

Saddam accuses UN experts of waging "germ warfare"

BAGHDAD, July 9: President Saddam Hussein on Friday accused UN experts of waging "germ warfare" against Iraq, following the expulsion of a New Zealander accused of sabotaging its crops, reports AFP.

"This disgusting behaviour on the part of certain UN employees amounts to germ warfare against Iraq," he said, quoted in official newspapers.

"UN employees possess and are using weapons of mass destruction, even to the point of waging a bacteriological war on Iraq, while at the same time accusing others of violating international law," he charged.

"The biggest insult in the history of the international community is the UN's recruitment of employees who stoop so low," said Saddam.

The accusation came a day after a New Zealand mine-clearing expert employed by the United Nations, Ian Broughton, left the country ahead of a Friday deadline for his expulsion.

Iraq accused Broughton of burying locust eggs in an area near the Iranian border on April 8 in a bid to ruin the country's already drought-hit harvest. The United Nations denied the charge.

"These are not individual acts but planned by the security services of certain states... which are enemies of Iraq," he said, referring to the United States and Britain.

He said "most but not all" UN employees had either indulged in smuggling out archaeological treasures from Iraq or in acts of espionage.

Broughton's expulsion was the first such incident between Iraq and the United Nations since UN arms inspectors were evacuated on the eve of US and British air strikes last December.

Iraq regards the inspectors as spies and has vowed never to allow their return. UN chief Kofi Annan acknowledged last month that the spying charges were partly justified.

On Friday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed al-Sahhaf renewed Baghdad's rejection of what he called "suspect projects" at the UN Security Council to resume the disarmament of Iraq and ease sanctions.

"Iraq categorically rejects all suspect projects submitted to the Security Council given that they were drawn up without consultation with Baghdad," he said, quoted by the official news agency INA.

He said Baghdad insisted on a lifting of sanctions and compensation for US and British air strikes as well as the scrapping of no-fly zones enforced by Washington and London over southern and northern Iraq.

Iraq rejects a US-backed British draft for an easing of UN sanctions, saying it adds new conditions. The sanctions, linked to Baghdad's disarmament, have been in place since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

France and Russia have submitted rival proposals more favourable to Iraq.

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Awami Jubo League has built an unauthorised building for its office in city's Kawran Bazar area.

— Star photo

Protests over press curbs spark violent clashes in Tehran

TEHRAN, July 9: Violent clashes erupted early Friday between Iranian security forces and students protesting new curbs on the country's press, leaving several people injured according to the official IRNA news agency, reports AFP.

"A number of students and law enforcement officials were injured in the scuffles and taken to a nearby hospital," an interior ministry spokesman said, quoted by IRNA.

Students began demonstrating at Tehran University's Amirabad campus in a residential area in the north of the capital Thursday and that violence erupted on Friday morning when police attempted to intervene," IRNA said.

"The law and order forces entered the scene of the en-

counter without informing the interior ministry of the incident and arrested a number of students," the spokesman said.

The student rally was in protest at a series of crackdowns on the press waged by the powerful conservative wing of the regime, including new press legislation and the banning of a leading reformist newspaper.

Salam newspaper, which backs moderate Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, was shut down Wednesday by a special clerical court following an intelligence ministry complaint that it had published parts of a "top secret" document.

The ministry withdrew the complaint late Thursday, saying it wanted "to prevent provocative developments" and "unnecessary tension in the po-

litical atmosphere."

IRNA reported that the ban was lifted but Salam newspaper employees told AFP they did not know whether the paper would be published on Saturday.

Meanwhile a leading Iranian cleric gave his backing to the proposed new press legislation, which was approved in principle by parliament on Wednesday but faces detailed debate by the assembly before becoming law.

"Freedom of speech and writing exist, but not freedom of conspiracy. Freedom does not mean that one can strike against our values," Ayatollah Ahmad Janati said at Friday prayers at Tehran University's main campus.

