

NOTORIOUS WARLORD KILLED IN EASTERN UKRAINE



DONETSK: In this file photo, Donetsk People's Republic platoon commander Arsen Pavlov, also known as Motorola, rides a bike at a checkpoint blocking the major highway which links Kharkiv, outside Sloviansk, eastern Ukraine. Separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine say a notorious warlord has been killed in a bombing in the rebel stronghold of Donetsk. — AP

DONETSK: Ukraine's pro-Russian rebels announced three days of mourning yesterday after notorious rebel commander Arsen Pavlov, known as "Motorola", was killed in a lift bombing. The 33-year-old Russian died late on Sunday when a homemade device exploded in the lift at the entrance to his block of flats in the de facto rebel capital Donetsk, separatist authorities said. It was the latest in a string of assassinations of insurgent commanders, with rebel chief Alexander Zakharchenko blaming it on Kiev, describing it as a declaration of "war" by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. But other separatists said the bombing may have been part of an internal power struggle among the rebels, who Kiev and the West say are directed by Russia.

"Either it's an operation staged by the Ukrainian services or it was one of us," said a fighter in the Sparta battalion which had been led by Pavlov. Ukrainian

military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said yesterday that Pavlov's death meant he had escaped "inevitable punishment in the form of life imprisonment". "He simply got lucky," Lysenko said. An army veteran from Russia's Komi region, Pavlov, who fought in the second Chechen war-joined the fighting that broke out in east Ukraine in April 2014 as a volunteer, rising to prominence after appearing on Russian TV broadcasts.

Flowers, glowing tributes

In a 2015 interview, he famously boasted of having shot 15 Ukrainian prisoners of war, prompting calls for an investigation by Amnesty International. And in June this year, he reportedly survived another assassination attempt. His death was widely reported by Russian state media, which paid glowing tribute to him. Yesterday morning, the crime scene was ringed by armed rebel fighters

who refused to let reporters through, saying investigators were at work. Several pensioners came to lay flowers outside the block of flats. Three people who witnessed the explosion told AFP Pavlov's bodyguard was also killed, although this has not been confirmed by rebel officials. Fighting in east Ukraine—which has claimed nearly 10,000 lives—has dragged on despite a peace plan brokered by Germany and France, which has run around amid acrimony between Russia and Ukraine. Kiev yesterday said one soldier was killed and seven injured in the latest clashes. Pavlov is the latest of rebel leader to be killed in the war-torn region controlled by heavily-armed militias. Earlier attacks have seen pro-Russian warlords blown up by car bombs and anti-tank missiles in spectacular mob-style hits that the rebel leadership blamed on Kiev but which many put down to separatist power struggles. — AFP

60 KILLED AS SOUTH SUDAN WAR RAGES

A WORRYING SURGE OF VIOLENCE IN WORLD'S YOUNGEST NATION

MALAKAL: At least 56 rebels and four government troops were killed in heavy weekend clashes in northeastern South Sudan, in a worrying surge of violence in the world's youngest nation. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) spokesman Brigadier General Lul Ruai Koang said Monday that rebels aligned with former vice president Riek Machar attacked government troops near the country's second largest city of Malakal.

Violence between Machar's supporters and

Saturday.

"On our side we lost four SPLA fighters and twenty were wounded." Forces loyal to Kiir invited journalists to the region on Sunday to show they were in control of the area, and an AFP photographer reported seeing up to 40 bodies in the places he could access. However Major Dickson Gatluak with the rebel SPLA In Opposition (SPLA-IO) insisted his forces were in control of the two towns as well as the northern part of Upper Nile state. "What we are trying to

AFP photographer reported it was calm on Sunday. "It is just a matter of time (before) our forces will take Malakal ... we have realized that there is no political settlement in Juba, there is not any political space in Juba so we have to organize ourselves because the government has failed," he said.

'On the edge of a precipice'

South Sudan, which gained independence in July 2011, descended into war just two and a half years later when Kiir in December 2013 accused Machar—who he had sacked as his deputy-of plotting a coup. Kiir is a member of the Dinka tribe, while Machar is a Nuer, and fighting has split the country along ethnic lines. Numerous attempts to shore up a fragile 2015 truce have failed, and in a major setback to peace efforts, fierce clashes erupted in Juba on July 8 this year between Kiir's forces and those loyal to Machar.

The international community has expressed deep concern over a spread in violence since the July clashes, which pushed the number of refugees from the war-scarred nation past the one-million mark, according to the UNHCR. In a further blow to peace hopes, Machar last month urged "a popular armed resistance" against his rival's government. Machar, who fled to Khartoum after the July fighting, last week left for South Africa for medical tests. An influential group of South Sudanese politicians known as the "former detainees" after their arrest when war broke out in 2013, warned last week that "the country is on the edge of a precipice".

