

International

RUF leader Sankoh captured

UN hostages being freed in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, May 17: Cheerful crowds filled the streets of Freetown today as rebel leader Foday Sankoh was captured and his rebels began freeing the last of 500 UN peacekeepers taken hostage two weeks ago, reports AFP.

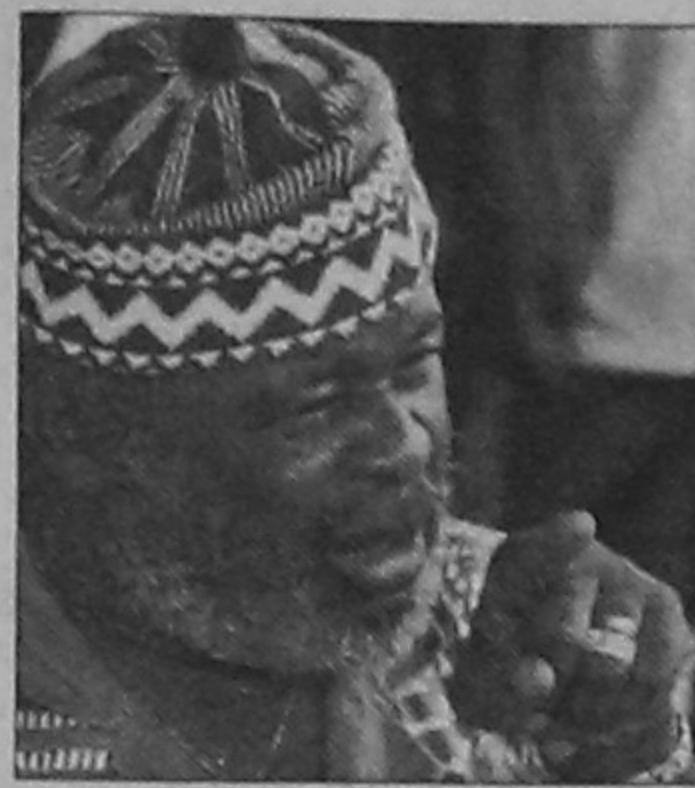
Sankoh was taken to army headquarters in the capital, where he is in British hands, a British army officer said.

The wily rebel leader, whose forces have broken a fragile 10-month peace accord, had been missing since May 8.

Shortly after Sankoh's capture, the United Nations announced that rebels had begun releasing some 350 hostages held in eastern and northern Sierra Leone.

Sankoh, who launched a brutal guerrilla war in 1991 and won vice presidential powers as part of the Lome peace accord last July, was being held by British troops, said a British officer who refused to be identified.

As news broke of Sankoh's arrest, crowds massed outside



Foday Sankoh

later to the Sierra Leone government," the officer said.

He gave no further details and did not explain why Sankoh was under British guard inside a Sierra Leone army compound.

Authorities accuse Sankoh, who escaped death row after striking the July power-sharing agreement, of masterminding another coup and illicitly selling diamonds.

The United Nations also holds Sankoh personally responsible for his rebels having taken 500 peacekeepers hostage earlier this month. After an initial batch of 140 were freed on Sunday, the remainder were being released on Wednesday, the UN force commander said.

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader went missing last week Monday following a massive anti-RUF demonstration outside his house that turned violent. Nineteen people were killed in the incident.

In Rome, the Misra missionary group said Sankoh had been hiding in a shelter under

the heavily guarded army building shouting anti-Sankoh slogans, while other Sierra Leoneans drove through the streets to voice their joy over the arrest of the man behind systematic mutilation of civilians in an eight-year campaign of terror.

"Sankoh is in the hands of the British army for the moment. We will hand him over

to the British army for the moment. We will hand him over



The BA Regional Turboprop at Liverpool Airport after it made an emergency landing Tuesday. All 44 passengers and four crew made a successful evacuation after the plane came to a halt on the runway at the airport and tilted on to one wing. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

PWG kills 3 cops in Andhra:

Three policemen have been killed by left-wing extremists in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, police said yesterday. Reuters reports from Hyderabad.

A police spokesman said six members of the outlawed People's War Group (PWG) ambushed a group of policemen in Nizamabad town, 160 km (100 miles) north of the state capital, Hyderabad, on Tuesday night. He said an assistant sub-inspector, a constable, and a home guard were shot dead in the attack.

Driver shot dead in Delhi road: In another case of road rage on the Indian capital's crowded highways, three drunken men argued with a car driver after an accident, then shot him dead and injured two passengers, newspapers reported Wednesday. AP says from New Delhi.

