



Workers set a stage on Tuesday at the Shivaji park grounds in Bombay, to celebrate the first anniversary of India's nuclear tests as well as the launching of the election campaign by the caretaker Prime Minister of India Atal Behari Vajpayee. Vajpayee's government has proclaimed the anniversary as "National Resurgent Day." — AFP photo

N-tests brought security to India: Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, May 11: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said today that India's nuclear tests one year ago had provided a secure climate for economic development, reports AFP.

"It is only when a nation is secure from all external and internal threats that it can successfully pursue its developmental goals," Vajpayee said in a speech marking the first anniversary of the May 11 and 13 underground tests.

The outgoing Hindu nationalist premier said the tests were an "honour to all of India's achievements in science and technology."

Vajpayee has previously defended the tests by pointing at covert nuclear moves by arch-rival Pakistan and increasing militarisation by China, another traditional rival.

India carried out three underground nuclear tests on May 11, 1998, followed by a further two days later.

The blasts drew an immediate tit-for-tat response from ri-

val Pakistan, earning both countries global condemnation and sanctions.

The anniversary today received jingoistic treatment in India's pro-government media but many heavyweight newspapers ignored the event.

"Pride of India" was the title of the editorial in the Pioneer newspaper, a strong supporter of Vajpayee's BJP party.

"May 11 will remain a red-letter day in India's contemporary history... India has been placed firmly on the road to superpower status," the Pioneer said.

The Indian Express daily said the blasts, far from being the "road to disaster" predicted by critics, had proved to be "a road remarkably well travelled" so far.

In its editorial titled "Radioactive glow," the newspaper said India had got away remarkably lightly and had managed the diplomatic fallout of the tests with "phenomenal success."

"The economy has suffered, but far less than might have been expected and above all the fear that the government would lose its nerve... and panic into compromising its own security has been belied," it added.

Most national dailies surprisingly chose to ignore the anniversary of an event that has dominated foreign policy for the past 12 months.

The Business Standard chipped in with a "nuclear balance sheet," listing how the international sanctions slapped on India after the tests had failed to have an impact on the economy.

Highlighting "the relative ease" with which India had coped with the US-led sanctions, the Standard argued that the tests had forced Washington to pay more attention to New Delhi.

"India still remains peripheral to US interests, but it has at least moved on the radar screen."

One killed as Pak troops shell Kashmir town

SRINAGAR, India, May 11: Artillery shells rained down on a Himalayan town on the disputed Kashmir border with Pakistan Tuesday, wounding two civilians and creating a panic that emptied the area, officials said. Residents said one person was killed, reports AP.

Indian soldiers returned mortar fire after Pakistan started "intermittent shelling on forward posts," army spokesman Major P. Furushotham said. At least 60 Pakistani shells fell on the India side. Four shells fell in Baru, a village near the town of Kargil, hitting two civilians, he said.

Residents of Baru, however, said four civilians were wounded by shrapnel when 8-10 shells slammed into the nearby hills. A mountain guide, who was among the victims, died later, they said in a telephone interview.

The firing began Sunday from Batalik and Shingoo mountain ranges in Pakistan-held parts of Kashmir, some 80 kilometres (50 miles) west of Kargil, a town with a popula-

tion of 20,000. "Heavy shelling started this morning," said Agha Saeed, the chief priest of local mosque, in a telephone interview. "Shells are falling on the mountains nearby. The shelling is near the army camps. We don't know if shells will fall on the town," he said. "There is a lot of panic in the area."

Thousands of people headed out of the town on buses, trucks and private cars, Saeed said as he prepared to leave Kargil with his family.

"I think at least 40 per cent of the people must have left," said another resident, Sanaulah, who uses only one name. Most of the residents were heading to four villages on the banks of Suru River, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) northeast of Kargil.

Artillery duels on the Kashmir division line, which is monitored by the United Nations, routinely break out between the hostile neighbours. The last major exchange was last July and early August, when shelling killed more than 100 civilians on both sides of the border.

Crackdown on Pak journalists

US expresses concern

By Syed Talat Hussain

ISLAMABAD, May 11: After months of silence and close monitoring of the deteriorating press freedom situation in Pakistan, the United States government finally issued a stern reaction to the Sharif government's kidnapping and harassment of journalists.

