

## DPRK building missile base near China

SEOUL, July 7: North Korea is building an underground missile base near its northern border with China, making the site difficult for US and South Korean forces to attack, a local newspaper said today, reports Reuters.

The Chosun Ilbo newspaper quoted an unidentified government official as saying North Korea was building the underground missile site in Yanggang province at the central part of its border with China.

"South Korea-US forces are anxious to come up with countermeasures since an attack at a time of emergency is impossible because the base is about 20 km from China," the official was quoted by the paper as saying.

He said it would be difficult to attack the base since its entrance faces China. The paper said the construction of the base was about 70 per cent completed and it had 10 launch pads, each 20 metres (66 feet) long, leading to speculation they could be used to launch Taepodong I and Taepodong II missiles, now under development.

Last August, North Korea test-fired the three-stage Taepodong I, which flew over Japan and landed in the Pacific. Pyongyang said it was launching a satellite, which US defence officials later confirmed.

The Taepodong II's range would put the US states of Hawaii and Alaska within striking distance, defence analysts said.

Chosun quoted a military source as saying missiles fired from the new base could reach all of South Korea and most parts of Japan.

## Hillary's first campaign for Senate race

WEST DAVENPORT, New York, July 7: Hillary Rodham Clinton has been to New York a dozen times this year as the nation's first lady, but on today's trip she's a candidate for the Senate, reports AP.

For her first official campaign appearance, Hillary chose the homestead of the man she hopes to succeed, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan. It is the first stop on what aides describe as a summer-long "listening tour" of the state.

Her aides said Hillary, the first-ever first lady to seek public office, hopes to blunt charges she is a political carpetbagger, having never lived or worked in New York.

With no fanfare, Hillary's campaign on Tuesday filed a single page with the Federal Election Commission in Washington, declaring that she had formed a committee to explore a Senate race. That enables her to raise and spend money for political travel, polling and advertising.

Moynihan's decision to retire after 24 years in the Senate cleared the way for her Senate bid.

The race to replace Moynihan is being eyed on the Republican side by New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and two congressmen from Long Island, Rick Lazio and Peter King.

Giuliani formed a Senate exploratory committee in April. Hillary Clinton's decision to visit the Moynihan homestead brought a flurry of activity to the normally placid place. Workmen constructed an outdoor platform to hold the more than 200 reporters and television crews, some from as far away as Asia and Europe.

"Today, we're cleaning out the barn in case it rains tomorrow... It's full of pigeon guano," the senator's wife, Liz, said on the eve of Hillary's arrival.

Her four-day swing through eastern and central New York, a traditional Republican stronghold, has generated enthusiasm from many Democrats.

## US warns Russia not to sell arms to Syria

WASHINGTON, July 7: The United States warned Russia on Tuesday that it could lose American aid if it sold more lethal weapons to Syrian, which Washington considers a state sponsor of terrorism, reports Reuters.

The State Department made the point publicly as Syrian President Hafez al-Assad visited Moscow for the first time since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Assad was seeking to renew ties with Syria's former patron and acquire new weapons to strengthen his hand in long-stalled peace talks with Israel expected to be revived soon.

"In terms of arms sales... we would be very concerned about any new Russian arms sale to Syria or to any other designated state sponsor of terrorism," State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley said.

He noted that under US law, assistance could be withheld from the government of a country that transferred lethal military equipment to a country determined by the secretary of state to be a state sponsor of terrorism.

Despite the warning, Foley said Assad's visit could be a "positive" even "if the aim is to try to build momentum for the Middle East peace process."

New Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has promised to inject new urgency into the search for Mideast peace.



Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi (C) prepares to lay a wreath honouring the remains of Captain Sumeet Roy, a casualty of the fighting in Kashmir, during a funeral ceremony Wednesday. Though India claims to be pushing back Islamic militant infiltrators steadily, the cost remains high for the Indian Army. — AFP photo

## Militants rule out withdrawal from Kashmir peaks

ISLAMABAD, July 7: The commanders of Islamic militants fighting in Kashmir Wednesday said they would reject any order by Pakistan to withdraw from the strategic peaks they have captured in Indian Kashmir, reports AFP.

"We reject any appeal by Pakistan to vacate our positions," Mohammad Salahuddin, chief of the united front grouping 15 militant organisations, told a news conference here.

Salahuddin, accompanied by other "mujahideen" leaders, denounced a weekend Pakistan-United States summit where Washington said it was assured the withdrawal of Islamic fighters from Indian Kashmir.

