

Kashmir mosque siege ends: Five dead

SRINAGAR, India, Mar 27: Indian army troops pulled out of a village in Indian Kashmir today after a two-day siege of Muslim militants holed up in a mosque ended with the killing of all three separatists, reports AFP.

Two soldiers, including a major, were also killed in the operation, police said.

The army pulled out after the third militant was killed late Sunday night at Dohdipora village, near Handwara town, 90 kilometres north of the Kashmiri summer capital Srinagar.

The other two militants had been killed when they jumped out of the mosque and tried to escape after setting off an explosion as a diversion.

The 50-hour siege began when the three militants sought refuge in the mosque after troops sealed Dohdipora on Saturday to conduct a house-to-house search.

More than 25,000 people have died in Kashmir since 1989 in violence linked to a Muslim separatist drive. India accuses Pakistan, which administers part of the disputed Himalayan province, of fuelling insurgency in its territory.

Islamabad denies the charge but extends moral and diplomatic support to the unrest.

Clinton back in US after Asia trip

WASHINGTON, Mar 27: President Bill Clinton returned to Washington late on Sunday night after a nine-day trip that took him to India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, and included talks with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in Geneva, reports Reuters.

Clinton's summit with Assad failed to produce an immediate resumption of negotiations between Syria and Israel, but Washington pledged to keep working for a deal.

Islamabad ready for talks with Delhi

Musharraf begins 4-nation Asia tour

ISLAMABAD, Mar 27: Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf said on Saturday Islamabad was ready for a dialogue with New Delhi anywhere, any time, at any level, reports PTI.

We don't mind returning to the Lahore process, if the centrality of the Kashmir issue was recognised, Gen Musharraf told a crowded press conference after the departure of US President Clinton.

We deeply appreciate the interest expressed by President Clinton in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute and reduction of tension between Pakistan and India.

"I also impressed upon President Clinton that it is necessary to facilitate a meaningful dialogue for progress towards resolution of the Kashmir problem, in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people".

He said he had given an open formula on resumption of dialogue and it was up to President Clinton what role he would play.

He said Clinton had visited our region at a time when it is passing through a critical period. We both share the concern that tensions in south Asia are high and need to be defused. It is widely recognised that Kashmir is the root cause of tensions in the region.

On cross-border terrorism, Musharraf said, we are not involved in sending people across the Line of Control into Kashmir.

Asked if the visit of the US President had given legitimacy to his government, he said, "I think my legitimacy comes from the people of Pakistan. Legitimacy comes from the people's support too. I do not need a certificate from anybody".

My discussions with the US President also covered all issues including nuclear matters and terrorism, the military ruler said.

The US President pointed to certain concerns over nuclear proliferation and emphasised

the need for restraint. General Musharraf said, adding we reaffirmed our policy of restraint and responsibility on nuclear matters.

AFP adds: General Pervez Musharraf left Islamabad today for Malaysia at the start of a tour of four Southeast Asian countries aimed at boosting trade and economic links, officials said.

The tour, which will also take him to Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei, was in pursuit of "Pakistan's Look-East" policy, the foreign office said.

Musharraf was accompanied by a delegation including Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar and senior officials.

In addition to talks on economic cooperation, Musharraf will seek support for Pakistan's full dialogue partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and membership of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

He will also discuss security in South Asia and the need for

an early solution to the dispute between Pakistan and India over Kashmir, the official statement said.

Musharraf's tour "is in pursuit of Pakistan's Look East Policy which is meant to enhance bilateral, economic, trade and investment relations," the foreign office statement said.

In Malaysia, his first stop, Musharraf will have talks with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and meet Malaysian investors and businessmen.

In Singapore, he will hold talks with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and in Indonesia two memorandums of understanding on enhancing bilateral cooperation will be signed.

Since seizing power in a military coup in October, Musharraf has visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey, Bahrain, Iran and China.

Pakistan's military regime faces a tough task to revive the country's economy.



