

## International

Pressure mounting on Berisha to quit

## Chaos destroying last semblance of order in Albania

TIRANA, Albania, Mar 14: One by one, anarchy spread Thursday to Albania's few tranquil towns, leaving ransacked armories, civilians navigating tanks, and children shouldering assault rifles. Helpless politicians asked for Western military involvement, reports AP.

The chaos that has engulfed southern Albania for days spread north, east and west throughout the country, destroying the last semblance of order.

Responding to the increasing threat, US helicopters landed in Tirana to evacuate American citizens. Announcing the operation, US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said in Washington that the flights could continue for several hours or even days.

He said the ambassador and core staff would remain in the capital for the time being. Italian helicopters also flew out hundreds of people, and other embassies made their own plans to get their nationals out.

In Tirana, guards deserted the central prison, allowing 600 prisoners including two promi-

nent leaders of the former Communists to flee. Then, the guards returned to loot the prison.

At least 12 people were reported killed throughout the country, many of them by random gunfire. Citizens were increasingly taking arms, not so much out of political protest, but to protect themselves.

Pressure was building on President Sali Berisha to quit — the one move that might help restore order. An opposition politician said Berisha had acknowledged in a meeting that he had lost control of the country.

"Berisha accepted that he has no institutional control," said Skender Gjinushi of the Social Democrats. "He has no army, no police. Tirana is in total anarchy."

"We don't know who is armed and who is not," Gjinushi said. "Do they want to fight, or fire in the air? Or what are their demands?"

Political sources said that one of the first acts of the new prime minister, Bashkim Fino, was to hand Berisha a petition from rebellious southern Al-

banians asking for his resignation.

The Social Democrats and the Forum for Democracy, a loose umbrella organization of opposition groups, also called on Berisha to quit.

The government asked for an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council. State radio said Berisha and opposition political parties appealed to the Western European Union, the military arm of the European Community, for involvement.

It was not clear what kind of help they were seeking. WEU spokeswoman Myriam Sochaki said the organization had received a message from Albania indicating it was considering such a request, but did not actually have it yet.

She said if a request were made, the organization could provide humanitarian aid, help evacuate people, or help separate forces.

In Brussels, NATO ambassadors met in special session to discuss the crisis.

The unrest threatens to engulf neighboring countries, particularly Italy and Greece, with another flood of refugees.

Because there are sizable ethnic Albanian populations in Serbia's Kosovo province and in Macedonia, it also could further destabilize those chronically unstable areas, and threaten peace throughout the Balkans.

The problem in Albania appeared increasingly to be a total collapse of order rather than one in which opposing forces could be separated.

In Tirana, shopkeepers were boarding up store fronts to prepare for looting.

State TV cut into children's programming for a special newscast, leading with the ominous announcement that 200 citizens had volunteered to help police restore order in Tirana. It said they warned Tirana residents to obey the law, or they would open fire.

There were unconfirmed reports of six dead in the capital, state radio said.

A guard at the central prison, reached by telephone, said Ramiz Alia, the last communist president, former Socialist Prime Minister Fatos Nano and hundreds of other inmates walked free when guards left their posts.

## Congress (I) meet Monday to discuss polls defeat

NEW DELHI, Mar 14: India's Congress (I) party will hold a special meeting on Monday to discuss its defeat in a string of elections, it was announced today, reports AFP.

The meeting, by parliament members of the 112-year-old party, follows a continuing tug of war between Congress President Sitaram Kesri and his disgraced predecessor, former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said Kesri agreed to convene the meeting in the wake of persistent demands by Rao loyalists. Suresh Kalmadi an SS Ahluwalia.

Rao, who has been accused of corruption by Indian detectives, stepped down as Congress chief last September after leading the party to a disastrous defeat in the general elections.

He was succeeded by Kesri, the party Treasurer, who until then was known as a Rao supporter. But after becoming party president, he began to sideline Rao sympathisers in the party.

Kesri's aides had earlier blamed Rao for the Congress rout in the 1996 parliamentary elections. Rao supporters later turned the heat on Kesri after the party lost power in last month's polls in the state of Punjab.

It also suffered reverses in most by-elections to national parliament last month, and was trounced by Hindu nationalists in municipal elections in the western state of Maharashtra.

