

# Alarm grows as military take over in Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Oct 15: International alarm rose Friday as Pakistan's military ignored worldwide appeals to restore democratic rule and imposed effective martial law after deposing the civilian government in a bloodless coup earlier in the week, reports AFP.

Concern was most keenly felt in neighbouring India where, although the government was unwilling to immediately react to the state of emergency declaration, experts and former leaders were quick to warn of trouble.

Former prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral warned General Pervez Musharraf's takeover could only raise tension on the subcontinent where India and Pakistan, the world's newest nuclear powers, have been bitter rivals for five decades since independence and partition.

Most recently they waged a border conflict in Kashmir in May to July. The divided Himalayan state has been the

root of two of their three wars. "The history of Gen. Musharraf's military career and his observations on Kashmir show India should expect confrontation from him," Gujral, prime minister in 1997-98, told The Asian Age newspaper.

Brahman Chellaney, a security expert with the private Centre for Policy Studies, concurred. "What has happened in Pakistan has serious negative implications for India," he said. Analysts said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's two-day-old government would be cautious as it would have to deal with the junta.

New Delhi had a muted reaction to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ouster on Tuesday, merely expressing "grave concern." But Vajpayee convened an urgent cabinet meeting and Indian troops on the border were put on high alert.

In Washington, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the decision to impose a state of emergency was a "step in the

wrong direction". "We were hoping he would take steps to re-establish democracy procedures and re-institute elections," he said.

The White House was more cautious. "We are watching the situation very closely. We are still trying to ascertain what ultimately the results will be," White House spokesman Jim Fallin told AFP.

He added US ambassador to Pakistan, William Milan, would meet the country's new leaders Friday.

Former colonial ruler Britain also expressed alarm. "It is a seriously and deeply worrying step," a Foreign Office spokesman said. British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President Bill Clinton are among those who have called for a return to democracy.

Also in London a leader of former premier Benazir Bhutto's opposition Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) called for elections and said a state of emergency would not be welcomed.

"People were not happy when the civilian government declared a state of emergency (after nuclear tests last year) and people will not be happy about it now," Nisar Khuhro, a close Benazir aide told AFP.

And inside Pakistan, the country's main fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami party expressed alarm for the first time since Tuesday.

"It is shocking," Jamaat's secretary general, Syed Munawwar Hassan, told AFP. "Nobody can support the suspension of fundamental rights or martial law."

In Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said: "Such a move goes against democracy and we are extremely concerned."

Vice Foreign Minister Yutaka Kawashima summoned Pakistani Ambassador Touqir Hussain to express concern that military rule "will not lead to instability in Southwest Asia and undermine nuclear non-proliferation."

## Parliament may be dissolved, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has said he may recommend the dissolution of Parliament soon, the first step toward holding a general election, a news report said Friday, reports AP.

"We will see whether Parliament can be dissolved or not. If we have enough voters (among lawmakers), we might dissolve it," Mahathir was quoted as saying by The Star newspaper.

Mahathir said the annual budget for 2000 will be presented to Parliament as scheduled on Oct. 29 and that the election date would not be before the budget.

A spokesman in the prime minister's office confirmed Mahathir's remarks on elections.

"I give you my assurance, Oct. 29 will be budget day," Mahathir was quoted as telling local reporters on Thursday.

As a first step toward election, Mahathir must ask Malaysia's constitutional monarch to dissolve Parliament. The election commission would be expected to announce a voting date soon after.

Malaysia must call general elections sometime before July 2000, but a snap poll is expected as early as November. Mahathir has said he may call a snap poll so that the opposition does not get enough time to campaign.

