

# 36,000 Iranian troops take part in military exercise in Gulf

TEHRAN, Apr 30: Some 36,000 Iranian troops took part on Thursday in a massive naval, airforce and ground exercise in the Gulf, official Tehran Radio said, reports AFP.

The manoeuvres code-named Victory-4 were carried out by revolutionary guards and regular troops over a 50,000 square kilometres (20,000 square miles) area of the northern Gulf.

They were aimed at maintaining the country's "naval defensive readiness" the radio said.

The operation included helicopter troop movements and firing of air-to-sea and sea-to-air missiles at imaginary enemies.

The Victory-4 manoeuvre began Monday with commando and submarine operations at Bushehr, with in-port emergency rescue operations and communication exercises.

The radio stressed the defensive nature of the opera-

# US Defence Deptt split over efficacy of air strike

## Clinton weighing a two-track approach to end Bosnian war

WASHINGTON, Apr 30: President Clinton is driving toward a final decision by Saturday for tougher action to end the war in Bosnia, unswayed by the sudden willingness of Serbs to participate in international peace talks, reports AP.

Administration officials said Clinton was considering a two-track approach, combining air strikes against Bosnian Serbs and lifting an arms embargo on outgunned Bosnian Muslims.

Clinton intends to make up his mind by Saturday, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Thursday. All of the President's national security and foreign policy advisers have been summoned to a meeting that day.

It's not clear when Clinton will publicly announce his decision. Christopher is expected to first outline the decision to European leaders next week. He's expected to visit several

European capitals, starting in London and including a stop in Moscow.

Clinton must confront a Congress torn between the threat of another Vietnam-like quagmire and the horror of ethnic cleansing of Muslims and Croats by Serbs.

The Defence Department is split over the effectiveness of air strikes. And allies are reluctant to take the tougher action, fearing a widening of the war and a backlash against British, French and other forces taking part in UN relief operations.

"Five hundred and thirty-five members of Congress have almost 535 different ideas of what should be done because it is that frustrating and that complex," Sen. Patrick Leahy said after conferring over lunch with Christopher.

Clinton was quick to express skepticism at Bosnian Serbs' abrupt willingness to

join Muslims and Croats in peace talks Saturday and Sunday in Athens.

"Let's see how serious they are," he said. "They've said things before and not meant it."

Privately, administration officials said the Serbs were stalling in the hope of averting military strikes.

"If they mean it now, so much the better," the president said. "We will know them by their deeds, not their words."

Christopher said Clinton would not delay.

"It does not change our plans at all," he said.

To demonstrate US resolve for pressing ahead, the White House choreographed back-to-back appearances by the military Joint Chief of Staff and then by Christopher before reporters and cameras in the White House driveway.

Gen. Colin Powell, the Joint

Chiefs chairman, said Clinton spent two hours with the military leaders in "a full discussion of a wide-range of military options as well as consideration of the current diplomatic situation."

"We haven't ruled anything off the table," other than the use of American ground forces, Powell said.

He said the chiefs talked with Clinton about "the proper linking of military actions to political objectives and policy objectives."

Powell did not offer much of an endorsement for air strikes, which the president is known to be considering.

"There is always a risk associated with it," he said. "Whether they have the effect that some of the more strident advocates hope they would have is a question to be answered."

However, Powell said the military was ready to carry out any orders from the president.

# Off the Record



WASHINGTON: US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary acknowledge the applause of members of the President's Health Care Task Force Thursday during a farewell ceremony on the White House South Lawn. — AFP/UNB photo

## Police record plane crash as road mishap

NEW DELHI: An airplane crash that just killed 56 people in Western India is being described in police records as a traffic accident, an Indian newspaper reported Friday, says AP.

The Boeing 737-200 crashed onto its belly, broke into three pieces and caught fire soon after taking off Monday from the city of Aurangabad, 680 miles (1,094 kms) southwest of New Delhi.

