

## International

## US warplanes bomb northern Iraq

ANKARA, July 16: US warplanes bombed a communications facility in Iraq's northern "no-fly" zone on Friday after coming under anti-aircraft fire during a routine patrol, the US military said, reports AFP.

The US European Command based in Stuttgart, Germany, said in a statement received here that the site, southeast of Mosul, was used to transmit information from radars that could be used to target the aircraft.

All planes returned safely to the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey after the strike and the military was assessing damage to Iraqi forces, it said.

Incirlik is home to US and British planes which patrol the northern no-fly zone imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War to protect the region's Kurdish population.

A similar exclusion zone was also set up over southern Iraq in a bid to protect the Shiite Muslim population there and is patrolled by US and British aircraft based in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

IRQ 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.

US Defence Secretary William Cohen said Thursday in Ankara that both zones would stay in place "as long as (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein continues to refuse to abide by and comply with UN Security Council resolutions".

## 13 peasants massacred in Colombia

BOGOTA, July 16: Right-wing Colombian death squads massacred at least 13 peasants and torched 15 homes in two separate attacks on Thursday following a weekend offensive by Marxist rebels, authorities said, reports Reuters.

The surge in violence by the guerrillas and their rightist paramilitary foes came just days before peace talks were due to resume on July 19 between the government and rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The negotiations are aimed at ending a long-running war that has claimed 35,000 lives in 10 years. The talks are being conducted without any prior ceasefire agreement.

The latest violence occurred in the town of Villanueva in the oil-rich eastern province of Casanare, and in the hamlet of Saiza, in northern Cordoba province.

A police spokesman said five people were slain in Villanueva. "This morning we found five bodies that had been beheaded and dumped outside the town hall," the spokesman said. "It seems the paramilitaries were responsible."

In Saiza, paramilitary gunmen, known euphemistically as peasant self-defence groups, murdered eight peasants and set fire to 15 houses, the army said. In 1988, FARC rebels massacred 45 peasants in the village.

## 'Iran preparing to launch missile'

WASHINGTON, July 16: Iran is preparing to test launch later this summer a medium-range multi-stage missile that could have a range of up to 2,650 miles (4,250 km), an independent US specialist said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The missile, code-named Kosar, would carry a version of Russia's RD-216 liquid-fuel rocket booster, the same engine which powered the Soviet Union's SS-5 missile, said Kenneth Timmerman, director of the Middle East Data Project.

"The Iranians as we speak are in the process of stacking and unstacking missile stages for a test launch later on this summer at the Shahrood missile test centre," he told Reuters.

Timmerman, who gave testimony to a House of Representatives subcommittee on Tuesday, said he expected the Iranians would present the launch as a test for putting a satellite into orbit, just as North Korea did when it fired a Taepodong missile over Japan in August.

Iran has already announced plans to commission a communications satellite to be launched within two years. In February it said it was building a missile to launch satellites but Western defence analysts said the missile, named Shehab-4, was more likely to be a surface-to-surface weapon.

The analysts said the Shehab-4 was largely derived from the obsolete Soviet-era SS-4 ballistic missile, which had a range of 1,250 miles (2,000 km).

Timmerman said he had his information on the more powerful Kosar missile from US and Israeli intelligence sources. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had no immediate comment.

"It is the US side which is tracking the activities at the launch site right now. They are analysing what they actually see (from satellite photographs). That's where they see the multiple stages and they see them put one on top of another," he said.

The most powerful missile so far launched by Iran was the Shehab-3 in July 1998, with a range of 800 miles (1,300 km).

## Deadline for Kashmir pullout extended for 24 hours

SRINAGAR, India, July 16: India Friday gave Islamic guerrillas a 24-hour deadline to complete their withdrawal from Kashmir, while ordering its own troops to exercise restraint, reports AFP.

"On the request of the Pakistan authorities, the deadline for withdrawal has been extended for 24 hours, i.e. up to first light on July 17," said army spokesman Colonel Bikram Singh.

The extension had been signalled Thursday by Indian National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra, after it became clear that the harsh terrain was hampering the withdrawal to the Pakistan side of the Kashmiri border.

The enemy is on the move and vacating most of the areas," Singh said.

"But just as he has taken a certain number of days to come, it will take some time to get out."

In the meantime, one senior army commander, who declined to be identified said all troops monitoring the with-

drawal had been told to "exercise restraint" in the event of any contact with the retreating forces.

A foreign ministry spokesman said any infiltrators still on Indian soil after July 17 would be "deemed as hostile and suitable action taken."

