

Cuba asks UN council to condemn US role in airliner bombing

NEW YORK, United Nations, Apr 29: Cuba Monday asked the UN Security Council to condemn the United States for its alleged role in the bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976, reports AFP.

In a letter to the president of the council, Cuban Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon Quesada demanded that a meeting be called to condemn Washington for continuing to protect the two men believed to be responsible for the attack, Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles.

Hosch and Posada Carriles, leading Cuban exiles and vehement opponents of President Fidel Castro, are accused of having bombed a Cubana De Aviation Airliner en route to Havana from Barbados on October 6, 1976, killing all 73 people on board.

"We demand that the Security Council condemn the sabotage against the Cuban air plane with the same firmness that we condemn the sabo-

Lankan Tigers massacre 74 Muslim villagers

COLOMBO, Apr 29: Tamil Tiger rebels shot and hacked 74 Muslim villagers to death in a gruesome midnight massacre in north central Sri Lanka Wednesday, a police official said, reports AP.

Dozens of rebels in camouflage uniforms first attacked a police post, forcing security men on duty to flee, said a police official reached by telephone. The policemen left behind their weapons, which the rebels seized, said the official speaking on condition of anonymity.

The massacre was in the village of Alanchipathana in Polonnaruwa district, 200 kilometers northeast of

Colombo. Details of the incident were sketchy and there were conflicting reports about how the villagers were killed.

"The rebels surrounded the village before the attack just past midnight... Some of the male victims were beheaded," said the police official. He said the rebels used guns, knives and machetes.

The rebels torched some mud-and-straw huts before fleeing the farming village, which had about 85 families, the official said. The Muslim village is surrounded by a cluster of Tamil villages and most survivors escaped by fleeing into nearby woods.

At least 14 wounded victims

were rushed to hospital when policemen and soldiers reached the village after daylight, the official said.

Earlier, a senior army official in the military headquarters in Colombo claimed the rebels hacked their victims to death instead of shooting them for fear of alerting an army camp about 5 kilometers from the village.

