### Pakistan urges Indian PM to join peace efforts

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: Pakistan yesterday urged India to review and reappraise its hostility towards Pakistan and asked Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to join Islamabad's Military Ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf's efforts for peace in the region, reports PTI.

The government of Pakistan

urges India to review and reappraise its hostility towards Pakistan.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee should join Gen. Pervez Musharraf in efforts for peace in the region, the foreign office said a day after Vajpayee's statement in Jalandhar that New Delhi would like to discuss Kashmir with Islamabad with the focus on vacation of Pak-occupied Kash-

The threat of another war held out by Atal Bihari Vajpayee is reminiscent of the policy of bluster and intimidation that characterised Inc'an statements after its nuclear weapons test of May 11 and 13. 1998. India should know that such incendiary rhetoric is entirely counter productive, it said in a statement.

Pakistan, it said, would continue with its policy of maintaining peace with India and pursuing peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue.

### Hackers attack Yahoo

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb 8: Internet giant Yahoo stumbled Monday when hackers staged an attack that disrupted the enormous search engine and Web portal for almost three hours, a company spokeswoman said, reports

Yahoo did not call the incident a "hack" since their computers' security was never breached, the spokeswoman said. But someone was sending enormous volumes of information through the Yahoo site that clogged the system and forced the site to a standstill.

"Routers experienced a distributed denial of service attack at one of their California's data centre." the spokeswoman said. "Someone or something cre-

ated a fake traffic jam by sending packets of mock traffic," she added. "It was the first time Yahoo experienced difficulties to

that extent." The origin of the attack is unknown.

Yahoo is one of the world's most popular Internet sites, with 120 million visitors using 465 million Web pages a day during December.

### Three civilians, soldier killed in Aceh

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia. Feb 8: At least three civilians and a soldier were killed in the latest bout of violence in Indonesia's rebellious Aceh province, security authorities said today, reports AFP.

The soldier was killed and another wounded when their convoy of motorcycles was ambushed by unidentified gunmen in West Aceh district Monday, Lieutenant Colonel Widhagdo

Widhagdo said a gunfight between the troops and the attackers took place but that he had "not received any information of casualties on the attackers'

# Israel launches air strikes in Lebanon: 3 power stations hit

BEIRUT, Feb 8: Israeli warplanes struck a guerilla stronghold and power stations across Lebanon early today in retaliation for Hezbollah attacks that killed five Israeli soldiers in the past two weeks. Fifteen civilians were wounded in the eastern town of Baalbek, but there were no reports of injuries from other areas targeted by the jets, reports AP.

Following the strikes, large areas of Lebanon plunged into darkness, including the capital Beirut, Baalbek and the cities of Sidon and Tyre in the south.

Witnesses said the air raids began with concentrated attacks on Baalbek, where they unleashed five air-to-surface missiles - three on a power station on the edge of the town and two on a Hezbollah stronghold.

The attack on the power station set it on fire, and the facility was still burning two hours after the strike. All 15 people injured, who include four women and four children, lived in houses near the station.

Their injuries were caused by flying glass and debris. Some houses in the area cracked and shop shutters were blown off.

A key Hezbollah position at 'Al-Aseera, another Baalbek area, was hit by two missiles. but damage could not be ascertained because the area was immediately cordoned off by Lebanese security police and Hezbollah officials.

The impacts blew out windows and doors of apartments in Baalbek as jets roared over the Shi'ite Muslim-populated city, also home to world-famous Roman ruins. Soon after the second sortie, ground gunners opened up with a anti-aircraft fire on the raiding jets.

A second wave of warplanes hit a television relay station belonging to Hezbollah on the southeastern edge of Baalbek, according to witnesses.

power transmission in the mountains east of the northern port city of Tripoli. The attacks did not disrupt Tripoli's power

supply, but surrounding areas had no power following the raid, according to witnesses.

