Friday night, a Primakov spokesman said.

The spokesman provided no other details about the conversation, but it was likely that Primakov and Annan also discussed the possibility of holding an emergency session of the UN General Assembly on Kosovo, which Russia has called for.

Primakov also met with top government officials today to discuss the Kosovo crisis. The government has agreed to send Yugoslavia 1,600 metric tons of humanitarian aid, which Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry has said will include medicine, food and clothing.

Meanwhile, a Russian reconnaissance ship, on its way to the Mediterranean to spy on NATO forces involved in raids against Yugoslavia, reached Turkey's Bosphorus today, the Interfax news agency said.

The Liman, an intelligence-gathering vessel of the Black Sea Fleet, left the fleet's base in southern Ukraine on Friday. Moscow has said it wants to get a better picture of what's going on in Yugoslavia, but has insisted it will not share any intelligence data with Belgrade.

BRIFING

Primakov meets Azeri president: Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov discussed improving economic ties among ex-Soviet republics during a meeting with Azerbaijan President Geidar Aliyev on Saturday, AP reports from Moscow.

Chopper crash kills 3 in Russia: A military helicopter crashed in southern Russia on Saturday, killing all three crew members, a news report said, AP says from Moscow.

900 Thai officials on blacklist: Nearly 900 people from the ranks of the civil service, military and police have been placed on a narcotics blacklist that will be turned over to investigators, a newspaper said Saturday, AP reports from Bangkok.

Five die from food poisoning: Five people died from food poisoning after a fish meal in the northern Vietnamese province of Thai Binh, a spokesman at the provincial hospital said yesterday, AFP reports from Hanoi.

Dengue fever claims 383 in Vietnam: Dengue fever killed 383 people in Vietnam last year, nearly 70 per cent more than the death toll from the disease a year earlier, a government official said Saturday, AP reports from Hanoi.

US lyricist Jesse Stone dead: Jesse Stone, a major influence on 20th century popular music who wrote "Shake, Rattle and Roll" and helped develop many of Atlantic Records' biggest hits, had died. He was 97, AP reports from Altamonte Springs.

Death toll rises to 20: Religious fighting escalates in Eastern Indonesia

JAKARTA, Apr 3: Christian mobs attacked Muslims in a mosque in an escalation of religious fighting in eastern Indonesia, local media reported Saturday. Three people were killed, reports agencies.

At least 20 people have died this week in and near Tual, a city in the troubled province of Maluku, which has been hit by chronic rioting since January. Until now, the centre of the violence has been in the provincial capital of Ambon, where at least 200 people have died.

The attack during Jumma prayers at noon Friday at a mosque in the district of Kei Besar, which neighbours Tual, forced hundreds of Muslims to seek refuge in the forest, Republik newspaper reported.

The military, which has struggled to contain frequent outbreaks of unrest in Indonesia over the past year, set hundreds of troops to the district in an attempt to restore order.

An overview of reports of clashes on Saturday as community leaders tried to persuade residents to lay down their weapons. But tension remained high in Tual, where groups of men armed with swords and spears roamed the streets.

The official Antara news agency said three people died, dozens of people were injured and at least 60 houses were ransacked in Kei Besar.

One man was also killed Friday in Larat district and clashes were reported in the small towns of Dobo, Keleser and Sonlaki.

Witnesses in the Kai Islands said at least 20 people had died since Christian-Muslim fighting broke out on Wednesday. That toll did not include any possible casualties from Friday's violence.

About 13,000 fearful people who fled their homes were sheltering in government and military installations in Tual, 2,800 km east of Jakarta, the Indonesian capital.

Most of Indonesia's 210 million people are Muslims, but Maluku province has a large Christian population.

Snowfall hampers relief work in quake-ravaged areas in India

NEW DELHI, Apr 3: Earthquake-devastated Himalayan villages in India's remote north remained cut off after an unexpected snowfall forced the air force to cancel flights to drop food and tents, officials said, reports AP.

An overcast sky in the rest of the region on Friday also impeded relief work by the air force and army, which were penetrating remote areas that had remained out of reach for the last five days.

"We are standing by," said Squadron Leader R K Dhingra, the main spokesman for the air force. "If the weather continues to be bad, rescue work will be affected."

