

Permanent members of Security Council to cut arms flow

WASHINGTON, May 30: The five permanent members of the UN Security Council reached interim agreement Friday on 10 guidelines aimed at reducing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, reports AP.

A senior State Department official said the agreement was "quite an achievement" but stopped short of calling it a breakthrough.

The agreement does not commit the United States to restrict any activities beyond those called for in other international agreements it has signed, the official said.

He indicated that the most substantial impact of the agreement relates to commitments made by Russia and China.

It provides a way in which those two nations "can agree to do some things in the area of missiles, in the area of chemi-

cals that they haven't agreed to before in an international forum," the officials said.

He noted that neither country is a member of a grouping set up to discourage the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

The meeting among the officials from the United States, Russia, Great Britain, China and France was part of a series begun a year ago at the initiative of President Bush.

An earlier meeting yielded agreement on ground rules governing conventional weapons.

The five also agreed in their two days of talks to initiate an exchange of data on conventional arms exports. Three of the five provided the data during this week's meeting and the remaining two promised to submit their data within the next month, the official said.

Action not 'supra-constitutional': Ishaq Khan

Pak army starts raiding bandit hideouts in Sind

KARACHI, May 30: The Pakistani army has begun raiding suspected bandit hideouts in the jungles along the Indus river in the crime-plagued southern province of Sind, police said today, reports AFP.

The "Clean-up operation," previously announced by the government in Islamabad, is aimed at curbing banditry, terrorism and sabotage while "restoring the writ of the government" in the troubled province.

Sources said troops, supported by the para-military Sind force, had entered the jungles on both sides of the Indus between Hala and Moro towns, north of Karachi.

The army was also reported to have taken up positions along high ways and roads in

the central Sind districts of Nawabshah, comprising the towns of Qazi Ahmed Kandiari, Moro, Sakrand and Mehrabpur.

Vehicles were searched for arms and suspects, and key installations such as telephone exchanges, television relays, power stations, railway stations and bridges were placed under guard.

Railway lines were also being patrolled to deter actions by terrorists, who recently attacked several trains, killing and injuring dozens of passengers.

Sind's provincial government has handed over its law enforcement functions to the Pakistani army for six months under a constitutional provision.

A three-member committee comprising the army corps commander, provincial chief minister and provincial police chief has been formed to supervise the crackdown.

Provincial authorities and army officials met Friday in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city and port as well as Sind's capital, to review the law and order situation and hammer out details of the operation.

Some political leaders, including former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, whose political base is in Sind, and the ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement, have expressed concern that their supporters will be victims of the crackdown.

The federal and provincial governments have sought to

reassure them that an "even-handed and just" approach would be adopted.

The Federal Interior Minister, Chaudhury Shujaat Hussain, has said the administration of Sind had not been handed to the army. Rather, he said, troops would only undertake the restoration of law and order.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan told reporters in Peshawar on Friday that the military operation was not "supra-constitutional," and that any one who objected to it could challenge it in a court of law.

Khan reiterated Pakistani government allegations of Indian involvement in recent acts of sabotage and terrorism in Sind.

Off the Record

Pornography charges dismissed against parents

RICHMOND: A judge has dismissed child-pornography charges against a couple who mailed a photo postcard of their daughter with her genitals exposed, reports AP.

Madison District Judge John Paul Moore made the ruling just before jury selection was to begin Thursday in the trial of David Greene, 40, and his wife, Starna Hill, 44.

An investigation began after Hill mailed a photo postcard of Greene and their 6-year-old daughter, Mira, to a friend. Hill said she wasn't wearing her reading glasses and didn't notice her daughter's nightgown wasn't covering her genitals. Had she noticed, she said, she wouldn't have mailed it.

The picture was confiscated by Brad Reeves, the US postal inspector in Cincinnati. Authorities questioned the girl about possible abuse and searched the family's home, seizing photo albums and videotapes picturing Mira.

