

Suu Kyi marks 'Martyrs Day'

State press calls for her removal

YANGON, July 19: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi laid flowers for her assassinated father, independence hero Aung San, on "Martyrs Day" here Monday as the junta demanded her removal from politics, reports AFP.

The junta's propaganda mouthpiece urged Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party to dump her, saying she was a traitor who had sold herself and the country to "foreigners."

"There should be a clean-up within the party for the sake of

its continual survival, ridding themselves of undesirable elements and letting other capable ones who really love the people and the nation take over," the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper said.

The latest verbal attack against the Nobel Peace laureate came as she made a rare public appearance to lay flowers at the Martyrs Mausoleum in memory of her father, who was assassinated along with most of his cabinet 52 years ago.

Dressed in a somber black sarong with a white jacket and black shawl, the slightly built NLD leader knelt at the mausoleum and bowed three times in a traditional show of respect for her father.

Aung San is a national hero, revered for founding the Myanmar army and leading the country formerly known as Burma to independence from Britain in 1947.

But the military he created has brutally ruled Myanmar in a succession of juntas since 1962, refusing to recognise a 1990 election won in a landslide by the NLD under Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership.

Monday's wreath-laying service was the only public appearance Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed to make on Martyrs Day, and the area around the mausoleum near the famous Shwedagon Pagoda was blocked to the public.

She was accompanied by junta representative Colonel Than Tun.

30 years ago this day man landed on the moon

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., July 19: Thirty years ago, men shook the bonds of planet Earth and landed on the moon, fulfilling an ancient human dream as they stepped for the first time onto another celestial world, reports Reuters.

On July 20, 1969, Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin raced their lunar lander across the desolate moon's surface, searching for a soft landing spot. Moments after the spacecraft touched down, Armstrong radioed home: "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed."

Hailed as humankind's

greatest technological achievement, built on the backs of some 400,000 people who worked in the US space programme, the moon landing was to have been the stepping stone to the colonisation of space.

Thirty years later, the graying space explorers wonder why mankind has never made its next great leap — to Mars.

"So titanic was that achievement and yet so timid our subsequent efforts," Aldrin said recently.

The US moon quest began in 1961 when President John F. Kennedy locked in a Cold War with the Soviet Union and seek-

ing proof of US technological superiority, challenged his nation to achieve "the goal before this decade is out of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth."

Little more than eight years later, Armstrong, Aldrin and Michael Collins surged off the launch pad at Cape Canaveral on July 16, 1969 atop a Saturn 5 rocket, said to have been the most powerful machine ever built.

Across the quarter-million-mile (400,000-km) void between Earth and moon, the anxious world watched.

As the tiny lunar lander neared the surface of the moon, alarms rang in the cockpit. The craft was running dangerously low on fuel as Armstrong and Aldrin scoured the landscape for a safe place to set down.

With just 17 seconds worth of fuel left for landing, the lunar module touched down. As billions back on Earth cheered, the astronauts' earthbound colleagues exhaled.

"I don't believe anyone was breathing in Mission Control," Charles Duke, who was on the radio with the astronauts that day and later walked on the moon as a crewman on Apollo 16, recalled recently.

Nearly seven hours later, Armstrong stepped down on the powdery surface of the moon and uttered the famous words: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

He meant to say "One small step for a man," Armstrong, a shy ex-astronaut who at 68 runs a business in Ohio, said last week at a rare public appearance at the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. "The 'a' was intended, I thought I said it."

the first leg when it sent Yuri Gagarin into space in 1961. The United States won the race.

"The important achievement of Apollo was demonstration that humanity is not forever chained to this planet," Armstrong said. "Our visions go rather further than our opportunities are unlimited."

Of the 12 men who walked on the moon, three are gone: Apollo 14's Alan Shepard who was the first American in space, in 1968; James Irwin of Apollo 15, in 1971; and Charles "Pete" Conrad of Apollo 12 killed in a motorcycle accident this month.