The Jamhour substation on a hill overlooking Beirut was also hit by the jets, which returned 15 minutes later to strike it again, triggering antiaircraft fire and tracers which lit up the Beirut night sky. Witnesses said that a missile hit the road in front of the facility. creating a huge crater that prevented firemen from reaching the site for about 45 minutes after a second missiles scared a direct hit and set the facility

Beirut was plunged into darkness soon after the raids as Israeli jets roared low over the city for about half an hour. A huge ball of orange flame and clouds of smoke rose from the Beirut station. The same station was hit twice before once in The Israeli jets also hit June, when Israel previously punished Lebanon by targeting power stations and once in

The Israeli army said at-

tacks on three power plants in Lebanon were in response to "the severe escalation in the activities of Hezbollah and other organisations in south Lebanon.

Tuesday's raids came hours after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's Security Cabinet ordered a "harsh military response," according to a senior Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Those who have harmed us, will be

harmed," Barak said Monday. Hezbollah has been fighting to drive the Israelis out of a security zone they established in southern Lebanon in 1985 to protect the country's northern settlements from cross-border guerilla attacks.

Barak said last July 7 that Israel would withdraw from the area within a year. He had hoped a pullout would be through an agreement with Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, but Israeli-Syrian peace talks broke down last



A firefighter speaks on his radio next to the wreckage of the Deir Nbouh power station yesterday. Israeli aircraft knocked out three power stations in Lebanon, plunging town and villages into darkness and injuring 18 civilians in retaliation for guerilla attacks on Israeli troops in the south. - AFP photo

Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (L) shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee prior to their talks at the Hyderabad House yesterday following a welcoming ceremony at the presidential palace in New Delhi. Wahid is on a two-day official visit to India, as part of a larger world tour.

### Wahid begins India visit

NEW DELHI, Feb 8: Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid began a two-day state visit to India today, saying he would continue to press for the resignation of security minister and former military chief General Wiranto, reports AFP.

"The word sack is too heavy. Anyway I will ask him to quit," Wahid told reporters when asked if he would dismiss the recalcitrant minister on his return to Jakarta next week after an extended Europe-Asia

Following the welcoming ceremony at the presidential palace, Wahid visited the memorial to India's independence hero Mahatma Gandhi.

Later in the day, he met with Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and witnessed the signing of a tourism cooperation pact.

Wahid, for his part, paid tribute to India's cultural tradition and the historical links between the two countries.

"India is one of the sources of our culture," Wahid told reporters at the palace. "Part of our vocabulary comes from Sanskrit ... and Urdu.'

Wahid was scheduled to leave New Delhi for South Korea on Wednesday evening.

## Wiranto hits back over rights abuse charges

JAKARTA, Feb 8: Indonesia's former military chief General Wiranto has broken a weeklong silence to hit back at a national human rights panel which implicated him in atrocities in East Timor, reports AFP.

In an interview with the Straits Times in Singapore published Tuesday, Wiranto said he would not accept personal or legal responsibility for any crimes committed by his He has resisted pressure from

President Abdurrahman Wahid -- who is on an overseas tour -to resign as senior security minister after the panel, set up to probe the violence that flared in the former Indonesian territory in September 1999, implicated him in the terror.

He cited as an example the infamous My Lai massacre of innocent villagers in Vietnam by US troops.

"When one of the US officers in Vietnam during the Vietnam War killed a number of innocent villagers, the My Lai incident, I don't think the commander-in-chief of US troops in Vietnam, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked to be legally responsible," he said. A UN commission of inquiry

has also implicated Wiranto in crimes against humanity in East Timor and called for an international tribunal to try him and five other Indonesian gen-But Wiranto insisted the

buck did not stop at the top where unlawful activities by soldiers were concerned, but with their immediate platoon or company commanders.

He reiterated that he was not resigning his cabinet post because it would be seen as an admission of guilt.

