

Let's heal the wounds of war

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mostly students at Vietnam National University listening to a translation through earphones. Passers-by along Hanoi's Hai Ba Trung Street, a stretch of TV and stereo shops, stopped to watch at least a few at every shop, over a dozen at some.

Clinton was first the diplomat, then the tourist, then the campaigner, grasping hands in the sidewalk crowd along Van Mieu Street after a walking the walled grounds of the Temple of Literature, a 1,000-year-old museum, once a university dedicated to literature and philosophy.

But his high point came in talking at the university, where he cautiously tried an occasional phrase in Vietnamese. His wife and daughter sat in the audience.

In urging a more open Vietnamese trading economy and society, Clinton acknowledged that no one can force change on a nation determined to make its own decisions a nation that fought off the United States when it tried to block communism here.

Speaking of the long war he opposed and avoided by maneuvering around the draft three decades ago, Clinton said the suffering shared by Americans and Vietnamese alike in the war "has given our countries a relationship unlike any others."

The pain, he said, is shared through the one million Americans of Vietnamese ancestry, the 3 million US veterans and others who served here during the conflict, and "are forever connected to your country."

"Finally, America is coming to see Vietnam as your people have asked for years, as a country, not a war," Clinton said. He said it is a country "emerging from years of conflict and uncertainty to shape a bright future."

Clinton urged that it be a future built on free trade and also on freedoms restricted by the communist regime. On the red carpeted stage behind him was a larger-than-life bust of the man who emblemized that regime and the American defeat of 1975 while he lived, Ho Chi Minh.

The president said the knowledge to be gained on campuses like Hanoi's will be vital in the future of globalisation of economies, and so will the freedom to explore, travel, think, speak, worship and dissent.

"All this makes our country stronger in good times and in bad," Clinton said. "We do not seek to impose these ideals, nor should we. Vietnam is an ancient and enduring country."

"You have proved to the world that you will make your own decisions," he said. But his words

were a summons to a turn away from the barriers of the communist way.

"Let us continue to help each other heal the wounds of war, not by forgetting... but by embracing the spirit of reconciliation," he said.

War veteran Nguyen Van Kich, 67, said the speech was "very interesting. He talked about the past, but also talked about a better future for our relationship."

But Le Thanh Hai, a 40-year-old physician, thought Clinton should have said more about US forces' use of Agent Orange during the war.

Clinton started his trip at the mustard-yellow presidential palace just beyond the giant mausoleum memorial to Ho. A bust of Ho was the dominant feature of the ornate room where President Tran Duc Luong welcomed Clinton.

"I'm glad to be here," said Clinton, who arrived late Thursday night. "I'm looking forward to building toward the future."

The two leaders posed for photographs, then sat together briefly in a first exchange of pleasantries. "I've been very moved by the friendliness of the people on the streets," Clinton told Luong. "It is a very good omen for our relationship."



Baul artistes presenting folk songs at the day-long Nabannautsav (harvest festival) held on the premises of Institute of Fine Arts yesterday.

--Star photo

Norway's peace efforts

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will not believe that he is an impartial negotiator, informed circles said. The people would like to hear a specific reply from Solheim why he did not seek a clear explanation from Prabhakaran what he meant by the statement.

With this situation continuing, the core issue of a new draft constitution seems to be in doldrums. The draft constitution contains reforms to devolve local-governance powers to areas where the Tamils dominate.

Earlier, passage of the draft constitution fell flat on August 2 after PA and UNP disagreed over other changes in the proposal related to the vast powers of the executive presidency, which the opposition would like to see abolished.

Cooperation between Kumaratunga's Peoples Alliance and the UNP led by Ranil Wickremesinghe is essential for adopting the plan.

Kumaratunga's PA was short of six seats for a majority, which forced it to seek support from among smaller parties. The Muslim National Unity Alliance agreed to support the PA but was demanding several Cabinet posts. The party is believed to be divided on the issue of supporting the government and that has further delayed formation of a new cabinet.

Both the Muslim National Unity Alliance and the Eelam

People's Democratic Party, a former Tamil rebel group, said they would join the new coalition, giving the PA an overall majority.

The October 10 parliamentary election seems to have created more political stalemate and stand-off between the two major rivals - the PA and the UNP. People are expecting a snow-balling effect of the already-festering problems if these two parties fail to come to a consensus regarding resolution of the country's political problems. There are also calls from the influential Buddhist clergy and the business community to form a national government and restore political stability.

"But even if the political parties agree for passing the draft constitution bill, the people - who are majority Sinhalese - are opposed to the plan, because you know, granting autonomy would mean sacrificing land to the LTTE. Yes, it could be possible if certain changes are made in the proposal," Godage said while talking to The Daily Star. This, according to him, will take more time.

