

# NATO targets Serbian industrial areas

BELGRADE, Apr 12: NATO struck at Serbia's industrial heartland Monday, returning to strikes already hard hit in the allied air campaign to force Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to stop the fighting in Kosovo, reports AP.

As NATO foreign ministers convened in Belgium for their first meeting since airstrikes began nearly three weeks ago, Western officials continued to express deep concern over the more than half-million ethnic Albanian refugees who have fled or been driven out of the province, and hundreds of thousands of others displaced within Kosovo.

In neighbouring Albania, the worst border clashes in weeks between Kosovo rebels and Yugoslav forces left two people dead and nine others wounded, international monitors said. Yugoslav officials accused NATO and Albania of aiding the rebel Kosovo Liberation army.

NATO says the bombing campaign will go on until Milosevic withdraws Yugoslav and Serb units sent to Serbia's southern Kosovo province as part of his crackdown on separatist-minded Kosovo rebels.

In the industrial town of Pancevo, just across the Danube from Belgrade, orange flames leapt into the night sky as fire engulfed one of Yugoslavia's biggest oil refineries.

The factory that makes Yugo cars — housed in a complex that also makes weapons — was hammered against early Monday, Tanjug said. The Zastava plant in Kragujevac, 70 kilome-

ters southwest of Belgrade, was badly damaged last week. The independent Beta news agency said the Yugo plant's assembly lines were badly damaged.

Nearby Batujina, site of a military airfield, was also targeted.

The latest wave of strikes also reportedly targeted Serbia's second-largest city, Novi Sad, where two major bridges had already been destroyed. Tanjug said a missile struck a residential area Sunday evening. Beta quoted Caslav Popovic, a city official, saying a military barracks had been targeted, causing fires but no casualties.

Civilians were wounded in the central Serbian town of Krusevac, where a factory and a thermal heating plant were hit, Serbian TV said. It did not report any deaths.

Kosovo, which had taken the brunt of strikes on Sunday — Orthodox Easter — was hit again late in the day, when British Harrier jets struck a fuel storage depot in Kosovo, the British military said.

Amid growing Western concern about conditions inside the province, NATO officials showed aerial photographs Sunday of what was described as a possible mass grave in Pusto Selo, outside Pristina. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said Sunday the ground appeared to be freshly dug, and the pictures resembled those of mass graves seen during the war in Bosnia.

First-hand information from inside Kosovo is hard to come by, but British Foreign Secre-

tary Robin Cook estimated Sunday about 400,000 people are hiding from Serb forces in the forests and mountains of Kosovo. He gave the figure after talking by telephone to Hasim Thaci, an ethnic Albanian leader in the province.

British officials also said some 100,000 ethnic Albanian men were believed missing, based on the low number of males among the refugees crossing into Macedonia and Albania. The estimate revived speculation the men had either been massacred by Serbs, joined the rebel KLA, or were being held hostage.

Many of the refugees managing to get across intermittently open borders tell of their villages being burned and emptied.

On Yugoslavia's tense southern border, the conflict spilled over again into Albania. In the border town of Trojaja, heavy mortar fire hit border police headquarters and a residential neighbourhood Sunday, killing two people and wounding nine, said Andrea Angeli, spokesman for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which monitors the frontier.

Earlier Sunday, Albania reported 10 mortars had landed near the village of Kremica on the Albanian side. The Serbs reported shells fired from Albania landed on their side of the border.

More fighting at the Padesh border station, near Trojaja, wounded three KLA fighters and a foreign reporter, Angeli later reported. No further details were immediately available.

# Pakistan has 3 missiles ready for testing

ISLAMABAD, Apr 12: India's test firing of its newest nuclear capable missile seems certain to set the volatile South Asian region on a dangerous nuclear arms race, analysts said Monday, reports AP.

Hardline Islamic parties were quick to respond demanding Pakistan test its own missile and immediately.