The Statement expressed a "deep US concern over the recent crackdown on members of the press by the Government of Pakistan and noted that the victims of this crackdown included respected Najam Sethi, editor of the weekly English-language newspaper, The Friday Times." The Statement noted with concern that "during the past two weeks, he and several other colleagues have been physically mistreated, arrested on trumped-up charges, subjected to threatening phone calls and had personal property destroyed."

It said that "continuation of this crackdown is certain to raise serious doubts within the international community about the commitment of the

government of Pakistan to freedom of press and the rule of law." We strongly urge the Pakistani government to release Najam Sethi and others being held and to terminate immediately this unacceptable crackdown against members of the journalist community in Pakistan. We have raised our concerns with the Government of Pakistan and the US will continue to monitor the situation, closely."

The Statement is the first reaction from the US government on the issue since it was first raised when the Sharif government took on the Jang Group of publications a year and a half ago, slapping them with huge tax defaults and asking them to pay-up or get rid of ten journalists who were critical of the government, including Dr Malecha Lodhi, Pakistan's most famous journalist also named in Time Magazine's 100 personalities selected from all over the world for their potential to become future leaders.

Military mistakes that claimed so many lives

UNDATED, May 11: Since the bombing of Yugoslavia began on March 24, more than 100 people have been reported killed by NATO's mistaken attacks on a refugee convoy, a passenger train, a market and hospital complex, residential neighborhoods and the Chinese embassy, reports AP.

Mistakes in warfare or times of high military tension are not new. Some examples from recent history of the US military actions:

April 1994: Two US Air Force F-15s shot down two US Army helicopters on a diplomatic mission over Iraq, mistaking them for hostile aircraft in the "no-fly zone," killing 26 people. No one was found criminally responsible.

February 1991: US bombs a shelter in Baghdad during the Gulf War, killing more than 300 people. US officials said it was an Iraqi military center and did not know civilians were inside US public support for the war remained high despite the bombing.

January 1991: Seven US Marines are killed when a missile fired by a US Air Force A-10 attack aircraft hits their armored vehicle during a battle with the Iraqis. In all, more than 30 US and nine British service members were killed by "friendly fire" during the war.

July 1988: US warship Vincennes shoots down an Iranian passenger plane over the Gulf, mistaking it for a threatening warplane, during the war between Iraq and Iran. All 290 people aboard are killed. United States paid over \$130 million in a 1996 settlement that included compensation for families of the victims.

April 1986: US bombing in Libya damages French Embassy but no one is hurt.

Rajiv Murder Indian SC upholds death sentences

NEW DELHI, May 11: India's Supreme Court today upheld death sentences on four people convicted of the assassination of premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, the Press Trust of India said, reports AP.

Three others found guilty of conspiracy to kill Gandhi had their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment.

Rajiv Gandhi was killed in state of Tamil Nadu on May 21, 1991.

Cezanne still life sells for over 60m dollars

NEW YORK, May 10: Cezanne's "Still life with curtain, pitcher and bowl of fruit" sold for more than 60 million dollars Monday at Sotheby's first major spring auction in New York, reports AP.

The exact price for the still life painted in 1893 was 60,502,500 dollars. Its value was estimated between 25 and 35 million dollars.

The masterpiece came from the collection of former US Ambassador to London John Hay Whitney and his wife Betty Whitney. It was considered one of the best private American collections.

Meanwhile impressionist painter Georges Seurat's "Island of the Grande Jatte" sold for more than 35 million dollars Monday at Sotheby's first major spring auction.

UK to pay poor students to stay on in education

LONDON, May 11: The British government plans to pay children from poor families 40 pounds (65 dollars) a week to stay on in education, government sources said today, reports AP.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown was due to tell a conference on homelessness in London that the government was determined to "reclaim the lost generation of young people" who are unemployed and at risk of living on the streets.

He will say incentives of "educational maintenance allowances" need to be introduced to help young people stay on at school or college.

Y'slavia partially withdraws troops

NATO strikes to continue

BELGRADE, May 11: NATO forces attacked targets around Belgrade and elsewhere in Serbia early Tuesday, even after Yugoslavia announced a partial pullout of its forces from Kosovo, reports AP.

