

Attacks continue as Delhi sees no Kashmir pullout



US President Bill Clinton (R) walks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (L) outside Blair House following their nearly three hours of talks on ways to end fighting in Kashmir. Clinton and Sharif agreed that "concrete steps will be taken" to restore the Line of Control between Indian and Pakistan-held Kashmir. — AFP photo

Russian forces attack gunmen in Chechnya

MOSCOW, July 5: Russian forces on Monday killed a large number of Chechens when its helicopter gunships attacked gunmen near the separatist republic's border with Russia, reports AFP.

"We are delivering strikes without waiting until they attack us. What happened this night firmly confirms this," Interior Minister Vladimir Ruzhailo said in remarks broadcast on private NTV television.

Ruzhailo's comments came after a Kremlin meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

"We noticed a group of 150-200 gunmen armed with automatic weapons, who clearly planned to attack our border checkpoints," Ruzhailo said.

"We used helicopters and mortar fire. The gunmen suffered losses. As far as we can tell through intercepted radio dispatches a large whole number of them were killed."

Ruzhailo's announcement came a day after Russian troops fired on Chechen rebels. The Chechen government then threatened to retaliate.

He said interior ministry troops at 6:00 a.m. (0200 GMT) sent a squadron of helicopters to attack a group of Chechen fighters stationed at the border of Russia's Dagestan region.

Russia previously said it had set up unit of 17,000 troops near the border with Chechnya, with which it fought a 21-month war that according to estimates claimed some 80,000 lives.

The conflict ended without the main issue of the small republic's status being settled. Chechnya claims full independence from Moscow, although it has not been recognised by any country in the world.

Skirmishes are frequent between Russian troops and Chechen rebels.

Last month, seven Russians were killed and 15 injured in a night of border fighting.

UN worried about holding E Timor referendum

DILI, Indonesia, July 5: Anti-independence militiamen in East Timor ambushed UN police officers and stoned their helicopter, prompting the world body to question Monday whether a plebiscite on independence could proceed as planned, reports AP.

The confrontation between militia members and UN staff on Sunday followed an assault on a relief convoy in the town of Liqueia, some 25 KM west of the territorial capital, Dili.

The confrontation was the most serious challenge to UN authority in East Timor by militias vehemently opposed to the holding of the referendum. UN staff were attacked and threatened in other towns last week.

Indonesian officials announced that Liqueia's police chief was replaced Monday and said more Indonesian police would be sent to East Timor to beef up security.

In Jakarta, military commander Gen. Wiranto pledged that the security forces will protect UN personnel. "Security is being guaranteed by the Indonesian authorities, and the police and military will ensure it," Wiranto said after a meeting with jailed East Timor guerrilla leader Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao and visiting Nobel Peace Prize winner Jose Ramos Horta.

The plebiscite will determine the future of the former Portuguese colony that was invaded and annexed by Indonesia in the mid-1970s.

Citizens of the half-island province are to choose between remaining part of Indonesia as an autonomous region or full independence.

Violence has escalated in the months since plans for the ballot were announced.

Meanwhile, the latest attack on international humanitarian workers by militiamen opposed to a referendum on independence for East Timor raises fresh concerns about whether the ballot can go ahead, UN special envoy James H. Dorey said Monday.

"We're very concerned," about the attack, Dorey told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

BRIEFLY



UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Sadako Ogata gestures as she talks with an ethnic Albanian refugee boy, Monday in the refugee camp in Stenkovac, about his return to Kosovo. Ogata was to accompany a convoy of refugees back to Pristina. — AFP photo

Blast kills 1 in Istanbul: One person was killed and 24 wounded, five of them seriously, when a bomb placed in a rubbish bin in an Istanbul park exploded Sunday evening, the NTV television news channel reported, AFP says from Ankara.

Road accident kills 29 in Cameroon: Twenty-nine people died and many others were injured when two minibuses packed with passengers were in a head-on collision Sunday some 20 km north of Yaounde, the Cameroon gendarmerie said, AFP reports from Yaounde.

Greens threaten to quit Schroeder's coalition govt

BERLIN, July 5: The junior partner in Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's center-left coalition threatened to walk out Monday unless the government finds a way to speed up plans to wean Germany off nuclear power, reports AP.

Leaders of the environmentalist Greens Party, who are to meet with Schröder on the issue Wednesday, called the closure of Germany's atomic power plants a make-or-break issue for the 8-month-old coalition.

Taiwan, PNG set up diplomatic ties

TAIPEI, July 5: Papua New Guinea and Taiwan forged full diplomatic links here Monday, officials said.

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Jason Hu and his PNG counterpart Roy Yaki signed a joint communiqué here after a day of talks, reports AP.

The governments of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Papua New Guinea have established full diplomatic ties effective today in accordance with the international law, the communiqué said.

It added Taiwan "is soon to open the embassy in Port Moresby," the capital of Papua New Guinea, and swapping ambassadors would "strengthen friendly and cooperative ties between the two states."

DPRK may abandon plans to conduct missile test

SEOUL, July 5: North Korea showed signs of abandoning plans to conduct a second missile launch during US-North Korea talks in Beijing late last month, a South Korean newspaper reported today, says Reuters.

Dong-A Ilbo quoted an unidentified South Korean government official accompanying President Kim Dae-jung on a visit to the United States as saying he heard the news from a senior US official at the summit between Kim and President Bill Clinton on Saturday.

There were positive signs during the recent US-North Korea talks in Beijing, that North Korea may suspend its plans to test-launch a missile, the Korean official quoted the US official as saying.

The US official declined to disclose details, such as what North Korea was demanding in exchange for abandoning its plans for a missile launch, the paper said.

North Korea sent shock waves across the region last August by test-firing a new long-range rocket that soared over Japan and into the Pacific. Pyongyang said it was launching a satellite, which US defence officials later confirmed.

Reports from the United States and Japan over the past month have suggested North Korea was preparing to launch a

Joining coalition govt was a mistake: Jayalalitha

CHENNAI, July 5: AIADMK Supremo Jayalalitha last night admitted that she had made a grave error by having an alliance with the BJP in the last elections and assured minorities that she would never again commit the same mistake.

"It was to make amends for my mistake that I brought down the BJP government and I can assure you that I will never again have any truck with the BJP in future," she said, addressing the "Muslims" right to live conference organised by the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (TMKM) here.

Lambasting the Karunanidhi government in Tamil Nadu for harassing innocent Muslims in the name of conducting searches for extremists, Jayalalitha said her party would be at the forefront of the struggle of secular forces to defeat the DMK-BJP combine in the Lok Sabha elections.

The TMKM's conference, with the twin objective of uniting political parties opposed to the BJP-DMK front and raising

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The British government was encouraged by Sunday's unexpectedly trouble-free Protestant parade through Portadown, west of Belfast, where security was boosted to stop violent clashes between marchers and Roman Catholic residents.

The pro-British unionists, who form the majority in the province, now have two weeks to back the plan, as does their chief rival, the political wing of the IRA, Sinn Féin. Without such support, the plan collapses.

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