

Shining Path rebels break out of jail: 5 killed

LIMA, Mar 29: About 70 prisoners, most of them Shining Path guerrillas, broke out of a jail near Cuzco on Sunday night after a car bomb exploded in the perimeter of the facility, leaving four guerrillas and a policeman dead, police said, reports Reuter.

The guerrillas, some of whom may have also belonged to the pro-Cuban Tupac Amar Revolutionary Front, broke out of the Quincoro Jail in the district of San Gerónimo near Cuzco, 550 km (330 miles) southeast of Lima, police officials said.

The mass escape followed the explosion of a car bomb which blew a hole in the left side of the building, the officials added. Police said four prisoners and one policeman had been killed in the incident, but declined to give further details.

Police with helicopters were combing the area, the officials said.



Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al Shara (R) and his Egyptian counterpart Amr Moussa make their way to the meeting of the Arab foreign ministers on Sunday at the Sheraton Hotel in Damascus to discuss whether to resume peace talks with Israel. — AFP/UNB photo

Israel seals off Gaza

JERUSALEM, Mar 29: Israel reacted to a surge in Arab-Israeli violence by sealing off the 750,000 Palestinians and the occupied Gaza Strip for the second time since it deported 415 alleged Muslim activists in December, reports Reuter.

Palestinians stabbed to death a Jew and Israeli troops shot dead an Arab in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, while police said a Palestinian and an Israeli were stabbed and wounded in separate incidents in Jerusalem.

Some of the 3,000 Jewish settlers living in the Gaza Strip rioted after the killing and Israeli radio said security forces arrested two people.

The army said Palestinians from the Strip would be barred indefinitely from Israel from 3:00 am (0100 GMT) today, the Strip was closed for six days earlier this month after a Gaza Arab killed two Israelis and wounded eight in Tel Aviv. Israel expelled 415 alleged Muslim fundamentalists, most

of the from Gaza, to a no man's land in south Lebanon on December 17 with the stated aim of halting Arab-Israeli bloodshed. But 75 Palestinians and 14 Israelis have since been killed.

Middle East peace talks have stalled over the deportations. Palestinians, saying that Israel must take back the deportees, say they will not join the next session of negotiations set for April 20 unless Israel promises no further expulsions. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Sunday that a goal of peace talks was to separate Israelis and the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to prevent violence.

great a separation as possible. In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said peace negotiators from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan would not take a final decision for at least another nine days on whether to attend the peace talks to be held in Washington.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told Israeli television Arab news: "I do not have any doubt that we cannot stay in Gaza."

But he said the Palestinians had to return to the negotiation table if there was to be any progress, adding: "We've hinted to them that on several issues Israel would be willing to move towards them."

Peres had said earlier that Israel would not make new gestures over the deported Palestinians to persuade Palestinian negotiators to resume peace talks.

Regional confce on human rights opens in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Mar 29: Thailand's Prime Minister opened here today a five-day regional conference on human rights with a call for recognition that human rights cannot be implemented in the same way in all countries, reports AFP.

Chuan Leekpai, implicitly referring to criticisms by western countries of the human rights record of other countries, also remarked that changes human rights must emerge primarily from within and not (be) imposed from the outside.

Human rights should also evolve at their own pace if they are to be peaceful and sustainable, he said.

Representatives of 49 governments and numerous non-governmental organizations are attending the meeting in the Thai capital to draft a regional position for the UN-sponsored world conference on human rights later this year.

BRIEFLY

Somalis plan to celebrate peace: War-weary Somalis plan a big celebration in their capital Monday to mark what they hope will be a new era of peace in the anarchic country, reports Reuter from Mogadishu.

Representatives from the country's 15 factions are to address a rally at the city's main stadium after warlords reached agreement on Sunday to establish the first glimmer of a government since a devastating civil war began two years ago.

"This is the first real agreement we have had and people really want to celebrate what we hope will be a new, peaceful Somalia," said Abdi Hassan Awale, Internal Affairs Commissioner of the Somali National Alliance, dominated by principal warlord Mohamed Farah Aided.

Germans join airdrop over Bosnia: A German air force cargo plane joined six US and one French aircraft flying aid in an airdrop over Bosnia on Monday despite Serb threats to shoot down any Germans making the trip, reports Reuter from Frankfurt.

There were no incidents whatsoever, a US military spokeswoman told Reuters after the eight planes returned safely to Rhein-main airbase in Frankfurt.

The planes dropped a total of 43.6 tonnes of ready-to-eat food and 0.8 tonnes of medical supplies to the towns of Zepa and Srebrenica, a US military statement said.

