

## 50 Moro rebels killed in anti-terror crackdown

AFP, Zamboanga

Government troops have killed more than 50 Moro separatist guerrillas in a major anti-terrorist operation in the southern Philippines, a senior military official said Sunday.

Government troops began an artillery barrage and opened extensive ground operations against the separatist bases after Philippine President Gloria Arroyo ordered "selective aerial and artillery attacks to dislodge embedded terrorist cells."

She gave the order prior to departing for a state visit to the United States, which has provided military training and financial aid to the Philippine fight against the separatist guerrillas.

The military fired at least 135 artillery rounds on Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) positions in two areas of Mindanao island over the past 24 hours, southern Philippines military chief Major General Roy Kyamco told reporters, though no bodies have been recovered.

## Mamata may return to Union Cabinet: PM

PTI, Manali

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday said there will be induction of some new ministers including the possible return of Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee and indicated that burden of some of the ministers would be lightened.

"Sambhavana to hain" (possibility is there), Vajpayee told reporters here when asked whether former Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee will be re-inducted.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday ruled out the possibility of former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh rejoining BJP.

"No", Vajpayee shot back when reporters asked him about this possibility.

There has been media speculation that in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, Singh may be brought back to the party fold though the former chief minister has also denied any such move.

# Pak cross-border terrorism must end first: Vajpayee

AFP, Manali

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee Sunday reiterated that Pakistan must stop supporting militants who are fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

"Pakistan must end cross-border terrorism," he told reporters in the northern Himalayan resort of Manali at the end of a week-long holiday, before he returned to the Indian capital New Delhi.

"Efforts are being made that cross-border terrorism is ended and in that constructive atmosphere further talks will be held. There is no change in our position."

India accuses Pakistan of funding and supporting Islamic militants and pushing them into Kashmir to fight the security forces there. Islamabad denies the charge, saying it extends only diplomatic and moral support to the groups.

More than 38,000 people have died in the insurgency in Indian Kashmir since it began in 1989, according to Indian figures. Separatists and Pakistan put the toll at more than double that.

Tensions spiralled between nuclear rivals India and Pakistan following an attack on India's parliament complex in December 2001, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-backed rebels battling Indian rule in Kashmir.

The attack triggered the mobilisation of around a million troops from

both sides to their common border and brought them to the brink of war until India withdrew most of its forces in October.

India had been insisting that a dialogue with Pakistan would resume only after Islamabad stopped sending Islamic rebels into Indian Kashmir and dismantled what New Delhi describes as terrorist training camps in Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

But on April 18, during a visit to Kashmir, Vajpayee stunned political observers in India by offering talks to Pakistan.

In the past few weeks both sides have announced the resumption of diplomatic and air links, severed in December 2001.

Vajpayee said the recent peace moves initiated by him were not made under any compulsions.

There has been speculation that the United States had leaned on India to make moves towards dialogue, which has been denied by both countries.

"There were no compulsions," Vajpayee said.

In recent interviews, Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha has said any negotiations between India and Pakistan must be structured and follow a set agenda.

In an interview to a television channel last week, Sinha said an end to violence in Kashmir was "a practical necessity," but stopped short of saying it was a precondition for talks.



Schoolchildren gather to form the word 'SARS' during a campaign to get residents more involved in the fight against the disease, in the eastern city of Nanjing, China on Sunday. A month into the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome crisis in China's capital, residents say they welcome efforts made by the government to control the outbreak, but many fear it might again cover up the next big health disaster.



Indian Surinder Singh is kissed by his mother, Mahinder Kaur upon his release by Pakistan at the Wagha border at Attari on Sunday. Singh along with 19 other prisoners were released by the Pakistan government as a good will gesture of peace.

## Pakistan frees 20 Indian prisoners

AFP, Wagah

Twenty Indian prisoners were released by the Pakistani authorities Sunday as part of efforts aimed at cooling tensions between the South Asian rivals, officials said.

Television channels showed the group crossing into India on foot one by one through the Wagah border point in the northern Indian state of Punjab, the only legal land crossing between the two countries.

Each man was checked by security personnel on both sides of the border and then escorted to meet relatives, many of whom wept as they welcomed their loved ones.

The 20 included 14 crew members of an Indian cargo boat who were taken into custody by Pakistani authorities after their vessel 'Raj Lakshmi' sank off the coast of Karachi, reports said.

The other six are Sikh youths arrested by Pakistani officials near the India-Pakistan border while trying to illegally make their way to Europe for employment.

# Hurriyat calls for truce in Kashmir

IANS, Srinagar

The All Party Hurriyat Conference has urged a ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir to create a conducive atmosphere for talks between India and Pakistan.

"We fervently appeal to the Indian security forces and the freedom fighters to silence their guns so that peace gets the right atmosphere," Hurriyat leader Molvi Abbas Ansari, a member of its seven-member executive, told IANS.

He said that while India and Pakistan were moving in the right direction, Kashmiris needed to be taken along to ensure the success of the peace moves.

Ansari said that any peace exercise between India and Pakistan that ignored the sentiments of the 12 million Kashmiris living on the two sides of the Line of Control in the Indian and Pakistan

administered parts of the state was liable to fail.

