

Algeria calls for OIC meet on Gorazde issue

ALGIERS, Apr 20: Algeria called Tuesday for an emergency meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to discuss the Bosnian Serb assault on Muslims in Gorazde, the Foreign Ministry said, reports AFP.

Algers would push for "collective action to dissuade the Serbs from their aggression."

Kohl, Yeltsin talk Gorazde situation over telephone

BONN, Apr 20: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Russian President Boris Yeltsin yesterday discussed the situation in Gorazde over the telephone, reports Xinhua.

Spokesman for the German government Dieter Vogel said that for the interests of the civilians, Kohl hopes for a peaceful solution to the conflict and ceasefire there.

Kohl stressed that every effort should be made to end the bloodshed in Gorazde and find a permanent and peaceful solution to the issue.

Kohl talked over the phone on Monday with US President Bill Clinton and French President Francois Mitterrand on the situation in the Muslim enclave of Gorazde.

NZ may send more peacekeepers to Bosnia

NATO allies consider UN request for more air power

BRUSSELS, Apr 20: The NATO allies on Wednesday considered a United Nations request for permission to call in air strikes to protect "safe areas" in Bosnia from relentless Serb attacks, reports AP.

President Clinton has signalled his willingness to expand the scope of threatened air strikes by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation against Bosnian Serbs.

Ambassadors of the 16 allied nations were discussing the call by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for more air power at their regular weekly meeting.

"I very much hope NATO will make a credible and positive response to Boutros-Ghali's request," Sir John Weston, the British ambassador, said in a BBC interview.

Diplomats said it was unlikely, though, the ambassadors would give final approval to the Boutros-Ghali request at Wednesday's meeting and would probably schedule another one in the coming days.

They suggested military strategists would be asked to draw up contingency plans for possible use of air strikes to protect the UN-designated safe havens for Muslim civilians.

In a letter to NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner, Boutros-Ghali asked for approval to call in alliance warplanes "to launch air strikes... against artillery, mortar positions or tanks" determined "to be responsible for attacks against civilian targets" in the safe areas.

He made his request after Serbs, ignoring international appeals to halt their onslaught, battered the safe area of Gorazde, which is held by Bosnia's Muslim-dominated government.

In Washington, Clinton decided Tuesday to back Boutros-Ghali's appeal as part of a package of military and diplomatic recommendations drawn up to halt the violence in Bosnia, administration officials said.

NATO agreed last August to

use air power against Serb positions if the United Nations requested it to end the siege of safe areas. At a summit in January, Clinton and other alliance leaders reiterated that position.

The allies, though, have not yet given Boutros-Ghali permission to call in the air raids.

Under a different procedure, the United Nations already can order NATO "close air support" to protect UN peacekeepers in Bosnia. American fighters early last week bombed Serb positions attacking Gorazde when UN troops were at risk.

In February, Boutros-Ghali requested NATO help after a shell killed dozens of civilians in a marketplace in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo.

The allies responded by issuing a 10-day ultimatum to the Serbs to withdraw their heavy guns around the beleaguered capital or face air raids. The Serbs complied as part of a cease-fire arranged around the city.

UN-designated safe areas

include Gorazde, Sarajevo, Bihać, Srebrenica, Tuzla and Zepa.

Bosnian Serbs began the war in April 1992 after a Muslim-Croat vote to secede from Yugoslavia. The Serbs have seized about 70 per cent of Bosnia in fighting that has killed or left missing more than 200,000 people.

AFP adds: Prime Minister Jim Bolger said Wednesday he was "actively considering" a request by the United Nations for more New Zealand peacekeepers to be sent to Bosnia.

Following a general request from the UN for 10,000 more troops, later reduced to 3,500, Bolger said the government had the appeal "under active consideration" and would be seeking the views of other UN members of the matter.

"But we should understand that if New Zealand puts more UN forces into Bosnia... that some of them may not come home. This is not a tranquil area, as we know, this is by most definitions a war zone," he said on Radio New Zealand.

Off the Record

Princess Anne to star in TV ad

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth's daughter Princess Anne is to become the first member of Britain's royal family to star in a television advertisement — for a charity, reports Reuters.

The Princess will appear next week in the advertisement to promote Save the Children Fund's largest ever fund-raising appeal marking its 75th anniversary, the charity said Wednesday.

The charity, of which the Princess is president, was founded by a British woman appalled by the suffering of children in Austria after World War I. It now operates in more than 50 countries.



Cannibalism in prison

MOSCOW: Five hungry inmates in a Kazakhstan prison killed their cellmate, skinned him and cut him into pieces which they boiled in a kettle and ate, Itar-Tass news agency said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

It said the incident happened last week and was not unexpected because most of the 80,000 prisoners in the former Soviet Republic were permanently hungry. Tass gave no further details on the case.

Chelsea inherits mom's social conscience & dad's talent for math

WASHINGTON: Fourteen-year-old Chelsea Clinton has inherited her mom's "social conscience" and her dad's talent for math, the First Parents say, reports AP.

In turn, Mom and Dad have learned a few things from their daughter.

In an interview with Parents magazine, President Clinton said he is a better person and a better president "for having been a father."

"Parenthood ties you to the rest of life in a way and makes you less self-absorbed," he said.

Hillary Rodham Clinton added that "our willingness to just learn from Chelsea and respect who she is, the person she was meant to be, has helped us a lot."

Trading compliments, Clinton said Chelsea had her mother's social conscience and discipline, while Mrs Clinton joked that Chelsea "certainly didn't get her math ability from me" and the teen had her father's "remarkable big mind and big heart."

In the interview, the Clintons talked at length about the challenges and pleasures of parenthood in a rare public reflection on the daughter they generally try to shield from the spotlight.

Recalling Chelsea's birth, Mrs Clinton said she delivered by Caesarean section and Clinton was the first father the hospital let into its operating room for a birth.

"I was awake and he was holding my hand," she recalled. "And then he started talking to all the doctors and nurses. And so it was just this kind of group experience. ... We would have loved to have more children."

Neither Clinton addressed why they did not have more children. A spokesman for the first lady, Neel Lattimore, said they have not elaborated on the matter publicly.



BRIEFLY

Kuwait rejects Iraqi proposal:

Kuwait's parliament on Tuesday rejected an Iraqi proposal to set up a dialogue between the two countries' MPs, saying it backed the government's hardline against Baghdad, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

"The national assembly will not allow any party to raise doubts over the cooperation between the executive and legislative branches" in Kuwait, the parliament said at the end of its weekly meeting.

Sudanese envoy abducted in Somalia:

Three Somali gunmen kidnapped Sudan's ambassador to Somalia outside a hotel in Mogadishu Tuesday witnesses said, Reuters reports from Mogadishu.

They said Ambassador Abdulqadi Mohamed Hassan was driving from his office to the Nasser Hablood Hotel when the gunmen intercepted him and dragged him into their vehicle and sped off.

Tremor hits Iran:

An earthquake measuring 4.8 degrees of the Richter Scale shook Iran's southwestern region of Khuzestan, the Iranian news agency IRNA said yesterday, Reuters reports from Nicosia.

It said there were no reports of casualties or damage in Tuesday's tremor.

UN peacekeeper killed in Croatia:

A UN peacekeeper was killed and a colleague wounded Tuesday while clearing mines at Plastovo, around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the port of Split, a UN spokesman said, AFP reports from Zagreb.

The accident happened at around 9:30 AM (070 GMT) in a demilitarised zone under United Nations supervision on the edge of the self-proclaimed Croatian Serb Republic of Krajina, the spokesman said.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (L) and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat hug each other during their meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow April 19. During their meeting the two leaders discussed the problems in the Middle East region. — AFP photo

'ME' peace a strategic priority for Russia'

MOSCOW, Apr 20: President Boris Yeltsin said Tuesday following talks here with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat that establishing a lasting peace in the Middle East was a strategic priority for Russia, the presidential press service said, reports AFP.

In a statement sent to the media, the press service said that Yeltsin and Arafat had a "thorough discussion" on Mideast affairs, the current state of and prospects for Arab-Israeli relations, and the development of Russo-Palestinian relations.

"The Russian President stated that establishing a lasting and fair peace was and remains a strategic priority for Russia in this region of vital importance," the statement said.

Russia inherited from the former Soviet Union the role of cosponsor of the Mideast peace talks launched in 1991 under former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Arafat, who has not visited Moscow since 1988, said he appreciated Russia's contribution to the peace process.

Arafat remarked that efforts undertaken by Russia had played "an essential role in overcoming the failure" provoked by the Hebron massacre of 30 Palestinian worshippers by a Jewish settler last February, and in ensuring the security of Palestinians in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions.

EU to spend \$11.3m for Palestinian police force

LUXEMBOURG, Apr 20: The European Union said on Tuesday it would spend 10 million European Currency units (11.3 million dollar) to help create a Palestinian police force in the West Bank and Gaza, reports Reuters.

Germany will also contribute 600,000 marks (350,000 dollar) to the police project.

Tension grips Karachi as ethnic violence continues

KARACHI, Apr 20: General unease and tension has gripped Pakistan's commercial capital, Karachi, following a rash of ethnic and sectarian violence that has left at least five people dead over the past week, reports AFP.

Gunfire still often echoes through the city. One person died late Monday in running gun battles between members of an ethnic party and its rival faction.

Traffic remained paralysed Tuesday after a firefight between students at a law college's residential hostel.

Adding to the tension has been a series of hoax calls warning of bombs on board the national airline, a train, and in several banks and a hotel.

Last week, sectarian violence claimed at least two lives

in separate shooting incidents involving militant Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim organisations. A grenade was hurled into a Shi'ite mosque injuring five people.

"This resurgence of sectarian violence is worrying," said one official. "It could become very dangerous for the city if it escalates."

The tension is not only sectarian, but ethnic as well. Karachi, with a population of more than 10 million, is home to several different ethnic groups, plus an estimated 1.5 million illegal immigrants predominantly from Bangladesh.

The single largest ethnic community is Mohajir, a term used to describe the Urdu-speaking migrants from India following partition of the subcontinent in 1947.

Benazir blames India for instability in South Asia

BONN, Apr 20: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said on Tuesday South Asia stood at a crossroads and could either move towards peace or become a factor for instability in international affairs, reports Reuters.

Speaking to the German Society for Foreign Affairs in Bonn, Benazir blamed India for South Asia's failure to rise above mutual suspicion and achieve stability and prosperity.

Bhutto arrived on Monday for a four-day visit, officials said, would focus on improving ties with Germany, including trade.

Pakistan's relations with India have deteriorated be-

cause of renewed tensions in Kashmir, the mostly Muslim region ruled two-thirds by India and the rest by Pakistan, she added.

"All inter-state disputes in South Asia are between India and the other countries, not between any two or more countries other than India," said Benazir Bhutto.

"It is regrettable that India has not only obstructed amiable settlement of its problems with the other South Asian states, it has also added to the difficulties faced by its smaller neighbours."

The non-resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir problem, the centre issue in our relations, has served to perpetuate

tension and hostility and forced Pakistan to divert its meagre resources towards defence preparedness instead of addressing our socio-economic imperatives," she said.

The South Asian region — Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives — is home to over a billion people, nearly one-fourth of the world's population.

"It can either achieve peace and stability and prosperity and become a valuable partner in the establishment of a just and lasting world political and economic order, or it may become a factor of instability for the international system."

Hun Sen accuses Thailand of aiding Khmers

PHNOM PENH, Apr 20: Co-Premier Hun Sen confirmed today that Khmer Rouge guerrillas recaptured their capital Pailin in northwest Cambodia, and accused Thailand of directly aiding the rebels in their counter-attack, reports AFP.

"I accuse Thailand directly," an angry Hun Sen, reached by telephone in the northwest city of Battambang, told AFP. "During the fighting there was artillery support from Thai territory."

He said several hundred Khmer Rouge fighters were transported through Thai territory to reinforce the Pailin counter-offensive.

Let (Thai Foreign Minister) Prasong Soonsri explain this to me face-to-face," he said.

