

Pope denounces UN draft proposal on birth control

VATICAN CITY, Apr 18: Pope John Paul II denounced the United Nations Sunday for seeking to "destroy the family" in a draft proposition on birth control, reports AFP.

Two PLO delegates walk out of talks in Cairo

CAIRO, Apr 18: Two PLO delegates walked out of talks with Israel in Cairo on Sunday and the Chief PLO delegate said it was unacceptable that the Jewish state refused to free militant prisoners, reports Reuters.

The two sides also clashed on Israel's insistence that Palestinian courts have no jurisdiction over foreigners visiting their relatives in Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Nabil Shaath, the head of the PLO team, said this was at least an improvement on Israeli's previous position — that all foreigners should be immune from Palestinian law.

But he added: "It is still a horror on a miniature scale. We do not accept their whole approach to jurisdiction."

The other two delegates, Mohamed Dahlan and Jibril Al-Rojoub, walked out in protest at Israeli discrimination between prisoners.

mitting the draft, to be addressed to world leaders and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and presented at a forthcoming UN conference in Cairo on population and development. "I am returning to the Vatican to oppose a United Nations project which is seeking to destroy the family," he said.

"I am simply telling them... reconsider and convert, if you are the United Nations you cannot destroy the family."

Later in the day in St Peter's Square the Pope told worshippers that he was "issuing an appeal to all people with consciences, to all free spirits," to oppose the draft.

He added: "A defeat for mankind is in prospect if we entrust exclusively to economists, sociologists and politicians a sector as delicate as conception and human life in the decision context of sexuality and the family."

With 1994 designated the international year of the family, he added, humanity had a right to expect a strengthening of the principle, contained in the universal declaration of Human rights, that "the family is society's natural and fundamental unit."

"Whoever threatens the family threatens humanity," he added. In a letter published Thursday, the holy see denounced the UN draft as amoral.

Patriot missiles arrive in ROK to boost defences against DPRK

PUSAN, South Korea, Apr 18: Two US ships carrying Patriot air defence missiles arrived in South Korea on Monday as part of US moves to boost the South's defences against communist North Korea, reports Reuters.

Witnesses saw a number of camouflage-painted trucks come off from the ships, which

docked at the southern port of Pusan early on Monday.

The ships, the meteor and the comet, were escorted by South Korean patrol boats into Pusan harbour amid tight security.

A Defence Ministry spokesman would not confirm the arrival of the missiles, but US officials have said Patriots were

on the ships.

The officials said between three and six batteries were sent to South Korea. A battery consists of eight launchers and 64 missiles.

US president Bill Clinton ordered Patriot missiles to be sent to guard South Korea against possible missile attack by the North, which is locked

in a standoff with the West over its suspected nuclear weapons programme.

Seoul, a mere 50 km (30 miles) from the border, is highly vulnerable to missile attack.

Patriot missiles, which were requested by General Gary Luck, the US commander in South Korea, were used during the 1991 Gulf war to intercept Iraqi Scud missiles over Israel and Saudi Arabia. North Korea has variations of the Scud.

The United States has also sent anti-tank helicopters to the South.

The North has warned that the US decision to deploy the missiles in the South could lead to war on the peninsula.

US Defence Secretary William Perry will arrive in South Korea late on Tuesday for two days of talks about rising tensions over North Korea's nuclear programme. He will stop briefly in Tokyo on Thursday on his way home.

Perry will meet senior US and South Korean officials to discuss military readiness and political strategy over Pyongyang's refusal to allow full international inspection of its nuclear facilities.

North Korea has denied charges by Washington and its allies that it is actively trying to develop nuclear weapons.



US military transport ships Comet (R) and Meteor (L) come in to dock at a military port in the southern city of Pusan, in South Korea on Monday with the first dispatch of Stinger and Patriot missile batteries to be deployed at American bases in South Korea to counter a North Korean missile threat.