"Pandit Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan (the prime ministers of the two countries) met in 1950s. Then the two countries agreed on a declaration in Tashkent (in 1965) and later in Shimla (in 1971). Why did these exercises fail? It is our belief that they failed because Kashmiris were not included in such parleys," Ansari maintained.

Ansari is expected to head the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) after elections scheduled for later this month.

Ansari would not comment on whether the US was nudging the two countries towards peace, but said: "Both India and Pakistan have realized after the Iraq developments that they must move quickly towards a negotiated settlement of their disputes as instability in the region could mean trouble for both of them".

He did not think India's concern over trans-border incursions was all that unfounded.

"It is not a land dispute, so the political aspirations of the Kashmiri people cannot be overlooked. The prosperity of entire South Asia is intricately linked with the prosperity of the Kashmiri people and vice versa," he maintained.

He replied in the affirmative when asked whether the Hurriyat would renew its request to the Indian government for permission to go to Pakistan administered Kashmir to create a congenial atmosphere for peace talks.

"We renew that request to the government of India once again. Let them allow us to go to Pakistan to assuage the feelings of Kashmiris there and lend whatever help we can to make the India-Pakistan talks a success."

## Roh shifting North Korea strategy

THE KOREA HERALD/ ANN, San Francisco

President Roh Moo-hyun indicated Thursday South Korea may cut or slow down exchanges with North Korea if Pyongyang continues with its nuclear saber rattling.

Seoul's envoy to the United Nations said the government may make inter-Korean cooperative programs dependent on the progress of the nuclear issue, though humanitarian aid will be continued.

"During my US tour, North Korea declared the nullification of the inter-Korean denuclearisation agreement. We need effective cards so that we can flexibly respond to (the North's move)," Roh told reporters on an airplane on his way to San Francisco, the last leg of his week-long US visit. Roh returns to Seoul Saturday.

He made the remark when asked about the fate of inter-Korean exchanges in the wake of Wednesday's summit between Roh and US President George W. Bush

in Washington.

"I made it clear that we will not play in the way the North intends," he said.

During the talks with Bush, Roh said that future inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation will be conducted in light of developments on the North Korean nuclear issue, according to their joint statement.

His remarks are seen as indicating a major shift in Seoul's tactics in dealing with the North.

The government had maintained that inter-Korean projects should proceed regardless of the tension over Pyongyang's suspected nuclear programs.

"I have no doubt that the North Korea nuclear issue should be resolved peacefully. But we don't rule out possible changes during the process of negotiating a peaceful resolution," Roh said during the press meeting.

Korea's ambassador to the United Nations, Sun Joun-yung, echoed Roh's position.

## Pakistan's no to nuke rollback unilaterally

PTI, AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid M Kasuri said his government would never give up its nuclear weapons unless India does, reports said on Saturday.

"Let me say categorically, there will be no unilateral rollback of Pakistan's nuclear programme," the Urdu-language Jung newspaper quoted Kasuri as having said. There is reason to believe that India is a "threat" to Pakistan's security. "Our threat perception is real. It's not imaginary," he said.

Kasuri, who stopped over in London while returning to Islamabad from his visit to the USA said, India rejected Islamabad's offer of nuclear disarmament in South Asia. Pakistan was, however, ready to do so if India did the same.

About the Kashmir problem and talks with India, Kasuri reiterated Pakistan's commit-

ment to hold a "composite and sustained", dialogue with India. It would be a continuous process. Islamabad was ready to show flexibility but he insisted that Kashmir would be "an integral part of the dialogue". He said: "It's far better not to start thinking of details of the solution. Let the dialogue start. Let us approach the talks in a positive spirit."

On cross-border terrorism, the minister said Pakistan was trying its "best to control the incursions". Kasuri said Pakistan did have an influence on the Kashmiris, but "we cannot dictate them. They don't take dictations from us".

He said India should join the gas pipeline project from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan to cater to its energy needs. Pakistan was ready to give India international guarantee and would honour it as it had the Indus Basin Treaty.

## Lanka okays tighter security for Chandrika

THE ISLAND/ ANN, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government has partially accepted a proposal to increase security to President Chandrika Kumaratunga, a senior government spokesman said yesterday.

"We have decided to extend the high security zone around Janadhipathi Mandiraya on a priority basis," he said, adding that the gazette notification in this regard has been prepared.

Responding to questions, he said, the decision was based on a written request made by Presidential Secretary Kusumiri Balapatabendi on behalf of the president. "Citing a serious Tiger threat to the president, Balapatabendi wanted the government to enhance her security on a priority basis," the spokesman said.

Subsequent to high level deliberations involving Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe, Defence Minister Tilak Marapana and Defence Secretary Austin Fernando, the government decided to accept the proposal in part as it would be impossible to implement the president's recommendation in full.



Pakistani MP Sardar Saleem (2nd from R) and an other unidentified Pakistani legislators wave to the press as they are about to return to their country by crossing the border at the Wagah outpost in the northern Indian state of Punjab on Saturday. The 13-members delegation returned to Pakistan after a ten-day peace mission to India with the aim of nudging the South Asian rivals towards a dialogue.