

# Islamabad calls for UN role

## Pak villagers flee border areas, spend night in trenches

ISLAMABAD, May 27: Pakistan today reiterated its call for an increased United Nations role in Kashmir after the Indian air strikes there and said it would not escalate the conflict as long as its positions were not attacked.

"We have been saying that the United Nations and the secretary-general should intervene because this is a threat to peace and regional stability," Pakistan Information Minister Mushahid Hussain told Reuters.

A US State Department official today said the latest fighting in Kashmir underlines the need for resolving differences between India and Pakistan quickly and called upon both to initiate a dialogue to reduce tension within the framework of the Lahore Declaration.

The officials told PTI that Washington was in touch with both sides on the skirmishes along the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir and has conveyed its concerns to the political leadership of both countries.

We instructed our embassies in India and Pakistan to express concern about the firing that has been going for at least a week and urge both countries to work to reduce-tension, the official said.

"India and Pakistan to resolve their differences. We hope they will be able to do this quickly in the context of the Lahore Summit."

We understand that Prime Minister Vajpayee and Prime Minister Sharif have discussed these developments over phone. We encourage them to keep in touch."

AP adds from Athmuqam: While Indian jets pounded mountain hideouts of Kashmiri militants for a second straight day Thursday, border residents in Pakistani villages spent another night in the trenches.

At night the few residents who haven't fled Athmuqam, just one km from the troubled border, sleep in trenches that they dug outside their homes.

While Athmuqam in 110 km south of Kargil district, where Indian jets are trying to flush out militant insurgents, residents here say Indian artillery attacks from across the border have been relentless.

"We live in a constant state of fear," said Mohammad Yassen, a 64-year-old farmer. "The firing can start any time without warning. We have been running. Our houses, fields and cattle are all lost."

Last weekend, Yassen watched as his neighbour died when Indian shells rained down.

"I left my family at a relative's place and came here for a day, risking my life to check my house and fields," he said.

"The Indians are raining artillery fire almost daily in our area for the last 10 days," said Khawja Abdul Majed, a clerk at the Forest Department. His office is one of the few government offices still open in Athmuqam.

Most of buildings are deserted and people have left.

"People are frightened... and the majority of them have already left for safer place," he said.

On Wednesday India launched air strikes against what it said were Pakistani-backed militants in Kargil sector on their side of a border that has been disputed for more than five decades.

Pakistan military said three times Indian planes dropped bombs inside Pakistan's Kashmir territory on Thursday, a claim denied by India.

In Athmuqam the exodus began several days ago.

Those who have remained behind have mostly sent their families to the capital of Pakistan's Azad Kashmir or to a refugee camp set up just 30 km away.

"It is a ghost town no," said Abdul Waheed, another employee of the forest department. "Ninety per cent of the houses and shops have already been deserted... Only a handful of government employees and those residents, who have no where to go are still here."

The conditions at the refugee camp in Thunian are miserable.

There families huddle together for warmth and comfort. There is little food and in the hills the night time temperatures fall near zero.

"Our children are starving and shivering in cold, but there is not help coming in from the government," Sahab Jan Bibi, a refugee from Athmuqam.

In some tents 20 people live together. Others sleep outside.

"We have no money to buy medicine or food," she said.

Most of the refugees are furious with the Pakistani authorities whom they say have done little to help.

For the young in the refugee camp their nights a from their home.

Nine-year-old Mohammed Waqar recalled one attack last week.

"We were in school when (an Indian shell) hit at a nearby mountain. The sound was so terrible that everyone in our class started screaming and crying and some even fainted with fear, said nine-year-old Mohammed Waqar.

Cross-border attacks along the dispute border — the flash point of two wars between India and Pakistan are routine occurrences, but residents and government officials alike say the fighting has escalated in the past 18 days.

Residents on Pakistan's side of the border say the government of Pakistan has done little to help. The semi-autonomous Azad Kashmir government told residents to dig trenches and last year handed out small weapons.

Pakistan says it gives only moral, diplomatic and political support to insurgents in India's only Muslim dominated state of Kashmir. India says that Pakistan arms and finances the decade old insurgency demanding either outright independence for a united Kashmir or union with Islamic Pakistan.



An Indian soldier displays ammunition used for the 155mm Bofors guns Thursday in the village of Drass in Kashmir state as India staged a second day of air strikes against Islamic guerillas and remained locked in artillery clashes with Pakistan on the state's disputed border. The third round of aerial attacks in Kashmir's northern Kargil region targeted hideouts, food and ammunition stores of Muslim militants. Three helicopter gunships and bombers attacked the targets, more than 100 km northeast of the Kashmir summer capital of Srinagar. — AFP photo

# Militants step up fight against Indian forces in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, May 27: Four militant groups claim they have sent more fighters to battle Indian forces in northern Kashmir following air strikes by the Indian air force, a Pakistani newspaper reported today, says AFP.

A spokesman of Tehrik-e-Jihad told reporters in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir that dozens of its fighters had joined the Mujahideen already hold up in Kargil and Drass sectors. The News daily reported.

The spokesman, who declined to be named, said Wednesday more reinforcements would be sent to "make our positions stable and sound."

Our men are equipped with modern and sophisticated weapons to successfully counter the Indian offensive," he added.

Three other militant groups — Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Al-Badr Mujahideen and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen — said they had also sent their men to join the battle, without giving numbers, the report said.

The Indian Air Force Wednesday took to the skies for the first air strikes against Muslim militants in Kargil and Drass sectors close to the dividing Line of Control in Kashmir.

The move provoked a strong reaction from Pakistan which placed its armed forces on high alert.

Several bombs landed on the Pakistani side, Pakistani officials said, warning the country reserved the right to retaliate if the situation worsened.

Reports from Indian-controlled Kashmir said the Indian Air Force carried out another air raid today against the guerillas.

There was no immediate official comment here on the new Indian air strike.

India holds two thirds of disputed Kashmir region and Pakistan the northern third.

Pakistan accuses India of "brutal repression" to crush a Muslim separatist campaign in its zone that has claimed around 25,000 lives since 1989.

India blames its arch-rival for infiltrating guerillas in Kashmir, a charged denied by Islamabad, which vows political and moral support for what it calls a legitimate Kashmiri struggle for self-determination.

The neighbours have fought two wars over Kashmir since their independence in 1947 and with both having tested nuclear weapons last year the volatile region is widely considered a nuclear flashpoint.

Pakistani newspapers today described the new flareup in Kashmir as a wake-up call to the international community to work for a solution to the problem of Kashmir, claimed by both Pakistan and India.

"The international community ought to intercede, not just by urgings and appeals but by supporting a genuine process of tension reduction and conflict resolution," The News said in an editorial.

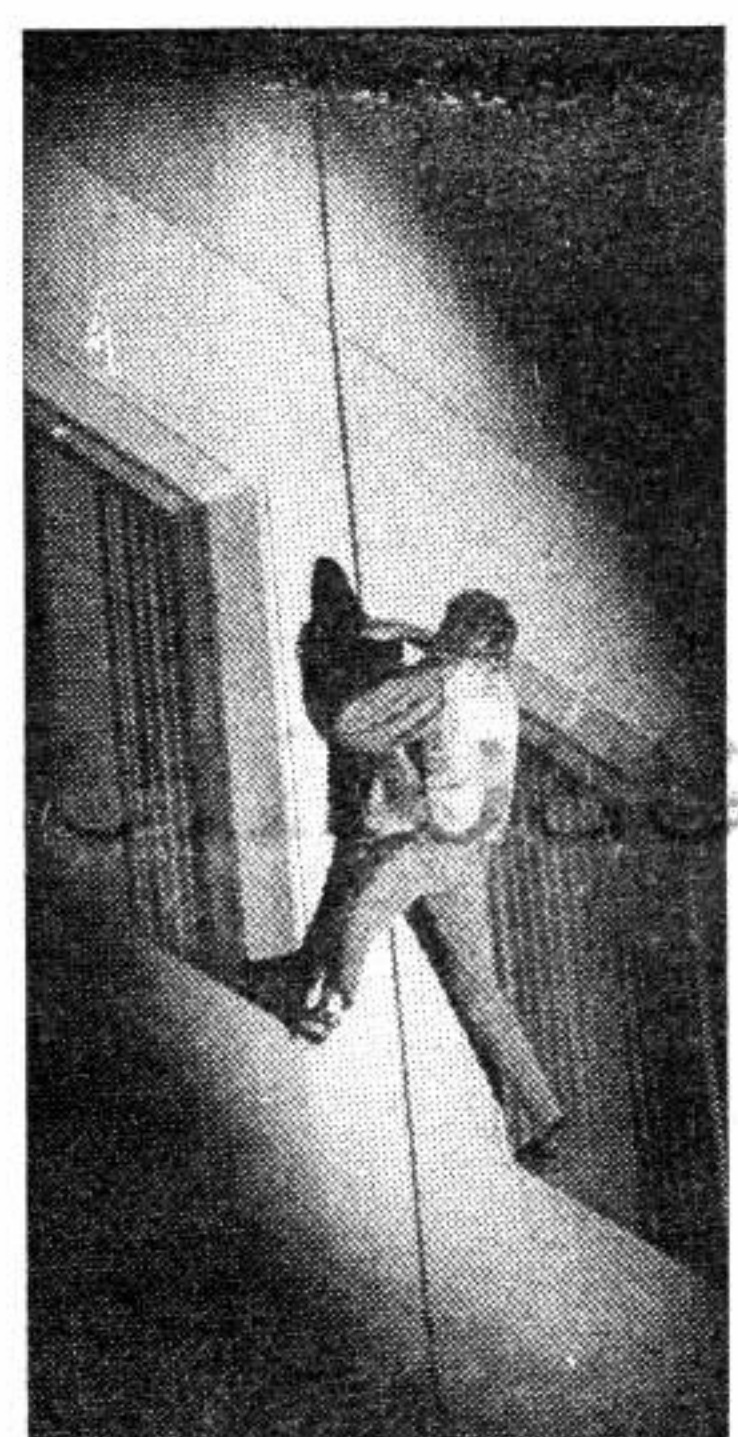
For those who "pretend" that normalisation can be achieved, by wishing Kashmir away, Wednesday's escalation should serve as a "wake-up call," it said.

The Nation blamed India for the crisis saying it was "reneging on its promise" to allow the people of Kashmir to decide their future in accordance with UN resolutions.

Pakistan has been pushing for a plebiscite in Kashmir, but India has categorically ruled out such a move.



Indian troops near the village of Drass, in the disputed Indian province of Kashmir, shell Muslim separatist guerilla positions with 155mm guns Thursday. — AFP photo



Using only his hands and feet, French climber Alain Robert climbs Montreal's 25-storey Crowne Plaza Hotel on Sherbrooke street Wednesday in front of a crowd of thousands to raise money for sick children. Robert's climbing was televised live as part of "Le Point J", a French Canadian television show. — AFP photo

# Milosevic indicted for war crimes

BELGRADE, May 27: Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic faced charges of war crimes Thursday as NATO bombing raids against Yugoslavia reached a new peak with alliance warplanes mounting nearly 400 attack missions against targets in Kosovo and throughout Serbia, reports AFP.

In the 24 hours up until the early hours of Thursday, NATO planes flew a total of 741 sorties, the highest total since the air campaign began on March 24, an alliance spokesman said.

It was the first time that the international community has laid charges against a head of state in office for atrocities committed during an armed conflict.

Chief prosecutor Louise Arbour of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) made the announcement at a news conference.

She announced the indictment of four other Yugoslavs, along with Milosevic including Serbian President Milan Milutinovic, the chief of staff of the Yugoslav armed forces, the Serbian interior minister and a Yugoslav deputy prime minister.

Close to 970,000 ethnic Albanians have been driven from their homes in Kosovo since fighting between Yugoslav forces and ethnic Albanian separatists intensified in February last year.

Refugees who have poured into Albania and Macedonia in droves since the NATO bombing campaign began on March 24 have given accounts of summary executions, rape and intimidation as part of a Serb terror campaign.

In Brussels NATO said there were 308 strike sorties, also a record, while 74 more sorties were intended to neutralise Serb air defence systems.

The high percentage of strike to overall sorties reflects growing confidence within the alliance that the Serbs' ability to resist attacks and pose a threat to attack aircraft is diminishing.



Slobodan Milosevic

At the start of the campaign, more than two out of three planes which left NATO bases were involved in support operations for those planes instructed to attack specific targets.

Even now, NATO's requirement that pilots only fire when they are confident of hitting a military target means many strike sorties have to be aborted without bombs being dropped.

Better weather has also provided a considerable boost to NATO.

We are in the most favourable weather period since the start of the campaign," spokesman Jamie Shea said, adding that meteorologists were expecting the clear blue skies to continue for the next two weeks.

Shea said the increased number of attacks also reflected the increased ease with which NATO could mount round-the-clock raids now that Hungary and Turkey were both being used as bases and Bulgaria and Romania have granted access to their airspace.

He denied however that the alliance was in danger of running out of military targets. "Milosevic has a lot of military capability, there are still a lot of things we can go after."

