

Pak govt under fire over Kashmir pullout

ISLAMABAD, July 12: Pakistanis reacted Monday with a mixture of rage and relief to the disengagement agreement with India in Kashmir while Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif came under fire for what some called a betrayal, reports AFP.

Many expressed shock at the sudden and anti-climatic end to the two-month conflict that gripped national attention amid a flood of reports of heroic battles waged in the Himalayan mountains.

"It is unbelievable," said shopkeeper Iftikhar Ali, reflecting the general response to Sunday's sudden disengagement accord, announced by Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz.

Others described the deal as a shameful, disgraceful retreat. But many felt relieved that the threat of war had been lifted, allowing Pakistan to tackle pressing problems of rampant poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment.

"In the first place we should not have led ourselves into this trap. I am happy the danger of war no longer haunts us," said university professor Rashid Khalil.

The announcement threw more than a dozen militant groups involved in the conflict into disarray, although they vowed to adapt and continue their jihad (holy war) for the "liberation" of Indian-held Kashmir.

Sayed Salahuddin, head of a 15-party umbrella body of 15 mujahideen organisations, said the Kargil operation had given a "clear message" to the Indians that "mujahideen can beat and dislocate them any time, anywhere."

The people of Indian-occu-

pled Kashmir should not feel disheartened," he said in a statement.

Former army chief general Mirza Aslam Beg said the Pakistani forces would be painted as a "rogue army" by Western and Indian media while ruling politicians will "emerge as a responsible government."

Hundreds of civilians, 100 soldiers and 40 young officers had been killed in the past two months along the border Line of Control and the Kargil front, he said.

"Who will be held responsible for their blood?" he asked.

Former cricket hero-turned-politician Imran Khan said Sharif had dealt an "irreparable" blow to the Kashmiri cause. Muslim Militants have waged a 10-year revolt against India's rule over part of the territory.

Poet Munir Niazi said people were "extremely demoralised" since they had been led to believe that Kashmir's freedom was "around the corner."

"It is futile to hope the US will play an effective role (in resolving the Kashmir issue) as they cannot spare us for being an Islamic state," he said.

But he said Pakistan was helpless since it could not survive without Western economic aid.

The disengagement accord came a week after Sharif and US President Bill Clinton met in Washington. Sharif undertook to try to persuade Muslim fighters to withdraw from heights they had occupied in the Indian sector.

Clinton promised to take a personal interest in a Kashmir settlement, a statement which the Pakistani premier has in-

terpreted to show that he succeeded in internationalising the Kashmir issue.

But Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the chief of Pakistan's main fundamentalist party Jamaat-Islami, said in a statement that Sharif had "committed an unpardonable offence" and would have to face "punishment for betraying the blood of martyrs."

Abdur Rashid Turabi, Jamaat's head in Pakistani Kashmir, said: "The successes achieved by the Kashmiri mujahideen at the battlefield have been lost by Pakistan at the diplomatic front."

Former president Farooq Ahmed Leghari, a political foe of Sharif, said the premier "has sold Kashmir under pressure from United States." He demanded Sharif's immediate resignation in the "larger national interest."

Former foreign minister Sardar Asef Ahmed Ali said the Washington agreement led to a "complete diplomatic surrender by Pakistan."

The Jamaat and like-minded organisations are considering holding a series of protests against the "anti-jihad" withdrawal agreement, Turabi said.

The Al-Badr mujahideen group said it would hold rallies in Lahore and Islamabad to mobilise support.

Government leaders defended the move to defuse the crisis, saying it averted war with India.

"A dreadful war has been prevented and the nuclearised South Asia has been saved from a catastrophe," said Chaudhry Nisar Ali, minister for petroleum and a close Sharif aide.

India asks Pakistan to pull out by July 16

NEW DELHI, July 12: India said Monday it had told Pakistan to withdraw all its fighters who have intruded into India's side of divided Kashmir by Friday, in order to restore peace in the Himalayan state, reports AFP.

"We have told them all Pakistani forces must withdraw well north of LoC (Line of Control) in Kashmir by July 16," an external affairs ministry spokesman told reporters here.

He said the demand was conveyed by the Indian director general of military operations to his Pakistani counterpart on Sunday.

