

## Clinton recovering after bypass surgery

AP, New York

Former President Bill Clinton was recovering after a quadruple heart bypass operation to relieve arteries so severely clogged that they posed imminent danger of a major heart attack.

His heart disease was extensive, with blockages in some arteries "well over 90 percent," said Dr. Craig R. Smith, the surgeon who led the four-hour operation at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia on Monday.

"There was a substantial likelihood that he would have had a substantial heart attack," said Dr. Allan Schwartz, chief of cardiology. Doctors called Clinton's operation successful and said his return to full health will take weeks.

The former president also had high blood pressure and may not have been adequately treated for high cholesterol. His doctors said he was put on a cholesterol-lowering drug a few days ago. Clinton was prescribed cholesterol medicine in 2001 as he was leaving office.

"These past few days have been quite an emotional roller-coaster for us," Clinton's wife, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, said in a statement.



PHOTO: AFP  
An Iraqi youth poses in front of a burning US military tanker after it came under attack on the outskirts of Baghdad yesterday. Five US soldiers and 40 Iraqis were killed yesterday in separate attacks in Baghdad and Sadr City.

## Pak PM leaves door open for Musharraf to remain army chief

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz yesterday left open the possibility that President Pervez Musharraf could break a commitment to quit the army by the end of the year.

"Today the president of Pakistan is the head of armed forces of Pakistan and he is there legally, and I have full faith that whatever steps he will take it will be according to the constitution and law," Aziz told the Urdu-language ARYOne television channel.

"Leave this to him, I have full confidence that he will make a correct decision in the interests of the country. The real thing that we have to see is what is in the interests of our country."

Musharraf, who stole power in a bloodless coup in October 1999, has held the dual posts of army chief and president since June 2001 in the face of furious opposition.

In a deal with powerful Islamist parties last December he pledged to give up his uniform and become a civilian president by December 31 2004.

The pledge was enshrined in the constitution through the 17th amendment.

But Musharraf has indicated in several interviews in recent months that he may not respect the pledge, citing the demands of the war on terrorism as among the reasons for him to remain in control of the army.

He told the ARYOne channel on Monday that "96 percent" of Pakistanis wanted him to remain as army chief, but he gave no explanation of how he arrived at the figure.

Meanwhile, President Pervez Musharraf Monday said the vast majority of Pakistanis wanted him to forget his pledge to quit the army to become a civilian ruler.

"You should go and ask the people, 96 percent will say 'should not shed' the uniform," General Musharraf, who has held the dual posts of army chief and unelected president since June 2001, told Dubai-based private television channel ARYOne.

Musharraf has agreed to give up his military uniform by December 31 under a deal with a powerful Islamic political alliance.

## Colombo warned against no-war, no-peace policy

LTTE to repay war loans

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tiger rebels asked the government yesterday to revive stalled peace talks and warned that a policy of "no war, no peace" was fraught with political and military dangers.

Through their proxies in parliament the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) urged the government to end the stalemate in the peace process and jumpstart talks based on their proposal for self-rule.

The group's proxy, the Tamil National Alliance, said in parliament Tuesday that President Chandrika Kumaratunga should establish the Interim Self-Governing Authority proposed by the guerrillas.

Both sides have been observing an Oslo-brokered truce since February 2002, but direct talks remain suspended since the Tigers withdrew in April last year. Peacebroker Norway's attempts to revive the process have failed so far.

"It is imperative that the present crisis relating to the peace process be brought to an end," Tamil National Alliance legislator R.

Sampanthan said.

"It is primarily the duty of the Sri Lankan state to salvage the process."

His statements came four days after Kumaratunga said she was ready to set up an interim council for the island's embattled northern and eastern regions, but added the Tigers must agree to discuss a final peace deal.

"No one wants a return to war," Sampanthan told parliament. "A war would only result in immense destruction for everyone..."

But "forces inimical to the peace process are seeking to prolong this 'no war, no peace' situation. They are not concerned about the continuous deprivation and suffering of the Tamil people."

He warned that failure to end the impasse would result in serious political and military consequences.

Norway is due to send special envoy Erik Solheim here next week in a bid to revive the peace talks aimed at ending the three decades of ethnic bloodshed that has claimed more than 60,000 lives.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Tamil

Tiger rebels have agreed to repay a "huge public debt" raised to finance their war against government forces, a pro-rebel website reported yesterday.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) published the names of 3,000 individuals who will be given back their contributions to the "fund to liberate the soil," the Tamilnet website said.

