

Seven killed, 26 hurt in Mumbai blast

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Seven people died and 26 others injured in an explosion believed to be accidentally triggered by film industry explosives at suburban Jogeshwari area of north west Mumbai early on Thursday, police said.

"The blast occurred due to some explosive materials like gelatine and some other chemicals stored in the house. It appears to be an accidental explosion, but investigations are on," a police spokesman said.

Ayub Khan, brother-in-law of the house owner Dilnawaz Mustafa Khan, who was staying in another locality and seen at the site of explosion, has been arrested and the police are finding out whether Dilnawaz had any links with terrorists, Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Satyapal Singh said.

The explosion occurred at around 3:10 am at Raj Mahal Yadav chawl on Bandivali road in Jogeshwari. Of the 26 injured, nine have been admitted, four in ICU, while 17 were discharged after giving first aid.

The impact of the explosion was so severe that the roof of the house was completely blown off and rocked the neighbouring houses and shattered window panes.

Singh said that the police have recovered three cylinders and electrical wires perhaps used in explosion from the house and are inspecting Dilnawaz's godown where he used to store explosives for supplying to the film industry.

Ayodhya temple campaigner passes away

PTI, Ayodhya

Mahant Ramchandra Das Paramhans, who spearheaded the movement for the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya, died on Thursday morning after a protracted illness, two days after he was shifted here from a hospital in Lucknow in keeping with his wishes.

The 90-year-old president of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas, had suffered heart attack and was admitted to the SGPGI Hospital in Lucknow earlier this month where he underwent surgery for removal of stones in gall bladder and he was also suffering from cancer.

Even as his condition remained critical, he insisted on being shifted to Ayodhya after being discharged from the hospital, he was brought to Digambar Akhara here, where he breathed his last at 0445 am (local time).

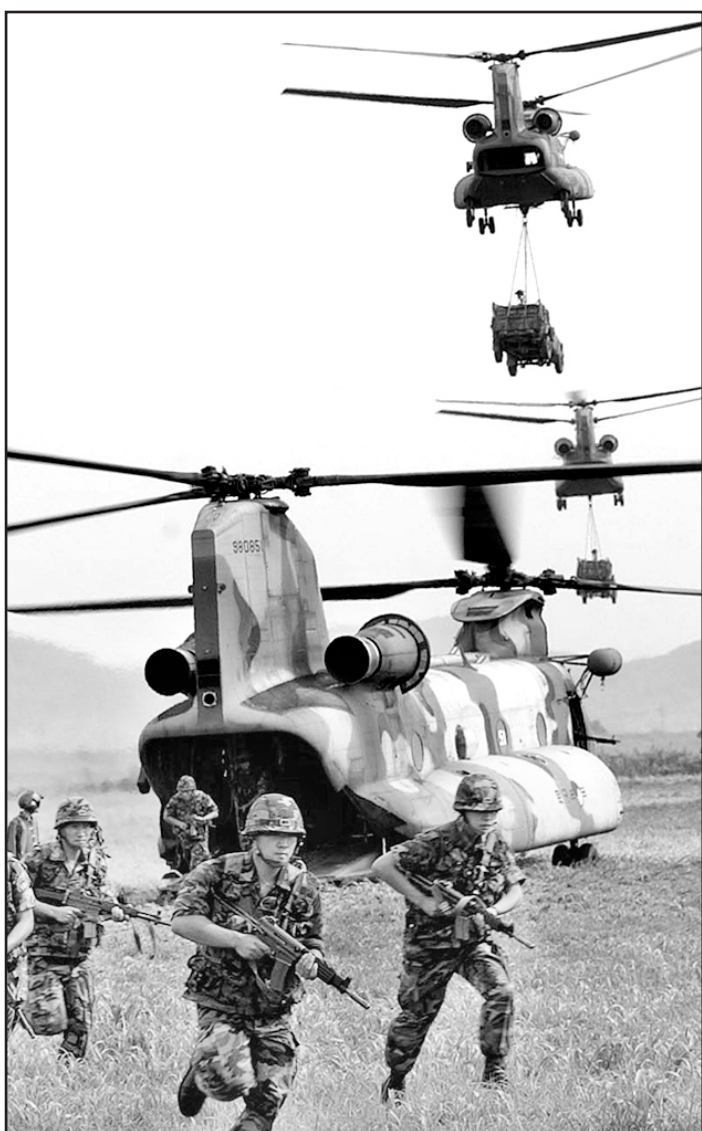


PHOTO: AFP

South Korean soldiers run from a helicopter during a military exercise in Yeonki, July 31, amid tensions over North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons programme. Top US arms negotiator John Bolton slammed North Korean leader Kim Jong Il for forcing his people live a "hellish nightmare" as he stepped up a war of words with the Stalinist state over its nuclear weapons ambitions.

