

Tamil Liberation Army blows up Gandhi statue

MADRAS, Jan 26: Three powerful bomb explosions set off by a pro LTTE outfit, Tamil Liberation Army, (TLA) damaged the Mahatma Gandhi Statue and two town Congress (I) offices in three different places in Tamil Nadu in the early hours yesterday. No casualties were reported, says PTI.

According to police a bomb exploded in the municipal office in Villupuram in south Arcot district around 0225 hrs blowing up a bronze bust of Mahatma Gandhi in the compound.

The other two explosions occurred in Athur in Salem district and Kudavasal near Nagapattinam a little later damaging town Congress (I) offices in those places.

Protesting against the explosions, the Congress (I) workers attempted to picket

buses and over 100 workers of the party including the south Arcot district Congress (I) President, Janakiraman, MLA, were arrested.

A portrait of LTTE leader, and proclaimed offender in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, V Prabhakaran was found at the site of the blast at Villupuram along with hand written posters of the TLA.

In the other two places only posters were found.

The hand written TLA posters recovered from all the three places listed charges against the central and state governments including the banning of the LTTE and the arrest of LTTE activists. They also blamed the governments for the death of LTTE leader, Kittu, last week off Madras coast when his ship was cornered by the Indian naval ships.

Return of Palestinian deportees Ghali wants SC to make Israel comply with resolution

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 26: The UN Secretary General has recommended the Security Council take "whatever measures are required" to ensure that Israel complies with a resolution demanding the return of more than 400 Palestinians deported to southern Lebanon, reports AP.

Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, in a report addressed to council members late Monday, said "I intend to initiate discussion with the Israeli authorities regarding the establishment of a United Nations monitoring mechanism in the occupied territories."

AP adds: Israel's UN ambassador Gad Yaacobi said Israel regretted the secretary-general's approach, which it felt was "one-sided and totally ignores the background" behind

the deportations. Israel radio said Boutros-Ghali also urged the world body to create a new mechanism to monitor the Israeli-occupied territories to ensure Palestinians' rights were respected.

Yaacobi, interviewed on the radio, confirmed news accounts of Boutros-Ghali's recommendation to the UN Security Council.

He added that the report was "not explicit" about whether sanctions against Israel were recommended for failing to comply with Security Council Resolution 799.

The resolution calls on Israel to return the Palestinians who were expelled Dec 17 as alleged members of the radical Muslim fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements.

Israeli officials have said they hope the United States

would use its veto in the Security Council to block any sanctions against Israel. US Ambassador to Israel William Harrop told army radio he hoped the situation would be resolved before a decision on a US veto was necessary.

Israel has refused to permit the men back before their expulsions of up to two years are up. Some of the men have been returned to their homes in the occupied territories after Israel admitted it expelled them by mistake.

Boutros-Ghali's report accused Israel of "defying the authority of the Security Council," the radio said. It was issued after visits by two special UN envoys in the past two weeks failed to persuade Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to change his mind.

Yaacobi said Israel was studying the seven-page document issued in New York on

Monday.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Israel would undertake an "intensive" diplomatic campaign to avoid UN measures.

Peres said if Israel didn't take steps against Hamas the movement "would have continued going wild in the territories, trying to kill the negotiations and those who are negotiating."

The Palestinians were deported after six Israeli troops were killed in 10 day. Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed four of the killings and were accused of the other two.

Israel Supreme Court finished hearing arguments in the case against the deportations Monday but has not said when a decision would be made. Israeli officials have said they would comply if the court deems the expulsions were illegal.

Off the Record



LOS ANGELES: Actress Elizabeth Taylor (L) and singer Michael Jackson hold one of two awards he won Monday at the American Music Awards. Jackson won for the favourite single in the Soul/Rhythm category, "Remember the Time," and favourite album in the Pop/Rock category, "Dangerous." Taylor presented Jackson with a special International Artist Award. — AFP/UNB photo

'Love ultimate truth at heart of all creation'

LOS ANGELES: Michael Jackson received his third special award from the hands of actress Elizabeth Taylor and won another two trophies late Monday for the most honours at the 20th annual American Music Awards, reports AP.

