

Court annuls election of Zhirinovsky



said the court's finding could be appealed against within 10 days.

The ruling came after one of the five losing contenders for the constituency, Professor Oleg Novikov, filed a formal complaint that election regulations had been violated.

He alleged that candidates had not enjoyed equal access to television, as provided by the rules, and that the ballot paper contained the name of a contender who had pulled out of the election race.

Zhirinovsky headed the party list of his Liberal Democratic Party which performed strongly in the polls. But he also stood as an individual in the Shchelkovo Constituency, near Moscow, and it is that seat which he chose to fill in the state Duma (Lower House).

Half of the 450-seat Duma is filled by deputies elected on party lists and another half by winners in individual constituencies.

Gulf Arabs blame Israel for mosque massacre

DUBAI, Feb 26: Gulf Arab states held the Israeli government responsible for Friday's massacre by an Israeli settler of Palestinians at a mosque in the West Bank and hoped the attack would not jeopardise Middle East peace efforts, reports Reuters.

The official Saudi Press Agency quoted an official source as saying in a statement that "the Israeli government was responsible for this massacre for ignoring the crimes that Israeli settlers commit against unarmed Palestinians."

The governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates condemned the killing of at least 53 Palestinian worshippers and the wounding of scores by an

Israel rejects presence of int'l force to protect Palestinians

PLO seeks urgent UN meet to condemn Hebron massacre



Undated picture shows US-born Doctor Baruch Goldstein who mowed down about 58 Palestinians praying inside the mosque in Hebron February 25. The 35-year-old Jewish settler spent years in the anti-Arab Kach movement and lived in the settlement of Kyriat Arba, a hotbed of Jewish extremism on the edge of Hebron.

— AFP photo

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 26: The Palestine Liberation Organisation sought an emergency meeting of the Security Council to condemn the mosque massacre Friday, while Western nations worked on lessening damage to the peace talks, reports AP.

The council was drafting a statement condemning the massacre of dozens of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron by a Jewish settler, and calling on Israel to provide better security.

However, it was expected to reject calls for international steps to protect Palestinians. The PLO called for international peacekeepers, and a draft resolution by Pakistan and nonaligned nations also called for measures, including a "foreign presence," to protect Palestinian civilians.

Israel has rejected any international presence as a violation of its sovereignty.

The council delayed a formal meeting until Saturday because diplomats were divided over whether to issue a strong but legally nonbinding statement without a vote, or vote on a resolution backed by the PLO and Islamic countries.

Either move would condemn the massacre that Israel says was carried out by a lone gunman. PLO officials said they had information pointing to a group of Israeli settlers.

US, Israeli and nonaligned diplomats were continuing negotiations Friday night in order

to decide on a statement or resolution.

"The sense on the council was one of very great outrage and shock," Security Council president Roble Olhaya, the ambassador of Djibouti, said Friday night. "Our delay should not be interpreted as lessening the importance of what happened. We need to decide on the format."

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali condemned the massacre but said it should not derail peace talks.

The PLO envoy to the United Nations, M Nasser al-Kidwa, said in answer to questions, "I hope this is not a fatal blow to PLO-Israel peace talks." But it is a very serious one.

He also said Palestinian sources indicated at least six people were involved, not just a lone gunman. The PLO has said it has information that 20 to 30 Jewish settlers were involved, a senior Arafat aide said in Tunis.

Al-Kidwa spoke before attending closed Security Council consultations.

British Ambassador Sir David Hannay told reporters that all council members expressed revulsion "at this appalling crime."

He said the formal statement that would be issued might underscore the importance of the Israelis "giving full and adequate protection to all citizens in its territories."

Off the Record



Hot fashion news from the new Renaissance collection shown in London February 24, Naomi Campbell, an international headline making model herself, wears a wedding dress made from newspapers with the bodice decorated with dollar bills. The collection was shown within the umbrella of the British Fashion Week.

— AFP photo

Burglary in Charles' apartment

LONDON: The London home of Prince Charles, the heir to the British crown, was burgled and a number of personal belongings stolen, police said Friday, reports AFP.

The thief or thieves broke into Saint James' palace overnight Thursday to Friday, stealing cufflinks, tie clips, and other belongings of the prince, a spokesman said.

He said the burglars used scaffolding erected outside the palace, which is just along from Buckingham palace, Queen Elizabeth II's official London residence.

The burglary was only discovered on Friday morning by an employee at the palace. The prince of Wales is currently on holiday in Switzerland, and had been informed, the spokesman said.

The break-in was the second incident involving royal residences this month. On February 5, an American citizen paraded across central London and landed on top of Buckingham palace, before stripping naked.

Electronic mail death threat to White House

DANVILLE, Illinois: A college student has been charged with sending an electronic mail death threat to the White House, saying President Clinton and his wife would die on the same day, reports Reuters.

Christopher Reincke, 18, a student at the University of Illinois, sent the message on December 4 and was tracked down through an investigation by the secret service and the university, the U.S. attorney's office for the central district of Illinois said.

The message, signed "overlord," said "I am curious, Bill, how would you feel about being the first president to be killed on the same day as his wife?" and promised "you will die soon."

Sculptor rapes 15 models

PARIS: A French court on Friday convicted and sentenced a sculptor to 10 years in prison for 15 counts of rape and 14 attempted sexual assaults on models who posed for him, reports AP.

Jean-Pierre Etchegoin, 48, had met the models in Paris between 1988 and 1990 and invited them to his atelier in the town of Bri-Comte-Robert south of the capital, which turned out to be a hotel room.

The women, between 18 and 25 years old, were "victims of a sort of psychological anesthesia," prosecutor Pierre-Louis Jacob said.

"I was very careful, never to use threats, physical pressure or even brusque movements," Etchegoin told the court in nearby Melun. "They were all free to leave."

The women said that after they signed a contract and started to pose, they were attacked.

Take it easy after waking up for your heart's sake

BEIJING: People who happily hop out of bed first thing in the morning are likely to get exactly what they deserve — a major heart attack, according to a Chinese doctor, reports Reuters.

"The waking moment when one first cracks an eyelid is the moment of greatest risk for cardiac arrest and even sudden death," Huang Guoxiong of the Liaoning Chinese medical college told the official Xinhua news agency on Saturday.

"Therefore, after first awakening idle about in bed rather than show off your hardworking spirit."

Huang said years of study had proved to him the value of loafing around in bed and the dangers of springing to one's feet to greet the new day.

"When one hops out of bed immediately after awakening, even more burden is laid on the heart," Huang said, adding that he had "encountered many incidences of cardiologic disease caused by awakening and hopping up."

BRIEFLY

Shevardnadze invited to visit US:

President Clinton has invited Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze to make an official visit to the United States March 6-8, the White House announced Friday, Reuters reports from Washington.

The two leaders will meet at the White House March 7. It will be Clinton's first meeting with Shevardnadze.

"The president is looking forward to discussing the US-Georgian bilateral relationship, political and economic reform in Georgia and events in the region," a White House statement said.

British plane crashes: An airliner carrying mail crashed in a snowstorm in central England Friday night, killing one of the two people on board, the owner said, AP reports from London.

The 90-seat Vickers Viscount came down in woodland near Drinton, 110 miles northwest of London, a Civil Aviation Authority spokesman said. There were no reports of injuries on the ground.

The pilot was killed and the co-pilot injured, said the owner, British World Airlines. The plane, subcontracted to the Royal Mail service, had been carrying parcels.

302 more Vietnamese back home:

A group of 302 Vietnamese migrants returned to Vietnam on Saturday under a voluntary repatriation programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Xinhua reports from Hong Kong.

Comprising 114 men, 76 women, 55 boys and 57 girls, they were the 204th batch to go back under the programme, according to a government information service announcement this afternoon.

Danish tanks arrive in Tuzla:

Ten Danish leopard tanks arrived in the northeastern Bosnian city of Tuzla on Friday, four months behind schedule, to provide cover for UN peacekeepers, the Defence Ministry said, AFP reports from Copenhagen.

The 1,000-strong contingent of the Nordic battalion cracked open bottles of champagne when the tank column arrived.

The tanks are to help reopen Tuzla airport so that aid can be brought into the city, under siege from the Bosnian Serbs.