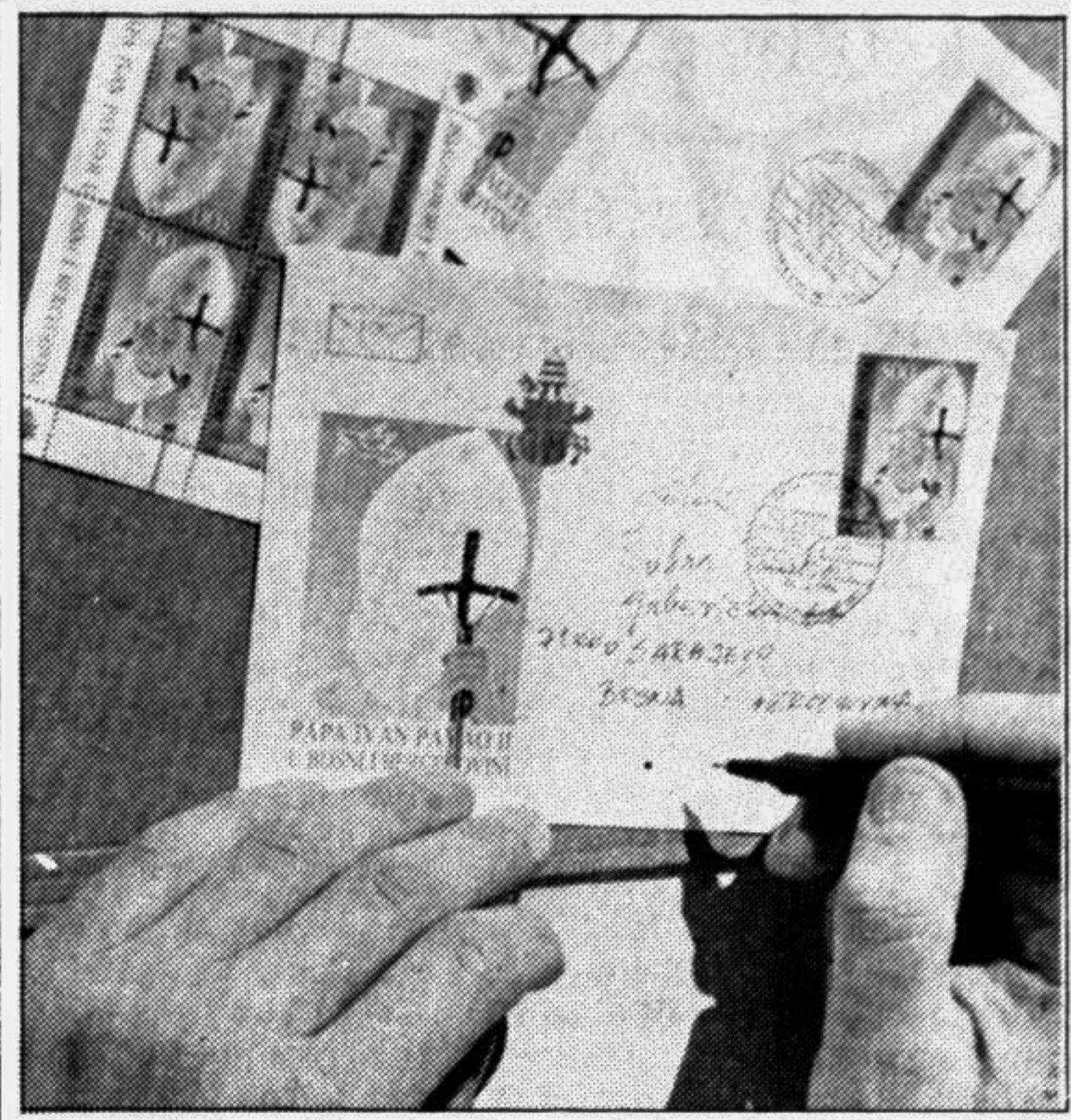
## Blast near rly station in Punjab, 6 hurt

NEW DELHI, Mar 14: A powerful bomb blast near a train station injured at least six people in India's northern state of Punjab today, the United News of India (UNI) said, reports Reuters.

The news agency quoted witnesses at the site of the blast in the city of Jalandhar as saying they saw at least six people lying on the ground after the explosion.

Police in Jalandhar gave no further details but said they were investigating the bomb explosion, UNI said.

Sikh militants fighting for an independent homeland in the agriculture-rich region have frequently targeted trains there, usually inflicting serious casualties.



Postcards bear Thursday the newly issued 500 Dinar (1 US dollar) stamp with the portrait of Pope John Paul II. The stamp was issued in honour of John Paul's April 12 and 13 visit to Sarajevo, the first by a pope. Some 10,000 copies of the stamp were printed in Slovenia. Security, which had forced Pope John Paul II to cancel plans to visit Bosnia in 1994, are still a great concern to authorities organizing his trip to the war-ravaged Bosnian capital, Bosnian officials admit. — AFP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

## 1.2 kg heroin seized in India:

About 1.2 kilos (2.64 pounds) of heroin was found inside the body of a Nigerian brought to a hospital in New Delhi by his friends. The Times of India reported yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

Doctors made the recovery during an autopsy on the Nigerian, identified as Stanley Gogo. Forensic experts said the heroin caused his death. Police suspected he could have been a drug smuggler operating between India and Nigeria. The heroin was found stuffed in small capsules which the Nigerian had swallowed and hoped to retrieve later.

