

**Anthony Hopkins, Jodie Foster best actor, actress**

**'Silence of the Lambs' sweeps five top Oscars**



**Thatcher decides to leave parliament**

LONDON, Mar 31: The great iron lady has decided to leave parliament and let others get on with the job of governing Britain. But has the trail Margaret Thatcher blazed made it any easier for women to win political power, reports Reuters.

Not very much, judging by the number of women candidates contesting the April 9 general election.

Thatcher's example has not brought an army of women up through the ranks of the ruling Conservatives. The party reverted to an all-male leadership after dumping their veteran Prime Minister more than a year ago.

Women voters are in the majority in Britain, but women politicians are a very rare breed — only 44 out of total of 650 legislators in the outgoing British parliament.

The opposition Labour Party is committed to creating a better gender balance in parliament and includes women in its proposed cabinet.

Labour has 138 women candidates, a ratio of one woman to almost five men. The Conservatives are fielding 63 women candidates. The centrist Liberal Democrats lead the field with 143 would-be women parliamentarians.

LOS ANGELES, Mar 31: 'Silence of the Lambs,' the thriller about a fledgling FBI agent who needs the help of an evil genius, swept the five top Oscars on Monday night, including best picture and acting awards for Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster, reports AP.

"My God, I can't believe it," said Hopkins, who received a standing ovation from the crowd at the 64th Annual Academy Awards show. "I am greatly honored and tremendously moved."

Hopkins, who played Dr Hannibal (The Cannibal) Lecter, becomes the third British performer in a row to win an Oscar, following Jeremy Irons for "Reversal of Fortune" and Daniel Day-Lewis for "My Left Foot."

"I'd like to dedicate this to all the women before me who didn't have the chances I had," said Miss Foster, who joins the ranks of repeat Oscar winners. She was named best actress of 1988 for her performance as a rape victim in "The Accused."

'Silence' also brought Oscars to director Jonathan Demme and to Ted Tally for best adapted screenplay.

The film becomes only the third movie to sweep the five major awards. "It Happened One Night" did it in 1934 as did "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in 1975.

Jack Palance, the crusty trail boss in "City Slickers," and Mercedes Ruehl, the war-hardened video store owner in "The Fisher King," won for best supporting performances.

The best foreign film award went to "Mediterraneo," Italian comedy set during World War II.

Another best picture nominee, "JFK," Oliver Stone's assassination polemic, won for film editing.

Last years box-office champion, "Terminator 2: Judgment Day," won three early awards; makeup, sound effects editing and sound.

The races for best picture and the top acting prizes created more than the usual suspense because there were no clear favourites.

"For the first time in years, it's a horse race," said Gilbert Cates, producer of the ceremonies, which were televised live on ABC.

Miss Ruehl, a first-time nominee, recounted her early days as a struggling actress, and added, "At this moment, all of those sort of doleful memories... suddenly transformed themselves into nothing more than the sort of charming and amusing anecdotes from my memoirs."

Palance, a sentimental favorite nominated four decades ago as villains in "Sudden Fear" and "Shane," demonstrated his fitness by performing several push-ups on stage.

The 72-year-old character actor recalled a director telling him in 1949 that he would win an Oscar, "and 42 years later, he was right."

"Beauty and the Beast" — the first animated feature nominated as best picture — bid for consideration as the feel-good choice in a year when other top nominees dealt with murderers, gangsters, presidential assassins and homosexual rape.

Barbra Streisand's "The Prince of Tides" and "JFK" were considered dark horses, benefiting possibly from a split vote for the others.

Billy Crystal, host for the evening, got things off to a lively start by entering in the same hockey mask that Hopkins' character wore in the film to restrain his cannibalistic tendencies.

"I'm having some of the academy over to dinner," Crystal told the actor. "Care to join me?"

Other nominees were Beatty for "Bugsy," Robert De Niro for "Cape Fear," Nick Nolte for "The Prince of Tides" and Robin Williams for "The Fisher King."