Since Monday's 6.8-magnitude quake, the lower Himalaya stretch has been rocked by nearly 50 strong and mild tremors. At least 100 people have been killed by official count, but subsequent reports from outlying villages suggest more than 110 have died.

An aftershock measuring 4.8 hit the region early Friday, killing at least one person in Pipal Koti, not far from Chamoli, which bore the brunt of the earthquake, an Uttar Pradesh state government official said.

Angry villagers near Chamoli surrounded an army rescue team late Thursday and refused to let it leave, Brigadier AP Sawad, the senior officer responsible for the army operation, told The Associated Press. They calmed down after the commander promised government help was arriving, Sawad said.

"We are taking tents and food but most of all they want financial help, which the civilian administration is looking after," Sawad said in a telephone interview from an army base in Rudrapur town.

Seven large air force helicopters and four smaller army aircraft dropped food packets and tents across the mountains where thousands of houses have been destroyed or badly damaged.

But poor victims left homeless by the powerful temblor complained help wasn't coming fast enough.

Consultant arrested for spreading computer virus

TRENTON, (New Jersey) Apr 3: The virus spread like lightning, infecting scores of computers and overloading e-mail systems of companies and governments worldwide, reports AP.

The sleuths who tracked down the alleged culprit, David L. Smith, cornered their quarry almost as fast, relying on an age-old detective's tool: There are fingerprints in cyberspace.

'Islamabad ready to face any eventuality'
Pakistan will continue to raise Kashmir issue at all int'l fora

ISLAMABAD, Apr 3: Pakistan yesterday said it would continue to raise the Kashmir issue at all international fora until its final settlement as per Shimla Agreement since the matter remains a dispute between Islamabad and New Delhi, reports PTI.

It is within our right to take the Kashmir issue to all international fora and we will continue to do so, Foreign Ministry spokesman Tariq Altaf told reporters here, reacting to Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh's remarks in an interview to the Pakistani daily The News.

Ruling out the possibility of a third party mediation for resolving the Kashmir issue, Singh had told the paper India and Pakistan speak the same language and do not require intermediaries.

The Kashmir issue will remain a dispute until it is settled finally in accordance with the Shimla Agreement, he said.

adding the two countries were committed to resolve the matter as per the agreement.

On Singh's rejection of Pakistani demand for troops withdrawal from the valley, Altaf said, we hope this process of resolution of disputes, particularly the final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir will continue.

We are very much devoted to this (bilateral dialogue) process and the Kashmir issue is the heart of the matter," Altaf said, adding, "we are looking forward to further meetings at various levels so that more progress can be made."

He said no date has been fixed for the bilateral expert level talks, due this month as per the agreement reached between the foreign ministers of the two countries when they met in Sri Lanka last month during the SAARC conference.

Under the agreement, experts from both sides will discuss nuclear issues to be followed next month by foreign secretary level talks in New Delhi on peace and security besides the Kashmir issue.

The foreign secretaries will also review the progress made in the first round of integrated dialogue process covering eight outstanding issues.

Discussions on the remaining six issues at various levels will be held in Islamabad in June.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday said Pakistan wants relationship with its neighbours on the principles of peaceful co-existence in safe hands and its armed forces were fully geared and equipped to face any eventuality, Sharif said.

Pakistan is a peace-loving nation and wants relationship with its neighbours on the principles of peaceful co-existence. The country's defence is in safe hands and its armed forces were fully geared and equipped to face any eventuality, Sharif said.

Pakistan is a peace-loving nation and wants relationship with its neighbours on the principles of peaceful co-existence. The country's defence is in safe hands and its armed forces were fully geared and equipped to face any eventuality, Sharif said.

betan cause for independence and of Myanmar pro-democracy activists. Two years ago he organised a conference of LTTE supporters at his Delhi home.

Plot to kill Mamata? CALCUTTA, Apr 3: Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee yesterday claimed that she has received an intelligence warning against "plots to kill her by foreign mercenaries on or before April 15," reports PTI.

Banerjee told newsmen quoting from a "warning letter" received from a "person known to her in the intelligence agency that at least 23 foreign mercenaries of Taliban in disguise as Muslim women have already surveyed her residential area in minute details."

Refusing to identify the agency, Mamata further claimed, "Five human bombs are being scattered around Kalighat and Chetla with a view to assassinating you (Mamata Banerjee) and others on or before April 15."

