

Refugees stream into Albania

82 warplanes being deployed to intensify NATO attack

**BELGRADE, Apr 11:** NATO warplanes pounded targets in Kosovo and central Serbia early today, hours after the United States and Britain said they were deploying more warplanes and an aircraft carrier to intensify the air campaign against Yugoslavia, reports Reuters.

Serbian state television said NATO missiles hit the area around the Kosovo provincial capital Pristina at 1 am (2400 GMT). There were no immediate reports on casualties or damage.

It was the second NATO air raid on Pristina in less than 24 hours, despite worsening weather which NATO said could hinder its attacks.

The Pentagon said on Saturday 82 more warplanes were being sent to Europe to enable NATO to "Expand the number of strikes over any 24 hour period and give US more deep-strike capacity as necessary."

Britain said HMS Invincible would join NATO forces as "part of tightening the screw" on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

NATO has around 600 attack and support planes which, with warships firing cruise missiles, have been attacking Serb strategic and military targets for two and a half weeks.

The campaign aims to press Milosevic to reverse what the alliance says is ethnic cleansing of the Albanian majority in Kosovo and allow the return of the refugees and a NATO-led military presence in the Serbian province to protect them.

The Belgrade-based news agency Beta said early today NATO warplanes had bombed the central Serbian town of Kraljevo. Quoting a local television station, it said two explosions were heard near the town.

Serbian television also said NATO missiles blasted both military and civilian targets in the towns of Prizren and Urosevac, in southern Kosovo.

NATO bombs caused "con-

siderable" damage in the Western town of Pec and had hit the old residential part of Djakovica, near the border with Albania, it said. It did not say when the air raids on the four towns had been carried out.

On Saturday night, several thousand Kosovo refugees streamed into northern Albania after Yugoslavia reopened its main border crossing and carried out another wave of expulsions.

They followed some 2,000 who crossed the border over Friday night, saying Serb soldiers and police forced them from their homes at gunpoint. The border had been closed since Wednesday.

The latest wave reported seeing Serb tanks concealed in the ruins of abandoned homes, apparently hiding from NATO planes.

In Belgrade, Russian Cossacks joined groups of Serbs

trying to shield bridges from NATO bombing.

"Russian love and Russian power are with you," said one Cossack among the colourful array of men in Tsarist uniforms and traditional sheep skin hats.

Announcing its plans to deploy another 82 planes, the United States said it still felt sure the West could tame Milosevic without sending ground troops into combat in Kosovo.

"We're going to persist until we prevail," said National Security Council spokesman David Leavy. "And we're confident that day by day, as we attack his military infrastructure, we can achieve our objectives."

Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon said the extra planes would include 24 F-16s and four tank-busting A-10 thunderbolts.

Meanwhile, Albanian television, in an unconfirmed report, said a five-km long line of civilians had left the Kosovo capital Pristina and was facing starvation.

Albania and Yugoslavia charged each other at the weekend with provoking a wider war in the Balkans as fierce fighting between Kosov Liberation Army (KLA) guerillas and Serb forces on the Albanian border entered a second day.

In the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, state television reported that 1,300 new arrivals had crossed its frontier from Yugoslavia on Saturday.

Bus-load after bus-load of refugees arrived at Skopje airport to board flights for Germany. Three planes with more than 700 refugees had left by mid-afternoon.

A plane-load of 60 refugees, including 34 children, also flew from Macedonia to Warsaw — the first airlift to Poland.



NATO spokesman Jamie Shea (R) gestures as he answers questions during a joint press conference with German Colonel Konrad Feytag at NATO headquarters in Brussels Saturday. More than 200,000 people have been displaced within Kosovo in conditions which are causing increasing concern among NATO nations, Shea said. — AFP photo

Arafat meets Sharif

**LAHORE, Apr 11:** Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat sought support for an independent Palestinian state during a meeting Saturday with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in this eastern Punjab capital, reports AP.

Sharif, along with several other Pakistani officials, met Arafat at the Lahore airport where he stopped briefly en route from neighbouring India, where he also asked the Indian leadership to support and independent state of Palestine.

