

## Pakistan inciting violence in Kashmir: Narayanan

### Curfew, protests in Himalayan state as Hurriyat leaders detained

AFP, New Delhi

Indian President K.R. Narayanan said Monday Pakistan had failed to respond to India's ceasefire initiative in Kashmir and was still fuelling the violence in the disputed region.

Narayanan said India's three-month suspension of combat operations against Muslim militants in Kashmir had been welcomed by the international community and by the people of Kashmir, but that Islamabad had undermined the measure.

"It is a matter of deep distress and concern to all of us that Pakistan has not reciprocated India's sincerity," the president said in a speech to open a new parliament session in New Delhi.

"There has been no let-up, much less an end to, cross-border terrorism and vicious anti-Indian propaganda emanating from Pakistani soil," he said.

Narayanan also rejected Islamabad's offer to hold talks with New Delhi on the issue.

"Its protestations about its eagerness to resume talks with India will not carry conviction so long as it allows the terrorists' guns and bombs to do the talking," he added.

"Should Pakistan create an atmosphere conducive for meaningful talks, India will be more than ready to resume the dialogue process," said the president.

India accuses Pakistan of backing the Muslim militant rebellion in Indian-held Kashmir which has claimed some 34,000 lives in the past 12 years.

Pakistan denies the charge, saying it only gives diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for self-determination.

Muslim-majority Kashmir is divided into Indian and Pakistani zones, and is claimed by both countries.

The Indian cabinet's security committee is due to meet this week to decide whether to extend its ceasefire against militant groups in Kashmir.

The measure expires on February 26. Narayanan did not say whether the government would extend the truce, but he said India was prepared to hold talks with any group in Kashmir that rejected violence.

India offered a one-month ceasefire against militant groups in Kashmir on November 27 for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the truce was twice extended.

Meanwhile, a 3,000-strong crowd Monday gathered at the grave of a Muslim man gunned down by Indian troops last week in the Kashmiri city of Srinagar, as tension remained high in the troubled region.

Several prominent pro-independence leaders -- including Yaseen Malik, Shabir Shah and Javed Mir -- who were detained over the weekend remained in custody Monday, police said.

"They are in preventive custody because they can instigate violence again," said a police spokesman.

The tense situation in Kashmir, where an estimated 34,000 people have died since Muslim militants launched an anti-India rebellion in 1989, comes as the Indian government mulls whether to extend its unilateral ceasefire in the area.

As the crowd returned from the Dalgate cemetery, where they held 'fourth day' prayers for the man who died during clashes between stone-throwing protesters and troops on Friday, fresh trouble erupted.

Hundreds of youths hurled rocks at police who responded by arresting around 30 members of the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a police official said.

Police also clamped a curfew on three areas of the Kashmiri summer capital Srinagar for the fourth day running.

A widespread strike was also observed for a fourth day across Indian-held Kashmir.



Riot police enter the Carandiru Prison in Sao Paulo, Brazil on Sunday. Some 7,000 people had been taken hostage in 23 prisons by inmates and 11 were killed in the prison riots across the Sao Paulo state on Sunday.

## Taliban massacred 300 civilians

AFP, Washington

The ruling Taliban militia has massacred more than 320 civilians in central Afghanistan over the past nine months, in a bid to scare the local population away from supporting an opposition alliance, according to a new report made public on Monday.

The documents, compiled by the organisation Human Rights Watch, described in graphic detail the killings of about 300 ethnic Hazara, a Shia Muslim group, in the district of Yakaolang, in Bamiyan province, early last month.

In addition, more than 31 Hazara prisoners, 26 of whom have been identified as civilians, were executed last May by Taliban soldiers near the Robatak pass, on the border between Baghlan and Samanangan provinces, in north central Afghanistan, the report said.

Human Rights Watch, which supplemented its findings with photographic evidence and a list of the victims, urged the United Nations and the world community to probe summary killings and executions in Afghanistan, which has been torn by wars for more than two decades.

"A prompt and thorough investigation could deter further killings of Afghan civilians," said Sidney Jones, the group's director for Asia.

"The UN so far has failed to systematically document and pursue accountability for abuses in Afghanistan," Jones said.

The Hazara, who live in central and northern Afghanistan, have been at loggerheads with the Sunni-controlled Taliban since its emergence as the predominant Afghan armed militia in 1994.

Taliban leaders refuse to recognize Hazara as true Muslims, prompting the latter to resist Taliban rule. Hazara-populated areas have been a stronghold for the opposition United Front that controls about 10 percent of Afghan territory.