He was hired to troubleshoot the facility's personal computers. AT and T spokesman Burke Stinson told The Star-Ledger of Newark.

After spending the night in jail, Smith, who was released on \$100,000 bail, called a supervisor at AT and T on Friday morning to say he wouldn't make it to work.

"He phoned his boss today to say he wouldn't be in, but added that he'd see him next week," Stinson said. "My reaction is, 'Fat chance.' My guess is we won't be seeing much of him in the future."

Apparently frightened when the FBI posted a warning about Melissa last week, investigators said Smith threw his computer equipment into one of the trash bins at his central New Jersey apartment complex.

"After he put the virus onto

Arms sale to Syria
US sanctions on 3 Russian firms

WASHINGTON, Apr 3: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has decided to impose sanctions on three Russian firms involved in the sale of anti-tank guided missiles to Syria, the State Department said Friday, reports AP.

The sanctions involve a ban on purchases from and exports to the three firms and also suspends US assistance to them. The amount of the assistance was not disclosed.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Albright could have cut up to 90 million dollars in assistance to the Russian government but decided not to do so because she believed it would not serve US national interests.

The law applicable to such cases is invoked when sales of lethal equipment are made to countries on the State Department's terrorism list. Syria is one of seven countries on the list.

The three firms are the Tula Design Bureau, the Volsk Mechanical Plant and the Tsnitochmash plant.

The measures will remain in place until one year after the transfers have ceased or until the secretary determines that it is important to US interests to waive them, Rubin said.

Fighting leaves 11 dead in Lanka

COLOMBO, Apr 3: At least 11 people have been killed in fresh fighting between Tamil Tiger guerrillas and Sri Lankan troops, the Defence Ministry said today, reports AP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam exploded claymore mines next to a police patrol in the north-western region of Mannar on Friday and killed four constables, the ministry said.

It said troops killed seven rebels in four separate incidents in the north of the country the same day.

The latest fighting came a day after 21 people were killed in fighting across the island's north and east.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a drawn out campaign for an independent homeland.

vision broadcasting facility, a beaming ISRO chief Dr K Kasturirangan said shortly after the launch.

The satellite is at present going around the Earth in an elliptical orbit with a perigee of 250 km and an apogee of 35,936 km. The satellite will be put through a battery of tests before it is placed at its final orbit, 36,000 km above the equator.

It was a text-book launch and marks one more step in the space partnership between India and Europe, chairman of the Ariane Space Agency, Jean Marie Lutton, said afterwards.

Insat-2E, built at a cost of Rs 220 crore, has 17-C-band transponders which can be used in telecommunications, television broadcasting and meteorological services.

These will provide 12,000 two-way voice links or broadcast 100 digitally compressed TV channels or suitable mix of both. The satellite can be up-linked from India, China, West Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Europe, Australia and southern parts of Russia.

The fact that 11 of the 17 transponders have been taken on lease even before launch of the satellite justified the confidence we had, said Dr Kasturirangan.

The Insat-2E also carries for the first time an improved version of a very high resolution radiometer which will be used in imaging cloud coverage including cyclone formation and estimating and predicting rainfall.

The charged coupled device camera, featuring for the first time in Insat series, would provide pictures of earth with ground resolution of 1 km by 1 km. This will assist in cyclone analysis, storm monitoring, rain and snow forecast.

The satellite, which has a life span of 12 years, was critical for ISRO as its earlier Insat-2D had to be abandoned two months after launch in 1997 due to technical snags.

ISRO has also announced that it will be building five more telecom satellites to vastly enhance the nation's capacity to handle telephone and data traffic.

The first satellite in the next series on Insat-3B, will be launched by Arianespace at Kourou in French Guiana in the third or fourth quarter of this year, according to ISRO Chairman.



Ethnic Albanian refugees arrive in Macedonia on foot on Friday after being forced at the Kosovo village of Djeneral Jankovic, a couple of kilometers from the border, to leave a train coming from Pristina in Kosovo. — AFP photo



Photos of US Army Sergeant Andy Ramirez adorn the fence in front of his home in East Los Angeles Friday. Ramirez and two other US servicemen were captured by Serb forces while on patrol in Macedonia near the Yugoslav border, according to the US Defence Department. Yugoslav officials said the three were captured on their territory. — AFP photo

India launches telecom sat

KOUROU (French Guiana), Apr 3: India's Insat-2E multipurpose telecommunications satellite was successfully launched this morning from the Kourou Space Station in French Guiana marking a new milestone for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), reports PTI.

