

## International

Sonia blasts BJP govt's handling of Kashmir conflict

# India urges Pakistan to show restraint

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: India said its military held back after Pakistani troops fired a missile at Indian aircraft flying near the border, and urged Pakistan to show similar restraint in the latest confrontation between the nuclear-armed rivals, reports AP.

Tensions rose between the neighbours after Indian fighter jets shot down a Pakistani military aircraft Tuesday, killing all 16 crew members. On Wednesday, Pakistan fired a surface-to-air missile that sailed short of Indian military helicopters flying journalists to the crash site.

India lodged a protest against the missile firing late Thursday. Responding to fears that tit-for-tat attacks could escalate out of control, it pressed Pakistan to "exercise due restraint."

India insists that it shot down the plane Tuesday because it veered inside Indian territory, violating a 1991 agreement that requires combat aircraft to stay 6 miles (10 kilometers) away from the border.

"We want a dialogue with Pakistan, but these kinds of provocations are not conducive to the normalization of relations," said Foreign Office spokesman Raminder Jassal.

The United States urged both sides "to avoid further loss of life and further escalation and heightening of tensions," State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said.

The UN Security Council also called on India and Pakistan "to settle the problem through bilateral consultations."

Speaking in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press in Islamabad, Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz criticized India for violating the agreement as well, but did not specifically say that Pakistani aircraft were abiding by it.

Addressing whether the Pakistani aircraft violated Indian airspace, Aziz said, "Suppose it did ... How can a propeller plane like this threaten a jet?"

He said Pakistan "would certainly not like to initiate any (incidents) and we hope India won't."

India's air force and western defenses were on high alert.

Thursday, in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, Aziz said his country had increased air patrols near the border and had put its army on alert.

India said the Pakistani naval reconnaissance plane flew into its territory and returned to Pakistan after it was hit. Most of the wreckage was found inside Pakistani territory, but parts of the plane were scattered along the border, India said.

Pakistan accused India of stealing pieces of the wreckage.

"It was such a cruel attempt to prove the Indian viewpoint," Aziz said. He said the plane was one mile inside Pakistan when it was attacked.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars during the last 50 years.

AFP adds: Indian opposition leader Sonia Gandhi yesterday blasted the Hindu nationalist government's handling of the recent Kashmir conflict and pledged stability if her Congress Party wins upcoming polls.

In a first formal news conference since entering politics last year, Gandhi said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyi deserved no credit for the Indian military's success in ousting Muslim guerrilla infiltrators from Kashmir.

The victory is that of our armed forces. They fought under extremely difficult circumstances," the Italian-born Congress president said at the release of her party's manifesto for the September-October elections.

This victory is not that of the government which allowed the (Muslim) infiltrators to grab our land while it was sleeping," she said.

The 60-page Congress manifesto went a step further, saying the large-scale infiltration into Indian Kashmir could be directly attributed to the government's complacency as it sought to build bridges with Pakistan.

"Instead of keeping a vigil on the border, (the government) let down its guard. It said it would

give us a review of our security environment. All we have got are Pakistani intruders," the document said.

The fighting in Kashmir, which pushed India and Pakistan to the brink of war, "was a tragedy brought about by the cavalier functioning of the government and its criminal negligence," it added.

The Congress offensive appeared aimed at denting the psychological edge the Hindu nationalists have gained from the victory in Kashmir, ahead of elections starting September 5.

Opinion polls say the patriotic fervour sparked by the Kashmir conflict could give Vajpeyi's coalition a clear-cut majority in what was expected to be a badly hung parliament.

Gandhi, who took to politics in January last year, also took pot shots at the constant infighting which marked the 13-month Vajpeyi alliance until it collapsed in April, necessitating fresh elections.

## Advani seeks to amend Indian constitution

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: India's Hindu nationalists will try to amend the constitution to ensure a fixed five-year tenure for parliament if they win upcoming elections, a minister said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani told supporters in the western city of Gandhinagar that a federal government should not be voted out of power before completing its full five-year term.

A "fixed tenure legislation" was possible "within democratic norms," The Hindu quoted Advani as saying. The minister, however, did not specify how a government could remain in power if it was reduced to a minority.

India's September-October elections have been necessitated by the single-vote defeat of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyi's Hindu nationalist-led coalition.

The government's collapse renewed concern over political instability in India, which has seen three costly national elections and four short-lived governments since 1996.

Advani said the BJP was thinking of aping the American electoral system "where the president elected for a four-year term can be disturbed only in exceptional circumstances."

