

# Bolivian president falls prey to own prophecy

REUTERS, LA PAZ, Bolivia

As he was sworn in as Bolivia's president just over a year ago, millionaire mine owner Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada warned his government could fall unless it quickly tackled endemic poverty in South America's poorest nation.

On Friday, just 14 months into the job, his prophecy came true.

After a month of deadly protests by thousands of Bolivians -- from humble street vendors to Indian miners and coca farmers -- furious at his free market economic policies and failure to curb poverty, Sanchez de Lozada on Friday resigned in a letter to Congress.

"I put my resignation before the consideration of the beloved Congress," Sanchez de Lozada said in the letter read aloud to

Congress by an official as government opponents heckled, screaming "murderer." Congress accepted his resignation in a vote.

His second presidency -- Sanchez de Lozada ruled Bolivia from 1993-97 -- was supposed to last until August 2007.

"If we don't act today, if we don't reestablish economic growth and protect those that have the least ... then desperation could put democracy in danger," Sanchez de Lozada said as he was sworn in on August 6, 2002.

Elected with 22 percent of the vote on a platform to bust corruption and social exclusion in a land where nearly two thirds of the population is poor, he boasted he was the "only politician to make it to the presidency already rich and didn't need to steal".

But the 73-year-old U.S.-

educated businessman, who speaks Spanish with a thick American accent and is one of the richest people in Bolivia, ignored widespread opposition to a U.S.-backed drive to eradicate coca crops and a plan to export gas to the United States until it was too late to turn back.

His presidency was blighted by protests. In February he was smuggled out of his La Paz presidential palace in an ambulance after an International Monetary Fund-backed austerity drive sparked massive riots in which 32 people died.

He slumped in polls as he failed to jump-start an economy stagnant for the past 20 years -- his approval rating was just 9 percent according to recent polls.

Sanchez de Lozada was handed the presidency by Congress last

year after he failed to get enough votes for an outright win at the polls, forcing his National Revolutionary Movement to build a coalition that fell apart amid deadly clashes between troops and protesters that have killed an estimated 74 people.

The man he barely beat to the post, Indian coca farmer leader Evo Morales, was one of the main leaders of the past month's protests. However it is his vice president, political independent Carlos Mesa, who is tipped to take the helm.

Lozada is married with two children -- his daughter Alejandra is an elected lawmaker in his own party, his son Ignacio is an economist. He has four grandchildren.

Lucky for him, his recent prophecy that he would have to be carried out of the presidential palace dead before he quit failed to materialise.



PHOTO: AFP  
Carlos Mesa (R), named President of Bolivia is greeted by Hormando Vaca Diez, president of the Congress on Friday in La Paz. Mesa was named by the Congress after accepting the resignation of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada.

## US Senate, House pass \$87b for Iraq

REUTERS, Washington

The US Senate and House of Representatives on Friday passed spending bills of roughly \$87 billion for operations in Iraq, after the Senate voted to shave President Bush's \$20 billion request to rebuild the country and convert half of the aid to loans.

Reflecting unease over Bush's Iraq policies, senators voted to cut \$1.86 billion from his \$20.3 billion request for Iraq's rebuilding. In a setback for Bush, they also narrowly voted to make half of the reconstruction money a loan.

Senators then passed the emergency spending bill for military operations and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan on an 87-12 vote.

The House earlier in the day passed its version of the bill 303-125, after narrowly rejecting a loan proposal similar to the Senate's.



PHOTO: AFP  
Leftist protesters burn US President George W. Bush and Philippine President Gloria Arroyo effigy in Manila yesterday as the US leader's convoy passes. Almost a hundred US flags were burned by the rallyists to show their opposition to the visit of US president.

## Protests mark brief Bush trip to Manila

AFP, Manila

Several thousand anti-US protesters demonstrated in the Philippines' capital and burned US flags while five leftist legislators walked out yesterday as US President George W. Bush gave a speech before a joint session of Congress.

After burning the flags, about 7,000 protesters tried to march on the Philippines legislature, where Bush delivered his address outlining Washington's commitment of more military aid to help Manila fight terrorism.

