

20,000 US Gulf War veterans suffer from mysterious diseases

WASHINGTON, Apr 30: The National Institutes for Health (NIH) confirmed Friday what at least 20,000 US Gulf War veterans already knew: They suffer from mysterious diseases, reports AFP.

What the diseases are and how to treat them remains in question.

US troops returning from Operation Desert Storm had reported suffering from unusual illnesses — loosely termed "Gulf War Syndrome."

Among the symptoms were chronic fatigue, aching joints, headaches, lack of concentration and loss of memory.

When the soldiers reported the illnesses, many ran into government resistance to investigate the problems.

The NIH study concluded that perhaps more than 20,000 veterans face real and serious health threats.

"This is a very real condi-

tion," said Dr Herbert H Schaumburg, a member of the NIH committee.

"These people are suffering. There has not been an adequate response to their need," he added.

The study did not find a single cause for the various symptoms.

It suggested combat stress, coupled with long-term exposure to burning oil, chemicals, and parasite-carrying insects, as the possible cause.

The NIH funded the department of defence for making an inadequate effort to present scientific data needed to make additional conclusions.

The report urged the defence department as well as the veterans affairs and health and human services administration to study the problems further.

Christopher carrying proposal to Syria Israel ready to return 3 Druze villages on Golan

JERUSALEM, Apr 30: Israel is proposing to return three Druze villages on the Golan heights to Syria as a first step in relaunching deadlocked peace negotiations, Israeli Radio said today, reports AFP.

Majdal Shams, the largest Druze community on the heights, Buqata and Masadah along the ceasefire line are all named in an Israeli peace plan being carried to Syria by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the radio said.

But the village of Ayn Qunyah lower down the strategic plateau would remain under Israeli control, according to a map drawn up by the Israeli army, along with Mount Hermon and access routes. The northern villages could be handed back within three months, the radio said, if in return Syria dropped its de-

mand for an Israeli commitment to full withdrawal from the heights.

Golan was seized by Israeli in the Middle East war in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

It has remained the main stumbling block in peace talks between the two former arch enemies.

Syria is demanding an Israeli commitment for the return of all the Golan heights and a full Israeli withdrawal from all Arab occupied territory ahead of peace while Israel wants a Syrian commitment for peace and open borders first.

Christopher was due to arrive later today in Damascus to present the Israeli plan for peace to Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin presented the

"global" plan to Christopher on Friday.

"We have put forward a global approach which includes the type of peace the principles of a withdrawal, the stages and some requests to the United States," Rabin said in the Aviv after talks with Christopher.

The plan included "all our conditions for reaching peace with Syria," the Israeli Premier said.

But the official Syrian press said today it would not be swayed by 'honey word,' into making concessions on its demand.

Both men refused to reveal details of the plan for the Golan heights but officials say Israel wants Washington to guarantee security arrangements in a withdrawal phased over 10 years.

The Israeli ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich refused to confirm or deny to Israeli radio the existence of such a plan dubbed 'Majdal Shams First'.

He said Israel had not given any maps on an eventual withdrawal from the heights to Christopher.

But he added that the "proposals and ideas being carried by Christopher to Damascus should allow a serious discussion with Assad."

A spokesman for the 13,000 Jewish settlers on the heights Yehuda Wolman reacted angrily to the reports saying that "any territorial concessions would have consequences for security in the region and northern Israel."

There are about 15,000 Druze living on the heights, most of whom have refused to adopt Israeli nationality.

Peace talks begin tomorrow Sihanouk assures Khieu Samphan of security

PHNOM PENH, Apr 30: In a last-ditch bid to secure peace talks for the country, Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk has invited the nominal leader of the rebel Khmer Rouge to stay in the royal palace to ensure his safety while in the capital, reports AFP.

The invitation came in a letter today to Khieu Samphan, after the proposed round table peace talks were put in jeopardy when the guerilla leader expressed concern for his delegation's security while in Phnom Penh.

"I have the pleasure to inform you that during your entire stay in Phnom Penh for the 'round table,' I will put you up inside the royal palace in order to totally reassure you

about matters concerning your security," the King said in his letter.

Despite an earlier refusal, Co-Premiers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen and National Assembly Chairman Chea Sim have now agreed that the Khmer Rouge delegation could stay in the palace, the King said.

The "round table of peace and national reconciliation" hosted by the King was scheduled to start Monday.

But Khieu Samphan Friday wrote to the King citing widespread security problems in Cambodia, and stating he would prefer the talks to be held in a "neutral place."

Heavy fighting was reported in northwest Cambodia



US First Lady Hillary Clinton leans across an empty chair to talk with US President Bill Clinton April 29 during a meeting with Native Americans on the South Lawn of the White House. The meeting was the first time all of the nation's tribes were invited to meet with a US president.

Security tightened in Colombo

COLOMBO, Apr 30: About 4,000 personnel have been deployed in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo to avert any untoward incidents on May Day, reports Xinhua.

Police sources said all necessary precautions have been taken as there is intelligence information that there could be possible attempts to sabotage and disrupt May Day activities to create chaos and confusion in the country.

According to government sources, the ruling United National Party (UNP) will commemorate the first death anniversary of the late President Premadasa who was killed in a bomb explosion while leading a UNP rally in Colombo last May Day.

A statue of Premadasa will be unveiled by President DB Wijekunna at St. Sebastian Hill in Colombo tomorrow.

North Korean family defects to South

SEOUL, Apr 30: A family of five North Korean defectors arrived in Seoul Saturday, saying they fled because of hardship in their communist homeland, reports AP.

"It was difficult to live," said Yeh Man Chul, 48, a former army captain. He said he and his wife and three children escaped six weeks ago by walking across the frozen Yellow River to China.

It was the first family defection from North Korea since 1987. In the previous such incident, 11 members of a North Korean family fled to the rival South via Japan and Taiwan.

Gunmen kill 8 in Karachi

KARACHI, Pakistan, Apr 30: Masked gunmen riding motorcycles opened fire today on people in Karachi who ignored a strike call by a Pakistani ethnic party leaving eight dead in two days of violence, police said, reports Reuter.

"We are receiving reports of shooting by unidentified people from widely separate parts of Karachi," one police official said.

Police said six people were killed today, including a policeman shot dead in the northern suburb of new Karachi, and a civilian.

Four others died and two were seriously injured when a bus overturned after gunmen fired at it because it ignored a demand from the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) that all buses be pulled off the streets of this sprawling industrial port of 11 million people.

Pakistan blames India for not allowing envoys to see Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD, Apr 30: Pakistan Friday attacked India for not allowing a group of diplomats to meet locals during a tour of Kashmir, saying the visit had been turned into a "conducted ride," reports AFP.

A Foreign Ministry statement alleged the Delhi-based diplomats were not allowed the freedom to go where they wanted in the northern states summer capital Srinagar "for fear they will be exposed to the true sentiments" of the Kashmiri people.

If they were not allowed to go to the scene of alleged mas-

sacres and meet ordinary Kashmiris "how could the envoys be expected to form an objective judgement about the situation prevailing in Indian held Kashmir," the ministry said in a statement.

Pakistan has accused India of gross human rights violations in Kashmir in its efforts to stamp out a separatist campaign, while New Delhi has accused Islamabad of helping arm and train the separatists, a claim it denies while saying it extends moral support to the struggle.

The two countries have twice gone to war over the

disputed State, the northern part of which is controlled by Pakistan.

"It appears the much advertised campaign on transparency in Indian held Kashmir has now been exposed as a transparent attempt to deceive the international community about the grave situation created by massive Indian repression and violation of human rights in the valley, the statement said.

It underlined the need for a fully fledged and impartial fact finding mission which should have free and unimpeded access to all parts of Jammu and Kashmir.



Riot police fire teargas shells at a protest march called by the ethnic-based Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) April 29 in Karachi. Two protestors were killed when security forces opened fire on the marchers following clashes with the police in a continuing confrontation. Key MQM leaders have been recently jailed after courting arrest.

UNSC calls for arms ban on Rwanda

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 30: The Security Council early Saturday condemned the massacres in Rwanda and called for an arms ban but made no decision on Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's proposal to consider sending troops to stop the slaughter in the central African country.

Boutros-Ghali, in a letter to the council Friday, urged it to consider authorising a large force to halt the killings in that central African country, where he said 200,000 people may have been butchered in the past three weeks.

In response, council president Colin Keating of New Zealand said that members first wanted Boutros-Ghali, "to flesh out his proposal and provide a concept of operation."

Western members said privately, however, they saw few volunteers for a major force while some African states welcomed his proposal.