And in a sign of growing frustration in the region with the warring leaders of South Sudan, Kenyan lawmakers last week threatened sanctions. Defense and Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Ndung'u Gethenji, said lawmakers were mulling sanctions "against those who are perpetuating war-like activities, genocide and killing (so that they) may no longer enjoy having their assets in our country, their children studying in our schools in relative comfort in peace and security while they continue to destroy the lives of their people back in their own country. "Kenya can no longer afford to have another failed state on its border," he said.— AFP



MALAKAL: Soldiers of the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) patrol near to dead bodies of rebel soldiers in Lelo, outside Malakal, northern South Sudan. — AFP

troops loyal to his bitter political foe President Salva Kiir, has blighted the nation for much of its hard-won independence from Sudan, achieved in 2011. "The rebels of Riek Machar attacked us in two places of our defense, that is Wajwok and Lelo, and we heavily impacted on them. The dead bodies of the rebels confirmed after count was 56," the spokesman said, adding that the clashes began Friday evening and ended on

do now is, our forces are trying our level best to try to march to Malakal town. So our forces are not yet displaced from those areas and this is not true," he said.

Malakal is the closest town to the oil fields in the Upper Nile region which bring in government's biggest revenue, and has changed hands several times since fighting broke out in 2013. Gatluak said fighting was ongoing, although the



ABS, YEMEN: An elderly man walks next to his donkey at a camp for internally displaced people near the town of Abs, located on Yemen's western coastal plain below towering desert mountains. — AP

TOWN DESTROYED, DISPLACED YEMENIS LANGUISH IN A FIELD

ABS, Yemen: The cornfield is dotted with tents, mud-brick shelters and huts made of sticks and plastic sheets, home to around 900 Yemenis who fled the front-lines of their country's war. Buried in the field's soil are the bodies of loved ones they carried with them as they escaped. Around 30 miles to the north near the border with Saudi Arabia, their hometown Haradh lies emptied of people and largely destroyed by fighting as Yemeni rebels and Saudi forces bombard each other with rockets and missiles across the frontier.

"I am still in disbelief," said Moussa Al-Shibani, a farmer now living in the cornfield, known as Al-Makhzan camp. "I was stable in my land, my town, among my family. I never thought to leave. My home is a piece of me." Al-Makhzan camp, located on Yemen's western coastal plain below towering desert mountains, is just one small corner of misery in the humanitarian crisis that has overwhelmed this country. More than 3 million of the country's 26 million people have been driven from their homes; entire towns have been wiped out under airstrikes; other cities have come under crippling sieges by Houthi forces. Hunger has become widespread.

The war began when the Shiite rebels known as Houthis based in the north seized the capital Sanaa. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies launched a campaign of airstrikes against the rebels. More than 4,000 civilians have been killed in airstrikes or in ground fighting between the rebels and fighters backing the internationally recognized president. Haradh had once been relatively prosperous, benefiting from cross-border trade and smuggling.

Some 11,500 families

Now the main street is lined with leveled buildings, according to footage aired on Yemeni TV. Most residents - some 11,500 families - fled in the summer of 2015, scattering to various nearby areas. Some came to the field outside the town of Abs, and its owner let them set up shacks, which has since grown into Al-Makhzan camp. Leila, a grandmother with a traditional tattoo on

her forehead, said her home was flattened in an airstrike. As her family fled, they carried with them the bodies of two of her children and a friend killed in the strike.

They are now buried in the field. "We're worth nothing, not even the palm of a hand," she said, using a local expression that means a tiny amount. In Al-Makhzan, barefoot children roam the field. The men are jobless. There are no medical facilities. The closest hospital was in Abs, a half-hour drive away. Few could afford the car fare for that. Then in August an airstrike destroyed the Abs hospital, so now the nearest medical facility is even farther, three hours away. Several elderly people over 80 years bedridden in their shacks said they are just waiting to die, too weak to seek help for ailments.

Every three months, aid from UN agencies arrives. The residents need everything but most of all, food, said Al-Shibani, who now acts as an aid coordinator. Many are living on just bread and tea. Al-Shibani left the Haradh area with his and his brothers' families after an airstrike hit a gas station next to his house. He later returned to take care of his sheep and a plot of land where he grew vegetables. He found the whole area deserted, his land littered with munitions and cluster bombs. "I was the only one left," he said. "There is nothing but a battlefield." Rebel fighters told him it was better for him to leave.

Motta Ali Arafag built a mud-brick shelter with her own hands in Al-Makhzan for her family - her parents, husband and three children. Her brother lives nearby in a shack with his family. Now Arafag is four months pregnant with another child. "I don't want children anymore ... not at a time of war," she said. Her kids became terrified and unable to sleep when warplanes fly overhead. Yahia Gaber's four daughters have suffered psychological trauma from the bombings. His daughter Beshayer, nearly 15, bites people, tears her hair and slaps her own face. Doctors told them there's nothing that could be done, Gaber said, adding his own explanation: "They have been struck by devils." — AP

MITTERRAND MISTRESS BLAMES HER SILENCE ON SUBMISSIVE CHILDHOOD

PARIS: Former French president Francois Mitterrand's mistress and mother of the daughter he kept hidden for 20 years blamed her "submissive" upbringing for agreeing to "accept the unacceptable", in an interview broadcast yesterday. Anne Pingeot told France Culture radio that growing up in a conservative Catholic household in southwest France she was taught that "a woman should be submissive and have no intellectual life." "My family was one or two generations behind the times. This was the countryside, it was very reactionary, very right-wing... Farmers in the area were still harvesting with scythes."

The great love of Mitterrand's life, who last week published the 1,218 love letters she received from him over the course of their passionate 33-year affair, said it took the Socialist leader to "help me advance in another direction." "At the same time that submissive side led me to accept the unacceptable," the 73-year-old former museum director said. Pingeot was just 14 when her father, a car firm executive, brought Mitterrand home after a round of golf in Hossegor, a seaside resort in southwest France. Mitterrand, who was married to Danielle and had two children, was just a year younger than her father. But he and Pingeot were instantly smitten. "He left an indelible impression," she said.

Six years later they began an affair that continued throughout his 1981-1985 presidency until his death of prostate cancer in 1996. Mitterrand's intensely intimate, beautifully written letters to his lovers were published last week under the title "Lettres a Anne (Letters to Anne), 1962-1995." The intensely private Pingeot said she agreed to make the letters public to ensure they were not published "in the wrong way." "I don't know if I did the right thing," she said of the book, which has catapulted her back into the spotlight, more than 20 years after Mitterrand's death.

Silent heroine

Mitterrand's affair with Pingeot was an open

secret among reporters who covered his presidency, bound by an unwritten French code of respect for the private lives of public figures. The public was, however, oblivious to his double life as head of state and a man mad about a woman and a child with whom he spent much of his free time and holidays.

It was not until late 1994, a few months before he left office, that the existence of Mazarine was revealed in a picture on the front

cover of Paris Match magazine, on the eve of her 20th birthday. A little over a year later, Mazarine and her mother were among the mourners at Mitterrand's funeral, alongside Danielle. Mazarine Pingeot, now 41 and a professor of philosophy, broke her silence on her childhood in 2010 with a book "Bouche Cousue" (which translates as "My Lips Are Sealed"). In the book she described her mother as "the heroine of a film that no one will ever see." — AFP



PARIS: This file photo shows late French President Francois Mitterrand (3rd-left), standing beside Valery Giscard d'Estaing (left) and Françoise Cachin (right) as they listen to chief curator at the Musee D'Orsay Anne Pingeot (In Red) during the inauguration of the museum in Paris. The world has long known that Francois Mitterrand had a 33-year affair that produced his daughter Mazarine, but only now can the fervor of the love between the then French president and his mistress be revealed. — AFP

RWANDA LAST KING, KIGELI V DIES AT 80

KIGALI: The last king of Rwanda, Kigeli V, who ruled the east African nation for less than a year before being forced into exile, finally settling in the United States, died early Sunday according to his official website. He was 80. Born Jean-Baptiste Ndahindurwa, King Kigeli came to power in 1959 and was forced to leave the country the following year after clashing with the Belgian colonial power. In 1961, the monarchy was abolished. The king began a life of exile in east Africa, including Kenya and Uganda, before leaving for America, where he settled in the suburbs of Washington in 1992.

Details of his death were not immediately known. "It is with a very heavy heart that we announce that His Majesty King Kigeli V Ndahindurwa, the last King of Rwanda, died early this morning," read a statement on his website. "He was a devout and dedicated believer and the last anointed African Roman Catholic king to reign over a full country." Funeral arrangements, and details on the her to

the throne will be announced at a later date, the statement said. King Kigeli had come to power after succeeding his half-brother Mutara III, who died in unclear circumstances on the eve of the Hutu "social revolution" which sent hundreds of thousands of ethnic Tutsi fleeing.

Most of them did not return home to Rwanda until after the 1994 genocide, which left some 800,000 dead, mostly from that minority. Kigeli V is a Tutsi, but the tradition is that the monarchy represent all Rwandans of all ethnicities. In September 1961, the monarchy was abolished by referendum and Rwanda gained independence the following year. While in the United States, the exiled monarch led the King Kigeli V Foundation to aid Rwandan refugees. A 2013 profile in Washingtonian magazine, found him living in subsidized housing, on food stamps and donations, in Oakton, Virginia, happy to hand out chocolates to neighbors' children. "They call me the King of Africa," Kigeli said of the neighbors, in that report. — AFP