NATO responded swiftly Monday to the announcement withdrawal, saying airstrikes will continue until Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic meets all allied conditions, including a complete pullout of his Serb forces.

US President Bill Clinton said he was "encouraged," but the attacks would not stop.

NATO missiles hit targets around Belgrade late Monday and early Tuesday, including the northeastern Pancevo industrial zone and an administrative building of a chemical factory in Baric, southwest of the capital, Yugoslav media reported.

A military statement said the Yugoslav army supreme command had ordered a partial withdrawal that began at 10 pm (2000 GMT) Sunday after the troops defeated the rebel ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation

Army.

It said the army will reduce its troops in Kosovo to "peace-time" levels when there is an agreement to deploy a UN mission in the province.

Meanwhile hours after NATO bombs hit the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright paid a highly unusual midnight call to the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

At midnight Saturday, when Albright called on Ambassador Li Zhao Zing, it was early Sunday afternoon in China and large-scale demonstrations were under way at the US Embassy and consulates, thought by US officials to be government-inspired.

In a letter she presented to the envoy, addressed to Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, Albright said the United States "expects and asks the Chinese government to meet its responsibility to take all appropriate measures" to ensure the safety of Americans in China. She also expressed her sin-

cer apologies and condolences for the three deaths and six serious injuries caused by the attack on the Belgrade embassy and for the damage to the building.

Another report from Beijing says: Shouting and waving signs, protesters gathered early Tuesday outside the US and British embassies in Beijing in a fourth day of protests of NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia.

Also Tuesday, Chinese state media for the first time reported US President Bill Clinton's apology for the bombing. State media's withholding of the news of US apologies, first made Saturday, had fanned the anger of demonstrators.

Police in riot gear watched as about 20 people gathered outside the paint-spattered British Embassy at the start of a government-organised protest route that runs past the US Embassy.

The protesters shouted and waved signs, but did not throw stones or paint as they had on earlier days.



About 300 anti-US demonstrators protesting NATO attacks in Yugoslavia burn mock cruise missile while others throw ripe fruits at the US embassy in Manila on Tuesday. Several hundreds protesters, belonging to a leftwing organisation, called for an end to the "US war of aggression" in Yugoslavia and demanded NATO pull out of Kosovo. — AFP photo

Hundreds flee militia targeted areas of E Timor

DILI, East Timor, May 11: Hundreds of people have fled militia-targeted areas of this city after two days of violence, which left at least four dead, residents said today, reports AP.

Dili residents said six people had died but police recorded only four deaths, all of them pro-independence supporters.

"Four people were killed on Sunday and Monday," Herti of the East Timor police information office, said, adding one person was killed on Sunday and three on Monday.

East Timor police chief, Colonel Timbul Silaen, was quoted by the Antara news agency saying one of the three men who died Monday had been listed as seriously wounded the previous day.

Silaen's staff said 104 people

from the outlying area of Hera had asked for protection at the police headquarters compound. Residents from Kintal Boot in suburban Dili said the neighbourhood emptied Monday night on rumors of a new attack by pro-Indonesian militia.

"Kintal Boot is finished," said an elderly woman waiting with her granddaughter outside the office of the International Committee for the Red Cross hoping for refuge there.

People waited to board the inter-island steamer Dobonsofo bound for the East Java port of Surabaya.

A departing priest said "I will return," but could not say when.

An AFP photographer present said there was a heavy

presence of military and militia in the area. The University of East Timor, which also came under attack Monday, was deserted, with bullet holes in the walls and scores of smashed windows.

The two days of violence came less than a week after Indonesia and Portugal won acclaim for signing an accord providing for the people of the former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975 to determine their own future through a vote.

The vote will take place "if the security situation permits" according to the documents signed at the United Nations which provide for a civilian police force to ensure the vote is carried out without intimidation.

'UN global fund can help avert world crises'

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts, May 11: Contributors to a new United Nations report suggest that a global fund set up to pay for things like health care and protecting human rights could help avert world crises, report AP.

Other authors in the report, compiled by the UN Development Programme, suggest that the G-7—the group of top industrialized nations—be expanded to include eight of the major developing countries. The seven largest economies—the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada—comprise the G-7.

"Often developing countries are left out of talks that directly affect them," said Sara Sievers, executive director of Harvard University's Center for International Development, where the report was released Monday.

The report, entitled "Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century," theorizes that major world crisis of the late 20th cen-

tury—such as the unrest in Kosovo or outbreaks of communicable diseases—could be minimized if more attention were paid to the protection of global public goods.

Global public goods are described as things such as public health, education, the health of the environment, human rights and market efficiency.

Some authors of the report say that developed countries need to contribute to developing countries that don't have the resources to provide for their people.

Authors such as Rajshri Jayaraman and Ravi Kanbur, for example, suggest that donor countries contribute to a fund that would help developing countries.

The authors say the fund would help ensure that developing countries have the money to protect things like tropical species, or pay for disease eradication.

"Education, health care, violence, all of these things are interrelated," Sievers said.

Off the Record

Dance of terror

HARARE: Two naked thieves with painted faces and leaves in their hair leapt from bushes on a Zimbabwean golf course and did a war dance around two startled women golfers before making off with their handbags, a newspaper reported yesterday, says AP.

The state-run Herald newspaper said the thieves, whose only weapons were their birthday suits, left the women—one of whom was an elderly tourist from England—stunned and blushing and minus cash and cellphones.

Peggy Taylor told the newspaper that although she had been shocked, she could now laugh about the incident, which took place at the Wingate Park club in Harare.

However, she said it would be a long time before she went out to play golf again.

Deluxe prison

MOSCOW: A Siberian city is considering opening a deluxe prison for wealthy inmates willing to pay for private cells equipped with television sets, refrigerators and baths, a news report said Tuesday, says AP.

The idea, being reviewed by the Slavgorod city council in the Altai region, was proposed by the head of a local public organisation, Alexander Yeger, who himself had served time in prison, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Yeger suggested turning a local bankrupt garment factory into a prison, saying that remodeling would cost only 500,000 rubles (about \$1,000).

He said the new prison would have no shortage of guests willing to pay for comfortable cells, and would bring a steady stream of tax revenues into the city budget, ITAR-Tass reported.

Sony gives the world a robotic dog

TOKYO, May 11: Sony Corp. Tuesday unveiled its first litter of robotic dogs that can play, bark, talk and even develop their own personalities, but cannot die, reports AP.

The gleaming metallic puppy-sized robot is named AIBO, the Japanese word for partner. The first two letters of the name also refer to "artificial intelligence."

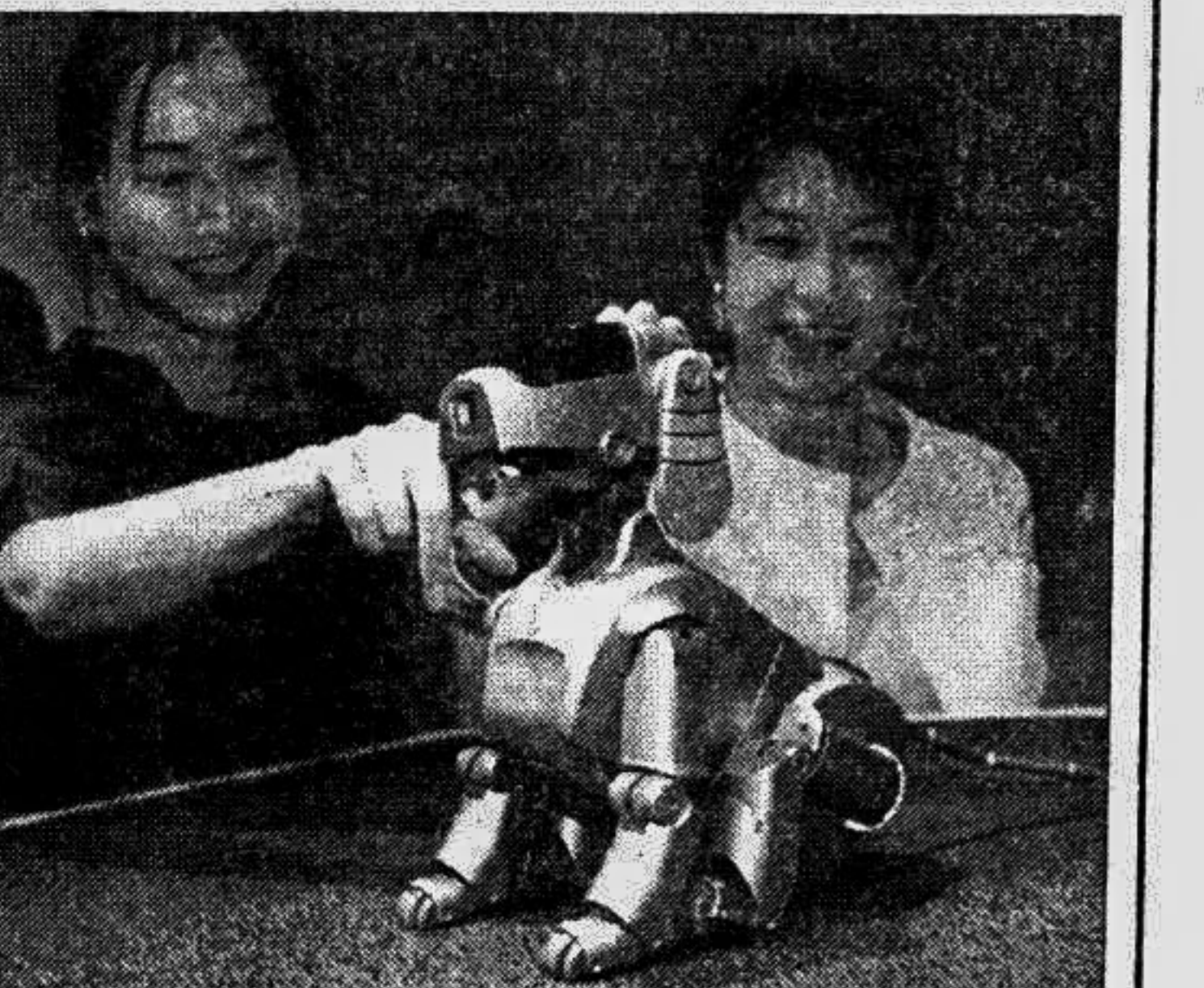
The AIBO acts much like a puppy, although it cannot move as fast and does not urinate on lamp posts.

It has 18 types of movement allowing it to play ball, crouch as if urinating, and to move its head, body and all its legs in coordination depending on its action or mood.

The dog likewise reacts to petting, stroking and punishment, either by sulking or playing with a ball of its favourite colour.

Among the myriad of commands and reactions already installed, Sony's staff debated whether to create something called a death function, said general manager Tadaaki Otsubo.

But Sony decided death was not required, instead allowing owners to simply restart their pets with a fresh programme.



Ladies from Sony Corporation's PR section play with the company's new entertainment robot 'AIBO' during its press preview on Tuesday in Tokyo. Sony will sell the limited number of 5,000 dog-shaped robots in Japan and the US starting July this year with price of 250,000 yen in Japan and 2,500 USD in US. — AFP photo

Non-communicable diseases to claim 8 m Indians a year

NEW DELHI, May 11: Non-communicable diseases, that will account for majority of disease in the next century, will claim about 8 million Indians a year-double that of the present figure, says the world health organisation (WHO), reports PTI.

Major challenges in Non-communicable diseases in coming decades include depression, heart diseases, lung cancer, injuries and alcohol-related diseases—the leading cause of disability of men in developed countries, according to the world health report.

The next century will face a double burden of emerging Non-

communicable diseases as well as infectious diseases, malnutrition and complications in childbirth which mainly affect the poor, says the report released by WHO's Director-General GRO Harlem Brundtland.

While infectious diseases and malnutrition can be tackled with cost-effective solutions, prevention and treatment of Non-communicable diseases would be more difficult.

The report singles out Malaria and prevention of tobacco deaths for concerted efforts to minimise non-communicable diseases.



King Abdullah bin-Hussein of Jordan and Queen Rania leave Westminster Abbey on Tuesday after laying a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. King Abdullah and Queen Rania are on a six day official visit to the UK. — AFP photo