Dostum tells UN mission Ceasefire impossible with Rabbani in power

ISLAMABAD, Apr 18: Afghan warlord Rashid Dostum has told a UN peace mission that a ceasefire in Afghanistan is impossible while President Burhanuddin Rabbani is staying in power, reports Xinhua.

Dostum, who has been fighting against Premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar at Kabul in an attempt to oust Rabbani, stated this during an hour meeting in Mazar-i-Sharif of northern Afghanistan Sunday with the UN mission led by Mahmoud Mestiri, said reports from Afghanistan.

The Uzbek general told Mestiri, who urged him to observe a ceasefire in Kabul, that he could foresee no end to fighting unless Rabbani resigned.

"I fully support these proposals for the resignation of Rabbani and formation of an interim government which will arrange elections and form a unified army," he said.

The fighting between the joint forces of Dostum and Hekmatyar and those of Rabbani which started on January 1 has lasted for nearly four months with neither side in a winning position.

11,000 people have been killed and 12,000 others injured due to the fighting, which also spread to northern Afghanistan where pro-Rabbani troops are engaged in fierce

fighting with forces loyal to Dostum who controlled eight northern provinces.

The UN mission headed by former Tunisian foreign minister Mestiri left for the western city of heart after talks with Dostum.

This is Mestiri's third trip into Afghanistan since his mission began last month.

Riot breaks out in French city

LYON, France, Apr 18: Riots broke out in a suburb of this eastern central French city Sunday, in the third night of violence which has left buildings and vehicles wrecked and seen nine people arrested, reports AFP.

Hundreds of police reinforcements were deployed in the Lyon suburbs of Vaulx-en-Velin, Rillieux-La-Pape and Bron, where fire services said two cars and a building had been set alight.

The authorities said around a dozen vehicles and a former social services centre were torched overnight Saturday in Vaulx-en-Velin.

A gymnasium in Bron, a pharmacy and the door of a police station were also wrecked.

BRIEFLY

Benazir leaves for Bonn: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto left for Bonn yesterday for a four-day official visit to Germany during which she will have talks with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Pakistani officials said, Reuters reports from Lahore.

The talks will focus on strengthening ties, particularly in trade and commerce, the officials said.

They said regional and international issues, including Pakistan's dispute with neighbouring India over the Himalayan region of Kashmir were also likely to be discussed.

Mubarak to visit China Apr 21-23: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will visit China from April 21 to 23, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday, a Reuters reports from Beijing.

Mubarak was invited by Jiang Zemin, China's President and Communist Party chief, Xinhua quoted the Chinese foreign ministry as saying.

6 drug traffickers held in China: Chinese police have arrested six people for drug trafficking in Tibet, seizing 393.9 grams of heroin, the China Daily said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The group, which included a Nepalese individual, was caught by police red-handed selling the heroin to local peddlers, the report said, but did not specify when the arrests had taken place.

The Nepalese gang member had brought the heroin from Nepal, it said.

1 militant killed in Lebanon: A local commander of the Syrian-backed Amal Movement was killed on Monday when a bomb wrecked his car in South Lebanon, security sources said, Reuters reports from Sidon.

They said the bomb exploded when Nimeh Haider started the engine of his car in the village of Qa'ayit Al-Jisr.

Haider was the commander of Shi'ite Muslim Amal guerrillas in the Nabatieh area of the south. No group claimed responsibility for the assassination.

Team to study species in Baikal: A Russian-Japanese team will conduct a study of animal life in the depths of Siberia's lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake, the leader of the Japanese team said yesterday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

A six-person Russian navy submarine will be used to explore the bottom of the lake, a depth of 1,741 meters, in the hope of discovering unknown species, the leader, Yutaka Horie, was quoted as saying by the Kyodo news agency.

More than 2,000 animal species live in lake Baikal.

Native Fury '94 ends: More than 3,000 US, British and Kuwaiti troops ended four days of joint manoeuvres Sunday, the largest since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

The exercise dubbed "Native Fury '94" took place in the presence of US General Norman Schwarzkopf who led the allied forces in Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait from the occupying Iraqi forces.

