

India's 'N-doctrine' finds few followers

NEW DELHI, Aug 19: India's nuclear policy is raising concerns at home and abroad, with critics accusing government hawks of promoting an outdated and dangerous Cold War mentality, reports AFP.

India's draft "nuclear doctrine," unveiled on Tuesday, envisaged a weapons programme that would produce a land, air and sea based nuclear deterrent. The document, which would have to be approved by the government that comes out of next month's general elections, was given a frosty welcome by the United States, China and the Indian press.

"This doctrine seems to have been hastily drafted, and announced for reasons other than security," The Indian Express said Thursday, voicing a widely-held view that the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee saw the document as a potential vote winner.

"The timing of the document's release is sinister in as much as it seems to cash in on the surge of assertive nationalism evoked by the recent Kashmir conflict," said the Hindustan Times.

"The draft could well have waited until after the elections are over."

In Washington, US State Department spokesman James Rubin said the doctrine's commitment to developing a nuclear arsenal was neither in the interest of India, the United States nor the world at large.

"We have received the document and we are studying it. In general, we do not find it an encouraging document," Rubin said Wednesday.

He also stressed that Washington would continue to press New Delhi to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, two foreign nuclear weapons and to halt production of fissile material.

An opportunity to push home that message will come in a couple of weeks at the UN General Assembly session in New York, where Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant is expected to meet US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright or her deputy Strobe Talbott.

Addressing some of the concerns over the draft doctrine, Singh insisted Wednesday that India's nuclear programme would not upset the global non-proliferation regime.

"What India has done is acted in its own interest to enhance the strategic space and autonomy that it has. There is no need for anyone to fear from what is after all a discussion paper," he said.

India's nuclear policy is "neither country-specific nor strike-specific and to read anything more is completely unwarranted," Singh said.

When India came out of the nuclear closet with a series of underground tests in May last year, New Delhi party justified the move by pointing to a perceived China threat.

Beijing reacted to the publication of the nuclear doctrine by calling on India to renounce its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

"This is conducive to the prevention of an arms race in the region and to maintain security and stability," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao.

3 more aftershocks hit Turkey

Rescue workers race against clock

IZMIT, Turkey, Aug 19: Rescue workers raced against the clock Thursday to dig through the rubble of Turkey's earthquake disaster after finding several people alive, but the death toll soared past 5,300, reports AFP.

The government crisis centre in Ankara said 4,063 people were killed and 18,225 injured as of 7:00 a.m. (0400 GMT), but the death toll was expected to rise further as the chances of finding survivors from Tuesday's tremor diminished.

The death toll of the devastating earthquake in Turkey rose to 5,300 on Thursday, according to figures reported by the Anatolia news agency.

Some 30,000 were injured in the quake, according to these latest figures.

Three more aftershocks struck the region early Thursday, measuring 4.2, 4.0 and 4.1 on the Richter scale, according to the Kandilli seismological institute in Istanbul.

But rescuers drew fresh courage from the discovery of several survivors overnight.

One German rescue team was frantically digging through a pile of rubble in Izmit early Thursday after hearing survivors banging on debris 54 hours after the quake.

"Our dogs have also indicated that people are alive in there," a rescue worker told AFP.

In Duzce in northwestern Anatolia, a woman and a teenage girl were freed from the debris of a five-storey building some 44 hours after the quake.

As British and Turkish rescuers continued work to save two more people thought to be under the rubble.

And grim faces cheered up a little in Golcuk, a small town on the Sea of Marmara, as rescuers miraculously disentangled a 15-day-old baby girl after eight hours of intensive work.

German teams dug out alive a young boy and a woman in Izmit late Wednesday, while Russian experts found a 13-year-old boy and a 35-year-old woman alive under the rubble in Golcuk.

Rescuers have estimated that those trapped under the rubble can survive about 72 hours -- the stretch of time a person can go without water.

As a result, search and rescue missions have top priority until Friday, rescuers said.

The tremor, measuring 7.4 on the Richter scale, claimed more than 2,000 lives and injured almost 5,000 in Izmit alone, where the epicentre was located.

The Anatolia news agency quoted officials as saying that over 76,000 buildings in Izmit were damaged in the quake, 4,300 of which were classified as having received "heavy damage."

In neighbouring Sakarya, almost 900 people were killed and more than 3,000 injured, while in Yalova on the Marmara shore close to 350 people died and more than 2,500 were injured, the crisis centre said.

In Istanbul some 460 people died and more than 5,000 were

injured, while several hundred were killed in Bolu, Bursa, Eskisehir, Tekirdag and Zonguldak.

In Izmit, firefighters overnight managed to bring under control a fierce blaze in a state-owned oil refinery.

The fire is under control although we cannot yet say one hundred percent under control," Husamettin Danis, general director of the Tupras refinery, said.

Of the six oil tanks that were on fire, three with a capacity of 10,000 tonnes each collapsed after their contents burned out, while another tank with a capacity of 8,000 tonnes was still engulfed in flames, Danis said.

The fires at two smaller tanks of 3,000 and 1,000 tonnes were nearly extinguished.

Officials meanwhile sped up efforts to restore power, phone and water lines and repair damaged roads to facilitate the delivery of relief aid as doctors in Izmit warned of an imminent risk of disease and epidemics.

But local reports criticized the government's humanitarian aid as insufficient, as residents in Sakarya complained of not receiving food more than 24 hours after the quake and bodies started to decompose in overflowing morgues in Izmit.

The quake also changed Turkey's geographical make-up, as the Marmara Sea submerged parts of the southern shore and moved its coastline several meters inland.

According to press reports, Turkey was also moved two meters closer to Greece.



Local residents, sit on their belongings Wednesday which they recovered from their collapsed home in Adapazari in the Sakarya region, two days after a massive earthquake hit western Turkey. Turkey keeps up hopes early Thursday of finding more survivors in the debris of crushed buildings even as the death toll exceeded 5,300. — AFP photo

Suharto leaves hospital

JAKARTA, Aug 19: Former Indonesian president Suharto left hospital for home Thursday afternoon, six days after being rushed to hospital with intestinal bleeding, reports AFP.

The 78-year-old former strongman was taken by wheel chair to a waiting sedan driven by his son Bambang Trihatmo, for the short drive to his central Jakarta residence.

He was pale, but waved at journalists.

On arrival at his home in the Menteng residential area, Suharto walked the few steps from the car to his porch, supported by two of his daughters.

He again waved at journalists waiting in front of his home.

The former president was rushed to the Pertamina hospital on Saturday. Doctors said he was suffering "intestinal bleeding."

Yeltsin okays Cabinet lineup

MOSCOW, Aug 19: President Boris Yeltsin on Thursday approved Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's choice of ministers to form the new government, the premier said following a Kremlin meeting, reports AFP.

Presidential decrees confirming the appointments of the new government -- Russia's fifth in the past year and half -- are ready, Putin told reporters following talks with Yeltsin.

"I think that in the near future, they will be signed," Putin was quoted by Interfax as saying.

"The prime minister presented his proposals for the composition of the government and the president supported them," confirmed Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin, quoted by ITAR-TASS.

Yeltsin met with Putin earlier to discuss the formation of the government that is not expected to change significantly.

Yeltsin on Tuesday signed decrees keeping several ministers from the former government of Sergei Stepashin at their posts including the foreign minister, defense and interior ministers.



South African President Thabo Mbeki speaks at the closing ceremony of the South African Development Community (SADC) summit in Maputo Wednesday. The summit ended after hearing from the presidents of Uganda and Rwanda whose armies have been fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo. — AFP photo

Milosevic's party offers early polls

BELGRADE, Aug 19: Planning a mass anti-government rally Thursday, opposition leaders said they would only agree to Slobodan Milosevic's offer to hold early elections if the president steps down and the vote is held under international control, reports AP.

The offer Wednesday appeared to be a last-minute concession to try to defuse Yugoslavia's political crisis and deflate the upcoming rally in Belgrade.