US lambastes North Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

Top US arms negotiator John Bolton described North Korean leader Kim Jong-il on Thursday as a tyrannical dictator who lived like royalty while jailing thousands and keeping many hungry in a "hellish nightmare."

In a tough speech guaranteed to provoke a blistering North Korean response, the undersecretary of state also said Kim was mistaken if he thought threats to proliferate nuclear weapons would weaken international resolve to halt Pyongyang's atomic ambitions through multilateral talks.

His comments come at a delicate time. Japan's Kyodo news agency said the United States, China and North Korea were discussing a proposal to hold three-way talks in early September.

The last year has seen Kim Jong-il accelerate these programs, particularly on the nuclear front," he said in a speech to the East Asia Institute, referring to proliferation.

"The days of (North Korea) blackmail are over," he said. "Kim Jong-il is dead wrong to think that developing nuclear weapons will improve his security."

Bolton, widely seen as a hawk on North Korea, painted a stark picture of life for North Koreans with Kim at the helm.

He mentioned Kim's name some 40 times, and described him as one of the world's "tyrannical rogue state leaders" who needed to introduce sweeping reforms or face economic ruin.

"While he lives like royalty in Pyongyang, he keeps hundreds of

thousands of his people locked in prison camps with millions more mired in abject poverty, scrounging the ground for food," he said.

"For many in North Korea, life is a hellish nightmare."

North Korea is edging toward nuclear talks but has recently repeated its demand Washington drop its "hostile policy."

Bolton, on a three-country tour that will take him next to Tokyo, said the United States and its allies were trying to persuade North Korea to start multilateral talks on ending its nuclear weapons program.

Secretary of State Colin Powell told Reuters in Washington on Wednesday that he saw the "distinct possibility" of more multilateral talks this year with North Korea, China and perhaps others aimed at resolving the crisis.

North Korea wants bilateral talks with Washington, a line Bolton described as a "one-note piano concerto." He said it would be highly irresponsible for Washington to hold one-to-one talks.

He other tracks should be pursued too, including the U.N. Security Council taking "appropriate and timely action."

"Unfortunately, the Council is not playing the part it should," he said. "To date, virtually nothing has happened."

Bolton, who visited China before Seoul, said 11 countries would continue efforts to try to thwart North Korean exports of weapons and other illicit goods.

Indian fencing along LoC backed by US

India, Pakistan exchange heavy fire in Noushera

PTI, Washington

The US has backed India for erecting fences along the Indo-Pak border and Line of Control to stop infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir and said Pakistan must end cross-border terrorism and dismantle terrorist training camps.

State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said that just because the US does not like the Israeli fence on the West Bank does not mean that all fences like the Indian fence along the Indo-Pak border are "bad".

"I guess I have to reject the contention that it (the Indian fence) is just like (the Israeli fence) in the Middle East. I think these are two different fences. There are a lot of fences along borders around the world," Boucher said at a regular briefing when asked about his stand on India building a fence along the border vis-a-vis the fence Israel is building.

"The issue with the fence that Israel is putting up... Is because building this fence involves taking land; it prejudices or might be seen to prejudice the outcome of future discussions; and it basically complicates the situation of trying to achieve progress that can result in real security for both sides through cooperation and through shared security, through each side taking its responsibilities."

"And that is why we've made

clear that we think this particular fence (Israeli fence) is a problem. It does not mean fences are bad all over the world."

Asked on which side of the fence he is on, he said, "We are not taking a position on the fence."

On the US stand on cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, Boucher said: "I think on cross-border terrorism, it remains a very important issue to us. It remains one that we follow very closely and we continue to discuss with the parties because we do think it is important to stop the terrorism in this area and stop the camps, and to make sure that nobody's territory is being used as a place to sponsor terrorism against its neighbours."

