

# Chandrika sets Dec 15 deadline to end crisis

## People's Alliance ready to forget acrimony

AP, AFP, Colombo

President Chandrika Kumaratunga announced yesterday that she was setting a December 15 deadline to resolve a standoff with Prime Minister Wickremesinghe that threatens efforts to end the country's 20-year civil war.

Kumaratunga moved earlier this month to curtail Wickremesinghe's power, taking control of three top ministries and suspending Parliament after accusing the premier of granting too many concessions to the Tamil Tiger rebels.

Friday's announcement comes a day after Wickremesinghe's government said it was willing to give Kumaratunga a broader role in the negotiations to find a

lasting resolution to the civil war. The two leaders so far have held two meetings to resolve their dispute.

"The President says she is willing to forget the past and start anew, but she wants the talks to find a solution by December 15," Kumaratunga's spokesman, Sarath Amunugama, said.

Amunugama declined to say what steps Kumaratunga would take if a resolution to the crisis is not reached by the deadline.

Wickremesinghe runs the day-to-day affairs of government, but Kumaratunga controls the military and has the power to sack the government and call new elections.

Norwegian-mediated talks to end the civil war have been suspended since

April, and the current political turmoil has stalled efforts to coax the rebels back to the bargaining table.

The Norwegians have said they would stay on the sidelines until Kumaratunga and Wickremesinghe resolve their differences.

AFP adds: The Sri Lankan president's party said Friday it was ready to end its power struggle with the prime minister and attempt a fresh deal on governing together within three weeks.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's spokesman Sarath Amunugama said the People's Alliance was prepared to forget the acrimony with the premier, which had led Norway to suspend efforts to broker an end to the island's ethnic war.

"What has happened in the past has happened," Amunugama told reporters here. "If we are going to cohabit, we have to forget the past."

He said a panel appointed by the two squabbling leaders earlier this week to work out a fresh cohabitation arrangement was expected to finalise a report by December 15.

The remarks came a day after Prime Minister Ranil Wickre-mesinghe's government offered its own olive branch to Kumaratunga.

Government spokesman G.L. Peiris said the prime minister was prepared to forget his differences with the president so that the pair could together mend the economy and put the peace process back on track.



PHOTO: AFP  
US soldiers stand in front of an overturned donkey cart in which a makeshift rocket launcher was used to attack the Palestine and the Sheraton hotels early yesterday in Baghdad. Two people were wounded in the attack where main media and international companies are based. In the center is the battery used to detonate the launching system.



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistani Shiite Muslim activists stand around a burning effigy of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon during a demonstration to mark the "Jerusalem Day" in Islamabad yesterday. More than two hundred activists including children took part in the demonstration shouting slogans against US and Israel.

### Musharraf says

# Pakistan at risk of being bombed, sanctioned

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan risks being bombed and sanctioned unless it eradicates "senseless" religious extremism, President Pervez Musharraf warned in comments reported yesterday.

Pakistan will suffer from sanctions and "they may even start bombing our tribal areas," General Musharraf told local newspaper editors late Thursday, according to the Dawn daily.

He did not specify who would drop bombs on Pakistani territory but he was understood to be referring to the United States, whose troops are combating the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in their two-year hunt for al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters and al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden.

"If we don't control the tribal areas and they start bombing your tribal areas, what will we do? Let us not be

under any illusion," the Nation newspaper quoted Musharraf saying.

Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters are believed to be using bases in Pakistani tribal areas along the porous border to orchestrate a bloody guerrilla campaign against aid workers and troops inside Afghanistan. Eighteen of them were captured and eight killed by Pakistani troops near the Afghan border on October 2.

Musharraf issued the warning in the midst of an intensified crackdown on Islamic extremists, targeting already-outlawed groups which had reemerged under new names.

Authorities are also swooping on suspected Taliban sympathisers among illegal Afghan immigrants in the south-west border province Baluchistan.

Since Saturday Musharraf has banned six radical groups and placed

one under surveillance, accusing them of promoting extremism and religious intolerance.

Police in Baluchistan have arrested 500 Afghan illegal immigrants and begun deporting them.

Musharraf said the world had started suspecting that he and the government were supporting extremists and terrorists.

Bombs would be dropped and sanctions slapped on Pakistan "if this perception is not removed urgently," Dawn quoted him saying.

"This is one area which will drown us."

Scores of radical Islamic extremist groups sprouted in Pakistan in the wake of the 1979-1989 war to oust Soviet invaders from neighbouring Afghanistan and since the start of a guerrilla insurgency in disputed Kashmir against Indian forces in 1989.

## UN may set up regional office on Iraq in Jordan

AP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Thursday the United Nations could establish a regional office in Jordan or Cyprus to focus on activities in Iraq, including helping the country through elections to self-government.

He said Baghdad is still too insecure for UN staff to return, but the United Nations is examining how it might help the Iraqi Governing Council from outside the country, with workers making regular visits into Iraq.

