

## Pak diplomat arrested with secret documents

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: Indian agents caught a Pakistani high commission (embassy) official here Friday while he was allegedly receiving classified documents from a local contact, officials said here, reports AFP.

Pakistani official Arshad Ali was caught with top secret documents he had received from the contact near a crowded south district city mosque and was taken in for interrogation, one official said.

In Islamabad, an official statement said Ali was detained, beaten and injured by police in New Delhi.

Ali was taken to a police station by plain clothed policemen from a market where he was shopping, the statement said.

The Pakistani high commission in New Delhi had lodged a strong protest with the Indian External Affairs Ministry, demanding an immediate investigation and action against the

culprits, the Pakistani state-

ment said. Police handed over Ali to Delhi-based Pakistani diplomats, but arrested his contact, Mohammad Hanif, on charges of spying, the officials in New Delhi said, adding that the two had been under police surveillance for months.

Ali is likely to be sent back to Pakistan by the embassy, they said.

Police refused to disclose the contents of the classified documents with which Ali was reportedly caught, but said he paid Hanif 77 dollars for the consignment.

Pakistani diplomats were not immediately available for comments.

Reuters adds: More arrests were likely as investigations continue into a Pakistani spy network, it added.

Pakistan lodged a protest with the Ministry of External Affairs.

## US, Russia to back Palestinians' participation

# Israel threatens to boycott talks

JERUSALEM, Apr 18: Israel will boycott multilateral Middle East peace talks next month if Palestinians from outside the occupied territories attend, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir warned in an interview published Friday, reports AFP.

Multilateral working groups are to convene from May 11-13 in Brussels and from May 13-15 in Ottawa to discuss refugees and economic development.

But Shamir told the Jerusalem Post that if a representative of the Palestinian Diaspora was present, "we won't be there, so it won't be anything."

Israel has steadfastly opposed the participation of Palestinians who do not live on the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip at the peace table.

The United States and Russia, co-sponsors of the peace process, said in January

that they would back the participation of Palestinians from the diaspora in the working groups, but that stance has not been officialised.

Hanan Ashrawi, spokes woman for the Palestinian delegation, said Monday that for the first time Palestinians not living in the territories would take part at the two working groups.

Israel has blocked any role for the Palestine Liberation Organisation at the peace table but Palestinian negotiators take instructions from the PLO.

They met in Cairo this week with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, prompting a warning here that legal proceedings could be taken against them on their return to Israel, where the organisation is outlawed.

Shamir denied to the Post that Israel would skirt the issue. "It must be investigated," he said.

"We have to see if it happened and on what scale. We don't turn a blind eye."

With general elections due on June 23, Shamir also hit out at the opposition Labour Party's scheme for Palestinian autonomy within a year.

"I'm almost sure a Palestinian state would result," he said. "A Likud-run agreement would not result in the existence of a Palestinian state."

He also told the English-language daily that Washington had promised Arab leaders it would not provide loan guarantees for Israel to absorb new immigrants unless building was halted on the occupied territories.

"No doubt about it," Shamir said, "there was some kind of promise. The Arabs say so. It was conditional upon the total freeze of the settlements."

Israel refused to stop new construction and President

George Bush blocked loan guarantees of 10 billion dollars.

The state department dismissed reports in the Israeli press last week that Bush had promised Saudi Arabia a year ago that Israel would never be granted the loan guarantees if the Arab nations entered the peace process.

Shamir described US Israeli ties, which have chilled over the issue, as based on "identical interest."

"We have a common interest with the United States because Israel is the only factor in the entire area that will always have interests identical with those of the United States," he explained.

Bush had unfinished business with Middle East radicals, Shamir added.

"Iraq is still a threat. Libya is a threat and the Iranian threat is advancing," he warned.

## Off the Record

### Tribute to AIDS victim

LONDON: Film star Elizabeth Taylor flew in to London today to make a special appeal for the fight against AIDS at a memorial tribute to one of the disease's best-known victims, queen lead singer Freddie Mercury, reports Reuters.

"I will be asking people to be more aware and take more precautions," Taylor said at London's Heathrow airport.

"I want to make people realise that it's a disease that can kill anyone," she told reporters after arriving from New York with husband Larry Fortensky.

Taylor, president of the American foundation for AIDS research, will be among a galaxy of stars at Monday's open-air rock concert at Wembley stadium, billed by organisers as the biggest memorial tribute in history.

More than 20 acts, including David Bowie, Elton John and remaining members of queen, will perform to raise awareness of AIDS and funds for the fight against the disease.

Organisers estimate the potential worldwide television audience at one billion in some 70 countries. Mercury died of AIDS last November, aged 45.



Liz Taylor

### Acrobat survives 6,600-foot fall

HONG KONG: An acrobat whose parachute failed to open properly during a show last week in Shanghai survived a 6,600-foot (2,000-metre) fall, an official news report said Saturday, reports AP.