Asked if the US could at least push the Indians to place the UN observer group on their side for an objective assessment, Boucher said Washington has supported the UN Security Council resolution on this subject in the past.

"But the US position and the US effort has been, first, to work with both India and Pakistan to develop our own relationships... These are two relationships, each of which is very important to us."

On that basis, he said, "We have also been looking to see what we could do to help them resolve the problems between them and to help them move to a point where they can deal more specifically with some of these issues as part of the

overall effort to get them to improve their relationships".

"That is where we have put our effort into, and that is where we continue to put our effort," he added.

PTI from New Delhi reports: Indian and Pakistani troops on Thursday exchanged heavy shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Noushera sector of Rajouri district in Jammu and Kashmir, official sources here said.

Indian troops retaliated the Pakistani firing targeted at Jhanghar, Kalal, Rumlidhara and Kalsian areas of the sector from across the border with mortar bombs from 0300 hours to 0700 hours, the sources said.

No loss of life or property was reported in the shelling, they said, adding the damage on Pakistani side could not be ascertained.

The sources attributed the increased firing and shelling in Noushera sector to facilitate armed terrorists to infiltrate into Indian territory, they said.

Reports from International Border (IB) in Jammu said that light arms firing between two sides took place at Jabawal and Chambliyal areas during the last 24 hours. There was no casualties on our side, they added.

Maoists strike again

AFP, Kathmandu

Maoist rebels ambushed a Nepalese army patrol under a new policy of attacking troops deployed far from their barracks as the kingdom's peace process further unraveled, army and guerrilla sources said Thursday.

A high-ranking Maoist said on condition of anonymity that top rebel leaders met in mid-July and decided the guerrillas would shoot any troops seen more than five kilometers (three miles) away from their barracks, despite the ceasefire in place since January 29.

He said the meeting was chaired by the Maoists' elusive leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal - known by the alias Prachanda (The Fierce) - near Surkhet, 398 kilometers (248 miles) southwest of the capital Kathmandu.

In an apparent implementation of the policy, guerrillas late Wednesday opened fire on an army patrol in Surkhet district although there were no casualties on either side, an army official told AFP.

The official confirmed the troops were 10 kilometers (six miles) away from their barracks at Chhinchu but said it was a standard patrol.

On July 24, a female Maoist guerrilla was killed in a shootout triggered by a similar rebel attack on troops in the western Kalikot district, according to army officials.

Fearing a collapse of the ceasefire, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa reviewed the security situation Wednesday with army, police and other security officials. He ordered all suspicious vehicles be searched in sensitive parts of Kathmandu, a source in his cabinet said.

3 Afghan insurgents killed by US troops

AP, Kabul

US forces killed at least three suspected insurgents spotted near an American base in volatile eastern Afghanistan, a US military spokesman said Thursday.

Lt. Col. Douglas Leforge said the three were part of a 10-man "enemy element" observed Wednesday night near the US base in Asadabad, capital of eastern Kunar province near the Pakistan border.

"The firebase fired 120mm mortar illumination rounds as a warning, then fired high explosive rounds, killing the estimated three personnel," Leforge said in an e-mailed statement from Bagram Air Base, headquarters of US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan.

The rest of the suspected insurgents fled the area and a coalition

ground patrol was dispatched to investigate further, Leforge said.

No coalition casualties were reported.

Near Asadabad last week, coalition forces called in a B-52 bomber and two fighter jets to pound insurgents who fired two rockets at the US base. None were killed or wounded.

Elsewhere, insurgents fired three rockets at another US base to the southeast in Orgun, a small town in Paktika province, Leforge said.

The rockets fell harmlessly like scores of others over the last year. A coalition patrol deployed after the attack found the launch site, but none of the attackers.



PHOTO: AFP

India's Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani (L) gestures as he speaks with Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen during a National Seminar on Freedom and Development in New Delhi July 31. Sen, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998, delivered his speech on 'Development as Freedom-An India Perspective'.



PHOTO: AFP

A woman holds a "Wanted" poster in Lima calling for the extradition of former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, 30 July 2003, during a demonstration in front of the Japan's Embassy.

Japan asked to hand over Fujimori

BBC ONLINE

Peru has formally asked Japan to extradite its former President, Alberto Fujimori, to face charges dating back to the early 1990s.