The communique was issued after a meeting between US President Bill Clinton and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Pakistan has said it would "appeal" to the mujahideen to leave their positions in the Kargil-Drass sectors across the Line of Control which divides the Himalayan state between India and Pakistan.

Salahuddin said no appeal had been received from Pakistan so far but that the fighters would turn down such a request and continue their occupation as long as possible.

He termed Sharif's mission to Washington as a "stab in the back" to the 11-year "freedom struggle" in Kashmir.

In Kargil, India's military offensive in Kashmir remained on full throttle Wednesday.

Indian military officials said the army had recaptured the strategic Jubar Hills in the Batalik sector of northern Kashmir, following a fierce bunker-to-bunker fighting during the night.

The decisive moment in the battle for Jubar Hills came during an Indian rocket attack on an enemy ammunition dump.

There was a huge explosion which gutted many of the bunkers held by the infiltrators, one official said.

Another peak adjacent to Jubar Hills was also retaken, he added.

India has stressed that its military operation in Kashmir will continue until the last

guerrilla has retreated to the Pakistan side of the border.

The fighting began in early May when India launched a massive offensive to evict guerrillas who had crossed the so-called Line of Control and set up heavily-armed mountain bunkers in Indian territory.

According to official figures, 283 Indian soldiers have been killed in the conflict compared to 542 on the other side. Independent observers say the figures are probably far higher.

Islamabad, which denies New Delhi's claims that Pakistani regular soldiers are involved in the fighting, has promised to "use its influence" and effect a withdrawal by the "Kashmiri freedom fighters."

The commitment was made by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during talks at the weekend with US President Bill Clinton.

In return, Sharif asked for US help in resolving the long-standing Indo-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, which has sparked two wars in the past 50 years.

## Sierra Leone govt, rebels reach accord

LOME, July 7: Sierra Leone's government and rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) reached an accord Wednesday in Lome which is expected to be signed later in the day, rebel chief Foday Sankoh told AFP.

"I am going to sign an accord today. An accord has been reached," Sankoh said.

The announcement comes after marathon talks that began late Tuesday and lasted into the night among five west African heads of state and the RUF rebel chief, who first launched his bush war in 1991.

Sankoh gave no further detail on the nature of the accord, but a Togolese diplomat said that the agreement would be signed between the rebel leader and Sierra Leone's President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah later Wednesday morning.

Along with Kabbah, the presidents of Burkina Faso, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo hammered out the accord with the RUF during the night, the diplomat said.

The peace deal, which comes after six weeks of talks, was brokered by Togo, which holds the presidency of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

## Open heart surgery pioneer C Walton dead

ST PAUL, Minnesota, July 7: Dr. C. Walton Lillehei, a medical pioneer who became known as the "father of open heart surgery," has died of cancer. He was 80, reports AP.

Lillehei, who died Monday, created many innovative heart surgery techniques during the 1950s while a surgery professor at the University of Minnesota.

Lillehei, who also serves as chairman of the Department of Surgery at the Cornell Medical Center-New York Hospital for several years beginning in 1967, was the author of more than 700 clinical publications and trained more than 1,000 cardiac surgeons practicing around the world.

Among Lillehei's students were Dr. Christiaan Barnard, who performed the first human heart transplant in 1967, and other pioneers in heart transplantation.

In 1955, Lillehei led university researchers in developing a machine to oxygenate blood and pump it through the patient's body, making open-heart and ultimately heart-transplant surgery possible.

Lillehei worked with Medtronic Inc. cofounder Earl Bakken in 1957 to develop the first wearable pacemaker for the successful treatment of patients with chronic complete heart block.

Lillehei also contributed to the design of four prosthetic heart valves, including the widely-used St Jude Medical Mechanical Heart Valve.

In 1973, Lillehei's image was tarnished when he was found guilty on five counts of tax evasion.

## India to pursue diplomacy, military campaign in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, July 7: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee vowed Wednesday to pursue diplomatic efforts to evict Islamic guerrillas from Kashmir, but refused to halt a military offensive in the Himalayan state, reports AFP.

At the same time, Vajpayee told a meeting of chief ministers that he was against any internationalisation of the 50-year territorial dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir.

Facing the most serious crisis of his 16-month premiership, Vajpayee said India was determined to drive out the guerrillas -- and what New Delhi claims are Pakistani troops -- occupying key hills in Indian Kashmir.

He also raised doubts over the pledge his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif made to US President Bill Clinton on Sunday to pull the fighters back over the Kashmir border.