Greene and Hill are now considering a lawsuit. The anguish this has cost our family and the damage of our reputations were not considered, said Greene, a physician.

County Attorney Robert L. Russell said law-enforcement officials were justified in investigating the couple, but he asked that the charge be dismissed after a social worker convinced him that Mira wasn't abused.

"The child is a normal, happy, and well-adjusted child, and the child enjoys a close and loving relationship with her parents," Russell said in a statement.

Largest bacteria in intestines of a fish

INDIANAPOLIS: The world's largest known bacteria — a million times larger than their average cousins — have been discovered in the intestines of a surgeonfish, reports AP.

Only tiny specks to the naked eye, the bacteria are behemoths in the microbial world, Indiana University researchers said Friday.

Epulopiscium (ehp' yoo loh pee' uhm), as the bacteria are known, could revolutionize thinking about how bacteria function, researchers said. Some of the one-celled microorganisms cause diseases, while others are necessary for fermentation.

"Bacteria have always been considered to be structurally simple — basically bags of enzymes," said Norman R. Pace, the Indiana University biology professor who directed the research.

"That means to us that bacterial cell organization is much more complex. It's not just a bunch of stuff floating around in a bag," he said.

The findings were presented Friday by university doctoral student Esther R. Ansel at the meeting of the American Society for Microbiology in New Orleans.

Street boy to attend Earth Summit

NAIROBI: Sixteen-year-old John Kabure shares a squalid slum shack with his family of nine. He has never been outside Nairobi, much less Africa, reports AP.

But next week John, who for years scavenged food from garbage bins to survive, will join world leaders at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

He will represent the Mathare Youth Sports Association, a group that clears garbage and drainage ditches as well as playing soccer in Mathare Valley, one of Africa's largest and poorest slums.

Bush to address Rio summit June 12

LOS ANGELES, May 30: President George Bush will address the UN sponsored earth summit in Rio de Janeiro on June 12, officials announced here Friday, reports AP.

After a long debate, it was decided two weeks ago that Bush would attend the UN conference on environment and development June 3-14, despite lingering administration concerns that the President would be pressured into signing agreements which Washington opposes.

The exact dates of Bush's stay in Rio have not been decided. But one White House official said the President probably would arrive on June 11 and would leave either on the 12th or 13th.

Some 100 heads of state or government are expected to attend the earth summit.

Bush, in Los Angeles Friday on a campaign swing,

Kashmir rebels kill 5 of a family

SIRINAGAR, May 30: Kashmiri Muslim militants killed a Muslim family of five including two teenagers in a Kashmir's Tangdhar border area early yesterday, police officials said here, reports AP.

The officials said the girls, their father Fatehuddin, mother Musnati and 23-year-old brother were killed early in the morning but gave no further details.

None of the militant groups waging a bloody secessionist war in Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, claimed immediate responsibility for the killings, which brought to 16 the number of deaths attributed to militant squads in the past seven days.

However the outlawed Al Jihad group, in telephone calls to journalists, claimed responsibility for four of the earlier killings "after due trial in special courts in which they were found guilty of spying for Indian security forces and sentenced to death."

Presidential polls in India July 13

NEW DELHI, May 30: India's ninth President will be elected July 13 to succeed Ramaswamy Venkatraman, whose five-year term as head of state draws to a close later that month, the Election Commission announced, reports AP.

An Electoral College comprising members of the Federal parliament and the legislative assemblies of India's 25 states will vote in the election, whose schedule was unveiled by the commission here late Friday.

Nominations will be accepted between June 10 and 24, the Commission said.

ROK students plan street protests today

SEOUL, May 30: About 40,000 radical students from more than 100 colleges nationwide gathered on a sprawling university campus Saturday for a rally denouncing the governing party's presidential candidate, reports AP.

Shouting "Let's crush DLP (Democratic Liberal Party)," the students marched at Yon-seung University and cheered fellow students from provincial cities.

