

BRIEFLY

Pak PM meets Hong Kong chief:

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday paid a brief courtesy call on Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa after cutting short a visit to China due to the Kashmir crisis. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Sharif met Tung in a "brief meeting" a Hong Kong government spokesman said without giving further details. The Pakistani premier arrived late Tuesday from a two-day stay in Beijing. His programme in Hong Kong has been curtailed to allow him to return home early amid escalating tensions in Kashmir, a Pakistani consulate spokesman said earlier.

Clinton presents Medicare plan:

President Bill Clinton on Tuesday unveiled his plan to modernise and financially shore up Medicare, the federal health care programme that covers some 39 million retirees. AFP reports from Washington.

"Nothing is more important than providing quality health care for our seniors," Clinton said at a White House ceremony.

Two quakes shake Central Asia:

Two earthquakes shook three countries in Central Asia early yesterday, but no casualties or damage were reported, Russian news agencies said. AFP reports from Moscow.

The second earthquake, with its epicenter in Afghanistan, was the heavier, measuring five points on the Richter scale, seismologists said. It rocked Dushanbe, the capital of neighbouring Tajikistan.

Two killed in Mexico:

Two military officers were killed on Tuesday in an attack on a unit of the presidential guard near the Los Pinos presidential residence here, the city's attorney general said, AFP reports from Mexico City.

Six gunmen attacked the military officers and robbed them of some 500,000 pesos (50,000 dollars) they had just withdrawn from a bank for the unit's daily operations, the attorney general's office of Mexico City said.

Renoir's painting sells at £3m:

A painting by the French impressionist artist Renoir, which had been unseen for 20 years, was sold for more than three million pounds (4.7 million dollars, 4.6 million euros) at Christie's auction house in London on Tuesday. AFP reports from London.

"La jeune fille au banc" (Young Girl on a Bench), painted by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) in 1875, was part of a series of garden studies and was secured by a telephone bidder.

Bus-truck crash kills 6 in China:

An overloaded bus skidded out of control on a rain-slicked highway and hit a truck west of Shanghai, killing six passengers, an official newspaper said Wednesday. AP reports from Shanghai.

The accident occurred Monday night near the city of Suzhou, the Wenhui Daily said. The area has been deluged by almost continuous rain for more than a week. The bus meant for 37 passengers was carrying 85 people, the newspaper said.

Ceausescu's goods in auction:

Property and gifts once belonging to executed Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu are to be sold at auction, the Romanian government said on Tuesday. Reuters reports from Bucharest.

A government statement said goods would be put on auction or sold on consignment, but gave no details. Gifts from Romanians or foreigners would be sold after expert assessment.

3 civilians killed in Aceh:

Three civilians were found fatally stabbed and arson attacks forced more people to flee their homes in restive Aceh province, witnesses and medical workers said Wednesday, AP reports from Indonesia.

The three bodies were found Tuesday with neck wounds in the Tanah Jambaya and Baktya districts in northern Aceh. The death bring the murder toll to five this week, including two primary school teachers found with fatal stab wounds Monday. Last week, unidentified gunmen killed about a dozen civilians and soldiers.

Nepal's Cabinet expanded:

Nepal's Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai expanded his month-old government Wednesday to include 17 more ministers in the Cabinet, the state-run Radio Nepal announced. AP reports from Kathmandu.

Minister for Information Purna Bahadur Khadka was given the additional portfolio of the interior security ministry, becoming the second most powerful minister in the Cabinet. Former Finance Minister Ram Sharman Mahat was named foreign minister.

Li Peng to visit N Korea in Oct:

A Chinese delegation headed by Li Peng, head of China's parliament and the country's second highest ranking official, is likely to visit North Korea in October, a Japanese financial daily reported yesterday. Reuters reports from Tokyo.

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun, quoting diplomatic sources in Beijing, said the visit will mark the 50th anniversary of formal ties between China and North Korea.

Blast kills 1 in Philippines:

A grenade has been hurled into a prayer rally in the southern Philippines, killing one person and wounding nine, police said yesterday. Reuters reports from Zamboanga.

The culprit escaped and investigators said they suspected Tuesday night's attack was carried out by the Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim fundamentalist group blamed for a spate of bombings in the country's southern islands in recent years.

Australian DPM resigns:

Australia's Deputy Prime Minister, Trade Minister and National Party leader Tim Fischer has resigned suddenly from all his official positions, party sources said yesterday. AFP reports from Sydney.

Fischer called a special meeting of his National Party parliamentary colleagues to inform them of his decision, but no information was immediately revealed about the reasons, the sources said.

Floods leave 18 dead in Japan:

Flooding and landslides set off by pouring rain in southwestern Japan have left at least 18 people dead, 10 missing and 26 injured, police said Wednesday. AP reports from Tokyo.

National broadcaster NHK TV reported that at least 22 people were killed by early Wednesday. The rains, which began Tuesday, destroyed 37 homes and flooded about 5,000 homes, police said. The Meteorological Agency issued heavy rain warnings for wide areas of western Japan Wednesday morning.



International

Indian offensives continue

US presses on Pakistan to pull troops out of Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, June 30: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif returns from Beijing today armed only with modest Chinese support against US demands to pull troops out of Indian Kashmir or risk a fourth war with archival India, reports Reuters.

The United States turned up the heat on Islamabad today by openly accusing Pakistan of using regular troops in the seizure of strategic heights on the Indian side of disputed Kashmir, a charge Pakistan sternly denies.

A US official in Washington, who declined to be named, said, "there are Pakistani regular forces involved, probably in the high hundreds. It's very substantial."

The statement was seen as a significant escalation of US pressure on Pakistan and a sign of Washington's frustration at scant progress towards a solution to the worst military standoff between India and Pakistan in nearly 30 years.

It was the first time the United States had publicly voiced charges which are common knowledge in the Pakistani capital but which have so far only been made under the cover of diplomatic anonymity or the safety of distant deadlines.

Pakistan daily maintains that the insurgents are Kashmiri "freedom fighters" over which Islamabad has no control, but the US statement put the onus for their withdrawal squarely on the shoulders of the two-time Pakistan premier, diplomats said.

Western governments had little doubt the occupying force comprises soldiers from the Northern Light Infantry, a regular army unit, although how many and in what ratio to "mujahideen" (holy warriors) was guesswork, diplomats said.

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"infiltrators" from Indian Kashmir.

Former Foreign Secretary Niaz Nalik said the subject was reviewed in secret weekend talks he had in New Delhi with Prime Minister Atal Behari Va-

and artillery units pounded Muslim guerrilla bases in Kashmir today, as ground forces sought to press home their advantage after capturing two key peaks in the region.

Air force officials said

larly intense on guerrilla positions in the Tiger Hills area, where Indian troops captured two strategic peaks on Tuesday.

The current conflict began

on May 9 when India launched operations against what it



A photograph of popular Indian film actress Mamta Kulkarni adorns the butt of the assault rifle of an Indian soldier at a Kashmiri frontline near Kargil, June 29. Bunker-to-bunker fighting in Kashmir between Indian soldiers and Islamic raiders from Pakistan is nearing a decisive phase but the bloodiest battle is still to come, an Indian commander said yesterday.

— AFP photo

jaypee and said he hoped a military exit would be followed by resumed peace talks between the two premiers.

He said that Indian and Pakistani military officials should meet to discuss the withdrawal, which could be read as tacit Pakistani acknowledgment of control over the "infiltrators".

AFP adds: Indian air force

bombers flew numerous night-time sorties in the mountainous areas of northern Kashmir near the Line of Control (LOC) — the de facto border with Pakistan.

Artillery units also kept up a constant barrage throughout the night ahead of a visit to the battlefield by Indian Home Minister L K Advani.

Indian shelling was particu-

claims are regular Pakistani soldiers and Islamic guerrillas who crossed the LOC to take up positions in Indian-held Kashmir.

The Islamic guerrillas still control much of the Tiger Hills area in Drass sector, but Indian Army officials said Wednesday that their troops had managed to cut their main supply routes.

Church taking the lead.

The church has in a "rather dramatic way" not only demanded the resignation of Milosevic, but also made it clear the Milosevic leadership had a policy of atrocities in Kosovo, Rubin said.

The whole responsibility for this misery lies on Slobodan Milosevic," said former Gen Vuk Obrovic, another leader of the Alliance for Change.

About half of the 860,000 Kosovar Albanians forced to flee to neighbouring countries have now returned home. Thousands more are returning every day. At least 70,000 Serbs, fearful of reprisals, have fled Kosovo.

NATO-led peacekeepers are trying to restore order in Kosovo, but thousands of the refugees who returned to find their houses burned and neighbours murdered seem bent on new protests.

Police tried to prevent the opposition rally in Cacak's main square, blocking some roads to stop protesters and some media crews.

Some analysts have said that Turkey may try to delay a final decision until after November, when the country is to play host to the summit of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Diplomats have said that European states have hinted that they may boycott the summit if Ocalan is hanged.

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The verdict sparked celebrations among relatives of the war victims at the port of Mudanya, near the prison island where the trial was held. Some held ropes in the shape of nooses. Many wore the red crescent and star Turkish flag

across their chests.

"I want to see him hanged with my eyes now," said Huseyin Tamac, whose 21-year-old son was killed in a 1994 clash with the rebels.

It could be months before Tamac sees his wish come true. The death sentence is automatically appealed. If the court reaffirms the sentence, as is widely expected, it must still be approved by parliament and President Suleyman Demirel.

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The findings are likely to add to the controversy over the impact of heat-trapping pollution in the atmosphere and to what extent it will affect climate and sea levels worldwide in the decades to come.

The new estimates are primarily based on a funding of significantly lower levels of sulfur dioxide emissions than previously assumed, Wigley said. Sulfate particles cool the atmosphere, mitigating the impact of the greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels. Sulfur emissions are dropping because of the push to reduce acid rain and other surface air pollution.

"The new research suggests the likelihood of slightly larger changes in temperature and sea level rise than projected in the most recent IPCC assessment," said Eileen Claussen, executive director of the Pew Center on Climate Change.

Myanmar junta blasts AI as dupe of terrorists

BANGKOK, June 30: Myanmar lashed out at human rights group Amnesty International on Wednesday, saying its report on alleged abuses in the military states was part of a "smear campaign" by ethnic terrorists, reports AFP.

A junta spokesman said Amnesty's report released earlier Wednesday was based on interviews with "so-called refugees" who were in fact supporters of "ethnic terrorist groups".

"These same terrorists are also exploiting Amnesty and using it as a platform to attack the government in their smear campaign," the spokesman said in a statement received here.

The Amnesty report focused on three remote border states — home to Karen, Shan and Karenni minorities — and was based on interviews with refugees in Thailand.

"ASEAN countries then claimed that such a move would encourage the (junta) to improve its human rights record.

"Amnesty's report echoes claims by Aung San Suu Kyi that ASEAN membership gave the junta new confidence to crack down on all forms of dissent, including the NLD.

Militants kill 13 workers in Kashmir

JAMMU, June 30: Armed Islamic guerrillas surrounded sleeping construction workers in Jammu-Kashmir and shot dead 13 of them, police said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The attack at a brick factory was carried out late Tuesday in