



Co-star of the movie "The Quest," Roger Moore arrives at the movie's premiere with his girlfriend Kristina Tholstrup (L) on Saturday in Studio City, CA. The movie was directed by co-stars Jean Claude, Van Damme. — AFP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

### Nigeria's spiritual leader sacked:

The spiritual leader of Nigeria's Muslim community, Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki of Sokoto, has been dismissed. Sokoto radio reported late Saturday citing a communiqué from the state's military administrator Colonel Yakubu Muazu. AFP reports from Lagos.

A curfew has been clamped on the northern state from 7 pm to 7 am to prevent any unrest following this unprecedented measure, the radio said. Muazu accused the Sultan of misuse of funds given by individuals or organisations for the building of mosques and financing of other religious activities.

### Taliban's 'no' to free Russian crews:

The Rebel Taliban militia rejected an appeal Saturday from President Clinton for the release of a Russian flight crew held in southern Afghanistan since their cargo plane was forced down eight months ago. AP reports from Kandahar.

"The Russians were taking weapons to our enemies, this is an act of war," said Taliban spokesman Amir Khan Muttaqi. Taliban leaders rejected the appeal during a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel. A message from Clinton to the Taliban leadership was hand delivered by Raphel.

### Bal Thackeray's son dies:

Bindumadhav Thackeray, eldest son of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, died in the Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai on April 20 following a road accident. He was 42. PTT reports from Mumbai.

Thackeray was seriously injured when the car in which he was travelling to Pune along with his family members collided with a tempo at Karla near Lonavala on the Mumbai-Pune road. He was rushed to the Hinduja Hospital here after being given first aid at the Parmar Hospital in Lonavala. However, the end came during an emergency operation at around 1730 hours, hospital sources said.

### Voting begins in Italy:

Voting began yesterday in Italy's third general election in four years of political chaos. Reuter reports from Rome.

Polling stations opened at 7 am (0500 GMT). First forecasts of the result by research institutes were due to be published as soon as voting ends at 10 pm (2000 GMT). Some 48.9 million Italians are eligible to vote. The election pits the centre-right freedom alliance of parties, led by media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, against a centre-left olive free bloc, which has as its main force the former communist democratic party of the left.

### Floods kill 7 children in Yemen:

Seven children died when they were swept away by floods after torrential rains in Central Yemen, newspapers reported Saturday. AFP reports from Sanaa.

The children, aged between three and 10, died in Sanaa in the province of Shabwa. Five were members of the same family. At least 23 people have now died in the storms which have been battering Yemen for more than three weeks. There has also been enormous damage.

### Tornadoes claim 2 in US:

Two people died, hundreds of homes were damaged and thousands were left without power after tornadoes ripped through the midwestern and southern United States Friday and Saturday, AFP reports from Washington.

The Mississippi sheriff's office in the deep US South said a boy was killed when a tree fell on his mobile home early Saturday. In Illinois in the US Midwest, a woman was killed late Friday when high winds knocked her vehicle off a highway, officials there said. Kentucky, in the east central part of the nation, was particularly hard hit.

### 10 peasants killed in Brazil:

Ten of the 19 peasants killed Wednesday by police in the rural, southern Amazon were fatally shot at point blank range, according to a congressional report released Saturday. AFP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

"Some of the peasants were executed in cold blood", Para State Public Ministry Jose Luiz Furtado told reporters. The clash came amid a surge of protests by landless peasants at a cross Brazil.

### PLO police uncover arms cache:

The Palestinian Authority has discovered an Islamic militant arms cache and arrested two men involved. Palestinian police said Sunday. AP reports from Gaza City.

The cache belonged to the Islamic Jihad group and included three pistols, an M-16, hand grenades, material used to make bombs and bullets, said Maj. Gen. Abudil Razek Majaladeh, Chief of Gaza City security.

Police did not identify the two men arrested.

### WW II plane found in Indonesia:

The wreckage of a World War II Allied Forces aeroplane and parts of a human skeleton have been found in the jungles of Indonesia, the official Antara news agency reported Saturday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

Two villagers looking for firewood in the Kotabaru district of south Kalimantan province found the wreckage on Saturday, along with parts of a skeleton, bullets and explosives, a military spokesman told the agency.

### Turkey warns Syria of harbouring Kurdish rebels

ANKARA, Turkey, Apr 21: Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz warned Syria Saturday against harbouring Kurdish guerrillas, reports AFP.

"Some negotiations with the rebels are necessary, but they are not a solution to the problem," Yilmaz said during a speech in this town, near the Syrian border.

"These neighbours should either cease such anti-national activities or they will have to face the punishment they deserve."

Kurdish rebels have been fighting a war for autonomy in southeastern Turkey since 1984.

