

# US to urge India in talks not to block CTBT: Christopher

WASHINGTON, July 18: Signature because it would be such an important step forward for the world as a whole."

US officials said President Bill Clinton decided two weeks ago to forgo further efforts to find a more flexible formula for having the treaty enter into force, which had been a major end game dispute in the negotiations.

Some US officials are concerned that India, a so called threshold nuclear state might try to block the treaty — which bans all atomic test from being sent to the United Nations.

Christopher said when he holds talks with India's new Foreign Minister I K Gujral, in Jakarta next week "I'll be urging them (India) not to block that approach... it should not be within the capacity of India to block such a treaty."

The two ministers will meet on the fringes of the August 23-25 Association of Southeast Asian Nations' annual meeting.

Christopher said he telephoned Gujral few days ago to make sure we'd have a useful and effective meeting."

But in an overall sense, we think the over all product is a very important one and we'd simply like to get it open for

negotiations in Geneva on July 29.

"It isn't quite coming together as quickly as we'd like to see it" one US official told Reuters.

Failure of the conference to approve a text and send it to the United Nations General Assembly in New York for signature would be a major blow to Clinton's arms control agenda and a serious setback in efforts to achieve the long-sought pact.

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negotiations in Geneva on July 29.

The Security Council has postponed until next week its planned debate on whether to toughen sanctions on Sudan, which is suspected of harbouring terrorists, council president Alain Dejammet said Wednesday. AFP reports from United Nations.

The council has instead decided to focus its meeting Thursday on the situation in Bosnia, he added.

**W Bengal passes bill for minorities:** The West Bengal Assembly yesterday passed the West Bengal minorities commission bill, 1996 for setting up a minorities commission for the protection of the religious and linguistic minorities in the state, PTI reports from Calcutta.

The bill sought to provide a broad-based statutory commission to replace the current commission which was constituted by administrative resolutions. The Minorities Affairs and Welfare Minister, Md Amin said that the commission would have judicial power.

**Teenager kills mother in France:** A 16-year-old girl shot her mother dead near Nantes late Wednesday then took a train for Paris, where she was arrested on arrival after confessing to a passenger, police said. AFP reports from Nantes.

The unnamed teenager allegedly gunned down her 54-year-old mother, a dermatologist, 3 with several shots from a pistol while her father and elder sister were on a trip to Canada. Police and prosecutors refused to give any details of the motive for the killing.

**Ex-British PM's 80th birthday marked:** Prime Minister John Major on Wednesday hosted a Downing Street banquet to celebrate the 80th birthday of former Conservative Premier Edward Heath. AFP reports from London.

Queen Elizabeth II and her husband the Duke of Edinburgh were among the guests who also included former foreign secretary Lord Carrington and Geoffrey Howe and violinist Yehudi Menuhin. The dinner was the highlight of a glittering round of dinners and parties that have been held over the last week for Heath whose birthday was on July 9.



East Timor activists burn products from Indonesia in Lisbon Wednesday to protest against their import by European countries. East Timorese, both in Portugal and in East Timor protested the 20th anniversary of Indonesia's annexation of the former Portuguese colony.

— AFP/UNB photo

## International

# 4,000 Tigers attack key military base in north

COLOMBO, July 18: More than 4,000 Tamil separatist rebels attacked a key military base in northern Sri Lanka Thursday, and desperate soldiers called in air strikes to stop the guerrillas from overrunning the camp, military officials said. reports AP.

Waves of rebels broke through the Mullaitivu army camp's defence lines during the midnight assault, sending 1,500 soldiers inside scurrying for cover, officials said.

Naval gunboats which rushed to be area were being driven back by the rebel boats and mortar fire from the shore. One naval gunboat was damaged and a sailor killed in the fighting, in which a rebel boat also was destroyed, said a senior navy official.

Air force pilots flying over the battle zone reported that most of the base was in rebel hands, about 12 hours after the fighting began. At dawn, air force planes and helicopter gunships began bombing and

strafing rebels, officials said. Heavy casualties were feared in the fighting, but the military headquarters in Colombo had few details from the area because the rebels had destroyed communication lines to the camp, about 275 kilometres (172 miles) northeast of the capital, Colombo, officials said.

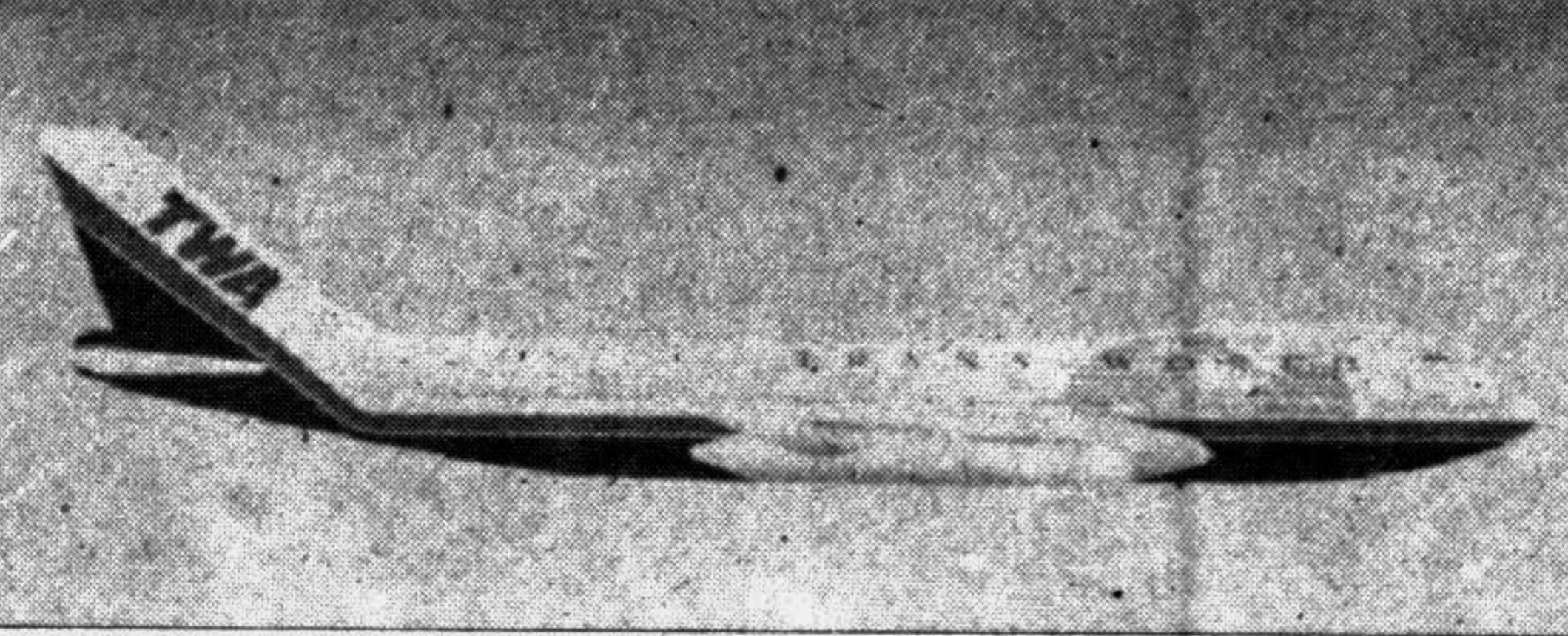
The military was gathering soldiers in the port city of Trincomalee to attempt an amphibious landing to help save the base. Trincomalee is 90 kilometers (56 miles) south of Mullaitivu.

The attack was the biggest in the north since government troops drove the rebels out of their longtime stronghold of Jaffna city in December, capping a grueling 50-day offensive.

In May, the military announced that it had extended its control over all of the Jaffna Peninsula, and 400,000 Tamil civilians who had fled during the offensive had returned to their homes.

The rebels either retreated into the jungles in the north or moved to Tamil-dominated areas in eastern Sri Lanka.

The nearest military base, 40 kilometres (25 miles) away,



An illustration shows a TWA Boeing 747. A Paris-bound TWA jumbo jet exploded in mid-air and crashed into the Atlantic after take-off from New York JFK airport Wednesday. Over 200 passengers are feared to have lost their lives.

— AFP/UNB photo

## US won't press for ban against junta

# ASEAN rejects demands for sanctions on Myanmar

JAKARTA, July 18: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations defended its growing ties with Myanmar on Thursday, rejecting demands for sanctions to pressure its military rulers to improve human rights, reports AP.

UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros-Ghali presented the dollars 12,500 award to Pathfinder International of Watertown, Massachusetts and Philippines Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani.

Ramos-Shahani, sister of Philippine President Fidel Ramos, is one of her country's leading advocates of population control and has strongly advocated the view that the Philippines' exploding population has exacerbated economic problems.

Pathfinder International, founded in 1957, has supported more than 2,000 programmes in some 30 countries on subjects such as family planning and AIDS prevention.

**ME peace process is dead: Velayati**

TEHRAN, July 18: Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said Wednesday he believed the Middle East peace process was "dead," just as his country had predicted, reports AFP.

The new Israeli government does not even respect the so-called positive points of the talks on the issues of Jerusalem, Golan Heights and the Jewish settlements, Velayati said in an interview with AFP. "According to our assessment, the peace process is dead."

"It was cooked up between Israel and the United States," he said, referring to the US-sponsored peace process.

Iran, which has called for an end to Israel, had repeatedly called on Arab countries to avoid making peace with the Jewish state. Despite initial progress in the peace process, which is based on the principle of land for peace, Israel's new right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has taken a hardline, saying his country would not turn over any more occupied land.

Alatas said ASEAN's approach has helped ease political and economic problems in Myanmar.

"Any objective observer would see that there have been some very positive developments," he said, including last year's release of Suu Kyi from

house arrest.

Despite this, Western countries are expected to raise the issue of coordinated sanctions against Myanmar during talks after the meeting.

Alatas said ASEAN officials will listen but aren't likely to be swayed.

Reuter adds from Washington: The United States, faced with opposition from Asian countries, will not press sanctions against Myanmar. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said on Wednesday.

"I think that we do not see a present role for sanctions," he told Reuter in an interview.

"But we want to have a discussion with other countries in the region to see what steps they might be prepared to take to try to ensure that the regime in Myanmar does not take additional repressive action and provides more openness for their people," he said.



US President Bill Clinton (R) leans towards US First Lady Hillary Clinton Wednesday in the East Room of the White House during a ceremony for the Friends of Art and Preservation in Embassies Programme. Arkansas court watchers are expecting President Clinton to testify by videotape Wednesday in the criminal trial of two former associates.

— AFP/UNB photo

# Scientists seeking biological weapons to fight mosquito

PANAMA CITY, Florida, July 18: Scientists are seeking ways to silence that annoying, threatening whine in the night — the mosquito buzzing around you, its prey, reports AP.

These days they're studying how to turn biology against the mosquito. They're investigating hormones, diseases, toxic spores, cannibal insect larvae and microscopic relatives of spiders and crabs.

They believe these could be alternatives to insecticides that can be expensive, could harm the environment and may lose effectiveness as mosquitoes build up resistance to them.

"Those problems are probably never going to go away," says US Department of Agriculture Researcher Don Barnard. "So, whether you want to do it now, or whether you want to do it 20 years from now, there's going to have to be alternative methods in place."

The USDA Centre for Medical, Agricultural and Veterinary Entomology in Gainesville, where Barnard is lead mosquito-and-fly researcher, is working on the problem. So are two state laboratories in Florida, home to more than 70 species of the bloodsucking pests.

One approach may be to fight mosquitoes with mosquitoes.

Florida A and M University's John A. Marenian Sr Laboratory in Panama City is studying cannibals that in the larval stage eat the

larvae of other mosquitoes. As adults, they feed on plant nectar, so are harmless to people.

The research began a few years ago with a giant tropical arthropod, called copepods, from Burma, but the inch-long (2.5-centimetre-long) creatures proved better actors than killers. The lab produced some of the giants for the movie "Jurassic Park." But the species doesn't adapt well to Florida's climate.

There's a problem with its ability to overwinter in Florida," said lab director John Smith. Scientists are looking at other cannibal species that may adapt better.

The University's researchers also are studying microscopic arthropods, called copepods, that feed on newly hatched mosquito larvae.

They are easy to rear and their tiny size means they can be applied to mosquito breeding areas, such as stagnant ponds, with conventional pesticide equipment such as backpack sprayers, Smith said.

A bacterium isolated in Egypt also can be applied like an insecticide. A larva "will pull these little toxic spore crystals into its body thinking it's food," Smith said. "Once it's inside, it basically disembowels the mosquito."

Another potential weapon under study at the university lab is a synthetic hormone that keeps juvenile mosquitoes from molting into adults. Although effective, it doesn't work well

in highly polluted environments or if not applied at just the right time, Smith said.

Scientists at the University of Florida's Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach are trying to find out what it is about the Asian tiger mosquito that seems to be killing off yellow-fever mosquitoes.

The answer could have major implications for worldwide disease control.

The yellow-fever mosquito is the top spreader of its namesake disease and Dengue fever.

The Asian tiger's advance has corresponded with a decline of yellow-fever mosquitoes, something even a multimillion-dollar eradication effort failed to do in the 1960s, said Florida professor George O'Meara.

One theory is the Asian tiger may be carrying certain pathogens that do not affect them, but are deadly to yellow-fever mosquitoes, O'Meara said.

Federal researchers already are preparing to field-test a pathogen from Thailand that has been effective in the laboratory against the larvae of the yellow-fever mosquito.

The USDA's Barnard said state and federal environmental regulators have given permission to release the protozoan in semicontrolled conditions at Gainesville. A similar test is being planned for Argentina.

The protozoan has an advantage over some of the other biological alternatives, such as copepods, hormones and toxic spores, because it wouldn't have to be repeatedly applied by mechanical means, Barnard said.

It would be spread by female mosquitoes and then propagate itself in the environment.

The federal lab also is studying a tiny nematode. The wormlike parasite, isolated in Argentina, lives inside a mosquito larva, growing to eventually take up most of its body cavity.

You can look at these things under the scope and you can see these nematodes wound around inside," Barnard said. "It's like a non-stop corkscrew."

Although biological alternatives have shown promise, no one is ready to declare victory in the mosquito war.

"We're always really careful about talking about biocontrol agents because it's an area of research that expectation just hasn't been met in terms of field application," Barnard said. "A lot of people are pretty skeptical."

But, he said, mosquitoes already have shown they can develop resistance to chemicals and there are limits on how much insecticide formulas can be changed to overcome that ability.

"When that peters out, if there isn't something in place then we won't have any way to control mosquitoes," Barnard said.

## Taliban rockets kill 12 in Kabul

# Five Afghan factions form peace front

Gallani said a commission comprising three men from each of the five groups had been set up with its base in the Nangarhar capital of Jalalabad to work for forming a broader council that could take power from Rabani.

The commission would other groups, including the powerful opposition Taliban Islamic militia, factions backing the government and prominent individuals to help in forming the broader council.

AP adds: A barrage of rockets devastated a crowded fruit market in central Kabul on Thursday, killing at least 12 people and wounding 36 others, witnesses and doctors said.

One of the rockets fired by the Taliban militia landed in the middle of the market's main road. Mangled bodies were scattered across the road amid debris and dozens of overturned fruit carts.

## Off the Record

### Earth's core spins slightly faster

NEW YORK: As the world turns, its core goes just a little faster, reports AP.

Earth's inner core, a solid iron crystal about the size of the moon, rotates about 1.1 degrees faster in a year than the rest of the planet, geologists from Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory announced in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

That means that the core finishes a complete rotation not in 24 hours, but in 24 ours minus two-thirds of a second.

At that rate, Earth's core "laps" the rest of the planet every 200 days, "which in geological and astronomical terms is pretty darn fast," geologist Paul Richards said.

Richards and Lamont-Doherty geophysicist Xiaodong Song used an ingenious method to detect the core's slightly faster spin. They studied old measurements that recorded how long it took sound waves from earthquakes to pass through the core to seismographs located literally half way around the world.

And the scientists are not surprised. Computer simulations have told them that the Earth's inner core ought to rotate. So by confirming that it does, Song said he and Richards have helped further the understanding of the engine that generates the planet's magnetic field.

"It's going to be very important in solving the puzzle of the origin of the magnetic fields," Song said.

### Wrong kind of publicity

LONDON: A Scottish insurance company shipped out 77 live homing pigeons in public relations stunt. But it generated the wrong kind of publicity, reports AP.

"It's absolutely disgusting in all aspects," said Jo Crozier, a spokeswoman for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The society is considering animal cruelty charges over Wednesday's campaign by Scottish Life International of Edinburgh.

The insurer sought to promote investment opportunities by delivering boxed homing pigeons to new organisations, offering a case of Scotch whisky to the one whose pigeon got back first.

### Swiss police are not only for human, but also for...

KANDERSTEG: Switzerland, Swiss police swooped in to save 142 snails which an amateur of this gastronomic delicacy had collected to cook and eat, local police in Bern Canton said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Snails are protected in Bern and it is an offence to collect them in the wild.

Police said the culprit had taken advantage of rainy weather to go out snail hunting. He was intercepted after other walkers reported him to the police and the snails were immediately released.

## Netanyahu faces Arab anger for hardline stands in Cairo