Miss Foster hoped to join the ranks of repeat winners.

Outside the Los Angeles Music Center, dozens of whistling and chanting demonstrators protested what they consider negative gay stereotyping by Hollywood. More than 100 police in riot gear and on horseback kept them from interfering with the arriving celebrities. At least 11 people were arrested.

The activists objected to movie version of "Fried Green Tomatoes" of a lesbian relationship that was in the original novel.

Among the glittering celebrities lined up to present awards were former Oscar winners Elizabeth Taylor, Robert Duvall, Denzel Washington, Paul Newman, Michael Douglas, Sally Field, Shirley MacLaine, Kevin Costner, Anjelica Huston, Audrey Hepburn, Goldie Hawn, Whoopi Goldberg, Jessica Tandy, Kathy Bates and Joe Pesci.

Other stars set for the show included Kathleen Turner, Sharon Stone, Patrick Swayze, Sylvester Stallone, Tom Hanks, Annette Bening, Angela Lansbury, Edward James Olmos, John Candy and John Singleton, first black nominee for his direction of this year's "Boyz n the Hood."



HOLLYWOOD: US Actor Jack Palance poses with his Oscar after winning the Academy Award for best supporting actor on March 30 at the 64th Annual Academy Awards ceremony. Palance won for his performance in "City Slicker." —AFP/UNB photo.

She was best actress of 1988 for "The Accused." Her competition this year was Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon for "Thelma and Louise," Laura Dern for "Rambling Rose," and Bette Midler for "For the Boys."

Other stars set for the show included Kathleen Turner, Sharon Stone, Patrick Swayze, Sylvester Stallone, Tom Hanks, Annette Bening, Angela Lansbury, Edward James Olmos, John Candy and John Singleton, first black nominee for his direction of this year's "Boyz n the Hood."

**Main winners**

LOS ANGELES, Mar 31: The following were main winners at Monday's 64th annual Academy Awards ceremony, reports APF.

Best Picture: "The Silence of the Lambs"

Best Actor: Anthony Hopkins, "The Silence of the Lambs"

Best Actress: Jodie Foster, "The Silence of the Lambs"

Best Director: Jonathan Demme, "The Silence of the Lambs"

Best supporting actor: Jack Palance, "City Slickers"

Best supporting actress: Mercedes Ruehl, "The Fisher King"

Best original screenplay: Callie Khouri, "Thelma and Louise"

Best adapted screenplay: Ted Tally, "The Silence of the Lambs"

portrayals in three Oscar-nominated films: a gay serial killer in "The Silence of the Lambs" a homosexual accused of conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy in "JFK" and the removal from the

**Mitterrand looking for new PM**

PARIS, Mar 31: President Francois Mitterrand, his Socialist Party floored by two humiliating elections in a week, was looking Monday for a new prime minister he hopes will put the party he founded back on its feet before legislative elections next year, reports APF.

His first choice to replace the immensely unpopular Edith Cresson was the man public opinion surveys give as France's most liked politician, European Commission President Jacques Delors.

**US proposes ME talks from April 27**

WASHINGTON, Mar 31: The United States has proposed that the next round of Middle East peace talks be held here from April 27, with a later round to be held outside the United States, at Israel's request the State Department said Monday, reports APF.

"We have proposed that the next round take place in Washington D.C beginning on April 27 and that the subsequent round take place at a venue outside the US closer to the region," said State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

She said that Israel and Arab negotiators were asked to propose a list of acceptable sites outside Washington but only Israel had responded as yet.

"Before April 27 we will announce the venue of the subsequent round of talks whether we have received a list or not," she said.

The proposal by the United States and Russia, which are co-sponsoring the peace talks, was sent to Israel, the Palestinians, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, over the weekend, she said.

None have yet responded.

Mideast peace talks began in Madrid in late October.

Three rounds were later held in Washington when the two sides failed to come up with a location acceptable to both sides.