It said the repayments will be made from September 17 but the amount and manner of repayment were not immediately clear.

The Tigers are known to have raised money from Tamil civilians in the island's embattled northern and eastern regions in the past and continue a practice of "taxation" in regions under their control.

The "Tigers' Finance Division has (already) been paying back its huge public debt in (the northern city of) Jaffna in stages since Colombo signed a truce with Kilinochchi (the headquarters of the LTTE political office) in February 2002," the Tamilnet said.

## Muslims drift, not run, towards Kerry

AFP, Chicago

They may not face the segregation that once defined the lives of black Americans, but many Muslim Americans feel that they are fighting the civil rights battles of the 1950s and 60s all over again.

The discrimination has changed with the times -- indefinite detentions, closed hearings, secret evidence, and racial profiling have replaced segregated schools, diners, and beaches -- but the sense of being a second-class citizen is the same.

Or at least that's the contention of the leaders of the US Muslim community, who are fighting to make Muslim civil rights an issue in this November's US presidential elections.

"There is a crisis of civil rights for Muslims in this country," said Agha Saeed, chairman of the American Muslim Alliance, (AMA) at a national

gathering of US Muslims this week-end.

"Today, Muslims and Arabs are second-class citizens in the United States."

The parallels between the experiences of black Americans and Muslim Americans have not been lost on ordinary Muslims like computer engineers Suhl Kahn and Badar Hussain.

"Blacks weren't really Americans until 9/11," noted Kahn, in a wry observation on mainstream America's shifting perceptions of "us and them" in the wake of the terror attacks on New York and Washington.

Like many of his Islamic brethren, the 36-year-old computer engineer from Chicago supported the Republican presidential nominee in 2000 -- part of a Muslim bloc vote that boosted George W. Bush.

## Anwar wins new court battle

AFP, Putrajaya

Malaysia's highest court agreed yesterday to review the corruption conviction of former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim, a move that could lead to his immediate return to politics.

The decision came just hours after Anwar underwent spinal surgery in Germany for an injury he says was caused by a police beating after his arrest in 1998.

The operation was a success and Anwar, who had been increasingly confined to a wheelchair, was able to walk shortly afterwards, an aide said Tuesday.

In Malaysia, meanwhile, Anwar's lawyers won an initial victory in the Federal Court in a bid to clear his name completely, after the same court last Thursday overturned his sodomy conviction and set him free from nearly six years in jail.

## Thousands trapped by China floods

Death toll hits 107

AFP, Beijing

Rescuers battled yesterday to reach thousands of people trapped by floods and mudslides in southwest China as the death toll from some of the worst storms in years rose to 107 with another 88 missing.

"We now have at least 72 dead in Sichuan province. Among them 46 are in Dazhou city," an official surnamed Liu at the Sichuan disaster relief bureau told AFP.

"Fifty people are still missing throughout Sichuan," she added.

Dazhou, in the northeast of the province, has been worst hit by the torrential rains that have triggered widespread landslides and flooding, stranding thousands of people.

Neighbouring Chongqing municipality has also been pummeled by the weather.

"As of this morning there were 34 dead and 33 missing," Chongqing disaster relief office vice director He Lingyun told AFP, adding that 243 people were injured.

In Yunnan province, one person died and five were missing after being engulfed by mud Tuesday in Yongsheng county, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The floods unleashed by unrelenting rains prompted authorities to put the massive Three Gorges Dam project on alert and close it to shipping for the first time since it began operation in July.

The dam is in Hubei province, to the east of Sichuan and Chongqing, and water flow has surged over the warning levels after the upper reaches of the Yangtze River started flooding, Xinhua said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Chechen students hold posters reading "No terrorism" and "Chechen youth against terrorism" during an anti-terrorism rally in the Chechen capital Grozny yesterday. A total of 338 people, half of them children, are confirmed dead, and more than 400 former hostages, including 225 children, remain in hospital.

## British soldier charged with murder of Iraqi civilian

AFP, London

A British soldier was arrested yesterday on charges of having murdered an Iraqi civilian while serving in Iraq last year, the police and defence ministry said.

The Metropolitan Police said the 21-year-old was taken into custody at a London police station.

The defence ministry identified him as a soldier who had served in the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment.

## Jiang Zemin plans to resign from top military post

AFP, Washington

Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin, who remains China's top military leader, has told Communist Party officials that he plans to resign, prompting an intense and so far inconclusive struggle for control of the armed forces, The New York Times reported on its Web site Monday.

