

## Arafat calls for an end to attacks

REUTERS, Ramallah

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat urged Palestinian militants to halt attacks on Israeli civilians ahead of an Israeli election, which could change the course of more than two years of conflict.

In a Palestinian cabinet statement released Saturday, Arafat was quoted as saying he rejected "all acts of violence that target Palestinian and Israeli civilians."

"Attacks against Israeli civilians have severely harmed our cause in the international arena and in Israeli public opinion," the statement said.

"As the Israeli election date (January 28) is getting closer, we appeal to all our people to practice self-restraint."

## Hope fades for Peruvian jet passengers

REUTERS, Lima

Hopes of finding survivors from a Tans Peru jet thought to have crashed in Peru's northern jungle with 46 people on board faded on Friday as rescue teams battled bad weather and difficult terrain.

Helicopters that had hugged the rugged hills earlier on Friday, flying beneath heavy cloud cover, were grounded later due to dense fog and torrential rains.

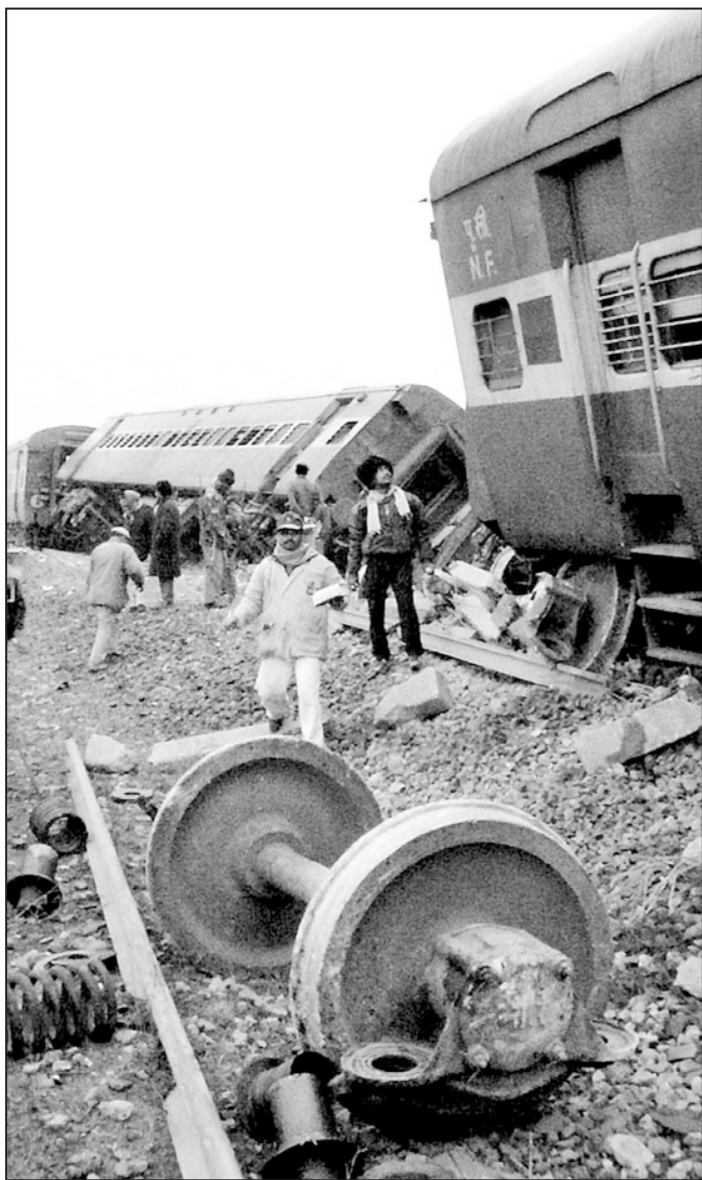


PHOTO: AFP  
The wreckage of the Howrah-Guwahati Kamrup Express lay scattered in Tihu, near the Assam state capital Guwahati on Saturday. Nine coaches and the engine of the express train were derailed on Friday but no casualties were reported.

## India to test-fire Agni-III

PTI, New Delhi

India is developing surface-to-surface 'Agni-III' missile with a range of more than 3,000 km and it is likely to be test-fired before the end of the year, Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister VK Aatre said here on Saturday.