"Soon after the nuclear test India declared it would test its medium range ballistic missile and that would force Pakistan to respond — we tried hard to convince India not to go this route but now they have and we will have to respond," said Nishat Ahmed, director of the Pakistan Institute for Regional Studies and a retired general in the Pakistan army.

But as Tanvir Ahmed Khan, director of the Institute of

Strategic Studies, said the race already has begun.

"The weapons already exist ... the decision is on deployment," he said.

India on Sunday tested its new Agni missile with a 2,000 kilometre (1,200 miles) range, which is expected to be the mainstay of India's nuclear delivery system, along with the Prithvi.

Both missiles can carry either conventional or nuclear payloads deep inside Pakistani and Chinese territory.

The front pages of Pakistani newspapers Monday decried India's test and speculated on Pakistan's response.

Pakistan has three missiles in the wings ready for testing: — The Ghauri II, an advanced version of a previously tested ballistic missile, but with a

range of 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles).

— The Shaheen missile with a shorter range of 750 kilometers (450 miles), with a payload of 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds).

— The Shaheen II with a range of 2,300 kilometers (1,380 miles) capable of carrying a payload of 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds).

Calling India's testing of the Agni II a threat to security in the region, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said the government would decide an "appropriate" response leading most people to believe Pakistan will test its own missile likely within the next two days.

"Whenever the government takes a decision we are ready," a leading nuclear scientist Dr Samar Mubarak was quoted as

saying by the independent news agency News Network International.

"We have never let the nation down and by the grace of God we will not let the nation down this time," he said.

At the Institute for Regional Studies in Islamabad, Ahmed said that India's Agni II appears aimed more at China than Pakistan, against whom India has fought three wars in 52 years.

Its relationship with China also is uneasy having fought and lost a territorial war in 1962.

Ahmed said getting into an arms race with China could be India's economic undoing.

"India's main interest in developing the Agni is to develop capability vis a vis China ... competing against Pakistan

was an easy task but competing also against China, whose economy is quite developed compared to India's is an option that cannot be a very pleasant one from their point of view," he said.

For Pakistan, said Khan at the Institute of Strategic Studies, the decision of whether to conduct a missile test should be made not in response to India, but based on national defence requirements.

He said there is no need for Pakistan to test and it's time for Pakistan to put an end to the tit-for-tat relationship with India.

"Pakistan should be above to maintain a research and development programme in the name of its own national defence and not in a reactive mode to India," said Khan.

## Mahathir released from hospital

KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 12: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was discharged from the hospital today after a 10-day stay for a severe lung infection, the government news agency reported, says AP.

The 73-year-old leader was admitted to the National Heart Institute on April 22 for a serious case of bronchitis. He had not been seen by the public until last Friday, when he appeared on national television still weak and pale from his illness, saying he hoped to return to work soon.

Aides said Mahathir, who underwent triple bypass surgery in 1989, was hospitalised at the heart institute.

# No first use of N-weapons: Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, Apr 12: Fending off international censure of India's missile test, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has reaffirmed India will not be the first to unleash nuclear weapons. Critics at home accused him of playing politics, using the test to shore up his collapsing government, reports AP.

Defence officials said Sunday's 11-minute test flight over the Bay of Bengal showed the second generation Agni missile was ready for battle, capable of delivering a 1,000 kilogram (2,200 pound) payload of nuclear or conventional explosives more than 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) — far enough

to reach any target in Pakistan and penetrate deep into China.

The test was long expected. India had made it clear it would ignore the advice of the United States to refrain from further missile developments to promote the nascent peace efforts with Pakistan.

"India remains committed to minimum deterrence, to no first use of nuclear weapons, and never to use them against non-nuclear weapons states," Vajpayee said in an address to the nation late Sunday.

"India cannot depend on others to defend her. We have to develop our own indigenous capabilities. Agni is a symbol of that resurgent India," he said.

India gave advance notice to Pakistan and the United States on Saturday it would conduct the test.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said he had cautioned India against the test. It "would be a negative development which would adversely affect the talks between the two countries, but India replied that it was part of its programme," he told the British Broadcasting Corp. Urdu-language service.