The massacre in Yakaolang began on January 8 and continued for four days, according to the report.

Taliban forces, searching for United Front loyalists, rounded up about 300 civilian adult males, including staff members of local humanitarian organisations.

"The men were herded to assembly points in the center of the district and several outlying areas, and then shot by firing squad in public views," the document said.

The largest pile of bodies was seen by witnesses in the village of Qala Arbab Hassan, according to Human Rights Watch.

## Strong tremor hits Gujarat

### Indian president calls for action against corrupt builders

AFP, New Delhi

A tremor measuring 5.1 on the Richter Scale rocked the quake-ravaged Indian state of Gujarat today, said an Indian meteorological department official.

A.K. Shukla, director of the seismological department at the Indian met office told AFP the quake struck at 7:41 am (0211 GMT) and lasted for 25 seconds.

Its epicentre was located 30 kilometres (19 miles) north-northwest of Bachao -- one of the towns worst hit by the 7.9 magnitude quake which struck on January 26.

"The tremor was of moderate intensity, but it could be felt all over the state. So far we have no reports of any fresh damage or casualties," Shukla said.

The tremor was the third-strongest aftershock to hit Gujarat since the main quake. A tremor measuring 5.9 on the Richter Scale was recorded on January 28, followed by another one measuring

5.3 on February 8. The January 26 quake killed around 25,000 people and left some 1.25 million homeless.

Gujarat, which is in an earthquake-prone zone, has a population of around 42 million and is one of India's most prosperous and industrialised states.

Meanwhile, Indian President K.R. Narayanan called Monday for tougher building regulations following the Gujarat earthquake, and demanded action against corrupt builders and planners.

Narayanan said the January 26 quake in the western state of Gujarat, which killed an estimated 25,000 people, had highlighted an urgent need to modernize India's disaster management system.

"We need to urgently revise and update the rules and regulations governing construction and town planning," Narayanan told the opening session of parliament.

"We also need to enforce them with rigour, and ensure that stern

action is taken against their violators," he added.

Shoddy construction methods and corrupt architects, planners and builders have been blamed for thousands of deaths in the quake.

In the Gujarati commercial capital of Ahmedabad the huge quake brought down 69 modern buildings even though the city was 450 kilometres (280 miles) from the quake epicentre and much of the old town survived.

However press reports say that although 59 criminal complaints have been filed against builders, only three have been arrested by police nearly four weeks after the quake.

They said police refused to even register complaints from survivors for days after the quake, and that even though they are now formally registering the complaints little action is being taken.



American singer and actress Jennifer Lopez looks surprised after receiving a Buddha statue as an award from Sony Music for outstanding record sales in Asia on Monday. Lopez is in Hong Kong to promote her newly released album "J.Lo."

## Chopper crash kills member of Myanmar junta

AFP, Yangon

The Myanmar regime's number-four Lieutenant-General Tin Oo died Monday in a helicopter crash in the country's southwest, according to a well-informed source.

A total of 14 passengers, including Tin Oo and two cabinet ministers, were travelling to inspect plantations in Karen state when the helicopter developed a mechanical fault, said the source, a relative of one of those aboard.

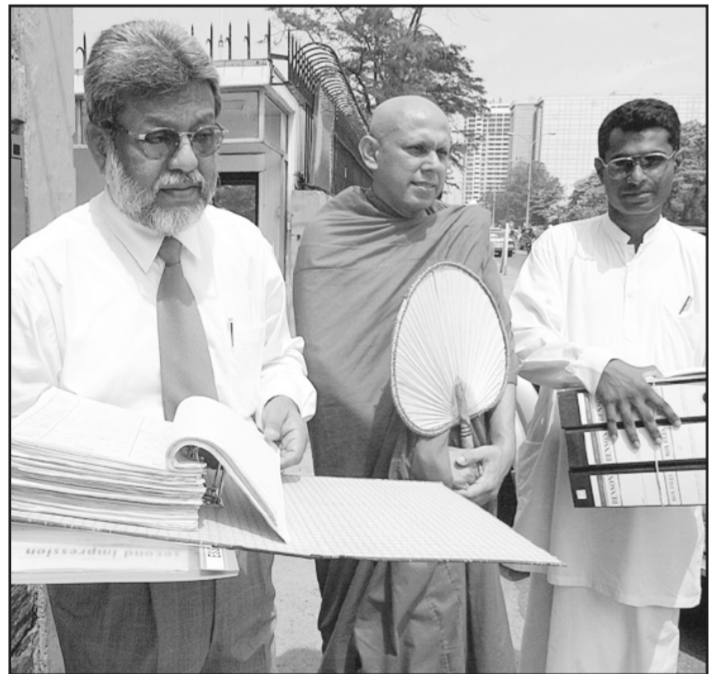
## Storm kills 17 in Philippines

AFP, Cebu

Seventeen people have been killed and nearly 100,000 others made homeless by landslides and floods in the central and southern Philippines, officials said Monday.

