

Pakistan to continue support to Kashmiri freedom struggle

ISLAMABAD, July 13: Pakistan's unequivocal and consistent support to the Kashmiri freedom struggle would continue until the realisation of their right of self-determination, reports PPI.

This was declared Monday by Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz while briefing Kashmiri leaders at the Foreign Office here on the current situation in Kashmir. It was also addressed by Raja Zafarullah Haq, Minister for Religious Affairs and Lt Gen (R) Abdul Majeed Mali, Minister for Kashmir Affairs.

The Foreign Minister paid tributes to the Mujahideen and the Kashmiri people for their steadfast resistance against repression and injustice, and the sacrifices they made for the just Kashmiri cause.

Sartaj Aziz pointed out that as a result of the "courageous action" of the Mujahideen on the Kargil heights, Kashmir is-

... was again at the centre stage of the world agenda. Over the past two months, the Kashmir cause had held the attention of the international community which was convinced that an expeditious settlement of Kashmir issue was essential for promotion of durable peace and security in South Asia, he noted.

He said the sacrifices of Mujahideen had injected a renewed vigour and vitality in the Kashmiris struggle. "Kargil will be always remembered as a glorious chapter in the history of resistance against alien occupation and tyranny," he observed.

Kashmiri leaders belonging to the Muslim League, Muslim Conference, AJK Peoples Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, etc., who attended the briefing paid tributes to the Kashmiri Mujahideen and saluted their sacrifices. They expressed appreciation of the consistent moral, political

and diplomatic support to their cause by the Government and people of Pakistan.

They were of the view that Prime Minister of Pakistan had always taken "a bold and courageous" stand in support of Kashmiris indigenous struggle.

They believed that the Mujahideen had achieved eminent success in their purpose of highlighting the Kashmiri cause. It would, therefore, be advisable to give an opportunity to the international community to play its role in the intensification of diplomatic efforts and peaceful negotiations for an expeditious settlement of Kashmir dispute.

They reiterated that Kashmiri struggle will continue until such time that their fundamental rights including the right of self-determination were achieved and their land freed from Indian occupation.

Kashmiri militants storm paramilitary camp

4 killed, several others taken hostage

SIRINAGAR, India, July 13: Muslim separatist guerrillas in Kashmir stormed into a high security paramilitary camp early Tuesday, killing four people and taking several others hostage, police sources said, reports AFP.

In an unprecedented attack, the rebels entered the Border Security Force camp at Bandipur, about 65 kilometres north of the Kashmir summer capital Srinagar, and shot dead a deputy inspector general (DIG), a sub-inspector, a constable and his wife.

"They have never dared to come into a highly protected camp like this," a source said, adding the militants remained holed up inside one of the apartments in the army residential camp.

He said the attackers entered

the camp around 1:00 a.m. (1930 GMT) "from the nearby mountains" and attacked the constable's wife.

A sub-inspector who tried to save her was shot dead. The other two men were also killed when they rushed to "overpower" the rebels, he said.

An official said there were house-to-house searches in the nearby villages of Baghat and Madar while senior local leaders were requested by BSF personnel to urge residents to volunteer information about the attackers.

Border Security Force (BSF) chief K. Vijay Kumar said paramilitary troops had evacuated 30 families from the camp, while "seven to 10 persons" were still held hostage by the militants in the residential complex.

"A fierce gunbattle is going on. We will not rest until we have killed them or captured them," Kumar said. "Never has a DIG of the BSF been killed by militants in an attack like this."

"We have to shoot with care as we do not want to injure our own people," he added, as security forces cordoned off the area and reinforced troops took positions in nearby mountains.

Kumar admitted a breach in "our security," adding the militants had "taken advantage of this."

"Our task will be to ensure such lapses do not occur again," he said.

The attack came two days after India said Islamic militants had begun to withdraw from Indian-administered Kashmir. India launched an operation on May 9 to evict the infiltra-

tors who crossed the de facto border dividing the Pakistan and Indian sectors of the Himalayan region.

The latest Kashmir conflict, experts say, could lead to a resurgence of militant attacks in the divided Himalayan territory.

Early this month, suspected rebels massacred 41 Hindus and Muslims in three separate attacks in Kashmir. The incidents led to bitter protests.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting the Muslim separatist campaign in Kashmir which broke out in 1989 and has claimed more than 24,000 lives.

