

# Pakistan vows to get tough with Arab militants

## Blasts shake Pak city

ISLAMABAD, Aug 13: Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar has vowed to get tough with Arab militants living in Pakistan since the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s, a report said, reports AFP.

Pakistan has come under mounting pressure from its Middle Eastern allies to rein in the Arabs, who are suspected of plotting terrorist attacks against their homelands, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

"We in Pakistan have declared our policy clearly that we will not allow the use of Pakistani soil for any activity against the peace and integrity of our brotherly Arab countries," Sattar said in an interview with a television station in Qatar.

"Such activities are not acceptable to us. We ... through our contacts with the Afghan government have started trying to identify those individuals who are using Afghan territories for sabotage activities in their countries of origin."

"Whenever we find these individuals we arrest them and later on deport them."

He said 25,000 Arabs who came to fight the Jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 had not returned and many were now living in Pakistan.

Some of the so-called Afghan Arabs are believed to be working with Muslim extremist groups allegedly operating in Afghanistan, which is condemned internationally for harbouring suspected Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden.

Middle Eastern countries have made strong protests to Islamabad to clamp down on their networks in Pakistan, especially in the semi-autonomous North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

The United States earlier this year named Pakistan as a "safe haven" for terrorists and senior officials have said South Asia is now the new locus of international terrorism.

Meanwhile, three bombs shook the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta Saturday night, the latest in a spate of blasts in the impoverished province of Baluchistan, a report said.

The explosions, one of which appeared to have targeted a federal police station, occurred after 10 p.m. and caused panic but no injuries or damage, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

Deputy Police Commissioner Athar Hussain Sial said "tight" security in the town following several explosions in recent weeks succeeded in confining Saturday's attacks to quiet areas where the damage would be minimal.

Police said investigations were underway but no one has claimed responsibility for the blasts.

More than 25 bombs have exploded throughout Pakistan this year but police have so far failed to arrest a single culprit. At least nine people, mostly

soldiers, were killed when a powerful bomb rocked a garrison area of Quetta late last month. Earlier this month a bomb exploded in a garage in the city, killing two people and injuring four.

The government has transferred the police inspector general for Baluchistan province and suspended the city's police and intelligence chiefs for failing to track down the terrorists.

Unknown callers in the past have told local newspapers that the so-called Baluchistan Liberation Army were responsible for the blasts.

Baluchistan is an impoverished desert province with distinct tribal cultures and language, and with an undercurrent of resentment towards the wealthier provinces like Punjab.

Supporters of a jailed tribal leader have also claimed responsibility for previous blasts, but the government has refused to indicate where its suspicions lie.



Kashmiri girls walk in a Srinagar street patrolled by Indian paramilitary troops yesterday as authorities in Indian administered Kashmir beef up security ahead of India's Independence Day celebration on August 15. Violence has surged across troubled Kashmir after a front-line militant group Hizbul Mujahideen ended unilateral ceasefire on Tuesday when more than fifteen people were killed in a car bomb blast in the heart of Srinagar. Another explosion triggered by suspected Muslim militants killed four Indian border guards and injured 25 others, ten severely, travelling on a bus in Kashmir yesterday. -- AFP photo

## Lanka govt steps up campaign against Ranil Wickremesinghe

COLOMBO, Aug 13: Sri Lanka's government today stepped up a campaign against opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, linking him to extra-judicial killings 12 years ago, a move which could lead to his arrest, officials said, reports AFP.

The state-run Sunday Observer reported that a senior police officer, arrested 10 days ago in connection with the "killing fields" murders during a leftist uprising in the late 1980s, was linked to Wickremesinghe.

There was no immediate comment from the police, but official sources said preparations were being made for his arrest ahead of November's parliamentary elections.

## 2 killed in bomb attack in Philippines

COTABATO, Philippines, Aug 13: At least two people were killed and 11 others wounded, two critically, when a bomb believed planted by Muslim separatists exploded at a burger restaurant in the southern Philippines, police said, reports AFP.

Initial reports said the bomb exploded at 10:00 a.m. (8:00 BST) inside the restaurant in the town of Carmen, North Cotabato province, killing a 13-year-old boy and a soldier on the spot, provincial police chief Superintendent Alex Paul Montegudo said.

Eleven others sustained shrapnel wounds and were rushed to a nearby hospital in critical condition, he said.

Montegudo said the explosive was made of 81-millimeter mortars strapped to a timing device and was similar to those used by the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in previous attacks.

## Anwar supporters spark standoff at Malaysia jail

SUNGAI BULOH, Malaysia, Aug 13: Some 2,000 supporters of imprisoned Malaysian deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim sparked a stand-off with police today as they attempted to visit him in jail to mark his birthday, reports AFP.

The crowd, travelling in a convoy of around 200 vehicles, arrived about midday at the Sungai Buloh prison on the outskirts of the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

They gathered outside the main gate chanting "Reformasi" (reform), "Democracy" and "Down with (Prime Minister) Mahathir (Mohamad)".

## UNSC to vote for holding Sankoh's trial

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 13: The UN Security Council is scheduled to vote Monday on a resolution which will open the way for the trial of the infamous Sierra Leonean rebel leader Foday Sankoh, reports AFP.

Diplomats forecast a unanimous decision of the 15 council members welcoming a request from the government of Sierra Leone for United Nations help in setting up a special court to try those charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The draft resolution, sponsored by the United States, does not name any group or person suspected of such crimes.

## Somali parliament inaugurated in Djibouti

ARTA, Djibouti, Aug 13: Somalia's first parliament since the 1991 fall of president Mohamed Siad Barre was inaugurated here today, marking a key step in a Djibouti-led reconciliation process, reports AFP.

Djibouti President Ismael Omar Guelleh, United Nations envoy David Stephen as well as diplomats and Djibouti government officials attended the opening of the transitional assembly.

## Lankan monk to help recruit 20,000 soldiers

COLOMBO, Aug 13: A senior Sri Lankan Buddhist monk has accepted a challenge from the country's president to help enlist 20,000 men as a boost to the war against Tamil rebels, a press report said today, says AFP.

The monk, Galaboda Gnanissara, said he could encourage youngsters to join the military if the government made a "full commitment" to the campaign against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

President Chandrika Kumaratunga had challenged Sinhalese extremists to send 20,000 men to join the army, which is finding it difficult to attract recruits amid a high desertion rate.

President Kumaratunga had said those who advocated a military solution to the country's long-running Tamil separatist conflict should be prepared to accept only half of their salary.

## BRIEFLY

**Journalist jailed in Iran:** A reformist journalist close to President Mohammad Khatami, Ibrahim Nabavi, was jailed Saturday on the orders of Tehran's press court, the official IRNA news agency reported today, AFP says from Tehran.

According to the report, Nabavi -- an editorialist for numerous banned pro-reform newspapers -- had been interrogated earlier on Saturday by the court and ordered arrested and jailed by press court chief Said Mortazavi.

**Hollywood actress Loretta dies:** Academy Award winning actress and Hollywood glamour queen Loretta Young died Saturday of ovarian cancer, the star's family announced, AFP reports from Los Angeles.

Young, whose acting career started in the era of silent movies and extended into television, was famous for her elegance and fashion. "Every time she 'sins' she builds a church. That's why there are so many Catholic churches in Hollywood," Marlene Dietrich once quipped about the star, referring to both her sex appeal and religious devotion.

**Fresh violence kills 3 in Aceh:** At least three people were killed in the latest violence to hit Aceh, as fresh troops arrived in the restive Indonesian province, police and residents said Sunday, AFP reports from Banda Aceh.

## Kidnapped Red Cross workers freed in Georgia

TBILISI, Aug 13: Two Red Cross staff and their driver were freed today and arrived in Tbilisi after being held hostage in a mountainous area of northeast Georgia for more than a week, reports AFP.

Sophie Prokofiev from France, Natalia Zelino from Italy and their Georgian driver Yuri Darshiev were released after negotiations with the kidnappers and arrived Sunday morning in the Georgian capital.

## Taliban attack opposition base

KABUL, Aug 13: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia today launched a two-headed attack on the opposition's northeastern base but were beaten back, resistance sources said, reports AFP.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (C) meets with the PLO Executive Council in Gaza City on Saturday following his return from a whirlwind international tour. Arafat, who is headed to Beijing next, embarked on a tour to explain the Palestinian position after the failure of the Camp David summit in the US last month.

## PLO meet on Palestinian state by end of August

### Israel awaits US intervention for revival of peace talks

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Aug 13: The Palestine Liberation Organisation's Central Council (PLOCC) is to meet before the end of August to re-examine the proclamation of an independent state, it was announced Saturday, reports AFP.

The presidency of the PLOCC has made contacts with the (Palestinian) political forces to inform them of latest developments prior to the holding at the end of August of a new session before the end of the interim period on September 13, the date set for the proclamation of the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, said a communiqué from the Palestinian leaders who met here under the chairmanship of Yasser Arafat.

The PLOCC, an intermediate body between the PLO Executive Committee and the Palestine National Council (parliament in exile), had decided July 3 to declare independence on September 13 with or without a peace agreement with Israel.

Israel and the United States oppose such a proclamation. Israeli interim Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben Ami warned Saturday in Madrid that the declaration of a Palestinian state on September 13 would be "extremely detrimental" to the Middle East peace process.

Meanwhile, Israel said today it is hoping for US intervention to revive formal peace talks with the Palestinians, with a deadline for a final accord exactly one month away.

"Until (US Middle East envoy) Dennis Ross returns to the Middle East -- probably in the next two weeks -- there will not be formal negotiations with the Palestinians," said Prime Minister Ehud Barak's spokeswoman Merav Parsi-Zadok.

However, she added: "Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have forged very amicable relations and there are still informal contacts between us."

A US embassy official said Ross was expected back in the region on about August 20, ostensibly for a holiday.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on Saturday that there were no immediate plans for the United States to make a concerted effort to accelerate its peace efforts.

The women were between 18 and 25 years old and were planning to work as prostitutes, the official said.

One of the three Taiwanese is a notorious organiser of illegal migration, the official Xinhua news agency quoted police as saying.

## Thousands stranded as landslide closes highway

### 5 killed in clash with Maoist rebels in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Aug 13: Thousands of people and hundreds of vehicles were stranded on a highway after landslides blocked the busiest road link with Kathmandu, police and reports said today, says AFP.

Police said the Prithvi Highway, at a point near Krishnavir in Dhading district, was closed following mudslides early Saturday. "About 10,000 passengers have been stranded on either side of Krishnavir awaiting clearance of the road," the English daily, "The Kathmandu Post" said.

"Hundreds of vehicles are also trapped," it said.

Prithvi Highway is the busiest road linking Kathmandu to other parts of Nepal.

An older highway was also blocked, cutting off all roadlinks out of Kathmandu Valley, police said.

The Prithvi Highway has been closed and opened several times over the past week due to landslides triggered by heavy rains.

Home Minister Govinda Raj Joshi said 106 people have died in floods, landslides and mudslides since mid-June.

Property and infrastructure worth millions of rupees had been damaged, Joshi said.

Meanwhile, at least five people were killed, including a policeman, in a clash between police and Maoist rebels in a remote Nepalese village, police and newspapers reported Sunday.

Police sources said three people were killed Saturday in crossfire with the insurgents in Jajarkot district, 325 km far west of Kathmandu.

A policeman, a Maoist rebel and an elderly female bystander, were among those killed.

The woman was airlifted to Nepalgunj for medical treatment but she died en route, the police said.

Two more people were killed in the skirmish but the police were unable to confirm this, according to the English daily, The Kathmandu Post.

The underground Nepal Communist Party-Maoist rebels have been waging war since 1996 for a people's republic in Nepal instead of the constitutional monarchy established in 1990.

Clashes between rebels and the police have left 1,382 persons dead.

## Power station blown up

### Troops gunned down 4 rebels in Assam

GAUHATI, Aug 13: Federal troops Saturday gunned down four separatist guerrillas in India's northeastern Assam while tribal rebels blew up a power station in a powerful explosion, official sources said, reports AP.

A senior army officer said soldiers killed the four militants during a pre-dawn raid at a hotel in eastern Assam's Tinsukia district, 550 kilometres (330 miles) from Gauhati, Assam's capital.

The official said the dead rebels belonged to the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) who are fighting for independence from India.

The slain ULFA militants, including an explosive expert of the outfit, were planning to stage violent acts in the area before Independence Day on August 15, the official said.

Separatists outfits usually step up violence ahead of India's Independence Day. Killings, bomb attacks on oil installations, passenger trains, and road bridges explosions and attacks on military and police targets become common before and during Aug 15, forcing the government to step up security to minimise loss of life and property.

Earlier Saturday, tribal Bodo militants triggered a powerful explosion near Madupur in Kamrup district, 60 kilometres (36 miles) west of Gauhati, and damaged a power transformer and a high tension power line.

Police said the explosion was suspected to have been carried out by the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) militants.

Meanwhile, at least 50,000 troops have been called in to reinforce security in the region following a call for a dawn to dusk shutdown by a dozen separatist guerrilla groups against New Delhi's alleged "colonial and repressive" rule over the vast region rich in oil, tea and timber.

The army, police, and paramilitary soldiers have stepped up vigil in vulnerable areas.

"We are taking no chances and security forces are on a full alert to foil attempts by militants to attack vital installations on or before Independence Day in the region," PV Sumant, Assam Police Chief, said.

WASHINGTON, Aug 13: US navy aircraft responded to Iraqi artillery attacks Saturday by striking two anti-aircraft artillery sites in Iraq, the US military said, reports AFP.

The strikes were made "in response to multiple Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery attacks today against coalition forces enforcing the no-fly zone in southern Iraq," the United States Central Command said in a statement from MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

The strikes were by two US Navy Hornets aircraft, Lieutenant-Colonel Ginger Blazicko told AFP.

An Iraqi military spokesman said earlier Saturday that airstrikes by US and British warplanes left two people dead and 19 wounded, three of them seriously, in the southern Iraqi city of As-Samawah.

Witnesses in Iraq said the planes struck a residential neighbourhood, a grain silo, a construction materials warehouse and a building of the traffic department.

The US statement said that "coalition aircraft do not target civilian populations or infrastructure and seek to avoid injury to civilians and damage to civilian facilities."

There are nearly daily clashes between Iraqi forces and the US and British warplanes that are enforcing no-fly zones in the north and south of the country.

Baghdad, which does not recognise the flight restrictions, says US and British warplanes have killed 301 Iraqis and wounded 920 others since December 1998.

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## 'Diana wanted to marry Pak heart surgeon'

LONDON, Aug 13: Former Pakistan cricket captain Imran Khan will disclose in a television documentary that Princess Diana asked him to help broker her marriage to heart surgeon Dr Hasnat Khan, the Sunday Telegraph reported, reports Reuters.

In an hour-long programme to be shown on Tuesday, Imran says he held private talks with the Princess in May 1997 during her visit to Pakistan in which she expressed her love for Hasnat and her desire to marry him.

"She had been involved with him for two years and she wanted to marry him," the Telegraphs quoted Imran as saying.

Before the Princess was killed in a car crash in Paris in August 1997, she was reportedly in a relationship with the son of the Harrods owners Mohammed Al Fayed, Dodi, who also died in the

accident. After the accident, Al Fayed said the princess and his son had been planning to marry.

Imran suggested that this relationship was possibly a romance designed to make the London-based surgeon jealous.

The Channel 5 documentary, called "Diana: Her Last Love" says that while the princess was seen with Fayed before her death, she was still in touch with Hasnat's family advising them not to read anything significant into the relationship, the Sunday Telegraph reported.

Ashfaq Ahmed, Hasnat's great-uncle, tells the programme: "I can say with certainty that he (Hasnat) was greatly in love with her, and he was very much impressed by her personality. Not by her beauty, by her humanity."

## Britain to allow human cloning for research

LONDON, Aug 13: The British government is set to give its cautious go-ahead this week to the cloning of human embryos for therapeutic research, according to media reports here today, says AFP.

A report by the government's chief medical officer, Liam Donaldson, is due to be published Wednesday, three months after it was handed in.

Ministers are expected to agree with its recommendation to allow cloning, but only for research purposes, the Sunday Telegraph reported.

However, such are the moral and ethical dimensions of the case that MPs will be allowed a free vote on the issue, the paper said.

Normally, MPs vote along party lines. Allowing cloning of human

embryo cells for research would accord with the opinion of many scientists, who believe it will pave the way to new cures for many illnesses.

Other groups and religious organisations say cloning for experimentation breaks the sanctity of human life.

At the heart of the matter is the removal of pre-programmed cells, called stem cells, from embryos less than 14 days old.

Scientists have discovered that such stem cells are capable of developing into any kind of tissue, including nerves, muscle, organs and bone.

If, one day, it was possible to direct stem cells to become selected types of replacement tissue, it could be used to treat a host of diseases which at present are incurable.

## Fierce clashes rage in Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK, Aug 13: Kyrgyz troops today battled for the third day running with Islamic rebels who crossed over from neighbouring Tajikistan, as the military warned that a much larger contingent was poised to flood over the border.

Government forces have surrounded a group of some 100 Islamists, massed near the border with Tajikistan in southern Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz National Security Secretary, Bolot Dzhazuzakov, told AFP.

"Fierce clashes are continuing for the third day," Dzhazuzakov said.

The fighting has killed 20 government soldiers and wounded 18 others, he said, adding that the rebels -- entrenched in the high mountains -- had only suffered "minor" losses.



Trees burn in a wildfire on the mountains just east of the Bitterroot River near Darby, Montana on Saturday. Firefighters set a "backburn" hoping the west winds would blow the fire away from local homes. -- AFP photo