

# Rocket attacks foil Afghan leaders' meet

KABUL, June 13: Heavy rocket and artillery fire in Kabul prevented a meeting between arch-rivals Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar today, officials said, reports Reuter.

The two leaders had been due to meet in war-battered resort town of Paghman about 20 km (12 miles) west of Kabul on Saturday but heavy artillery fire in the area forced both men to turn back, officials said.

Officials were trying to rearrange the meeting for Monday or Tuesday.

The main proposal is to solve misunderstanding and mistrust and to pave the way for Hekmatyar to begin his work, presidential spokesman Abdul Aziz Morad said.

Morad said the two men would also discuss arrangements for the Prime Minister designate to enter the capital.

The president and the public still think he should come to the Prime Minister's house, Morad said.

Hekmatyar has yet to leave his heavily fortified base at Charasyab, about 20 km (12 miles) south of Kabul, from where his fighters have bombarded the capital with rocket and artillery fire for about year in a battle for supremacy of the city.

Morad said one of Hekmatyar's first tasks as Prime Minister would be to collect all heavy weapons held by fighters of the nine main quarrelling factions making up the Islamic coalition government that took power from the fallen communist government in April 1992.

At least three people were killed and more than 60 wounded in exchanges of rocket

and artillery fire between fighters of the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat party and government troops in the western suburbs on Saturday.

In the past week, about 80 rockets have killed 25 people and injured 82, Radio Kabul said.

The head of a peace delegation said he was trying to organise a mission to revive a ceasefire agreed by all the groups on May 20 after three weeks of tortuous negotiations.

"We have plans to send a ceasefire delegation," Mahmud said in an interview.

# Egypt recalls diplomat from Colombo

COLOMBO, June 13: An Egyptian diplomat accused of smuggling 153 gold bars worth over 200,000 dollar in Sri Lanka has been recalled home, The Sunday Island newspaper said, reports Reuter.

It said, the diplomat assigned to the Egyptian Embassy in Colombo, who was not identified, may have already left Sri Lanka. Embassy officials were not immediately available for comment.

According to Customs and Foreign Ministry officials, the gold bars were found on June 5 hidden in the false bottom of a bag belonging to the diplomat as he arrived at Colombo's Airport from Singapore.

The bag and gold were confiscated, and the diplomat allowed to return to his Embassy.

# Lanka to airdrop leaflets for identifying Premadasa's killer

COLOMBO, June 13: Sri Lankan police will airdrop leaflets in the north and the east seeking to confirm the identity of the suspected Tamil rebel killer of President Ranasinghe Premadasa, a news agency report said today, according to Reuter.

State-owned Lankapuwath news agency said the leaflets would be distributed on Monday by the Criminal Investigation Department which is handling the investigation into Premadasa's assassination.

Premadasa and 23 others, including his valet MP Mohideen, were killed by a suicide bomber at a May Day parade.

Lankapuwath said two members of Premadasa's security staff, who were questioned on Friday, have been detained for withholding information on the alleged assailant.

This raised to 25, the number detained in connection with the murder investigation.

Police have said the suspected killer, Kumarakulasingham Weerakumar, was a friend of Mohideen and was suspected of having links with Tamil rebels.

The rebels, who are fighting in the north and the east for a

separate state, denied any involvement.

The agency, quoting a senior detective, said the leaflets carried the photograph and detailed description of the man in order to obtain positive identification that he was Weerakumar.

Police said earlier that the identification was based on his government-issued identity card and other information.

The agency said that similar leaflets were being distributed in refugee camps in Sri Lanka and India, where there is a sizeable Tamil population which fled fighting between govern-

ment troops and the rebels. It said that another of Premadasa's valets, who is in custody, was also likely to be charged for withholding information on the alleged killer.

Lankapuwath quoted police as saying that a reward of one million rupees (20,000 dollars) was being offered for information that would confirm that the killer was the 23-year-old Weerakumar.

AFP adds: Government troops in war zone today braced for revenge attacks by Tamil guerrillas following the army's capture of five rebel-held villages in the island's east, officials said.

Hundreds of security forces faced little resistance when they captured five villages held by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in coastal Batticaloa Friday. One soldier and 12 rebels died in the fighting.

Tigers may try to attack us in the east because of the operation. But they might do it in the north to divert our attention away from the east, said a military official.

Government forces launched operation "Sea Gale" under cover of a 48-hour curfew Thursday to destroy LTTE positions in the east and expand their network of military bases in the region, officials said.

Troops continued Sunday to consolidate their positions in the formerly Tiger-controlled villages of Vakaraal, Kadirvell, Kadju Farm, Markerni and Kayankerni, a military spokesman said.

Press reports said that military commanders had ruled out a withdrawal of troops from captured areas.

