

# Chechen president declares partisan war

## Moscow prepares to send 50,000 troops

MOSCOW, Feb 11: Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov declared today the start of a partisan war throughout the breakaway republic, as Moscow intensified its efforts to destroy the last rebel strongholds in the mountains, reports AFP.

The rebels plan to wage war in the southern mountains, on the northern plains and in every village in the republic, Russia's private NTV television station quoted Maskhadov as saying.

He denied Moscow's claims that the Russian military assault on Chechnya was a battle against banditry, or terrorism, saying it was a war against the Chechen people.

During the first 1994-96 Chechen conflict, the rebels launched a war of ambushes and skirmishes against the "occupying" Russian forces, enabling them to retake several localities and eventually push Moscow forces out.

On Monday, Maskhadov said his troops aimed to retake the Chechen capital, Grozny, which has been under Russian control for nearly a week.

The separatist rebels fled Grozny on February 1, taking up positions to the south of the republic, which the Russian forces have been bombing heavily as a precursor to a ground offensive.

Russian raids in the last 24 hours in the mountains, destroying a number of rebel bases and military installations, Russian military officials told the Interfax news agency on Friday.

In Ium Kale, a village in the Argun gorge that was captured by Russian paratroopers on Thursday, federal troops on Friday were under orders to search for and destroy remaining rebels, the Russian North Caucasus headquarters told ITAR-TASS.

The troops were also clearing landmines from administrative buildings and homes in the village, ITAR-TASS said.

Moscow prepared to send 50,000 federal troops into the mountains to crush the last pockets of rebel resistance in what Moscow hopes is the last phase in the nearly six-month offensive.

The Chechen fighters had suffered severe losses in the bombing campaign, Sergei Yastrebnsky, Moscow's spokesman on Chechnya, said on Thursday.

The Russians dropped 1.5-tonne bombs for the first time since they started their air campaign against the breakaway republic on September 5. Previously they had used lighter bombs of up to 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds).

A spokesman for International Committee of the Red Cross based in Moscow told AFP that use of the heavy bombs had been outlawed by the Geneva Convention.

But Russian military officials have insisted international conventions allow the bombs use.

Meanwhile, a key US lawmaker said on Thursday that President Bill Clinton's administration should introduce a UN Security Council resolution condemning Russia's "extremely vicious tactics" in Chechnya.

India's troubled Kashmir Valley was crippled today by a strike called to mark the 16th anniversary of the execution of a top Muslim separatist leader in an Indian prison, reports AFP.

Shops, banks, post offices and government institutions were closed in the Kashmir summer capital Srinagar and civilian traffic stayed off the roads in response to the strike called by the Freedom Conference — an umbrella grouping of Muslim separatist parties.

The strike commemorates the memory of Maqbool Bhat, the founder of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) — the only militant group demanding Kashmir's independence from India and Pakistan.

Other rebel groups in Kashmir want a merger with Muslim-majority Pakistan.

Bhat was hanged for murder in New Delhi's high-security Tihar jail in 1984. His family maintains that Bhat was falsely charged.

A JKLF press release today vowed to "take the mission of the late leader to the logical conclusion, come what may."

More than 25,000 people have been killed in violence linked to the Muslim insurgency launched in Kashmir in 1989.

India accuses Pakistan, which administers the northern tip of the divided province, of fomenting militancy in Kashmir. Islamabad denies the charge but extends moral and diplomatic support to the unrest.

India's appeal for talks with northeast separatists

GUWAHATI, India, Feb 11: The Indian government launched a fresh appeal today for unconditional peace talks with the myriads of separatist groups fighting in the country's northeast, reports AFP.

"We know that denouncing troops alone cannot counter insurgency and that to solve the militancy problem political negotiations are a must," said PD Shenoy, the additional secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, with special responsibility for the northeast.

The doors for negotiations with any militant group in the north eastern states are open without any pre-conditions, Shenoy said.

More than 50,000 people have been killed in violence linked to the various separatist insurgencies raging in India's seven northeastern states since independence in 1947.

Shenoy said the government was contemplating "withdrawing all security operations" against some of the militant outfits currently operating in Assam state.

"We are considering withdrawing counter-insurgency operations against the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and preparing grounds for holding peace talks with them," he told reporters in the Assamese capital, Guwahati.

The BLT, which wants an independent tribal homeland, has been responsible for numerous acts of sabotage in Assam, including a 1997 train blast that killed 35 people.

Shenoy said the government was also committed to the economic development of the northeast region "so that young people are given a constructive alternative to going to the jungles and picking up the gun."

The central government recently announced a two billion dollar economic package for the region.

10,000 evacuated in Tokyo for WWII bomb

TOKYO, Feb 11: Police evacuated about 10,000 people in northern Tokyo on Friday as the defence forces defused an unexploded one-tonne World War II bomb, a report said, reports AFP.

Members of 4,800 households near the site in Tokyo's Itabashi district were evacuated, roads were closed and subway services were suspended while the bomb was defused in a 30-minute operation, said Kyodo News agency.