Ground units, Kuwaiti aviation and US and British troops took part in the operation in Adira Al-Khilla 90 kilometres (56 miles) north of the capital, the official news agency Kuna said.

Buthelezi meets de Klerk: Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who is boycotting South Africa's April 26-28 all-race elections, held talks with President F W de Klerk yesterday, a government spokesman said, Reuters reports from Pretoria.

There were no immediate details of the meeting which political sources said was apparently called at Buthelezi's request.

Buthelezi, who is demanding constitutional changes to ensure virtual self-rule in the Zulu heartland of KwaZulu-Natal, said on Saturday that a meeting of South Africa's main political players could "quite possibly" take place.

Rwandan rebels keep fighting to weaken army's resolve

KIGALI, Apr 18: Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels kept up the pressure on government forces in Kigali overnight, with fierce mortar and cannon-fire exchanges aimed to weaken the army's resolve, a military spokesman said, reports AFP.

"It's a classic technique, to weaken the opponent psychologically and physically, to

keep him awake," he told AFP.

The spokesman was speaking at the Meridien Hotel in the capital, situated on the front line in the northeast of the capital, which is disputed by government and rebel forces.

Intermittent bursts of gunfire rang out during the night from the surrounding hills.

The African state was

plunged into an frenzy of ethnic bloodletting following the death on April 6 of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, whose plane government troops says was shot down.

Most of the 20,000 people killed were members of the minority Tutsi tribe which dominates the RPF, hacked or clubbed to death by hardline government supporters from the majority Hutu group.

UN attempts to mediate a ceasefire — rebel and army commanders met Friday for the first time since the president's death — have so far failed to end the violence.

A second round of talks due Saturday did not take place. Rwandan state radio said Sunday that government forces had responded to a set of RPF preconditions for talks issued by the Tutsi-dominated movement on Saturday, but failed to indicate the tenor of the response.

Abdul Kabia of the UN assistance mission in Rwanda told AFP Sunday the armed forces had accepted a rebel demand for joint patrols by security forces and its guerrillas to restore order.

But it was unclear how they had responded to the rebels' insistence that the government and the presidential guard — accused of horrific atrocities — be disbanded.

India agrees to hold talks with US on NPT

NEW DELHI, Apr 18: India has agreed to hold discussions with the United States on organising multilateral talks on Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT), yet neither the venue nor representation to these talks appear to have been decided yet, a US diplomat said here today, reports Xinhua.

Agreeing to multilateral talks on NPT substantially modifies the earlier Indian position of insisting on global nuclear disarmament initiatives where arsenals of the declared nuclear powers would also be on the table for discussion.

The second report of Clinton administration to congress on progress towards regional non-proliferation in South Asia noted clearly that "Pakistan, India, the United States and other interested countries agree that an appropriately structured multilateral forum could be useful," the diplomat said.

Rejecting the five-party (the United States, Russia, China, India and Pakistan) conference proposal, India had given a counter-proposal of bilateral talks with the United States on NPT and regional security.

Five captives found in ANC office

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 18: Four men and a young boy who claimed to be members of a rival Zulu nationalist group were found imprisoned in the basement of an African National Congress office, police said after freeing the captives late Sunday, reports AP.

The discovery came on the eve of a planned Inkatha Freedom Party march through downtown Johannesburg. The march was called off Sunday, but that did not calm fears of trouble between ANC and Inkatha members. Police blocked off streets near ANC offices Monday morning.

Police spokesman Col Dave Bruce said the Inkatha members, including a 14-year-old boy, found at the ANC offices had all apparently been badly beaten. Four were discovered in the basement of ANC regional headquarters after one escaped and contacted a police officer, Bruce said.

Bruce said a man tried to prevent police from gaining access to the ANC offices by pointing a gun at them.



