

## US-Pak ties: Gone are the Cold War days

ISLAMABAD, Mar 22: When the chips are down, Muslim Pakistan looks to the United States for help, reports Reuters.

It will be no different during President Bill Clinton's brief visit on Saturday, but gone are the days when Pakistan was a Cold War ally blocking the Red Menace in Afghanistan.

Then, worries about martial law, a lack of democracy and even the hanging of a former prime minister were brushed aside by a United States more focused on Cold War concerns.

Now Washington is leading the charge in demanding a return to democracy after last October's military coup, pushing Islamabad to take a

stronger stand on terrorist groups and calling for Pakistan to improve its record on nuclear non-proliferation.

"The world has changed," one Islamabad-based diplomat said of Washington's goals in the region.

"There are nuclear concerns, relations with India and Osama bin Laden, and even drugs," he said.

"They want America to save them, but then they criticise America for interfering," he said.

Pakistan has been a close but testy ally of the United States, and its previous three military rulers — Field Marshal

Ayub Khan (1958-69), General Yahya Khan (1969-71) and General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) — faced few calls to restore democracy because of Pakistan's key position at one of the crossroads of the Cold War.

But the latest military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, seized power in very different times and has heard a chorus of calls to set a timeframe for the return of democracy as well as deal with terrorism, and use Pakistan's influence to get Afghanistan's ruling Taliban to expel Bin Laden, wanted for masterminding deadly bomb blasts on US embassies in Africa two years ago.

"Our interests include avoiding the threat of conflict in South Asia, fostering democracy in Pakistan, fighting terrorism, preventing proliferation and doing what we can to help create an environment of regional peace and security," US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said in a speech.

"In no way is this a decision to endorse the military coup or government led by General Musharraf. And no one should interpret it as such," Albright added about Clinton's visit, which came after intense debate within the US administration.

"Another vital US interest in Pakistan is countering terrorism."

## 5 killed during Holi festivities in West Bengal

CALCUTTA, Mar 22: Five persons were killed in separate incidents of violence during Holi festivities in West Bengal on Monday, police said, reports PTI.

Two persons were killed in North Bengal's Jalpaiguri district in as many incidents in Birpara Tea Garden and Dalsingpara Tea Garden areas.

A 26-year old man was stabbed by drunken Holi-revellers at Birpara following altercation over spraying of colour last evening, police said. He succumbed to injuries on way to hospital. Local people caught hold of two attackers and beat them up severely. They had been hospitalised since then.

In Dalsingpara miscreants attacked one person with sharp weapons killing him on the spot following quarrel between two groups over throwing coloured water, police said. No arrests had been made.

In South Bengal three persons were killed on the same day.

In Howrah one person was killed and another injured in police firing while a police officer suffered injuries in stone pelting by a mob, police said. Some policemen went to Remeswar Malia Lane to control a group of Holi-revellers and fired three rounds when attacked, police said.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (C) gives a speech as Pope John Paul II and the Palestinian leader's wife Suha Arafat (R) look on in the West Bank town of Bethlehem yesterday. The Pope said on his arrival to Bethlehem that the suffering of the Palestinian people had lasted too long and expressed his support for their right to a "homeland". — AFP photo

## DPP considers dropping bid for Taiwan's independence

TAIPEI, Mar 22: Leading members of Taiwan president-elect Chen Shui-bian's party met today to consider dropping its pro-independence stance which has provoked threats of a military response from China, reports AFP.

The proposal, discussed in a central executive committee meeting, follows Chen's historic victory for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Saturday's presidential election.

"After Saturday's elections, we have become the ruling party," said Chen Zau-nan, a member of the DPP's 31-member central executive committee.

"We must face the issue in a more practical manner," he told AFP Tuesday.

Party officials said details of the meeting would be announced later Wednesday but they did not expect an immediate conclusion.

Any change would have to be approved by the entire membership at a congress to be held in June or July.

If approved, the amendment would be one of a series of conciliatory gestures to China offered up since Chen's election — the first Monday when he

agreed to Beijing's demand to discuss its "One China" policy.

Taiwan's parliament Tuesday approved trade, transport and mail links between its frontline islands and mainland China, ending a 50-year ban on direct contact.

And on Wednesday Chen invited China's top envoy to Taiwan Wang Daohan to attend his inauguration ceremony on May 20, saying it would help create a positive atmosphere between the two.

Many in the DPP feel that because Taiwan is, to all practical purposes, already independent, it has nothing to gain by continuing to advocate a formal declaration of that status.

Like the majority of Taiwan voters, they feel they can only lose by further antagonising China, whose premier Zhu Rongji said Tuesday it will never hold negotiations with "any people and party that advocate Taiwan independence".

However, the proposed change is merely a gesture of goodwill to China, and not a change of belief on the part of the members.

"I think there is no need to emphasize independence," said Chen Zau-nan. "Hopefully in so doing Chen will be given greater

room in handling the disputes with China."

The DPP's Hsieh Chang-ting, the mayor of Kaohsiung city, gave his support saying: "To ensure stability is the priority. It's better that we take the initiative to deliver a goodwill message. Taiwan is in fact independent."

While there is wide support for the amendment within the party, other factions question the wisdom of the timing.

"If it is abolished, China will only push for further concessions," said DPP legislator Lin Cho-Shui who argued the climb-down should be kept as a bargaining chip.

"If we abolish this clause, if we give in, Beijing might push us a little bit further and they might ask us to give up our claim on sovereignty, and then maybe something else," he said Wednesday.

Under Chen Zau-nan's proposal, which is likely to be one of several considered, a new clause would omit references to independence and a new constitution.

The original clause, outlined in the party's founding manifesto, unveiled 13 years ago states:

"Based on the people's

sovereignty principle, the right to establish a self-governed independent sovereignty, the Republic of Taiwan, and the formation of a new constitution should be decided by all residents of Taiwan through a plebiscite."

The new clause would simply state that any change should be decided through a referendum — however the prospect of a plebiscite is also an anathema to Beijing, which regards Taiwan as a breakaway province.

Chen Shui-bian has for years said that he favours formal independence. But to mollify a war-threatening China during the campaign, he promised to drop any moves in that direction if he were elected.

Despite fears of an angry response from China to Chen's victory, cross-strait relations have so far unfolded smoothly.

The Pentagon said Tuesday it had detected no sign of unusual military activity by either China or Taiwan.

However, protests have raged in Taipei for five days over the ruling Kuomintang's shock defeat to Chen, with loud calls for party president Lee Teng-hui to take responsibility for the loss.

## Pope backs Palestinian state

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Mar 22: Pope John Paul II said on his arrival in Bethlehem today that the suffering of the Palestinian people had lasted too long and expressed his support for their right to a "homeland," reports AFP.

"The Palestinian people have the natural right to a homeland and to the right to be able to live in peace and tranquility with the other peoples of this area," the pope said with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at his side.

"No-one can ignore how much the Palestinian people have had to suffer in recent decades. Your torment is before the eyes of the world. And it has gone on too long," he said.

The pope arrived in Bethle-

hem from Israel as part of a week-long pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the first in 36 years by a head of the Roman Catholic church and the first ever to Palestinian-ruled territories.

"Only with a just and lasting peace — not imposition but secured through negotiation — will legitimate Palestinian aspirations be fulfilled," he said.

Arafat, who has pledged to declare an independent state in 2000 even without a peace deal with Israel, hailed the pope's stance in his speech of welcome.

"The Palestinian people value highly your just positions in support of their cause and their rightful presence on their homeland as a sovereign and independent people," he said.

The pope, who is due later to visit a Palestinian refugee camp near Bethlehem, said his prayers were with those Palestinians — Muslims and Christians — without a home of their own.

After his arrival on board an Israeli jet, the pope, who was accompanied by a large entourage, was greeted by a crowd of Palestinians. He kissed a bowl of Palestinian earth, a gesture normally reserved for state visits, as nearby crowds shouted "Viva il Papa."

The pope had already taken the unusual step of sending a telegram to Arafat when he overflew the Palestinian territories on his way to Israel from Jordan, where his emotionally and politically-charged trip to the holiest sites in Christianity began on Monday.

## Anwar's trial postponed

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 22: The sodomy trial of jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim was adjourned Wednesday, delaying again the Judge's decision on whether Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad must testify in the trial of his onetime portage, reports AP.

Anwar's lawyers have been trying for months to force Mahathir to testify in the trial. High Court Judge Ariffin Jaka then announced that he would give his ruling on whether Mahathir must appear as a witness.

However, before Ariffin could do that on Wednesday, the defense lawyers requested for the trial to be put off until Thursday because they were also involved in the appeal of fellow lawyer Zainur Zakaria, a member of Anwar's defense team.

## BRIEFLY

### Violence claims 5 in Indonesia:

Fresh violence broke out between Christians and Muslims in eastern Indonesia killing five people and injuring dozens more, news reports said Wednesday. AP reports from Jakarta.

Local military chief Maj. Puhuh said the fighting started on Monday between two communities on Halmahera island, about 2,650 kilometres (1,650 miles) northeast of Jakarta, the official Antara news agency reported. He said hundreds of troops have been deployed to the area and peace has since been restored. Puhuh, who like many Indonesians only uses one name, did not say what triggered the violence.

### 11 of a marriage party killed in UP:

Eleven members of a marriage party were killed and five seriously injured when a jeep carrying them collided with a bus at Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh Tuesday, police said, PTI reports from Mirzapur.

The accident took place near Bhatskhoh under Shauria police station in Mirzapur district. Superintendent of Police R P Singh said. Nine injured were hospitalised in serious condition, he said. The bus driver was absconding.

### Mortar attack in Baghdad: 4 killed

BAGHDAD, Mar 22: Four people were killed and 38 injured in a mortar attack in the Iraqi capital late Tuesday, the official news agency INA reported today, blaming Iranian agents, reports AFP.

"A group of agents of the Iranian regime fired six mortars at densely-populated civilian areas of Baghdad," it said, quoting an Iraqi security source.

One Iraqi was killed as well as three other Arab nationals, while 38 others were wounded, it said.

### Annan outraged at massacre in Kashmir

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 22: Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed outrage Tuesday at the massacre of 35 Sikh villagers in Kashmir and said it was a reminder of the need for India and Pakistan to find a political solution to the Kashmir dispute, reports AP.

Annan sent his "heartfelt condolences" to the families of victims and "reiterates his condemnation of all acts of terrorism from whatever quarter." UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

### Conservatives in Germany name first woman leader

BERLIN, Mar 22: Germany's scandal-scared opposition conservatives nominated Angela Merkel, a 45-year-old physicist from the formerly communist east, as their first woman leader on Monday, reports Reuters.

The national executive board of the Christian Democrats unanimously supported Merkel's candidacy, a senior official told reporters after its meeting in Berlin. She should be formally elected next month.

## Pope in Holy Land of Bible

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Mar 22: Pope John Paul II arrived today in Bethlehem, the town where Jesus Christ was born 2,000 years ago, for an emotional first-ever papal visit to the Palestinian territories, reports AFP.

The frail pontiff kissed a bowl of Palestinian soil as he arrived, a gesture welcomed by Palestinians as a sign of support for their aspirations for statehood, as the pope traditionally kisses the earth at the start of state visits.

On the second day of a week-long pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the pope was greeted by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"It is a historical holy moment in Bethlehem for the Palestinians to meet his Holiness," Arafat said.

The pope flew into the Palestinian-ruled town on board an Israeli air force helicopter, full-

filling a longheld dream of his papacy to visit the sites of Jesus's birth, life and death, as nearby crowds shouted "Viva il Papa."

The pope had already taken the unusual step of sending a telegram to Arafat when he overflew the Palestinian territories on his way to Israel from Jordan, where he began the first papal pilgrimage in 36 years.

He flew into Bethlehem after paying a visit to Qasr al-Yahud, a site on the River Jordan where many Christians believe Christ was baptised by his cousin John.

During his day-long visit, the pope was due to celebrate mass inside the Church of the Nativity on the site where Christians believe the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, the son of God, then visit a nearby Palestinian refugee camp before holding another meeting with Arafat.

## Indian press sees shift in US policy on Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Mar 22: India's leading dailies today saw a shift in US policy on Kashmir after a massacre of 40 villagers overshadowed the opening day of President Bill Clinton's visit here, reports AFP.

They said the rampage by unidentified gunmen in India-controlled Kashmir on Monday night brought the stark reality of Muslim "terrorism" home to Clinton, the first US President to visit India in 22 years.

"Clinton to tell Pakistan to stop exporting terrorism" belatedly The Hindustan Times in its front page headline.

Its lead article began: "In a significant shift, the US came out in clear support of India's stand that the dialogue with Pakistan can be resumed only if the Line of Control (LoC) is respected and cross-border terrorism is ended."

