

## International

# India, Pakistan to set up panel to discuss Kashmir dispute

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: India and Pakistan have vowed to continue their official talks and are to set up a panel to discuss a long-standing dispute over Kashmir, reports said today, says AFP.

Foreign secretaries of the South Asian arch-rivals met in Edinburgh on the sidelines of the Commonwealth summit and agreed to start a new official dialogue as soon as possible after the last talks in September ended in a deadlock.

Newspapers here said Indian Foreign Secretary K Ranghuth and his Pakistani counterpart Shamshad Ahmed "agreed to address all issues," including Kashmir.

Of the three wars between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947, two have been over Kashmir.

New Delhi says the Hi-

malayan territory is an integral part of India while Islamabad wants a UN-brokered referendum to decide the future of the Muslim-majority state.

Pakistan had urged India to agree to substantive discussions on the 50-year-old Kashmir dispute in order to put the bilateral dialogue back on track.

The foreign secretaries meeting followed an earlier 75-minute breakfast session between the Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistani premier, where the Kashmir issue was discussed.

The Hindustan Times said the premiers discussed the artillery duels in August and September along the Kashmir border resulting in dozens of civilian casualties on both sides.

"They expressed satisfaction that the situation has stabilised

and said attempts should continue to ensure that the situation remained so," the daily said.

The September talks held in New Delhi were the third round of talks between the two neighbours, which restarted in March following a three-year freeze.

During talks held in Islamabad in June the two sides set an eight-point agenda, including peace and security, the Kashmir state, as well as confidence-building measures.

It was also agreed to set up "joint working group" to discuss the identified topics.

"The two sides have agreed to address all issues listed in the joint statement" issued in June. They actively agreed to continue discussions in this regard through diplomatic channels," the Times of India, quoting a press statement said.

## Army begins operation to trap militants

PTI adds from Jammu: A massive operation "Bear Trap" has been launched by the army against militants in foothills of Pir Panjals ranges to trap them in Surankot sector of Poonch district in Jammu region, a defence spokesman said here today.

In the last two days, six militants were killed and a large quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered, while the army lost one officer in the operation, he said.

Meanwhile, the body of Major His Gahalawat, who was killed in an encounter with militants in Surankot sector of Poonch district on Friday, was flown to his home town Rohtak in Maryana on Friday where he will be cremated with full military honours, he said.

## Cabinet reshuffled Thais may go to polls in Jan

BANGKOK, Oct 26: Thais may go to the polls in January if key laws are speedily passed by the embattled government of Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Bangkok newspapers said Sunday, reports AP.

Hoping to defuse demonstrations in the capital and calls for his resignation, Chavalit Friday reshuffled his cabinet and pledged to hold early elections.

The election timetable was speeded up Saturday when King Bhumibol Adulyadej urged the new cabinet and Parliament to pass laws "as soon as possible" that would enable the polls to be staged.

The powerful constitutional monarch spoke at a swearing-in ceremony for 14 newcomers to the cabinet and others who changed jobs.

A growing chorus, especially from the Bangkok middle class, is blaming Chavalit and his close political associates for Thailand's economic crisis.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met her Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohammad at Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh on Friday. — PID photo

# Gujral govt sharply divided over political crisis in UP

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's ruling minority government was sharply divided today following a political crisis in a key state assembly, officials said, reports AFP.

Coalition allies the Communist Party of India (Marxist, CPI-M) and the Socialist Party slammed Gujral's decision not to impose federal rule in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh following a mass brawl in the state legislature last week.

Harkishan Singh Surjeet, general secretary of the CPI-M which supports the multi-party United Front government, said Gujral's government had "bungled" in Uttar Pradesh by allowing a Hindu nationalist government to take power.

The government simply did not understand the situation, displayed its bankruptcy and then began crying. Such blunders will not be tolerated in the

future," Singh said.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), India's largest parliamentary party, is shunned by many parties for its right-wing stance.

It took control of Uttar Pradesh, regarded as India's political heartland, after winning a vote of confidence on October 21 amid allegations of bribery.

This led to opposition calls for New Delhi to take over the running of the state.

The Congress (I) Party, which is the power behind the coalition, tried to pressure Gujral into sacking the BJP government as more than half of its state deputies defected to the BJP.

The United Front ended two

port for the Gujral coalition.

Surjeet said federal rule should have been imposed immediately after the BJP coalition collapsed following the withdrawal of support by a party of the "untouchables."

"The BJP in its quest for power is willing not only to enter into unprincipled alliances but also is indulging in horse-trading and unscrupulous means," Surjeet said.

