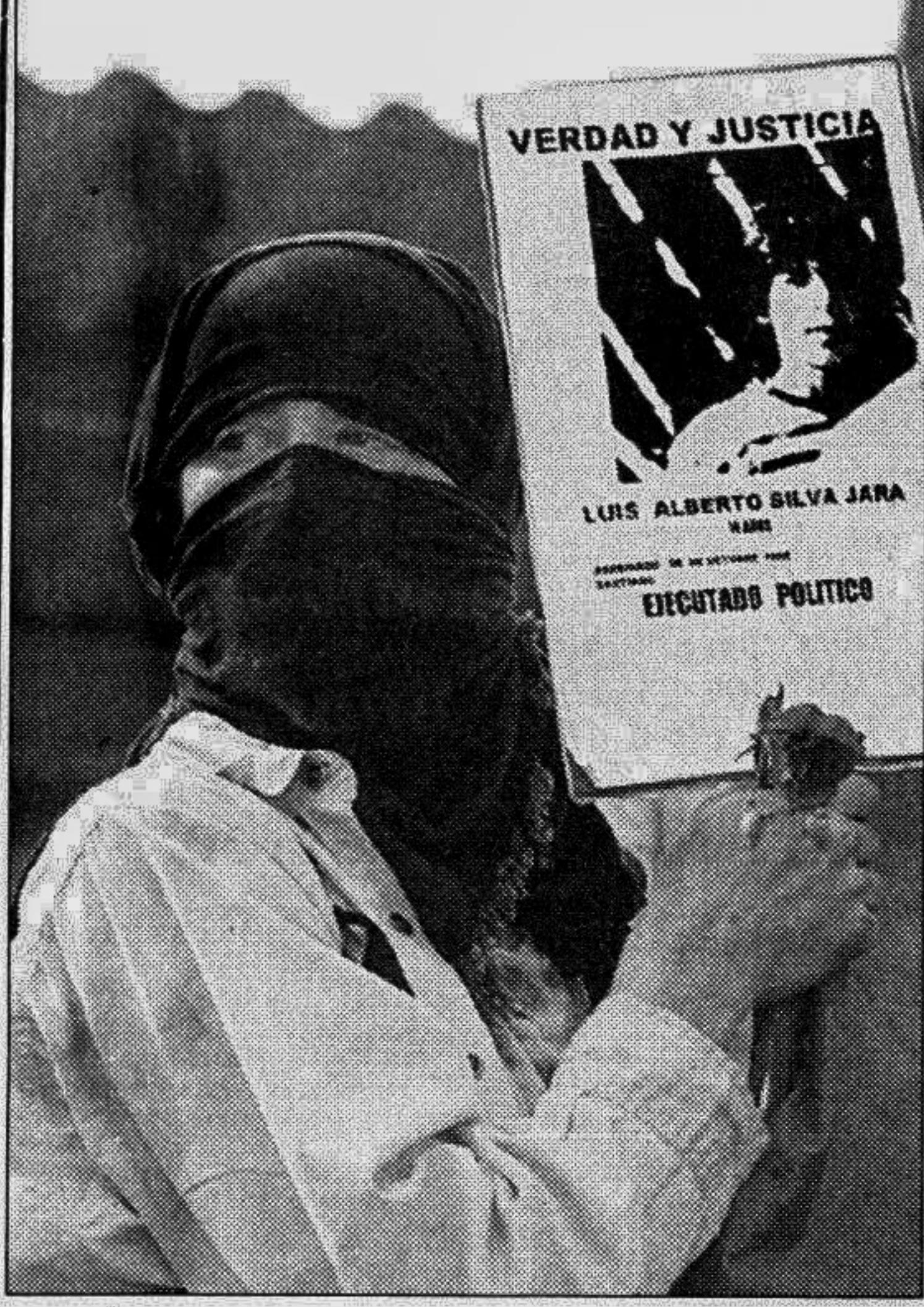


International

BRIEFLY



A masked woman holds a poster and a flower as thousands of Chileans take to the streets on Saturday in Santiago during a parade marking the 26th anniversary of the coup that brought Augusto Pinochet to power and to remember the thousands of Chileans who died during the dictatorship which lasted from 1973 to 1990.

— AFP photo

Police kill 2 protesters in Chile: Police shot dead two youths late Saturday during protests in Santiago marking the 26th anniversary of the bloody military coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power, local television reported. AFP reports from Santiago.

The fatal shootings, in a working class neighbourhood in eastern Santiago, came at the end of day-long demonstrations marking the anniversary of the September 11, 1973 military takeover. The youths were part of a crowd that had erected barricades and lit bonfires in the neighbourhood, according to reports.

US-NKorean missile talks end:

North Korea and the United States Sunday ended six days of talks here on sanctions and missile issues on a positive note, they said in a joint statement, AFP reports from Berlin.

"Each side came to a deeper understanding of the other's concerns and each acknowledged the need to continue taking steps that address these concerns," they said. North Korea and the United States said that they agreed "each would endeavour to preserve a positive atmosphere conducive to improved bilateral relations and to peace and security in northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region."

Japan's rocket launch delayed:

Japan put off the launch Sunday of an H-2 rocket due to a fuel sensor failure, the second delay in the project, officials said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

"Disorder was found in a sensor at the first-stage liquid hydrogen tank and today's launch was put off due to repair work for this," an official at the National Space Development Agency (NASDA) said. Its rocket, carrying a satellite, was to be launched at 4:41 p.m. (0741 GMT) from Tanegashima Space Center in southern Japan. It was rescheduled to September 17 or later.

Fresh offensive against Tamil Tigers

COLOMBO, Sept 12: Heavy fighting raged in Sri Lanka Sunday as government troops launched an air and ground offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels, official sources said as both sides reportedly suffered losses, reports AFP.

Ground troops backed by air cover mounted the pre-dawn drive in the district of Mannar in a bid to capture territory held by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), officials said.

They said initial reports suggested that the air force had destroyed several bunkers of the LTTE and about 80 guerrillas were believed to have been either killed or wounded.

Unconfirmed reports placed the military losses at about five soldiers killed and over 50 wounded. Defence ministry officials here were not immediately available for comment.

Military sources said the latest army action was aimed at

expanding the area held by the security forces and straightening a defence line in the district of Mannar.

The latest fighting ended a nine-week lull in the area.

In the last week of June, government forces faced stiff rebel resistance while trying to capture the rebel-held town of Vattalattivu.

In that battle, the LTTE admitted losing 84 of their fighters and claimed killing over 100 government troops.

However, the military placed its own losses at 16 killed and claimed that over 250 guerrillas perished at the hands of the security forces. The army said it captured the bodies of 97 rebels who were killed in the fighting.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a drawn out campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions. More than 55,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past 27 years.

Russia extends air raid into Chechnya for 2nd week

GROZNY, Russia, Sept 12: Russian warplanes blitzed Chechen border villages overnight, the presidency said here today, as Moscow extended into a second week its campaign of airstrikes against suspected rear bases of rebels fighting in neighbouring Dagestan, reports AFP.

Two people died and 50 homes were destroyed in raids on the village of Nozhal-Yurt near the border with war-torn Dagestan, the presidency said. The nearby village of Zamli-Yurt was also struck.

In the Gudermes region, the village of Azamat-Yurt was targeted. Russian bombs setting fire to a major gas pipeline running through the area, while the settlements of Nizhny-Gerzel and Gerzel also suffered bomb damage.

Up to 25 homes were destroyed in airstrikes in the village of Ichkoi-Yurt, the presidency added.

Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov said Saturday that

Moscow's air campaign had killed 150 people and in the breakaway Russian republic and triggered a refugee crisis, with frightened villagers fleeing into central Chechnya.

Maskhadov declared a state of emergency and announced a general mobilisation of the Chechen armed forces on Saturday in response to the Russian air raids which have heightened tensions with Moscow.

Russia launched the strikes last Sunday after some 2,000 Islamic guerrillas invaded Dagestan from Chechnya. Moscow has denounced Grozny for allowing its territory to be used to launch the insurgency.

Maskhadov insisted Chechen forces were playing no part in what he branded a "large-scale adventure" in which Moscow also played a role, and said only direct plays between himself and President Boris Yeltsin could halt the spiralling violence.

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UN calls for intervention as troops attack E Timor refugees

DARWIN, Australia, Sept 12: The UN mission to East Timor called Sunday for international military intervention after hearing eye-witness accounts of an attack by Indonesian troops on thousands of starving East Timorese refugees, reports AFP.

The attack happened at what was previously regarded as a refugee safe-haven at Dili nine kilometres (six miles) south of the devastated capital of Dili, UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) spokesman David Wimhurst said.

Accounts differed about whether it happened on Saturday or Sunday.

Wimhurst told reporters the United Nations had received three separate reports from East Timor about the attack in which troops were said to have advanced up a mountain "killing as they went."

One of the witnesses, a man who phoned from high on a mountain above the refugee enclave had told of hearing the sound of shots being fired below him and people screaming in terror.

"He said there are thousands of refugees down there," Wimhurst told a news conference.

"He can hear the TNI (Indonesian armed forces) are advancing up the mountain killing everybody as they went."

Clearly angered by the latest developments, he said: "There is still no international peace keeping force in sight yet."

"They (the Indonesians) are still slaughtering people in East Timor and the international community has not acted."

"Obviously there is an urgent need for an armed intervention to prevent these atrocities from continuing."

Earlier, he told of growing alarm at the plight of the refugees, believed now to number more than 30,000, because they have no food left and international agencies are unable to get any into the people.

He said a Catholic nun, Sister Ann Forbes, had told the UN there was almost no food left for a growing number of refugees and what little was left was going to the women and children.

"In fact it is quiet in Dili and there are no reports at the moment of any attacks on the displaced people there," he told CNN.

"What may be at issue is that there was an incident there yesterday, we believe, in which one person was killed and this may have been communicated to the expatriate East Timorese population in Darwin and picked up from there."