After receiving the international artists award, the megastar who has criss-crossed the globe and contributed small fortunes to help needy children said that love was "the ultimate truth at the heart of all creation."

The award he received -- the third after an honorary merit award in 1984 and an Achievement Award in 1989 -- will also bear his name in future.

Jackson won two other awards for favourite Pop Rock album for "Dangerous" and favourite soul-rhythm and blues single for "remember the time."

Winners of two American Music Awards this year included Michael Bolton, Mariah Carey, Billy Ray Cyrus, Pearl Jam, Kriss Kross and Boyz II Men.

Mother forced her daughters to be prostitutes

BANGKOK: A Thai woman has been accused of chaining up her two teenaged daughters and selling them for prostitution, police said yesterday, reports Reuter.

The children, 13 and 15 years old, escaped from their mother on Monday in Nakorn Sithammarat province, 1,100 km (700 miles) south of Bangkok, and told police that in the past year she had forced them to be prostitutes.

The sisters told police their mother chained them up and beat them if they resisted having sex with men.

Police said they arrested Deang Sritthamayot, 37, on charges of procuring and forcing youngsters to have sex against their will.

Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has announced a major crackdown on child prostitution in Thailand.

Quayle has sold his memoirs for 1m dollar

WASHINGTON: Former Vice President Dan Quayle has sold his memoirs for at least 1 million dollar, according to a published reports, says AP.

The Washington Post cites unidentified sources in Tuesday's edition as saying a seven-figure deal was struck with Harper Collins and that the book will begin with Quayle's selection as George Bush's running-mate in 1988 and end with last November's election.

The Post said that in addition to mainstream bookstores, the publisher intends to sell the book through its religious subsidiary in Christian-oriented markets -- much as it did the highly successful memoirs of Oliver North.

The paper said the Quayle book probably will be published in the fall of 1994 and that the proposal was shown to only three publishers.

Quayle was a controversial figure during his four years as vice president, with critics pointing to his numerous embarrassing gaffes and behind-the-scenes circumventing of legislation.

BRIEFLY

Ishaq greets Sharma: The Pakistan President and Prime Minister have sent messages of felicitations to Indian leaders on the occasion of India's 43rd National Day Monday expressing the desire of establishing tension free relations with the neighbour, reports Xinhua from Islamabad.

In his message to Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma, President Ishaq Khan said Pakistan sincerely desires to establish tension free and cooperative relations with India.

"Such a relationship would best serve the interests of our two countries as well as strengthen peace and stability in the region," he said.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his message to his Indian counterpart Narasimha Rao expressed his confidence that with mutual efforts, Pakistan and India would be able to establish good neighbourly and cooperative relations.

Former Tunisian PM Nouria dead: Former Tunisian Prime Minister Hedi Nouria died Monday following a long illness, the official television announced. He was 82, reports AP from Tunisia.

Nouria, who retired from politics in February 1980 following a debilitating heart attack, had headed the government for a decade beginning in 1970, this North African nation's second prime minister.

He had earlier served as finance minister in the government of Prime Minister Bahi Ladgham after Tunisian independence from France in 1956 and was the first governor of the Central Bank of Tunisia.

Born in April 1911, in Monastir, the hometown of former President Habib Bourguiba, Nouria was trained as a lawyer. He launched his political career with Bourguiba, helping found the Neo-Destour Party in 1934, which campaigned for Tunisian independence. Nouria was its Paris representative.

Two UN troops killed in Croatia: Two French UN peace-keepers were killed during artillery exchanges between Serb and Croat forces in the Krajina area of Croatia on Monday, a UN spokeswoman told Radio France-INFO from Zagreb, reports Reuter from Paris.

Spokeswoman Shannon Boyd said a further three French soldiers were wounded during exchanges of heavy artillery and tank fire in the area of Zadar, on the Croatian coast.

Croatian government troops launched an offensive on Friday to recapture areas of southeastern Croatia held by Serb forces since last year.

Peruvian govt to evaluate media: The State Department expressed concern Monday over a recent statement by President Alberto Fujimori of Peru that his intelligence service will monitor the news media to guard against potential subversive influence, reports AP from Washington.

"We are concerned that this statement will intimidate reporters who are performing their duties in a routine, professional manner," the department said in a written response to press questions.

Fujimori told a news conference last week the media will be "continually evaluated" because "state security, as in all democratic countries, takes priority over any other consideration."

Anti-Iranian rally in Istanbul: Thousands of mourners chanting anti-Iranian slogans marched through Istanbul Monday night to protest against the killing of prominent Turkish journalist Ugur Mumcu, Reuter reports from Istanbul.

Mumcu was killed by a car bomb in Ankara on Sunday. Police said 10,000 people, including journalists, lawyers and human rights activists marched through Istanbul to the Cumhuriyet newspaper where Mumcu had been an investigative reporter and an editorial writer.

20 anti-govt protesters killed in Togo

LOME, Jan 26: At least 20 people were killed when police opened fire on a crowd seeking the end of military rule, French cabinet minister Marcel Debarge said, reports AP.

Thousands of demonstrators had gathered Monday to protest the rule of President Gen. Gnassingbe Eyadema, accused of the military to block scheduled elections. His troops are alleged to have killed hundreds of political opponents.

French Cooperation Minister Debarge and German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Helmut Schaeffer met Eyadema to try to resolve the ongoing political crisis.

They said they saw 12 bodies in a morgue and Debarge said he had confirmed at least 20 deaths. Journalists said bodies, mostly of young people, had bullet wounds.

Major joins Indian Republic Day celebration

NEW DELHI, Jan 26: Prime Minister John Major of Britain joined India's leaders and hundreds of thousands of spectators on Tuesday at a military parade marking the 43rd anniversary of the constitution India adopted after winning independence from the British Empire, reports AP.

Thousands of soldiers marched down Raj Path, a wide road linking the Presidential Palace and India Gate, a 100-foot-tall archway that India colonial rulers built to honor British and Indian soldiers killed in World War I.

The soldiers who marched down the road Tuesday were dressed in the crisp, colorful uniforms of their regiments. Some played in bands; some rode elephants, horses or camels; and many simply marched by holding a rifle in one arm and snapping the other arm up and down in time with the music.

Huge colorful floats, put together by India's 25 states and

often based on their local folklore, followed the soldiers. As a group, the floats appeared to celebrate the cultural diversity of India.

One float was filled with huge sunflowers whose seeds were being eaten by large bees. Another encouraged birth control in this overpopulated nation of 875 million people by showing a husband and wife with only two children.

The floats were followed by large groups of dancers in elaborate outfits. In one, the dancers were dressed as peacocks, India's national bird.

As the parade ended, troops raced by performing stunts on motorcycles. One soldier rode by atop a tall leader connected to the empty seat of his motorcycle. Twenty-five others rode by stacked in a pyramid atop seven motorbikes.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma saluted each regiment as it passed the reviewing stand where he stood alongside other government offi-

Clinton firm to lift ban on gays in armed forces

WASHINGTON, Jan 26: President Bill Clinton on Monday refused to back down in the face of strong opposition from the military and Congress and vowed to implement his pledge to lift a ban on homosexuals in the armed forces, reports Reuter.

Clinton met for nearly two hours with the six Joint Chiefs of Staff, including Chairman General Colin Powell, and a spokesman said afterwards the meeting was "cordial, honest and respectful" but that Clinton was unswayed.

Spokesman George Stephanopoulos said Clinton would announce his policy reiterated his commitment to ending discrimination against homosexuals in the military solely on the basis of status, and to maintaining morale and cohesion in the military, he said.

The Joint Chiefs expressed their concerns and difficulties with the President's commitment, but also expressed their respect for his decision-making power as Commander-in-Chief, he said, adding that none of them mentioned any threats to resign if Clinton goes ahead.

Clinton spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers said Clinton would meet this morning with Democratic and Republican

leaders of Congress to discuss their concerns about his plans.

The White House believes the ban can be overturned by a presidential order but there are rumblings in Congress that such an order could be reversed by legislation.

Senate armed services Chairman Sam Nunn, a Clinton ally, served notice on Monday. He opposes the fledgling President on this issue and will insist on its right to have a say in any change of policy.

The constitution of the United States puts this responsibility on the Congress of the United States as well as the President," the Democrat told a news conference.

Clinton made clear in advance he was sticking by his pledge, made during the election campaign in which he won overwhelming support from homosexuals, to allow gays and lesbians into the military.

"I intend to keep by commitment," Clinton told reporters a few hours before military brass arrived. "I want their input on how we should do it."

However, Defence Secretary Els Aspin warned on Sunday that Clinton faces defeat in Congress if he lifts the ban.



President Clinton holding talks with Joint Chiefs of Staff at White House on Monday. — Star TV photo

11 more killed in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR, (India) Jan 26: At least 11 people were killed in fresh violence in Kashmir on Monday on the eve of India's Republic Day and officials said the army had been put on alert after militants threatened to disrupt the celebrations, reports Reuter.

In Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital, security forces cordoned off several sensitive areas on Monday to try to flush out separatist militants.

Police said they had received reports that militants were planning violence to disrupt the annual celebrations. They did not elaborate.

They reported clashes between militants and security forces in Srinagar and elsewhere in the Himalayan valley on Monday.

An army officer and three soldiers and a militant of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front were among the dead, police said.

Sharif off to Zurich

ISLAMABAD, Jan 26: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left for Zurich today on a five-day visit to Switzerland during which he is to represent Pakistan at the World Economic Forum, official sources said, reports AP.

The forum's 23rd annual session starting at Davos from Thursday is to continue until February 2.

Sharif is accompanied by his Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz, Industries Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Kanju.

Before this departure Kanju told reporters at Islamabad Airport the Prime Minister would also exchange views with world leaders and top businessmen participating at the Davos conference, on Economic issues and matters of bilateral interest and global development.

US may recognise Angolan govt

WASHINGTON, Jan 26: The United States is moving toward diplomatic recognition of the Angolan government for the first time, more than 17 years after the country gained its independence, State Department officials say, reports AP.



NEW DELHI: British Prime Minister John Major is assisted by a groundskeeper while tying his shoe moments after placing a flower wreath upon the cremation site of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the capital on Monday. — AFP/UNB photo

Yeltsin pledges to build new ties with India

MOSCOW, Jan 26: Russian President Boris Yeltsin pledged Monday to build new relations with India that would put an end to former Soviet concerns with influence in South Asia, reports AP.

"The Soviet Union played India against China. We do not want to build relations based on those conditions," Yeltsin told reporters as he prepared for his first official visit to India from tomorrow to Friday.

"We want to build a new type of relationship that will preserve the positive aspects of the former relations between our country," he stated.

The Russian leader was scheduled to hold talks with Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao on his arrival tomorrow and at least ten agreements were ready to be signed, with an additional four undergoing finishing touches, Interfax reported.

Yeltsin added that bilateral relations should not be de-

veloped with the aim of consolidating power against another bloc of countries as had been the practice during the Cold War.

He confirmed that Russia would sign a new friendship treaty with India to replace the 1971 accord that established relations between the former Soviet Union and India, its most important strategic ally in the south Asian area.

Leaders of both countries were also scheduled to discuss India's \$6.2 billion debt to Russia (\$500 million dollars) built up at a time when the Soviet ruble was at par with the Indian rupee.

"We have recent disagreements on the amount owned," Yeltsin however, said, hinting at difficult talks over repayment.

The President also confirmed Russia's decision to sell rocket boosters to India, despite US protests last year over the sale estimated at \$900 million dollars.