



Indian soldiers stand beside bodies of militants lay at a army camp in Nowgem, 105 KM north of Srinagar Saturday. Nine militants were killed in a two-day gunbattle with government troops while trying to enter India across its border with Pakistan in the northern state of Kashmir. — AP/UNB photo

Bid to revive ME peace jeopardised further Arafat accuses Israel of violating peace accords

JERUSALEM, July 5: Efforts to revive the stalled Middle East peace process has been further jeopardised as Israelis and Palestinians engaged in a recent 12-hour showdown and three Israeli, horsemen disguised as Arabs smashed the windows of Palestinians' cars, reports AP.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat accused Israel on Saturday of violating the peace agreements in the showdown that stemmed from a dispute over a Gaza Strip road.

The Palestinians "will not hesitate to confront any attempted aggression on our land," he said in a Cabinet statement. "We will not accept anyone harming the lives or jobs of our people in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli side must respect the agreement."

Israeli and Palestinian troops confronted each other with cocked assault rifles and armoured personnel carriers Thursday night and early Friday.

The incident, which prompted accusations from both sides, came as the United States appears to be making little headway in winning Israeli

agreement on a troop withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank.

Arafat left Saturday for Cairo, for a Sunday meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Hussein about the deadlock in the peace process.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suggested that the confrontation in Gaza, during which Palestinian trucks blocked Jewish settlements, could make Israel even more hesitant to hand over land to the Palestinians. Israeli hardliners claim that a troop pull-back would leave more than a dozen settlements isolated and at the mercy of the Palestinians.

"You could also understand how sensitive we are to the issue of redeployment, which could place tens of thousands of Israelis at great peril any time the Palestinians decide to violate the agreement, as they did last night," Netanyahu said Friday.

Netanyahu accused the Palestinians of staging a deliberate provocation and said Israel would not succumb to threats of violence.

The Gaza confrontation began with a routine argument over the use of a road. About two-thirds of the Gaza Strip is controlled by the Palestinian Authority, but Israeli troops patrol near Jewish settlements and control several access roads.

On Thursday afternoon, Palestinian Supplies Minister Abdel Aziz Shaheen demanded that Israel allow a convoy of 22 Palestinian cars use a coastal route it controls. Israeli soldiers let Shaheen pass because he was a Cabinet minister, but told the others to turn back.

A compromise deal was reached Friday with the help of US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, and Shaheen and his convoy were allowed to drive along the coastal road.

Also Saturday, Israeli police said three Israeli horsemen disguised as Arabs smashed the windows of Palestinians' cars in the tense, divided West Bank city of Hebron.

Welding chains and wearing Keffiyehs, a traditional Arab headgear, the three shattered windshields and dented Arab-owned cars parked late Friday.

Jiang asks India, Pakistan to give up nuclear ambitions

MOSCOW, July 5: Chinese President Jiang Zemin yesterday asked India and Pakistan to give up their nuclear ambitions and sign nuclear non-proliferation treaty, reports PTI.

Addressing a news conference after attending the summit of "Shanghai Five" - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, he accused India of heightening tension in South Asia by conducting nuclear tests.

Pakistani nuclear tests were in "response" to the Indian action, he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov at a press conference in Almaty on July 3 also urged India and Pakistan to follow the example of China and four former Soviet republics, who resolved their territorial issues through negotiation, transforming their common border into a zone of peace and stability.

3 killed as 2 choppers collide in Philippines

MANILA, July 5: Two Philippine Air Force helicopter gunships collided in mid-air today in the southern Zamboanga Peninsula when they collided, they said.

"They just collided and crashed towards mango trees," 14-year-old Jose Aalviar who witnessed the accident, said.

One of the helicopters snapped in two on impact, another witness said.

Radio reports said Defence Secretary Orlando Mercado has ordered an investigation into the accident, but the accident would not hamper operations.

Mercado said other air force helicopters would not be grounded and Armed Forces Chief Lieutenant General Joselin Nazareno was to submit a full report on the accident late today.

The helicopters were both MG-520 attack aircraft, an air force official said after earlier stating one was a UH1H gunship.

They were carrying ammunition from the Edwin Andrews' airbase to military posts when they collided shortly after 9:00 am (0100 GMT).

The pilots, Captains Bernard Pudador and Marjoe Laplaha, were killed instantly and one passenger died later in hospital.

The three survivors in hospital were in a critical condition.

