

## Over 50 killed in Armenian clash

LONDON, Apr 19: More than 50 people have been killed in fighting in a predominantly Armenian area of Azerbaijan located north of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Moscow's Channel 1 television reported today in a dispatch monitored by the BBC in London, says AFP.

"The Armenians self-defence in Shumyanovsk district have been under constant fire since the morning of Saturday," the television said.

"According to the latest information on the battle in the Armenian village of Maraga, 53 people have been killed there and 43 are missing," Channel 1 said.

It said Karachinar, another Armenian village in the area, was the focal point of "an extremely fierce confrontation."

North of Stepanakert, the Armenian village of Talysh in Karabakh's Mardakert district came under attack, with one death and two people injured reported so far.

In a dispatch from Yerevan, the Itar-Tass news agency said Stepanakert, Karabakh's capital, was bombed by grad multiple rocket launchers Saturday from nearby Shusha.

Itar-Tass also reported from Baku, Azerbaijan, that two people were killed and were several injured when the villages of Agbulag, Atrik and Mirzakhan in the Taz district came under artillery and machinegun fire from across the border in Armenia.

The presidium of the Azerbaijani parliament adopted and appeal to Commonwealth countries and the international public, Itar-Tass reported.

"It says that, according to reports from reliable sources, there is a danger that Shusha may be subjected to a destructive bombardment."

## Pindi protests Arshad's detention

ISLAMABAD, Apr 19: Pakistan's Foreign Ministry summoned the Indian Deputy High Commissioner on Saturday to lodge a strong protest against the detention and alleged mistreatment of one of its diplomats by police in New Delhi, reports Reuters.

The ministry said in a statement it had conveyed to the Indian official a demand for an immediate inquiry into last Thursday's incident and appropriate action against the culprits.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency quoted New Delhi police on Friday as saying Pakistani diplomat Arshad Ali was a spy who had been caught red-handed buying top secret documents.

## Bush for further isolation of Castro US tightens embargo on Cuba

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine, Apr 19: President George Bush called on Saturday for the further isolation of Cuban leader Fidel Castro and tightened the US embargo on Cuba by closing American ports to ships doing business with Havana, reports Reuters.

Today we are closer than ever to our goal of returning freedom to Cuba, Bush said in a written statement issued by the White House in Maine, where he is spending the Easter holiday.

Noting that the collapse of the former Soviet Union cost Havana economic and military subsidies that had been as high as US dollar 5 billion annually, Bush boasted that Castro is on his own.

"My administration will continue to press governments

around the world on the need to isolate economically the Castro regime," he said.

Together we will bring to Cuba a new era of freedom and democracy, Bush said.

An administration official said the increasing pressure on Castro comes because the feeling is that Cuba is becoming isolated more and more.

They've been cut off from aid from their former godfather, the Soviet Union and we (should) strike now while the iron's hot to strengthen up our embargo, he said.

He issued orders closing US ports to cargo ships that are engaged in trade with Cuba.

The administration official said one aim of the president's action was to close a loophole in the US trade embargo imposed in 1960 following

Castro's ascent to power.

The official said certain Cuban goods have been sold in the United States because they first were shipped to a third country and then sent to the United States for sale.

Cuban sugar, for example, has been bought and delivered to a third country and then resold in the United States.

Bush, in effect, also challenged Castro to allow direct flights of humanitarian aid to Cuba from friends and relatives of Cubans living in the United States.

He ordered the treasury department to issue licenses that would permit direct flight of package mail between Miami and Havana — something Castro rejected in 1988.

Currently, Cuban expatriates

in the United States charter an airplane that must fly to Mexico and then goes to Cuba.

Those flights have cost US dollar 27 a pound for freight, while direct travel would reduce the expense to US dollar 5 per pound, an official said.

Meanwhile, US news and world report reported the United States privately warned Castro that it would view as an act of war a repeat of the 1980 Mariel exodus of Cuban refugees when, at Havana's urging, 120,000 refugees fled to Florida.

It said the Bush administration was worried that he mounting economic crisis in Cuba might prompt another outflow and it would be difficult to sop since the refugees could rightly claim political persecution.

## Off the Record

### Now he is in crossword puzzle

ENGLAND: For an actor playing someone damaged by sexual obsession, Jeremy Irons was sounding pretty breezy as he pondered the day's crossword puzzle, reports AP.

Blank 'we all' - five letters beginning with D: Irons mused during a lunch break on the set of the film 'Damage', waving away a doctor who had come to tend to a bloodshot eye.

"Or what about 26 down," he continued, his pen poised, "A town in Southern California - six letters, the second is J."

Last year's Academy Award-winning best actor for 'Reversal of Fortune', the 43-year-old Irons looked every bit the elegant Englishman, immaculately suited, his dark hair lightly streaked with silver.

Yet behind that distinguished appearance lies the most turbulent of souls - or so Irons was finding as he became Stephen Fleming, a well-heeled Conservative politician ruined personally and professionally by his lust.

"It's terribly difficult to play," said Irons, his attention at last diverted from puzzles to the promotional job at hand.

"The big problem is that it could seem as if what Stephen is having is just an adulterous affair," Irons said of the movie, adapted from Josephine Hart's novel in which sexual desire spills over into psychosis.

### London crime capital of Europe

LONDON: London is the crime capital of Europe, according to a survey conducted for Britain's independent on Sunday newspaper, reports Reuters.

It found that London had the highest total number of crimes although Berlin had a higher rate of violent crime.

Burglaries and car crimes were particularly high in London.

There were 60.2 serious property crimes per 1,000 population in London in 1990, compared with 45 in Paris and 32.8 in Rome.

The study is based on crime statistics for 1990 from the 12-nation European Community, the latest year for which complete figures were available.

### The naked spy

LONDON: A Soviet agent at the centre of Britain's most notorious sex-and-espionage scandal of modern times has challenged the long-held view that the affair failed to provide Moscow with any British secrets, reports Reuters.

Yevgeny Ivanov breaking 29 years of silence, gave his account of the scandal in his memoirs called 'The naked spy', a first instalment of which was published in the Sunday Times.

The row in the early 1960s involved call girl Christine Keeler who was friends with both Ivanov, then a Soviet captain and assistant naval attaché in London, and John Profumo, then Britain's war minister.

