

Israel won't abandon Jewish settlements

Bush rejects proposal for loan guarantee

WASHINGTON, Mar 17: Israel's efforts to secure \$10 billion in US loan guarantees appeared doomed Monday after President Bush's administration rejected the latest congressional proposal, reports AP.

without the loan guarantees rather than abandon Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Bush administration has maintained a hard line against the settlements...

sources said. A final effort was expected Tuesday. In other developments, the White House denied that the United States is trying to harm Israel's image through leaks that allege improper Israeli sales of advanced US weapon technology.

relations had suffered because of the charges, Arens replied: "I hope it's not a crisis at all, because the allegations are groundless."

At the State Department, spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Israel had agreed to a US request to send a team to Israel to ensure that there are not any misunderstandings on technology transfer questions, including on the Patriot missile.

The proposal would provide up to \$10 billion a year in guarantees over five years. But the first year's instalment would be reduced by an amount equal to any money Israel spends to complete settlement construction that already had begun as of January 1, 1992.

Off the Record

Bush pokes fun at Congress

CHICAGO: President Bush poked fun at Congress for its check-bouncing scandal Monday even as the White House said it was investigating whether any Cabinet members who once were lawmakers were among the guilty, reports AP.



"I'll tell you, what's going on Capitol Hill right now gives new meaning to the phrase, 'The check's in the mail.' ... Bush said in Milwaukee. The audience laughed and applauded.

Later, presidential press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said the White House was investigating whether any Cabinet members had bounced checks while serving in Congress.

Six former House members serve in the Cabinet: Jack Kemp, Lynn Martin, Edward Derwinski, Manuel Lujan, Dick Cheney, and Edward Madigan, as well as Vice President Dan Quayle. Bush himself also served in the House.

Child rape suspect wants to be castrated

HOUSTON: A judge withdrew his approval Monday for a child rape suspect's request to be castrated rather than stand trial. The judge said a doctor could not be found to perform the surgery, reports AP.

State District Judge Michael McSpadden agreed March 6 to let Steven Allen Butler be castrated after Butler asked to undergo the procedure rather than stand trial on charges he raped a 13-year-old girl.

The case touched off a storm of controversy. Critics said castration was a barbaric action that did nothing to address the crime of rape, and black activists said the action was racially motivated because Butler is black.

God will not forgive her

MANILA: God will not forgive former first lady Imelda Marcos unless she repays the money she allegedly stole from the nation, the Philippines' top churchman says, reports Reuter.



Cardinal Jaime Sin, in a television interview on Monday night, also said marital fidelity was a requirement for the presidency and the private lives of candidates in the May 11 election were a valid campaign issue.

"However, when I say forgive ... it does not mean we will forgive her the injustices she committed. That's why there are cases against her," he said.

World's oldest cow celebrates her b'day

DUBLIN: Big Bertha, hailed in the Guinness book of records as the world's oldest cow, celebrated her 48th birthday today with a tot of Irish whiskey and a bucketful of apples, reports Reuter.

Her birthday party was celebrated in a live broadcast on Irish Radio but one listener complained that a beefburger advertisement in the middle of the programme showed crass insensitivity.

Villagers at Blackwaters Bridge in the western county of Kerry got together to celebrate Big Bertha's birthday with a few songs, allot more drinks and blessing from the Catholic priest.

Her proud owner, farmer Jerome O'Leary, said: "She gets pretty nervous when confronted with the public but I give her a drop of whiskey or poteen (an illegal moonshine whiskey) to build her up."

Big Bertha, who had record 39 calves, has raised more than 20,000 punts (32,000 dollars) in cancer charity fund raising appearances.

Koreas exchange copies of N-arms accord

SEOUL, South Korea, Mar 17: South and North Korea on Tuesday exchanged signed copies of an accord detailing the make-up of a commission to oversee implementation of their nuclear arms ban treaty, reports AP.

The exchange, at the border village of Panmunjom, was a step toward resolving international worries that the Communist North is developing nuclear weapons.

The copies, each already signed by one side's prime minister, were to be signed by the other and returned on Thursday.