10 Tigers killed in accidental explosion

COLOMBO, July 5: At least 10 Tamil Tiger guerrillas were killed in an accidental explosion in the rebel-held area of Wanni on Saturday.

The rebel radio gave no details of the incident which came a day ahead of the group's "Black Tiger Day" which marks the 11th anniversary of their first suicide bombing.

The LTTE is leading a drawn-out campaign for independence in the island's north-east, more than 55,000 people have been killed in fighting since 1972.

Police detain 200 in Chechnya for curfew violations

MOSCOW, July 5: Police in Chechnya detained more than 200 people for curfew violations over the weekend during a state of emergency declared to stem a wave of lawlessness in the separatist republic, a news agency said Sunday, reports AP.

Four kidnappers were arrested and their hostage released Saturday night during a road check, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. Another seven people who were on Chechnya's most wanted list were taken into custody.

Police detained the drivers of eight heavy trucks carrying stolen oil, the report said. Six of the trucks were destroyed on the spot after the drivers resisted police, ITAR-Tass said.

Law enforcement officials also seized 18 Kalashnikov submachine guns from curfew violators who did not have permits for the weapons.

Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov announced the state of emergency June 23 to help police carry out their anti-crime campaign. A curfew is in effect daily from 10 pm to 6 am.

Chechnya has become a centre of violent crime, including kidnappings and rampant shootings, since the end of its independence war against Russia two years ago.

Hong Kong closes down Kai Tak Airport

HONG KONG, July 5: Thousands of people descended on Hong Kong's Kai Tak Airport today for a final glimpse of jets making their dramatic landing before the airport closes, reports AP.

Photographers lined the perimeter fence and packed every possible vantage point to get a picture on the last day of jumbo jets skimming over the Kowloon rooftops to land.

An elaborate security operation was to be implemented for the switch over from Kai Tak to the new Chek Lap Kok airport this night. Some 1,000 vehicles were to take part in 16 convoys taking equipment from the city centre airport to Chek Lap Kok on reclaimed land off Lantau Island around 28 kilometres away.

Key roads between the two will be cut off to ease transport arrangements. Heavy rains and thunderstorms are forecast for the move, which authorities fear will slow proceedings. The final flights out of the 73-year-old Kai Tak Airport will take off at about 11:30 pm.

One Cathay Pacific flight departs for Paris and the English city of Manchester and a China Airlines plane will leave for Taipei.

Hong Kong's Director of Civil Aviation Richard Siegel, accompanied by the Chief Secretary for the Administration Anson Chan and Finance Secretary Donald Tsang will turn off the runway lights at 1:00 am.

Another report adds: At least 49 were killed working on Hong Kong's new 20 billion dollars airport project, but a government deal with contractors prevented public knowledge of the deaths.

BJP confident of completing 5-yr term

NEW DELHI, July 5: India's Hindu nationalist led coalition government exuded confidence today after a key ally said it did not intend to withdraw its crucial legislative support at present, reports AP.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said it was confident of completing a five-year term following Saturday's decision by the regional AIADMK party.

"We hope speculation about the government's fate will now end," BJP spokesman M Venkaiah Naidu said, adding that members of the ruling 14-party coalition should not air their differences publicly.

"The government will not fall," Naidu said. "It will complete its term."

AIADMK announced Saturday in the southern state of Tamil Nadu that it would not withdraw its vital backing immediately.

"We will continue to support

the government for the present," spokesman VR Nedunchezhian said after a meeting chaired by its chief Jayalalitha Jayaram, a former movie actress. "But how long will depend on the prevailing and developing situation."

Vajpayee's fragile government has been under threat from the AIADMK, which controls 27 of his coalition's 264 seats in the 545-member parliament, since he took office in March. Without its support he would be unlikely to survive.

The AIADMK's relations with the Hindu nationalists have been strained despite Vajpayee's repeated attempts to placate Jayalalitha, who faces several corruption charges but enjoys widespread support in Tamil Nadu.

Jayalalitha has been insisting that Vajpayee sack the Tamil Nadu state government led by her party's rivals, whom she accuses of corruption.

But the Hindu nationalists, although desperate to retain the AIADMK's support, say there is no justification for such extreme action which would require ratification by the Indian President.

Defence Minister George Fernandes, another ally of the Hindu nationalists, flew to Tamil Nadu to meet Jayalalitha although he had earlier publicly called her an "Empress of Corruption." Fernandes later said in the state capital Madras that Jayalalitha had given him a "very good message" to be conveyed to Prime Minister Vajpayee.

