

1 killed as radicals march on Pak air base

Hundreds others detained

AFP, Jacobabad

One protester was shot dead and hundreds of others arrested Sunday as Islamic radicals tried to march on an airfield being used by US forces in southwestern Pakistan.

Police said they were forced to fire live ammunition and tear gas in self defence after thousands of protesters angrily reacted to efforts to stop them converging on the airbase here, near the Afghan border.

"The protesters tried to break the police picket and also fired on police," police spokesman Mohammad Riaz told AFP.

"In retaliation, police fired back."

Riaz said three police officers and eight protesters were taken to hospital with gunshot wounds after clashes at a roadblock in the outer district of Shikarpur.

Altif Hussein, a doctor at Jacobabad Civic Hospital, said one protester, aged about 35, died from bullet wounds.

However Hussein said he did not have the chance to thoroughly inspect the victim because

dozens of infuriated protesters arrived at the hospital and demanded the body.

"They were very angry and took the body back as soon as I issued the death certificate," Hussein said.

The Islamic fundamentalist party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), which has close links to the ruling Taliban militia in Afghanistan, organised Sunday's protest.

Despite the arrest of two of its leaders, the JUI has organised a series of rallies over the past week against the US-led air assault on the Taliban and Pakistan's support of the military action.

The protesters Sunday were aiming to march on the airbase, one of two which Pakistan has allowed US forces to use for logistical support and search and recovery operations for troops or pilots downed in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has also offered the use of its air space and intelligence, but insists that no US combat operations will be launched from its territory.

US cargo planes and helicopters have been seen landing at the airbase here in recent days.

Witnesses have also reported seeing US personnel exercising within the perimeter.

Police sources said they had arrested at least 400 Islamic radicals who were trying to march on the base Sunday.

But JUI spokesman Abdul Ghafoor claimed more than 2,000 people had been arrested.

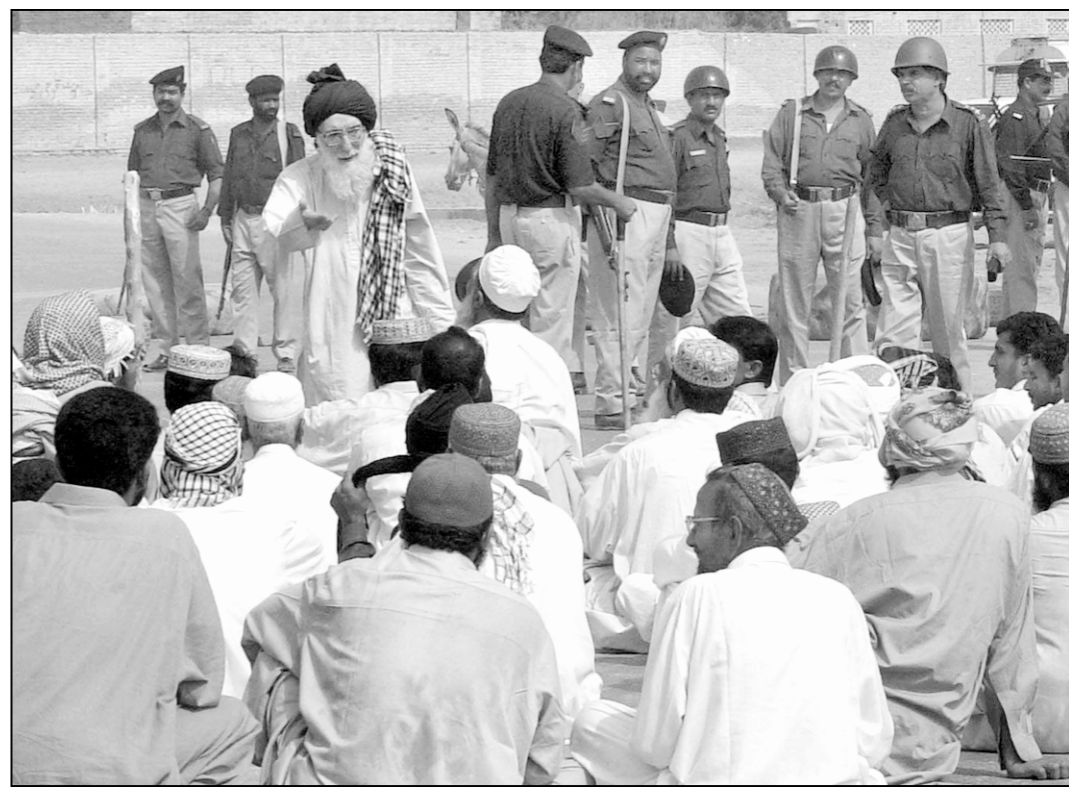
"The police are arresting anyone with a beard," Ghafoor said.

Despite the crackdown, Ghafoor said 4,000 militants had gathered in the city centre and still intended to march to the airport. However he played down speculation the intention was to storm the airport.

"We will be peaceful. We do not want to indulge in any violence," he said before the violent clashes at Shikarpur.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has offered his full support to the US-led war on terrorism and Washington's efforts to snuff out alleged terrorist networks in Afghanistan.

But he has been called a "criminal" by religious fundamentalist leaders, who blame Israel for the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington and advocate the introduction of



An elderly religious leader talks to protesters while keeping their morale high after police stopped them in Jacobabad on Sunday. One protestor was shot dead and hundreds others were arrested as Islamic radicals tried to march on to an airfield being used by US forces.

8 militants shot dead in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Eight Islamic separatists, including six who infiltrated from Pakistani territory, were shot dead by security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir, a police spokesman said Sunday.

Six militants who entered via Sawjian in the southern district of Poonch were killed late Saturday in gunbattles after they refused Indian troops' demands that they surrender, police said.

Police said all the dead militants were foreigners and had infiltrated in two batches through the Line of Control — the de facto border which divides Kashmir into Indian- and Pakistani-administered regions.

Two more militants were shot dead by security forces in Kashmir on Saturday, the spokesman said.

More than 35,000 people have been killed in Indian-administered Kashmir since a Muslim separatist insurgency broke out in 1989.

Hatred against US will grow, says Saddam

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein warned Saturday that hatred of the United States will grow across the globe, and again condemned the US-led strikes on Afghanistan, the state-run INA news agency reported.

"The American aggression against Afghanistan is a demonstration of force, of terrorism against not only the people of Afghanistan but all others," Saddam said at a meeting with his closest aides, the agency said.

"Hatred will rise against America across the whole world," he added.

Saddam, whose regime has been under UN sanctions since invading Kuwait in 1990, is the sole Arab leader not to have condemned the September 11 terror attacks on the United States.

US President George W. Bush on Thursday described Saddam as an "evil man" whom the United States is watching carefully.

Palestinian police foil four suicide attacks

Israeli troops gun down Hamas member

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinian security services have foiled four attempted suicide bombings against Israel in the past two weeks, a senior Palestinian security official told AFP Sunday.

The official said several arrests of potential suicide bombers had been made, including members of the radical Islamic Jihad movement.

"We succeeded in stopping four attacks" in the West Bank, said the high-ranking official, who asked not to be named.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat pledged to crack down on extremists attacking Israel when he signed up to a truce deal on September 26. Israel has accused him of renegeing on his side of the deal.

Palestinian police made a series of raids in the West Bank a week ago, detaining several members of Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the two radical groups opposed to any compromise with Israel.

The official did not specify if the arrests were made in those sweeps.

Meanwhile, Israeli sharpshooters gunned down a

member of the Palestinian militant group Hamas in the West Bank Sunday, even as Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was expected to announce an easing of the blockade on Palestinian territories.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair meanwhile called for anti-terror strikes in Afghanistan to be balanced with advances in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, a day before meeting Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in London.

Sharon intends to announce a relaxation of choking security restrictions in areas of the Gaza Strip and West Bank where relative calm has been restored, Israeli radio said.

Political sources quoted by the radio however warned these confidence-building measures would be scrapped the moment the ceasefire is breached in these areas.

One of the key areas was set to be a district of self-rule Hebron, the flashpoint West Bank town where 400 hardcore Jewish settlers live under heavy army guard at the heart of a population of 120,000 Palestinians.

Pakistan to deport foreign reporters from Afghan border

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan said on Saturday that it would deport any foreign reporter who tried to enter areas close to the border with Afghanistan.

"We have also seen that some of your colleagues want to go to areas where they are not allowed," Foreign Ministry spokesman Riaz Ahmed Khan told a news conference.

We are considering that in case such an incident takes place... if somebody is caught close to the border, we will also take action against that agency or the network," he said.

That action would include revoking a journalist's visa, effectively resulting in deportation, he said. "You should advise your colleagues not to be adventurous," he said.

Clash in Bihar over effigy burning of Laden

AP, Patna

Violence flared in the eastern Indian state of Bihar Saturday when Hindu and Muslim activists hurled bombs at each other and set fire to shops over the burning of an effigy of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, police said.

The clashes broke out when a group of Hindus protesting against terrorism in Patna, the capital of Bihar, tried to burn an effigy of bin Laden, the man named by Washington as the prime suspect in the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Angry Muslims pelted the Hindu protesters with stones. Then both sides fired at each other with guns and hurled homemade bombs.

At least a dozen shops were set on fire before police could stop the fighting.

War in Afghanistan holds hope for Kashmir

AFP, Islamabad

The US-led military campaign in Afghanistan could offer the best chance in 50 years to push for a resolution of India and Pakistan's bitter dispute over Kashmir, western diplomats say.

The Kashmir issue is expected to figure prominently in US Secretary of State Colin Powell's upcoming visit to New Delhi and Islamabad, aimed at shoring up support for Washington's war on terrorism.

Diplomats here say Powell will press on both countries the need to ease tensions over divided Kashmir so as not to undermine the global alliance against terrorism, in which the South Asian rivals have become unlikely allies.

Since their independence from British rule in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought two full scale

wars over Kashmir. US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said Thursday that a decade-old description of the disputed Himalayan region as the "most dangerous place in the world" still held true.

"If India and Pakistan are willing to make a minimum effort in the current climate, conditions could emerge for a pause in the violence in Kashmir and maybe for the beginning of a resolution," said one western diplomat.

India controls the southern two-thirds of Muslim-majority Kashmir and Pakistan the remainder.

An armed Muslim insurgency in the Indian-controlled zone has claimed more than 35,000 lives since 1989.

India says the Muslim militants are terrorists sponsored by Pakistan, while Islamabad labels

the insurgency a freedom struggle against Indian repression.

Washington has been cautious about raising expectations of Powell's visit, saying only that he is hoping to "lower the temperature" between the two nuclear-capable rivals.

Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan said Saturday that Islamabad wanted the Kashmir issue to be "addressed, and addressed meaningfully."

While Pakistan has always been keen on international mediation in Kashmir, India is bitterly opposed to any third party intervention, arguing that Kashmir is an integral part of its sovereign territory.

The two sides are deeply entrenched, but there are hopes that the US "war on terrorism" may help them lift their heads above the sandbags.



An Afghan woman collects US humanitarian aid, thrown from a plane on Saturday night not far from the village of Khawaja Bahudine in northeast Afghanistan. US planes dropped several tons of food supplies in the region overnight Friday-Saturday for Afghans.

'US will suffer more than Russians in Afghanistan'

AFP, Riyadh

Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar pledged in an interview printed Sunday that his Islamic militia will teach the United States "a much more bitter lesson" than that taught to the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

"It's true that we have not started our real battle against the United States because of their technological superiority," he told the Saudi daily Al-Watan.

"But -- God willing -- we will not greet them with roses," Omar said.