International experts believe North Korea could develop nuclear weapons as early as 1993. Worries have increased as the North repeatedly delayed opening its nuclear facilities to outside inspection.

Formation of a joint nuclear control commission was part of an inter-Korea nuclear arms

ban treaty adopted in mid-February, but it was not until Saturday that the two sides agreed on details of its make-up. The six-member commission is to hold its first meeting at the border village on Thursday to set rules and procedures for mutual inspections of suspected nuclear weapons sites on both sides.



JERUSALEM: Israeli border policemen watch a car set ablaze by Palestinian youths in the East Jerusalem's Arab neighborhood. — AFP/UNB photo

Whites vote to end apartheid

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 17: Whites voted Tuesday in a referendum on ending three centuries of white domination and sharing power with blacks, a vote on which President FW de Klerk has staked his political future, reports AP.

Most political analysts predicted a government victory in the whites-only poll on a mandate for constitutional change, with some saying support has been swinging to de Klerk in the final days of the three-week campaign.

"I voted 'yes.' It's the only thing to do for the future of this country ... my (black) workmates don't have the vote and I must vote for them," construction worker Chris Bakker said after voting in Johannesburg.

Satyajit receives Oscar in hospital

CALCUTTA, Mar 17: Indian film director Satyajit Ray was given a special Oscar in his hospital bed but it will not become official until the Academy Award ceremonies in Hollywood on March 30, a family spokesman said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

He said a crew went to Ray's room in the intensive care unit of a Calcutta hospital on Monday to film an acceptance speech to be shown at the awards ceremony.

Acharya, however, said the Oscar was given to Ray and it was then taken to his family home where some photographers were allowed to take pictures of it standing in his study.

Oscar and said then he wanted to go to Hollywood to receive it if he was well enough.



Satyajit Ray

The picture was published in Calcutta newspapers Tuesday. "Actually, it is not to be publicly displayed before March 30, after the awards ceremony, Acharya said. Official or not, Ray was delighted.

"This is a remarkable experience in my life. It is the most marvellous hour I could hope to get," he told the Statesman, Calcutta's leading English-language newspaper.

Ray, 70, was selected in December for the honorary Oscar for a lifetime of achievement in cinema. Oscars spokesman, Bob Werden said in Los Angeles that was not correct but threw confusion over exactly what happened by saying the most prestigious award in cinema was not handed over.

Thai junta pledges to restore democracy

BANGKOK, Mar 17: The junta that staged a coup a year ago promised this month's election will restore democratic civilian rule, but the military is well-prepared to continue dominating and patronizing Thai politics, reports AP.

And many are afraid Sunday's parliamentary election might bring a return of the political instability that has dominated Thailand since it adopted parliamentary democracy 60 years ago.

A pro-military alliance is tipped as having the best chance of gaining the majority. But analysts doubt a pro-military government would be stable for long because of a growing movement by student groups, dissident politicians and academics hoping to check military influence.

"It is certain that military leaders will continue their influence over politics through the Senate and a pro-military alliance in the lower house," said Suchit Bunboonkarn, an expert on the military at Chulalongkorn University.

The military must return to the barracks before the country can achieve true democracy," said Somkiart Chantarasima, a leader of the Student Federation of Thailand, acknowledging this would prove very difficult.

66 Asians detained in Dubai

ABU DHABI, Mar 17: Dubai's coast guard has detained 66 Asian men who tried to enter the wealthy Gulf Emirate, illegally, the local English-language newspaper Khaleej Times reported today, says AFP.



ALEXANDRIA: South African police search a hostel dweller after police were fired at by Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters on March 14, in a weekend of violence which left 12 people dead and several hurt. — AFP/UNB photo

The group attempted to enter the port city by boat, the paper said but it did not specify when they were arrested. It quoted police sources as saying the men would be tried Tuesday and deported after serving jail terms.

The sources did not reveal the men's nationalities but most of those previously arrested while trying to sneak into the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were from Pakistan, Iran and Bangladesh.

BRIEFLY

Inmates seize 3 prison guards:

Two inmates seized three prison guards at a federal penitentiary Monday and warned the hostages' lives would be in danger if police used force to end the standoff, reports AP from La Macaza. The prisoner demanded that Claude Poirier, a popular radio journalist, act as mediator, a role he has often played in past hostage crises.