"All of us are keen that the government lives its full life and irritants are removed," he said. "Jayalalitha feels the same way."

There had been speculation that AIADMK might suddenly support the main opposition congress party's bid to form a rival government.

BRITFLY

Indian film-maker dead: Veteran filmmaker Amrjeet, who produced blockbusters like 'Fantooshi', 'Hum Dono' 'Gambler' died here on Saturday after protracted illness at the age of 65. PTI reports from Mumbai.

Amrjeet suffered a paralytic stroke a few years ago and never recovered from that, family members said, adding he breathed his last at a private nursing home. Associated with 'Navketan Films', he entered the film industry as a story writer. His debut venture 'Fantooshi', directed by Chetan Anand, was a major hit.

Djibouti FM in Iran: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi discussed strengthening bilateral relations on Saturday with his counterpart from Djibouti, Mohammad Mussa Shehem, AFP says from Tehran.

The official Iranian IRNA press agency quoted Shehem as saying that his visit, which began Thursday, is testimony to the determination of Djibouti to establish cooperation with Iran on the political, economic, and cultural levels.

ROK diplomat held in Russia: Russia said on Saturday it had arrested a South Korean diplomat for spying and charged his Russian Foreign Ministry contact with treason. Reuters says from Moscow.

Boris Neuchev, a spokesman for the Federal Security Service (FSB), said his colleagues had been surprised by the openness of the diplomat's contacts with the ministry official, who, he said, handed over secret documents before being caught red-handed on Friday night.

2 die in Brazil train accident: Two people were killed Saturday and another six injured when a train derailed in southeastern Brazil, police said. AFP reports from Sao Paulo.

The train - whose cars were empty - went off the rails on the outskirts of the town of Juiz De Fora, destroying four homes in an impoverished suburb. A man and his four-year-old daughter were killed in their home by the crash.

Fans pay homage to Sherlock Holmes: More than 30,000 fans, some from as far afield as Japan and the United States, flocked this English village Saturday to pay homage to literature's most famous sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, AFP says from Crowborough, England.

Crowborough in south-eastern England was the address of Holmes literary creator Conan Doyle for the last 23 years of his life between 1907 and 1930.

Rockets pound NE Afghanistan: Five rockets pounded the northeastern outskirts of the beleaguered Afghan capital Sunday injuring three people - two of them children, said eyewitnesses. AP reports from Kabul.

Flying shrapnel from one of the rockets wounded a father and his child, who were sleeping in the yard when the rocket hit. Another child was hurt from flying shrapnel elsewhere in the area, said nearby residents. A mosque also was destroyed in the barrage.

Dynamite blast kills 4 in Colombia: Four civilians died and eight others were injured Saturday when a dynamite left across a road by leftist rebels exploded, Colombian Attorney General Ruben Dario Gonzalez said, AFP reports from Bogota.

Earlier Saturday the Colombian Army said five people had been killed in the blast linked to the National Liberation Army (ELN), one of two leftist groups fighting the government of outgoing President Ernesto Samper.

4 Asians arrested in Qatar: Qatari authorities arrested four Asian nationals for drug trafficking, the official QNA news agency reported Saturday, AFP says from Doha.

The agency quoted Nasr Al-Malki, Director of the Narcotics Department, as saying that 44 kilograms of hashish were seized, more than half of which was hidden at a construction site.

Colombian rebel group planned to kill president

BOGOTA, Colombia, July 5: A leftist rebel group planned to assassinate President Ernesto Samper earlier this year to refute claims that the faction was on the decline, the guerrillas have revealed, reports AP.

Samper was to be attacked while visiting the contested Segovia region along with Defence Minister Gilberto Echeverri Mejia, according to a field commander from the National Liberation Army, Colombia's second largest guerrilla group.

The rebel leader, who goes by the name Commander Julian, disclosed the plot to reporters Friday during the rebels' release of 15 young women hostages. His account was reported Saturday in local newspapers.

The rebels interpreted Samper's visit to Segovia as an attempt to humiliate them by implying that the region was peaceful and that the guerrillas had been expelled, the rebel commander said.

"We felt that if soldiers can die in the armed conflict, why can't those who are responsible for the critical situation facing Colombia die as well?" he said.

The planned assassination was aborted, he explained, because Samper was surrounded by crowds during the visit, the exact date of which could not be determined.

