

Cousin of emir, 18 others condemned to death in Qatar

AFP, Doha

Qatar's appeal court yesterday condemned a cousin of the emir and 18 other people to death for their role in a failed 1996 coup, overruling life sentences handed down by a lower court, the official news agency QNA reported.

It said the appeal court also imposed life terms on 26 defendants for plotting to overthrow Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and acquitted another 28.

On February 29, 2000, a criminal court condemned Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Hamad al-Thani, a cousin of the emir, and 32 co-defendants to life in prison and acquitted 85 other defendants.

Both the prosecution and defence appealed against the verdict, with the former calling for the death sentence for all 33 slapped with life terms.

The accused were charged with trying to reinstall Qatar's former leader Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani, who was deposed by his son Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in June 1995.

China executes 29 in one day

AP, Beijing

Chinese authorities executed at least 29 people in one day on Sunday as part of a crackdown on crime that already has seen hundreds put to death.

In the northeastern province of Liaoning, 15 people were executed for crimes including armed robbery, rape and racketeering, the state-run Xinhua NewsAgency reported.

Executions also were carried out in the southwestern city of Chongqing and in Changde, a city in the southern province of Hunan.

A total of 14 people were put to death in the two cities for a nine-year spree of thefts and killings, Xinhua said.

Meanwhile, a court in the southern city of Guiyang on Friday sentenced eight people to death for kidnapping and trafficking in children, the China Women's News reported. The gang sold 41 children over three years, the paper said, but did not say how old the children were or who they were sold to.

Mongolian President reelected

AP, Ulan Bator

President Natsagiin Bagabandi was re-elected in voting that gave his formerly communist party almost total control of the Mongolian government, according to election results announced yesterday.

Bagabandi received 57.91 per cent of votes cast Sunday at polling stations that included tents set up in remote spots on the Mongolian steppe for thousands of nomadic herders, the General Election Committee announced.

Bagabandi's chief challenger, Radnaasumberiin Gonchigdorj, a former parliament speaker, received 36.58 per cent of the votes, said GEC spokesman Jamyangdorjin Nergui.

Bagabandi's Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, which now espouses democracy and radical economic reform, had already won 72 of parliament's 76 seats in elections last year.

"With this support, the people stand for the sustainability of the work of the president and parliament," said Prime Minister Nambar Enkhbayar, who is chairman of Bagabandi's party.

Miro won't visit Iraq: Syria

AFP, Damascus

There is no visit to Iraq by Syrian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustapha Miro scheduled on Monday, the cabinet press office said in Damascus, contrary to what had been announced a day earlier by an Iraqi official.

"No visit by Miro to Iraq had been scheduled in the first place", the same source said.

An Iraqi official said Sunday that Miro was due to kick off Monday what would have been the highest-ranking visit between the two countries in 20 years.

For his part, the Syrian Economy and Foreign Trade Minister Mohammad Imadi, is expected to travel to Iraq to take part in a session of the two countries' mixed commission, his office said.

According to the official press, he will lead a delegation of officials from his ministry and from the Health and Irrigation ministers.

The two Arab states, after a longstanding on-off relationship, finally broke off diplomatic ties in 1980 when Damascus backed Tehran in the 1980-1988 war between Iran and Iraq.

Israel pounds Gaza, kills 2 Palestinians

ME violence may spill over into region: Solana

AFP, Gaza City

Two Palestinians were killed in fresh violence in the Gaza Strip yesterday, only hours after Israeli forces bombed Palestinian factories and security buildings amid mounting international concern over the escalating violence.

The killings came ahead of the publication of a report by an international panel into the deadly eight-month tide of unrest while one of its authors, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, started a regional tour in Egypt.

The early morning raids by Israeli helicopters and missiles, which the Israeli army said targeted a mortar bomb factory, came despite sharp international criticism of Israel for its use of warplanes in deadly strikes against the Palestinians on Friday.

"The army will continue to use whatever means necessary in order to preserve the security of Israeli civilians and its soldiers," the army said in a statement.

