



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

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 Twaddell, 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 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 factions leaders signed.

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

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-Bhadoli 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 PTI.

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 timed 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.

Turkey warns Syria of harbouring Kurdish rebels

ANTAKYA, Turkey, Apr 21: Minister Mesut Yilmaz said Saturday against Turkey's Turkish Kurdish rebels, reported AP.

"Some neighbours are co-operating with, providing safe haven to terrorists who want to divide up Turkey," Yilmaz said, "near a town in this town."

These neighbours should either cease such antagonistic activities or they will be faced with the punishment they deserve," Yilmaz said.

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.

Also of importance was a

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

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 weapons 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.

The summit's main document was a sweeping nine-page declaration reaffirming the commitment of Russia, the United States, Britain, Canada, Italy, Japan, France and

Germany to 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 uranium and plutonium from 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

reactors, saying these might be 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 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 de-

sign faults, poor maintenance and the exodus of skilled operators.

The summit reaffirmed

pledges to help Ukraine close

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 of the Washington-based Natural Resources Defense Council.

Moreover, world leaders

appeared to remain deeply di-

vided on Iran — with the

summit omitting the question,

Russia going ahead with plans

there and President Clinton

warning this may eventually

bring Iran closer to building a

bomb.

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 guerrillas' northern Jaffna stronghold, the military said today, reports Reuter.

Troops recovered the bodies of 14 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels while guerrilla 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 guerrillas 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 Liber-

ation 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 guerrilla 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 Vadamarachchi 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 Dunuwille said no civilians had been killed.

Rebel group claims responsibility for Delhi blast

Pakistan denies firing rocket into Kashmir

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 AP.

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 in 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 (52,960 US dollars).

Queen turns 70 with a 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 com memorative 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 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.

Diplomatic move to halt war in Lebanon

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 Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. "He is also in Syria and met 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

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.