

Gunfire paralyses Bosnian capital

SARAJEVO, Apr 21: Serb secessionists backed by the federal army shelled the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina early today as heavy gunfire in several parts of the city paralyzed traffic, reports AFP.

Police said there were casualties in the fighting, but were unable to provide numbers.

Shortly before dawn, Serb militia supported by army artillery launched an assault on a police station in the Novi Grad District of eastern Sarajevo, a neighbourhood dominated by ethnic Serbs.

The area around the Sarajevo television station, located in the mostly Muslim old city was also being shelled.

Radio Sarajevo warned people who work in the combat zones to stay home. And public transportation in the city was paralyzed.

At least 13 people were killed on Monday and 30 wounded in newly independent Bosnia-Herzegovina where Serbs and the Serbian-led federal army are trying to take control of broad slices of territory inhabited by ethnic Serbs who make up about 34 per cent of the population, versus 44 per cent Muslims and 17 per cent Croats.

BJP to oppose polls move in Jammu, Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Apr 21: The BJP would strongly oppose any move by the government to hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir without taking appropriate steps to ensure a free and fair poll, reports PTI.

In a statement here yesterday, the party Vice President Krishan Lal Sharma said it would be better if the government decides to hold elections to the local bodies in the state immediately and simultaneously proceed to make appropriate preparations for the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

He said his party was of the firm opinion that there could be no elections in the state without a fresh delimitation.

Over 400 Bhutanese die in Nepalese camps

KATHMANDU, Apr 21: More than 400 refugees from the remote Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan have died in refugee camps in eastern Nepal because of unhealthy conditions, government officials in Kathmandu said today, reports Reuter.

Most were children suffering from diarrhoea, dysentery or measles, they said.

About 30,000 Bhutanese refugees, almost all of Nepali origin, are living in squalid camps in eastern Nepal. An average of 200 refugees arrive in the camps a day, officials said.

Bhutan says, 28 per cent of its 600,000 people are of Nepali origin. It denies it is brutalising its ethnic Nepali population.

Relatively prosperous Bhutan has expressed fears that its Buddhist Drukpa culture will be swamped by an uncontrolled influx of Hindus from impoverished Nepal. It has angered Kathmandu by trying to force immigrants to adopt Bhutanese dress and customs and to speak the Dzongkha national language.

Relations between the two Himalayan Kingdoms, separated by a narrow strip of Indian territory, have worsened since Nepal's monarchy bowed to mass protests in 1990 and surrendered power to a multi-party parliament.

Nepal's Prime Minister Gita Prasad Koirala said last week he was concerned about the continuing influx of refugees and had begun "quiet diplomacy" with Bhutan's monarchy to solve the problem.

"All it (quiet diplomacy) has done is to take the pressure off the Bhutanese authorities," said Bhutanese human rights activist Bhim Subha, Director-General of Bhutan's power department before fleeing to Nepal last year.

Off the Record

King falls to death

MANILA: Horrified police officials and cadets watched as a police skydiver plunged to his death south of the Philippine capital after his parachute failed to open, police said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Police Inspector Patrick King fell to his death at the Philippine National Police Academy grounds in Calamba town Monday when both his main and reserve chutes failed to open, spokesmen said.

King and several other members of the academy's skydiving team had jumped from a helicopter in an exhibition dive as part of the school's graduation exercises.



PHNOM PENH: US Senator Charles S. Robb (CD-Virginia) takes a close look at the map of Cambodia made from human skulls, victims of the Khmer Rouge (KR), Genocide, while visiting the former KR torture center Toul Sleng Monday. Robb is part of a five-member Senate delegation in Phnom Penh discuss the MIA POW issue with the Cambodian government. —AFP/UNB photo

World needs you to live

LONDON: Elizabeth Taylor was there, with her Hollywood glitter, but the real star at a huge AIDS benefit pop concert at Wembley stadium here Monday night was Freddie Mercury, the former lead singer of the group Queen, who died last year of the disease, reports AFP.

