

International

Pak tribal leaders to enforce strict laws

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Feb 22: Tribal leaders in Pakistan's rugged Northwest Frontier Province announced Saturday that their own vigilante force would impose strict justice in the region, reports AP.

Maulana Abdul Hadi, the leader of the Tazin Ittihad-e-Ulema, or Council of Clerics, appeared to be testing the new government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Hadi's group had been banned as part of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto campaign against religious extremism in Pakistan.

It was unclear Saturday if the new federal government had permitted the restoration of Hadi's group, which functioned legally under during Sharif's first term as prime minister, from 1990 to 1993.

Hadi held a meeting in Bara, a village in the Khyber tribal zone, 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of the provincial capital of Peshawar, that ended with Saturday's announcement of his version of Islamic law.

He said murders and kidnappers faced having their homes burned down, a typical form of punishment in the tribal belt, and fines of up to 1 million rupees (dlrs 25,000).

There would also be strict

punishment for those involved in the heroin trade or producing counterfeit money, he told thousands of tribes people at the rally.

Earlier edicts by Hadi's group have barred women from working or appearing in public unless covered head to toe.

Ms. Bhutto's government was ousted last November on charges of corruption.

140 Tamil rebels drown in boat capsiz

COLOMBO, Feb 22: Almost 140 Tamil refugees were drowned when their boat capsized off Nachchakudah in north Sri Lanka on its way to India according to reports reaching here today, reports Xinhua.

The reports said the overloaded boat was carrying at least 140 people when it sank Wednesday night off the northern Mannar coast.

Women and children were among the victims who lived in Tamil rebel controlled area. The rebels had ordered them to board the ill-fated craft and were trying to send them to India, the reports said.

Diplomats term Jinag's statement as a sign of self-assurance

Deng's successor delivers barely disguised criticism

BEIJING, Feb 22: Two days after the death of Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, his appointed successor has clearly implied that the man who wrenches China into the modern age did not do well enough, reports Reuter.

President Jiang Zemin, Deng's protege and now the most powerful man in China, delivered the barely disguised criticism when he greeted a visiting leader from Kazakhstan on Friday and spoke publicly for the first time since Deng died on Wednesday aged 92.

After vowing, as expected, that China would pursue the Deng-era reforms that propelled the impoverished Stalinist state towards the status of superpower, Jiang said:

"We would run China's undertakings still better, and make greater contributions to the cause of peace, development and progress of the mankind."

To ordinary Chinese Jiang's words, quoted by the official Xinhua news agency, were an unmistakable rebuke.

"Of course that's a criticism,

said a Chinese worker without hesitation.

Diplomats described Jiang's statement made to Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, as a sign of self-assurance following the death of the man who plucked him from relative obscurity to run China in 1989.

But diplomats said Jiang's swift undertaking to outdo Deng before the last rites for him at a funeral next Tuesday could be seen as disrespectful and politically risky.

"Now is the time for China to pay its respects to Deng, and that is what people want to do right now," said a western diplomat.

A boast like that could be regarded as in bad taste, not to mention politically risky, when China wants to mourn."

Since imperial China, social convulsions and power struggles often accompanied the transfer of the "mandate of heaven" to a new emperor — or party chief.

While the latest power shift so far has been seamless, the

analysts said upheavals were possible — specially with Jiang's post as Communist Party chief up for re-election at the 15th party congress later this year.

Jiang, 70, must now defuse challenges from other aspirants to power, among them Qiao Shi, the former security star who heads parliament's economic supreme Zhu Rongji and Premier Li Peng, shadowy figures little known in the outside world could be in the wings.

Jiang's remarks to Nazarbayev were the first public commitment that he planned to press on with Deng's market-oriented reforms.

Deng's reforms, grounded in the belief China's people should be allowed to get rich, ended a decade of chaotic rule by Mao Zedong, who believed his people should be "Red" — communist.

Jiang was the man chosen by Deng as his heir in 1989 after the political upheaval that accompanied the crushing of pro-democracy demonstrations centred on Tiananmen Square.

No progress in talks between UNSCOM, Iraq

BAGHDAD, Feb 22: No progress was registered in the talks between UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) chief Rolf Ekeus and the Iraqi side on transferring the missiles engines destroyed by Iraq to the US for USF official said, reports Xinhua.

Rolf Ekeus also focused on the disclosure of the documents about Iraqi weaponry programmes to the UNSCOM, said Roger Knight, a special assistant to the director of the Ongoing Monitoring and Verification (OMV) centre in Baghdad.

"There is not any movement on the talks between Ekeus and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. And it is too early to say that any key dispute can be solved during the UNSCOM chief's stay, said Roger.

Two rounds of talks were held between Ekeus and the Iraqi side on Thursday evening and Friday morning.

The Iraqi delegation was headed by Tariq Aziz and included other senior officials such as Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf and Oil Minister Amir Mohammed Rashid.

Another session of the talks between the two sides will be held this evening, according to the UN official.

Emergency rule, decreed to give the government a free hand in combating left-wing rebels, places areas under the control of security forces and suspends many constitutional rights.

Despite a dramatic drop in violence since the peak of the guerrilla violence between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, about 30 per cent of Peru continues under a state of emergency.

Police believe Tupac Amaru

Peru hostage crisis

Government extends state of emergency for 2 more months

Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) members have been approaching the diplomatic residence disguised as street-vendors or journalists to do intelligence work and meet with comrades inside. Various suspects have been arrested by anti-terrorist police using emergency laws.

NATO allies for major arms cuts

VIENNA, Feb 21: NATO allies presented proposals for major arms cuts to a security summit on Thursday in a bid to appease Russian fears over the alliance's plans to expand eastward, reports Reuter.

The alliance is prepared to take significant steps in this regard," said the proposal delivered to the body dealing with the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE).

"Specifically, the total of future aggregate national ceilings of ground treaty limited equipment of (NATO's) 16 members will be significantly less under the adapted treaty.



Albright in ROK for peace talks

SEOUL, Feb 22: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in South Korea today for talks expected to focus on Korean peninsula peace efforts, reports Reuter.

She arrived from Moscow on the seventh leg of a nine-nation tour of Europe and Asia, her first overseas trip since becoming Secretary of State last month.

Albright was to meet South Korean president Kim Young-sam and Foreign Minister Chong Ha Yoo and then visit US troops in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

North Korea on Friday announced it would attend a briefing with the United States and South Korea on Korean peace talks, a sign the communist north was trying to put on a normal face after an embarrassing high-level defection.

In a brief statement by the foreign ministry, Pyongyang said it would attend the US south Korean briefing in New York on March 5 to discuss four-way peace talks involving China.

North Korea twice delayed the talks earlier this month in what was seen as an effort to press Washington to provide more food aid for its hungry population.

The United States insists if never promised Pyongyang a specific amount of food aid in return for North Korea's participation in the briefing.

Lankan army plane crash death toll rises to 3

COLOMBO, Feb 22: Sri Lanka's military today raised the death toll from a military plane crash near Colombo to three and said another 36 people had been injured, reports Reuter.

Sixteen people were hospitalised after the crash on Friday with the rest discharged after being treated for minor injuries, a military spokesman said.

The Russian-made AN-32 plane with 59 passengers, including four crew, veered off the runway during take-off and crashed into a marshy unit at Ratmalana Airbase, 11 kms (seven miles) south of Colombo.

Air Force officials said the cause of the crash had yet to be determined. The plane, which cracked in the middle, was being removed in two sections to a hanger for investigations to begin, they said.

Some Air force officials said on Friday that the crew had decided to abort the flight as it was about to take off but did not say why.

The plane was carrying servicemen to Palaly, a key northern base for the military in its fight against separatist Tamil guerrillas, who are waging a 13-year war for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east.

The crash was the third incident involving an Air Force plane this year. In January, a Chinese-built Y-12 airplane went missing off northern Sri Lanka while on a surveillance mission. Its crew of four was never found.

Off the Record

Unfriendly lion

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan schoolboy was killed by a lion while posing for a picture with it at a popular "petting" zoo police said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Police in the tourist resort of Ahungalle, 80 km (50 miles) south of Colombo, said the 17-year-old boy died after he was mauled by the lion, the private zoo star attraction.

The boy had sat next to the lion to have his picture taken with the animal. The keeper had stepped aside so that he would not be in the picture. That is when it attacked. Sub-Inspector Sam Keerthi told Reuters.

Visitors to the zoo can enter the animals cages and pet them leopards and a crocodile are also available for petting, police said.

Wildlife activists have previously criticised the zoo's owners for allegedly drugging the animals to allow petting.

The zoo's owners have denied the charge, saying the animals allowed to be touched were tamed from years of contact with humans.

The owners who closed the zoo on Friday as a mark of respect for the victim, were unavailable for comment.

Warm and tender side of Castro

MADRID: As a jailed young revolutionary in the 1950s, Fidel Castro may have been thinking about toppling the aristocrats behind Cuba's military dictatorship, reports AP.

But in his heart, he yearned for "the most delicate of all creatures" the daughter of an upper-class family who would later have his child.

Six love letters published Friday in a Madrid newspaper, purportedly written by Castro, revealed a gentle, even melodramatic side to the bearded communist.

Castro wrote the letters to Naty Revuelta from a prison on Cuba's Island of Pines following the failed July 1953 attack on the military's Moncada Barracks in Santiago. Years later, the battle would become a chapter of Castro's lore.

"One kiss is very much like another, yet lovers never tire of kissing" Castro wrote.

The conservative daily ABC received the six letters from the couple's daughter, Alina Fernandez Revuelta, who remains estranged from the man who has ruled Cuba since the 1959 overthrow of Gen. Fulgencio Batista.

Their correspondence began when Naty snuck a letter into Castro's jail cell with her mother.

Castro replied with a note that read: I guard and will always guard your tender letters. For me it is a true pleasure to receive your letters and another I enjoy as well, to answer them."

At times, Castro writes with sentimentality. He once told Naty that "you can always count on my support; it is something you will never have to ask for. You have my final word."

In other letters, Castro sounds like a teacher and mentor, encouraging Naty to further her education and remain committed to the highest ideals.

In a letter written three days before Christmas in 1953, Castro chides Naty for offering to get him a record player.

India to test-fire Prithvi: India will Sunday test-fire a medium-range missile, defence sources said

The officials said the surface-to-surface Prithvi (Earth) missile would be launched in the eastern state of Orissa. Some 600 people living around the town of Balasore, near the missile test site, had been evicted temporarily. The Prithvi missile, which has yet to become fully operational, has a range of between 150 kilometres (93 miles) and 250 kilometres (155 miles) and can carry a one-tonne nuclear, chemical or a conventional warhead. It has been tested 15 times.

Rebel disarmament is one aspect of the peace agreement.

"Among the URNG here there are certainly people who have been fighting in very difficult terrain for 10-15 or even more

Rwandan refugees in Zaire fear rebels' attacks

KISANGANI, Zaire, Feb 22: Tens of thousands of Rwandans at Zaire's largest refugee camp are caught between a government that doesn't want them and a rebel leader who has threatened to overrun their temporary refuge, reports AP.

Marzouk, who has been detained in a New York jail for 19 months, must be extradited soon as his lawyers made a surprise decision January 28 to refuse to fight extradition to Israel.

But Marzouk claims his work for Hamas consisted only of raising money for social services.

Even as diplomats met in South Africa on Friday to try to stop Zaire's civil war, many of the 160,000 displaced people were left to wonder where they might have to flee next.

"Some say if we have to die, let's go home and die in our own country," said Jean Francois Nsengiyumva, who fled Rwanda in 1994.

Laurent Kabila, Zaire's rebel leader, has threatened to attack the refugee camp of Tingi-Tingi because former Rwandan soldiers and Hutu militiamen armed by the Zairian government are among the Rwanda Hutu refugees.

Nsengiyumva, gesturing toward a tent housing scores of women with sick children, said: "We've come so far from our home that if they tried to get there now, they wouldn't make it."

"We know that we're a big burden to these people, but we're here. Where else do they want us to go?"

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The crash was the third incident involving an Air Force plane this year. In January, a Chinese-built Y-12 airplane went missing off northern Sri Lanka while on a surveillance mission. Its crew of four was never found.

Two months later, the unit allegedly executed 14 residents in the village of Trnovace after a Bosnian Serb van ran over a mine planted nearby.

The indictment against Jorgic, who has worked in west Germany's Ruhr Valley as a locksmith since the 1970s, charges he and other Serbs shot dead 22 Muslims in front of a restaurant in the village of Grapska in 1992.

Jorgic faces 14 other counts, including placing a metal bucket over an inmate's head in the Doboj prison and pounding it with a wooden plank. The man died.

Both Djajic, who lived in Munich, and Jorgic say they are victims of mistaken identity.

Judge Wolfgang Kellner, a court spokesman in Munich, said prosecutors must first

prove that there was a genocide in former Yugoslavia before they can convict someone of participating in it.

Prosecutors in both cases intend to call a human rights lawyer from the University of Bochum and have submitted UN reports to back the charge. For a backup, however, both men are also charged with murder.