



Newly elected for Japan's largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan, leader Yukio Hatoyama gestures as he speaks to reporters during his press conference after leadership elections in the party's convention in Tokyo Saturday. — AFP photo

# Police raid party offices, detain leaders to foil Karachi rally

KARACHI, Sept 25: Police Saturday raided opposition party offices and detained leaders hours before a planned anti-government rally in Karachi, opposition officials said, reports AFP.

The crackdown came as the authorities in southern Sindh province declared the rally "unlawful" and police officials warned they would not allow the opposition to disrupt peace in the provincial capital Karachi.

Scuffles erupted between police and a group of activists from former premier Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) outside the main opposition leader's villa near Clifton beach, residents said. The incident occurred when policemen tried to lock the iron gates of Bhutto's fortress type Bilawal House.

Witnesses said police chased the slogan-chanting

people with bamboo sticks and whisked away around a dozen PPP workers.

Benazir is in London and party sources said police had cordoned off her residence, located close to the site of the rally planned for late Saturday in the city's fashionable Clifton area.

Police earlier picked up Nasreen Jilil, a member of parliament and a leader of the ethnic Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the party, said.

Police also arrested local leaders of former cricketer Imran Khan's Movement for Justice and another opposition faction Pakistan Democratic Party, the sources said.

Opposition sources said the crackdown over the past three days had netted more than 1,000 workers and supporters of the PPP and MQM, both influential in politically volatile

Sindh region. A PPP spokesman, Aijaz Durrani, condemned the arrests and said "people will be on the road to register their protest against the fascist government."

The country's 19 religious and political parties, united recently under the umbrella of the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) with the objective of removing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's 31-month old government, vowed to defy the official ban on processions and demonstrations.

Police thwarted a similar opposition attempt on September 11 when top leaders were detained and participants were subjected to teargas and baton charges.

The authorities appear unlikely to relax the ban as riot police stood alert and police commandos on motorbikes drove the mainroads in Clifton, where diplomats, business

