

# India, Pakistan urged to show restraint

HONG KONG, May 28: India and Pakistan on Friday faced mounting calls to open dialogue and show restraint as fighting in troubled Kashmir threatened to escalate, reports AFP.

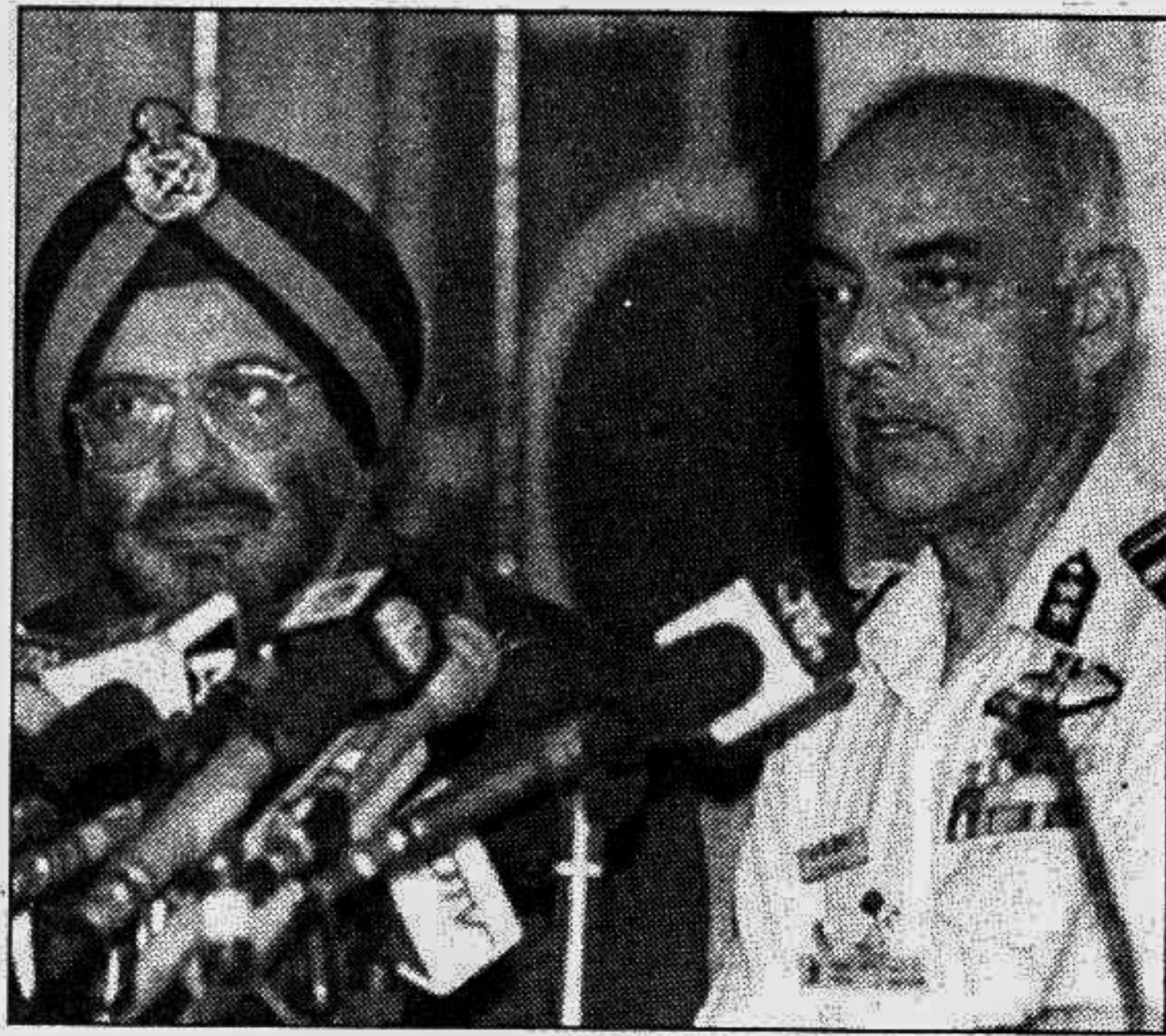
In Washington, State Department spokesman James Rubin said the United States was "strongly concerned" over the fighting in Kashmir and urged Pakistan and India's leaders to speak directly.

