

Pindi closes roads to truce line in Kashmir to stop PPP march

ISLAMABAD, Apr 3: Pakistan closed roads to the ceasefire line in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir today for two days to try to prevent a political group from storming the line, reports Reuter.

The Kashmir branch of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) plans to cross the line on Sunday to demonstrate support for a three-year-old separatist rebellion in Indian-ruled Kashmir.

Local officials ordered roads to the line, closed today and Sunday, the official APP news agency said.

The district administration had received intelligence that participants in the march would be armed and planned to seize public transport to reach the line, officials said.

Kashmir Affairs Minister Sardar Mehtab Ahmad Khan said authorities would block Sunday's march and security agencies in Pakistan-ruled Azad (free) Kashmir have been put on alert.

Pakistani authorities used force to block three attempts last year to cross the 1,400-km (870-mile) UN-monitored line that separates the Indian and Pakistani armies.

India rules two-thirds and

Pakistan the remaining third of Kashmir, over which the two countries have fought two of their three wars since their independence from Britain in 1947.

More than 9,000 people have died in the uprising by militants seeking independence or union with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the major militant groups fighting Indian rule in Kashmir denied on Friday government allegations that one of them killed prominent heart surgeon and rebel leader Abdul Ahad Guru.

They blamed the government for the abduction and murder of one of India's top

heart surgeons, who was posthumously revealed to be a top member of the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

The Hizbul Mujahideen group, which is fighting to join the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India to Pakistan, called on international human rights groups to investigate Guru's assassination.

"The government is trying to implicate one or other of the militant groups and to project the incident as inter-group rivalry to cover up its own crimes," it said in a statement.

Press Myanmar to release Suu Kyi: 422 Japanese MPs

TOKYO, Apr 3: More than 400 Japanese members of parliament have urged their government to put pressure on Myanmar for the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, politicians said, reports AFP.

Letters bearing the signatures of 422 ruling and opposition party members from both houses of Japan's Diet (parliament) were handed to chief cabinet secretary Yohei Kono Friday, they said.

The number accounted for some 55 per cent of Japan's 764 members of parliament.

Satsuki Edo, one of the 422 legislators, said he hoped that the signatures would also help solve human rights problems in other southeast Asian countries.

Off the Record

Gaddafi wants thieves to lose hands

LONDON: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi called on Friday for stricter implementation of the Sharia (Islamic law), including cutting off the hands of thieves and public flogging of adulterers, state television reported, says Reuter.

The television, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, quoted Gaddafi as saying thieves who stole from public rather than private funds, or who stole only small amounts, were getting away without punishment.

"The Quran says the hand of the thief—male or female—must be cut off. I want a law to be introduced, or the original law to be amended, so that the hands of the thief, both male and female, be cut off regardless of the amount the have stolen," he said in a televised speech.

Gaddafi said the punishment should be more severe when the theft involves public funds.

"Robbery must be punished by cutting off of the hands whether it involves public or private property. In fact it should be applied especially when (the theft) is committed against public property," he said.

"Also, the man or the woman who commits adultery should be given 100 strokes of the whip and the whipping must be witnessed by a group of believers or on television," he added.

He urged Libya's Basic People's Congress, due to meet over the weekend, to include the issue of implementing Islamic law on its agenda.

They send their children to prostitution

BANGKOK: Four women have been arrested and charged with supplying their five children for prostitution, police said yesterday, reports AFP.

The women and their five children, ranging in age from seven to 15, were picked up in downtown Bangkok Friday evening by undercover policeman posing as potential customers.

Police were told about the mothers selling the children's by an outraged member of the public, an officer said.

The children were kept at a police station Friday night and were due to be sent to a children's welfare home later Saturday, the officer said.

Age doesn't matter

BANGKOK: A man who is reported to be 115 years old is planning to marry a 106-year-old woman whom he met at a health contest for the elderly, a Thai newspaper said Saturday, reports AP.