The US has been sending C-130 Hercules cargo planes on the nightly high-altitude flights since February 28 without running into any anti-aircraft fire or other interference from Serb forces fighting Muslims in Bosnia.

Seven hurt in 3 Egypt blasts: Three bombs exploded in the southern resort town of Aswan on Sunday night, injuring a policeman and six civilians, security sources said Monday, reports Reuter from Aswan in Egypt.

The bombs all went off between 9 and 9:30 pm (1930 GMT). One of them, under a police car, produced seven casualties while the other two caused only material damage. Security sources said there were no tourists injured in the blasts.

The bombs appeared to be the latest episode in an increasingly bloody cycle of attack and counter attack between Muslim militants trying to overthrow the government and security forces trying to crush them.

Mass grave discovered in Iraq: A mass grave containing around 1,500 bodies has been discovered on the site of former Iraqi military base near the northern Iraqi city of Arbil, said Kurdish officials quoted by the BBC Sunday, reports AFP from London.

The bodies were of Arab soldiers executed by the Iraqi government during of the mass Kurdish uprising against President Saddam Hussein in March 1991. In the wake of Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, the BBC report said.

Arbil was the regional headquarters for the Iraqi military before the Kurds took control of the north.

Nepal's diplomatic ties with Armenia: Nepal has established diplomatic relations with the republics of Kirghizstan and Armenia on Friday, reports Xinhua from Kathmandu.

The protocols to this effect were signed at separate functions in New York by the Permanent Representative of Nepal in the United Nations, Jaya Raj Acharya, and the Permanent Representative of Kirghizstan, Ambassador Kjoumakadyr Atabekov and Permanent Representative of Armenia, Ambassador Alexander Arzumanyan on behalf of their respective governments.

Up to now, Nepal has diplomatic relations with 102 countries.

Quake shakes Manila: A moderate earthquake lasting about half a minute hit the Philippine capital and nearby areas Monday shaking buildings and causing panic among some of their occupants, reports AFP from Manila.

The tremor, whose epicentre was plotted in Mindoro island south of Manila had a strength of intensity four on the Rossi-Forrel Scale of nine, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

Radio reports said some occupants of buildings in Manila fled outdoors when the tremor struck shortly before noon (0400 GMT).

China appoints 49 advisers on HK affairs

HONG KONG, Mar 29: China has tapped 49 more local residents, including a former acting British colonial governor, as advisers on Hong Kong affairs before the colony reverts to Chinese rule in 1997, two Beijing-funded newspapers reported Monday, reports AP.

The appointments represent the latest attempt by China to exert more influence here by handpicking local advisers and backing the creation of several pro-Beijing political groups.

Ta Kung Pao and Wen Wei Po provided full-page capsules and photos of the 49 new advisers, mostly businessmen, professionals and politicians sympathetic to Beijing's Communist government.

The new appointees are expected to be joined in the Chinese capital for meetings in April by the first group of 44 advisers, known jokingly in the colony as the "Gang of 44."

IAEA deadline to open N-site ends tomorrow DPRK ready for showdown with UN

TOKYO, Mar 29: A defiant North Korea, facing a March 31 deadline to open suspected nuclear weapons sites for inspection, warned today of a powerful riposte if the United Nations voted to slap sanctions on it, reports Reuter.

A Foreign Ministry statement said that if the United States and other nations took the North Korean nuclear issue before the UN Security Council and continued to apply pressure, "We will be compelled to take a powerful self-defensive measure..."

The statement, reported by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) monitored in Tokyo, said the North Korean people would never bow to threats or blackmail, but it did hold out the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman quoted on the statement reiterated Pyongyang's demand that Washington "rescind its hostile policy towards us, pull its nuclear weapons and troops out of South Korea and abandon its

nuclear threat to us as early as possible and commit itself to unconditional non-use of nuclear weapons against us."

It added, however, "The best way for this, we think, is to build up mutual confidence between the DPRK (North Korea) and the United States and start negotiation between them on the principles of equality and reciprocity, first of all."

With the clock fast ticking to Wednesday as deadline set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Pyongyang's Stalinist leadership appeared headed for a showdown with the United Nations over its refusal to let experts check a military complex that the West suspects of producing material for atomic weapons.

The Vienna-based IAEA has

repeatedly voiced concern over inconsistencies in Pyongyang's nuclear data. Some experts believe North Korea is making plutonium on a scale far exceeding any civilian nuclear programme needs.

The North denies it is developing a nuclear arsenal, and has drawn the line at allowing IAEA inspectors to check the suspect complex at Yongbyon.

It says the United States, still technically at war with the North 40 years after the Korean war truce, has faked satellite and other data to throw suspicion on a non-nuclear military installation to gain access for purposes of espionage.