But Wiranto left open the possibility he would quit if Wahid demands it on his return from overseas next weekend, and the general added he did not want to discuss the issue in the media.

"In this country (Indonesia), if a person resigns from office. it can be interpreted as an admission of guilt and admission of wrongdoing. "I have performed my duty

for my country to the best of my

ability. I have never committed

any kind of unlawful activity,

and I am proud of my record,"

Wahid, who arrived in India Tuesday, said in Europe that he would pardon Wiranto if he was found guilty of rights abuses in East Timor.

Expressing regret that the

He challenged the panel to

And he said he had documen-

world saw him as a "barbarian,"

Wiranto attacked the Indone-

sian government-backed panel

which implicated him in the

violence as being anti-military

find a "single evidence against

me concerning unlawful activ-

tary proof that he did every-

thing possible to ensure troops

respected the rights of the East

Timorese, including their de-

sire for independence.

and biased.

"He will be amnestied, pardoned, after he is convicted," if found guilty. Wahid said in an interview with the Portuguese daily Diario de Noticias.

"Whatever his guilt, whatever his mistakes, he (Wiranto) was the supreme commander and we will respect him," Wahid

## Lanka steps up security after bus bomb attacks

has heightened already tight se- roundings." curity on public transport after a spate of parcel bomb attacks against buses, officials said today, reports AFP.

Warnings were issued to bus crews to be more vigilant for unattended luggage after a parcel bomb ripped through a crowded bus in central Sri Lanka Monday, killing one passenger and wounding 50 others, police said.

be on the alert.

getting a seat in a crowded bus, passengers are usually more worried about securing a seat," a local police official said. 'We are appealing to them to

Officials said state radio and television have stepped up adverts aimed at minimising the risk of parcel bomb attacks in public places.

An empty bus was also targeted Monday, four days after three similar attacks near the capital Colombo wounded 30 passengers.

Both blasts on Monday were in the district of Monaragala. Passengers were also urged to 254 km east of here, police said, adding the number of casualties "Because of difficulties in would have been higher if not for a mechanical failure in one of the buses.

The driver had asked passengers to get off because of a problem with the gearbox," a

COLOMBO, Feb 8: Sri Lankan be more vigilant about the sur- police spokesman said. "A total of 51 people wounded in the first bus and in the second blast there are no casualties.

One of those wounded died in hospital, police said.

Officials said they suspected both attacks were the work of the same group and that the explosive devices had been rigged with a timing mechanism to go off at about the same time.

There were about 250 grams of explosives in each bomb," a local official said as an investigation got underway.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombings against buses, but police said they were working on the basis that it was the work of Tamil rebels.

Croatian presidential candidate Stipe Mesic smiles while celebrating his victory in Zagreb on Monday after first unofficial results in Croatia's presidential elections are released.

— AFP photo

### Explosion in Russian apartment kills nine

MOSCOW, Feb 8: At least nine people were killed and 10 injured in a suspected gas explosion today at an apartment block in Khabarovsk, in Russia's Far East, NTV television reported, says AFP.

Dozens of people may be trapped in the rubble of the fivestorey building which belongs to the military administration, Khabarovsk city official Alexander Gorbunov told NTV. The report quoted emergency

services as saying the bodies of nine people, including that of an eight-year-old child, had been found in the rubble. One section of the building was said to have been destroyed. The explosion was appar-

ently caused by a gas leak in an apartment on one of the top two floors, the emergency services said, adding that residents had reported smelling gas just before the blast.

### Two small planes collide over Los Angeles: 4 dead

LOS ANGELES, Feb 8: Two small planes collided over Los Angeles and dropped out of the clear, sunny sky Monday, one of them crashing in flames on a golf course. All four people aboard were killed, reports AP. No one on the ground was hurt.

Two men were killed in the plane that plunged through power lines and landed on the golf course, and a couple believed to be in their 60s died in the other plane, which fell into the trees near busy Interstate 5, said Fire Department spokesman Bob Collis.

