India disappointed by Pak response to Kashmir ceasefire: Fernandes

ken Defence Minister George Fernandes today said New Delhi was disappointed by Pakistan's response to a ceasefire announced by it in disputed Kashmir, reports

The defence minister also insisted the Indian government will not offer any time-frame for deciding on a planned trip to Pakistan by Kashmiri separatist leaders, which is currently on hold.

"One is disappointed at the way the Pakistani leadership is looking at it (ceasefire)," Fernandes told reporters after opening a naval housing complex in this western coastal city.

"Until the otherday they (the Pakistani leadership) were talking about Jehad and their commitment to provide training and other aid to militant outfits in Kashmir.

"Today, Pakistan seems unwilling to rein in those (separatist groups) it had earlier let loose

Fernandes said India had hoped that its unilateral suspension of military action against the anti-Indian rebels would get the two South Asian rivals to the negotiating

leadership has called for US Presi-

dent-elect George Bush to push

through a "real relaunch of the peace

process" in the Middle East after he

George W Bush, for a real relaunch of

the peace process on the basis of UN

resolutions ... and on the basis on the

peace principles set out at the (1991)

Madrid treaty stipulating the

exchange of land for peace," the

leadership said in a statement issued

After its weekly meeting in Gaza

GUWAHATI, India, Jan 20 : An

outlawed separatist group in

India's northeastern state of Assam

has rejected the federal govern-

ment's offer for unconditional

peace talks, newspapers here

Asom (ULFA), Assam's frontline

militant group fighting for a home-

land in the oil-rich state, said the

government's offer was "unaccept-

is humiliating as the officials have

said the main issue of Assamese

sovereignty could be negotiated

"The offer by the home ministry

The United Liberation Front of

reported today, says AFP

the leadership said it hoped to estab-

lish "solid relations with the new US

"We call on the new US president,

takes office today, reports AFP.

"The ceasefire is holding completely and totally as far as the Line of Control (in Kashmir) is concerned. Troops on both sides of the border are staring down at each

"In so far as the situation in Kashmir is concerned, there hasn't been any great let up in the activities of some of the militant outfits such the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahedeen and others,' Fernandes said

Most pro-Pakistan guerrilla forces have rejected the Indian ceasefire, warning that they will instead intensify raids in Kashmir.

Fernandes's comments came two days after Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said the ball was in Pakistan's court to create a cordial atmosphere leading up to peace talks between the two sides.

Vajpayee said Islamabad's support to cross-border militancy, especially in Kashmir, were major impediments to peace, adding that a spurt in violence in Kashmir, following the ceasefire from Novemberend, was Islamabad's handiwork.

has caused two of the three wars

Bush urged to salvage ME peace

administration, in the interest of the

The statement went on to praise the regional efforts of outgoing Presi-

"We are still in favour of continu-

ing talks, the Palestinian people have

chosen the path of peace through

peaceful negotiations, because the

deadlock in talks cannot help peace,

or regional security," the Palestinians

Meanwhile, peace prospects hung

in the balance Friday, with Israel

delaying its response to a Palestinian

proposal for 10 days of marathon

talks while Israeli Foreign Minister

Shlomo Ben Ami said the two sides

ULFA rejects Delhi's offer for talks

only when we come for a dialogue,

statement as saying Saturday.

Paresh Baruah, said.

the newspapers quoted the ULFA

cannot be compromised at any

cost," the statement, signed by

ULFA chief Arabinda Rajkhowa

and the outfit's military chief

interior ministry official

announced that New Delhi was

ready for talks with the ULFA and

was even prepared to discuss the

issue of sovereignty with its leader-

"We want to first see the out-

ship "anywhere in the world."

On Wednesday, a top Indian

"The question of sovereignty

United States.'

dent Bill Clinton.

their independence from British colonial rule in 1947.