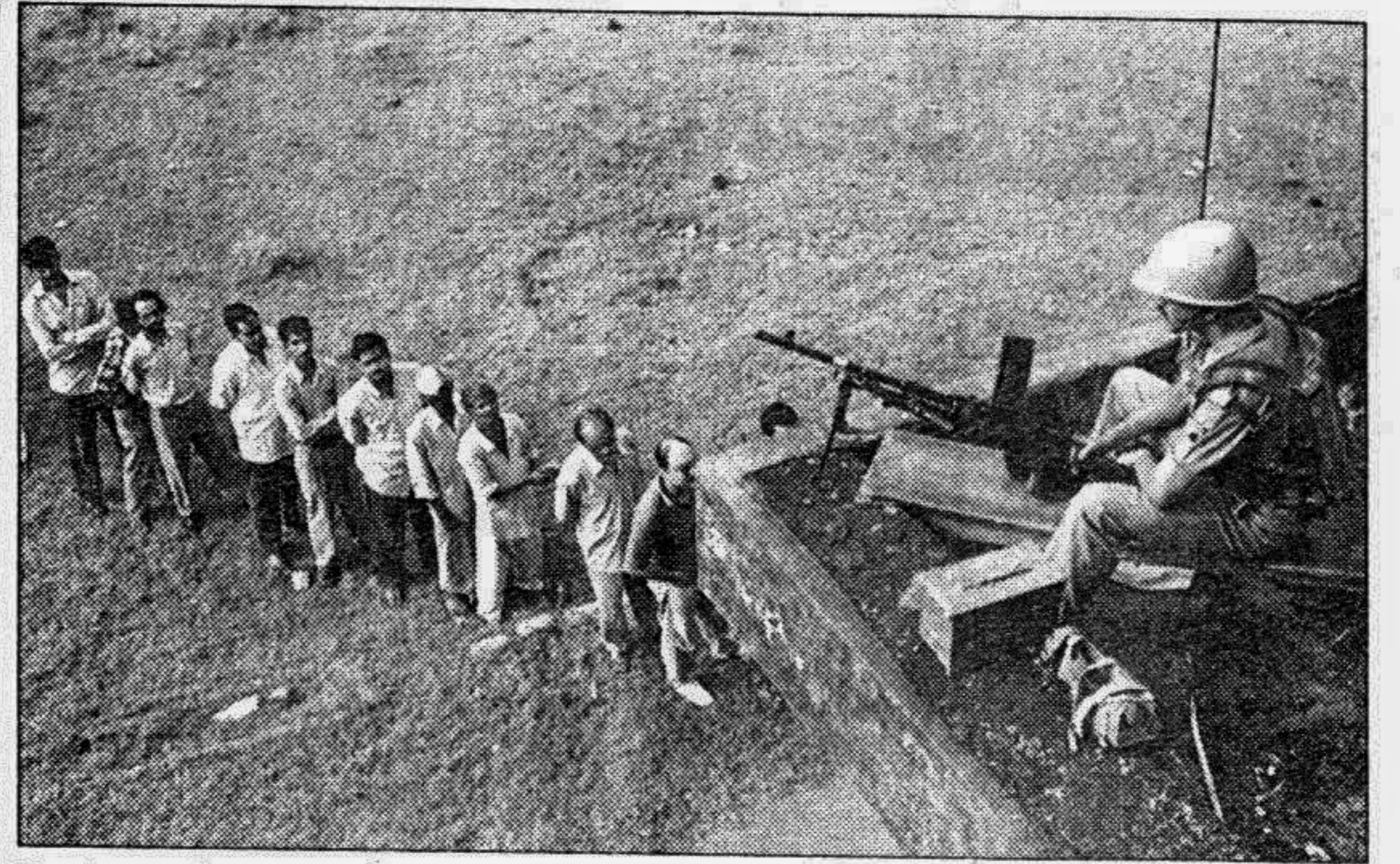
leaders and high government officials reside, witnesses said.

Sharif sacked the Sindh government in October last year and placed the province under direct federal rule to curb lawlessness and acts of terrorism after recurring political and ethnic violence here had claimed more than 4,000 lives.

The opposition accuses Sharif of massive corruption, violating the constitution and undermining Parliament and the judiciary.

Sharif denies the charges accusing the opposition of trying to destabilise the country rather than wait for the next round of scheduled elections in 2001.

Nisar Khoro, a lawmaker of Benazir's party said more than 2,000 of their activists have been arrested since Friday, an accusation the police called exaggerated.



People stand waiting to vote outside a polling booth, as a paramilitary soldier sits atop a ledge with a semi-automatic gun Saturday in Patna, Bihar state. Parts of Bihar including Patna went to polls yesterday in the fourth phase of India's general elections. Around 24 people have died from underground bomb explosions and other polls related violence in the previous phases of voting. — AFP photo

## Typhoon Bart heads for north Japan

TOKYO, Sept 25: Japanese rescuers were still searching for two missing people on Saturday as Typhoon Bart, which claimed 26 lives, headed for the northern part of the country, officials said, reports AFP.

In Miyazaki prefecture of the southwestern island of Kyushu, 250 police and firefighters continued their efforts to find a missing 29-year-old man caught by a swollen river, a police official said.

In neighboring Kumamoto prefecture, 1,040 km southwest of Tokyo, 12 people were killed early Friday when high waves hit some 60 houses as Typhoon Bart landed there.

Police in Shizuoka prefecture, 160 km west of Tokyo, were also searching for 72-year-old man who is missing presumed drowned after being swept away in a flooded river, an official said.

## China steps up crackdown on crime

BEIJING, Sept 25: China is stepping up on its crackdown on crime ahead of the 50th anniversary of communist rule, with southern Guangdong province to execute 238 criminals before next week's celebrations, according to reports seen here Saturday, says AFP.