Many papers zeroed in on comments Clinton made at a press conference after talks with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, when he said: "You cannot expect a dialogue to go forward unless there is an absence of violence and a respect for the Line of Control."

"We share your outrage and heartbreak at last night's brutal

India has blamed Pakistan-based Muslim militants for the massacre of Sikhs in Chadisinghpura village, 80-km south of the Kashmiri summer capital of Srinagar.

But the governor of the Pakistan-ruled part of Kashmir has pointed the finger at Indian intelligence agents.

It was the first such attack against Sikhs and the worst massacre in Kashmir since the Muslim uprising against Indian rule began there in 1989.

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attack in Kashmir."

Vajpayee said the killings were "further evidence of the ethnic cleansing that has been under way for a decade" in Kashmir.

The Hindu said: "In an important political shift, Clinton has aligned himself with the Indian position that the creation of an appropriate environment is necessary for a purposeful Indo-Pak dialogue."

It quoted senior officials as saying Clinton's "specific" statements about the conditions for restoring dialogue between India and Pakistan, particularly his emphasis on ending the violence, was "of recent vintage."

All papers said Vajpayee had persuaded Clinton to take the message to Islamabad on Saturday when he is due to meet Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.

## Clinton pledges support for India's anti-AIDS drive

NEW DELHI, Mar 22: US President Bill Clinton today pledged support for anti-AIDS efforts in India, a country which the World Bank says accounts for 60 per cent of HIV cases in Asia, reports AFP.

Clinton told a meeting of the joint houses of parliament that India could count on US partnership to develop vaccines to eradicate diseases and viruses such as malaria, tuberculosis and Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

"No one should ever speak of

AIDS as someone else's problem. This has long been a big problem for the United States. It is now a big problem for you," he said.

"I promise you America's partnership in the continued struggle."

Independent Indian health experts say government efforts to stem AIDS remain woefully inadequate after years of trying to sweep the issue under the carpet.

## Paternity leave still a possibility for Blair

LONDON, Mar 22: Cherie Blair, Prime Minister Tony Blair's wife, hailed the Finnish Prime Minister for taking parental leave to be with his new baby — and, perhaps, dropped a hint to her own husband, reports AP.

Speaking to lawyers in London on Monday night, Cherie Blair noted that Finn Paavo Lipponen has twice taken advantage of paternity leave. Last week, Lipponen's office announced that he would take a six-day parental leave from his job to be with his new baby.

In 1998, Lipponen took a similar leave when his wife, Paivi, gave birth to their first child.

"I, for one, am promoting a widespread adoption of this fine example," said Cherie Blair, who is pregnant with the couple's fourth child. The baby is due in May.

Effective this year, parents in Britain are entitled to 13 weeks of unpaid leave during the first five years of a child's life. However, the regulation does not apply to the prime minister and other elected officials.

## Bangladesh Power Development Board

### BPDB's Local Tender Notice

বাত ১১টা থেকে ভোর ৬টা  
মুখো সোপা পশপ চালান

Local sealed tenders are hereby invited by the Bangladesh Power Development Board for procurement of Lead Acid (Industrial) Battery for the following Power Station.

SI No	Tender enquiry no. & date	Name of stores	Value of T.doc's Taka	Submission of T.doc's date time	Opening of T.doc's date time
1)	Pur-410/2000 dtd 08.3.2000.	Supply of Lead Acid- Industrial Battery for Bheramara Power Station, PDB, Bheramara, Kushtia.	500/-	25.4.2000 11-00 AM	25.4.2000 11-30 AM

A complete set of tender document including detailed specification, terms & conditions may be sold to the interested bidders against a written application to the undersigned on payment of Taka (non-refundable) mentioned above against each tender in the shape of Bank Draft/Pay Order favouring "Director of Purchase, PDB, Dhaka." The bidding documents will be available from 15.3.2000.

All bids must be accompanied by a bid bond in the prescribed bid format @ 2% of the total bid price from a scheduled bank of Bangladesh in accordance with instructions to the bidders. Tender will be received up to 11-00 AM and will be opened at 11-30 AM on opening date of each tender in presence of the bidder or their representative, if any.

No tender documents will be sent by post nor sold on the day of opening of each tender.

Biddu/Jan-1573(5)/99-2000  
DFP-6097-14/3  
G-520

Director of Purchase  
PDB, Dhaka.