Boutros-Ghali did not say how many troops might be needed to end the massacres, which erupted after Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of neighbouring Burundi were killed April 6 when their plane was shot down as it was landing at Kigali, the capital.

Both presidents were members of the Hutu tribe but the culprits who downed the plane have not been identified yet.

The council, after hours of negotiations, held a formal meeting on Rwanda at which Keating read a statement that also fingered the Hutu-domi-

naid armed forces as the main perpetrator of the slaughter, mainly against minority Tutsis and Hutus opposed to the late president.

"Attacks on defenceless civilians have occurred through the country, especially in areas under the control of members or supporters of the armed forces of the interim government of Rwanda," the statement said.

The statement touched on the Geneva Convention on genocide, saying humanitarian law had been breached and that "the killing on members of an ethnic group with the intention of destroying such a group in whole or in part constitutes a crime punishable under international law."

But the Council did not use the word "genocide" to con-

demn the massacres as proposed by ambassador Karel Kovanda of the Czech Republic, who also wanted stronger condemnation of the headline Hutu army and militia.

This was deleted by the non-aligned Caucus in the council, including African members Djibouti, Nigeria and Rwanda itself, which has a seat on the 15-member body.

"We did not want to pour fuel on the fire and sensationalise it," said ambassador Robel Ohaye of Djibouti.

Council statements carry less weight than resolutions and must be approved by all 15 members.

Citing evidence that new massacres were being planned, Boutros-Ghali said the Security Council should re-examine its decision.

Off the Record



Paloma Picasso, daughter of the late artist Pablo Picasso, smiles for the cameras at the Cologne 'Optica 94' glasses fair in Germany April 29, where she introduces her latest models for the fashion-conscious people with poor eyesight.

Man videotapes himself raping young girls

LONDON: A 43-year old man who videotaped himself raping young girls was sentenced to 28 years in jail Saturday in what the judge said was the longest term he had ever given, reports Reuter.

Adrian Mole, from Dorset in southern England, was found guilty of 10 charges of rape and one of attempted buggery.

The court had been told Mole forced two girls to have sex and then threatened to disfigure them if they reported him.

The two victims, now in their 20s, said the attacks started when they were under 16, the age of consent, with one girl only 11.

Jailing Mole, judge Martin Tucker said: "This was not just rape, it was torture you were getting your satisfaction from."

"This is the longest sentence I have imposed or have heard of being imposed in a case of this kind," the judge said.

All for love, all for Priyanka!

NEW DELHI: An Indian youth who believed his astrologer that he would marry slain prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's daughter, Priyanka, was arrested for making a nuisance of himself, police said Friday, reports AFP.

Twenty-two-year old M Gangadharan was arrested outside the heavily-guarded residence of Gandhi's Italian-born widow Sonia on Thursday, after futile attempts to woo Priyanka Gandhi.

The lovesick youth, who travelled some 5,000 kilometres (3,000 miles) from the southern state of Tamil Nadu to press his suit, appeared puzzled at his arrest, police said, giving no further details.

An astrologer had told Gangadharan in his native village that Priyanka Gandhi, in her early twenties, would become his wife. The illiterate young man then decided to try his luck.

The Gandhis are commonly referred to as India's first family. Priyanka's great-grandfather Jawaharlal Neru, her grandmother Indira Gandhi and father Rajiv Gandhi were all Prime Ministers of India.

Whoopi Goldberg to marry union organiser

LOS ANGELES: Actress and comedian Whoopi Goldberg has struck up a bargain of the marital kind with a film industry union organiser, reports AP.

The actress spilled the news Friday on CNN's 'Larry King Live,' showing off a dazzling ring.

"You are engaged?" King asked her.

"I am engaged," Goldberg said.

She produced the man himself — Lyle Trachtenberg — later in the interview.

Goldberg told King that she met Trachtenberg seven months ago when he tried to organise workers on the film 'Corrina Corrina,' in which she stars.

"I have some really obscure cookbooks," he says in the April 18 issues of People magazine.

Filmmaker's library on bad taste

NEW YORK: Filmmaker John Waters has built his career on bad taste. His library, too, reports AP.

Waters' home sports a world-class collection of books on aberrant behaviour, including such titles as 'Hunting Humans,' 'Prison Groupies' and 'Women Who Love Men Who Kill.' He's got entire shelves devoted to Charles Manson and Patty Hearst.

