

## 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 Jassim 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 News Agency 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, Radnaasumbereliin Gonchigdorj, a former parliament speaker, received 36.58 per cent of the votes, said a GEC spokesman in Ulan Bator.

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 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.

"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 pressure 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.

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.

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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.

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.

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.

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PHOTO: AFP

Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian (L) speaks at the airport in Taipei shortly before his departure for US and Latin America yesterday.

## 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 Vajpeyi.

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.

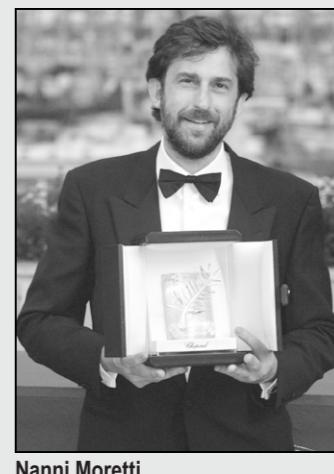
Opposition to the ceasefire has been mounting from factions within India's ruling BJP party. Elements of the Indian security forces have reportedly been against its renewal.

The 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

## '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.

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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 Mambo" and "What Time is It There?"

## Lanka to help India, Pakistan break ice

SAARC standing committee meet from June 8

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka is to host a gathering of top South Asian diplomats which will provide a neutral setting for arch-rivals India and Pakistan to break the ice and revive a tottering regional grouping, diplomats said yesterday.

Sri Lanka yesterday confirmed that a preparatory meeting of the seven-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be held on June 6 and 7 ahead of a two-day standing committee meet from June 8.

The standing committee comprises the foreign secretaries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan foreign ministry said it was going ahead with arrangements to host the meetings.

"We can confirm that the standing committee meeting will be according to schedule but we can't immediately say anything about bilateral meetings that may take place on the sidelines," a foreign ministry official said.

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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.

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allowing bilateral matters on the agenda, even in an informal way, to be handled over to Nepal.

The 11th summit due to be held in Nepal has been held up because of Indo-Pakistan bickering.

Diplomats said they expected the standing committee meet next month to set an agenda for a meeting of the council of ministers which is tasked with finalising dates for the next summit.

The previous council of ministers meeting was held in Sri Lanka's central town of Nuwara Eliya in March 1999 with little achieved after two days of talks.

India froze all bilateral contacts after Pakistan's alleged involvement in a border conflict in Kashmir's Kargil sector in May-July 1999, which left 1,000 combatants dead on both sides.

Next month's foreign secretaries' meeting follows intense diplomatic efforts to get India to agree to reviving the SAARC.

Since its first summit in Dhaka in 1985, the