The Guangdong Province Supreme People's Court has declared the province would hold 57 public rallies to announce sentences for 818 convicted criminals, the Southern Daily reported Friday.

The paper said 238 would receive death sentences, while nearly 70 percent of the sentences would be for prison terms longer than five years.

Charges included murder, armed robbery, rape, kidnapping and other "serious and heinous" crimes carried out by mafia and underworld gangs, it said.

According to Thursday's Yangcheng Evening News, in the first eight months of the year 23,248 people in Guangdong Province were convicted of violent crimes.

The paper said 41.8 percent of those receiving sentences harsher than a five-year jail term were either imprisoned for life or sentenced to death.

## 'Anwar fit to attend court'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 25: Jailed Malaysian ex-deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim is well enough to attend his sodomy trial due to resume next week, a hospital authority said Saturday, reports AFP.

"Anwar is certified fit to attend the trial in court on Monday," National University Hospital director Khalid Abdul Kadir was cited as saying by the state Bernama news agency.

But he will remain at the hospital until the complete results of his medical tests had been obtained to conclude whether he had been poisoned with arsenic, Khalid said.

Anwar's sodomy trial was halted when he was admitted to hospital on September 10, with his lawyers alleging abnormally high levels of arsenic found in his urine indicated a murder attempt.

The trial was to have resumed on September 20 but was postponed another week after the hospital said he was still unwell due to continued tests and other health problems.

## Another quake strikes State of emergency in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Sept 25: Taiwan's cabinet approved a state of emergency Saturday as it attempted to feed, clothe and treat around 100,000 earthquake refugees facing an approaching typhoon and fresh tremors, reports AFP.

President Lee Teng-hui was due to issue a formal decree shortly afterwards, granting the government emergency powers to help the tens of thousands living in the open after one of the world's most powerful quakes this century, which killed up to 2,000.

The powers were also to speed a drive to repair colossal damage to infrastructure, industry and agriculture.

Vice Premier Liu Chao-shiuan announced the decision after a five-hour cabinet meeting. "The cabinet has proposed a six-month state of emergency all over the island," he said.

Taichung and Nantou counties, and parts of other central counties, are declared disaster areas. The decree is meant to help rehabilitation and reconstruction by overriding restrictions imposed by current laws.

Parliament was to ratify Lee's decree Tuesday, a process considered little more than a formality.

The announcement came as rain from Typhoon Cam began to fall on areas affected by

Tuesday's massive earthquake and after a second separate earthquake rocked the island.

The powers would allow the government to use troops to conduct evacuations and relief and re-prioritise budgets without regard to existing laws on property, freedom of movement or parliamentary process. The laws have been used only three times in Taiwan's history.

Any faint hope for survivors all but evaporated Saturday more than four days after the quake and bulldozers began clearing heaps of rubble and twisted metal under which unrecovered bodies lay.

Initial estimates put infrastructure damage at 100 billion Taiwanese dollars (3.1 billion US dollars), and the finance ministry has warned of a drop in gross domestic product (GDP) of up to 0.5 percentage points.

More than 6,100 buildings, mainly high-rise apartment blocks containing up to 100 flats each, have been destroyed. A further 5,398 have been damaged.

More than 60 powerful aftershocks, quakes in their own right, cause more destruction daily, and Saturday afternoon the first distinct quake from a different faultline rocked central Taiwan.

A powerful earthquake aftershock hit Taiwan Saturday, shaking buildings in the capital Taipei far away from the epicentre of Tuesday's shockwave which killed 2,000.

No figures on damage or casualties were immediately available but seismologists said the quake measured 5.6 on the Richter scale.

They said the tremor was an aftershock from Tuesday's quake and originated 5.7 kilometres (3.4 miles) underground. Earlier in the day a separate earthquake of a different origin measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale struck Taichung county.

## Beijing asks Taipei if it wants UN aid

China Saturday expressed willingness to ask for a UN-backed international rescue effort to alleviate this week's devastating earthquake in Taiwan.

A letter from the mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) said a request to the UN would go forward only if Taiwan first requested Beijing to do so. Xinhua news agency reported.

We are authorized to inquire whether you want us to ask the United Nations to launch an international rescue action for the quake hit area."

## Fierce fighting in two Afghan cities

KABUL, Sept 25: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Saturday launched a second offensive in the country's north with 6,000 troops attacking two provincial cities in Kunduz province, the opposition said.

The fighting is fierce and it's going on now. Casualties are heavy but there has been no advance by the Taliban," an opposition spokesman, Mohammad Habel, told AFP.

He said the offensive at Dasht-i-Archi and Imam Sahib was backed by the militia's aging fleet of MiG fighter jets which flew eight sorties early Saturday killing at least 15 civilians.

Air traffic at Kabul airport was heavy. There was no independent confirmation and a Taliban spokesman was unavailable for comment.

Earlier the Taliban Saturday rejected claims by the opposition United Front of significant gains in the country's western provinces.

"Claims by the opposition of making ground in Nimroz, Farah and Shindad are virtually baseless and void of truth," a Taliban spokesman said in a interview with the official local daily newspaper, Heywadi.

"They don't have any proof in this regard," he added.

## Offensive against militias on in E Timor

DILI, East Timor, Sept 25: East Timor's peacekeepers turned up the heat on feared pro-Indonesian militias Saturday, with heavily armed sweeps of the capital as they flushed out those responsible for the destruction of the territory, reports AFP.

Armoured personnel carriers patrolled the streets of Dili during the hunt, protected by Black Hawk helicopters hovering overhead.

About 1,000 combat troops, backed by armoured personnel carriers and half a dozen helicopters, sealed off several city blocks Friday in the multinational force's first major display of strength.

The raids netted four militiamen, including a platoon commander of one of the most brutal gangs, the Aitarak (Thorn) militia.

Force spokesman Major Chip Henriss-Anderssen said the arrests sent a clear message to the gangs who have tried to melt into the crowds of refugees in Dili.

"You can't run, you can't

hide, justice is here," he said Friday.

The force is gradually building up to its expected strength of 7,500 but its Australian commander, Major General Peter Cosgrove, has said deployment may be speeded up in the face of militia threats and an increasingly hostile withdrawal by Indonesian soldiers.

All but a few thousand Indonesian soldiers have quit the territory, ahead of Monday's official handover of control to the International Force in East Timor (Interfet).

Refugees, emboldened by the strengthening presence of the UN-mandated peacekeepers, began trickling back into the capital Saturday.

East Timor's population of about 800,000 people was scattered by the bloodshed which followed an August 30 UN-administered vote overwhelmingly in favour of independence from Indonesia, with many taking to the hills and jungles outside the towns or into the neighbouring province of West

Timor. Many militiamen also retreated into Indonesian West Timor, forcing thousands of refugees across the border with them and vowing to resist the multinational peacekeeping force.

The continuing threat of militia attack has seriously hampered the progress of relief efforts in East Timor, especially to isolated areas where up to 190,000 people are believed to be sheltering.

A food convoy to East Timor's second largest city, Baucau, postponed Friday because of security concerns, left Dili under Interfet guard for the 115 km journey Saturday.

## Peacekeepers prepare to assume control from Indonesian army

Multinational troops mounted raids on pro-Jakarta militias and coped with a hostile Indonesian withdrawal Saturday, trying to keep order before formally gaining control of East Timor Monday.

The peacekeepers tightened their grip on the feared militia gangs with heavily armed sweeps of the capital, but indicated Indonesian police were allowing those captured in the raids to go free.

Armoured personnel carriers patrolled the streets of Dili during the hunt, protected by helicopters hovering overhead, as the international troops flushed out those responsible for the destruction.

But a spokesman for the International Force in East Timor (Interfet) indicated the soldiers' hands were tied in trying to prevent the militia from getting back on the streets and continuing to terrorise the community.