"Any Pakistani intruders found (in Kashmir) after the deadline will be treated as hostile and dealt with accordingly," the spokesman said.

The statement came a day after India and Pakistan agreed to disengage in Kashmir, where New Delhi launched a military offensive in May to oust Islamic fighters and suspected Pakistani troops who had taken over key hills in the Indian

state. The winding LoC divides Kashmir. Both countries dispute the ownership of Kashmir and control parts of the picturesque Himalayan state.

Pakistan has repeatedly denied Indian claims that its regular troops were also involved in the occupation of Kashmir mountain peaks along with the Islamic guerrilla fighters.

The Indian spokesman said Islamic fighters had already pulled out of at least one of the key battle zones in Kashmir.

"We believe the withdrawal has already happened in Kargil," he said. "Our forces have gone to verify that."

"Our forces have not de-escalated their (military) action," he added.

In Kargil, Indian troops watched Islamic militants dismantle positions and withdraw from Kashmir Monday, as fighting began winding down after two months and more than 1,000 casualties.

Artillery shells crashed onto the Indian town of Kargil Sunday night and Monday morning, causing some damage.

But officers at the nearby army headquarters reported that the agreement Sunday on a disengagement had led to a near halt in firing between India and Pakistan.

Asked if a ceasefire was being observed, an operations officer at the front said, "For the time being, it holds." Indian forces were verify in the withdrawal, he said.

Top military commanders from the two countries agreed to the withdrawal of Islamic militants from Kashmir, leaders of both countries said, easing fears of a wider war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

The plan, worked out over the weekend at an Indian border post in Atari in Punjab state, calls for Pakistan-based fighters to withdraw from the Indian-controlled region and for both sides to halt airstrikes, artillery fire and ground assaults.

Air Marshal Vinod Patney, responsible for air operations during the Kargil conflict, con-

firmed that airstrikes had been "suspended." He told a New Delhi news conference that air reconnaissance missions had also been halted for the moment. Before resuming such flights to monitor the withdrawal, he said the Indian air force would inform Pakistan, as usual.

India said soldiers held back fire on Sunday in all four sectors of Kashmir's Kargil region, where the fighting has raged and Indian troops have claimed major successes.

In Pakistan on Sunday, Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said the militant withdrawal should be completed in a week or two.

Kashmir is split between India and Pakistan, and was divided by the line of control under an agreement signed in 1972. Of the three was India and Pakistan have fought since gaining independence from Britain, two have been over Kashmir, in 1948 and 1965.

"Gradually the disengagement will be complete in the entire area," Aziz said.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee thanks a donor after receiving a cheque to benefit war widows of the Kashmir conflict, during a function at his residence yesterday.

— AFP photo

US embassy bombings 2 accomplices of Laden arrested in London

LONDON, July 12: Police arrested two men for allegedly conspiring with Osama bin Laden in last summer's deadly bombings of two US embassies in Africa, Scotland Yard said Monday, reports AP.

The men were arrested Sunday in London on warrants following a request from the United States. They are charged with conspiring with bin Laden and his network to murder American citizens on or prior to August 8, 1998, police said.

Ibrahim Hussein Abdel Hadi Eidiarous, 42, and Adel Mohammed Abdul Almagid Bary, 39, are scheduled to appear Monday at Bow Street Magistrates Court for the start of the extradition process.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman refused to release any other information. Bin Laden is suspected of masterminding and financing the August 7, 1998 bombings of the embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The blast in downtown Nairobi killed 213 people, 12 of whom were Americans, and injured

more than 5,400. The nearly simultaneous bomb in Tanzania killed 11 people.

Bin Laden, who is said to be in Afghanistan, is on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list and a 5 million dollar reward has been offered for information leading to his arrest.

The United States is also seeking the extradition of Khaled Al Fawwaz, a Saudi national, from Britain in connection with the attack.

Al Fawwaz, who was arrested September 28, is charged in the United States with conspiracy to murder in connection with the embassy bombings.

But for extradition purposes, he is accused of having an agreement with bin Laden and others calling for the killing of Americans throughout the world, especially soldiers and diplomats.

His extradition hearing is scheduled to resume in September.

Five other defendants are being held in New York on conspiracy charges stemming from the bombings.

