

## US, DPRK reach basic agreement on N-talks

SEOUL, June 7: North Korea and the United States have reached a basic agreement in marathon talks in Kuala Lumpur aimed at salvaging their accord to halt the North's suspect nuclear programme, a spokesman for the North said today, reports AFP.

Both sides reached agreement in principle on major issues on this basis, both sides have begun working-level consultation for the formulation of a joint document this morning, the North's mouthpiece, the KCNA news agency, quoted a foreign ministry spokesman as saying.

The announcement dispelled speculation that the abrupt departure of two low-level North Korean delegates from Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday spelled the collapse of the talks, which have dragged on since May 19.

The North had threatened to reprocess thousands of spent fuel rods which US experts say could provide enough

plutonium for four or five bombs — if the talks failed.

The sticking points, which caused the first round of talks on the reactor model type to collapse in Berlin, had been the North's refusal to accept Light-Water Reactors (LWRs) from its old foe South Korea, and its demand that Washington pay an extra one billion dollars for infrastructure.

But in the surprise announcement carried by KCNA, the North's spokesman identified the areas of agreement as 'the choice of the reactor model, the mode of contract making, the liabilities of the United States and the expenses for the adjustment of the construction sites.'

"We think the talks will soon end if the dialogue partner respects the agreed principles," he concluded.

"I think that the parties involved feel they have made a good deal of progress," State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelley said.

## 'No request from Colombo' India rules out intervention in Lanka's civil war

NEW DELHI, June 7: Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee has ruled out intervention in Sri Lanka's civil war and said there has been no such request from Colombo, reports AFP.

Mukherjee, in an interview published today by the Times of India, said New Delhi would like to see a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka.

"We are concerned at the resumption of hostilities and the use of advanced weaponry by Tamil separatist guerrillas," he told the newspaper.

"We are watching the situation with close interest," Mukherjee added, "and believe that a political solution has to be found within the framework of unity and integrity of Sri Lanka."

Asked whether he was rul-

ing out another Indian military intervention in the conflict, Mukherjee replied: "Yes. But I would not put it so positively. The question does not arise since there is no request from Sri Lanka."

India sent thousands of troops to Sri Lanka under a 1987 pact aimed at ending the Tamil rebel drive. The Indian army lost nearly 1,200 men in fighting with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) before returning home in March 1990.

Mukherjee also said an Indian offer to resume talks with Asian rival Pakistan remained "on the table."

"Time and again we have reiterated our willingness to enter into a comprehensive and meaningful dialogue with Pakistan on all outstanding issues," he said. "Our offer is very much

on the table."

"We are ready to talk and settle all differences with Pakistan bilaterally," he said. "It is up to them to show the sincerity to respond. We consider that the ball is really in Pakistan's court."

Mukherjee, who visited the United States last month, said India would welcome a US attempt to force Pakistan to cut off its support for Muslim separatist guerrillas fighting Indian troops in Kashmir.

"If the United States uses its influence with Pakistan to end the latter's support for terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, we would certainly welcome it," he said.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Kashmiri Muslim militants seeking to end Indian rule over the disputed Himalayan territory.

Pakistan, which also claims sovereignty over Kashmir, denies the charge but provides diplomatic support to what it describes as a legitimate campaign for self-determination.

Mukherjee also reiterated Indian opposition to the possible lifting of a US law prohibiting arms sales to Pakistan and said New Delhi would be concerned if Pakistan receives a shipment of F-16 jet fighters.

"We have made it clear that if Pakistan gets more F-16s, their striking power will be enhanced," he said. "Then, we will be compelled to raise ours."

"But we don't want an arms race on the subcontinent," he added.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two of them over Kashmir.

## Chernobyl-like disaster may occur in Cuba

MIAMI, June 7: A Chernobyl-like nuclear disaster could occur at a shoddily built power plant in Cuba and President Clinton should pressure Russia to end monetary and technical support of the project, experts and lawmakers said Tuesday, reports AP.

Cuban leader Fidel Castro is compelling engineers to flout safety guidelines and cover up errors to quickly finish work at the plant in Juraguá in central Cuba, said three Cubans who worked on the plant and defected to the United States.

If the plant leaks radioactive material, Cuba, southern United States, the Caribbean and Central America could be contaminated, they said.

"We're talking about a potential Chernobyl right in our own back yards," said US Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Miami. The Russian disaster killed 31 people and cast a pall of radioactivity over Europe.

While the Cuban plant's design may be sound, the construction isn't, said Jose Oro,

an engineer who worked in nuclear waste disposal unit before defecting in 1991.

"The operation of this reactor will be nothing but criminal," Oro said. "The construction... was being performed in a completely negligent and reckless manner."

Workers improperly installed water pipes and welded parts of the reactor, both of which could heat up the core and cause radiation leaks, said Vladimir Cervera, an engineer who worked in the plant's quality control department before arriving in the United States in 1990.

Further, blatant errors are being treated as state secrets and no one's correcting them, Oro charged.

US Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart of Miami said Clinton has ignored the plant, which is about 180 miles (288 kilometres) south of key West in the province of Cienfuegos and estimated to cost \$800 million. The plant could start operating in 18 months.

## BRIEFLY

**Quakes shake Philippines:** Three moderate earthquakes have rocked the northern and southern Philippines in a span of 16 hours, seismologists said Wednesday. No damage or casualties were reported, AP reports from Manila.

The first tremor measuring 5.9 in the Richter scale struck at 4:20 am (20:20 GMT) Tuesday, centering in the northern tip of Luzon Island, 432 kilometres (270 miles) north of Manila, said the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

**2 US babies die of suffocation:** Two babies died Tuesday after spending hours in a car parked outside a motel in hot weather while their mother was inside visiting friends, police said. AP reports from McMinnville, Tennessee.

The toddlers, 1-year-old Dustin Ducker and his brother Devon Ducker, who would have been 2 in July, apparently died of dehydration and suffocation, authorities said.

**18 more executed in China:** Eighteen Chinese aged from 21 to 69 were executed Friday in Chongqing, after being sentenced for a variety of crimes, the Sichuan Daily said in its latest edition, received in Beijing yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Separately, the Jiangxi Daily reported five people were executed on Saturday from murder and theft in Nanchang.

**PLO launches Palestinian TV:** The PLO launched Palestinian television on Tuesday, broadcasting to Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank from self-ruled Jericho. Reuters reports from Jericho.

The governing Palestinian authority took over Jericho and Gaza Strip from Israel in May 1994 under a peace deal signed the year before.

**Rain claims 100 in China:** Torrential rain that has battered southern and southwestern China since the end of May has already caused 100 deaths, the Chinese press says, AFP reports from Beijing.

The southwestern province of Sichuan was the worst-hit, with at least 62 deaths and 200 injuries, the China Daily said Wednesday.

**Ramos orders release of fishermen:** President Fidel Ramos on Wednesday ordered the release of 62 Chinese fishermen arrested in February while fishing in contested waters of the South China Sea, AP reports from Manila.

Ramos told a nationally televised news conference that the eight, all minors, would be freed in a gesture of good will as soon as details can be arranged.

Friday marks the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and the mainland government.

**Rabin may reach Cairo Friday:** Egypt expects Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Cairo on Friday to meet President Hosni Mubarak and US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Reuters reports from Cairo.

Mubarak, asked yesterday about Rabin's visit, said only that they had not yet decided what they would talk about. "When that's agreed, we'll announce the subjects," he told reporters.

**Israeli-backed militiaman killed:** Guerrillas set off a roadside bomb in southern Lebanon on Wednesday, killing an Israeli-backed militiaman and wounding another, security sources said, AP reports from Lebanon.

The bomb, apparently detonated by remote control, exploded as a patrol of the South Lebanon Army militia searched a road near the town of Jezzine in the Israeli-occupied border strip. The Iranian-backed Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the morning attack and said all the patrol's men were killed or wounded. A patrol usually consists of six soldiers. Lebanese security sources, requesting anonymity, said only one was killed and another was wounded.

**Clinton telephones Assad:** US President Bill Clinton Tuesday telephoned Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in abid to accelerate the Mideast peace process on the eve of a visit to the region by Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Xinhua reports from Washington.

Clinton made a very brief call to touch base prior to the arrival of Secretary Christopher. White House spokesman Mike Mucurruy told reporters. During the call, the President reiterated his personal commitment to resolving differences between Syria and Israel over the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Golan Heights.

