

# Baker's move to resume ME talks

WASHINGTON, Mar 25: Secretary of State James A. Baker hopes to have Arab-Israeli peace talks resume here in late April in another attempt to narrow the deep divisions between the sides, US and diplomatic sources say, reports AP.

The idea is to squeeze in one round or even two before Israel holds its elections June 23 and the American presidential campaign moves into high gear.

It usually takes two months to put together a new government after an Israeli election, so the summer is not likely to be a productive time to negotiate.

The US presidential campaign, meanwhile, could drag out the talks if either the Arabs or Israel conclude they might get a better deal if President Bush were defeated.

The sources, who declined to be identified, said Tuesday that Baker wants Arab leaders

# Libya may not surrender Pan Am bombing suspects to Arab League

CAIRO, Mar 25: Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid returned here today from Libya without any indication Tripoli will fulfill its promise to hand over two suspects in a 1988 US airliner bombing, reports AP.

"Consultations continue in order to have more details," Abdel Meguid said after returning to the Egyptian capital.

Abdel Meguid told AFP before leaving for Tripoli Tuesday that he would be discussing the details of taking custody of suspects Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, 39, and Al-Amin Fhimah, 35.

Tripoli agreed Monday to turn over to the Arab League the two suspects in the bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland which killed 270 people, in an attempt to end a tense standoff with the United Nations.

Abdel Meguid, leading a delegation of representatives

of seven Arab League members, met with Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi as well as Libya's number two, Major Abdessalam Jalloud.

In Cairo, a well informed political source said Abdel Meguid would agree to take custody of the two men if Tripoli agreed in writing that they be extradited eventually to the United States or Britain.

AP report adds: UN Security Council President Diego Arria had expected the meeting to produce a letter from Gaddafi confirming earlier promises of the swift delivery of the two Libyans for trial in the United States or Britain.

Libya faces the threat of UN sanctions if it does not turn over the two men wanted in the 1988 bombing of Flight 103 over Scotland and four wanted in the 1989 bombing of a French airliner. The attacks claimed 441 lives.

"I was expecting throughout the day a letter of confirmation," Arria, the Venezuelan

ambassador, said by telephone in New York several hours after the meeting occurred. "I have not been informed."

"In this case, I can't say no news was good news," Arria said. "I'm not very optimistic."

The Bush administration contended Tuesday that Libya was stalling, and demanded that it put in writing its offer to give up the suspects. Late Tuesday it added that Libya must sever all ties with terrorist groups.

"We are looking for action, not words," the State Department said. It said several terrorist groups, including the Abu Nidal organization, train in Libya.

The Arab League delegation that went to Libya comprised league secretary-general Esmat Abdel-Maguid of Egypt and envoys from Syria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

Libya offered on Monday to turn the suspects over to the Arab League.

Its plan was an attempt to avoid a new Security Council resolution imposing an arms embargo, cutting off its air routes and urging other countries to eject most Libyan diplomats.

The suspects are identified as Abdel Basset Ali Megrahi, 39, and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, 35. Arria said the Arab League representative assured him the men would be turned over promptly, but he added, "I don't know what shape or form the delivery will take, if it takes effect."

Libya's offer won Tripoli a brief respite from council action very brief, diplomats said.

US Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering said he will renew his push to have the council adopt the resolution by the end of the week if the Libyans, indicted by the United States and Britain, are not extradited. He said the Libyan offer "seems to be more of a stall than a compliance."

# Hundreds of Indians died in custody

LONDON, Mar 25: Amnesty International said on Wednesday that hundreds of people in India, including pregnant women and children, had died in recent years from beatings and torture while in custody, reports Reuter.

The London-based human rights group said in its latest report on India that victims across the country were picked up by police, illegally detained and then tortured for confessions until they died.

"They torture and deaths continue because police know there's hardly any change of the long arm of the law touching them, even if they kill the victim and the truth is revealed," it said.