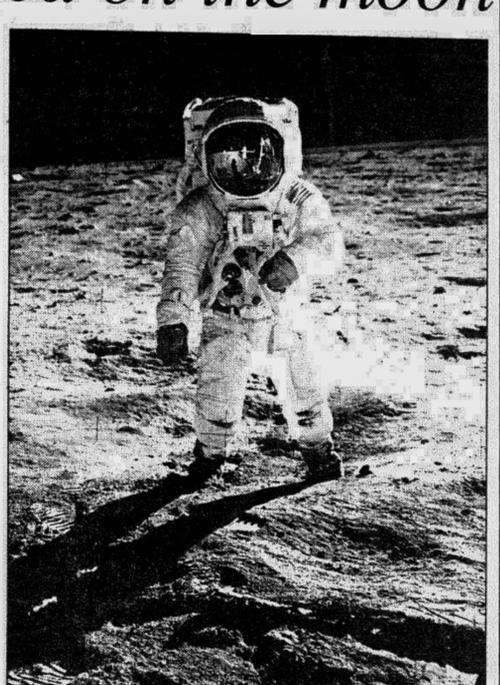
As they gathered at the Kennedy Space Centre last week to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the voyage, the Apollo astronauts, now in their 60s and 70s, lamented the failure to establish a colony on the moon and send an astronaut to Mars.

"Man can successfully travel to another planet... but he cannot live in the past," Apollo pioneer George Mueller said.

Mueller, who as NASA's associate administrator of manned space flight for much of the 1960s directed the Apollo programme, said he looked back on those heady days with mixed emotions.

"I remember it being a great achievement," he said.

The United States spent some 25 billion dollars to reach the moon.



Released by NASA, this file photo dated July 20, 1969 shows Apollo 11 astronaut Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr. on the surface of the Moon as taken by fellow astronaut and first man on the Moon, Neil Armstrong. Today marks the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and man's first walk on the Moon. — AFP photo

Aceh rebels kill 4 Indonesian soldiers

JAKARTA, July 19: Rebels in the troubled Indonesian province of Aceh killed four soldiers and injured 21 others during an ambush on a military truck early Monday, the military said, reports AFP.

Seven soldiers were severely injured and 14 others lightly when their truck was ambushed on Aceh's main highway in Pidie district, an officer on duty at the Aceh command based in Lhokseumawe, North Aceh district, told AFP.

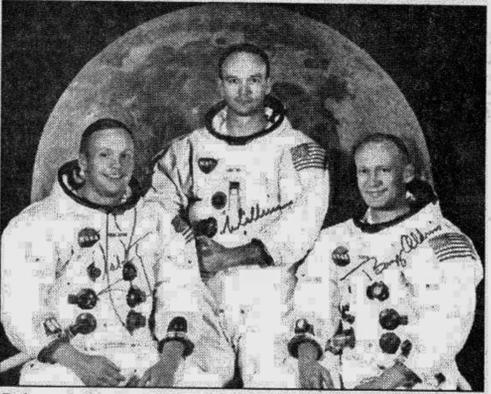
The officer declined to identify himself but said the injured had been sent to two hospitals — the military hospital in Lhokseumawe and the state hospital in Sigli, the town of Pidie district.

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Released by NASA, this file photo dated May 01, 1969 shows the crew of the Apollo 11 lunar landing mission (L-R) Neil Armstrong, commander, Michael Collins, command module pilot and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., lunar module pilot. Today marks the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and man's first walk on the Moon. — AFP photo

Uzbek leader urges Afghan parties to agree ceasefire

TASHKENT, July 19: Uzbek President Islam Karimov on Monday urged Afghanistan's warring parties to agree a ceasefire and prisoner exchange to pave the way for a broad settlement of the long-running civil war, reports AFP.