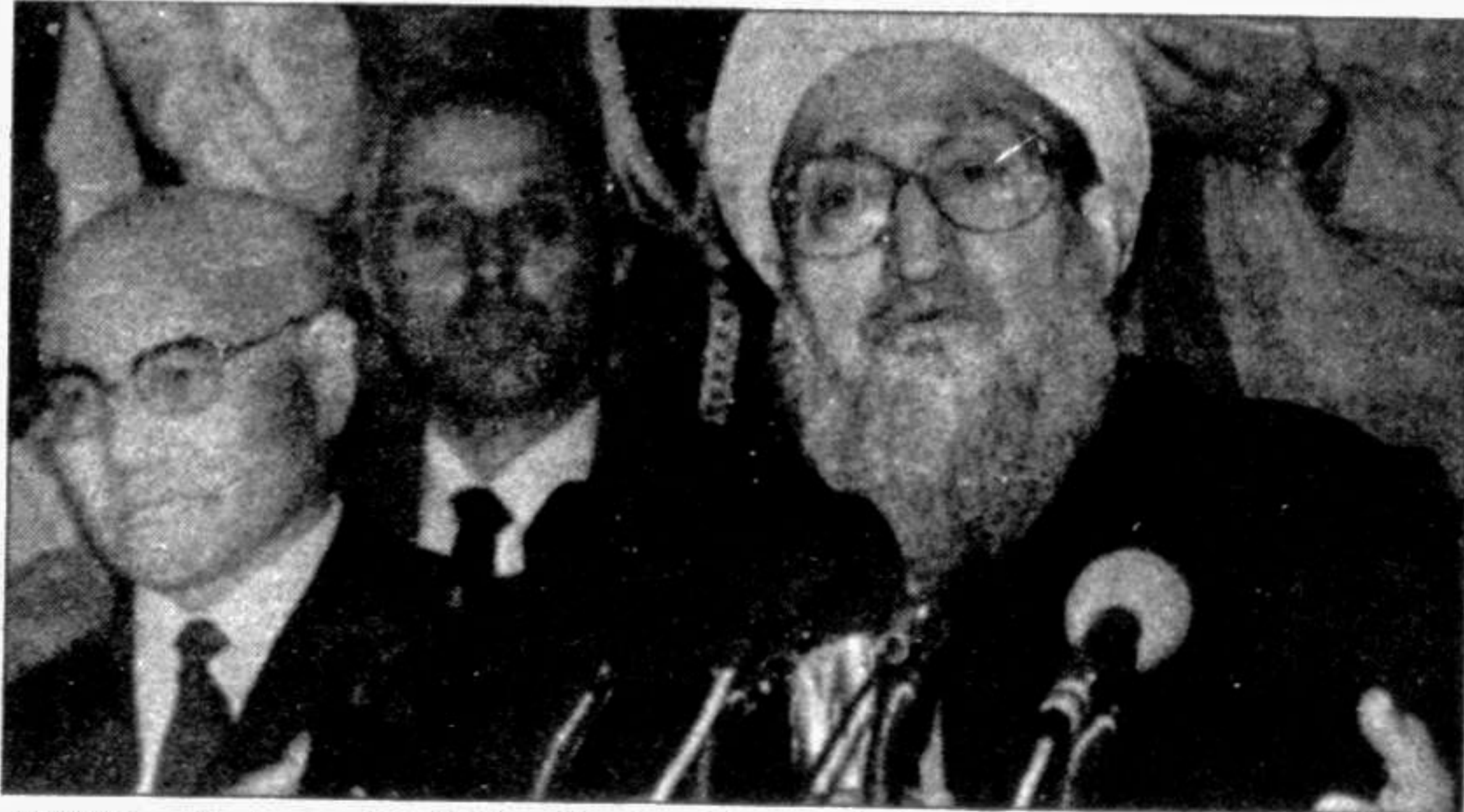
The motive of the attack was not immediately known, but Tamil rebels often kill people opposed to their demand for independence or to dramatize their separatist campaign. Muslim youth armed by the government have retaliated by attacking Tamil vil-

lans.

In August 1990, Tiger rebels killed more than 300 Muslims in the east in two separate attacks.

At least 7,000 people have been killed since June 1990 when rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam resumed their violent campaign for an independent homeland in the north and the east where most Tamils live.

Tamils, mostly Hindus, are 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 17 million people, while Muslims are 7 per cent. Sinhalese are three-fourths of the population and control the government and the military.



KABUL: Moderate Mujahideen Leader Sibgatullah Mojadeddi (R), who has assumed Afghanistan's interim presidency, speaks during the formal handing over of the Kabul government on Tuesday. Looking on are Vice President Abdul Wahid Sawrobi (L) and Foreign Minister Abul Wakil (C) behind of the Soviet-installed regime. A rocket hit the building minutes after the ceremony ended. — AFP/UNB photo

Myanmar opposition highly sceptical of junta's intentions

BANGKOK, Apr 29: Myanmar's military junta has unveiled surprise after surprise since changing its leader last week but opponents question the sincerity of its apparent shift from hardline policies, reports Reuters.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has since Friday pledged to free political prisoners, offered a concession to detained Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, agreed to take back many of the 200,000 Muslims drive into Bangladesh and announced the suspension of an offensive against Karen rebels.

However, it has not said it will release Aung San Suu Kyi or hand over power to her National League for Democracy, despite the party's landslide win in a May 1990 general election.

And while it has announced a timetable for the start of a programme that may eventu-

ally lead to civilian government, diplomats say it is unclear just how long this will take.

Opponents remain highly sceptical of the junta's intentions.

They afford these activities without any sincere attitude that can reflect the aspiration of the people and the prosperity of the country," said a statement from the main organisation of dissident students, who fled to border areas after the military crushed a 1988 pro-democracy uprising.

