

## International

## Lankan security forces on red alert Fresh offensive against LTTE in Jaffna under cover of curfew

COLOMBO, Apr 19: Thousands of heavily armed troops launched a major offensive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas in northern Sri Lanka today under the cover of an indefinite curfew, defence sources here said, reports AFP.

Infantry troops were fanning out of their forward defence lines in the Jaffna Peninsula and moving against positions of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the sources said.

The widely expected offensive came on the first anniversary of the LTTE's resumption of the fresh hostilities against security forces in what is now regarded as Eelam War III. Tigers are battling for an inde-

pendent homeland called Eelam.

The defence ministry in a brief statement said the operation code-named "Rutresia II," or Sunshine II, was launched at dawn with an indefinite curfew in the northern districts of Jaffna and Kilinochchi.

"Civilians have been advised to remain calm and to gather at safe places designated by the security forces," the ministry statement said, adding that maximum possible precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of civilians.

In October last year, security forces launched operation Rutresia, which lasted nearly 50 days and ended up with the military taking control over

the LTTE's former citadel of Jaffna.

That offensive cost the lives of some 500 soldiers and an estimated 2,500 rebels. Tens of thousands of civilians fled the area and are still living in refugee camps located in the southern sectors of the peninsula controlled by Tigers.

The latest fighting came amid a security alert across the country to pre-empt attacks by the LTTE to mark the first anniversary of Eelam War III.

The LTTE pulled out of a 100-day truce with the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and marked the beginning of what is now known as Eelam War III by blasting two navy gunboats a year ago today.

Earlier report says, Sri Lankan security forces were placed on red alert Friday, the first anniversary of the latest round of fighting with Tamil Tiger guerrillas, officials said.

They said military units across the embattled northern and eastern regions have been ordered to take defensive action to pre-empt attacks by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas.

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### Rao cancels rally for security reason

NEW DELHI, Apr 19: Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao today cancelled a campaign rally for general elections in the northern part of Haridwar due to "security reasons," officials said, reports AFP.

Rao was to address a meeting at an Open College Ground in the afternoon in the Hindu holy town, nearly 200 kilometers (125 miles) from New Delhi, in support of his Congress (I) Party.

"It's been cancelled," an official in charge of his tour programme said. "It is because of security reasons." He did not elaborate.

Rao, 74, is protected by elite commandos. Former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated midway during the last general elections in 1991.

### Masari allowed to stay 4 more yrs in Britain

CROYDON, England, Apr 19: Britain on Thursday withdrew an expulsion order on a Saudi dissident whose presence had threatened lucrative arms deals with Riyadh and said he could stay in the country for four more years, reports Reuters.

The Home Office (Interior Ministry) said permanent asylum for Mohammed Al-Masari was still not on offer but he could apply to extend his stay at the end of four years.

"It is a great relief that the threat of deportation is gone," Masari told reporters.

His wife and young children, believed to be in Saudi Arabia, will now be able to join him in Britain where two daughters already live. He will be given a permit to travel outside Britain, the Home Office said in a statement.

After a meeting with Home Office officials, Masari indicated he would continue his attacks on the Saudi royal family.

Asked whether he would continue his campaign, he replied: "This is understood."

### Abacha fires 16 generals

LAGOS, Apr 19: Military officials announced the ouster Thursday of 16 army generals and more than a dozen colonels, three weeks after the army and air force chiefs were sacked, reports AP.

No reason was given for the forced retirements, which took effect Monday. Gen. Sani Abacha rarely explains such actions and has yet to say why he fired his army and air force chiefs last month.

Last year, Abacha also fired his top military chiefs without giving a reason, but military sources at the time said he questioned their commitment to his hard-line rule.

Abacha claimed to have uncovered a plot to overthrow his government several months ago, but it was unclear if the latest firings were connected to the alleged plot.



Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres shakes hands with the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat during their meeting at Erez crossing in the north of the Gaza Strip on Thursday. Peres, saying that Arafat had fulfilled his commitment to crack down on terrorism, put the Palestinian peace process back on track as the two leaders held their first meeting since a wave of suicide bombings in Israel.