A European Ariane 42 P Rocket Carrying the 2250 kg satellite, the last of the Insat-2 series, blasted off majestically from the launch pad of the centre Spatial Guyanais here at 3:33 am (IST) with a roar and a golden glow that lit up the entire area.

The rocket, with two solid-propellant strap-on boosters, put the satellite into its geostationary transfer orbit 22 minutes after the launch. Six minutes later, the master control facility at Hassan, 180 km from Bangalore, took control of the satellite.

Initial tests of the satellite, a wholly indigenous effort, have been termed satisfactory.

"Everything went as per the plan. We have received first signals from the satellite at our Hassan centre. Insat-2E will significantly augment India's telecommunications and tele-

vision broadcasting facility, a beaming ISRO chief Dr K Kasturirangan said shortly after the launch.

The satellite is at present going around the Earth in an elliptical orbit with a perigee of 250 km and an apogee of 35,936 km. The satellite will be put through a battery of tests before it is placed at its final orbit, 36,000 km above the equator.

It was a text-book launch and marks one more step in the space partnership between India and Europe, chairman of the Ariane Space Agency, Jean Marie Lutton, said afterwards.

Insat-2E, built at a cost of Rs 220 crore, has 17-C-band transponders which can be used in telecommunications, television broadcasting and meteorological services.

These will provide 12,000 two-way voice links or broadcast 100 digitally compressed TV channels or suitable mix of both. The satellite can be up-linked from India, China, West Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Europe, Australia and southern parts of Russia.

The fact that 11 of the 17 transponders have been taken on lease even before launch of the satellite justified the confi-

Off the Record

Man lands in eternity rather than in record

NEW YORK: A man trying to set a world record by climbing five bridges in four hours slipped off a cable on the Brooklyn Bridge on Friday and fell 500 feet (150 meters) to his death, landing on a Brooklyn street. A 14-year-old boy filming the stunt captured the fall, police said, reports AP.

Robert Landetta, 27, of Brooklyn, was pronounced dead at the scene — he landed in front of 11 Front Street, said Officer Johna Giammarino, a police spokesman.

Landetta allegedly told a photographer taking pictures on the bridge that he wanted to set a record, police said.

"I'm doing this for the Guinness Book of World Records," he said to the photographer, according to police.

The Brooklyn Bridge was the first bridge Landetta was slated to climb, police said. It was not known what other bridges Landetta had scheduled to climb.

Police have the videotape of the fall, taken by a 14-year-old friend, Giammarino said.

Longest paper clip chain

SINGAPORE: Sixty Singaporean volunteers worked for 24 hours to complete on Saturday the world's longest paper clip chain at 31,572 km, organisers reported, says AP.

The chain, bunched up and formed into a rectangle on a platform in a shopping centre, beats the previous record of 27,189 km, set by students from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

Organisers said the effort was monitored by a representative from the Guinness Book of World Records.

Second clone cow in S Korea

SEOUL: South Korean scientists have succeeded in cloning a cow and hope to use the technology to mass produce the animal, the Science and Technology Ministry said today, reports Reuter.

"Jean-ie", a calf cloned from genes taken from a 980-kg (2,205-lb) adult cow, was born last Saturday, the ministry said in a statement.

"In the near future, we hope to distribute such cloned embryos to local farms to produce more of the large cows for their meat," said Kim Ho-seung, Assistant Director of the ministry's Research and Development Division.

The calf was named after a famous local poet, Hwang Jeon-je, by President Kim Dae-jung as both were deemed "ahead of their time," the statement said.

"In contrast with current in vitro fertilisation methods, cloning reduces the chances that the newborn's genes will deviate from the original cow's genetic characteristics," Kim said.

The government-sponsored experiment, conducted by a Seoul National University research team and led by Professor Hwang Woo-sook, was the country's second successful cow-cloning project.

In February, the team succeeded in giving birth to a calf called "Young-long," cloned for milking purposes, Professor Hwang said.

Hwang said the team used the same nuclear-transfer method as that used by Scotland's Roslin Institute to create Dolly the Sheep, the world's first cloned animal.

The technique involves fusing genetic material from a normal cell with an unfertilised embryo.