"During this meeting we must consider working out a mechanism for the talks process," Karimov told the start of the "six-plus-two" conference, attended by Afghanistan's six neighbours, plus Russia and the United States.

Deputy foreign ministers from China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were attending the meeting, as well as the warring parties.

The fundamentalist Taliban which controls 80 per cent of Afghanistan after overthrowing the regime of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani in 1996, is opposed by an anti-Taliban alliance commanded by Ahmad Shah Masood.

Karimov said that following a ceasefire, peace talks should focus on the makeup of the future Afghan state and the creation of a broad-based government.

That could pave the way for the signing of a final package of

general agreements between the Taliban and opposition parties, the Uzbek leader said.

"With the agreement of the Afghan parties, a general agreement between them could be signed at a meeting of the foreign ministers of the group of six plus two," Karimov said.

He called for parallel talks on the creation of massive aid packages for the war-torn country covering humanitarian aid, and the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan's shattered economy.

A peace deal could clear the way for a special UN General Assembly session on Afghanistan, said Karimov, "which would symbolise the political recognition by the international community of the results of the agreement on restoring peace to this country."

UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi for his part warned the peace process was at a critical stage.

"Until now we have witnessed the resumption of military activities in Afghanistan," he said.

"If the six plus two fails to resolve the Afghan conflict, there will be doubts about its ability to launch peace initiatives."

Mediation is not an answer to Kashmir problem: India

NEW DELHI, July 19: India stood firm Monday in rejecting any foreign mediation in its dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir, as the post-mortem began on 10 weeks of bitter fighting in the Himalayan region, reports AFP.

"Mediation is not an answer to Kashmir... The international community has to recognise reality," Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh said in a television interview.

"Between countries nothing will work, no mediation, no intermediary role, unless there is a basic modicum of trust, goodwill and a desire to live together."

US President Bill Clinton, who helped broker the withdrawal of Islamic guerrillas from Indian Kashmir that brought an end to the conflict, has pledged to take a "personal interest" in resolving India and Pakistan's 50-year dispute over Kashmir, over which they have fought two wars.

India is bitterly opposed to any third-party intervention, and while Singh in the BBC interview said he was willing to talk to Clinton "about any issue," he reiterated mediation

was not an option.

"The main point is for Pakistan to understand that it cannot force the situation," he said. Singh is scheduled to hold talks with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the sidelines of the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers' meeting in Singapore later this month.

It will be the first high-level contact between New Delhi and Washington since Pakistan called on the Islamic militia to withdraw.

India launched an offensive May 9 to evict what it said were mainly Pakistani soldiers who had crossed the Line of Control (LoC) and taken up strategic positions on the Indian side of the border.

Pakistan insisted the guerrillas were Kashmiri freedom fighters, or mujahadeen.

As of Monday morning, the withdrawal of all infiltrators from Indian territory had been confirmed, with the exception of several positions in the Mushkoh valley.

Meanwhile, with the fighting finally over, the post-mortem into the conflict has

begun in earnest.

While the battle was still on, the media and opposition parties rode -- and in many cases fanned -- a prevailing wave of nationalist sentiment, voicing widespread support for the army and muting criticism of the government.

However, no sooner had India announced the complete withdrawal of the enemy forces, than the analytic scalpels were brought out to dissect the causes of a conflict that cost the lives of more than 400 Indian soldiers.

"The war: Did we really win it?" ran the cover headline on the latest issue of the influential weekly magazine Outlook.

The failure of military intelligence in detecting the initial infiltration across the LoC has become a favoured target, while harsh questions are being asked of the country's level of war preparedness.

The latest Kashmir conflict will undoubtedly renew calls for reforms of India's military structure, with the topic destined to become the subject of heated debate in campaigning for mid-term general elections that begin in September.

Jiang tells Clinton China has not ruled out force against Taiwan

BEIJING, July 19: President Jiang Zemin told US President Bill Clinton that China has not ruled out using force against Taiwan if the island tries to split from the mainland, a state media said Monday, reports AP.