Japanese N-reactor leaking water shut down

TOKYO, July 12: Engineers shut down a nuclear reactor in western Japan Monday morning after monitoring equipment showed it was leaking radioactive water, an official said, reports AP.

The No. 2 reactor operated by Japan Atomic Power Co. in Tsuruga, 323 kilometres (200 miles) west of Tokyo, was manually shut down at 8:45 am (21:48 GMT Sunday) after a spokesman Yoshikazu Murabe said.

There was no danger of radioactivity escaping into the outside environment, he said.

An estimated 50 tons of water used for cooling the inside of the reactor had leaked out, and the device was still leaking as of 12:00 noon (0300 GMT), but at a lower volume than earlier," Murabe said.

The reactor was shut down after plant engineers noticed a fire alarm sounding inside the vessel that houses the reactor. A sensor inside the vessel detected radiation levels that were twice a normal level, he said.

Engineers lowered the output of electricity from the pressurised light-water type reactor and eventually shut it down completely, Murabe said.

The cause of the leak was not yet known, as plant workers were waiting for the vessel containing the reactor to cool off before investigating, Murabe said.

Japan, a country poor in natural resources, relies on nuclear power for about one-third of its electricity needs, according to government figures.

75-yr-old art teacher hurls bombs at parliament

CANBERRA, July 12: A 75-year-old man threw two Molotov cocktails at Australia's federal parliament early Monday in his second attack on the building since 1992. No one was injured, reports AP.

The former art teacher, Clifford Courtney Moss, drove a white van to an entrance of Parliament House about midnight and a few minutes later threw two petrol bombs at the front doors, police said.

During a court hearing later Monday, Moss admitted throwing the bombs to protest a Australian dollars 55,000 (35,000 US dollar) damaged bill he had been forced to pay for his earlier attack on the building seven years ago, police detective Mark Lefebvre said.

Moss said he made Monday's attack early in the morning so that few people would be in the area.

Moss faces a maximum of 15 years' jail when he is sentenced next month in the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court for his earlier attack on the building. In August 1992, Moss drove his four-wheeled drive vehicle through the same doors, scattering groups of schoolchildren in the entrance hall, before stopping in the Great Hall, which is used for ceremonial events.

In Monday's attack, Moss was about to get a third petrol bomb when a security officer seized him and forced him to the ground. "I was surprised to get one off — two was a bonus," Moss told the guard, Lefebvre said.

Lefebvre said Moss had been planning the attack for weeks, after the government refused his request that it return the money he had paid for the damage he had caused in the 1992 attack.

Magistrate Peter Dingwall ordered Moss to remain in custody until another hearing.

BRIEFLY

Tamil Tigers kill 7 soldiers: Tamil Tiger guerrillas Monday ambushed government troops in north-eastern Sri Lanka, killing at least seven soldiers and wounding another, officials here said, AFP reports from Colombo.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) opened fire at the soldiers who were on a routine clearing operation in the village of Kokkuthuduvai, officials said. They said the guerrillas had also fired mortar bombs towards a military bunker in the area. In violence elsewhere, government troops killed three rebels in two separate confrontations, the defence ministry here said in a statement.

Bomb attack in south Lebanon: An official of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army militia was seriously wounded Monday in a bomb attack in the Israeli-occupied border strip, SLA officials said, AFP reports from Marjayoun, Lebanon.

Ahmad Chebli was travelling in a convoy near the village of Alta ash-Shaab at the western end of the strip as the roadside bomb went off, they said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack from the Lebanese militant groups which fight the 21-year-old Israeli occupation.

Landslide kills nine in Romania: Nine people died and several were missing Monday, in a landslide near a dam in southwestern Romania, hit by torrential rains since the weekend, authorities said, AFP reports from Riu de Mori, Romania.

Rescue teams and local officials were searching for survivors among a group of workers on the dam in the Hunedoara region. "The victims, construction employees working on the dam, were caught by surprise by the landslide," Serban Micu, a spokesman for the regional authorities, told AFP. Heavy rains have pounded western Romania since Sunday.