Police there have registered the plane crash as a road mishap because the accident began when the jet collided with a truck carrying cotton bales near the runway, The Times of India said.

The daily quoted unidentified Indian Airlines sources as saying that since the truck was on a street outside the airport boundary, police insist on recording it as a road accident.

## 'Clothes don't make the man'

LISBON: A cross-dressing woman who took a bride and received loans from neighbours by masquerading as a highly decorated general was convicted of fraud Thursday and sentenced to three years in prison, reports AP.

Terestina Gomes, known since 1975 as the distinguished but cash-strapped war veteran Gen Tito Anibal de Paixao Gomes, also was ordered to repay the money she borrowed.

Gomes, dressed in a conservative tie and a double-breasted pinstriped suit, had one comment for a crowd gathered at the courtroom door: "Clothes don't make the man."

She then strode from the courthouse to the accompaniment of a John Philip Sousa march blaring from a music store across the street.

Gomes, a 52-year-old former secretary, said during the trial that she left home on the Portuguese island of Madeira in 1974 and resurfaced a year later in Lisbon dressed as an army captain.

## Diana's first female bodyguard

LONDON: Princess Diana has chosen a female bodyguard for the first time, reports AP.

Police Sgt. Carol Quirk will accompany the princess on her travels, joining three other bodyguards who guard Diana 24 hours a day, London newspapers reported.

Quirk, 36, is reportedly proficient in judo and like others protecting royal family members, was trained at the elite Special Air Service commando school in Hereford, England.

Quirk, who is unmarried, had been on a two-month trial with Princess Diana to see if they got on and impress Diana with her "tact and ready smile," the Daily Mirror reported.

Britain's sensation-seeking tabloid newspapers have described Quirk as "Carol the crackshot" and as riding "shotgun" to Diana. Actually, she will carry a 38-caliber Smith and Wesson revolver.



# Buckingham Palace to be opened to public

LONDON, Apr 30: Buckingham Palace, Queen Elizabeth's main residence in London and headquarters for the Royal family, is to be opened to the public for the first time, reports Reuter.

The government announced paying visitors would be allowed into the palace for eight weeks every summer to help cover the cost of the repairs at Windsor Castle, another royal residence west of London ravaged by fire last year.

The decision was seen as a further response to public disquiet over the lavish lifestyle of the royal family, whose prestige has been eroded by the marital failures of heir to the throne Prince Charles and his brother Prince Andrew.

Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke told parliament up to 70 per cent of the cost of restoring Windsor Castle would be met by entry charges for tours of the state rooms and picture gallery in Buckingham Palace starting this August.

Earlier it had been announced the taxpayer would foot most of the bill, estimated at between 30 and 40 million pounds (47 to 62 million dollar).

The London palace, first built in 1703 and remodelled in 1913, is one of the city's main tourist attractions.

Pictures of newlywed royal couples, including Prince Charles and Princess Diana, waving from the balcony have been transmitted around the world. Thousands of tourists



BOSNIA: A Muslim family stands in their backyard Thursday as sniper fire still continues between Muslims and Croats. — AFP/UNB photo

# Afghan leaders may meet soon

KABUL, Apr 30: Leaders of most of Afghanistan's nine main political factions were expected to gather in the provincial city of Jalalabad this week for more talks on resolving the country's political crisis, reports AP.

But President Burhanuddin Rabbani, one of the leading protagonists, had postponed his flight to the eastern provincial capital because not all the participants had arrived, a government source said Thursday.

"Some of the Mujahedeen leaders are still in Pakistan," the source said.

The leaders must break the deadlock over the issue of a cabinet if there is to be a chance for peace in Afghanistan.

Babbani has refused to accept the proposals of Prime Minister-designate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

# Hostages in Costa Rica freed

SAN JOSE, Apr 30: A group of five gunmen led by a former policeman trying to raise money for a liver transplant freed all 23 hostages at Costa Rica's Supreme Court only to be captured in an airport shootout, reports AP.