It was the highest-level threat in a Chinese war of words that began when Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui said their governments have "state-to-state" relations. Beijing, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, called that a step toward declaring formal independence, which it would stop by force if needed.

China and Taiwan have been ruled separately since a civil war 50 years ago. Both say they are part of the same country.

"We are not committed to abandoning the use of force on the issue of Taiwan," the newspaper China Daily quoted Jiang as saying by phone to Clinton on Sunday evening. "There are certain forces on the island of Taiwan and in the international community which aim to separate Taiwan from the motherland. We will not stand

by and let this happen."

In Washington, the White House said Clinton reaffirmed US support for the "one China" policy during the phone call.

He hoped both sides could maintain a dialogue, and the cross-strait issues could be resolved peacefully, said White House spokesman David Leavy.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is expected to see Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan this week at a meeting in Singapore. Chinese officials have not confirmed US reports that they will meet formally.

Lee enraged Beijing when he said in a German radio interview broadcast July 10 that the rival governments have "state-to-state" relations. Beijing denounced that as a rejection of "one China."

Defence Minister Chi Haotian said last week that China's military was ready to use force if necessary to back up Beijing's claim to Taiwan.

The dispute threatens to wreck attempts at restarting talks broken off by Beijing in

1995 in anger at Lee's efforts to raise Taiwan's international profile.

China's top envoy on Taiwan affairs, Wang Daohan, had been scheduled to visit the island this year. But Wang's agency, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait, said last week he might cancel unless Taiwan clarifies Lee's comments.

"Splitting" China's territory and sovereignty cannot be allowed under any circumstances," China Daily quoted Jiang as saying to Clinton. "We have warned the Taiwan authorities to stop on the brink of any kind of separation attempts and avoid damage to the cross-strait relations."

The report received prominent exposure in China, appearing on the front page of the main Communist Party newspaper, the People's Daily and other major newspapers.

The dispute has caused turmoil in Taiwan, where the main index of the island's stock exchange has fallen some 13 per cent since last Tuesday.

2 US soldiers killed in Kosovo

Two US soldiers were killed and three injured in a road accident in Kosovo, a Kosovo peacekeeping force (KFOR) spokesman said Monday, AFP reports from Pristina.

The soldiers were 15 kilometers east of Gnjilane, in southern Kosovo, when their armored personnel carrier overturned Sunday, Canadian spokesman Louis Garneau said. The injured soldiers required first-aid treatment but were not seriously hurt. An investigation has begun to find the cause of the accident.

SLA man killed in south Lebanon

A soldier in the Israeli-allyed South Lebanon Army (SLA) was killed Monday by a roadside bomb planted in the buffer zone Israel occupies across the border, the Israeli army said, AFP reports from Kiryat Shmona, Israel.

The SLA soldier was killed by a bomb as he took part in a routine patrol, an army spokesman said. The bombing followed a period of relative calm which coincided with peace overtures between Israel and Syria, the powerbroker in Lebanon and a main backer of the Islamic militia Hezbollah which spearheads attacks on the Israeli-controlled buffer zone.

N Korean woman defects to South

A woman from North Korea has arrived in South Korea via a third country to seek asylum, intelligence officials said Monday, AP reports from Seoul.

The National Intelligence Service identified the woman as Yoon Mi Hyun, 23, who had worked at a table tennis facility in Pyongyang until she left the communist country in May.

MQM to launch protest campaign against Sharif

KARACHI, July 19: Pakistan's influential ethnic party will launch a protest campaign against alleged extra-judicial killings of its workers amid simmering tensions in Karachi, party officials said Monday, reports AFP.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which represents Urdu-speaking migrants from India after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, will organise a hunger strike protest inside and outside the country, they said.

A protest in world capitals will be staged outside the official residences of the US president, the British prime minister, the United Nations headquarters, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and human rights organisations.