Quake jolts southern Philippines: An earthquake with a magnitude of 4.8 on the Richter scale rocked the southern Philippines on Monday but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, government seismologists said, AFP reports from Manila. The quake occurred at 1:58 p.m. (0558 GMT) and was felt in the immediate areas of the cities of Davao and General Santos. Its epicenter was plotted in the Philippine Sea southeast of the main southern island of Mindanao.

Orange Order march Massive security operation in Belfast

BELFAST, July 12: Thousands of Protestants paraded on the streets of Belfast on Monday as the Orange Order marching season and political attempts to broker peace in Northern Ireland reached a peak, reports AFP.

A massive security operation met the Order's biggest march of the year, celebrating the victory of William of Orange over the Catholic King James in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

Armed infantrymen, armoured personnel carriers and riot police were intent on keeping the peace as on-lookers soaked up the beer and summer sunshine.

As Belfast echoed to the strains of flutes and beating drums, the leader of the main Protestant party, David Trim-

ble, was speaking to British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the latest blueprint for peace.

Belfast security forces, the main Protestant militia and the Orangemen all said they expected a peaceful protest as up to 20,000 marchers and supporters converged on a park close to a Catholic district, itself a flashpoint of sectarian conflict over the years.

Police and troops laid steel barricades topped with razor wire across a bridge leading to the Lower Ormeau Road quarter to block Protestants from the Catholic neighbourhood.

Dark suits, bowler hats, white gloves and orange sashes were the order of the day as solemn-faced marchers followed Union Jack flags through town in military formation.

Indonesian delegation arrives in East Timor

DILI, East Timor, July 12: A top-level Indonesian delegation flew to East Timor Monday for talks on whether security can be sufficiently improved to allow a UN vote on self-determination to go ahead next month, reports AFP.

The delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and armed forces chief General Wiranto, was made up of 16 ministers and 15 senior officials.

The one-day flying visit came two days after United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan blamed Jakarta for having to delay the poll process because of inadequate security.

Annan delayed voter registration for three days from Tuesday, saying the process could get under way on Friday only if tangible improvements in security were witnessed.

The UN secretary general said the main reason for the delay was Jakarta's failure to control pro-Indonesian militias operating "with impunity" in the former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975.

The militias have openly attacked both pro-independence East Timorese and most recently the UN Assessment Mission to East Timor (UNAMET).

Speaking at a press conference after the talks, Alatas said the number of ministers in the delegation "shows our government's determination and our sincerity and our seriousness to really implement what we have agreed to do on the basis of the New York agreement."

He said Indonesia "welcomed" the three-day delay, but added: "One way or another it will not affect... the holding of the actual balloting."

S Korea warns North over missile test

SEOUL, July 12: South Korea's foreign minister unveiled a tough new line towards North Korea on Monday, warning it could lose all foreign aid and see its economy destroyed if it launches a second missile, reports AFP.

The caution, one of the strongest since President Kim Dae-Jung came to power nearly 18 months ago, came as his "Sunshine Policy" of engagement stumbled following a naval gunbattle and a war of words between the Koreas.

Hong Soon-Young said a fresh North Korean missile launch would prompt Seoul, Tokyo and Washington to consider severing food aid to the famine-stricken communist nation.

"If North Korea fires a mis-

sile, it will have a serious impact on aid from various sides as well as ongoing business deals," he said in an interview with the Munhwa Ilbo newspaper in Seoul.

The severance of aid and cash donations from abroad could endanger North Korea's "struggle for existence," he said, in comments confirmed by his office.

"We have not officially declared our position, but it is clear we are getting tough with North Korea," he said, adding Seoul had entered a "cooling off period" in ties with the North.

"Firing a missile is not a technical matter for North Korea but a question of political judgement on the part of its regime," he warned.

OAU summit begins in Algeria

ALGIERS, July 12: Algerian President Abdelkader Bouteflika on Monday kicked off the 35th summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a call for "African solidarity in the new world balance," reports AFP.

Africa should think about how to "integrate globalisation without ill effects," Bouteflika told some 49 of his African peers, evoking one of the main themes of the three-day summit being held at the luxurious Club des Pins resort, the high-security residence of Algeria's civilian and military elite.

Earlier Monday an impressive contingent of white-garbed camel drivers and horsemen on their mounts greeted the delegates as they arrived at the Palace of Nations venue, west of the capital.

The African leaders went immediately into a closed-door session ahead of the official

opening ceremony.

Outgoing OAU chairman Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso declared the summit open and immediately passed the torch, for one year, to Bouteflika, who was Algeria's foreign minister for 16 years, from 1963 to 1979.

Bouteflika welcomed the delegates "in the name of Arab-African Algeria," and saluted two OAU founding fathers attending the summit, Tanzanian former president Julius Nyerere and independent Algeria's first president Ahmed Ben Bella.

A third, Leopold Senghor of Senegal, could not attend for health reasons. "I cannot imagine Africa without Algeria," Bouteflika said, adding that the holding of the summit in Algiers provided "political and moral backing" for the national reconciliation process he has launched since taking office in April.

UN fact file on globalisation

UNITED NATIONS, July 12: The Human Development Report, an annual UN survey focusing on who holds the strings of power in the world and how people live in various countries, published the following findings today, reports Reuters.

HAVES: One fifth of the world's people living in countries with the highest incomes produce 86 per cent of world gross domestic product, 82 per cent of world exports and 68 per cent of foreign direct investment and control 74 per cent of the world's telephone lines. The bottom fifth, in the poorest countries, produce about 1 per cent in each category.

PEOPLE: The 200 richest people in the world more than doubled their net worth to one trillion dollar between 1994 and 1998.

PATENTS: Rich industrialised countries hold 97 per cent of all patents worldwide.

HAVE-NOTS: The income

gap between the richest fifth of the world's people and the poorest fifth increased from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 74 to 1 in 1997. Tanzania's debt service payments are nine times what it spends on primary health care and four times what it spends on primary education.

IMMIGRATION: Some 130 to 145 million legally registered migrants live outside their home countries.

WOMEN: Women occupy more than 30 per cent of parliamentary seats in only five countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands.

INTERNET: English is used in almost 80 per cent of all Web sites although fewer than one in 10 people world-wide speak the language. The number of computers with a direct connection to the Internet rose from under 100,000 in 1988 to over 36 million in 1998.

GROWTH: Only 33 countries achieved a sustained annual growth rate of at least 3 per cent per capita between 1980-96. During that period, during per capita growth declined in 59 countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and the former Communist nations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

CRIME: Organised crime syndicates are estimated to gross 1.5 trillion dollar a year. The value of the illegal drug trade was estimated at 400 billion dollar in 1995, about 8 per cent of world trade, more than the shares of iron and steel and motor vehicles, and roughly equivalent to textiles and gas and oil.

PHONE COSTS: The cost of a three-minute phone call from New York to London fell from 245 dollars in 1990 (in 1990 dollars) to 35 cents in 1998.

TOURISM: Tourism rose from 260 million visitors in 1980 to 590 million in 1996.

Mahathir wants to retire after general elections

KUALA LUMPUR, July 12: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad reiterated Monday that he would retire after general elections, widely expected to be held later this year, reports AP.

In an interview with Singapore-based channel CNBC Asia, Mahathir, who has until June 7 next year to call an election, also dodged questions as to whether he would call a snap poll.

"I will have to retire sometime after the general election," said the 73-year-old premier who has been in power for 18 years.

"I would have retired last year, except for the mess created by my (former) deputy," he said, referring to Anwar Ibrahim whom he sacked in September last year due to differences in economic policies.

Mahathir said that Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, a former foreign minister appointed his new deputy during a cabinet reshuffle in January, was "my most likely successor."

He said elections would be held anytime before July next year, but when asked about the possibility of holding it this year, he said: "I don't know yet. I

