White House welcomes Arafat's move

Arafat ready to hold summit meet with Netanyahu

GAZA CITY, Apr 4: Palestinian president Yasser Arafat said Thursday he was ready to hold a summit meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to save the peace process, reports AFP.

"I'm not against this meeting but the problem is how to push forward and to prevent all the breachings of the peace process especially confiscating of lands building settlements judaizing Jerusalem and many other issues." he said.

"We are against terrorism, definitely." Arafat told journalists, King Hussein of Jordan telephoned Arafat from the United States on Thursday to discuss ways to revive the peace process, the Palestinian leader's adviser Nabil Abu Rudina told

The peace process has been in crisis and rocked by violence since Israel started work on a new Jewish settlement in annexed East Jerusalem on March

A spokesman for Netanyahu denied on Wednesday that there are any plans for a summit between the Israeli prime minister and Arafat next week in Washington, which is the key sponsor of the ailing peace ini-

Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani said the same day that US President Bill Clinton wanted to organise a summit with the Israelis and Palestinians to ease the crisis in their relations.

The US administration invited envoys from both sides to Washington prepare from a high-level meeting which could involve a three way summit between Arafat , Netanyahu and Clinton, he said.

Another AFP report from Washington adds: The White House Thursday welcomed Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's apparent willingness to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to restart the peace process.

"We went them to be in dialogue," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry.

We think that's very important to the resolution of the issues that confront the parties immediately and of course to the continued momentum that must exist for the peace process itself."

Asked whether US pressure had affected Arafat's decision. McCurry said "We've obviously encouraged them to continue their dialogue."

But he said it was premature to speculate on a date prior to Netanyahu's Monday meeting with Clinton.

Arafat said earlier Thursday he was "not against this meeting", an Arafat spokesman said Wednesday the White House sought to arrange such a

"But the problem is bow to push forward and to prevent all the breachings of the peace process, especially confiscating or lands, building settlements, ju-

daizing Jerusalem and many other issues."

"We are against terrorism, definitely," Arafat told journalists. The peace process has been in crisis and rocked by violence since Israel started work on a new Jewish settlement in a annexed East Jerusalem on March

Earlier AP report says: The impasse in Mideast peace talks and sustained Palestinian rioting have pushed President Clinton into a corner, testing both his influence and his imagination.

With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu due at the White House on Monday, the president is considering a variety of options to reopen negotiations and to raise the level of US involvement.

They include inviting Netanyahu, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan.



Visiting US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin (L) points to Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the latter's official residence on Friday. Rubin is on a day stopover in Tokyo en route to Cebu, in the Philippines, to attend the APEC Finance Ministers meeting, starting today. - AFP/UNB photo June.

Tragic

GENEVA, Apr 4: Hunger is so widespread in North Korea that many people are eating grass an the bark of trees, a member of a Red Cross mission to the Stal-

inist state has said, reports Yasuo Tanaka made the claim as the International Federation of the Red Cross reported Thursday that the South Korean Red Cross was sending 1,671 tonnes of food-aid -

mostly potatoes - to the North this week. "Some people have no rice, no food at all," Federation quoted Tanaka as saying. "They eat grass, tree bark and root. People are not dying, but widespread a malnutrition is

obvious in the country." South Korea's Red Cross Society had announced Tuesday that its new aid package worth 1.1 million dollars would include 1,650 tonnes of potatoes, 10 tonnes of powdered milk and 11 tonnes of radish and cabbage seeds.

It was to be shipped Thursday from Inchon Port to the North.

In Tokyo on Wednesday, UN World Food Programme Executive Director Catherine Bertini. who toured North Korea in March, warned of a "tragedy to come" as food could run out by

Memoirs of Sakharov released

MOSCOW, Apr 4: Yelena Bonner, the widow of the late Soviet dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov, released the first unabridged Russian-language edition of her husband's mem oirs on Thursday, reports AP.

Sakharov began writing the book when the Soviet government banished him to the city of Gorky for criticising the regime and continued working on it until his death in 1989.

Bonner told a news conference she personally typed and edited the memoirs, taking the last notes from her husband on the day of his death, according to Russia's ORT television net-

Excerpts of the memoirs were published in a Soviet magazine in 1990-1991, but the publishers cut all science-related pages, she said.

Inmates kill 5 guards in Colombia: Inmates killed at least five prison guards and took 15 hostages in

riot at a jail in northern Colombia on Thursday evening

orison authorities said. Reuter reports from Bogota.