The Samajwadi Party (Socialist Party) leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, said Gujral's response to the Uttar Pradesh crisis was "weak-kneed" and the premier had surrendered to the BJP.

The CPI-M has 32 members in the parliament while the Socialists have 17 MPs. Analysts said the political crisis in Uttar Pradesh could spur new general elections.

## Jiang leaves for US visit Sino-US accord on sales of N-reactors likely

BEIJING, Oct 26: China's President Jiang Zemin left today for a fence-mending visit to the United States amid signs the two sides were close to an agreement that would allow sales of US nuclear reactors to Beijing, reports Reuters.

Jiang's special Air China jumbo jet took off from Beijing's Capital Airport for the flight to Hawaii, where he is due to arrive later today on the first leg of his eight-day state visit.

Jiang, who also heads the ruling Communist Party and the military, will be the first Chinese leader to make a state visit to the United States since 1985.

His trip is the culmination of strenuous diplomatic efforts by both sides during the past year to improve relations battered by disputes ranging from differences over Taiwan to human rights, trade and nuclear

proliferation.

Soothing comments by US President Bill Clinton and Jiang in the past two days indicated both sides now want to stress shared interests between the world's only superpower and Asia's rising giant.

Signs emerged at the weekend that an agreement on nuclear technology could be the centrepiece of the Sino-US summit.

Washington and Beijing were close to an accord for Beijing to end nuclear cooperation with Iran and hoped to complete it in time for Jiang's Wednesday summit with Clinton, US officials said.

Once the deal is completed, and officials were optimistic it would be, Clinton would then be able to approve the first export of advanced US nuclear reactor technology to China.

## Bid to kill Hamas leader Netanyahu testifies before probe panel

JERUSALEM, Oct 26: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu testified before a government-ordered panel probing a bungled bid to assassinate a leader of the militant Islamic group Hamas in Jordan. His spokesman said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The spokesman, Shai Bazak, said Netanyahu was interrogated by the three-man "clarification committee" for three hours on Friday. He provided no details of what information Netanyahu disclosed.

"It appears it was his first and last testimony. No further testimony has been seen," Bazak told Israel radio.

Critics have blasted the Netanyahu-appointed committee as a whitewash and called for an independent state commission of inquiry to look into the attempt.

## 'Dodi Fayed was never connected with drugs'

LONDON, Oct 26: The Al Fayed family denied in advance today's press an article due to be published later this week which claims that Dodi Fayed, the close friend of Diana Princess of Wales was a cocaine addict, reports AFP.

"Dodi Fayed was never connected with drugs," the Sunday Mirror quoted the Al Fayed's spokesman Michael Cole.

A report to appear next Saturday in the Daily Telegraph, also alleges that Dodi was kidnapped when he was a child and remained obsessed with security.

"Dodi Fayed was never connected with drugs, he was never kidnapped and he was not obsessed with security. He took the proper security precautions when required," Cole said.

## One of Van Gogh's 'sunflowers' fake?

LONDON, Oct 26: One of Vincent Van Gogh's famous "sunflower" paintings, sold to a Japanese insurance company in 1987 for 24.75 million pounds (\$39.5 million dollars), may have been a fake painted by a struggling French art teacher, The Sunday Times reported, says AP.

The newspaper said that a year-long investigation by art writer Geraldine Norman indicated that the picture was "almost certainly" painted by artist Claude-Emile Schuffenecker and not Van Gogh.

The disputed picture is one of three showing 14 sunflowers set against a pale green background which were painted by Van Gogh. The original was painted in 1888.

In an article in the newspaper, Norman said that Van Gogh's letters referred to only six sunflower paintings, although seven now exist.

## Off the Record

### Chelsea's surprise treat for mom's birthday

WASHINGTON: Chelsea Clinton crept into the White House early Saturday morning — a surprise treat for her mom's 50th birthday, reports AP.

It was her first trip home since leaving for college last month.

Secret Service agents said Chelsea — a Stanford University freshman — arrived from the airport at around 2 a.m. with more than enough time for private celebrations of Hillary Rodham Clinton's birthday on Sunday.

"It was a huge surprise for the first lady," spokeswoman Marsh Berry said. While President Bill Clinton normally spends a few hours in the Oval Office on weekends, it was shuttered Saturday as the reunited family spent a quiet day in the White House residence.

Two days of elaborate public festivities surrounding Hillary's birthday begin today in her Chicago hometown.