Israel has insisted that the talks be moved to the Middle East or, at least, to Europe while Arab negotiators have lobbied to keep the peace talks in Washington.

But Delors—who has been long reported to be more interested in replacing Mitterrand in 1995 than Cresson now—turned the offer down, his office in Brussels saying he planned to complete his European mandate, which runs until the end of the year.

Cresson spoke for 35 minutes with Mitterrand Monday, but refused to take questions, simply saying "I'll tell you next time," when asked what was happening.

With Delors out of the running, the two likeliest candidates appeared to be Economy Minister Pierre Bergeovoy and Culture Minister and Government spokesman Jack Lang.

The widely expected end of Cresson's 10 month old government is likely to take place Tuesday, the sources said, after final rounds of voting in elections Monday for presidencies of regional councils and two days before parliament opens its spring session.

The regional presidency votes expected to conclude Monday evening were crucial for the socialists, one in their historic stronghold of Nord-Pas-De-Calais and the other in upper Normandy, where Socialist Party boss Laurent Fabius is standing.

In regional elections on March 22 the socialists won only 18.8 per cent of the vote, and on Sunday lost another six departments—as French provinces are called—including the leftist fled of the Nord, which had consistently voted against the right since 1934.

The socialists were left with only 21 of the country's 96 departments, and won only three of the 21 regional presidencies — two of them in controversial votes that ended in two government ministers accused of being elected with the support of the far-right national front.

**Brazilian cabinet resigns**

BRASILIA, BRAZIL, Mar 31: The 12-member Cabinet of President Fernando Collor de Mello resigned Monday but six ministers were asked to stay on, according to Marcos Coimbra, the secretary-general of the presidency, reports AP.

Coimbra said the resignations took place so Collor, whose popularity is sagging following a series of political and personal scandals, could "feel free to name new minister." Coimbra is Collor's brother-in-law.

Collor is a conservative civilian who in 1990 became Brazil's first popularly elected president in almost 30 years.

The six Cabinet members who will remain are: Economy Minister Marcilio Marques Moreira, Health Minister Adib Jatene, Education Minister and acting Environment Secretary Jose Goldemberg, Army Minister Gen Carlos Tinoco, Air Force Minister Brig Socrates Monteiro and Navy Minister Adm Mario Flores.

**Off the Record**

**He was charged with buying sex favours**

PHILADELPHIA: A man charged with buying sexual favours from boys won't get a break from the legal system because he has AIDS and may be suicidal, the district attorney said Monday, reports AP.

"It is in society's best interest, always, to prosecute wrongdoing," said District Attorney Lynne Abraham.

Police say businessman Ed Savitz, who has had full-blown AIDS for about a year, may have paid hundreds of youths for sex, for their underwear, or even for faeces over the past decade. He was held in lieu of \$20 million bail.

Police found 5,000 photographs of boys in his downtown apartment and on Monday found nearly 200 bags of underwear and hundreds of photographs at storage facilities Savitz had been renting since 1989.

As of Monday, Savitz faced 17 counts, five each of sexual abuse of children and corrupting the morals of a minor, three of indecent assault, and two each of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse and promoting prostitution.

Prosecutors said they feared Savitz might kill himself or cause additional harm to others if released. Assistant District Attorney Charles Ehrlich said Savitz had sex with one of the boys as recently as last Wednesday.

The city Health Department said Monday that many callers to AIDS hot lines indicated that "Savitz insisted that his partners wear a condom before performing anal sex."

**And now with the preschool children**

FARMVILLE, N.C.: A jury on Monday began weighing evidence from 143 witnesses to determine if a former day care center operator molested 12 children in his small-town preschool, reports AP.

Robert F. Kelly Jr., who owned the now-closed Little Rascals Day Care Center with his wife, Elizabeth, is charged with 100 counts of sexual abuse. He could get 40 life terms plus 600 years in prison if convicted on all charges.

