



PHOTO: REUTERS

People gather to get water from a huge well in the village of Natwargadh in the western Indian state of Gujarat on Sunday. Natwargadh is in the midst of the worst drought in over a decade. Dams, wells and ponds have gone dry across the western and northern parts of Gujarat forcing people to wait for hours around village ponds for the irregular state-run water tankers to show up as the temperature soared to over 44 degree Celsius, 111 degrees F.

## 26 bodies rescued from southern lake in Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Rescuers have retrieved the bodies of 26 holidaymakers who were drowned last Sunday when their overloaded boat capsized in a lake in southern Sindh province, police and hospital officials said.

"There could now one or two more bodies under water as the exact number of people who were on board is not known," police official Ramzan Sangijo said.

There were no survivors and a search is underway for more victims, he added.

"Rescuers have fished out 26 bodies from the lake so far and the toll could rise as the search is underway." Mohammad Dawood, a doctor at a local hospital, told AFP.

The boat overturned in high winds at Khinjer Lake near Thatta, some 130 kilometers (80 miles) northeast of the port city of Karachi.

Witnesses said that the boat capsized due to overloading and gusty winds. The lake is a favourite picnic spot for day trippers from crowded Karachi, thousands of whom line its banks at weekends.

# We don't have any magic lamp to stop infiltration: Kasuri

PTI, London

Pakistan has said it does not have an Aladdin's lamp to put an end to it but was ready to cooperate with India in this regard.

"We have never said there should be cross-border terrorism. What we have been saying is that our government is trying its level best to stop it," Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said in a phone-in to a BBC programme on Sunday night.

Pointing out that even America could not seal the border with Mexico, Kasuri said, "If some people go endangering their own lives and if the Indian Army which is present in lakhs and is also along the LoC, cannot stop them, then which Aladdin's lamp do we have that we rub it and all this stops."

Throughout the lengthy question and answer session, Kasuri emphasised the need for a sustained composite dialogue between Pakistan and India on all issues, including Kashmir so that the "result would be

good" and there would be peace and development in the region.

"Unfortunately, we have fought three wars with India, and last year we were close to a war. We should all try that now we do not think of a war, once we do that then levels of cooperation will increase."

"Once the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers talk, I have full confidence that then the violence, hostility and militancy from both sides of the border would come down," Kasuri said.

Asked why the two countries could not accept the LoC as the International border between the two countries, the Pakistan foreign minister said: "Well at the moment we are not talking of solutions. The ultimate solution would be one in which there would be no defeat for either India or Pakistan."

"It would be extremely foolish at this stage to talk of solutions, if we do that, then the efforts that we are making for a dialogue, would be sabotaged even before the talks. The journalists, columnists in both

the countries are free to write as they have the freedom to do so. But those involved in the process - the foreign ministers, the prime ministers and the presidents should not go into the details at this stage.

"If we do so, then both the sides would go back to their stated positions, India would say it is their integral part and Pakistan would say it is the Security Council resolution. Therefore, wisdom at this stage demands that we concentrate on the dialogue, which we say the talks about talks, and make progress. We should sustain the dialogue, continue talks if this proceeds, both sides would succeed."

Answering a question on India's demand that cross-border terrorism, especially from that of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir would have to stop before resumption of dialogue, Kasuri said: "Well we have repeatedly been saying that we are trying, we have the world about this. Even Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, while speaking in the Lok Sabha mentioned this."

## SARS on retreat in Asia but vigilance needed

REUTERS, Beijing

SARS may be on the retreat in Asia but the World Health Organisation said yesterday that countries must stay on guard and the virus is going to be tough to kill off completely.

The severe economic impact of SARS on Asia and beyond was expected to be a key theme at a meeting of Asia-Pacific trade ministers in Thailand.

Hard-hit Taiwan logged its fourth straight day of single-digit growth in the number of new cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome yesterday with just four.

And China, where SARS first appeared late last year, reported just two new cases on Sunday for the first time since April 20 when the government came clean after a cover-up that grossly

understated the extent of the outbreak.

But the death toll in Canada's biggest city, Toronto, rose to 31 on Sunday when a 60-year-old woman died and authorities said they were investigating five other deaths that may be linked to SARS.

More than 5,000 people have been quarantined in Canada, most of them in Toronto, since a new cluster of cases surfaced in mid May, after the World Health Organisation (WHO) had taken the city off its list of SARS-affected places.

In China, the WHO said it was encouraged by the fall-off in the number of new cases but said the SARS virus would be hard to eliminate.