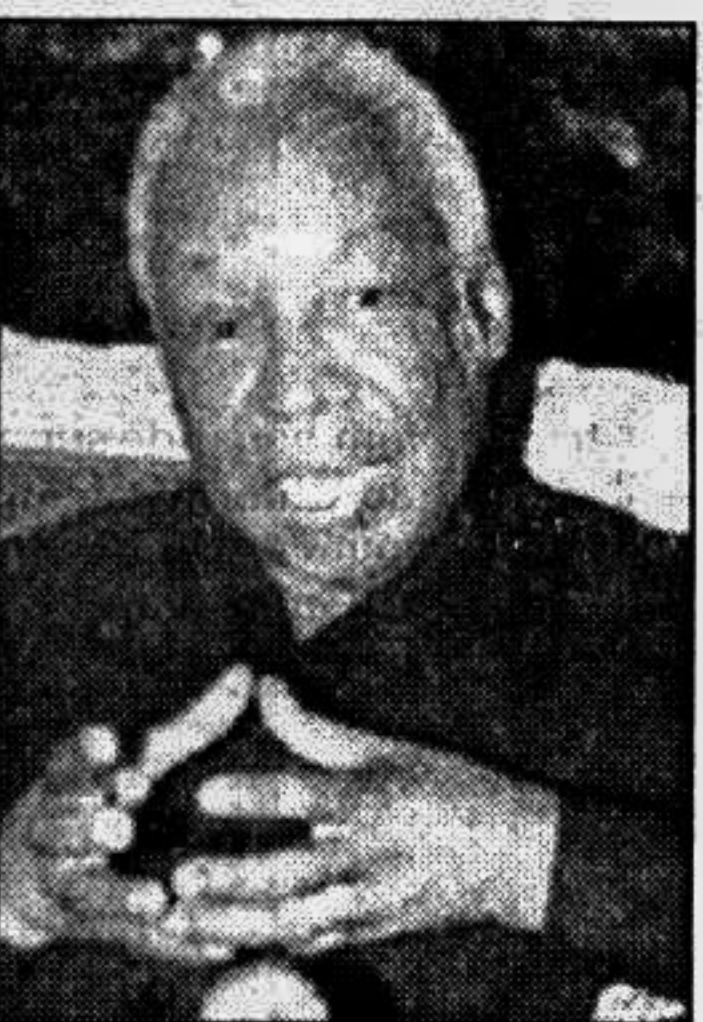
## Three killed in Kashmir blast

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 15: Two Indian soldiers and a civilian were killed by a bomb set off by Muslim separatists in Kashmir, officials said Friday, reports AFP.

The bomb concealed in an autorickshaw exploded late Thursday at Tangpora on the outskirts of Srinagar, the summer capital of the Himalayan state.

Three other soldiers and three civilians were injured in the blast.

The Harkat ul-Mujahideen, a hardline Islamic group which is fighting for Kashmir's secession from India, claimed responsibility for the bomb attack.



## Nyerere's body to be flown home Tuesday

DAR ES SALAAM, Oct 15: The body of Tanzania's former president Julius Nyerere is to be flown home from London on Tuesday, an airline official said, according to Friday's Kiswahili daily Mtanzania, reports AFP.

A special plane will be sent to London on Monday night to collect the body of Nyerere, who died on Thursday of cancer in a London hospital, aged 77. The aircraft would arrive back in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday, the paper said.

A senior official of the state-owned Air Tanzania Corporation (ATC) said that the plane had earlier been scheduled to leave Dar es Salaam on Friday and leave London for the return flight on Saturday night, according to Mtanzania.

Tanzanian High Commissioner to Britain, Abdulkadir Shareef, meanwhile said that a requiem mass for Nyerere would be celebrated at the Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral in London at around midday on Saturday, the daily also reported.

Shareef said that after the mass, arrangements have been made for people to pay their last respects to Mwalimu (Teacher), as the African elder statesman was popularly known in Tanzania.

Tanzanians were waiting for the official funeral programme expected to be announced by the government later in the day.

## Chile seeks release of Pinochet

SANTIAGO, Oct 15: Chile on Thursday formally asked the British government to release former dictator Augusto Pinochet - detained in London while awaiting possible extradition to Spain - on grounds that his health is rapidly deteriorating, reports AFP.

The Foreign Office in London confirmed it had received an official letter from the Chilean government, but would not say what it contained.

"We have made a serious case," Foreign Minister Juan Gabriel Valdés told Radio Cooperativa here. "This morning, acting on instructions from the president (Eduardo Frei) and myself, an official note was sent to London."



Palestinians prisoners waving from the bus as they enter into the West Bank town of Ramallah after they were freed yesterday. Israel freed the 151 Palestinian prisoners under the terms of the Sharm el-Sheikh peace accord with the Palestinian. — AFP photo

# Israel begins releasing Palestinian prisoners

NAHAL OZ, Israel, Oct 15: Israel freed busloads of Palestinian and Arab prisoners from its jails on Friday, one week later than planned under an interim peace accord, reports AFP.

A total of 151 inmates are being released, including several members of the militant Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are violently opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

"It's a good step, it's a happy day for Arabs and Palestinians," Palestinian Minister for Prisoners Hisham Abdelrazek said as he waited with families of inmates at Nahal Oz crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel.

The first prisoners, dressed in civilian clothes, flashed the "V" for victory sign as they were taken in buses from Ashkelon

jail in southern Israel before dawn to various checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza.

In Tokyo, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat welcomed the release, which was originally planned for October 8 under the terms of the Sharm el-Sheikh accord he signed with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak last month but was held up because of a dispute over which prisoners should go free.