## Australia, Indonesia sign accord:

Australia and Indonesia yesterday signed a historic sea boundary treaty after some 30 years of negotiations, establishing exclusive economic zones between the two Asia-Pacific nations. Reuters reports from Perth.

"Once it enters into force, the treaty will be of economic benefit to both countries," Australian and Indonesian foreign ministers said in a joint statement after signing the treaty. "The finalisation of the seabed boundary provides a basis on which exploitation of natural resources can proceed in a climate of confidence and certainty," they said.

## Teresa's message for Albanians:

Mother Teresa sent a message of love to Albania yesterday as her homeland continued to plunge towards anarchy. AFP reports from Calcutta.

The 86-year-old nun, who left Albania as a teenager, said: "Send my love to all of them. May God bring them joy, prosperity, peace and unity." Albania is in turmoil after weeks of civil rioting and the breakdown of law and order. The trouble was sparked after many people's life savings were wiped out following the collapse of fraudulent investment schemes in January.

## Russians to get new passports:

More than five years after the Soviet collapse, President Boris Yeltsin ordered new passports Thursday. AP reports from Moscow.

Russians are still carrying the red passports they used during Soviet times, with a Soviet emblem and "USSR" printed on the cover. Yeltsin ordered his government to come up with a design for a new passport by June 1, the presidential press service said. Passports are used in Russia for domestic identification.

## Russia supplied arms to Armenia:

The Russian military has supplied Armenia with millions of dollars of tanks and armoured vehicles during the last two years without the government's knowledge, Russia's defence minister was quoted as saying Thursday. AP reports from Moscow.

The investigation has revealed that the weapons were handed over free of charge and without a corresponding decision of the Russian government. Defence Minister Igor Rodionov said in a letter released to Russian news media Thursday. In the letter, Rodionov said the case had been handed over to the military prosecutor's office. Chief Military Prosecutor Valentin Panichev confirmed Thursday that an investigation was under way, but refused further comment.

## Sudanese troops engaged in fierce fighting against Ugandan forces

KHARTOUM, Mar 14: Sudanese troops were engaged in fierce fighting against invading Ugandan forces in southern Sudan late Thursday, a Sudanese military spokesman said on the eve of scheduled reconciliation talks, reports AFP.

General Mohamed Al-Sanousi Ahmed said that Uganda had applied "its military weight" in a drive on five towns, Kaya, Badi, Morobo, Yei and Lanya, adding: "Our troops are fighting bravely in all directions."

The enemy were supplied with US-made bridging equipment and canned food rations, Ahmed noted in a statement broadcast by Sudanese television.

## Annan, UNSC slate killing of 7 Israeli schoolgirls

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 14: United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Security Council condemned the killing on Thursday of seven Israeli schoolgirls by a Jordanian soldier on the border between the two countries, reports Reuters.

A spokesman for Annan said in a statement the UN Chief "deplores this act of violence and extends condolences to the families of the victims and the government and people of Israel."

"Today's tragic incident highlights the need to renew confidence in the peace process whose objective is the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East," the statement added.

Such terrible attacks on innocent people are despicable and deserve the condemnation of all, he said.

## Mother Teresa to set up new base in China

CALCUTTA, Mar 14: A dominant Mother Teresa, speaking today a day after handing over the reins of her Missionaries of Charity, scotched all talks of retirement and said her next project would be to set up a base in China, reports AFP.

The 86-year-old nun, flanked by her successor Sister Nirmala, told reporters at the order's headquarters "I have plenty of work to do and I will be here until my last breath."

"We have to pull on. We have 568 homes all over the world, in 120 countries. We will continue God's work."

Asked where the order would go next, she said with a smile: "China."

The Nobel Peace laureate denied that there had been a split among the sisters during the eight-week election of Sister Nirmala. She spoke into a hand microphone in a barely audible voice from the first-floor balcony of Mother House.

Her performance, however, totally overshadowed that of the new superior general.

with Uganda. Khair also implicitly accused the United States of involvement.

The machinery used in the fighting was too heavy to be moved a long distance by land in a short period of time, which means this hardware was moved by air and the Ugandan Army has no resources to do so," Khair argued.

He added that the United States "has already shown its hostile intentions towards Sudan."

Khair also said government forces had "repulsed four assaults in the Loka area destroyed a number of tanks, inflicted heavy casualties... and seized arms."

## CPI annual report 185 journalists interned in 24 countries in '96

NEW YORK, Mar 14: A record 185 journalists were in prison in 24 countries during 1996, with 78 of them in Turkish jails alone, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Twenty seven journalists were killed in the line of duty, 26 of them by assassination and one in the plane crash in Croatia that also killed US Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and his party, according to CPJ's annual report attacks on the press in 1996.