## Europeans against any new US sanctions on Iran, Libya

WASHINGTON, Apr 19: Western Europe's chief trade negotiator threatened on Thursday to take action against the United States if a bill becomes law that would sanction foreigners investing in Iran, reports AP.

A letter to key members of Congress by Sir Leon Brittan, vice president of the European Commission, also criticized similar action proposed against Libya. The commission is the joint executive of the 15 governments in the European Union.

The Europeans complain that such a law, like the recent US sanctions against non-American investors in Cuba, would be an exercise in "extraterritoriality" — the enforcement of US law outside US borders against people who

are not US citizens. Iran is seeking foreign investors for its oil industry, which lost much of its up to date equipment in a long war with Iraq.

"If the act as passed by the House International Relations Committee becomes law, the European Commission will be obliged to protect European commercial interests through all available multilateral fora," Brittan wrote.

He said such action would violate international law.

"US business representatives," he added, "have also told us of the difficulties they may encounter in their business relations with Europe, if trade, as well as financial relations, become part of the sanctions legislation."

His letter to US Rep

William Archer, chairman of the Mays and Means Committee, was made available by the Washington office of the European Union.

One forum in which the Europeans could seek redress is the new World Trade Organisation (WTO), formed in part to settle such disputes. Eventually, the WTO could authorise trade retaliation by Europe against the United States if it found US sanctions unjustified.

"We all recognised the need to work together in handling Iran and Libya," Brittan's letter said. "We share common concerns regarding human rights, nuclear non-proliferation and most importantly, we are united in our opposition to violence and state-sponsored terrorism."



German IFOR soldiers prepare the final touch as they finished building a bridge across the Bosna river near Visoko, outside Sarajevo, on Thursday. About 250 German soldiers serving with the NATO troops in Bosnia rebuilt this bridge which was destroyed in the beginning of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## Evidence of 11,000-yr-old human society discovered in Amazonian rainforest

WASHINGTON, Apr 19: A warren of ancient painted caves has yielded dramatic new evidence of a thriving primitive human society deep in the Amazonian rainforest 11,000 years ago, reports Reuters.

The research appeared today in the journal Science and appears to defy the conventional wisdom that tropical rainforests were too harsh to support early civilisation and questions assumptions about early migration patterns through the Americas, the project's chief archaeologist, Anna Roosevelt, said in a telephone interview.

The finding that early humans lived in tropical sandstone caves also raises provocative questions about the nature of early hunter-gatherer societies and about gender roles, said Roosevelt, of Chicago's Field Museum, who led the US-Brazilian archaeological project near Monte Alegre, Brazil.

Sociobiologists have used our supposed descent from hunters to support a genetic basis for human behaviour like

aggression and certain gender roles common in modern western cultures, such as men bringing home the food and women tied to domestic chores," she said.

She believes that everyone, including little children, helped gather food and notions about gender stem less from archaeology than from Victorian social conventions.

"Those are cultural ideas — and they come from our culture and from Victorian mores," she said. In prehistoric times, she believes "everyone was a food gatherer. Even the children could catch the baby rats and baby turtles that were not smart enough to escape."

The sandstone caves, known as the caverna da pedra pintada, or cavern of the painted stone, were discovered more than a century ago but never explored in depth or excavated.

The large bright yellow and red paintings of animals, human stickfigures, chimeras and shaman-like imagery were thought to date from a later

period and were left unexplored.

Roosevelt, who had long harboured doubts about theories that early human society arose in the Savannah and not the rain forest, learned about the caves and began an extensive study more than 10 years ago.

Early artifacts had been found in South America but the prevailing theory was that early civilisation developed in North America and humans migrated south. It was thought that early humans could not survive in the rainforest before slash-and-burn farming techniques were developed.

It had generally been accepted that the oldest human artifacts in the Americas were the fluted points, presumably used to hunt big game, found in 1932 among mammal bones in Clovis, New Mexico.