In a poignant moment as night fell, Taylor exhorted those 72,000 fans at Wembley and an estimated worldwide television audience of one billion not to join the 5,000 people infected each day by the human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV).

Mercury, one of the most flamboyant rock singers of his time died last November of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome at the age of 45.

Taylor, president of the American AIDS Research Foundation, went on to urge people to protect themselves. "I will keep telling you until you do and I won't give in and I won't give up because the world needs you to live."

Madonna-Warner jt venture

NEW YORK: Madonna has signed a contract with Time Warner for as much as 60 million dollars in one of the most lucrative deals ever negotiated by a pop entertainer, a newspaper reported Monday, says AP.

The partnership with Time Warner, to be announced later Monday, will allow the 33-year-old pop icon to form her own Maverick entertainment company, The New York Times reported.

The deal is comparable to a 50 million dollars plus agreement Michael Jackson was reported to have negotiated last year with Sony Corporation.

Under the terms described by the Times, Madonna would be advanced as much as 60 million dollars during the contract, which covers seven years with an option to extend to 11 years.

While Time Warner executives would not confirm the exact terms, the Times said the 60 million dollars figure was said to include a renegotiated recording contract giving Madonna a 5 million dollars advance for each of her next seven albums and a 20 per cent royalty rate.

Madonna said her new company would be an 'artistic think tank.'



BRIEFLY

Cambodians returning home: The United Nations resumed the repatriation of Cambodian refugees from Thailand on Tuesday after a break to assess the highly complicated operation, reports AP from Bangkok.

A total of 422 refugees from six UN aided camps were bused across the border to Battambang province in western Cambodia, said Jahanshah Assadi of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

About 400 refugees are to return Wednesday and other groups will go every few days, he said.

The pace must increase dramatically because the estimated 375,000 Cambodian refugees in Thailand are supposed to return by the end of the year to prepare for UN-organized elections scheduled for April 1993.

Douglas Hurd in Turkey: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd arrived in Ankara Tuesday for talks with Turkish leaders on the West's efforts to protect the Kurdish population in neighbouring Iran, reports Reuter from Ankara.

British officials said Hurd, on his first foreign trip since the ruling Conservative Party won a general election on April 9, would hold talks on Tuesday with Turkish President Turgut Ozal, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel and Foreign Minister Hikmet Chtin.

Hurd said he had chosen to make Turkey his first foreign visit because of what he described as Ankara's increasingly central role in the region and in particular in relation to Iraq and the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.

16 killed in bus mishap: Sixteen people were killed Monday in a minibus smash near the Natal provincial capital, Pietermaritzburg, state-run television said, reports AFP from Johannesburg.

Twenty-seven people were jammed into the minibus, which rolled down an embankment. Ambulance workers said it was one of the most gruesome crashes they had ever seen.

Of the 11 survivors taken to hospital, one was in a critical condition and four were serious, the television said. In all 179 people have been killed on South Africa's road since the Easter Holiday began Thursday, the television said.

Vatican team to visit Israel: For the first time in Israel's history, radio Vatican delegation will visit the country in May, Israeli radio reported, says AFP from Jerusalem.

Israel and the Vatican do not have diplomatic relations. The delegation will meet with Israeli cabinet officials, the radio said.

Repaying the benefits of its participation in Middle East peace talks, Israel has recently opened relations with India, China and a number of other governments.

JKLF leader escapes: A top Kashmiri militant leader escaped on Monday while being treated at a hospital in Srinagar, summer capital of India's Jammu and Kashmir state taking along a policeman guarding him, police said, reports Reuter from Srinagar.

Police launched a massive manhunt for Noor Khan, a senior leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, one of the frontline secessionist groups fighting to end Indian rule in Kashmir.

Indian authorities had allowed Khan out of jail to undergo treatment for a kidney ailment.

Police said at least 11 people, including seven members of the security forces and two militants, had been killed in the valley in several separate incidents since Sunday night.

