

## Russian N-plant shut down after leak

MOSCOW, Mar 24: A nuclear reactor at a power plant near St Petersburg was shut down Tuesday after some radioactive gases escaped into the atmosphere, officials at the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy said, reports AP.

Yelena Miryushenko, a ministry spokeswoman, said there was absolutely no danger to the public because plant filters rendered the gases harmless.

An emergency protection system was automatically activated after unspecified damage was detected in the hall of the third reactor of the Leningradskaya nuclear power plant, the ITAR-Tass news agency said.

The plant is 90 kilometers from St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city.

"Although radioactive inert gases and iodine got into the atmosphere through the filters of the plant, the level of radiation did not surpass the allowed norms for such installations," ITAR-Tass said, quoting ministry officials.

Miryushenko said the leak was a "third-class incident" on the seven-point International Atomic Energy Agency scale. The 1986 Chernobyl disaster rated seven, she said.

In St. Petersburg, a spokesman for the city's security department said there did not appear to be any immediate threat to city residents. "In principle, there are no grounds for panic," said Evgeny Lukin.

The mayor's office and city council convened an "extraordinary" session to discuss the incident.



Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is attacked by a woman wielding a bunch of flowers during a visit to Marple Bridge, stock port on March 23. — APP/UNB photo

## Flowery attack on Thatcher

MARPLE BRIDGE, England, Mar 24: A woman who took a swat at Margaret Thatcher with a bunch of daffodils was arrested Monday, reports AP.

The former prime minister was out seeking votes for the Conservative Party in this northern village near Manchester when a woman offered her a bouquet. When Thatcher went to accept it, the woman started flailing at her head with the daffodils.

Thatcher turned away and her personal detective stepped between her and the floral assailant while uniformed officers held the unidentified woman's arm.

Greater Manchester police arrested the woman for an alleged breach of the peace and took her to the police station.

## CSCE talks on Nagorny-Karabakh soon

HELSINKI, Finland, Mar 24: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe took on new members and old conflicts Monday before heading into talks on the post-Soviet world, reports AP.

The breakaway Yugoslav states of Croatia and Slovenia, and the former Soviet republic of Georgia, joining 13 other newly independent ex-Soviet states and Russia in the now 51-member organization.

CSCE delegates met Monday in advance of the opening Tuesday of a three-day meeting of foreign ministers that was expected to be dominated by such issues as efforts to bring peace to disintegrating Yugoslavia and resolve conflicts between the former disintegrating Yugoslavia and resolve conflicts between the former Soviet republics.

The foreign ministers were expected to take up the issue of the disputed territory of Nagorny-Karabakh, which has sparked fighting between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Armenian Foreign Minister Raffi K. Hovhannissian said he would urge the CSCE to set a date for an international peace conference on Nagorno-Karabakh and consider creating a peacekeeping force to guarantee a cease-fire.

More than 1,000 people have died in nearly four years of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly Christian Armenian enclave which lies within Muslim Azerbaijan.

## Big 3 suspend plans to push for UN sanction on Libya

NEW YORK (United Nations), Mar 24: Britain, France and the United States suspend plans Monday to push for an air traffic and arms embargo against Libya, French Ambassador Jean Bernard Merimec said, reports AP.

The decision came after Libya said it would hand over two suspects in the bombing of a Pan Am airline over Scotland to the Arab League.

The Libyan announcement is a sign of progress, Merimec said. He added, however, that the three nations would not wait "too long" for the suspects to be surrendered.

Britain, France and the United States said last week they planned to seek approval of a UN resolution imposing sanctions against Libya for re-

using to cooperate in probes into the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, and the 1989 destruction of a French UTA jet over Niger.

The two attacks left a total of 440 people dead.

Libya's ambassador here, Ali Ahmed Al Houdary, announced Monday that Libya had decided to surrender the two suspects in the Lockerbie bombing to the Arab League. He did not specify when this would take place.

Diplomats said that the Arab League would then surrender the two men to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who would in turn hand them over to US or British authorities.

Xinhua reports: The general secretariat of the Arab Lawyers Union said it completely rejected the use of the seventh clause of the UN charter which allows the use of military force against Libya.