The China News Service reported that the 20-year-old man, identified only by his surname, Che, encountered wind current problems after jumping out of a plane at 6,600 feet (2,000 metres). It said Che fell more than 3,000 feet (900 metres) before being able to slightly open the parachute. He landed on a house and then rolled to the ground, the state-run news agency said.

Che suffered a concussion, a fractured lumbar vertebrae, an injured right shoulder and damaged left eye socket. His injuries were described as serious but not life-threatening.

The China News Service said the accident occurred during the Lunghua Temple Fair Parachuting Show on April 11.



PHILIPPINES: Mario Castro, is carried away by devotees to a hospital after collapsing while nailed to a wooden cross on Friday. Castro a 40-year old bus driver was crucified for 13 consecutive years as part of his personal vow to reenact Jesus Christ's crucifixion.— AFP/UNB photo

### Clash on abortion

BUFFALO, NY: Those for abortion and those against it confronted each other with angry taunts just days before a new, prolonged protest aimed to shut down the city's abortion clinics, reports AP.

Both sides expect thousands to come to Buffalo for the latest showdown over the politically volatile issue of abortion. The protests, beginning Monday, are patterned after those last summer in Wichita, Kan. which lasted 46 days and resulted in 2,600 arrests and thousands of dollars in police overtime.

On Friday, about 100 abortion-rights activists tried to disrupt a church service where Randall Terry, founder of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue, spoke. No arrests were made.

Terry urged about 500 followers to turn out at clinics despite vows from abortion-rights demonstrators to keep them open.

"Some People here are going to get spit on, you're going to be cursed at," Terry said. "Be like Jesus, and just take it."

## Call to remove Indo-Pak tension

ISLAMABAD, Apr 18: Pakistan and Indian politicians have appealed for a constructive and purposeful dialogue on all vital issues to remove tension between the two countries, reports Xinhua.

The appeal was made by prominent politicians of the two countries at the second round of non-governmental India-Pakistan dialogue which opened here Friday under the aegis of the Institute of Strategic Studies of Pakistan (ISSP).

Former Indian Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral said there was a need to change the situation and create a cooperative atmosphere.

### 2 Chinese accused of raping

BEIJING, Apr 18: A five-province hunt for two Chinese men accused of murdering 22 people and raping eight women has ended, with one of them shot dead by police and the other captured by the Legal Daily reported Friday, says AFP.

Li Gang was shot and killed by police in northern Shanxi province on March 2, while his accomplice Tang Yanping fled only to be captured April 14 at his home in northeastern Jilin province, the newspaper said.

In the first three months of the year, Li and Tang went on a rampage across at least three provinces.

### Qatar, Bahrain urged to solve Hawar dispute

WASHINGTON, Apr 18: The United States urged Qatar and Bahrain on Friday to settle their dispute over the Hawar Islands peacefully, reports Reuters.

"We would like to see the dispute settled peacefully in order to remove one of the most persistent obstacles to Gulf Cooperation Council," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said.

"Neither party should resort to force or the threat of force," he said.



MOSCOW: Former East German leader Erich Honecker (R) takes advantage of the balmy spring weather to take a walk with an unidentified companion on the grounds of the Chilean embassy in Moscow on Friday. —AFP/UNB photo

### BJP denies temple damage

NEW DELHI, Apr 18: A 15-member BJP delegation led by the party Vice President Sikander Bakht which visited Ayodhya recently denied that many temples were destroyed while levelling the ground in Ayodhya, reports PTI.

Bakht who led the delegation soon after the visit of the all party delegation, told newsmen here yesterday that structures which were removed were not temples or places of worship, and were really in the nature of dwelling places.

### Pan Am bombing

# US pledges fair trial of suspects

WASHINGTON, Apr 18: The United States pledged Friday that the two Libyan agents suspected of carrying out the 1988 Pan Am jetliner bombing would get a fair trial if extradited to the United States but said it had received no extradition offer, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, Reuters adds, the United States, saying it wants to resolve the conflict with Libya, said on Friday that two Libyans suspected in the Lockerbie bombing would receive due process under US law if handed over for trial.

But States Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said the United States had not received any offer for the two Libyans to stand trial in the

1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people were killed.

Libyan Lawyer Ibrahim Lagwell told Reuters on Thursday night that his clients would be prepared to stand trial in a foreign country, including Scotland or the United States, if they could be guaranteed fair trials.

Boucher said: "We have not been contacted by anyone with an offer for the two suspects to stand trial in the US or the UK."

But he attempted to address the concerns the Libyans' lawyer had raised, saying: "In a trial, of course they would be afforded all the due process guarantees provided

by US law and available to all defendants regardless of national origin or the nature of the crime."

In an indication that Washington would like the current impasse to be brought to an end, Boucher added: "We would like to resolve this situation and we would welcome serious steps on the part of Libya."