Those tools were believed to be 10,900 to 11,200 years old and their makers were dubbed the "Clovis people." They are believed to be hunters who crossed the Bering Strait between Russian

and Alaska and then fanned out through the Americas in pursuit of giant game.

But Roosevelt's findings in the caves have been dated by several labs to be about 11,000 years old, which suggests that the Brazilian paleoindian civilisation developed at about the same time as the Clovis people.

"The existence of distinct cultural tradition contemporary with the Clovis tradition but more than 5,000 miles (8,047 km) to the south does not fit the notion that the North American big-game hunters were the sole source of migration into South America," said Roosevelt and colleague from several US and Brazilian universities and museums.

The early Amazonians were probably not primarily big game hunters but foragers in the forest and river basin, subsisting on fruit, nuts and animals. Over time, they became more sophisticated and moved out from the caves, setting up fishing villages, learning to make pottery and develop agriculture.

## US Congress passes anti-terrorism bill

WASHINGTON, Apr 19: Acting on the eve of the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing, the US Congress passed on Thursday legislation giving federal law enforcement authorities more tools to combat domestic terrorism, reports AP.

The House of Representatives voted 293-133 to send the bill to President Clinton.

The measure, which the Senate passed overwhelmingly Wednesday evening, lacks many law enforcement provisions the White House had sought. Nevertheless, Clinton, who long has pressed Congress to pass anti-terrorism legislation, was considered likely to sign it next week, after he returns from his overseas trip.

The original House bill, passed last month, had eliminated many of the Senate's anti-terrorism provisions because of lawmakers' concerns

about expanding federal law enforcement powers. Some of those provisions were restored in the compromise bill.

"The balance between public safety and order and individual rights is always a difficult dilemma in a free society," said Rep. Gerald Solomon.

The legislation provides new limits on federal appeals by death row inmates and other prisoners. It also would provide additional federal death penalties in certain international terrorism cases and for killing a federal employee or former employee because of that person's work.

"The bill 'has some very effective tools that we can use in our efforts to combat terrorism,'" Attorney General Janet Reno said Thursday.

"I would draft it differently, but I think that there are safeguards in the bill, she told her weekly news conference.

## US seeks China's approval for Korean peace plan

THE HAGUE, Apr 19: Secretary of State Warren Christopher will be seeking China's approval of a new US proposal for Korean peace talks in a meeting Friday with Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, reports AP.

Christopher also hopes to find a solution to a long-simmering dispute over China's nuclear technology sales to Pakistan, amid indications the Clinton administration will not impose strong sanctions against Beijing.

Christopher was still weighing his options before the meeting at the Chinese ambassador's residence, to be followed by a working dinner hosted by US Ambassador K. Terry Dornbush.

Trying to overcome strains on several fronts, including China's repression of dissidents and apparent infringement of US copyrights, Christopher intends to reaffirm US commitment to a one-China policy, a senior US official said.

That means assuring Beijing even after bullying Taiwan with missile tests that the United States concurs there is only one China. The reassertion means dampening any expectation Taiwan would get support if it sought independence.

China already has responded positively to President Clinton's proposal for peace talks involving four countries — the United States, China, North Korea and South Korea. "All parties concerned, including the neighbouring nations of the Korean Peninsula should work jointly to preserve peace and stability there," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said after Clinton made the proposal Tuesday on a visit to South Korea.

But the US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Christopher would like to get a firm endorsement from Qian, the foreign minister, as well as a positive reply from North Korea, which he said "may take some time."

## Off the Record

### Di feeding stories to newspapers!

LONDON: There is some evidence that Princess Diana and some other members of the royal family are feeding stories to newspapers, the head of the Press Complaints Commission said Thursday, reports AP.

Lord Wakeham said many press people have told him that members of the royal family expend "a considerable amount of energy" to try to get their side of the story in the newspapers. There is "some evidence" this is true, he said, citing a front-page story last week in the Daily Mirror which the paper said came from the princess herself. She reportedly denied a newspaper report that she has cellulite — fatty deposits — in her legs.

"I don't like what I see in some of the newspapers, but I'm not entirely going to blame the newspapers for that state of affairs," Wakeham said.