Islamabad denies the charge but extends moral and diplomatic support to the militants, whom it describes as freedom fighters or mujahideen.

Seven killed in US shooting

ATLANTA, July 13: Seven people were found shot to death in an Atlanta home after an 11-year-old boy who was wounded in the attack fled the closet where he had been hiding for hours, reports AP.

The motive for the fatal shootings of three adults and four children was unclear, but police were investigating whether one person killed the others and himself.

Neighbour Georgia Hall said the boy, identified by neighbours as Antonio Briskey, told her his stepfather had shot "everybody in the house."

"He said: 'My stepfather shot my mama, my auntie, my brother, everyone,'" Hall told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "We immediately called 911. We could not believe what had happened. We just called the police and sat with the boy."

Officers were called to the scene in the afternoon after the boy, who was shot in the elbow, sought help from neighbours. He told police the shooting started before 6 am. He left his hiding spot about 2:30 pm.

Family members and neighbours said the dead included a woman, her sister and four of their children. The bodies were removed Monday night.

Neighbour Betty Fuller said the boy's mother lived in the house with her sister and five children. She said the mother had a boyfriend, and that her boy is a smart, happy go-lucky child.

"He was just as sweet as he could be, and God had to be with him for him to hide," she said.

Police stayed outside the house for more than an hour after they arrived because a dog was barking inside, raising safety concerns. Once officers found bodies throughout the house, which is in a neighbourhood of single-family homes and well-kept yards.

Taiwan appeals for talks with China

TAIPEI, July 13: Taiwan urged rival China today to solve their differences through talks, not war, and vowed exhaustive efforts to persuade Beijing to accept the island's controversial jinking of its "one China" policy, reports Reuters.

"We certainly will try every channel possible to explain to Beijing our constructive intentions," Lin Chong-pin, a senior policymaker, told Reuters Television in an interview.

To resolve these differences by war is not a post-Cold War behaviour of all nations. We should do things by talks.

Lin said Taiwan would try even harder to persuade Beijing to go ahead with a landmark October visit to the island by its top Taiwan straits negotiator, Wang Daohan, and said it was up to communist China to make or break cross-strait relations.

Lin said a visit by Wang could foster a "more cooperative relationship between the mainland and Taiwan in the next century" and he held out hope that Wang's tour would proceed, saying he had heard no "formal" word of a cancellation.

"The final determinant is Beijing's behaviour," he said when asked about Beijing's charge that Taiwan was risking "monumental disaster." "We hope to see a more sensible and responsible behaviour from Beijing, as all great powers do."

US warplanes bomb radar site in Iraq

ANKARA, July 13: US warplanes bombed a radar site in Iraq's northern "no-fly" zone on Tuesday after coming under anti-aircraft fire during a routine patrol, the US military said in a statement, reports AFP.

The US European Command based in Stuttgart, Germany, said the planes hit an "intelligence and operations center" southeast of Mosul that was involved in radar operations possibly used to target airplanes patrolling the zone.

All planes returned safely to base after the strike between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. (0600 and 0800 GMT) and the military was assessing damage to Iraqi forces, said the statement which was received here.

The incirlik airbase in southern Turkey is home to US and British planes which patrol the northern no-fly zone, imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War in order to protect the region's Kurdish population.

US and British aircraft based in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia patrol a similar no-fly zone over southern Iraq that was established to protect the Shiite Moslem population there.

Iraq does not recognize the zones, which are not covered by any specific UN resolution, and has regularly attacked aircraft patrolling the zones in recent months.

Suu Kyi seeks ASEAN support for democracy

BANGKOK, July 13: Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Tuesday called on ASEAN to harden its stance toward the junta in Yangon, saying the bloc does not have a "clear conscience" over human rights, reports AFP.

The opposition leader and Nobel peace laureate accused the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) of hiding behind concepts like "Asian values" and "non-interference" to avoid taking on the junta.

"The democratisation process in Burma can be accelerated if the international community -- (ASEAN) in particular -- increases pressure on the military regime," she wrote in an article for Thailand's Nation daily.

"We believe that support from ASEAN ... is crucial to our quest for democracy."

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won a landslide victory in 1990 elections but the junta has refused to yield power.