The eight-month trial has cost North Carolina more than \$1 million, and is described as the states longest and costliest criminal prosecution.

Since August, jurors have heard testimony from 143 witnesses, including eight boys and four girls who recounted tales of abuse at the preschool in Edenton, 120 miles (190 kilometers) east of Raleigh. They began deliberating Monday morning.

**Mao plane appears soon**

HARBIN: A Soviet IL-14 plane, used by the late chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976), will appear soon at the China aviation museum in Beijing, reports Xinhua.

The IL-14 was given to Mao as a gift by the former Soviet leader Stalin. It was previously kept at an air base in Harbin, the capital city of northeast China's Heilongjiang province. The plane concluded its last flight from Harbin to Beijing on March 26.

The museum, which is located in north Beijing, has collected more than 200 aircrafts in 96 categories from home and abroad. It is believed to be the third largest aviation museum in the world.



PAKISTAN: An unidentified Pakistani journalist inspects the rope with which police wanted to neutralise Pakistani and foreign journalists on March 30 following a meeting held by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Chairman Raja Muzaffar. A heavy police contingent headed by Qamar Zaman (L) arrested the journalists to release them some 45 minutes later. —AFP/UNB photo

**BRIEFLY**

**Cambodian truce talks begin:** Field commanders of the Cambodian armies confronting each other in central Kompong Thom province have opened ceasefire talks in a Honeymoon Bungalow compound, reports Reuters from Cambodia.

UN peacekeeping officials voiced optimism that the talks on Monday night could silence the guns in the country's last major battlefield, where three months of intermittent skirmishes and running battles have killed 100 and created thousands of new refugees.

**Turkish planes raid Sidakan:** Turkish aircraft attack eight villages in Sidakan valley in remote northern Iraq yesterday, Kurdish officials said, Reuters reports from Iraq.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) officials said the raids took place late on Monday morning, but they reported no casualties.

United Nations radio reports indicated two people wounded in the bombing had been taken to Saidiq hospital in the town of Dyana.

**US may not open file on Thai PM:** The United States is unlikely to publicly document its charge that Thailand's Prime Minister-designate, Nangrong Wongwan, is involved in international drug trafficking, a senior official said on Monday, Reuters reports from Washington.

Asked if the State department was prepared to open its files on the Thai leader, spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler told reporters: "I doubt it."

She refused to answer any more questions on the matter, saying, "It's my understanding they (Thais) are still in the process of forming that new government. It has not been formed."

**NCNA criticises Li:** China's state news agency published rare criticism of Prime Minister Li Peng Tuesday saying his conservative approach to economic growth was out of step with the spirit of reform, reports Reuters from Beijing.

The official New China News Agency said delegates to a current meeting of parliament were unhappy at Li's suggestion that economic growth be set at six per cent in 1992.

In 1991, the growth rate of China's Gross National Product (GNP) was seven per cent, but the GNP rate for this year is set at six per cent. This does not accord with the spirit of speeding up economic development, the agency quoted Wei Mingyi, a deputy representing the army, as saying.

China's economic growth rate has become a key battleground in a fight between conservative Marxists and economic reformers led by 87-year-old Deng Xiaoping.

**Tagore's letters in Museum:** Letters written by Rabindranath Tagore to Sir Aautosh Mukherjee and his son Shyamprasad Mukherjee were donated to Rabindra Museum, Visha Bharati by Umprasad Mukherjee, reports PTI from Santiniketan.

Umprasad Mukherjee, the youngest son of Sir Aautosh Mukherjee, in a brief function held Santiniketan recently presented the original thirteen letters to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sabyasachi Bhattacharyya.

**Pretoria accepts ANC call**

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 31: South Africa's white-minority government shifted towards Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) here Monday by accepting that an elected assembly should help write a new constitution, reports APF.

Constitutional Development Minister Gerrit Viljoen told a news conference at the country's key multi-party constitutional talks, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), that an elected body, not just an ad-hoc forum of acknowledged black and white leaders, was now government policy.

