

US asks Haiti to restore democracy

WASHINGTON, Mar 12: Secretary of State Warren Christopher served notice Thursday on Haiti's military-led regime that the United States "is not prepared to tolerate" long delays in restoring democratic rule to that country, reports AP.

Christopher spoke to reporters while posing for photographers with Argentine diplomat Dante Caputo, the special envoy of the United Nations and the Organization of American States to Haiti. Caputo is planning to return to Haiti next week in hopes of persuading Haiti's leaders to recognize the legitimacy of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was overthrown 18 months ago, OAS sources said.

"We are at an important new stage and we think that it is significant that he (Caputo) is going back. It's important that progress be made," Christopher said.

Hopes for progress were raised last month when Haiti's leaders agreed to the deployment of OAS human rights observers around the country. Christopher said there are 77 observers there now and about 200 will be there by the end of the month.

Caputo said that with the deployment of the observers nearing completion, "we are going to the essential part of the problem — that means the political negotiation."

President Clinton will meet with Aristide next Tuesday.

Baghdad to provide list of N-suppliers in two weeks

BAGHDAD, Mar 12: Iraq has promised to provide a list of its nuclear suppliers within the next two weeks, the head of a UN weapons inspection team said here Thursday, reports AP.

Dimitri Perricos has also said however his team of nuclear experts unearthed dual-use machines that Iraq should have declared because they could be used for nuclear weapons.

As his nuclear mission left, UN chemical, biological and ballistics experts arrived in Iraq headed by David Franz, an American. They were expected to start work on Friday.

The full list of foreign suppliers was needed to ensure President Saddam Hussain's nuclear programme was not re-launched, said the Greek nuclear chief before heading for Bahrain.

The Iraqi authorities would submit the list to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, which has handled destruction of Iraq's nuclear programme under UN Gulf War ceasefire resolutions.

"I am sure now they will keep the promise," he said.

The inspection chief said he held a final meeting on Thursday during which the Iraqis agreed to complete the list of suppliers, 90 per cent of which they claim to have already surrendered.

Despite good Iraqi cooperation, the week-long mission discovered "dual-use machine tools that could be employed for nuclear weapons or civilian purposes," he said.

The tools should have been declared to the UN inspection team but had not, said Perricos. "None of the machine tools were being used for banned activities when inspected."

The United Nations ordered the elimination of all Iraq's weapons of mass destruction after the 1991 war for Kuwait.

"I cannot say we saw anything that is prohibited at the

sites we visited," Perricos said. Of the 28 sites inspected, three of them were new, he said, adding they had been photographed for analysis.

As part of a rotation, a 19-member group of chemical, biological and ballistics experts flew in Thursday from Panama, where the UN inspectors have a coordination office.

Franz, a chemical and biological arms expert in the US army, has said his mission would cover a variety of areas. "We will be visiting sites we have seen before or new sites. We are free to visit any site or installation in Iraq."

Off the Record

The sentence was 'unduly lenient'

LONDON: The Appeal Court sentenced a 15-year-old convicted rapist to two years' imprisonment, overturning a earlier ruling that the youth should pay for a vacation for his schoolgirl victim, reports AP.

Three Appeal Court judges decided the boy — who cannot be named under British law — had committed a crime "so serious that anything but a custodial sentence cannot be justified."

The boy had been convicted of raping the 15-year-old girl after dragging her into the woods as she walked home from the school in Oswestry, Wales, that they both attended.

On February 5, Judge John Prosser of Newport Crown Court in Wales sentenced the youth to three years probation and order him to pay his victim 500 pounds (dhs 715) "for a good holiday."

That unorthodox sentence attracted national anger and ridicule. The attorney general turned to the Appeal Court with a plea that the sentence was "unduly lenient."

Witnesses said the boy gulped and fought back tears after hearing the sentence. He reportedly whispered to his lawyer, "I have I got two years?"

The decision came amid mounting official and public disgust at a series of well-publicized acts of violent juvenile crime in Britain.

BRIEFLY

Rally against Lithuanian govt: Three years after Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union, nationalists again took to the streets on Thursday to accuse their government of subservience to Moscow, reports AP from Vilnius, Lithuania.

"We almost have no independence," said Victoria Laurinaviciene, a retiree who joined 20,000 protesters at the parliament on the third anniversary of Lithuania's independence declaration.

The government is creating joint companies with Russia. We will be buried economically," she said.

The protest was organized by Sajudis, the nationalist movement which led Lithuania's independence drive and controlled the parliament in 1990 that broke with Moscow — the first Soviet republic to do so.

Polisario accepts UN plan: The Polisario Front accepted a UN Security Council resolution Thursday affirming the United Nations' desire to hold a referendum this year on the future of the disputed Western Sahara, reports AP from Algiers.

Mohamed Abdelaziz, secretary-general of the Algiers-based Polisario, called Security Council Resolution 809 adopted March 2 "a positive step" toward resolving the conflict.

"As long as the UN insists on the necessity to respect the plan, we will not renew the war," Abdelaziz was quoted as saying in an interview with the newspaper Algerie-Actualite.

Morocco has already expressed satisfaction with the resolution, which aims to get the referendum back on track. It should have been held a year ago.

ROK proposes talks with DPRK: South Korea proposed Friday inter-Korean border talks be held next week to arrange the return of a self-confessed North Korean war correspondent captured in the 1950-53 Korean war, reports AP from Seoul.

The proposal followed South Korea's decision Thursday to lift a ban on business travel to Communist North Korea in its move to establish a new climate of inter-Korean dialogue.

Officials in Seoul said they were treating the return of the war captive as a separate matter from the North's sudden announcement Friday that it is withdrawing from an international nuclear non-proliferation pact.

Suspicion the North is developing nuclear weapons have been an obstacle to improved relations. South Korea has said it would repatriate Li In Mo, a 76-year-old war captive and convicted northern guerrilla, as early as late March.

Early retirement plan in US army: The US military will offer early retirement and lifelong benefits to over 17,000 active duty troops with between 15 and 20 years of service in a plan announced by President Bill Clinton on Thursday, reports Reuter from Washington.

Defence Secretary Les Aspin approved the use of early retirement for selected troops to curb so-called "involuntary separations" as the post-cold war armed forces are cut from 1.8 million to 1.4 million troops over the next five years.

The move would provide reduced retirement pay, but would waive the long standing 20-year minimum service requirement for those in uniform to receive retirement checks, retain shopping rights at bases and be eligible for other benefits.

Defence officials said Thursday the programme was expected to be offered to about 17,500 servicemen and women and to cost the government about 473 million dollar through fiscal 1994.

The Pentagon also said on Thursday it would offer reduced retirement pay beginning at age 60 to some enlisted members of the military reserves and national guard who are forced out of uniform with more than 15 and less than 20 years of service.

Holbrooke US envoy to Japan: President Clinton is about to appoint Richard Holbrooke, former assistant secretary of state for East Asia, as ambassador to Japan, the Wall Street Journal said Thursday, AP reports from Washington.

Holbrooke is managing director of Lehman Brothers, a leading US investment firm. The newspaper said Clinton will name Pamela Harriman, widow of diplomat Averell Harriman, as ambassador to France.

It reported that Stephen Solarez, who lost his seat in Congress in the November election, is said to be a candidate for ambassador to India or Israel.

French priest relieved: The controversial priest who led a violent clash of Roman Catholic traditionalists with police has been stripped of his duties, the newspaper Le Monde reported Thursday, reports AP from Paris.

Rev. Philippe Laguette, 40, led hundreds of rosary-brandishing worshippers in Sunday's occupation of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois church next to the Louvre museum.



PARIS: Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic (R) is encouraged to finish his discussion with a journalist and enter Elysee Palace Friday for French-sponsored talks on the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Milosevic is under mounting pressure to persuade his Bosnian Serb allies to accept an international peace plan. — AFP/UNB photo

Donors, aid officials threaten to leave Somalia

ADDIS ABABA, (Ethiopia), Mar 12: Donor nations and relief officials opened an aid conference on Somalia Thursday and threatened to limit funding or even pull out of the country unless violence is halted and peace talks progress, reports AP.

Three foreign aid workers have been killed so far this year, and rioting and clan fighting have interrupted relief shipments. Somali representatives attending Thursday's conference demanded the United Nations give them a stronger police force and step up weapons seizures.

The three-day meeting of about 200 officials from the United Nations, donor countries, relief groups and Somali organizations aims to complete a 166.5 million dollar plan to feed Somalia this year and revive its economy.

Officials are linking the funding to a Somali peace conference that begins Monday in the Ethiopian capital. They say that unless rival factions

make headway toward at least establishing local governments, the aid package could shrink.

"Somalis know that the generosity which the international community showed last year cannot be taken for granted unless those with the power to bring peace try their hardest to bury the hatchet and take responsibility for rebuilding the ruins around them," said Jan Eliasson, the UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs and chairman of the conference.

Irish envoy Hugh Swift said the looting and extortion of relief groups has gotten so bad that some organizations may pull out of the country. "One more serious incident and the relief effort could be destroyed," he told the delegates in a speech.

Swift urged the UN forces do more to protect aid workers' compounds and escort relief convoys.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has urged the Security Council to provide more protection for relief groups when it approves a resolution for the US-led effort to pass to UN command.

Abdullahi Moalim, a member of the United Somali Congress faction allied with warlord Ali Mahdi Mohamed, said clan leaders could not guarantee the safety of relief workers.

"We are also saddened that people so dedicated are killed. But we need a stronger UN-supervised police force," he said in an interview.

The proposed aid package includes dhs 14.6 million for local governments and police.

A Somali woman addressing the conference made an emotional appeal for women to be given a key role in rebuilding Somalia because so many have been widowed and left to care for their children amid famine.

"We are the most affected group of people in Somalia and now we raise up our voices in anguish and pain, but also in strength and hope; that we can be peacemakers," said Fadumah Alim, a former deputy education minister.

Her speech was punctuated by applause, and prompted a spontaneous singing of the national anthem by Somali delegates.

The UN plan has earmarked dhs 500,000 for women's support programmes.

The largest share of the aid plan, dhs 29 million, is for food shipments. But it also seeks to break Somalia's dependence on famine relief by allotting dhs 20.2 million for farming and dhs 20 million for job programs.

Health programs would receive dhs 23.7 million; refugee resettlement, dhs 22.5 million; education, dhs 10.5 million; and water and sanitation dhs 14.5 million.

Representatives of more than three-dozen countries, dozens of foreign and Somali relief groups, the 15 Somali factions and dozens of Somali community leaders are attending the conference.

Gunmen free 9 hostages from Nicaraguan embassy

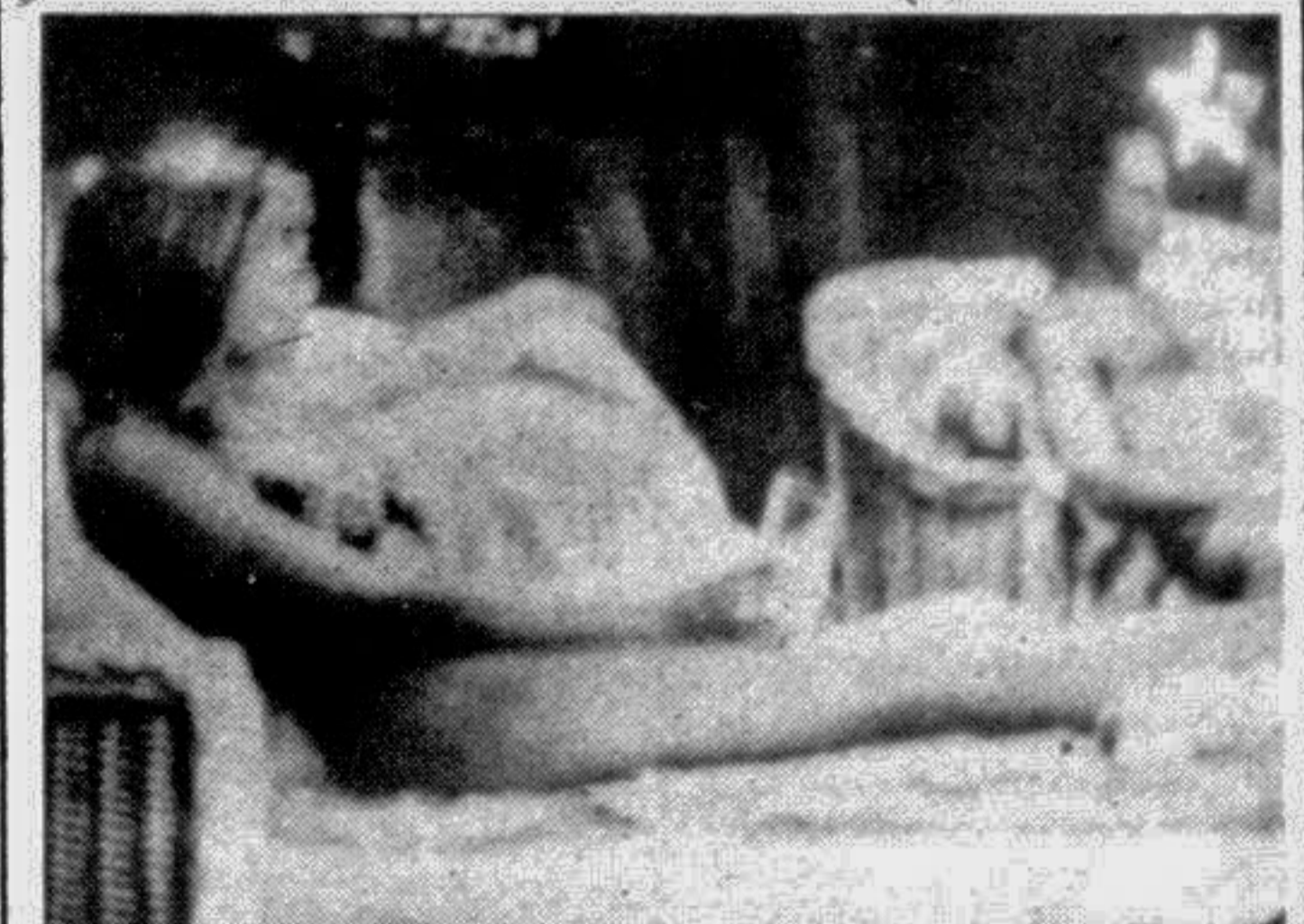
SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, Mar 12: Gunmen demanding 6 million dollars in ransom and the ouster of top Nicaraguan government officials were holding 16 hostages at the Nicaraguan Embassy on Friday after releasing nine others, reports AP.

On Thursday, the gunmen, foes of Nicaragua's president, Violeta Chamorro, freed two Costa Rican men and seven Nicaraguan women.

But a spokesman for the hostage-takers later accused Costa Rican authorities of delaying negotiations to end the standoff.

Ambassador Alfonso Robelo and 15 others, all believed to be Nicaraguans, were still being held inside the embassy.

Those released included Consul Dora del Carmen Narvaez and the embassy's third secretary, Maria Teresa Torres Guerra. Mrs Chamorro's niece.



A scene from the Bold and the Beautiful, a soap opera in Star TV network. — Star TV photo

Modern women suffer for lack of exercise

LONDON: British scientists who studied skeletons in a burial ground for clues to brittle bone disease say modern women seem to suffer greater bone deterioration than their forebears, possibly due to a lack of exercise, reports Reuter.

The researchers writing in the latest edition of Britain's lancet medical journal, examined bones buried between 1729 and 1852 in the crypt of a London church to gain data on the history of osteoporosis, or brittle bone disease, which particularly afflicts elderly women.

Osteoporosis is caused by a loss of bony tissue linked in part to hormonal changes and calcium intake. Problems associated with brittle bones such as hip fractures have increased among women in northern Europe in recent decades, even taking into account increased life expectancy.

The team from the Wynn Institute for Metabolic Research in London found that the rate of bone deterioration was greater in modern women than those buried in the Crypt, who came from a part of the city where silk-weaving was an important industry.

This suggested that exercise might be a factor in brittle bone disease, as women textile workers toiled long hours at the loom, had heavier household chores than present-day women and generally walked more than people do now.

"We know that walking was an important feature of their daily lives," the report said.

How to be a good princess

TOKYO: She's been to Harvard, Oxford and some of the best schools in Japan. But on Friday, Masako Owada began what may be her most valuable schooling yet — a crash course on how to be a good princess, reports AP.

Miss Owada, who is to wed Crown Prince Naruhito later this spring, arrived at the palace bright and early to begin her "princess education," a required course for future imperial brides.

The 29-year-old princess to be will spend four mornings each week for the next month and a half studying eight topics ranging from constitutional law to classical poetry.

"There are many things I have never studied before, so I hope to diligently study each topic and listen closely to each of my teachers' lesson," she said in a statement issued though the palace.

Though the lessons have been criticized by some as anachronistic, few in Japan doubt the need to somehow prepare an outsider for the intricacies of life behind the "Chrysanthemum Curtain."

The intense scrutiny of imperial family members and the strict limitations on their ability to speak or act freely in public nearly scared off Miss Owada. Japan's royals also must be familiar with a myriad of traditions and beliefs built up the monarchy's roughly 1,500-year history.

Palace officials say they have enlisted the best tutors available to help Miss Owada get ready. Among them are former Supreme Court Justice Masami Ito and several prominent professors.

The palace is taking into account her spotless academic background — she earned a degree in economics from Harvard and studied at Oxford for two years.

DPRK to withdraw from NPT

SEOUL, Mar 12: South Korea expressed grave concern today over North Korea's decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), saying it only heightened suspicion Pyongyang was developing nuclear arms, reports AP.

"The Seoul government is extremely concerned about this North Korean move, said a statement from the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

It added that this is a challenge to the global system for preventing nuclear proliferation and poses a grave threat

US planes drop 40.4 tonnes of food in E Bosnia

FRANKFURT, Mar 12: Six US military C-130 transport planes early today dropped 40.4 tonnes of food and 1.4 tonnes of medicine over the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, a US military spokesman announced here, reports AP.

The aircraft, carrying out the 12th airdrop since the operation began March 1, returned safely to Rhein-main airbase near here, the spokesman said.

5 Pak teenagers to die for kidnapping

KARACHI, Mar 12: A Pakistani special terrorist court has sentenced five teenagers to death for the kidnapping and "gruesome" murder of a six-year-old boy, the semi-official PPI news agency reported on Friday, says Reuter.

The youths, aged from 16 to 19, kidnapped Umar Ahmed in the southern port city of Karachi last July and demanded a ransom of 50,000 rupees (2,000 dollar). They strangled the boy and hid his body in nearby hills after his family notified police.

"Once can guess what havoc they will play when they are grown up," the judge was quoted as saying.

Egyptian police launch cleansing operation inside mosque

ASWAN (Egypt), Mar 12: Egyptian police have twice stormed the Al-Rahman Mosque in seven years. The first time, they seized Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, the spiritual mentor of Egypt's militants and in the second, they rounded up his men.

Security officials said the sweep against militant of Gama's El-Islamiya (Islamic group) inside Al-Rahman Mosque in this southern tourist town was deliberately ferocious to kill any chance for the militants to rise up again.

The police have carried out a cleansing operation. This was a lesson for the militants to do anything in

police launch cleansing operation inside mosque

the future. They have been taught a lesson," Aswan's director of tourism Mahmoud Fahmi told Reuters.

Nine militants were killed and 41 were wounded when police forces burst into the militant-controlled Al-Rahman Mosque where up to 200 men, women and children were praying on Tuesday night.

Islamic group militants, led by Sheikh Omar, a blind preacher in exile in the United States, are fighting to turn Egypt into a purist Islamic state and have devastated its tourist industry with attacks on foreigners.

Security sources and lawyers said security forces had surrounded Al-Rahman Mosque

first in 1986. They stormed it and arrested Sheikh Omar with 23 of his followers. The preacher was freed five days later and was flown to Cairo for interrogation.

In 1981 Sheikh Omar was tried but acquitted on charges of sanctifying the assassination of President Anwar Sadat. He has been living in the United States since 1990.

Two of his followers have been arrested in connection with the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York last month in which five people were killed and more than 1,000 were wounded.

Security officials said militant activity grew over the past two years in Aswan, which is the major tourist centre in Egypt's southernmost province.

Followers from nearby towns and villages would flock to Al-Rahman Mosque every week to take part in meetings and seminars debating Islamic laws and edicts, they said.

Residents said militant ideas were spreading fast among youngsters who were being told by fundamentalist clerics that foreign tourists "were infidels" and that working in the industry was "a sin" because foreigners were corrupt.

The sources said the number of militants in Aswan and nearby villages was up to 1,000.

A lawyer acting for some of the

87 militants arrested after surviving Tuesday's mosque assault accused the security forces of deliberately trying to kill as many as possible of the 300 worshippers packed into the building.

"Considering that Aswan is an important resort that attracts big numbers of tourists, the government wanted to show an iron fist. It decided to abort these groups which it felt were starting to cause danger."

It decided to hit them in their cradle before they could be able to carry out any acts of aggression. It suddenly felt that they have become a danger," he added.

The security forces entered the mosque to physically eliminate as many people as possible. It was not to arrest them because the security bodies know exactly where they live and have definite information about their movements," Hassan Mohammed Hassan said.

"If they had wanted to arrest them, they could have done it without a single drop of blood," he said. "But the aim was to terrorise all those who believe in their ideas."

After the assault, many militants shaved their beards and replaced their white robes of pious Muslims with trousers and shirts to avoid being detained by police, residents said.

Taiwan dissident to return home after 14 years

TAIPEI, Mar 12: A Taiwan dissident professor now teaching philosophy at Beijing University said today he would return home next month now that an entry visa had been granted to him by Taipei after 14 years, reports AP.

Taiwan's Bureau of Entry and Exit approved Thursday Chen Xu-Yings application for a visa on grounds that the applicant holds a republic of China passport, is a permanent resident of the United States and does not serve any official function in the Chinese Communist party or government.

Chen's visa application had been rejected 15 times since he left for research work in the US in 1979.