Bid to settle Kosovo crisis Holbrooke meets Milosevic, ethnic Albanian leaders

BELGRADE, July 5: US mediator Richard Holbrooke met Yugoslav's President Slobodan Milosevic and leaders of ethnic Albanians on Saturday in an intensive new drive to settle the smouldering Kosovo crisis, reports Reuter.

At the same time, Richard Gelbard, a special US envoy, said in London that NATO military intervention remains a serious option if diplomatic efforts fail to deter Serbia from fresh offensive in Kosovo.

Holbrooke had six hours of talks in Kosovo with leaders of the embattled province's Albanian majority and said afterwards that the United States wants a peaceful solution to the bloody conflict.

He has previously warned that Kosovo could become the flashpoint for a new war in the Balkans.

Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Zoran Ljilic told the Tanjug news agency that Belgrade does not want war to erupt over ethnic Albanian demands for independence, but offered no clear new proposals from the Belgrade side, saying Kosovo was Yugoslav territory and would remain so.

"Loudly and clearly we want to convey to the entire world that we will not and do not wish to wage a war. Not a single reason exists for that," Ljilic said.

Holbrooke, speaking in the provincial capital Pristina alongside moderate ethnic Albanian President Ibrahim Rugova, said: "They US believes that the solution of the Kosovo problem must be peaceful."

Holbrooke, who brokered the Dayton accords that ended the Bosnian war, earlier had five hours of discussions in Belgrade with Milosevic.

Mandela preaches unity among developing nations

CASTRIES, St Lucia, July 5: South African President Nelson Mandela preached unity among developing nations on Saturday, suggesting that his country could serve as a bridge between the Caribbean and small Pacific states, reports Reuter.

"It can no longer be accepted that the affairs of the United Nations and the development of world trade... should give disproportionate weight to a few powerful nations," Mandela said during a Saturday night speech in St. Lucia's crowded cricket stadium that was broadcast live throughout the region.

He suggested South Africa be a link between the Caribbean and Latin America and pacific nations to "enormously reduce" the reliance of developing nations on the developed world.

Heatstroke kills 4 in Japan

TOKYO, July 5: Soaring temperatures in Japan over the weekend have killed four people and hospitalised hundreds, officials said, reports Reuter.

Two people died of heatstroke today as temperatures rose to near record levels above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), Fire Department officials said.

Off the Record

Divine match

LAGOS: A Ghanaian senior military officer has escaped death by the donation of a kidney by his wife, a report reaching here said, quoting a local weekly issued Saturday, reports Xinhua.

Emmanuel Klutsey, according to a "heart-warming" front-page story in the state-owned The Mirror weekly, was told in early 1996 that his life could only be saved by a kidney transplant and the donor needed to be a close relative for a tissue match.

Col. Klutsey told 'The Mirror' that his brothers and sisters refused but his two daughters agreed. His wife, however, objected, saying the girls were too young and for a second time offered to donate one of her own.

A series of tests proved that her kidney was compatible with her with her husband's and in September 1996 the operation was carried out.

One year after the transplant, Col. Klutsey looks very healthy, telling The Mirror weekly "we are now more than one flesh because it is her organ which is keeping me going." The couple were married in 1972.

Pavlov the dog, is retiring

TORONTO: A popular comic strip featuring Pavlov the dog, which started in the Toronto Sun in 1971 and appeared in 100 newspapers around the world at the height of its popularity, will retire near the end of this month, reports AP.

The last Pavlov panel will be published July 25.

Ted Martin's daily cartoons began as a social commentary, with a couple commenting on life, and the dog was just a prop with nothing to do with the punchline. But readers could see him misbehaving in the background, doing headstands or crossing his eyes. Soon the scene-stealing dog walked off with the whole show.

For years, Martin woke up, ate, then sat at his dining room table imagining absurd situations for his dog. Some days the ideas came slowly. "I sat there with my head in my hands until something bubbled to the surface," Martin said.

When those days became more common, he decided it was time to put Pavlov to bed and move on to a new project, which is still top secret. He hopes to unveil a new comic strip next spring.

Two Cambodian opposition parties won't boycott polls

PHNOM PENH, July 5: Two opposition parties that had threatened to withdraw from Cambodia's elections because they would not be free or fair have decided to stay in the race, one of their leaders said Sunday, reports AP.

"We will continue the race, but we reserve the right to withdraw if there is violence and no fairness," Son Soubert, leader of the small but respected Son Sann Party, told reporters at a rally.

