

# Nepali Maoists slam govt as peace talks delayed

## Rebels demand referendum on monarchy

REUTERS, AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's Maoist rebels accused the multi-party interim government on Thursday of reneging on promises and setting new conditions in a bid to hold on to power as formal peace talks between them were further delayed.

Tourism Minister Pradip Gyanwali, a government negotiator, said that talks expected to resume on Friday had been put off until after the end of the Hindu festival of Dasain next week.

"Both sides have decided to hold the summit meeting between their leaders on Oct. 8," the two sides said in a joint statement. "They have also agreed to take the ongoing talks

forward to an early conclusion."

The statement came after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala held an informal meeting with rebel chief Prachanda.

The negotiations aim to resolve differences between the two sides over disarming the rebels and the future of the monarchy before drafting a new constitution.

The differences have stalled the peace process in the troubled country and delayed the Maoists' entry into the interim government. Some political parties say the rebels must give up their arms before joining the administration.

The Maoists have rejected their demands and a top rebel leader accused the parties of delaying talks

to hold on to the power they won after weeks of street protests in April ended King Gyanendra's absolute rule.

"They don't want any progressive change. The government is dilly-dallying to continue in power," Baburam Bhattarai, number two to Prachanda, told Reuters earlier on Thursday.

"Monarchy should be suspended, the (state) army as well as the economy should be restructured. These are the key issues that need to be sorted out in the talks," he said.

Maoists on Wednesday demanded a referendum on the future of the monarchy in the Himalayan nation, as high-level peace talks slated for this week

looked increasingly unlikely.

"On the question of monarchy, it should be suspended and a referendum held. This is our bottom line," the rebel's second-in-command, Baburam Bhattarai, told AFP.

"The people's movement in April was directed against the monarchy," he said of the mass protests that forced Nepal's King Gyanendra to end 14-months of direct rule.

The monarchy, Bhattarai asserted, "is one of the main stumbling blocks in this peace process."

Koirala and Prachanda held their first formal talks in June and the two sides agreed that the Maoists should join an interim cabinet that is to oversee elections to a new assembly.



Indian villagers use nets to catch fish as they stand on a flooded road in the village of Udaynarayanpur, some 60 km south-west of Kolkata yesterday. At least 19 people have died in torrential rains pounding eastern India for the fifth straight day.

## Ulfa envoys pull out of peace process

REUTERS, Guwahati

Representatives of the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) said yesterday they had pulled out of a year-old peace process with the government, accusing New Delhi of being insincere.

The decision came after New Delhi ended a truce with the rebels of Ulfa in Assam on Sunday and resumed operations against them.

The government said its move was prompted by the killing of two people, including a policeman.

The representatives were part of a Peoples Consultative Group (PCG) set up to mediate between the rebels and the government to try and end a nearly three-decade conflict in the state, which has killed about 15,000 people.

But progress was slow due to demands by both sides, which the other was not willing to concede.

# India to double troops along Bhutan border

AFP, New Delhi

India will more than double troops guarding its border with Bhutan to prevent rebels setting up bases in the tiny kingdom to launch deadly attacks across the border, an official said Wednesday.

The announcement came days after India and a major separatist group in the tea-and-timber rich state of Assam, which borders Bhutan, ended a six-week ceasefire.

Ten battalions comprising 10,000 troops will patrol the 380-kilometre (240-mile) border with Bhutan by year's end and another 2,000 troops in 2007, according to a federal home ministry official who declined to be named.

India already has around 5,000 troops posted along its remote northeastern border with Bhutan.

"The number of border posts is also being increased from 32 to 135 to make the security presence visible in the area," the official said.

Intelligence reports showed separatist guerrillas from Assam planned to set up new bases in the mainly Buddhist nation, the official said.

"We need to be vigilant as army operations are now on in Assam against Ulfa and the rebels might once again try to take shelter in Bhutan by year's end and another security," the official said.

In 2003, the tiny Bhutanese military destroyed rebel camps

including those of Assam's United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa), which had staged hit-and-run attacks on Indian targets from across the border.

The Buddhist nation has assured New Delhi that it will not give refuge to rebels fleeing India's northeast, a region racked by separatist insurgencies. It says it now has no Indian militants camps on its soil.

At least 30 rebel armies operating in northeast India use bases in neighbouring Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Their demands range from autonomy to secession in conflicts that have killed more than 50,000 since India gained independence from Britain in 1947.

## Pak easy visa policy excludes Indians

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan will be issuing visas on arrival to visitors from more than 20 countries, but not from neighbouring India, Tourism Ministry officials said yesterday, clarifying a report by the state-run news agency a day earlier.

