



South Korean Vice Minister for Reunification Yang Young-Shik (R) gestures to his North Korean counterpart Pak Yong-Su before they sit down to talks in Beijing Tuesday. Landmark talks between South and North Korea aimed at reuniting families separated for decades, started yesterday, a day after being indefinitely delayed by Pyongyang.

## First round of ROK-DPRK official talks end

BEIJING, June 22: Landmark talks between South and North Korea ended for the day today after a brief discussion of several issues including a high-seas gunbattle and the reunion of separated families, reports AFP.

A time for a second round of talks had not yet been set, Seoul officials here said.

The two sides agreed to have telephone contacts in the afternoon to discuss the schedule for the second round of meeting.

South Korea's chief delegate to the deputy-minister level talks, Yang Young-Shik, told reporters after the meeting which lasted slightly over one hour.

It was not known when the talks would resume, but sources here said they expected another round "soon."

At the meeting, the two sides expressed their basic policies and exchanged views," said Yang, vice-minister of the Unification Ministry.

The North Korean delegation was led by Pak Yong-Su, a senior official from the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland. He had in 1994 threatened to turn Seoul into a "sea of flames."

South Korea's Yang said some of the issues that came up included the reunion of separated families, last week's clash in the Yellow Sea and possible meeting at minister and prime minister level.

South Korea's main aim at this meeting, the first government face-to-face meeting in 14 months, is to reach a deal over reuniting families separated since the 1950-53 Korean War.

## Nine killed in Indian railway station blast

NEW DELHI, June 22: At least nine people, including two soldiers heading for Kashmir, were killed Tuesday and 80 injured in a bomb blast in a railway station in eastern India, officials said, reports AFP.

Railway official Sheila Gurung told AFP over the telephone that the blast occurred around noon, when the Mahananda Link Express was to leave the railway station of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal state for New Delhi.

There was a huge explosion on the platform," she said. "Many people more than 50, were wounded. Most of them are military personnel."

Two of the killed belonged to a 12-member military team heading to join the fighting in Kashmir, where troops are engaging Islamic raiders in a bloody combat since May 9, the Press Trust of India reported.

The condition of 42 of the injured was critical, said A.K. Das, the chief of a railway hospital in Jalpaiguri.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the explosion.

New Jalpaiguri is a major rail link and connects the hill resort of Darjeeling to the rest of India.

## IRA bomber Patrick freed

BELFAST, June 22: IRA bomber Patrick Magee, jailed for plotting to kill former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1984, was freed today as part of the Northern Ireland peace deal, reports Reuters.

Magee served 14 years in prison for bombing the Grand Hotel in the southern English coastal resort of Brighton where members of Thatcher's Conservative Party were staying for the party's annual conference.

## Ocalan trial resumes today

ANKARA, June 22: A panel of civilian judges and two prosecutors from the Ankara state security court left for the prison island of Imrali on Tuesday for the trial of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, the Anadolu news agency reported, says AFP.

The panel will include three civilian judges -- Mehmet Turgut Okayay, Huseyin Eken and Mehmet Maras -- after the Turkish parliament adopted a constitutional amendment last week to remove military judges from state security courts.

The move came in a bid to calm European criticism of the trial over the presence of a military judge and followed an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

Military judge Abdulkadir Davarcioglu, who was on the original panel, was replaced by Maras who had attended all six hearings of the Ocalan trial since it opened on May 31 as a reserve magistrate.

Prosecutors Cevdet Volkan and Talat Salk also left for Imrali for the treason trial against Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which will resume on Wednesday after two-week break for the defence team to prepare their case.

Ocalan has been held at Imrali, in northwestern Turkey, since his capture and incarceration in mid-February and is the venue of his trial on treason charges.

On Wednesday, the defence team will give its final summing-up, which the lawyers have said, will focus on a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish question.

Al Fayed's fresh bid to become British citizen

LONDON, June 22: Mohamed Al Fayed, the multi-millionaire owner of the luxury department store Harrod's, began a fresh bid today to secure British citizenship after his latest request was turned down by the government last month, reports AFP.

Lawyers for the Egyptian-born businessman will go to the High Court in London to seek permission for a judicial review of British Home Secretary Jack Straw's decision in May to refuse Al Fayed a passport on the grounds that he did not have the necessary "good character."

Al Fayed's reputation was tarnished following revelations of his attempts to buy political influence of Conservative legislators, in a scam which contributed to the party's 1997 general election defeat.

He has sought British citizenship for five years, though his requests have twice been turned down.

Volcano erupts in Philippines

MANILA, June 22: The Mayon volcano rained ash on surrounding towns in the eastern Philippines after a spectacular eruption Tuesday that sent steaming lava flowing down its southern flank, seismologists and witnesses said, reports AFP.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or evacuations following the eruption, which the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology recorded at 4:58 p.m. (0858 GMT).

The ash was "followed by moderate steaming activity," an institute seismologist told AFP.

A resident of Legaspi, a city near the southeast slope of the volcano, told AFP by telephone that a high column of ash and smoke "was seen on Mayon's crater."

Mayon is around 335 kilometers (208 miles) northeast of Manila.

## Blair holds talks with Obuchi

British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday held talks with visiting Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, Xinhua reports from London.

The two leaders met here after the weekend summit of Group of Eight world leaders. A press officer in the Downing Street said the 40-minute-long meeting was held in the morning before the two leaders enjoyed a one-hour lunch. Their talks covered bilateral issues and Blair welcomed Japanese investments in the United Kingdom. Blair's office said.

## Belgian aid worker freed

Kidnapped Belgian aid worker Lieven Dela Marche has been freed by Muslim gunmen to an Islamic separatist group and was scheduled to be turned over to the government and his family yesterday, a guerilla leader said, AFP reports from Zamboanga.

## Killed in clashes in Tibet

Five Nomads have been killed in violent clashes between rival groups of herdsmen in eastern Tibet, the London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN) reported yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

The fighting has been going on for two years between the Arig tribe of Henan country in the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and the Ngaira tribe from Maqu county in Gansu province, TIN said. "The latest incident, on May 20, broke out when Nomads from Maqu, on their way to a holy mountain in the disputed area, came across a patrol of five Arig herdsmen and shot them dead," the group said in a statement.

## Jiang for campaign to control flooding

BEIJING, June 22: President Jiang Zemin called for strenuous efforts to control flooding on China's Yellow River and demanded administrators act to save the troubled river, state press reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

Jiang called for full preparations for flooding along the lower reaches of the river where the river bed remains higher than the surrounding farmland due to centuries of silt accumulation and dyke building, the People's Daily said.

Speaking at a meeting of the Yellow River Water Conservancy Committee in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, Jiang underlined recent problems suffered by China's second longest river, including severe water shortages in the lower reaches and pollution.

Silt induced flooding along the Yellow River has traditionally been a major source of disaster, but recently new problems have been emerging, the president said.

During the 1990s the river has failed to reach the sea as water use has increased with economic development, while for much of the decade the river basin has been hampered by drought.

There is an imbalance in the supply and demand as contradictory and conflicting production, urban consumption and the environment have sharpened daily," Jiang was quoted as saying.

The accumulation of silt deposits along the river bed, which normally would be flushed out to sea with normal water levels, had also increased severely in recent years, further increasing flood dangers, he said.

"The problem of Yellow River water pollution has daily become more prominent and severely influences the production and living standards of a great many people on both sides of the river," he said.

Jiang's presence at the meeting appeared to underscore the leadership's concern over the river following years of mismanagement and waste and growing bickering between ministries and provinces over water use rights.

The establishment of the Yellow River Water Conservancy Committee was originally intended to put administration under a central control.

According to Ministry of Water Resources sources, however, the committee has been ineffective in controlling water use, while only adding bureaucratic gridlock to management.

The need for a steady supply of water for growing hydroelectricity has been a major focus of the committee since its establishment.

# Hope for peace fades: Pak gen

## India launches massive offensive in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, June 22: Pakistan's army chief has said hopes for peace are fading because of India's military action in Kashmir, warning his forces would go to any lengths to meet the challenge, officials said Tuesday, reports AFP.

"The threatening posture of the Indian armed forces contributed to the fading of hopes for peace," General Pervez Musharraf, said after reviewing the situation at a meeting on Monday.

He urged India to display a "more positive and more mature role" in resolving the Kashmir issue and "stop military actions against Pakistan army positions and innocent civilians."

Pakistan armed forces were prepared for "all eventualities," he said, blaming India for the escalation of tensions.

"Let there be no doubt that we are resolved to go to any extent in meeting all challenges on land, air and sea," he said.

Officials said the meeting was attended by chiefs of the three services, senior commanders and top civil and military officials.

It took "strong note of the negative and hostile stance of the Indian military leadership reflected through the continuous violation of the Line of Control (LoC) and concentration of troops close to international borders."

The six week-old heavy artillery duels between rival armies has escalated military tensions along the 720-km LoC which divides Kashmir into Pakistani and Indian zones.

The clashes erupted when the Indian forces launched a massive military action on May 9 to regain strategic heights captured by guerrillas in Kargil and Drass sectors on Indian side of Kashmir. The dispute over the ownership of the Himalayan state has sparked two of the three wars since their independence in 1947.

India charges that the Kargil guerrillas are Islamabad-backed intruders. Pakistan has denied the accusation saying they are Mujahideen (freedom fighters) waging a decade-old "indigenous struggle" against Indian rule in the southern two-thirds of Kashmir.

The US industrialised countries on Sunday called for a truce to the fighting, respect for the LoC by both sides and a resumption of India-Pakistan dialogue to defuse the crisis.

Meanwhile, the Indian army has launched a huge offensive on a strategic peak and a key mountain range in Kashmir after boasting significant victories against Pakistani-backed intruders, defence officials said Tuesday.

Indian troops were aiming to recapture the 15,140-foot (4,590-metre) high Tiger Hills peak and the Batalik mountain range in northern Indian Kashmir where Moslem guerrilla intruders are still entrenched, they said.

"Our only challenge in the Drass region is the Tiger Hills and one small post at the height of 5,000 metres (16,500 feet)," Brigadier Amar Aul told AFP in Drass.

The Indian air force said air operations were renewed on Tuesday as "the weather has improved." Strikes were suspended on Monday due to bad weather.

An official communique said "mopping up operations" were going on on the key Point 5140 peak taken by Indian forces on Sunday, and there had been major advances in another main battlefield in northern Indian Kashmir, the Mashkoh Valley.

"In the western region of the Mashkoh Valley, our troops have made good progress and have reached approximately 2.5 km short" of the Line of Control separating India from Pakistan.

"In the central region of the Mashkoh Valley, our troops have made considerable progress," it said.

The Indian army on Monday said troops had taken a spur on a 17,160-foot (5,203-metre) peak in Batalik after hand-to-hand fighting.

Point 5140 was regained following a 21-day battle a day earlier. More than 100 Moslem fighters had occupied the heights for over two months.

Aul said the advances were significant.

"We have been able to push off the intruders and now Point 5140 has fallen (so) the ridge line is totally with us and the national highway is totally safe."

The raiders atop the 16,962-foot Point 5140 (meters), the highest peak on the Tololing ridge, had fractured Indian communications by directing deadly fire on the Srinagar-Leh highway below.

Aul said the going had been tough.

"It took nearly one month to achieve the first goal of clearing Tololing Hills facing the main highway as soldiers had to be acclimatised in the difficult environment with heights of between 10,000 to 17,000 feet (3,000 to 5,100 metres)," he said.

"We had to stock special clothing, rations, equipment and other stocks."

Colonel Ravindranathan, who led the assault on Tololing, said "operations were possible at night," adding dead Pakistani soldiers from the National Light Infantry had been "buried with full military honours."

Military officials reported heavy cross-border artillery duels between Pakistani and Indian troops in the southern Kashmir frontier village of Palanwalan, some 70 km from the state winter capital Jammu.

"Most locals have fled. There is total panic," a source said.

The capture of Point 5140, India's biggest military success



Indian artillery men lift the turrets of their 155mm Bofors guns as they prepare to fire at enemy positions from a gun emplacement on the Srinagar - Kargil road Monday, as fighting against Islamic militants who infiltrated the Indian side of the Line of Control (LOC) continues.

so far in the current campaign, has left 13 Pakistani and three Indian soldiers dead.

According to the 336 Pakistani soldiers who died since the fighting began on May 9, while the Indian casualties had mounted to 149 killed, 297 wounded and 100 missing.

India has accused Pakistan of the heavy losses in the fighting as an outright condemnation of Pakistan's alleged role in the Kashmiri intrusion, which follows three wars between the arch-rivals.

The US leaders of leading industrialised nations - and Russia said they were "deeply concerned about the continuing military confrontation in Kashmir following the infiltration of armed intruders which violated the Line of Control."

## Golkar takes second place in Indonesian vote count

JAKARTA, June 22: Indonesia's ruling Golkar Party on Tuesday rose to second place in the latest official results from the country's landmark elections, reports AFP.

With more than 59 million votes counted, over half the total, on Tuesday morning, Golkar had narrowly overtaken the National Awakening Party (PKB).

The Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDI-P) of Megawati Sukarnoputri remained the strong leader with 21,534,360 votes, 36.4 percent of those votes.

Golkar had 10,723,780 votes, or 18.1 percent, and the PKB backed by moderate Moslem leader Abdurrahman Gus Dur" Wahid was third with 10,711,941 votes.

The Moslem United Development Party (PPP) remained fourth with 9.8 percent of the votes and the National Mandate Party (PAN) of reform leader Amien Rais trailed in fifth place with 6.7 percent.

A parallel unofficial tally from the Joint Media Operations Center put Golkar in second place more than a week ago. The latest results from the official tally released on Monday, had some 88,869,756 votes counted, about 80 percent of the expected total.

It placed PDI-P ahead with 30,517,991 votes or 34.4 percent. Golkar had 10,723,780 votes, 12.2 percent, and the PKB had 10,711,941 votes, 12.2 percent.

Golkar's tally was around 90 percent of the expected vote also had the party in second place a few days after the June 7 polls.

Golkar's count late Monday showed the party with 22,712,744 votes compared to PDI-P's 34,665,503.

Golkar chairman Akbar Tanjung has repeatedly criticized the official vote count as too slow and open to rigging.

Tanjung has also accused the Election Commission (KPU) of being unprofessional, the Suara Karya said Tuesday.



The Ramadan family, returning to Kosovo after spending three months in an ethnic Albanian refugee camp in Albania, discovers their home, destroyed during the war, in Ponorac Monday. Around 135,000 ethnic Albanians have returned to Kosovo since the end of NATO's bombing campaign 11 days ago, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

## Clinton visits refugee camp in Macedonia

SKOPJE, June 22: President Bill Clinton arrived in Macedonia Tuesday where he was to visit ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo at a camp in Steinkovec, a few kilometers (miles) from the Kosovo border, reports AFP.

Clinton, who arrived from Ljubljana, Slovenia, was to hold separate meeting with leaders from Macedonia, President Kiro Gligorov and Prime Minister Ljubo Georgievski, and Albania, President Rexhep Meidani and Prime Minister Pandeli Majko.

Macedonia and Albania, both neighbors to Kosovo, took in the bulk of the million refugees who had fled the Serbian crackdown in Kosovo since 1998.

Clinton was also due to address troops in the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo from the US contingent base set up at Skopje airport later Tuesday.

He was scheduled to head off for the United States around 6:15 p.m. (1615 GMT), with a two-hour stopover at the Aviano NATO base in Italy at 8:30 p.m. (1830 GMT).

In Slovenia on Monday, Clinton effectively called on Serbs to get rid of President Slobodan Milosevic, saying: "We want Serbia to be part of the new Europe but it must reject the murderous rule of Slobodan Milosevic and follow the path that Slovenia has chosen."

Clinton's one-day trip was the first to Slovenia by a US president since the former Yugoslav republic gained its independence eight years ago from Yugoslavia.

Earlier, a caller claiming to represent a previously unknown Macedonian group issued a terrorist threat ahead of Clinton's visit, the daily Dnevnik reported.

In a call to a local television station, an unidentified woman said a group called Macedonian Dawn had detonated a bomb here last week and threatened further action during Clinton's trip, the paper reported.

A bomb went off last Thursday in the parking lot in front of the headquarters of NATO's Kosovo peace force, located in a Skopje suburb.

There were no casualties. The caller also urged Macedonians not to cooperate with NATO peacekeepers and to support US interests actively instead.



Ethnic Albanian women, returning to Kosovo after spending three months in a refugee camp in Albania, weep in front of their home, destroyed during the war in Ponorac, Albania, Monday.

## 2 US disarmament experts ask Senate to ratify CTBT

WASHINGTON, June 22: Two key US disarmament experts have asked the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) soon in order to remove any excuse for inaction by India and Pakistan in signing it, reports PTI.

Paul H Nitzke, former top arms control negotiator, and Sidney D Drell, advisor, the federal government on national security, yesterday said in an article in the Washington Post, the CTBT would constrain advanced and not-so advanced nuclear weapons states from developing more sophisticated and dangerous nuclear weapons capabilities.

This is particularly important in South Asia. Last year, both India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests, threatening a dangerous escalation of their nuclear arms competition.

Both countries now have expressed a commitment to adhere to the CTBT this year. US ratification would remove any excuse for inaction by the parties of these nations and would strengthen the global non-proliferation regime.

The article says the US has to be prepared to be the latest disarmament ratifier. The CTBT would constrain advanced and not-so advanced nuclear weapons states from developing more sophisticated and dangerous nuclear weapons capabilities.

This is particularly important in South Asia. Last year, both India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests, threatening a dangerous escalation of their nuclear arms competition.

Drell said 131 nations have now followed the lead.

## Jakarta not attempting to put off Timor polls: UN

JAKARTA, June 22: Indonesian Justice Minister Muladi Tuesday told UN special envoy Jamsheer Marker that ongoing violence in East Timor was not a deliberate attempt to disrupt the August poll there to determine the territory's future, reports AFP.

The factional battles in East Timor result from emotional outbursts rather than systematic efforts to thwart the UN-sponsored ballot in the former Portuguese territory, Muladi was quoted by the Antara news agency as saying.

He was speaking after meeting Marker, the special envoy on East Timor of United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan.

Muladi said it was important to disarm both the pro- and anti-independence factions as quickly as possible while at the same time "socializing" Jakarta's offer, by which he meant disseminating more information.

The autonomy package was agreed by Indonesia and Portugal at the United Nations in New York in May. The agreement provides for a free ballot in East Timor on August 8 to determine whether the people there accept or reject the package.

Indonesia has said it will free East Timor a former Portuguese colony it invaded in 1975, if the people there rejected autonomy.

Violence between the two camps in East Timor has escalated since the offer was made.

The UN mission in East Timor (UNAMET) has blamed much of the violence on pro-Indonesian militias.

Muladi also said he was yet to receive a go-ahead from the foreign ministry to issue self-exiled East Timorese pro-independence leaders and Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu a visa to return to Timor.

East Timor is expected to attempt a meeting organized by two diplomats of East Timor to promote reconciliation among Timorese factions.

The meeting is to be held in Jakarta in two stages, on June 25 and 26, according to Timorese officials.

Meanwhile, Indonesian police Tuesday arrested about 100 students protestors calling for fresh elections and the scrapping of the military's political role, a witness said.

Police rounded up members of the Student and People's Committee for Democracy before they reached the national parliament building in Medan.