Five House of Representatives members from fringe parties walked out as Bush began his speech. One of the five, J. Virgilio Bautista, unfurled an anti-war banner as he left his seat but marshals seized it from him.

"It did not create any disturbance. It was completely ignored by the whole House," House Speaker Jose de Venecia told reporters later.

A small number of Filipino legislators who opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq also wore pins that read "Legislators against War," but stayed to listen to the speech.

Several kilometers away, riot police blocked protesters as they tried to march on the Philippines legislature. The protesters chanted anti-US slogans and burned American flags and effigies of both Bush and Philippine President Gloria Arroyo, branding them "terrorists."

There were no reports of any violence, however, as thousands of policemen backed by troops barricaded the highway leading to the building. Bush's motorcade later used the same avenue.

Earlier Saturday, more than a dozen student protesters who tried to enter a park where Bush was laying a wreath at a monument to national hero Jose Rizal were forcibly dispersed.

## ROK to send more troops to Iraq

AP, Seoul

South Korea said yesterday it would send additional troops to help US forces rebuild and stabilise Iraq.

"The government will decide on the number, characteristics and timing of the dispatch after considering the US request and public opinion," said Yoon Tae-young, a spokesman for South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun.

Yoon did not clarify whether the unidentified number of new troops will be combat or non-combat forces. South Korea has sent 675 non-combat troops to Iraq earlier this year.

The government needs parliamentary approval to send troops abroad.

"We will clarify our position after collecting opinion from inside and outside the party," the main opposition Grand National Party said in a statement. The party has 149 seats in the 272-member National Assembly.

## Advani asks Pakistan to hand over 20 terrorists to open new chapter

PTI, New Delhi

Asking Islamabad to stop supporting and sponsoring terrorism before the world treats it as a pariah, Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani on Saturday said a "new chapter" in Indo-Pak relations could be opened if the neighbouring country hands over 20 terrorists wanted by India.

He said the terrorist attacks like that on the residence of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in Srinagar on Friday would not affect the Government's resolve to achieve victory over terrorism.

"A new chapter can be opened in Indo-Pak relations if Islamabad hands over Dawood Ibrahim and other 19 terrorists whose list has been given to Pakistan last year," Advani said while inaugurating the silver jubilee celebrations of Antar-

Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad in New Delhi.

Pointing out that the US Government had declared Dawood as a "global terrorist", he said the External Affairs Ministry had again asked Pakistan to comply with India's demand of handing over the 20 terrorists.

"Pakistan should think. It should either shun the path (of sponsoring terrorism) or the way the world is reacting, it would be treated as a pariah," he said, adding, "Some countries are saying it, some others are not saying, yet they feel it can be useful to them."

"We have to achieve victory over terrorism on our own strength but we want to make the world understand that no country is immune to the threat," he said.

## French FM hits out at US policy of regime change

AFP, London

The United States' pursuit of regime change is not a viable policy, while unilateralism would make the world more unstable, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said in an interview published yesterday.

De Villepin also said that despite Thursday's UN Security Council resolution authorizing a multinational force in Iraq, "the conditions for real progress on the reconstruction of Iraq are not complied with today."

Interviewed in Britain's left-of-centre Guardian daily, the foreign minister said that any military action against Iran over its alleged nuclear weapons programme would be "absolutely ridiculous".

On Iraq, he said: "Reconstruc-

tion has to have a partner, you have to have real sovereignty in Iraq if you want to have the Iraqi people working with you."

De Villepin declined to commit France to providing reconstruction assistance at next week's donors' conference in Madrid.

On the subject of US foreign policy, de Villepin said: "Regime change cannot be a policy on its own in today's world. You have to be respectful of sovereignty."

"Of course, there are very difficult situations when human rights are concerned... we have known that in Kosovo."

"So in rare situations, we have to address these kinds of problems by military means. But you have to have the support of the international community."

He added: "If there is one country that imagines it can solve this matter alone, we are going to see more vengeance, more difficulties, more problems, and the world is going to be more unstable."