Italian actor Roberto Benigni (L) and Hilary Swank joke at the Academy Awards presentation on Sunday. Swank won the award for Best Actress for her role in 'Boys Don't Cry'. — AFP photo

Putin has a tougher task to shoulder

MOSCOW, Mar 27: For Vladimir Putin, winning presidential elections was the easy bit.

As he returns to the Kremlin on Monday to start a four-year term as Russia's new president, the 47-year-old ex-spy knew that an overladen and neglected in-tray of intractable social, economic and political problems lay in wait, reports AFP.

Crushing inequality, social deprivation, corruption, economic muddle and habitual political anarchy: the tasks ahead of Russia's youngest leader since Nicholas II are no less formidable than those faced by the last tsar himself.

"We are a rich country of poor people," Putin remarked recently, as he vowed to tackle Russia's greatest misery and predecessor Boris Yeltsin's most damning legacy: poverty.

Yet as even he admitted, poverty will not just go away without a sharp improvement in the country's fundamental economic indicators -- growth, foreign investment, price stability.

Economists say that these in turn can only be achieved by undertaking the kind of sweeping reform -- structural, fiscal and legal -- that still has never really been launched in Russia.

But if Putin has learned one thing from Yeltsin's era, it is that under Russia's current chaotic political system it has proven all but impossible to devise, implement and enforce reform.

And analysts suggest that this is where the new Kremlin chief will start.

"Economic reforms will be useless if there is no reform in the political system," said

economist Alexei Zabolotkin. "You need to strengthen the political system so that decisions are enforced."

"Currently this is not happening. Whether Putin can do this will be decisive for his presidency."

The situation during Yeltsin's era was not independence it was anarchy," he said. "What Putin needs to do is to transform it into normal political system."

Pressing though the economic agenda is, analysts still expect Putin to start by consolidating power, bringing Russia's robustly independent governors to heel, placing his own men in the strategic posts in the government White House, the Kremlin's presidential administration, the law enforcement bodies...

"Putin will probably tackle

the political problems first, attack the bureaucracy and the oligarchs in his effort to centralise power," said Roland Nash, economist with the Renaissance Capital financial group.

Added Yuri Korgunov, political analyst with the Indem think-tank: "His first assignment will be to run a inventory of the government."

"He has to install his own people into power, and win control over all the rest," Korgunov said. "Before Putin, everyone who tried to stay in power and implement reform found that the two are mutually exclusive."

Putin's one great advantage over his predecessor is that the broad economic numbers are more positive than at any point since the debt and devaluation debacle of August 1998.

Pope ends Holy Land pilgrimage

JERUSALEM, Mar 27: Pope John Paul II left Israel on Sunday, crowning a week-long tour of the Holy Land with a dramatic appeal at the holiest shrine in Judaism for forgiveness for the church's ill-treatment of Jews over centuries, reports AFP.

Capping what he called a "soul-stirring" pilgrimage to the cradle of Christianity, the pontiff made an unprecedented visit by a head of the Roman Catholic Church to the Wailing Wall, slipping his prayer into a stone crevice during a politically-charged tour of sites sacred to Muslims, Christians and Jews.

"We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant," said the text.

His message of repentance had already been contained in a public confession the pontiff made two weeks ago, but its personal delivery at the most sacred Jewish site had a special resonance for historically tormented Jewish-Christian relations.

Queen Elizabeth plants tree for reconciliation in Australia

CANBERRA, Mar 27: Queen Elizabeth II waded into Australia's national debate on race relations on Monday, planting a tree of reconciliation between black and white Australians at a religious centre, reports AP.

The queen, on a two-week visit, planted the tree at the new Centre for Christianity and Culture, where she was met by didgeridoo music and applause from 600 well-wishers including prominent Aboriginal activist Lowitja O'Donoghue.

Although the queen rarely enters political debates, this visit, her 13th to Australia, has seen her backing efforts at improving relations between black and white Australians.