"They will be taught a much more bitter lesson than that taught

to the Russians," Omar said in a telephone interview from Afghanistan, the Arabic-language daily said.

Defeated Soviet forces pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989.

He reiterated the Taliban's total refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden who is accused of masterminding the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

"We have said if Washington has the evidence proving his (bin Laden's) involvement and is confident of that, why don't they give us this evidence and we are ready to try him in Afghanistan or by a committee of Islamic scholars from

three countries.

"By ignoring this proposal, the United States is humiliating Islamic sharia law, and accordingly the current war is not targeting Bin Laden but the destruction of the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan," Omar asserted.

"I reiterate our readiness for the trial to take place in the presence of observers from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and western countries," he said.

Omar denied reports that members of his family have been killed in US air strikes which began on October 7, but admitted his house was hit.

He said there had been huge loss of life and extensive damage.

"Afghan cities and villages have suffered huge losses. A large number of women and children have been killed, and mosques, hospitals and residential areas have been hit," said Omar, describing the air raids as barbaric.

But he asserted that the Afghan determination to fight has not been undermined.

The Afghan people will reject any Western-backed government in Kabul, said Omar, vowing that death would be the fate of all collaborators.

Kabul's poorest have no escape from US bombs

AFP, Kabul

Only the poorest of the poor in the desperately impoverished Afghan capital remained in the city Sunday as constant US air raids spread fear and panic among a normally stoic people.

"Believe me, whenever there's a raid my children start crying. Last night even I cried with them," said Mohammad Nabi, 41, an auto spare parts salesman in the Qwaee Markaz area of Kabul.

"When women and children scream in the middle of the night, that is terrifying enough in itself."

As US jets buzzed overhead night and day, whether on bombing

runs or surveillance missions to identify fresh targets, those who could not afford to leave were trying to find shelter wherever they could.

Shopkeepers have moved their stocks to the countryside or boarded up their windows. "We fear our goods could be looted if there is anarchy," said one merchant who did not want to be named.

Taxi drivers said the city was becoming a ghost town.

"No one remains in the whole of Kabul to hire a taxi. I have been moving around the city all day to find a client but it has become very difficult," said 38-year-old Mushtaba as he sat in his rusty cab.

"Only those people who get

around on foot or bicycle remain in the city. After a month you won't see anybody in the city. They may die or leave."

The Pentagon confirmed Saturday that a 2,000-pound (900-kilogramme) bomb mistakenly struck a residential area near Kabul, apparently after a wrong digit was entered as the target's coordinates.

Instead of hitting a military helicopter at Kabul airport, about a mile from the residential area, it landed in an area of traditional Afghan mud houses.

Up to four civilians died, and dozens were left homeless in a city where hundreds of thousands already rely on foreign aid to eat.

Laden will never get captured, says son

AFP, London

One of Osama bin Laden's sons has vowed that his father will never be captured by the West, the Sunday Mirror, a British tabloid, reported.

Abdullah Laden, 18, told the newspaper that his father, the chief suspect in the September 11 attacks in the United States and the world's most wanted man, is still in Afghanistan, hiding in the mountains with 300 commandos.

"America and Britain will never track down my father," the young man said. "He has vanished into the landscape -- he is invisible."

He told the paper that bin Laden disappeared into the hills with 60 trucks filled with satellite equipment

on September 11 but said his father insisted he was not involved in the September 11 attacks.

The son of bin Laden is the first member of the family to be interviewed since the terror attacks in New York and Washington, according to the Sunday Mirror.

It said its interview was arranged by a Taliban agent and took place in a guarded compound in a diplomatic quarter of Islamabad, the Pakistani capital.

Abdullah told the tabloid his father was now hiding in a cave, planning victory against the Northern Alliance, the opposition grouping in Afghanistan, and against special forces sent to capture or kill him.



Australian PM John Howard and Opposition Leader Kim Beazley shake hands after the coin toss in the only debate of this election campaign at the Channel Nine Studios in Sydney on Sunday. This is the only leaders debate in the run up to the upcoming general election. At centre is host Ray Martin.