The rebels strike cross-border attacks from bases in Syria, Iraq and Iran.

### US will send team to Liberia to help broker peace

WASHINGTON, Apr 21: The United States will send a team of diplomats to Liberia to help broker an end to the recent fighting and put the peace process back on track, the White House said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The mission, led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William T. Wadsworth, will support the efforts of US Ambassador William Milam and mediators from Ghana to end two weeks of conflict and chaos in Liberia.

In a written statement, the White House also promised an additional 30 million dollar worth of equipment, training and other support to the West African peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) if it demonstrated a renewed capacity to play a neutral and effective role.

A dozen accords have failed to bring peace to Liberia in the past but the latest, signed in August in Abuja, Nigeria, held promise because all key faction leaders signed.

But now, Charles Taylor and Roosevelt Johnson, who control rival militias, each maintains the other side should give ground. Fighting was erupted early this month when Liberia's coalition government tried to arrest Johnson on murder charges.

### Jordan recalls ambassador from Iraq

AMMAN, Apr 21: Troubled by the mysterious deaths of five Jordanians in Iraq during the past three weeks, Jordan on Saturday recalled its ambassador from Iraq for consultations, reports AP.

The development signaled a further strain in relations between Jordan and its eastern neighbour and onetime ally.

A government source said Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti summoned Ambassador Bassam Qaqish for consultations over the recent events against Jordanians in Iraq.

"We will not allow the security and safety of our citizens to be tampered with," said the source, who spoke to The Associated Press in exchange for anonymity.

In Baghdad, Qaqish told the AP he would go to Jordan "on a regular visit," but denied that he was recalled by the government.

### Phoolan confident of winning polls

NEW DELHI, Apr 21: Phoolan Devi is confident of winning as the Samajwadi Party candidate from Mirzapur-Bhadoi Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh and all set to counter the widows of Behmai and their rath yatra, with the controversial film on her life, — "The Bandit Queen," reports PTT.

One of the issues confronting Phoolan Devi is the large number of men who were massacred in the Behmai village, says BBC in a press release issued here.

When BBC asked about the plan by the widows of these men to bring a rath yatra to her constituency, she told BBC "I will show the picture (Bandit Queen) this film is based on my life though it is currently banned. I will show the film if they bring the rath yatra."

### China condemns HR abuses in US

BEIJING, Apr 21: China's state-run news media are using a videotaped beating of illegal immigrants in California to condemn human rights abuses in the United States, reports AP.

The videotape has been shown in the government-controlled television news. The clips were from footage shot by US TV news helicopters of two sheriff's deputies clubbing two illegal Mexican immigrants after a high-speed freeway chase April 1.

The People's Daily, the paper of the ruling Communist Party, said the beating showed the United States is hypocritical when it condemns rights abuses in China.

The latest counterattack is aimed to precede a vote by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to condemn human rights abuses in China. China in the past has issued long reports criticizing the United States for not taking action to solve its own social problems such as homelessness and violence.

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seized, and many carriers proved to be "swindlers or

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page declaration reaffirming the commitment of Russia, the

United States, Britain, Canada, Italy, Japan, France and

## International

# Offensive against LTTE guerillas Troops kill 30 more Tigers on second day

COLOMBO, Apr 21: Sri Lankan forces killed at least 30 Tamil Tiger rebels on the second day of a major air-land-sea assault in the guerillas' northern Jaffna stronghold, the military said today, reports Reuter.

Troops recovered the bodies of 14 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels while guerilla casualties in air and navy attacks were not immediately known, a military statement said.

Five soldiers were wounded in Saturday's offensive to capture the eastern half of the Jaffna peninsula, it said.

An AFP report says: Government forces made strategic gains in a major offensive against Tamil Tiger guerillas in northern Sri Lanka today, officials said, amid fears of retaliatory rebel attacks in the capital Colombo.

Hand-to-hand fighting raged in the Namarchchi sector of the Jaffna peninsula as troops penetrated the defences of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and captured several key towns, military sources said.

"Two soldiers were killed in the first phase of the drive and they were shot dead at point-blank range," a military source said. "As the operation moves on, there are bound to be more casualties."

Military figures indicate that about 25 soldiers were wounded and two killed in the fighting while security forces have recovered the bodies of 46 rebels, however, the defence ministry has said Tiger losses were higher.

Chief defence spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said the latest military manoeuvre, carried out under cover of an indefinite curfew, had taken the Tigers completely by surprise and helped minimise losses on the government's side.

He denied guerilla claims that the Namarchchi sector of the Jaffna peninsula was being subjected to heavy shelling.