Colonel Mark Kelly told reporters the suspects were detained in accordance with Interfet's rules of engagement.

Interfet has no authority to hold suspects after disarming and questioning them and must hand them over to the Indonesian police. They are reportedly accepting suspects and releasing them.

## Threat of violence casts a shadow on Indian polls

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Indian authorities braced for violence Saturday as voting began in the fourth and penultimate stage of marathon general elections tipped to be won by the ruling Hindu nationalists, reports AFP.

The polling in nine states was covering some of the most violence-prone areas, including Bihar in the east and insurgency-hit provinces bordering Burma and Bangladesh in the northeast.

Polling booths opened at 7:00 am (7:30 am BST) in 74 constituencies. Election officials here said around 80 million voters were to choose from 664 contestants.

Voting will close at 5:00 p.m. (5:30 BST). The authorities ordered police to shoot rioters on sight in Bihar, where 38 people -- mostly police and election officials -- were among 47 killed nationwide in the last round of polling on September 18.

The autonomous Election Commission said it had taken "all possible steps" to ensure free and peaceful polling on Saturday.

The Election Commission is closely monitoring the arrangements in Bihar and elsewhere," said its spokesman, Subash Pant. "The home ministry is doing its best."

Tens of thousands of police and paramilitary forces were deployed in Bihar which shares a long border with Nepal. Most deaths in Bihar during the third round of polling were blamed on Maoist guerrillas, who tried to enforce a boycott of the polls by triggering landmines near polling booths.

Among the other states going to the polls Saturday were Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, and tiny Nagaland and Manipur in the northeast where separatist violence has claimed thousands of lives in the past 50 years.

In the far-eastern state of Assam, which will vote on October 3, a candidate of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party who was kidnapped one week ago was founded murdered on Friday.

The murder was blamed on the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), an outlawed group fighting for Assam's secession.

While exit polls from the first three rounds of polling showed a clear lead for Hindu nationalists, the main opposition Congress party is tipped to make major gains in Uttar Pradesh, which picks the highest number of 85 MPs.

The staggered battle for Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring Bihar, which elects the second largest quota of 54 MPs, will be crucial in determining the final profile of the 545-member parliament.

## Heavy security for fourth stage of elections

Polling was underway Saturday in the fourth and penultimate stage of India's election marathon, with security forces determined to prevent any repetition of the violence that marred the previous round.

The polling in nine states was largely peaceful, despite covering some of India's most violence-prone areas, including Bihar in the east and insurgency-hit provinces bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh in the northeast.

In the only violent incident, suspected tribal separatists in the far northeastern state of Nagaland exploded half-a-dozen small, handmade bombs in the state capital of Kohima.

No one was injured in the blasts, which police said were aimed at enforcing a separatist boycott of the polls.



An Indonesian soldiers disembarks from a truck to catch a boat back to Indonesia while supplies for Australian soldiers are unloaded by helicopter from HMAS Toubruk Saturday. HMAS Toubruk brought logistic supplies for the International Force for East Timor (Interfet) at the end of its first week of intervention to pacify the territory. — AFP photo

## Pak FM defends US coup warning

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 25: Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz on Friday defended a US warning against a possible coup in his country, saying it did not constitute interference in internal affairs, reports Reuters.

In an unusual step, US officials disclosed on Monday that the United States had warned political and military actors in Pakistan it would rights abuse charges, reports AFP.

The move reflected concern about political and military ferment. One US official said: "We hope there will be no return to the days of interrupted democracy in Pakistan."

## Pinochet faces 'most painful' experience of his life

SANTIAGO, Sept 25: Former dictator Augusto Pinochet told a Santiago newspaper he is going through the "most painful" moment of his life as he awaits proceedings for his extradition from Britain to Spain on human rights abuse charges, reports AFP.

Pinochet gave the interview, published Friday, to La Segunda in early September. His extradition hearings begin Monday, nearly a year after he was detained in London.