Amnesty said successive governments had denied torture took place and had done nothing to stop it.

The victims, some as young as six years old, nearly all came from poor and underprivileged groups such as low castes and minority tribes, landless labourers and migrant workers, according to the report.

Amnesty said many had been suspended from ceilings in jail cells and given electric shocks or whipped with leather belts. Others had their legs crushed with heavy rollers, were stabbed with sharp instruments or had chilies inserted in their rectums.

Rape of women by police was commonplace, particularly in areas of armed insurgency, it added.

Amnesty documented more than 400 cases in its 195-page report which it will send to Indian politicians, judges, police officers and others.

"In only three of the more than 400 cases of deaths in custody that we document in our report have any police officers been convicted," Amnesty said.

The organisation said senior officials often effectively gave the green light to torture. Police officers systematically covered up torture killings, bribing and threatening witnesses.

## BRIEFLY

**Lawyer held for contempt:** A defence lawyer in reputed mob boss John Gotti's murder-racketeering trial was held in contempt of court Tuesday for shouting at the judge, complaining the defendants were treated unfairly, reports AP from New York.

Anthony Cardinale, the attorney for Gotti co-defendant Frank Locascio, lost his temper when US District Judge Leo Glasser ruled the defence couldn't call an expert witness to testify.

"I can't believe that this court is ruling that I can't put a witness on the stand to say our transcripts are accurate when the government can," Cardinale said.

The outburst came while the jury was out of the courtroom and lawyers for both sides were arguing over trial testimony.

**Najaib meets Sevan:** President Najibullah met with the United Nations negotiator for Afghanistan on Tuesday and urged him to speed up the peace process, Radio Kabul reported, AP says from New Delhi.

The British Broadcasting Corporation reported several hours later that heavy small arms fire broke out in the vicinity of the presidential palace in Kabul. There was no immediate explanation for the shooting and explosions, according to the report.

Benon Sevan, the special envoy to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has been shuttling between Kabul and Islamabad, the Pakistan capital, to try to organize an informal conference of 150 Afghans representing all warring factions in Afghanistan.

Radio Kabul gave scant details of his meeting with Najibullah, but said the president asked Sevan to expedite the process of peace because Afghan people were tired of war.

**US denies visa for Villalobos:** The State Department has denied a Salvadoran rebel leader's request for a US entry visa because of his group's role in the killing of two American servicemen 14 months ago, officials said Tuesday, AP reports from Washington.

Joaquin Villalobos, a leading figure in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, applied for a visa to attend a World Bank meeting about El Salvador on Monday.

State Department press officer Colin Cleary said FMLN members may be ineligible for visas because that group has engaged in terrorist activity. He said Villalobos' faction was responsible for the January 1991 murders of Lt Colonel David Pickett and Pfc. Ernest Dawson.

The two servicemen were wounded when guerrillas shot down their helicopter in a contested area of El Salvador. US officials have acknowledged that the helicopter should not have been in the area.

**Floods kill 13 in Ecuador:** Torrential rains and flooding in Ecuador have killed 13 people, left four missing and destroyed 2,000 homes and 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres) of farmland, civil defence officials said on Tuesday, Reuter reports from Quito.

About 10,000 people were left homeless and sought refuge in public schools as the storms lashed the Ecuadorian capital and the port of Guayaquil, as well as the Andean countryside and coastal regions.

Most of the coastal highway was washed out and many towns in seaside provinces were flooded.

Health officials were working furiously to prevent and outbreak of contagious diseases in the country which is already in the grip of the Cholera epidemic.

**Fire claims one in Amman:** At least one person died when a fire engulfed part of Amman's intercontinental hotel on Tuesday forcing hundreds of people to flee for their lives, some with flames licking at their heels, Reuter reports from Amman.

The man, identified as Iraqi engineer Amer Abdullah Hussein Al-Janabi, 46, died after suffocating in the hotel's lift, a senior government official told Reuters.

Three other people were taken to hospital.