A statement issued by the Union yesterday described the attempt to introduce the clause in the Libya case as a "misuse of the UN charter and a violation of the international legitimacy which jeopardises the future of the international organisation itself."

The statement said the attempt also contradicts the main purpose of the international body, namely, maintaining peace and order in the world.

Imposing sanctions by using the power of the UN charter necessitates taking into consideration the effects of such

## Off the Record

### Men dislike condoms

SAN JUAN: AIDS was once primarily spread by homosexual relations or syringes, a full 60 per cent of HIV infections in the year 2000 are expected to be transmitted through heterosexual relations, reports AP.

In 1992, about 40 per cent of those infected with HIV will be women.

The condom is an effective means of preventing infection. But Lillian Wambua, a gynecologist from Cameroon, said many men in her country resist using condoms and would be highly offended if their wives suggested that they wear them. Experts from Asia, South America and the United States made the same observation.

Mapaporn Havanon, a sociologist in Thailand, where prostitution is a well-developed industry, said condom use in brothels has risen markedly because of the fear of AIDS and a government education campaign.

Almost 40 per cent of customers use condoms, she said.

But among the general population, only some four per cent use condoms even though married men commonly have extramarital sex, including with prostitutes, she said.

Experts said education is crucial in changing such trends. But all acknowledged that it was not a simple task.

"This behavior is not something you acquire overnight," said Hind Khattab, a social anthropologist from Egypt.

### Ads reveal wrong message

WASHINGTON: Alcohol advertising that shows people racing cars or surfing ignores the fact that drinking would make those activities dangerous, said Surgeon General Antonia Novello, who Monday renewed her call to drop such ads, reports AP.

"It is no coincidence that sports such as boating, swimming, skiing, surfing, car racing and mountain climbing which have strong links to alcohol-related injuries are the very activities glamorized in alcohol beverage ads and promotions," she said.

The ads also send the wrong message to the young, the surgeon general said at a national conference on alcohol abuse prevention.

"I have asked them to stop using any ads that leads our youth to think they can ski, swim, scuba dive or race cars better if they drink," she said.

"In short, we are doing everything we can to change the way Americans think and act with regard to the use and misuse of alcohol," she said.

### McCondoms in court

MONTREAL: The makers of the Big Mac want McCondoms to go away, reports AP.

McDonald's filed a court appeal Monday seeking to block the sale of the contraceptive by a Montreal store specializing in condoms.

The Oak Brook, Ill.-based fast food chain claims McCondoms violate its trademark "McLanguage" covering more than 75 products such as McRib, McCone or McKids.

McDonald's also claims the logo on the McCondom a stylized letter M in yellow print is an illegal copy of its registered golden arches, according to papers filed in Superior Court.

The store, La Capoterie, is named for "copote," the French slang word for condoms.

No date has been set for a hearing on McDonald's request for an injunction.

### Adults prefer not to talk about it

WASHINGTON: An estimated 8 million Americans with urinary incontinence could be cured or have their condition significantly improved if they would talk to their doctors about it, US health officials said Monday, reports AP.

The problem is, they do not want to talk about it. Wetting one's pants is not something adults discuss.

"It is tragic that this is a subject we sometimes snicker over and are too timid to report to our doctors," said Dr James Mason, head of the US Public Health Service.

He was right. There was the occasional snicker at Mason's news conference. Reporters cracked a joke or two.

So did one of the doctors.

"It's nice to see so much of the Washington press corps concerned with leaks and leakage," said Dr Jay Y. Gillenwater, president of the American Urological Association.

The Department of Health and Human Services issued guidelines Monday advising doctors on how to deal with incontinence. The department in the last few weeks issued guidelines on treating pain and is planning to issue similar reports on senility, AIDS and stroke.

The incontinence guidelines recommended treating patients with bladder training, pelvic muscle exercises, drugs or surgery.

## BRIEFLY

**Jihad to continue attack:** The pro-Islamic Jihad, reaffirming that it carried out the deadly car-bombing of the Israeli embassy in Argentina, vowed on Monday to continue its attacks on the Jewish state "regardless of the sacrifices," Reuter reports from Beirut.