The All Myanmar Students' Democratic Front accused the junta of trying "to divert international attention from Myanmar's affairs and to deceive the people."

Karen spokesman Em Marta expressed surprise at the junta's abrupt announcement on Tuesday night that it was suspending its offensive against the ethnic group,

which the army has battled for 43 years.

He said the army continued to lob hundreds of mortar bombs at the Karen's second base on the Thai frontier until Tuesday afternoon.

"We will never trust the Burmese army as long as Ne Win, Khin Nyunt and others are there," he said, referring to Myanmar's behind-the-scenes strongman and his military intelligence chief.

The ruling council named General Than Shwe to replace ailing hardliner General Saw Maung as its chief on Thursday.

But most diplomats and other analysts believe Ne Win, architect of authoritarian rule since 1962, remains in overall charge despite his official retirement in mid-1988.

The students' front said if the junta was really sincere it would release all political prisoners.

Arab League turns down Libyan call to ignore UN sanctions

CAIRO, Apr 29: The Arab League on Tuesday turned down a call by Libya to ignore UN sanctions against it, but pledged to continue working to end the crisis pitting Tripoli against the United States, Britain and France, league sources said, reports AP.

The decision was reached at a closed-door meeting of Arab League foreign ministers here.

The sources said the Arab League would seek to prevent an escalation of sanctions against Libya, which could include a crippling oil embargo, for its refusal to hand over two suspects in the bombing of a US airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Sources at the league's headquarters here said Arab countries were keen to pursue efforts to "contain the crisis" and halt developments that

could have a negative effect on all Arab countries.

Only Sudan and Iraq have said they would break the air traffic, arms and diplomatic sanctions which took effect two weeks ago. Other Arab states have reluctantly complied.

Earlier Tuesday, Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid met with the US ambassador to Cairo, Robert Pelletreau, at the ambassador's requests. No details about their talks were revealed.

Arab League sources denied reports that the organization would convene a special summit to debate the Libyan crisis.

Foreign ministers were to resume their meeting here Wednesday to discuss the Middle East peace process and the situation in the occupied territories.

Meanwhile, Libya urged its Arab League partners here Tuesday not to comply with the UN sanctions on Tripoli, but the organisation was unlikely to accept the call, sources at the league's headquarters said.

Libyan Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Beshari argued the league had already committed itself — before the sanctions were imposed — with resolutions of support for Tripoli in its confrontation with the west.

The sources said Arab countries were likely to respond that they had no choice but to respect the decision of the United Nations to impose air traffic, arms and diplomatic sanctions against Libya over the Lockerbie plane bombing.

Only Sudan and Iraq have said they would break the sanctions.

Off the Record

Pyramid may be better than pie as diet chart

WASHINGTON: The government unveiled a new shape for the ideal American diet on Tuesday—a pyramid built on a base of grains and, more to the point, not much fat, reports AP.

The pyramid replaces the familiar pie chart used since 1946 to promote good eating habits. The change is merely graphical—the recommended food-group allocations remain the same since the last revision in 1990 — but the government hopes the new shape will send a more powerful message.

"At a glance, the pyramid will help Americans understand more about the foods they need, from what groups and in what amounts", Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan said. "For example, the pyramid clearly shows that fats, oils and sweets should be eaten sparingly."

At the base of the pyramid are grains — bread, cereal, rice and pasta — which should be consumed at the rate of six to 11 servings daily. The next level shows vegetables — three to five servings a day — and fruit — two to four servings.

As the pyramid narrows, dairy products and meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts are displayed with advice that two to three servings be eaten each day.

Instructional materials featuring the pyramid were being sent immediately to schools, Indian reservations and feeding programmes for the poor and elderly.

Saddam skips his birthday party

NICOSIA, Cyprus: Saddam Hussein received gifts from government officials and diplomats and attended a Baghdad children's party in honour of his 55th birthday Tuesday, Baghdad radio reported, says AP.