In Kosovo, NATO said it had attacked 10 artillery positions, eight armoured personnel carriers, at least five tanks, four anti-aircraft artillery emplacements, several mortar positions.

## Navy destroys 12 LTTE boats: 7 killed

VAVUNIYA, Sri Lanka, May 27: The Sri Lankan Navy destroyed 12 Tamil Tiger boats and killed seven guerillas during a fierce sea battle off the eastern coast, military officials and a clandestine rebel radio reported Wednesday, reports AP.

The Voice of Tigers monitored in this northern Tamil-majority town admitted that seven rebels, including two women, were killed in the battle Tuesday when naval crafts attacked the rebel boats off Mullaithivu. The leader of the rebel group was also killed, the radio station said.

Mullaithivu, 280 km north-east of the national capital, Colombo, is believed to be the last major base of the rebels where many top rebel leaders are hiding.

## Ex-MLA, 9 others held for running brothel in India

JAIPUR, May 27: Former Rajasthan MLA, Ram Karan Singh Gurjar and nine others have been arrested for allegedly running of a brothel in a posh residential colony in the state capital, police said, reports PTI.

While Gurjar was taken into custody today, the others, including five girls allegedly involved in flesh trade, were arrested yesterday after police raided the brothel being run at the first floor of the house owned by the ex-MLA.

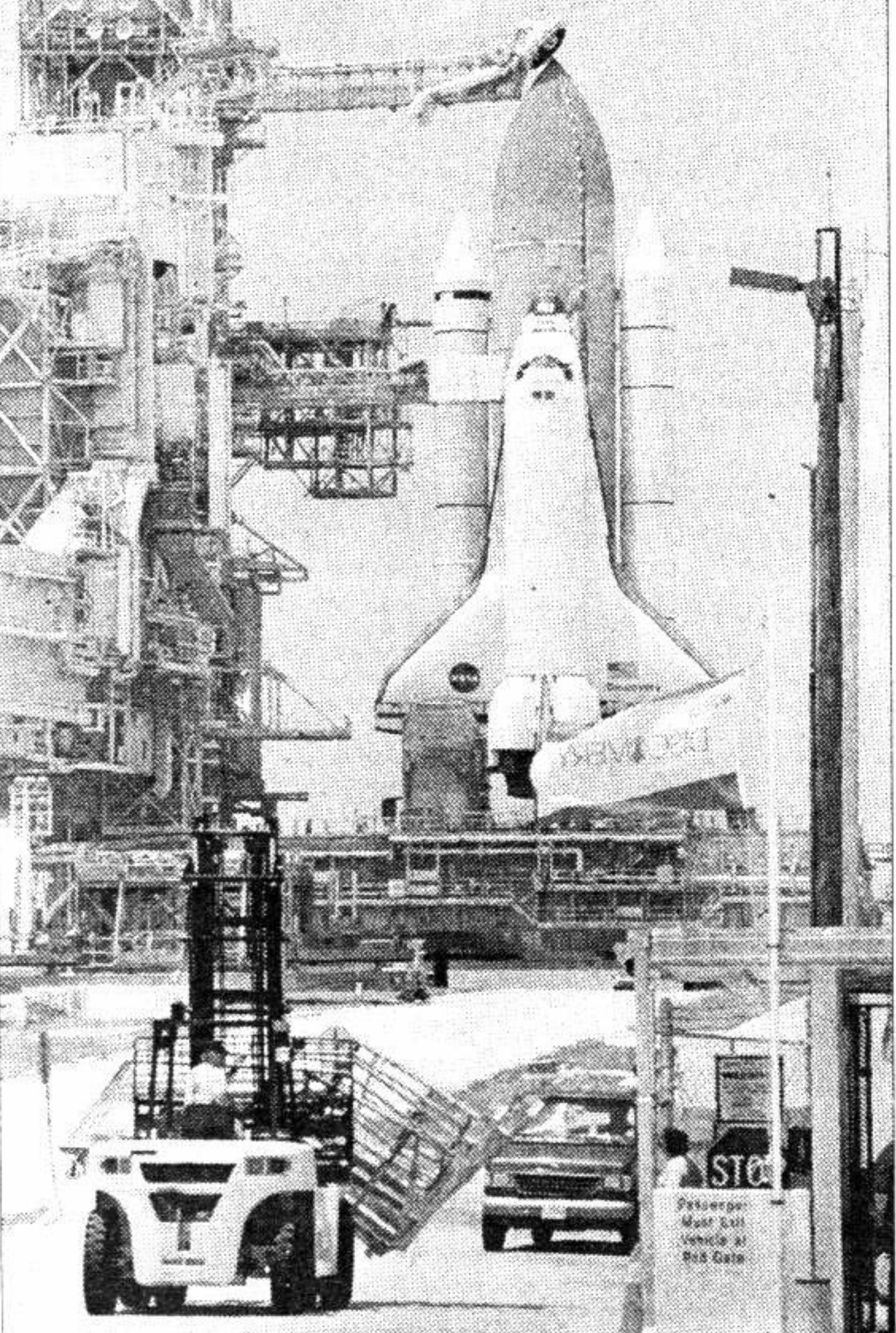
However, no direct involvement of Gurjar has yet been established except that he let out the portion of his house to one Vishwanath alias Jasbir Singh and his two sons, residents of churu, who have also been arrested.

The trio used to bring girls from Calcutta and share their earnings from flesh trade, police said quoting preliminary investigation.

## ROK president leaves for Moscow

South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung left Seoul Thursday for Moscow on an official visit aimed at obtaining Russia's support for attempts to ease Cold War tension with North Korea, officials said, AFP reports from Seoul.

During his first visit to Moscow as president, Kim will meet with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and seek Moscow's endorsement of his "Sunshine Policy" of inducing North Korea to the path of reform and openness.



NASA workers prepare the Space Shuttle Discovery on launch pad 39-B at the Kennedy Space Centre, Florida Wednesday. Discovery with a crew of seven was blasted off early Thursday on a mission to the International Space Station. — AFP photo

## Myanmar dissidents shed blood, burn flag in Bangkok

BANGKOK, May 27: About 200 Myanmar dissidents protested in front of their country's embassy in Bangkok today to demand democracy and human rights on the ninth anniversary of an election ignored by the military government, reports Reuters.

Three of the protesters slashed their arms to drip blood on to a Myanmar flag before setting it alight.

The demonstrators demanded that the military government in Yangon recognise the result of Myanmar's last election on May 27, 1990, and allow the creation of a civilian administration.

The opposition National League for Democracy, which is led by Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, won the election by a landslide but the generals ignored the result and have attempted to silence the party through arrests and intimidation.

A statement from protesters called for the release of all political prisoners. Diplomats in Yangon say the government is holding as many as 2,000 political prisoners.

The protesters in Bangkok were among thousands of dissidents who fled their homeland to escape the bloody military suppression of a nationwide pro-democracy uprising in 1988.

Many of them wore red headbands emblazoned with a fighting peacock, a symbol of the democracy struggle.

## Pre-polls violence in Indonesia Golkar Party office set on fire

JAKARTA, May 27: A Golkar Party office was set on fire early Thursday in the worst attack on the ruling party since the campaign for June 7 parliamentary elections began eight days ago, reports AP.

Witnesses and police said no one was injured in the incident in the troubled northwestern province of Aceh, site of a violent separatist movement. National election officials said Wednesday that balloting there could be postponed.

Suharto, 77, has been the target of allegations over his wealth since he quit following protests and riots 12 months ago. The allegations have become a major issue in the campaign for a new Parliament that will help select a had of state later this year.

Golkar was Suharto's own party and dominated politics under his iron rule, regularly winning elections amid claims of vote-rigging. It now is lagging in opinion polls, largely because of its links with Suharto. Several Golkar vehicles have been vandalized and its flags burned in Jakarta, where the party has been keeping a low profile.

Police said the two-story Golkar building in North Aceh District, about 1,700 kilometers (1,100 miles) northwest of Jakarta, was torched with gasoline around 3 am (1800 GMT Wednesday) by six unidentified people who warned the guard to run away.

"We are searching for the culprits and continue to investigate it," police Lt. Col. Iskandar Hasan said.

It was the second time that the local Golkar office was burned. Last August, rioters set it on fire after troops fired at mobs dissatisfied with the military's presence in Aceh.

Meanwhile, there were no signs of the campaign in Aceh's oil-and-gas-rich town of Lhokseumawe.

Home Affairs Minister Syarwan Hamid said Wednesday that balloting in Aceh could be postponed because of a lack of voters and outbreaks of violence.

## Pinochet lawyers refused right to appeal extradition

LONDON, May 27: Lawyers for General Augusto Pinochet were Thursday refused permission to challenge British Home Secretary Jack Straw's decision that Pinochet should face Spanish-initiated extradition proceedings over alleged human rights crimes, reports AFP.

The refusal was expected to enable the extradition proceedings to go ahead, seven months after the 83-year-old former dictator was arrested while visiting Britain.

The presiding judge ruled the challenge was "premature."

To allow it to go ahead "would needlessly disrupt the extradition process and postpone the machinery which will afford the applicant (Pinochet) every proper opportunity to advance his case and protect his position," he said.

Straw decided April 15 to permit the procedure in spite of the fact that the country's highest court, the Law Lords, had ruled that most of the charges of torture and killings alleged against Pinochet could not be taken into consideration.

## Tiananmen protests AI urges China to free those still in jail

LONDON, May 27: Amnesty International today called on the Chinese government to release all those still in jail for their role in the 1989 pro-democracy protests, reports AFP.

In a report to mark the 10th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4, 1989, Amnesty documented the cases of 241 people still in prison or on medical parole, serving long sentences for their part in the protests.

But the human rights body said these were a "fraction of the real number of people throughout China who were convicted, unfairly tried and sentenced for their involvement in the protests."

Amnesty said the authorities in China should give a final and complete account of all those killed during the crackdown, compensate the victims and their relatives and free those still in jail.

## Iran, Iraq to hold talks on fate of POWs

BAGHDAD, May 27: Iraqi and Iranian officials will exchange information on the fate of prisoners of war at a July meeting in Baghdad, the Iraqi coordinator of the two countries' joint committee said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Participants at the meeting should "determine the number of Iraqi prisoners of war to be released by Iran," Fahmi al-Qaisi was quoted by the Iraqi weekly Al-I'lam as saying.

He said Baghdad had asked Tehran for "information on Iraqis who might be held in Iranian prisons."

On May 18, officials from both countries held talks in the Iranian town of Khorasani, near the border, on the fate of war prisoners.

In late April, charged that Iraq was holding 2,806 prisoners, 11 years after their 1980-88 war ended.

## Dissidents kill 7 officials Iraqi opposition seeks US security assurances

WASHINGTON, May 27: The revamped Iraqi opposition in exile said on Wednesday it wanted US assurances of protection for Iraqi civilians, including a commitment to strike at Iraqi government forces on the ground, reports Reuters.

Members of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) said the forces of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein were already taking reprisals against civilians in the expectation that US support would encourage resistance activities.

The opposition leaders are in Washington this week in a show of unity promoted by the Clinton administration under the policy of "regime change" it adopted late last year.

Washington says it plans to start providing goods and services to the opposition under last year's Iraq Liberation Act, which made more than \$97 million available, mainly in the form of access to Pentagon inventories.

Ahmed Chalabi, the former INC chairman who now shares the leadership with six colleagues, said: "There has been more repression. Activities in the south of Iraq have been driven by Baghdad's expectations from the Iraqi Liberation Act. We need to extend protection to the people of Iraq."

AP adds: Iraqi dissidents last week killed seven security and ruling Baath Party officials and wounded 27 others in hit-and-run attacks in the capital, Baghdad, an opposition group said Wednesday.

The Iran-based Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq said that on May 16, its men attacked a security headquarters in the Washash district of Baghdad, killing four people and wounding six others.

The attackers, who fled the scene, also destroyed two vehicles and damaged the building, the group said in a statement faxed to The Association Press.

## Move to okay US-Philippine military accord protested

MANILA, May 27: Thousands of activists staged a noisy protest at the Philippine Senate today as legislators began a session to finally ratify an agreement that would boost US-Philippine military cooperation, reports AP.

The protesters included leftist groups known for their anti-US positions and nuns, priests and Catholic laymen who were kept at a distance from the Senate by metal barricades, armed marines and riot police backed by five fire trucks waiting in reserve.

The protesters denounced the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), an accord that would allow US forces to resume large-scale joint military exercises in this country.

They chanted "junk VFA" and carried placards saying "down with US imperialism."

A handful of pro-VFA protesters were also on hand, holding placards saying "VFA security of the country" and "The country without VFA is sweet smelling to the communists."

This was a reference to the communist insurgents who oppose the VFA and who have threatened to call off stalled peace talks with the government if the VFA is approved.

Aside from the communists, the country's Roman Catholic bishops have also opposed the VFA, citing nationalist and pacifist grounds. Several priests led delegations from their parishes to the protest.



Miss Botswana 1999 Mpule Kwelagobe, 19, reacts to an audience of millions of viewers around the world as she becomes the 48th woman to be crowned Miss Universe Wednesday in Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago. At (L) is Miss Philippines Miriam Quiambao. — AFP photo