Two Syrian Jews freed: Two Syrian Jews who were jailed in 1988 for having visited Israel have been released, Israel's radio and television reported last Monday, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

Elic and Sallie Sowed were arrested in 1988 and sentenced to six and a half years in prison after they returned from Europe and Israel. They were the last members of the Jewish community in jail.

Israel and Syria are technically in a state of war and all Syrians, including the 4,500 Syrian Jews, are liable for prison sentences if they visit Israel.

The Israeli media said the release was the result of Canadian and American pressure.

Thai army chief's warning: Thailand's new military chief has warned that he might ban all rallies in the country as opposition to non-elected Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon continues to mount, Tuesday, reports AFP from Bangkok.

The warning from Air Chief Marshall Kaset Rajananil, the new armed forces Supreme Commander, followed a huge rally Bangkok late Monday in which tens of thousands of people gathered to hear opposition politicians demand the resignation of Suchinda, his predecessor as military chief.

If there are demonstrations that cause traffic jams and disrupt people's lives in my capacity as commander of the internal peace-keeping command, will order a stop to such activities, Kaset said.

The internal peace-keeping command under Thailand's Supreme Commander allows for wide-ranging emergency powers in the event of unrest.

King Michael to return Bucharest

BUCHAREST, Apr 21: Romania's former King Michael, dethroned and banished by the communists 45 years ago, plans to return for next weekend's orthodox Easter festival, Church sources said today, reports Reuter.

Michael and his wife Anne have accepted an invitation from orthodox archbishop Pimen of Suceava and Radautu to spend Easter in the northeast Romanian archbishopric, Pimen's secretary Anton Hrb told Reuter by phone from Suceava.

The picturesque region, famous for its monasteries with colourful exterior frescoes, is next to Romania's border with the former Soviet republic of Moldova.

Star thirty-three times hotter than sun photographed

WASHINGTON, Apr 21: The hottest star ever recorded — an ageing brightness 33 times hotter than the sun has been photographed in a far away galaxy by the Hubble space telescope, US space scientists said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Burning at 360,000 degrees Fahrenheit (200,000 Celsius), the white star at the heart of a glowing red nebula in the great magellanic cloud galaxy is going out in a "blaze of glory" said Sally Heap, astrophysicist with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

"As far as I know, this is the hottest star on record," Heap said at a briefing commemorating the second anniversary of Hubble's launch on April 24, 1990.

The 2.1 billion dollar Hubble telescope has been troubled by problems with its main mirror, which was found to be improperly made and inadequately tested before launch.

Even so, the big orbiting telescope managed to spot a distant cluster of stars that contained the super hot star, which is identified as "the NGC 2440 nucleus."

Earth-based telescopes could not capture the hot star's image because the earth's atmosphere blurred the star's light with the light from the surrounding nebulous cloud, Heap said.

Hubble first photographed the hot star as part of a star cluster in August 1990, officials from NASA said.

Since then, scientists have worked with computers to sharpen the image and to clearly separate starlight from the nebular glow, which enabled them to more accurately estimate the star's temperature.

"The hot star is probably more evolved" than earth's sun, Heap said, and may be enjoying its "15 minutes of fame" before it fades.

She theorized that even hotter stars may exist, including some that could burn five times hotter than the star just discovered, but they would only be that hot for perhaps five weeks, she said.

The space scientists, gathered to cheer Hubble's accomplishments, were at pains to contrast computer-assisted images made by Hubble with more blurred images from earth-based telescopes.

In addition to the supper hot star, the scientists noted that Hubble had managed to photograph the "northern lights" on Jupiter and the intergalactic hydrogen clouds between galaxies.

When asked what Hubble had failed to accomplish, the scientists said they had hoped to photograph Halley's comet and the "fuzz" around Quasars, the most brilliant objects in the heavens.

However, they said that repairs to Hubble that are scheduled for November 1993 would fix all problems.

Rio de Janeiro, Apr 21: The warming of the earth known as the "Greenhouse effect" will increase the incidence of infectious and parasitic diseases, doctors said at a conference in Rio de Janeiro on Monday, reports Reuter.