The prisoners are armed and in control of the jail compound.

officials said, at least five of the prison's 500 inmates were

injured in a shoot-out during which they managed to rob the

sar province, and fired bullets and tear-gas over the walls.

Police and army surrounded the prison in Valledupar, in Ce-

Fire claims 6 prisoners in US: A van

day, killing all six of them as the driver tried vainly to save the

chained and shackled men, authorities said, AP reports from

The driver was burned on his arms and was taken to a

Earlier reports that a seventh inmate survived the fire were

incorrect, said Safety Department spokesman Anthony Kim-

brough. "There were six inmates and they all died," he said. A

UN arms inspector in Baghdad:

Chief UN weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus arrived Thursday to in-

vestigate the extent of Iraq's chemical weaponry, a UN official

weapons, was accompanying Ekeus, a Swedish diplomat.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said a team of experts, including four in the field of Chemical

"The UN team will focus on the chemical issue but there will,

of course, be other issues," the official told The Associated

US artist Henriette Wyeth dies:

Henriette Wyeth, daughter of American master NC Wyeth and a

world-renowned painter in her won right, died Thursday of

complications from pneumonia. She was 89. AP reports from

gaining fame for her portraiture when younger brother Andrew

Peter Hurd, and raised an artistic family of her own — all the

while keeping up with her painting, including portraits of ac-

tresses Helen Hayes and Paulette Goddard, former first lady Pat

2000 suffer food poisoning in China:
More than 2,000 children suffered food poisoning in eastern

China after school officials allegedly allowed them to test a new

soya milk drink for the manufacturers, a report said yesterday.

hospital following the outbreak of food poisoning at a school in

eastern China's Jiangsu province on Tuesday, the Sing Tao

About 200 of the youngsters were in a serious condition in

As the eldest of five Wyeth children, she was a child prodigy,

She moved to New Mexico in 1929 with her husband, artist

transporting prisoners burst into flames on a highway Thurs-

guards of their pistols and night sticks.

Nashville hospital for treatment.

said, AP reports from Baghdad.

Boswell, New Mexico.

was just beginning to draw.

Nixon and her own family.

AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Daily said in a report in Hong Kong.

guard assisting the driver was unhurt.

Dickson, Tennessee.

Pilot sees no immediate end to crisis in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Apr 4: A leading politician trying to broker peace talks between India's ruling coalition and a former ally now threatening to topple the government said today he saw no immediate end to the political crisis, reports AFP.

Rajesh Pilot, a member of the Congress Party which has withdrawn parliamentary support from the United Front government in a bid to from its own coalition, said: "The situation is very peculiar and very difficult.

"At the moment both sides are very firm on their approach. The Congress wants to form the government, and the United Front does not want to change its leader."

Pilot, a current member of parliament and a former minister but acting as a go-between

to try and solve the impasse, added. "We are trying to work out a formula acceptable to both

He held close-door meeting Thursday with Congress president Sitaram Kasri, who sparked the crisis last weekend and Vishwanath Pratap Singh, a Front leader.

"It will take two or three days for the picture to get clear."

Fresh national elections could become inevitable if a compromise is not reached before April 11 when the United Front government, made up of around a dozen leftist, centrist and regional parties and kept in power for the past 10 months by Congress backing, will have to prove its majority in parlia-

The Congress had hoped to

WASHINGTON, Apr 4: The

amphibious warship USS Nas-

sau is off the coast of Zaire and

its 1,388 Marines are ready to

assist in any evacuation of US

citizens, should that become

necessary, a Pentagon spokesman said Thursday, re-

number of Army troops will

leave over the next several days.

spokesman Kenneth Bacon told

Force troops are in Brazzaville,

Congo, just across the Congo

River from Kinshasa, Zaire,

while others are in Libreville.

Gabon, and a handful in Kin-

vicemen and women are ex-

pected to be at those posts. Most

By April 15, only 400 ser-

Some 670 Army and Air

reporters at a briefing.

"As the Marines take over, a

ports AP.

shasa itself.

persuade some of the Front's parties to switch sides and back its own plans for a new coalition. They, however, have refused and said they would stand by Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda.

Without their support, Congress will not be able to command parliamentary majority either.

Neither the Front nor congress, however, relish fresh elections, which are expected to play into the hands of their mutual enemy, the Hindu nation-

of those will be Air Force units

who would help mange evacua-

tion flights out of the region,

The spokesman noted that there still has been no request

for an evacuation, but that the

about 220 miles (370 kilome-

ters) from the coast and could

move closer to shore if the situ-

ation warrants, Bacon added.