It was the biggest show of force by radicals this year. The three-day rally, an annual gathering of nearly all campus activists in South Korea, started Friday night, targeting Kim Young-Sam and his governing party.

Kim, 65, is running to succeed President Roh Tae-woo whose single five-year term ends in February. Presidential voting must be held before the

end of this year.

Radicals regard Kim, a former opposition leader who joined the ruling party in a three-party merger in 1990, as successor of Roh's undemocratic policies.

Some 20,000 riot police have been deployed around the campus and elsewhere. The students plan to stage street protests Sunday.

In two southern cities, Kwangju and Mokpo, hundreds of students stopped running trains Friday and boarded for Seoul after police set up checkpoints at railway stations.

This year's presidential election will be a close race between Kim Young-Sam and his longtime rival Kim Dae-jung, who heads the nation's main opposition party. The two ran in 1987 but lost to Roh by splitting the opposition vote.

Japanese parties agree on bill to send troops abroad

TOKYO, May 30: The governing Liberal Democrats and two opposition parties agreed Friday on a controversial bill that would allow Japan to send its military overseas to participate in international peacekeeping activities, reports AP.

Japan's constitution bans the use of force in settling international disputes, and opponents say sending troops abroad for peacekeeping purposes would violate the ban and set a dangerous precedent.

Party officials said the governing party and two moderate opposition groups — the Komei, or Clean Government Party and the Democratic

Socialists — agreed on the bill by adding a requirement that Parliament give prior approval for each overseas dispatch of Japan's military.

The three parties agreed that the bill would allow troops to immediately take part in non-combat peacekeeping activities, but would delay participation in combat activities until a still-undetermined time, the officials said.

The parties also agreed to review the bill in three years.

A Liberal Democratic official said the parties will submit the bill to Parliament Monday and seek a vote on it "as soon as possible."

BRIEFLY

Sudanese peace talks extended: OAU-sponsored peace talks aimed at ending Sudan's nine-year-old civil war were extended on Friday for another five days after leaders of two rebel groups and the Sudanese government reached agreement on key issues, AFP reports from Abuja.

The talks, which started Thursday in the Nigerian capital and had been scheduled to end Friday, are being hosted by Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida, who is the current President of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

The Sudanese government successively agreed to rebel demands that a commission be created to discuss whether Sudan should be a secular state, as the southern rebels demand, or a Muslim one as sought by the Khartoum government.

Agreement was also reached on discussing the possibility of a referendum in the south.

Turkish ferry mishap, 370 rescued: Rescuers pulled 370 people from a crippled Turkish ferry as it burned Friday night in the Sea of Marmara, an official said, AP reports from Ankara.

A deck orderly died of a heart attack during the fire aboard the Istanbul, Transport Minister Yasar Topcu said. Earlier, unconfirmed reports said a machinist also died after inhaling poisonous fumes.

An undetermined number of people were flown by helicopter to hospitals.

The Romanian freighter Tusnat and two Turkish vessels answered distress calls from the Istanbul in the Marmara, which links the Black and Aegean seas. Some of those rescued were plucked from lifeboats, Topcu said.

N Korea may sell missile to ME: North Korea is preparing to sell a new intermediate-range missile to Middle East countries, a senior State Department official said Friday night, AP reports from Washington.

The missile "would be very, very destabilizing if it were introduced into the region," the official said. "And yet it appears that is the intention of North Korea."

North Korea has been exporting Scud missiles to the Middle East and is now signing up buyers in the region for the new missile said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Syria and Iraq have previously bought North Korean missiles.

The official said US experts are calling the missile the "No Dong" after a North Korean cape where the missile is being test fired. The non-nuclear missile has a range of 1,000 to 1,500 kilometers (620 to 930 miles), he said.

Fire kills five Chinese kids: Five Chinese children died after a teacher led his class of 60 out of school to fight a forest fire, the China Daily reported Saturday, Reuters says from Beijing.