Associated Press of Pakistan had quoted Tourism Minister Nilofar Bakhtiar as saying that Indian tourists would also be able to collect visas on arrival at Pakistani airports, but her ministry moved quickly to dismiss any notion that a thaw in relations between South Asia's nuclear rivals had gone so far.

A statement from the Tourism Ministry said the minister was "misquoted" and the only concession to Indian tourists and pilgrims would be an increase in the duration of their visas.

# Lankan military, rebels violate truce: Monitors

## Both sides accused of hampering monitoring work

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military and the Tamil Tigers have grossly violated a 2002 ceasefire in the past two months, Nordic truce monitors said yesterday, accusing both sides of hampering their work.

The unarmed Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) said the military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had blocked access to areas to investigate rights abuses — in itself a serious violation of the terms of the truce.

The monitors said in a ruling that the military had violated the ceasefire since late July when it captured rebel territory on the

southern lip of the strategic north-eastern harbour of Trincomalee.

The rebels had similarly violated the truce when they mounted offensive operations against the military in the northern Jaffna peninsula — which is still besieged by Tiger artillery fire.

"Throughout the period (July 22-Sept 25), both parties have responded to the other party's actions in ways that are not conducive with the ceasefire agreement," Chief monitor Major General Lars Johan Solberg said in the ruling.

"As a result of these actions, over 200 civilians have been killed and several thousand are internally displaced, creating a serious

humanitarian crisis in the eastern and northern part of Sri Lanka."

The ruling also accuses both sides of a string of other serious violations, such as restricting the movement of civilians.

Solberg told Reuters this week he was shocked and disappointed at the behaviour of both the rebels and the government.

The monitors have previously accused the security forces of being responsible for extrajudicial killings and the execution-style killings of 17 local staff of international aid organisation Action Contre La Faim in the east in August.

## Afghan offensive killed 300 rebels

Says coalition forces

AFP, Kabul

Around 300 insurgents have been killed in a US-led coalition and Afghan military operation that has been under way along the border with Pakistan for weeks, the coalition said yesterday.

About 100 other insurgents have been wounded in Operation Mountain Fury, which involves about 7,000 Afghan and coalition troops and covers five provinces, most of them on the border, a spokesman told reporters.

The operation started weeks ago but its military phase kicked off in mid-September.

"Since Operation Mountain Fury has commenced, we had more than 300 enemy killed in action, possibly about 100 wounded," Lieutenant Colonel John Paradis said, without specifying the time period to which he was referring.



Family members of the victims of a helicopter crash mourn during a condolence meeting organised by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Kathmandu yesterday.

# Pakistan doesn't support terrorism, says Musharraf Laden in Afghanistan

AFP, London

President Pervez Musharraf denied allegations made in a British military policy paper that Pakistan had indirectly supported terrorism, and said he would bring up the matter in discussions with Prime Minister Tony Blair in London yesterday.

"Absolutely, 200 percent, I reject it," Musharraf told the BBC in an interview from the United States.

The British broadcaster cited the policy paper written by an unnamed senior official in the British defence ministry as charging that Pakistan indirectly supported terrorism.

"Indirectly, Pakistan, through the ISI, has been supporting terrorism and extremism, whether in London on 7/7 (the July 7, 2005 bombings on London's transport network) or in Afghanistan or Iraq," the report reads.

The policy paper proposes using military links between British and Pakistani armed forces to persuade Musharraf to step down as leader of the country, accept free elections, withdraw the army from civilian life and dismantle Pakistan's intelligence service, the ISI.

Pakistan's military ruler responded angrily to the suggestions, saying: "I would like to tell this

Ministry of Defence spokesman to say the Ministry of Defence maybe should be dismantled before the ISI is dismantled."

He said the ISI was a "disciplined force" which "won the Cold War for the world", adding: "We don't like anybody advising us to dismantle ISI, least of all the (British) Ministry of Defence."

The report was described as being written by a senior military official linked to Britain's foreign intelligence service MI6, and part of a fact-finding mission to Pakistan in June.

"I take exception seriously, and I would like to talk about it Prime Minister Tony Blair when I meet him..."

The two leaders are to meet after Musharraf arrives in London on Thursday, Blair's office said.

A spokeswoman for the British defence ministry said the paper "in no way represent the views of either the MoD or the government."

She said the author of the report "suspects that (it has) been released ... precisely in the hope that (it) would cause damage to our relations with Pakistan."

"Pakistan is a key ally in our efforts to combat international terrorism and her security forces have made considerable sacrifices in tackling al-Qaeda and the Taliban."