"We are informed that Pakistan has agreed to withdraw," Vajpayee said. "We will watch for results on the ground."

"In the meantime our (military) operations shall

continue unabated."

However, he added the government had not ruled out a diplomatic resolution of the two-month conflict.

"While our armed forces are doing everything to throw out the armed intruders, we are also engaged diplomatically to achieve the same purpose."

The objective is one and only one. It is the complete and unconditional withdrawal of the intruders from our side. There is no other objective and no other subject that we are discussing."

Vajpayee's remarks were a clear warning that while India might accept mediation to end the current fighting, it would reject any interference in the overall Kashmir debate.

"We have made it clear there is no room for third-party involvement," he said, adding contacts with western countries over the current situation had a limited brief.

"This is not internationalisation of the Kashmir question since they (Western countries) all recognise that this is a bilateral matter to be settled between

India and Pakistan."

India launched its military operation in Kashmir in May.

Pakistan denies any involvement in the incursion, saying the armed men are Moslem insurgents fighting to end Indian rule over Kashmir.

The fighting has led to hundreds of deaths on both sides, and fuelled concerns of an all-out war between India and Pakistan, which conducted nuclear tests in May last year.

The two countries have fought three wars, including two over Kashmir.

Wednesday's meeting of chief ministers was the first multi-party forum to discuss Kashmir since fighting erupted in the state.

The opposition has supported the war effort, but has criticised the government's failure to check the large-scale incursion by Islamic forces into Kashmir.

On Tuesday, opposition leader Sonia Gandhi, addressing a public meeting ahead of coming elections, launched a bitter attack on Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist-led coalition.



Former rivals, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (l-r), his wife Nava and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara, toast at the Prime Minister's Office during the official changing-of-the-guard ceremony in Jerusalem Wednesday. Barak plans to meet Middle Eastern leaders and US President Clinton in the next two weeks as he tries to restart the peace process. — AFP photo

## Barak moves swiftly on peace track

JERUSALEM, July 7: Wasting no time honouring promises to revive the stalled Middle East peace process, new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Wednesday set quick summit meetings with Yasser Arafat, US President Bill Clinton and Arab leaders, reports AFP.

The summits were announced just a day after Barak was sworn in as the head of the broadest coalition government in Israel's history with the declared aim of achieving peace accords with the country's Arab neighbours.

Barak will meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo on Friday and Arafat on Sunday, his office said.

He will then travel to Washington on July 16 for talks with Clinton and other senior officials as part of his government's campaign "to put the peace process back on track," an official statement said.

Barak will also meet next week with Jordan's King Abdullah, it said.

"We have taken the initiative to revive the peace process by organising these meetings," said Danny Yatom, Barak's chief of staff.

He said the meeting with Arafat would take place on the Israeli side of the Erez crossing between Israel and the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip.

Taking office Tuesday night, Barak told parliament, "An historic chance for peace has been given to us."

"We can expect difficult negotiations, but if we find the same determination on the other side, no power in the world will stop us," he said.

Arafat welcomed Barak's statement and the arrival of his dovish government after three years of acrimony and peace-making deadlock under conservative prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We are ready to work together to achieve the peace of the brave which we signed with the Israeli government," Arafat said Tuesday night in Gaza City.

The top item on the agenda between Barak and Arafat is expected to be Israeli implementation of the Wye River interim peace accord signed last October by Netanyahu but then quickly suspended by the rightist Israeli leader.

The Palestinians have also said they will demand that Barak halt all Jewish settle-

ment expansion projects in Palestinian territories and cancel settler land-grabs carried out in the final weeks of the Netanyahu government.

Meanwhile, Palestinians leaders said Wednesday that they would put some firm demands on the table when PLO chief Yasser Arafat holds his first summit meeting this weekend with new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

"We will demand implementation of the Wye River agreement, an immediate halt to settlement activity, especially in Jerusalem and an end to the blockade to which the Palestinian people have been subjected," said Nabil Shaath, Arafat's minister for international cooperation.

Tangible progress on the ground within a short time-frame will be the real indicator of whether Barak really wants to get the peace process back on track in order to achieve a permanent, complete and just peace," he told AFP.

Shaath welcomed Wednesday's announcement by Israel that Barak would meet with Arafat on Sunday, just five days after taking office.

## Anti-Milosevic protests spread across Serbia

BELGRADE, July 7: Demands for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to quit spread on Tuesday to Serbia's second and third largest cities, while former Belgrade mayor Zoran Djindjic led an anti-government rally to warn of civil war if he stays, reports AFP.