Thousands of democracy supporters, including scores of NLD MPs, have been harassed

and imprisoned since the election.

Political dialogue between the junta and the NLD has failed amid bitter acrimony, with Aung San Suu Kyi consistently barred from the talks.

But in a conciliatory tone Tuesday, she said dialogue should be "beneficial to everybody, including the military regime."

"If ASEAN can persuade or put pressure on the present regime to convene the parliament that was elected by the people, this could be the first step towards democratisation," Aung San Suu Kyi wrote.

"While some countries are very active in helping hasten this protest, the ASEAN countries are not."

"Indeed quite a few ASEAN governments -- though not the public -- justify not helping by invoking the argument that democracy is a Western concept and that Asian values must be upheld."

"To the contrary, democracy simply means good government rooted in responsibility, transparency and accountability."

The military regime in Yangon, known as the State Peace and Development Council, is widely accused of gross human rights abuses including rape and forced labour.

The European Union (EU) and the United States have used Western sanctions against the regime but ASEAN governments have repeatedly stuck to their policy of non-interference in member countries' internal affairs.

Aung San Suu Kyi, who spent six years under house arrest from 1989 to 1995, said ASEAN did not have a "clear conscience" and its policies toward Myanmar had failed.

"This policy of non-interference is just an excuse for not helping. In this day and age you cannot avoid interference in the matters of other countries," she wrote.

"Foreign investment has provided Burma's military junta with legitimacy," she said, adding that Indonesia was the biggest ASEAN investor in Myanmar.



Iranians protest in one of Tehran's main streets yesterday as the country's worst unrest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution entered its sixth straight day. Students clashed with club-wielding anti-riot police and Islamic militants, chanting slogans in support of Iran's reformist President Mohammad Khatami defying a government ban on demonstrations declared late on Monday. —AFP photo

Renewed clashes with security forces in Tehran

Students defy ban on demonstration

TEHRAN, July 13: Defying a government ban on demonstrations, students clashed with club-wielding Islamic militia and anti-riot police here Tuesday in a sixth day of unrest which has rocked the Islamic Republic, reports AFP.

Chanting slogans in support of Iran's reformist President Mohammad Khatami, between 2,000 and 3,000 students gathered outside the main entrance to Tehran University, which has been closed by the authorities.

"Khatami, we support you," they shouted. "We will kill those who killed our brothers," they said in a reference to students who died during a police crackdown last week on a peaceful rally in support of press freedom.

Anti-riot police deployed nearby used a loudspeaker in a helicopter overhead to warn the

demonstrators that the security forces would intervene if they did not disperse, witnesses said.

Some 100 policemen backed up by Islamic militia and members of the elite Revolutionary Guard then fired tear gas canisters at the crowd and shots into the air, the witnesses said.

Street battles erupted and stone-throwing students clashed with members of the volunteer Islamic militias known as Basiji armed with clubs.

Similar violence broke out in Val-e-Asr avenue near the headquarters of the official IRNA news agency early Tuesday afternoon and residents reported hearing gunfire.

The gates to the main entrance to Tehran University, which had been knocked down during clashes on Monday, were repaired overnight, preventing

students from entering the campus, the flashpoint for the worst student unrest since the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

But IRNA reported that several demonstrators tried to break into the campus by jumping over the walls.

Elsewhere, several hundred students gathered at the interior ministry to protest at police violence during the six days of unrest.

Police arrested more than 200 people, according to press reports here, although there was no official confirmation and IRNA said only that an unidentified number of people had been arrested.

Several hundred students who had barricaded themselves inside the Tehran University campus were forced to leave on Monday night under a heavy barrage of tear gas from the security forces.

Roads surrounding the campus, including Enqelab (Revolution) Avenue, were again closed to traffic on Tuesday.

The renewed clashes came despite appeals for calm from Khatami, whose pro-reform agenda is supported by the students, and conservative Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader and spiritual guide.

In an effort to bring the protests under control, the Tehran authorities announced a ban on all demonstrations late Monday, and the official media has begun using the term "troublemakers" to describe the rioting students.

Libya to repatriate 43 nurses

TRIPOLI is to repatriate 43 Filipino nurses it has accused of spreading the AIDS virus at a Libyan hospital, President Joseph Estrada's spokesman said Tuesday, AFP reports from Manila.

Presidential spokesman Fernando Barican said the Filipino ambassador to Tripoli, Muktar Mualam, has informed the foreign office here that no formal charges had been filed against the nurses. "The Philippine embassy in Libya, has been assured by the Ministry of Health of Libya that it will extend full assistance and cooperation for the repatriation of the 43 Filipinas," Barican told reporters.

Shots fired at Israeli jeep in WB

Suspected Palestinian gunmen opened fire on an Israeli army jeep in the West Bank overnight but no one was wounded, the army said on Tuesday, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Several bullets struck the jeep as it was driving near the Palestinian-controlled town of Jenin in the far north of the West Bank, an army spokesman said. Soldiers found tracks leading towards the Palestinian-ruled sector and demanded that Palestinian police help in tracking down the attackers.

Iran to reopen consulate in HK

China has approved Iran reopening its consulate in Hong Kong, 10 years after it was closed when Tehran imposed the death sentence on author Salman Rushdie for allegedly insulting Islam, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

"The Iranian government is to set up a consulate in Hong Kong, but we don't know yet the timing and details," a Hong Kong government spokeswoman said Tuesday, adding a diplomatic note had been exchanged between Beijing and Tehran. The consulate was closed down in 1989, when Hong Kong was still a British colony, after the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini sentenced British author Salman Rushdie to death over his novel "Satanic Verses".



A model shows a crocheted evening dress with diamond pattern by mainland Chinese designer Liming Li yesterday on the opening day of Hong Kong Fashion Week at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Designers from Hong Kong and other parts of Asia will display their new collections at the show which runs through July 16. —AFP photo

Ten killed in Aceh province

MEDAN, Indonesia, July 13: Ten people have been killed in three separate incidents in Indonesia's restive province of Aceh, military officials and human rights groups said today, reports Reuters.

Four people died in central Aceh late on Monday when the military fired on a car when it appeared a rifle was being pointed, the military said, adding that the driver had refused to stop at a checkpoint.

Two passengers fled and another was critically injured. Lilawansa military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Edi Hariyono said.

He said two policemen were also found dead in a burned out vehicle in East Aceh on Monday. It was not known how the pair died.

And soldiers shot dead four people drinking coffee in a shop in the district of Idi Rayek, East Aceh on Monday, witnesses said.

"The four were accused of being members of the Free Aceh movement and were shot dead by the military during a patrol," said the Lhokseumawe Legat Aid Institute's Yakob Harizah.

Anwar aide acquitted of perjury

KUALA LUMPUR, July 13: The former private secretary of ousted Malaysian deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim was acquitted Tuesday of perjury, the official Bernama news agency reported, reports AFP.

Mohamad Azmin Ali, 34, was charged with giving false evidence when testifying as a defence witness during Anwar's corruption trial in March, Bernama said.

But sessions court judge Hamdan Indah ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove its case against Azmin beyond reasonable doubt.

The prosecution had challenged Azmin over part of his testimony which stated: "I told the magistrate that the detention period cannot be extended as the action and threats by the police during my detention were extremely brutal and it forced me to make admissions involving Anwar, without any basis."

Tories, Unionists team up over N Ireland law

LONDON, July 13: Protestant Unionists and opposition Conservatives joined forces Tuesday to try to toughen emergency legislation by the British government to install a power-sharing executive in Belfast by the weekend, reports AFP.

The Labour government Monday published a draft law to devolve power to an administration in Northern Ireland that represents both Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.

It aims to break 15 months of deadlock since the Good Friday peace accord was signed, heralding a new era for the British-ruled province after 30 years of strife.

But although the draft law goes some way to meeting Unionist concerns over the inclusion of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein in the executive, it does not go far enough for them.

Deeply unhappy at being called to form a government

Kazakhstan may allow Russia to launch rocket

MOSCOW, July 13: Kazakhstan, locked in a row with Russia over the use of its cosmodrome, may allow the launch of a rocket carrying vital equipment for the ageing Mir space station in three days, Russia's Mission Control said today, reports Reuters.

The Progress cargo craft had been due to blast off on Wednesday but was expected to be delayed after Kazakhstan suspended launches from its Baikonur base following the explosion of a Russian Proton-K rocket which scattered debris across the state.