Abducted girl rescued in Sylhet

SYLHET, July 9: Police rescued a Bangladeshi born British girl on Monday 13 days after her abduction and arrested a man in this connection, reports UNB.

According to a delayed report, one Kalamdar Ali aided by his accomplices picked up Surma Begum at gunpoint on June 21 while she was coming to the town from her Pachhal village along with her parents.

Police said Abdus Salam, an expatriate Bangladeshi living in London, had come to visit his ancestral home along with his family members including his daughter.

Kalamdar was arrested from Barajumma village in Balaganj thana.

Police recorded the statement of Surma Begum and sent her to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital for medical checkup.

Embezzlement 9 cases filed against JP MP

KURIGRAM, July 9: Five years after the disclosure of wheat embezzlement, the Bureau of Anti-Corruption has filed 9 cases against Jatiya Party leader Alhaj Golam Hossain MP and some other concerned officials, reports UNB.

In 1994, Relief Ministry detected that over 568 metric tons of wheat worth about Tk 2.8 lakh allocated for nine projects under Food for Work programme in Rowmari thana were misappropriated in 1986.

The then Upazilla Chairman Alhaj Golam Hossain allegedly speculated the wheat in collaboration with the then PIO of the project Mizanur Rahman and surveyor Amjad Hossain. Amjad Hossain is now the elected chairman of Berubari union Parishad in Nageshawari thana.

Soon after the detection the Ministry directed the TNO to take action against the accused. The TNO was learnt to have taken personal initiatives to recover the money, but he lost the battle.

He then asked the district Anti-Corruption office in 1997 to file case against the MP and other officials found involved in the incident of misappropriation.

After getting clearance from its head office in Dhaka, local Anti-Corruption office filed nine cases against the accused on June 28.

Zillur condoles FM's brother's death

Bangladesh Awami League General Secretary and Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman yesterday expressed deep sorrow at the death of Foreign Minister, Abdus Samad Azad's elder brother, Md Abdul Zabbar, 78, reports BSS.

Zabbar was a freedom fighter, social worker and founder of a number of local charities.

In a condolence message, Zillur Rahman conveyed his sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

One killed, one hurt in road mishap

MADARIPUR, July 9: A youngman was killed and another man injured as their motorcycle was dashed by a bus near Kalabari bridge in Sadar thana on Dhaka-Madaripur highway today (Friday), reports UNB.

Police said the Dhaka-bound bus of Subarna Paribahan hit the motorcycle from back at about noon killing motorbike rider Kawsar (18) on the spot and injuring Dadon Talukder.

Kawsar passed the SSC examination from Ghatakar High School this year.

Dadon was first rushed to Madaripur General Hospital and later shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

A case was filed with the police in this connection.

PM: Kashmir dispute

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The Prime Minister said because of mutual trust, accommodation and amity among the member nations, SAARC emerged as an engine of development for South Asia.

In addition to continued cooperation in agreed areas, SAARC now moved onto the core areas of economic cooperation.

Had there been unrest in the sub-continent, the achievements made by SAARC would not have been made at all, she said, hoping that the journey to peace and human development would be the main norms in the coming millennium which is just round the corner.

"No doubt, we have already covered much ground but still we have a long way to go to emancipate the teeming millions of the region from the curses of poverty, hunger, ill-health, malnutrition and illiteracy."

Observing that no nation in the present-day world can live in isolation, she said: "It has been universally accepted that peace is a pre-condition for progress and prosperity that, in turn, depend on the cooperation among the nations."

She said living in isolation might bring untold miseries for the people for the simple reason that they will be deprived of the regional as well as global expertise and resources for the uplift of their standard of living.

Expressing her firm belief that peace can't be attained without democracy, the Prime Minister cited the CHT peace accord as a dividend of democratic polity. "Restoration of peace in my country establishes the fact that there is close linkage between peace and democracy," she told the function.

Referring to the brutal killing of Bangabandhu and thus Bangladesh plunging into the long spell of military rule and dictatorship, she said the nation had to traverse a long thorny path thereafter for the establishment of democracy.