Students in Nis, Serbia's second largest city, said the people must choose between Serbia or Milosevic, and the city council of Novi Sad, Serbia's third largest town, accused the president of "catastrophic foreign and domestic policy."

It was the first time a city council had openly called for Milosevic's departure.

Some 1,500 people clashed with riot police in the southern Serbian town of Leskovac following the jailing of a television engineer who had interrupted broadcasts to call for an opposition protest.

Some protesters attacked the house of a local official of Milosevic's Socialist Party, smashing windows and breaking down the surrounding fence in protest at the 30-day sentence for Ivan Novkovic.

Djindjic, head of the Serbian Democratic Party, told some 5,000 people in Uzice, southwest of Belgrade, that Serbia was heading for a civil war unless Milosevic went immediately.

He sketched out an emergency programme of measures to follow Milosevic's departure.

"We must not let ourselves get involved in the last war Milosevic has yet to provoke, the civil war," said Djindjic, who returned to Belgrade on Sunday after a two-month absence.

"He has to go immediately, without bargaining, with no choice."

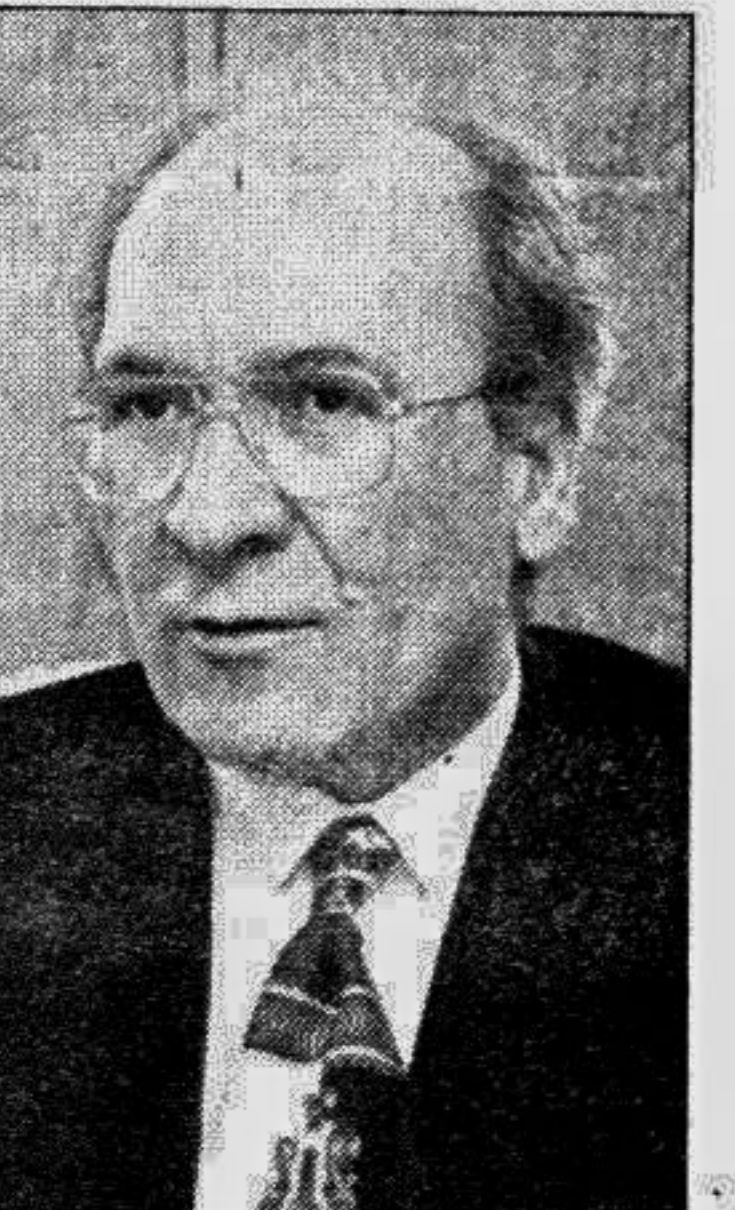
The rally, held under the slogan "Now or never," ended after an hour without incident.

Police did not intervene although the protest was banned. The crowd who had answered a call for the Uzice rally, issued by the Alliance for Change (SZP) opposition coalition, was blessed by a Serbian Orthodox priest.

In June, the Serbian Orthodox church also demanded resignation of Milosevic and other top Yugoslav officials.

Protesters in Uzice carried signs reading "Milosevic, stop defending us!", "Serbia deserves better," "We want changes", "Now or never" and "Milosevic, what is next?"

Djindjic urged the people to "transform" their dissatisfaction to "a general people's movement aimed at freeing the Serbian people from slavery."



Undated file picture of Turkish Minister of State for the Economy, Hikmet Uluoglu, who sustained serious injuries when he tried to commit suicide in Ankara early Wednesday.

Uluoglu had shot himself at his home and was rushed to hospital after he was found by his wife and his son. Health Minister Osman Durmus said later, Uluoglu was in a stable condition and his life no longer in danger. — AFP photo

## PNG PM quits amid storm over ties with Taiwan

PORT MORESBY, July 7: Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Bill Salesi resigned Wednesday amid uproar over a decision to establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan instead of China, a move his likely successor said would be reviewed, reports AFP.

Skate, facing defeat in a no-confidence vote within a fortnight, called journalists to his official residence and said he had quit to end political instability in the Pacific nation.

"My ministers did not put pressure on me," he said. "But we have looked at all the options and I think it is the best decision."

"I have consulted my ministers, my coalition partners and they took it with mixed feelings... I am resigning basically to stabilise politics."

His announcement came as Port Moresby's Post-Courier newspaper revealed he may have won a 2.3 billion US dollar grant from Taiwan in exchange for his signature on a treaty granting diplomatic recognition.

Taiwan Foreign Minister Jason Wu denied this, saying he too would resign rather than do such a thing.

"Not any promise regarding money has been made in the promotion of diplomacy, least of all cash payment," Wu told reporters.

## Taliban term US sanctions an 'attack against Muslims'

KABUL, July 7: Afghanistan's Taliban rulers said Wednesday they did not know the whereabouts of suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden and called US sanctions an "attack against Muslim people," reports AP.

US President Bill Clinton signed an executive order Monday imposing financial sanctions against Afghanistan's Taliban rulers in retaliation for their reputed support of Bin Laden.

It wasn't immediately clear whether this order would effect a recently signed agreement between the Taliban and a US-based company for a telecommunications system valued at about 150 million dollars.

International Telephone System has a 51 per cent share and the Taliban a 49 per cent share in a newly signed joint venture to supply telephone and cellular telephone services in Afghanistan.

Last month Washington put Bin Laden on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted List" and offered a 5 million dollar reward for information leading to his arrest.

"Investment in Afghanistan will continue if businessmen are making money because then they will be happy," said the Taliban's Deputy Minister of Commerce Maulvi Faizil Mohammed Faizal.

Washington accuses Bin Laden of masterminding last year's deadly attacks on US embassies in East Africa.

In his executive order, Clinton said the sanctions will "deepen the international isolation of the Taliban."

But Faizal accused the United States of imposing sanctions because it "wants to attack the Muslim people," all of their accusations against the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and against Bin Laden is without reason and without evidence."

Last year the Taliban's Supreme Court held an inquiry and cleared Bin Laden of accusations by the US that Bin

Laden was running a terrorist organisation and was involved in attacks against the United States.

According to the Taliban, Bin Laden, who left his home in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar earlier this year, has disappeared and his whereabouts is unknown.

Faizal questioned US information that claims Bin Laden still is in Afghanistan and still receiving support from the Taliban organisation.

"It is surprising... we are the government, we are in Afghanistan and we don't know where Bin Laden is but Clinton who is thousands of miles away he says he knows here he is. Where is his proof?" asked Faizal.

The Taliban army rule roughly 90 per cent of Afghanistan while their opponents, led by ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani, about 10 per cent.

In their territory the Taliban have imposed a harsh brand of Islamic law that bans women from work, denies girls education and requires men to wear beards, turbans and pray in the mosque.

America does not want a Muslim government in Afghanistan, said Faizal. There also has been widespread speculation in Afghanistan of another possible US attack on suspected bases of Bin Laden's inside Afghanistan, similar to last August's cruise missile attacks on eastern Afghanistan.

## UN arms team to go to Iraq next week

UNITED NATIONS, July 7: A five-member team of disarmament experts from Poland, South Africa, Russia, China and Germany is expected to go to Iraq next week to clean out a UN laboratory, United Nations sources said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Samples of chemical materials in the laboratory, which Iraq says are dangerous, were left behind by the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) when it left Baghdad in mid-December.

UNSCOM had expected to return since then. But Iraq will not let any of the UNSCOM experts or their associates from a Swiss government laboratory, who set up the operation, back into the country and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's office has agreed to Baghdad's demands.