Hundreds flee riots in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Hundreds of non-Muslims have taken refuge in police and army barracks following bloody riots in the northern Nigerian city of Kano which left at least eight dead, police and residents told AFP Sunday.

Violence broke out in the city Saturday following a Muslim rally Friday against US-led air strikes on Afghanistan.

A police spokesman said Sunday that hundreds of people, mainly non-Muslims from southern Nigeria, were taking refuge in police and army barracks in the city.

3 men go missing after rescue attempt at Indian mine

AFP, Kolkata

Three men who jumped into a collapsed mine in eastern India to locate missing relatives believed to be among 50 people trapped inside have also disappeared, police said Sunday.

The three were among scores of anxious relatives maintaining a vigil outside, waiting for the local authorities to begin the rescue of those trapped inside since Thursday, a police spokesman said.

The mine situated in the eastern state of West Bengal caved in when the victims were illegally extracting coal.

10 Abu Sayyaf rebels killed in Philippines

AFP, Zamboanga

At least 10 Muslim Abu Sayyaf rebels were killed Sunday and two soldiers were wounded in clashes in the southern Philippine island of Basilan, where troops rescued four Filipino captives.

Clashes erupted before dawn Sunday in Lantawan town when soldiers caught up with the rebels and their hostages, triggering the fighting, military southern command chief Lieutenant General Roy Cimatu said.

Four Filipinos were rescued at the height of the fighting, but the rebels still hold American couple Martin and Gracia Burnham and

nine Filipinos.

"Initially, 10 Abu Sayyaf were reported killed, but there could be more Abu Sayyaf casualties in the frontlines," Cimatu told reporters here.

Military officials in Basilan earlier said two soldiers were wounded in the showdown. A seven-year-old boy was also slain. His father and a woman and her son were wounded when the rebels opened fire on a cluster of huts as they retreated. Moreover, Philippine troops on Sunday rescued four Filipino hostages held by Muslim Abu Sayyaf gunmen on southern Basilan island following a fierce firefight, the military said.

Time bomb planted in train defused in Assam

AFP, Guwahati

Indian troops foiled a train disaster in the insurgency-ridden northeastern state of Assam by defusing a time bomb planted inside a crowded railway coach, officials said Sunday.

A police spokesman said a passenger informed Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel Saturday about an "unattended gas cylinder" in a coach of the Brahmaputra Mail, just before it was to leave the eastern city of Dibrugarh, 445 km from Assam capital Guwahati.

The train was bound for New Delhi via Guwahati.

"The RPF guards informed the army bomb disposal squad and within minutes it was found the gas cylinder was fitted with a timer device and packed with about 50 kg of explosives," a top police official told AFP by telephone from Dibrugarh.

"Half the train would have been ripped apart if the blast had taken place and the casualties would have been very high indeed," he said.

The bomb was defused less than 15 minutes before it was to go off.

Thousands of Europeans protest US attacks on Afghanistan

AFP, Berlin

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in cities across Europe on Saturday in peaceful demonstrations against the US-led reprisal bombing campaign on Afghanistan.

"No war, we want peace", was the chant of some 5,000 people who marched through central London, echoing the cries of fellow demonstrators in France, Germany and Switzerland.

"We are sending a very clear

message to (British Prime Minister Tony) Blair and (US President George) Bush to say that we think they should stop the bombing now," said Kate Hudson vice-chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Since Sunday, the United States has pounded targets of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia and sites of Osama bin Laden's suspected terror network, blamed for the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

In Germany, police estimated

around 25,000 people joined rallies in several cities including the capital Berlin, but organisers insisted the total was nearer 60,000.

More than 2,000 police officers were deployed in Berlin to maintain order as demonstrators made their way through the city under the theme "No war! Stand for peace!" but the event went off without incident.

In the southeast city of Stuttgart, several thousand protesters denounced what they branded the "military terror of the United States."