Tremor hits Iranian city:

A new earth tremor measuring 5.7 on the Richter scale hit the city of Zabol in southeastern Iran Saturday, Tehran radio reported, only days after an earthquake killed six people in the same region, AFP says from Tehran.

The radio said there was no information about casualties or damage in the latest tremor, which struck at 6:33 am (0233 GMT).

About a dozen aftershocks measuring up to 5.9 on the Richter hit the sparsely populated Afghan border region after an earthquake measuring 6.6 on Wednesday.

ROK to free 835 prisoners:

South Korea will release 835 prisoners and juvenile delinquents next week in a holiday amnesty, the Justice Ministry said Saturday, Reuters reports from Seoul.

The prisoners would be freed on Monday to mark the anniversary on March 1 of a 1919 uprising against Japanese colonial rule, a statement said. South Korea was a Japanese colony from 1910 until 1945.

ROK liberalises travel to China

SEOUL, Feb 26: South Koreans will be able to travel freely to China beginning in April, government officials said Saturday, reports AP.

Under present restrictions, South Koreans must receive permission from the Seoul government before they can travel to Communist China.

Some 200,000 South Koreans, mostly for business purposes, visited China last year. Tourism officials estimate as many as 500,000 tourists may visit this year as the result of the liberalisation.

South Korean President Kim Young-sam is scheduled to visit China for summit talks with China's Jiang Zemin in March.

Amnesty urges Israel to set up probe body

LONDON, Feb 26: Amnesty International urged the Israeli government on Friday to immediately set up an independent judicial inquiry into the killings of dozens of Palestinians by a Jewish settler in a West Bank mosque.

The human rights organisation noted that Israel had condemned the killing but said only an impartial inquiry would "remove any suspicion that, despite public pronouncements, the Israeli authorities are effectively condoning such violence."

"Amnesty International is calling on the Israeli government immediately to set up a judicial inquiry into the massacre of Muslim worshippers in the ... mosque," the London-based group said in a statement.

North Korea to allow N-sites inspections from March 1

UNITED STATES, Feb 26: North Korea agreed Friday to allow UN inspectors to visit its nuclear facilities beginning March 1, US and North Korean officials announced, reports AP.

North Korea, which had been resisting international pressure to open facilities suspected of building nuclear weapons, has been threatened with economic sanctions if it didn't comply.

Thomas Hubbard, a US deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, after talks late Friday with Ho Jong, North Korea's deputy ambassador to the United Nations.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency,

Hans Blix, was to report Monday on whether North Korea leaders would admit agency inspectors. If they refused, the United States had threatened to take the issue to the UN Security Council, and possibly consider economic sanctions.

Ho, the North Korean ambassador, denied after the talks that Washington had threatened economic sanctions.

In the talks, Ho said, the United States agreed to call off joint military exercises this year with South Korea, resume high-level talks in Geneva on a permanent settlement to the nuclear issue and allow the resumption of North Korean-

South Korean talks on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Meanwhile Reuters from Seoul says: South Korea welcomed Saturday North Korea's decision to allow international inspections of its nuclear facilities.

"It is good that an agreement has been reached. Hopefully there will be no other obstacles and the inspections would be carried out smoothly," said a Foreign Ministry official, who asked not to be identified.

He said North Korea was very likely to keep to the agreement this time and allow inspectors into its nuclear facilities.

Walesa asks Europe to unite against Russia

WARSAW, Feb 26: Polish president Lech Walesa said on Friday he was concerned about Russia's superpower ambitions and urged Europe to unite to protect itself from Russian domination, reports Reuters.

Walesa told a news conference Poland had decided to put aside its history of suffering under Russian and Soviet domination, hoping for new relations of partnership with Moscow.

"What the old Russia and the Soviet Union have done to us is beyond comprehension. Still we put the past aside because this is another Russia

and there is no Soviet Union," PAP news agency reported Walesa as saying.

"But Russia tells us it wants to be a superpower and that it wants us again in its grip," he said.

Walesa was speaking after a two-day visit to Latvia where he and Latvian Prime Minister Guntis Ulmanis discussed co-operation and regional security. Walesa expressed sympathy with Latvian concern over the presence of Russian troops in the Baltic States.