Son Soubert said he was also speaking on behalf of prominent dissident Sam Rainsy, who was campaigning in the eastern province of Kompong Cham. Sam Rainsy was expected to release an open statement later in the day.

The leaders said last month that if minimum conditions for democratic polls were not in place by July 5 - the anniversary of last year's coup by strongman Hun Sen - they would withdraw.

They called for an end to threats, intimidation and killing of opposition organisers and supporters, for access to the broadcast media, and the right to assembly.

Hun Sen has been accused of all these offences to ensure his party wins the parliamentary polls, but the international community has not come to the rescue of the opposition groups as they had apparently hoped by the threat to withdraw.

Hun Sen's coup last year deposed his co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who is also contesting the vote. As many as 100 of his supporters were killed in the months that followed the coup.

Ranariddh, president of the royalist FUNCINPEC party, has in the past aligned itself with Sam Rainsy and Son Soubert but did not join in last month's boycott threat.

Meanwhile, one year after strongman Hun Sen ousted his co-premier in a coup, opposition leaders Sunday denounced the bloody takeover and remembered those killed in the fighting.

The anniversary of the coup July 5-6, 1997, comes in the middle of campaigning for parliamentary elections Hun Sen has sent for July 26 to win back international legitimacy and aid lost after his seizure of sole power.

Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the co-prime minister chased into nine months of exile by the violence, and prominent dissident Sam Rainsy plan separate ceremonies Monday marking the anniversary.

Mexican govt cracking down on rebel villages

MORELIA, Mexico, July 5: The biggest thing in this little village is a sprawling rebel meeting centre, a scattering of clapboard buildings on the edge of town with a lurid painting of revolutionary icon Emiliano Zapata, reports AP.

The work that went into building the center three years ago testifies to the support the leftist Zapatista National Liberation Army enjoyed after its January 1994 uprising.

But only a handful of people now can be seen on the center's grassy grounds. The wood on the buildings is starting to age. Crooked floors hang open.

In Morelia itself, dozens of villagers are having second thoughts about the rebellion - apparently due to weariness with the conflict as well as government efforts to erode the rebels' base of support.

Late in May, 69 people signed a letter to Chiapas Gov. Roberto Albores Guillen announcing they no longer oppose the federal government.

"We now repent and recognize our errors in the past," they said.

It was perhaps the most significant government triumph in a campaign trying to stamp out some 35 rebel self-governments created since 1995 in the remote, rugged canyons of Mexico's southernmost state.

In recent weeks, the government has produced similar petitions from several other Zapatista strongholds.

It has taken a tougher line elsewhere. There have been four raids by hundreds of soldiers and police on similar towns. Pro-Zapatista local leaders were arrested on charges of usurping government functions. Early in June, eight villagers and two policemen died when Zapatistas resisted government forces raiding villages in the El Bosque area.

The rebels call the self-rule villages "autonomous municipalities" and reject state officials' authority.

Government officials are using carrots and sticks to try to isolate the Zapatistas and force them to resume direct peace talks on government terms.

For instance, aid programmes are being increased for villagers willing to work with representatives of the authorities.

The army, meanwhile, has tens of thousands of soldiers in the rebel region.

Rebel sympathisers from outside who once poured into the area now face checkpoints where officials inspect documents. More than 100 foreign "human rights observers," mostly Zapatista sympathisers, have been expelled for violating their visas or for allegedly meddling in politics.

Following months of high-level official criticism, Roman Catholic Bishop Samuel Ruiz quit as the conflict's main mediator. The government accused him of a pro-rebel bias.

Morelia's pro-rebel reputation came hard. Human rights groups accused troops of raping three village women and killing several villagers taken for interrogation during the two weeks of heavy fighting at the start of the Zapatista uprising in 1994.

In February 1995, villagers fled into the hills when troops briefly pushed into Zapatista territory. Soon afterward, the government passed a law declaring the Zapatistas a legal political movement to smooth the way for peace talks. But the rebels have remained armed and wary, and talks have been suspended since late 1996, increasingly frustrating national officials.



What is left of a motorcycle lies next to a burned out forest in the Matanzas Woods neighbourhood of Palm Coast, Florida Saturday. Tens of thousands of those who are usually in Flagler County were gone, evacuated, leaving those few who remained, those who were supposed to be here and those who weren't, to exist Saturday in a surreal pocket of sun, smoke and ghostly quiet. — AP/UNB photo