The Peruvian ambassador to Tokyo handed the 700-page extradition request into the Japanese foreign ministry.

The charges - which Mr Fujimori, now a Japanese citizen, completely denies - include murder, kidnapping and inflicting grievous wounds, the Peruvian foreign ministry said.

Japan rejected a similar request filed through Interpol earlier this year on the grounds that it has no extradition treaty with Peru.

"We will only follow our domestic laws in deciding how to respond,"

Yasushi Sato, an official at the Japanese foreign ministry said on Thursday, confirming receipt of the new request.

The former president has been living in self-imposed exile in Tokyo since a corruption scandal toppled his government late in November 2000.

While no treaty exists, the BBC's Elliott Gotkine reports from Lima, that Peru believes the charges are so grave that Tokyo will make an exception.

The Peruvian Foreign Minister, Alan Wagner, said Mr Fujimori had been a Peruvian all his life until he tried to "escape justice".

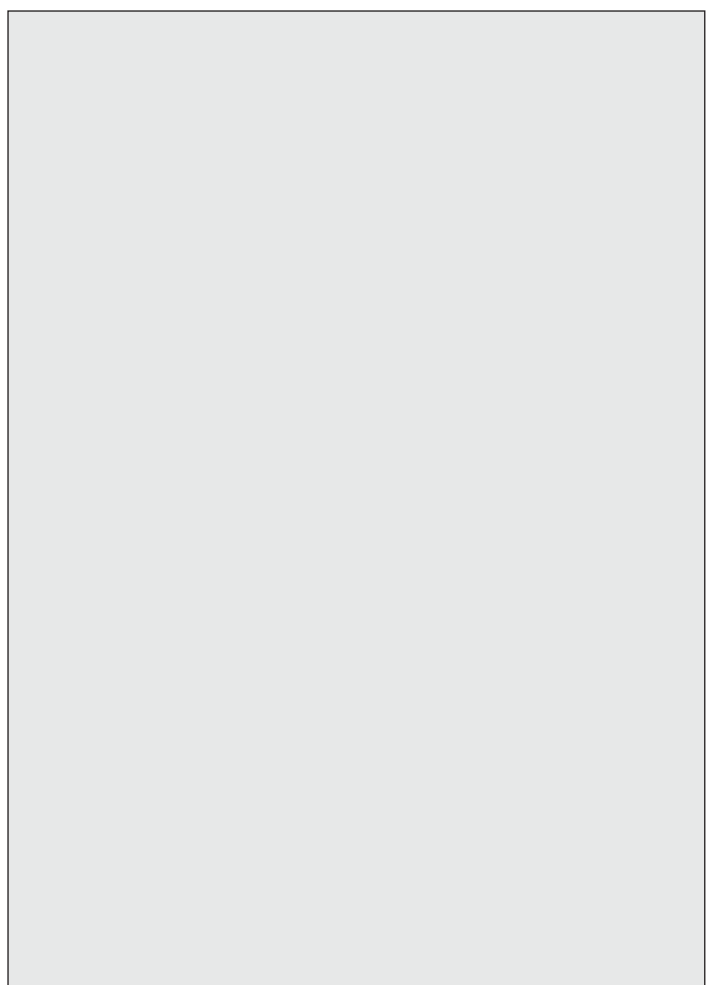
Mr Fujimori is accused of authorising, or at least being aware of, a death squad known as the Grupo

Colina during the war with Shining Path Maoist rebels.

The group has been connected to two massacres - the killing of 15 suspected leftist rebels in Lima in 1991 and the kidnapping and killing of nine students and a professor from La Cantuta University in 1992.

Other charges against the former leader, our correspondent adds, range from abandoning office to giving former spy chief Vladimiro Montesinos \$15m as severance pay.

The extradition request was dispatched to Japan after three attempts to translate it and tens of thousands of dollars in costs incurred by Peru's Government.



Pakistani child Noor Fatima watches a crowd of media at New Delhi airport after arriving from Bangalore on July 31. The two-year-old girl whose successful heart surgery came to symbolise peace efforts between the two countries left hospital on Thursday. Noor came to India on July 11 with her parents on Lahore-Delhi bus that was resumed after an 18-month suspension. The same bus service will take her home to Lahore from Delhi on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP