

Fresh Y'slav attack on Bosnian city

SARAJEVO, Apr 20: The Serb-led Yugoslav army has attacked a city in Bosnian-Herzegovina, defying international criticism of its role in the breakaway republic's conflict, reports Reuter.

The army poured artillery fire onto the southwestern city of Mostar on Sunday, killing at least one person and setting buildings ablaze, after Muslim forces ignored an ultimatum to hand over two Yugoslav air force pilots.

The attack followed a weekend of battles between rival ethnic groups which took the confirmed death toll in fighting over Bosnia's newly-won independence past 200 and plunged the republic closer to all-out war.

Both Bosnian and Croatian radio reports said Yugoslav air force jets also bombed Croat positions near Neum on the Adriatic coast, while the Yugoslav army shelled them.

An envoy dispatched to Bosnia by the government of Turkey, which has close ties with the republic's Muslims, saw little reason for hope after talks with Muslim, Serb and army elders in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo.

"I am not very optimistic," the envoy, Omer Ersun, said. His comments increased fears that international mediation cannot prevent a long and

bloody conflict in Bosnia, squeezed between the dominant Yugoslav republic of Serbia and newly-independent Croatia.

Bosnia, a republic of more than 4.3 million people, has been sliding towards all-out war since its Muslims and Croats voted last month for independence from Yugoslavia and the minority Serbs rebelled.

Arif Smajkic, director of the Bosnian public health institute, told Sarajevo television 200 people had been killed and 1,600 wounded in skirmishes in the last six weeks.

Some 1,000 others were unaccounted for, he said. Aid organisations say about 1,70,000 people have been driven from their homes by the fighting.

The United States led the international community last week in condemning Serbia and the Yugoslav army for interfering in Bosnia. It threatened to make Serbia an international pariah.

The army opened fire on Mostar, Bosnia's fifth largest city with a mixed population of more than 100,000, after Muslim forces failed to hand over two pilots which the army said had been abducted. The Muslims said the pilots had deserted.

India persuades Russia to transfer rocket technology

NEW DELHI, Apr 20: A team of Indian experts has gone to Moscow to renegotiate a stalled deal transferring Russian rocket technology to India, a Foreign ministry spokesman said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

He said Moscow had indicated a rethink was needed on space technology cooperation "in tune with international thinking on non-proliferation of military technology" after the United States put pressure on Russia to shelve the deal.

At stake is a 200-million dollar contract between the Russian space agency Glavkosmos and the Indian space research organisation which would include the transfer of cryogenic rocket boosters, Indian newspapers

reported on Sunday.

The United States has been pressing India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Diplomats say the country is "a turn of the screwdriver away" from assembling an atomic bomb.

The paper quoted an article in the Russian youth daily, Komsomolskaya Pravda, as saying the Russian President Boris Yeltsin had suspended the agreement following US objections.

There has been a running debate in Russia over the rocket deal with India, the Russian embassy's political counsellor Vladimir Grachev said.

Grachev said the debate was

part of Moscow's joint effort with Washington to vigorously pursue our policy of nuclear non-proliferation.

The ministry spokesman said Space Department Secretary UR Rao had left for Moscow at the head of a team of experts to work out new rocket technology transfer arrangements.

The Hindu newspaper said US Secretary of State James Baker told Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev during a visit in February that the deal with India created serious problems for US Russian space cooperation.

The Hindu said Baker warned Kozyrev that the United States might impose trade sanctions against Russia

if the Contract was not scrapped.

Grachev said Russian Parliament member Vitaly Sevov Yanov, a former cosmonaut, recently asked Moscow to assess the consequences for Russia's relations with India if it suspended the rocket contract.

Delhi has resisted signing the non-proliferation treaty, saying it discriminates against countries without nuclear arsenals.

It has also rejected a proposal to join the United States, Russia, China and Pakistan in a five-nation regional pact on nuclear non-proliferation, saying it does not give safeguards against the global reach of nuclear weapons.



Celebrants take part in the Palm Sunday Service at a Russian orthodox church in Moscow on April 19. Whereas Catholics the world over celebrate Easter on April 19, the Russian church will only celebrate Easter next weekend. — AFP/UNB photo

Arabs helpless to resist UN sanctions against Libya

CAIRO, Apr 20: Arab states, still recovering from the divisive Gulf crisis and helpless to resist UN sanctions against Libya, have adopted a wait-and-see approach to Tripoli's standoff with the West, diplomats said yesterday, reports Reuter.

A flurry of attempts by the Cairo-based Arab League to resolve the issue before the imposition of sanctions four days ago has died down, giving way to individual reactions, both rational and nervous, by member states.

"Up to this moment, no meetings on Lockerbie are

scheduled," said a League official, referring to a seven-nation ministerial committee that met for a third time in Rabat last week in a bid to break the deadlock.

Libya's ambassador to the Arab League, Ali Ireiki, said yesterday after a meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa that Arab foreign ministers would discuss the issue at a regular session in Cairo on April 28. He gave no details.

But diplomats were sceptical of a possible breakthrough, saying the next move was up to Libya.

The Arab league, struggling

to present a united front, tried to the last moment to find a settlement to the Lockerbie crisis. But its last suggestion to hand the two suspects to Malta was rejected by both Britain and the United States.

Most Arab states have said they will enforce the sanctions ordered by the United Nations Security Council against Libya.

Many Arabs believe the West is biased against the Arab world, arguing that sanctions should have been applied to Israel for its continued occupation of Arab land.

19-hour Yemen hostage ordeal ends Commandos free Saudi envoy

SAN'A, Yemen, Apr 20: Yemeni commandos on Monday, freed the Saudi ambassador, who was held in his office for 19 hours by a gunman described as desperate and apologetic. The gunman fired twice as he was overpowered, but no one was hurt, reports AP.

The gunman, who was also armed with a grenade and had claimed to have a bomb, was demanding a million-dollar ransom for Ambassador Ali Kassidi.

There was no immediate word on the fate of the attacker, told the Associated Press he was freed at 8:00 am (0500 GMT).

He said the man had raced past Yemen guards outside the embassy and broke into his office about 1 pm Sunday (1000 GMT), seizing him and his counselor, Abdul-Aziz Fathi. He

later freed Fathi.

Kassidi said he talked with the gunman throughout the night, and eventually convinced him to order breakfast.

Monday morning, a commando disguised as a waiter entered the ambassador's office and threw a cup of hot tea into the gunman's face, Kassidi said.

"First it was the waiter, then suddenly the room was full of Yemeni security," Kassidi said.

He said the man made a desperate attempt to reach a bag he claimed held a bomb, but the commandos held him back.

"It all happened very fast, and two shots went off from his gun," Kassidi said. He said he was uninjured, and believed no one else had been hurt.

The official Yemeni press agency identified the gunman

as Ahmed Nathar Gameel al-Qatari.

Kassidi described him as a Yemeni in his 30s who told him he was sorry "but that he was doing what he did because he badly needed the money."

Kassidi said the man's motives may have been political because he said he needed the money for a group he did not identify.

"We talked all night, but the man was nervous and confused," Kassidi said.

The official Saudi Press Agency in Riyadh carried a statement by the Saudi government strongly denouncing the incident as a "terrorist act" and "flagrant violation of all diplomatic norms".

The Yemeni Foreign Ministry denounced "all acts of terrorism and all attempts to mark the brotherly relations between the two countries."

Sudan lifts ban on UN relief flights

NICOSIA, Apr 20: The Sudanese government has lifted a six-week ban on UN relief flights to ferry food to thousands of starving people in southern Sudan, the national news agency said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The relief flights from Lokichoggio in Kenya to Nasir and Okobo in the south were resumed by the UN on Sunday. Sudan News Agency (SUNDA) quoted Ibrahim Abu Qaf, Sudanese general commissioner for relief and rehabilitation, as saying.

Aid agencies had said the ban on relief flights, ordered by military leader Lieutenant General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir to coincide with a government offensive against rebels in the south, had imperiled the lives of thousands of people.

The Sudanese government has recently claimed a series of victories against SPLA.

Li resents US pressure on arms sale

BEIJING, Apr 20: Chinese Premier Li Peng expressed resentment today at US pressure on human rights and weapons sales, Japanese officials said, reports AFP.

During a meeting with Li, Japanese international Trade and Industry Minister Kozo Watanabe said Tokyo was anxious about the future of Sino-US relations, which have yet to be normalized nearly three years after the 1989 Tiananmen square crackdown.

"The United States is important for China as a trading partner," Li was quoted as saying, "but it takes on its own standards on the human rights issue and the arms proliferation issue."

Ghali's appeal to donors

PHNOM PENH, April 20: UN Chief Boutros Boutros-Ghali urgently appealed to the world's donors today for funds to support the Cambodian peacekeeping operation lest it be forgotten in the rush for UN peace funds elsewhere in the world, reports AFP.

The Secretary-General also presided over the signing of two international human rights covenants by the Cambodian factions, including the murderous Khmer Rouge whose documented record of human rights abuses gave them a reputation as brutal killers.

In his appeal, Boutros-Ghali asked for 593 million dollars for food, health services, shelter, education, training and restoration of Cambodia's basic infrastructure.

"The funds are urgently needed to help this beleaguered nation recover from more than two decades of conflict

Off the Record

'I'm not cancer stricken'

NEW YORK: Elizabeth Taylor's publicist Chen Sam has sued The Star newspaper for \$7 million, saying its August 27 story reporting the spokeswoman had cancer was false, reports AP.

In court papers made public Friday in Manhattan's state Supreme Court, Sam said the story "was riddled with falsehoods, including the claim that I was 'cancer-stricken'."

Sam's lawyer, Richard Golub, said the next court date in the case is April 29, when Justice Carmen Ciparick is to rule on his motion to deny The Star's request to produce Sam's medical records dating to 1980.

The Star's story, headlined "Double Tragedy Devastates Bride-To-Be Liz Taylor," was published a few weeks before Miss Taylor's October wedding to Larry Fortensky. It said Fortensky's mother had died of cancer two weeks before and that Sam also had the disease.

"I unequivocally swear that I do not have cancer," Sam said in a sworn statement. "I have never had cancer; I was never diagnosed with cancer and have never been treated for cancer."

Star officials could not be reached for comment. A call Sunday night to the tabloid's New York office rang unanswered.

In its story, The Star said Sam refused to confirm or deny she had cancer.

"My private life is my own business," the tabloid quoted her. "I don't think it's anyone's business. People can write what they want."

Roman slave dead

LONDON: British comedian Frankie Howerd, who delighted millions playing a Roman slave in the 1970s television series "Up Pompeii," died on Sunday. He was 70, reports Reuter.

Howerd entered a clinic three weeks ago with a virus that caused heart and lung problems. He was discharged last Tuesday but collapsed later at his London home and died soon afterwards in London's chairing cross hospital.

"He was a true original and everybody will miss him," said television personality David Frost.

Love quenches its thirst

MONTICELLO, New York: A bride's ex-boyfriend shot the woman and her groom on their wedding day then turned the gun on himself, police said, reports AFP.

Eusebio Torres, 34, was upset that his former girlfriend planned to marry and went to the home of the groom, Manuel Saldana, 36, in the early hour of Saturday morning, police said.

He shot and killed Saldana and wounded his brother, then shot and wounded the bride-to-be, Emily Rodriguez, who was also at the house for the wedding due to take place a few hours later.

Torres then went home and killed himself, police said.



Winnie Mandela, estranged wife of African National Congress President Nelson Mandela, accused police of being involved in the pre-dawn slaughter of a family of eight in Sharpeville, at a press conference on Sunday. A police spokesman said the motive for the attack was unknown because the family did not seem to have any political affiliations. — AFP/UNB photo

Red-hot Chinese poker

BEIJING: A primary school teacher in China's Gansu province brandished a red-hot poker and seared the wrists, faces and lips of three children who failed to hand in their homework on time, reports Reuter.

As punishment, her annual bonus was docked and she was forced to pick up the medical costs, according to a local daily seen in Beijing today.

Re-run of Columbus voyage

GENOA, Italy: About 100 sailing vessels left Camogli near here Sunday for America to commemorate the historic voyage to the new world by Christopher Columbus 500 years ago, reports AP.

Boats from 23 countries are taking part in a re-run of the voyage, dubbed "Columbus 92". They are going first to the Spanish Port of Cadiz, then to Las Palmas in the Canaries, fore arriving in Puerto Rico around June 14.

They hope to have made New York in time for independence day celebrations on July 4. They then make their way back, aiming to reach the British port of Liverpool by mid-August.

The fleet sailed down the coast from Genoa to Comogli in a carnival atmosphere with crowds greeting them in small boats and ashore, before heading for the open sea.

BRIEFLY

Arafat for unity of Arabs: Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat paid a brief visit to the Mauritanian capital Sunday, declaring that 'the Arab world must unite to stand up to the new world order.' AFP reports from Nouakchott.

He met Mauritanian head of state Maouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya, whom he congratulated for the inauguration Saturday of a new term of office.

Arafat said they discussed issues concerning the Maghreb countries of north Africa, the Middle East peace process and UN sanctions against Libya.

President Assad in Riyadh: Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad arrived in the Saudi capital on Sunday at the start of his first tour of the region since the Gulf war, AFP reports from Riyadh.

Assad, accompanied by Vice President Abdel-Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara, was greeted at Riyadh airport by king Fahd.

Reliable sources in the region said the Syrian president would also visit Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

They declined to give details, citing security reason.

Quake rocks Taiwan: A strong earthquake measuring 5.6 on the open-ended Richter scale rocked Taiwan before dawn on Monday but no damage or casualties were immediately reported, the central weather bureau said, AFP reports from Taipei.

The tremor, which struck at 2:32 am (1832 GMT Sunday), awakened people and shook high-rise buildings across the island, the bureau said.

Its epicenter was located 15.1 kilometer (9.4 miles) south of the eastern coastal city of Hualien and 2.3 kilometers (1.4 miles) deep, it added.

Taiwan lies along earthquake belt but most of its tremors are centered under the surrounding sea, which eases their destructive capability.

Kuwait welcomes UN decision: The Cabinet on Sunday welcomed a United Nations decision to shift the emirate's border slightly northward, reversing decades of gradual creep by Iraq into Kuwaiti territory, AP reports from Kuwait.

The Cabinet, briefed by the Kuwaiti envoy to the Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission, said the demarcation was an 'important assertion of Kuwait rights and... the will of the international community'.

The decision returns to Kuwait a chunk of the Rumailah oil field, from which Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing oil before it invaded the emirate on August 1990.

The decision also returns to Kuwait the southern parts of Umm Qasr port, Iraq's only outlet to the sea after Basra was blocked during the Iran-Iraq war.

Vote to revive Soviet Union: About 100 delegates from several former Soviet republics voted Sunday to revive the disbanded Communist Youth League and devote themselves to the restoration of the Soviet Union, TASS reported, reports AP from Moscow.

The Komsomol, for decades the Communist Party's main organ for recruiting and training young people, was dissolved after the abortive August 1991 coup and the destruction of the party.

The delegates attending the two-day 23rd congress of Komsomol declared their organization would be an "international, voluntary, independent, public and political organization," the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

It said the group's goals would be to educate youth on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, to encourage political activity and "restore a unified, multi-national state — the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

Clinton, Brown pursue their goals in distinct ways

UNDATED, Apr 20: As governors, Bill Clinton and Jerry Brown had similar visions for the people of Arkansas and California but distinct ways of pursuing their goals, reports AP.

Both men — Clinton is in his fifth term and has served 12 of the last 14 years as governor of Arkansas, Brown served as California's governor from 1975 to 1983 — sought to provide a brighter future for their states' youth through education, work and training programmes.

Both are credited with appointing record numbers of women and minorities to high state offices.

Clinton sought and won several tax increases to help achieve his goals: Brown opposed the enactment of tax-cutting proposition 13 but takes credit for its fruits.

Here is a comparative look at their records as governors:

CLINTON: Clinton made education improvements one of his top priorities as Arkansas governor and emerged as a national leader on the issue.

State lawmakers in 1983 approved Clinton's proposals to require teachers to take basic-skills tests, to lower student-teacher ratios and to broaden the state's curriculum.

Per-pupil spending in Arkansas is below

average among the 50 states, but all Arkansas school districts now offer advanced math, science and foreign language courses; student test scores are up; the dropout rate is down, and more high school graduates are going to college.

A state student aid programme reappeared in his presidential campaign. Last week, Clinton assailed President Bush's "all-out assault on college aid to middle-class students." He proposed offering nationwide an Arkansas programme that guarantees \$1,000 college scholarships to lower- and middle-class high school students with passing grades who stay out of trouble. Those not going to college could enter an apprenticeship programme.

Clinton paid for these programmes with a \$250-million tax package. Sales taxes rose from 3 per cent in 1983 to 4.5 per cent in 1991. Clinton also raised the gasoline tax and added a voluntary tax with \$14 million worth of tax breaks for the poor.

The state legislature passed a series of Clinton-backed bills toughening child-support enforcement laws, and won passage of parental notification for abortions, boot camps for young inmates, investment tax credits and other business tax breaks.

The number of manufacturing jobs in the state grew by 11.2 per cent from 1980 to 1990

while the comparable national figure declined 6 per cent.

On the environmental front Clinton won reforms to get more citizens involved in pollution control and to organize the state solid-waste system. He angered the timber industry when he called for limits on clear cutting.

He appointed more blacks and women than any other Arkansas governor but also halted a small "race norming" programme that adjusted state employment test results to benefit minority applicants.

Brown: A number of ideas Brown pushed as governor of California were dismissed as oddball at the time but are now widely accepted, particularly in the areas of energy and the environment. Many are particularly in the areas of energy and the environment. Many are included in his presidential campaign.

Critics said he flip-flopped on major issues, and Brown tried to balance a moderate's fiscal stance with liberal social programmes.

He campaigned against California's tax-cutting Proposition 13, then embraced it when voters approved it. He condemned spraying of suburban neighbourhoods to stop the spread of the Mediterranean fruit fly, then ordered the pesticide tanks into the air.

Brown won praise for bringing women and minorities to the highest levels of California

government. Half the members of his first Cabinet were women, and he named the first black and first Hispanic to the State Supreme Court as well as the court's first woman chief justice.

He also was lauded for ending years of violence in the fields with the creation of the Agriculture Labour Relations Board.

"We can end poverty in America just like Reagan ended communism in the world," Brown said last week in Philadelphia.

"Instead of a Tomahawk Missile, you start getting kids in school get them a job cleaning up the mess, making high-speed trains."

He promoted many of those ideas as governors.

Brown formed the California Conservation Corps, a widely copied work programme that gives inner-city youths marketable skills, a work ethic and appreciation for preserving the environment.

He pushed windmill and solar power and opposed nuclear power before others did. He also proposed carpool lanes on freeways, which drew angry demonstrations, and pushed for alternative transportation systems.

Today, the coastal hills southeast of Oakland are dotted with windmills, and carpool and bike lanes are taken for granted.