This is part of the Sharm el-Sheikh commitment and there are still many other prisoners that we are going to work hard with the Israelis in order to acquire their release," Arafat told a news conference.

A first group of 15 prisoners was released to waiting families in the West Bank town of Hebron, including several teenagers and members of Hamas and Jihad, groups which

have waged numerous deadly attacks against Jews.

"I feel sad because our brothers are still in jail, those who have been there all their life," said freed Hamas member Ibrahim Msalam, who had two months left to serve of an eight-year jail term. "They have to release them, not us."

At the Nahal Oz crossing, a crowd of around 2,000 jubilant Palestinians sang and danced and waved flags as they waited for the release of their loved ones who arrived in buses on the Israeli side of the checkpoint.

"Barak, Barak, the prisoners will not give up," they chanted.

"It's not enough, all prisoners serving long sentences should be released," said a Hamas leader, Ismail Abu Shnab. "There will be no peace if the prisoners are still in jail."

## Russia launches new kilo class submarine for Indian navy

MOSCOW, Oct 15: The Russian "Admiral Shipyard" in St Petersburg yesterday launched a new kilo class submarine for Indian Navy, sources in arms exporting agency Rosvoorouzhenie told PTI.

The new submarine part of the 877 EKM Project, is the second of two vessels which Russia had contracted to build under a 1997 deal between India and Russia arms export corporation "Rosvoorouzhenie," the sources said.

Russia has already delivered the first submarine INS Sindurakshak in December 1997.

The new submarine, which has enhanced noise suppression systems that make it difficult to detect, would be equipped with latest electronic systems and deadly weapons including anti-submarine IRE missiles with "Smart" warheads.

Only recently the Kremlin cleared the export of these Smart Missiles to friendly countries and the Indian Navy would be the first foreign navy to receive them.

It would also have deadly Iglu anti-aircraft missiles.

## China denounces EU human rights report

BEIJING, Oct 15: China Friday denounced the European Union's human rights report, accusing Brussels of deliberately distorting facts and interfering in China's internal affairs, reports AFP.

"The Chinese government is opposed to the practice of any country and blocs of countries who distort facts and use human rights as an excuse to interfere in China's internal affairs," foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue was quoted by the China Daily as saying.

"The Chinese side believes that the allegations of the EU in the annual report on the human rights situation in China is entirely baseless."

Zhang said "unremitting efforts" by the Chinese government aimed at improving its human rights situation had scored "enormous achievements" and "attracted the attention of the world."

The first human rights report by the EU, released on Monday, underlined concerns over "administrative detention and re-education through forced labor which are still largely utilized in an arbitrary manner," in China.

"Some resolute efforts aimed at reforming the system of administrative detention, including the early intervention of a judge in the detention period, must be urgently made as the absence of arbitrary measures is one of the pillars of the rule of law," it said.

