

Kashmiri leader escapes assassination bid 3 Pakistanis, one Indian killed on Kashmir border

JAMMU, India, June 8: Three Pakistanis and an Indian civilian were killed Friday in fierce gunbattles between the two countries' border guards on their disputed Kashmir border, officials said here, reports AFP.

The Pakistanis died when the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) personnel fired back after coming under intermittent gunfire from the paramilitary Pakistan rangers, BSF officers said in this westerly capital of Kashmir state.

A BSF spokesman said the Pakistani firing began Wednesday in the border region of Chicken Neck, 85 kilometres (53 miles) southwest of Jammu. One Indian villager, named Mangal Singh, was killed Friday.

The rangers kept firing at eight villages and isolated BSF pickets along the frontier, triggering panic in the region, the spokesman said.

Our men retaliated, and

Palestinians for national dialogue of PLO factions

CAIRO, June 8: Palestinians are considering plans to organise a national dialogue grouping all PLO factions to put forward a united front in negotiations with Israel's new right-wing government, a senior PLO official said Friday, reports AFP.

Faruq Kaddumi, head of the PLO's Political Department, told the Arab Daily Al-Hayat that "the speedy resumption of Palestinian national dialogue is needed" after the election of right-wing leader Benjamin Netanyahu as Israel's Prime Minister.

"Consultations are underway on this subject and the general atmosphere on the Palestinian scene augurs well for the opening of national dialogue," Kaddumi said.

The talks could take the form of a PLO meeting or a gathering of heads of the various Palestinian factions, he added.

He said he had visited Syrian-based factions opposed to Yasser Arafat's autonomy.



Pakistan Foreign Minister Asif Ahmed Ali speaks Friday with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga during a three-day bilateral visit. The minister asked Kumaratunga for her mediation to end the conflict between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. — AFP/UNB photo

China conducts N-test, heading for another

BEIJING, June 8: China conducted an underground nuclear test Saturday and then announced it would carry out one more explosion before joining a moratorium on such blasts after September, reports AP.

The blast, and China's promise to end its tests, came just two days after Beijing gave up its demand that a nuclear test ban treaty under negotiation in Geneva include non-military explosions.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency confirmed that China conducted the test Saturday, but provided no details.

Australian scientists who monitored the test earlier in the day said it was conducted at 10:56 am (02:56 GMT) in the Lop Nor test range in northwestern Xinjiang.

The underground explosion was recorded by the Australian Seismological Centre and the Australian Geological Survey Organisation as having a body wave magnitude of 5.7, with an estimated yield of 20 to 80 kilotons, making it a middle-range explosion.

The groups said this was the first presumed test recorded since August 17 last year and at least the 44th explosion detected at Lop Nor since testing began there in 1964.

Shortly after reporting Saturday's test, Xinhua carried a Foreign Ministry announcement saying that China would conduct one more test "to ensure the safety of its nuclear weapons" before September.

"After that, China will exercise a moratorium on nuclear testing," it said.

The decision marks the end of a long international effort to gain China's compliance with an indefinite global moratorium on nuclear tests.

China earlier had said it would sign the nuclear test ban treaty but wanted a provision to allow non-military blasts. But it was left alone in that demand after France decided in January to discontinue its own.

BRRIEFLY

Heat wave claims 14 in Rajasthan: At least 14 people have been killed in a heat wave lashing the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan, a newspaper reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Four of the victims died on Friday, bringing the death toll since last month to 14, the Hindustan Times said. It gave no further details. The desert state of Rajasthan borders Pakistan.

LRA rebels kill 23 troops in Uganda: Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels have killed 23 government soldiers and injured eight others in an ambush of two army vehicles in northern Uganda, the government-owned new vision newspaper reported in Kampala on Friday, AFP reports from Kampala.

The paper said the soldiers were being transported from their rural unit base in Gulu district, 360 kilometres (225 miles) north of the Ugandan capital, when they were ambushed and sprayed with bullets at Cwero, 32 kilometres (20 miles) from Gulu town, by LRA rebels of Joseph Kony, a former Roman Catholic preacher.

