

# Nepali PM asks Maoists to respect peace deal

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's prime minister yesterday appealed to Maoist rebels to respect a new historic peace deal and create a "climate without fear" in the impoverished Himalayan nation.

Premier Girija Prasad Koirala made the call after rebels announced Wednesday their decade-long armed struggle was over, and they planned to join an interim government as well as take seats in parliament with

Nepal's ruling parties.

"Despite my deteriorating health condition I took a political gamble in bringing the Maoists into the political mainstream," 85-year-old Koirala said.

"With this historic agreement I have been successful," said Koirala, who delivered his 10-minute address to parliament sitting down and had trouble catching his breath.

"I urge the Maoists to respect the letter and spirit of the agreement. I urge the Maoists to create



a climate without fear," said Koirala who played a key role in peace talks that led to the agreement.

The rebels have agreed to lock up their weapons under UN supervision, dismantle the governing structures they have set up in the large swathes of Nepal they already control and join a multi-party government by December 1.

"We'll be organising celebration rallies all over the country," the Maoist leader Prachanda told reporters.

## India to test longer range ballistic missile in 2007

AFP, new delhi

India's longest-range ballistic missile, which proved to be a dud after a test-flight in July, will be re-tested next year, the country's chief military scientist announced yesterday.

M Natarajan, head of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), said the 3,500-kilometre range (2,710-mile) Agni-III (Fire) missile would not be scrapped because of the flop.

"We are going ahead. We will conduct the re-trial of Agni-III next year," Natarajan told reporters in the southern Indian city of Chennai.



PHOTO: AFP  
Sri Lankan Tamil members of the Parliament and their supporters shout slogans with holding placards in front of the United Nations office in Colombo yesterday as they protest against the artillery attack in the eastern district of Batticaloa on Wednesday by the government forces, killing at least 65 civilians.

# 34 Taliban killed in Afghan clashes

AFP, Kandahar

Clashes between insurgents and Nato-led and Afghan troops left 34 Taliban and three policemen dead in the latest violence in Afghanistan, officials have said.

Eight policemen, eight Taliban and three civilians were also wounded during the fighting in volatile southern provinces of Kandahar, Zabul and southeastern Khost which erupted overnight and continued early Thursday, police said.

Twenty-two Taliban were killed during a joint operation by Afghan army, police and Nato forces late Wednesday in the Pashmole area of Zahri district in Kandahar province, district police chief Ghulam Rasoul Aka told AFP.

Most of the casualties occurred

as a result of close Nato air support in the operation, Aka said.

Fighting erupted again early Thursday in Pashmole when insurgents attacked a police vehicle, prompting a gunbattle which left six Taliban dead, Aka said.

The police chief said four militants and three civilians were also wounded in the clash.

In neighbouring Zabul province, Taliban fighters ambushed a police patrol in Shahjoy district late Wednesday, killing two policemen and wounding another five.

"Two police were martyred and five were wounded in a Taliban ambush in Shahjoy district last night," provincial police chief Nur Mohammad Pakteen told AFP.

## Delhi, rebels set for talks on troubled Assam

AFP, Guwahati

Indian officials would meet next week with representatives of a separatist group blamed for twin blasts that killed 15 people in the restive northeastern state of Assam, a mediator said yesterday.

Representatives from the banned United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulf) withdrew from talks with the government after New Delhi called off a six-week ceasefire at the end of September, citing a surge in rebel attacks.

But spiralling separatist violence that came to a head Sunday with simultaneous bombings in Assam's main city, Guwahati, that left more than 40 injured saw rebel negotiators request a meeting.

# India hopeful about Indo-US nuke deal

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

As the Democrats took control of the US House of Representatives and Senate, a debate is on here how it would have an impact on the dynamics of burgeoning relations between Washington and New Delhi and more specifically the fate of Indo-US nuclear deal.

Sources and analysts here believe since the US policy towards India, a rising economic power in Asia, enjoys bipartisan support in the Capitol Hill and Democrats are traditionally favourable towards India and the nuclear deal in the altered legislative arithmetic in US would not affect India in any significant manner.

True, Democrats are known for their more protectionist mindset

when it comes to free trade, business process outsourcing and international nuclear commerce, but the fact remains that it was a Democratic President Bill Clinton who set off the transformation in Indo-US relations, they point out.

The Democrats are no less interested than the Bush administration in consolidating the gains of Indo-US ties and many Democrat lawmakers who had raised objections to India-specific clauses in the legislative bill to approve nuclear deal with India came round to support it, the sources said.

The huge bipartisan support the deal enjoys was reflected when the House of Representatives passed it with 369-68 votes and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved it by 16-2 votes. The 100-strong US Senate is yet to approve it.

# Heavy sea battle in Lanka

## Tamil refugees flee camps after killing

AFP, REUTERS, Colombo/Valachchenai

Tamil Tiger rebels staged a suicide attack against a naval patrol in northern Sri Lanka yesterday, crippling a gunboat that carried 10 to 15 sailors, military sources said.

The fate of the sailors was not immediately clear.

The defence ministry said a sea battle raged off the island's Jaffna peninsula but it did not immediately have details of casualties on either side.

Initial reports said that a rebel craft packed with explosives rammed at least

one gunboat.

The battle came as the government expressed "regret" over the killing of up to 65 civilians in an attack on suspected Tamil Tiger positions in the island's restive east on Wednesday.

Late last month, the navy said it had destroyed a rebel trawler transporting arms for the guerrillas off the northern coast.

The navy has often clashed with Tamil Tiger boats along the island's northeastern coast.

Meanwhile, thousands of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees fled their camp

in Tamil Tiger rebel territory in the island's east yesterday, survivors said, a day after army artillery pounded it and killed dozens of civilians.

Rights groups and diplomats voiced outrage at Wednesday's attack, which the military said was in retaliation for rebel artillery fire, while doctors tended infants and elderly patients among at least 125 civilians with multiple shrapnel wounds.

Many fear a new chapter in a two-decade war with Tamil Tiger rebels will escalate after peace talks collapsed in late October.