"We believe that there are more important things on the nation's agenda than the elections, but if the opposition wants that, so be it," Ivica Dacic, a spokesman for Milosevic's ruling Socialist Party, told The Associated Press. "We are ready."

On the eve of the Belgrade protest, 20,000 people rallied Wednesday in the country's third-largest city of Nis, chanting "resignations, resignations," the independent news agency Beta said.

Waves of anti-Milosevic protests began in Serbia, the dominant republic in Yugoslavia, after the 78-day NATO air campaign left the country badly damaged, impoverished, isolated and without control over the southern province of Kosovo. The air campaign was launched to force Milosevic to accept a peace plan for the separatist Kosovo province.

Similar rallies in the capital in 1996-97 pushed the Yugoslav president to make concessions to pro-democracy activists. Milosevic later took advantage of power struggles among coalition leaders to backpedal on all of the deals.

When asked about Thursday's demonstration, US State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Washington believed the people of Serbia "and the people of the Balkans would be far, far better off if an indicted war criminal were no longer to be the president of Yugoslavia. We believe that this is a view that is increasingly taking hold in a number of parts of Yugoslavia and Serbian society."

Rubin said US officials have met with opposition leaders and have been encouraging them to maintain unity as a means of hastening Milosevic's departure.

Opposition leaders have still been unable to forge a common front against Milosevic. A key opposition leader, Vuk Draskovic, for example, will not attend Thursday's rally. In the past, he had led the biggest protest against Milosevic.

On Wednesday another prominent opposition leader led Belgrade for Montenegro, Yugoslavia's rebellious province whose government opposes Milosevic.



People sleep on a pavement atop a fly-over on Wednesday in Calcutta. Homelessness is a rapidly growing problem in Calcutta as India's population continues to grow. A debate has broken out over the expected date at which India's population will reach one billion. — AFP photo

India to meet all financial needs of armed forces

NEW DELHI, Aug 19: Indian Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha pledged Thursday to provide the armed forces with all the funding they need to modernise in the wake of the recent Kashmir crisis, reports AFP.

"Whatever may be the financial needs and requirements of the armed forces we will meet them," Sinha told reporters.

"We will meet India's security needs without compromising in any way, by resigning in expenditure and increasing the tax base," he added.

It took India 10 weeks to complete its military offensive launched May 9 to oust Islamic guerrillas who had crossed into Indian territory from Pakistan across the disputed Kashmir border.

After the fighting, senior army officers complained that a lack of modern weaponry and surveillance technology had drawn out the conflict, which cost the lives of more than 400 Indian troops.

They also called for a significant increase in the national defence budget, which is currently running at around 2.3 percent of gross domestic product.

Stressing that the government would have "absolutely no hesitation in servicing the needs of the armed forces," Sinha said the current economic upturn in India should provide the tax revenue in-

creases to meet the army's funding demands.

Sinha's remarks came during a press conference which amounted to a review of the Hindu nationalist-led coalition's economic record in office, and its vision for the future if returned to power after next month's general elections.

Sinha also hinted that a new government might reconsider an earlier decision not to levy a special war tax to help pay for the cost of the Kashmir conflict.

"We shall evaluate and consider this in October... by such time we will also have studied the needs of increasing our allocations," he said.

Russian jets bomb rebel-held village in Dagestan

MAKHACHKALA, Russia, Aug 19: Russian warplanes pounded the Muslim rebel-held village of Tando in Dagestan overnight as the death toll from 13 days of fighting climbed to 40 among Russian and Dagestani forces, Russian officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

Moscow also vowed to step up its campaign to root out Muslim rebels from Chechnya who seized mountain villages in southwest Dagestan on August 7 as part of a drive to set up an Islamic state in the northern Caucasus.

"Intensive military actions will continue in the coming days," said Russian Deputy Interior Minister Igor Zubov at a Moscow news conference, adding that government forces were planning "large-scale operations on the entire territory

of Dagestan against the terrorists."

Zubov said fighting in Dagestan had left 40 dead and 160 injured among Russian and Dagestani forces, up from 29 dead.

But the Russian official put the number of casualties on the rebel side much higher at between 400 to 500 dead.

Russian military sources earlier this week said 600 rebels had died in fighting while spokesmen for the rebels in the Chechen capital of Grozny have also claimed to have inflicted heavy losses on the Russian side.

Russian aircraft carried out some 30 bombing raids overnight, pounding positions held by the rebels at Tando in the Botlikh district bordering Chechnya.

BRIEFLY

Bomb on bus kills 6 in China:

A bomb exploded aboard a minibus in southwestern China, killing six people and wounding 23 others, a police official said Thursday, AP reports from Shanghai.

The blast Wednesday morning in Fengjie County on the outskirts of Chongqing, a major industrial city, would be at least the 10th bombing this year in China. The violence has heightened official fears of unrest by workers and farmers angry at layoffs, stagnating incomes and corruption.

4 gunmen killed in Philippines:

Four gunmen were killed and two policemen wounded in a kidnap attempt on a wealthy Filipino-Chinese family in the southern Philippines, police said yesterday, AFP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

About 10 gunmen on three motor boats swooped on the coastal village of Kawit late Wednesday and tried to abduct two sons of shipyard owner Joaquin Tong, police said.

Iraq urges UN to stop US, UK's strikes on civilians

BAGHDAD, Aug 19: Baghdad urged the United Nations on Thursday to end the US and British air strikes on civilian areas, after saying that its planes had challenged the allied jets patrolling Iraqi airspace for the first time in months, reports AFP.

The United Nations is entirely responsible for what is happening to the Iraqi people and the Security Council must stop this aggression and take concrete measures," said the Babel daily, run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son.

Baghdad says at least 20 civilians, including 12 members of one family, were killed Tuesday during US and British air strikes in the north and south of Iraq. A further three died in Monday's strikes.

But the United States on Wednesday said it had no evidence to suggest that any civilians died in the attacks.

The ruling Baath party's Ath-Thawra daily on Thursday called on the United Nations "to open an enquiry to ask the United States and Britain what right they have to pursue their aggression against Iraq for eight months."

sisting as a spectator while Iraqi civilians are dying every day because of the US and British raids," the newspaper said.

Those slain are "the victims of a collective extermination because of the strikes and the (UN) embargo," imposed in 1990 following Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

The armed forces Al-Qadisiya daily also urged the Security Council "to adopt a serious and responsible attitude to dissuade the aggressors," and called on the Arab League "to apply the Arab convention on a common defence."

The newspaper slammed the league for not helping Iraq and for its officials' "sterile comments" and its insistence that Iraq should apologise to Kuwait for the 1990 invasion.

"To whom should we present our apologies? To those who offer military facilities to British and US planes so that they can carry out their raids on Iraqi houses?" the daily said, referring to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Afghan faction rejects Pak peace mediation

DUSHANBE, Aug 19: Afghan groups allied to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Massoud have rejected Pakistan's offer to mediate in peace talks with the Taliban, an Afghan delegation said here Thursday, reports AFP.

"We have rejected the mediation proposal of the Pakistani delegation," said Muhammad Yunus Konuni, head of the Afghan delegation.

"We explained to the Pakistani representatives that they cannot act as mediators because a mediator is a neutral and impartial person and they are at war against us," he told reporters.

Konuni, who met with Pak-

istani Interior Minister Rostam Shah in the Tajik capital, called on Pakistan to end its support for the Taliban militia and to withdraw its forces from Afghan territory.

Islamabad has repeatedly denied claims that it is supporting the Taliban, an Islamic hardline militia which now controls most of Afghanistan.

But delegations from the Afghan opposition and Pakistan will meet again next week although no firm date or venue for the talks have been set.

Pakistani officials were to travel Saturday to the southern Afghan region of Kandahar, headquarters of the Taliban.

UN calls on Jakarta to arrest gun-toting militiamen

DILI, East Timor, Aug 19: The UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) on Thursday called on Indonesian authorities to arrest gun-toting militia members threatening voters ahead of this month's self-rule referendum, reports AFP.

UNAMET chief Ian Martin also called for the removal of Indonesian military officers most closely linked to the militia bands, which are campaigning for autonomy within Indonesian rule.