An MQM leader, Aftab Sheikh, said the timing and date of the protests was being kept secret as the "vindictive" government would try to thwart the plan.

S Arabia plays central role in Kashmir, says Sharif

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, July 19: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Monday said Saudi Arabia was playing an important role in the resolution of the conflict over Kashmir, reports AFP.

Saudi Arabia has an important role in resolving the Kashmir problem and we stayed in close contact with it in the last period. We are in agreement on the steps that were taken," he said, quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The prime minister's comments came on the second day of his four-day visit to the kingdom and followed talks with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan bin Abdel Aziz.

Prince Sultan travelled to Pakistan in May, after the two states agreed to boost investment and trade. Riyadh has provided around one billion dollars in aid to Islamabad.

17 Iraqis killed in US airstrike

BAGHDAD, July 19: Iraq said Monday that 17 people were killed, mostly women, children and elderly people, in a US air strike on the south of the country, the deadliest in six months, reports AFP.

The bombing in the Najaf region on Sunday also left 18 wounded and destroyed many homes, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported. The victims were all buried on Monday.

It was one of the deadliest strikes since Britain and the United States waged an air war against Iraq in December.

The US administration and its ally, Britain, committed a new crime by carrying out an attack in the Najaf region, some 150 kilometres south of Baghdad, INA said.

The cowardly aggression carried out by the US planes caused the martyrdom of 17 people, mostly women, children and elderly people, and wounded 18 others," the agency

Israel preparing pullout from West Bank

JERUSALEM, July 19: The Israeli army on Monday began preparatory work for a pullout from some of its positions on the West Bank in line with the Wye River land-for-security agreement signed last October, Israeli radio said, reports AFP.

The operation would entail the relocation of a military command post and an Israeli-Palestinian liaison office that are currently located at the Jewish colony of Dotan, near the self-governing Palestinian town of Jenin, it said.

These facilities would be transferred close to the colony of Shaked, in the north of the West Bank, the radio said.

Other various military installations would be pulled back, and this would be followed later by similar work to prepare partial withdrawals in the Ramallah and Hebron regions, the radio said.

The Wye accord was signed in October by Israel's former government, led by hardline rightist Benjamin Netanyahu.

More Iranian students held Govt blames foreign countries for riots

TEHRAN, July 19: Iranian authorities arrested more students in connection with last week's riots, press reports said Sunday as the regime sought to downplay political bickering and blame the violence on students in the pay of foreign governments, reports AFP.

Several members of an Islamic students council close to reformist President Mohammad Khatami, due to hold a press conference Saturday that never took place, were arrested by the police, the moderate Neshat Newspaper said.

The paper gave no further details but the English-language Iran News reported that officials at Tehran University, where the press conference was scheduled to take place, had also been informed of the arrests.

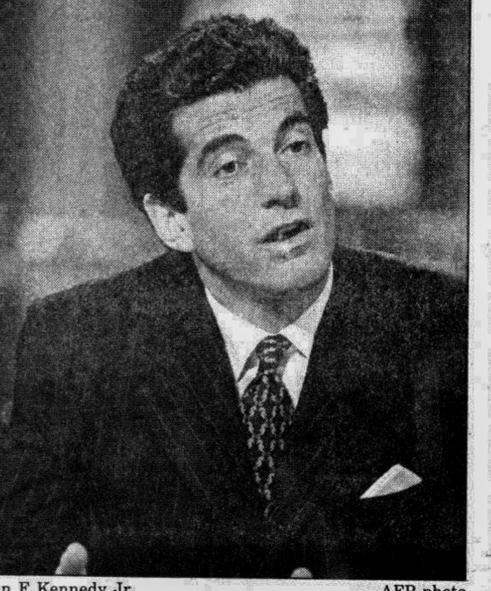
Local journalists invited to the campus for the press conference were turned away by university security, Iran News said. News of the fresh detentions

came a day after the Elected Council of Student Protesters said more than 1,400 people had been arrested following the worst unrest in Iran since the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The group, which includes representatives from the Tehran University dormitory where the violence first erupted 10 days ago, demanded the immediate release of all those detained, as well as a list of their names.