"Heat accelerates all biological phenomenon and favours the reproduction of micro-organisms such as bacteria and virus," said Dr Fernando de Avila Pires, organizer of the international conference on environment, development and health, a five-day conference that opened on Monday.

The conference was the first official preparatory event in Brazil for the UN conference on the environment and development to be held in Rio in June.

Brian Kay from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research in Australia said heat also increases the transmission of diseases carried by mosquitoes, such as Malaria.

Respiratory infections account for 15 per cent of the death in developing countries, infectious diarrhoea for 10 per cent, tuberculosis for six per cent and Malaria for two per cent.

At the end of the conference the scientists will prepare a "health charter" to be presented to Brazil's health minister.

The charter will define Brazil's goals in health care and will contribute to Brazil's position at the earth summit.

Don't try to breach sanction, US warns Damascus Syria postpones flight to Libya

DAMASCUS, Apr 21: The Syrian national airline postponed a flight to Libya, which was to have taken off Monday in violation of a UN embargo, after regional countries refused the aircraft permission to use their airspace, reports AFP.

An official of Syrian Arab airlines said the flight, which was to have left at 0930 gmt, was put off because countries on the flight path refused to allow the plane to use their airspace.

An aviation source in Cyprus said Egypt had also refused the flight to travel through its airspace. There was no alternative, he added.

But a Libyan Arab airlines spokesman warned at the time, flights between Tripoli and Damascus depend on many other countries who share

airspace between the two capitals.

But Syria has made clear its sympathy with Libya in its standoff with the west and has not announced an official position on the resolution.

Reuter from Washington adds: The United States, responding to Syrian efforts to breach the embargo against Libya, on Monday warned Damascus it expects that "all nations should abide by the sanctions."

"We are in touch with the Syrian government on the issue and they know our views. As we've stated to you before, we expect that all nations should abide by the sanctions," State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters.

Syria, on the US list of

countries accused of sponsoring terrorism, fears UN sanctions against Libya for its alleged involvement in terrorism could eventually be turned on Syria.

Reflecting that concern, Syrian president Hafez Al-Assad toured the gulf on Monday to muster support for Libya.

Xinhua reports: The Libyan government yesterday asked western reporters to leave the country while continuing its expulsion of foreign diplomats in retaliation for the UN sanctions.

A Libyan information Ministry official told journalists, Westerners and Arabs representing western news institutions that they can no longer work in Libya.

He said Arabs working for

western media can stay but are not allowed to report.

Foreign reporters have to get permission for interviews even with civilians on the streets. Photographers and TV crews are not supposed to take pictures or make video recordings of virtually anything without permission.

Meanwhile, Tripoli continues expelling foreign diplomats in retaliation for UN diplomatic sanctions. According to Belgium Ambassador Leon Doyan, three of the eight diplomats in his embassy were ordered to leave.

Sweden said on Sunday that one of its three Tripoli-based diplomats was ordered home and Italy announced earlier last week that was losing six members of its Tripoli embassy staff.

Queen Elizabeth celebrates her 66th birthday

LONDON, Apr 21: Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her 66th birthday "quietly" here today in an occasion overshadowed by family problems, reports AFP.



Queen Elizabeth

In a year marking the 40th anniversary of a separation for her second son Andrew and his wife "Fergie" and confirmation that her only daughter, Princess Anne, will divorce her husband Mark Phillips.

Winnie a great lady: Mandela

LONDON, Apr 21: South African Nationalist leader Nelson Mandela paid tribute to his estranged wife Winnie today, calling her a "Great Lady" with a powerful personality, reports Reuter.

The 73-year-old President of the African National Congress, who parted from his controversial wife earlier this month, told the British Broadcasting Corporation that their separation had been very painful but was unavoidable.

"Naturally this is a very painful experience but nevertheless the decision had to be made," he said, without elaborating on the reasons for their split. "I owe a great deal to Mrs. Mandela and to part was not an easy decision."

The couple's 33-year marriage survived Mandela's long imprisonment but cracked following Mrs Mandela's conviction for kidnap and assault and allegations of further involvement in violence.

Since the couple parted, 57-year-old Mrs Mandela has resigned her position as head of Social Welfare for the ANC but continues to make public appearances as an activists for

political reform.

Asked if his wife's actions had hurt the prestige of the ANC, Mandela replied with a tribute to her qualities.

"I regard her as a very great lady," Mandela said in the television interview. "But what has happened, has happened."



Winnie is a very powerful, a very strong person and her response to all this does indicate how very strong she is."

US won't force Israel to join talks

WASHINGTON, Apr 21: The United States Monday said it did not want to force Israel to participate in multilateral peace talks with its Arab neighbours but voiced hopes that Israel would not boycott the discussions, reports AFP.

The State Department denied it had changed the ground rules of the talks by agreeing to allow Palestinians from the Diaspora to participate in sessions on economic development May 11-13 in Brussels and on refugees May 13-15 in Ottawa.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said in an interview published Friday that if representatives of the Palestinian at the negotiating table.

"We hope that this is not

the case and that Israel will attend these meetings which are important components of the peace process and beneficial to Israel and Arab interests," said a State Department Spokesman, Phyllis Young.

But, she added, none of the parties would be forced to join the discussions if they did not want to.

Young also denied that the United States and Russia, which are co-sponsoring the talks, had changed the ground rules, as Israeli leaders have charged.

At Israel's insistence, only Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were allowed on the joint Palestinian Jordanian delegation to bilateral peace talks that began in Madrid last

November.

But U.S. officials say that the letter inviting participants to the historic peace conference had said the guidelines of the multilateral talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours, with participation also by gulf nations, the European Community and other nations, would be established at a preparatory meeting.

That session was held in Moscow in January, where Secretary of State James Baker said that the United States and Russia would back the participation of Palestinians living outside the occupied territories in talks on refugees and economic development.

Another department spokesman, Richard Boucher, denied that the United States

had promised the Arab countries it would refuse to grant Israel the 10 billion dollars in loan guarantees it had asked for in order to finance the absorption of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

AP adds: Israel's pro-settlement Gush Emunim movement on Monday created an extension to the existing Karnah Shomron settlement in the occupied northern West Bank, a spokesman for the group said.

The United States has refused to provide Israel with 10 billion dollars in bank loan guarantees to help house newly arrived. Mostly Soviet, Jewish immigrants until the Jewish state announces a freeze on settlements in the occupied territories.

Army plot to disrupt Filipino elections

MANILA, Apr 21: The Philippine military has uncovered a plot by rebel soldiers to disrupt next month's presidential election with bombings and assassinations, the armed forces chief said today, reports Reuter.

General Lissandro Abadia said a former police colonel facing rebellion charges and currently on bail had been visiting military camps distributing money to soldiers to try to entice them to join the activities.

We have discovered a pre-election destabilisation plot.

Definitely it's not a coup because they no longer have the force to do it. We're looking into bombings and other terrorist actions may be assassinations, Abadia told reporters.

President Corason Aquino, who has survived six coup attempts and will step down from office in June called on the police on Tuesday to quell any attempt to prevent a free and peaceful election on May 11.

Filipines will elect a new president, a new congress and more than 17,000 local officials in the polls.

Gaddafi arrives in Egypt by land

SALLOUM, Egypt, Apr 21: Libyan leader Moamer MG.P Gaddafi, whose country is under a U.N air embargo, travelled through here by land for meeting today with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on means to lift the sanctions, reports AFP.

Colonel Gaddafi was to hold talks with Mubarak at the Egyptian military airport at Sidi Barani, which is about 80 kilometers, from the Libyan border on the Mediterranean Sea.

Earlier reports said they were to meet in Marah Matruch. Their discussions were to focus on new Libyan proposals aimed at settling honourably the crisis through peaceful means within the framework of international law and respect for Libyan law," Libyan sources said earlier.