While emphasising France's desire to patch up relations with the US and to work with it on a range of international issues, the foreign minister also questioned Israel's US-backed security policies.

"I think that Israeli policy during the past months and years shows clearly that if you are going to imagine that only through security you are going to find solutions, you are mistaken."

He added: "We think that using force, on the contrary, is going to... give new reasons to some people to oppose us."

## Vajpayee says 'no' to Kashmir self-rule

### Stand off ends as holed up militants killed

PTI, Panipat

Prime Minister AB Vajpayee on Friday rejected the demand for right to self-determination in Jammu and Kashmir, questioning how anybody capturing power through the gun could indulge in such talks.

"There has been talk in Kuala Lumpur of right to self-determination (in Jammu and Kashmir). Does Pakistan have democracy? Does it have an elected government?"

"Those who rule at gunpoint are talking of right to self-determination. It is not right," he said addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone of Panipat refinery expansion project here.

Vajpayee said the parts of Jammu and Kashmir occupied by Pakistan belong to India and the issue relating to their retrieval will be taken up whenever there is talk on the state.

"We do not want anybody's land but we will not part with even an inch of ours," he asserted.

He said that unlike Musharraf, he was "an elected Prime Minister and will remain so till people wish."

ANS adds from Srinagar:

Paramilitary commandos yesterday shot dead two militants who were holed up inside a shopping complex in Srinagar after trying to attack Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's residence on Friday.

"The operation has ended. We killed the two terrorists who were inside the complex," a senior Border Security Force (BSF) official told IANS at the spot.

One of the terrorists was killed early on Saturday, prompting the other to launch a continuous round of automatic fire before he was shot dead, the officer said.

Hundreds of paramilitary troopers and police went inside the Dr Ali Jan complex after the daylong gunbattle ended.

"We are searching for weapons and explosives. The search operation may take some time," the BSF official said.

Windowpanes of the building were smashed and minor damage was caused to offices and shops located inside in the >

Three BSF troopers were injured on early Saturday and have been taken to hospital.

"We spent a sleepless night, and the whole night we heard sounds of deafening explosions and gun fire," said an employee of a hotel nearby.

Senior police officers have reached the spot. However, no movement is being allowed in the area. Shops, business establishments, Government offices, schools and colleges in the civil line area are closed.

In the gunbattle that began on Friday morning, two personnel of the BSF were killed while 15, including four officers of the paramilitary and police, were injured. Two photo-journalists were also wounded.

Two suicide terrorists on Friday attacked paramilitary troopers manning a gate at the heavily guarded official residence of Mufti.

After failing to enter the Chief Minister's residence, the attackers moved into the adjoining shopping complex.

Mufti said, "Elements that do not digest peaceful conditions in Jammu and Kashmir are engineering incidents of violence to derail the peace process in the state."

## Chicago office building fire kills 6

AP, Chicago

Some people trapped in a burning high-rise building in Chicago's Loop business district frantically dialed 911 for help in escaping the smoke-filled staircases and hallways, officials said. The fire killed six and injured 10, some critically.

The dead were among 13 victims overcome by smoke who were not found until after the fire was brought under control Friday evening and firefighters started searching the building floor by floor, authorities said.

"I was scared for my life. I still am," said Marianne Branch, who works in the public defender's office on the 17th floor and made her way down a smoky stairwell with colleagues.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire, but workers on the 12th floor said they first saw smoke coming from a storage room.

In addition to the public defender's office, the building houses county prosecutors, the secretary of state's office and other local and state government agencies.

The 5 p.m fire snarled rush-hour traffic in the Loop and forced subway commuters to bypass underground tunnels. Commuters could see flames and smoke pouring from the building's 12th-story windows.



PHOTO: AFP  
Russian Soyuz TMA-3 rocket blasts off carrying US astronaut Mike Foale, Spanish cosmonaut Pedro Duque and Russian cosmonaut Alexander Kareli at Baikonur cosmodrom in Kazakhstan yesterday. US astronaut Mike Foale, Spanish cosmonaut Pedro Duque and Russian cosmonaut Alexander Kareli will replace an international space crew of the International Space Station (ISS).