Rubin called the fighting "the most serious in some time in Kashmir."

"Senior American diplomats in India and Pakistan are in touch with both governments to express our strong concern, to urge them to show restraint and prevent the fighting from spreading, and to urge both countries to work to reduce tensions," he said.

Noting that Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif have spoken by phone, Rubin said: "We urge them to speak again directly to pull their countries back from the dangers of a heightened conflict."

Rubin's words were echoed by the European Union. In Bonn the German foreign ministry



Air Vice Marshal S.K. Malik (R), the head of the Indian Air Force, talks to reporters during a news conference in New Delhi Wednesday about the latest attacks on Muslim guerrillas in Kashmir. At (L) is Major General J.J. Singh, India's number two war-planner. The two said the third day of air strikes in Kashmir had achieved huge military gains. —AFP photo

issued a statement on behalf of the EU, urging both sides to open immediate talks.

The EU expressed "concern" at the "escalation of fighting" in Kashmir.

The statement called on "India and Pakistan to exercise the greatest restraint possible" and take "all necessary steps to halt the military confrontation and border infiltrations."

The ministry said the EU hoped the two neighbouring countries would abide by the Lahore Treaty signed in February which obliges them to resolve their differences, including Kashmir, through dialogue.

United Nations chief Kofi Annan had "expressed his concern repeatedly" over the Kashmir crisis, a spokesman at the UN said.

"We have some degree of encouragement by the fact that the two prime ministers were in telephone contact yesterday (Wednesday)," spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva added.

De Almeida e Silva noted that Annan, who was in Sweden on Thursday, had "expressed his concern repeatedly" about Kashmir.

Pakistan said Thursday it

had shot down two Indian fighter planes that had "intruded" on its air space. India acknowledged it had lost two planes but said only one was shot down with the other crashing due to mechanical failure.

The Kashmir crisis constitutes the worst escalation in military tensions between the longtime rivals since they became declared nuclear powers a year ago.

New Delhi and Islamabad conducted nuclear tests last May despite threatened US sanctions and worldwide condemnation.

The Indian military says some 400 Moslem militants have sneaked into the Kargil region, located in the southern two-thirds of Kashmir which India controls, since Pakistan and India resumed cross-border artillery duels May 9.

New Delhi says the militants were trained in Pakistan and sent across the border to boost a Moslem insurgency in Indian Kashmir.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since the subcontinent was freed from British rule and partitioned in 1947.



Activists from the Congress Party shout anti-Pakistan slogans near the Pakistan Embassy in New Delhi Wednesday to protest the loss of two Indian fighter jets in Kashmir. India and Pakistan have been engaged in an artillery duel in the disputed Himalayan province since May 9. —AFP photo

## Three Indians climb Mt Everest from Chinese side

NEW DELHI, May 28: Taking advantage of a clear moonlit night, three Indian mountaineers scaled the world's tallest peak Friday from the challenging Kangshung face from China, a spokesman for the climbers said in the Indian capital New Delhi, reports AP.

Jag Mohan, Sange Sherpa and Kishan Sherpa, members of the Indian Adventure and Mountaineering Association, reached the 8,848 meters (29,028 feet) high summit at 7:10 local time (0125 GMT), said DK Arya, president of the association quoting a message from the mountain.

Only four other people have climbed Everest from the Kangshung face before. The east ridge was last successfully climbed by a three-member Chilean team in 1992.

The three summiteers are part of a 10-member New Delhi-based IAMA team attempting to scale Mt. Everest.

Kusang Sherpa, a mountaineering instructor with the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in the northeastern city of Darjeeling and Sange Sherpa, who works for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, are brothers.

## Pakistan marks one year anniversary of N-tests

ISLAMABAD, May 28: Against the backdrop of blistering artillery duels and downed Indian aircraft on its volatile Kashmir border with neighbouring India, Pakistan on Friday celebrated the one-year anniversary of its nuclear tests, reports AP.

"We are celebrating our self-reliance. We are celebrating our security, our self-defence, our scientific and technological achievement — a genuine achievement for which the people of Pakistan can be rightly proud of," Information Minister Mushahid Hussain said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Giant posters proclaiming Pakistani scientists as "nuclear heroes" emblazoned the tree-lined boulevards of the Pakistani capital.

The state-run television aired special programmes and national leaders in speeches proclaimed Pakistan's defences invincible. Songs have been written, films produced and torch-lit parades held.

"One year ago today we broke the shackles of dependence on foreign technology and conducted successful nuclear tests, a distinction enjoyed by only a

handful of nations in the world," said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Pakistan detonated several nuclear explosions on May 28, 1998 and again on May 30, 1998 in response to several nuclear tests carried out earlier by neighbouring India.

But not everyone in Pakistan is celebrating. Demonstrations opposing the nuclear tests have been held by labour groups as well as peace and human rights activists.

In an editorial in the independent daily newspaper, The News, Pervez Hoodbhoy, a physics professor at Pakistan's Quaid-e-Azam University, debunked Pakistan's claims that the nuclear tests symbolised scientific achievement in this poor nation of 140 million people.

"The Pakistani state has declared bombs and missiles as the touchstone of scientific progress... but it has been able to acquire these without having created an educated society or working science institutions or even attempting to move toward a society where science can ultimately develop," Hoodbhoy wrote.

## China blasts US Senate resolution on Tiananmen

BEIJING, May 28: China on Friday blasted a non-binding resolution passed by the US Senate commemorating the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989, expressing "strong displeasure," reports AFP.

"China expresses its strong displeasure and resolute opposition to this," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"This motion wantonly distorts the facts of the human rights situation in China, and has totally exposed the ulterior anti-China motives (of a small number of congressmen)," it said.

"China has long seen through their tricks. Their conspiracy to use human rights as an excuse to interfere in China's internal affairs is doomed to failure."

The Senate resolution called on China to free political prisoners and end oppression of peaceful dissidents.

"We must never forget" the hundreds and possibly thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators slain by Chinese troops June 4, 1989, said Republican Tim Hutchinson, the measure's principal backer in the senate.

"The Chinese government knows what it has done, and it is afraid, afraid of its own people," Hutchinson said on the

Senate floor, adding that he would introduce the measure annually.

The motion — which passed without a vote, by unanimous consent — condemns "ongoing and egregious human rights abuses," expresses sympathy for the victims' families, calls on China to compensate them as well as ratify the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights.

The House of Representatives passed a similar measure Tuesday.

China must free political prisoners and end oppression of peaceful dissidents, the US Senate said Thursday on passing a non-binding resolution commemorating the Tiananmen Square crackdown's 10th anniversary.

The document further frayed Sino-US ties already strained by the Kosovo conflict. NATO's bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade and ensuing protests that left the US embassy in Beijing severely damaged.

But Hutchinson dismissed concerns that the measure would only serve to further inflame diplomatic ties between Washington and Beijing.

## 'Clashes in Kashmir won't turn into war'

HONG KONG, May 28: Pakistani and Indian newspapers agreed on one thing today. Their nuclear-capable countries cannot afford to let their clashes in Kashmir turn into a war, reports AP.

But finding out who is to blame remained, as ever, a point of discord between the arch-rivals.

Pakistan's claim that it shot down two Indian Mig fighters dominated front pages in the two countries, and the rest of Asia today.

"Pak missiles down two Indian MIGs" said Pakistan's The Nation daily.

Indian newspaper preferred their military's version that one was shot down and the other crashed with mechanical troubles. "2 MIGs lost, 1 pilot POW," said the Asian Age in New Delhi.

But the potential for disaster was highlighted by newspapers in both countries.

"The stakes are rising in a region bristling with nuclear weapons and missiles," said Pakistan's The News.

"The two nuclear powers indulging in a shooting match

even with conventional weapons bodes ill for the future," warned The Nation in Islamabad.

India's conservative Statesman newspaper said the two sides, which have fought three wars since their 1947 independence from British rule, could ill-afford another destructive battle.

"A war will cripple both economies, especially Pakistan's," it said, adding the two new nuclear powers had to act prudently to avert global ostracism.

But both sides blame the other for the latest escalation and new disputes on how to end the battle for control of Kashmir.

India has accused Pakistan of helping hundreds of Muslim militants get into Indian Kashmir, using the cover of frequent artillery battles along their frontier.

Pakistan said the two Indian jets were shot down because they strayed onto the Pakistan side of the border.

"The downing of the Indian planes and capture of the pilot prove beyond doubt that the

Indian government is deliberately trying to provoke Pakistan. The Indian attempt represents a major escalation and can have serious consequences," said The Nation.

But The News added: "Yet the response of the international community as well as the UN does not seem to match the dangers at hand — both for the region and the world."

"This is the moment for the international community to go beyond perfunctory calls for peace. The flareup in Kashmir can inadvertently slide into a wider conflict."

In India, The Hindu newspaper said while "Pakistan may have its own reasons to stoke the fire in Kashmir, New Delhi must accomplish the task on hand and strive not to be provoked."

"If it is a localised affair, it must be handled as such and swiftly resolved without causing too much damage to bilateral relations."

The Hindustan Times said Pakistan was totally at fault for starting the tension by firing on Indian Kashmir since May 9 and sending in "hundreds of infiltrators."



Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces his resignation from the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, during a meeting of the Likud Party central committee in Tel Aviv Thursday. Netanyahu had earlier stepped down as head of the Likud following his election defeat to Ehud Barak. —AFP photo

## Pawar, Yadav discuss third front

NEW DELHI, May 28: Expelled Congress leader Sharad Pawar, who yesterday floated the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Janata Dal President Sharad Yadav held discussions here last night in their efforts to form a third front along with other like-minded parties, reports PTI.

The meeting lasted for more than two hours, party sources said today. This was the second meeting between Pawar and Yadav.

Pawar also had discussions with Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) leader and former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and Samajwadi Party (SP) President Mulayam Singh Yadav earlier.

After his party's two-day national executive, the SP leader told reporters here yesterday his party was ready for having a tie-up with Pawar group provided he clarified his stand on Congress and BJP.

## Nehru's death anniversary observed

NEW DELHI, May 28: The nation yesterday eulogised its first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on his 35th death anniversary, recalling his immense contributions in making a democratic, secular and modern India, reports PTI.

All-religion prayer meetings, garlanding of his statue and symposia marked the day with President KR Narayanan leading the country in paying glowing tributes to the architect of modern India.

## Belgrade faces power, water crises

BELGRADE, May 28: Belgrade and other towns remained without power on Friday, more than 15 hours after NATO launched a new series of air raids on Serbia's electrical installations, reports AP.

NATO planes bombed electrical transformers and transmission towers near Belgrade, blacking out the city and reducing the supply of mains water, which is driven by pumps, by two-thirds.

Bread could not be found in the shops as of noon, as most bakeries had neither electricity nor water.

Two transformers in the western suburbs of Bezanija and eastern Lestane were each hit by two missiles at around 8:30 p.m. (1830 GMT), Serbian state radio Belgrade said.

Similar blackouts hit the northern towns of Pancevo and Novi Sad.

The state electricity company warned it would be more difficult to stabilise the system, which has been hit by NATO since early May.

It said only priority users, such as hospitals, had electricity, and appealed to residents to have patience, promising it would "try (its) utmost" to restore power during the day.

The public transport system was also at a standstill. All trams and trolleys were immobile in the streets, standing where they had been when the power was cut off.

NATO says the Alliance planes have been attacking only military targets, and says disrupting the electricity supply is legitimate, as it deprives the Serbian army of power.

Post on Thursday said pilots had been authorized to strike at Yugoslavia's main civilian telephone system and computer networks.

The goal is to sever communications between Belgrade and its military forces in Kosovo, it said, quoting senior NATO officials.

Meanwhile, the UN refugee agency Friday warned that Albanian military exercises near the Kosovo border could draw retaliatory shelling from the Serb side which would be "disastrous" for the refugees.

Staff from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have heard artillery rounds very close to Kukes, a town 25 kilometers (15 miles) from the Kosovo border which harbours around 100,000 refugees, spokesman Chris

Janowski said.

The firing is apparently part of an ongoing Albanian military exercise supposed to end Friday, he said.

"UNHCR is very concerned that this could draw incoming artillery fire from the Serb side with disastrous effects for the refugees," Janowski said.

The UNHCR had voiced its concerns to the Albanian authorities, arguing that Kukes is becoming "more and more hazardous by the day," he said.

The agency was also going from "tent to tent" in the camp trying to persuade the ethnic Albanians forced out of Kosovo to leave Kukes, the spokesman said.

On Friday, a total of 542 refugees had so far left the town, following 2,017 who left Thursday.

Despite the border clashes, an estimated 400 refugees arrived in northern Albanian on Thursday. The group included 165 former prisoners from Smrekovnica, bringing the total number of former prisoners arriving in Albania to 1,700, Janowski said.

In Macedonia, there have been just over 2,000 new arrivals since Wednesday, following a torrent of 30,000 from last

Saturday through Tuesday.

Most of those making it to Macedonia are entering at the Janina border crossing, with only a handful coming through the main Blace border post, which the Serbs closed on Wednesday.

The refugees said that six buses were turned back Thursday at Serbian checkpoints before Blace.

Some of the new arrivals reported "horrific" stories in two villages in Kacanik municipality, near the Kosovo-Macedonian border.

An old religious leader told the UNHCR that he personally buried the mutilated corpses of 25 young men killed on May 25 by Serbian paramilitary in Mika, a village once home to 800 Albanians, now empty.

He said he also buried a father and son killed the following day in Dubrava.

A refugee woman with six young daughters and a six-day-old son born while she was in hiding told the UNHCR that her husband, two brothers and three other men from the village of Bievac were taken by Serb soldiers.

"She does not know their whereabouts," Janowski said.

## UN begins preparations for East Timor vote

DILI, East Timor, May 28: The United Nations took its first concrete steps towards organising a vote on independence in East Timor today, 10 weeks before the troubled territory's people are due to decide its fate, reports Reuters.

Two preliminary evaluation teams left the capital Dili early today to start the process of finding voter registration centres. UN spokesman David Wimbush said.

The East Timorese are to vote on August 8 on whether to accept an autonomy package that will mean that they remain part of Indonesia. If the package is rejected, Jakarta is expected to move towards giving the territory independence.

East Timor has been racked by violence as supporters of the autonomy option attempt to swing the vote their way.

Militias armed with home-made guns have roamed without interference from the Indonesian security forces, killing dozens of people and driving many supporters of independence into hiding or exile. Many villagers have been pushed into what one long-term resident described as "indotration camps" run by the militias.

In a recent report, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that despite repeated assurances from the authorities in Indonesia that the militias would be ended, the violence was continuing.

## US rejects criticisms of Milosevic's indictment

AMELIA ISLAND, May 28: The White House rejected on Thursday analyst comments that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's indictment for war crimes could complicate the search for peace, reports AP.

President Bill Clinton briefly interrupted his holiday on this Florida island to applaud the International Criminal Tribunal's decision.

"It will reassure the victims of Belgrade's atrocities in Kosovo and will deter future war crimes by establishing that those who give orders will be held accountable," he said.

Earlier Clinton discussed the indictment on the phone with French President Jacques Chirac, British prime Minister Tony Blair and Czech leader Vaclav Havel.

"There was general agreement among the leaders that once again it demonstrates the reasons for what we are doing in Kosovo and should demonstrate to the people of Serbia the kind of leadership they have," White House spokesman Joe



Lockhart said. US President Bill Clinton pauses while reading his statement during his five-day vacation at White Oak Plantation in Yulee, Florida Thursday. Clinton welcomed the decision by the War Crimes Tribunal to indict Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. —AFP photo

Questioned on analysts' comments the indictment of Milosevic and four other top

Serbian officials would only make the search for peace more difficult, Lockhart responded: "You say it will complicate negotiations. We don't see this as negotiations."

"We have set clear conditions to bring the conflict to an end. Milosevic knows what they are, what he needs to do," Lockhart said.

Russia's special envoy to the Balkans, Viktor Chermomyrdin, first threatened to pull out of the peace process in a Washington Post article, but later said in Moscow he would continue to negotiate with the Serbian leader.

"The Russians can continue to play a constructive role," Lockhart said.

Chermomyrdin is due in Belgrade on Friday. But Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, involved in tripartite talks between Russia, the United States and Finland on the conflict, said there had been a " rapprochement of points of view" between Russia and the West.

## Taliban jets bomb Taloan: 13 killed

ISLAMABAD, May 28: Afghanistan's Taliban jet fighters swooped in low overhead Friday in northern Taloan killing 13 people — all of them civilians killed while they slept, said an opposition spokesman, reports AP.

Seven members of the same family in Taloan, the provincial capital of Afghanistan's northern Takhar province, were killed when a bomb smashed into their home, said Hussain Anwar, a spokesman for the northern-based alliance.

The alliance is trying to stop the Taliban religious militia from gaining complete control of the country.



South African President Nelson Mandela addresses ANC supporters during an election rally at Molets (northern province) Thursday. —AFP photo

## NASA's craft reveals crater on Mars

WASHINGTON, May 28: NASA's Mars Global Surveyor craft which is mapping Mars' surface identified a crater so deep that it could swallow up Mount Everest and a slope that goes from the south to the north, reports AP.

The MGS craft also discovered major differences between the northern and southern hemispheres.

MGS used a laser altimeter to design its high-resolution map that measured the crater, known as the Hellas basin, to have a depth of nine kilometers (nearly six miles) and a diameter of 2,100 kilometers (1,300 miles).

According to the researchers, when an asteroid hit the red planet, the crater formed hurling excavated material some 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) away and covering its surface with two kilometers (1.25 miles) of debris.

"This material contributes significantly to the higher elevation of the southern hemisphere and underscores the role of major impacts in shaping the early surfaces of the solid planets," said Maria Zuber, one of the members of the team analyzing MGS data.

The southern sphere is five kilometers (three miles) higher than the northern half.

"Probably the most unexpected finding was how much the Hellas impact basin dominates the topography of the southern hemisphere," Zuber, a

Griswold Professor of Planetary Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, added.

With Hellas and the Olympus Mons, an ancient volcano that is some 27 kilometers (17 miles) high, Mars has the highest mountain ranges and deepest craters in the solar system.

The difference in elevation also had an impact on how water migrated.

"While water flowed south to north in general, the data clearly reveal the localized areas where water may have once formed ponds," Zuber said.

The researchers believe that the northern hemisphere could have drained three-quarters of the water on the planet's surface. The sphere's large flat surface suggest that there may have been an ocean there, they said.

However, Zuber added: "We have not found the smoking gun" to prove that happened.

In a study of the data published in the journal Science, the researchers said that the frozen caps on Mars' poles are equal to between 2.3 and 4.7 million cubic kilometers, or one and a half times the surface of Greenland.

The craft also confirmed the difference between the surface of the southern hemisphere, which is older and heavily cratered, and the northern one, which is younger, lower and smooth.