

# Pakistan's stiff warning to India

## Islamabad calls for restraint

ISLAMABAD, May 26: Pakistan issued a stiff warning to India on Wednesday following air strikes by Indian jet fighters against infiltrators on its Kashmir territory, reports AP.

"We will take the necessary steps to defend ourselves," Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said shortly after receiving word that India launched air strikes Wednesday in the mountains that run like a seam along its border with Pakistan.

"We are retaliating when our positions are attacked and we will retaliate," he warned. However he didn't elaborate.

India accuses Pakistan of sending the infiltrators across the border.

Aziz dismissed the allegations.

"The area is an unmaned area... no one knows where they come from and who they are," he said.

He also said Pakistan was currently exercising restraint despite two weeks of cross border attacks from Indian soldiers on the border.

Kashmir has been the flash point of two previous wars between India and Pakistan and Aziz warned "we will take the necessary action when our positions are attacked."

Pakistani authorities have ordered residents along its side of the Kashmir border to dig trenches.

In Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir, there were reports in recent days of thousands of people fleeing the border area because of relentless shelling from Indian troops amassed on the border.

Pakistan says several civilians have been killed by Indian artillery attacks.

"We are assessing the situation," Aziz said "and we will reply later in the day."

According to newspaper reports Wednesday the Pakistan Air Force and army have been put on "high alert" along the Kashmir border with India.

Quoting an unnamed source, the independent English-language daily newspaper The News said a meeting Tuesday chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and senior military and government officials looked at the latest developments on the Indian side of the Kashmir border.

"We have taken up the whole scenario, its implications and how Pakistan should launch diplomatic offensive against India, along with operational preparedness to meet any challenge if

Indian forces launch a misadventure," The News quoted the participant as saying.

Aziz said Pakistan is trying to engage India in talks.

He said that Pakistan wants to hold high-level talks with India in Pakistan in the next three weeks. However there has been no immediate response from India.

"This escalation on the Line of Control (disputed border) is against the Lahore declaration," said Aziz referring to an agreement signed in February between Pakistani and Indian prime ministers.

Reuters says, Pakistan called for restraint on Wednesday after India launched air strikes in disputed Kashmir, but vowed to defend itself if its positions were attacked.

"There has to be restraint from both sides," Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz told reporters after India announced it had strafed positions held by infiltrators on Indian-controlled Kashmir, escalating tensions between the world's newest nuclear powers.

One Pakistan military official said there had been no reports of any bombs on the Pakistani side of the line of control.

"We don't know why they escalated the situation," Aziz told reporters. "If attack our positions, we will defend ourselves."

India and Pakistan routinely exchange fire across the 720-km (450-mile) ceasefire line dividing Kashmir.

The increased tension comes just two days before Pakistan marks the first anniversary of its successful nuclear tests and two weeks after the first anniversary of India's nuclear tests.

"It is an unwanted escalation of the situation because we have been trying to defuse the situation," Aziz said.

Aziz said the Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Islamabad was called to the Foreign Office on Monday and warned about escalating tension in Kashmir.

"We have already urged them to exercise restraint," Aziz said.

### US expresses concern

Meanwhile, the US envoy to New Delhi expressed concern over India's air strikes on "infiltrators" in Kashmir at a meeting with Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes today, a US embassy spokeswoman said.

"We have the opportunity to express our concern about what is happening in Kargil and our hope that the situation can be contained and brought to an end," the spokesman said.

According to newspaper reports Wednesday the Pakistan Air Force and army have been put on "high alert" along the Kashmir border with India.

Quoting an unnamed source, the independent English-language daily newspaper The News said a meeting Tuesday chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and senior military and government officials looked at the latest developments on the Indian side of the Kashmir border.

"We have taken up the whole scenario, its implications and how Pakistan should launch diplomatic offensive against India, along with operational preparedness to meet any challenge if



India's deputy chief of military operations, Mohan Bhagat (L), and Air Force assault unit chief Subhash Bhagat (R) brief reporters Wednesday in New Delhi after India for the first time conducted air strikes on some 400 Muslim militants in Kashmir. New Delhi claims the rebels, comprising Pakistani troops, have been pushed into the Himalayan zone to escalate violence. — AFP PHOTO

### UN calls for truce

Concerned about reports of heavy gunfire between Indian and Pakistani troops in Kashmir, Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged both sides to call a ceasefire, a UN spokesman said Tuesday. "These events again highlight the need for a political solution to the dispute over Kashmir," said spokesman Manoel da Almeida Silva.

"The secretary-general calls on the parties to exercise restraint and cease the fighting which has reportedly caused a number of casualties on the civilian population and displaced others from their villages in the area," the spokesman said.