"There would be constant back and forth and direct consultations with some people in Iraq this is what we have in mind," Annan said. "There are things that we could do even from outside, offering advice, steering things right and going in and out."



PHOTO: AFP  
Former US President Bill Clinton (C) meets with students of the Ram Rati Gupta Women's Polytechnic School of Rampur, Uttar Pradesh state, during a breakfast meeting in New Delhi yesterday. Clinton is in India on a three-day visit.

## UN slates Turkey attacks

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council unanimously passed a resolution on Thursday condemning the attacks on British targets in Turkey as well as the bombing of two Istanbul synagogues earlier in the week.

The measure, formally presented by Chile, was drafted and adopted just hours after 27 people were killed and more than 450 wounded in attacks on the British consulate and London-based bank HSBC in Istanbul.

The council said it "expresses its reinforced determination to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the charter of the United Nations."

It calls on all nations to "cooperate in efforts to find and bring to justice the perpetrators, organisers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks" and reaffirms the council's position to fight security threats "by all means."

# Europe now front line in terror war: Newspapers

AFP, Paris

Newspapers in several countries expressed fears yesterday that Europe had become a front line in a global war on terrorism, a day after 27 people died and more than 450 were injured in two massive suicide bombings on British targets in Turkey.

"The front has widened. The attacks in Istanbul target Europe," the left-leaning French daily Liberation said.

"Bin Laden's time bombs will one day or another be launched against Berlin or Paris, as they have against New York or Istanbul," it added.

Several editorialists said Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network must not be allowed to drive Turkey -- the only Muslim member of NATO and a candidate for membership of the European Union -- out of the Western camp.

"The terrorists wanted to create chaos in a Muslim country that has one foot in the West," the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter said.

"Now is the time to led Turkey moral support," said the conservative German daily Die Welt.

"Turkey is on our side, the right side, in this global war waged by murderous 'religious fighters'. It must sense that, and we must show it."

Germany's largest-selling tabloid, Bild, spoke to the country's two million Turkish immigrants, in a front-page message in Turkish saying: "Dear Turkish fellow citizens, we share your grief."

Russia's opposition daily Kommersant said "Turkey is a window on the West in the Muslim world (...)" This does not suit the Islamists who consider it their country."

The headline in Moscow's pro-government Vremya Novostei -- "Today Turkey, tomorrow everywhere" -- echoed the fear that the front in the terror war had broadened, but it laid the blame partly on the policies of the United States.

"The war in Iraq only made the

situation worse," it said, a view shared by the centre-right Spanish daily El Mundo.

US President George W. Bush "is wrong to fight terrorism with the American military machine," it said. "Bush's diagnosis is correct, but his remedy makes the sickness worse."

Another Spanish paper, the left-of-centre El Pais, agreed that US military actions had failed to make the world safer.

"The most disturbing conclusion from this new bloodbath is that al-Qaeda can act at will," it said.

The conservative French daily Le Figaro concurred, saying: "The enemy today seems to have gained the upper hand."

The top-selling Greek daily pro-government Ta Nea said the bombings in Istanbul came as a particular warning to Athens, which is to host next year's Olympic Games.

## Palestinian factions agree to truce talks

AP, Jerusalem

A ceasefire to stop three years of Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed moved a step closer when all Palestinian factions agreed to attend truce talks in Cairo, Palestinian officials said.

A truce would be a vital first step toward unfreezing talks on the US-backed "road map" peace plan that envisions a Palestinian state in 2005.

But the situation remains fragile, and repeated ceasefire deals brokered in the past three years, including by Egypt, have collapsed.

Egyptian mediators met with representatives of 13 Palestinian factions in Gaza on Wednesday and Thursday.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia said agreement was reached for a week of truce talks in Cairo, beginning Dec. 2.

Qureia wants the militant groups, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to agree to halt attacks. He would then ask Israel to join a truce, an offer Israel might find hard to reject despite misgivings.

# Al-Qaeda franchising its brand of terror around the world

AFP, Washington

Decimated and financially emasculated, al-Qaeda has franchised its brand of synchronised, devastating terror to smaller, regional groups around the world, posing a major challenge to counterterrorism forces, The Washington Post said yesterday.

With the shared experience of the al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, thousands of terrorists are now communicating via the Internet, passing on bomb and chemical-making techniques, US, European and Arab intelligence analysts and experts told the daily.

Investigators, for example, have found the same type of fuse being used in different continents, the sources said.

Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, with most of its leadership killed and its financial structure under increased scrutiny, has turned to inspiring and instigating attacks such as the recent bombings in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Chechnya and Iraq, the experts

said.

"The threat has moved beyond al-Qaeda," said Rohan Gunaratna, a terrorism expert at the Singapore-based Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies. "While al-Qaeda was the instigator of recent attacks, very few have actually been carried out by al-Qaeda."