Citing two unnamed people with leadership connections, the newspaper said Jiang's offer to relinquish authority as chairman of the Central Military Commission potentially gives Hu Jintao, who succeeded Jiang as president of China in 2002, a chance to become the country's undisputed top leader, commanding the state, the army and the ruling party.

But people here who were informed about a bargaining session under way at a government compound in western Beijing said it remained unclear whether Jiang genuinely intended to step aside, or if he would do so on terms acceptable to Hu, the report said.

One official said it was possible that Jiang, 78, has calculated that he will be called on to remain military chief or to hold another position of influence, The Times said.

However, Jiang's resignation, which he announced to a meeting of senior party officials late last week, is an indication that horse-trading is under way before a national party meeting due to take place later this month, the paper said.

## KASHMIR INCURSIONS

# Pakistan accuses India of contradictions

AFP, New Delhi

India is making contradictory statements about Islamic rebels crossing the border to fight in disputed Kashmir, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri charged yesterday.

After two days of peace talks with his Indian counterpart in New Delhi, Kasuri told the Hindi news channel Aaj Tak he had outlined efforts made by Pakistan to stem the flow of rebels into Indian-held Kashmir.

"I told the (Indian) foreign minister (Natwar Singh) how much we have done to stop militants coming into Kashmir and if some people are crossing over, you are building a wall there, besides having troops on the border," he said referring to a fence India is constructing to try to halt infiltration.

The fence is to run along the 230-kilometre (140-mile) international border and 750-kilometre (465-mile) de-facto border known as the Line of Control.

The Indian army says about 90 percent of the fence has been completed.

Kasuri said many Indians themselves had told him the numbers of militants crossing into Indian-Kashmir had come down.

"There are many contradictions in the statements made by your own people," he told the channel.

The charges followed comments Monday by Singh who said the issue of militants slipping across the border, "remains a serious concern" for New Delhi.

Kasuri stressed that Pakistan too wanted peace in Indian Kashmir, where an Islamic insurgency, which

New Delhi says is sponsored by Islamabad, has claimed about 40,000 lives so far.

The Pakistani minister noted "positive thinking" from both neighbours on proposals for a bus service linking Indian and Pakistani zones of Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz stressed yesterday that "substantive" talks on Kashmir, the cause of over half a century of hostility between India and Pakistan, were key to advancing the nascent peace process.

"We ... feel we need to have substantive talks on Jammu and Kashmir so that this core issue heads towards resolution," the new Pakistani premier said in an interview with Dawn newspaper.

"I think other peripheral issues will take their own course."

## Muslim growth rate outstrips Hindu in India

AFP, New Delhi

India's Muslim and Christian minority communities are growing at a faster rate than the Hindu majority in the country of more than one billion people, a new census report shows.

Hindus, whose growth rate has declined in the past decade, constituted 80.5 percent or 828 million while Muslims made up 13.4 percent or 138 million, according to religion-based data posted on the census commission's website yesterday.

Christians comprised 2.3 percent or 24 million of the population, and grew at a rate of 22.6 percent in the decade to 2001.

"Among the six major religious communities the decadal growth of the Muslims is the highest at 36.0 percent," the commission said.

"The growth rate of the Hindu population has come down from 25.1 percent in 1981-1991 to 20.4 percent in 1991-2001," it noted, without analysing why.

## India discovers 'wonder drug' to fight TB

AFP, New Delhi

Indian scientists have discovered a new molecule hailed in yesterday's press as a "wonder drug" in the fight against tuberculosis (TB), a mass killer on the subcontinent.

"It may reduce the treatment time to two months and may also reduce the dose to once daily," Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal said.

"Since 1963, this is the first success achieved in developing a new therapeutic molecule for TB," he said.

The new synthetic molecule called "Sudoterb" was identified by Mumbai-based Lupin Laboratories in partnership with four institutions back in 2001. Applications have been made to start clinical trials as well as for patents in the United States and India.

The news was greeted as a major boost for India's burgeoning bio-medical sector which hopes to turn the country into a global centre for drug research.

However, clinical trials on healthy humans and then TB patients are expected to last four years or more before the drug can be commercialised.



PHOTO: AFP  
Palestinian mourners carry the body of a Hamas militant yesterday during a mass funeral for fourteen activists killed overnight in an Israeli air raid in Gaza City. The Hamas fighters were killed in an air strike on a football field in Gaza in one of the deadliest Israeli attacks since the start of the Palestinian uprising four years ago.