"This is not the time to drop our guard," said the UN health agency's

spokesman in Beijing, Bob Dietz.

"We take a look at Canada where all of a sudden this thing just pops up seemingly out of nowhere with a really developed healthcare system and we realize that it's not an easy thing to get rid of," he said.

By Sunday, 332 people had died and 5,328 had been infected in China but the number of new cases reported has fallen sharply in the past three weeks from more than 100 a day.

"The figures look pretty good. Hard to believe sometimes, but we are taking them on good faith," Dietz said.

SARS has killed more than 750 people and infected more than 8,300 around the world since it appeared in southern China's Guangdong province last year.

## 'Militants using mosques as bases in Iraq'

AFP, Baghdad

Militants in Iraq are using mosques as arms depots and bases to carry out attacks on American soldiers, the US-led coalition said on Monday.

The announcement on the coalition's Baghdad radio station did not give specific details on locations but warned the Iraqi people that continued use of the mosques could lead to their destruction.

"These attacks are not only harming coalition troops but also innocent Iraqis who are sometimes killed as a result," the radio bulletin said.

"Those hiding arms and using mosques to commit armed attacks are violating the sanctity of these holy places and risk being responsible for their destruction" in the ensuing battles, it said.

"Such violent actions directed from places of worship is in contra-

dition with their holy status and should be condemned."

On Sunday, two US soldiers were injured and two Iraqis killed in a grenade attack on a US armoured vehicle outside a Baghdad mosque.

The coalition has repeatedly said it means no harm to Muslim sites, which could exacerbate the tension in post-war Iraq, and its troops have largely stayed away from the centre of holy cities such as Najaf and Karbala.

But it has also insisted that many anti-US attacks have been conducted from mosques.

In Fallujah, west of Baghdad, US troops were ambushed on May 22 which the coalition said began with grenade fire from a nearby mosque. Local residents denied the charge.

"Coalition forces recognise the sacred character of these places but that does not mean criminals may use them to carry out attacks," the radio said.

## Indians turn to prayer to end killer heatwave

AFP, Hyderabad

Indians desperate for an end to a heatwave that has claimed nearly 900 lives have begun seeking divine intervention to cool scorching temperatures.

More than 10,000 Hindus flocked to the bed of Osmansagar Lake -- a key source of water in Andhra Pradesh's capital Hyderabad that dried up in April.

They held special prayers for rain Sunday, the hottest day yet this year in the city with the mercury hitting 43.9 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit), around eight degrees

above normal.

In the north of the province, temperatures have reached 50 degrees, producing a mounting death tolls among labourers unable or unwilling to take an afternoon off from the fields.

"This extreme heat and drought has dried up all water sources and badly affected the fishing community. Only rains can bring some respite," prayer leader G. Narsingh Rao said.

Elsewhere in the city, thousands gathered at the Miralamb mosque in this historically Muslim city to seek God's help in ending the heatwave.

But despite the appeals for divine intervention, the severe heat is expected to last for a few more days, said C.V.V. Bhadram, director of Hyderabad's meteorological department.

"Strong northerly winds are sweeping across, causing temperatures to rise," he told AFP.

On Sunday another 89 people died from sunstrokes across the state, bringing the number of deaths to 884 since mid-May. Forty deaths have been reported from the heatwave in neighbouring Pakistan.

## Zimbabwe opposition leader detained ahead of protests

AFP, Harare

Police in Zimbabwe yesterday detained opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai ahead of planned anti-government street protests, Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) said.

"The president (Tsvangirai) has been picked up from his house 10 minutes ago," said an official from the MDC.

The charges that Tsvangirai faces were still not clear but the opposition leader had vowed at the weekend to lead the protests on Monday morning despite a high court order banning them.

The MDC blames Robert Mugabe's government for crippling economic problems and says it has popular support for the marches.

Inflation is running at 269 percent and shortages of food, fuel and bank notes are causing intense hardships for Zimbabweans.

The capital, Harare, was tense on Monday, with heavily armed police and soldiers deployed on the streets.

Police have warned that anyone taking part in the protests will "face the full wrath of the law" and the government has distributed flyers urging Zimbabweans to ignore the opposition's call to demonstrate.

Riot police manned road blocks on routes leading into the city centre. All roads around Mugabe's official residence near the city centre were closed.

An eyewitness told AFP police fired teargas to break up a group of people who tried to march into the

city centre from Highfield, Mugabe's home township and the nerve centre in the 1950s and 1960s of nationalist opposition to British colonial rule in the southern African country.