Russian officials have said the underfunded Mir station could crash to earth unless Kazakhstan allows the rocket to set off by Sunday from Baikonur, which Moscow rents commercially.

"If the negotiations do not end by tonight then probably the launch date will be moved to July 16," a spokeswoman for

Tories, Unionists team up over N Ireland law

with Sinn Fein before the Irish Republican Army has handed over a single gun, they want a series of water-tight guarantees and promises.

With the Tories, who are departing from the traditional united front which the opposition shares with the government on Northern Ireland, they have tabled amendments to the legislation, which Labour wants to push through parliament in three days.

The Unionists want a tight decommissioning timetable and, if the IRA fails to disarm, a legal "failsafe" that Sinn Fein will be kicked out of government and a stop to the early release of terrorist prisoners.

Unionist chief negotiator Dermot Nesbitt argued that suspending the whole executive if one party defaulted was like sending an entire football team off if one player fouled.

With Labour's huge majority, there is little chance of the draft law being defeated.

Tories, Unionists team up over N Ireland law

Mission Control said by telephone.

Preparations for the launch of the Progress were going ahead at Baikonur, the former Soviet space base. The craft is due to deliver food, fuel and a navigation system to Mir.

The navigation system is needed to stop Mir spinning out of control after the current Russian-French crew leave it unmanned in late August, and controllers say the crew will need a month to set it up.

The head of Russia's Space Agency, Yuri Koptev, said on Monday that the crew must receive the system by the weekend.

Kazakhstan and Russia generally enjoy good relations, but on Monday Kazakh Prime Minister Nurlan Balgimbayev, who has accused Moscow of negligence, said the Proton crash was the latest in a series of complaints about how Baikonur was used.

US House panel seeks pause on F-22 fighter programme

WASHINGTON, July 13: A US House panel on Monday moved to suspend the Air Force's F-22 stealth fighter programme, calling for a reevaluation of the planned purchase of 339 of the sophisticated warplanes over the next 16 years, reports Reuters.

At a closed meeting, the panel unanimously agreed to cut six of the fighters from next year's budget and apply 1.8 billion dollars in savings to fund the replenishment of existing fighter fleets and a programme to boost Air Force pilot retention, committee members said.

Development of the F-22

made by Lockheed Martin LMT.N, has been a centrepiece of Air Force efforts to produce a new generation of tactical fighters for air-to-air combat to replace existing F-15s and F-16s.

But with the military increasingly strained by extended overseas deployments, panel members said, sparse defence funds should be focused on more urgent needs.

"We're saying to the Air Force: 'You need to rethink where you are going,'" Representative Jerry Lewis, a California Republican and chairman of

the House Appropriations defence subcommittee, told reporters after the panel's meeting.

Lewis did not rule out resuming the programme, but said he believed the Pentagon could not afford the concurrent acquisition of three new fighters, referring to plans to buy more F-18E/F fighter jets made by Boeing and more Joint Strike Fighters being developed by the Air Force and Navy and made by Lockheed and Boeing B.A.N.

"I do not believe we can afford to go to a programme with three fighters," Lewis said. "If we're ever going to take a break

and step back and take a hard look at this, you better do it now."

The first two F-22s manufactured by Lockheed Martin have been flight tested. Committee members said they would duplicate many of the capabilities of the Joint Strike Fighter.

The Senate's defence spending bill, approved in May, fully funds the Pentagon's budget request for the F-22s, setting up a potential clash between the two chambers if the full House approves the subcommittee's plan later this month.

"We think we have a package

here that is dramatic and will change the direction of the Air Force. We think we can sell it to the Senate," Representative John Murtha of Pennsylvania, ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, said.

The Pentagon had requested 1.8 billion dollar for the six F-22s next year, with another 1.3 billion dollar for research and development. Lewis said the panel kept the development funds.

With the additional 1.8 billion dollar, committee aides said, the panel would fund the purchase of an additional eight

F-15 fighters, five F-16s and eight C-130J transport planes, while beginning a 300 million dollar bonus programme to aid pilot retention.

The full committee will consider the fiscal 2000 defence spending bill later this week.

The spending plan approved by the subcommittee provides 266 billion dollar in defence spending, up 3 billion dollar from President Clinton's request, Lewis said.

It includes funds for a 4.8 per cent pay raise for military personnel, which was also approved by the Senate.