A tropical depression dumped heavy rain over a large area of the southern island of Mindanao last week before hitting the central islands overnight Sunday, weathermen said.

A landslide hit a village near the town of Abuyog on Leyte island on Sunday, killing six people, Defence Secretary Eduardo Ermita said.



Sri Lanka's radical nationalist Sihala Urumaya, or Sinhalese Heritage Party members Thilak Karunaratne (L), monk Akuratiye Nanda and Champika Ranawaka (R) carry a petition with one million signatures to the British High Commission in Colombo on Monday. The party is demanding Britain ban the island's Tamil Tiger guerrillas who operate their "international secretariat" in London. British anti-terrorism laws were expected to go into effect on Monday.

## Reagan, Kennedy, Lincoln get nod as greatest presidents

AP, Washington

Americans mentioned Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln most often when asked in a poll whom they regarded as the greatest presidents of the United States.

Those three former presidents were followed by Bill Clinton, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, George Washington and Jimmy Carter, grouped together slightly behind the top three in the Gallup Poll. Others mentioned were George Bush, father of the current president, Theodore Roosevelt, Richard Nixon and Dwight Eisenhower. Others were mentioned by a combined 5 per cent.

Reagan was mentioned by 18 per cent, Kennedy by 16 per cent and Lincoln by 14 per cent in the poll of 529 adults taken February 9-11. The poll had an error margin of 5 percentage points.

A year ago, Kennedy and Lincoln were mentioned most often, and Reagan and Franklin Roosevelt were slightly behind them.

## Lack of Mori's successor puts Japan into limbo

AFP, Tokyo

The only thing saving Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori from having to resign immediately is the lack of an obvious successor, analysts said Monday as his poll rating fell to nine percent.

"Mori will stay on for now, at least until the budget for the next fiscal year passes" in March, said Hiroshi Kawahara, professor of political science at Waseda University.

"The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will then let him go because it finds no reason to keep him after the budget," Kawahara said. "We just have to wait until the end of March."

Mori was savaged by the media and opposition leaders last week for continuing to play golf after learning about the shipping tragedy off Hawaii that left nine Japanese missing presumed dead.

Adding to the pressure, the latest opinion poll by the leading Asahi Shimbun newspaper found the approval rate for his cabinet crashed to a staggering nine percent in February, down 10 points

from January.

It is the second-lowest public support level for any post-war Japanese cabinet after Noboru Takeshita's seven percent in April 1989.

Mori's disapproval rate soared to 79 percent in February, up 16 points from the previous month, and some 71 percent of voters demanded his immediate resignation.

"The Asahi approval rate showed the Mori government is like a cancer patient in the terminal stage," Kawahara said.

"It is not functioning to meet pressing economic and political demands under a prime minister who is not up to the job in the first place," he said.

Even the LDP's junior coalition partner, New Komeito, threatened Sunday to withdraw its support if Mori attempts to cling to power for too long.

New Komeito forms the coalition government with Mori's LDP and the much smaller Conservative Party. Mori took office in April last year.

## Sharon's bid to forge unity govt falters

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon's efforts to build a unity government hit problems Monday amid a split in Ehud Barak's Labour party, as the nation grappled with rising tension in the Middle East.

Coalition moves have faltered because of a growing rebellion inside Labour party against vanquished outgoing premier Barak and his agreement last week to join forces with Sharon's right-wing Likud bloc despite earlier announcing his withdrawal from political life.

In a bid to seek more time to win over his dissenting colleagues, Barak has decided to postpone a meeting of the Labour party's central committee that was due to vote Tuesday on the principle of joining a national unity government.

Sharon, the hawkish former general elected in a landslide over Barak less than two weeks ago, urged political parties Sunday to see beyond "small-minded politics" and personal interests to work together.

"In the light of the current situation on the security level, the political challenges we have ahead of us and unity are more important than narrow personal interests," a Sharon spokesman quoted him as saying.

The political chaos reigned as Israel, struggling to contain almost five months of deadly fighting with the Palestinians, faces rising tensions on several fronts following US-led strikes against Iraq and the killing of an Israeli soldier on the border with Lebanon.