**Russian quake death toll 1743:** Rescue crews continue to pull bodies from the rubble left by last week's earthquake on Sakhalin Island, with the confirmed death toll rising to 1,743 on Wednesday, AP reports from Moscow.

There are 167 other people still missing and presumed dead, which would put the final death toll above 1,900, said Karl Smolnikov, a spokesman for the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations.

**Cop kills colleagues in Egypt:** A depressed policeman shot dead two of his colleagues yesterday before committing suicide by throwing himself into the Nile in southern Egypt, police reported, AFP says from Minya, Egypt.

The unnamed member of the river police was on boat patrol with four other policemen near the necropolis of Beni Hassan, 250 kilometres (150 miles) south of Cairo, when he hoped fire on his partners, killing two immediately.

**13 killed in Myanmar clash:** At least 13 persons were killed and over 20 others seriously injured in group clashes at the border town of Moreh in Candel district bordering Myanmar Tuesday evening, PTI reports from Imphal.

Official sources said that eight persons died on the spot and five others succumbed to their injuries Wednesday morning. The injured were taken to nearby hospitals.



More than one thousand Egyptian journalists stage a protest Tuesday in Cairo against a new defamation law which they fear will restrain their freedom of expression. Strikes are still banned after an emergency law passed in 1981, after the assassination of Anwar Sadat. Journalists publishing "false information" face heavy penalties including imprisonment. — AFP/UNB photo

## Karachi violence death toll 150 Gunmen attack magistrate's car, kill driver, bodyguard

KARACHI, June 7: Gunmen pumped bullets into a magistrate's car Wednesday, killing his driver and bodyguard and bringing the death toll in three weeks of violence here to 150, police said, reports AP.

The driver had dropped off his passenger, Magistrate Li-aqat Ali, when gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire, police said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the killings, but police blamed members of a militant opposition group, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement.

Another eight people were killed overnight, many of the bullet-riddled bodies found Wednesday morning by police.

The most powerful political force in Karachi, the MQM represents Indian Muslims who settled in Pakistan after the two countries gained their independence in 1947.

The MQM also dominates Hyderabad and Sukkur, the only other major cities in Pakistan's southern Sindh province.

The MQM accuses Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government of discrimination, claiming its members are denied access to good jobs and decent education.

They also accuse Karachi's security forces of using excessive force.

Benazir denies the MQM accusations and accuses its

more militant members of using terrorist tactics to make political gains. So far her government has been unable to quell the violence.

"Sindh is facing a small insurgency," said Kamal Azfar, the provincial governor.

The worst violence to hit Karachi this year erupted on May 18 when MQM members attacked a security force patrol.

"This was a well-planned, guerrilla style hit-and-run attack," said Col. Munir Butt, a commanding officer of the paramilitary Rangers force that patrols Karachi.

Since then nearly 45 members of the security force have been killed.

## PLO, Israel agree to expand scope of talks on power transfer in WB

CAIRO, June 7: Israeli and PLO negotiators agreed Tuesday to expand the scope of talks on the transfer of powers in the West Bank, in their battle to keep a July 1 deadline for a deal on the next phase of Palestinian autonomy, reports AFP.

Israel's chief negotiator General Oren Shahor and his Palestinian counterpart Jamil Tarifi announced the agreement to cover 33 spheres of activity instead of just eight, at the end of a first day of talks in Cairo.

"Last week we asked to start negotiations on a transfer of authority in all spheres,"

Tarifi told a press conference.

"Today we are happy to hear from General Shahor that they accept and we are going to discuss the transfer of authority not only on the eight spheres but on all the spheres," he said, adding that technical talks would be held in Israel.

The two sides said they would work to seal as many chapters as possible by the July 1 deadline for agreement on an Israeli army redeployment on the West Bank and elections to a Palestinian Self-Rule Council.

They have so far been discussing the transfer to Pales-

tinian control of priority spheres: labour, local authorities, statistics, agriculture, postal services and telecommunications, trade and industry, petrol and gas.

Palestinians already took control of health, education, tourism, taxation and social affairs on the West Bank between August and November last year.

"We hope we will finalise the labour sphere during this round," said the Palestinian negotiator. "I think we will finalise more than eight spheres before the first of July."

Shahor said talks would move next week to Israel.

## Hamis group to end struggle against Israel

BEIRUT, June 7: The hard-line Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamis) plans to announce an official end to its armed struggle against Israel and become a political party, fundamentalist sources told today's Al-Hayat newspaper, reports AFP.

Hamis would also join the PLO-led autonomous authority in line with the wishes of its jailed leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the sources told the London-based Arabic newspaper which is published in several Arab capitals.

The radical Palestinian group, which is fighting the PLO-Israel peace process, is to announce its transformation from an armed group to a political party within a few days in the autonomous region of Gaza, the sources said.

## Kazakhstan now non-nuclear state

ALMATY, June 7: With the destruction last week of an atomic charge that had lain underground at the old Soviet weapons testing site at Semipalatinsk for three years, Kazakhstan officially became a non-nuclear state, reports AFP.

But despite the elimination of the 0.3-kiloton device containing almost one kilo (2.2 pounds) of plutonium in an unprecedented operation, Kazakhstan will retain the legacy of its nuclear past for some time to come.

The nuclear charge, aimed at testing the effect of an explosion on electronic apparatus, was the last remaining in this Central Asian republic, with possible military use.

## Manipur clashes leave 22 dead

NEW DELHI, June 7: At least 11 people, five tribesmen and six settlers, were killed in clashes in India's northeastern state of Manipur, news reports said Wednesday, reports AP.

Tuesday's fight also left at least 22 people wounded.

Tensions between the settlers and the Kuki tribes people started rising after the weekend kidnapping of a settler boy by the Kukis, who oppose people from outside settling in the area.

The state government has imposed prohibitory orders banning assembly of five or more people in public places, United News of India reported.

The tribesmen in the northeast say they are losing their identity and culture due to immigration of large number of people.

The area is about 2,000 kilometres (1,240 miles) northeast of New Delhi.

## Off the Record

### "New Man" or "Nude Man"

HONG KONG: With or without a fig leaf? That is the question. Hong Kong art lovers were debating Tuesday after a ruling that a male nude by an acclaimed British sculptress is indecent, reports AP.

"New Man," an eight foot bronze by Dame Elisabeth Frink, was bought by a Hong Kong real estate company in 1993 and has been displayed since in the lobby of an office block in the business district.

But after receiving a complaint earlier this year, the company applied to the Obscene Articles Tribunal for a ruling, covering the part in question with a leaf cut from cardboard until a verdict was reached.

"Indecent," ruled the tribunal of three men last week. Art lovers fear the ruling will strengthen censorship at a time when the British colony is trying to bolster its freedom before reverting to Chinese rule in 1997.

### Dangerous fidelity

NEW DELHI: An Indian woman chopped off the penis of an alleged paramour in a bid to prove her fidelity to her suspicious husband, the Pioneer Newspaper reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

Ramkanya, a resident of the northern state of Rajasthan, was accused by her husband of having illicit relations with Mangu Das, who lived in a neighbouring village, the police said.

Determined to prove her husband wrong, Ramkanya lured Das to her village where she, along with two men, led him to a forest, tied him to a tree and then cooly cut off his penis. The pioneer did not say if the woman had been arrested.

### Lucky Qingqing

BEIJING: A rare South China tiger named Qingqing has given birth to twin cubs in the Shanghai zoo, a report said Tuesday, reports AP.

No South China tigers are known to survive in the wild, and there are only about 40 of them in zoos in China, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Qingqing gave birth to the first cub early Saturday, and then surprised zoo keepers by giving birth to the second one more than three hours later, Xinhua reported.

Qingqing, originally from the Chongqing zoo in southwest China's Sichuan province, has given birth to 14 cubs, but only eight have survived.

### He only wanted to preserve

COLUMBUS, Ohio, For more than 30 years, Anthony Melnikas spent a quiet, unremarkable academic career studying medieval legal documents, reports AP.

Now, less than a month from retirement, the Ohio State University art history professor has become the focus of an international art theft investigation.

U.S. Customs officials are investigating how Melnikas got his hands on two pages of a valuable 14th-century manuscript the Vatican says were stolen from its library. The pages surfaced last month when Melnikas showed them to Akron art dealer Bruce Ferrini.

Ferrini contends Melnikas asked him to sell the pages. Melnikas has said he merely wanted Ferrini — a leading dealer in medieval manuscripts who was marketing two other pages for Melnikas — to study them.

The lavishly illustrated animal-skin pages, from a Roman text on agriculture once owned by the Italian poet Petrarca, are worth at least \$500,000.

"My initial doubts were about their authenticity, they were so exceptional," Ferrini said.

He sent copies to James Marrow, an art history professor at Princeton University, who tracked the pages to the Vatican, which was not aware anything was missing until Marrow called.

Ferrini turned over the pages to customs officials in Cleveland.

How Melnikas got the pages remains a mystery. He refused to discuss the case at his university office Thursday.

## Changes in US immigration policy to slash number of new admissions

WASHINGTON, June 7: Sweeping changes in US immigration policy would slash the number of new admissions but ease the way for spouses and minor children to join legal residents under a plan released today by a congressional appointed panel, reports AFP.

The proposals by the nine-member commission on immigration reform appointed by Congress will be reviewed later this month by Congress, where many of the Republican members have been pushing for lifts.

Senator Alan Simpson has proposed legislation for a 25 per cent reduction in immigration over the next five years as well as new deportation measures and border-crossing fees.

The November elections

which gave the Republicans their first majority in 40 years also saw the overwhelming approval of a California bill which denies social benefits to illegal aliens and bars their children from public schools.

The commission proposals would reduce the annual number of legal immigrants from its current level of 830,000 to 550,000 restrict admission of unskilled workers and impose new fees on employers sponsoring skilled workers in the United States.

They would also clear up the huge backlog of visa applications from relatives of resident aliens and allow spouses, children under 21 and parents to immigrate without a waiting period.

However, the plan would also sweep away a decades old preferences from siblings and

adult children of US citizens, mostly limiting admissions to those with special job skills.

Supporters of limits have complained that the current policy promotes "daisy chain immigration" that allows extended families to swell their numbers here.

But detractors, particularly from Asian and Latin American advocacy groups, are adamantly opposed to new limits on legal immigration.

"Asian Americans are affected because approximately 60 per cent of their immigration project coordinator for the organisation of Chinese Americans.

Shu noted that some republicans, including house leader Richard Armey, oppose new limits as the recognise that immigrants generally become citizens, note and

make valuable contributions to the economy.

She also says the opposition among Americans to legal immigration stems from misinformation about the policies.

"People are saying that aunts and uncles and in laws are coming over but the reality is it is only the immediate family," she said.

The advisory panel was formed after the immigration act of 1990 actually increased immigration numbers in family preference and employment based admissions.

Last year it recommended a crackdown on illegal border crossings and proposed an electronic system for monitoring work sites, a plan which Clinton has said he considers testing despite concerns about increased job discrimination.

## Anti-Japanese protests in South Korea

SEOUL, June 7: Hundreds of South Koreans staged anti-Japanese protests in the country's two major cities today, some demanding the execution of a former Japanese foreign minister for justifying Japan's occupation of Korea, reports Reuters.

A hundred mostly elderly people who fought against Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula, burnt an effigy of the ex-minister Michio Watanabe, during their rally near the Japanese embassy in Central Seoul.

"Japan, execute Watanabe immediately," they chanted. Another group of 50 people, including several elderly women who were forced to work as sex slaves for the Japanese imperial army during World War Two, staged a similar protest in front of the embassy.

"We are determined to

block the resurrection of Japan's neo-imperialism," they said in a statement.

About 150 people also staged a protest in front of the Japanese consulate general in Pusan, South Korea's second-largest city. They burnt the Japanese flag and an effigy of Watanabe, the Yonhap Domestic News Agency said.

Watanabe, a member of the Conservative Liberal Democratic Party, has become a major target of anti-Japanese protests in South Korea after he denied Japan's colonial rule of Korea at a party gathering on Saturday and said Tokyo took over Korea "peacefully."

Although he withdrew and apologised for his remarks on Monday this has failed to calm anti-Japanese sentiment. On Tuesday, students attacked Japan's cultural centre in Seoul with petrol bombs, briefly setting part of it on fire.