Pakistan is a long-time supporter of an independent Palestinian state. Islamic Pakistan also does not recognise Israel. Sharif promised Arafat Pakistan's continued support.

According to an official Pakistan government statement, Arafat is touring several countries to seek support for a May declaration of an independent Palestine. Then a five-year interim period of self-rule for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip ends.



Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif (L) and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat come out from Lahore Airport Saturday. Arafat flew into Lahore from New Delhi on an unscheduled visit for talks with Sharif on Middle East crisis. — AFP photo

Tribal rebels gun down five in Tripura

**GUWAHATI, Apr 11:** Tribal guerillas in northeastern India opened fire on shopkeepers as they were closing their roadside stores for the night, killing five people and wounding six, police said today, reports AP.

The incident was in the state of Tripura, where rebels are seeking to become independent from India and expel migrants who have moved into the remote state. An estimated 10,000 people have been killed in the rebellion in 20 years.

Police said the guerillas opened fire with automatic weapons on the night of Saturday evening in the village of Tulamura, about 70 kilometres south of the state capital, Agartala.

Thousands join Cardinal Silva's funeral in Chile

**SANTIAGO, Apr 11:** Thousands lined the avenues here to witness the slow funeral procession of Roman Catholic Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, a sharp critic of general Augusto Pinochet during Chile's military dictatorship, reports AP.

The late Cardinal died of a heart attack Friday after slipping into a coma on Tuesday, church officials said. He was 91.

Well-known Chilean personalities joined the procession at the National Cathedral, where a mass was held for the late Cardinal ahead of his burial Monday.

The 3,000 people that crammed into the Cathedral repeatedly interrupted the mass with choruses of "Raul our friend, the people are with you" — a cry often heard when Silva Henriquez preached on the sanctity of human rights.

"He helped save many lives," said one elderly lady, fighting back her tears.

President Eduardo Frei decreed five days of national mourning to honour the Cardinal, who helped document human rights abuses during the 1973-1990 military junta.

Virus named after village

**KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 11:** Malaysian health authorities have named a new virus that has killed more than 100 people and crippled the country's pig-farming industry after the village where it first struck, news reports said Sunday, reports AP.

Health Minister Chua Jui Meng said the previously unknown virus would be named Nipah after Sungai Nipah, the village where the disease claimed its first victims, the New Straits Times said.

Sungai Nipah is located about 100 kilometres (60 miles) southeast of Kuala Lumpur.

Until now, officials had claimed that the virus, which has triggered a six-month outbreak and thrown the southeast Asian nation into confusion, was Japanese encephalitis.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, however, tested samples of the virus and found it a very rare Hendra virus, first detected in Australia in 1994.

Symptoms are the same for both viruses — high fever, aches, eventual coma and death.

India backs Palestinian state

**NEW DELHI, Apr 11:** India fully supports the Palestinian people's "legitimate and inalienable" right to an independent state, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said on Saturday, reports AP.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, on a one-day visit, earlier held talks with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and K R Narayanan. A ministry statement said they underlined India's "consistent and unwavering support to the Palestinian cause."

He said India also upheld the right of all the states in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to "coexist peacefully" within secure and internationally recognised borders.

Arafat, who arrived from Bangladesh late Friday, also met Sonia Gandhi, leader of the main opposition Congress party.

A spokesman for the Palestinian embassy told AFP that Arafat was "here for consultations and to take advice whether India will support his plans to declare Palestine an independent state."

He is due to take a final decision at a meeting of the Palestine National Council in Gaza on April 27.

During a visit to Japan on Thursday, Arafat was urged by Tokyo to delay the declaration. Reports there said the Palestinian leader expressed an inclination to postpone the unilateral declaration from May 4 — when an interim period of autonomy under the 1993 Oslo accord expires.

Japan warned that any declaration now could stall a US-brokered accord to restart the Middle East peace process, which was signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu late last year.

Netanyahu has threatened to annex the remainder of the occupied territories if Arafat declares a state outside the framework of the planned final status talks.