Hillary with Chelsea at age 3. — File photo

## Nat'l marijuana competition!

MADRID: Wary of the police outside and hardly visible through clouds of smoke inside, 50 pot growers puffed on marijuana cigarettes Saturday in search of the best high in Spain's first national marijuana competition, reports AP.

Concentrating on the smell and, of course, the sensation, each of the growers tested 10 samples of marijuana from the 50 plants and rated their quality. The winner, to be announced Sunday, will receive a cup and a manual on marijuana growing techniques.

"I grow it and I smoke it," said one of the participants, a 33-year-old waiter from the central city of Avila who would only identify himself as David.

"I don't bother anyone, and I don't buy or sell marijuana or

hashish from anyone." The event was part of a campaign in Spain for marijuana cultivation to be declared legal for private consumption. Although Spaniards legally can possess small amounts of marijuana or hashish, a concentrated form of the drug, for personal use at home, they can be fined for selling or cultivating it.

The growers, ranging in age from 25 to 45, puffed away and traded opinions about each other's crop. They showed no signs of paranoia even though three police officers stood outside and growers were warned they might be searched on leaving the tiny cultural club where the competition was held.

Besides one woman, who had to be taken outside for air after fainting, there were no reported incidents.

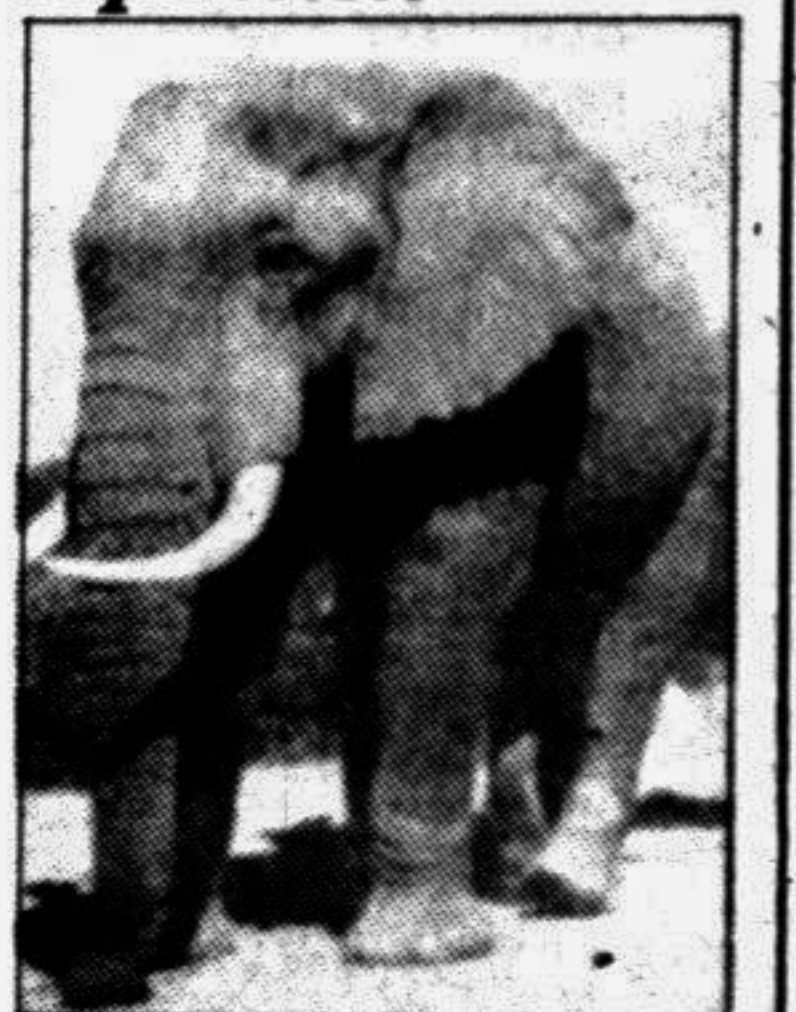
## Pachyderm pension

JALPAIGURI: The West Bengal government has introduced service books and pension facilities for kunkis — specially trained elephants serving under the state forest department, reports PTI.

According to a forest official at Garumara, the service books for 22 government elephants at Jaldapara and three at Garumara have been completed.

The service book includes all types of information on the elephant, like age, behaviour, disease, its area of training, special credits if any, the sources said.

The source pointed out that so far only Yatra Prashad — a famous kunki elephant — was provided with pension facilities for its excellent performance. Yatra Prashad took part in a number of wild elephant operations and also saved the lives of several forest officials. The forest department has set up a glass fibre statue of the elephant to mark its excellent service.