Tuesday's killing highlighted urban stress, the easy availability of firearms — legal and illegal — and the failure of police to curb drunken driving by operators of the city's 3.2 million vehicles.

17 militants among 21 killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, May 17: Indian troops gunned down 17 Muslim rebels in separate encounters in Kashmir, as two civilians and two soldiers were also killed in unabated violence in the disputed Himalayan state, police said today, reports AFP.

Police commandos early Wednesday killed two rebels in the military garrison of Yaripora, in Anantnag district, some 65 km south of the state winter capital Srinagar.

"One civilian also died in the exchange of fire between the militants and the police," a police official told AFP.

A police spokesman said Indian combat troops shot dead six Islamic guerrillas late Tuesday who entered Kashmir from Pakistan at a Raghji border point, some 150 km north of Srinagar.

The six had crossed the Line of Control (LoC) which separates the Indian and Pakistani zones of Kashmir, police said.

"Six militants were killed in

the firefight that lasted several hours. We recovered three AK-47 assault rifles, a machine gun and a pistol. We are keeping a vigil on the border to flush out militants who may be in hiding," said the spokesman.

In a separate encounter, Indian troops late Tuesday foiled another infiltration bid at a border point in Rajori 190 km north of the state summer capital Jammu.

"Nine militants, four of them Pakistani, were killed in the encounter," said a defense spokesman here.

In the crossfire one Indian soldier was killed, while an army officer was seriously injured," he added.

Muslim rebels overnight

carried out a rocket attack on a security post near Banjali, some 200 km east of Jammu. One soldier and a civilian were killed in the attack.

Meanwhile, local authorities Wednesday fished out the mutilated body of an alleged police informer.

Brosnan opts for delay in tying the knot

LOS ANGELES, May 17: James Bond star Pierce Brosnan has postponed his Irish wedding, which had been set for this coming weekend, until his teenage son fully recovers from an automobile accident last month, a spokesman for the actor said Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Publicist Dick Guttman said in a statement that Sean Brosnan, 16, was recently readmitted to a Los Angeles area hospital for treatment of complications from his injuries, which included a broken pelvis.

No details about the complications of the boy's medical condition were released.

Iranian House votes to seal border with Afghanistan

TEHRAN, May 17: Iran's parliament voted today to seal the country's 940 km border with Afghanistan in a bid to contain drug smuggling, reports AFP.

The conservative-dominated parliament agreed to give a special budget to the interior ministry to build electronically-equipped walls and fences to keep out smugglers and bandits.

Deputies said the measures were essential to save the border province of Khorassan from drug and criminal activity.

On Sunday an MP from a border region made a violent attack on Interior Minister Abdolvahed Mussavi-Lari for the lack of security.

"Every day our children, our women and our men are shot dead, taken hostage or raped by Afghan bandits and drug traffickers," shouted Ebrahim Bay Salami, who represents Khavat and Reshtekhar in the frontier area.

The government statement

also did not say if security forces suffered any casualties in the overnight battles.

However, the government said civilians in Jaffna were not leaving the area despite artillery and mortar attacks blamed on the Tamil Tigers.

There was no immediate reaction from the guerrillas to the latest military claims, but the rebels said in a statement from their London office Tuesday that they launched two frontal assaults along the coastal areas of Jaffna and Chavakachcheri.

The Tiger combat units have smashed through the defence lines of the government troops causing heavy casualties to the enemy, the LTTE statement said on Tuesday.

The LTTE said fighting was also raging at Kaithady near Jaffna.

The latest fighting came as President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Wednesday vowed to restore peace based on Buddhist principles of non-violence and equality.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga today vowed to restore peace based on Buddhist principles as heavy fighting raged with Tamil rebels in the north.

Kumaratunga used a message on Wesak, Buddhism's most important celebrations marking the birth, enlightenment and the passing away of Buddha, to call for national unity and an end to the bitter civil war.

"We will soon take steps to provide comprehensive and lasting solutions drawing from the philosophy of Buddhism based on equality with honour and co-existence which everybody can accept," Kumaratunga said.

She said a solution to the country's drawn out Tamil sepa-

ratist conflict could be found by following the path of Bud-

du's teachings.

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11. Last date of opening quotation box

12. Date & time of opening quotation by the undersigned

13. Date & time of lottery (if necessary)

14. Date will be fixed later on (which will be circulated through notice board).

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