An ongoing separatist campaign in Indian Kashmir has left more than 34,000 people dead over the India blames Pakistan for

fomenting the Muslim insurgency, and has linked talks with Pakistan to a halt in what it calls cross-border which holds the Islamabad,

northern third of Kashmir, denies the allegations but provides moral and diplomatic support to the separatists.

In Bombay, defence minister Fernandes also said any extension to the ceasefire, set to end January 26, would depend on how Islamabad responded to Vajpayee's demand that it rein in the militant groups that have been "trained, equipped, financed and pushed into our coun-

Fernandes, speaking of the planned trip by Kashmiri separatist leaders of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference to Pakistan, said the event was under the consideration

have never been so close to peace

Israel's "peace cabinet" meeting

has been postponed until Saturday,

putting off an answer to Palestinian

leader Yasser Arafat's dramatic

request for 10 days of intensive

of a murdered 16-vear-old Israeli's

body in the West Bank Thursday.

The delay followed the discovery

On the security front, Israel bol-

stered its ties with the United States,

signing an agreement that will

increase military assistance by 60

million dollars per year. The aid will

reach 2.4 billion dollars per year by

come of the ongoing peace talks

between the government and the

National Socialist Council of

Nagaland (NSCN)," the ULFA

then we shall have no hesitation in

sitting for a dialogue with the gov-

rebel group fighting for a homeland

in adjoining Nagaland state, had

agreed to a ceasefire in 1997 and

have held several rounds of talks

with New Delhi aimed at ending

their five decades of bloody strug-

"If the talks yield positive results,

The NSCN, a powerful tribal

statement said.

ernment," it said.

negotiations in Taba, Egypt.



Ousted Philippine president Joseph "Erap" Estrada waves to supporters from a ferry yesterday in Manila after leaving Malacanang Palace to cross the Pasig River to Malacanang Park. Estrada vacated the presdential palace with his family after his desperate bid to cling on to power collapsed and his Vice President Gloria Arroyo was installed in power.

World leaders pledge support to Arroyo

HONG KONG, Jan 20: The United States was relieved and Japan pledged its support as world leaders recognised Gloria Arroyo as the next president of the Philippines, reports AFP.

Arroyo, who Saturday took the oath as Philippines president, vowed to wipe out corruption and poverty adding: "I feel God put me in this point of our history and there is hard work ahead.

The United States expressed relief the crisis was settled peacefully and "in accordance with democratic and constitutional proce-

In a statement issued by the US embassy in Manila, Washington said it had "an exceptionally strong working relationship" with Arroyo and that it was looking forward to working with her in the future.

As a student of Georgetown University in Washington DC, Arroyo was a classmate of outgoing US President Bill Clinton

The embassy also thanked Joseph Estrada for his efforts to bring relations with the US closer during his two-and-a-half vears in power. Estrada earlier succumbed to

massive opposition rallies -- spurred on by the desertion of his cabinet and military chiefs -- and quit his office, leaving Arroyo as his constitutional successor

It was the Philippines second bloodless uprising in 15 years, dubbed People Power II. A similar movement ended the 20-year rule of dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and is commemorated by the Roman Catholic shrine where the anti-Estrada protest was centered.

Japan welcomed Arroyo as the new president and pledged to support and work closely with the 53year-old economist and her new administration.

"Japan expects the new government under President Arroyo to be launched smoothly," Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono said in a statement.

"To further strengthen friendship and cooperation between Japan and the Philippines, the government of Japan will continue to closely cooperate with the new government under President Arroyo," Kono said.

In Bangkok, the Thai foreign ministry said Estrada's ousting was in accordance with the democratic process of the Philippines and was in line with the will of the majority of



Petition for stripping Sharif of nationality

ISLAMABAD, Jan 20 : A peti-Nawaz Sharif's Pakistani nationality has been moved by a citizen at a High Court, reports said today,

The petitioner, Iqbal Haider, has asked for Sharif be stripped of his nationality because he chose 'to enjoy a life in exile" in Saudi Arabia neglecting his duty to the state, The News daily reported.

