

PAKISTAN FM SAYS

Kashmir dispute must end for 'durable' peace

AFP, Washington

Pakistan and India will experience "durable peace" only if the two nations resolve their 57-year-old dispute over the Himalayan state of Kashmir, Pakistan's foreign minister said here Friday.

And Kashmiris must be included in the peace process for the matter to be resolved, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri told reporters after meeting his US counterpart Condoleezza Rice for more than an hour at the State Department.

Kasuri said Rice asked how the dialogue between Pakistan and India was going.

"I told her that we needed to

resolve this issue (Kashmir) so that there could be durable peace between Pakistan and India," he said.

"Pakistan and India need to guard against other issues raising their ugly heads because 57 years of Kashmir is enough," Kasuri said.

"In order that it is resolved we need to include the Kashmiris in the peace process," he said. "There can be no resolution to the dispute if the Kashmiris are not involved."

"It's like trying to solve the Palestinian problem without the Palestinians."

The Himalayan region is divided between Pakistan and India and is claimed by both in full. It has caused two of the three wars between the

nuclear-armed neighbours since their independence from Britain in 1947.

Meanwhile, Pakistani foreign minister said here Friday his country had not been contacted by the US government regarding claims by a man with suspected al-Qaeda ties that he was trained at an al-Qaeda camp in Pakistan. "Our government has not been contacted," Kasuri told reporters after meeting with Rice for more than an hour.

"And if we are contacted, it goes without saying that we will provide cooperation," he added.

Pakistan on Thursday denied that there were any al-Qaeda training camps on its soil.

A father and his son from Lodi,

California, were charged this week with lying to federal authorities.

The son, Hamid Hayat, 22, admitted he had trained at an al-Qaeda camp in Pakistan for six months in 2003 and 2004 where he others were trained on "how to kill Americans," an FBI agent stated in an affidavit.

Hamid's father, Umer, 47, who drives an ice cream truck, acknowledged paying for his son's flight and giving him a 100-dollar a month stipend knowing he was going to a "jihad training camp," according to the affidavit.

Hamid was arrested upon returning to the United States from Pakistan late last month.



US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (R) holds talks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Kurshid Mahmood Kasuri at the State Department Friday in Washington, DC.

Talks on with Pakistan to open Kargil-Skardu road: Manmohan

PTI, Kargil

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday said that talks were going on with Pakistan for opening of roadline between Kargil and Skardu in Pakistan controlled northern areas.

Laying foundation stone for a 44 MW power project, the Prime Minister said converting the Srinagar-Leh road into National Highway was under consideration and plans were contemplated to make this road an all weathered route.

He also announced a grant of Rs 10 crore for Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council.

Recalling the 1999 Pakistani aggression of Kargil, Singh said it had caused a lot of problems for the people of this region.

"Our effort is to ensure that such dangers do not recur. That is why we have started talks with Pakistan government to ensure permanent end to mutual conflicts and so that people of two countries could live peacefully," he said.

Advani's meek surrender

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

The dramatic I-won't-take-it-lying-down resignation and the later meek surrender to Hindu hardliners marks the end of an era for the L.K. Advani as he is known for two decades.

If Advani loyalists think the man or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that he heads has emerged stronger after the unsavoury row involving Pakistan's "father," Mohammed Ali Jinnah, they are horribly wrong.

Even when he left for Pakistan early in June, Advani looked every inch a confident man, a politician who some day would get to rule this country a la his long-time friend and self-confessed moderate Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

But Advani is no Vajpayee, and this episode has proved he can never be one.

When Vajpayee, the man who has earned remarkable acceptability from BJP's numerous allies despite never hiding his commitment to the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), visited Jinnah's memorial in Islamabad, there was no outcry.

After all, it has become customary for leaders visiting Pakistan to pay their obeisance to Jinnah, one who is widely blamed in India for the 1947 partition of the sub-continent that triggered so much human



Senior Leader of India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and opposition leader L.K. Advani (L) is greeted with floral garlands by party workers in New Delhi yesterday.

miser.

People visiting the Mao mausoleum in Beijing are not expected to adhere to Maoism. You can visit the Jinnah tombstone, place a wreath and come away without offending anyone's sensibilities.

It is as much a formality, as much a military dictator bowing to Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at the Rajghat here.

Advani, himself a victim of the

1947 India split, should have known better.

The original support base of the RSS-sponsored Jana Sangh, the BJP's predecessor, lay in northern India, mostly among the Hindu trading class and the Punjabi middle class that was uprooted from Pakistan.

They never forgave Jinnah for what his ideology did to them, and one can't fault them for that.

6 troops, 2 civilians die in Nepali rebel ambush

Powerful bomb defused in capital

AFP, Kathmandu

At least six soldiers and two civilians were killed when a passenger bus hit a landmine planted by Maoist rebels in eastern Nepal, the army said yesterday.

The rebel attack late Friday in a district 40km east of the capital Kathmandu was the second against a passenger bus in less than a week, the army said.