They got them, they got them, shouted President Rafael Calderon on hearing the news the five had been captured, ending an ordeal in which 18 Supreme Court justices were held hostage for three days.

Calderon said the gunmen were taken at the international airport, where the five have been led to believe they would catch a flight to freedom in an unidentified South American country.

Instead, there was shootout and the five surrendered to police, he said. There were no casualties.

A Costa Rican commando team reportedly was hiding in two old aircraft on the runway and captured the hostage-takers as they headed for a twin-engine plane parked nearby.

The brief exchange of fire occurred when the five gunmen tried to shoot their way out of the trap, the reports said.

Calderon said he was happy and satisfied with the outcome.

With their arrest, new details began to emerge about the motives behind the Supreme

Court takeover by a group which called itself the death commando and initially was reported to be linked to Colombian drug traffickers.

Their leader, Guillermo Fallas, sent a letter to a local television station explaining that he suffered cirrhosis of the liver and had taken hostages to raise money for a liver transplant abroad. Sources close to Fallas said he had only a few months to live.

Fallas, who was joined in his dramatic attack by his brother Gilberto, said in the letter that he was sorry for betraying his country, but that he had no choice, since no government official would agree to help him.

"I asked for a social security pension, but they turned me down for being too young," Fallas wrote. "I filed a special appeal with the constitutional court, and it was rejected too."

He insisted in the letter that the groups threats to kill some of the justices, and to blow up the court were just the result to psychological pressure, and that the gunmen had no intention of harming their hostages.

The three other members of the group have not been identified.

The gunmen had received 150,000 dollars, according to a government spokeswoman, in exchange for the release of the justices.



SAN JOSE: Justice Jose Luis Arce Saenz (C), one of the 19 justices taken hostage at the Costa Rican Supreme Court, leaves the court with his wife Thursday after being released. — AFP/UNB photo

# Arab world may have 300m people by 2,000

ABU DHABI, Apr 30: The Arab world is expected to have almost 300 million people by the year 2000, an official report said, according to AP.

The Arab population will grow by three per cent annually until the year 200 and this rate is high compared with a world growth rate of 1.7 per cent," said the annual report distributed by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund.

By the turn of the century, the population of the Arab League's 21 members will reach 299 million, it said. Its population was at 229 million in 1991 and estimated at 241 million last year.

"Such and increase in the Arab population could be exploited, if prepared through training and education, in expanding economic activity."

# Croats, Muslims agree to exchange prisoners

SARAJEVO, Apr 30: Warring Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia-Herzegovina have agreed to an exchange of civilian prisoners, due to be released by midday (1000 GMT) today under a reinforced ceasefire agreement, Sarajevo Radio reported, reports AP.

The ceasefire agreement was signed Thursday evening by the commanders of the mainly Muslim Bosnian army and the Roman Catholic Croat forces after nearly two weeks of fighting between the two previously allied groups.

The latest exchange agreement also said that both groups had agreed to the return of those killed in the fighting — estimated at least 200 — with bodies to be collected from streets and houses at 4:00 pm and handed back to relatives.

The two commanders, Sefer Halilovic of Bosnian army

and General Milivoj Petkovic of the Croat forces, have ordered their local commanders to cooperate with UN agencies, including the UN Protection Force, and with the International Committee of the Red Cross, Sarajevo Radio said.

The area has seen savage fighting since April 15 which has continued despite three ceasefires, with atrocities reported on both sides.

Populations have been fleeing burning villages as UN personnel report multiple rape and point-blank executions of women and children.

Another report says: Serb troops shelled the Sarajevo neighbourhood of Stup — devoid of civilians throughout the night. Sarajevo Radio reported this morning. Stup, situated on a strategic crossroads between the city and the airport, controls the western gateway to the capital.

# Gadhafi accuses West of using threats of oil embargo

CAIRO, Apr 30: Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi accused the West of using threats of an oil embargo to terrorise the North African country and said he will stop selling oil rather than take such punishment, reports AP.

"We will turn off our oil, and we will live without oil for 5,000 years," a defiant Gadhafi said in a speech to students Thursday.

"This is terrorism when they go on about oil," he said. Gadhafi's speech at Jadu University southwest of Tripoli was televised and monitored in London.

# US policy toward S Asia to focus on regional stability

WASHINGTON, Apr 30: The Clinton administration's policy towards South Asia will concentrate on regional stability and nuclear nonproliferation, a top State Department official told the House of Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific during an April 28 hearing, reports BSS.

Other key objectives listed by John Malott, interim Director of the Bureau of South Asian Affairs, included the promotion of democracy, human rights and economic reform, countering terrorism and narcotics and addressing "global" issues such as AIDS, population growth and the environment.

Malott also assured the panel that the administration would nominate a new assis-

tant secretary for South Asia "sometime in the near future."

The Clinton administration, he said, believes that the realization of its key goals "requires that we pursue an evenhanded approach," particularly with regard to India and Pakistan. US officials "reject the concept of a tilt in either direction," he said.

Asked whether the administration will support the Pressler amendment, under which US aid to Pakistan was suspended, Malott responded that there has been "no discussion" at the department about changing the policy. "And as long as it is the law of the land, we will pursue it," he said.

He said the Clinton administration was not considering

restrictions on aid to India, that assistance is targeted to some of the "poorest of the poor," and "we shouldn't punish them," Malott said. Reports of human rights abuses on the part of the Indian government has produced "serious concerns" in Washington, Malott said. But he made clear that US officials are disinclined to link India's human rights record to assistance or trade.

Regarding Kashmir, Malott reiterated the US view that "any solution must take into account the views of the Kashmiri people themselves." He stressed that this position should not be seen as either supporting or rejecting the possibility of a plebiscite in the disputed state.

Although the panel had hoped to discuss the administration's foreign aid plans for South Asia, George Laudato of the Agency for International Development noted that no request was ready for submission. He said one would be submitted "shortly."

Following is the text of Malott's written statement, as submitted to the panel:

Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I am very pleased to be able to appear before you today to discuss the Clinton administration's policy towards South Asia. On behalf of the Department of State's New Bureau of South Asian Affairs, I look forward to a close and cooperative relationship with you, Chairman, and the members and staff of this

subcommittee, as we work together to achieve the interests of the United States in a region of the world that encompasses one-fourth of humanity.

South Asia — an area of 1.3 billion people, half of whom live in poverty, but most of whom live under democracy — is undergoing profound transformation. The Soviet collapse has altered significantly America's relations with the key players in the region, Pakistan and India. Since 1990, democracy has been restored in Nepal and Bangladesh, and affirmed through elections in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The failure of socialism has prompted governments to initiate market based economic

reforms and liberalize foreign investment. The fall of communist rule in Afghanistan has brought political instability and major humanitarian needs than now spread into central Asia.

South Asia is a patchwork of technological advance and economic growth next door to abject poverty. It is the seat of political turmoil, insurgency, and war, and of national ethnic and religious tensions. It is also a possible nuclear flash-point.

In dealing with South Asia we confront, in one place, the key post-cold war foreign policy concerns set out by the Clinton administration. The situation there offers us great challenges and great opportunities.

# Li Peng under treatment

BEIJING, Apr 30: Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, suffering from a bad cold, is under treatment and is resting, an official said here Thursday, reports AP.

"Li Peng has caught a bad cold," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin told a weekly briefing.

He is now receiving treatment and taking rest. When he is well again, we will discuss once again the arrangements for his visit to four central Asian countries and Mongolia," he said.

The spokesman gave no other details nor did he indicate whether the Premier was being treated in hospital or not.