UN envoy Yasushi Akashi (R), checks his watch as he announces with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (L) late Sunday in Sarajevo that Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic agreed in a last minute talk for a temporary ceasefire for Gorazde. Bosnian Serb troops are already in the town, radio amateurs reported after the statement.

Father of N-bomb secretly shared information with Soviets

NEW YORK, Apr 18: Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb, secretly shared information with the Soviets on his work in the hopes of preventing a nuclear war, according to the memoirs of a former Russian spy, reports AFP.

During World War II, Oppenheimer and fellow US scientists Neils Bohr and Enrico Fermi shared progress reports with the Soviets, according to Pavel Sudoplatov's "special talks: the memories of an unwanted witness — a Soviet spy-master," excerpted in Time Magazine.

"Since Oppenheimer, Bohr and Fermi were fierce opponents of violence,

Norfolkers want referendum to decide their destiny

NORFOLK ISLAND, South Pacific, Apr 18: Discontent is stirring among the Norfolkers, descendants of convicts and HMS Bounty mutineers who only reluctantly tolerate Australian rule over their isolated speck of land, reports AP.

"The people of Norfolk Island... have never been accorded the right of referendum to decide their destiny," Norfolk legislator Ric Robinson wrote in a 26-page letter to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Robinson and other islanders fear Australia is trying to erode Norfolk's home rule by requiring it to obey more and more federal laws. They want a UN supervised vote to verify their status.

Few of the 1,700 Norfolkers seem to want either complete independence or incorporation with Australia. If there is consensus, it is for self-government, with Australia handling defence and foreign relations.

The very idea of discontent seems absurd on a 5-by-3-mile (8-by-5-kilometre) dab of paradise 930 miles (1,500 kilometres) east of Australia, blessed with sparkling beaches, a

mild climate, imposing cliffs and the famous, towering Norfolk Pines.

Tourism has brought general prosperity. Life is simple and crime virtually unknown. Cows have the right of way over cars on the road.

But the island's history is written in rebellion and blood.

England turned Norfolk into a branch of its Australian penal-colony experiment, sending prisoners here from 1788 to 1814, but then evacuating it because the colony was too costly and remote.

In 1825, Norfolk Island was revived as a punishment station, the end of the line for up to 2,000 incorrigible felons and Irish rebels whose spirits were broken with floggings, hard labour and prolonged isolation in silent, blacked-out cells.

"My object was to hold out that settlement as a place of the extremist punishment, short of death," Gov Ralph Darling of New South Wales proclaimed in 1827.

He succeeded brilliantly. After a prison rebellion failed in 1834, a priest sent to comfort

the convicts reported: "Those who were to live wept bitterly, whilst those doomed to die, without exception dropped on their knees, and with dry eyes, thanked God that they were to be delivered from such a place."

Norfolk's notoriety contributed to revulsion in England about the practice of sending prisoners to Australia, and the punishment station was shut down in 1854. Now, the ruins of the prison settlement are a tourist attraction.

In 1856, British authorities transferred 194 Pitcairn Island families, most of them descendants of Bounty mutineers, to Norfolk.

Queen Victoria declared the island a "separate and distinct settlement" that year and Norfolkers governed themselves until 1896, when New South Wales took control. Australia's federal government now has the last word on Norfolk affairs, but the island has its own Legislature and courts.

More than 1,000 of today's 1,700 islanders are descended from Fletcher Christian's Bounty mutineers and the Tahitian wives they took. Pitcairn names still dominate the local telephone book: 40 Christians, 28 Quintals, 17

Adams, eight McCos, seven Smiths.

Norfolk Island was uninhabited when Capt James Cook discovered it in 1774, so the current Norfolkers proudly claim to be the indigenous people. They speak English in public, but among themselves use "Norfolk," a blend of old English and Polynesian words found only Norfolk and Pitcairn.

Robinson said Boutros-Ghali had not replied to his letter, but "I did get a nice reply from the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples inviting me to a conference in Geneva at the end of July."