Clash leaves 8 killed in Tajikistan: At least eight people were killed when Islamic rebels attacked a checkpoint manned by government troops in Tajikistan early yesterday, the Interior Ministry said in Dushanbe, AFP reports from Dushanbe.

Up to seven rebels and one government soldier were killed in the assault on the checkpoint at Obigarth, 80 kilometres (50 miles) east of the Tajik capital. Four government troops were also wounded in the clash, a ministry spokesman said.

Departure of Greenpeace delayed: The departure of a Greenpeace anti-nuclear voyage to China was delayed yesterday because of a maintenance problem aboard the environmental group's vessel, Reuter reports from Manila.

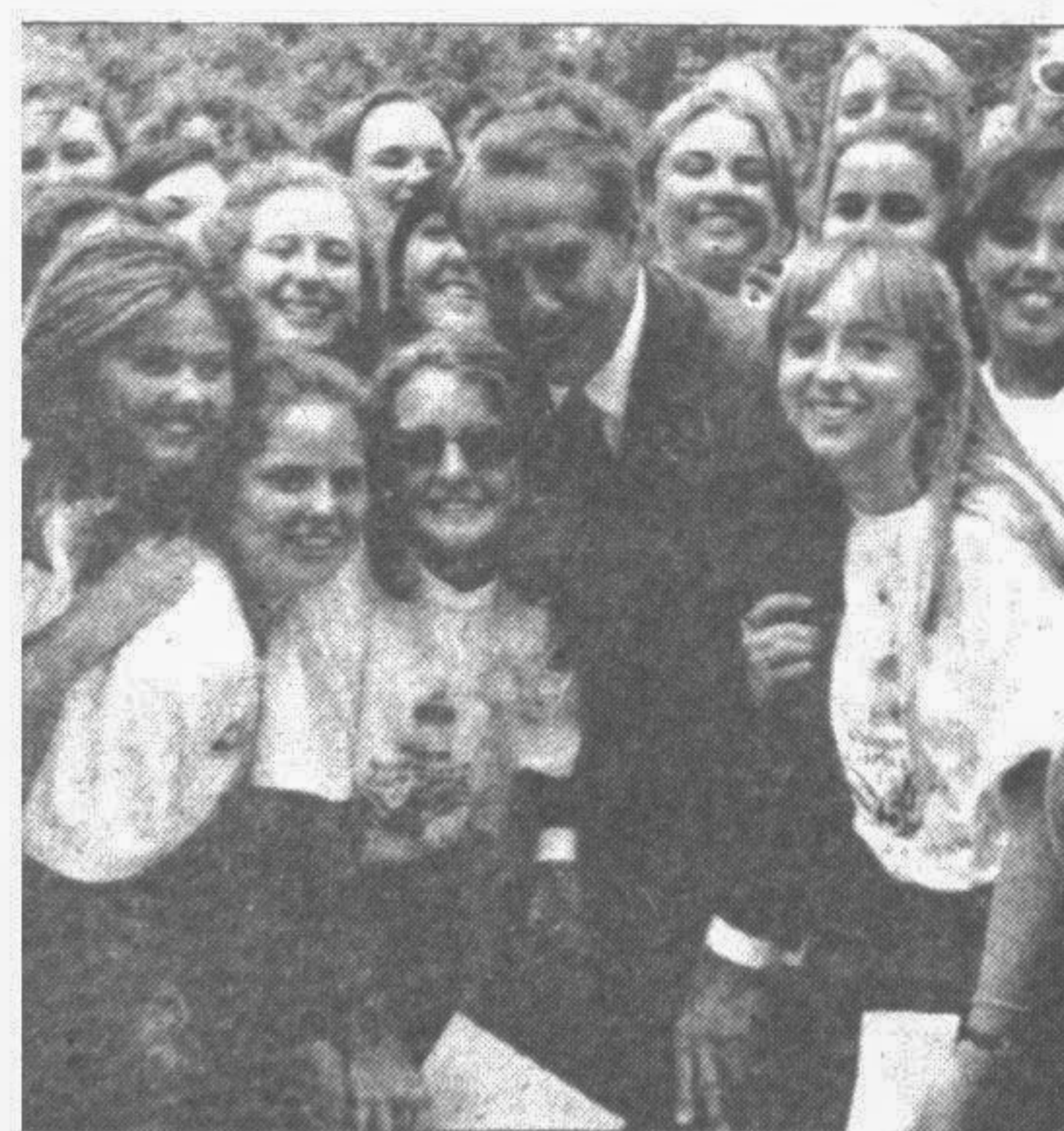
Organisers said the MV Greenpeace, scheduled to leave Manila this morning, would now leave around 6 pm (1000 GMT) yesterday. "There is a broken oil seal that has to be replaced in the hydraulics of the crane. It is very vital," Greenpeace captain Ulf Briggander told reporters.

New Angolan cabinet named: Angola's new Prime Minister, Fernando Franco Van Dunem, named his cabinet on Friday with new ministers in charge of finance, planning, industry, defence and education, Reuter reports from Luanda.

Mario Monteiro takes over the Finance Ministry from Augusto Tomas Pedro Sebastiao was confirmed in charge of the Defence Ministry where he was already acting minister. Appointment of the 21 member cabinet was announced by President Jose Evaristo dos Santos who named Van Dunem Prime Minister on Monday.

China science confce ends: A five-day meeting of more than 800 members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering ended Friday in Beijing, Xinhua reports from Beijing.

The conference elected CAS's new board of chairmen and 17 academicians of foreign nationalities, and awarded the sixth Tan Kah Kee prize and the first engineering science prize. Cae President Zhu Guangya said at the closing ceremony that the conference has been rich in content and "has achieved anticipated effects."



Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole poses for a photo with the Girl's State Volunteers-Friday outside the War Memorial Building in Nashville, Tenn. The candidate is campaigning in Nashville and Chicago. — AFP/UNB photo

13 Russian newsmen assassinated in '94: CPJ

NEW YORK, June 8: Thirteen journalists have been assassinated in Russia since 1994 and the government has not prosecuted a single case in connection with the killings, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said Friday, reports AP.

The press has suffered its most violent attacks in decades during President Boris Yeltsin's years in office, William Orme, CPJ Executive Director, said in a statement coinciding with publication of the reports.

The CPJ said journalists at greatest risk were those covering the war in Chechnya, investigating organised crime, reporting on corruption in the military or criticising government officials.

It noted that at least eight journalists had been murdered in mafia-style contract killings in Moscow and the provinces in the past two years.

Orme asserted that of those killing documented by the CPJ the Russian government "has not seriously investigated."

Birth place of Shakespeare to be recreated

LONDON, June 8: Stratford-Upon-Avon, birth place of Britain's most famous playwright William Shakespeare, is to be recreated as "Stratford-on-Pacific" in a Japanese seaside town, reports Reuter.

Japanese local authorities have commissioned British construction company Border Oak to build a Shakespeare visitor centre in the tourist town of Maruyama, on the eastern coast of Japan, a statement from Border Oak said on Friday.

The Shakespeare Country Park, costing 3.5 million pounds (5.42 million dollars) will include replicas of the houses where, Shakespeare was born and died, the home of his mother Mary Arden and a theatre where the bard's plays will be performed.

Traditional half-timbered, Oak framed buildings will recreate the atmosphere of 'ye olde England'.

Russia to provide uranium to int'l scientists

PARIS, June 8: Russia will provide highly enriched uranium to international scientists conducting research in France under a peacetime nuclear cooperation accord signed on Friday between Paris and Moscow, reports Reuter.

Under the pact signed by French Industry Minister Frank Borotera and Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov, Moscow will furnish the uranium to two research centres and in return will gain access to those centres for its own scientists.

The arrangement is a way for cash short Russia to participate in international nuclear research efforts. French officials said Moscow will contribute uranium rather than currency in support of research costs.

The accord requires Moscow to contribute 55 kg (121 lb) a year of the enriched uranium over a nine year period to the Max Von Laue-Paul Langevin Institut, the French alpine city of Grenoble.

Another 125 kg (275 lb) will go to a research reactor.

'Ballot can even take place within six months'

India will see fresh election within a year: Rao

NEW DELHI, June 8: India, where a minority coalition government took office a week ago, will see fresh elections within a year, former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao said in remarks published today, reports AP.

Rao, whose Congress (I) Party's legislative support is vital for Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, told party colleagues that the ballot could even take place within six months, newspapers reported.

"This is not going to be a longish affair," the Economic Times quoted Rao assaying here, referring to Deve Gowda's centre-left United Front government, which lacks majority support in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, the Lower House.

"I think we have to prepare for fresh elections within the

next six or seven months," Rao said Friday. "A year at the latest."

It was the first time Rao has commented on the longevity of Deve Gowda's coalition, which depends on the support of the Congress, the second biggest group in parliament with 140 MPs.

Gowda too depends on astrologers!

NEW DELHI, June 8: India's new prime minister hastily moved into his official house after astrologers said it was a favourable moment, newspapers said Saturday, reports AP.

Astrologers had earlier overlooked the stellar conjunctions for Friday morning, forcing Gowda to move house one week ahead of schedule.

Gowda, 63, says he is a deeply religious man who takes major decisions only after consulting with astrologers.

commented on the longevity of Deve Gowda's coalition, which depends on the support of the Congress, the second biggest group in parliament with 140 MPs.

Deve Gowda, 63, was sworn in as India's 11th Prime Minister on June 1 after Hindu nationalists resigned May 28, after failing to win majority support in the federal parliament. The Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) was in power for just a fortnight.

Deve Gowda has to win a vote of confidence in parliament before June 12.

The BJP has been warning that the Congress, which was routed in the April-May parliamentary elections, would soon ditch Deve Gowda.



Syrian President Hafez al Assad (C) meets with his Egyptian counterpart President Hosni Mubarak (R) and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah ibn Abdel Aziz (L) at the Tachrine Palace for a summit to discuss Arab unity after the election victory of Israeli right-wing prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. — AFP/UNB photo

SLORC enacts new law to silence opponents

Myanmar junta, Suu Kyi head for another showdown

YANGON, June 8: Myanmar's military rulers and dissident leader Aung San Suu Kyi appeared headed for another showdown today after the government introduced a stiff new law to silence political opponents, reports Reuter.

An editorial in the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper applauded moves to muzzle anti-government activists but Suu Kyi and officials from her National League for Democracy (NLD) planned to go ahead with regular weekend speeches.

The broad-ranging law, which appears to be aimed directly at the NLD, prohibits anyone from saying or doing anything deemed contrary to the government's plans to write a new constitution.

Signed by ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) chairman Than Shwe, the law allows prison sentence of up to 20 years. Violators can also be outlawed and the assets

of offending organisation may be seized by the government.

Suu Kyi's regular weekend speeches at her Yangon residence have steadily gained in popularity since they began after she was freed from six years of house arrest last July.

The crowd had swelled from a timid group of several hundred people to up to 10,000 chanting, applauding supporters over the past two weekends.

New Light of Myanmar praised the military for "restoring conditions to normal and moving ahead with the essential of achieving all round progress."

"National reconciliation has never been as successful as it is today and the Tatmadaw (armed forces) government is paving the way toward greater peace, progress and prosperity," it said.

Earlier reports says, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on Friday slammed Myanmar for a new law muzzle

zling opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her party calling it a new low point in the domestic and human rights situation in the country.

The law prohibits anyone or any organisation from speaking out against the government in any way that would step the current policies of the military government.

Apparently aimed at Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, it also prohibits anyone from disrupting government moves to draw up a new constitution.

In a statement Kinkel called the move a further attempt by the general's of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to maintain dictatorial power.

This move shows that the generals are only interested in holding on to power and not in bringing about the national reconciliation which the overwhelming majority of the people want, he added.

IFOR to play key role in polls

Bosnian polls must be held on schedule: Holbrooke

NEW YORK, June 8: Despite the risks, Bosnian elections must be held on schedule or else the country will fragment and those indicted for war crimes will grab even more power, the architect of the Yugoslav peace agreement says, reports AP.

In Bern the chairman of the multinational group entrusted with deciding whether to go ahead with the September elections said his organisation, and not Washington or any one else, will make such a ruling.

Human rights groups have called for a postponement of the elections. They fear that restrictions on freedom of movement and controls on the press will lead to corrupt elections that will solidify the position of hard-liners among the rival Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

Human Rights Watch-Helsinki presented a report Friday that it said shows that the Bosnian factions have failed to comply with the peace accords as well as "the failure of the international community to insist on compliance."

Without such compliance, the group charged, the elections will be a "charade."

But Richard Holbrooke, who negotiated the Bosnian peace accord in Dayton, Ohio, last year, said such fears must be overcome.

"I think the elections are certain to be imperfect and it's essential they go on," he said Friday in New York. "If the elections are not held while NATO forces are on the ground they probably never will be held."

AFP adds: A top leader of the Bosnian Serbs said Friday that the NATO led Implementation Force (IFOR) would have a key role to play in the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Arab leaders for unified front in talks with Israel

DAMASCUS, Syria, June 8: Arab leaders say they will give Israel's new hard-line leader time to form a government and declare its policies toward Mideast peace — but they do have limits, reports AP.

"We're for peace, not for surrender or submission," Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah said before talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Syrian President Hafez Assad.

In their second and final day of meetings Saturday they hoped to forge a unified front for negotiations with Israel.

The Jewish state last week elected right-wing leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who in his election campaign promised to go much more slowly in peace deals than his predecessors.

His tough statements have caused considerable apprehension among the Arabs, who fear the pronouncements could signal serious, and possibly in-

surmountable, setbacks for the peace effort.

The meeting is the third in ten days among Arab leaders. Abdullah is the half-brother and designated heir of the ailing king Fahd.

"We'll give Netanyahu the benefit of the doubt and enough time — that means a matter of weeks, not longer — to know where he stands" on key peace issues, said Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa.

Netanyahu, who has yet to lay out his policies, in his campaign said he opposed granting Palestinians their own state and promised to proceed more slowly with the peace process than the previous two Israeli leaders.

He also has said he will not give back the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau over looking Israel captured from Syria in 1967. The Syrians say they will settle for nothing less than a total Israeli pullback.

UN conference focuses on cities at war

ISTANBUL, June 8: When the Palestinians took control of Gaza City two years ago, the city was black because the Israelis had painted buildings with black tar to prevent them from being used as message boards. Today, it is colourful again but life is far from normal, reports AP.

After five years of civil war in Sierra Leone, hundreds of thousands of hungry refugees are wandering the streets of the capital, Freetown. They have no place to live. No jobs and some are dying of starvation.

Beirut is being rebuilt from the ashes of civil war. But the old downtown centre which was traditionally the meeting point for Christians and Muslims has been deliberately de-

stroyed — and some fear that hopes for real reunification have been destroyed with it.

From Kuwait City to Sarajevo, the list of cities and towns ravaged by war gets longer every year. Right now, fighting is ripping apart the fabric of urban life in Liberia, Chechnya and Afghanistan.

At the U.N. conference on cities, participants shifted their focus for one hour Friday from the problems of cities at peace to the chaotic nightmare of cities at war — and the challenges they face in trying to rebuild.

Florence Dillsworth, mayor of Freetown, said the war has destroyed about half the country and created acute over-

crowding in Freetown and other big towns. Water and sanitation are inadequate and children lucky enough to attend school sometimes have 150 youngsters in their class.

Four years ago the population of Freetown was 110,000. Now it is 1.5 million, and we have not added to the facilities that we had some five years ago, Dillsworth said.

The top priority of the country's recently elected civilian government, the first in 20 years, is rehabilitation and reconstruction.

We need every help we can get — but we do not have the resources, Dillsworth said.

The mayor called on the U.N. conference to set up mechanisms to resolve conflicts and

assist war-ravaged countries.

"I think it is incumbent on the developed cities, the richer cities, to stretch out the hand to help us to begin again," she said.

Mayor Aown Shawa of Gaza City also called for additional resources to finance reconstruction.

As soon as the Palestinians took control of Gaza City two years ago, he said, they started making emergency repairs to vital services such as roads and the sewage system.

I visited some districts in the Gaza Strip where sewage flow went into homes — the bedrooms of the people, he said.

The mayor blamed the Israelis for "deliberate negligence" of all infrastructure dur-

ing their 27 years in control of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

"In other respects Gaza was a destroyed city and still is," Shawa said. "I think we are on the way, but we need time and we need time and we need resources."

Many industrialised nations have been reluctant to finance reconstruction in war-torn countries, partly out of concern that fighting may break out again.

Elovis Maksoud, Director of the Centre for the Study of the Global South at American University in Washington, which sponsored Friday's session, said it is in the industrialised north's interest to promote peace in the developing south — because it would create new

markets. In Beirut, it's not resources that are the problem but the reconstruction plan being implemented by Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, said Assem Salaam, president of the Lebanese Institute of Architects and Engineers.

He blamed Hariri, a property developer, for demolishing much of Beirut's medieval sector and 19th century Ottoman quarter in 1983 and 1992 — and for ignoring a plan that would have kept the historic centre of the city where all trades, professions and religions mixed.

Its elimination, Salaam said, has dealt "a deadly blow" to reunification.

Off the Record

'Divorce' from father!

MILWAUKEE: A judge granted a "divorce" for three children who pleaded for a life free of their jailed father's alleged mental abuse, drug use and joblessness, reports AP.

The 34-year-old father, however, will still be required to support the children financially, Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Domini Amato ruled.

Friday's decision allows the children of Mark Jocius — 7-year old Bryan, Jennifer, 14, and Matthew, 16 — to sever all their legal ties and change their surname.

"It's clear from the evidence the dad, ever since the birth of the first child, has been a non-parent," the judge said.

The ruling followed a four-day hearing that opened Tuesday with the children's court-appointed lawyer reading a letter they wrote in January to Judge Clarence Parrish, who granted their parents' divorce in 1990.

The children cited their life on welfare, their father's repeated drug use and their mother's bouts with panic disorder, agoraphobia and depression.

Jocius "was abusive toward all of us during the marriage," the letter said. "We don't mean to sound whiny, but we don't want him around anymore."

Amato said the divorce from their father was permanent for the two older children, but he left it up to Bryan, the youngest, to change his mind. If he does, Jocius would have to prove he was a fit parent before Bryan can resume a relationship with him.

All he did to be with her

HONG KONG: A man in eastern China dug up his wife's grave and then lay down in her coffin and died after poisoning himself in order to be with her, it was reported Saturday, says AP.

Li Kinru, 57, of Anfu county, Jiangxi province, had been depressed since his wife died a year ago, and committed suicide May 17 by ingesting rat poison and toxic fertiliser to join her, following a row with his three children, the China-funded Wen Wei Po newspaper reported.

Toto's new life with pacemaker

PITTSBURGH: Toto may lead a dog's life but the Yorkshire terrier has a human heart pacemaker, reports Reuter.

Six months ago Toto, the pet of Yvonne Conrad of East Freedom Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, developed a heart blockage and was in danger of dying. But a Cornell University veterinarian implanted a human heart pacemaker in the 14-year-old terrier, giving it a new lease in life.

"We simply can't get over the difference her pacemaker has made," Conrad said. "I'm trying to get my neighbours and people all over the country to will their pacemakers to the animal kingdom before departing for the hereafter."

Conrad, 52, a kennel operator, said she was lobbying for more pacemaker operations for dogs. The total cost for Toto's care was about 2,600 dollars. "My dog is worth it," she said.

Using human pacemakers to prod sluggish animal hearts is not new but it is rare. A University of Illinois registry that matches donated pacemakers with animal recipients nationwide handles between 200 and 300 matches per year.