On March 12, Pyongyang announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, under the terms of which it is obliged to grant access to IAEA inspectors.

The move strengthened suspicions in the west, and also in Seoul and Tokyo, that North Korea had either succeeded in building a nuclear weapon or was on the verge of doing so.

Jai-son quits politics

SEOUL, Mar 29: A senior member of South Korea's ruling party quit politics today, the latest casualty of President Kim Young-sam's drive to oust corruption-tainted politicians, reports Reuter.

Kim Jai-son, a former parliamentary Speaker and currently senior adviser to the ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) told reporters he would give up his seat in parliament.

"I am leaving political circles... and earnestly hope the nation is blessed with demo-

cratic progress, Kim said.

He is among more than a dozen DLP lawmakers who have become the target of public outrage for allegedly using their positions to accumulate fortunes through real estate speculation and other illegal means.

Last week two wealthy lawmakers quit parliament after being accused of shady land speculation.

The President is expected to sack several senior officials suspected of tax evasion...

NPC presidium passes amendments to Constitution

BEIJING, Mar 29: The presidium of the first session of the eighth National People's Congress (NPC) passed draft amendments to the constitution and other draft documents and decisions at its fifth meeting held here this morning, reports Xinhua.

The following are the documents passed at the presidium meeting:

- Draft amendments to the constitution of the People's Republic of China.
- Draft basic law of the Macao special administrative region and three appendices and draft designs of Macao regional flag and emblem.
- Draft decisions on establishment of the Macao special administrative region and basic law of the Macao special administrative region which are explained by Wang Hanbin, Executive Chairman of the session's presidium.
- Draft decisions on methods for the formation of the first government, legislative Assembly and judicial department of the Macao special administrative region.
- Draft decisions on establishment of the committee of the basic law of the Macao special administrative region under the NPC Standing Committee suggested by the committee



LOS ANGELES: Erlinda Casady, a scenic artist for the Academy Awards show, puts the finishing touches on March 28 on life-size Oscar statues that will decorate the stage during the Academy Awards presentation. — AFP/UNB photo

Lesotho BNP won't accept polls results

MASERU, Mar 29: The Basotho National Party (BNP), which ruled the tiny southern African mountain kingdom of Lesotho for 16 years until it was toppled by the army, said on Sunday it would not accept the result of weekend elections which showed its former exiled rivals holding a substantial lead, reports Reuter.

By late Sunday night official returns showed the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) had won 30 of the 65 constituencies. An analyst said the BCP need to win only five of the remaining 35 constituencies to be declared the outright victor.

Final results were expected later today. But the ruling military council, which has pledged to return the country to civilian rule, has said it will not make any official announcement on the outcome until late in the week.

Seventeen parties contested the 243 seats in 65 constituencies, but only the BNP and BCP fielded a full slate candidates.

There had been fears of a repeat of the violence which followed the last election in 1970. When the BNP's Leabua Jonathan declared the poll null and void, suspended the Constitution and arrested opposition activists.

Off the Record



ZURICH: The Duchess of York takes care of her daughters Princes Eugenie (L) and Princes Beatrice (R), as they leave Zurich Airport for holidays in the Swiss ski resort Klosters on Sunday. — AFP/UNB photo

Golden-tooth goat

TEHRAN: A goat slaughtered and cooked by aides to a Muslim religious leader in a southern Iranian town was found to have golden teeth, a newspaper said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Jewellers in Lamard near the Gulf coast, called in to test the teeth, confirmed they were covered by a three-millimetre (0.12-inch) film of gold, Salam said.

Old people in the town said a kind of grass grew in the region which gave golden teeth to animals which grazed on it, the paper added.

No memorials for her because she has been raped

BOSTON: Activists asked Saturday that the United Nations do more to protect women in war-torn Yugoslavia from being raped and killed, reports AP.

"The big difference between men and women in the war is that when he is killed, he has died for defending the nation. If she is raped, she is nothing," said Lepa Mladjenovic of Belgrade, Yugoslavia. There are no memorials for her because she's been raped, and there are memorials for unknown soldiers.

Mladjenovic and six other women's rights advocates from around the world spoke at the Old South Church at a news conference sponsored by the Boston chapter of the National Organization for Women.

He was distraught

PITTSBURGH: A white man who said he was distraught because he'd just been robbed by black youths of his last two dollars climbed down from a bridge after a black policeman offered him 5 dollars, reports AP.

The man, identified by authorities as Louis, climbed atop the Seventh Street Bridge over the Allegheny River around 7:30 pm Saturday (0030 GMT Sunday).

Officer George Phillips, who is black volunteered to join a medic and firefighter on a ladder 100 feet (30 yards) above the river. Phillips tried to convince the man the robbery wasn't racially motivated.