**Azeris put up portraits of Khomeini, throw out Lenin**

BAKU, Azerbaijan, Mar 31: Throughout Azerbaijan, Mus lims have thrown out pictures of Lenin and put up portraits of Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the most powerful symbol of militant Islam, reports AP.

"He is a holy teacher, we respect him," said Sabir Kazi Husein, vice chairman of the Muslim Religious Board for Transcaucasia as he fingered a sheaf of Khomeini portraits sent by Iranian clergy men.

Khomeini's frequent visage is the most visible sign of Iran's presence in Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic of 7 million mainly Muslim people, Azerbaijan, which shares a 800-kilo-meter border with Iran, became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union last December.

Iran is trying to increase its clout with its neighbour as a battle unfolds with rival Turkey for influence in Azerbaijan.

On the economic front, Azerbaijanis will soon be able to buy Iranian food and clothing in a two-story marble department store that

was built in Baku with Iranian government support.

Iran also may help Azerbaijan market its oil, which made up 10 per cent of the production of the former Soviet Union.

On the diplomatic front, Iran has tried to broker peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia in their four-year conflict over the mainly Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

On the cultural front, Azerbaijani students have been invited to study in Iranian cities. A large Iranian book store opened in August in downtown Baku with rows of Qurans as well as anti-American books in English.

Some of the books are in Azerbaijani, a Turkic language easily understood in Turkey. Most are in Farsi, the official language of Iran that is written in the Arabic alphabet. The majority of Azerbaijanis cannot speak or read Farsi, but Iranian officials clearly hope they will learn.

Azerbaijanis are Shi'ite Muslims, the faith of nearly all the population of Iran, including

roughly 8 million ethnic Azerbaijanis who live in northern Iran. Most people in Turkey are Sunni Muslims.

Ancient Shi'ite rites have survived decades of religious suppression in Azerbaijan.

During the funeral in the city of Agdam last month for Azerbaijanis killed by Armenians in a massacre in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijani women repeatedly chanted "Shakshi Vakhsai."

The chant is part of ceremonies observed on the most important Shi'ite holy day, which marks the murder by Sunni Muslims in the year 680 of Hussein, the second son of Ali, whom Shi'ites consider the rightful, successor of Mohammed.

Although the chant survived in the rite, none of the mourners in Agdam could tell a reporter what it meant.

Iran is playing a direct role in trying to revive Islam in Azerbaijan. Iran provided some money to restore the Agdam mosque, one of 17 working mosques in Azerbaijan. A portrait

of Khomeini hangs inside. There are about 3,000 mosques in Azerbaijani religious authorities hope someday they will all be open.

Along with Iran's growing religious influence, unification of the Azerbaijani people is a potentially explosive issue. Unification is opposed by Iran, which twice this century has waged civil war to prevent the secession of Iranian Azerbaijan.

The issue is alive, however, in the republic of Azerbaijan.

A caretaker of the Agdam mosque said many would like to unite with the Azerbaijanis in Iran to make a strong republic.

The Azerbaijanis have been separated since the 1820s, when their territory was divided between Persia and Russia.

"The Iranian government is really scared of this," said Nasir Bey, a leader of the Azerbaijani Popular Front. "The issue of unification will be raised at some point, but we will wait for the Azerbaijanis in Iran to warm to the idea and then we will sit down and talk."

**North rejects South Korea's proposal**

SEOUL, South Korea, Mar 31: North Korea on Tuesday rejected South Korea's proposal to quickly set up a joint military commission to implement the non-aggression pact they adopted last month, officials said, reports AP.

The discord at a border meeting reflected the wide differences that remain between the rival Koreans on how to end decades of Cold War confrontation even after adoption of the pact.

It was the second inter-Korean meeting on non-aggression since the pact was adopted February 18. The first meeting on March 13 also made no significant progress.