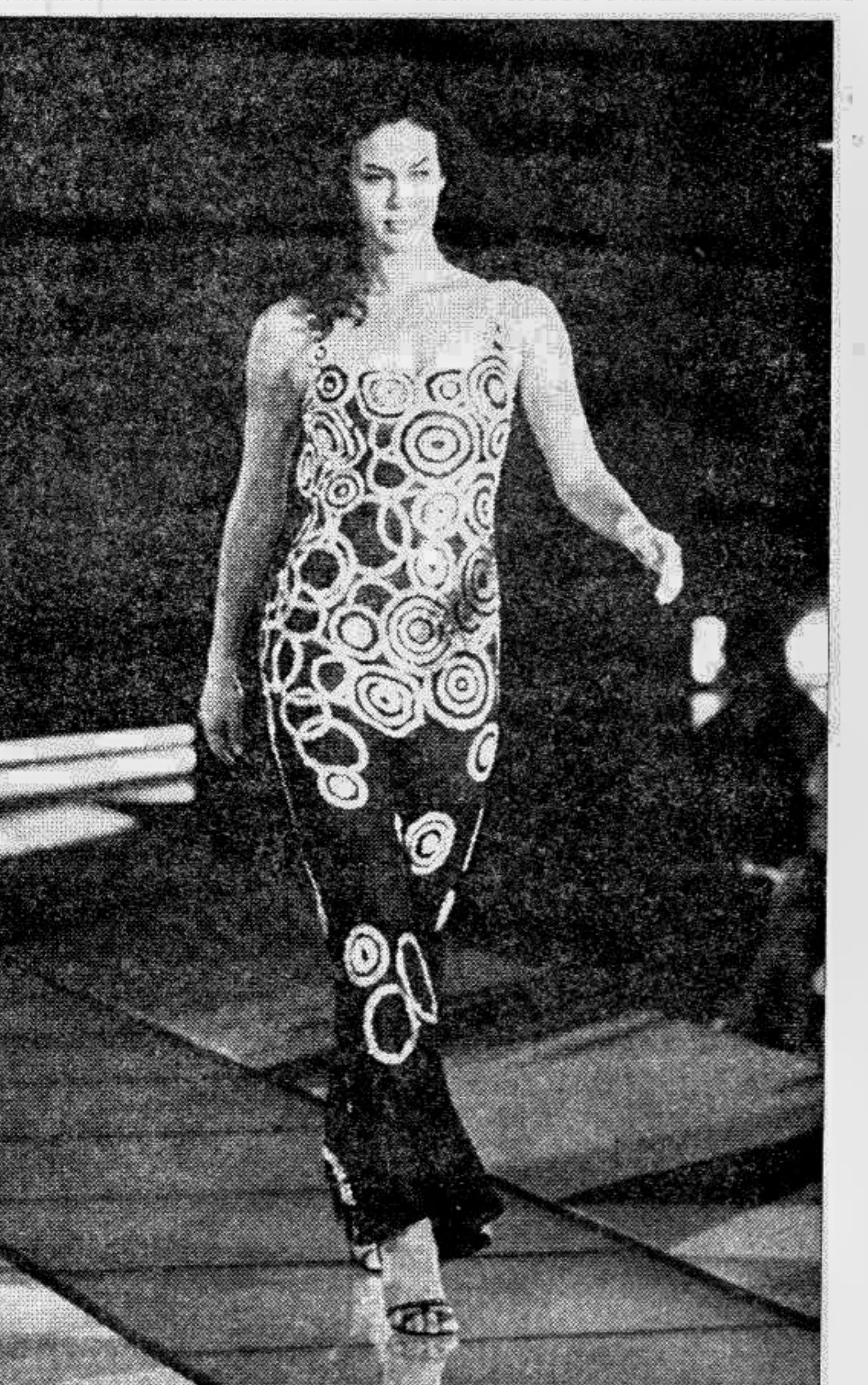
cannot give you any assurance." The premier said the Anwar saga was "not so much of an issue" in the coming polls as "he is fading."

Anwar was sentenced to six years' jail in April for abuse of power and is now on trial again on a charge of sodomy. His wife Azizah has started a new political party and said she was considering contesting in Mahathir's constituency in northern Kedah state.

Asked if he was ready to face a challenge from Azizah, Mahathir laughed and said: "She can contest anywhere. If she want to contest in my constituency, I will have no choice but to face her."

On complaints that the campaign period this time might be limited to nine days, Mahathir said: "We have had nine days campaigning period in the last three elections, so what is new?"

The premier has kept Malaysians guessing about the election date but is widely expected to call a ballot within months as the economy recovers from a recession. Some 1 million people are expected to vote in Malaysia's 10th general election.



Australian actress Megan Gale presents a dress created by Italian stylist Gai Mattiolo on Sunday as part of the High Fashion Week at the Piazza Farnese in Rome.

— AFP photo