"I have some really obscure cookbooks," he says in the April 18 issues of People magazine.

The ITAR-Tass news agency said the two presidents signed a package of five documents, including a key agreement on the highly charged issue of social guarantees for 20,000 retired Russian servicemen living in Latvia.

After talks on the social guarantees earlier this week in

Russia to withdraw 12000 troops from Latvia

MOSCOW, Apr 30: Presidents Boris Yeltsin of Russia and Guntis Ulmanis of Latvia signed an agreement Saturday on the withdrawal of 12,000 Russian troops from the Baltic republic by Aug 31, reports AP.

At a Kremlin signing ceremony, Yeltsin described the agreement as historic and said he hoped it would pave the way to better relations with Latvia.

The treaty now needs the approval of the Russian and Latvian parliaments, and nationalistic are influential forces in both parliaments and the treaty could have a rough time.

The Latvian parliament earlier this month failed to approve a preliminary agreement

BRIEFLY

Blast claims 5 in El Salvador: Four children and an adult were killed when a grenade the children were playing with exploded in northern El Salvador, police said Friday, Reuter reports from San Salvador.

It was the latest in a string of tragedies in which children have died handling or stepping on grenades and other explosive devices left over from a 12-year civil war which ended with UN peace accords two years ago.

Police said the four children, aged between seven and 15, and the mother of two of them died when the grenade exploded Thursday in the mountain village of El Zapotal in the northern province of Chalatenango.

8 leftists held in Istanbul: Police arrested eight suspected militants of an underground leftist organisation and seized large quantities of arms and ammunition, officials said Friday, AP reports from Istanbul.

Acting on a tip, agents last week arrested eight people planning to rob a bank, police said. They did not give a reason for the week delay in announcing the raid.

The suspects, all Turks, were identified as members of a leftist organisation known as the Turkish People's Liberation Party-Renewed Liberation Union-People's Liberation Forces.

Murderer gets 51 yrs jail in US: A man convicted of killing a family of four and setting their house ablaze after a night of drinking, smoking marijuana and calling phone-sex lines was sentenced Friday to more than 51 years in prison, AP reports from Hutchinson.

Paul Kiser, 23, probably set the fire to hide his crime, investigators said. In March, a jury convicted the former fuel deliveryman of second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter, burglary and arson in the deaths of Tim and Deanna Peters and their children, 6-year-old Joshua and 4-year-old Angela.

2 Syrians hanged in Lebanon: Two Syrians convicted of killing two Christian jewellery store owners were hanged early Saturday. Abdul-Karim Jejj, 24, and Hassan Zaatar, 26, both Muslims, went to a twin scaffold at the courtyard of the justice palace in Baabda a hilltop town east of Beirut before dawn, AP reports from Baabda.

The pair, wrapped in flowing white gowns with their hands cuffed behind their backs as they dangled from the gallows, were pronounced dead by a coroner dead two minutes later.

A crowd of about 500 spectators watched the execution from 30 meters (yards) away. The scene was only 150 meters (yards) from the jewellery shop where the two Syrians murdered its Christian owners, brothers Ghassan Antonious, 42, and Jalli Antonios, 47, on November 23, 1992.

British soldier killed in Bosnia: One British soldier was killed and two others were injured when their vehicle ran over an anti-tank mine near Gornji Vakuf in central Bosnia, the Defence Ministry said on Friday, Reuter reports from London.

A ministry spokesman said the soldiers drove their vehicle over the mine on Friday afternoon. He could give no details on the condition of the two injured soldiers and referred reporters to the British military in Bosnia.

Quake hits southwestern Japan: A strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.7 hit the island of Kyushu in southwestern Japan Saturday. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, reports AP from Tokyo.

The quake, which struck at about 12:30 pm (0330 GMT), was strong enough to wobble small objects, the Japan Broadcasting Corp reported from its bureau in Miyazaki, 900 kilometers (560 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

Police said there were no reports of damage.

British actress Frederick dead: Actress Lynne Frederick Unger, the former wife of Peter Sellers and David Frost, has died, the county coroner said Friday. She was 39, AP reports from Los Angeles.

The British movie performer was found dead in her West Los Angeles home on Wednesday, coroner's spokesman Scott Carrier said. She appeared to have died of natural causes in bed, he said.