The officials radio, monitored in Nicosia, said Saddam skipped an official celebration hosted by his lieutenants in his hometown of Tikrit, north of Baghdad, as he did last year.

The radio said that the nominal No. 2 man in Saddam's hierarchy, Izzat Ibrahim, hosted that party.

Ibrahim is deputy chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council and deputy secretary-general of the Baath party's regional command. Both are headed by Saddam.

The radio made no mention of how many Iraqis turned out to attend the festivities. Saddam's birthday is a national holiday in Iraq.

The radio broadcast constant praise for Saddam, hailing him for rebuilding Baghdad following the allied bomb and missile attacks during last year's Gulf War.

In Amman, Jordan's capital, more than 400 Iraqis attended a reception in Saddam's honour.

Anti-Saddam demonstrators in London tried to deliver 17,000 black coffin-shaped boxes to the Iraqi Embassy to symbolise the number of people listed as missing in Iraq.

8 burnt to death in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, Apr 29: Eight persons of a particular community were burnt to death when militants set ablaze their houses in Pandori Bhuraich near Amritsar last night, reports PTI.

Elsewhere in Punjab ten persons were killed in separate incidents of violence since last night.

Seven persons including five security personnel were killed and two injured when militants ambushed a patrolling party vehicle near village Balia in Ludhiana district last night.

The dead included two Punjab police constables, two home guards one S P O and two civilians. An ASI and a woman were seriously injured in the incident.

Court upholds banning of FIS

ALGIERS, Apr 29: The Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld the banning of the country's fundamentalist opposition party, party sources said, reports AP.

A lower court ordered the dissolution of the Islamic Salvation Front on March 4 after the Interior Ministry filed a complaint that the front was subversive and a threat to public security.

The Supreme Court's decision finalized the banning of the Salvation Front, which spearheaded violent anti-government protests last spring and was set to take over Parliament in national elections early this year.

Sevan in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Apr 29: UN special envoy Benon Sevan arrived here Wednesday from Tehran after a two-day stay in the Iranian capital, reports AP.

The United Nations representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan had no plans "at this point" to travel to Kabul, a UN spokesman said.

Sevan spent a week in Kabul following the overthrow of former president Najibullah on April 16. He then came here to welcome UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali before both men travelled to Tehran.

Kashmir frees 288 detainees

SRINAGAR, Apr 29: The Jammu and Kashmir government has ordered release of 288 detainees lodged in different jails and interrogation centres.

A meeting of senior officers here yesterday decided to release the detainees of which 70 have already joined their families, an official spokesman told PTI.

He said a high level screening committee met under the chairmanship of State Director General of Police, B S Bedi, and recommended release of 288 detainees after reviewing their cases.



LONDON: Model Juliet Santree wears a jewelled swimsuit from 135 pounds (about 240 US dollar), jewelled cotton-coordinates (short tiered cotton print skirt) from 295 pounds (525 US dollar) and a matching hat during a photocall for the Diane Freis designer wear collection in London Tuesday. — AFP/UNB photo

Killer bees spread into US city

SAN ANTONIO, Texas: A swarm of "killer bees" from South America has spread into San Antonio, Texas, the largest US city to be affected, scientists confirmed Tuesday, reports AP.

The "killer bees," so-named for their aggressiveness, are honey bees which bred with African bees accidentally introduced into Brazil in the late 1950's. They have since spread from Argentina to Texas.

The US Agriculture Department tested bees from a swarm found in San Antonio last week and discovered they were Africanised honey bees. San Antonio has since been added to a quarantine area in an effort to limit the movement of the "killer bees."

Myanmar troops shell Karen rebel positions

BANGKOK, Apr 29: Myanmar government forces shelled Karen rebel positions overnight despite an announcement the attacks had been suspended, a Karen official said Wednesday, reports AP.