The smaller, regional groups that have fallen under al-Qaeda's influence include Islamic Great East Raiders Front, which claimed Thursday's bombings in Istanbul, Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and other obscure groups in Pakistan, Morocco the Philippines and Chechnya, the daily said.

Around 20,000 people from 47 countries were trained and indoctrinated in al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan Gunaratna described as "a terrorist Disneyland, where you could meet anyone from any Islamic group."

The al-Qaeda inspired terrorist groups have also caused the financial structure of terrorism to shift, officials

said.

"There is no pool of money now that everyone can draw on," said a senior US official. "There is no longer a fairly knowable group of large donors or entities. Now, groups in Indonesia raise money there. Groups in Malaysia raise money there. There are many more targets, and much harder to find."

Many of the local groups resort to petty crime, drug trafficking and extortion to finance their operations, officials said.

Paul Pillar, a Central Intelligence Agency analyst and terror expert said the franchising of al-Qaeda was partly the result of US success in killing off the terrorist group's leadership and disrupting its sources of finance.

One of bin Laden's major contributions, he added, was "putting the anti-American perspective at the forefront."

"It has been so successful that it has thoroughly affected even these groups that are more regionally focused... Anti-Americanism sells, particularly in the Middle East."

## 'Turkey blasts linked to SE Asian attacks'

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

There is a clear link between the bombings in Turkey and attacks in Southeast Asia, with al-Qaeda using local groups as proxies in its global network of terror, analysts said yesterday.

The relationship al-Qaeda has with the Turkish Islamists who are believed to have carried out the Istanbul attacks "is exactly the same" as Osama bin Laden's group has with the regional Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna told AFP. Twenty-seven people died in bombings of the British consulate and the HSBC bank in Istanbul on Thursday, and Britain's Foreign Secretary Jack Straw blamed "terrorists based on al-Qaeda and its associates".

JI has been accused of a string of bombings across Southeast Asia, including last year's Bali blasts in Indonesia which killed 202 people -- all apparently carried out by local militants with links to al-Qaeda.

Gunaratna, an associate professor at

the Singapore-based Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, said that despite recent arrests JI's contacts with al-Qaeda remained intact through its new operational commander, Zulkarnaen.

The Afghan-trained Indonesian, whose real name is Aris Sumarsono, took over after the capture in Thailand in August of Hambali, Asia's most wanted man, Gunaratna told AFP.

Like Hambali, "he is a man who is very close to al-Qaeda."

Clive Williams, director of terrorism studies at the Australian National University, said it appeared likely that there would be "more attacks by local groups on behalf of al-Qaeda, which is to some extent constrained."

"The variety of soft targets is greater than it was, in the sense that targetting a bank as in Istanbul was I think a first."

Williams said this indicated a need for Western-linked businesses which in the past had not seen themselves as targets to now think more seriously about their security.

## Sharp increase in prosecutions of Arabs, Muslims in US city

AFP, Detroit

Prosecutions of Arab and Muslim Americans in a Midwestern city that is home to a large concentration of American Arabs have shot up since the September 11 attacks, the Detroit News reported Thursday in Michigan.

The number of plaintiffs with Arab or Muslim names charged in the heavily-Arab city of Dearborn, Michigan, has jumped 9.3 percent in the two years since the attacks on the United States.

At the same time, charges against people without Arab or Muslim names dropped 6.7 percent, according to an analysis of 100,000 district court records by the daily.

City officials insist any increase in the number of prosecutions stem from stricter enforcement of city ordinances, rather than any racial bias.

"In our city, we apply the laws equally and fairly," said mayor Michael Guido in a statement.

# 'Pakistan will never accept LoC as int'l border with India'

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan will never accept the Line of Control (LoC) as the International Border with India, the country's Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has said.

"Pakistan is ready to hold talks with India on all issues, including Kashmir, but it will not accept the Line of Control as a border," the Daily Times quoted Ahmed as saying in an interview with a local TV channel.

Reiterating Islamabad's policy of third party mediation on the Kashmir issue, he called on international powers to help solve the issue.

He also stressed on the participation of Kashmiris in talks over Kashmir. In talks between Pakistan and India, Kashmiris should be involved," he said.

Praising Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's stance vis-a-vis

Pakistan, the minister said: "Vajpayee is the only leader in India who can solve all outstanding issues with Pakistan."

Asserting that the 12 points proposed by New Delhi were being considered by Pakistan, Rashid said: "More will depend on the upcoming South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit as far as relations between Pakistan and India are concerned."

AFP adds: A teenaged girl and a man were killed and a woman injured when Indian and Pakistani troops traded fire for several hours over their de facto border in Kashmir, police said Friday.

Two Indian army barracks were damaged but no soldiers were hurt during the shelling overnight in the Gurez sector of Indian Kashmir's north-western Baramulla district, a police spokesman said.