Islamic Jihad (holy war), a Muslim fundamentalist group linked to Hizbollah (party of God), issued its second statement in five days laying claim to the March 17 attack which levelled the embassy in Buenos Aires, killing at least 28 people.

"The war is open and we will continue our strikes," Islamic Jihad said in the Arabic-typed statement delivered to the Beirut offices of An-Nahar newspaper.

It came with a 90-second video tape which, according to the statement, showed the Israeli embassy before the bombing. The black-and-white silent film showed a three-step arcade entrance fronted by trees, the heavily edited picture was shaky.

**'Iraq moves in right direction':** President Bush said Monday that Iraq has moved in the right direction toward complying with UN resolutions to disclose and destroy its weapons of mass destruction, AP reports from Washington.

"I think our firmness has now caused them to back down once again," Bush told a television interviewer.

"The Iraqis in the last day or two have moved in the right direction. They keep talking about compliance, and then fail to comply. But there's been a little more positive movement in the last few days," said Bush.

"All I can say to them is, you must comply with these UN resolutions," said Bush.

"I think they will, one way or another," he added in a satellite interview with a TV station in Hartford, Conn.

**Stone meets Arens:** A senior US military official met with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens on Monday on Tel Aviv as American experts inspected Israel's inventory of Patriot missiles, AP reports from Jerusalem.

Michael PW Stone, the US Secretary of the Army, in Israel on a four-day visit at a time of tense relations between Jerusalem and Washington.

Allegations have surfaced in the United States that Israel transferred US missile technology to China.

Israel has repeatedly denied the allegations. Arens told Stone that Israel will give its full cooperation to the US investigative team because it has nothing to hide, Israel radio said.

**Libya offers Pan Am suspects to AL:** Libya's ambassador said Monday that his country will turn over the two suspects in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 to the Arab League, AP reports from United Nations.

The offer was the North African country's latest effort to avoid UN Security Council economic and diplomatic sanctions being pushed by the United States, Britain and France.

The three allies have demanded the extradition of a total of six Libyans wanted for the bombings of the New York-bound Pan Am plane over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 and a French airliner over Africa in 1989. A total of 441 people died in the attacks.

The three countries on Monday seemed to relax their attempt to pursue the punitive resolution while evaluating the situation. No further meetings were scheduled on the draft resolution.

**New cabinet in S Africa by July:** South Africa's visiting Foreign Minister Pik Botha said in Tokyo that a multiracial interim cabinet would be formed by July, Asahi Shimbun reported Tuesday, AFP says from Tokyo.

According to a Japanese official, Botha told his Japanese counterpart Michio Watanabe on Monday that the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODSA), made up of 19 political groups, is likely to agree on an interim cabinet at its next meeting in April, Asahi said.

Botha also told Asahi in an interview Monday that the establishment of the multiracial interim cabinet would be realised "in the near future between April and July."

**Voting starts in ROK:** Voting started Tuesday in South Korea's general elections with some 20 million people expected to vote in 237 constituencies, reports AP from Seoul.

Some 1,047 candidate from six parties were running for seats in the 14th National Assembly.

The Kyong Hyong daily reported some 35 per cent of voters were still undecided in a race dominated by three main parties — the ruling Democratic Liberal Party, the opposition Democratic Party and the fledgling Unification National Party.

Voting was proceeding normally after the polls opened under overcast skies. Polling stations were due to close at 6:00 pm (0900GMT) with the ballot count to begin immediately and initial results expected late in the evening.

## Israel to continue Jewish settlement

JERUSALEM, Mar 24: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir vowed yesterday to continue the building of Jewish settlements in the occupied lands despite US pressures, reports Xinhua.

Israel would never agree to the US demand of stopping settlement of Jews in the territories, the 76-year-old premier told hundreds of Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem.

"We have never been able to understand why Arabs should be entitled to live everywhere in the land and Jews should be forbidden to live and build and develop in parts of their ancient land?" Shamir asked.

Shamir was defying US pressure on Israel to stop building new Jewish settlements in the occupied lands, a tough precondition for 10 billion dollars in loan guarantees which Israel seeks absorb large numbers of Jewish immigrants.

After half a year of negotiations, the US administration last week turned down the Israeli request for the loan guarantees, insisting that a total freeze be imposed on Jewish settlement in exchange for US commitments.