"Now, I have a very simple view... If you don't want to get yourself in the newspapers, shut up," he told a media conference organized by The Institute of United States Studies, which is part of the University of London.

Diana has a love-hate relationship with the news media, sometimes lashing out at tabloid photographers, other times cultivating certain reporters and feeding them exclusive quotes and information. Diana agreed to a television interview last November, and talked about her failed marriage, her lover and her views on the monarchy.

Prince Charles' friends and allies have also leaked stories giving his side of the dispute.

As chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, Wakeham supervises the self-regulation system and code of conduct agreed to by newspapers. He is a former leader of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Wakeham said the papers have generally abided by his request to allow Charles and Diana's eldest son, Prince William, to attend school at Eton without press harassment.

### How do ants think?

TEHRAN: An Iranian of teenager has written a book about the way ants think after he was inspired by the Muslim holy book, the Quran. The Daily Jomhuri Eslami newspaper said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

"Inspired by the Quran... the author has managed to discover and express parts of the hidden thoughts of the ants," Sadeq Omid, an official at a state-run publishing house which is bringing out "ants' thoughts" in 2,000 copies, was quoted as saying. He did not elaborate.

Nader Qeytani, 18, a high school student in the southwestern Ilam province, wrote the book after observing the behaviour and activities of the insects for four years. Omid said, "The young author is currently investigating patterns of fighting among animals, he said without giving further details."

## UNSC accuses Libya of violating air embargo

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 19: The UN Security Council late Thursday accused Libya of violating a UN air embargo by flying Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia and warned Tripoli against attempting further violations, reports AP.

The Security Council formal statement was issued after Libya said Thursday it would fly more Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia after defying a four-year UN ban on Libyan flights on Tuesday.

The Security Council statement said that Tuesday's flight by a Libyan Arab Airlines plane to Jeddah constituted "a clear violation" of the 1992 air embargo against Libya.

The Libyan flight landed in Jeddah late Tuesday with 115 people heading for the annual Hajj pilgrimage to the Islamic shrine of Makkah, after overflying Egyptian territory. The plane returned to Tripoli on Wednesday.

It was the second year that Libya had thumbed its nose at the United States, the main sponsor of sanctions against Tripoli. Libya staged two illegal flights last year during the pil-

grimage, drawing protest letters from the United Nations to Tripoli, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Thursday's short US-drafted statement recalled that Libya had been allowed an exemption to the embargo to transport pilgrims to Makkah, but warned that the Council "will review the matter should further violations occur."

On Thursday, the official Jana news agency said that "flights of Libyan Airlines planes and other equipped planes are continuing in order to transport Libyan pilgrims directly to Jeddah from different airports in the country."

Jana did not give dates for the new flights.

Egypt's national carrier, under the UN exemption like last year, started transporting 10,000 Libyan pilgrims to Saudi Arabia one week ago. But Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi warned last month that Libya would not ask permission from anyone to fly its pilgrims to Makkah. Egypt had requested the UN exemption of its own accord, he said.

## BRIEFLY



A Lebanese boy caught in the rubble of a house in Nabatiyah on Thursday that sheltered a family of eleven and was bombed by an Israeli warplane, cries for help. A mother, seven of her children and a young cousin were killed in the attack. Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath, launched April 11 in an attempt to halt Hezbollah attacks, has killed 94 and wounded 192 in Lebanon, mostly civilians.

— AFP/UNB photo

### 17 pilgrims die in Pak bus mishap:

A bus carrying pilgrims to a Muslim shrine fell into a deep ravine in Northwestern Pakistan on Thursday, killing 17 people and injuring 38, police said, Reuters reports from Peshawar.

They said the bus went into the 100 feet (30 metre) deep ravine in the Buner area of the North West Frontier Province when it came off a sharp curve on the road to the Pir Baba shrine.

### Greenpeace activists held:

Police arrested members of the environmental group Greenpeace when they tried but failed to stop the loading of spent nuclear fuel rods onto a ship before dawn on Friday, AP reports from Sydney.

Six others were arrested but were released without charges filed.