It was discovered January 20 at a shopping centre construction site in an area that was targeted by US air raids between 1944 and 1945 because it was home to an Imperial Japanese Army arsenal.

During the brain growth spurt, called synaptogenesis, brain cells receive a balanced signal from two types of neurotransmitter chemicals, glutamate and GABA, he said. If this signal is disrupted, the developing brain cells are programmed to commit suicide. This is the body's way of eliminating surplus cells.

But, based on the rat studies, alcohol severely disrupts the glutamate-GABA signals and this, in turn, causes nerve cell suicide at about 15 times the normal rate, he said.

US President Bill Clinton (C), Senate Minority Leader Sen. Tom Daschle (L), and House Minority Leader Rep. Richard Gephardt (R), listen to speakers on Thursday during a meeting of the Senate and House Democratic Caucuses at the Library of Congress in Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The Democrats unveiled their "Families First: The 2000 Democratic Agenda."

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# Britain empowered to suspend N Ireland govt

LONDON, Feb 11: Britain last Thursday adopted emergency legislation giving it the power to suspend Northern Ireland's power sharing administration as last ditch efforts to find a deal on IRA disarmament stalled, reports AFP.

The law, which gave royal assent on Thursday, is a formality marking the law's definitive adoption after it was passed by the lower House of Commons earlier this week.

British Northern Ireland minister Peter Mandelson introduced the measure to parliament last week after Protestant Ulster Unionists threatened to bring down the government without a verifiable start to IRA disarmament.

Political leaders in both Britain and Ireland scrambled against the clock to find a last-ditch deal and avert the suspension of the two-month-old Belfast executive, now expected to happen Friday.

Talks appeared to be focusing on a reported "mutual demilitarisation" deal proposed by Dublin, but time ran out for an agreement.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair held more telephone talks with his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern in the afternoon as part of the frantic diplomacy.

Blair's official spokesman said they were still hoping for progress, while "clearly acknowledging that there is very little time left before we have to suspend the institutions."

"The sense is there would have to be something fairly dramatic to prevent that from happening," he added.

The emergency law was introduced after the IRA failed to start disarmament, bringing a threat from Protestant Unionists to bring down the fledgling administration.

Unionists met Saturday in Belfast to decide whether to fulfil the threat, but London would rather suspend the executive than see the whole edifice come crumbling down.

The IRA's political wing Sinn Féin, however, has warned that a suspension would be disastrous and make the prospect of disarmament even more remote.

Unionist leader David Trimble travelled to Dublin for talks with Ahern.

Afterwards, both leaders gave no sign of a breakthrough, but insisted that talks were still ongoing.

"People would be wrong to regard this as a terminal crisis in the (April 1998) Good Friday agreement," Trimble said. "It is not."

Ahern was reluctant to see suspension, but admitted in the Irish parliament earlier that it could be "a very real possibility."

"If we can find resolutions now, great. If not, we'll just have to keep at it and we'll keep on working together," he said after meeting Trimble.

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# Pakistan has Chinese M-11 missiles: CIA

WASHINGTON, Feb 11: American Intelligence Agency CIA has reconfirmed Pakistan possesses M-11 Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs) from China, in addition to Ghauri Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) from North Korea, reports PTI.

Pakistan has M-11 SRBMs from China and Ghauri MRBMs from North Korea, Pakistan has flight-tested 1,300 km range Ghauri, Robert D Walpole, National Intelligence Officer for Strategic and Nuclear Programmes, said presenting CIA's annual report on the Ballistic Missile threat to Congress before the senate subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services.

Under American law, export of M-11s to Pakistan by China attracts automatic US sanctions against Beijing.

India has flight-tested 2,000 km range Agni II MRBM. Walpole said in his report, adding that countries developing missiles view their regional concerns as one of the primary factors in tailoring their programmes — to provide deterrents and force-multipliers.

China, he said, conducted the first flight-test of the mobile DF-31 ICBM last August.

We judge it will have a range of about 8,000 km and will be targeted primarily against Russia. Chinese strategic nuclear doctrine calls for a survivable long-range missile force that can hold a significant portion of the US population at risk in a retaliatory strike, he said.

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# Kashmir train blast toll rises to five

## India blames Pakistan

SAMWAL, India, Feb 11: The death toll from a train blast in Indian Kashmir rose to five Friday as Railways Minister Mamata Banerjee blamed neighbouring Pakistan for staging the attack, reports AFP.

Banerjee, who visited the site of the explosion at Samwal village, south of the Kashmir winter capital Jammu, told AFP two more people had died overnight.

"This is not a train accident, this is a bomb blast staged by the Pakistanis," Banerjee said, adding that Pakistani saboteurs had often targeted the same section of railway track which is four km from the border.

The explosion occurred at around 6:00 p.m. (1830 BST) Thursday about 30 km south of Jammu. Three people were killed immediately and 10 seriously injured. Seven other compartments were derailed.

On the 15th of last month

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