

High security, protests greet leaders at NATO summit

WASHINGTON, Apr 23: Demonstrators with strongly divergent views over the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia are planning protests outside the White House during the alliance's 50th anniversary celebration this weekend, reports AP.

The National Albanian-American Council received a permit for a Friday rally in support of widening the NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia.

"We thank NATO forgetting involved but we are asking them to do much more," said Ilijer Zherka. "While NATO is patting itself on the back this week, people are dying in Kosovo and they can't stop it."

Taking the opposite view, a local Serbian church is organising a protest for Saturday urging an end to the bombing campaign.

"We are protesting the bombing because we consider it illegal and civilian people are being killed," said Zoran Hodjera, congregation president of St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church in Washington, which is organising the rally.

US Park Police officials said three groups have been given protest permits for the weekend. Aside from the Kosovo-related protests, a demonstration against nuclear weapons is scheduled for the area around the Washington Memorial Friday.

The protests will lend a sobering note to what has been planned as the largest gathering of foreign leaders ever to visit Washington.

Even in a city well accustomed to the high security measures accorded important guests, the safety measures sur-

NATO strikes Serbian state TV HQs

BELGRADE, Apr 23: NATO struck the headquarters of Serbia's state TV on Friday, knocking out the country's main station of the air as it was broadcasting a US television interview with President Slobodan Milosevic. Ambulances rushed to the scene and reporters saw about a dozen injured taken away, reports AP.

The attack came hours after a Russian envoy said Milosevic has accepted the idea of a UN-controlled international presence in Kosovo.

To allied leaders gathered in Washington for a 50-year alliance anniversary summit, it was unclear whether such a presence meant the armed force demanded by NATO or was Milosevic's same offer that was rejected last week by NATO.

The alliance sent a missile into the side of Serbian state television's downtown headquarters that collapsed its top two floors, according to reports on the scene. Thick smoke filled the street and staff members called out names of colleagues they feared were trapped inside.

Another Belgrade TV station, Studio B, showed live scenes of the rescue attempt, including police trying to remove one man drenched in blood from the debris.

Elsewhere, Yugoslav media reported NATO jets struck at least three television relay stations that retransmit state TV signals to other parts of the country. The attack on the studio, located in the heart of the city, took place 24 hours after NATO blasted one of Milosevic's residences in the boldest attack yet against the Yugoslav leadership.

In a diplomatic bid to end the conflict, former Russian

Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin held daylong talks with Milosevic. Chernomyrdin said he and Milosevic had "considered the possibility of an international presence led by the UN in which Russia would take part."

Milosevic has so far rejected NATO demands to withdraw his troops from the embattled province and accept a Western-dictated autonomy plan for the ethnic Albanian majority there.

It appeared unlikely NATO would accept any deal that did not include an armed military force in Kosovo to police a peace deal and protect ethnic Albanian civilians.

In an interview with CNN's "Larry King Live," Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek, chairman of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said "to expect the refugees to return without an armed military presence is impossible."

US President Bill Clinton said in Washington that he did not have details of what was discussed. "If there is an offer for a genuine security force, that's the first time that Milosevic has done that," Clinton said.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he was encouraged by news that Yugoslavia would accept an international presence in Kosovo and "eagerly awaits the details."

Soon after Chernomyrdin left for Moscow, alliance jets were back in action Thursday night and early Friday, attacking a railway bridge on the Ibar River in central Serbia, three Serbian television relays, a major rail bridge west of Belgrade and the southern city of Nis.

A short while later, television sets across the country

went dark after a NATO missile hit the downtown Belgrade headquarters of Yugoslavia's main TV network, the major source of news and entertainment for most Yugoslavs.

NATO has long complained that Serbian television was a legitimate military target because it was spreading "propaganda" about the alliance air campaign.

When screens went dead, the network was broadcasting a taped interview of Milosevic by Houston's KHOU-TV.

