

International

BRIEFLY

Over refugee issue
Nepali, Bhutanese
FM to meet Apr 4

KATHMANDU, Mar 31: Foreign ministers of Nepal and Bhutan will meet in the Nepali capital on April 4, to discuss the problems of tens of thousands of Bhutanese refugees living in camps in east Nepal, officials said today, reports Reuter.

Bhutan's Foreign Minister Dawa Tshering will lead a four member delegation for a four-day discussion with the Nepali Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Laohani, a Nepali Foreign Ministry official said.

The two governments have held six rounds of talks over the past six years.

About 100,000 Bhutanese of ethnic Nepali origin have fled Bhutan since 1990 demanding democracy and ethnic equality.

They are living in eight camps supervised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jhapa and Morang district in east Nepal.

A military spokesman Sarah Munasinghe said.

He said 10 sailors, including two officials, were killed when the LTTE used a flotilla of eight boats, fitted with powerful outboards motors, to mount the surprise assault against the convoy taking supplies to the Jaffna Peninsula.

"All arrangements are in place to start the offensive. It can begin even tomorrow if the government so wishes," a defence source said, adding

LTTE attacks naval convoy, army base: 54 killed

COLOMBO, Mar 31: Tamil Tiger rebels staged a seaborne suicide raid and attacked a military base in eastern Sri Lanka, raising the death toll on both sides to at least 54 as the army geared for a major offensive, officials said today, reports AP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rammed an explosive laden boat against an Israeli built Dvora gunboat escorting a naval convoy off the northern town of Vellaiakerni on Saturday, military spokesman Sarah Munasinghe said.

He said 10 sailors, including two officials, were killed when the LTTE used a flotilla of eight boats, fitted with powerful outboards motors, to mount the surprise assault against the convoy taking supplies to the Jaffna Peninsula.

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"All arrangements are in place to start the offensive. It can begin even tomorrow if the government so wishes," a defence source said, adding

that the Tigers had escalated their attacks to blunt the onslaught.

But the LTTE said that the army was trying to mount a big campaign in the Thenmarachchi and Vadamarachchi sectors of the Jaffna Peninsula and ordered Tamil civilians to leave the region.

Earlier AP says: At least 35 Tamil rebels were killed when the separatist rebels launched a daring attack on a navy convoy in the sea off Sri Lanka's northeastern coast, a military spokesman said Sunday.

Navy fast attack craft and gunships which were escorting the convoy, had repulsed an initial attack by Tamil Tiger rebels destroying two rebel boats. But after the first attack, another column of rebel boats launched the daring attack, said Dunuwille.

Off the Record

Scientists capture colours
of universe during Big Bang

LONDON: British scientists have captured the colours of the universe during the Big Bang with a swirling, molten image of oranges, yellows and reds flecked with the darker spots of matter coming into existence, reports Reuter.

The historic image of ripples in the radiation left by the creation of the universe came from a technological breakthrough that gave the radio telescope at Cambridge University unprecedented detail in its mapping of the cosmos.

"This is a real breakthrough because previous photos were on far too large a scale to be really helpful," said Dr Paul Scott, Assistant Director of Research at the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory.

"Now we have for the first time detailed evidence of the kind of structure that will produce the clusters of galaxies we see today," he added.

The picture shows features thought to be the "seeds" of galaxy clusters which formed out of the Big Bang fireball.

Scientists have seen other pictures of the Big Bang's radiation traces, but never before with such detail.

The clarified images strengthens the hand of the scientific school that argued that when the universe came into being about 15 billion years ago, the galaxies began to form where matter and energy joined together.

Hizbullah rockets hit N Israel

Israeli Arabs blast closure of WB, Gaza

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Mar 31: Israeli Arabs marched and held strikes Saturday to protest Israel's periodic confiscations of Arab land and its month-old closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, reports AP.

In Gaza City, the Palestinian Authority called for an immediate session of the UN Security Council to address the closure, said Yasser Abed Rabbo, a minister under Yasser Arafat.

Israel sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip after a series of deadly suicide bombings by Palestinian militants that killed 62 people in Israel between February 25 and March 4. The closure bars thousands of Palestinians from jobs in Israel and is straining the Palestinian economy.

People in 53 Israeli Arab villages went on strike Saturday, while rallies were held in three villages in northern Israel to mark Land Day, and annual memorial to six Arabs killed in 1976 riots protesting Israeli land seizures. In the Bedouin villages of the southern Negev desert, Arabs planted olive trees.

Earlier Reuter adds: A second barrage of Katyusha rockets hit northern Israel early this morning slightly injuring one civilian an Israeli army spokesman said.

He said the rockets hit the Galilee Panhandle and Israeli forces fired in return.

Hizbullah guerrillas had fired a first barrage of rockets on Saturday night at Israel after two Lebanese civilians were killed by Israeli shelling. No one was injured in that rocket attack.

Reuter/UNB photo



A man walks past a building destroyed by shelling in downtown Grozny on Saturday. Russian President Boris Yeltsin is expected to announce measures to bring peace to the rebel Chechnya region.

Perry hails Croatia's pledge on 7 war criminals' surrender

ZAGREB, Mar 31: Defence Secretary William J Perry applauded Croatia's announcement Saturday that the most notorious of seven indicted Bosnian Croat war criminals will surrender this week. Perry hinted at stronger efforts to bring the most-wanted Bosnian Serb general to justice, too.

Perry told reporters he had stressed to Susak that Croatia must cooperate more fully in turning over indicted war criminals or risk losing US support.

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