

## Khmer Rouge accepts proposal for truce

PHNOM PENH, May 4: The Khmer Rouge guerrilla group has agreed to King Norodom Sihanouk's proposal for a nationwide truce, reports AP.

Fighting has intensified in recent weeks and the UN World Food Programme says, driven some 55,000 people from their homes in two western provinces.

On Monday, Sihanouk called for an immediate cease-fire and the establishment of a commission with two generals from each side to monitor it. Then peace talks would be held either in Cambodia or at Sihanouk's guest home in North Korea. The government has agreed to the proposal.

In a letter to Sihanouk

### India launches satellite into orbit

NEW DELHI, May 4: India's space agency successfully launched a 113-kilogramme (248.6 pound) satellite into orbit today, officials said, reports AFP.

The 5.30 am (00.00 GMT) lift off from the Sriharikota launch site in southern India was described by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) officials as a "grand success".

The satellite put into orbit by a three-stage experimental rocket known as ASLV-D4 is expected to send back experimental astronomical data, the officials said.

## BRIEFLY

**Floods claim 39 in China:** Flooding triggered by torrential rains caused 39 deaths, and affected 40 towns and districts in southeastern China's Fujian province, the China news service said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Samming district was the worst hit with 16 dead, 200,000 homes damaged and 61,000 hectares of farmland flooded, the agency said. The downpour lasted from Sunday to Tuesday, it added.

**Richard Scarry dead:** Richard Scarry, whose more than 250 books for children have sold over 100 million copies round the world, has died at his home in Switzerland, a family spokesman said Tuesday. Reuter reports from New York.

Scarry, 74, died Saturday of a heart attack at his home in Gstaad, according to spokesman Dean Bender in a statement released here.

Trained at the Boston museum art school, Scarry launched his illustrating career in 1949 by doing the drawings for a book for western printing division called "Mouse's House."

**Mahathir in France:** Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad arrived Tuesday on a two-day private visit during which he will meet with his French counterpart Edouard Balladur and local business leaders, AFP reports from Paris.

Through the Amtra company, France is competing with Canada to build an underground system in Kuala Lumpur, a project worth an estimated 780 million dollars.

A project for the French oil company ELF to build a refinery in Malaysia is also under consideration. Mahathir leaves Thursday for the United States.

**Indian warehouse blast kills 22:** At least 22 people, including nine children, were killed when a warehouse storing fireworks exploded in India's western state of Maharashtra, a police spokesman said today.

He said the explosion which occurred on Tuesday night, also injured 76 people in Chikalthane village in the Solapur district. The village is over 400 km (250 miles) from India's commercial centre of Bombay, the capital of Maharashtra.

Police believe sparks from a fireworks display fell on the warehouse, triggering the explosion. Villagers had been celebrating during a Hindu festival.

**Kenyan ferry mishap toll now 276:** The death toll in a Kenyan ferry accident has reached 276 after 88 more bodies were retrieved from the sunken vessel when it was refloated in the port city of Mombasa, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Nairobi.

The Mtwangi ferry carrying more than 300 commuters capsized on Friday. Seventy people were rescued.

President Daniel Arap Moi has appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate the accident, widely blamed on overloading.

**US launches spy satellite:** The US air force launched a rocket carrying a spy satellite Tuesday after failed attempts in two weeks. AFP reports from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

The unmanned Titan four blasted off from Cape Canaveral into hazy skies, heading northeast over the Atlantic on its way to deploy what military space experts believe it is an electronic eavesdropping device.

Officials would not give details on the satellite.

**2 killed, 7 injured in Somalia:** Two people were killed and seven wounded in Marka, south of the Somali capital of Mogadishu, when protesters were "hired gunmen" employed by the United Nations opened fire, radio Mogadishu charged late Tuesday, AFP reports from London.

The radio, which backs clan leader Mohamed Farah Aideed, said "UNOSOM II (United Nations) officials in Marka used hired gunmen, who opened fire on the people who were expressing their patriotism."

**Gore will lead US team to SA**

WASHINGTON, May 4: Vice-President Al Gore will lead the US delegation to the inauguration next week of South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela, reports Reuter.

US officials said Gore would lead a delegation that would include a number of distinguished Americans in and out of government. Also in the group will be Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy.

President Clinton is to announce the names Wednesday along with details of US assistance. Officials have already pledged to double US aid to South Africa to at least 140 million dollars.

Thus, it said the Singapore

## 21 orphans, 13 Red Cross officials massacred in Rwanda

BRUSSELS, May 4: Twenty-one orphans and 13 Rwandan Red Cross officials were massacred in an attack on a school in Butare, southern Rwanda, a Belgian Red Cross official stated Tuesday.

Khieu Samphan said talks should eventually take place in a neutral place, whether it is inside or outside the country. He previously had insisted on holding them outside of Cambodia, a condition the government rejected. The security of the Khmer Rouge delegation cannot be ensured in Phnom Penh, Khieu Samphan said.