## Clinton nominates Gen Ralston as NATO chief

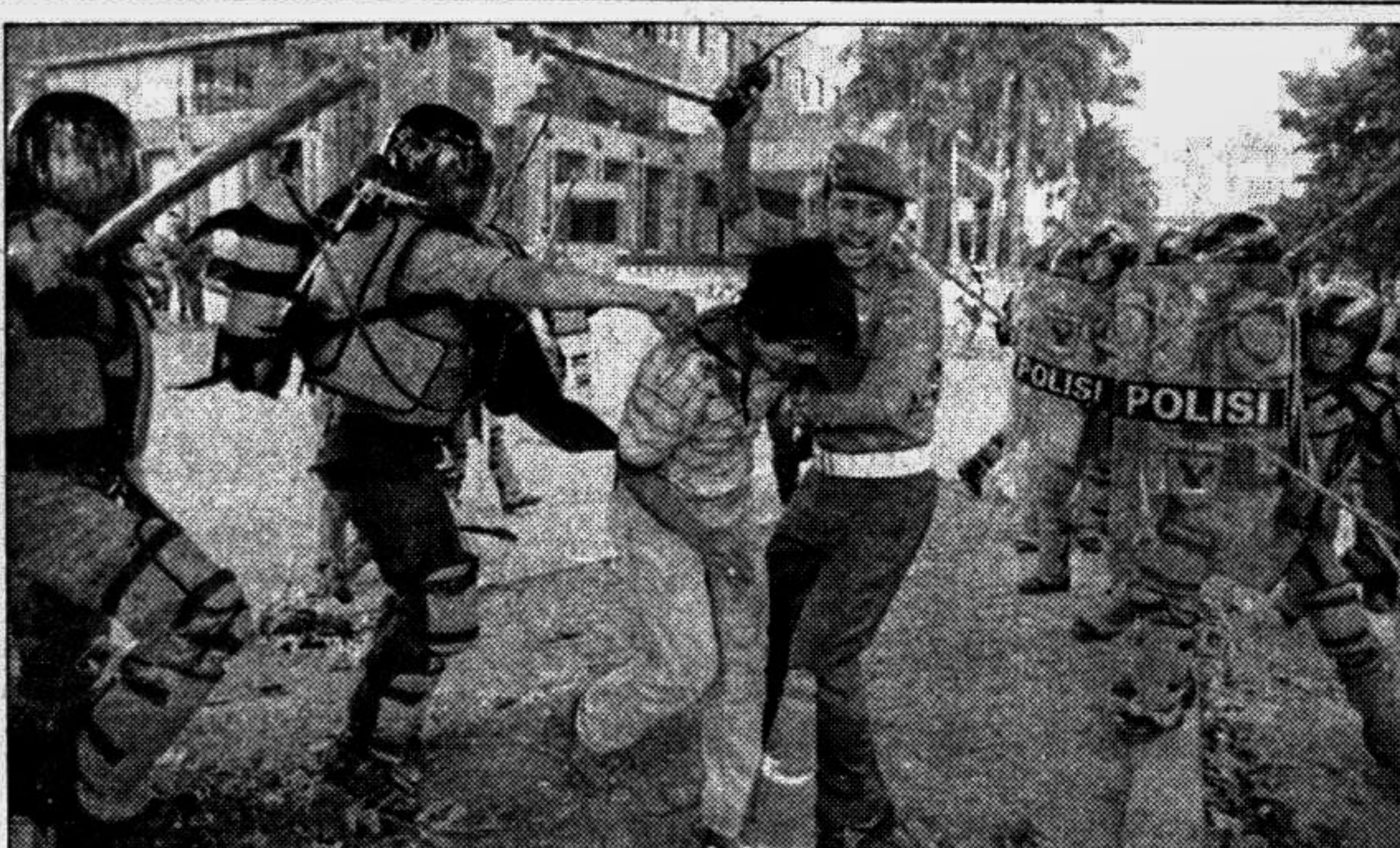
WASHINGTON, Oct 15: President Bill Clinton officially nominated General Joseph Ralston, the current vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as supreme allied commander of NATO, replacing General Wesley Clark, reports AFP.

Clark's departure was announced by the Pentagon at the end of July. He will leave his post next spring, three months before the end of his term.

Replacing Clark, who directed NATO bombings against Yugoslavia during the conflict in Kosovo, has been seen as a punishment after press reports of tension between the NATO commander, US Defence Secretary William Cohen and the commander of KFOR peacekeepers in Kosovo, British General Michael Jackson.

President Clinton nevertheless paid homage to Clark in the statement naming his successor, saying he did an "extraordinary job" as supreme allied commander "who led the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to a 'brilliant victory' in operation Allied Force" against Yugoslavia.

Ralston's nomination to NATO, the second in three and a half years, must be confirmed by the defence committee of the NATO council.



Indonesian soldiers beat a protester during a clash in Jakarta yesterday. Security forces clashed with more than 1,000 students and local residents near the Indonesian parliament, as assembly members inside the building discussed the fate of President B.J. Habibie. At least three soldiers were injured in the clash. — AFP photo

## Police, students clash in Jakarta

JAKARTA, Oct 15: Security forces clashed with thousands of students and local residents around Indonesia's parliament Friday as assembly members huddled in the building to determine the fate of President B.J. Habibie, reports AFP.

Anti-riot personnel fired warning shots and opened up with tear gas volleys for the second straight day as they chased after rock-throwing protesters in avenues and alleys near the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) which chooses the president on Wednesday.

Estimates of the number of demonstrators, some armed with petrol bombs, ranged from 2,000 to 5,000. By early evening soldiers and police were able to force the demonstrators away from the parliamentary complex, witnesses said.

Inside parliament itself, the 700-member assembly was busy in factional meetings before rendering a verdict on the per-

formance of Habibie, who delivered a three-hour speech to the body on Thursday defending his record.

The 63-year-old engineer was catapulted to power after his mentor, veteran ruler Suharto, resigned as Jakarta was rocked by bloody riots in May 1998.

A rejection of Habibie's "accountability" speech by the MPR could effectively scuttle Habibie's bid to get a five-year term.