"The development of Agni-III is on. It is being designed to hit targets at a distance of more than 3,000 km. We will hopefully test-fire it before the end of the year," he said on the sidelines of a seminar on Defence and internal security on the concluding day of a three-day NRI convention here.

Aatre also announced that surface-to-surface missile 'Agni-I', which was test-fired on Thursday last, is ready for induction into the armed forces.

## Polls in 4 Indian states on Feb 26

PTI, New Delhi

The Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura will be held on February 26. A notification for the polls will be issued on January 31.

Announcing the poll schedule, Chief Election Commissioner J M Lyngdoh told reporters the last date for filing nominations will be February 7, scrutiny will be held on February 8 and last date for withdrawal of candidature is February 10. Counting of votes will be held on March 1.

# DPRK hints at missile tests

## Washington to take nuke case to UN

REUTERS, AP, Seoul/Beijing

North Korea Saturday escalated a nuclear crisis with a threat to end a moratorium on missile testing on the day it became the world's first country to withdraw from a treaty preventing the spread of atomic weapons.

The secretive Communist state has caused alarm across the world since expelling UN nuclear inspectors last month, raising the stakes with ever more bellicose statements in an attempt to win concessions, recognition and security guarantees from the United States.

"The moratorium on our missile test firing will be of no exception, now that the United States has rendered all agreements reached between the United States and North Korea invalid," North Korean Ambassador to China Choe Jin-su told a news conference.

Such a move was essential to counter possible US attack, Choe said, blaming the United States for failing to maintain talks and move toward establishing diplomatic relations.

"I'd like to reiterate as follows -- the development, test, deployment and export of our missiles entirely belong to our sovereignty," Choe said.

He spoke a day before US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly is due in Seoul on the first leg of an Asian tour.

Pyongyang stunned its neighbours in 1998 by firing a medium-range ballistic missile that arched over Japan. The following year, the North announced a self-imposed moratorium on missile flight tests to last until the beginning of this year.

The crisis may have spiralled after last year's speech by President Bush, bracketing North Korea with Iraq and Iran in an "axis of evil," convinced Pyongyang it was under threat. The brief detention at US behest of a ship exporting missiles to Yemen late last year heightened its anxiety.

In Friday's announcement of its immediate withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), with notice of a single day, Pyongyang blamed Washington's "hostile" policy but said it had no intention of developing nuclear arms.

Voicing "burning hatred" for the United States, more than one million people massed in the North Korean capital to support the their government's decision, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. The report could not be independently confirmed.

Pyongyang's decision has triggered worldwide condemnation, cries of concern from neighbours and suggestions the issue be placed before the UN Security Council.

The United States played down the nuclear standoff, saying North Korea's latest move was cause for concern but not unexpected.

The UN International Atomic Energy Agency sought to reassure worried governments it did not see North Korea's decision to withdraw from the nuclear NPT as raising the stakes in the crisis and felt there was room for diplomacy to work.

North Korea's official news agency poured out a series of attacks against the United States.

"If the US brings dark clouds of war to hang over this land, the army and

the people of (North Korea) will remove the land of the US from the earth and root out the very source of evil and war," KCNA quoted one speaker as telling the rally in Pyongyang.

Tensions have been rising on the divided Korean peninsula since Pyongyang admitted to Kelly in October it had been pursuing a nuclear arms program in violation of a 1994 agreement.

The communist state's ruling party daily called on South Koreans to side with the North against the United States.

"All the Koreans should see through the US trite trick to perpetuate Korea's division and turn out in an anti-US struggle for independence and demonstrate the strength and mettle of the Korean nation," the Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary.

But South Korean commentators focused on a line in Friday's furious statement from Pyongyang that appeared to leave the door ajar to a diplomatic solution by inviting the United States to verify that the North did not possess nuclear weapons.

Diplomatic sources with close ties to Pyongyang told Reuters in Tokyo that North Korea would agree to scrap its weapons plans if Washington reaffirmed a 2000 joint communique that declared the two nations had "no hostile intention" toward each other.

Washington has said it will talk but not negotiate. AP adds: The United States is preparing to take its case against North Korea to the UN Security Council and is looking for broad support to try to harness the country's nuclear weapons programs.