The two men killed by Israeli soldiers near the Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip were members of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, Palestinian security sources said, although the circumstances of the shooting were not immediately clear.

Four people were injured in Monday's raids, which the Palestinians said hit two industrial factories and a security building in the northern Gaza Strip, and also damaged 10 houses and a book-

shop.

The raids appeared to demonstrate Israel's determination to strike hard at the Palestinians to put down the intifada or uprising that erupted in late September and has cost the lives of 560 people, most of them Palestinians.

In Israel, security was at unprecedented levels as the nation marked its conquest of east Jerusalem 34 years ago amid heightened fears of Palestinian attacks.

Jerusalem Day, which began Sunday and runs through Monday, marks the anniversary according to the Hebrew calendar of east Jerusalem's seizure from Jordanian control in June 1967 and subsequent annexation, a move not recognised by the international community.

Meanwhile, European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, who is on a four-day mission to the Middle East, warned yesterday in Cairo that violence between Israel and the Palestinians could spill over into the wider region.

"We are really on the verge of a very critical situation and everybody with common sense has to make the utmost to stop it," Solana told journalists after an hour's meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Solana, who was one of the authors of the Mitchell report on the current violence between Israel and the Palestinians, said he would try and convince the leaders of the region that the report's conclusions must be implemented.

The report was due to be published later Monday in the United States.

"Now it is for the leaders to implement what is there and we would like very much to see the conclusions of the report implemented," he said.

The Mitchell committee was set up at the US-Israeli-Palestinian summit in Sharm el-Sheikh at the start of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, which to date has claimed almost 540 lives, the vast majority of them Palestinian.

Solana criticised Israel's use of F-16 fighter jets in attacks on official Palestinian targets on Friday, the first such raids since the Jewish state's seizure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

"I'd like to say that what we've been seeing lately, to fight with weapons, with F-16s, is not a manner to get peace in the region," he said.

"We are trying (with) all the means we have at our disposal to try to bring peace back," Solana added, refusing to be drawn on whether the EU would impose an economic boycott on Israel to pressurise it back to the negotiating table.

"We do not want to be part of the problem, we want to be part of the solution," he said, reiterating his call for an immediate ceasefire to the eight-month violence between Israel and the Palestinians that has seen more than 560 people killed.

India likely to extend ceasefire in Kashmir

AFP, New Delhi

India is likely to extend its unilateral ceasefire in violence-wracked Kashmir to sustain an offer for peace talks to Muslim separatist groups, government sources said Sunday.

However, when contacted, the Indian Prime Minister's office refused to confirm or deny the report on the ceasefire which is due to expire at the end of the month.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the government was likely to extend it by another three months.

The news agency said the decision is to be taken later this week by India's cabinet committee on security, which is chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

India's self-titled unilateral ceasefire was declared six months ago, at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

The initiative actually represented a suspension of some combat operations -- a move which was rejected by Muslim separatist guerrillas fighting against what they call the Indian occupation in Kashmir.

The rebels have called the Indian initiative a propaganda ploy aimed at winning support of the international community.

On Saturday, India's home and defence ministers Lal Krishna Advani and Jaswant Singh visited Kashmir.

Opposition to the ceasefire has been mounting from factions within India's ruling BJP party. Elements of the Indian security forces have reportedly been against its renewal.

'The Son's Room' wins top award at Cannes film festival

REUTERS, Cannes, France

Italian director Nanni Moretti won the Cannes film festival's coveted Palme d'Or award on Sunday for "The Son's Room", the tragic story of a family torn apart by the death of a child.

It was the first time an Italian movie had taken top honours at Europe's premier film competition since 1978 and Moretti raised both fists in the air in a victory salute as he went on stage to collect his prize.

The other big winner of the night was Austrian director Michael Haneke's controversial film about voyeurism and masochism, "The Piano Teacher", which picked up three prizes, including the best actress award for Isabelle Huppert.

By contrast, the two big Hollywood pictures in competition, "Shrek" and "Moulin Rouge," left empty handed at the end of the 112-day festival.

However, two independent US directors were honoured.