Just three days after US and British warplanes hit targets around Baghdad, Israel and the United States kicked off a joint military exercise in southern Israel, including test-firing of Patriot anti-missile missiles, an army spokesman said.

But officials from both sides denied the five-day exercise, dubbed Juniper Cobra, was connected with the air raids, saying it was a routine drill that had been planned for more than a year.

"The Israeli population has no need to worry, and there is no reason

## France debates future of shipwrecked immigrants

AFP, Frejus

France Monday faced the problem of how to deal with the unprecedented arrival of more than 900 Kurdish migrants, with the country's political class split down the middle as Interior Minister Daniel Vaillant said their cases would be looked at "one by one."

Politicians from right and left clashed over how to deal with the 912 Kurds, who claim to be fleeing oppression in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, after their dramatic arrival aboard a leaking freighter off a Cote d'Azur resort forced the asylum issue to the top of the national agenda.

Speaking on France 3 television, the interior minister said France "has done everything to ensure the humanitarian dimension immediately be taken into account," but he refused to say whether any or all of the migrants would be given political asylum.

"It is a human drama, but going beyond emotion there are rules," Vaillant observed. On Wednesday a

judge would start looking into the case and, the minister said, "I cannot prejudice what (the magistrate) will propose after the hearing."

The Kurds must "show that they are political refugees," Vaillant said. "Europe, and notably France, is not ready to take in all those who want to immigrate."

Meanwhile, the 912 "are women and men in an illegal situation" and if their requests for asylum were rejected, "they have no place on (French) territory."

Socialist Health Minister and former humanitarian campaigner Bernard Kouchner described Kurdish democrats as France's "allies against dictatorship" and compared the Riviera arrivals to the Vietnamese boat people.

From the right, the Gaullist candidate for mayor of Paris, Philippe Seguin, called for them to be protected.

"We are not going to bring ourselves down to the level of slave-traders by sending this group back to Saddam Hussein," he said.



Charles Trenet, celebrated for six decades as a chanson composer and singer, has died at age 87 following a stroke at Creteil hospital, outside Paris in the early hours of Monday.

## Iraq threatens to hit back at KSA, Kuwait for raids

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's ruling Baath Party on Monday threatened military retaliation against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait if they keep providing bases for US and British air strikes.

"Doesn't Iraq have the right to adopt military measures against aggressors and those who grant them facilities if the aggression is renewed?" asked the party's mouthpiece, Ath-Thawra.

The Iraqi leadership is determined "to face up to the aggression and step up the means of resistance so as to turn the skies over Baghdad into a hell for the crows of aggression," it said, referring to US and British warplanes.

"Is Iraq obliged to pardon the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for their role in the aggression?"

Ath-Thawra said the Saudi and Kuwaiti leaderships should be "ashamed to put forward pretexts" for the US and British strikes around Baghdad on Friday that Iraq said left three dead and 30 wounded.

Iraq is capable of "taking additional military measures to respond to the American and British aggressors as well as those who support them, in case the aggression is repeated," chimed in another official Baghdad daily, Al-Jumhuriya.

"We will no longer hide our intentions to the treacherous leaders in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, whose hostility has reached such a level that is backfiring on them," the paper said.

US and British warplanes police the skies of southern Iraq from air bases in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as well as aircraft carriers in the Gulf.

## Estrada faces arrest next week, says prosecutor

AFP, Manila

The prosecutor leading attempts to indict ousted Philippines president Joseph Estrada said Monday he would seek to have the ousted leader jailed next week on corruption charges.

Special prosecutor Aniano Desierto, the government ombudsman, said Monday that a special panel had already completed its probe into allegations the former president had illegally amassed a fortune while in office.

Desierto has made it clear he believes there is sufficient evidence to support plunder, corruption, and related charges against Estrada which would result in his immediate detention.

But he has been blocked from laying the charges while the Supreme Court hears arguments over Estrada's claim that he was removed from office illegally.

The court last week asked Desierto to temporarily suspend the investigation for seven days -- until next Monday -- while it considered the arguments.

Desierto said he would be ready to announce the result of the probe as soon as the court gave the green light. "We'll be on time, on schedule," he said.

Prosecutors allege Estrada accumulated at least 400 million dollars in his 30 months in office, despite receiving a monthly salary of only 1,000 dollars a month.

Estrada has argued that he remains the president and therefore enjoys immunity from suit. He was toppled in a military-backed popular revolt last month.

He argued in his new Supreme Court filing Monday that Desierto's comments on the corruption case made a fair investigation impossible and applied for a "gag" order to be imposed on the prosecutor.