Indian officials in Kashmir said there were still pockets of infiltrators in the Mushkoh Valley sector, near the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir.

"But they are clearly packing up," said the military commander.

Indian air force planes were flying reconnaissance missions to verify that all the bunkers on the Indian side of the disputed LoC had been vacated.

The Indian army has been waging a two-month war against the infiltrators, who had crossed the disputed LoC over the winter and set up heavily fortified bunkers on strategic heights on the Indian side.

Virtually every stone has to be checked before moving forward," he said.

Life was slowly returning to normal in towns and villages along the LoC that have been largely deserted since residents fled intense cross-border

shelling.

Many of the refugees have returned to towns including Kargil and Drass in the past few days, and shops and restaurants have begun to reopen.

For most, the main task in the coming months will be to prepare for the harsh winter which cuts off entire communities for six months of the year.

The conflict has robbed the locals of two crucial months that should have been spent sowing, harvesting and stockpiling food. Many have also lost cattle and livestock -- killed in the shelling or by abandoned dogs.

India has rejected repeated appeals by Pakistan to resume talks on Kashmir, insisting there can be no dialogue until all the infiltrators have retreated over the de facto border.

Even then, several government leaders have indicated an early resumption of talks is unlikely, given the deep sense of mistrust the conflict has engendered between the two South Asian rivals.



Iranians shout anti-US slogans outside Tehran University yesterday after Ayatollah Hassan Taheri-Khoramabadi, a top conservative Iranian cleric, blamed the United States for instigating the past week's violent clashes between student protesters and security forces that left two people dead.

— AFP photo

## 1989 bombing of airliner

## Libya pays compensation to France

PARIS, July 16: Libya has transferred funds to France to compensate victims of the 1989 mid-air bombing of a DC-10 UTA airliner, the foreign ministry said Friday, in a move expected to open the way to normalisation of bilateral ties, reports AFP.

The ministry statement put no figure on the compensation sent to France but said relatives of the 170 people who died in the attack "can obtain the payment" of amounts transferred by Libya to France."

Diplomatic sources said Libya had transferred some 200 million francs (30 million euros).

The French authorities note with satisfaction the Libyan payment of the compensation," the statement said.

The payment is an "expression of the Libyan authorities' acceptance of responsibility for its citizens, in accordance with the decisions taken by French President Jacques Chirac."

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine reiterated Wednesday in an interview with the Arab daily Al-Hayat that France would only normalise its ties with Libya if Tripoli paid the promised compensation.

"We are still waiting for the Libyan authorities to respect the consequences of the Paris court ruling, in accordance with the commitments they have made. They have given us their assurances," Vedrine said.

"Once that is done, I can confirm that we would be ready to resume normal relations, without forgetting the past but with the wish to look towards the future. We are at that point," he said.

French envoys recently travelled to Tripoli.

One of them, presidential advisor on African affairs Michel Dupuch, took a personal message to Gaddafi about bilateral relations and the implications of the lifting in April of international sanctions against Libya.

The sanctions were lifted after Tripoli handed over two suspects wanted in another air-liner bombing, that of a Pan-Am airplane over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988 that killed 270 people.

Those demands were unmet as days of unrest at Tehran University led to bloody clashes with security forces and culminated in a clampdown on the growing pro-reform student movement.

## Iran bans further protests

TEHRAN, July 16: Iranian officials will not authorise any protests in the coming days, Interior Minister Abdol-Vahed Mussavi-Lari announced on state television Friday amid rumours of a fresh student rally on Saturday, reports AFP.

"No one has asked for authorisation and in fact no such authorisation will be given," Mussavi-Lari said.

"What we need now is peace and calm. Given the current situation, the demands of the students must be examined under reasonable and calm conditions," he said.

Student sources have indicated they might take to the streets again Saturday to press their demands for the sacking of the police chief and the removal of security forces from the direct control of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

They have also been demanding the return of leading reformist newspaper Salam, whose banning last week sparked the first protests.

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BEIJING, July 16: China has ordered a low-level military alert in its southern regions facing the Taiwan Straits amid a tense standoff with Taiwan after the island's president claimed it was a separate state, sources said Friday, reports AFP.

"The Nanjing military district was ordered on low-level alert Wednesday," a source close to Chinese officials told AFP. "They are now on a level two alert."

ARATS spokesman Xu Zhiqin told AFP Wang was waiting for clarification from his Taiwan counterpart, Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) chairman Koo Chen-fu.