35 drowned in Pakistan:

A luxury bus fell into an irrigation canal near the southern Pakistani town of Hyderabad on Monday, drowning more than 35 people, police said, Reuter reports from Hyderabad. They said five bodies had been recovered and the search for more was continuing.

Malawi varsity closed:

Malawi closed its only university Monday after pro-democracy protesters clashed with police, church officials and Western diplomats reported, AP says from Lusaka.

Train carrying toxic derails:

A freight train carrying toxic chemicals was derailed Monday at Aix-Les-Bains, southeastern France, and all its seven cars overturned, but no casualties have been reported, Xinhua says from Paris.

Strike cripples Punjab:

A strike called by Sikh politicians in protest against the inauguration of Punjab's newly-elected Assembly crippled the northern Indian state on Monday, officials said, AP reports from Chandigarh. They said the strike, most effective in the border districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Faridkot, was largely peaceful. The stoppage was less successful elsewhere.

Iraq still hiding missiles

CHICAGO, Mar 17: President Bush has said that Iraq is still hiding many ballistic missiles and "all options are open" to force Baghdad to comply with the United Nations' orders to dismantle its arsenal, reports AP.

"We are just insisting in every way we can that Iraq comply with the United Nations resolutions," Bush told reporters Monday.

"I'm not discussing options. All options are open," he said. "Serious business here."

But Bush suggested that the movement of the US aircraft carrier America into the Gulf was not a sign of imminent military action against Iraq.

"I wouldn't read too much into the movement of a carrier," she president told reporters aboard Air Force One, observing that US warships routinely operate in the gulf.

Later, in a written bi-monthly report to Congress, Bush described instances of Iraqi non-compliance with UN inspectors charged with finding and destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

Despite the destruction of 62 missiles and other equipment, he said, "the United States believes that Iraq still possesses large numbers of undeclared ballistic missiles."

He said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein "bears full responsibility for the suffering in Iraq" because of his refusal to take advantage of a UN offer to allow the sale of \$1.6 billion of Iraqi oil to buy food and medicine.

Chicago on Monday, a day before presidential primaries in Michigan and Illinois. "When the economy is tough, some suggest we turn inward," Bush said. But "I am not going to pull back into some Fortress America. We are not going to forget our responsibilities to lead around the world."

Polls show Bush far ahead of challenger Patrick Buchanan in both Michigan and Illinois. The president said he would keep his winning streak intact although he refused to predict

the margin of victory. With 15 primary victories on Bush's side, the president's strategists are convinced that the threat from Buchanan's "America first" campaign has receded.

'US won't forget responsibilities to lead the world'

CHICAGO, Mar 17: President Bush, touring the industrial Midwest for Tuesday's primaries, lashed out at his isolationist opponent, saying the United States was not going to forget "our responsibilities to lead around the world," reports AP. Meanwhile, Democratic candidates bickered over character issues and proposals to end the recession as they struggled to determine who would lead the opposition into the November election. Bush was speaking at a Polish-American rally in

Michigan as perfect proving ground for his "America First" message, but late polls showed he was more likely to have a tough time matching past showings.

Buchanan abandoned his talk of toppling Bush and returned to his battle cry that a vote for him would "send Washington a message to wake up".

Bush, in a stop in Milwaukee, hardly sounded worried on an election eve trip to Wisconsin and Illinois that raised \$1 million for his re-

election effort at a time even conservative enthusiasm for Buchanan's rebellion appeared to be waning.

"I've been very pleased," Bush said of his unbroken string of 15 victories. But he refused to predict his margins: "Never try to say how high the high bar should be on these primaries."

positive impetus behind his protest candidacy against President Bush?

But Buchanan isn't putting a dent in Bush. Polls so far show him only slightly above 20 percent heading into Tuesday's Republican Primary, with Bush 50 points higher.

Barring a miracle, a Buchanan victory Tuesday looks impossible. The polls suggest he will even be hard-pressed to match his best showings so far — 37 percent in New Hampshire, 36 percent in Georgia.