

## Sudan govt, rebels sign peace charter US orders expulsion of Sudanese diplomat

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 11: The United States has ordered the expulsion of a Sudanese diplomat suspected of aiding terrorists who plotted to blow up the United Nations and assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, reports AP.

US officials told Ahmed Yousif Mohamed, a second secretary at the Sudanese mission to the United Nations, on Tuesday that he had 48 hours to leave the United States, James P. Rubin, a spokesman at the US mission said Wednesday.

"Our understanding is that the gentleman will depart the United States within the required 48 hours," a US official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The official said Mohamed and a second Sudanese diplomat, Siraj Yousif, were suspected of having given information to terrorist groups in 1993.

Yousif has already left New York.

Last week, US Ambassador Madeleine Albright told members of the Security Council that two members of the Sudanese mission were involved in aiding terrorist groups.

Albright addressed the council as it considered imposing sanctions against Sudan for its participation in a 1995 assassination attempt against Mubarak. Sudan has denied involvement.

The council is expected to

resume its discussion of the sanctions next week.

The Sudanese mission to the United Nations was listed as an indicted co-conspirator in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre, which killed six people, and in a plan to blow up the United Nations, the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, the George Washington Bridge and a federal building in New York City.

Last year, 10 people, including blind Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, were convicted in the plots and sentenced to terms ranging from 25 years to life. Another Sudanese-born defendant, Siddiq Ibrahim Siddiq Ali, pleaded guilty during the trial.

Reuters adds: The Sudanese government and two rebel factions on Wednesday signed a peace charter in the capital, Khartoum.

The agreement was signed by First Vice President Al-Zubeir Mohammad Al-Saleh for the government along with the leaders of two factions which broke from the mainstream southern rebel movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Riek Machar, signing for the southern Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) said: "I have come to contribute to the breaking of the barriers of mistrust, hatred and lack of confidence which have characterised relations between north and south Sudan for the last 40 years."



South Korean President Kim Young-Sam (L) and his wife Son Myong-Soon (R) cast their ballots at his home town in Seoul on Thursday for the 15th Assembly election. South Koreans went to the polls to elect a new parliament amid mounting border tension with North Korea.

— AFP/UNB photo

## South Koreans vote for new parliament

SEOUL, Apr 11: Polls opened Thursday in Parliamentary elections seen as a mid-term referendum on President Kim Young-sam, reports AP.

As voting started at 6 am (2100 GMT) at 16,394 polling stations across the country, electoral officials feared voter apathy and good weather will result in record-low voter turnout of less than 70 per cent.

Bus terminals and train stations were crowded early Thursday with people who used the national holiday to go picnicking.

Newspapers reported as many as 20 per cent of eligible voters were undecided on the eve of the election, which some said was marred by mud-slinging and regionalism.

Kim was hoping for a strong showing by his New Korea Party as an endorsement of wide-ranging political and economic reforms enacted during his first three years in office.

The efforts by the first civilian president in 32 years to clean up endemic corruption have resulted in the arrests of his two military-backed predecessors on bribery charges.

But Kim's carefully cultivated image as Clean was tarnished during the campaign when a long time aide was arrested on charges of pocketing millions of dollars in bribes from businessmen. Kim also has come under fire for being soft on North Korea.

Kim's party lost badly in lo-

cal government elections last year and many observers thought that trend would continue in Thursday's balloting.

But recent North Korean military incursions into the demilitarised zone separating North and South Korea gave the president's party an unexpected boost.

At stake were all 299 seats in the unicameral National Assembly, with 253 of them directly contested. The other 46 seats will be allotted among political parties on a proportional basis. A total of 1,389 candidates were running.

The polls were to close at 6 p.m. (0900 GMT). Exit polls will be allowed for the first time, but official results are not likely to be known until Friday morning.

The results will shape South Korea's political landscape before the presidential elections in mid-1997. With political power concentrated in the presidency, parties often see National Assembly elections as a warm-up for the Big Election.