"We're still waiting for the clarification of Mr Koo and SEF and their attitude to Mr Wang's visit to Taiwan," Xu said.

Markets in Taipei, Hong Kong and Tokyo have tumbled through the week due to investors' jitters amid the tensions.

Taiwan defense ministry spokesman Kung Fan-tung moved to offer reassurances Friday.

"There are no signs showing movement of communist Chinese military," he told AFP after visiting the frontline Kin-

men island. "The ministry is closely monitoring the situation."

But a Fujian provincial government spokeswoman told AFP by telephone that Fujian authorities had conducted drills with civilian vessels on China's side of the Taiwan Strait.

Fujian television reported that drills involving 110 civilian boats had taken place in Shishi city.

Two Hong Kong newspapers reported Friday that President Jiang Zemin signed a military order on Tuesday telling forces in the southern cities of Nanjing and Guangzhou to be on alert for war preparations.

The Sun daily said naval and air forces in the Taiwan Strait were also directed to go onto combat readiness.

The Chinese-language daily Hong Kong Economic Times also cited unnamed sources in Beijing as saying that China might occupy one or two of Taiwan's outer islands to change what was seen as its stance in pursuing independence.

## BRIEFLY

## Tigers kill Tamil leader:

Suspected Tamil Tiger rebels shot and killed a leader of a moderate Tamil political party Friday, police and witnesses said, AP reports from Jaffna.

P. Karunaratnam, 28, the local secretary of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, was shot while she was shopping at the local vegetable market. The assassins fled after the street attack.

## Quake rocks Myanmar:

An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter Scale jolted north-eastern Shan state in Myanmar on Thursday, a meteorological official said, Reuters reports from Yangon.

No damage had yet been reported from the quake which occurred at 0939 GMT yesterday and rattled a sparsely populated area.

## Stone Age tools found in Red Sea:

An Egyptian-Belgian archaeological mission has found a cave with remains dating back to 7,000 BC at al-Qoseir on Egypt's Red Sea coast, the state-owned al-Akhbar newspaper reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Cairo.

It quoted Gaballah Ali Gagallah, secretary general of the Supreme Antiquities Council, as saying tools and paintings recording daily life had been discovered inside the cave.

## 7 killed in clashes in Nepal:

At least seven people have been killed in clashes between Maoist guerrillas and security police in different parts of Nepal, police said on Thursday, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

One policeman was killed and five guerrillas died when a group of about 100 Maoists attacked a police station at the Awalchung Village Development Council (VDC) Southwest of Kathmandu, they said. Two other officers and some 10 guerrillas were also wounded during the attack on Monday, they added.

## Barak ready to move quickly for broad peace in ME

WASHINGTON, July 16: New Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak told President Bill Clinton on Thursday the Middle East had reached a "moment of truth" and he was prepared to move quickly for a broad peace, a senior Israeli official said, reports Reuters.

"The Middle East has suffered long enough," the Israeli official said, describing Barak's 2 1/2 hours of a talk with Clinton. "We are ready. This is the moment of truth. It's a fateful moment. There are dangers, but we are ready to try to reduce them."

The White House extended every courtesy to Barak, who met Clinton for the first time as Israel's premier, arranging separate talks with Vice President Al Gore and a rare overnight stay at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.

The two men, accompanied by their wives Hillary Rodham Clinton and Nava Barak, flew by helicopter to the wooded camp for dinner and further discussions on Thursday night.

Clinton and Barak vowed to put momentum into Middle East peace talks and slipped quickly into an easy relationship that had been absent in US-Israeli ties in recent years.

"I came here as a messenger of the people of Israel who have called for change and renewal. And I am determined to bring about change and renewal," Barak said in the White House before he and Clinton engaged in one-on-one talks.

Released by NASA, this file photo dated July 20, 1969 shows astronaut Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr. saluting the US flag on the surface of the Moon during the Apollo 11 lunar mission. The 20th July this year marks the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and man's first walk on the Moon.