"We found a briefcase next to the lift which had the passport of Janabi," the official, who supervised the evacuation, said. "The three others are being treated at hospital."

**Quake shakes Islamabad:** A mild earthquake woke residents of the Pakistani capital early Wednesday but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries, the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said, AFP reports from Islamabad.

# Roh fails to win simple majority

SEOUL, Mar 25: In a stunning turn around that could spell hard times ahead for the government, President Roh Tae-woo's ruling party failed to win a simple majority in Tuesday's election for South Korea's new parliament, reports AP.

The independent newspaper Chosun Ilbo banner headlined in its this morning edition: "DLP defeated, opposition now dominates parliament again."

With 95 per cent of the votes counted as of 7:00 a.m. (2200 GMT) the ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) had lost its early lead and picked up only 108 seats out of 237 constituencies.

The mainstream opposition Democratic Party (DP) was certain of 73 seats, the new Unification National Party (UNP) had picked up 22, while independents had a lock on 19 seats, according to unofficial state television tallies.

The official central election management committee, however, had still not released any official figures.

Despite the apparent upset, political pundits believed that Roh's party could easily recruit several pro-government independents to gain a simple majority in the new parliament.

Television commentators said that South Korean voters were unwayed by Roh's appeal for a safe majority for his DLP to assure political stability and progress on reunification with North Korea.



SEOUL: Ruling party executive chairman Kim Young-Sam watches national television report on election results with a grim look at his party headquarters, as his party's lead dwindles with 40% of vote counted shortly after midnight. —AFP/UNB photo

Main opposition DP leader Kim Dae-Jung said voters accepted his call for support to check the giant DLP, which enjoyed a two-thirds majority in the outgoing parliament.

Kim said the nation clearly signalled its rejection of the ruling party, which was born two years ago when Roh merged his party with the party of then opposition leader Kim Young-Sam and a third opposition group.

Until then, Roh's ruling party did not have a majority in the parliament, and his administration had been harassed by the combined opposition.

The most spectacular development in the latest elections is the emergence of the new UNP founded by business tycoon Chung Ju-Yung barely two months ago.

He targeted what he said was the economic failure of the Roh government, arguing that the country's economy would be irreparably ruined if the ruling party continued in office.

With the defeat of the ruling DLP, the question arose whether Kim Young-Sam, a veteran opposition politician who became the ruling party's executive chairman, will get Roh's blessing to become the party's nominee for the presidential election set to take place in November.

Some analysts have expected the upcoming presidential race to be a face off between two Kims.

# World losing interest in me: Rushdie

ARLINGTON, Va, Mar 25: Author Salman Rushdie, a million-dollar bounty on his head, emerged from hiding Tuesday night to salute the publication of "The Satanic Verses" in paperback and suggested the world is losing interest in protecting him, reports AP.

Rushdie addressed a Freedom Forum conference on barriers to free expression. The occasion was the second visit he has made to America, since the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989 denounced his book and offered \$1 million to anyone who would assassinate its author. Rushdie has lived in hiding ever since.

"I am no longer certain of the commitment of the British government to the task of protecting me," Rushdie said.

"I do not say this lightly," he added, but offered no evidence on which he based his conclusion. He has been under 24-hour guard in Britain and has been moved periodically from one safe house to another.

The printed invitation received in the mail by the audience of 250 listed CBS newsman Mike Wallace as the



Salman Rushdie

evening's speaker. Most of the guests did not know that Rushdie would appear, although some said there had been rumours over the last few days.

Wallace spoke, but only to introduce Rushdie. A door swung open, and the bearded 44-year-old Rushdie, wearing a rumpled maroon jacket, passed through. The audience of journalists and educators rose to its feet.

Guests were required to provide identification and pass through metal detectors. Around the room, guards eyed the audience while Rushdie spoke.

But the author appeared at ease. He spoke for nearly an hour and made an occasional joke about his situation.