Meanwhile the intelligence ministry accused foreign nations of staging the disturbances, echoing what has become a refrain from the regime as it attempts to deflect attention from bitter factional squabbling inside the government.

In a statement read on state radio Sunday the ministry said a number of those arrested in connection with the riots had confessed to being "backed by foreign countries."



John F. Kennedy Jr. — AFP photo

J F Kennedy Jr: America's crown prince

HYANNIS PORT, Massachusetts, July 19: Friends described him as a "normal guy." But with dashing good looks, wealth and a past marked by extraordinary loss mingled with high privilege John Kennedy Jr was something akin to a crown prince for Americans, reports AFP.

Even as he matured into a poised young man, Kennedy, presumed dead in a plane crash, remained fixed in the minds of many as the three-year-old toddler saluting the casket of his father, the US president of the same name slain in 1963.

That visual memory, forged in tragedy, was recalled by reporters and commentators after authorities announced Sunday that the 38-year-old Kennedy had likely perished in a plane crash two days earlier, along with his wife, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy and her sister, Lauren Bessette.

On November 25, 1960, just days after his father swept into the US presidency, "John John" first captured the hearts of Americans through photographs of him playing underneath the presidential desk in the Oval Office of the White

House as the new president worked.

After burying his father, the young Kennedy once again had to stand at a funeral -- this time that of his uncle Robert who was assassinated midway through his promising 1968 presidential bid when the young John Kennedy was eight years old.

The American public watched as the scion who romped in the Oval Office as a boy grew into a handsome man, heir to the glamorous image of his father and mother, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy.

And the fascination only grew when, in 1996, he married Carolyn, an uncommonly attractive blond who seemed a perfect match for Kennedy.

But his life, while imbued with the sparkle of wealth and fame, was also a portrait of cruel loss.

His younger brother, Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, died just three months after he was born in 1963; his uncle Joseph Patrick Kennedy, Jr., died in 1944 in an air crash in World War II; his aunt, Kathleen Agnes Kennedy died in a plane crash

in 1958.

John's cousin David Anthony Kennedy died of a drug overdose in 1984, and another cousin, Michael Kennedy -- son of Robert Kennedy -- died at age 39 in a ski accident in Colorado in January 1998.

Once described by People Magazine as "the sexiest man alive," John Kennedy Jr. married Carolyn Bessette, a fashion publicist, in a surprise, extremely private wedding in Georgia. They had no children.

Unlike several of the Kennedy men who have glided smoothly into the realm of elective politics, John Kennedy Jr. avoided that path in favor of engagement from the other side as editor of the political and celebrity magazine "George," launched in 1995.

Some news reports said however he had begun to talk quietly about a future campaign for the US Senate.

Earlier in his life, he attended Brown University and received his law degree at New York University before working as a public prosecutor in Manhattan District Attorney's Office.

He also was a volunteer in the Special Olympics for handicapped athletes, a movement born out of a foundation his grandfather, Joseph Kennedy started in 1946.

From 1998 to 1990, he worked in New York on assisting people with mental and developmental disabilities and served on the board of directors of the Robin Hood foundation, a New York group that helps disadvantaged youth.

Like his sister, Caroline, John lacked the pretension of many celebrities and political figures, instead greeting strangers with a "Hi, I'm John" and an outstretched hand.

That attitude appeared to win the hearts of New Yorkers, and admirers worldwide.

Outside the couple's loft apartment in New York City's industrial district of TriBeCa, people crowded the sidewalk with flowers, candles and notes of prayer.

One of the mementos was a drawing of him as the three-year-old boy saluting his father's casket.

On it was inscribed the question: Has anyone here seen my old friend John-John?