

Israeli troops, Palestinians exchange gunfire in Gaza

Passover holiday begins amid tension

AP, Jerusalem

Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire in the West Bank and Gaza Strip early yesterday, as Israel prepared for the weeklong Passover holiday amid new warnings by Islamic militants to set off bombs.

In the West Bank, a Palestinian police officer who allegedly helped lure two Palestinian gunmen to an area under Israeli control where they were seized by Israeli forces. The army said the two men arrested by troops belonged to Tanzim, the armed wing of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

In the Gaza Strip, three Palestinian policemen were wounded overnight in a heavy gunbattle with Israeli troops near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim. One of the officers was in critical condition with a shot to the head.

In the confrontation, Israeli tanks and naval patrol boats fired heavy machineguns at a position of Force 17, a Palestinian security service near Netzarim. A bulldozer later razed the position and two abandoned warehouses, the army said.

From the position, mortar shells were repeatedly fired at Netzarim, the army said. Israel has accused Force 17 of being responsible for many of the shooting attacks on Jewish settlements in the past six months.

Early Saturday, Palestinians fired a mortar shell toward the Jewish settlement of Alei Sinai in northern Gaza. No one was hurt. Exchanges of fire were also reported in five locations in the West Bank.

On the outskirts of Ramallah, two Palestinian gunmen, Jad and Hussam al-Malhi, members of the same clan, were arrested in a supermarket late Friday. Ramallah is "Area A," under full Palestinian control, while the supermarket is in so-called "Area B," where Israel retains overall security control.

Jad's brother Anwar said a friend asked Jad and Hussam to come to a meeting place on the outskirts of town to discuss business. The friend asked the two to wait at the supermarket, where two men in civilian clothes tried to grab them, Anwar said. There was a brief struggle before the two were taken away by uniformed Israeli soldiers, according to the brother.

Israeli Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer has said troops would enter Palestinian-controlled territory, if necessary, but Israel has not done so in the past six months of fighting, despite the recent escalation.

Saturday also marked the start of the weeklong Passover holiday, which celebrates the exodus of the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

US officials report progress in talks for return of crew

REUTERS, Haikou

U.S. officials prepared for a third meeting with the 24 detained crew of a U.S. spy plane on Hainan island on Saturday after President Bush for the first time reported progress in talks on their return.

"We are awaiting word on when we will be able to see the crew," U.S. defence attaché Brigadier General Neal Sealock told reporters in Haikou, capital of the southern island province of Hainan.

"We were promised to see the crew today, I am positive that will take place," he said.

Washington and Beijing are now working on a letter containing an agreed account of how the Navy surveillance plane collided with a Chinese jet fighter off the coast of South China, and an expression of regret for a missing Chinese pilot.

"We're working hard to bring them home through intensive discussions with the Chinese government. We think we're making progress," Bush said on Friday in Washington.

His comments reflected guarded optimism in Washington after Sealock met for the second time with the crew on Friday.

Sealock told Bush by telephone



This undated photo released by CBS News reportedly shows some crewmembers of the US plane detained in southern China.

Sealock said after the second visit the first without a Chinese official present.

Chinese state newspapers meanwhile splashed on their front pages an emotional letter from the wife of the missing pilot to Bush, charging him with cowardice and defaming her husband Wang Wei.

"They're looking forward to getting released from their current situation and returning home," U.S. officials have portrayed

Wang as a "Top Gun"-style daredevil known for risky tactics.

The letter was delivered to the U.S. embassy in Beijing on Saturday morning.

China blames the U.S. plane, which was on a reconnaissance mission over the South China Sea, for veering into its jet.

Radio Nepal said 12 policemen were wounded and 11 others were missing after the clash. There were 72 policemen at the post at the time of the attack, the radio said.

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel blamed the late Friday attack on rebels of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

The quake centered at 4.86 degrees southern latitude and 100.89 degrees eastern longitude.

Nepali rebels attack police post, kill 31

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepali rebels killed 29 police officers and two civilians in an attack on a police post in a village in the west of the country, state radio said yesterday.

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel blamed the late Friday attack on rebels of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

Another quake rocks Jakarta

XINHUA, Jakarta

An earthquake, measuring 5.7 on the Richter Scale, jolted Indonesia's Bengkulu province again yesterday but no casualty was reported.

The Antara News Agency quoted the Meteorology and Geophysics Agency spokesman as saying that the quake occurred at 06:07 am local time (23:07 GMT Friday).