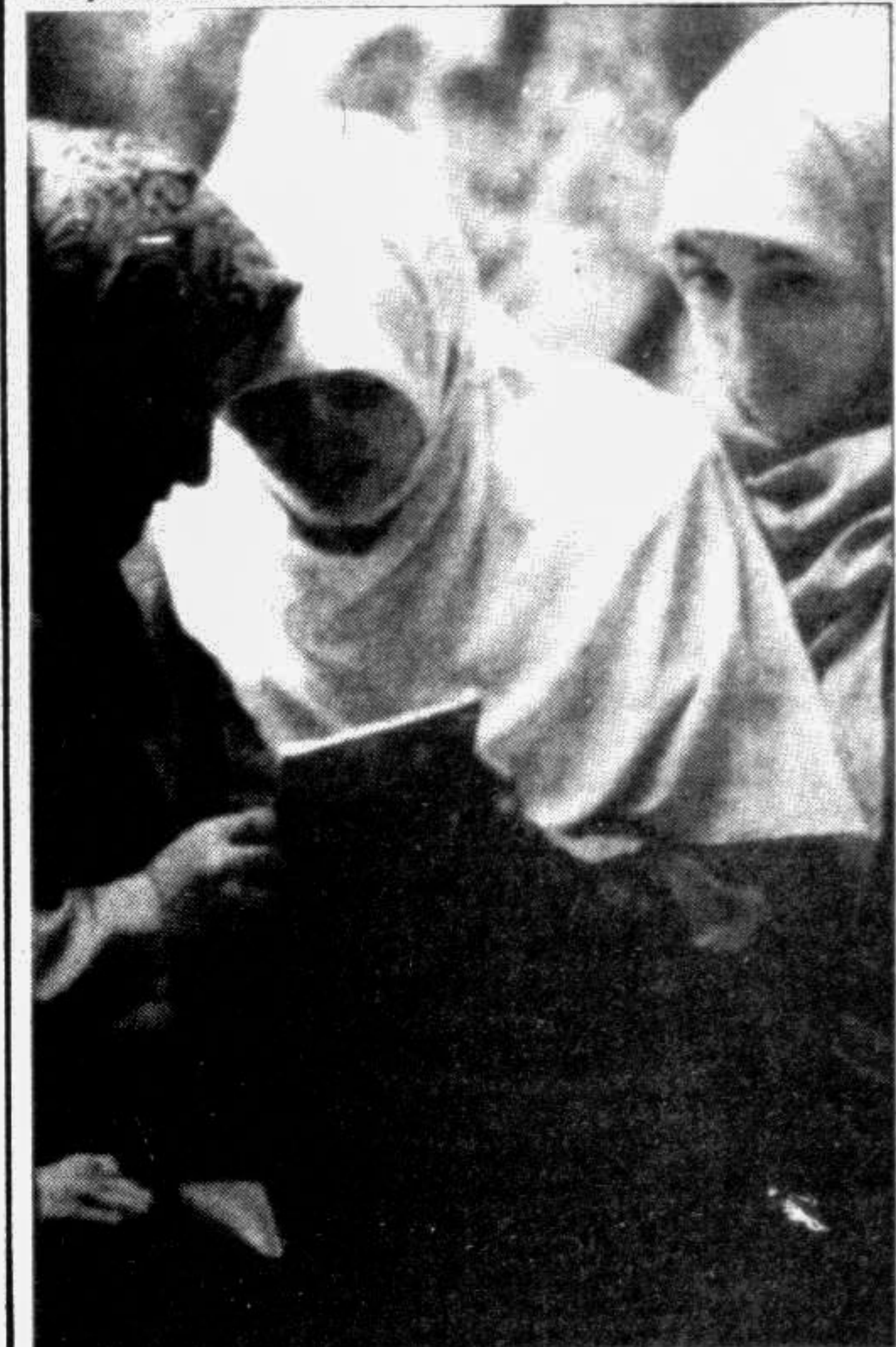
### Protest indeed!

GAUHATI: About 120 college students shaved their heads Sunday to protest what they described army atrocities in the northeastern state of Assam, reports AP.

The students lined up before seven barbers at the dormitory courtyard of the Bhole Barooah College as part of an agitation to focus world attention on soldiers killing and raping people in Nalbari and Darrang districts.

"We can't protest against the army atrocities by taking out processions or holding rallies because we'll be arrested," said Jayanta Malla Barua, general secretary of the students union.

The students shouted slogans and carried placards saying 'Army Go Back' and 'Stop Army Atrocities' while barbers wielded the razors. Two cooks at the dormitory also joined the protestors, Barua said.



Young Turkish women wearing the Muslim veil read through papers at a bookstall at the 6th conference of Muslims in Europe which opened in Belgium on Saturday. —AFP/UNB photo



TRIPOLI: Libyan school children throng the streets in Tripoli on Saturday, as life continues to be normal after four days of the UN embargo. —AFP/UNB photo

## Constitution restrains President to dissolve Russian parliament

MOSCOW, Apr 19: The full-scale Russian Parliament voted Saturday for a new Russian constitution restraining the President from dissolving Parliament, reports AFP.

It approved a text providing for a Presidency which its author says would be akin to the US model, but threw out drafts which would have increased Presidential powers.

But supporters of President Boris Yeltsin persuaded the Congress of People's Deputies to refer a clause which provides for the separation of the powers of Parliament, the judiciary and the executive back to committee for revision.

The Congress approved by 664 votes — 29 more than the two-thirds required the first

point of a resolution which adopts the overall conception of constitutional reform and the principles of the constitutional draft approved by the Russian Parliament. The Supreme Soviet.

The draft is known as the Rumatintsev draft after its main author, Oleg Rumatintsev, who has headed a Parliamentary committee working on the draft for the past 18 months.

It has 140 articles and 24 chapters, and has already been amended once by the Supreme Soviet, the reduced Executive Parliament.

Rumatintsev says that his draft calls for a Presidential system more akin to the US model than a Parliamentary regime.

Its first article — entitled the 'sovereignty of the state' — stipulates that Russia is a sovereign, democratic, social and federal state based on the Rule of Law.

And in its second Article, the draft declares that man's life, his liberty, his honour and his dignity are supreme values in the Russian Federation.

The text of the draft adopted stipulates that the market economy will be Russia's economic foundation.

The draft also states in what is being described as a concession to decentralisation that the citizens of the 20 autonomous regions of the Russian Federation may establish their own citizenship but

that they will also remain citizens of the Federation.

Yeltsin had argued in Parliament for a new constitution replacing the 1977 constitution inherited from the Soviet Union which would redefine the state's right to intervene in the life of citizens.

The Rumatintsev draft also introduces political pluralism. It guarantees freedom of thought and faith, and in Article 69 declares that the state does not prefer one dogma above another.

Article seven states that economic activity will be free and that there will be diversity and equality of forms of property.

### Joint military exercise in Caribbean today

CARACAS, Apr 19: Thirteen Caribbean nations will start joint military exercises in the Caribbean Monday with the United States and Britain in a bid to increase their joint retaliation ability in case of regional insecurity or natural disaster, reports Xinhua.

According to reports received here yesterday, the operation will be performed in four states, with more than 600 troops and civil personnel participating.

Coded "trade winds 92", the exercises will, throughout the four stages, involve units from nine member countries of the Caribbean security system, Antigua, Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St Christopher, Nevis St Lucia and St Vincent.

The defense forces of Jamaica, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago,

### China grants shelter to Myanmar refugees

BEIJING, Apr 19: China is granting temporary refuge to Myanmar refugees who are streaming across the border to escape fighting between Yangon troops and separatist guerrillas, the official New China News Agency said, reports Reuters.

"Due to the fighting between the government troops of Myanmar (Burma) and the Kachin independent army, a large number of refugees from Myanmar have spontaneously entered China," the agency said in a report issued late on Saturday.

"Out of humanitarian consideration, the Chinese government has accorded temporary settlement, to those refugees," it said, quoting a Foreign Ministry spokesman. It did not say how many Myanmar refugees were al-

ready in China.

The Kachins are one of several ethnic minorities in seeking independence from Yangon.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry denied what it said were reports Chinese border troops had ambushed Myanmar refugees, calling them "sheer fabrication."

The Japanese news agency Kyodo on Friday quoted sources as saying more than 1,000 Chinese soldiers backed by military helicopters had recently battled a group of armed drug smugglers inside Myanmar territory, killing about 120 people.

Waves of Burmese refugees have fled to neighbouring countries as the country's military government continues its long civil war against groups of armed insurgents.

### Tigers kill ten Lankan soldiers

COLOMBO, Apr 19: Tamil guerrillas ambushed and killed at least 10 soldiers conducting an offensive against them in northern Sri Lanka, a military official here said today, reports AFP.

Dozens of gunmen believed to be from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked their victims with automatic weapons and grenades in coastal Mannar district overnight Saturday, the official said.

He said first reports spoke of at least 10 security force deaths and an unspecified number of other casualties. It was not immediately clear if the guerrillas suffered any losses.

The LTTE is leading a 20-year-old guerrilla campaign against government forces across the island's embattled northeast to establish a separate Tamil homeland there.

### Iran's ties with Gulf neighbours discussed

KUWAIT, Apr 19: Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati discussed his country's relations with its Arab Gulf neighbours during talks in Kuwait on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Officials said Velayati met the Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, and Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Velayati, on his first visit to Kuwait since it was freed from Iraqi occupation in 1991, also held talks with Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

The Kuwaiti news agency quoted Sabah as saying they discussed Iran's relations with the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Velayati refused to answer reporters' questions.