— AFP photo

## In East Timor

## Bloodshed mars start of voter registration

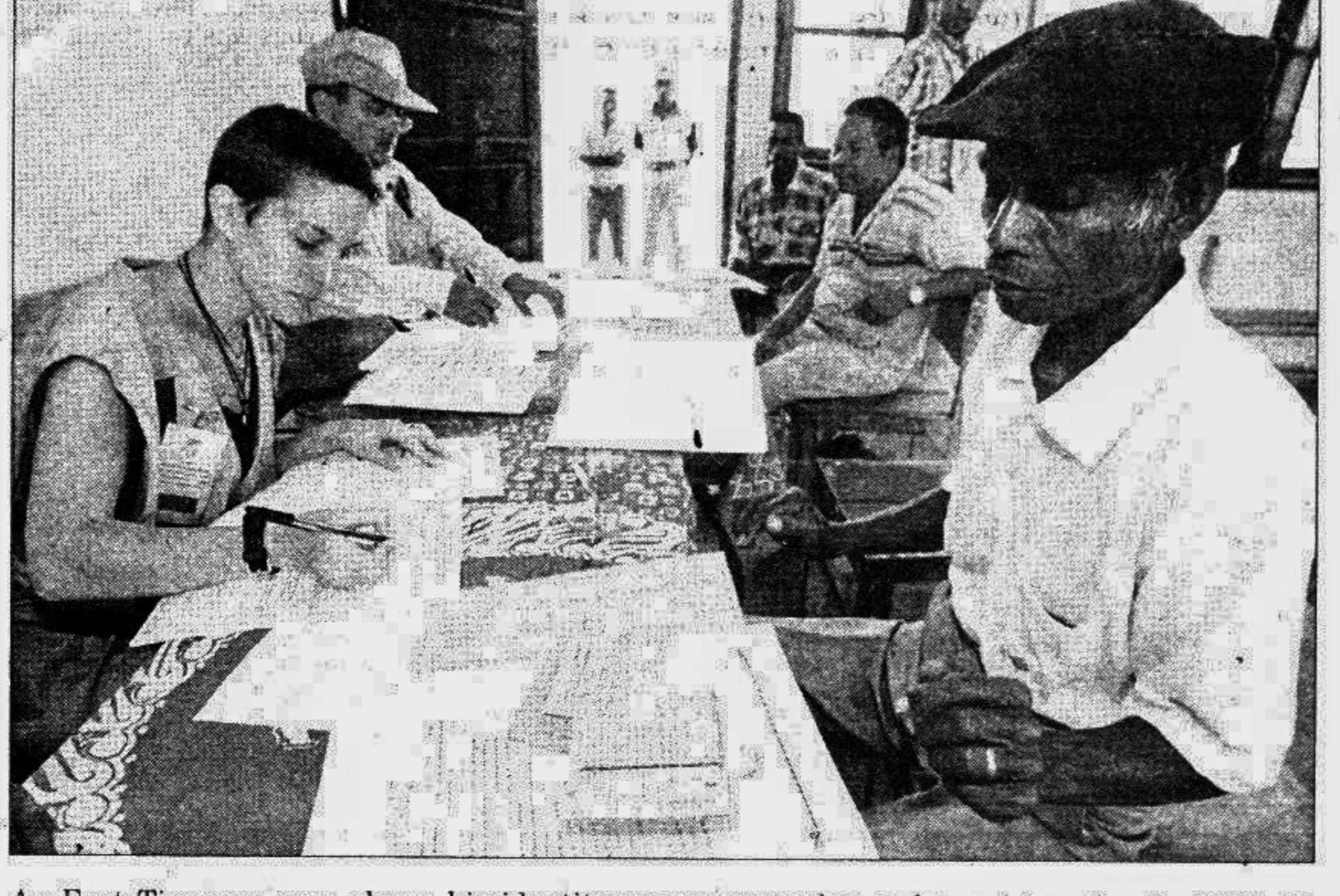
SUAI, Indonesia, July 16: Bloodshed marred the start of voter registration for an UN-supervised ballot on the independence of Indonesia's troubled province of East Timor, officials of the world body said Friday.

Witnesses said anti-independence militiamen attacked pro-independence supporters in remote Salas village in Zulmatali district, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) southwest of the provincial capital of Dili.

One militia member was killed and two other people were injured in the brawl, officials said. The clash erupted just hours before a 20-day registration period was launched Friday in 200 UN outposts and offices across the half-island territory.

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Elsewhere in East Timor, voter registration got off to a mainly peaceful start the United Nations postponed it by three days because of fears of more violence.



An East Timorese man shows his identity papers yesterday as he registers for the UN-held ballot in August at the Bairope neighbourhood in Dili as voter registration stations opened simultaneously across the territory. Registration began ahead of the planned landmark poll on the future of East Timor. Stations in the capital Dili and its outskirts opened their doors to receive all East Timorese over the age of 17.

— AFP photo

## Off the Record

## Tale of a 'Tiger Lady'

JACKSON, NJ, July 16: A New Jersey woman who keeps tigers on her property refused on Thursday to give in to state authorities who have been trying to close down her