Pakistan said it would decide early this week how to respond. The United States, Japan and Australia also issued statements of regret and concern.

The launch came 11 months

after India conducted a series of underground nuclear tests.

It also came as Vajpayee's multi-party coalition was approaching a political day of reckoning. A key partner has threatened to withdraw support for the alliance, depriving it of its majority in parliament. Leaders of dozens of parties and factions gathered in the capital Monday for closed-door lobbying before the legislature convenes on Thursday.

Defence Minister George Fernandes said the missile test was unrelated to the political crisis. He confirmed it had been previously scheduled and postponed at least once.



Belgrade citizens stand on the "Gazela" Bridge over the River Sava in Belgrade during the 5th day of the "bridge guarding" campaign Sunday. — AFP photo

## Israel, US disagree over Jewish settlement

JERUSALEM, Apr 12: Deep disagreements between Israel and its closest ally, the United States, were evident Sunday after a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the US Assistant Secretary of State, reports AP.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Martin Indyk tried to distance himself from a statement made by Netanyahu regarding Jewish settlement activity, and said some comments made by Israeli officials regarding NATO action against Yugoslavia were unhelpful.

Netanyahu, who addressed reporters first, did not respond.

The two men discussed a US-brokered peace accord between Israel and the Palestinians frozen by Netanyahu in December, six weeks after it was signed. Israel has accused the Palestinians of failing to live up to their obligations in the land-for-security agreement.

But the United States has said the Palestinians are working hard to combat militant activity, and continue in the West Bank, land captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast War which the Palestinians want for a future state, is harmful to the chance for peace, American officials have repeatedly said.

Addressing the settlement issue, Netanyahu said "We never had an agreement, not before Wye, not during Wye and not after Wye with any limitation on our activities in the communities. And we didn't have one before the Oslo agreement either."

Indyk responded, "We've not said that there is an agreement and that is not the point."

Indyk noted that the United States had invested a lot of effort in ensuring that the Palestinians refrain from unilateral acts, including a declaration of independence.

## Vajpayee meets President Confidence vote likely this week

NEW DELHI, Apr 12: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee met India's president Monday as he battled to save his year-old government following his estrangement with a powerful regional ally, reports AP.

A spokesman said Vajpayee and his top ministers briefed President K R Narayan on the political situation, and claimed the government had the backing to survive the threat. "We have the majority. We will prove it when it is required," M Venkaiah Naidu.

Vajpayee was accompanied by K Advani, the minister responsible for law and order, and P Kumaramangalam, who orchestrates the government's business in parliament.

Narayanan is a ceremonial figurehead, but he will play an important role in case the Vajpayee government loses its majority in parliament and falls. Narayanan will be required to

assess various claimants to power.

The Vajpayee government could face a vote of confidence as early as this week.

Kumaramangalam said earlier the government is banking on a large number of abstentions for its survival if it is put to a test of confidence.

"No vote in parliament is sterile. It is connected to the overall situation whether lawmakers are willing to risk another government," said Kumaramangalam. "The government will be relying heavily on abstentions," he told reporters.

A large regional party from south India has threatened to withdraw from the ruling coalition, which could precipitate its collapse in a confidence vote when parliament reconvenes on Thursday. Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party needs to win over smaller opposition parties to offset the loss, or at

least persuade them to abstain.

Vajpayee may draw some benefits from Sunday's test launch of new generation missile. He is projecting the test as a matter of national prestige and self-reliance. It comes 11 months after India conducted underground nuclear explosions, which proved hugely popular with the public.

With only days left before parliament meets, the political scenario was still confused. "Currently the strategy is to bring down the BJP-led government first and then fight for the spoils," said Arun Nehru, a former leader of the opposition Congress Party.

Jayaram Jayalalitha, the Madras-based leader who precipitated the crisis, was due to hold a round of talks in New Delhi before finally deciding whether to pull out of the coalition.