### Briton hanged in Singapore:

John Martin was hanged in Singapore just before dawn on Friday for the grisly murder of a South African tourist, a prisons department official said, Reuters reports from Singapore.

Martin also known as John Martin Scripps, was executed after changing his mind about appealing against his conviction for killing Gerard Gorge Lowe with a hammer, then dismembering the body and dumping the parts in the Singapore river.

### Russia, Canada sign N-memo:

Russia and Canada signed a memorandum Thursday on cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, AP reports from Moscow.

The signing took place in Moscow on the eve of a nuclear security summit, in which the leaders of G-7 nations, Russia and Ukraine will take part.

The memo urges greater exchanges of information and closer contact between scientists of the two countries, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. It was signed by Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov and Canada's Ambassador to Russia Jeremy Kinsman.

### 8 miners killed in Peru:

Landslides killed eight miners in two separate mining accidents in the Peruvian highlands, according to a news report Thursday, AP says from Lima.

The worst of the two accidents Wednesday happened at the San Cristobal mine in La Oroya, belonging to the state-owned Centromin, the Lima daily El Comercio reported. La Oroya is 140 kilometers (85 miles) east of Lima.

Six workers extracting zinc at the open-pit mine were killed there when a bank 100 meters (330 feet) long and 40 meters (130 feet) wide crashed down on top of them, the newspaper said.

### Meet on ME terrorism postponed:

An international meeting in Luxembourg on fighting Middle East terrorism has been postponed indefinitely to allow US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to make an emergency shuttle mission to the Middle East, the State Department spokesman said on Thursday, Reuters reports from Moscow.

Nicholas Burns said Christopher made the decision to go to the Middle East after Israeli forces, countering a wave of Katyusha rockets from guerrillas in Southern Lebanon landed shells on a United Nations outpost crammed with refugees killing more than 100 people.

### German minister heads for Syria:

Germany is sending a deputy foreign minister to Syria on Friday for talks on ending the violence between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, AP reports from Bonn.

Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said he spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak by phone Thursday night to express Germany's concern over the latest attack. At least 75 Lebanese refugees were killed after a barrage of Israeli artillery shells slammed into a UN base in southern Lebanon.

In a statement, Kinkel said Germany was in close touch with US and French officials working to end the violence, and urged Barak to do his utmost to help reach a ceasefire.

## Fighting rages in Chechnya defying Yeltsin's order

MOSCOW, Apr 19: Russian troops are openly flouting President Boris Yeltsin's order to cease combat operations in Chechnya and systematically waging war against civilians, and international aid organisation said Thursday, reports AP.

The group, Doctors Without Borders, said Yeltsin's plan to end the war in the breakaway republic is not working and the situation is seriously deteriorating.

"Villages and civilian installations, including hospitals, schools and mosques, continue to be targeted, in blatant violation of the Geneva Convention and other international agreements to which Russia is a signatory," Dr Eric Goemaere, the director general, told a news conference.

Yeltsin, who is under pressure to end the unpopular war as he seeks re-election, and his military commanders have said major combat operations have been halted and Russian forces are only responding to rebel attacks.

Goemaere sent a letter to US President Bill Clinton and called on the leaders of all G-7 countries, arriving in Moscow for a nuclear safety summit, to

put pressure on Russia to halt the targeting of civilians in Chechnya.

The group has 11 international staff and more than 40 Chechens and Russians working in Chechnya. They are "quite worried" that the strong condemnation of the Russian military may put them in more danger, said group spokeswoman Samantha Bolton in Moscow.

In Chechnya, civilians have reported being targeted by Russian forces, who have bombed and shelled villages in southern Chechnya in recent weeks.

The Interfax news agency said separatist forces on Thursday were shelling Russian positions in the southern settlements of Stary Achkhoy, Orekhov, Gorskoe and Vedeno.

The death toll from Tuesday's rebel attack on a Russian military convoy has risen to 93, independent NTV television said Thursday. It said 54 Russian troops in the convoy were wounded and only 13 escaped unharm.

The death toll could not be independently confirmed.