"We have been able to reestablish the voting right of the people after long struggle. We strongly believe that orderly change in the government must be brought about through ballot, not bullet."

She said: "We incorporated in the constitution the concept of neutral, non-partisan caretaker government in 1996 for ensuring free and fair elections."

Turning to the regional issues, the Bangladesh Prime Minister said there was no denying the fact that sometimes political tensions mount in the region despite cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields.

She expressed her wish to establish a society based on the rule of law in South Asia through mutual cooperation and understanding among the seven nations.

"I can state the objectives of SAARC in one sentence and that is to promote the welfare of more than 1.2 billion people of South Asia and improve their quality of life."

This calls for concerted efforts and active cooperation by all the seven member-countries of SAARC.

Describing the achievements of SAARC, the Prime Minister said that they were now working to develop a long-range vision and formulate a perspective plan of action including a SAARC agenda for 2000.

She mentioned that under the SAARC umbrella, some concrete steps had already been taken to implement the poverty alleviation programme. "Bangladesh took the lead for the alleviation of poverty through the mechanism of Micro-Credit and achieved remarkable success."

Focusing on her government's foreign policy, Prime Minister Hasina said: "Friendship with all and malice to none is the cardinal principle of my

foreign policy."

Saying that economic diplomacy is the cornerstone of Bangladesh's foreign policy, Hasina asserted I would like to state that Bangladesh is not only a country of problems but also a country of prospects."

Replying to a question on the steps of the government for the spread of education, she said the government attached top priority to education and made the highest allocation for the sector.

About women empowerment, Hasina said in a local body election, the Union Parishad, some 14000 women were elected through voting, which is a "very important step for the women empowerment at the grassroots level."

Hasina said there are 30 reserved seats for women in Parliament and women are also directly elected to the legislature, but the provision of reserved seat for the women would come to an end at the next election.

"We'll request the opposition to vote in favour of this system so that the system can be continued," she told the function.

Referring to the restoration of democracy, the Prime Minister said her government had established democracy in the country and was striving for its smooth functioning.

In Rangamati 330 learning centres to be set up

RANGAMATI, July 9: Six NGOs in collaboration with the Directorate of Non-formal Education will set up 330 learning centres for elderly people during the 1999-2000 fiscal, reports UNB.

Officials said one teacher with monthly salary of Tk 500 will be appointed for each centre.

They said educational activities would be conducted in the centres for the first nine months of every year while literacy programmes in the remaining months under a 10-year long programme.

"Meanwhile, 210 centres have started operation in the district."

Rajshahi police hold milad for constable Farhad

RAJSHAHI, July 9: Rajshahi district police and Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) jointly organised a special *doa* and *milad mahfil* at the local Police Lines after *Jumma* prayers today for the peace of the soul of police constable Farhad Khan who was killed in a bomb attack in Dhaka on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Munajat was offered for early recovery of those who were injured in the incident.

Riot police and other police units of Rajshahi also held *doa* and *milad mahfil* for the peace of the departed soul.

They also expressed sympathy for the members of the bereaved family.

Syed Sirajul Islam, DIG, Rajshahi Range, Khondokar Shahab Ali, RMP Commissioner, DIG of Railway Police, Police Super, Rajshahi, and other high police officials were present at the *doa* and *milad mahfil*.

Panchbibi poura budget announced

JOYPURHAT, July 9: Panchbibi Pourashava has announced a Tk 2.07 crore budget for the fiscal 1999-2000, reports UNB.

Pourashava Chairman Adv Samsul Alam Dudu announced the budget on Wednesday without imposing any new taxes.

Earlier on June 29, a Tk 5.50 crore budget was announced for Joypurhat Pourashava for the new fiscal.

Belfast Protestant parade banned in city centre

BELFAST, July 8: Belfast's biggest Protestant parade was Thursday banned from rallying in a city centre park, amid fears it might have become the focus for violence, reports AFP.