## BRIEFLY

**Qatari, Thai leaders sign accord:** The Emir of Qatar and Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai of Thailand signed the most extensive cooperation accord between their countries Monday since the establishment of diplomatic relations two decades ago. AP reports from Bangkok.

The pact endorsed by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, leader of the oil-rich Gulf state, and Chuan covers economic development, trade and academic cooperation, the Thai Foreign Ministry said. The Emir is heading a 110-member delegation seeking to further develop diplomatic and economic relations in Asia. Other countries on his itinerary include India, Pakistan, South Korea, Japan, China and Kazakhstan.

**Arson fire on Myanmar shrine:** An arson fire has damaged the ornate ceiling of a staircase leading to Myanmar's most revered shrine, the recently refurbished Shwedagon Pagoda, official newspapers reported today, AP says from Yangon.

The blaze was extinguished 15 minutes after it was spotted by security personnel Saturday and damage was described as slight, the papers reported. Photographs showed burned portions of the ceiling. The newspapers, which are controlled by the military government, named no suspects but said arson was suspected.

**Ex-Chinese minister dies in Taiwan:** Former Chinese vice minister of culture Wang Jifu died Taipei yesterday from injuries suffered in a fall during a tour of central Taiwan six days ago, police said, AFP reports from Taipei.

The 71-year-old Wang had been in a coma since he was rushed to the Chungshan Medical College Hospital where doctors found serious head injuries and some bruising to the chest. He fell from a stair during a visit to a museum in Taichung, said Peng Yunguang, an official with China's Culture Ministry who witnessed the accident. Wang, who retired eight years ago, arrived here on March 31 at the invitation of a private culture organisation. He was scheduled to leave last Thursday.

**Kyrgyzstan gets acting PM:** Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev on Monday named an acting prime minister following the death earlier this month of the former premier, a news report said, AP reports from Moscow.

Amangely Muraliyev, a regional governor, has been named acting premier, the Interfax news agency reported from Bishkek, the capital of the central Asian nation. The report did not indicate when a permanent prime minister would be named.

**Honduran prison official killed:** The deputy director of the Honduran prison system, his wife and their two bodyguards were shot to death in an ambush and their bodies burned, officials said on Sunday. Reuter reports from Tegucigalpa.

Deputy Commissioner Luis Reyes was assassinated in an ambush Saturday afternoon, Honduran Security Minister Elizabeth Chitez told reporters. Officials were not able to identify the badly burned bodies until Sunday.

**Sir Norman gets architecture award:** England's Sir Norman Foster, whose creations include the world's largest airport in Hong Kong and the British Museum's Great Court, has won the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the discipline's highest honour, AP reports from Los Angeles.

The prestigious award, which includes a 100,000 dollars grant and a bronze medalion, honours a living architect whose work demonstrates a combination of talent, vision and commitment. Announced Sunday by the Hyatt Foundation, it will be presented in Berlin on June 7.

**Israeli jets bomb Hizbollah bases:** Israeli warplanes attacked suspected Hizbollah positions just north of Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone overnight, a security source said yesterday, Reuter reports from Tyre.

The source said two Israeli jet fighters fired a total of six rockets at a valley near the village of Zibquine, north of the western sector of the 15 km deep buffer zone.

There was no immediate report of casualties.

## Ishihara elected Tokyo governor

TOKYO, Apr 12: Tokyo governor-elect Shintaro Ishihara received a mixed welcome today, with expressions of hope for change and of concern over his outspoken, nationalist reputation, reports AP.

Ishihara, 66, won Sunday's election by a landslide, defeating a host of contenders. The outcome was a major defeat for Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's ruling party, whose official candidate ended up an embarrassing fourth.

Ishihara, author of the controversial book "The Japan That Can Say No" and a former transport minister, will succeed outgoing Tokyo Gov Yukio Aoshima later this month.

A clearly disappointed Obuchi said he was responsible for the outcome, which he called "very regrettable."

Although the head of Tokyo's municipal government has little influence over national policy, the governor's race was widely viewed as an important political barometer for the country as well as a gauge for Obuchi's popularity.

## A lesson for govt officials

HONG KONG, Apr 12: Passengers on a delayed Air China flight from Shanghai to Beijing revolted after learning they were being kept on the ground to wait for some government officials who were running late, and they eventually shouted the officials off the jet, a newspaper reported Monday, reports AP.

Flight CA 986 had originated in San Francisco and was due to leave Shanghai at 1230 GMT on Friday but ended up on the ground for two hours as the officials, apparently from Shanghai's Foreign Affairs Department, failed to show up, the South China Morning Post reported.

When the passengers learned why they were stalled, they demanded that the captain take off but were told that air traffic control wouldn't give clearance until the officials were aboard, the newspaper said, citing accounts from two passengers and another witness, none of whom were identified by name.

The government officials finally arrived, only to be greeted by shouts of "rotten eggs" and "get off the plane", the Post reported. A grandmother on the jet had circulated a petition insisting that the airplane take off and about 30 of the 252 passengers went to the front of the jet to stop the officials from boarding, the newspaper said.

The officials finally gave up, but they then circled their cars around the airplane for half an hour, delaying the flight further, the newspaper said.

## Verdict of Anwar's trial tomorrow

KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 12: Rocked by the sacking and arrest of Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia this week braces for the final verdict in the most dramatic political challenge to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's 18-year rule, reports AP.

The six-month judicial drama was expected to end Wednesday when Judge Augustine Paul pronounces whether the ousted deputy prime minister abused his office to cover up alleged acts of sexual misdeeds.

Anwar's trial riveted world attention as the decades-long political calm of the Southeast Asian nation was shattered by unprecedented street demonstrations and shrill demands for a change in leadership.

His treatment, both by Mahathir and later by police, fractured relations with several other Southeast Asian neighbours and Western nations who considered Anwar a colleague and a friend.

Malaysians watched anxiously as Anwar's defence attorneys protested key witnesses being barred and evidence they considered crucial shut out from the trial as irrelevant.

At the end of the day, some felt the judgement would contain few surprises.

"The judgement will go the Mahathir way," said KC Loong, a computer salesman. "It is all political," he said softly, shaking his head.

Just as the hearings drew to a close, Anwar predicted a guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion. When asked by reporters how long he expected to be sentenced, Anwar replied: "Two four years, it makes no difference."

"What would really shock the country is a verdict of 'not guilty on all charges,'" said Bruce Gale of the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd, a Singapore-based think tank that closely monitors Malaysian politics.

Anwar's supporters and opposition leaders, however, began preparing Monday for a guilty verdict by planning protest rallies and demonstrations near the courthouse Wednesday.

Paul will issue verdicts on four charges of using the powers that come with being Malaysia's No. 2 man to get the police to obtain retractions from two people who wrote Mahathir about Anwar's alleged sexual travesties. He faces one more charge of corruption and five more counts of violating laws that forbid homosexual acts in the predominantly Muslim nation.

Each corruption charge carries 14 years in jail and a 20,000 ringgit (\$ 5,000) fine. A conviction also would bar him from running for public office for five years.

## Suharto's son charged with corruption

JAKARTA, Apr 12: The youngest son of ex-President Suharto faced the prospect of life imprisonment when he was formally charged with corruption in a Jakarta court Monday, reports AP.

Hutomo "Tommy" Mandala Putra, 37, is the first member of Indonesia's former first family to face trial for graft after months of student protests against the Suharto clan.

Proceedings were broadcast on national television.

Several of his siblings and Suharto himself have also been questioned by government lawyers over allegations that they corruptly built huge fortunes and business empires during Suharto's 32-year authoritarian reign, which ended last year amid riots and protests.

They have all rejected the accusations that have been made as Indonesia endures its worst economic crisis in 30 years.

Tommy has become the third defendant in a case involving a multimillion-dollar property deal in 1997 between a state food agency and Goro, a retail company then owned by Tommy.