According to Myanmar state radio, Maj. Gen Naung Hla told brigade commanders Tuesday the offensive against the ethnic Karen minority had been suspended "in view of national unity and goodwill."

But Em Marta, spokesman for the Karen National Union army, said shells continued landing overnight at the Karen base of Komora and in areas around its headquarters.

Fresh fighting threatens UN operations in Bosnia

BELGRADE, Apr 29: Heavy mortar fire rocked a strategic town in Bosnia-Herzegovina early Wednesday in a new round of ethnic violence that threatened the operations of UN peacekeepers, reports AP.

Critics issued fresh calls for international sanctions on Serbia for its part in the escalating fighting.

Meanwhile, European Community efforts to halt the violence stalled as talks in Lisbon, Portugal, between Bosnia's Slavic Muslims, Serbs and Croats were postponed until Wednesday.

The United Nations announced Tuesday it was cutting back on refugee workers in the Bosnian capital of

Sarajevo and scrapping a planned logistics headquarters for peacekeepers in the northern Bosnian town of Banja Luka.

Some 300 people have died and more than 2,000 have been wounded in Bosnia-Herzegovina since violence erupted after Muslims and Croats voted for independence Feb 29. The fighting intensified after the state won broad international recognition April 7.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said on Tuesday some 400,000 people have fled their homes in Bosnia, swelling the flood of more than 1 million fugitives in what was Yugoslavia.

Serbs, who comprise a third of Bosnia's 4.4 million people, fiercely opposed independence. With backing from the Serb-led federal army and paramilitaries from Serbia, they have seized large chunks of territory in hopes of forming their own republic.

The United States and western Europe have condemned Serbia's role in the Bosnian violence, threatening diplomatic and economic sanctions.

The 51-member Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe set Wednesday as a deadline for expelling Yugoslavia from the organization if violence in Bosnia is not ended.

But the fighting continued, and threatened to undermine efforts by the United Nations to organize 14,000 peacekeepers in neighboring Croatia.

Sarajevo, headquarters for the peacekeepers, was shelled repeatedly Tuesday night, with the Muslim-held radio and television building hit. Serb militias earlier ringed the city of 600,000, imposing a virtual blockade.

Mostar in southwest Bosnia came under heavy mortar fire shortly before midnight Tuesday, Associated Press reporter Slobodan Letic said from the city.

Artillery rained down on the historic Ottoman town --

40 percent Muslim, 40 per cent Croat and 20 per cent Serb -- from federal army positions high above on Fortica hill.

The town center shook every few seconds with a fresh blast early Wednesday, Letic said. Minarets of the city's ancient mosque and church spires were silhouetted black against the orange flare of explosions.

Some 60 per cent of Mostar's 100,000 inhabitants have fled the town. At least 18 have died and 161 been wounded there since early April.

As mortar shells whistled down on most parts of the town, Djahida Miloradovic took shelter with a group of about

100 pensioners crammed into the cellar of a hotel.

"Shame on them for shooting on their own people," said the 64-year-old Muslim, clutching a blanket. "I'm not surprised by anything anymore. We can expect any sort of bestial behaviour."

As she spoke, glass shattered and debris crashed from federal army positions and said they were trying to arrange a cease-fire.

But a local army commander said the shelling was in response to Croatian militia attacks on the village of Oriac, north of Mostar, and would continue until Croats ceased fire, UN officials said.

Rockets hit security zone in S Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon, Apr 29: Katyusha rockets slammed into Israel's self-declared security zone in South Lebanon overnight, security sources said today, reports Reuters.

They said the rockets hit Kawakaba village in the eastern sector of the zone, controlled by about 1,000 Israeli troops and their local South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia allies.

There was no report of casualties.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack. But Muslim militant groups led by the pro-Iranian Hizbollah, (Party of God) have stepped up attacks on the Israelis and SLA to show opposition to Arab-Israeli peace talks.