The Khmer Rouge has stepped up attacks in the adjoining western provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey since recapturing the guerrilla headquarters at Pailin in Battambang on April 19. It was relatively quiet in the provinces Tuesday.

The refugee exodus from the two provinces is by far the largest since the United Nations organized elections in May 1993 to help end Cambodia's civil war. Communist Khmer Rouge guerrillas boycotted the election and continued fighting.

Some of the heaviest reported fighting has been for Treng, a strategic commune along Route 10 between the Battambang capital town and Pailin.

On Tuesday, Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh said the guerrillas appeared to be pulling back from Treng.

for shooting down the aircraft. Habyarimana last year cut a peace pact with the RPF.

The international community must intervene in Rwanda. It must halt this massacre, the worst that Africa has ever known," Dufour said.

Fighting among the Hutus and the Tutsis raged on in Rwanda on Tuesday as the United Nations bid in Arusha, Tanzania, to bring delegations from the government and the RPF face-to-face for peace talks.

It is most likely that the victims were of the Tutsi ethnic group," the official, Pascal Dufour said, adding that they were slaughtered in front of other children by unidentified armed militiamen.

The Red Cross volunteers were also killed, with the headmaster of the school, who had tried to prevent the slaughter.

In Veneta, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said the children had been taken to Butare from Kigali by orphanage staff who thought they would be safer in the southern town.

The ICRC said it was "shocked" by the ethnic bloodshed that has claimed more than 100,000 lives in Rwanda since the death in a plane crash of President Juvenal Habyarimana on April 1.

Three UN peacekeepers were wounded when mortar bombs hit Kigali airport on Tuesday during bombardments between the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (APF) and government forces.



Exiled King Kigeli V Ndagurwa of Rwanda poses in Washington's Union Station May 3. According to the king, only UN military intervention can end the carnage in Rwanda. King Kigeli was deposed 33 years ago. — AFP photo

## Jericho—an unlikely capital for Palestinian self-rule

JERICHO, May 4: The sleepy town of Jericho, in ancient times, the site of grand passions, seems an unlikely capital for Palestinian self-rule, reports AP.

Its palm-lined boulevards feature pleasant cafes, not buildings of state. One site proposed for use by the Palestinian authorities is now a hotel.

Jericho lacks a university or an intellectual elite features that place Hebron, Nablus and east Jerusalem at the center of Palestinian political life.

But this town of 15,000 people is unquestionably a Palestine Liberation Organization stronghold, one of the factors leading its leadership to demand that Israeli negotiators include it in negotiations last year.

It also is the first stop for the 600,000 Palestinians and visitors who cross the Allenby Bridge from Jordan every year, making it a thoroughway for the West Bank produce that moves to the Arab world. Jericho's economy is based mainly on agriculture.

Many leading Palestinians own second homes in Jericho, considerably warmer in winter than other parts of the West

Bank. In summer, temperatures soar above 104 degrees Fahrenheit and slow life to a crawl.

Jericho wasn't always so quiet. Some scholars say its 11,000 years of settlement make it the oldest town on Earth.

In 1948, its population boomed from 2,000 to 70,000 with an influx of Palestinian refugees from Israel's independence war. The reverse occurred when Israel captured

Radicals protest Cairo accord

SIDON, May 4: Radical Palestinians called for protest strikes in refugee camps in Lebanon on Wednesday after the PLO and Israel signed an accord giving Palestinians control over Jericho and the Gaza Strip, reports AP.

Burning tires blocked inlets to the Ein el-Hilweh camp, the largest in Lebanon with 60,000 inhabitants. Black posters, reading "Down with the Accord of Treason" and "To Hell with the Shameful Cairo Agreement," spanned the alleyways of the camp, on the outskirts of Sidon.

So will the nearby Nebi Musa, the site where Muslims believe Moses is buried.

## 10 killed in Afghan fighting

KABUL, May 4: At least 10 people were killed and 80 wounded in a brief but intense overnight infantry attack by rival factions battling Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, frontline and hospital sources said today, reports AFP.

A combined infantry force of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum based in and around the old Microray Housing Estate attacked pro-Rabbani troops across the Kabul river in an attempt to establish a foothold there.

The enemy's morale was too weak to sustain an infantry attack so they used the heavy weapons," frontline commander Sabro of the defending pro-Rabbani troops told AFP.

Speaking from his base in the new Microray Housing Estate facing the Uzbek opposition dug-in no more than 100 metres across the Kabul river, Sabro said three of his men were wounded while he had received a report that at least 10 of the attacking force had been killed.

The 30-minute exchange of small-arms fire was the most intense witnessed by locals for several weeks.

No-confidence motion against Lankan govt

COLOMBO, May 4: The opposition has moved a no-confidence vote against the government, blaming it for price rise, corruption and violation of human rights, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

The motion will be debated on Thursday, but it is likely to be defeated as the governing United National Party holds 125 of the 225 seats in Parliament.

The main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party and other groups that moved the motion also have faulted the government for not bringing peace to the north and east, where more than 19,000 people have been killed in the a Tamil separatist rebellion.

The other signatories to the motion were the United Socialists Alliance, the Peoples United People and one law maker of the Tamil United Liberation Front.

At least four similar no-confidence motions have been defeated in the past.

## Off the Record

### Polygamist ambassadors face tough choice

MBAKANE: Foreign ambassadors often face tough decisions abroad, but those from this small southern African nation may face their hardest choice before departing — which wife to take with them, reports AP.

The mountainous kingdom sandwiched between South Africa and Mozambique has a tribal-rooted history of polygamy, with men being allowed to have several wives.

It also used to have an informal policy of allowing its ambassadors to take their wives and children with them when posted abroad.

But Foreign Minister Solomon Dlamini changed that at the latest Parliament meeting Monday.

Responding to a question, Dlamini said ambassadors with multiple wives would have to leave all but one behind when serving in a foreign country.

The ambassadors can only keep one house in the foreign country, so he usually goes with only one wife," said Felizwe Dlamini, Secretary of State for Swazi Foreign Affairs. "This has always been the policy but sometimes dignitaries work around it."

He said all five of the current Swazi ambassadors have one wife, so the issue has been dormant.

"It's up to the man how many wives he has, but polygamy is allowed," Dlamini said.

Swaziland gained independence from Britain in 1968 and is currently ruled by King Mswati III, who is believed to have at least five wives. His father, the late King Sobhuza II, reportedly had more than 100 wives.

### Bid to sell fake mummy

TEHRAN: Two men have been arrested trying to sell what they said was the body of an ancient Persian King, an Iranian newspaper reported on Tuesday, says Reuter.

The mummy, priced at 20 billion rials (11 million dollars), was a fake, so were the buyers, who turned out to be police.

The Daily Kayhan said Tehran police worked four months to set up the deal with antique smugglers who claimed they had the body of Xerxes, an Achaemenid King killed by palace conspirators in 465 BC.

Police arrested the pair at a rendezvous in the northwesternern city of Urumiyeh and seized the mummy, it said.

Tests at the Tehran cultural heritage organisation showed that the expertly mummified body is fake ... it is not even a human corpse" Kayhan said.

### "Topless" photos anger, humiliate Diana

LONDON: The Princess of Wales is angry and humiliated that topless pictures of her are being hawked round the world for up to one million pounds (1.5 million dollars) by a Spanish agency, press reports here said Wednesday, reports AFP.

But the first-known "topless" pictures of the princess are said to show her lying face down, and British publications have so far proved reluctant to snap them up.

The princess told a friend the intrusion into her privacy was "like a rape," said the Daily Mail, adding the news of the photographs had left her feeling angry and "utterly humiliated."

There were unconfirmed reports from Madrid Tuesday that Spanish magazine "HOLA," the parent publication of Britain's "Hello" magazine had paid an undisclosed sum for photographs of the princess with her bikini top on. The topless pictures remained unconfirmed.

It was also suggested the two magazines might save the princess from world-wide embarrassment by buying the negatives — not to print them, but to ensure they were never published.

A spokesman for the Madrid-based Europa press agency, which is selling the photographs, claimed they were "inconclusive" and would not necessarily be sold.

"She is sunbathing with her face down, she is not wearing a top ... I do know there is a lot of interest from some papers in the UK, but at the moment they are not sold," he added.

The princess' lawyers are still in dispute with the Daily Mirror and Sunday Mirror over "Sneak" photographs taken last year as she worked out in a London gym.

## DPRK won't accept full inspections of N-sites

TOKYO, May 4: North Korea said it would not accept full inspections of its nuclear sites, and warned it would exchange critical fuel rods by itself without the presence of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, reports AFP.

A North Korean foreign ministry spokesman made the remark late Tuesday in reply to IAEA requests for samples of spent fuel to test whether any fissile material had been diverted for military use.

The spokesman said in an interview with the Korean Central News Agency (OKCNA) that if the IAEA continued to call for the sampling of the rods, "we will have no other alternative but to replace the fuel rod(s) according to our operation plan."

He said that replacement of the fuel rods was urgent and could be delayed no longer, either from the technical point of view or for the sake of security, according to a KCNA dispatch monitored here.

"If we allow the selective measurement of the fuel rod(s), the Agency secretariat will find a new pretext for pressure on the DPRK," the North Korean spokesman said.

"We can no longer allow the IAEA secretariat to use our nuclear problems as a political expedient," the spokesman added.

Serbs offer truce for Brcko corridor

SARAJEVO, May 4: Bosnian Serbs Tuesday offered a cease-fire for the Brcko corridor, considered Bosnia's next flashpoint, and offered not to move troops into the region, UN envoy Yasushi Akashi said, reports AFP.

Speaking after talks with Bosnian Serbs leader Radovan Karadzic in a palace near Sarajevo, Akashi said the Serbs had also agreed to allow a greater number of UN military observers in the northeastern region of Tuzla.

Brcko is held by the Serbs but part of the corridor is threatened by Muslim forces.

## Singapore reduces lashing sentence of American teen-ager