Joel Coen and David Lynch shared the best director's award for their two films "The Man Who Wasn't There" and "Mulholland Drive" respectively.

The president of the jury, Norwegian actress and director Liv Ullmann, told the closing ceremony that picking the winners had been tough and her panel had been divided on many issues.

"The Son's Room" received an ovation when it was screened here last week and was voted by newspaper critics as the best of the 23 films in competition, but Moretti never thought of himself as the



Nanni Moretti

automatic winner.

"Often there is no causal relationship between what the public likes and what the jury likes, so the fact that people said I was a favourite didn't reassure me in the least," he told reporters.

The jury handed out just eight main awards, "The Piano Teacher" being the only film to take more than one prize.

Besides Huppert, her co-star and compatriot Benoit Magimel won the award for best actor, while Haneke himself took the "Grand Prix" award runner up to the Palme d'Or.

Huppert delivers a stunning performance as a cold, sexually repressed teacher, while the youthful Magimel plays her brilliant student who decides to seduce her.

"There are films that frighten you. You think they will take everything away from you, but they give



Isabelle Huppert

you everything," Huppert said as she collected her prize. "I thank Bach, Schubert and Mozart," she added.

While Huppert had been clear favourite to take the best actress honours, US star Jack Nicholson had been widely tipped to win the best actor prize for his brilliant portrayal of a retired detective in Sean Penn's taut thriller "The Pledge."

If it was a disappointing evening for the Americans, the large Asian contingent fared even worse.

The region had five films in competition and after a strong showing at Cannes in recent years, hopes were high that they would triumph once again.

In the event, only one laurel went Asia's way a technical award to Du Tuu-Chih for his sound work on two films set in Taiwan, "Millennium Mamba" and "What Time is It There?"



PHOTO: AFP

Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi (2nd R) sits with her daughter Priyanka (L) at a memorial to mark the 10th anniversary of the assassination of her husband, former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, in New Delhi yesterday.

Jet lag shrinks the brain: Study

AFP, Paris

You've just staggered off a 12-hour flight. The clock says it's dawn, but your body says it's bedtime. You can't remember what day it is, nor do you really care.

The fuzzy, queasy sensation of jet lag has sometimes been likened to having your brain gently squeezed - and now, a researcher in Britain says that feeling has scientific backing.

Kwangwook Cho, of the University of Bristol Medical School, found that chronic jet lag appears to shrink a frontal part of the brain, inflicting a temporary loss of memory and cognitive skills.

He studied 20 women flight attendants aged between 22 and 28 who had worked for at least five years for an airline and routinely

flew across at least seven time zones. Women were chosen for the test because they generally suffered worse jet lag than their male counterparts.

Ten of the women had a long turnaround between flights, of at least two weeks, while the others had only a week.

Cho carried out a scan of each woman, using magnetic resonance imaging, which provides a 3-D image of the brain, and assessed their performance in memory and understanding tests.

Among the women who had a short turnaround in flights, an area of the brain called the right temporal lobe was "significantly smaller" than women who had the 14-day turnaround, Cho says.

They also had higher levels of cortisol, an adrenal hormone that is

secreted during stress, and they performed more slowly and less accurately in the cognitive tests.

Cho, whose study is published in June's issue of the specialist US journal Nature Neuroscience, says the findings back up previous research on the effect of cortisol levels on the brain. Damage to the temporal lobes has also been a cause of amnesia.

"Jet lag recovery period may be a potential way to eliminate the temporal lobe atrophy associated with repeated jet lag," Cho says.

The implications are important, not just for airline personnel faced with a short turnaround between flights, but for shift workers in other sectors who face frequent disruption to their body clock, he says.

Taiwan president leaves for US, Latin America

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian yesterday left for a five-nation tour of Latin America via the United States - a stopover bitterly opposed by China.

Chen, accompanied by his wheel-chairred wife Wu Shu-chen, departed from the northern Chiang Kai-shek airport on board an EVA Airways Boeing 747-400.

"As a sovereign state, Taiwan must stand up and walk out (towards the international society)," Chen said shortly before his departure.