The UN had been negotiating with Indonesian authorities to try to secure guarantees for the safe transfer of up to 1,500 internal refugees to Dili, a major religious and cultural centre to the Catholic East Timorese.

But Wimhurst said none of the refugees had so far been sent to Dili where a major crisis was already developing before the attack which he described as another "major crime against the East Timorese people."

The former Irish president was due to give a news conference here at 2:30 p.m. (0500 GMT), but earlier called for a war crimes tribunal to probe rights violations by Indonesia and the army-backed militia.

The Dili seminary, which sits on the top ridge of the mountains surrounding Dili, was for generations East Timor's most important educational institute where almost every prominent indigenous leader was educated.

Dili was the only place where East Timorese could be educated beyond secondary school level and its alumni include a roll call of independence leaders up to and including Xanana Gusmao who was released from home detention by Indonesia last week.

William Perry is nearing completion.

Earlier, Clinton told business leaders that "the people of North Korea need food and opportunities, they need engagement with the South and the chance of a brighter future."

"They do not need new weaponry that threatens the security of the region and the world."

But China urged restraint over the missile fears.

"All the relevant parties should do more things that are conducive to peace and stability in the Korean peninsula," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said here.

Intelligence reports from the three allies have stoked fears that starving North Korea could be preparing to test-launch a longer-range Taepodong II capable of reaching Alaska.

Japan hosts 47,000 US troops and South Korea 37,000.

UNAMET spokesman in Dili, Brian Kelly, said reports from the Indonesian military and its own sources in Dili indicated the mission town was calm Sunday and that the attack had occurred on Saturday.

"In fact it is quiet in Dili and there are no reports at the moment of any attacks on the displaced people there," he told CNN.

"What may be at issue is that there was an incident there yesterday, we believe, in which one person was killed and this may have been communicated to the expatriate East Timorese population in Darwin and picked up from there."

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An East Timorese father, wearing a headscarf in the colours of the Indonesian flag for protection, holds his child on Saturday in Dili following violence by pro-Indonesian militia.

— AFP photo

US, Japan, S Korea unite against N Korean missile

AUCKLAND, Sept 12: US President Bill Clinton agreed in a critical summit Sunday with Japan and South Korea to unite against a widely-feared North Korean ballistic missile test, Japan's premier said, reports AFP.

We agreed to work closely to prevent another North Korean missile launch and to contribute to Asian stability," Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi told reporters after the meeting here.

Clinton met with Obuchi and South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung -- leaders of the two key US allies in Asia -- to discuss measures to curb North Korea's missile program.

In a joint statement after the summit, the leaders "confirmed that they are prepared to undertake measures to improve their respective relations" with North Korea but only as Pyongyang addressed their concerns and took steps "to reduce tensions and establish lasting

peace on the Korean peninsula and beyond."

The three-way encounter was held on the sidelines of a major Asia-Pacific summit here.

It coincided with deepening concerns in North Asia about the unpredictable Stalinist state's ballistic missile program and as key US-North Korean negotiations in Berlin were extended.

North Korean delegation chief Kim Gye-Gwan said in the German capital he was satisfied after "some progress" was achieved in nearly eight hours of talks with the US side.

Pyongyang stunned the world on August 31 last year when it test-fired a medium-range Taepodong I ballistic missile that flew over Japan. North Korea insisted it was the start of a satellite launch program.

A long-awaited review of US policy toward North Korea by former US defence secretary

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Sonia vows to remain in Indian politics

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Opposition leader Sonia Gandhi Sunday pledged to remain in Indian politics despite mounting personal attacks on her by the ruling Hindu nationalists, reports AFP.

Gandhi held a public rally in the central Indian town of Kora after she was not bothered by a campaign of slander focusing on her Italian origins.

"The personal charges hurled against me by political rivals will never succeed in cowing me down," the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted her as saying.

"I am prepared to face any danger for the service of the people of this country."

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party and its allies have made virulent personal attacks against the 52-year-old Gandhi, president of the main opposition Congress party.

One minister said she had done nothing for India except bearing two children. Gandhi, who married into the Nehru

Gandhi family in 1968, became an Indian citizen in 1983 and took to politics only last year.

Gandhi critics say she is a "foreigner" and is unfit to become India's prime minister.

It was her first campaign rally after the second round of parliamentary elections on Saturday. The month-long staggered polls began on September 5 and will conclude on October 3.

Gandhi also accused Vajpayee of failing to prevent the recent infiltration of hundreds of Islamic guerrillas into Kashmir, which almost

sparked a war with Pakistan.

Her 114-year-old Congress party is widely expected to lose

to Hindu nationalists in the elections, which followed the collapse in April of Vajpayee's 13-month Hindu nationalist-led coalition.

Opinion polls say no single party will win an overall majority in the 545-seat parliament, but predict a good showing for the Vajpayee-led alliance.

Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist party will not be able to form a government.

It was the second time that

Zhang Yimou has won the main

Venice prize. He took it first in 1992 for "The Story of Qiu Ju."