However, with the uncertainty continuing over the peace mediation, people are asking questions like: has the process of mediation been a setback for President Kumaratunga? Are the political differences between the two main parties so wide that they would fail to come to a consensus in national interest?

US envoy meets Khaleda

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the journalists and human rights "violation" also came up, the source added.

Political Advisor of the US Embassy Dan Mozena accompanied the US ambassador while BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Morshed Khan MP and Khaleda's advisor MM Rezaul Karim were on the other side.

After the hour-long parley, MM Rezaul Karim briefed newsmen about their discussion. He, however, refrained from telling the journalists whether domestic politics figured at the talks.

The envoy wished Khaleda early recovery from illness, he said.

He said they discussed ways of further development of the existing US-Bangladesh "excellent" relationship. Khaleda expressed her pledge that the relationship between the two friendly countries would be strengthened in future.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to US also came up in their discussion.

Answering a query from Khaleda, Peters said that the final results of the US president election would be declared soon.

10 pilgrims die in Pakistan bus collision

ISLAMABAD, Nov 17: Ten pilgrims were killed and 40 others injured today in a head-on collision in the southern Pakistani town of Sehwan Sharif, state television reported, says AFP.

The 650 delegates -- wrapping up a five-day meeting -- also called on those countries that produce GMs not to intimidate other governments which resist or prohibit GM products.

Brazilian lawyer Andrea Lazzarini, who stopped GM producer Monsanto from introducing its modified soybean seed in that country, said civil society could play a big role in helping governments to resist pressure exerted on multinational companies.

"One of the best strategies is for consumers to boycott GM foodstuffs," he said.

Conference wants moratorium on genetically modified foods

DURBAN, South Africa, Nov 17: Delegates at the 16th World Congress of Consumers International here Friday called for a moratorium on growing and marketing genetically modified (GM) foods until they are subject to stricter safety checks, reports AFP.

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Brazilian lawyer Andrea Lazzarini, who stopped GM producer Monsanto from introducing its modified soybean seed in that country, said civil society could play a big role in helping governments to resist pressure exerted on multinational companies.

"One of the best strategies is for consumers to boycott GM foodstuffs," he said.

Doctor Suman Sahai of India's Gene Campaign, said science too had role to play in the fight against GM foodstuffs as it could police their safety.

"Proof is growing that our fears about irreversible damage to the environment caused by genetic modification to foodstuffs is well-founded," he said.

Michael Hansen from the United States' Consumers Union warned that most of the maize and corn in that country was already genetically modified.

New US regulations eliminating certain export controls means that GM corn/maize may be making its way into food products and food aid sent around the world."

He called for stricter control and checking, saying this was the job of not only governments but of the world's consumer organisations.

"It is up to governments and

consumer organisations to ensure that GM foods are monitored and controlled," he said.

Delegates in the east coast city of Durban also adopted a statement that all people have the right to safe and sufficient food.

In order to protect this right, they said, governments and international agencies should ban the use of patents on food products.

Such patents, they said, could impede people's access to food and increase the dependency of developing economies on developed ones.

Earlier this week, delegates heard that the use of patents on medicines, and the protection this practice enjoys from international organisations, was keeping desperately-needed drugs beyond the reach of the sick and poor in developing countries.

Briton killed in Riyadh by suspected car bomb

RIYADH, Nov 17: A Briton died and his wife was slightly injured when a suspected car bomb wrecked their four-wheel drive vehicle in the central shopping district of the Saudi capital today, police announced, reports AFP.

"It is suspected to have been an explosive charge that was in the car," Riyadh police chief Abdullah Al-Shaharani told the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

Witnesses at the scene told AFP the man lost a leg and an arm in the blast but was pulled alive from the wreckage.

Shaharani said the fatal victim was a British expatriate working in the kingdom and that he died in hospital from severe injuries.

His wife was released from the hospital after treatment.

In London, meanwhile, a Foreign Office spokeswoman confirmed that a British couple had been the victim of a car blast.

While police in Riyadh said the man died and his wife was injured, a Foreign Office spokeswoman said hospital authorities had told the British consul that the man was in a critical condition.

It was not immediately clear whether the hospital had spoken to the Foreign Office before the police chief made his announcement.

The spokeswoman said the man's wife had already been discharged and was now staying with friends. She said the couple, believed to be in their 40s, had been living in Riyadh for several years.

An inquiry was underway into the explosion, which coincided with the opening in the Saudi capital of a major oil forum attended by 400 delegates, many of them government ministers.