The Marines have sent a small

contingent to Brazzaville to

into the region several weeks

ago to establish communica-

tions and basic security in the

event an evacuation was or-

dered by boat, helicopter or mil-

itary transport plane.

The Army forces were sent

help assist in the transition.

The Nassau is in waters

troops will remain ready.

Indian President Shankar upbeat mood. Dayal Sharma is expected to invite the Hindu nationalists Labour's election theme the largest group in the 545-seat tune. "It can only get better," drummed from loudspeakers parliament with 162 members before Blair spelled out a proto try to form a government if gramme that borrowed much Deve Gowda loses the confifrom 18 straight years of Condence vote.

election manifesto servative government

Labour Party launches

LONDON, Apr 4: Opposition Labour Party leader Tony Blair It included keeping virtually all the Conservatives' tough tion platform pledging tight curbs on labour unions; no increase in personal income taxes the transformation theme tune for five years; and no taking back by the state of the big enterprises sold off — including most recently the national that our manifesto does not railway.

> The most expensive pledge, a jobs program aimed at getting 250.000 young people off wel fare, would be funded by a onetime tax on the former stateowned enterprises, including utility companies.

> This is expected, party officials say, to raise at least three billion pounds (nearly dlrs 5 billion).

> While its declared economic program is modest. Labour pledges a constitutional up-

Peruvian rebels urged to

LIMA, Apr 4: Mediators in Peru's hostage crisis made a "serious and firm appeal" to rebel captors to reach a com-

on Thursday launched an elec-

holds on spending and taxes -

of his once-socialist party, re-

promise the earth... there is no

magic wand or instant solu-

suggesting he's likely to win the

May 1 national election and be-

come Britain's youngest prime

minister this century. Blair un-

veiled the 10-point program in

tions," Blair, 43, declared.

"We make a virtue of the fact

With the latest opinion polls

ports AP.

It didn't elaborate, and mediators refuse comment on their work. But rebel leader Nestor Cerpa reiterated over the weekend that he was demanding freedom for his imprisoned ported that mediators had crafted a plan in which the

rebels would be offered a payoff and safe passage to Cuba. The deal also would include the promise of early release for some, but not all, jailed Tupac Amaru rebels.

reported Wednesday that some rebels had been transferred from and Andean prison to Lima, the capital — a move that could suggest a deal to resolve

Citing prison sour es it didn't identify, Panamericana said Nancy Gilvonio, Cerpa's common-law wife, was among those transferred from Yanamayo prison in Puno.

Off the Record

Brother-sister as couple

CAMBRE. Spain: Going public with a family born of incest, Daniel and Rosa Maria Moya thought they would be scorned reports AP.

But their town council in northwestern Spain surprised them this week by voting to recognise their union and the birth of their two children, the daily El Pais reported on Thursday. The brother and sister were separated as youngsters when their parents marriage fell apart. For economic reasons,

La Coruna while Rosa Maria grew up with her mother in Madrid. Then, 18 years ago, the siblings met by coincidence in a discotheque in Madrid. They fell in love and had children - ages

Daniel had gone to live his father in the northwestern city of

11 and 4 — but did not marry. Daniel is 38; Rosa Maria 42. Earlier this week, the town council of Cambre, population 15,000, voted to recognise their union. The centre-right Popular Party voted against the proposal.

Daniel, an unemployed tile maker, said neighbours did not scorn them although they knew the two were brother and sister.

Astronauts to become firebugs in orbit

CAPE CANAVERAL: Columbia's astronauts will play with fire over and over again during the space shuttle's upcoming science mission, reports AP.

The crew plans to set as many as 200 small fires in the spacecrafts laboratory during the 16-day flight, set to begin with a Friday afternoon liftoff. Astronauts have never started so many fires on a shuttle before.

Scientists want to see how quickly flames spread in weightlessness in order to develop cleaner fuels and better firefighting techniques, both in space and on Earth.

The flames will be no more than 4 inches (10 centimetres) high and will be contained in a closed, triple-layer chamber, Hot wires and various fuels will be used, including hydrogen, heptane and methanol. "One of the reasons that we don't have many combustion

experiments until this late in the game is precisely because of NASA's concerns with safety," said Forman Williams, chairman of applied mechanics and engineering sciences at the University of California at San Diego. "But we've got that down

Columbia is equipped with five handheld fire extinguishers as well as built-in extinguishers. In a worst-case scenario, the astronauts could evacuate the burning laboratory, close the hatch and empty all the air inside, smothering the flames.