## Milosevic villa hit again

BRUSSELS, May 26: NATO said Wednesday it had struck a villa belonging to President Slobodan Milosevic for the second night running in the heaviest night of bombing yet against Yugoslavia, reports AFP.

Boosted by improved weather conditions and the increasing weakness of Serb anti-air defences as a result of earlier strikes, alliance warplanes were able to fly 650 sorties.

Of these, 358 were strike sorties, the highest total recorded since the air campaign began on March 24.

NATO said it had struck Milosevic's Dobanovic presidential villa on the outskirts of Belgrade because it contained a military command and control bunker, again denying that it was attempting to assassinate the Yugoslav leader.

The new peak in the bombing came as the allies accelerated preparations for the deployment of ground forces in Kosovo once Belgrade has agreed to comply with the alliance's demands to pull its forces out of the province and accept the deployment of an international security force.

Alliance ambassadors on Wednesday approved a "concept of operations" for the planned

Kosovo Force (K-FOR) which envisages that some 45,000 men will be needed to secure the province -- 17,000 more than were judged necessary before the air campaign began and hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians were forced to flee their homes by Serb forces.

NATO already has an advance force of some 16,000 men stationed in Macedonia in preparation to go into Kosovo as soon as a peace deal emerges. Some 11,000 NATO troops are also stationed in Albania, although they have not yet been formally designated as available for KFOR.

Alliance spokesman Jamie Shea said he expected a "significant percentage" of KFOR to be pre-deployed in the region over the coming weeks, subject to agreement with the host countries.

The remaining forces would be put on standby in their own countries.

"The idea is that we should be ready to enter Kosovo as soon as possible to prevent a vacuum emerging," Shea said.

The make-up of KFOR will become clearer earlier next week when alliance generals hold a conference at NATO's military headquarters at Mons.

The alliance also attacked army barracks at Sabac, Pec, Novi Pazar and Pirot, as well as ammunition dumps and petroleum storage sites.

Elsewhere in Serbia, the alliance continued its controversial tactic of targeting Serb television installations. Relay stations and transmitters at Belgrade, Srbija, Pafest, Pirot and Sremski Karlovci were attacked.

The alliance also attacked army barracks at Sabac, Pec, Novi Pazar and Pirot, as well as ammunition dumps and petroleum storage sites.

Violence has escalated between pro-and anti-independence groups this year — par-

## Indo-Pak strategic fact-file

NEW DELHI, May 26: Military tension between India and Pakistan mounted today after New Delhi launched air strikes on its side of the disputed Kashmir region to flush out what it said were Pakistan-backed Afghan infiltrators, reports Reuters.

Following are key facts about the two South Asian nations' military capability:

(Source: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1998/99)

### INDIA

Population—983.44 million

GDP—\$385 billion (1997)

Armed forces—1,175,000 plus 528,400 reserves.

Army—980,000 personnel in five regional commands 3,414

battle tanks, 1 surface-to-surface missile regiment (Prithvi).

Navy—55,000 personnel in four principal commands, one aircraft carrier, six destroyers, 19 submarines, 18 frigates.

Naval Air Force has 67 combat aircraft including 17 Sea Harriers and 83 armed helicopters.

Air Force—140,000 personnel, 772 combat aircraft and 32 armed helicopters.

### PAKISTAN

Population—140.69 million

GDP—\$61 billion (1997)

Armed forces—Active 587,000, plus 513,000 reserves

Army—520,000 personnel, 2,120 tanks, 18 surface-to-surface

Hatf 1 missile. Half 2 (under development).

Navy—22,000 personnel, nine submarines, eight frigates, two destroyers. Naval Air Force has seven combat aircraft and 12 armed helicopters.

Air Force—45,000 personnel, 410 combat aircraft.

## Golkar nominates Habibie

### E Timorese less interested in Indonesian nat'l polls

DILI, May 26: Campaigning for a crucial June 7 parliamentary election is heating up across Indonesia, but few seem to care in East Timor, reports AP.

Instead they're preoccupied with their own crucial vote — an UN-supervised referendum on August 10 on whether to become independent from Indonesia.

NATO

continues to insist that any security force must be based around an Alliance "core," something which Belgrade has so far categorically ruled out.

Differences over the composition of the force are seen as one of the biggest obstacles to an accord between NATO and Russia on the terms of UN Security Council resolution designed to end the conflict.

As well as targeting Milosevic's villa, NATO said it had carried out extensive strikes against Serb forces in Kosovo with attacks on 15 artillery positions, six mortar emplacements, five tanks and other military targets.

