

# Indonesia plans quick pullout if E Timor rejects autonomy

## Australian military placed on alert

DILI, East Timor, Aug 26: Indonesian troops will pull out of East Timor within six months if East Timor rejects autonomy in a landmark referendum next week, an Indonesian spokesman said Thursday, reports AFP.

The announcement came as thousands of people took part in the final rally backing Indonesian sovereignty in the former Portuguese colony which will vote on its future next Monday.

If the people of East Timor reject autonomy under Indonesian rule, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and armed forces chief General Wiranto want a gradual withdrawal to prevent a security vacuum, said Indonesian government task force spokesman Dino Djala.

"Alatas and Wiranto have said three to six months... we don't want to leave a vacuum here, there has to be some con-

tinuity," Djala said. There are between 12,000 and 15,000 Indonesian military and 8,000 police in East Timor, according to foreign military observers.

Djala said he was unable to give a firm date for ratification of the vote by Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly (MPR).

But the assembly is to convene on October 1 and he said it could be passed by mid-October.

There are mounting fears of violence as pro-Indonesian leaders have warned of guerrilla warfare if the referendum is only narrowly one by separatists.

The United Nations has said it will strengthen its civilian police force in East Timor after the vote, and the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) sources say there could be a change in their advisory role.

Representatives from Indonesia, Portugal and the United Nations were to meet in Lisbon on Thursday to discuss further measures for East Timor after the vote.

The task force spokesman told reporters the choice East Timorese make on Monday will be final. "This is a permanent choice, there is no going back."

After some 10,000 independence supporters marched in Dili on Wednesday, the pro-Indonesian show of force began in a cloud of engine exhaust as close to 200 motorcycles led off a procession near the headquarters of the Aitarak militia in Dili.

In contrast to the previous day's festive atmosphere, some residents said the militia had hijacked many vehicles for the rally.

Meanwhile, the Australian Defence Force was Thursday

placed on alert to evacuate Australians as fears intensify of a violent reaction to Monday's historic autonomy ballot in East Timor.

More than 200 Australians are in the territory to witness the vote and with violence flaring Thursday, Defence Minister John Moore said the government was taking no chances.

Another report says, three men, including two independence supporters, were shot dead Thursday in clashes on the fringes of a pro-Indonesian campaign rally in East Timor, witnesses said.

A member of the pro-Indonesian Aitarak militia gunned down an independence supporter in Dili's downtown Kuluhan area while a policeman shot dead another pro-independence man suspected of inciting violence, the witnesses said.



Commander of the pro-Indonesian "Aitarak" militia Eurico Guterres leads pro-autonomy supporters through the streets of Dili Thursday. The pro-integration marchers took to the streets on their last day of campaigning, while the pro-independence supporters will conclude today the official campaigning for the August 30 UN-sponsored ballot on the future of East Timor.

## 7 militants, one soldier killed in Kashmir

JAMMU, Aug 26: Government forces pursued armed Islamic militants into jungles close to the cease-fire line with Pakistan in disputed Kashmir, killing at least seven of them and losing one soldier, police said Thursday, reports AP.

Government forces have intensified patrolling in the state with voting in India's general elections scheduled for next month. A dozen rebel groups, fighting for secession from India since 1989, have asked people to boycott the elections.

India accuses Pakistan of training and arming the guerrillas, a charge Pakistan denies. India and Pakistan have fought two wars over control of Kashmir since they won independence from Britain in 1947.

Acting on a tip from a local villager on Wednesday, the soldiers attacked a jungle hideout of the guerrillas, who returned fire. The gunbattle lasted several hours and left four rebels and one soldier dead, a police officer said on condition of anonymity. Another four soldiers were injured in the fighting in Saurjan, a village in Poonch district, 125 kilometers (80 miles) north of Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu-Kashmir state.

## Congress biggest enemy: NCP

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) yesterday declared that Congress leadership was its biggest enemy and predicted a split in Congress after the elections with the breakaway faction joining NCP, reports PTI.

The biggest enemy is the Congress leadership, but that does not mean we are joining BJP, senior party leader P. A. Sangma told reporters here.

Rejecting the charge that NCP and BJP were speaking the same language, he said, there is no question of the NCP following the BJP.

He said such a criticism was being made because of the two parties were taking up similar issues — Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin and a fixed term for Lok Sabha.

Sangma said Congress would not reach the three-digit mark in the polls following a dismal performance and would split after the polls. The splinter group would join NCP, he claimed.

## Sonia says

## Coalition govts not in country's interest

MAKRANA (Rajasthan), Aug 26: Congress President Sonia Gandhi today said short lived governments could not do any good to anybody because such governments were formed by coming together of different parties for the sole aim of grabbing power, reports PTI.

"Such coalitions could benefit only some individuals and the country is always the sufferer," she said at an election rally here.

"People join hands or come to power but internally they are poles apart as there is no meeting point on ideology. This is how the country saw three prime ministers in as many years," she said.