"At least six soldiers and two civilians died when the passenger bus struck the landmine set up by terrorists at Narke Bhanjyang in Kavre district Friday evening," a senior army official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Two civilians, who were aboard the bus, were injured and have been airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment," he said, adding he had no more details.

On Monday, 36 people, including three security personnel, were killed and over 70 hurt when rebels blew up a passenger bus in Chitwan district, 180km southwest of Kathmandu.

The attack was one of the bloodiest against civilians since the Maoists took up arms in 1996 to

overthrow the monarchy and set up a communist republic.

There was no Maoist comment on the latest landmine ambush but the rebels said the Monday's blast was a mistake and that they had been targeting a security patrol.

The insurgency has claimed over 11,000 lives in the kingdom which was thrown into deeper turmoil four months ago when King Gyanendra dismissed the government and seized power, saying the move was necessary to end the revolt.

Meanwhile, security forces in Nepal disarmed a powerful time bomb that had been planted by suspected Maoist rebels near a health clinic in the heart of the capital Kathmandu Friday, the military said.

"The Royal Nepalese Army bomb disposal squad successfully defused the bomb," an army official told AFP.

"Had the bomb disposal squad not diffused the time bomb in time, many civilians could have been killed," he added, saying that Maoists rebels were suspected of planting the device.

Lankan monk MP ends fast after talks

Grenade attack kills 2

AFP, Colombo

A Buddhist monk legislator called off fast unto death yesterday, a day after Sri Lanka's president promised to consult the clergy amid growing opposition to her plan to share tsunami aid with Tiger rebels.

But a bigger threat to President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government loomed with a threat by the Marxist JVP party to pull out of the ruling coalition, setting the stage for its possible collapse, unless she abandons the aid-sharing plan by next Wednesday.

Opponents of the aid-sharing plan fear it will grant legitimacy to the rebels' separatist campaign.

Buddhist monk Omalpe Sobitha from the all-clergy National Heritage Party ended the fast outside the Temple of the Tooth in the central town of Kandy, a protest organiser said.

Meanwhile, suspected Tamil Tiger rebels attacked the office of a rival Tamil group in northern Sri Lanka with grenades Saturday, killing two people and wounding five, the military said.

US soldier, 7 rebels die in Afghan clash

12 killed as US military vehicle, minibus collide

REUTERS, AFP, Kabul

Insurgents in Afghanistan ambushed a patrol on Friday and one US soldier and seven of the attackers were killed, the US military said.

The joint US-Afghan army patrol was attacked in Paktika province in the southeast of the country.

"Coalition forces reported the enemy fleeing shortly after the ambush began. Coalition fixed- and rotary-wing attack aircraft and artillery responded to the attack," the US military said in a statement.

Three US soldiers were wounded, it said.

Thirteen US soldiers have been killed in a wave of clashes, blasts and ambushes in Afghanistan since late March.

About 150 insurgents have been killed, according to US and Afghan government figures. Dozens of government security men have also died in the fighting.

The United States commands an 18,300-strong international force in Afghanistan, most of whom are American, fighting Taliban and al-Qaeda militants and hunting their leaders, including Osama bin Laden.

US-led troops toppled the hardline Taliban government in late 2001 after it refused to hand over al-Qaeda bin Laden, the architect of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

The name of the dead soldier was being withheld pending notification of next-of-kin.

Meanwhile, at least 12 Afghan passengers were killed when a minibus and a US military vehicle were in collision yesterday in southern Afghanistan, officials said.

The accident occurred on the Kandahar-Spin Boldak highway near the Pakistani border and US troops immediately cordoned off the area, Spin Boldak's police chief Abdul Wasay said.

"Today, a minibus had an accident with a US military vehicle on the Kandahar-Spin Boldak highway, in which 12 civilians have died," Wasay said.

G4 confident about UNSC berth

AFP, United Nations

Germany, India, Brazil and Japan have enough votes to land permanent seats on the UN Security Council, but they will still seek more support before pushing for a vote, ambassadors for two of the so-called G4 nations said.

However, Pakistan, which opposes the change because of its rivalry with India, said that if the General Assembly ever votes on it, "they'll lose."

Speaking with reporters after a meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on Friday, German Ambassador Gunter Pleuger and Indian Ambassador Nirupam Sen said they still envision putting their proposal to enlarge the Security Council from 15 to 25 seats to a vote by the end of June.

The proposal calls for the creation of six new permanent seats and four non-permanent seats on the Council.

Holders of the six new permanent seats would be identified later, in a

second resolution, but it is already known that they would go to members of the G4 and two African countries to be chosen by the African Union in a summit in early July.

If the two resolutions pass, a third resolution would be required to amend the charter of the United Nations.

"We are seeking consultations, dialogue and discussions with all member states here... and at the end of that we'll have a vote on the resolution," Pleuger said. "June has always been our target, we have not given up."

"We are confident that we have the two-third majority that we need but we're also striving to have the largest possible support," he added.

The General Assembly of the United Nations comprises 191 members, so a two-third majority is 128 votes. The General Assembly does not hold veto power, a privilege reserved for the five permanent members of the Security Council -- China, The United States, France, Britain and Russia.

Israel, Palestinians start coordination for pullout

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas was heading back to his Ramallah headquarters yesterday after talks with militant factions in Gaza City over the increasingly fragile truce, as Israel and the Palestinians began tentative cooperation over the Gaza withdrawal.

Moves to coordinate the Israeli pullout took place in Tel Aviv late Friday at a meeting between Israel Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz and Palestinian civil affairs minister Mohammed Dahlan, in talks described by both sides as "important and positive".

The three-hour meeting focused on security coordination during the pullout, which will see Israel evacuating all troops and 21 Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip following a nearly 40-year occupation of the territory.

Regarded as the strongman of Gaza, Dahlan is seen as capable of keeping in check on the Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, both of which are keen to be seen as expelling the Israelis under

fire.

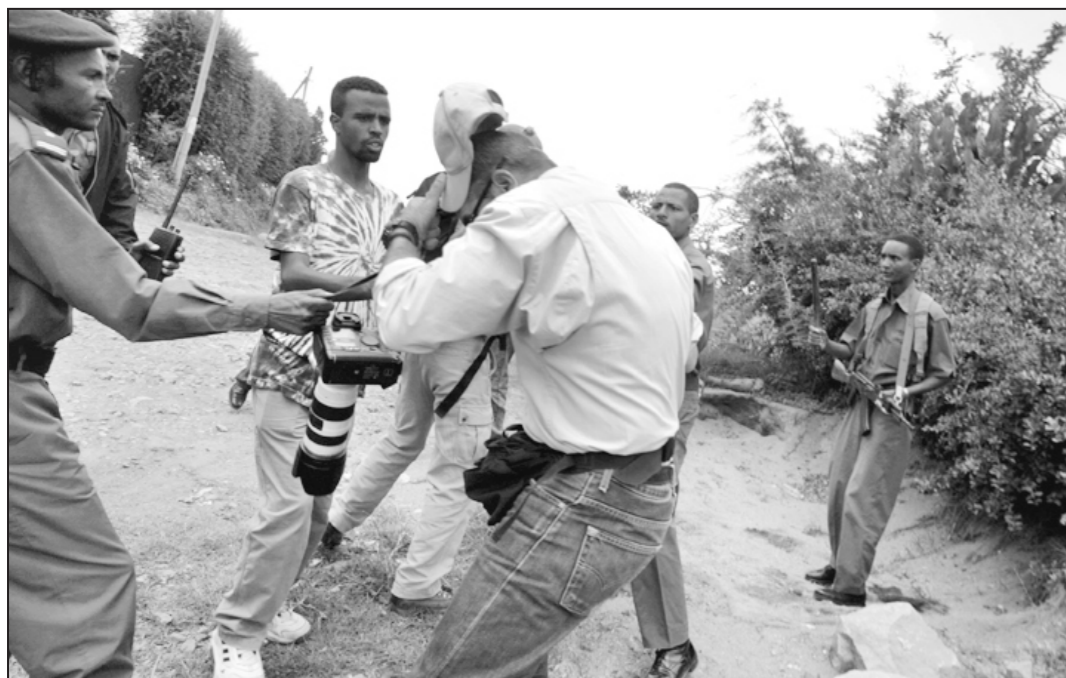
The two men also examined the issue of travel between Gaza and the West Bank and the opening of the Strip's borders with Israel and Egypt.

Dahlan has warned the pullout would be a failure without improved Israeli-Palestinian coordination. He has called for the opening of "safe passage" routes between Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the reopening of the Yasser Arafat International airport close to the Egyptian border.

The airport was razed by Israeli troops in January 2002 following a series of deadly suicide bombings.

Speaking to AFP, Dahlan said he had asked Mofaz for a detailed report on the homes which would be left intact in the settlements, but the Israeli minister said a decision on their fate would only be taken in the next 10 days.

Should Israel decide to leave the properties standing, Dahlan said a "special force" would be tasked with protecting them, along with any other structures left intact.



Ethiopian Army soldiers beat up an international journalist while trying to remove their camera equipment yesterday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, outside the residence of main opposition leader Hailu Sheva. Photographers and cameramen from international news agencies AFP, AP and EPA were assaulted by Ethiopian security forces after having shot frames of the opposition leader currently under house arrest.

Europe's oldest civilisation unearthed

AFP, London

Europe's oldest civilisation has been discovered by archaeologists across the continent, The Independent newspaper said yesterday.

More than 150 large temples, constructed between 4800 BC and 4600 BC, have been unearthed in fields and cities in Germany, Austria and Slovakia, predating the pyramids in Egypt by some 2,000 years, the newspaper revealed.

The network of temples, made of earth and wood, were constructed by a religious people whose economy appears to have been based on livestock farming, The Independent reported.

Excavations have taken place over the past three years but the discovery is so new that the civilisation has not yet been named.

The most complex centre discovered so far, beneath the city of Dresden in Saxony, eastern Germany, comprises a temple surrounded by four ditches, three earthen banks and two palisades.