The number of journalists' deaths and cut by slightly more than half compared with 1995 when 57 were killed because of their work. The report said Algeria remained the most dangerous place for a reporter to work, with seven killed there in 1996. Bringing the total to 59 since rebel factions began targeting journalists there four years ago.

A total of 474 journalists have been killed in the last

decade, the report said.

Six reporters were killed in Russia, four in the Chechnya. Among journalists killed in 1996 was Ireland's famed investigative reporter Veronica Guerin who was killed in June by two gunmen while she was driving her car. One man was arrested for her murder earlier this year.

The record 185 imprisoned journalists was three higher than in 1995.

In terms of jailing journalists, Turkey was listed as the worst offender for the third straight year, the report said adding that the formation of an Islamist led government failed to alter the state's on-going persecution of journalists.

The committee's Executive Director, William Orme said, "Turkey is once again the single most egregious example of a government that criminalizes independent reporting. CPJ aims to direct a harsh public spotlight at this gross abuse of press freedom."



An Iraqi man unloads humanitarian aid coming from Sudan outside the offices of the Red Crescent Society in Baghdad, Thursday. The UN sanctions committee has approved 11 more import contracts for Iraq, raising to 26 out of more than 200 the number of deal cleared under the "oil-for-food" accord, said an Iraqi minister yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

## Palestinians welcome UN resolution

JERUSALEM, Mar 14: Palestinians welcomed today a UN resolution condemning Israeli plans to build a new Jewish enclave in disputed East Jerusalem as "proof of Israel's isolation," reports AFP.

But a spokesman for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat also hit out at the United States for being the sole state to vote alongside Israel against the resolution in the UN General Assembly.

"This is a world consensus, recognizing Palestinian rights and is clear proof of Israel's isolation," said Nabil Abu Rudeina, Arafat's top adviser.

"We criticise the US decision to vote against this international unanimity," he added in a statement on the official voice of Palestine radio.

Abu Rudeina also said that there were no preparations underway for a meeting between Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to try to resolve the crisis caused by Israel's building plans in East Jerusalem and a series of other contested policy decisions.

The UN text called the building of Jewish neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem "illegal" and a "major obstacle to peace."

## Jakarta for shifting OIC's focus from politics to economic cooperation

JAKARTA, Mar 14: Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, wants to steer the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) towards greater economic cooperation and away from politics, officials and analysts say, reports AFP.

Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, speaking ahead of a special OIC summit in the Pakistani capital Islamabad on March 23, said it was Jakarta's aim to establish better ties within the 54-member organisation.

"We have been doing that since we took on the chairmanship of the OIC at the ministerial level last year," Alatas told AFP. Jakarta hosted the group's

annual ministerial meeting in December. "We encouraged economic cooperation," he added.

The Jeddah-based OIC is holding a special summit to coincide with Pakistan's 50th anniversary since independence from Britain and will follow the Islamabad meeting with a regular summit in Iran in December.

Iran Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on a visit here this week told Alatas that Tehran also wanted to persuade other OIC members to focus more on economic cooperation.

Alatas said the special summit was to be ceremonial in nature despite calls from some quarters for it to focus on tradi-

tional topics like the Middle East peace process.

Mohamad Hikam, a researcher at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, supported Indonesia's planned initiative to give more emphasis to economic issues.

"The Indonesian option is pragmatic, as economic cooperation is something much more tangible than political matters," he said.

Hikam said Indonesia did not want to see the OIC to become bogged down with debating sensitive issues such as the enforcement of Islamic policies of individual countries.

Indonesia is also trying to avoid being turned into one of

the main players in the Arab-Israeli conflict and, therefore, it is trying to shift the focus to economic cooperation," Hikam said.

Indonesia, whose 200 million population is about 90 per cent Muslim, is not ruled as an Islamic state and its constitution gives equal footing to Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. It also considers as subversion any attempt to impose the domination of one religion.

"If we (the OIC) want to survive in this era of globalisation, from the point of view of Islam, we would be making full use of the potentials of the world's Muslim community," com-

mented Muchrim Hakim, an executive of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Hakim, who also is vice-president of the OIC-affiliated Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), said the OIC was well organised but its full potential had not yet been reached.

He said OIC members should focus on improved trade and take advantage of less strict production standards and fewer non-trade barriers.

He also said members could make better use of the ICCI and the Islamic Development Bank as well as the group's other finance institutions.

Hakim is also a member of a research institute which is part of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), a powerful Muslim group which include a number of ministers.

Ezzedine Laraki, a former Moroccan prime minister who was elected OIC secretary general last December, has said he would work to "improve the conditions for the closer economic and cultural cooperation now that we are on the threshold of the 21st century."

Political issues however could rule during the Pakistan summit, analysts said, following the results of the December meeting.