Golfers on the sixth fairway at Cascades Golf Club scattered as burning debris fell out of the sky over the San Fernando Valley.

One group of golfers was talking about last week's Alaska Airlines crash off the Southern California coast when the two small planes collided overhead in the midmorning.

### Japanese opposition ends parliament boycott TOKYO, Feb 8: Japanese oppoparties greater input in deciding the Liberal Party and Buddhist-

sition parties today abandoned an unprecedented 11-day parliamentary boycott after being promised a bigger say in debates, officials said, reports

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan accepted a compromise offered by House of Representatives Speaker Soichiro Ito to break the deadlock, said party spokesman Nobuhiro Imaizumi. Two smaller opposition par-

ties -- the Social Democratic Party and Japan Communist Party -- rejected the deal but agreed to drop their boycott of the parliament anyway. The deal gave opposition

the timetable for the parliament, or Diet, and more opportunities to question Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, according to a copy of the agreement.

"We have accepted the compromise offered by lower house speaker Ito," said the Democratic Party of Japan spokesman. "We are now ready to return to parliament sessions, including budget deliberations," he said.

Opposition parties have been boycotting the Diet to protest an alleged lack of debate over a law to reduce the number of lawmakers in the lower house. The prime minister's Liberal Democratic Party and its allies,

backed Komeito party, enacted the law February 2 in spite of the boycott.

Obuchi welcomed the deal. "I am delighted," he told Japanese reporters at his official residence, according to Jiji Press news agency. "If they appear (in the Diet to ask questions) I will answer."

But two opposition parties made it clear they were returning to the Diet under protest. "We reject the compromise. It

is a selfish view of the ruling parties and gives no consideration to the opposition," said a Social Democratic Party official dealing with Diet affairs. who refused to be named

### Lift sanctions or face consequences North Korea warns US

SEOUL, Feb 8: North Korea today warned the United States to lift economic sanctions against the Stalinist regime or face the "consequences" of extending North Korea's economic isolation, reports AFP. The warning carried by the

official media came less than two weeks after North Korea agreed to send its first ever high-level delegation to the United States in March for talks aimed at improving their long-hostile relations. Pyongyang's official Rodong

Sinmun daily blasted US President Bill Clinton for reportedly refusing to drop decades-old sanctions against North Korea and for allegedly planning to reinforce them. "The US has opted to escalate

economic sanctions against the DPRK (North Korea) while paying lip-service to 'dialogue' and 'improved relations," the editorial, carried by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

"The improvement of relations cannot go with economic sanctions. If the US truly wants dialogue and improved relations with the DPRK, it should take all-inclusive, full and practical steps to lift the sanc-

"The US is well advised to think twice over all the consequences to be entailed by its escalated economic sanctions against the DPRK," it warned. Under a deal struck between

the enemies in September, North Korea agreed to a moratorium on its long-range missile test launches in return for an easing of sanctions imposed by Washington with which it remains technically at war.

In January, the two sides decided to take their bid to improve their hostile ties one step further when, according to US officials. Pyongyang agreed to send a high-ranking official to Washington for a landmark

The paper said the lifting of US sanctions was Pyongyang's right, not a gift, and stressed that above all else North Korea cherished its independence and sovereignty and would not be beholden to Washington. "It will be a great miscalcula-

tion if the US thinks that it can frighten us or isolate and stifle our socialism through economic pressure," it said. The attack came just weeks

before expected preparatory talks in New York for the North Korean visit to the United States, probably by First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju.

It also came as South Korea's Foreign Minister Lee Joung-Binn told the Munhwa Daily today that North Korea has basically accepted a crucial US proposal to halt developing missiles and nuclear weapons and to renounce terrorism in return for better ties with the



wards a new position near the village of Vedeno, in southern Chechnya on Monday. Russian forces over the weekend killed hundreds of Chechen rebels who were fleeing Grozny and running for cover towards the southern mountains, according to reports.