Yugoslav jets also reported NATO media struck around the southern town of Vranje, 300 km southeast of Belgrade, with 40 missiles over a two-hour period and blasted the centre of Uzice, 120 km southeast of here, damaging the post office and other buildings.

NATO jets also destroyed a bridge over the Rasina river near Krusevac about 150 km south of Belgrade. Air alert sirens went off late Thursday in the capital.

As refugees continued to stream out of Kosovo, where hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians remained displaced, NATO jets rained dozens



Firemen and doctors try to evacuate injured people from the damaged headquarters of the Serbian state television in Belgrade, shortly after it was hit during a NATO air strike, early Friday. NATO warplanes bombed the RTS building in the centre of the town, allegedly killing at least one person and injuring another. None of the three RTS channels could be received in Belgrade, and satellite broadcasting was also knocked out. — AFP photo



Ricky Martin of Puerto Rico holds his trophies at the Billboard Latin Music Awards, Thursday at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach. Martin won for Pop Male Album of the Year and Pop Hot Latin Track of the Year. — AFP photo

Kohl honoured in US as 'Statesman of the Decade'

NEW YORK, Apr 23: World leaders gearing up for Friday's NATO summit in Washington passed to honour former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl for helping to guide Europe through the turbulent years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, reports AP.

Kohl — who as chancellor from 1982-1998 presided over the reunification of post-war Germany — was honoured Thursday evening as "Statesman of the Decade" by the EastWest Institute at a gala in New York. Former US president George Bush presented the award.

Speaking to an audience of dozens of current and past heads of state, Kohl said he believed the conflict in Yugoslavia would not derail the consolidation of peace at the close of the 20th century.

New Tokyo governor takes over

TOKYO, Apr 23: Shintaro Ishihara, a conservative author and opponent of the US military presence in Japan, launched his term as Tokyo governor Friday, pledging to transform the face of Japanese politics, reports AP.

"I want to create a new political pattern springing from Tokyo," Ishihara told reporters as he took office. "It is important to send a new message to Japan and to the world."

The new governor, author of the book "A Japan That Can Say No," has raised concerns abroad for his pledges to kick US troops off a key military airbase and for his revisionist views of World War II.

Ishihara won the April 11 election with the slogan, "A Tokyo That Can Say No," promising to stand up to traditionally powerful bureaucrats in both the city and national governments. The author, who ran as an independent, took over the reins of the city government from former comedian Yukio Aoshima.

US prof wins prize for his contribution to IT

SAN FRANCISCO, Apr 23: A micro-electronics pioneer whose early work on minuscule transistors helped power the information age won the world's single largest award for invention on Thursday night, reports AP.

Carver Mead, a Professor of Engineering and Applied Science at the California Institute of Technology, was awarded the 500,000 dollars Lemelson-MIT Prize in a ceremony at the city's Exploratorium Museum.

"I was very surprised," Mead said. "The previous awards were all given to people who had one big blockbuster patent. And I don't have one of those, so it never occurred to me that I was a candidate."

Mead's innovations also include a standard amplifying device used in microwave communication systems, which people use every day when making telephone calls or dialing into the Internet, and a hearing aid powered by a digital microchip.

"They made a video where they interviewed a number of people that had those hearing aids, and it makes you cry," said Mead, 65.

"These people are saying, 'This thing has changed my life. I can hear my grandchildren now. That's very satisfying.'"

But Mead is best known for his work on transistors, a project that he began in 1968 on a suggestion from Gordon Moore of Integrated Electronics — later Intel.

"Moore's Law" — that computer chips would continue to double in power while remaining the same size and price — has since become a truism in the computer industry. But in 1970, Mead's forecast that the transistor could be reduced to .15 microns was revolutionary.

By comparison, a human hair is 20 microns in diameter and a wavelength of visible light is half a micron, Mead explained in an interview Thursday.