Prom Kaew-ngarm won the contest in the northeastern province of Udorn Thani Thursday while the woman he wants to wed, Bai Onnok, came in second.

Prom, married twice before at ages 20 and 40, told the newspaper he hadn't wanted to do so again because his children may protest.

"But after meeting Bai, I think we can get along well and I want to marry her. I'm lonely," he said. "I'll ask my children to have sympathy for an old man."

Prom said frequent exercise and a diet of only cooked food, particularly fish, fruit and vegetables, accounted for his longevity and sexual potency.

The newspaper did not say if the reported ages of Prom and Bai had been verified.

A tragic end

KATHMANDU: A deer hunter wearing a fox-skin cap met a tragic end in a forest as a fellow hunter mistook him for a deer, the Nepalese news agency reported Saturday, says AFP.

The incident took place in the Baharise forest in Sakhuwasbani district, 380 kilometers (238 miles) northeast of Kathmandu last week, the Rastris Samachar Samiti (RSS) report said, quoting police sources.

Two brothers wearing fox-skin caps were hiding in a bush hunting spotted deer when a third hunter fired his double-barrel gun at them, killing one instantaneously, the report said.



SARAJEVO: A young couple embraces in a Sarajevo street on Friday during the fifth day of a ceasefire in the Bosnian capital. — AFP/UNB photo

Palestinian leader dies during interrogation

JERUSALEM, Apr 3: A militant Palestinian leader died during interrogation by Israeli prison authorities, Palestinians charged Friday, reports AFP.

But a prison spokesman said Nasser, 22, reported to be a leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Fatah Hawks, died from "complications following a lung infection."

Violent demonstrations broke out in the Deir El-Balah Refugee Camp in the occupied Gaza Strip, where Nasser had lived.

Palestinians said Nasser died during interrogation in Israel's Ashkelon Prison.

They said Israeli authorities had told Nasser's family that he had been ill and died during questioning, even though the family reported him to have been in perfect health when he was arrested March 20.

Nasser, who was captured along with three other Fatah Hawk suspects, is suspected of having killed fellow Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israelis and of opening fire on Israeli soldiers and settlers.

The prison spokesman said that Nasser was given medical care shortly after his arrest and transferred to the emergency ward at the Brazilian hospital in Ashkelon.

Authorities have started an inquest to determine the cause of death and the source of the infection, Israeli police said.

Nasser's lawyer, Rajjal-Surani, asked Yehuda Hiss, head of the Abu Kabir Medical Institute near Tel Aviv, to delay the autopsy until a foreign medical examiner arrives.

24-hour bus, train strike in London

LONDON, Apr 3: Feared bumper-to-bumper chaos in the British capital failed to materialize Friday as London's bus and train services went on a 24-hour strike — and thousands of would-be workers followed their lead, reports AP.

Commuters in London, where 400,000 normally travel to work by train, had faced further disruption as 7,000 bus staff walked out over pay cuts and changes in working practices.

But tens of thousands of workers stayed at home, arguing that the struggle to get to work simply wasn't worth the effort.

The result was half empty roadways at rush hour. A British Automobile Association spokesman reported that roads into most cities were "like on a Sunday."

The rail strike, the first for four years, was called by the Rail Maritime and Transport Union, which has 68,000 rail workers. Virtually all of the nation's trains ground to a halt Friday but London's subway system remained open.



Pope John Paul (L) looks on as Mikhail Gorbachev (R) adjusts Elizabeth Taylor's breasts during a look-a-like meeting in Warsaw yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

Emergency in Azerbaijan

MOSCOW, Apr 3: Azerbaijan President Ebulfez Elcibey declared a state of emergency to take effect at midnight Friday as intense fighting prompted calls for international intervention to stop the bloody Nagorny-Karabakh conflict, reports AFP.

Elcibey's decree, confirmed by Azerbaijan's Parliament, covers the entire country and was necessary because of Armenia's "aggression" against Azerbaijan, the Interfax News Agency reported.