However, Munasinghe, who had just returned from the battle zone, admitted that the peninsula's Vadamarchchi sector in the northeast of the peninsula was heavily pounded by the Sri Lankan army, navy and the air force.

AP adds: In a statement from their London office, the Tamil Tigers said Ukrainian-built Mi 24 helicopter gunships had fired on fleeing Tamil refugees preparing to cross from the Jaffna Peninsula into the mainland.

"All family members of one refugee family have been completely wiped out and hundreds of Tamil refugees have been seriously injured in the helicopter attacks," said the rebel statement.

The rebels claimed the dead and the injured refugees are so numerous that it is difficult to count. It said the bodies were destroyed beyond recognition.

Military spokesman Maj. Tilak Duniwille said no civilians had been killed.

Rebel group claims responsibility for Delhi blast

ISLAMABAD, Apr 21: Pakistan today denied firing a rocket into Indian-controlled Kashmir which on Saturday exploded close to an election rally by India's ruling Congress Party, reports AFP.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said it was an Indian "ploy to cover up its own wrong doing in held Kashmir," the Sunday edition of the news reported.

According to the Press Trust of India, a Pakistani rocket exploded close to a school where about a hundred people were attending a rally by India's ruling Congress Party. No injuries were reported.

There are frequent bursts of automatic weapon fire, and occasionally rockets, from both sides of the line which separates India and Pakistan-held Kashmir.

On January 26, 20 people were killed when a rocket landed next to a mosque in Pakistan-held Kashmir.

AP adds from New Delhi: Separatist rebel groups claimed responsibility Sunday for a bomb that demolished a low-budget hotel in the Indian

capital, killing at least 13 people, including four tourists.

The joint claim by two small separatist groups from Kashmir and Punjab came in a written statement in Srinagar, the centre of six-year war for Kashmir's independence from India.

The blast came a week before voting begins for India's general election, which rebel groups have vowed to disrupt. Balloting will be held in Kashmir for the first time since the rebellion erupted in 1989. More than 12,000 have been killed.

"This is the first gift to the Indian government for deciding to hold the elections in Kashmir," said the statement signed by the Jammu and Kashmir Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, a group that advocates Kashmir's union with Pakistan. It also was signed by the Khalistan Liberation Forum, one of the few groups left over from a decade-long rebellion by Sikhs in Punjab.

The bomb went off Saturday night in a street-level shop in the Arjun Guest House in the crowded Paharganj district.

Off the Record

Number to be halved salaries to be tripled

LONDON: Former prime minister Edward Heath, the longest serving member of the British parliament, said Sunday the number of lawmakers should be halved and their salaries tripled, reports Reuter.

"When you think of the whole of the United States with nearly 250 million people only has 435 members in the assembly and we've got 660 that ought to be halved," he told GMTV television.

"MPs ought to be paid three times as much," he added. Fellow conservative parliamentarian Spencer Batiste has introduced a private members bill calling on the number to be cut to 500 but it has no government backing and is unlikely to pass.

Media reports Sunday said that a review board looking at the salaries of members of the Lower House have been deluged with requests from lawmakers to hike their pay by 30 per cent from the present level of 34,850 pounds (\$2,960 US dollars).

Queen turns 70 with as little fuss as possible

LONDON: Just a quiet family dinner at the castle, perhaps a chorus or two of "Happy Birthday" and some candles to blow out. Queen Elizabeth II turns 70 on Sunday with as little fuss as possible, reports AP.

No pageantry, no commemorative stamps, no royal banquets mark the milestone. But in many households, old-fashioned royalists no doubt will raise a glass to toast their beleaguered monarch.

Her children's trouble love lives and the relentless pursuit of the tabloids have stripped the monarchy of much mystique, but the sympathies of many Britons still are with the queen.

"For her children to completely squander the treasure of goodwill that her long and dutiful reign has accumulated, they would have to work overtime," John Updike wrote in The New Yorker this week.

She isn't fashionable, she never gives interviews, she doesn't hug orphans and hospital patients for the benefit of photographers.

But what the queen lacks in surface glamour and crowd appeal she makes up in regality — every inch a monarch since ascending the throne at the age of 25.

She has trekked around the globe on Britain's behalf for 44 years, unveiled countless plaques.

trying to arrange a truce. From Syria, he was to go to Israel, where his aide, Dennis Ross, already has been discussing a possible truce with Israeli leaders.

Syria is the main power broker in Lebanon, where it has kept some 40,000 troops since a 1976 intervention to stop civil war fighting. Its consent is crucial for any truce to hold.

Another key player is Iran, which many suspect arms and finances the Lebanon-based Hezbollah group. Its foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, was also in Syria and met President Hafez al-Assad on Saturday.

