

## Jail riot in Honduras

## 243 prisoners flee with AK-47s into hills

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, Feb 12: Scores of inmates rioted at a prison in northern Honduras on Wednesday, and 243 of them — armed with AK-47s — fled into nearby hills after overwhelming guards and setting a building on fire, reports AP.

Two prisoners were wounded during the breakout from El Porvenir prison near La Ceiba, and a third was captured several hours later.

Roadblocks were set up around La Ceiba, 190 miles (300 kilometres) north of Tegucigalpa, and the army was called in. A big contingent of police rushed to the prison just as the inmates were breaking out.

It was not immediately known how many prisoners fled all together. The prison, which was designed for 300 inmates, currently houses about 500.

Deputy Interior Minister Alberico Reconcino Venegas told reporters the prisoners were demanding the immediate release of the prison director, who has been jailed since December.

The director, Jorge Martinez, had been popular with the prisoners because he allowed home leaves and frequent visits from relatives. Honduran au-

## Israel, PA envoys meet US mediators

WASHINGTON, Feb 12: Israeli and Palestinian envoys held a brief face-to-face meeting with US mediators Wednesday but State Department said no progress was made to revive the peace process, reports AFP.

The meeting capped two days of consultations here on urgent steps the United States is seeking to end a 11-month stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace effort.

Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh and chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat took part in the meeting chaired by the State Department's coordinator for the Middle East, Dennis Ross.

"We do not believe that we have closed the significant gaps that need to be closed and that the decisions that need to be made have not been made," State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

## Proposal for confederation

## Pakistan dismisses Advani's comment as 'wishes thinking'

ISLAMABAD, Feb 12: Islamabad yesterday dismissed as "wishes thinking" a Hindu nationalist party leader's comment that Pakistan and Bangladesh should reunite with India, reports AFP.

"This nostalgia for revival of the 'Raj' days ignores the bitter realities of history as much as it speaks for Indian hegemonic ambitions," a Pakistani foreign office spokesman said.

Presently, in the forefront of the issues that need to be addressed are normalization of relations among the countries of South Asia on the basis of legality, justice and fair play," he added.

## Cuban dissident for more release of prisoners

MEXICO CITY, Feb 12: Cuba has freed several dissidents, but the move doesn't appear related to the pope's call for prisoner releases, a leading rights activist said Wednesday, reports AP.

The action is "coincidental," to Pope John Paul II's appeal last month, said Elizardo Sanchez, head of the Cuban Commission of Human Rights and National Reconciliation.

Advani, whose party is tipped to come top in India's February-March elections but fall short of a majority, said people should realize that the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 has not served the interest of any section of undivided India.

India was partitioned at the end of British colonial rule, known as the "Raj," as escalating tensions between Hindus and Muslims of the Subcontinent turned into violence.

India's election is being keenly watched by the rulers and people of Pakistan with attention focused on Sonia Gandhi and the likelihood of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in New Delhi.

While the Congress party's lead campaigner is being compared to international cricket star-turned-politician Imran Khan who attracted the crowds but failed to baffle over voters in Pakistan's general election last year, the BJP's declared nuclear agenda is being secretly welcomed.

The foreign office here is keeping its fingers crossed, hoping for a more stable Indian government to get the Islamabad-New Delhi talks back on track. Pakistan considers that its diplomatic initiative on the foreign secretary-level talks has been undermined by two successive weak United Front (UF) governments in New Delhi.

Analysts here have noted how the BJP is trying to moderate its stand. They note how BJP President L K Advani, who had once said his party would get Pakistan declared a terrorist state, is now speaking differently to woo Muslim voters in his constituency.

Political observers here note that, unlike in this country, a "rigid" consensus is maintained on critical foreign policy and security issues in India and hence they saw "little room" for a change in policy towards Pakistan with a change in government.

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