- AFP photo

# BR FF



East Timorese independent leader Xanana Gusmao (L) is welcomed by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad at the latter's office in Putrajaya yesterday. - AFP photo

E Timor leaders arrive in KL: East Timorese leaders Jose Alexandre Gusmao and Jose Ramos-Horta arrived in the Malaysian capital late Monday, the last stop of their Asian tour to open diplomatic relations and secure

financial aid for their homeland, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur. Gusmao, widely known s "Xanana," was the leader of the East Timorese armed resistance group and jailed by Indonesian authorities for seven years. Ramos-Horta shared the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize for his years of activism for independence. Gusmao and Ramos-Horta were met at the airport by senior officials from Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and driven in a

motorcade with police escort to a downtown hotel. Troops kill LTTE leader: Government soldiers shot and killed a prominent Tamil rebel leader in the northern town of Jaffna after an informant tipped them off about his whereabouts, a defence ministry's spokesman said

Tuesday. AP reports from Colombo. Kumaran, who uses only one name, was shot from close range when he tried to escape after being stopped at an army check post on Monday, defence spokesman Colonel Ranjith Wi-tana said. Witana said troops in the former rebel capital, about 300 kilometers (186 miles) north of Colombo, had received information that Kumaran would be in the area. Soldiers then set

up road blocks and challenged him as he approached.

# Briton arrested for trying to buy military goods for Pakistan.

BOSTON, Feb 8: A 33-yearold British man appeared in court here Monday to face charges that he tried to smuggle military goods into Pakistan, reports AFP.

Jonathan Reynolds was arrested here Saturday. Prosecutors claim he came to Boston from Bangkok, where he resides, to wrap up a deal to ship to Pakistan night vision goggles and plans for the C-130 mili-

tary aircraft The C-130 was designed specifically for the US Air Force to use as gunships and electronic warfare platforms.

Thailand arrests

six Myanmar

soldiers BANGKOK, Feb 8: Thai troops were on high alert along the Myanmar border today after a squad of armed Yangon soldiers was arrested by a Thai patrol,

reports AFP. The six Myanmar troops were detained after intruding into western Thailand at Nam Pleng Din district, Mae Hong Son province, on Thursday, the military said.

Myanmar has sent a letter to Thailand over the issue but details have not been made public. A foreign ministry official said Thailand would reply and make clear the men were arrested on its side of the border. "Further discussions will be

made at the local level, at the Thailand-Myanmar Border Committee," the official said. Colonel Phuchong Rattanawan, director of army intelligence, said the six were un-

der interrogation by army offi-

filed by US Customs Service Special Agent Richard Kruegers Reynolds attempted to obtain and ship the goggles and aircraft plans to Pakistan through third-party companies in other countries without the required export licenses. The United States has pro-

hibited all military exports to

According to an affidavit

Pakistan since October 1990, when the US Congress slapped Islamabad with a ban on military assistance, equipment and technology for Pakistan's failure to restrict nuclear development and testing. Reynolds identified himself

to an undercover US Customs

agent as an officer of Britain's

Aero Global Service.

The criminal complaint against him said that in a series of secretly recorded phone conversations with an undercover officer, Reynolds confirmed that he acted as a purchasing agent for Pakistani concerns and was seeking assistance in obtaining and shipping military goods to Pakistan.

agent obtain an export license with the false claim that the equipment was destined for South Korea rather than Pakistan. The phone conversations began in September 1998. Since then Reynolds received samples

of night vision goggle and

Reynolds eventually wired

moved his offices to Thailand.

He suggested the undercover

the undercover agent that he planned to visit him in Boston in late January "to get other projects of mutual interest up and running," papers filed with the court said. Reynolds was arrested during the meeting with the agent. US Magistrate Marianne Bowler ordered Reynolds held pending a hearing set for Wednesday.