The president also sent a message Friday to US President Bill Clinton denouncing the "escalation in the aggression" and asking for democratic countries to stop the conflict. Turkish, Iranian and

Armenian leaders also demanded international intervention.

Earlier Friday Armenian and Azeris made a claim, later retracted, that Armenian troops had entered Kelbadzhar, a town just east of the Armenian border that serves as supply centre for Azeri troops and the target of a week-long Armenian offensive.

The Armenians are seeking to open up an important land corridor to Nagorny-Karabakh, a mountainous region within Azerbaijan populated mostly by Christian Armenians who refuse to be ruled by the Muslim-led government in Baku.

The result of the massive offensive of Armenian forces is that about 60,000 inhabitants

of the Kelbadzhar region and 32 cities and villages of the Lachin region are in danger of being exterminated," Elcibey said in his letter to the American President.

Turkish and Iranian leaders, Muslim allies of Baku, also called for a peaceful solution to the bloody conflict.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin telephoned US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to demand international intervention to stop the Armenian offensive, the Anatolia News Agency said Friday in Ankara.

Cetin also planned telephone Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to discuss the matter, the semi-official agency said.

Queen Britain's richest person

LONDON, Apr 3: Queen Elizabeth, set to pay income tax this year for the first time, remains Britain's richest person, a survey said on Friday, reports Reuter.

The Sunday Times newspaper said its annual survey of Britain's 400 richest people showed the Queen still topped the list, although the monarch's estate dropped in value to an estimated 5.0 billion pounds (17.5 billion dollar) compared with 6.5 billion pounds (9.8 billion dollar) last year.

A spokesman attributed the decline to Britain's sluggish property and art markets. "It's generally just the prices of land and artefacts she owns going down," he said.

The survey, to be published in the paper's colour magazine on Sunday, estimated that the Queen's personal wealth — on which she will pay tax for the first time this financial year — was at least 450 million pounds (680) million dollar.

The Queen's concession to be taxed followed what she called an "annus horribilis" (horrible year) marked by marital scandals involving her

children and a major fire at Windsor Castle, her favourite palace west of London.

The Queen was one of only 25 women listed in the survey, and one of 182 people listed who inherited their wealth, compared with 218 who made their own money.

The highest new entry into



Queen Elizabeth the survey, which includes British nationals and people doing business in Britain, was Hungarian-born financier George Soros. Dubbed "the man who broke

the pound," Soros made around one billion dollar by betting against sterling in foreign exchange dealings before the pound's sharp devaluation last September.

Soros ranked 11th with an estimated wealth of 750 million pounds (1.1 billion dollar). He made headlines earlier this year by donating 32 million pounds (about 48 million dollar) to humanitarian aid for Bosnia.

Among pop musicians, the survey said the elder statesmen have amassed the most wealth. Former Beatle Paul McCartney was top of the pops with 400 million pounds (600 million dollar) placing him at number 19 in the overall list. Former colleague George Harrison was quoted at 25 million (38 million dollar).

Three of the rolling ones rock group ranked in the top 400 — Mick Jagger with 90 million pounds (135 million), Keith Richards with 70 million (105 million dollar) and Bill Wyman with 24 million (36 million dollar).

Indo-Japan talks end

NEW DELHI, Apr 3: India and Japan concluded a two-day annual meeting here Friday, discussing nuclear non-proliferation and worsening relations between New Delhi and Islamabad, officials said, reports AFP.

Indian Foreign Secretary Jyotindra Nath Dixit also briefed Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Kunihiko Saito on India's ties with the United States, China and the Association of South East Asian Nations, an official spokesman said.

The spokesman gave no details of the discussion, but said they were useful and "reflected the intensified relationship between (India and Japan) in recent years."

The delegations also discussed the situation in Sri Lanka.

BRIEFLY

Jackovich new US envoy to Bosnia: President Clinton plans to nominate career foreign service officer Victor Jackovich to be ambassador to war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina, the White House said Friday, reports AP from Washington.

Jackovich had been nominated to the same post by President Bush last fall, but the Senate adjourned without confirming him. He has spent several months in Geneva trying to help negotiate peace for the former Yugoslav republics.

He is a career officer with the United States Information Agency who is fluent in Russian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian. His last overseas assignment was as cultural affairs officer in Moscow.

2 IRA guerrillas get life-term: Two IRA guerrillas were sentenced to life imprisonment on Friday for killing a part-time soldier with a car bomb, reports Reuter from Belfast.

Geraldine Ann Ferrity, 21, and James Duffin, 35, were convicted of the murder in 1990 of Ulster Defence Regiment Sergeant-Major Albert Cooper, 42. They both denied the charge.

Prosecutors said Ferrity had left a car containing a semtex bomb with Cooper, who worked at an exhaust workshop, Duffin, they said, had scouted the route she took.

Ferrity had pretended the car needed a new exhaust, primed the bomb, handed Cooper the keys and was walking away when it exploded, they said.

14 killed in Caracas road mishap: Fourteen people were killed, most of the children, and 35 injured in a fiery crash Friday involving a truck and 12 other vehicles on an entrance to a highway north of Caracas, authorities said, reports AFP from Caracas.

The truck carrying 90 tonnes of aluminum lost its brakes on an entrance to the beltway that circles the Venezuelan capital, slammed into a bus and 11 other vehicles stopped at a traffic light and burst into flames.

At least two cars were trapped under the truck, fire officials said.

The morning crash occurred as four million Caracas resident took to the road to begin the easter week vacation.

Nixon to visit 3 Asian states: Former President Nixon, who opened up US relations with China 21 years ago, is making another trip there, as well as to Japan and South Korea, an aide said Friday, reports AP from Park Ridge.

Nixon is to arrive in Hamada, Japan, on Monday and travel to Tokyo on Wednesday, said Liz Johnston, who works in the former president's office in Park Ridge, near his home.

While in Japan, Nixon plans to meet with Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa and former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, she said.

Nixon is due in Seoul on Thursday, where he is scheduled to meet with President Kim Young Sam. But most of Nixon's time will be in China. He is due to arrive in Beijing on April 9 and visit Shanghai on April 12.

Ganev starts Japan tour Apr 10: United Nations General Assembly President Stoyan Ganev will make a week-long visit to Japan from April 10, the foreign ministry has announced, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

Ganev is scheduled to take part in a UN conference on disarmament from April 13 to 16 in Tokyo and hold talks in Tokyo with Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe and other officials, the ministry said on Friday.

Ganev, who served as Bulgaria's foreign minister from 1991 until December 1992, was elected president of the UN General Assembly last September.

Zhang goes to Russia tomorrow: The Commander of the Chinese navy, Vice Admiral Zhang Lianzhong, will make an official 10-day visit to Russia beginning April 5, at the end of which China might decide to buy Russian battleships, ITAR-Tass reported, says AFP from Moscow.

Zhang was to visit Moscow and the sea ports of Saint Petersburg and Vladivostok and travel to the submarine factories of Severomorsk, the news agency said.

He will hold talks with Deputy Defence Minister Andrei Kokoshi, the Commander of the Russian Navy Admiral Felts Gromov and with commanders of the northern, Pacific and Leningrad fleets.

In Severomorsk, the Chinese military officials was to visit nuclear and diesel submarines as well as the nuclear cruiser Admiral Ushakov.

Four militants killed in Punjab: Four militants were killed in Punjab since Friday night, police said, PTI reports from Chandigarh.

Amarnjit Singh, a "Lt. Gen." of the Khalistan Liberation Organisation, and three other militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in a village Hotian in Amritsar district.

Some arms and ammunitions were recovered from the encounter site. In another encounter, militant Gurmit Singh was killed near village Jainpura in Ludhiana district.

Fundamentalists in Algeria free one of 12 hostages

ALGIERS, Apr 3: Suspected Muslim fundamentalists Friday released one of 12 hostages they have been holding inside a bank near here two days after security forces foiled their getaway after an attempted robbery, police said, reports AFP.

The freed woman, a 24-year-old employee at the bank in El Afrour, 70 kilometres (45 miles) west of Algiers, was being taken to a military hospital in Algiers.

Police did not say what was wrong with her.

The Muslim extremists were still holding nine employees.

Russia continues to dump N-waste at Sea of Japan

LONDON, Apr 3: The Soviet navy dumped huge quantities of radioactive waste into the sea, said an official report whose publication here Friday quickly provoked a flurry of protest from Japan, reports AFP.

The report, compiled by the Russian President's environmental adviser Alexander Yablokov and released here by the ecological organisation Greenpeace, said that from 1966 to 1991 the navy dumped 18 decommissioned nuclear reactors and 13 150 containers of radioactive waste into the ocean, much of it in the Sea of Japan.

The radiation emitted by this seafoam waste amounts to 2.3 million curies, about twice that released by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident in Ukraine, the Yablokov report said.

While two of the nuclear reactors and 2,640 cubic metres of solid waste were jettisoned in the Sea of Japan, the navy also dumped waste into the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian

ocean according to the report.

Seven Nuclear reactors still containing nuclear fuel dumped in the sea north of Russia were an undoubted "threat" to the environment, Russia's Deputy Environment Minister Alexei Poryadin said Friday in Moscow.

The reactors were dumped in the Kara Sea near the Novaya Zemlya islands during testing of under-sea nuclear weapons and the Lenin ice-breaker ship, ITAR-Tass news agency quoted Poryadin as saying.

In 1958, some 600 cubic metres of low-level nuclear waste were jettisoned in the White Sea and 100 cubic metres of liquid nuclear waste were abandoned in the Gulf of Finland in 1960 by the ice-breaker Lenin.

Between 1959 and 1992, liquid radioactive waste totalling 20,600 curies and solid waste totalling 2.3 million curies were dumped in the seas north of Russia.

Radioactivity from nuclear waste is currently 324,000 curies in the Kara Sea, 12,593

curies in the Barents Sea, 100 curies in the White Sea, 0.2 curies in the Baltic and 18,565 curies on Russia's Pacific shores.

ITAR-Tass said a Russian government commission had drawn up a "white paper" on the subject.

"We want to investigate the matter because it's against humanity," Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said.

"It's absurd," added foreign minister Michio Watanabe. "We can't accept that nuclear waste is dumped in the sea."

A Greenpeace spokesman said the group had obtained a copy of the Yablokov report, which was submitted to President Boris Yeltsin in February.

Greenpeace said Russia faced a "waste nightmare" in needing to find a place for the spent fuel of its 235 nuclear-driven ships and submarines. Each year these vessels produce 20,000 cubic metres of liquid waste and 6,000 cubic metres of solid

waste.

The environmental group praised the "frankness" of Yablokov's report, nothing that it has provided details "which would never have been revealed during the cold war."

As late as 1989, the year the Berlin wall fell, the Soviet Union had said that "it did not dump, does not dump, nor plans to dump radioactive waste at sea," Greenpeace recalled.

The Japanese Daily Asahi, which also quoted the Russian document, said Friday that 38 ships filed with nuclear waste had offloaded the contents into ten dumps in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk near the Kamchatka peninsula northeast of Japan.

The director general of Japan's science and technology agency, Mamoru Nakajima, told journalists that Tokyo would try to get hold of the report as soon as possible through diplomatic channels. It would react only after having analysed its contents, he said.

WTC bombing: Allegations lies: Iraq

BAGHDAD, Apr 3: A newspaper published by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son said today allegations of possible Iraqi involvement in the New York World Trade Centre bombing were "lies and plots", reports Reuter.

"US circles are trying to fabricate lies and plots to hint that Iraq is involved in the skyscraper operation", Babel newspaper published by Saddam's son Uday said.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sources said on Wednesday an international search was under way for Iraq-born Ramzi Ahmed Yousef (25).