

Lanka navy, air force sink LTTE boats

Troops kill 7 civilians in Jaffna

REUTERS, AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's navy and air force sank two Tamil Tiger rebel boats in battle yesterday, officials said, further straining a battered 2002 ceasefire and possibly putting peace talks further out of reach.

secretariat Palitha Kohona told Reuters. "The people who got out of the second boat are now on land, and are being engaged by ground forces."

Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna peninsula after a grenade attack wounded three soldiers in the same area, a pro-rebel website reported Friday.

explosives. However military sources said the soldiers fired an RPG into the taxis.

Hostile war critics confront Rumsfeld

AP, Atlanta

Already under fire from some retired military brass who want him to resign, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was greeted at a speech in Atlanta by unusually hostile anti-war protesters.



Iranian President Mamoud Ahmadinejad (L) shakes hands with Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz prior to a meeting in Baku Thursday. The two leaders, who are in Baku to attend the 9th session of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) Summit, discussed the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project and Iran's nuclear issue during the meeting.

3 die in Indian courtroom shootout

AFP, New Delhi

A suspected gangster wanted for 18 cases of murder and looting was among three people killed in a courtroom, police said yesterday.

Army restores peace in Vadodara

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Curfew has been temporarily lifted for women and children in Vadodara. Although no incidents of fresh violence have been reported but tension still hangs in the air.

IAEA still central to solving Iran crisis

Says Russian FM

AFP, Moscow

The international community should continue to focus on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday.

don't support the opposite conclusion," he said. "All our proposals today are aimed at clarifying this question," Lavrov said.

New Israeli PM looks to US for backing to redraw borders

AFP, Jerusalem

Newly installed Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert set his sights Friday on a visit to Washington to win US support for his plan to redraw Israel's borders and leave parts of the West Bank.

Palstinians, saying no progress in the stalled Middle East process is possible with radical Islamists Hamas in government.



Rahul Gandhi, son of Sonia Gandhi, president of the Congress Party and Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, talks with supporters yesterday during election campaign for the by-polls scheduled to take place in Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly constituency on May 8.

Maoists, Nepali govt edge towards peace talks

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's new government took a tentative step towards peace with the Maoist rebels yesterday after the militants agreed to take part in talks to end their decade-old insurgency.

Parliament held its fifth sitting Friday since reopening last week and members discussed punishing those responsible for human rights abuses during the protests that left 17 people dead and hundreds more injured and jailed.

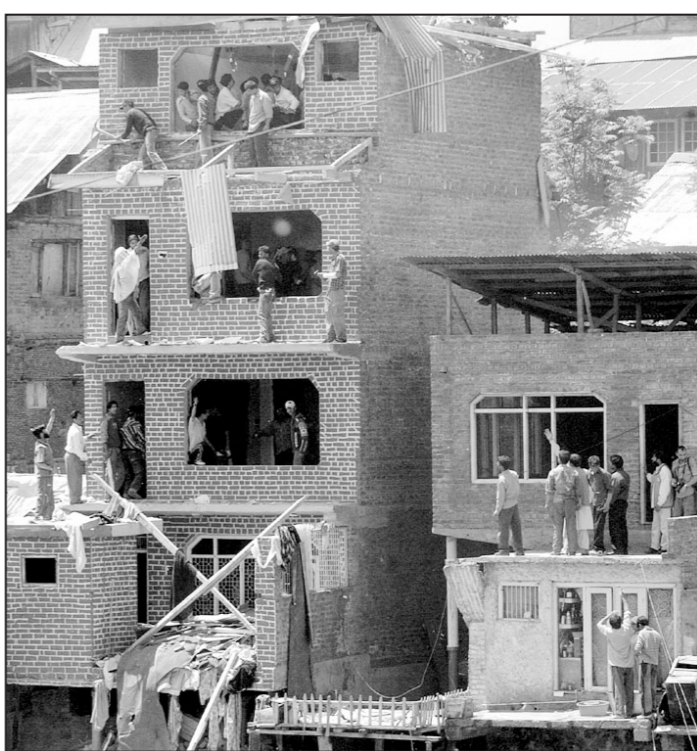
November, isolating King Gyanendra -- the world's sole Hindu monarch. On Wednesday, the newly reinstated government called a ceasefire, matching that called by the rebels last week, and urged the Maoists to enter peace talks.

Hurriyat wants militants to join peace talks

REUTERS, New Delhi

Kashmir's main separatist political alliance said on Friday it wanted to invite Islamist militants fighting in the disputed region to join new peace talks with New Delhi.

down arms. The militants are also opposed to any compromise over the territorial dispute. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the insurgency so far in the region, which is also at the root of nearly 60 years of enmity between nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan.



Kashmiris dismantle the house of an alleged pimp Sabeena in Srinagar yesterday. A day-long strike to force the government to reveal the names of people caught up in a sex scandal paralysed Kashmir. Police last month unearthed a prostitution racket allegedly involving more than 40 young women serving politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen in the state.

Kashmir closes to protest sex scandal

AFP, Srinagar

A strike and protests to force the government to reveal names of people caught up in a prostitution scandal paralysed the summer capital of Indian Kashmir yesterday and injured 20 people.

Video shows Zarqawi fumbling with rifle

AP, Baghdad

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is shown wearing American tennis shoes and unable to operate his automatic rifle in video released by the US military as part of a propaganda war aimed at undercutting the image of the terror leader.

leader first firing single shots from a US-made M-249 light machine gun. A frown creeps across al-Zarqawi's face as the weapon jams. He looks at it, confused, then summons another fighter.

Big Darfur rebel faction strikes peace deal

REUTERS, Abuja

The biggest of three rebel factions from Sudan's Darfur region accepted a peace deal with the government yesterday but two other factions rejected it, casting doubt on whether the agreement would be workable.

EU to aid Abbas in plan to avert PA collapse

REUTERS, Jerusalem

A European Commission proposal to "avert or delay" the Palestinian Authority's collapse calls for pooling donor funds and using President Mahmoud Abbas's office to funnel them to provide basic services, a Commission document shows.

that letting it go ahead would take pressure off Hamas to renounce violence, recognise Israel and abide by interim peace deals. But they said the Bush administration has agreed to back an expansion of Abbas's elite presidential guard. The EU would provide the funds for training and equipment.



An undated video grab released on the website of the US Department of Defence (DOD) Thursday shows al-Qaeda's Iraq frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi with a masked comrade (L) at an undisclosed location in Iraq.