

## 'US, Pak leaders may meet soon over Kashmir'

KARACHI, June 26: Talks are under way to arrange a meeting between Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and US President Bill Clinton on the Kashmir crisis, Pakistani army chief General Pervez Musharraf said Saturday, reports AFP.

"Lots of contacts have been going on" to schedule a meeting on the conflict between Pakistan and India over the disputed Himalayan state, Musharraf told reporters during a visit to a navy base at Manora island near here.

The general declined to say when the meeting was likely to take place, but added: "I hope soon."

Musharraf met the US president's special envoy, General Anthony Zinni, in Islamabad for two hours on Thursday. Zinni, who is commander-in-chief of the US Central Command, also held hour-long talks with Sharif on Friday.

Musharraf said the US and Pakistan wanted to find a solution agreeable to all three parties to cool down tensions and move towards a settlement of the five-decade-long dispute over Kashmir.

Zinni's two-day visit followed a US State Department call for the withdrawal of allegedly Pakistan-backed guerrillas from Indian-held Kashmir to help defuse tensions between the world's newest nuclear powers.

Officials said Sharif told Zinni, whose delegation included US Deputy Assistant

Secretary of State Gibson Lanpher, that durable peace would return to the region only after the Kashmir dispute was settled.

The confrontation on the border town of Kargil was "symptomatic of the problems that have bedevilled Pakistan-India relations over Kashmir," he said.

Sharif told Zinni that a "balanced and constructive" approach was required to establish a lasting peace in the region.

Lanpher is to brief Indian officials in New Delhi on Saturday about Zinni's talks with Pakistani officials.

The seven-week Indian army and air force operations in Kashmir escalated military tensions in the disputed region and fierce artillery duels have been going on along the Line of Control (LoC) dividing the rivals' zones.

Pakistan denies it has intruded into Indian-controlled Kashmir and rejects charges its soldiers have crossed the LoC. It says Muslim militants fighting in the Indian zone are not its responsibility.

Musharraf said Pakistan did not want to escalate the situation. "We do not want to initiate the worst but it should not be taken a statement of weakness," he said.

But he ruled out the prospect of an imminent war. "No. War is not imminent because we do not want war and I am sure India does not want war," he said.

The two countries have fought three wars.

# India, Pakistan considering peace plans

## Talks on Kashmir can't be one-sided: Vajpayee

mostly Pakistani soldiers and says the guerrillas are Kashmiri separatists over whom it has no control.

But Western nations have recently increased pressure on Pakistan to withdraw the infiltrators.

"Hours before the US officials' meetings in Islamabad, US State Department spokesman James Rubin pointedly blamed Pakistan for the intrusion.

Defence officials said Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee cut short a visit to the eastern city of Patna to attend the late-night meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security on Friday.

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gibson Lanpher was expected to visit New Delhi on Saturday.

"The meeting was there, but without the three chiefs (of the air force, navy and army), a defence official told Reuters.

No further details of the meeting, attended by National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra, Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, Defence Minister George Fernandes and India's top career diplomat, K. Raghunath, were immediately available.

Western diplomats and analysts say Sharif is stuck in a corner as he tries to head off a wider conflict over the infiltration which the powerful Pakistani army planned without

his knowledge.

India, which launched air raids in the Drass, Kargil and Batalik sectors of Kashmir on May 26, has said it will not resume peace talks with Islamabad until the guerrillas are expelled.

The Times of India said Pakistan had also demanded that India agree to hold talks on the 50-year-old dispute over Kashmir within a specified time-frame, failing which Islamabad would be free to approach the United Nations for mediation.

New Delhi denies that Washington's initiatives amount to mediation over Kashmir, which it rejects, but it has welcomed increasing support from Western nations.

AFP adds: India is mulling over a set of Pakistani proposals, which followed talks with a top US general in Islamabad, to end the current Kashmir conflict, a report said today.

The Times of India newspaper said the Cabinet Committee on security, headed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, met late Friday to discuss the Pakistani peace plans.

Quoting government sources, the daily said the plans might have been worked out with the Pakistani leadership by US envoy General Anthony Zinni and Gibson Lanpher, deputy assistant secretary of state, during their two-day visit to Pakistan.

India's Foreign Ministry re-

fused to comment on the report.

Zinni, who flew to Islamabad Thursday, had talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and army chief General Pervez Musharraf.

Sharif told Zinni the fighting in Kargil was "symptomatic of the problems that have bedevilled Pakistan-India relations over Kashmir."

"Unless a peaceful solution of the Kashmir dispute was reached in the shortest possible time, situations like Kargil would continue to erupt, threatening peace and endangering the stability of the region," Sharif said.

The Pioneer daily and other newspapers quoted Vajpayee as saying overnight Friday in the northern state of Bihar that there would be no talks with Islamabad until all the intruders had been forced out.

Meanwhile, India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Saturday said peace with Pakistan over the Kashmir conflict cannot be an "one-sided" affair.

"We want peace. But it cannot be one-sided," Vajpayee was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India in the western city of Pune.

Vajpayee spoke as, according to media reports, New Delhi was studying Pakistani peace proposals for ending the conflict following the visit of a US delegation in Islamabad.

On Thursday fierce fighting



Indian opposition leader Italian-born Sonia Gandhi donates blood in New Delhi Saturday in aid of Indian soldiers fighting in Kashmir. — AFP photo

between Indian soldiers and Islamic guerrillas in the Indian-held Kashmir region were continuing and Vajpayee said despite initial setbacks India's military operation had been a success.

"Initially we faced some difficulties, but the situation has been tackled. Our brave soldiers

are capturing one height after another," he said.

US deputy assistant secretary of state Gibson Lanpher, who visited Pakistan along with US envoy General Anthony Zinni to ask for a withdrawal from Indian Kashmir, was expected Saturday in New Delhi.

## Top US nuclear official quits

WASHINGTON, June 26: The head of the US Energy Department's weapons programme, Victor Reis, has submitted his resignation to the White House, becoming the first official to step down in the wake of Chinese nuclear spying charges. The Washington Post said today, reports Reuters.

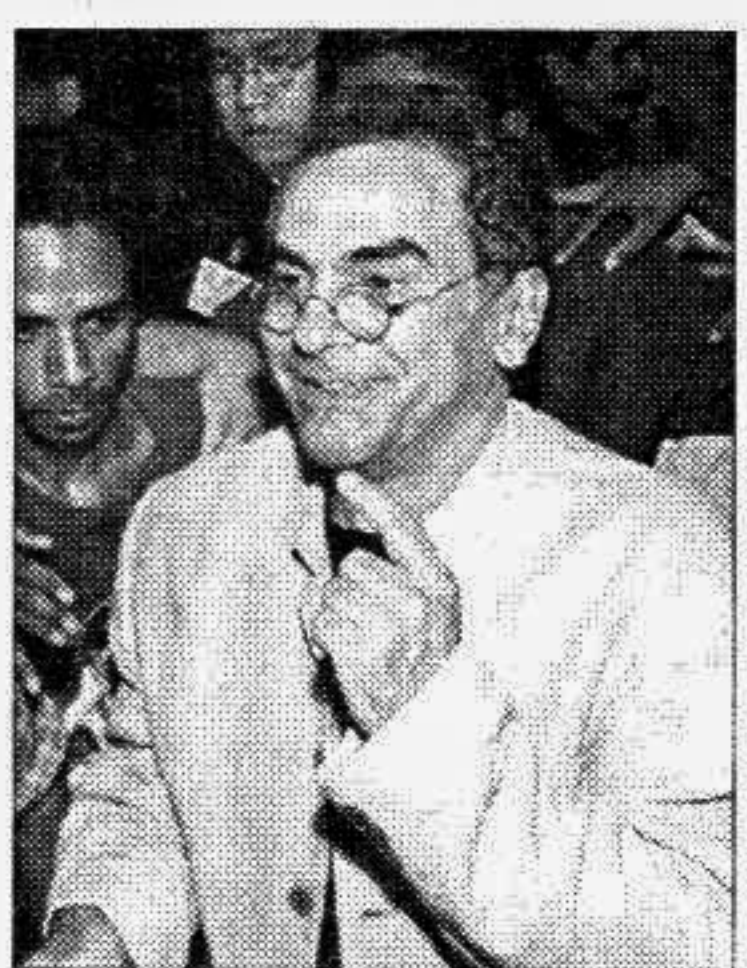
Reis stepped down over a disagreement with Energy Secretary Bill Richardson on how to improve security and streamline management at government laboratories and other facilities that maintain the US nuclear arsenal. The Post reported, citing unnamed officials.

## Charles in Spain with Camilla

GRENADA, Spain, June 26: Prince Charles is holidaying with his companion Camilla Parker-Bowles near Grenada, in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia, the local press reported Saturday, reports AFP.

The heir to the British throne arrived on Friday afternoon on board a private jet to join his close friend, who arrived the day before, at a property at Iora, belonging to the Duke of Wellington.

The couple have already spent several holidays there.



Nobel Peace laureate Jose Ramos Horta gestures as he is mobbed by journalists upon arrival in Jakarta Saturday. — AFP photo

## East Timor talks move into 2nd day

JAKARTA, June 26: Talks aimed at ending violence in East Timor moved into a second day Saturday, with a rebel leader who has spent the last 24 years in exile expected to join in, reports AFP.

The reconciliation talks, dubbed Dare II and sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, are aimed at implementing a peace pact signed June 18.

## Serb troops block roads demanding wages

# Milosevic stands in way of post-war aid: Clinton

BELGRADE, June 26: Pressure mounted on President Slobodan Milosevic as angry Serb troops blocked roads to demand unpaid wages and President Bill Clinton said the Yugoslav leader stood in the way of post-war aid to his shattered country, reports Reuters.

"The price of American aid to rebuild Serbia would be for Serbs to show remorse for their forces' atrocities in Kosovo and to drop Milosevic, Clinton told a news conference in Washington on Friday.

"They are going to have to come to grips with what Milosevic ordered in Kosovo... If they think it's OK, they can make that decision, but I wouldn't give them one red cent for reconstruction," he said.

"They are going to have to come out of denial and then they're going to have to decide whether they support his leadership or not.

"They're going to have to decide whether they think it's OK

that all those tens of thousands of people were killed, and all those hundreds of thousands of people were run out of their homes and all those little girls were raped and all those little boys were murdered," Clinton added.

A US spokesman said earlier that Washington was planning, however, to aid Western-leaning Montenegro, Serbia's junior partner in the Yugoslav Federation.

The United States has offered up to \$5 million for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of Milosevic and other Yugoslavs indicted as war criminals by the UN War Crimes Tribunal.

Serbs on the streets of Belgrade of Friday dismissed the idea of the reward. "I don't believe anyone who went for it would live long enough to enjoy the money," said one young man.

A more serious threat to Milosevic was a growing chorus

of calls from Serbs for him to step down.

Hundreds of Yugoslav soldiers, some armed and drunk, blocked roads in central Serbia for the third day running on Friday.

Dozens of soldiers stood on top of an armoured personnel carrier blocking the bridge over the Ibar river in the centre of Kraljevo, about 170 km south of Belgrade.

"This is a protest to show we are angry that they haven't paid us for going to Kosovo," one man said, standing in a crowd of angry, uniformed soldiers.

"I came back home after three months and I saw my child and wife don't have anything to eat," said a soldier from Kraljevo who was called up to serve in Kosovo.

"If I saw someone now with Slobodan (Milosevic's picture) I would kill him personally," said another.

Kraljevo residents seemed sympathetic to the soldiers,

some bringing them supplies including more beer. All around the town, run by politicians who oppose Milosevic, were freshly painted signs of a fist with the word "resistance" above them.

NATO supreme commander General Wesley Clark said on Friday Kosovo urgently needed an international police force to accompany its military peacekeepers, as a spate of killings in the province threatened to spiral out of control.

In an interview with Reuters, Clark said soldiers, however well trained, could not fully perform policing duties.

Within hours of his comments US marines were involved in a shoot-out-killing a civilian after being attacked at a checkpoint.

Fourteen civilians have died in 24 hours as thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees flood home, many bent on revenge against Serbs.

## BRIEFLY

### Taiwan officials to visit China:

Taiwan said yesterday it would send a delegation led by a senior official to Beijing on Sunday to lay the groundwork for a high-level exchange between the arch-rivals later this year, Reuters reports from Taipei.

The nine-member delegation would discuss a planned Taiwan visit by top China envoy Wang Daohan, repatriation of hijackers, and settlement of fishing disputes, said Jan Jyh-hong, deputy secretary-general of the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation, in a press conference held before his departure.

### Japanese encephalitis kills 48:

An outbreak of Japanese encephalitis has killed 48 people in Vietnam in the first five months of the year, local press reported Saturday, AP reports from Hanoi.

The victims were among 525 people who contracted the disease, the Thanh Nien (Youth) newspaper said. Northern provinces reported 213 cases with 17 deaths, including Bac Giang with 16 cases and six deaths and Ha Giang with 13 cases and 11 deaths.

### Floods hit Mexico:

More than 5,000 families were cut off from the rest of Mexico when floods and landslides swept through the southern isthmus of Tehuantepec, civil protection officials said Friday, AFP reports from Mexico.

Residents of San Francisco del Mar and San Francisco Ixhuatan are encircled by two water currents and the sea, said military sources in the southern state of Oaxaca. One woman died when she tried to swim across a stream of flood water in the indigenous community of San Francisco Ixhuatan, state officials said.

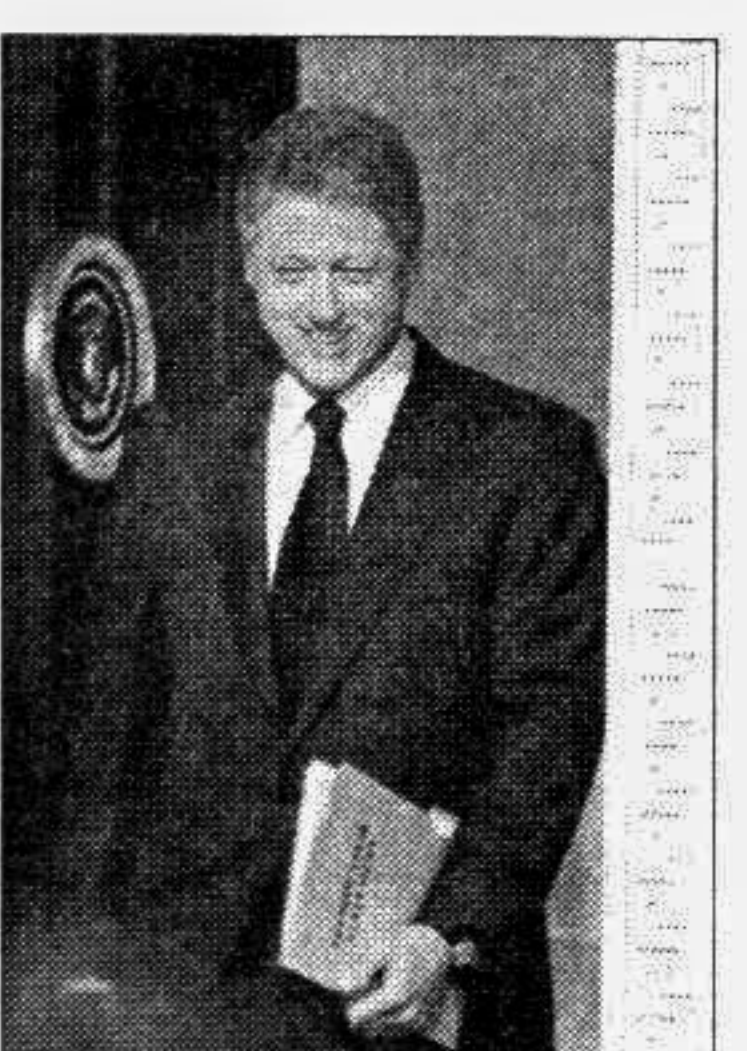
# Clinton urges Congress to move on domestic policies

WASHINGTON, June 26: President Bill Clinton, saying election year pressure must not derail key domestic initiatives, urged Congress on Friday to make this summer a "season of progress" on issues such as Medicare and gun control, reports Reuters.

As the war over Kosovo shifts into a peacekeeping mission and the partisan rancour over the Monica Lewinsky scandal fades, Clinton launched a drive to focus on the domestic issues that have been overshadowed by the two major crises of the past 18 months.

With a sense of urgency to act before the presidential campaign shifts into high gear in January, Clinton argued that it amounted to smart politics by Democrats and Republicans alike to enact laws the public wants.

"There will be plenty of time for politics in the months to come," Clinton said at the start of a lengthy news conference in which he called for political bipartisanship. "The summer



US President Bill Clinton enters Presidential Hall Friday at the White House in Washington to deliver an afternoon press conference to discuss his domestic agenda. — AFP photo

## UK, France sign accord with UN to provide peace keepers

UNITED NATIONS, June 26: Britain and France on Friday became the first permanent members of the Security Council to sign agreements with the United Nations earmarking thousands of their troops for potential peacekeeping operations, reports Reuters.

They became the 23rd and 24th UN members to conclude accords with the world body under which troops and equipment can be quickly made available, subject to government approval.

Each country will earmark 5,000 to 8,000 service personnel for possible UN peacekeeping. The other permanent members of the council are China, Russia and the United States.

British UN Ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock and French UN representative Alain Dejammet signed memoranda of understanding with the UN under-secretary-general in charge of peacekeeping, Bernard Miyet of France.

Both envoys made brief speeches at a formal ceremony in a room lined with photographs of former chiefs of UN peace missions.

should be a season of progress."

Noting the economic success being enjoyed in many parts of the nation, Clinton reminded lawmakers of both parties "we will be judged by what we do with this opportunity — whether we seize it or squander it in petty bickering and partisan animosity."

Acknowledging that "obviously, the closer you get to the election, the more difficult it will be" to enact major legislation, Clinton vowed to "keep working right up to the very end" of his term in January 2001.

"I think it would be to everyone's advantage to continue to make progress," Clinton said.

Clinton offered no new proposals in his remarks, but said he would unveil on Tuesday details of a plan to overhaul the Medicare health care programme for the elderly and disabled, which will include a proposal for partial coverage of prescription drugs.



Masked Palestinian militants from the Islamic Jihad movement, burn US and Israeli flags during a rally in the Shajaiyah district Friday commemorating the anniversary of the death of Mahmoud al Khawaja, a Jihad leader, killed by the Israeli security forces. Around 500 Palestinians attended and uniformed police was not present at the scene. — AFP photo

# Israeli raids in Lebanon shatter hopes for peace

BEIRUT, June 26: Lebanese officials pleaded to rebuild demolished power stations and bridges destroyed in the heaviest Israeli airstrikes against Lebanon in three years. But damage to newly revived hopes for Middle East peace may prove far more difficult to repair, reports AP.

The attacks were in response to a rocket attack by Shi'ite Muslim Hezbollah guerrillas early Thursday on the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmonah, which injured five people.

Hezbollah guerrillas answered the Israeli strikes near the capital of Beirut with rocket attacks on northern Israel, killing two Israelis in the border town.

The latest escalation also set back hopes for reviving long-stalled peace efforts, generated by Israeli elections last month in which Ehud Barak defeated hard-line Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"These tragic events do not augur well for the prospects of resuming the peace process. A repetition of such acts may, in fact, undermine the process," Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss told a news conference Friday. He put the preliminary casualty toll at eight Lebanese dead and 64 wounded.

He said his government holds Barak — whom Netanyahu did not consult about the raids — equally responsible for the casualties.

The UN Security Council called on Israel and Lebanon Friday to immediately halt all fighting and cooperate with UN peacekeepers.

Earlier, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on both sides to stop targeting civilians, calling the deaths "deplorable." Israel and the Shi'ite Muslim Hezbollah guerrillas have been battling in southern Lebanon held their fire most of the day Friday, after the heaviest

airstrikes since 1996.

In Kiryat Shmonah, which has not seen civilian deaths from rocket attacks since 1995, streets were largely deserted Friday as Israeli residents had left town or were staying in shelters.

Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, told Israel Radio that Israel isn't interested in escalating the situation if Hezbollah stops attacks across the border onto northern communities.

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens said Israel had warned Syria — the main power broker in Lebanon — to rein in Hezbollah. "That message apparently was not understood, and so we really had no choice," he told The Associated Press Television Network.

Hezbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah issued a statement Friday saying Hezbollah "will resort to the Katyushas whenever necessary."

## DPRK, ROK resume talks

BEIJING, June 26: North and South Korea resumed their first governmental talks in more than a year today after four days of false starts and postponements by Pyongyang, reports Reuters.

A South Korean delegate said the two sides had "exchanged views" on their deadly naval clash in the Yellow Sea last week and the issue of reuniting the Korean families divided by the world's last Cold War frontier.

The delegate said North Korea had agreed the family would be foremost in the talks but he did not give further details on the discussions, which ended after about 65 minutes. The two sides agreed to meet again on Thursday at 10 am (0200 GMT).

"We've exchanged views with one another," one North Korean delegate told reporters on leaving the second round of talks in Beijing this week.

North Korean delegate Park Young-soo said earlier on Saturday that he hoped the talks would produce good results.

"We should repay our people's anticipations and hopes," he said as the session began. There are still many pending issues between North and South

Korea. We should try to resolve these by step."

The first talks between the rivals in 14 months collapsed after 90 minutes on Tuesday after they ended up slinging accusations over the naval gunbattle in the Yellow Sea last week.

The skirmish between South and North Korean navy boats was their first in the Yellow Sea since their 1950-53 war. The two Koreas remain technically at war because the conflict ended in an armed truce rather than a peace agreement.

Tensions grew further this week after the North denied a South Korean tourist allegedly trying to tempt people to defect.

North Korea released the tourist on Friday, its first conciliatory move since the naval clash.

Yang today called the tourist incident "regrettable." "I welcome that she come back safely and I hope such an incident will not be repeated."

A US envoy said today that North Korea was still considering a package of proposals presented to Pyongyang during last month's visit there by special US envoy William Perry.



Miss Russia Elena Rogojina waves after being elected Miss Europe in Beirut Friday. Thirty-six European beauties took part in the 50th annual Miss Europe contest, watched by more than 900 people, and held in Lebanon for the first time since the 1975-1990 civil war. The show went on despite Israeli air strikes near Beirut. — AFP photo

## World socialist leaders gather in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, June 26: Delegates from 139 nations comprising the Socialist International met here Friday to explore ways to give socialism a shot in the arm on the eve of the 21st century, reports AFP.

Former French prime minister Pierre Mauroy, who is set to take over the organisation's helm in November, inaugurated the meeting, held in Argentina for the first time.

In his opening remarks, Argentine presidential candidate Fernando De La Rúa, a social democrat, called on socialist leaders to adopt policies that promote "progress, ethics and social justice."

He stressed the need for Latin American and socialist countries to integrate into the global economy and alleviate poverty in their societies. "The middle class, which is the nerve centre of countries like Argentina, is hurting," he said, noting that out of the 1.3 billion people who, according to the United Nations, survive on less than one dollar a day, 110 million live in Latin America.