

## China wants peaceful settlement of Spratlys

BEIJING, Apr 27: China has no wish to spark an incident in the disputed Spratly Islands but will honour its contract with a US company to explore for oil there despite Vietnamese protests, the Foreign Ministry said today, reports AFP.

"The Chinese government has all along stood for a peaceful settlement of the Nansha (Chinese name for Spratlys) issue and we do not wish to see the occurrence of any incident that might complicate the matter," a ministry spokesman said.

The Spratlys are claimed wholly or in part by China, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan. The crux of the dispute centres on what are believed to be large oil and natural gas deposits in the area.

Hanoi has reacted strongly to what it described as the "illegal" contract signed by China and Colorado-based Crestone Energy, warning that the deal marked a "serious escalation of the situation in the South China sea."

Crestone had announced that it would sink exploratory wells under the protection of the Chinese navy, which has recently stepped up operations around the Spratlys.

The spokesman, reaffirming China's claim to the island chain, said the contract was perfectly legal.

"China has undisputed sovereignty over the Nansha islands and adjacent waters," he said.

"The signing of the contract with the American company entirely falls within China's sovereignty," he added.

## No need for air strikes as Serbs comply with ultimatum: Akashi

SARAJEVO, Apr 27: Bosnian Serbs have effectively complied with a NATO deadline to withdraw heavy weapons from around Gorazde, averting any need for new air strikes for now, a top UN official said, reports AP.

NATO gave the Bosnian Serbs until 2:01 am (0001 GMT) Wednesday to withdraw their big guns 12.4 miles (20 km) from the centre of the eastern Muslim enclave or face air strikes. The Serbs claimed full compliance Tuesday night.

"On the basis of information available right now and subject to further verification I have come to the conclusion there is no need to ask NATO for air strikes at this time," Yasushi Akashi, the chief UN official for former Yugoslavia, told re-

porters in Zagreb, Croatia, shortly before the deadline expired.

"There is effective compliance at this time," said Akashi. The United Nations must consent to any bombing runs.

Reflecting tough talk by UN and NATO officials earlier in the day warning of air strikes if Serbs failed to comply by the deadline, Akashi said he would not totally exclude the possibility that air strikes would be necessary in the future.

Four hours ahead of the deadline, UN spokesman Cmdr. Eric Champeron told reporters in Sarajevo that the Serbs had cleared weapons from all sites in the zone where they were known to have had them.

Akashi said that UN military

observers had visited more than 30 sites during the day and had found no weapons at all but two. At two sites, he said, they had found weapons that had been immobilised.

He said that the UN observers got full cooperation from the Serbs and that more checks would occur on Wednesday with UN observers and NATO surveillance.

Chaperon suggested earlier that weapons could have been moved elsewhere in the zone. UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, NATO officials and Western leaders had warned all day that if the Serbs failed to meet the deadline, they would face attack.

"If they will not withdraw from the 20 kilometres then we will use air strikes against

them without any hesitation," Boutros-Ghali said earlier.

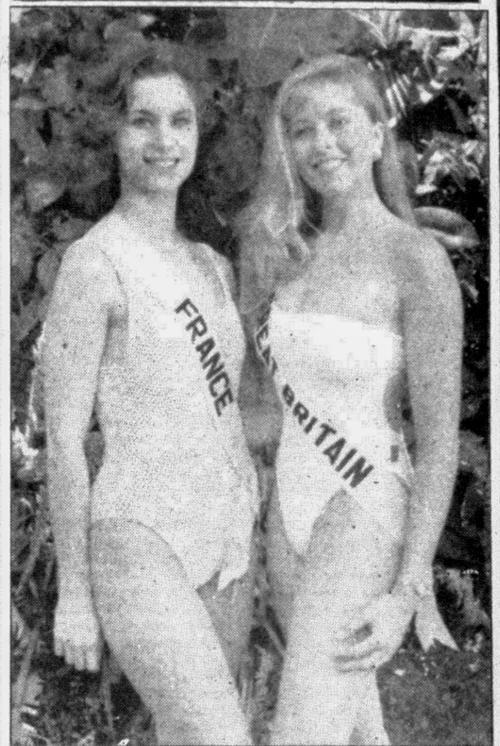
It was the second of two deadlines imposed by NATO Friday. The Serbs had until 2:01 am (0001 GMT) Sunday to pull back weapons and troops three kilometres (1.9 miles) from the city centre.

The speaker of the self-declared Bosnia Serb Parliament, Momcilo Krajinic claimed Tuesday night that the deadline was met.

He said "all operations connected with the artillery withdrawal would have been finished by 2100 hours (1900 GMT Tuesday) at the latest," the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA reported.

The Bosnian Serb military claimed all Serb infantry units had quit the three-kilometre zone Tuesday.

## Off the Record



A pair of Miss Universe contestants from Europe Valerie Claisse, 22, a fashion model from France and Michaela Pyke, 22, a claims negotiator for an insurance company in Great Britain strike a pose in their swimsuits at Manila Hotel April 27. A total of 78 contestants will vie for the 1994 Miss Universe crown on May 21. —AFP photo

### Salesman offers to sell kidney to 'live a little'

RIO DE JANEIRO: A 24-year-old salesman in Brazil's northeastern city of Salvador is offering to sell one of his kidneys for just under 100,000 dollar because he wants to "live a little," reports Reuter.

"I was considering putting an ad in the classifieds but I decided the best way was to speak to the press and leave them my telephone number," said the man, who asked to be identified only as Jose.

"You can live quite healthily on one kidney — you just have to be a bit careful with your diet," he said in a telephone interview.

Brazilian newspapers have carried reports of children being snatched by gangs who remove their organs for sale. But Jose, who makes around 180 dollar a month selling paper products and dreams of seeing New York insisted he would not deal with criminals.

"I just want to change the way I live my life," he said. "people are born and then they die, I want to be different."

### Women sentenced to death for selling newborn girls

BEIJING: Two elderly women have been sentenced to death for trafficking in newborn girls, the official media reported Wednesday, says AP.

The case underscores the continuing problem of human trafficking in the Chinese countryside, where tens of thousands of women are sold to men to be their wives and babies are sold to couples seeking children.

The Legal Daily said the two condemned women were in-laws from Lianmeng village in coastal Zhejiang province who were involved in 18 cases of trafficking during a six-month period last year.

Zu Guiying made a profit of 2,140 yuan (dols 246) selling 19 babies while Shen Yubao earned 1,930 yuan (dols 220) trafficking in 14 newborn girls, the report said. The newspaper said the women, whose specific ages were not given, acted individually and together in the illicit trade.

### Buthelezi calls for extra day of voting in Natal

UMLAZI (South Africa), Apr 27: Zulu nationalist leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi joined millions of other blacks voting for the first time Wednesday, and then called for South Africa's first all-race election to be extended an extra day in Natal Province, reports AP.

Buthelezi, whose Inkatha Freedom Party is the main black opponent to the election's expected winner, the African National Congress, claimed there was evidence of vote "rigging."

Election observers wearing the identifying armbands of the Independent Electoral Commission rushed to shake Buthelezi's hand when he finished casting his ballot at a stadium named for Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini in the black township just outside Durban.

### S Arabia refuses visas to Libyan religious team

TRIPOLI, Apr 27: Saudi Arabia has refused entry visas to a Libyan religious delegation who wanted to make arrangements for Libyan pilgrims to go to Mecca, the Libyan news agency JANA reported, AFP says.

Quoting the Libyan daily "Islamic Call", JANA said Libyan Muslim clerics had been to several Islamic countries "as part of efforts to lift obstacles imposed by the West on Libyans wishing to make their pilgrimage."

JANA said all the delegations had fulfilled their missions "except the one which was to go to Saudi Arabia where the authorities refused to grant them entry visas."

The United Nations slapped an air embargo on Libya in April 1992 banning flights to or from that country to punish Libya for refusing to hand over two suspects in the 1988 Lockerbie aircraft bombing which killed 270 people.

### China postpones trial of 14 dissidents

HONG KONG, Apr 27: China, hoping to polish its human rights image to avoid losing US trade privileges, has postponed a trial for 14 dissidents, a Hong Kong newspaper said Wednesday, reports AP.

The Hong Kong Standard, quoting family sources, said the trial had been scheduled for this week but has been delayed to an unspecified date.

The English-language daily said the 14 dissidents were suspected members of banned labour and pro-democracy groups. It said they have been in custody for nearly two years on counter-revolution charges. Chinese terminology for threatening Communist rule.

President Clinton has given China's Communist leaders until June to produce "overall significant progress" on human rights.

### Iraq agrees to speed up arms monitoring

MANAMA (Bahrain), Apr 27: Iraq joined the chief UN weapons inspector Tuesday in agreeing to speed the development of an arms monitoring programme that could lead to the lifting of a 32-month-old embargo on Baghdad's oil exports, reports AP.

A joint statement issued at the conclusion of three days of high-level talks in Baghdad said "both sides reiterated their commitment to continue and accelerate intensive efforts aimed at reaching their shared objective."

Iraq is seeking the lifting of the sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait which have left its oil-based economy in tatters with severe shortages in basic commodities contributing to growing public discontent.

Baghdad claims it has com-

plied with the UN cease-fire demands that ended the 1991 Gulf War and ordered the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, biological and chemical — and long-range missiles.

The activation of a long-term monitoring plan to ensure Iraq does not resume production of any weapons of mass destruction is one of the key conditions it must meet before the Security Council will consider lifting an embargo.

Ekeus, of Sweden, heads the UN Special Commission overseeing Iraq's compliance with the resolutions. He and Maurizio Zifferero, chairman of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, were invited to Baghdad by Iraqi Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz.

## BRIEFLY

**Rao to visit US May 19:** Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao will meet with President Bill Clinton at the White House in May, US officials said Tuesday, AFP reports from Washington.

Clinton and Rao will meet for the first time and discuss Indian-US issues during the premier's official working visit May 19, the White House said.

**US envoy to Haiti resigns:** The US special envoy to Haiti has resigned, the State Department announced Tuesday, as the Clinton administration veered towards a new tougher policy against Haiti's military rulers, Reuter reports from Washington.

A brief statement from State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly said special envoy Lawrence Pezullo agreed to stop down effective April 29 after meeting Secretary of State Warren Christopher last Saturday.

The move was welcomed by supporters of exiled Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, one of whom said, Pezullo was associated with a failed policy.

**Iran begins military exercises:** Iran started a week of military maneuvers on Tuesday, that will include launching missiles, in the Hormuz Strait, gateway to the Persian Gulf, the official agency IRNA said, AFP reports from Tehran.

Surface-to-air missiles will be fired from the Iranian coast, and units from of the Crack Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps are to attack pretend enemy ships, the agency added.

The first Iranian-built hydrofoil will be used in the exercises, Iranian navy commander, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, said. The maneuvers are code-named after "The Eight (Muslim Shi'ite) Imams," who were called Reza.

**Wijetunga cancels China tour:** President Dingri Banda Wijetunga has postponed a scheduled visit to China next month, a government official said Wednesday, AP reports from Colombo.

No reason was given for the postponement of his first overseas visit as President, but Wijetunga has been busy trying to reorganise his party as it heads towards parliamentary and presidential elections at the end of the year.

The ruling United National Party was routed in last month's regional council election in southern Sri Lanka, losing 20 of the 21 constituencies to a five-party alliance led by the main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

Wijetunga plans to change many top party managers and reshuffle his cabinet.

**Rabin in St. Petersburg:** Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin arrived in St. Petersburg Wednesday for a one-day tour of the northern Russian city his mother emigrated from 75 years ago, AFP reports from St. Petersburg.

Rabin laid a wreath at a monument to the World War II soldiers who repulsed a three-year Nazi offensive on the city, which has the largest Jewish community in Russia.

Officials said he was to meet with Jewish leaders and visit the Hermitage museum before flying back to Israel later Wednesday.



From left to right: Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President FW de Klerk and Inkatha Freedom Party chief Mangosutho Buthelezi casting their votes at various places of the country on the second day of South Africa's first multi-racial elections yesterday. —AFP photo

## Israel ready to withdraw from Golan for peace, says Rabin

MOSCOW, Apr 27: Touting Israel's latest peace offer to Syria, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reiterated Tuesday that his country is ready to pull back from the Golan Heights and dismantle Jewish settlements there, reports AP.

The statement, coming as Rabin concluded the formal part of a four-day visit to Russia, provided more evidence of Israel's wishes to move ahead in stalled talks with Syria over the future of the strategic Golan, annexed in the 1967 Middle East war.

It came after Rabin received a warm reception from President Boris Yeltsin, who told him Russia wanted to build closer ties with the Jewish state after years of distrust and anti-Semitism. Yeltsin pledged to push for Middle East peace to create a "zone of neighbourly relations and stability" near Russia's

southern borders.

Rabin told a news conference that Israel is "ready to make painful compromises for peace."

"In the context of peace, I'm ready for a withdrawal on the Golan Heights. The geographical dimension will be dependent on the depth of peace," he said.

"For security reasons, we will not vacate settlements. For peace, we are ready to do so," Rabin added.

Asked about Rabin's comments on withdrawal back home, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres emphasised on a television call-in show that Israel is not ready for a complete withdrawal.

Peres added: "It is clear to us that if we cede parts of the Golan Heights, and I am not saying how much, no settlements will be left there. It goes together."

Israel apparently is showing greater flexibility prior to the visit of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who arrives Thursday in Jerusalem to launch a mediation effort. Christopher reportedly will take to Syria the Israeli proposals for a phased 10-year withdrawal.

Rabin's government may be in a no-win position on the Golan — Israelis overwhelmingly oppose a full withdrawal, while Syria demands a complete withdrawal and responded unenthusiastically to Rabin's initial announcement of the proposal last week.

Rabin indicated that further delays are possible in reaching a final agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation on implementing self rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.



New Japanese Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata (L) talks with Morihiro Hosokawa, outgoing prime minister, about the crash of the China Airlines Airbus jet liner prior to their ruling coalition leaders meeting April 27 at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo. —AFP photo

## Hata renews efforts to persuade Socialists

TOKYO, Apr 27: Japan's newly-elected Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata renewed his efforts today to persuade Socialists not to leave the ruling coalition, reports AP.

Tomichi Murayama, head of the Social Democratic party (SDP), appeared to be rejecting any overtures, and went on record saying his group will not remain in the seven-party coalition.

But SDP officials said he might meet Hata if other coalition leaders asked him to do so.

The SDP walked out of the coalition after five other parties in it formed a new political bloc — The Kaishin.

The decision will leave Hata with the option of trying to run a minority government or calling early general elections.

However, some coalition leaders suggested today that the bloc's activities might be frozen to appease angry Socialists and keep them in the government.

Takashi Yomezaya, Chairman of the Democratic Socialist Party which is in the new grouping, said "a temporary halt to the activities of the Kaishin" might be a possibility.

But the Chairman of the SDPs parliamentary committee, Koken Nosaka, appeared to spurn the offer, saying "faith and trust are important."

Hata, 58, said he was not setting a deadline for attempts to persuade the SDP to stay in the government which has so far prevented him from being able to form a new cabinet since he was elected Prime Minister 48 hours ago.

## Tornado hits Indiana town: 1 killed, 51 hurt

LAFAYETTE (Indiana), Apr 27: A tornado struck a mobile home park and a venetian blind factory early Wednesday, and lightning caused an explosion at a gas station. At least one person was killed and 51 others were injured, police said, reports AP.

The extent of the damage was not immediately known.

"We're really going to have to wait until daybreak to do a full search of the trailer park," said Alden Tylor, a spokesman for the state Emergency Management Agency.

Jerry Hauer, director of the Emergency Management Agency, said more than 200 people were evacuated because of damage to their homes and power outages.

## Experts search for clues to plane crash at Nagoya Airport

NAGOYA (Japan), Apr 27: Investigators Wednesday searched through what little was left of a China Airlines jet for clues to what caused the plane to crash and burst into flames in a failed landing Tuesday night, killing 262 people aboard, reports AP.

Only nine people survived the crash, the second worst aviation disaster in Japanese history and the tenth worst worldwide.

Miraculously, among the survivors were a 3-year-old boy and his 6-year-old brother. Their mother, however, was still missing and presumed dead.

After removing the bodies, some that had been strewn hundreds of metres (yards) from the plane, officials allowed relatives who had been waiting all night to walk

around the charred crash site. Virtually none of the plane except parts of its wings was recognizable.

"I deeply apologize to all the families of the victims," China Airlines president Yuan Hsing-yuan said in Taipei.

Yuan told the Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) that the airline is considering paying a Taiwan dols 1.5 million (dols 58,000) compensation to families of the crash victims.

A China Airlines chartered plane was scheduled to bring more relatives from Taiwan to Nagoya later Wednesday to identify bodies.

Only 91 of the 158 bodies recovered had been identified by 9 a.m. (0000 GMT) Most of the bodies were burned or mangled beyond recognition.

The 3-year-old Seiji Nakayama was conscious and

able to talk, though suffering from broken bones and in serious condition. His brother, Yuji, was also alive, but had a fractured skull. Further details on his condition were not immediately known.

"It is a miracle that he was spared," said Toshio Sugiyama, the younger boy's doctor. The doctor said Nakayama was expected to survive.

"I'm just happy that they're alive," said the boy's father, Tatsumi Nakayama. The mother, Daisy Nakayama, a Philippine national, was on the passenger list but her body had not been identified as of Wednesday afternoon.

Survivor Sylvanie Betonio, also a Philippine national, told Fuji TV that passengers had no warning that the plane was in trouble before it hit ground. All other survivors — two

have yet to be identified — were unconscious and in serious condition. One passenger who survived the crash died Wednesday afternoon after undergoing hours of treatment. Her death raised the death toll to 262.

All of the identified survivors were seated toward the front of the plane, and most were near windows.

Flight 140 carried 256 passengers including two infants, and 15 crew bound from Taipei, Taiwan, to Nagoya. Most were from Japan or Taiwan.

Airport officials recovered the flight recorder Wednesday morning and began analysing it for evidence. Japanese police also searched China Airlines' offices in Nagoya for evidence of possible professional negligence.

## Heavy fighting in Kigali

NAIROBI, Apr 27: Heavy fighting erupted between rebels and governmental forces in Rwanda's capital Kigali overnight, dashing hopes that a unilateral ceasefire declared by rebels would hold, a top UN official said today, reports Reuter.

"It's broken down almost completely. There has been heavy shelling," Abdul Kabia, Executive Director of the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), told Reuters by phone.

Kabia said the airport, controlled by government forces, came under heavy mortar attack late on Tuesday which prevented a United Nations plane from landing.

The UN complained to the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which explained government forces had moved heavy guns onto the airfield.