Rushdie saluted the publication of "The Satanic Verses" in a \$1 million paperback edition by a group of American publishers who hid their identity. Where the publisher normally would be identified, the book jacket says only "The consortium, Inc."

In addition to questioning the British government's commitment to protect him, the author suggested the United States government could be more supportive in pressuring Iran to drop its threat.

"I appeal to the American government to show itself to be the true friend of liberty," he said.

# Yakub Khan Ghali's special representative for W Sahara

NEW YORK (United Nations), Mar 25: US Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali named former Pakistani Foreign Minister Yakub Khan as his special representative for western Sahara, the United Nations said Tuesday, reports AP.

Khan succeeds Johannes Manz, of Switzerland, said Francois Chuliani, spokesman for the Secretary General. Manz resigned in December to become his country's permanent observer at the United Nations.

The Pakistani diplomat has served as his country's ambassador to France, Ireland, the United States, Jamaica and the former Soviet Union before becoming Foreign Minister from 1982 to 1987, and from 1988 to 1990.

His appointment should allow for the resumption of a stalled UN peace plan for the Western Sahara, diplomatic sources said.

# Off the Record

## Noriega's wife charged with shoplifting

MIAMI: The wife of former Panamanian strongman General Manuel Noriega was arrested and jailed in an alleged shoplifting incident at a Miami department store, police said Tuesday, AP reports.

Felicitate Noriega, in Miami to attend her husband's drug trial, was arrested Friday with a friend at the Burdine's department store south of Miami, said Metro Dade County police spokesman Patrick Brickman.

Noriega, 46, and her friend, Rosa Busto, 50, were booked into a local jail and stayed 12 hours before being released on \$1,500 bond apiece, he said.

Both women were charged with third-degree grand theft. They were accused by store security officers of taking buttons valued at \$135 off the clothing and placing them in a bag of merchandise they had already purchased, Brickman said. They were detained after they left the store.

The grand theft charge stemmed from an estimated 1,200 dollar worth of damage to the clothing.

## Pig skin to treat human cancer

BEIJING: China has successfully experimented with fast neutron radiation on pig skin, which will be applied in treatment of human cancer, according to experts in Beijing, reports Xinhua.

Professor Shen Wenjiang of the Beijing Oncology Institute and researchers of the high energy institute of the Chinese academy of sciences said the experiments have provided reliable data for clinical treatment of cancer with the fast neutron method.

The experts noted that about 70 per cent of cancer patients need radiation therapy, which is also a final therapy for 40 per cent of the cancer patients. However, conventional photon radiation is not effective to cure some radiation-resistant cancers.

Professor Shen and other researchers started fast neutron radiation experiments on pig skin with a proton accelerator three months ago. Repeated experiments with different doses show that the pig skin's early reactions to fast neutron radiation include erythema, dry and wet desquamation and the pigs can recover in a short period without treatment.

## They put on brave face

LONDON: Britain's Prince Andrew and his wife "Fergie" put on a brave face despite their marital break-up on Monday for the second birthday party of their daughter Princess Eugenie, reports Reuter.

Buckingham palace announced last Thursday that the Duke and Duchess of York, as they are officially styled, were to separate after nearly six years of marriage.

A fleet of cars brought 15 tots to the birthday party where there were cakes, gifts and helium-filled balloons at the Yorks' ranch-style mansion.

The Yorks have been living in opposite wings of their mansion, a gift from the Queen worth almost nine million dollars. But friends expect the Duke to move out to bachelor quarters at the Palace after Eugenie's birthday party.

Palace sources said the Duchess would continue for the time being to live in the mansion with the children.

## I'm happy that they caught him

CARSON (California): A teenager showing off for friends fired a bullet into the air that killed a 5-year-old boy a half-mile away, said authorities who arrested the youth for investigation of murder, reports AP.

The 15-year-old, whose name was withheld because of his age, was booked Saturday for the killing of Adrian Benitez, said Los Angeles County sheriff's Deputy Rich Erickson. The boy was being held without bail Tuesday in a juvenile detention center.