Thy stole his cigarette lighter and two dollars. That's all he had to him name, Phillips said. He was distraught about blacks not liking him.

Phillips said he offered the man 5 dollar and gave him a lighter so he could smoke a cigarette as they spoke. The man finally came down about 9 pm (0200 GMT Sunday). "When he came down he wanted his five dollars and I gave it to him," Phillips said.

Oscar prize brings millions of dollars for winners

NEW YORK, Mar 29: Backers of Oscar-nominated films can expect more than a glittery statue and the applause of peers if their movie wins the industry's top prize, reports AP.

Veteran industry-watchers say the Best Picture award usually inspires millions of dollars in box office sales and boosts the price a movie can command in the home video and cable television markets.

This year's Oscars will be awarded in a live nationally televised programme on Monday night. The show historically attracts the second-biggest audience of the year after the Super Bowl. ABC said commercial time is sold out at 600,000 dollars for each 30-second ad, twice the price on a top regular programme in prime time.

While awards are given in 23 categories ranging from costumes, screenplays and songs to best actor and actress, industry experts say the prize with the biggest box office payoff is Best Picture.

"That's the one that really counts with the public," said Barry Reardon, president of distribution at Warner Bros. "The others just don't bring them out."

Emanuel Gerard of the investment firm Gerard Klauer Mattison said infrequent moviegoers used that award as guidance.

This year's Best Picture nominees include two independently distributed films, "Howards End" and "The Crying Game," which had each logged less than 20 million dollars at the box office as of the nominations on February 17.

The other three nominees for best film were handled by major Hollywood studios and featured big-name stars — "A Few Good Men" with Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson and Demi Moore, "Scent of a Woman" with Al Pacino, and "Unforgiven" with Clint Eastwood.

Howard Suber, a co-chairman of the film and television producers programme at UCLA, said the Best Picture Oscar typically adds 10 million dollar to 20 million dollar at the domestic box office alone.

But the impact can vary widely, depending on how long the film has been in the theatres and how much of the country has had a chance to see it.

"The Crying Game," an Irish thriller released by Miramax in November, appears to have been the biggest box-office beneficiary since it was nominated for Best Picture and five other Oscars.

Its accumulated box office receipts nearly tripled to more than 43 million dollars

through March 23 from 15.8 million dollars before the nominations, according to figures from Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. of Los Angeles.

The increase cannot be attributed to the nomination alone, however.

It also was fueled by a big expansion in the number of theater screens showing the movie. It was on 239 screens the weekend before the nominations and is now on more than 1,000.

"Howards End," based on an early 20th century novel by E. M. Forster and one of two films to get nine Oscar nominations, has seen a much slimmer rise in box office receipts to just under 22 million dollars from 18 million dollars when nominated.

But the film, in distribution for more than a year, is on only 287 screens, continuing a deliberately paced marketing plan that included advertising for a year on strategically placed Hollywood billboard that Oscar voters likely would see.

"We feel confident we will do 25 million dollars at the box office," said Michael Barker, co-president of its distributor Sony Pictures Classics.

The other three nominees already have dwarfed those totals at the box office been though they have been in theaters less time.

Warner Bros. "Unforgiven," which tied "Howards End" with nine nominations, collected 81.7 million dollars at the box office since its release in August.

Universal's "Scent of a Woman" sold 50.8 million dollar in tickets and Columbia's "A Few Good Men" did more than 133 million dollar at the box office through March 23 although each was only released in December.

A huge foreign TV audience is expected for the Oscar show. ABC said the three-hour telecast will be seen in 95 countries.

UCLA's Suber estimated foreign audiences contribute nearly half of a film's total revenue, and probably are more susceptible to influence by the Oscar tag because they don't recognize as many big name U.S stars.

The award is also a plus when movies are sold to pay TV or on videos, said Richard Jewell, professor of film history at University of Southern California.

Once a movie gets into the video store, its competition changes from current films to virtually every movie made.

"It is worth much more in a sale to cable or to video rental stores if you can put 'Academy Award-winning' on the label," Jewell said.

Japanese minister defends death penalty

TOKYO, Mar 29: Pro-hanging Justice Minister Masaharu Gotoda defended the death penalty today, following the first reported executions in Japan for more than three years, reports AFP.

Gotoda told a parliamentary committee on judicial affairs that the death penalty was necessary to maintain the rule of law and it was not yet time for Japan to abolish it.

He also said, "It is wrong for a justice minister to assume the post if that person would not approve executions because of personal belief or religion."

Gotoda, appointed in December, said "the order of law and a nation cannot be maintained" if the justice minister does not carry out death sentences handed down by judges.