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Off the Record

When a carpenter beats a politician's record

**WELLINGTON:** Michael Morel celebrated setting a world record for speaking nonstop Sunday by drinking a beer, then going home to bed, reports AP.

The 64-year-old New Zealander, a retired carpenter, spoke for 26 hours, beating a record of 24 hours 19 minutes set by US politician Storm Thurmond in 1957.

Under Guinness Book of Records rules, he took a 15-minute break only every eight hours, and toilet stops were permitted every four hours.

Other than that, he spoke continuously, apart from allowable natural pauses between items lasting no more than 30 seconds.

Morel started talking early Saturday morning on the broad topic of life. Twenty-five hours later, he stopped, said Theo Diepeveen, who videotaped the event to submit to the Guinness Book of World Records.

"The first thing we did was have a beer together," Diepeveen said.

The Guinness Book's English-based editorial department had told Morel his attempt appeared to fall within its guidelines for the world's longest lecture on a single topic.

The videotape would be submitted for the record to be ratified.

US jets bomb Iraqi sites

**WASHINGTON, Apr 11:** US Air Force F-16s struck Iraqi radar and anti-aircraft sites in southern Iraq with missiles Saturday after the fighters were fired at, defence officials said, reports AP.

The "Fighting Falcon" aircraft returned safely to base. The officials said the incident occurred at about 9:30 am (0630 GMT), around 160 kilometres (100 miles) south of Baghdad in a "no-fly" zone patrolled by US and British planes to prevent the Iraqi military from entering the airspace and threatening opposition groups. Western planes also fly flight-interdiction sorties over northern Iraq.

The F-16s, on routine patrol, were targeted by Iraqi missile guidance radar system and fired upon by Iraqi surface-to-air missiles, the US Central Command at MacDill Air Force base, Florida.

Theft of N-secrets FBI raids home of scientist

**WASHINGTON, Apr 11:** Federal agents on Saturday raided the New Mexico home of a scientist fired from the Los Alamos National Laboratory amid allegations that China stole nuclear secrets from the United States, reports Reuters.

US law enforcement officials said FBI agents spent almost six hours searching the scientist's home near Los Alamos. They gave no other details.

The scientist who has not been charged with any crime has been identified in published reports as Wen Ho Lee.

He was fired from the US nuclear facility earlier this year amid reports that China used secrets stolen from Los Alamos in the 90s to produce small warheads that could be launched from a single missile at multiple targets.

Opinion survey 50pc Indians want fresh polls

**NEW DELHI, Apr 11:** Fifty per cent of Indians are fed up with minority coalition governments and want fresh elections to resolve the country's current political crisis, an opinion poll published today said, reports AP.

The survey, conducted by the mass-circulation Hindustan Times daily in the four leading cities of Bombay, Calcutta, New Delhi and Madras, however, revealed that a new election would again result in a badly hung parliament.

Fifty-one per cent wanted beleaguered Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's 13-month-old government to continue for a full five-year term despite the numerous crises it has suffered from fractious allies.

India has had three governments since 1996, when general elections resulted in a hung parliament. A leftist centrist mi-

nority coalition was toppled by the Congress, leading to mid-term polls last year following which Vajpayee came to power as the head of another multi-party alliance.

Vajpayee's minority coalition is currently under threat following a rift with its largest ally, led by maverick politician Jayalalitha Jayaram, who has threatened to pull out of the government over the controversial sacking of a naval chief.

Most analysts expect Jayalalitha to pull 18 MPs out of the 280-member coalition next week, leading the Congress Party, headed by the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, to try to cobble together a new government.

Thirty-seven per cent of those interviewed favoured a change of guard but when asked which party they would back in the event of a new election, 41

per cent said they would vote for Vajpayee's party while 40 per cent backed the main opposition Congress party.

Political analyst Mahesh Rangarajan, reacting to the survey, said it was a pointer to the Congress, which has ruled India for more than 40 years since the country's 1947 independence, not to jump the gun.

