

Israel able to make 100 N-bombs, India 60

STOCKHOLM, Mar 1: Israel may have enough nuclear materials to make almost 100 nuclear bombs, India could make as many as 60 bombs and its arch rival Pakistan up to 10, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute said Monday, reports AP.

North Korea could accumulate enough plutonium for four to seven nuclear weapons by the end of 1995, SIPRI said.

None of these countries have confirmed they have a nuclear weapons programme, through Pakistan and India admit they are able to make weapons.

The estimates were included in what SIPRI said was the first comprehensive study of the quantities and whereabouts of weapon-grade plutonium and uranium produced

since the discovery of nuclear power 50 years ago.

The report said there was a total of about 1,000 metric tons of plutonium and 1,300 tons of highly enriched uranium in the world. A few kilograms (less than 10 pounds) of either substance can be used to make a nuclear device.

Controlling and disposing these vast quantities is one of the most serious challenges facing the international community, SIPRI said.

Most of the world's stocks are in the hands of the major nuclear powers — the United States, the former Soviet Union, Britain, France and China.

But civilian nuclear power plants, which generate plutonium as a by-product, can be used as a platform for nuclear weapon programmes in other

countries. Another serious threat of nuclear proliferation follows possible lack of control of nuclear weapons in the crumbling Soviet empire, which has the world's biggest arsenal, SIPRI said.

The 246-page report estimated there is 720 tons of weapons-grade uranium stored in the former Soviet Union, mostly in warheads due to be dismantled in line with the START I, START II and INF treaties.

The United States signed an agreement with the Russians in February to buy 500 tons of the enriched uranium to help ensure the stocks do not fall in the wrong hands.

SIPRI said some countries appeared to be backing away from former nuclear ambitions, including Argentina,

Brazil, South Africa and Taiwan. Iraq could have had its first nuclear bomb next year, had it not been for the Gulf War, it said.

Iran and North Korea remained high on the list of countries suspected of attempting to construct nuclear weapons, the report said.

SIPRI said about 20 per cent of the world stocks of plutonium was held by countries outside the five nuclear weapon states. Most of it was in the form of spent nuclear waste from civilian power production. Separating such plutonium for use in nuclear weapons requires sophisticated technology and know-how.

SIPRI estimated that by the end of 1991 Israel produced 240-415 kilograms (533-922

pounds) of weapon-grade plutonium, and could have constructed 54-98 nuclear weapon devices. Pakistan had enough material of 6-10 nuclear weapons and India enough for almost 60 bombs, the report said.

The slashing of the superpowers nuclear weapon arsenals is creating a huge excess of highly enriched uranium and weapon-grade plutonium. As a result, production of weapon-grade uranium has virtually ceased, SIPRI said, but civilian nuclear power production continues to churn out new plutonium.

It seems likely that the production of weapon-grade plutonium is reaching an upper limit, even though three military production reactors still operated in Russia in early

1993, the report said.

The report stressed the need to end the oversupply of civilian plutonium. Much of it will have to be treated as waste, while highly enriched uranium can be diluted and used as nuclear fuel. It also called for greater transparency surrounding these materials and said the UN should publish annual statistics on every country's holdings.

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Danish oil tanker runs aground

LONDON, Mar 1: An empty Danish oil tanker ran aground just off the coast of Cleveland, northeastern England, on Sunday due to winds of 80 to 90 kilometres an hour, coast guard officials said, reports AFP.

The winds considerably interfered with rescue operations, and almost cost one rescue worker his life, they said.

The Danish tanker, the Freja Svea was flying the Bahamas flag and weighed 52,500 tonnes, according to Lloyds. It was moored Sunday off the coast of Cleveland, and the crew was unable to bring up an anchor chain. The storm then ran the vessel aground.

Most US military men opposed to lift ban on homosexuals

LOS ANGELES, Mar 1: Almost three-quarters of US military personnel are opposed to a plan to lift a ban on homosexuals in the military, according to a poll published Sunday by the Los Angeles Times, reports AFP.

Of 2,300 members of the armed forces questioned, 74 per cent said they opposed President Bill Clinton's plan to lift the ban with 18 per cent in favour.

A total 81 per cent said that the lifting of the ban on homosexuals would lead to widespread violence in the armed forces. But only 10 per cent said they would quit the armed forces if the ban were lifted.

Public Prosecutor Hamad Ibrahim said the court decided to postpone the trial until March 20 after he recommended that it turn down their appeal against sentences of six years in jail.

It was the fourth postponement.

The lawyers to the defendants also asked for their release on bail but their request was rejected, he told AFP by telephone from Sharjah, where

the 10 local actors, all Hindus, are being tried.

The 10 were sentenced to imprisonment and deportation in October after staging a play judged to be insulting to both Islam and Christianity.

The actors, who are from the Indian state of Kerala but live in the UAE, were arrested in June. The play, staged in Sharjah on May 28, triggered public outrage.

The author of the play, Vayala Pillai, was sentenced in absentia to six years in jail. Last week, he sent a letter to the Sharjah court protesting the sentence and defending his play.

Indian actors' trial in UAE postponed

ABU DHABI, Mar 1: A United Arab Emirates (UAE) court has postponed hearing an appeal for 10 Indian actors convicted of blasphemy, the prosecutor said Sunday, reports AP.

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Lottery for US residence visa soon

WASHINGTON, Mar 1: If you're an alien who wants to live in the United States permanently, all you need are a pencil, paper, a stamped envelope — and a little luck, reports AP.

For the third and final year, the State Department is organizing a 'visa lottery' that will give natives from 37 countries or territories a shot at a US residence visa.

Applicants need only mail in their name, date and place of birth and mailing address. Also required are the names and birth dates of family members and the location of the nearest US consulate.

As lotteries go, the odds for this one are fairly good: The ratio of qualified applicants to winners last year was 20 to 1.

As before, there will be 40,000 winners, of whom

16,000 must be Irish. The pro-Irish tilt of the ground rules reflects the clout of the Irish lobby on Capitol Hill.

The lottery discriminates in other ways as well. Citizens from virtually all European countries are eligible but all of sub-Saharan Africa is ineligible as is all of Latin America except for Argentina and all of Asia except for Japan.

The legislation reflects the view that revisions in immigration law over the years discriminated against Europeans. A lottery rigged in favour of Europeans was seen as the best way to correct the imbalance.

A year ago, applications were accepted from about 800,000 aliens, and there were more winners from Poland than any other country, including Ireland, because of

an avalanche of applications from that country.

There were 19,856 winners from Poland, 16,000 Ireland, 1,052 from Britain, 970 from Japan and 825 from Indonesia.

A 30-day mail-in period begins Tuesday. Applications received outside that time frame are considered invalid. Winners are chosen at random regardless of the time of receipt during the mail-in period. Only one application per entrant is allowed.

In some countries, especially Japan, consultants have charged high fees in past years to help facilitate the lottery application. Fees can range as high as 500 dollars. But US officials consider such outlays a waste of money.

The fact that anyone would pay someone 20,000 yen (160 dollar) to buy a 100-yen (80-

cent) postage stamp and mail a letter for him does not make much sense," the US Consul General in Japan, Michael Carpenter, wrote in a letter to a Japanese newspaper at the time of last year's lottery.

Following is the list of countries whose citizens are eligible for the lottery

Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Guadeloupe, New Caledonia, Germany, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Bermuda, Gibraltar, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, San Marino, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and Tunisia.

South's step to break deadlock with N Korea

SEOUL, Mar 1: South Korea may consider approving limited economic cooperation with North Korea in the hopes of breaking a deadlock in inter-Korean relations, sources say, reports AP.

Reliable government sources say the step is part of President Kim Young-sam's "new and progressive approach" to concerns that North Korea may be trying to build a nuclear bomb.

Last week CIA Director R/James Woolsey said in congressional testimony that "there is the real possibility that North Korea has already manufactured enough fissile material for at least one nuclear weapon and is hiding

this" from the UN International Atomic Energy Agency.

South Korean Unification Minister Han Wan-sang said in a KBS television interview over the weekend that the government is seeking a new course of action.

Economic incentives long have been considered the most compelling reason for North Korea to open its closed society and comply with international demands for nuclear inspections.

Under the current policy of South Korea and its allies, the North will be offered improved ties and economic cooperation only after it accepts full international and inter-Korean nuclear inspections.

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Arab kills 2 Israelis

AN ARAB stabbed and killed two Israelis in south Tel Aviv and wounded at least six others Monday, hospital officials and Israel army radio said, reports AP from Jerusalem.

Dr Bianca Lederman, a spokeswoman for Tel Aviv's Ichilov hospital, told Israel radio that two of the victims died at the hospital, three were being operated on and two were in stable condition.

She said rest of the victims had only slight wounds.

Israel radio said the victims were eight men and one woman.

A taxi driver, identified as Arich, told army radio he saw an Arab with a knife fleeing a group of young men who eventually caught and began beating him.

China limits school fees: The Chinese government has ordered limits on the fees that public schools charge their pupils in an effort to curb an increase in dropouts, an official newspaper said Monday, reports AP from Beijing.

The China Daily said some schools are charging several hundred yuan (tens of dollars) per semester in book fees, health care fees, heating and light fees and even exam fees. It said the fees were one factor in a one-third increase in the number of junior high school dropouts last year, with nearly 6 per cent of students ending their studies.

The new order by the State Education Commission says fee increases must be approved by the local government, the paper said. It did not, however, set a specific limit on the total amount that can be charged.

Kim for an end to corruption: President Kim Young-sam called Monday for an end to corruption, saying that "the country today is clearly not the land of morality that our ancestors envisioned," reports AP from Seoul.

Clean government is the key theme for Kim's newly installed civilian government, the first in three decades not led by an army general or ex-general.

"Almost unaware, we have let misdeeds and corruption pervade our society," he said in a speech marking the 74th anniversary of the movement for independence from Japanese colonial rule.

PRD names new leader: Mexico's opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) named a new leader Sunday to clear the way for its founder, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, to run for President in 1994, reports AP from Mexico City.

Cardenas resigned from the center-left party's top post on Friday. Senator Roberto Robles was named new interim President Sunday.

The son of a popular former President, Cardenas ran for President against Carlos Salinas De Gortari of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 1988.

Salinas was declared the winner, but opposition parties on the left and right accused the PRI of using fraud to steal the election.

Floods claim 3 in Fiji: Floods claimed three lives and caused widespread damage in Fiji's sugarcane belt in the west of the main island of Viti Levu at the weekend, police said yesterday, reports AFP from Suva.

Torrential rain and high winds broke a road bridge near Nadi International Airport, 125 kilometres (75 miles) west of here, and disrupted flights.

Spokesmen for the five-star Regent and Sheraton hotels at Nadi said the floodwaters had subsided yesterday and roads had reopened to traffic.

Clan divisions threaten peace talks in Somalia

MOGADISHU, Mar 1: Somalia's warlords face an uphill task to bury clan differences and end factional fighting after agreeing to peace talks to explore ways to set up an interim government, diplomats say, reports Reuter.

The fighting which flared in the southern port of Kismayu and the capital Mogadishu in the past few days underlined the deep clan divisions in the famine-stricken country.

The fighting is all about strengthening their respective clans," one diplomat involved in the peace talks said on Sunday.

The violence has been the worst since a US-led multinational task force arrived in December to protect aid supplies from looters.

Eleven people were killed last week in Kismayu when supporters of warlords Omer Jess and Mohamed said Hersi, known as Morgan, flexed their muscles in a struggle for territory and political clout.

The violence spread to Mogadishu where witnesses said nine people were killed. Three Nigerian troops and three US marines were injured. Two Somalis were killed in Kismayu on Sunday in fresh outbreak of clan violence.

Relief workers said that, although all of Somalia's 15 warring factions spoke of reconciliation, deep clan divisions threatened peace talks due on March 15 in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

A preparatory all-party panel met behind closed doors on Saturday and agreed on a 16-item agenda for the UN-sponsored conference, including restoration of human rights, national reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Ortega refused to elaborate

on the issue, but said the offer to discuss the prisoners was part of an effort by Saddam to "open a new era" in regional and international relations.

"They are ready to discuss the problem in the open and clarify every point," he told The Associated Press through an interpreter.

The Iraqi leadership, Ortega said, "is willing to live up to the pledge that Kuwait is a closed chapter."

"It is time other regional leaders took a new look at the entire situation in the post-Gulf War period and realize that their interests would be better protected in an atmosphere of accommodation and free dialogue," Ortega added.

Ortega, who led Nicaragua's Sandinista movement that overthrew Anastasio Somoza in 1979, now heads the Nicaraguan opposition. He lost power when he lost the 1990 presidential election.

He was among a host of officials who tried to reach a diplomatic solution after Iraq's August 2, 1990, invasion of Kuwait.

Ortega said he had been asked by assistant secretary-general of the Arab League, Ibrahim Idris, to raise the prisoner issue with Saddam.

Ortega said the Iraqis told him that "some of the people whose names appeared on a list provided by Idris" are already back in Kuwait.

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THANDIKULAM: A Tamil man, T Dharmaratnam, is handcuffed to a make-shift barbed wire cell on Saturday after he was found carrying 16 gold coins on his way to Tamil guerilla-controlled territory just north of this village. —AFP/UNB photo

Saddam wants new ties with Arabs, West

AMMAN, Mar 1: Former Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said Sunday that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein wants to open a new chapter in relations with the Arab world and the West, reports AP.

As a goodwill gesture, Saddam offered to publicly discuss Kuwaiti allegations that Iraq is still holding about 800 prisoners captured during Iraq's seven month occupation of the Emirate Ortega said on his way home from visiting Baghdad.

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3 Muslims killed in Filipino clashes

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Mar 1: Police pursuing Muslim rebels who massacred 25 government troopers last month killed three rebels Monday in separate clashes on the southern island of Basilan, officers said, reports AP.

Also Monday, a senior national police official said the rebels were the prime suspects in the bombing Sunday of the airport in Zamboanga.

Chief Superintendent Wilfredo Cruz, director of the national police's Aviation Security Command, said the bombing was intended to divert military operations away from Basilan, which is off this port city, about 880 kilometers (550 miles) south of Manila.

Superintendent Indo Ho, Basilan provincial police commander, said troopers from the police mobile force company and the Special Action Force first encountered about 40 rebels Sunday in the village of Limbo-opas in Tipo-tipo town.

Ho said one M-79 grenade launcher and two hand grenades were recovered from the slain rebels. Village residents told police they saw the rebels carry away five injured comrades, he added.

The government has launched a massive police and military operation against members of the secessionist Moro national Liberation Front who massacred 21 Philippine marines and four militiamen last month.

More than 80,000 civilians have been displaced and dozens of people have been killed since the operation began.

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