The Lahore High Court on Friday ordered the government and Sharif's nephew Hamza Shahbaz to appear before it on January 31 in connection with the

ousted in a coup in Sharif, October 1999, was exiled along with 19 close relatives last month.

New Philippine President Arroyo --a petite woman with big ideas

the new Philippine President, is a petite convent-bred economist with ambitious goals, reports AFP.

The 53-year-old daughter of a former president was sworn in Saturday, the same day the United States -- on whose constitution the Manila government is largely -- was swearing in its modelled 43rd president, George W. Bush, who also has a former president for a father.

Arroyo will have to race to achieve her key goals of eradicating poverty and wiping out graft, a scourge which her predecessor Joseph Estrada was charged with and which led to his fall from grace Saturday.

She will serve out the remaining three-and-a-half years of Estrada's six-year term but after that, a general election will decide the next president.

"I feel God put me in this point of our history and there is hard work ahead," the US-educated economist told a news conference after being sworn in by Supreme Court chief justice Hilario Davide at a historic Christian shrine where thousands of Filipinos had been staging rallies calling for Estrada's

She could also seek a fresh six-

pleting the remainder of Estrada's mandate.

As a student of Georgetown University, in Washington DC. Arroyo was a classmate of outgoing US President Bill Clinton.

A deeply religious Christian, Arroyo has vowed to wipe out



Gloria Arrovo

corruption in the presidency but promised there would be no witch-

She said she would push four "core" goals, with a priority on eradicating poverty in the

resource-rich archipelago of 76

improve "moral standards" in the government, replace the traditional politics of personality and patronage with politics of consultations and leadership by example.

"The crying need of the hour is

morality at the top or to put it conversely, the many and diverse problems plaguing (our) country and people today stem from the lack or disregard for morality at the very corridors of power," she said. The president and vice presi-

separately, allowing Arroyo to serve as Estrada's vice president even though they were from different Arroyo was in her early teens

dent in the Philippines are elected

when her late father Diosdado Macapagal was elected president "I believe in a very strong work

ethic. I believe in a dignified lifestyle I believe that rhetoric should be matched by action and performance is more important than

grandstanding," she said. Arroyo graduated with top honours from Manila's Assumption

College, run by Roman Catholic She says she toes the church

line "on almost all of the political

Court believes Gorbbelaar Terim crisis

Fiorentian get serious Radebe raises the stakes Ferreira's misfortune

Court orders Hinduja brothers to face questioning in Bofors scandal

NEW DELHI, Jan 20 : An Indian court today ordered three brothers of the London-based Hinduja business empire to appear before federal detectives probing a 1986 bribery scandal involving the Swedish Bofors arms firm, reports

Judge Aiit Barihoke asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which has charged the Hindujas in the scandal, to interrogate the three billionaire Indians beginning later Saturday.

would continue tomorrow and the day after during working hours," Barihoke told brothers Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash Hinduja in

If need be, the interrogation

The three are charged with accepting money from Bofors to help clinch a 1.3-billion-dollar gun deal in India.

On Friday, the judge granted bail to the three but ordered them not to leave India without permission. Soon after the judge's order, the brothers moved an application seeking Barihoke's permission to

The CBI in a U-turn on its previous stand said Saturday the three should surrender their passports

and remain in India. Counsel for Hindujas, Rajinder Singh, opposed the CBI's petition. "The mere fact that the three

coming to an end in March, they had to participate in board meetvarious overseas compa Another counsel for Hindujas,

quarters?" he asked.

Amit Desai, said the court must allow them to leave India to attend to their business empire spanning Asia and Europe as well as join a meeting of the World Economic Forum's in Switzerland beginning

brothers have come to appear

before the court on their own

volition without even receiving the

summons should be an assurance

to any reasonable mind that they

would not avoid trial proceedings,'

"Also, what is important is the

questioning, which the CBI has

already done through question-

naires. The brothers have already

"What is so important about

The Hindujas in their petition

said since the financial year was

questioning them at the CBI head-

answered all the questions.

"We have always been available to CBI whenever they wanted us and if we are permitted to travel out of the country we would definitely come back whenever they want us in future," Desai argued.

Judge Barihoke, however, said he would give his verdict on the travel petition Monday.

Pinochet to face judge tor first time

SANTIAGO, Jan 20 : Chile's Augusto Pinochet will face off Tuesday against the crusading judge who has sought to charge the ailing former dictator for alleged human rights abuses committed during his 17-year rule, reports

Pinochet will appear Tuesday as ordered before Judge Juan Guzman to answer questions concerning his actions after taking power in a bloody coup in Septem-

ber 1973, his lawyer said. The 85-year-old Pinochet insists he is innocent of all charges relating to the estimated 3,000 people who disappeared or were killed during his rule from 1973 to 1990.

Annan in China with reform, HR on agenda

BEIJING, Jan 20: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan arrived in Beijing Saturday to begin talks with Chinese leaders on UN reform, human rights and China's participation in UN peacekeeping operations, reports AFP.

"I have come to Beijing to hold discussions with Chinese authorities on UN-related issues, some of the crises that we are dealing with and UN reform," Annan told journalists on arrival.

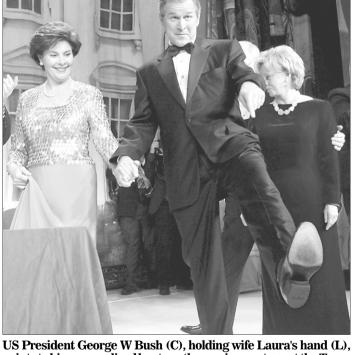
Annan, on his fourth visit to China since becoming the head of the UN, will meet with Vice Premier Qian Qichen and Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan on Sunday, before holding talks with President Jiang Zemin on Monday.

Afghans urged to pray for rains

KABUL, Jan 20 : Afghan Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has called on the people to offer prayers for rainfall on three consecutive days, a statement, broadcast by state-radio, said today, reports AFP.

"All countrymen are requested to offer Istisqa prayers for three days starting from Saturday so that God the Almighty sends rain of blessing to our drought-hit country," he said.

Afghan farmers have already warned of widespread famine next spring as winter rains had failed to break a devastating drought in time for the crucial harvest season.



points to his personalised boots as they arrive on stage at the Texas State Black Tie and Boot Ball at the Marriott Wardman Park on Friday in Washington, DC. Vice President Dick Cheney and his wife Lynne are in background.

Saudi, Indian FMs sign cooperation accord

RIYADH, Jan 20 : Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Saud al-Faisal, held talks on boosting economic ties and on the Palestinian uprising against Israel, the official news agency SPA said today, reports

They also reviewed efforts to boost political ties and signed an accord on "cooperation and coordination" between their ministries, at the meeting late Friday in the Saudi

capital, SPA said. The accord "will permit the two countries to exchange views on regional and international issues of common interest," according to India's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Tamliz Ammed.

"The peace process in the Middle East and the savage killings carried out by Israel against innocent Palestinian civilians" were at the centre of the talks between Prince Saud and

Singh, SPA reported. It said the two ministers called for Israel "to respect the bases of the

Madrid (peace) conference and the

relevant resolutions of the UN

Security Council founded on the

Singh arrived Friday on the first visit by an Indian foreign minister to the kingdom, which hosts a major

Indian community but is a key ally of

India's arch-rival, Pakistan. He is also expected to sign an agreement with Saudi Arabia on drug trafficking.

The more than one million Indians who work in Saudi Arabia make up the oil-rich Gulf state's largest expatriate population, sending home nearly four billion dollars a year in remittances.

India also buys 25 percent of its oil from Saudi Arabia.

But the kingdom, the keeper of Islam's two holiest shrines, has strong relations with Pakistan, supplying Islamabad with nearly a billion dollars in economic aid over the past few years.

Former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who is now living in exile in Saudi Arabia, said in July 1999 that Riyadh played an "important" role in the resolution of India and Pakistan's conflict over Kash-