A sudden change of wind engulfed the class in flames and five died trying to escape. The youngest was 10 and the oldest 14 the newspaper said, adding that the teacher and five children were severely burned.

Local authorities in Henan province in central China posthumously honoured the dead as model teenagers and young heroes, but are anxious they do not become role models.

Children under 16 have been banned from fighting fires in Henan, the newspaper said.

Floods hit Argentine provinces: Thousands of Argentines have fled their homes as rivers swollen by torrential rains swept through several northern provinces, the state news agency Telam reported on Friday, Reuters says from Buenos Aires.

Civil defence officials in Chaco, Corrientes, Entre Rios, Formosa and Santa Fe told Telam that over 40,000 people had to be evacuated after the Pilcomayo, Paraguay and Parana rivers rose due to heavy downpours in Paraguay.

In Paraguay's capital of Asuncion and nearby towns, civil defence officials said floods forced 30,000 people to leave their homes.

The worst-hit areas has been the Argentine town of Clorinda, across the Paraguay river from Asuncion and 1,400 km (875 miles) north of Buenos Aires.

Smoking banned in Nepal: Nepal's government has announced a ban on smoking in public places, factories, government offices and educational institutions with immediate effect, the state radio reported Friday, AFP says from Kathmandu.

The radio quoted an official statement from the cabinet secretariat, which did not specify the punishment for violating the ban.

"Smoking will be banned in public buses, cinema theatres, hospitals, health centres, the central secretariat and other public places. So that non-smokers' health may not be harmed," the order said, adding it would also be forbidden in all educational institutions and factories.



JERUSALEM: A Palestinian youth argues with Israeli border policemen during an ID check in East Jerusalem Friday. Security was reinforced in the area, following the increasing wave of stabbings. The Israeli authorities sealed off the Gaza Strip indefinitely and will close Jerusalem to Palestinians today, for the 25th anniversary of the 1967 Israeli-Arab war.

DPRK now security threat in Far East: US commander

MANILA, May 30: The commander of US forces in the Pacific said Friday that North Korea is now the chief security threat in the Far East, reports AP.

Admiral Charles Larson, Commander in chief of the US Pacific Command, said the collapse of the Soviet Union removed a restraining factor in geopolitics which has allowed smaller powers to play a destabilizing role.

North Korea, the Korean peninsula, is my No 1 security concern in the entire region," Larson told the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines.

Larson, who is in Manila for an annual security meeting with Philippine officials, said North Korea's admission that it possesses a small amount of plutonium illustrates the potential threat.

Plutonium can be used to make nuclear weapons.

Larson said nuclear weapons in North Korea were a threat to all of East Asia because North Korea has often sold weapons to other countries.

He said the problem was exacerbated because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which, despite the Cold War, had served as a restraining factor over its client states.

"The Soviet-US confrontation, for all its bad things, did have a constraining effect in some ways," Larson said. "We don't have that anymore. There are a lot of independent actors."

Reuter from Panmunjom adds: North Korea on Friday refused to attend a meeting called by the US-led United Nations Command (UNC) to discuss last week's border gunbattle between South and North Korean soldiers.

UNC delegates waited in vain for North Koreans to attend the 460th Military

Armistice Committee meeting at a conference room in the border town of Panmunjom.

North Korea has boycotted the MAC, the military committee responsible for overseeing the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean war, since a South Korean general was appointed head of the five-man UNC delegation 14 months ago.

Seoul said its troops shot dead three North Korean soldiers last Friday in the southern section of the heavily fortified demilitarised zone DMZ that separates the two Koreas.

The South has described the infiltration as the worst violation in recent years of the 39-year-old armistice accord. The ceasefire agreement has yet to be replaced with a peace treaty and the two Koreas remain technically at war.