In a speech last week, the queen made a plea for the nation's indigenous people, who are generally poorer, less healthy and more likely to be imprisoned than their white counterparts.

She said Australia's reputation for "fairness and decency" would depend on its effort to ensure "prosperity touches all Australians."

Oscar winners at 72nd Academy Awards

LOS ANGELES, Mar 27: The following Oscars were presented at the 72nd annual Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards here Sunday, reports AFP.

Best picture -- "American Beauty" Bruce Cohen and Dan Jinks, producers.
Best director -- Sam Mendes, "American Beauty."
Best actor -- Kevin Spacey, "American Beauty."
Best actress -- Hilary Swank, "Boys Don't Cry."
Best supporting actor -- Michael Caine, "The Cider House Rules."

Best supporting actress -- Angelina Jolie, "Girl, Interrupted."
Best original screenplay -- Alan Ball, "American Beauty."
Best adapted screenplay -- John Irving "The Cider House Rules."

Best art direction -- Rick Heinrichs and Peter Young, "Sleepy Hollow."
Best original score -- John Corigliano, "The Red Violin."
Best film editing -- Zach Staenberg, "The Matrix."

Best sound -- John Reitz, Gregg Rudloff, David Campbell and David Lee, "The Matrix."
Best make-up -- Christine Blundell and Trefor Proud "Topsy Turvy."

Best costume design -- Lindy Hemming "Topsy Turvy."
Best short live action film -- Barbara Schock and Tammy Tiehl, "My Mother Dreams the Satan's Disciples in New York."
Best animated short film -- Alexandre Petrov "The Old Man and the Sea."

Best original song -- Phil Collins "You'll be in My Heart," from the animated movie "Tarzan."

Best documentary feature -- Arthur Cohn and Kevin MacDonald, "One Day in September."

Best short documentary -- Susan Hannah Hadary and William Whiteford, "King Gimp."

Best outstanding visual effects -- John Gaeta, Janek Sirrs, Steve Coutley and Jon Thum for "The Matrix."

Best cinematography -- Conrad Hall, "American Beauty."

Best sound effects editing -- Dane Davis, "The Matrix."

Also, Polish director Andrzej Wajda was given an honorary Academy Award for lifetime achievement and Warren Beatty was honoured with the Irving Thalberg award, the highest honour for a producer.

BRIEFLY

Fernandes in Vietnam:

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes met here Monday with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Van Tra to strengthen military ties, a foreign ministry official said, AFP reports from Hanoi.

Fernandes went into talks with Vietnamese Defence Minister Pham Van Tra after arriving here Sunday on a five-day official visit, the official said, but provided no further information.

Dy governor killed in Russia:

The deputy governor of the Kamchatka region in Russia's far east died late Sunday when acid was thrown in his face and he was stabbed in the neck, NTV quoted local police as saying, AFP reports from Moscow.

Alexei Kotlar, who reportedly headed the local privatization committee, was attacked outside his home in Elizovo and died in a hospital, ITAR-TASS said.

Quake hits northwest China:

A strong earthquake shook a quake-prone region in China's central Asian border lands Monday but caused no casualties or other damages, Chinese state media and government seismologists reported, AP says from Beijing.

The magnitude-5.1 quake hit Jiashi county in the Xinjiang region around 4:40 am (2040 GMT Sunday) and was strong enough to be felt, the official Xinhua News Agency and the seismologists reported.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer

LGED, Barisal

Memo No: LGED/XEN/Bari/2000/1008

Dated: 9-3-2000

Tender Notice No 33/99-2000

The Executive Engineer, Local Government Engineering Department, Barisal invites sealed tenders in prescribed 2911 no. form for Construction/Re-construction of 8 (eight) schemes in 1999-2000 FY under RDP-19 in Barisal district from different category contractors of LGED (as per power of category) and pre-qualified contractors of any LGED project renewed up to 1999-2000.

Interested contractors may obtain necessary tender documents during normal office hours on all working days up to 11-4-2000 from the office of the (i) Divisional Commissioner, Barisal, (ii) Project Director, RDP-19, LGED, LGED Bhaban, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, (iii) Deputy Commissioner, Barisal, (iv) Executive Engineer, LGED, Barisal/Bhola/Jhalokati/Pirojpur, (v) Upazila Engineer, Babuganj, Mehendiganj, Sadar, Uzirpur & Bakerganj, Barisal on cash payment of non-refundable fee (shown in group list). Tenders will be received by the abovementioned offices up to 1:00 PM on 12-4-2000. No tender will be accepted beyond this time and tenders will be opened at 1:30 PM on the same day in the receiving offices by the officers-in-charge in the presence of the tenderers, if any.

Copy of VAT registration certificates with 10 digit number, income tax certificate with Tax-payer Identification Number and up-to-date licence must be enclosed along with the tender. Tenderer shall quote rate on overall percentage basis above/at per/below the estimated cost of the tender. Any tender with quoted rates more than 5% (five per cent) less than the estimated cost will be summarily rejected. Tender with quoted rates more than 5% (five per cent) higher than the estimated cost must accompany itemwise detail analysis of rate of each item without which tender will be rejected.

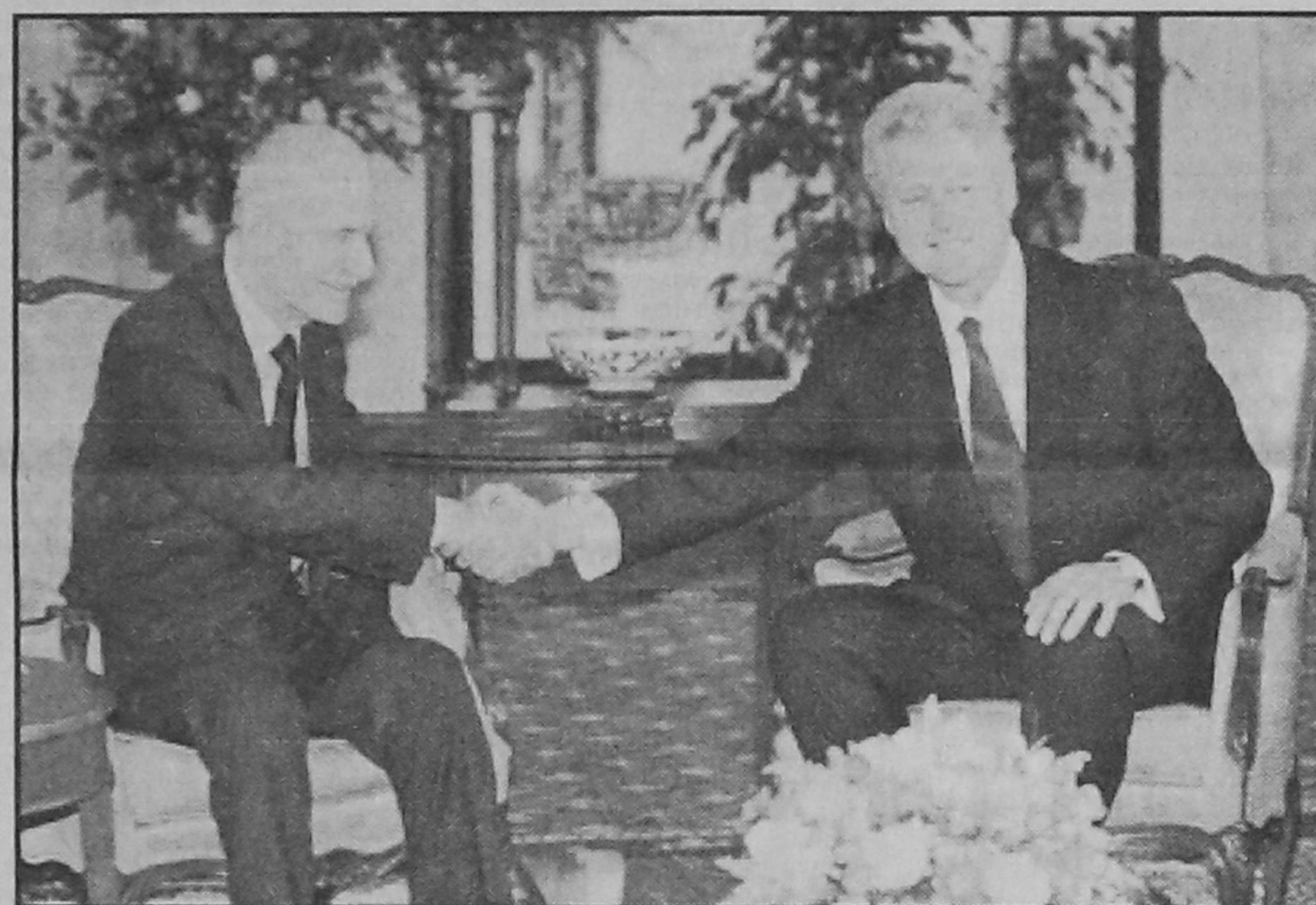
In the event there be more than one lowest responsive tenderers quoting the same rate the contractor shall be selected by open lottery. Lottery time, date & place will be informed later on the Notice Board of office of the undersigned.