North Korea's decision to quit a treaty designed to curb the spread of nuclear technology triggered the Bush administration's decision.

Referring also to North Korea's reversal of a 1994 pledge to freeze its nuclear weapons programs, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Friday, "It will ultimately have to go to the Security Council." He said the timing was not set.

Powell made the statement after conferring with Mohamed elBaradei, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

At a joint news conference, elBaradei said, "What I think we are talking about is a matter of weeks. ... If we do not see signs of cooperation on the part of the DPRK (North Korea) quite soon, then obviously we will have to move to the Security Council."

North Korea officials said the country does not plan to rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but would agree to let the United States verify that it is not producing nuclear weapons if Washington drops its hostile stance.

"The DPRK may prove through a separate verification between the DPRK and the US that it does not make any nuclear weapons," said a government statement issued in Pyongyang, referring to the North's full name, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea.

One option open to the Security Council would be to apply worldwide economic sanctions against North Korea, worsening its already desperate economic situation.

# EU for averting Iraq war

## Deployment orders for 35,000 more troops, Blair urges Bush against early strike

AFP, Washington

The United States Friday ordered another 35,000 troops to the Gulf despite pleas from European allies to avoid war with Iraq.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld signed deployment orders for the new wave of reinforcements, which will include marines and more fighter aircraft, a senior US official said.

The deployments come on top of 25,000 troops Rumsfeld ordered deployed to the Gulf just before Christmas.

And Secretary of State Colin Powell reiterated that the United States was resolved to disarm Iraq through military means if necessary, with or without UN approval.

"I think the international community...has spoken clearly," Powell said after meeting with International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohammed ElBaradei.

"Iraq must be disarmed of its weapons of mass destruction. And if it isn't accomplished peacefully...then I think the Security Council has to take the action that's indicated and determine whether or not force is appropriate."

President George W. Bush has "made it clear that we reserve the right...in the absence of international action to disarm Iraq, to act with like-minded nations to disarm Iraq. And we are positioning ourselves for whatever eventually might occur," Powell said.

Earlier this week, British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon announced plans to deploy a force comprising 3,000 marine commandos and called up 1,500 reservists in readiness for possible war against Iraq.

Hoon said as long as Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions was in doubt, the threat of force "must remain and it must be real."

However, British Foreign

Secretary Jack Straw spoke more moderately, saying, after talks in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur that Britain was committed to acting through the UN Security Council before being involved in any war.

After weeks of procrastinating, Turkey reluctantly gave the US military buildup a boost by agreeing to have its air bases and ports examined for possible use during any military conflict.

Turkey fears war in neighbouring Iraq would send its cripple its economy and stoke independence ambitions of its restive Kurdish population, which, with Iraqi Kurds forms the core of the Iraqi opposition.

In an apparent attempt to make clear it was not alienating itself from Iraq, Turkey's state minister for external trade, Kursat Tuzmen, arrived in Baghdad with 350 Turkish businessmen to talk bilateral trade.

But many allies, particularly in

Europe, are worried about moves toward conflict.

Another report says, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is to hold talks with US President George W. Bush and chief UN arms inspector Hans Blix "to prevent early military action in Iraq becoming inevitable", the Times reported Saturday.

Blair is expected to fly to Washington towards the end of this month to deliver a message that the United Nations should be given "time and space" to deal with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the British daily said.

The prime minister also hopes to speak with Blix, possibly in London, before the weapons inspector delivers his assessment of Iraq's compliance with UN disarmament demands on January 27.

## No more fight with Indians: Naga rebels

PTI, New Delhi

In a significant statement in the midst of Naga peace talks, the NSCN (I-M) leaders on Saturday said that there would be "no more fighting" between Indians and Nagas.

"I want to tell you that there will be no more fighting between Indians and Nagas. That is the understanding we have reached now," NSCN (I-M) chairman Isak Chisi Swu told reporters after an hour-long meeting with Defence Minister George Fernandes.

"People of Nagaland have been praying that the leaderships of India and NSCN (I-M) should successfully conclude their talks," he said.

"Nagas have now a much better understanding with the people of India," Swu said.

## 'Priceless' Beatles tapes recovered

AFP, London

A haul of 500 original Beatles tapes stolen in the 1970s and containing tracks thought never to have been released has been found in Holland after a joint operation between British and Dutch police, officers in London said Saturday.

Police described the tapes by the British pop legends as "priceless". The only recordings from them which have been heard before were on bootleg copies.

Two people were arrested in west London Friday and another three in a town close to Amsterdam when officers cracked a piracy racket.

The tapes contain what are known as the "Get Back" sessions. There was to be an album of that name in 1969 but the project was shelved.



PHOTO: AFP  
Activists perform a street theatre depicting the detention of immigrants outside the Immigration and Naturalisation Services building on Friday in Los Angeles during the second phase of the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System. The registration is being implemented by the INS to fulfil a congressional mandate asking temporary visitors coming from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen to indicate their immigration status and to provide addresses in the US and in their country of origin.

# Foreigners queue up to beat US immigration deadline

## AI urges US to review immigration move

AFP, San Francisco

Long queues of men from 12 mainly Muslim states and North Korea formed Friday outside immigration offices across the United States to beat a registration deadline under new anti-terrorist regulations.

Many Muslim leaders, who say their community has suffered enough after the September 11 attacks in 2001, predicted the new rules will lead to new arrests.

A handful of detentions were reported in California, where hundreds of Muslim men were rounded up in December. But rights groups say the measures are only spreading fear and will do little to track potential terrorists.

The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) has demanded that all males aged 16 and over from the 13 nations, who do not have resident status, appear before an INS agent by Friday night to be photographed, questioned and give fingerprints.

This round of the "special registration" involves nationals from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

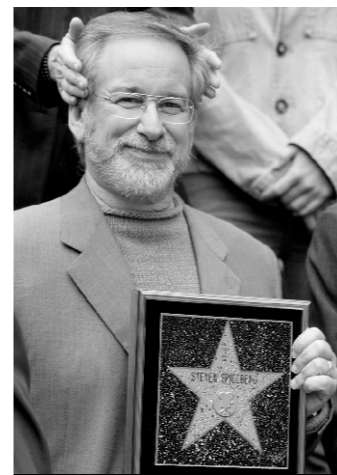
Iranians, Iraqis, Libyans, Sudanese and Syrians had to register by December 16. Pakistanis and Saudis without resident status must go to the INS

by February 21.

The registrations are required under the US Patriot Act, passed after the September 11 terror strikes on New York and Washington, to allow authorities to track potential terrorists living in the United States.

Around 50 protesters led by US civil rights campaigner Al Sharpton protested outside the Los Angeles immigration department as foreigners registered inside.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International Friday urged the United States to review controversial immigration rules aimed at cracking down on terrorists, claiming that detained foreigners had been mistreated.



## Steven Spielberg gets Hollywood Walk of Fame

AFP, Los Angeles

Movie maker Steven Spielberg, the force behind eight of the top 30 money-spinning films in history, was honoured Friday with a belated star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

The three-time Oscar winner who made Hollywood billions through blockbusters such as "Jaws" (1975), "ET The Extraterrestrial" (1982) and "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981), oversaw the unveiling of his monument on the pavement of Los Angeles' Hollywood Boulevard.

"I get to feel like an old relic in the oldest museum Hollywood has to offer," Spielberg said at the unveiling ceremony attended by stars such as actor Mike Myers.

## Musharraf says no to any more concessions to India

PTI, Islamabad

Accusing the Indian leadership of suffering from an "attitudinal" problem, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said he is not prepared to "grant any more concessions" on Kashmir issue that could convince India to resume bilateral talks and hoped that the international community would prevail on New Delhi in this regard.

"The ball is now in Indian court. Pakistan is not ready to grant more concessions to India", he told local daily Pakistan Observer in an interview, claiming that he has "done enough" for India to resume talks.

He said the Indian leaders were "slaves to a mindset" and struck by an attitudinal problem.

"We need some external diplomacy to bring India back on talks table," he said adding, "attitudinal change in Indian leaders was what Pakistan is very eagerly looking for. This can be facilitated only by international community".

He expressed hope that Indian government would respond positively to offer of talks by Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali.

Ruling out any chances of him going to India for talks he said it was now the duty of the Prime Minister to pick up the threads that were left at Agra. "But again it takes two to clap. Unless Indians invite Jamali for talks, how can he move forward for the normalisation of relations" he said.