"Taiwan must approach the world and have it be seen by the world. Taiwan hopes to share with the allies its experiences in political, economic and cultural development."

Chen was seen off by Vice President Annette Lu, parliament speaker Wang Jin-pyng, Premier Chang Chun-hsiung and other top government officials.

Among his entourage are Foreign Minister Tien Hung-mao, Economic Minister Lin Hsin-i, and powerful entrepreneurs including Jeffrey Koo, from the National Association of Industry and Commerce.

Chen will stay at the Waldorf Hotel in New York. In a visit rich in symbolism, he will meet congressmen on Tuesday, then visit the metropolitan art museum and the Stock Exchange.

His transit stops are "officially unofficial" but are packed with meetings and photo-ops.

The Liberty Times said a group of 20 US legislators will fly from Washington to New York on board an air force plane to meet him.

Among the group are said to be Senator Robert G. Torricelli and House of Representative Benjamin A. Gilman.

Fire in prison kills 26 inmates in Chile

AP, Santiago

A fire during a prison riot in the northern Chilean city of Iquique killed 26 inmates, the government reported early yesterday.

"The multitudinous inmates set mattresses and blankets on fire and we now lament the deaths of 26 people," regional governor Patricio Zapata said in the port city 1,700 kilometers north of the nation's capital, Santiago.

It was not known what triggered the violence, Zapata said.

The riot broke out at about 10 pm Sunday and four hours later, 17 bodies had been recovered, according to Zapata.

"The situation has now been brought under control," Zapata said, as scores of relatives of the inmates gathered around the prison building.

Radio Cooperative of Santiago reported that police used tear gas to disperse the relatives of inmates who tried to enter the prison.

"The reasons for the violence are not clear, and we have ordered an investigation," Zapata said. He said Justice Minister Jose Gomez was flying to Iquique from Santiago to lead the investigation.

Zapata said the fire spread quickly when the inmates set mattresses and blankets ablaze.

Russia sends cargo ship to space station

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia launched an unmanned cargo ship yesterday to resupply the International Space Station, mission control in Moscow said.

The Progress M1-6 unmanned cargo craft took off from Russia's Baikonur space base in Kazakhstan at 2:33 am (0433 BST) and would dock at the space station on Wednesday, a mission control duty officer said.

The ship was functioning normally, she said.

The International Space Station is being built mainly by the United States and Russia, with the participation of Canada, Japan and European countries.

Action must be taken now on global warming: Annan

AP, Medford, Massachusetts

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned Sunday that action must be taken now on global warming and called on the United States to resume leadership on the issue.

Speaking at commencement exercises at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Annan said it is important that Americans, who produce the most greenhouse gases of any nation, join other nations in reducing emissions and conserving energy.

Climate change "may well be the greatest global challenge that your generation will face," Annan told the graduates.

In March, President George W. Bush rejected the Kyoto climate treaty and its mandatory pollution reductions as too harmful to the American economy. Bush said he

would continue to pursue other measures to address climate change.

That decision met with disapproval from environmental advocates at home and governments abroad. Annan avoided explicitly criticising the US position, but did suggest that American cooperation is the key to progress on the issue.

"All world leaders must show they take these issues seriously," he said. "But it is the leaders of the industrialised nations who must show the way, especially on the question of global warming."

After the ceremony, Annan said he hoped the United States would be present when Kyoto talks reconvene in July in Bonn, Germany. He said he does not believe the Bush administration's position on the global warming accords is cast in stone.

"I seem to sense that the door has been left slightly open," Annan said.

"I think the test will come in July when the countries of the world come together to discuss the environment, and I hope the administration will go in there ready to engage, ready to give and take and ready to explore ... what we can do to protect our environment."

Annan said climate changes brought about by global warming would hurt all countries.

"Imagine melting polar ice caps and rising sea levels, threatening beloved and highly developed coastal areas such as Cape Cod with erosion and storm surges," he said.

"Imagine extreme weather causing billion-dollar calamities. Imagine a warmer and wetter world in which infectious diseases such as malaria and yellow fever spread more easily.