The authority reserves the right to accept any tender or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason thereof.

DFP-6225-15/3

G-559

Executive Engineer
LGED, Barisal



US President Bill Clinton (R) shakes hands with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad at the opening of their meeting in Geneva on Sunday. — AFP photo

Clinton-Assad summit fails

GENEVA, Mar 27: Middle East peace prospects appeared dimmer on Monday after US President Bill Clinton and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad failed to put the stalled Israeli-Syrian peace talks back on track at a summit in Geneva, reports Reuters.

Syria blamed the Jewish state for the impasse and gave a veiled warning of trouble if its arch enemy went ahead with plans to pull out of Lebanon by July, unilaterally if necessary.

Clinton and the frail 69-year-old Syrian leader, who rarely travels abroad, faced each other in the ballroom of Geneva's Intercontinental Hotel for their first summit since 1994.

After more than three hours of talks, the United States said the gaps between Israel and Syria remained too wide to permit an immediate restart of negotiations suspended since January, although it pledged to keep working for a deal.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart told a news conference

that the meeting had failed to bring the two sides closer. "The significant differences remain and were not narrowed," he said.

"As far as any resumption of talks, it's impossible to predict when those talks might resume. There are significant differences and I don't believe that, from the position of the United States, we believe that it would be productive for those to resume now."

Signalling lowered expectations, the United States said it would send Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, and not Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as previously expected, to Israel on Monday to give Prime Minister Ehud Barak a fuller account.

The Israeli leader needs a first personal contact with the Syrian leader soon to help sell a deal to his divided coalition and to a sceptical electorate in a difficult referendum, but Lockhart said there was no real discussion of such a meeting.

The only achievement of the summit to which Lockhart

pointed was clarifying each side's needs for a peace settlement in a face-to-face encounter with Assad.

The summit had been billed as one of the last opportunities to revive the talks between Israel and Syria under Clinton's waning presidency and head off a possible renewal of violence when Israel pulls out of Lebanon.

Syrian presidential spokesman Jibril Kourieh said the two leaders had reviewed "the obstacles which Israel put and is still putting in front of the resumption of talks".

He repeated Assad's insistence that the basis for resuming negotiations must be an Israeli commitment to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights.

"Stress was put on the unity of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks on finding a just solution the Arab Palestinian cause to achieve a comprehensive peace and to stabilise the situation," Kourieh's statement said.

Seven more killed in Aceh province

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia, Mar 27: At least seven more people have died in the unrest in the troubled Indonesian province of Aceh, police and residents said today, reports AFP.

A man's body, his feet and hands tied, was found on the banks of the Krueang Aceh river in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital early Monday, said Sayed Ichsan, an employee at the emergency ward of the Zainul Abidin state hospital.

A policeman and a civilian auxiliary were also shot dead as they were patrolling on motorcycle in the village of Ujung Blang, West Aceh on Sunday, West Aceh district police chief Lieutenant Colonel Her Aris Sumarman said.

The shots fired by an armed group of men killed the two victims on the spot and the assaults immediately fled the area," Sumarman said.

He said a police team had been deployed to search for the assailants.

After over three decades

'Ban on communist party in Indonesia to be eased'

JAKARTA, Mar 27: More than three decades after communism was outlawed in Indonesia, President Abdurrahman Wahid said on Monday he wants to ease a ban on the Communist Party, reports AP.

"This government is a democratic one, and democracy does not differentiate between communist or non-communist," Wahid told a congress of Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle in the town of Semarang, about 400 kilometres (250 miles) east of Jakarta.

Communism was banned throughout this Southeast Asian country in 1966, when an estimated 500,000 Indonesian leftists were slaughtered in the aftermath of an abortive coup. About 600,000 others were arrested.

Many people claim the coup attempt had been backed by the Indonesian communist Party, then the world's third-largest, claiming 20 million followers.

On Sunday, Wahid told a group of university students in east Java on that many of Indonesia's 210-million people had been unfairly branded as communists and discriminated against.

Wahid said he will encourage parliament to support his move to scrap the presidential decree banning communist teachings, the Jakarta Post reported.

"I think the decree violates basic human rights," he said. Wahid's comment drew sharp criticism from Muslim organizations which said that communist teachings should remain banned because they promote atheism.

On Monday, about 50 Muslim protesters rallied in front of the Presidential palace to demand that the ban remain in place. The demonstrators carried banners reading "To hell with communism" and "Indonesia's military and Muslims opposed communism."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer

Public Works E/M Division-8, Mirpur, Dhaka

Tender Invitation Notice

No. 1 E 44/99-2000

- Tenders in Bangladesh Form No. 2911 under sealed cover are invited from Public Works Directorate's special class/1st class (combined)/1st class (E/M) 1st class/2nd class E/M contractors' firms having valid A.B.C/B.C supervisory & contractors' licence issued by Bangladesh Electrical Licensing Board and VAT Department's registration/TIN certificate for the undermentioned work. Tenders will be received in the tender box kept at this Division, Office of the Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7, Timber Workshop Division, Workshop Division, Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka up to 12:00 Noon of 06/04/2000 and will be opened on the same day at 12:30 PM in presence of the tenderers (if any).
- Tender form, schedule of item, terms & conditions etc can be seen and purchased by the contractors' firms or their authorised representatives on cash payment of Tk 425/- (Non-refundable) from this Division, Office of the Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7, Timber Workshop Division, Workshop Division, Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka during office hours latest up to 05-04-2000 on production of registration book with necessary papers.
- Tenderers must enclose original money receipt of purchasing tender at the time of submitting tender.
- 2% of the estimated cost as earnest money should be submitted with each tender through Bank Draft/Pay Order/CD from any scheduled bank in favour of the Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-8, Mirpur, Dhaka. Otherwise tender will be treated as cancelled outright.
- It may be noted that the amount of estimated cost as well as quantity of item, rate etc stated in the tender may be refixed with necessary amendment on the basis of technically approved estimate for the said work.
- The authority is not bound to accept the tender of the lowest tenderer and reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason.

Sl No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time allowed
1.	Installation of necessary electrical equipment and fittings for renovation of the ground floor of the existing NIPSON Students' Hostel Building at the premises of the Directorate of Health, Mohakhali, Dhaka as the UMIS office of the Directorate of Health.	Tk 4,97,024/-	Tk 9,945/-	30 (Thirty) days

DFP-6713-21/3

G-557

Executive Engineer
Public Works E/M Division-8,
Mirpur, Dhaka.