Orange Order leaders had been planning to steer their main July 12 parade in Belfast, which 20,000 Orangemen were expected to attend, to Edenderry, on the outskirts of Northern Ireland's capital.

Earlier this week, an independent parades commission banned a local Orange lodge from using its traditional route down Lower Ormeau Road.

The road, one of the key arterial roads in and out of the city, is mainly Roman Catholic, and the commission feared the parade might raise tensions.

Furious Orange leaders then decided to re-route the main parade to nearby Ormeau Park as a gesture of solidarity - but that has now been banned too.

The second ban, sparked predictable anger among Orangemen, who insist they have a right to march down any public road.

Parades commission chairman Alistair Graham said it was barring the Orange Order

from deviating from the route of its main parade to Edenderry.

He said the prospect of 20,000 Orangemen converging into "one of the more contentious interfaces in this city" was certain to bring "major problems of disruption, tension and damage to fragile community relations."

Protestants see the hundreds of colourful Orange Order marches across the province every year, with their flutes and drums and pipe bands; as an honest expression of their history and culture.

The climax of the marching season is July 12, the anniversary of a victory by Protestant King William II in 1690.

Catholics however view the parades as outdated and above all designed as a provocative display of Protestant hegemony.

The parades commission was set up in order to reduce tensions by liaising between the communities and, if necessary, adjudicate on whether some of the more contentious marches, notably those which pass



Picture dated January 8, 1998 of European Commissioner for Transport Neil Kinnock (left), with Austrian Franz Fischler, Commissioner for Agriculture, talking at the start of the meeting of the European Union Commission in Lancaster House in London. Incoming European Commission President Romano Prodi named Friday a new 19-member team of commissioners, appointing Kinnock as one of his deputies and Fischler in charge of agriculture.

— AFP photo

First govt-rebel meeting in East Timor

DILI, East Timor, July 9: A regional Indonesian police commander in East Timor met a pro-independence rebel leader in his hideout this week in the first meeting of its kind, an Indonesian official said Friday, reports AFP.

The official, Indonesian task force head Dito Djalal, told reporters the meeting took place in a remote village in Manatuto.

"This was the first meeting ever between a Falintil commander on the ground and the government," Djalal told reporters.

He said the meeting led to a local ceasefire agreement but resistance sources told AFP the rebels had told the police commander they were merely obeying by an existing ceasefire pact.

"There will probably be more of these meetings as it is a part of a process," said the rebel source, who is close to Xanana Gusmao, the jailed leader of the Resistance Council of East Timor.

Falintil is the armed wing of the council.

Three unarmed civilian police from the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) were at the meeting on Wednesday as were two members of the neutral Peace and Stability Commission, Djalal added.

The regent of Manatuto and a group of unarmed Indonesian soldiers were also in the group on the government side, he said.

Djalal said the government party was greeted by about 150

to 200 men, many of them armed with AK-47s, M-16s and G-3 rifles.

He said the group won an agreement from Falintil not to attack Indonesian security forces. "In other words a ceasefire. It was a good meeting, very friendly."

UNAMET spokesman David Winhurst told AFP that at the meeting "The hope was expressed that more dialogues of this nature be conducted in the future."

Djalal said the meeting was arranged after a group of rebels approached a military post that morning.

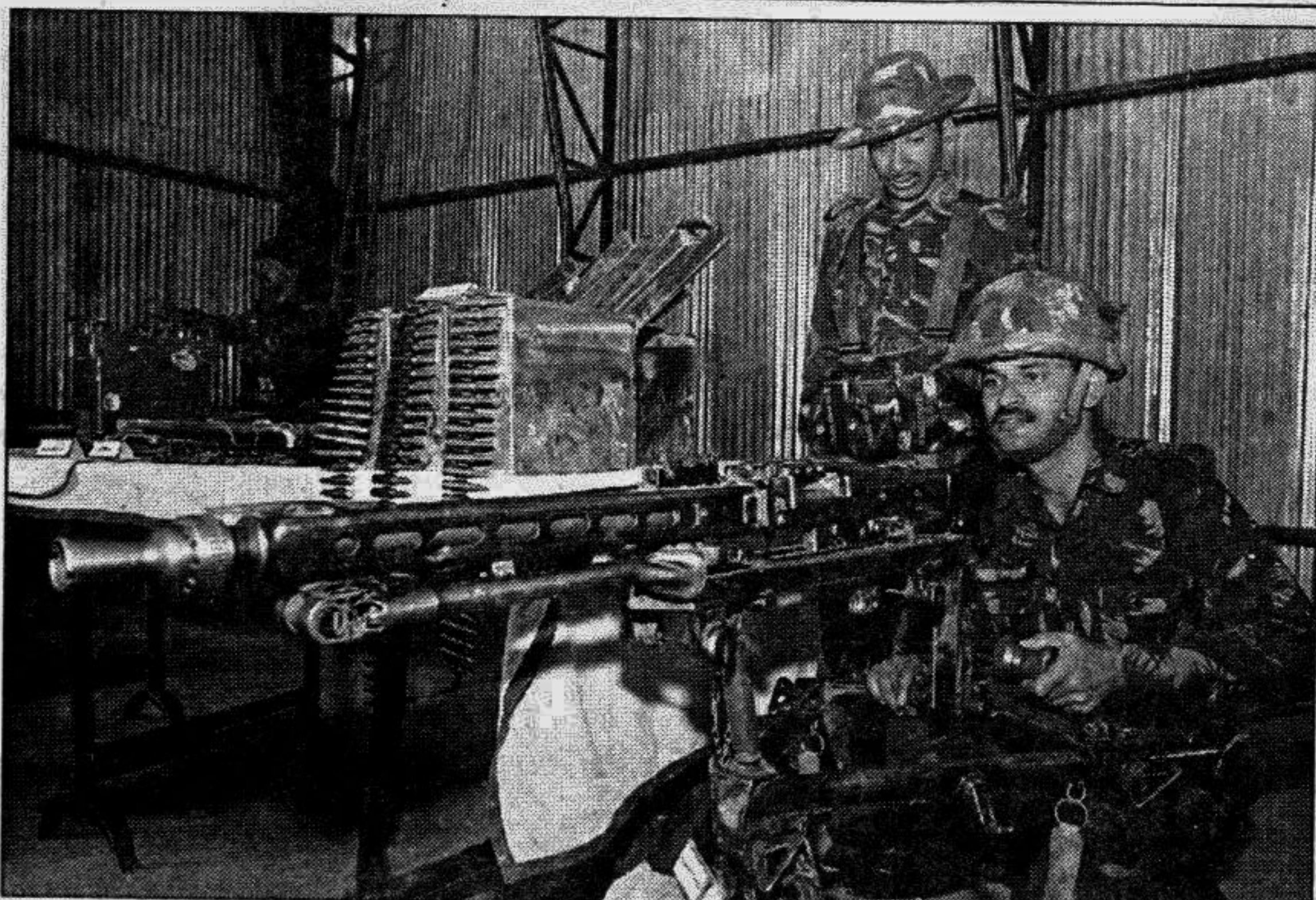
Responding to a statement by Djalal that the government side was disappointed that Falintil had not surrendered their weapons, the resistance source said it was premature to talk of laying down arms.

The source said the Peace and Stability Commission was expected to meet soon to work out a framework for disarmament.

The opposing sides in East Timor, the Falintil and the Indonesian military-backed militias, have agreed in principle to lay down their arms before a UN-conducted vote on autonomy.

Indonesia has said it will consider offering the territory independence if its people reject autonomy.

Voter registration is scheduled to start next week but UNAMET chief Ian Martin said on Wednesday that security conditions would have to improve before registration could begin.



Indian soldiers check arms and ammunitions recovered from their war against Islamic militants in Kargil on Thursday. Indian troops have been shocked at the intruders' superior weaponry and relatively luxurious rations as they fight a debilitating high-altitude war in the disputed Kashmir region.

— AFP photo