Elsewhere in Serbia, the alliance continued its controversial tactic of targeting Serb television installations. Relay stations and transmitters at Belgrade, Srbija, Pafest, Pirot and Sremski Karlovci were attacked.

Elsewhere in Serbia, the alliance continued its controversial tactic of targeting Serb television installations. Relay stations and transmitters at Belgrade, Srbija, Pafest, Pirot and Sremski Karlovci were attacked.

The idea is that we should be ready to enter Kosovo as soon as possible to prevent a vacuum emerging," Shea said.

The make-up of KFOR will become clearer earlier next week when alliance generals hold a conference at NATO's military headquarters at Mons.

The alliance also attacked army barracks at Sabac, Pec, Novi Pazar and Pirot, as well as ammunition dumps and petroleum storage sites.

Violence has escalated between pro-and anti-independence groups this year — par-

ticularly in the last month as dozens have been killed and hundreds of others forced to flee their homes.

The United Nations has called on Indonesia to stop the violence, particularly by anti-independence militiamen who roamed Dili's streets.

The world body has begun to bring in hundreds of officials to supervise the referendum. Including about 280 international police officers to advise Indonesian police how to maintain law and order.

Golkar, which has curtailed its campaigning in several parts of Indonesia after being hit by vandalism, decided to rest on its past support, especially with the electorate already polarised.

"We don't need to follow the Indonesian elections. Indonesia has already agreed in New York to allow us a vote in August so it is not important for us who wins in Indonesia," said one student at the University of East Timor, a hotbed of anti-Indonesian protest.

Added another student: "Only a few people campaign here, some of them only to get money from the political parties."

To many East Timorese, the campaign for the June 7 national elections is inseparable from the intimidation by pro-Indonesian militias that has accompanied the push to support autonomy and remain a part of Indonesia.

Violence has escalated between pro-and anti-independence groups this year — par-

they hope to offer tough competition to other international launch facilities.

"ISRO can offer to launch satellites at a much cheaper rate than other countries with launch facilities," Kasturirangan, chairman of ISRO, told reporters Tuesday at Sriharikota, some 2,000 km southeast of New Delhi.

"In the international market it will cost about 1 million dollars to piggyback a satellite," he said, but did not give the competitive Indian figure.

The three satellites will be put into polar synchronous orbits at a height of 720 km from the Earth's surface within 18 minutes of liftoff. Details of the orbit were not immediately available.

A satellite reaches a synchronous orbit when its orbit takes 24 hours, the duration the earth takes to rotate once on its axis.

India can launch at least two satellites each year, Kasturirangan said. Next on the calendar is a Belgian satellite, the date for whose launch has not been announced.

Indian space officials say

## India launches sat

SRJHARIKOTA, India, May 26: A rocket with Indian, German and South Korean satellites blasted off from this southeastern town Wednesday as the government-run space agency began commercial operations, reports AP.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle C-2 with the three satellites took off from the space center on an island in the Bay of Bengal, off the coast of Andhra Pradesh state. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee cheered as the rocket took off on a clear morning.

PSLV is India's most technologically advanced space project. It was the first launch with a foreign commercial payload.

The rocket carried a 1,050-kilogram (2,310-pound) Indian remote sensing satellite, Oceansat-1, for oceanographic research.

The other satellites were KITSAT-3, a 107-kilogram (235-pound) satellite of South Korea's Satellite Technology Research Centre, and the 45-kilogram (99-pound) Tubsat of the German Aerospace Center.

Indian space officials say

## Benziz appeals for US protection of her husband

WASHINGTON, May 26: Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto appealed Tuesday for US protection of her jailed husband and asserted that Pakistan is becoming a Muslim fundamentalist dictatorship, reports AP.

Benazir Bhutto, in a letter last week, asked President Bill Clinton to send a medical team to examine her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, saying Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government is trying to kill him.

The Clinton administration expressed concern for his treatment in custody and has asked Pakistan for an explanation of the case.

Benazir denied allegations that led to her conviction on corruption charges and drove her into self-imposed exile in Britain.

"What is occurring against me in Pakistan is not a case of corruption but a unilateral assault against democracy itself," she said. This, she said, is made more dangerous by Pakistan's nuclear capability.

She expressed a willingness to return to power for a third time if her people want her.

"I will do what the people of Pakistan want," she said. "If they want me to lead them, I am there."

## BRIEFLY

**Rebels kill 6 in Indonesia:** Separatist rebels killed six people in two related incidents in the troubled northern province of Aceh, the Indonesian military said Wednesday. AP reports from Jakarta.