"We need to tell the whole world - in the past it was our grandparents who suffered, tomorrow it may be you if the whole Europe does not unite to defend against it (Russian domination)," Walesa said.

Relations between Poland and Russia have been chilled by Poland's determination to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as quickly as possible despite Moscow's objections.

Several senior Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, have suggested that Poland and other countries of the former Soviet bloc are still seen as belonging to Moscow's sphere of interest.

Kashmir militants observe strike

SRINAGAR, India, Feb 26: Muslim separatists staged a day-long strike in Kashmir on Friday in support of a Pakistani move to censure alleged human rights abuses by Indian security forces in the Himalayan region, reports Reuters.

Indian troops retaliated by arrested two key militant leaders and killing seven others from the Hiz-ul Mujahideen guerrilla group, members of the group said.

Proposed Muslim-Croat fed not adequate for peace in Balkans

oppositional and Catholic Church have always advocated an undivided Bosnia, arguing that its division would set a bad precedent for Croatia.

One-third of Croatia is occupied by Serbs who captured it during Croatia's 1991 war of independence from Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia.

Croatian opposition and Bosnian government representatives in Zagreb say the issue is not whether Croats and Muslims could be allies again, but whether there can be a stable peace if Serb conquests are not turned back.

Opposition leaders said the only solution was an undivided Bosnia Herzegovina.

"If the proposal works out, Serbs would then get to keep all the conquered lands," said Goran Granic, leader of

Croatia's largest opposition party, the Social Liberals. He said the proposal was a "positive change" but not adequate.

Granic said the Serbs "would remain an destabilising factor in the Balkans." He cited other possible Balkan flash-points such as Serbia's southern province of Kosovo where 90 per cent of the population is ethnic Albanian, and potential Serbian aspirations toward Macedonia.

"Of all possible alliances, the Muslim-Croat seems most likely," said Neven Kulenovic, charge d'affaires of the Bosnian embassy in Zagreb. "Many more Muslims were killed by Serbs than by Croats."

"Though all solutions are open... we cannot accept the status quo on the ground as fait

d'accompli," Kulenovic said.

Tudjman's speech to leaders of his governing Croatian Democratic Union made clear he had no choice but to accept the proposal, even though it was a radical policy shift.

Tudjman for the first time said that a settlement in Bosnia was key to solving the problem of Serb-held territory in Croatia.

He apparently realised that Croatia has a greater chance of regaining those territories with Western support, than if it is branded an aggressor in the Balkan conflict and strangled by sanctions.

Tudjman himself has long harbored a dream of dividing up Bosnian territory with Serbia. He has publicly supported a Croat-Muslim federation and other international

peace plans in hopes of winning Western acceptance and a place in Europe, but also has pursued possible cooperation with the Serbs and other avenues.

Now, he has apparently realised that he cannot have it both ways. He made clear that Croatia has no choice but to bow to Western pressure.

Sanctions would be ruinous to the already shaky economy. Bosnian Croats have recently lost ground to Muslim-led government forces in central Bosnia.

"Croatia would be in a very unfavourable position if the war in Bosnia continues," Tudjman said.

His remarks also indicated tacit acknowledgement that Croatia cannot solve the problem of the Serb-held territo-

ries alone.

Tudjman said the West promised to solve the issue of the Serb-held territories "as soon as possible" if Croatia accepts confederation.

He said Croatia has been promised extensive financial help, membership of the Council of Europe and access to NATO's Partnership for Peace in exchange for Croatia's policy shift.

Some suggested that Tudjman's shift could have stemmed from a fear that the West is fed up and could decide to wash its hands of the Balkans.

"This could be the last Western offer for a settlement, before they decide to pull out of the Balkan quagmire," said Dalibor Cepulic, policy analyst at Zagreb Law School.

16 Myanmar citizens held in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Feb 26: Thai immigration and special branch police have arrested and detained 16 Myanmar people in the Thai capital suspected of being anti-Yangon activists, a local newspaper said Saturday, reports AFP.

The 16 were taken to the immigration division's detention centre Friday, according to the Bangkok Post. Police could not be reached today for comment.

Thailand has played an increasingly active role in supporting the Myanmar junta, which has ruled its northern neighbour since 1988, despite persistent international criticism of its human rights record.