

# G8 for immediate end to Indo-Pak duel

## Fierce fighting in Kashmir

COLOGNE, Germany, June 20: The G8 leaders Sunday called for an immediate end to the fighting in Kashmir and a resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan, reports AFP.

The G8 leaders in a summit communicate also expressed concern over a resurgence of tension over nuclear testing between the two countries and reiterated a call at their Birmingham summit in May last year for the two to join international non-proliferation efforts.

The communiqué said that any military action designed to change the status quo was irresponsible, and called for the immediate re-establishment of the line of control.

Indian troops have been fighting with Pakistani-backed guerrillas in a disputed region of Kashmir for the past six weeks. Islamabad has denied sending troops into the region.

Pakistan had urged the G8 to support talks between the two countries to try to solve the 50-year-old dispute over the Himalayan region, while India had urged the G8 to understand that it is Pakistan's responsibility to ease tensions in the region.

India-Pakistani tension was already high on the agenda at last year's summit after India conducted its first nuclear test.

The G8 leaders failed to agree on imposing sanctions on India, and ended up simply urging India to refrain from further tests and urging Pakistan to exercise "maximum restraint," but this failed to prevent Pakistan going ahead and carrying out its own test.

Meanwhile, India launched fresh attacks on Islamic guerrillas and fought intense artillery duels with Pakistan in Kashmir Sunday while awaiting a response from the G8 summit in Germany on the conflict.

Army sources in Jammu, the winter capital of Indian Kashmir, said Pakistani soldiers earlier Sunday launched mortar attacks on civilians in the region's Akhnoor region, killing one and injuring 15. The shells pounded the vil-

lage of Palanwalan, some seven kilometres (4.3 miles) from a site where Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani was scheduled to address a public meeting last Sunday.

The attacks have led to panic and sparked another round of exodus from the Akhnoor sector, one source said in Jammu.

He said thousands of people were moving out of Akhnoor on tractors, trucks and camels heading for Jammu, some 70 kilometres from the shelling zone.

The army closed a bridge to civilian traffic for its own use, raising fears the refugees from the border regions could be stranded on the banks of the Chenab river that flows between Akhnoor and Jammu.

The sources also said Indian gunners destroyed a Pakistani artillery post, killing three soldiers across the heavily-militarised Line of Control (LoC) in the Jammu plains of Kashmir. The troops, retaliating to

heavy mortar fire from across the LoC, destroyed the Pakistani post killing three and injuring many, a source said.

The two rival armies also exchanged mortar and artillery fire in the frontier regions of Rajouri, Poonch and Jammu, expanding their six-week battles from Kargil in the north to the southern belt of Indian Kashmir.

India began air sorties over the combat areas of Drass, Batalik and Kargil, where Indian soldiers are fighting the guerrillas and what New Delhi says are Pakistani army troops.

The air missions have begun, an air force spokesman said without elaborating. Indian ground forces also launched fresh attacks Sunday on Batalik, which rises to heights of 15,000 feet (4,545 metres), in their campaign to dislodge the guerrillas and alleged Pakistani soldiers.

The fighting is concentrated in Batalik's Tiger Hills, from where the Pakistan-backed

guerrillas were firing on a strategic Indian highway. A military source in Srinagar said the combat was "intense."

Indian and Pakistani paramilitary forces also exchanged fire along their border in the region of Samba, located in the extreme south of Indian-administered Kashmir, they said.

Home minister Advani said: "It is only a matter of time before Kargil is completely vacated."

However Advani said India was against opening new battlefronts in Kashmir.

The Indian army redeployed thousands of soldiers from the Kashmir Valley to its southern Kashmiri frontiers and handed over security operations against Kashmiri secessionists in the north to paramilitary troops.

The secessionist drive spearheaded by Kashmiri militants in the Himalayan valley has left more than 24,000 dead in the past decade.



Indian Sikhs burn in effigy coffins for Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief Pervez Musharraf during a demonstration near the Pakistan Embassy in New Delhi Sunday to protest Islamabad's alleged support to Islamic raiders in India-held Kashmir. The fighting in the Himalayan region since May 9 has left hundreds dead and wounded. —AFP photo

# 60,000 Kosovars held in Serb 'concentration camps'

## Respect truce in Kosovo: G8

LONDON, June 20: A British newspaper reported Sunday that NATO troops have found 60,000 Albanian refugees held by Serb forces in burnt-out villages transformed into concentration camps in northern Kosovo, reports AFP.

The Sunday Telegraph said that the Albanian families were rounded up from mountain hideouts in a Serb operation in mid-April and driven to five ransacked villages near the northern town of Podujevo.

They were to be held at the camp, known as Saykovic, to be used if necessary as human shields in the event of a ground war with NATO, reported the paper, which claimed an exclusive to the discovery.

Most of the Serb forces had deserted the area by the time NATO troops arrived, but the allied soldiers advised the refugees, many gaunt and weak with hunger and illness, to stay put until all Serb forces had withdrawn from the province, said the paper.

For two months, the refugees were held captive in total isolation. All, including children, were given identity cards bearing their name, a number and the name of the part of the camp they were held in, said the newspaper.

Any who tried to escape ran the risk of Serb snipers in the hills. Four old men who tried to



A Serbian policeman turns back Serbian refugees from Kosovo at a checkpoint near Kraljevo Saturday. Belgrade authorities directed Kosovar Serbs fleeing the province to return in convoys "during the next 48 hours", promising to aid them. —AFP photo

leave to find food ignored NATO's warning not to leave and were shot dead as they headed for the liberated town of Podujevo, the Telegraph journalist recounted.

One refugee at the camp said that at least 90 people had been killed in Podujevo earlier in the conflict, their bodies burned or buried.

He added that around 4,000 Serb troops swooped on them in their mountain hideout around Koliq, driving them towards the camp as they "threw grenades and held knives to children's throats, demanding money from parents."

"They told us they were taking us home," explained the refugee, when in fact they were being taken to the camp. Many were killed on the way, added the paper.

Another reports says, the world's leading industrialized states plus Russia called Sunday on Kosovo parties to respect the ceasefire and said the return of refugees was a priority, in a draft of the final communiqué from a summit here, reports AFP.

The Group of Eight (G8) draft said the return of the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees driven out by Serb

forces to their homes was a main priority of the international community, as was protecting the Serb minority in the Yugoslav province.

The G8 of Britain, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States said they would cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal that is investigating war crimes violations in Kosovo.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic must carry out democratic reforms if his country is to benefit from international reconstruction aid, world leaders said here Sunday.

## 8 die as building collapses in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 20: At least eight people were killed and 21 injured when a building under construction collapsed in the Indian capital, police said today.

"According to our reports, eight people have died and 21 were injured in the building collapse last night," a police official told Reuters.

The official said rescue workers and police had pulled out the people trapped under the debris.

The Statesman newspaper said most of the victims were construction workers.

"I was returning home when I noticed the building collapse as if a huge block of ice was cracking. It just happened in seconds," it quoted Mahender Singh, a resident of the area, as saying.

## 5 more detained China steps up crackdown on dissidents

BEIJING, June 20: Chinese police have rounded up five more dissidents in central China, a Hong Kong-based human rights organisation said today, warning that the crackdown against political opposition is set to intensify, reports AFP.

Some 15 policemen Saturday burst into the home of China Democracy Party member Zhu Lulu in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and took Zhu and party member Han Shendou away. Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

After detaining the pair police ransacked the house for two hours taking away a computer, communications equipment and all documents, the centre said.

## Habibie urges Indonesians to accept results of election

JAKARTA, June 20: In an apparent attempt to calm Muslim concerns over the outcome of the June 7 parliamentary election, president B J Habibie on Sunday urged Indonesians to place national interests above all else, reports AP.

Speaking at the opening of the annual national Quran reading contest, Habibie said people should accept the result of the polls, as it had been conducted in a "fair, honest and transparent manner."

"I hope Indonesian people can start thinking positively that a win or defeat is normal in life," he said.

And now that the election is over, what lies ahead is for the nation to concentrate on overcoming the economic crisis, establishing order and security and pursuing a civil Indonesian society.

The remark came amid growing calls in this overwhelmingly Muslim country to reject a woman as president. The front-running Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle is headed by Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the country's founding president, Sukarno.

## NASA launches sat to improve weather forecast

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, California, June 20: A satellite was launched Saturday night on a 98 million dollar mission to improve weather forecasting and detect the onset of conditions like El Niño by measuring winds blowing over Earth's oceans, reports AP.

A Titan II rocket carrying NASA's QuikScat satellite roared off a central coast launch pad at 7:15 pm (23:15 GMT), headed for a polar orbit 500 miles (805 km) high.

The launch sequence was expected to take about an hour. QuikScat's first signal was not expected to be heard until 76 minutes after liftoff when it passes over Norway.

A series of recent failures raised concerns about Titan rockets, but QuikScat mission officials were confident their booster would operate properly.

# Doubt about possibility of Indian polls in Sept

NEW DELHI, June 20: With fighting in Kashmir showing no signs of ending soon, India's parliamentary elections that had been expected in September have come under a shadow of doubt, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said that his government was determined to go ahead with elections involving nearly 650 million voters -- come what may.

But the president of Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party, Kushabhau Thakre, promptly contradicted him, raising many eyebrows.

Thakre said if the fighting in Kashmir raged on until September, the government could call a meeting of all political parties and discuss ways of postponing the polls.

Thakre's remarks have sparked a hue of protests.

The opposition denounced Thakre's remarks as an assault on democracy. The BJP argued that Thakre was misquoted by the media. And pundits warned that an election postponement would hurt the Hindu nationalists.

The main opposition Congress insists on timely elections.

"Even if there is a war, holding elections will be difficult but it will have to be done," said Pranab Mukherjee, a party leader and a former foreign minister.

"Just because there is a war, we cannot abrogate the constitution. We don't close down courts. Elections are a natural

political activity. They can be held even in a war situation," he said.

The autonomous Election Commission is yet to announce a schedule for the elections, but they have to be held within six months of the Vajpayee government's collapse in April.

Vajpayee now heads a "caretaker" government. A new elected lower house of parliament has to be in shape by the third week of October.

The Hindu nationalists had appeared confident of storming back to power after opposition leader Sonia Gandhi's failure to form an alternate government in April. Kashmir has upset the

India launched a ferocious military offensive last month against hundreds of Islamic guerrillas, including suspected Pakistani troops, who have occupied key hills in Indian Kashmir.

The decision has sparked fighting along the Kashmir border between Indian and Pakistani troops, triggering fears of a fourth war between the two South Asian rivals.

The fighting has also punctured whatever hopes Vajpayee may have had of capitalising during the elections his historic bus journey to Pakistan in February that had raised hopes of peace.

But privately some officials say the election -- a gigantic affair in India -- may have to be put off if the fighting continues unabated. Every election requires a massive security cover. And although the army is not

involved with elections, paramilitary forces that provide security during balloting have been pushed into insurgency-hit areas to replace soldiers who have moved to Kashmir.

"On the one hand the prime minister says he can organise elections. But officials say it might be difficult to mobilise security forces which are needed for the polls," said political analyst G.V.L.N. Rao.

"If the Kashmir situation escalates, there could be a problem of holding elections," Rao told AFP here. "At the present level of fighting, the elections can take place."

Election Commissioner G.V.G. Krishnamurthy said Saturday that the Kashmir battles would be "kept in mind" while deciding the polling dates.

Rao has warned that postponement of elections could backfire on the government.

"That would only indicate that the situation is very serious, and others would want to know why the situation was allowed to come to such a pass," he said.

Although the opposition is backing the "government" on Kashmir, it has already started asking why the Hindu nationalists allowed the "intruders" to take over a vast stretch of Kashmir border.

Most parties have also begun holding public meetings and forging alliances. The coming general elections would be India's second in as many years, and the third since 1996.

## BRIEFLY

**Clashes claim 8 in Yemen:** Eight people were killed Saturday and nine injured in clashes over ownership of a piece of land in the province of Dhama, about 150 km south of Sanaa, AFP reports from Sanaa.

Witnesses said six members of the Al-Jaradi tribe were killed in an ambush set by Al-Jamal tribesmen. Two members of the Al-Jamal tribe died in a subsequent revenge attack on their village.

**4,000 rebels killed in Guatemala:** Guatemala's 36-year civil war left almost 4,000 guerrillas dead or missing, a foundation for former guerrillas said Saturday, AFP reports from Guatemala City.

Some 1,980 guerrillas died, while 2,000 disappeared, said Enrique Corral, president of the Guillermo Torriello Foundation. The group hopes to compile a list of missing guerrillas and to exhume some graves, if they receive funding from international groups or the government.

**Iranian FM in Jordan:** Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi discussed the need to improve ties with Amman Saturday on the first visit to Jordan by an official of his rank since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, AFP reports from Amman.

During a meeting with Jordan's Foreign Minister Abdel Ilah Al Khatib, Kharazi said "development in the Middle East" had made it necessary to begin high-level talks with Jordanian leaders and increase bilateral cooperation.

## Pak PM asks India to show flexibility Sharif offers talks with India

LAHORE, June 20: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif offered bilateral talks with India on Saturday, while urging Pakistan's uneasy neighbour to be more flexible on the violent dispute over Kashmir, reports AP.

"India's rigid attitude over Kashmir is aggravating the problem... it is responsibility of both the countries to make efforts to decrease tension," he told reporters.

"Our doors are still open for talks and we are willing to accept third-party mediation to get this matter resolved once and for all," the state-run associated Press of Pakistan quoted Sharif as saying.

India has steadfastly refused international mediation on

Kashmir, a 52-year-old dispute that has been the cause of two wars between India and Pakistan. The two nations fought a third war over Bangladesh or what was then East Pakistan.

Tensions intensified between Pakistan and India last month after Muslim militants captured strategic mountain heights in Indian-held Kashmir last month.

Sharif said Pakistan is trying to ease tension which have triggered fears of a full-scale war between these two nuclear powers.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad of sending infiltrators, including Afghan mercenaries and Pakistan soldiers disguised as Muslim militants, into its part of Kashmir.

## Koreas set to resume talks in Beijing today

SEOUL, June 20: North and South Korea will meet in Beijing on Monday, in the first inter-Korean governmental talks in 14 months, despite Pyongyang's vow of retaliation for last week's naval clash between the two sides, reports Reuters.

South Korea's vice-minister of unification Yang Young-shik left today with two other officials to attend the meeting scheduled for 10 am Beijing time (0200 GMT) at the Kempinski Hotel, as suggested by South Korea.

Pyeongyang notified Seoul on Saturday through the Red Cross office in the border village of Panmunjom it would attend the vice-ministerial meeting but did not confirm the time and venue, the South Korean Unification Ministry said.

Talks are expected to focus on food aid for the famine-stricken north and the reunion of tens of thousands of families separated in the North and South.

Bilateral talks had come to a halt last year after Seoul insisted it would offer aid to North Korea only if Pyongyang committed itself to allow reunions of families separated after the 1950-53 Korean War.

The two Koreas technically remain at war because the Korean War ended in an armed

truce rather than a peace agreement.

South Korea did not rule out discussion of the disputed sea boundary issue between the two Koreas after last week's Yellow Sea naval clash in which the South sank a North Korean gunboat and heavily damaged several others.

"Any participant is free to raise any topic," said South Korea's Foreign Minister Hong Soon-young told reporters on Friday. "If Pyongyang brings up (the sea border dispute), than of course we have our position. In that case this will be a prolonged debate."

South Korea's main opposition Grand National Party attacked the minister's remarks concerning possible discussion of the sea boundary, saying President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine policy" of engagement with the North jeopardised the safety of the nation.

The United Nations Command, which fought against Chinese backed North Korea in the Korean War, unilaterally demarcated the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in 1953 between the two territories in the Yellow Sea.

South Korea said North Korea had passively agreed to the demarcation in a 1992 basic agreement.



Prince Edward and his wife Sophie leave St. George's Chapel in Windsor as the Royal family look on after their wedding Saturday. Buckingham Palace announced before the wedding that the couple will be known as the Earl and Countess of Wessex. —AFP photo

## Red Cross pulls out staff from Kabul

KABUL, June 20: The International Red Cross withdrew several of its international staff from the war-weary capital on Sunday to protest the abduction and beating of 10 Red Cross workers last week, a Red Cross official said, reports AP.

The largest aid giving group in Afghanistan, the Red Cross also has reduced its operations in the war-shattered country to emergency services only, the official said on condition he not be identified.

Last week 10 Red Cross workers -- eight Afghan nationals and two expatriate staff -- were kidnapped, beaten and robbed in Afghanistan's central Bamyan province. The Red Cross demanded security guarantees from the Taliban.

It's not clear what security guarantees were sought or whether the pull out and reduced operations by the Red Cross reflected the Taliban's refusal to give these guarantees.

The Red Cross official would not say how many Red Cross workers left the Afghan capital for neighbouring Pakistan.

However, he said the Red Cross was negotiating with the Taliban, who have called the beating a "highway robbery."

All 10 victims were released and are in good condition, the Red Cross said.

The Taliban rule 90 per cent of Afghanistan, including Kabul, and are battling a northern-based opposition alliance on several fronts in a bid to capture remaining parts of the country.

## Hillary may leave White House early for NY Senate seat campaign

WASHINGTON, June 20: US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton could leave the White House early to move to New York in her campaign for a Senate seat in 2000, the weekly newsmagazine US News and World report said Saturday, reports AFP.

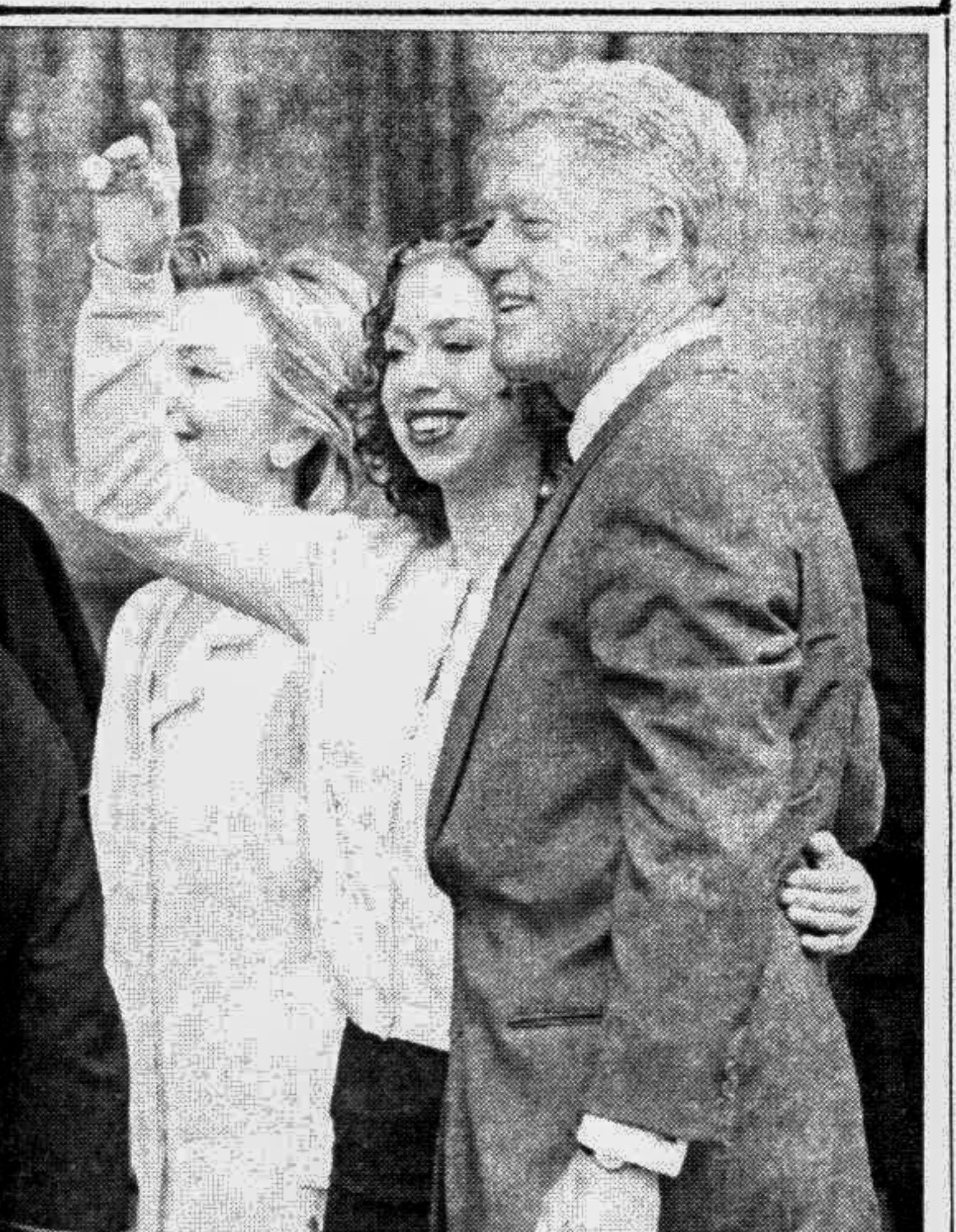
"She should be here by the fall," said one aide who was not identified in the magazine hitting newsworlds on Monday.

"Everyone will understand if she has to go back to Washington for a NATO summit or something like that... But there's no doubt that she'll leave the White House early," the aide was quoted as saying.

## Lanka troops kill 18 Tigers

COLOMBO, June 20: At least 18 Tamil Tiger guerrillas were killed in renewed clashes with government forces in northern Sri Lanka over the weekend, the Defence Ministry here said Sunday, reports AFP.

Government troops opened fire on a group of men believed to be from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Well Oya region on Saturday and killed six of them, the ministry said.



(L-R) Hillary, Chelsea and US President Bill Clinton stand outside the Dome in Cologne where G8 leaders came to attend a morning service on the sideline of the G8 summit here Sunday. — AFP photo