Norfolkers pay no taxes to Australia and get no general revenues from it. They raise most of the island's annual budget, equivalent to about 7 million dollars (4.9 million US dollar), through local taxes, predominantly on activities connected to tourism.

For decades, Norfolkers have argued for a return of complete self-government.

"Once a people has had self-government, they never forget that they did and the urge is to have it back again," said novelist Colleen McCullough, Robinson's wife.

Pak court orders severe punishment for robbery

ISLAMABAD, Apr 18: A Pakistani court has ordered the amputation of the hands and feet of three men who assaulted and robbed a man in the eastern city of Sargodha last year, press reports said here Monday, reports AFP.

The court on Sunday also sentenced the three to seven years imprisonment and fines of 20,000 rupees (650 dollars) each besides the amputation of their right hands and left feet, newspapers said.

The three unnamed robbers allegedly waylaid their victim, gouged out one of his eyes, broke a leg and robbed him of 40,000 rupees (1,000 dollars) last year in Sargodha.

Off the Record

150m years old frog fossil discovered

TOKYO: North Korean archaeologists have discovered the fossil of a frog which lived about 150 million years ago, proving the peninsula was a cradle of human civilisation, the country's official news agency said Monday, reports Reuters.

The remains were found at Sinulju, a northwestern city near the border with China, the Korean central news agency reported.

The discovery was in the same stratum where in Archaeopteryx (fossil bird) of the early Jurassic period was unearthed in 1993, said an agency report monitored in Tokyo.

"This convincingly proved Korea being a cradle of human civilisation where now extinct animals and plants evolved systematically," it added.

Even the president has joined in the enthusiasm for this latest scientific find, the English-language agency reported.

"The great leader President Kim Il-Sung named the oldest known fossil frog discovered this time 'ancient frog,' it said.

"Station Strangler" appears in court

CAPE TOWN: A scar-faced, perfumed male bodybuilder, with "the soft hands of a woman," appears in court on Monday as prime suspect in a hunt for South Africa's worst serial killer — the "Station Strangler," reports Reuters.

A 29-year-old school teacher, with a history of mental illness, faces a charge of murdering the latest of 22 victims strangled in an eight-year rampage that horrified Cape Town. Police say further charges are likely against the powerfully-built man, said to have the sensitive hands of an accomplished pianist, after scientists completed a series of grim forensic tests.

The suspect, identified by a deep scar on his right cheek, was arrested last week in a huge hunt for "The Station Strangler" who lured 21 boys and a man away from railway platforms, raped and strangled them, and dumped the bodies face down in his own personal graveyard.

A former psychiatric patient told in a newspaper interview on Sunday of an encounter with the suspect when they shared a bedroom in a mental hospital.

"One night when I had cramps the suspect even massaged my legs," said the ex-patient who asked not to be identified.

"He has white smooth hand, the hands of a woman, but he is incredibly strong. I shudder to think that I slept in a bed next to him for two and a half weeks," the patient told the Sunday Tribune newspaper.

"He used to go to the gymnasium every day. He is very powerfully built — like an athlete — and is an immaculate dresser. He smelled like the queen of England and readily admitted that he was a homosexual."

Princess Nori not in a hurry to marry

TOKYO: Princess Nori, youngest child of Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, turned 25 today and criticised speculation by the tabloid press about her love life, reports Reuters.

Responding in writing to questions put by Japanese court reporters, Nori said speculation about prospective marriage partners could disrupt a number of lives. She hinted she felt no particular rush to get married soon.

Nori said the fuss over her brother Naruhito's choice of bride had set a regrettable precedent.

"Before the crown prince decided to get engaged, the mass media disrupted the lives of a number of people with their clamour, deeply hurting them in some cases," she said.

"It is painful for me to see that this regrettable situation has happened again with regard to me."

Last year, when the princess made a private trip to Europe, Japanese media vied with each other to predict secret trysts with likely suitors.