The blast, which took place at 1:20 pm (17:20 BST), scattered debris over a wide area.

The security services evacuated two buildings along the road near Olaya Street, a main thoroughfare, and carried out a search.

Police closed off surrounding roads, and officers meticulously gathered up pieces of debris scattered over a wide area.

The US and British energy secretaries are among those attending the 7th International Energy Forum.

At the same time, US Defence Secretary William Cohen is in the region on a week-long tour and was last reported to have been in neighbouring Oman on Thursday.

He is due to travel to Saudi Arabia, but the details of his itinerary are being kept secret for security reasons.

Clinton's tiger goes missing

JAIPUR, Nov 17: One of the wild Bengal tigers which came face-to-face with US President Bill Clinton in March has gone missing from India's Ranthambore National Park, reports Reuters.

There had been no trace of the tiger called Bhumburam for four months and the warden said he feared it had been shot by poachers.

"Leave alone seeing Bhumburam, there is not even any trace of his pugmarks, which has raised doubts about his existence," Honorary Wildlife Warden Fateh Singh Rathore told Reuters.

"We don't have any solid evidence, but I have reasons to believe it might have fallen prey to the bullets of poachers," he said by phone from the park in the desert state of Rajasthan.

Clinton took an afternoon out from his six-day South Asian journey in March to the park, an expanse of bush, forest and craggy gorges that is home to 32 of India's dwindling tiger population.

After riding in an open tour bus with daughter Chelsea and mother-in-law Dorothy Rodham for two hours, Clinton finally spotted Bhumburam and a female tiger reposing with an air of total disinterest. Both beasts greeted him with a generous yawn.



The Battalion Ansars who were sacked in 1994 staged a token hunger strike at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday demanding their reinstatement.

--Star photo

3 held with forged currency notes in Bagerhat

BAGERHAT, Nov 17: Police arrested three people and recovered a large number of counterfeit notes of Bangladeshi currency from Mulghar in Fakirhat upazila here Thursday night, reports UNE.

Acting on a tip-off, police set up an ambush near a shrimp depot in front of Mulghar Government School at 9 pm and arrested the three. They were going to the depot to buy shrimp.

Police recovered 50 forged notes of Tk 500 and 298 notes of Tk 100 denominations from their possession.

The arrested Golam Mostafa Kazi, Mohor Ali and Gorai Mollik are believed to be the members of an organised gang engaged in forged currency notes trading.

They were sent to jail today.

Armed attack

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people present in the meeting," said witnesses.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control at about 2 pm.

Rabul Islam, 24, Alal, 20, Asadullah, 40, Nargis, 22, Sajeda, 45, Mufai, 30, Mannan, 27, and Khalil, 32, who sustained bullet injuries were admitted to Fabra General Hospital.

BCL demands arrest of Akhi's killers

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of ruling Awami League yesterday held a commemorative meeting at the TSC auditorium of Dhaka University in memory of Akkasur Rahman Akhi, the slain general secretary of Dhaka City (North) unit of BCL.

Gunmen shot and killed Akhi, also vice president of Titumir College Students' Union, at Gulshan-2 in the city on November 9 following a dispute over the control of a club in Badda area.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad was the chief guest at the meeting while AL leader Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Rahmatullah MP addressed it as special guests.

Chaired by BCL president Bahadur Bepari, the meeting was also addressed by BCL general secretary Ajay Kar Khokon, leaders Liakat Sikder, Saifuddin Naisir and AKM Azim.

The leaders expressed their grievances over the failure to find the motive behind Akhi's killing and to arrest all the killers even seven days after the incident.

They demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of all those involved in the killing.

BCL also brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus in the morning and held a rally in front of DUCSU building to press home their demand.

UN scientists complete survey of radioactive Kosovo bomb sites

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, Nov 17: UN scientists today completed a study of sites contaminated by depleted uranium (DU) ammunition fired by NATO planes during the Kosovo war and recommended they be avoided while samples were tested, reports AFP.

"It was possible to detect higher than normal levels of beta and gamma radiation," Pekka Haavisto, head of the United Nations Environment Programme team told reporters.

"These sites should be marked. The danger is perhaps less than having an X-ray at the dentist, but it is an unnecessary risk."

The team took "several hundred samples" of spent DU ammunition and contaminated earth, soil, plants and cow's milk, from sites in Kosovo where NATO planes had fired on suspected Yugoslav positions during the alliance's 1999 air war.

The samples will be tested in laboratories elsewhere in Europe and the results of the study become available in February next year, he said.