"I was able to show that we were nowhere near the limits," he said. "It was pretty counter-culture at the time to take a position like that."

Yet his forecast has nearly come true: Today the smallest transistor is .18 microns. Mead, who lives in Woodside, California, said he plans to use the prize money to help support companies that have been launched by his former students.

Colorado teenagers wanted to blow up their school

LITTLETON, Colorado, Apr 23: The two gunmen in the Columbine High School massacre were planning to blow up their school and probably had help from others, investigators said after discovering a powerful bomb in the kitchen that had been built from a propane tank, reports AP.

"These subjects were not only on a killing rampage, but they were going to destroy the school," Sheriff John Stone said. "They were going to burn the school up."

The discovery of the 9-kilo (20-pound) propane tank heightened suspicions that the two killers had help from other people, either with building the 32 bombs discovered so far in the school, its environs and the killers' homes, or getting them



Supporters of Congress (I) Party President Sonia Gandhi shout slogans as they hold a placard reading: "we want Sonia Gandhi to be P.M. (prime minister)" in front of her residence in New Delhi Friday. India plunged even deeper into political crisis after north Indian regional leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, who holds 20 precious parliamentary seats, withdrew his support from the Congress Party in forming a new government. — AFP photo

Israel threatens to close PA HQs in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, Apr 23: Israel's government threatened Thursday to close offices in a major Jerusalem centre for Palestinian political activity, an unprecedented move dismissed by the Palestinians as a toothless election ploy, reports AP.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he told his police minister to close Palestinian Authority offices in Orient House, the centre is widely viewed as the Palestinian headquarters in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem, the sector claimed by the Palestinians as a future capital.

It was the first time any government dared threaten the nerve center of Palestinian activity in the disputed city.

Israeli radios reported that police reinforcements were increased in anticipation of demonstrations on Friday, the Muslim sabbath.

Consuls from European Union countries, including France, Britain and the EU envoy — paid solidarity visits to Orient House later Thursday. The European Union has backed the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state.

Bodyguard of Castro defects to Dominican Republic

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic, Apr 23: One of Fidel Castro's bodyguards walked into the US Embassy during the Cuban leader's recent visit to the Dominican Republic and asked to defect, a US official confirmed, reports AP.

"He just knocked on the door" Sunday, after a summit of the Association of Caribbean States, said the US Embassy official, who spoke on condition of anonymity Thursday.

Capt. Lazaro de Betancourt would be the first known member of Castro's security team to ask to defect in 40 years — dealing a personal blow to the Cuban leader and a political blow to his communist government.

Adopted brother of Anwar charged with sodomy

KUALA LUMPUR, Apr 23: The adopted brother of jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim was charged Friday with two counts of sodomy, indicating that the state may proceed with sodomy charges against the ousted deputy prime minister, reports AP.

Sukma Sarmawan, Anwar's former personal secretary, Mohd. Azmin Ali, and a dress-maker for Anwar's wife, Mior Abdul Razak, were all charged Friday with committing perjury in regard to Anwar's sensational corruption and sex trial.

Sukma was also charged with one count of assisting Anwar in the act of sodomy against Anwar's former driver, Azizan Abu Bakar, and one count of sodomy on Azizan. If convicted, Sukma could face up

to 20 years in prison. He pleaded not guilty, surrendered his passport and was released on bail.

His trial was set for July 5. Anwar was convicted last Wednesday of corruption and sentenced to six years in prison. The prosecution claimed Anwar had sex with men and women and abused his powers of office by forcing police to cover up his sexual misdeeds.

The conviction sparked rioting in downtown Kuala Lumpur last week by thousands of supporters who believe Anwar is innocent. Anwar's defence team was to meet with prosecutors next Tuesday to determine whether he would face an additional corruption charge and five counts of sodomy.