Palestinian school girls cover their faces to protect themselves from teargas during a demonstration in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, Saturday. Stone-throwing Palestinian demonstrators clashed with Israeli Army firing teargas and rubber bullets. — AP/UNB photo

## Iraq plans to set up 'new mechanism' to deal with UN arms monitors: Aziz

BAGHDAD, Oct 26: Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said Saturday that his government plans to set up a "new mechanism" to deal with UN disarmament inspectors, reports AP.

Speaking to the National Assembly two days after the UN Security Council passed a resolution threatening new sanctions against Iraq, Aziz said such a mechanism would "reorganize relations with the UN inspectors with the objective of lifting the unjust embargo," the official Iraqi News Agency reported.

Aziz did not say how such a framework would operate, nor how it could remove the wide-ranging UN sanctions imposed on Baghdad after President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990.

The Security Council agreed Thursday to impose a travel ban against selected Iraqi officials if they try to impede UN

inspectors seeking to determine of Baghdad has complied with UN orders to destroy long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq must prove that it has destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction before the UN sanctions can be lifted.

The Iraqi leadership referred the latest resolution to parliament Friday, asking it to recommend a response.

After meeting behind closed doors Saturday, the 250 members of the assembly decided to reconvene Sunday, the official news agency reported. Saddam previously has referred to the largely rubber-stamp parliament when he sought endorsement of his opposition to the United Nations.

A government newspaper said Saturday that Iraq should reconsider its cooperation with the UN inspectors, whose report to the Security Council provoked the resolution.

## US envoy to UN meets Kabila

KINSHASA, Congo, Oct 26: Congo's President Laurent Kabila and America's UN ambassador have announced an agreement that clears the way for a UN investigation into alleged massacres by Kabila's army, reports AP.

UN Ambassador Bill Richardson said Saturday that he hoped the investigation could begin early in November, ending an impasse that threatened to strain relations between the world body and Kabila's government.

But while welcoming the agreement, Richardson said he remained only "cautiously op-

timistic" that it actually would forward.

"We want to see actions, not just words, and today has been a very good start," he said.

The Congolese government has said for weeks that the investigation may proceed, but has effectively blocked it by raising objections to the scope and nature of the probe.

Both sides appeared to have made concessions: Kabila dropping his insistence that the team focus only on eastern Congo, and the United Nations publicly promising the team will stay out of Congo's internal politics.

## Sassou Nguesso takes oath as Congo president

BRAZZAVILLE, Oct 26: The former military leader of Congo installed himself as president after a civil war victory and said there must be no ethnic man-hunts as he tried to rebuild the country, reports Reuters.

Denis Sassou Nguesso, taking an oath of office on Saturday, was scathing in denouncing ousted successor Pascal Lissouba, who became the Central African state's first democratically elected president in 1992.

He said he would pursue Lissouba for genocide but urged the people of the oil-producing former French colony to rally round him and help the recovery from a four-month conflict in which he said 10,000 people were killed.

"The victory should be lived as a new beginning. A beginning of true national reconciliation and solidarity," he said after taking the oath in the people's palace parliament building in the political capital Brazzaville.

## Montenegro polls Court upholds Djukanovic's victory

BELGRADE, Oct 26: Montenegro's constitutional court upheld the victory of Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic over outgoing President Momir Bulatovic in the Yugoslav republic's presidential elections, Fonet news agency said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

A statement by the court said it unanimously rejected allegations of election fraud by Bulatovic, the candidate of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

Djukanovic, a 35-year-old reformer who is openly hostile to Milosevic, narrowly defeated Bulatovic in last Sunday's election.

The court said it expected to receive fresh allegations of irregularities from Bulatovic and would consider them.

# Largest gathering of black women in US history



Participants in the Million Woman March cheer as Winnie Mandela, former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela, speaks Saturday in Philadelphia, USA. — AP/UNB photo

PHILADELPHIA, Oct 26: Hundreds of thousands of black women thronged Philadelphia on Saturday for the Million Woman March, a mass rally aimed at building political, economic and social unity within black communities in the United States, reports Reuters.

In the largest gathering of black women in US history, crowds of mothers, aunts, sisters, nieces and daughters stood shoulder-to-shoulder in an autumn drizzle to sing the black national anthem, pray and listen to an all-day programme of inspirational speeches.

Organisers put the crowd size at 2 million, as a sea of marchers filled a mile-long boulevard stretching between the huge Greek-style Philadelphia Art Museum and city hall. An unofficial police estimate said about 300,000 people attended the rally.

Winnie Mandela, the former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela, and US representative Maxine Waters, a California Democrat, were scheduled to join a long procession of keynote speakers during the eight and a half hour programme.

"Women are coming to atone today, the women are coming to understand that it is time we take responsibility for our lives and our circumstances," actress

Jada Pinkett told reporters before taking her place on the speaker's platform.

Modelled on the Million Man March that brought hundreds of thousands of black men to Washington two years ago, the women's march was meant to show unity in the face of inner-city problems ranging from inadequate health care and poor education to high unemployment and crime.

Under a banner theme of repentance, resurrection and restoration, the march sought to elevate black women from a collective status that many say has been at the bottom of the social totem pole since the days of slavery centuries ago.

"This is a very, very positive march," said Marcia Harris, a 35-year-old financial planner from New Haven. "It shows the media that we can come together without the violence that people in the media have been talking about."

The chief organisers, two ordinary women from Philadelphia, said it was important for black women of different backgrounds to come together in a mood of solidarity.

"Black women have been the epitome of strength in this country," said Phil Chonessu, who co-founded the Million Woman March last year with her friend Asia Coney, a local housing activist.

"We want to prepare our women, no matter what their status in life, to look at how we can begin to invest as black women and how we can begin to vote in blocs as black women."

Chionessu and Coney bypassed the established circuits of black influence in America, including the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, and relied instead on the organising powers of local community leaders like themselves.

Their strategy, forged during years of local housing campaigns showed the first signs of success late on Friday, when tens of thousands of women began arriving at Philadelphia hotels from as far away as California.

The march began under leaden skies at about 7 am (1110 GMT) with a prayer vigil at the waterfront area known as Rennie's Landing. Marchers then trekked for miles to the Liberty Bell and the main march venue on Benjamin Franklin Parkway, a wide boulevard lined with trees, flags and fountains.

"I feel connected, I feel like I'm meeting with family, and I'm excited about meeting with my sisters," said Charlene Ryan, a 66-year-old great-grandmother from the Negro Women's Community League of Wilkes-Barre.

## BRIEFLY

### Hillary to meet Blair Nov 1:

First Lady Hillary Clinton is scheduled to meet on November 1 in London with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to bolster her husband's already close relationship with Blair, US news and World Report magazine reported Saturday, AFP reports from Washington.

It will be the first time a US first lady has met one-on-one with a British Prime Minister for substantive discussions without the president, the magazine said, quoting White House officials.

### Blast kills 8 in China:

An explosion killed eight workers and injured four at an aluminium plant in China's southern Guangdong province, said a newspaper seen in Beijing yesterday, Reuters reports from Beijing.

The blast, the cause of which was under investigation, killed five workers at the site and three more died later in hospital.

### 10 executed in Sierra Leone:

Sierra Leone's military junta executed 10 soldiers charged with murder Saturday in what it said was a public signal that it was determined to bring peace to the troubled West African country, AFP says from Freetown.

It was the first time the junta, which seized power on May 25, had ordered capital punishment of soldiers. Military police chief John Harleston said the men had pleaded guilty before a court martial to the charges and were killed by firing squad in a garrison west of the capital.

### Colombian rebels kill priest:

Leftist guerrillas on Saturday killed a Catholic priest who apparently was an innocent victim in an attack that targeted a regional governor, the governor himself said, AFP reports from Bogota.

The killing came amid a wave of violence that has struck Colombia ahead of Sunday's local elections, which guerrillas have pledged to disrupt. Saturday's attack took place in the town of San Francisco in the northeast department of Antioquia, as department Governor Alvaro Uribe and the town's priest, Antonio Bedoya, were walking out of town toward a waiting helicopter.

### 20 die in Salvador road mishap:

Twenty people died and 27 more were injured when a bus plunged into a gully Saturday at Sonaate, El Salvador, police reported, AFP says from San Salvador.

The bus plunged into a gully seven metres (23 feet) deep after the driver lost control of the vehicle, Sonaate police told AFP. The bus was carrying a group of pilgrims who were on their way to a vigil in the town of Zaragoza.

### Landmine kills 2 in Senegal:

A landmine laid by suspected separatist rebels killed two people, including a priest, in Senegal's southern province of Casamance on Saturday, officials said, a third person was seriously injured, Reuters reports from Dakar.

The mine exploded under a car carrying the three in the Ganguit region about 30 km (20 miles) southeast of the Casamance capital Ziguinchor, an official told Reuters by telephone from the region. One civilian was killed in a similar incident in the province on Thursday.