AFP adds: The Israeli Army today resumed intermittent shelling of Hezbollah targets in Southern Lebanon. Lebanese police said, as the pro-Iranian guerillas fired 11 rockets into northern Israel, reports AFP.

Israeli shells crashed into villages near Nabatieh, 60 kilometres (35 miles) southeast of Beirut, and Tyre.

DAMASCUS, Syria, Apr 21: Foreign ministers from six nations assembled Saturday in Syria, stepping up an international diplomatic campaign to halt Israel's 10-day-old war on pro-Iranian militants in Lebanon, reports AP.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher also arrived in the Syrian capital to discuss a ceasefire and a written agreement that would prevent new outbreaks of violence.

"There is still some difficult terrain to go over," Christopher said before a meeting with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad. "There clearly is some distance to go. I don't take it for granted."

US President Clinton, attending a nuclear safety summit in Moscow, said he was keeping in regular contact with Christopher and hoped for a quick resolution.

Christopher arrived in Damascus with promises from Syria and Lebanon that they would be "actively involved" in

the plant, but stopped short of making any further aid promises. Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma then reiterated that without new agreements and prompt financing, Kiev cannot fulfill its promise to close the plant by 2000.

"President Kuchma is holding G-7 hostage, trying to squeeze more money, and in the process he's not maintaining the reactor," said Thomas B. Cochran, the Washington-based, Natural Resources Defense Council.

Moreover, world leaders appeared to remain deeply divided on Iran — with the summit omitting the question, Russia going ahead with plans to complete a nuclear plant there and President Clinton warning this may eventually bring Iran closer to building a bomb.

The summit reaffirmed pledges to help Ukraine close

reactors, saying these might upgraded to meet acceptable safety levels.

That fell far short of what representatives of 42 non-governmental groups and independent experts recommended earlier this week in Moscow: an immediate beginning of a shutdown and a \$10 billion fund to develop alternative energy sources.

The summit was a disaster in regards to civil nuclear problems, the environmental group Greenpeace said.

The meeting left open the issue of Chernobyl, which many experts single out as the world's most dangerous power plant — with uncorrectable design faults, poor maintenance and the exodus of skilled operators.

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Germany's nuclear safety and security.

Russia pledged to join other countries in banning nuclear waste dumping at sea. The leaders promised to start talks immediately on banning production of weapons-grade nuclear materials, work for a convention on safe waste handling and — with a government's permission — place dismantled warheads under international monitoring.

Summit participants also said they are committed to keeping nuclear power as an important energy source through the 21st century — a view that is anathema to anti-nuclear activists.

The leaders failed to demand a shutdown of aging, mostly Soviet-designed nuclear

French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette receives his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati at the French embassy in Damascus on Saturday. After talks with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov, the French minister met Velayati and urged him to bring his influence to bear on Hezbollah guerillas.

— AFP/UNB photo

Sharma wants Himachal governor to quit

NEW DELHI, Apr 21: President S D Sharma wants a state governor to resign because of her alleged involvement in a housing scam. Press Trust of India news agency said Saturday, reports AP.

The federal police is preparing to question Sheila Kaul, the governor of northern Himachal Pradesh state, about allegations that she accepted bribes from government officials to rent them government subsidised houses.

Sheila Kaul, who was Housing Minister in the federal government before she became the governor last year, has so far refused to quit, saying the investigation is still on and she hasn't been charged yet.

## Moscow Summit: A big step for one man, a small for mankind

MOSCOW, Apr 21: Moscow's nuclear summit was a big step for one man, and a small one for mankind. It was a big step for the host, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, enhancing his standing as a world leader less than two months before a crucial election, reports AP.

It also marked a small step forward for mankind, offering hope that nuclear explosions will soon be banned forever.

But the summit failed to address many pressing nuclear concerns. In the eyes of environmental activists, the leaders of G-7 nations and Russia even laid the groundwork for a more dangerous future.

The summit, held 10 years after the world's worst nuclear accident, the explosion at Ukraine's Chernobyl power plant, had a packed agenda.

It included the safety of nu-

clear reactors and waste

dumps, liability for accidents,

disarmament, and steps to

prevent nuclear terrorism and

smuggling.

The meeting's most important

result was the eight leaders' agreement to seek a comprehensive nuclear

ban by September, hailed as a major breakthrough.

The agreement left China as the only member of the formal "nuclear club" still arguing about the ban's scope.

Yeltsin, who will visit Beijing in the coming week, promised to discuss the issue with Chinese leaders.

"We need to conduct the corresponding work, to campaign a bit, so that they sign this treaty and it becomes really comprehensive and eternal," he said.

Also of importance was a

programme of combating nuclear

smuggling, meant to prevent

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