# Iraq stalls camera installation

BAGHDAD, June 13: Iraq is stalling a UN demand to install two highly sensitive cameras to monitor missile testing sites close to Baghdad, a senior UN inspector said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

"We haven't heard anything from the Iraqis," Nikita Smidovitch told reporters.

On Friday, Iraq asked the UN, "it wanted the camera issue to be included in a package it intends to review with the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) scrapping its weapons of mass destruction under the terms that ended the 1991 Gulf War over Kuwait."

He said, "He extended his visit to Iraq to solve the camera issue and expressed hope the Iraqis would allow him have them installed eventually."

Smidovitch and four other Ballistic missile experts had been due to leave Baghdad on Friday.

They extended their visit after Iraq prevented them from installing the cameras at sites where Iraqis are working on missiles with a range close to the 150 km (95 miles), the maximum limit allowed under UN Security Council resolutions.

The sites are Yawm Al-Azim, 65 km (40 miles) south of Baghdad and Al-Rafah 65 km (40 miles) southwest of the capital.

Smidovitch said, Baghdad had also not yet complied with another UN demand to destroy chemical production equipment that may be used for prohibited purposes.

# Arms smuggling worries Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, June 13: Malaysia has beefed up surveillance at key entry points amid concern over the rising number of firearms being smuggled in from former communist countries and supplied to criminals, news reports said today, according to AFP.

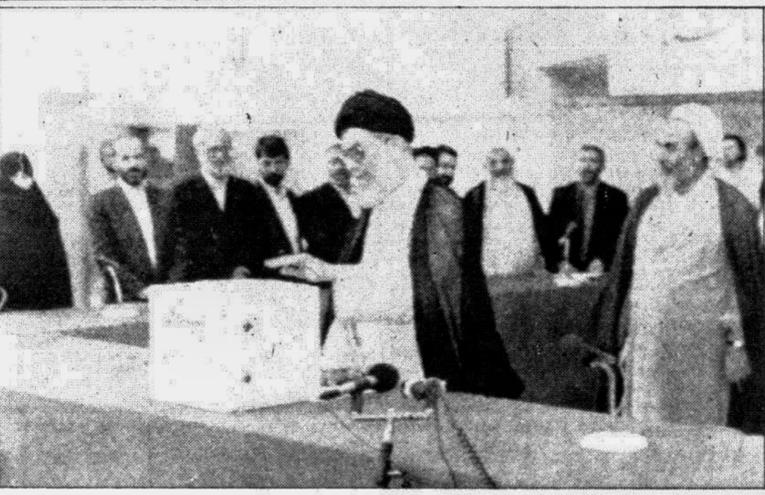
Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub was quoted as saying that police had discovered that an increasing number of rifles and handguns made in former communist bloc countries had landed in the country.

"We are very concerned that these arms are being sold to criminals who use them to commit dangerous crimes," Megat Junid said.

Recent investigations showed that pistols and revolvers used by robbers. Robbers were also smuggled in from China and Vietnam, he added.

Malaysia, assisted by Thailand, recently seized firearms and heroin following the arrests of six bandits belonging to a notorious triad gang whose members were believed to have murdered 11 people in recent months.

Megat Junid said the collapse of communist regimes around the world and the end of several wars in the region had brought about a surplus of weapons.



Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei casts his vote during the sixth presidential elections in Tehran on Friday. President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani won a second term in power with 63 per cent of the vote in Friday's elections. Story on page 1 — AFP photo

# Arabs begin talks with call for reconciliation

ABU DHABI, June 13: The main Arab allies in the US led Gulf War coalition that rejected Iraqi troops from Kuwait began talks on Saturday with a call for reconciliation among Arabs estranged by the conflict, reports Reuter.

United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah Al-Nuaimi told fellow foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Egypt and Syria that there was a need for a spirit of forgiveness.

"We are gathered today in an atmosphere which is dominated by the wish to improve inter-Arab relations, and ... a call for forgiveness and solidarity," he said.

"We are in dire need of forgiveness and burying of differences between Arab brothers," he said, repeating remarks made in December by UAE President Sheikh Zaid Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan.

The PLO, Jordan and Yemen, who all expressed sympathy with Baghdad during 1990-91 Gulf crisis, have all felt the wrath of the oil-rich Gulf Arabs who saw their stance as a betrayal.

Welcoming US commitment to being a full partner in the talks, Nuaimi also called for Washington to press Israel for Middle East peace talks progress.

"We still stress ... the United States' responsibility to forcing Israel to take the needed immediate steps "to help the talks advance," he said.

The tenth round of the bilateral Middle East peace talks resumed in Washington on Tuesday.

The UAE Minister, in an opening address to the two-day meeting of the eight signatories of the military and economic Damascus declaration, also stressed that ties with non-Arab Iran "must be based on non-interference."

"We feel that developing relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran need to concentrate on the basis of respect of rights of neighbouring states and non-interference in the affairs of others," he said.

The eight signatories of the declaration, a thus-far dormant alliance signed in March 1991 as Iraqi troops fled from Kuwait, are expected to reiterate their support for Abu Dhabi in its dispute with Iran over sovereignty over three Gulf islands.

# Pretoria won't attend Vienna conference

CAPE TOWN, June 13: South Africa has turned down an invitation to attend a United Nations human rights conference in Vienna starting Monday, Foreign Minister Pik Botha said here Saturday, reports AFP.

Botha said the government had declined UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali's invitation on grounds that South Africa was still denied participation in the UN General Assembly.

As South Africa's ambassador to the UN in 1974, he was obliged to leave the General Assembly when it withdrew his delegation's credentials in protest at apartheid.

"As South Africa is still denied participation in the activities of the General Assembly it would be premature to seek to take part in meetings arranged by that body, Botha said.

# Mahathir leaves for China

KUALALUMPUR, June 13: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad left today for a 10-day visit to China, which will include talks with his counterpart Li Peng on vital regional security and economic issues, reports AFP.

"Although security will only feature indirectly in our discussions we will seek to know in principle the role China will play in east Asia and southeast Asia, Mahathir told reporters earlier this week.

Reports from Beijing on Thursday said Li Peng, who had been out of public view for more than six weeks with what was officially described as a bad cold, would be well enough to receive Mahathir.

Mahathir, accompanied by his wife, will lead a 290-member delegation including four cabinet Ministers, making this visit the biggest-ever Malaysian mission to China since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1974.

Mahathir said he intended to discuss with Chinese leaders a wide-range of regional and bilateral issues.

# Off the Record

## Letters problem for democracy

WASHINGTON: US President Bill Clinton said on Saturday the White House is getting 40,000 letters a day and told 800 volunteers, "We've got to answer all those letters," reports Reuter.

Clinton said that in his three and one-half months in office, more letters had flooded into the White House than in all of 1992, creating "a great problem for democracy".

He spoke at a brief rally-the-troops ceremony on a driveway between the White House and the old Executive Office building, addressing 800 mostly young people who agreed to spend the day opening letters.

"We're getting about 40,000 letters a day. We're desperately working to try to answer those letters with very limited staff," he said.

In all, he said three million pieces of mail had come in during his tenure, "and that's good, but we've got to answer all those letters. We have to let the American people know that they are being heard."

"You are really going to help democracy work today," he said.

The White House has also opened computer electronic mail channels and added phone lines to cope with the extra attention Clinton is receiving.

The mail is piling up at the new executive office building across the street from the White House.

## Don't know which one is new

KANO, NIGERIA: Nigerian Presidential Candidate Bashir Tofa lost one vote in Saturday's poll — his own, reports Reuter.

Election officials in his northern home city of Kano banned Tofa from casting his vote because he arrived late at his local polling station and then learnt his voter's card had expired.

"Tofa, competing against Fellow-Millionaire Moshod Abiola," said later at his house in Kano's Zoo road, that he left the polling station to avert a fracas.

"I realised that my presence there would cause a commotion therefore I had to leave," the 45-year-old Bank Chairman said.

Nigeria's 39 million eligible voters were told to register for the country's first presidential election since 1983.

But it seemed one of the two candidates, busy campaigning for the past six weeks, forgot.

"All I know is that I have a voter's card. I don't know which one is old or new," Tofa said.

# BRIEFLY

**India test-fires Prithvi:** India Saturday successfully test-fired a medium-range missile from a launch pad on the east coast, local news agencies reported, Reuter says from New Delhi.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the Prithvi, a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 350 km (220 miles), was test-fired over the Bay of Bengal.

The Prithvi, which means earth, can carry a payload of up to one tonne. The PTI said the launch was watched by officers of the army and navy-services that will use the missile.

It was the 11th test of the Prithvi, which the Defence Ministry describes as a tactical battlefield support weapon.

**Iraq detains Briton:** Iraqi authorities have detained a Briton on the Kuwait-Iraq border, the British embassy in Kuwait said Saturday. Reuter reports from Kuwait.

A spokesman said the man was arrested in the demilitarised zone on May 28 and was believed to have been taken to Baghdad. The spokesman declined further comment and referred queries to the foreign office (Foreign Ministry) in London.

A Baghdad court sentenced a Kuwait-based American oilman to eight years in prison for illegal entry after he strayed over the border into Iraq last month.

The border area between Kuwait and Iraq has not been clearly demarcated on the ground and travellers can easily get lost.

**Storms lash parts of UK:** Rainstorms lashed parts of Britain and Ireland drowning at least four people and causing millions of pounds (dollars) in damage, Reuter reports from London.

Three people died in south-west England on Saturday and a 14-year-old boy was washed into a flooded drain and drowned near the Irish capital Dublin, police said.

An elderly woman walking with her husband fell into the flooded East Lyn river at a beauty spot in the English County of Devon and drowned as she was swept downstream.

Another man died and one was missing in a boating accident in the popular holiday region of Cornwall further to the west.

**UN cancels Cypriot leaders' meet:** The United Nations cancelled Saturday a planned meeting between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders Monday after Turkish leader Rauf Denktaş said he would not attend, AFP reports from United Nations.

Denktaş informed UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that he would be unable to come to New York as he had planned Monday, said Joe Sills, the Secretary General's spokesman.

Boutros-Ghali described Denktaş's decision as a "regrettable development," the spokesman said.

Denktaş had been due to meet with Cyprus President Glafkos Clerides, a Greek-Cypriot.

**Flood leaves 19 dead in China:** Severe rainstorms and flooding have left 19 people dead and two missing in China's southeastern Fujian province, an official newspaper said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The storms from June 1 to 9 destroyed more than 3,000 houses, irrigation facilities and large areas of farmland in western Fujian, the Liberation Daily reported.

Losses were estimated at 116.6 million yuan (20.5 million dollars), the Shanghai-based newspaper said.

# ULIMO, NPFL feud obstacle to aid work in Liberia

MONROVIA, June 13: Hundreds of thousands of people are currently starved of food and medicines in northern and eastern Liberia because of disputes among the warring factions about the provision of humanitarian aid, according to relief workers, reports AFP.

"Lofa County in northwestern Liberia, with 100,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, was in a 'catastrophic' situation," a representative of the US aid organisation Catholic Relief Service (CRS), father Kenneth Vavrina, said that since March no aid had reached the region, trouble by sporadic clashes between the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) and Charles Taylor's National Front of Liberia (NPFL).

# Most Indians eat meat, frequently marry blood relatives

NEW DELHI, June 13: Most Indians do eat meat and most of their marriages are still arranged — not infrequently to blood relatives, Indians divide themselves into over 4,000 separate communities and they speak 325 different languages, reports Reuter.

Those are some of the many intriguing findings in a colossal 43-volume anthropological work called "People of India" that is being published by the Anthropological Survey of India.

Billed as the largest survey of its kind in the world, the project began in October 1965 and culminates with the release this October of the first five volumes, said K S Singh, a tribal historian and the project's Editor.

The original mandate was to

survey the human surface of India ... to show the impact of change and development since independence," he said in an interview in his office, tucked away in a warren of decrepit government buildings in New Delhi.

The survey identified 4,636 separate communities in India — far more than anywhere else in the world — defined by occupation, ethnic characteristics, or their own perceptions of their place in society, Singh said.

Almost all of India's 880 million people belong to one community or another, he said. Despite the formidable wall of the Himalayan mountains to the north and seas on its other three sides, India has centred great migratory waves since the dawn of civilisation in the subcontinent around 2,500 BC.

Mediterraneans came from the West, Aryans from central Asia, and Mongoloids from the Tibetan plateau, pushing the native Dravidians further and further to the south.

The migrations created a rich mosaic of languages and customs and reinforced the importance of clan and community, Singh said.

There are few communities which do not consider themselves migrants and every community recalls its migration in its folklore and history," Singh said.

One of the surprising findings of the survey is that only 20 per cent of the communities in the land of the sacred cow consider themselves to be strict vegetarians.

Alcohol is consumed in well over half the communities,

and chewing or smoking tobacco is widespread.

We are, therefore, largely a drinking, smoking and meat-eating people," Singh said.

India, which gave birth to two major world religions and several minor ones, has a particularly dynamic religious life.

Indians practise Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism and Jainism, and sometimes belong to two or more of these faiths, according to the survey. It also found Jewish settlements and thousands still adhering to the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism.

The survey shed new light on how entwined religious practice is in India, Singh said.

In the Barak valley of north eastern Assam, where the

# Stop blocking to join int'l bodies, Lee tells China

TAIPEI, June 13: Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui called on Beijing Sunday to cease blocking Taipei's attempts to join international organisations, reports AFP.

"Mainland China should stop blocking Taiwan from joining the international arena ... and the two sides should help each other in order to strengthen the Chinese race," Lee said in a press statement released by the Presidential office.

The statement quoted a speech Lee made to graduates of National Chengchi University Saturday.

Lee's appeal to China followed his recent directive that Taiwan should step up efforts to rejoin the United Nations, which Taipei left in 1971 when Beijing was officially admitted to the world body.