## UN sanctions won't harm Lankan ties with Libya

COLOMBO, Apr 19: The recent UN resolution on sanctions against Libya will not affect Sri Lankan relations, Sunday Times reported today, says Xinhua.

The UN resolution imposed after Libya refused to extradite two men allegedly responsible for the Lockerbie aircraft disaster banned on all direct air links to and from Libya arms deals and called for the downgrading of Libyan embassies abroad.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said that trade with Libya will not be affected by this action since the resolution did not impose any sanctions against non-military goods. The island country buys oil from Libya and sells tea.

He said that there were no direct air links or arms deals between the two countries, and there was no question of downgrading the Libyan embassy in Colombo as it has a very small diplomatic staff.

A Libyan embassy spokesman in Colombo also said bilateral trade will not be affected by the UN sanctions and Sri Lankans in Libya are free to return or continue to work there.

However presidential advisor Bradman Weerakoon said the Sri Lankan mission to Cairo has been instructed to give necessary

assistance to Sri Lankans working in the Middle East country who wished to return home.

A spokesman for the Egyptian embassy in Colombo said that Sri Lankans who wish to return will have to come to Cairo by road and then fly to Colombo.

The Sri Lankan government has so far not requested the Egyptian authorities to help in this matter but they would be willing to do so if requested, he said.

AFP reports: A Syrian drug dealer with ties to a Palestinian terrorist leader may have planted the bomb which caused the destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland in December 1988, a published report said here Saturday.

In its current issue, Time magazine said it had obtained an FBI field report from Germany which said Monzer Al Khassar, a Syrian drug dealer, may have placed a piece of luggage containing a bomb aboard the Boeing 747 in Frankfurt.

The plane exploded in mid air over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people.

At the time Al Khassar was cooperating

with the US drug enforcement administration in a sting operation but also was working with Ahmed Jibril, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Time said.

The new theory comes just three days after the United Nations imposed an air and arms embargo against Libya which has refused to extradite two nationals accused by Washington and Britain of being responsible for the bombing.

AP from London adds: A former Libyan government official hiding under US government protection is ready to testify against two Libyans accused in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, a British newspaper reported Sunday.

The Independent quoted Vincent Cannistraro, former chief of CIA counterterrorist operations, as saying the unidentified Libyan knew 'the who, where and when' of the 1988 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people died.

Cannistraro was also quoted as saying that a Maltese shopkeeper who sold clothes to the bomber was ready to supply evidence and would implicate the two Libyans.

The former CIA official, who now runs his

own security consulting firm, told the paper he believed the pair coordinated their efforts with Palestinian terrorists in Syria in an operation possibly financed by Iran.

The UN Security Council this week ordered international air travel and arms sales to Libya cut off to pressure the country into turning over two men for trial in Britain or the United States.

Libya, which has no extradition treaty with either nation, has offered to turn over the two men — Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, 39, and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, 35 — for trial in a neutral country.

The newspaper report could not be immediately confirmed. The Foreign Office said it had no information on the report and referred queries to the US government.

In February, Cannistraro told The Washington Post that a Libyan source had reported that the two suspects had disappeared and will not be found. The two men, described in the West as Libyan intelligence operative, subsequently appeared in public in Tripoli, the Libyan capital.

### US navy closes last drydock in Subic

SUBIC BAY NAVAL BASE, Philippines, Apr 19: The US Navy towed out the last remaining drydock from its Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines today, heralding the closure of one of its largest overseas ship-repair yards, reports Reuters.

The floating drydock, named the US Resourceful, has been at Subic since the end of the Second World War and played an important role during the Vietnam war repairing US warships.

At least 22,000 Filipino workers will lose their jobs because of the closure of the base.

The rescue and salvage ship Beaufort towed out the 543-foot (165 metre) drydock at the start of a 15-day voyage to Yokosuka, Japan, where it will be repaired.