

### MQM office attacked in Karachi: 5 killed

KARACHI, June 17: Unidentified gunmen attacked an office of the Pakistani ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) here late Monday, killing five activists and injuring three others, police and hospital sources said, reports AFP.

### Ex-Lankan minister held

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, June 17: Sri Lankan police have arrested a former Cabinet minister and opposition leader saying he was a threat to peace, local newspapers said Tuesday, reports AP.



A Palestinian carries his crying daughter as they escape an area where Israeli soldiers clashed with stone-throwing Palestinian youths during a third day of clashes in Hebron Monday. The Palestinian protests have flared up again after a few months of calm, due to the stalemate in Middle East peace negotiations.

### Iraq accuses US of using UN arms monitors as cover for spying

UNITED NATIONS, June 17: Iraq accused the United States on Monday of using the UN weapons inspection programme as a cover for spying on Iraq and threatening the security of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, reports AP.

Council has refused to lift the sanctions until the inspectors certify that Iraq has destroyed its banned weapons systems. In the letter, Aziz said Iraq believed it was in its national interest to cooperate with the inspection programme.

standoff Wednesday. Ekeus insists that his inspectors have the right to visit any site they choose under resolutions enacted after the 1991 Gulf War. But under an agreement last June, Iraq promised the United Nations unrestricted access to sites that did not threaten its territorial and national sovereignty.

The agreement was purposely vague in an effort to resolve a series of standoffs last year between UN inspectors and Iraqi soldiers guarding the sites. Iraq has from time to time barred inspectors from certain sites considered sensitive. The Iraqis generally backed down after warnings from the council.

### BJP urges Gujral not to join Samajwadi Party's rally

NEW DELHI, June 17: The BJP today urged the Prime Minister I K Gujral not to attend the proposed June 19 rally of Samajwadi Party at Lucknow being organised by the Defence Minister, Mulyam Singh Yadav, to what it called, subvert the duly-elected government and pave the way for central interference, reports PTI.

By attending the rally, the prime minister will make himself party to this undemocratic and unethical agenda of his defence minister, whose political ambitions are beginning to pose a serious threat to law and order situation in UP and it could lead to grave internal security scenario, the BJP vice president, K Janakrishna Murthy, told reporters here.

### Jyoti Basu has no plan to retire

NEW DELHI, June 17: India's best-known communist leader, who has been ruling the state of West Bengal for 20 years, said in remarks published today that he has no plans to retire, reports AFP.

"I will continue to head the (West Bengal) government as long as I can," The Hindustan Times quoted Jyoti Basu as saying in Calcutta the West Bengal capital.

Basu, a top leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI(M)), became Chief Minister of West Bengal, a popular state, bordering Bangladesh, on June 21, 1997.



As the city plays host to the important EU Amsterdam Summit two of the main participants of the occasion find themselves the target of humour at an alfresco cafe Monday. Two locals enjoying a cold beer in the warm sunshine of the capital donned masks of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac as props to highlight their anti-Europe protest.

### Kashmir govt to probe media report on western hostages

The government of Jammu and Kashmir does not attach much credence to the claim in a local newspaper report that four Western hostages held by Kashmiri militants since July 1995 were gunned down last year by their captors. The government will however order an investigation.

### COHEN VISITS GULF LEADERS

LONDON: Britain's first-ever Muslim member of parliament and Pakistani-origin multi-millionaire Mohammad Sarwar may face temporary suspension from the ruling Labour Party on charge of sleaze tomorrow, reports PTI.

The three-member committee appointed by the Labour's highest body, the National Executive Committee (NEC), last night submitted its report after completing its inquiry into the episode of the MP allegedly paying 5,000 pounds sterling to a rival candidate during the May general elections.

The Labour Party spokesman, when approached, refused to divulge what action the committee had proposed to the party disciplinary committee against the erring member of parliament.

However, reports suggested that the member could face temporary withdrawal of party whip and temporary suspension from the organisation till police completed investigation into the scandal.

### Taliban punish 48 for defying strict Islamic codes

KABUL, June 17: The Taliban religious police launched a fearsome crackdown in the Afghan capital, punishing 48 people for defying their strict Islamic codes, a police official said Tuesday, reports AP.

In the last 24 hours, police units patrolling the streets of this war-weary city beat 14 women, who were out on the street and apparently not fully covered in line with the Taliban's Islamic dress code.

The Taliban require women to wear Burkhhas, long flowing robes that cover them from head-to-toe. A religious police official said his forces also beat four taxi drivers and seven shopkeepers who had served women unaccompanied by men, a crime according to the Taliban, who forbid interaction between men and women who are not related.

The religious police also arrested 23 men who had trimmed their beards contrary to a Taliban edict that requires men to grow full beards like the one the Muslim Prophet Mohammed (SM) wore.

### First-ever Muslim MP of Labour Party may face suspension

WASHINGTON, June 17: With Mideast peace talks at a standstill, the United States should abandon the step-by-step approach to peace set by the 1993 Oslo accord and go for a final settlement that includes Palestinian statehood, a prominent foreign affairs group said Monday, reports AP.

"The time has come for a change in US policy and for a bold American initiative to induce Israel and the Palestinians to agree on the broad contours of a final settlement," reported a task force commissioned by the Council on Foreign Relations.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said he had not read the report and could not comment on it directly. But he said that the United States would not take a "defeatist" stance toward developments in the Mideast.

"When the times get tough, you don't run, and you don't throw up your hands and think up 16 different policy options to pursue. You stick with what got you to the game. And what got us to the game was the consistency of American mediation, of our objectivity and friendliness with the Palestinians and the Israelis," he said.

The year-long study concluded that the situation in the Mideast, with talks going nowhere and hostility between Palestinians and Israelis growing, "has deteriorated to a perilous point" that could easily lead to renewed conflict.

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### Off the Record

Tough guy in wrong place AMSTERDAM: Helmut Kohl is a tough guy to lose, reports AP.

But for a moment Monday, he was mistakenly missing from the European Union summit. Germany's strapping chancellor was walking through the EU summit site at the Dutch Central Bank en route to a news conference when he found himself surrounded by television cameramen. In the confusion, he and his advisers walked out a security exit and into the adjacent neighbourhood.

Kohl crossed a bridge over the Amstel River before he and his staff realised they were in the wrong place. They eventually reached another security gate and reentered the compound without incident. Security has been extremely tight for the summit, and none of the EU leaders has ventured — intentionally, at least — outside the gates.

Asked whether he was lost, Kohl's advisers laughed off the apparent mishap. "Oh, no," they said, "We're just out for a walk."

Devoted husband MOSCOW: A Russian military officer saved his wife from committing suicide — then hanged himself in the family bathroom — a news agency said Monday, reports AP.

The officer, identified only as Lt. Yerofeyev, quarrelled Sunday with his wife, who then tried to kill herself by slitting her wrists. The Interfax news agency reported. But the officer saved her and managed to stop the bleeding. He then hanged himself in the bathroom, Interfax said quoting military officials who requested anonymity.

Yerofeyev, who served as a platoon commander with the 8th Russian army corps in southern Russia, hadn't received his salary since February. Sergei Ushakov, a spokesman for the Russian chief military prosecutor's office, confirmed in a telephone interview that Yerofeyev had killed himself but declined to give further details.

According to the official statistics, 153 officers killed themselves during 1996, and the number of suicides appears to have been on the rise this year. Military officials attribute most of the cases to the victims' desperation over unpaid wages, which made them unable to support their families.

The cash-strapped Russian government, locked in a cycle of uncollected revenues and unpaid debts, owe wages and pensions to millions of Russians. Many soldiers are among the unpaid.

### Yet, another reason to control hypertension

ARLINGTON, Virginia: In a finding that offers another reason to control high blood pressure, a new federal study suggests a link between hypertension and brain tissue loss, reports AP. The study, reported on in Monday's editions of USA Today, shows that ignoring high systolic blood pressure — the higher of the two numbers in a blood-pressure reading — in middle-age could lead to brain damage and loss of cognitive ability by the early 1970s.

The research on male twins shows that the longer a man lives with above-normal systolic pressure — a normal reading typically is 120 — the more mental declines he exhibits and the more healthy brain tissue is lost. "There's been a misperception in the medical community that since systolic pressure goes up with age, it's OK to accept a level above 140," said Teri Manolio of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

### Clinton to consider nat'l apology to black Americans for slavery

WASHINGTON, June 17: President Clinton says he will consider extending a national apology to black Americans for slavery — but not compensation for their ancestors' suffering. "It's been so long and we're so many generations removed," he says, reports AP.

The idea of an apology came from a white Ohio lawmaker who introduced apology legislation in Congress last week, just as Clinton was preparing to unveil his national initiative on race in a speech in San Diego. In a radio interview aired Monday, Clinton said the apology proposal caught him off guard. He said he would think about it because "there's still some unfinished business out there among black and white Americans."

"I think it has to be dealt with," Clinton told the American Urban Radio Network. "I think this would be a helpful debate." Last month, Clinton apologized for the nation to the black men who were unwitting experiment subjects in the government's Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and in January he awarded — 50 years late — the Medal of Honour to seven black World War II soldiers for valor in combat. But Clinton said he disagrees with the idea of paying reparations to the descendants of slaves, something many black activists have said is needed to begin rectifying more than 200 years of inequality that blacks have experienced.

"I suppose that some would think that, but it's been so long and we're so many generations removed. I don't think that," Clinton said. "What I think we ought to do instead of reparations is to be repairing," he continued. "That is why I don't want to abandon affirmative action without an effective alternative when there's still so many people living at least with the aftermath of discrimination." Speaking Monday night to black Democratic supporters, Clinton pitched his plan to engage in an intense examination of racial relations. At stake may be America's ability to stand alone in the world as a multiracial, integrated society, he told the party fund-raiser. "If we can pull this off, the

United States will be by far the best positioned country... in the 21st century," he said. "If we act like we don't have to think about it till the wheel comes off, there's a chance that the wheel will run off." "And even if it doesn't, we will never be what we ought to be." The apology was proposed last week by Rep. Tony Hall, D-Ohio. He said he suggested it because he found no record of one. "To me, it's a moral issue," Hall said. "We used to court African-Americans as three-fifths of a person. They were not treated as people. When you've hurt somebody, nothing solves the problem at first like a good, old-fashioned apology," Hall said. "Then we can begin to heal. If you don't

say that, the whole issue lingers and lingers." Hall ran his idea past the Congressional Black Caucus, which cheered it. He began seeking co-sponsors and immediately found 11, all of them white. Four more lawmakers signed on Monday, Hall said. The bill was sent to the House Judiciary Committee. But Hall, too, has declined to embrace reparations, saying that issue has nothing to do with the apology he is seeking. "This has to do with something basic and important," Hall said. "Reparations ought to be discussed later." US Rep John Conyers has introduced legislation on reparations in every session of Congress since 1989. Each time his proposal, which would cre-

ate a commission to study the feasibility, has died in committee. "I don't know what the problem is," Conyers told CNN on Monday. "We should probably say thank you to Tony Hall... who has been courageous enough to pick (the issue) up and put it into the dialogue. I think it's time we should be able to talk about this subject without going ballistic." Slavery was a central theme in the consultations that Clinton made with activists, scholars and other experts in drafting his plan for a national dialogue on race. Their advice was that Clinton first address the lingering wounds of slavery, then try to resolve the array of racial problems that stem from it.

### Leaders face tough talks as they seek to wrap up treaty for EU expansion

AMSTERDAM, June 17: European leaders faced tough talks today as they sought to wrap up a new treaty preparing the EU for expansion, with fierce debate expected over Franco-German proposals to give the Union a defence arm, reports AP. After averting a potential crisis Monday by persuading France to sign up to a German-inspired pact which will enforce fiscal discipline in the future single currency area, the EU moved on to the original agenda for the summit here. The European Union plans to take in new members from

Eastern and Central Europe. Now, after 15 months of grinding negotiations, the EU faces a deadline to conclude the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) on revising the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which gave birth to the current EU. The most difficult of the dozen points still unresolved by the EU leaders concerns ambitious Franco-German proposals for a gradual merger between the EU and the Western European Union (WEU) defence grouping, which would transform what is essentially an economic block into a defence club.

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