Habibie is being opposed by Megawati Sukarnoputri, 53, daughter of Indonesia's founding president Sukarno, and Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, 59, head of the largest Islamic organisation in the predominantly Muslim country of more than 200 million people.

Police said about 70 people had been injured since clashes began Thursday.

The state Antara news agency quoted an official as saying that during the

overnight clashes Thursday around parliament and a nearby Catholic university, at least eight people were arrested and 49 injured, including 11 security personnel, four onlookers, and 34 demonstrators.

University students who spearheaded Thursday's protests were joined Friday by uniformed high-schoolers and local residents when they gathered in front of the private Atma Jaya University not far from the parliament building.

Trouble began when rocks rained upon anti-riot troops and police deployed near a flyover to block any march by protesters.

The security forces first reacted by hurling back rocks, but as the stoning intensified from various directions, they fired teargas and warning shots.

Skirmishes continued all day and into the night as legislators continued to huddle in parliament.

# Russia storms Chechen stronghold

NEAR GORAGORSKY, Russia, Oct 15: Federal troops stormed the former Chechen stronghold of Goragorsky on Friday and set their sights on a village only 15 kilometres (10 miles) west of separatist capital Grozny, reports AFP.

Russian soldiers near Goragorsky told AFP they had orders to march to the village of Dolinsky once Goragorsky (60 kilometres east of Grozny) had been fully checked for any suspected rebels.

The operation, which will involve an estimated 3,000 Russian soldiers, is expected to last about two days.

"This operation requires lots of grenades because gunmen may be hiding in basements. It is better for everyone to walk out onto the streets once we move in," an officer named Gennady said.

"We are moving to Dolinsky next," he added. "Clearly most of the Chechens have pulled

back. We have not faced any return fire since Wednesday."

Chechen officials in Grozny confirmed to AFP that the rebels had withdrawn from Goragorsky, the scene of intense fighting for most of this week, and were retreating towards the capital.

Generals have made the seizure of Goragorsky one of their top priorities since invading the republic on October 1.

Federal forces have stormed the rebel state for the first time since the brutal 1994-96 war with a self-declared goal of wiping out suspected terrorist bases Moscow holds responsible for organising a wave of terrorist bombings and two incursions in Russia.

Fierce battles continued Friday in other parts of Chechnya's western front as Grozny claimed six weeks of Russian attacks had left more than 2,000 Chechen civilians dead.

Russia reported conducting 40 sorties over the republic overnight, more than double the figure issued, despite Chechen claims that they had shot down a Russian warplane and killed its pilot.

Artillery struck the western Chechen villages of Bamut -- a scene of intense fighting Thursday -- Achkhoy-Martan and Assinovskaya, the defence ministry in Moscow said.

Defence officials based in Dagestan said one Russian soldier was killed and four others wounded in overnight fighting in the northeastern Shelkovskaya region. Some 20 Chechen gunmen were killed in the action.

Grozny has disputed Russia's casualty figure reports. Chechen officials said Thursday that 920 federal troops had been killed over the past three weeks.

It reported that 37 Chechen soldiers have been killed and 45 wounded since September 23.

## Kenneth Starr to quit next week: Report

WASHINGTON, Oct 15: President Bill Clinton's implacable prosecutor Kenneth Starr will formally quit his post as independent counsel next week, according to the Internet-based news service The Drudge Report, says AFP.

Starr, who sought to resign in August but was turned down by a tribunal on grounds he still had work to do, will be replaced by one of his assistants Robert Ray, said the news service run by Matt Drudge, who did not disclose his sources.

The Drudge Report also said Starr privately expressed deep regret over the prosecution of Linda Tripp, a key witness behind Clinton's failed impeachment for his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

## IRAQ, Indonesia to strengthen ties

Iraq and Indonesia signed an agreement overnight to expand their economic cooperation, particularly in oil exploration, the official Iraqi news agency INA reported Friday, AFP reports from Baghdad.

The accord was signed by the two countries' respective trade ministers, Mohamed Mahdi Saleh and Rahardi Ramelan, at the end of the fifth round of meetings of their joint economic commission. INA said the agreement pledged increased efforts to widen cooperation in petroleum, industrial, agricultural, health, communications and educational sectors.

Venezuelan President in S Korea: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez arrived Seoul Friday for a three-day state visit aimed at boosting economic ties between South Korea and the Latin American country, officials said, AFP reports from Seoul.

Chavez, the first Venezuelan head of state ever to visit South Korea, will hold a summit with President Kim Dae-Jung later Friday focussing on boosting economic relations between the countries, notably in the technology field. "We expect the visit to provide the momentum to foster increased trade and investment ties between the two countries," a foreign ministry official said.

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