# Sept 9 uprising plot foiled, claims Myanmar junta

YANGON, Aug 13: The military government claimed Friday to have foiled a plot by dissident groups to incite a general uprising on Sept. 9 and announced the arrest of four people, reports AFP.

The government accused the party led by Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi of joining with a government-in-exile, ethnic rebels, drug traffickers, die-hard communists and former students in fomenting the plot.

But the government stopped short of accusing Suu Kyi, the country's best-known opposition leader, of direct involvement, saying only middle-level officials of her National League for Democracy were involved.

"Those who are trying to incite unrest and disrupt the prevailing peace and tranquility will be severely punished," chief spokesman Col. San Pwint told a news conference.

Exiled opposition groups have urged people in this numerology-obsessed country, also known as Burma, to take to the streets in a new revolt on what they claim is an auspicious date 9-9-99.

Myanmar was calm last Sunday, but exiled dissidents in neighbouring Thailand marked the anniversary of an uprising launched Aug. 8, 1988. San Pwint said that a so-

called "political defiance committee" had been formed March 28 by the ABSDF and the Karen National Union, the country's largest ethnic rebel army, in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai.

An unidentified non-government organization from Norway supposedly gave 1.7 million Thai baht (drs 500,000) to the committee.

"Due to the timely exposure of the dissident plot, public disinterest in civil unrest and public concern to maintain peace and stability, there will be no upheaval and the public remains unperturbed," San Pwint said.

ABSDF officials in Thailand were not immediately available for comment.

Price hikes for electricity, phone calls, rice and cooking oil have increased financial burdens on ordinary people. Activists outside the country have likened the problems to the atmosphere that preceded the 1988 uprising.

However, there has been no indication that people are ready to the army's guns again in a new revolt.

The military has ruled Myanmar since 1962 and has shown no signs of ceding power.

## Move to implement Wye River accord

### Arafat, Barak to meet soon

JERUSALEM, Aug 13: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak will meet early next week to set up a timetable for implementing the Wye River accord, Israeli public radio said Thursday.

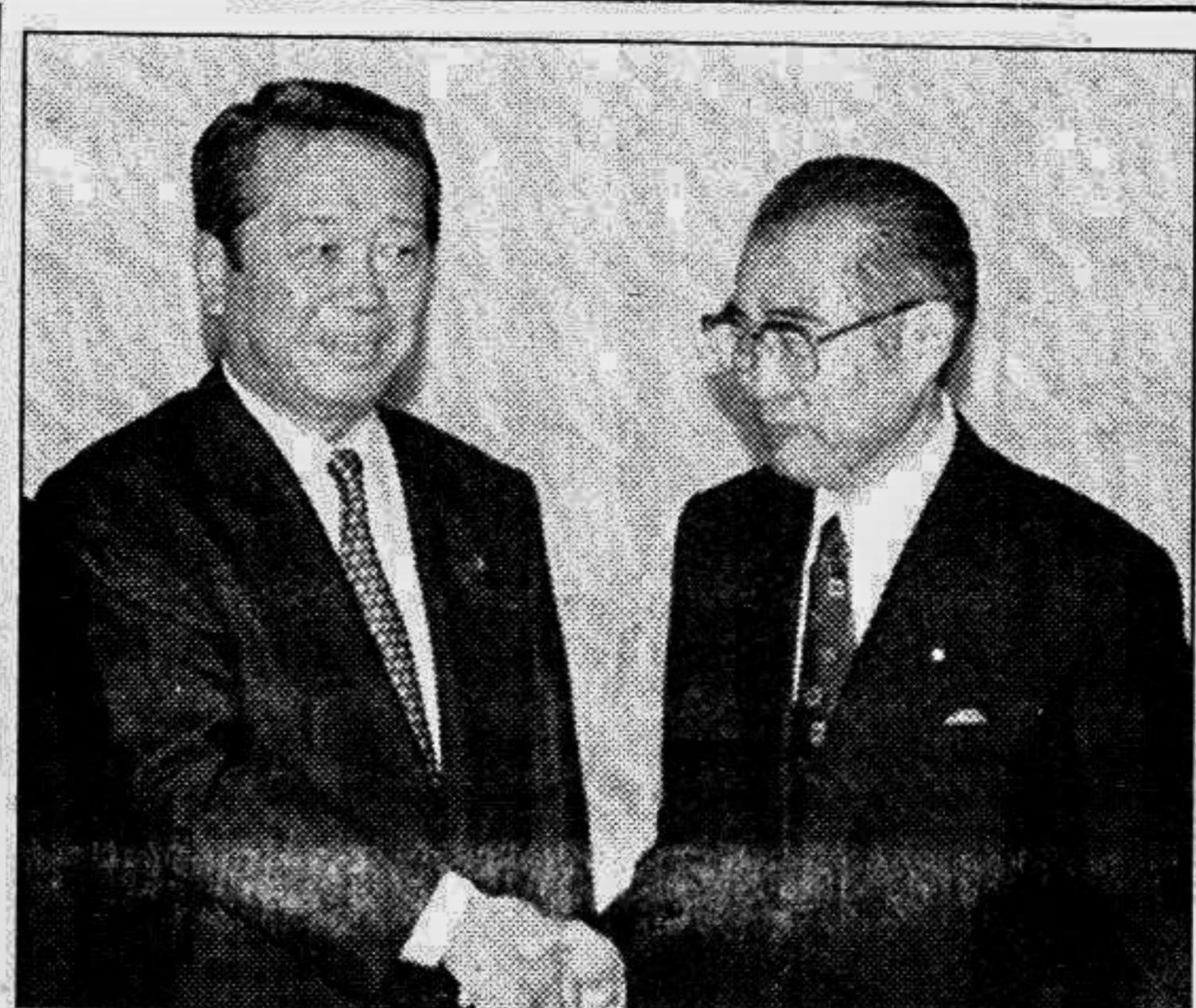
The summit will take place "in the first half of the coming week," the radio reported senior officials in Jerusalem as saying.