Sikhs kill 6 cops in Punjab

LUDHIANA (India), May 30: Six Indian paramilitary policemen were killed Saturday when a Sikh militant bomb blew up their vehicle, police said, reports Reuters.

Only one member of the seven-man patrol survived the blast about 30 km (20 miles) from Ludhiana, one of the main industrial cities of the northern state of Punjab where Sikh militants are fighting for independence, they said.

The six men of the Border Security Force were among 14 deaths reported overnight in Punjab, where thousands of people have been killed in the decade-old campaign for a Sikh homeland, the militants call Khalistan.

Sharif condemns attack on Mojaddedi's plane

ISLAMABAD, May 30: Pakistan condemned a rocket attack on a plane carrying Afghanistan's interim president on Friday, reports Reuters.

"I have been greatly shocked at the rocket attack launched against your aircraft on approach to Kabul Airport," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said in a message to President Sibghatullah Mojaddedi.

"No behalf of the government and people of Pakistan, I strongly condemn this act of terrorism."

Kabul radio said one of three rockets fired at Mojaddedi's aircraft struck the nose cone, but the pilots man-

aged to bring the plane down safely.

Mojaddedi and his entourage, who were returning from the Pakistan frontier city of Peshawar after a three-day visit, were unharmed, but one of the pilots was injured.

It was Mojaddedi's first foreign visit since taking power as head of a Mujahideen government in Kabul a month ago.

Pakistan President Golam Ishaq Khan called the rocket attack cowardly.

"We deeply condemn this act of sabotage which was not only aimed against your person but also against the peace process in Afghanistan," he said.

Lankan troops face stiff resistance from Tigers

COLOMBO, May 30: Hundreds of troops backed by air and sea cover continued an offensive against Tamil guerrillas in northeastern Sri Lanka, with an estimated 34 lives lost in heavy fighting in the area, officials said, reports AP.

Four of the victims were soldiers killed when troops advanced towards bases of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in coastal Mullaitivu district Friday, a military spokesman in Colombo said.

He said troops faced stiff resistance, but were assisted by Naval gunboats and the air force which "blasted jeeps and

trucks" carrying rebel reinforcements to the front. "We lost four. Five others were seriously injured and another five slightly hurt. We estimate that about 30 Tigers were killed in air attacks," the spokesman said.

The latest casualties took to 44 the number of army dead, and to 100 the estimated LTTE fatalities, in three days of fighting in the sprawling northeast, where the Tamil Tigers want to set up a separate state for Sri Lanka's minority Tamils.

The army offensive in Mullaitivu continued Saturday and a second phase of opera-

tions in the LTTE-controlled northern Jaffna peninsula, particularly on the outskirts of Palaly air base, was also due to begin, officials said.

Guerrillas hit back Friday by wiping out 29 soldiers including two officers in an ambush in another area, eastern Batticaloa district, forcing the army to extend its current "limited operation" to include the east, officials said.

"It (the ambush) was clearly a diversionary tactic. Now we have started follow-up operations to track down the Tigers in Batticaloa. Essentially, our men are in action in a number of places," a military official

said. But the main thrust of the air-sea-land campaign remained confined to Jaffna peninsula and Mullaitivu district, where troops captured rebel-held territory and expanded their forward defence lines, the spokesman said.

"In the process of conducting operations, our aim is to kill as many Tigers as possible," he said, adding that rebel casualties were believed to be much higher than official estimates.

Meanwhile: Tamil guerrillas killed three security personnel in a major attack on a military post near a northern Sri Lanka

town where President Ranasinghe Premadasa has been on a three-day visit, officials said Saturday.

About 100 members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked a forward defence line in Vavuniya district late Friday, killing two policemen and a para-military trooper and wounding seven soldiers including an officer, the officials said.

A military spokesman in Colombo said troops backed by tanks retaliated, causing "many" casualties among the LTTE militants who fired small arms and rocket-propelled grenades at the defence line.