The other two defendants, whose trials were opened last week, are Beddu Amang, the former chief of Bulog, the national logistics bureau, and Riccardo Gelael, a close business associate of Tommy.

## Off the Record

**Another Tyson**

BELJING: A Beijing teacher bit off a pupil's ear during a schoolyard dispute, the Life Times newspaper said today, reports AP.

The two came to blows on Tuesday in No. 163 School in the Chinese capital during "a small quarrel," which other pupils tried to halt, the paper said.

As the pupil, called Zhang and aged about 15, tried to return to the classroom the teacher Wei attacked him and bit off his ear.

The mangled ear was found on the ground and doctors at a nearby hospital managed to sew it back on. The teacher has been detained.

**A sale to remember**

SEATTLE: Call it a sale to remember: A boarding pass from the ill-fated Titanic fetched 100,000 dollars at an auction Saturday, reports AP.

The buyer was Jeffrey Trainer, an Allentown, Pennsylvania, collector who is in the trading card business. The price began at 5,000 dollar and zoomed to 100,000 dollars in less than a minute, said Cheryl Gorsuch, co-owner of the Tacoma antique store that held the auction.

She talked Trainer through the auction by phone.

"He likes one-of-a-kind things," Gorsuch said. "He said he will keep it, just to enjoy it."

Attempts to telephone Trainer, who has an unpublished number, were unsuccessful.

The rare document — an immigrant inspection card that served as a boarding pass for third-class passengers — is among the most expensive pieces of Titanic memorabilia to hit the auction block, experts say.

The pass once belonged to Anna Sofia Sjoblom of Finland, who pinned it inside her jacket for the 1912 voyage. She had borrowed 3 dollars to afford passage on the Titanic after she and three male friends were bumped from the Adriatic, another ship in the White Star Line.

The day the Titanic sunk was Sjoblom's birthday, though accounts differ as to whether she turned 18 or 20. She made it onto Lifeboat No. 16, reportedly the same one that carried White Star Line chairman J. Bruce Ismay. Her boarding pass, still pinned inside her jacket, never got wet.

## British Academy Film Awards 'Elizabeth' gets five prizes

LONDON, Apr 12: Elizabethan England ruled the day at the 51st British Academy Film Awards Sunday with five prizes going for "Elizabeth" and four for last month's leading Oscar-winner, "Shakespeare in Love," reports AP.

But it was an altogether separate Elizabeth — screen Legend Elizabeth Taylor — who got the evening's biggest applause as she haltingly stepped to the podium to a sustained standing ovation to receive a lifetime achievement award from the British Academy.

"It makes me want to act again," said Taylor, 67, who was born in North London but has long lived in the United States. "But nobody will have me."

In an emotional speech, Taylor called the prize "the most incredible award" because, she added, "I guess I didn't think of myself as an actress and didn't think many of you did — quite rightly, too."

Taylor also took the prize to those who had been involved with her in her long standing crusade against AIDS, which

"takes up all my energy, my love, my compassion; it's become my life now."

Taylor has not been back in her native England for seven years "for reasons some of you may laugh at," she said, "others might not."

Referring to Britain's restrictive quarantine laws which have made it difficult for her to bring her dog into the country, Taylor said, "If rats can get in, why can't dogs? My dog has to have rabies just to live in California. She might have got them from me."

Oscar victor Italian actor Roberto Benigni, triumphed as well at the British Academy, winning his second consecutive prize for best actor.

"This is my first prize in England," said the ever-effusive Benigni, who was a memorably manic presence at last month's Oscars. "Really, I am full of joy, like a watermelon."

The recipient this year of seven Academy Awards, including best picture, "Shakespeare in Love" took the BAFTA prize for best film.



From left to right, David Parfitt, Edward Zwick, Donna Gigliotti, Pierce Brosnan (who presented the award), John Madden and Harvey Weinstein pose after they collected the award for best film for 'Shakespeare in Love' at the 51st BAFTA Film Awards at the Business Design Centre in London Sunday. — AFP photo