Barak reiterated Thursday his desire to implement the accord while making a speech at the National Defence College.

"I'm convinced that together we will implement the Wye accord in all its aspects and that the negotiations which will be opened between us will move us toward concluding an accord in principle ahead of the final accord," he said.

Arafat said earlier in the day that the two sides were still far apart.

"Unfortunately, until now, nothing has been achieved," on



Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi (R) shakes hands with Ichiro Ozawa, head of ruling coalition Liberal Party, prior to their policy talks at prime minister's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. The Liberal Party decided to stay in the coalition with Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the New Komeito.

— AFP photo

## Turkey, Iran sign deal against Kurdish rebels

ANKARA, Aug 13: Turkey and Iran signed a deal today pledging to cooperate against Kurdish rebels and Iranian armed dissidents, but appeared unable to agree on their exact location and activities, reports Reuters.

The border cooperation accord was clinched after three days of lengthy and difficult talks between teams from Islamic Iran and officially secular Turkey in the Turkish capital.

Ties between the neighbours are plagued by Turkish charges of Iranian shelter for Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas and Iranian complaints of Turkish backing for members of Iran's Mujahideen Khalq armed opposition and other dissident groups.

Both sides deny the charges.

Today's agreement, however, includes pledges that both sides will carry out "simultaneous operations" against the PKK rebels and the Iranian opposition.

"Simultaneous operations mean the commanders on both sides decide to hold an operation at the same time in their own region. It is not a joint operation, the head of the Turkish delegation, Interior Ministry Deputy Undersecretary Yahya Gur, told reporters at the signing ceremony.

Gur said the operations would be directed against "terrorist elements", a standard Turkish phrase for condemned rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan's PKK rebels.

But the head of the Iranian delegation denied Turkish allegations of a PKK presence on

## Violence in Ambon: 89 die so far

AMBON, Indonesia, Aug 13: At least 89 people have died in the latest round of religious violence in Indonesia's eastern Maluku province, as overwhelmed security forces denied Friday allegations of a massacre at a church, reports AP.

Witnesses said the death toll had been killed this week alone.

Philip denied accusations of a massacre at the Galala church, saying the rioters had been killed in surrounding neighborhoods, one of the worst-hit parts of the riot-torn city. He said several of the dead Christians were subsequently brought to the church.

Philip said tensions had eased considerably Friday, with troops patrolling the streets.

Police have been reinforced in past days by a battalion of Indonesia's toughest soldiers.

The unit was one of two deployed after local security forces proved incapable of quelling the running battles.

Most of the dead were Christians, he said. Other witnesses claimed that Muslim rioters broke into the church and disfigured some bodies.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.

The report accused members of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy of doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

The incident happened at Kasala, in the Maluku-Nkula territory, north of Katanga, on the night of July 28.

One person escaped the massacre and made it to the town of Lubumbashi, where she was treated at the local medical centre, said the report.

Rwandan soldiers carried out the attack because the villagers had refused to join their cause.