Israel is eager to get the loan guarantees so as to easily approach the international money markets to finance the massive absorption of Jewish immigrants, mainly from the former Soviet Union.

Another report adds: A senior PLO officials has said that continuation of the Arab-Israeli

bilateral talks will be advantageous to the Palestinians although to no quick results are expected.

Nabil Shaath, Political Advisor to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, said in a statement published yesterday that the best advantages are the sponsorship of the peace talks and American insistence on a pre-condition for providing loan guarantees to Israel.

Shaath said contacts are under way among Egypt as well as the Palestinians and other Arab parties participating in the bilateral talks in preparation for the next round of peace talks. The bilateral talks, stated in Madrid late last October, has undergone four sessions, and no progress has been made in matters of sub-

stance.

The PLO official said he expected the next round of talks to resume on April 17-24, but added that the date is yet to be fixed.

Shaath's statement followed his recent visit to Egypt. Egypt which has pledged to be an honest broker in the peace process, appreciated the PLO's effort to help achieve peace in the region, Shaath said.

Meanwhile, Bassam Abu Sharif, another Advisor to Arafat said he was certain that the peace process would continue.

Sharif also said, without explanation, that he expected the peace talks to yield initial results in November, "despite Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's intransigence toward the negotiations."

## Pretoria plans new system to replace blacks

PRETORIA, Mar 24: The government on Monday outlined plans for a new system to replace white minority rule, proposing the establishment of multiracial "transitional councils" as a first step, reports AP.

The African National Congress and other anti-apartheid opposition groups opposed the plan, saying it would leave the white government in control. They want a transitional government that is not dominated by the existing white leadership.

"This is the worst-case scenario for an interim government," said ANC negotiator Thebo Nbeke. "The critical element is that we can't continue with the old government acting as an interim government."

Top government ministers said the councils would advise on the transition and a new constitution and help clear the way for elections that for the first time would include blacks.

## France won't sell Mirage to Taiwan now

PARIS, Mar 24: France has no plans to sell Mirage 2000 fighter planes to Taiwan in the immediate future, though the Dassault Aviation Firm has been authorised to explore that market, authorities sources said here yesterday, reports AP.

"No real negotiations have begun," a well-placed source said hours after Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen warned of a "strong reaction" from if a deal went ahead.

Diplomats in Beijing said the reaction could be the recall of China's ambassador to France and the departure of the French ambassador to the People's Republic.

The French ministries of Foreign Trade and Industry, however, refused to comment on Chinese reports that France had begun talks on selling at least 15 of the advanced combat planes to the nationalist island.

France's International Commission for the Study of Exports of War Materials

(CIEEMG) has authorised both Dassault Aviation and the Aeronautical Company to look into Taiwan markets, an informed source said here.

Should the French authorities be planning a sale, it would take at least one year to go through, the source added.

China formally protested when France sold six unarmed La Fayette class frigates to Taiwan for 4.8 billion dollars, summoning French Ambassador Claude Martin to the Chinese Foreign Ministry last December.

The Chinese government took no further action.

CIEEMG decisions and recommendations are usually kept secret, but the market prospect phase is generally followed by formal negotiations and then the signing of contract.

Diplomats in Paris said yesterday that if France were to press ahead with a sale of Mirage 2000's, worth up to 60 million dollars a piece the move would signal a major change in policy

## Lawsuit against Bush rejected

WASHINGTON, Mar 24: The US Supreme Court on Monday refused to review a lawsuit challenging President George Bush's right to declare war against Iraq in 1991, reports Reuter.

Stephen Farsac had filed the complaint against Bush in US district court in Maine on January 8, 1991, claiming the president was violating the US constitution by starting a war against Iraq without a formal declaration by Congress.

A US district court judge dismissed the complaint on February 8, 1991, saying the issue was moot because of congress voted on January 12 to authorise US military action against Iraq if Iraq did not remove its troops from Kuwait.

The first US Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal of the lawsuit on July 31.

Farsac said that even though the war was over, the Supreme Court should consider his request for declaratory relief because a similar situation could occur again. But the High Court justices rejected his appeal without any comment.

## Palestine Council meet in Tunis on Sunday

AMMAN, Mar 24: The Palestine Central Council is to meet in Tunis on Sunday to discuss the prospect of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, a Palestinian leader said here yesterday, reports Xinhua.

Sheikh Abdel-Hamid al-Sayeh, Speaker of the Palestine National Council (PNC), said that invitation had been extended to participants of the planned meeting.

The 92-member Central Council serves as a link between the PNC and the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization under Yasser Arafat.

## No US candidates have good idea to solve problems

WASHINGTON, Mar 24: More than half of the registered voters in a new nationwide poll released Monday say none of the presidential candidates have good ideas for solving the nation's problems, reports AP.

The USA Today-CNN-Gallup poll conducted over the weekend reflected a general dissatisfaction among the electorate, except when it came to their member of Congress.

Fifty-six per cent said the member of Congress representing their congressional district deserved re-election, but 58 per cent said most House members should find another job.

While the telephone survey of 1,004 adults nationwide gave President Bush an approval rating of 41 per cent, 71 per cent said he was more likely to win the general election than the Democratic nominee, whoever that is.

Registered Democrats also favoured Bush's chances in the fall, with 55 per cent saying the president was more likely to be re-elected than the Democratic nominee. Eighty-eight per cent of registered Republicans favoured Bush's chances.

The poll, conducted March 20-22, had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

More than half, 57 per cent, said none of the candidates have come up with good ideas for solving the nation's problems.

If the election were held now, between Bush and Democratic front-runner Bill Clinton, Bush would beat Clinton 52-43, the poll said. If former California Gov. Jerry Brown were the nominee, Bush would win 59-35.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton, all but assured of the Democratic presidential nomination, has lashed out at President Bush for his economic and military policies, calling him a "do nothing" leader.

The attach came a day before the Tuesday presidential primaries in Connecticut. Bush and Patrick Buchanan are on the Republican ballot in Connecticut, but Buchanan has made little effort here.

In election-eve interviews with Connecticut television stations, Bush defended his call for cutting two Seawolf submarines from the bud-

get and accused his opponents of playing "the oldest, most crass political game in the world" by promising large defense cuts.

His comments came just hours after Clinton visited the Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, Conn, to highlight his support of the Seawolf and Centurion submarine programmes.

Clinton trained some of his firepower on Bush, saying the President would let the nation drift without an economic or military conversion plan rather than raise taxes on his wealthy friends.

The Arkansas governor seized on Bush's statement Sunday that he would prefer Congress "do nothing" to stimulate the economy if the alternative was to raise taxes on the wealthy to pay for middle-classes tax relief.

Clinton's internal campaign polls conducted after his Illinois and Michigan primary sweeps showed him leading former Massachusetts Sen. Tsongas in the state.

Bush seemed to be referring to Clinton's position on the Seawolf when he talked about defense cuts Monday in an interview with

WTNH-TV of New Haven.

The president said he wanted to cut defence spending by \$50 billion and said: "you're hearing from the other side, Well 50's not enough, let's cut it by 100. But when I go to some different area or some different plant, I'll tell them I'll keep theirs open." That's the oldest, most crass political game in the world."

Democratic contender Jerry Brown, in turn, said Clinton and Bush were much the same.

Clinton entered Tuesday with a better than 7-1 delegate lead over Brown; 965.25 to 129.25, according to The Associated Press delegate tally. Bush is the runaway leader in the Republican Party delegate chase, with 715 to Buchanan's 46. At stake Tuesday were 53 Democratic delegates and 35 Republican delegates.

Although Clinton's lead is all but insurmountable, Brown is vowing to stay in the race. Buchanan has virtually suspended campaigning but says he plans to stay in the race through California's June 2 primary.

## Sevan's surprise visit to Kabul

KABUL, Mar 24: UN special envoy on Afghanistan Benon Sevan flew back to Kabul on a surprise, unannounced visit early today, United Nations sources said here, reports AP.

UN sources said Sevan was expected to go into a meeting with Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdul Wakil whom he met with nine times during his last visit here.

No further details were immediately available.

Sevan's arrival comes only five days after he had left Kabul following an extended tour, during which President Najibullah promised he would step down if Afghan can decide on an interim government to prepare for peace in the war-torn country.