In February, an accidental fire burned for 90 seconds aboard the Russian space station Mir, filling the complex with smoke and forcing the six crewmen to don emergency oxygen masks. NASA astronaut Jerry Linenger, who has been living on Mir since January, said he was stunned at how fast the smoke

ler, who until 1994 headed the

On the Russian side, they in cluded the country's ousted security chief. Alexander Lebed and Gen. Boris Gromov, the former commander of Russian

"We were very surprised by the overwhelming support from the American public for the organization that conducted the

seek solution to crisis Last week, newspapers re-

promise, a newspaper reported. Thursday, reports AP.

Leftist Tupac Amaru rebels have held 72 hostage since Dec. 17, when they stormed the compound to demand the release of more than 400 imprisoned guerillas. Peru refuses to trade hostages for prisoners.

The newspaper El Comercio said mediators on Wednesday made "a serious and firm appeal to the terrorists to reach a peaceful and quick solution."

Panamericana television

the hostage crisis v is in the

spread — 10 times faster than he expected. Tirana govt must intensify dialogue with rebels' ATHENS, Apr 4: Albanian Prime Minister Bashkim Fino and senior European diplomats

> try, one of the diplomats said. reports AFP. Franz, Vranitzky, head of Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe team dealing with the Albanian crisis, spoke after talks here with

agreed that the beleaguered

Tirana government must inten-

sify dialogue with rebels who

control the south of the coun-

Fino himself said he was committed to restoring "peace and calm in the country" where mobs seized weapons from police and army in a warehouse a month ago and seized control of several cities in an uprising against president Sali Berisha.

The rebels blame Berisha for the collapse of pyramid investment schemes which left many people penniles in what was already Europe's poorest country.

Majority Americans favour eliminating N-weapons

Warship ready to evacuate

US citizens from Zaire

WASHINGTON, Apr 4: Adding ammunition to a call by a group of generals who once commanded America's nuclear arsenals, a poll released Thursday found that a substantial majority of Americans want nuclear arms eliminated, reports AP.

"Until now there have been no reliable studies of public attitudes (on nuclear arms) in the post-Cold War environment." said Alice Slater of Abolition 2000, a coalition advocating the destruction of nuclear stockpiles. The group commissioned the survey. "It's time for our leaders to

end this final chapter of the Cold War," she added. The study was released four

months after 60 former generals and admirals from around the world published an unprecedented appeal to US and Russian leaders to reduce nuclear arsenals to the "lowest verifiable levels. They included Gen. Lee ButUS Strategic Command which controls the America's intercontinental nuclear forces; Gen Andrew J Goodpaster, a former supreme allied commander in Europe; and Gen. Charles Horner, who commanded coalition air forces in the Gulf War.

forces in Afghanistan.

elimination of nuclear weapons and the consistency and intensity of that opinion." said Celinda Lake of Lake Sosin Snell & Associates, the polling

It found that 84 per cent of those interviewed said they would feel safer if no country, including the United States. had nuclear weapons.



Shield," performs at the inauguration of the country's first factory for armored personnel carriers in the eastern city of Damman, Saudi Arabia, on Wednesday. The vehicle can carry - AFP/UNB photo up to 14 soldiers and has a 450 horsepower engine.

frared radiation, or heat, that UNDATED, Apr 4: Scientists

speculate that the dinosaurs became extinct after a giant asteroid hit Earth and threw up so much dust into the atmosphere that the world was dark for three years, reports USIS.

Now many scientists believe human beings may be causing something just as ominous climatic changes over the coming century larger than any

since the dawn of civilisation. The principal change to date is in the balance of gases that form Earth's atmosphere. These naturally occurring "greenhouse gases," including carbon dioxide (CO2), methane, nitrous oxide, and water vapor, keep ground temperatures at a global average of 15 degrees Celsius. Without this natural blanket Earth's surface would be about 30 degrees Celsius colder than it is today, making the planet a freezing, barren, lifeless place similar to Mars.

The greenhouse gases keep the surface warm because as incoming solar radiation strikes Earth, the surface gives off in-

the gases temporarily trap and keep near ground level. The effect is comparable to the way a greenhouse traps heat. The problem is that human

activity may be making the greenhouse-gas blanket "thicker." For example, burning coal, oil and natural gas spews huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the air; the destruction of forests allows carbon stored in the trees to escape into the atmosphere; and other activities such as raising cattle and planting rice emit methane, nitrous oxide, and other greenhouse Until human populations

soared and began burning fossil fuels, greenhouse gases that occur naturally remained in relative balance. But the Industrial Revolution that began in 19thcentury Britain ushered in a new age of rapid industrialisation that greatly increased man's impact on the natural

Svante Arrhenius, a Swedish chemist, theorised in

of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by coal-fired industries would cause global temperatures to rise. The first credible projections about how much greenhouse warming might occur came in the mid-

1896 that increasing amounts

1960s when scientists at Princeton University estimated that average global temperatures would rise by 2 degrees Celsius in the 21st century if carbon dioxide levels doubled. The development of advanced computers and satellite technology enabled scientists to take ever more detailed measurements of greenhouse gas emissions In 1988, James Hansen, a

climate specialist at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, told a Senate committee that global warming is occurring, and that same year the UN General Assembly set up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a worldwide network of 2,500 scientists to advise world leaders. The IPCC declared in a report

released last June that "the balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate."

Scientists are concerned that if there are increases in these gases, especially carbon dioxide. Earth's atmosphere could warm up to a dangerous degree as more heat is trapped on the Earth's surface. An example of a serious greenhouse effect is Venus where because of the thick CO₂ atmosphere, the planet's cloud-covered surface is hot enough to melt lead. The World Energy Council,

an independent research organisation, released a report last year that found that global emissions of carbon dioxide increased by 12 per cent between 1990 and 1995. According to the IPCC, if emissions continue to grow at

current rates, it is almost cer-

tain that atmospheric levels of

carbon dioxide will double from

pre-industrial levels during the

21st century. The most direct

result of such an increase, the

panel predicts, is likely to be a

probably faster than any such change over the past 9.000 But some scientists dispute the level of man's contribution to the rise, claiming that the

global warming" of 1 to 3.5 de-

main flaw in the science lies in

grees Celsius over the next 100 vears — a rise that is larger and

the computer simulations of the Earth's climate and its response to industrial emissions. Sallie Baliunas, an astrophysicist at Harvard University, says that "only a small part of the 0.5 degree Celsius rise in the past 100 years - no more than a few tenths of a degree - could have been caused by human-made greenhouse gases." She says that's because most of the warming occurred before 1940. while most of the 50 per cent increase in gas emissions by industrial development and transportation came after 1940.

The IPCC has listed several likely negative outcomes of global warming, including a rise of 15 to 20 centimeters in average sea levels worldwide by

2100, rendering uninhabitable many heavily populated river delta regions, including entire cities; and a change in weather patterns, bringing more floods or droughts to some areas, with far-reaching effects on agriculture and forestry. Another threat to human

life resulting from climate change, according to some, is the spread of mosquito borne infectious diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, as the tropical habitat of insects expands northward. Concern mounted in the United States when a dengue outbreak spread to northern Mexico in 1995. Predictions about global

warming led the United States and more than 160 other countries to sign in 1992 the first binding agreement dealing directly with climate change the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Under the convention signatory governments agreed, on a voluntary basis, to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Human activity may be making greenhouse-gas blanket 'thicker' 3200 guests may join HK handover celebration

HONG KONG, Apr 4: China and Britain have agreed on the broad outlines of a 3,200-strong guest list for the joint celebration of Hong Kong's handover to China three months from now. a British official said today.

The official told Reuters the two sides would invite a total of about 3,200 guests to the event, marking the end of a colonial era in the territory stretching back 156 years.

About 400 "international guests" would be included. Some would be government ministers and the heads of international organisations, said the official, who asked not to be named.

But China and Britain were not expecting heads of government or heads of state to be among them. One Western diplomat said this was a sign Beijing had won in its efforts not to give Britain too glorious

a send-off at midnight on June However, it was still possible

some countries might ask to send a head of government rather than a minister. China wanted to save the glory for its own celebrations from July 1, after the British

have gone, the diplomat said. A meeting of the Sino-British negotiating team haggling over handover details failed to announce a deal on the

guest list last month. But the

official made clear today the

broad outlines had been agreed.

Invitations had been sent to international guests but the names could not be revealed until they had accepted.

The rest of the guest list still had to be determined, although it was basically up to China and Britain to decide individually whom they wanted to invite.