The quake centered at 4.86 degrees southern latitude and 100.89 degrees eastern longitude.



Israeli border police arrest a Palestinian boy during clashes after Juma prayers on Friday in the Old City of Jerusalem. Three Palestinians were rushed to hospital with bullet wounds during a confrontation in the West Bank town of Bethlehem in which Israeli troops fired tear gas and rubber bullets at a crowd of around 70 stone-throwers protesting Israeli "assassinations" of Palestinians.

Benazir's fate hangs in balance

AFP, Islamabad

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's fate hangs in the balance despite a Supreme Court verdict against her corruption conviction, Pakistani media said yesterday.

"By setting aside the Lahore High Court conviction, the Supreme Court has in a way vindicated Benazir Bhutto in the eyes of public opinion," the News daily said.

"But by remanding the case for re-trial it has in fact kept her fate hanging in balance."

The verdict gives a "big psychological boost" to Benazir's political fortunes, the paper said, but added: "Will she be let go off the hook?"

"It depends on many other things not in the control of the current arbiters who vow to keep her out."

Pakistan's top court on Friday accepted appeals by Benazir and her jailed husband Asif Ali Zardari against their April 15, 1999 corruption convictions and ordered a re-trial of the case.

Benazir and Zardari were both given five-year prison sentences, fined a total of 8.6 million dollars and disqualified from parliament for seven years by an accountability bench of the Lahore High Court.

Benazir had claimed the conviction, during the rule of ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif, on charges of allegedly taking huge kickbacks from a Swiss firm during her 1993-96 rule had been politically motivated.

The Nation newspaper said Benazir, who lives in self-exile in London, will not have another argument to prove that she was a target of political vindictiveness.

Indian troops on high alert in Guwahati

AFP, Guwahati

Indian troops were on high alert yesterday against violent protests by militants in turbulent Assam state on the anniversary of a powerful separatist group.

The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which is fighting for an independent homeland in the oil and timber-rich northeastern state, observes its 22nd foundation day today.

Rebel sources said the main celebrations will take place at the ULFA headquarters in the Himalayan nation of Bhutan, with similar functions planned in London, Myanmar and New York.

"Security forces have been put on maximum alert fearing possible attacks by ULFA militants on vital installations like crude oil pipelines and railway tracks," a top police official told AFP.

In the past, ULFA militants have blown up oil pipelines and attacked security personnel in a bid to demonstrate their firepower on its anniversary.

Troops have been patrolling vulnerable areas to protect a 1,160 kilometre crude oil pipeline that crosses the state, connecting to the Barauni refinery in Bihar.

A police spokesman said extra police and paramilitary forces had been deployed at refineries and oilfields, while air surveillance was being conducted.

More than 3,000 ULFA members, including some top leaders, have surrendered over the past two years while hundreds have been killed in encounters with security forces.

"The mass surrenders have put pressure on the militants to strike at soft targets in order to prove they are still a force to reckon with," an army commander engaged in counter-insurgency operations said.

The ULFA fights out of well-entrenched bases inside Bhutan and carries out hit-and-run guerrilla strikes in Assam.

Meanwhile, surrendered ULFA militants are organising an anti-terrorism rally today to coincide with foundation day.

Leaning Tower of Pisa reopens in November

CNN, Rome

The public are to be allowed back inside Italy's Leaning Tower of Pisa for the first time in 11 years.

Tourists will have to pay 25,000 lire (\$12) for a ticket to make the dizzy climb when the monument re-opens in November.

The 12th century tower was closed to the public at the start of 1990 for a daring restoration project aimed at reducing its lean.

It involved pulling the tower back using huge lead counterweights which should keep the building, which stands apart from the main body of Pisa's cathedral, safe for the next 300 years.

"Eleven years of work are not that much when you consider it took 200 years to build the monument in the first place," Italy's Public Works Minister Neri Nesi said on Friday.

Tourists, accompanied by a guide and security personnel, will be

allowed up the tower in groups of 30. Pierfrancesco Pacini, head of the office which is responsible for the tower, said.

An inauguration ceremony will be held on June 16. Visitors will be allowed to walk up to the top as well as to step outside onto the loggia, at the second "story" level.

Officials said by the time tourists are back, the tower's tilt should be reduced by 40 centimetres.

The tower leaned six degrees, or 13 feet, off the perpendicular, on its south side before work began -- now its tilt is nearly back to the level of 300 years ago.

The decrease in lean, though, is not enough for the naked eye to detect but sufficient to stabilise the monument, experts have said.

The tower started leaning when the soil beneath it started shifting shortly after work to construct it began in 1173.

70 arrested in Seoul for anti-US protests

AP, Seoul

About 70 students were detained for questioning yesterday after staging an anti-American rally at the US embassy in central Seoul.

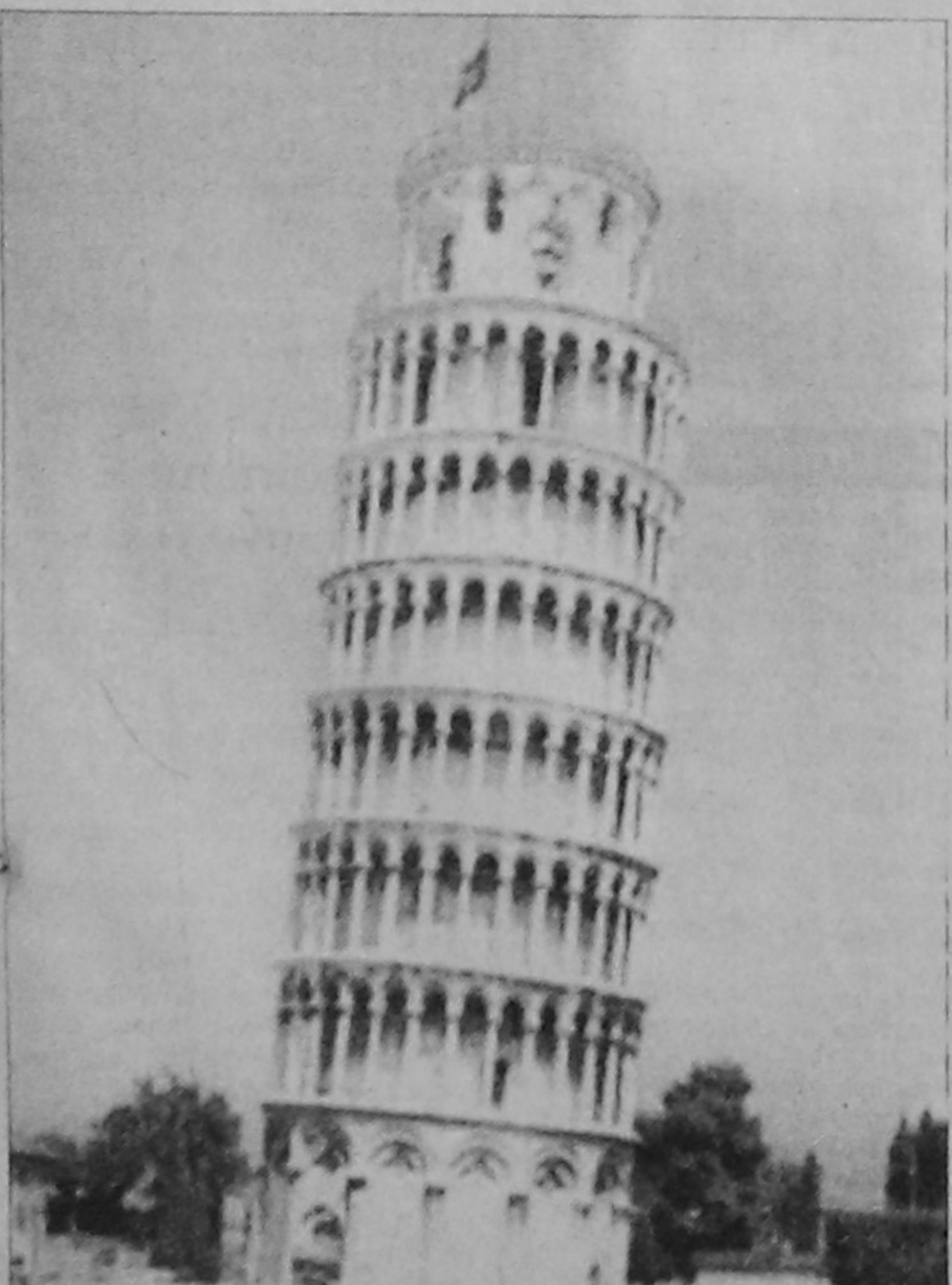
The protesters, members of the outlawed student organisation Hanchoongryon, occupied four lanes of an eight-lane boulevard in front of the embassy, demanding the withdrawal of American soldiers from South Korea.

"Withdraw US troops!" they chanted. They wore headbands with similar slogans.

They also protested Washington's plan to build a missile defense system.

Riot police quickly hauled away the students, who lay on the pavement with interlocked arms. No injuries were reported.

Earlier, students scattered leaflets that said the US military presence in South Korea and the missile defense plan impede efforts toward the reunification of the two Koreas.



Workers have spent 11 years reducing the tower's lean



যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা :

- ঢাকা: ■ হলদী: ফোন: ৯৯৬০০০, ৯৯৬০০১ ■ গার্মেন্টস: ৯৯৬০০২-৬ ■ ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স: ফোন: ৯৯৬০০৩, ৯৯৬০০৪ ■ কম্পিউটার: ফোন: ৯৯৬০০৫, ৯৯৬০০৬ ■ বিপুল: ফোন: ৯৯৬০০৭, ৯৯৬০০৮ ■ পুরোনো দপ্তর: ফোন: ৯৯৬০০৯, ৯৯৬০১০ ■ উত্তর: ফোন: ৯৯৬০১১, ৯৯৬০১২

- চট্টগ্রাম: ■ কমার্শিয়াল: ফোন: (০৩১) ৯২৪২৯, ৯২৪৩০ ■ লাল খান বাজার: ফোন: (০৩১) ৯২৪৩১, ৯২৪৩২ ■ সুমিত্রা: ফোন: (০৩১) ৯২৪৩৩, ৯২৪৩৪ ■ নারায়ণপুর: ফোন: (০৩১) ৯২৪৩৫, ৯২৪৩৬ ■ সাতার: ফোন: (০৩১) ৯২৪৩৭, ৯২৪৩৮ ■ ময়মনসিংহ: ফোন: ০১৭২৪০০০
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বেলা বয়ে যায়...

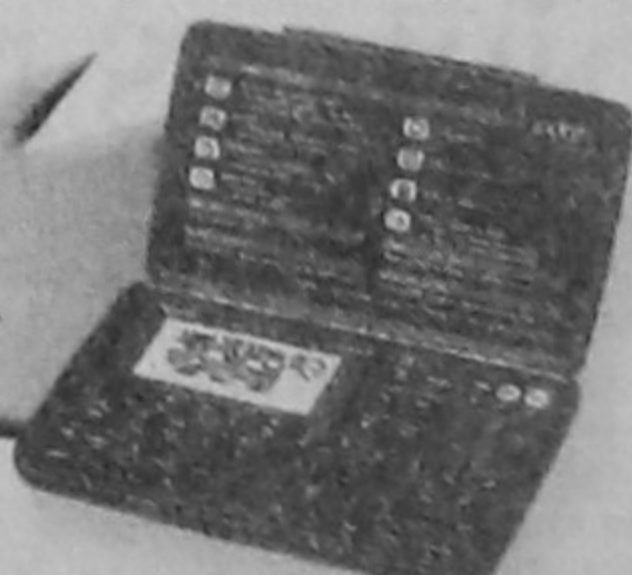
সময় আর শ্রোত কারো জন্য অপেক্ষা করে না- এমন কথা আজকের ছোট শিশুটিও জানে, কিন্তু...বোধে ক'জন!

মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষার পরবর্তী সময়টা কি শুধু এমনি এমনি কাটিয়ে দেবে?

নাকি - তা কাজে লাগিয়ে পেশাগত জীবনের পথে নিজের যোগ্যতাকে এগিয়ে নেবে এক ধাপ, পাশ্চাতে দেবে তোমার জীবনধারা - সে সিদ্ধান্তটা অবশ্যই তোমার... তবে সিদ্ধান্তটা নিতে হবে এখনই, কারণ ওই যে- সময় আর শ্রোত কারো জন্য... তো..., চলে এসো আজই এ্যাপটেক এর যে কোন সেন্টারে।

মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষার্থীদের জন্য এ্যাপটেক চালু করেছে একটি বিশেষ কোর্স- যা তোমাদের জন্য একান্ত উপযোগী।

বিশেষ আকর্ষণ!! ডিজিটাল ডায়েরীসহ আরো কিছু...



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