US admn for security talks in northeast Asia

WASHINGTON, Apr 20: A senior US official suggested Monday the establishment of a security dialogue in northeast Asia to ease tensions and avoid an arms race in the troubled area, reports AFP.

Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, told a State Department policy forum that the Clinton administration was more open to such dialogues than its Republican predecessor.

"There will be a need for a forum in northeast Asia as well as one which now exists in southeast Asia," he said, referring to the security talks between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its dialogue partners.

"We think this can be a very promising vehicle for preventive diplomacy. I think in terms of significance for stability and peace in the region (this) could be a very fundamental legacy indeed," Lord said.

He said the idea was in an embryonic stage, but the goal would be to "erase misperceptions, ease tensions, perhaps build confidence and deter arms races," throughout the

Asia-Pacific region. Lord said that the Bush administration had feared that launching a regional security dialogue in Asia would be interpreted as a cover for a diminishing American presence in the region.

"We see these dialogues as supplements to, not supplanting, force presence and our alliances," he said.

Tensions in northeast Asia have heightened since North Korea has refused to allow international inspection of its nuclear programme to make sure it is not building an atomic bomb.

Some officials and analysts have expressed fears that failure to stop Pyongyang could trigger an arms race embroiling China, Japan and South Korea as well.

But Lord cautioned the need for "patient diplomacy" with the North Koreans to ease the fears of Japan, South Korea and keep China on board since it has a veto on the UN Security Council.

He said that if any conflict erupted, it would be important to show it was the result of "North Korean intransigence and not American impetuosity."

US defence analyst says North Korea may allow fresh nuclear inspections

SEOUL, Apr 20: North Korea is expected to allow fresh nuclear inspections and will soon announce new measures to open its closed economy, a US defence analyst said in an interview published Wednesday, reports AP.

Dr William Taylor Jr. made the remarks to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency in Beijing, where he arrived Tuesday from a weeklong visit to North Korea. The interview was published in the Korean language Wednesday.

Taylor, senior vice president of the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, was invited along with several US and Japanese journalists to last Friday's celebrations of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's 82nd birthday.

From lengthy talks with North Korean leaders, including a 3 1/2 hour meeting with Kim, Taylor said he got the impression that the Pyongyang government would allow fresh nuclear inspections "in the

near future."

He said he was not sure how soon they might take place.

North Korea's refusal last month to allow UN inspectors to make a full survey deepened suspicion that it is developing atomic bombs.

On Tuesday, Kim personally denied this and said he would order a suspected plutonium-extracting facility destroyed if Washington recognised his Communist government and provided economic aid.

The US State Department responded: "If the status of North Korea's nuclear programme is as Kim reports, there is no reason why Pyongyang should not open its nuclear facilities to outside inspections."

Taylor was quoted as saying that diplomacy is the only way of resolving the dispute, and that sanctions could provoke the beleaguered North Koreans into war.

Taylor, who has visited North Korea several times,

said it would make concessions on nuclear inspections if it got Western diplomatic recognition and aid.

Taylor told Yonhap that he was carrying a message for South Korean leaders from Kim Yong Sun, a confidant of the North Korean president, but he declined to disclose its contents.

Kim is chairman of the Unification Policy Committee of North Korea's supreme People's Assembly, and handles policy toward rival South Korea.

Taylor also said North Korea would announce "very soon" new measures, more extensive than previous ones, to open its state-controlled economy. He did not elaborate.



A little girl smiles as she touches a white whale leaning out of the swimming pool as the coach keeps an eye on them in Moscow's first and only dolphinarium April 19. — AFP photo

UN welcomes accord in South Africa

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 20: The UN Security Council late Tuesday welcomed a last-minute deal between South Africa's key black and white leaders to bring the Zulu-led Inkatha party into next week's crucial elections, reports Reuters.

In a statement read at a formal meeting, the 15-member body commended "all the parties involved for the statesmanship and good will which they have displayed in reaching this result."

The statement, read by council president Colin Keating, New Zealand's ambassador, also hoped the agreement would bring an end to the violence which has scarred South Africa and called on all parties to conduct free and fair elections.

"The council looks forward to the successful completion of the electoral process in South Africa and to the establishment of a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa that will take its place in the international community," the statement said.