Most respondents felt film actress-turned-politician Jayalalitha was unjustified in trying to blackmail the government.

However, 41 per cent said a Congress-led coalition would be the best alternative government if the present alliance fell as opposed to 39 per cent who backed the Hindu nationalist coalition.

The Hindustan Times gave no details on the number of respondents or its method of survey.

Voting begins in Japan to elect new governors

**TOKYO, Apr 11:** Voters headed to the polls on Sunday to cast ballots in an election for Tokyo governor that has drawn nationwide attention, reports AP.

On a cloudy day, Tokyo residents lined up to choose from among 19 candidates that include an award-winning author, a former professor and a former top United Nations official.

The same day, voting began for heads of 11 other prefectural (state) governments, including the gubernatorial election for Japan's second-largest city, Osaka.

The Tokyo governorship race has drawn nationwide attention, much of it focused on candidate Shintaro Ishihara, famous for his hawkish, nationalist views.

Ishihara, the award-winning author of the controversial 1989 book, "The Japan That Can Say No," has been shown by recent opinion polls to be in the lead.

The voting started slowly following a night of drenching rains, with election officials estimating the voter turnout early in Tokyo at 4.40 per cent

— 3.99 percentage points lower than the corresponding period four years ago.

The city has 9.7 million eligible voters.

Although the head of Tokyo's municipal government has little influence over national policy, the governor's race is widely viewed as setting the political direction for the entire nation.

The elections will also test the popularity of Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, who has made an economic turnaround the pillar of his administration.

The Tokyo candidate backed by Obuchi's ruling party, former senior UN official Yashushi Akashi, is lagging in recent news media polls. His defeat could even endanger Obuchi's grip on power.

Other candidates include international politics expert and former professor Yoichi Masuzoe, former Foreign Minister Koji Kakizawa, former opposition lawmaker Kunio Hatoyama and Man Mikami, a former schoolteacher.

The vote comes at a time when Japan is beset by a prolonged recession and calls for change are increasing.

4 Maoist rebels killed in Nepal

**FOUR Maoist guerillas were killed and two policemen were wounded in a gun battle in midwestern Nepal, police said Sunday, AP reports from Kathmandu.**

The rebels ambushed a police patrol Saturday, but police returned fire and killed four attackers in the village of Gajul in Rolpa district, 300 km west of Kathmandu, the Nepalese capital, police said. Since the rebels began fighting a guerrilla war three years ago, more than 600 people have been killed. The guerillas, based in one of Nepal's most underdeveloped areas, oppose Nepal's constitutional monarchy and demand Nepal become a republic state.

S' pore PM to visit Brunei

**Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was set to embark on a two-day working visit to Brunei today, television news reported Sunday, AP says from Singapore.**

During his visit, Goh was scheduled to meet Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and other leaders, the Television Corporation of Singapore said. Goh was also slated to visit Brunei's Civil Service Institute and meet Singapore expatriates living in the country. Singapore Foreign Affairs Minister Shanmugam Jayakumar and other senior officials were to accompany the premier.

Mubarak leaves S Korea

**With a promise to help improve icy relations between North and South Korea, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak left Seoul Sunday, ending a three-day visit, AP reports from Seoul.**

During his stay, Mubarak met with President Kim Dae-jung, Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil, National Assembly Speaker Park June-kyu and other officials to strengthen ties and boost trade and investment.

After a summit talk with President Kim on Friday, Mubarak said he will use his long-time ties with North Korean leaders to help reduce tension on the divided Korean Peninsula.

Bus bomb kills 2 in Lanka

**COLOMBO, Apr 11:** A time bomb exploded inside a bus in the Buddhist temple town of Kandy Sunday, killing two people and wounding 11 others, police and hospital sources said, reports AP.

Police said a Tamil girl placed the bomb on the bus, and blamed the Liberation Tigers to Tamil Eelam.

After the blast, security measures were heightened in Colombo and in Kandy, 90 km east of the capital. Soldiers in battle gear manned road intersections as almost all vehicles entering the city were being checked.