"Without a doubt, this has been the longest and most painful experience," Pinochet said.

## Pakistan to respond if India introduces N-defence

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 25: Pakistan warned on Friday that if India develops a three-pronged air, land and sea-based nuclear weapons delivery system, Pakistan will have to respond to the perceived threat, reports AP.

Pakistan's foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz told reporters, "The recently announced nuclear doctrine by India, even though in a draft form, causes us deep concern because it militates against all initiatives for nuclear and conventional restraints in the region."

The doctrine envisages a triad of operationally deployed land, air and sea-based nuclear weapons, Aziz said.

"If India pursues this doctrine, whose dangerous implications should be quite evident, Pakistan will be obliged to adopt appropriate policies in response, for the preservation and maintenance of deterrence."

India and Pakistan both tested nuclear weapons last year and have since tested ballistic missiles, raising fears of an arms race.

The two nations have already fought three wars and came close to a fourth in May during a weeks-long conflict in the disputed territory of Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state in predominantly Hindu India.

"I wish to make it clear we will not engage in a conventional and nuclear arms race by matching India bomb-for-bomb and missile for missile," Aziz said.

Aziz on Wednesday urged the five permanent members of the Security Council to convene a conference "to promote the goals of strategic restraint and stability in South Asia."

But his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, brushed aside the offer, saying that all the world's nations should participate in any proposed South Asian peace conference.

Aziz called the decades-old standoff over Kashmir "the most dangerous source of conflict in the world."

## Several dead as Russian jets continue raid on Grozny

GROZNY, Russia, Sept 25: Several people were killed early Saturday when Russian warplanes carried out a new wave of air raids on Grozny, the Chechen presidency said, reports AFP.

According to the Interfax news agency, quoting unidentified sources in Grozny, seven people were killed and 24 others wounded.

Targets included an oil refinery and storage depot. An AFP reporter said oil tanks were ablaze in the Oktabrskiy quarter of the capital and at Khaian-Koryt, 10 km away.

Russian warplanes also destroyed Chechen television transmitters in Grozny overnight, news agency ITAR-TASS reported Saturday, quoting the Russian air force.

Air force chief General Anatoly Kormukov was quoted as saying that Chechen television's technical installations "have ceased to exist."

On Friday Russian warplanes carried out repeated air attacks on Grozny and its surrounding area for a second consecutive day, killing at least 23 people, according to the Chechen presidency.

Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat attends a luncheon at the US Chamber of Commerce Friday in Washington, DC. — AFP photo

Running battles Thursday

JAKARTA, Sept 25: Jakarta braced for more protests Saturday as militant student groups planned to march on parliament, in demonstrations against a new security bill that have already left at least six dead, reports AFP.

The Forum Korea (City Forum) students, prominent in organising the bloody protests of the last two days, said they would join with at least two other groups and descend on parliament later Saturday to protest the new army-backed security bill.

BRITV 6 slain in Philippines clashes: Four people were killed in clashes between two rival Muslim clans in the southern province of Sulu while two others were slain by bandits in a separate incident in Davao del Sur province, the military said in Zamboanga, Philippines, AFP reports from Philippines. Followers of Irish Aning and Ibin Juhurt, two local clan leaders with a longtime feud between them, began trading gunfire in Lugus town on Thursday, in fighting which continued to Friday, the head of military forces in the south, Lieutenant General Edgardo Espinosa said. Albright to visit Africa in Oct: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will travel to Africa next month for 10 days, visiting Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania, the State Department announced on Friday, Reuters reports from New York.

Jakarta braces for more protests: JAKARTA, Sept 25: Jakarta braced for more protests Saturday as militant student groups planned to march on parliament, in demonstrations against a new security bill that have already left at least six dead, reports AFP. The Forum Korea (City Forum) students, prominent in organising the bloody protests of the last two days, said they would join with at least two other groups and descend on parliament later Saturday to protest the new army-backed security bill. Running battles Thursday

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