"I'm happy that they caught him, but it's not going to get my son back," said Francisco Benitez, whose son was buried Monday.

Erickson said witnesses told sheriff's deputies that the teenager was boasting about a gun when he fired four to five shots into the air March 11 outside a house in Wilmington, about 32 kilometers south of downtown. It wasn't clear where the boy got the gun.

He died six days later when he was taken off life-support systems.

# US establishes diplomatic ties with Georgia

WASHINGTON, Mar 25: The United States has established diplomatic relations with Georgia and plans to open an embassy in Tbilisi as soon as possible, the White House announced Tuesday, reports AP.

The United States will also support Georgia's candidacy for joining international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, said White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

The United States has now established diplomatic relations with all of the former republics of the Soviet Union.

# Brown stuns Clinton with upset win in Connecticut primary

WASHINGTON, Mar 25: Former California governor Jerry Brown stunned front-runner Bill Clinton Tuesday with an upset win in the Democratic Party's presidential primary in Connecticut, reports AP.

With only a small percentage of the votes still to be counted, Brown was leading Clinton by a narrow 38 per cent to 35 per cent.

But it was big enough to revive the democratic race ahead of the key New York primary on April 7 and cast doubt over the Arkansas governor's ability to take on President George Bush.

"This thing is now coming to New York and this will be the battle of where the party is going," Brown said in New York where he was already campaigning.

Clinton, who appeared to have all but clinched the nomination with his big wins last week in the midwestern states of Michigan and Illinois, said he had expected a tough fight.

"In a way, it sets up a better stage for New York," he added.

On the Republican side, President George Bush easily retained his unbeaten record in the state where he was raised, winning 67 per cent of the vote, while his right-wing challenger Pat Buchanan has 22 per cent with 89 per cent of the precincts reporting.

But it was the democratic contest which mattered on a night when the Clinton band-

wagon was stopped in its tracks by Brown's angry charges and a low voter turnout.

Former Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas, who suspended his campaign last Thursday, but who was still on the ballot here, was holding down a surprising 20 per cent of the vote in third place.

Clinton had key wins in his native south and in the mid-west earlier this month, eventually forcing Tsongas out of the race, but he has struggled so far to convince voters in the Northeastern states.

He entered Connecticut a strong favourite, however, having already secured nearly half the number of delegates he needed to win the nomination, and with only Brown left in the

way.

The former California governor vowed to stay in the race as an alternative and his attacks on the Arkansas governor's personal integrity doubled in intensity in the last few days saying that he could not keep track of the scandals that were dogging Clinton.

Clinton's aides had expressed concern that most of Tsongas' voters were transferring their allegiances to Brown instead of their man and that some of the anti-establishment candidate's bars were striking home.

They also feared that it would be difficult to get Clinton's voters out to the polls amid assumption that he had all but won the democratic nomination.

Exit polls indicated that Brown had won votes from people who were fed up with politics, unhappy with the democratic candidates on offer and concerned about the economy.

Brown has hammered away from an anti-establishment, root-out-corruption platform that opened to ridicule in New Hampshire, but which has gradually won over converts as other candidates have fallen by the wayside.

Clinton said he agreed with Brown that the Connecticut result proved that "people don't want this process to be over." They sure don't want it to be taken away from them and I don't either," he added.

In a White House statement, Bush called his win

# Some close aides of King Birendra sacked

KATHMANDU, Mar 25: Nepal's King Birendra, his once absolute powers now drastically diminished, has sacked several close aides and pruned his secretariat, place sources said today, reports Reuter.

At least 36 palace officers have been transferred or sacked, said one source who spoke on condition of anonymity. The orders take effect from April 13, Nepal's new year's day, the official said.

The officers include Chitran Thapa, the King's principal private secretary, and Colonel Shahi Pratap, a senior aide-de-camp, the source said.