NASA's next space shuttle mission: Now all-female crew

**CAPE CANAVERAL (Florida), Apr 10:** COME 2001, women may have an inside track in the male-dominated world of space. Within the next two years, NASA may be flying all-female space shuttle crews — for science, reports AP.

With a new space station on the horizon and increasing talk of trips to Mars, NASA wants to make sure it protects the health of all its astronauts, male and female. But just as with Earth-bound medical research, most of what it knows has been gleaned from men, and projecting results onto women could be dangerous.

Weightlessness, for instance, is known to cause bone loss in both sexes, and because women are at greater risk of osteoporosis, theory might suggest women in space load up on calcium. But that could create kidney stones, points out Dr Ar-

naud Nicogossian, the space agency's top doctor.

Other areas of concern, for both sexes, include radiation and the weakening of the immune system in weightlessness. Millie Hughes-Fulford, a University of California professor who flew on the space shuttle in 1991, would, love to see an all-female crew. As an osteoporosis researcher, she'd be especially interested in whether women lose bone and calcium at the same rate in space as men.

"That would probably be the biggest argument against women going to Mars. 'Oh, my dear, you're getting much too close to menopause and you're going to lose all that bone when you're gone,' she said.

NASA is seeking multiple second opinions to determine whether more gender-specific research is needed. The study should be completed by the end of June. After reviewing the findings, "then we'll decide if it makes sense to have a mission dedicated specifically to fly women and how often we have to continue that type of mission," Nicogossian said.

"It will not be a one-time deal," he promised.

It wasn't until the last few years that NASA could even consider putting together an all-female crew. Every shuttle mission requires two pilots, and NASA only recently added its second and third female shuttle pilots. The 119 current astronauts include 29 women.

Monday. Of the 278 people who have flown on US spacecraft since Alan Shepard's 15-minute hop May 5, 1961, only 31 have been women. This officials roster excludes Christa McAuliffe and the two other rookies who were killed aboard Challenger.

Women were not admitted to NASA's astronaut corps until 1978 and did not fly on a space shuttle until 1983. No woman piloted a shuttle until 1995. And women will not command a shuttle flight until Eileen Collins takes the left front seat aboard Columbia in July.

For now, the space station era seems to be shaping up the same way — mostly male.

Of the six US astronauts and six Russian cosmonauts training to live on the international space station only one, American Susan Helms, is female.

And only one woman was among the seven NASA astronauts who lived on Mir. It was only because her ride home was delayed that Shannon Lucid ended up staying six months in 1996, a record for women worldwide and for Americans of either sex.

Because they've worked so hard to get where they are, many of NASA's women dislike the idea of all-female crews, says an agency insider. They're insulted, in fact, by anything that smacks of gimmickry or implies their skills somehow don't measure up.

Former astronaut Kathryn Thornton, one of the few women to walk in space, wonders why NASA doesn't simply collect the scientific data by assigning more women to more space shuttle flights.

"I don't know why it would be necessary to have them all on the same flight," said Thornton, a physicist now teaching at the University of Virginia. "I would worry about the privacy issues. Everybody would know these seven women on all these different tests. And if the issues have to deal with how the crews get along, I'd be really upset."

A crew of all women could certainly be perceived as a gimmick, especially with John Glenn's trumpeted return to orbit last fall still resonating.

Nicogossian refuses to speculate on whether an all-female crew might include a geriatric volunteer, a la the 77-year-old Glenn. "It depends on the experiments," he said.

And he doesn't want to guess what might happen if it turns out women make better space travellers.

"Might it be onward, women only, to Mars?" "I'll leave that question open," he said.



Two young East Timorese women are comforted by a nun Sunday during a religious service at the church of Liquisa, some 30 km from Dili, where earlier this week more than 25 people were massacred during an attack by pro-Indonesian militia inside the church building. Some 600 villagers returned to the church for the first time since the killing to listen to East Timorese religious leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Bishop Carlos Belo officiate Sunday Mass. Following the mass militia members attacked a convoy of journalists who were following Belo, breaking car windows and injuring a driver. — AFP photo