Hitting out at the BJP-headed coalition government at the centre, Gandhi said even the members of BJP were speaking in different languages. Such government could not provide a stable government, she added.

## Voters in Bellary unaware of Sonia's foreign origin

BELLARY, Aug 26: While BJP leader Sushma Swaraj is seeking to turn the Lok Sabha contest here into a fight between Deshi and Bideshi many voters in this backward area of Karnataka are not even aware of Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin, reports PTI.

Swaraj in her public meetings emphasises that Sonia Gandhi is a woman of foreign origin and it is a fight between Swadeshi (Native) and Videshi (person of foreign origin), but many voters this correspondent spoke to are not aware that the Congress President has Italian origin.

"For quite a few of them it is the name of the Gandhi family that matters, when asked, one mashes said Sonia Gandhi is Indira Gandhi."

One Venkata Rao of a village under Siriguppa assembly segment said I have not heard the name of Sonia Gandhi, while 27-year-old Manjunatha said his family always voted for the Congress.

## Izetbegovic to press charges against NY Times

SARAJEVO, Aug 26: The Muslim member of Bosnia's collective presidency, Alija Izetbegovic, is to press charges against The New York Times for its article on corruption in Bosnia published last week, media reported here Thursday, reports AP.

The Sarajevo daily Oslobođenje, quoting Izetbegovic's spokesman Ademir Jerkovic, said the Muslim leader was preparing a suit against the US daily and a journalist.

"In the suit President Izetbegovic will say more about the motives behind this story," Jerkovic said.

Jerkovic also said that Izetbegovic demanded an international investigation of the allegations in the article.

# Militants vow to combat 'farce' polls in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, Aug 26: A key Kashmiri guerrilla organisation said Thursday it had prepared a plan to counter the forthcoming electoral "farce" by India in Kashmir, reports AFP.

"We appeal to people in Indian-held Kashmir to boycott the so-called parliamentary elections to demonstrate once again their love for freedom," the Hizbul Mujahideen said in a statement.

"It asked Kashmiris not to give any direct or indirect cooperation to Indians in staging the 'drama' and warned of 'serious consequences against those who betray the national cause'."

Indian authorities have chalked out a plan to compel people to vote at gunpoint, fill

ballot boxes with bogus votes and gather queues of Hindus from outside at polling stations for propaganda," the group claimed.

Hizbul Mujahideen, considered the most active group in the more than a decade-old Muslim separatist campaign in Indian-held Kashmir, said the "fraudulent" election could not dampen the Kashmiri "freedom movement."

More than 24,000 people have died in Kashmir since 1989, when a Muslim rebel campaign erupted.

India accuses arch-rival Pakistan, which administers part of the disputed state, of fomenting militancy in Indian territory. Islamabad denies the charge.

Incidents of violence have been reported daily from Indian-administered Kashmir in the run-up to next month's parliamentary elections. Eight people have been killed so far this week, according to the Indian media.

Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday vowed continued "whole-hearted moral, political and diplomatic support" for the "just and genuine struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination."

Kashmir, where the rival armies were engaged in a two-month confrontation from early May to mid-July, has caused two of the three wars between the neighbours since their independence in 1947.

## Moroccan plane hijack drama ends peacefully

BARCELONA, Aug 26: A lone hijacker seized a Moroccan airliner on a flight to Tunisia and forced it to land in Spain overnight before freeing all 81 people on board and surrendering to police early today, reports AFP.

The hijacker, a 45-year-old Moroccan whom officials described as "mentally unstable," had originally demanded the Royal Air Maroc plane be refuelled after landing in Barcelona and then flown to Frankfurt, Germany.

After five hours of tense negotiations, he freed his hostages unharmed and gave himself up without a struggle. The pistol he had brandished during the hijacking turned out to be a fake, officials said.

David Bonet, spokesman for the Catalonia regional government, said the motive may have been a desperate bid to emigrate to Europe, but that remained unclear because the hijacker kept changing his story to investigators.

The hijacking began at 2015 GMT when the man seized control of the Boeing 737 on a scheduled flight from Casablanca to Tunis and diverted it north to Barcelona's El Prat Airport.

The plane was parked on the tarmac away from the terminal. About 200 police and Civil Guard members cordoned off while negotiations were conducted by radio.

The man claimed he was one of three hijackers holding the plane but authorities quickly realised he was acting alone, a Spanish government source said.

Officials at first reported the plane was carrying 88 people. But after the hijack drama was over, a final count showed only 73 passengers plus eight crew members on board.

Most of the passengers were North Africans, but there also French, Germans, Swiss, Italians, Dutch and Canadians among the group.

## India denies nuclear cooperation with Israel

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: India yesterday denied having any nuclear cooperation with Israel and asserted that its ties with Tel Aviv will never be pursued at the cost of our multi-faceted relations with the Arab countries, reports PTI.

"We would like to emphasise that while we have good relations with Israel, there is no nuclear cooperation between the two countries, an External Affairs Ministry spokesman said in response to a question adding India's support to the Arab and Palestinian causes continues unchanged."

He was asked about media reports on the statement made by Deputy Secretary General of the Arab League Mohammed Zakaria in which he made a reference to nuclear cooperation between India and Israel.

## Hundreds leave HK homes after landslide

HONG KONG, Aug 26: Hundreds of people have been evacuated from their homes in a Hong Kong public housing estate after a landslide sparked by rain in the wake of Typhoon Sam, a government spokesman said Thursday, reports AFP.

Some 439 people have registered for temporary shelter after the landslide late Wednesday threatened three tower blocks in Kowloon, he said.

Residents on Thursday returned to their homes to collect belongings without knowing when they could go home for good. The government has temporarily closed two blocks pending work to stabilise the nearby slope.

Typhoon Sam, which hit the territory on Sunday, was the wettest on record, according to the Hong Kong Observatory. A man died after his hut collapsed in flooding.

## Monitors hope

# New Indian govt will sign CTBT after polls

VIENNA, Aug 26: Heads of the organisation which oversees the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) said Thursday they hope a new Indian government will sign it "fairly soon" after forthcoming elections, reports AFP.

They also expressed optimism that a conference in Vienna in October will give a "political push" to the landmark nuclear treaty, which must still be ratified by several key countries before it can enter into force.

"The top priority when it comes to new signatures... is really India and Pakistan," said Wolfgang Hoffmann the executive secretary of the preparatory commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO).

The process of talking with

these two countries is now in abeyance now that everybody is waiting for the outcome of the Indian elections, scheduled for September/October, he told AFP.

"Only after these elections... will we be able to talk again to the new Indian government and what we hope is that we will start again at the point where the talks ended... If we can achieve this then I think we have a fair chance to have an Indian signature fairly soon."

The CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 1996, but before it can enter into force it must be ratified by a list of 44 countries judged to have nuclear facilities.

So far only 21 of the countries on that list have ratified.

Hoffmann confirmed that a conference to review progress will be held in Vienna on October 6-8, saying he hoped it would be held a ministerial level.

Under the terms of the treaty, subsequent review conferences could be held annually if key states still do not sign.

"We are optimistic and we hope that we won't need a second conference," said CTBTO chairman Mokhtar Reguieg, "It will depend on the states, and what measures they take to accelerate the entry into force of the treaty."

Hoffmann said: "It might be that this first conference will be sufficient to give a political push. But we can't say where we will be a year from now."

## Probe into Kandahar blast begins

KABUL, Aug 26: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban movement said today it was investigating the huge blast outside the residence of its supreme leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, in the southern city of Kandahar, reports Reuters.

A Taliban officials said from Kandahar that authorities were looking into Tuesday night's explosion that killed at least 10 people, including three of Omar's security guards, and wounded more than 40.

No suspect has been arrested. We are at the earlier stage and can't give you details of the investigation now. With God's grace, the culprits of the incident will be traced soon," the official, Jahangirwal, told Reuters.

High-intensity explosives packed in barrels in a truck caused the blast, the first in the Taleban's seat of power.

Kandahar is where the Islamic movement originated in late 1994.

## DPRK demands direct talks with US

SEOUL, Aug 26: North Korea on Thursday demanded direct talks with the United States on a dispute over its maritime border with rival South Korea, spurring calls for it to raise the issue directly with Seoul, reports AFP.

The renewed call came just a day after the United States announced it would be holding talks with the communist state in Berlin next month in a bid to improve its ties with Pyongyang, suspected of planning a fresh missile launch.

"The issue of fixing the demarcation line in the West Sea (Yellow Sea) of Korea is an issue related to the armistice agreement," the official Korean Central News Agency said in a dispatch monitored here.



A poor village woman ties a wristlet on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's hand at his residence in New Delhi Thursday to mark the Hindu festival Rakhi, where sisters tie coloured thread on their brother's wrists in return for pledge to protect their life and honour. The poverty-stricken unidentified woman sought Vajpayee's help.

## BRIEFLY

### India to airlift aid for Turks:

India will airlift its first consignment of relief assistance for the people affected by the recent earthquake in Turkey yesterday, PTI reports from New Delhi.

It will consist of 9.5 tonnes of surgical items, medicines, mainly antibiotics, and tea.

**Pak PM in Turkey to offer sympathy:** Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif embarked on a visit to Turkey Thursday to offer his sympathy to Turkey's leaders over last week's devastating earthquake that killed thousands, AP reports from Islamabad.

"I am proceeding to Turkey this morning to personally convey to the president and prime minister of Turkey our sense of grief and sorrow on this unparalleled tragedy," Sharif said in a departure statement.

**Floods kill 126 in Nepal since June:** Floods and landslides in Nepal have killed at least 126 people since June, an official said yesterday, Reuters reports from Kathmandu.

At least five people were killed and 17 missing when a river breached its banks flooding a village in Nepal's Terai region on Tuesday night, said Khem Raj Neupane, a senior bureaucrat.