"The aim of the assessment will be to determine whether the use of DU during the Kosovo conflict has resulted in any current or future health or environmental risks," Haavisto said.

DU is used to make munitions heavier and enable them to cut through tank armour, but its use is controversial because it throws up a cloud of radioactive dust at the point of impact, which could present health risks.

The ammunition was first used by US forces in the 1990-1991 Gulf War, and some scientists believe its effects could explain some of the symptoms of so-called Gulf War syndrome, a wasting illness that affected returning soldiers.

Maoist rebels blockade mines, trains in India

RANCHI, India, Nov 17: Maoist activists clashed with police Friday blockading mines and trains in India's youngest state of Jharkhand, constituted on Wednesday, the police here said, reports AFP.

Police fired at armed members of the Jharkhand Liberation Front when they attacked a security post, as the Maoist organisation tried to enforce a general strike in the new eastern Indian state, they said.

Jharkhand police chief Shivaji Caire reported no casualties firing and added that Maoist guerrillas uprooted train tracks and blocked passenger trains near the state capital of Ranchi.

The group, the political wing of the banned Maoist Communist Centre guerrilla force, staged the strike to protest a police attack on a rally held in Ranchi a day after Jharkhand's midnight formation, Caire said.

Officials from the state-run Coal India said protesters disrupted mining operations in at least three regions, clashing with police.

"The strike affected the day's production of coal in these minefields," one official said.

Jharkhand is carved out from 18 of Bihar's state's 51 districts and boasts more than 30 percent of India's mineral wealth. It is also the country's only producer of nuclear weapons grade uranium.

Eight of Jharkhand's districts are virtually in the clutches of Maoist guerrillas, who run parallel administrations in the region.

Jharkhand's government, headed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party, has vowed to eliminate insurgency and turn the region into an economic powerhouse.

UN resumes diplomatic ties with Yugoslavia

DAYTON, Ohio, Nov 17: The United States today resumed diplomatic ties with Yugoslavia, US ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke said here, reports AFP.

"Today we're establishing full diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia, another great benchmark," Holbrooke told reporters here on the sidelines of a conference marking the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords.

Holbrooke did not expand on his comments, but a formal announcement of the resumption of ties, severed last year during the NATO bombing campaign during the Kosovo crisis, was expected later Friday from the White House, officials said.

The move comes a day after Belgrade announced it had decided to renew diplomatic relations with four NATO members, including the United States, which led the bombing, and after a two-day visit to Yugoslavia by top US Balkans envoy James O'Brien.

It also comes as US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright prepares to meet new Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica later this month in Vienna.

In Belgrade, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic said his country had exchanged letters formalising ties with Britain, France, Germany and the United States.

"We have, by exchanging notes, just completed formalities, with which we have established diplomatic relations with France, Britain, Germany and the United States," Svilanovic said.

Govt considering action

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Besides, the report said, unauthorised and unplanned structures and huge commercial establishments have changed Dhanmondi's skyline.

The police report said some 111 houses have been converted into schools in Dhanmondi alone.

There are 76 hospitals and clinics, 44 NGOs, embassies or international offices, 17 Chinese restaurants and fast-food shops, 52 big shops and markets, 14 community centres and over 80 apartment complexes in Dhanmondi area.

The police findings revealed that in most cases there is no permission from RAJUK and Environment Directorate for operating those establishments commercially.

Thousands of people are coming to these commercial establishments every day from different areas and a small segment of them are involved in criminal activities.

The police probe found crimes increasing in Dhanmondi area with the mushrooming of these commercial establishments.

"Bureaucrats, politicians, big businessmen who are residing in this residential area are leasing out or establishing these commercial units in their own plots, sometimes without taking permission", says the police report.

Recently police have sent a detailed report on the commercial establishments of the posh residential area to the higher authorities for action.

which is fighting for an independent tribal homeland, has not claimed responsibility.

This is the fourth attack by militants in less than a month on people doing business in Assam from others Indian states. At least 35 people have been killed since Oct. 22 by unidentified rebels.

The ruling Asom Gana Parishad government has accused rival political parties of secretly backing attacks on the business community to foment unrest and destabilize the government.

Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, Assam's chief minister, earlier said there was "a definite hand of some political parties in the recent killing of some non-Assamese people in the state."

He said action would be taken soon.



A chocolate Mother Christmas with the stance of a Barbie doll wearing a low neckline and tight pants was seen at the shop shelves in Hamburg, Germany yesterday. This special eatable delight was developed by a German chocolate factory from the city of Wahlstedt with hopes that this Christmas chocolate surprise with extra appeal will make large Christmas sales. --AFP photo