"I'm going to go on pressing the Indonesian government very hard and I'm sure I'm not going to be the only one," Martin told a press briefing here.

The appeal came as a rash of militia attacks were reported from the towns of Suai and Manatuto on Thursday and in Maliana to the west on Wednesday.

Shooting was reported in the incidents outside a church in Suai and on a bridge in Manatuto. Both reportedly involved militiamen stopping independence supporters, from attending rallies.

The number of casualties was unclear. UNAMET said one of its cars in Suai was pelted with rocks, but none of the passengers was injured.

Martin said Indonesia should show that its policies were being "followed on the ground" by arresting anyone found carrying weapons outside designated areas, and by removing military officers closely associated with the militias.

Under previous agreements governing East Timor's UN-administered vote, Indonesia remains in charge of security, he noted.

The spokesman for the Indonesian Task Force in East Timor, Dino Djajal, said later Thursday: "We have told the police that if they see any violation of the campaign process they must act promptly."

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has twice postponed the vote because of continuing violence by the militias against supporters of independence for East Timor, a former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975.

Rebels' infighting in NE India threatens peace talks

GUWAHATI, India, Aug 19: Tribal separatists in the north-eastern Indian state of Nagaland shot dead three leaders of a rival militant faction Thursday, jeopardising peace talks to end a 52-year insurgency in the region, reports AFP.

A police spokesman said members of the outlawed National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) had ambushed the hideout of a rival NSCN faction near the state capital Kohima in the early hours of Thursday.

The militants killed three people, including Daily Mon-

gro, the secretary general of the rival faction, at point-blank range," the spokesman said.

Nagaland Chief Minister S.C. Jami told AFP by telephone from Kohima that the attack was the result of an "ongoing fratricidal war" within the NSCN.

Leaders of the faction that carried out the attack had held formal peace talks with Indian government officials in Amsterdam last month, aiming to build on a ceasefire brokered in August 1997.

Mongro's faction had also entered into a ceasefire with Indian troops, but had yet to ac-

cept the government's offer of unconditional peace talks.

"By killing the three leaders of the rival faction, the militants have violated the ceasefire agreement," Jami said.

"This kind of attack does not augur well when the general mood in the state is for peace."

The factional war broke out in 1988 when the NSCN split into rival camps following a disagreement between its senior leaders.

The 52-year-old struggle for an independent tribal homeland in Nagaland has cost more than 25,000 lives.



Young Colombians protest with their hands bound and their mouths taped shut Wednesday in Villavicencio, 120km southeast of Bogota. The protest was brought about by the assassination of popular radio journalist Jaime Garzon on August 13 in Bogota. — AFP photo

US, Russia ready for further N-arms cuts

MOSCOW, Aug 19: The United States and Russia are ready to begin negotiations on a START III nuclear arms reduction treaty immediately after its predecessor, START II, is ratified by the Russian parliament, a US statement said Thursday, reports AFP.

In the statement issued by the US embassy here, Russia and the United States also said they had exchanged views in two days of talks here on the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty.

"Specific proposals (on changing ABM) were not discussed in the course of the consultations," said the statement. "The sides reaffirmed that the treaty continues to be the cornerstone of strategic stability."

Russian and US officials ended two days of talks here Wednesday to try to advance disarmament efforts between the two nuclear powers, which have been at a standstill since the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) II was signed in January 1993.

Two executed for murder in Karachi

KARACHI, Aug 19: Two Pakistanis convicted of kidnapping and murdering a boy were executed in Karachi's central jail Thursday, officials said, reports AFP.

Khalid-ur Rehman and Nasim Akhter were found guilty by a special court for suppression of terrorist activities in December of abducting for ransom and killing nine year old Anas Farid in 1994.

The bodies of the two were handed over to waiting relatives after the hanging, witnesses said.

An activist of the private Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Moazzam Ali, criticised the hanging on the ground the rights body was opposed to the death penalty.

The port city of Karachi, capital of southern Sindh province, has a history of ethnic, political and sectarian violence which has claimed 4,000 lives in the last four years.