A continuing majority in the often raucous National Assembly would allow Kim to push ahead with his reforms. His party now controls 150 seats.

But if the ruling party loses its majority, Kim would probably be forced to merge his party with one of several minor opposition parties and his reform campaign could lose momentum.

## Off the Record

### He plays himself on 'A Child's Wish'

WASHINGTON: President Clinton will portray himself in an upcoming made-for-TV movie about a child with terminal cancer whose wish is to meet the president, reports AP.

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Wednesday that Clinton agreed to the cameo role because it reinforces the importance of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Filming of CBS movie, "A Child's Wish," began recently in Washington. The movie deals with the troubles of a family when the daughter loses a leg to cancer and the father subsequently loses his job as a result of spending too much time with her.

The president's scene will be shot in the next few weeks, the White House official said.

"He plays himself. It's a very serious role," the official said of Clinton. "He very strongly believes that the Family and Medical Leave Act is of great importance to the country."



### Tom cruise fills it in real life

SANTA MONICA, California: Tom Cruise, who's played many a film hero, filled the role in real life when a woman was struck by a hit-and-run driver, reports AP.

The actor was on his way home from dinner on Tuesday when he saw Heloise Vinhas lying in the street. Cruise stopped and called for help on his cellular telephone, his publicist Pat Kingsley said Thursday.

Vinhas, 22, was in excruciating pain and didn't even recognise her guardian angel, who made sure she got to the hospital.

Cruise checked and learned that the woman had torn ligaments in a knee and would be hospitalised two days.

### Israeli jets bomb Lebanon

## 'Syria, Lebanon must take responsibility for attacks'

JERUSALEM, Apr 11: Israel will put pressure on the Lebanese government to rein in Shiite Muslim fighters waging a guerrilla war with Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon, a senior defence official said Wednesday, reports AP.

"The government of Lebanon must know that it needs to take more responsibility for what takes place in south Lebanon," Deputy Defence Minister Ori Orr told Israel television.

"I am talking about action that will explain to the government of Lebanon that it is responsible for the lives of its civilians," he added.

Orr's comments followed a day of heated fighting between Israeli soldiers and guerrillas from the Hezbollah, or Party of God, in southern Lebanon. The fighting left Israeli Staff Sgt. Uri Shraga Friedman, 20, dead, and at least two wounded. On Tuesday, Hezbollah fired dozens of Katyusha rockets into settlements of northern Israel, wounding 36 people, and drawing retaliatory air and artillery strikes.

Orr did not say how Israel would pressure Lebanon to

restrain Hezbollah attacks.

Orr warned that Syria, which has de-facto control in Lebanon, must also take responsibility. The 1993 understanding was brokered by the United States with Syria.

"Syria must understand that if it wants to conduct a comfortable lifestyle like it conducts today in Lebanon, it cannot allow the Hezbollah to operate freely like it does today," he said.

Meanwhile, Israeli air force jets struck twice in eastern and southern Lebanon early Thursday, hours after Shiite Muslim guerrillas killed an Israeli soldier and wounded two in south Lebanon, police said.

Police and reporters in Lebanon's ancient city of Baalbek said there were no casualties from the rare nighttime air attack on Tallet Kayyal hill, an area used as a garbage dump 1.2 miles (2 kilometres) west of the city.

Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas and Syrian troops stationed in the eastern Bekaa Valley opened fire with aircraft guns on the jets at about 4:15 a.m. (0115 GMT). No hits were reported.

## BRIEFLY

### China to sign border accord:

China and four neighbours — Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan — will sign an agreement on peaceful borders on April 26 in Shanghai, a Chinese government spokesman announced Thursday, AP reports from Beijing.

The five countries will promise in the agreement that their border troops will not attack each other and they will not target their military exercises at one another. It also will limit the amount of live ammunition used in border exercises and ensure that observers may be sent.

The signing ceremony will be held during a state visit by Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The presidents of the other three former Soviet states also will attend; Foreign Ministry spokesman Chen Jian said.

### 219 Chinese to perform Hajj:

Muslim farmers from China's poverty-stricken Ningxia province have begun the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah, the Xinhua news agency said, Reuters reports from Beijing.

A total of 219 Muslims from the northwestern province flew to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. Most of the pilgrims were farmers who paid about 22,000 yuan (2,650 dollars) to make the trip, the agency reported late on Wednesday.

### Gallery on Subhas Bose in Port Blair:

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has decided to set up a permanent gallery in the memory of Subhas Chandra Bose at the Cellular Jail in Port Blair. PTI reports from Port Blair.

Subhash Chandra Bose had first hoisted the Indian tricolour at Port Blair on December 30, 1943. He had also visited the Cellular Jail to pay homage to the martyrs when the island was under Japanese occupation.

### Chretien to open Romania's N-plant:

Canadian Premier Jean Chretien and Romanian counterpart Nicolae Vacaroiu will inaugurate this former communist country's first nuclear reactor on April 17, officials said Wednesday, AP reports from Bucharest.

The Canadian-designed Candu-6 reactor, which is to reach capacity by August, is part of a larger five-reactor nuclear power plant located at Cernavoda, 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of the capital Bucharest.

## US evacuates Americans, foreigners from Liberia

WASHINGTON, Apr 11: As US war planes stood by, Air Force helicopters evacuated Americans and other foreigners Wednesday from war-ravaged Liberia, reports AP.

More than 270 people had been ferried to safety during the first 24 hours and hundreds of others from a variety of countries waited outside the US Embassy compound to join the airlift.

Americans were being given first priority in the voluntary evacuations but continued fighting prevented many from making it to the embassy, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Only 61 Americans were aboard the initial flights, which took the evacuees to neighbouring Sierra Leone, a two-hour ride by helicopter. Seats, not filled by Americans were taken by nationals from Britain, Ireland, France, Canada, Australia, Ghana, South Africa and Greece. Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed el-Misiri was among those flown out.

A total of 14 helicopters and military aircraft were involved in the operation.

An embassy spokesman in Monrovia said up to 600 people were waiting quietly outside.

side the embassy gates Wednesday for screening to see if they qualified to join the airlift.

"No one is being turned away if they are deemed eligible," a State Department official said. The eligible include American citizens, Liberians with US residential cards or passports and third country nationals.

It was not clear how many of the 470 Americans in Liberia want to be evacuated. Burns attributed the low turnout during the early hours of the evacuation partly to fighting which persisted despite a cease-fire.

Meanwhile, the stench of rotting bodies filled the Monrovia air Wednesday as bands of armed thugs roamed the streets, looting homes and food warehouses and smashing cars and shop windows.

Exactly how many people have been killed in the five days of fighting between rebels and government troops is unclear.

Red Cross workers, for the first time since the fighting broke out Saturday, began to venture out Wednesday. One worker, James Jallah, said he counted 16 bodies on his tour.

### Kashmiri editor's body recovered from Jhelum river

SRINAGAR, India, Apr 11:

The body of a Kashmiri journalist kidnapped last month by unidentified gunmen was pulled from a river in Kashmir on Wednesday, police said, reports Reuters.

They said 38-year-old Gulam Rasool Sheikh, editor of the daily Urdu newspaper Rehnumaye Kashmir and the weekly Saffron Times, was abducted by suspected militants on March 20.

Sheikh's relatives have said he was kidnapped by "renegade militants" backed by the Indian Army.

There have been several attacks on Kashmiri journalists during the six-year-old revolt against Indian rule in the Himalayan region, in which more than 20,000 people have been killed.

Police said Sheikh's body was recovered from the Jhelum River in Pulwama, south of Srinagar, summer capital of India's only Muslim majority state.

In September last year, a Kashmiri cameraman with Asia News International died of wounds sustained in a parcel-bomb attack.

### US may shift small number of troops from Okinawa

WASHINGTON, Apr 11: US and Japanese officials are nearing agreement on a consolidation of military bases on Okinawa that may result in shifting a small number of troops to elsewhere in Japan, a Pentagon official said Wednesday, reports AP.

Kenneth Bacon, chief spokesman for Defence Secretary William Perry, said both sides remained committed to keeping the overall US troop level in Japan at approximately 47,000. The actual number in Japan fluctuates but current stands at about 45,000, including about 29,000 on Okinawa, officials said.

Confice on rebuilding Bosnia

### Serb leaders demand separate representation

SARAJEVO, Apr 11: Bosnian Serb leaders said on Wednesday they would not attend a reconstruction conference as part of an overall Bosnian delegation and demanded separate representation, reports Reuters.

Rajko Kasagic, Prime Minister of the Bosnian Serb Republic, told Carl Bildt, the international high representative for Bosnia, that his invitation to attend the conference was "unacceptable".

The conference, to drum up international aid to rebuild Bosnia after 43 months of war between its Muslim, Croat and Serb communities, starts on Friday whether the Serbs go or not.

## Tamils form 32 km human chain urging govt to halt attacks

COLOMBO, Apr 11: Tens of

thousands of Tamil civilians formed a human chain in northern Sri Lanka, calling upon the government to halt an imminent military offensive against separatist guerrillas, travellers and rebels said Thursday, reports AP.

As part of the protest on Wednesday, the civilians also staged processions and signed memorandums addressed to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga, said the travellers after reaching government-controlled regions.

The rebels said the human chain was "to draw the attention of the world to the colossal loss of life and large-scale destruction of property" during the proposed offensive.

School children, workers, religious dignitaries and shopkeepers, participated in the protest, said the rebel statement faxed from their office in London.

The travellers said the 32-kilometre (20-mile) human chain was formed between the towns of Chavakacheri and Point Pedro in the peninsula, about 310 kilometres (193 miles) north of the capital, Colombo.

The rebels, fearing a military onslaught, have been repeatedly warning civilians to leave the region and were also

moving weapons and equipment to the mainland from the northern and eastern half of the Jaffna Peninsula, said the travellers who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The military last week asked civilians to stay away from rebel camps because of

air and artillery strikes, but have declined to reveal whether an offensive will be launched.

Meanwhile, naval gunboats destroyed five rebel boats on Tuesday, killing at least four guerrillas in the Jaffna lagoon, the military said. One soldier was also killed and four wounded in a separate attack on northeastern Sri Lanka on Thursday.

The rebels are fighting for an independent homeland in the north and east for minority Tamils. They claim widespread discrimination by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and the military.

AFP adds, the demonstration was aimed at pressuring the Colombo government to call off a major military campaign scheduled after the Sinhala and Tamil new year over the weekend, the sources said.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in a statement from its London office that civilians were also planning a signature campaign.

The military captured one third of the northern Jaffna Peninsula after nearly 50 days of fighting that ended in December with the loss of 500 soldiers and an estimated 2,500 rebels. Most civilian fled the area before the fighting broke out.

### 1st May declared free day in Moscow

MOSCOW, Apr 11: The mayor of Moscow declared Wednesday that on May 1 the residents of the Russian capital will be able to ride the metro, go to the theatre and get their newspapers without spending a single ruble, reports AP.

"Muscovites should perceive that the city is not hostile to them," the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted Mayor Yuri Luzhkov as saying.

"People have gotten extremely tired of bitterness. Their hearts should melt a bit," Luzhkov chose the traditional Soviet holiday to appeal to Russians who have struggled to adapt to market reforms and feel nostalgia for Soviet times, when prices were low.

He said all mass transit will be free, as will entry to museums, cinemas and theaters. Newspapers and magazines will be distributed without charge, the report said.



A Turkish army soldier collects weapons near the corpse of a Kurdish independence fighter at a rebel position in the mountains of northern Iraq, not far from the Turkish border region on Tuesday. Turkish forces resumed an offensive against Kurdish PKK rebels in the region killing at least 100 people in a massive military operation.

— AFP/UNB photo

### Egyptian police nab 245 suspects

CAIRO, Apr 11: Police Wednesday arrested 245 people suspected of trying to re-establish and extremist Muslim group with foreign backing, reports AP.

Police officials, detained in 17 Egyptian provinces, were trying to recreate the Takfir wa el-Higra, or Renunciation and Emigration, organisation.

The group's philosophy rejects society as infidel and urges members to isolate themselves from it and bring true Islam.

The group was largely crushed in 1977 after its members assassinated Egypt's minister of religious endowments, Mohammed Hussein el-Dahab, who supervised religious affairs for the state.

## France unwilling to press China on HR front for trade's sake

PARIS, Apr 11: It seemed simple enough. In a dinner speech announcing a nearly 2 billion dollar deal to sell jetliners to China, France's prime minister planned to mention Beijing's human rights problem, reports AP.

Instead, Chinese premier Li Peng blipped at counterpart Alain Juppe's plans. It nearly drew the lucrative trade deal into chaos, underscoring just how touchy China can be when it comes to human rights.

Both nations signed the agreement for 33 Airbus jets and other contracts Wednesday evening, and Juppe made no mention of human rights in his address. But the standoff

delayed a state dinner by nearly two hours. And when they finally did sit down and break bread, they agreed not to toast each other, bucking international tradition in a mutual — if unusual — diplomatic snub.

Paris took pains not to press Beijing on the human rights front, and it shielded Li from the activists who vigorously protested Wednesday's visit, his first since China's 1989 crackdown on a pro-democracy movement.

In the end, only the demonstrators dared speak out.

"Money has become more important than human rights. It's crazy," said Wen Lin, a 25-

year-old student from China protesting near the Eiffel Tower.

"Even the money doesn't make a difference," she said. "My parents still live in a tiny apartment back in China. There a few people get rich and the rest suffer."

Li's visit, which runs through Saturday, raises a thorny question: Should foreign trade be withheld or restricted to force a nation with a blemished human rights record to do better? Or is trade itself a catalyst for change? France has built its China policy around the latter, insisting that trade and democracy are inextricably linked.

"I don't think we can be indifferent, blind, distant toward a country that is in full transformation," said French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette, but added:

"Will we sacrifice human rights for trade? That's out of the question."

Cynics and skeptics — and there are many — contend that France, struggling amid nearly 12 per cent unemployment and a lingering European recession, will say and do anything for business and jobs, that a market of 1.2 billion people simply cannot be ignored.

At Paris' Human Rights Square, 30-year-old student Kuo Weishung of Taiwan

puffed on a pipe and let out some steam over China's recent aggression toward his homeland, which Beijing views as a renegade province.

Last month, China staged war games and fired missiles into the Strait of Taiwan in an attempt to cool rising nationalist sentiment there. The United States sent warships, but France stayed quiet — too quiet for Kuo.

"Now France wants to do business with China," he said. "Business should be a reward for human rights progress."

No doubt it was that commitment to business, along with a reluctance to jeopardise the 1.9 billion dollars Airbus deal, that prompted Juppe to

snip a key paragraph from his planned speech rather than muddy the trade waters.

It was innocuous enough. According to an early draft of the speech faxed to The Associated Press, Juppe planned to say simply: "We talked this evening about human rights. It is our experience and our conviction that all economic and social development is accompanied by parallel progress of democracy and human rights."

There was no mention of Amnesty International's persistent allegations that Beijing systematically beats, tortures, imprisons and kills political opponents. But Li apparently saw something he didn't like.

### Clinton vetoes abortion bill

WASHINGTON, Apr 11: President Bill Clinton on Wednesday vetoed a bill passed by Congress that would make partial birth abortions illegal, the White House announced, reports AP.

Partial-birth abortions are performed after the 20th week of pregnancy.

The bill was the first attempt to prohibit a form of abortion in the United States since a 1973 supreme court ruling legalised abortion.

According to the bill partial-birth abortions refer to a procedure in which a doctor delivers a living fetus before killing the fetus and completing the delivery.