There were reports of beatings in some suburbs, where army and police have been patrolling since Saturday.

State radio said police were escorting state-owned passenger buses into the capital. There were very few private bus operators plying the roads.

Students at the country's main University of Zimbabwe were vacating the campus by mid-morning as tensions apparently started rising at the news of Tsvangirai's detention.

## 5 including four militants killed in Jammu

REUTERS, Jammu

Four militants and a civilian were killed in separate militancy-related incidents in Poonch, Doda and Rajouri districts where security forces busted two militant hideouts since on Sunday, official sources said here yesterday.

Security forces, under operation "Sarp Vinash", eliminated two Lashker-e-Taiba militants and busted two hideouts in Hillkaka area in Surankote tehsil of Poonch district on Sunday, the sources said.

Recoveries from the slain militants included three AK rifles, three magazines, four handgrenades, one wireless set and 150 quintals of ration, they said.

In another incident, security forces shot dead two militants in an encounter in Licha Tringla Ghat area of Marmat tehsil in Doda district on Sunday night, the sources said, adding recoveries included one AK rifle, two magazines and 20 rounds, one shotgun and a wireless set.

Unidentified militants killed a 70-year-old man of the Gujjar community in Kandi area of Rajouri district, they said.

## No smoking in Indian Parliament?

TNN, Kolkata

The Indian Union health ministry plans to declare both the Houses of Parliament, including their lobby and the main hall, as 'public places' so that no MP can smoke there, Union health minister Sushma Swaraj said here on Sunday.

"We have proposed to construct small chambers for smokers so that they can remain in their chambers and continue harming themselves and not others," Swaraj said at a function organised by Bhagirath Neotia Woman and Child Care Centre.

The campaign against the evils of smoking is not good enough, she said. "While advertisements which glorify smoking are running everywhere, those countering them with facts are just not coming."

Despite pressure from all quarters, curbs against smoking in public places could be successfully cleared in both the Houses of Parliament.

## The Red Planet



PHOTO: BBC ONLINE

Despite being as far away as 378 million kilometres Mars is visible from Earth with the naked eye. The question of whether life has existed or exists on Mars looms large in the human imagination. This riddle may soon be solved as European and American missions prepare to explore the planet's surface late in 2003 and early 2004.

## Europe goes to Mars

BBC ONLINE

The race to find life on Mars was set to begin on Monday with the launch of Europe's first voyage to another planet. Three probes are leaving Earth this summer, starting with the European Space Agency's Mars Express mission.

It carries the Beagle 2 lander, which, if all goes well, will become the first British-built craft to touch down on another world.

The launch marks the start of a new golden age in Mars exploration. The US space agency (Nasa) is sending two missions to the fourth planet. The first of its Mars Exploration Rovers should leave Earth in a week or so.

Another Mars traveller is destined to arrive early next year. Japan's Nozomi craft should reach the planet early in 2004 after a long journey beset by mishaps.

There has long been interest in exploring Mars because it is believed to be the planet most likely to harbour life. Clues that Mars once had oceans, lakes and possibly microbes have sparked a "gold rush" to send unmanned space craft to visit the planet.

The United States and Russia have spent billions since the 1960s trying to land a dozen or so space craft on the Red Planet.

Only three have been suc-

cessful so far: Nasa's two Viking probes, which landed in 1976, and its Mars Pathfinder, which explored the surface in 1997.

Mars Express is Europe's first solo mission to Mars and indeed any planet.

Final launch preparations are underway at the Russian Cosmodrome in Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

The first opportunity for the craft to be blasted into space was to commence on Monday at 1745 GMT (1845 BST).

The orbiter with the lander on board will go up on the Russian rocket that has become the workhorse of the space industry, a Soyuz/Fregat launcher.

The space craft will cover a distance of about 400 million kilometres (250 million miles) on the six-month journey to Mars.

Its main scientific goal is to detect vast reservoirs of water thought to be trapped under the Martian surface using a ground-penetrating radar. It will also take images of Mars and conduct a geological survey of the planet.

Between them, Mars Express and Beagle 2 could answer one of the biggest questions in science: Is there, or was there, life on Mars?



PHOTO: AFP

Afghan refugee girls smile before leaving for their homeland in Afghanistan with their family from Pakistan's northern region of Chitral. Some 2,000 Afghan refugees headed home from Chitral, the largest group to return to the war-shattered country from this area under the UNHCR voluntarily repatriation program. Pakistan, Afghanistan and the UNHCR have signed an agreement in March under which some 1.8 million Afghan refugees are to return home over the next three years on a voluntary basis.