He noted that over the weeks that the crisis has been developing, Libya had advanced a number of proposals but they have not been serious.

Libya has been virtually isolated from the outside world since Wednesday, when UN sanctions came into force because Tripoli had refused to

hand over the men Abdel Baset Ali Mohamed Al-Megrahi and Al-amin Khalifa Fhimah.

The UN resolution ordering the sanctions also calls on Libya to cooperate with an investigation into the 1989 bombing of a French airliner over Niger. A total of 441 people were killed in the Lockerbie and Niger bombings.

In the interview, Lagwell said he believed the Libyan authorities would not object to a voluntary surrender by the two suspects.

"My clients feel that they are innocent and they would accept a fair trial in any place where they have a guarantee," he said.

## Talks fail to reunite Koreans

SEOUL, Apr 18: South and North Korea failed at a border meeting on Saturday to settle differences over attempts to reunite 10 million Koreans separated from their families by four decades of cold war, Seoul officials said, reports Reuters.

Nothing came out of today's meeting. The two sides could not agree on anything, an official at Seoul's north-south dialogue office said.

He said the two Korean delegations met in a joint exchange and cooperation committee for nearly three hours at the border hamlet of Panmunjo, but the talks were deadlocked over details.

The delegations agreed to reconvene on April 27.

The north turned down a southern proposal to allow some separated families from both Koreas to meet as an initial step, the spokesman said.

North Korea was still insisting that detailed measures be left to the Red Cross officials, he said.

South Korea suggested an economic information office be set up in Panmunjo, the spokesman said. The north was not opposed to the idea but further details could not be agreed, he said.

The two Koreas, still technically at war since the 1950-53 Korean conflict.



KABUL: Chief of staff of the Afghan Air Force General Jamil (L) discusses the situation with his deputy, Mohammad Halem Raziz at Kabul's military airport on April 17.

## Mujahideen preparing for final showdown with Kabul forces

KABUL, Apr 18: Prayers for peace and cheap bread rang out from mosques across the encircled city of Kabul yesterday where Afghans waited in fear and hope for the end of 14 years of civil war, reports Reuters.

Row upon row of shops on the edge of the city were shuttered and boarded up. Streets were mostly deserted.

Rumours spread of how Mujahideen guerrillas were tightening their grip around Kabul, preparing to meet government forces in a final showdown.

"The mullah is praying to God for peace and cheaper bread," said a 44-year-old shopkeeper in the old bazaar surrounding the Puli Kishiy mosque in central Kabul.

Bread has almost doubled in price in recent days because of wheat shortages and fears of mass bloodshed if frantic negotiations involving

the United Nations, the government and various rebel groups break down.

President Najibullah's overthrow by members of his own government this week may have delighted some, but this is far outweighed by their sense of fear.

"Of course we are afraid. People are really weary of war," the shopkeeper said.

Nearly beggars with limbs blown off by mines lay on rags. Children cried for alms in the crowded grounds of the mosque.

"We have no work, no money. What is our future? We're afraid," said Karim, a young unemployed man on his way to Friday prayers. "Najibullah never kept his promises," a Sikh stallholder said.

Sandbags were piled beside a white marble statue of a mother and child outside UNICEF offices. Around the corner government troops lolled on an armoured personnel carrier, nursing a machine-gun.

"The situation is normal inside the city," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wahid Qayoumi said.

However, the situation was rather "special" beyond the city limits, he said. No one seemed quite sure of where those limits are after a series of Mujahideen victories and defections by government forces.

Who is fighting whom was equally confusing and many Afghans listen to the British Broadcasting Corporation and Voice of America to try to keep up with shifting alliances.

Kabul airport was manned by government officials, government soldiers and militiamen who only recently had turned against Kabul to join the rebels.

Carrying submachine-guns and shoulder rockets and wearing traditional baggy trousers and turbans, the militiamen looked incongru-

ous beside soldiers in neat green uniforms.

Both sides said the militiamen were under the orders of militia commander general Rashid Dostum, who last month abandoned Najibullah and cast in his lot with the Mujahideen guerrillas in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

With Najibullah's fall, Dostum apparently feels able to mend fences with the Kabul government.

Reporters who drove south out of Kabul reported scattered shelling, believed to be coming from government forces and intended as a warning to the Islamic fundamentalist, Hezb-i-Islami guerrillas who are approaching Kabul.

The shelling could be heard in the distance — at least by some.

"Booms? No I haven't heard any," said a taxi driver who said he stopped listening years ago.

### Power grab in Peru predicted 2 years ago

WASHINGTON, Apr 18: A private report predicted a power grab in Peru two years ago, including the possibility that a democratically elected president could welcome a coup to disfigure his failure to solve Peru's many problems, reports AFP.

The study, Sendero Luminoso and the future of Peru, was done by the Rand Corporation for the State and Defence Departments in March 1990, and argued that the only pertinent question was not if there would be a coup in Peru, but when.