Ousted deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim's adopted Indonesian brother Sukma Darmawan Sasmitaat Madja leaves the court Friday in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Bus accident kills 30 in China: A truck loaded with freight hit a bus head-on in eastern China, causing an explosion and fire and killing at least 30 people, a state newspaper said Friday, AP reports from Shanghai.

The truck crossed the center line and hit the bus Wednesday afternoon on a highway in Xiangshui county in Jiangsu province, the People's Daily reported. The area is near the city of Yancheng, about 500 km northwest of Shanghai. A bus passenger was quoted as saying that after some passengers escaped out the windows, he heard an explosion and both vehicles caught fire. The truck driver and at least 29 bus passengers were killed, the report said. Another 23 people were injured, the newspaper said.

7 die as chopper crashes in US: An Army Black Hawk helicopter crashed early Thursday at Fort Campbell, killing seven people and injuring the other four aboard, AP reports from Fort Campbell.

An Army photo of the crash scene showed the helicopter scattered in several large pieces in a wooded area beside a road. The UH-60L helicopter went down in a rural training area about 7 am EDT (1100 GMT), the Army said.

Blair introduces 'doctrine of int'l community'

CHICAGO, Apr 23: British Prime Minister Tony Blair called for a new degree of international cooperation that would allow increased intervention in the politics and economies of other nations, reports AP.

Blair outlined his "doctrine of international community" Thursday night during an address to the Economic Club of Chicago.

He said that in the future, countries will have to band together to prevent human tragedies such as those happening in Yugoslavia's Kosovo region and to prevent economic crisis, such as occurred recently in Asia and Brazil.

"We live in a world where isolationism has ceased to have a reason to exist," Blair said. "By necessity we have to cooperate with each other across the nations."

tion, now that it has started I am convinced there is no alternative to continuing until we succeed, Blair said.

"Success is the only exit strategy I am prepared to consider."

He said that the Kosovo conflict, as well as Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq, highlight that the post-Cold War era requires a new "framework" of thought about cooperation.

"There is a global financial crisis. We react, it fades, our reaction becomes less urgent," he said. "We are continually feeding off the danger of letting wherever CNN roves be the cat prod to take a global conflict seriously."

The international community will have to establish clear policies on intervention as well as strengthen and reform the international organisations, including NATO and the United Nations, that would lead such efforts, he said.

Blair said one of the most pressing foreign policy problems the international community will face is "to identify the circumstances in which we should get actively involved in other people's conflicts."

"Acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter," he said.

Off the Record

100 reasons for English pride

LONDON: Britain's leading tabloid marked St George's Day today by listing 100 reasons why it is great to be English, reports Reuters.

The Sun, heralding England's national day, put the Queen Mother top of the list, calling her "the essential English lady who is our favourite royal."

Next came the Beatles who were joined in the top 10 by William Shakespeare, a cup of tea and pints of milk being delivered to your doorstep.

Ever modest, the Brash tabloid — owned by Australian-born tycoon Rupert Murdoch — listed itself as Reason 100 for English pride.

Fatherhood in question!
TOKYO: A baby smiles in the arms of a doting dad. "A man who does not help in child-rearing can't be called a father," the voice on the TV public announcement gently warns, reports AP.

UN hails peace effort to end war in Congo

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 23: The UN Security Council on Thursday welcomed African efforts to bring peace to Congo and reiterated its call for an immediate halt to fighting, reports AP.

An agreement calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities was signed Sunday by Congo's government and Uganda, which has supported rebels battling to oust Congolese President Laurent Kabila.

But the rebels and their main backer, Rwanda, rejected the agreement brokered without their participation by Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi, and the rebels said they would continue fighting.

"The members of the council call on the other parties to the conflict also to commit themselves to an immediate cessation of the hostilities," said France's UN Ambassador Alain Dejammet, the current council president. They stress that efforts must be made by all parties to this end."

Fighting has wracked Congo since rebels took up arms in August to oust Kabila from power. Kabila is receiving support in troops, tanks and aircraft from Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad.