INTERNATIONAL

Use of N-arms should be 'inconceivable': Sattar

Indo-Pak FMs may meet in Nepal

The use of nuclear weapons in warfare should be "inconceivable" for any state. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said Saturday as tensions mounted with neighbouring India.

"Pakistan does not seek any war, local or general, conventional or nuclear. Pakistan is for peace and for adherence to the norms of peaceful coexistence," Sattar told a press conference.

When asked if Pakistan would unleash a first-strike nuclear attack if war with India broke out and its survival was at stake, Sattar said the topic was "a

very grave issue and it should not be lightly discussed.' "Nuclear weapons are awful weapons and any use of these weapons

should be inconceivable for any state," he said "Of course these are weapons of defence and deterrence and we hope

the deterrence value of these weapons will be kept in view by anyone who is engaged in adventurism."

Military tensions between the two nuclear-capable rivals have escalated since a December 13 attack on the Indian parliament by five armed gunmen in which 14 people died, including the assailants. India says it has proof that Pakistan-based groups carried out the attack

under the patronage of Pakistan military intelligence. Pakistan has denied

India has mobilised a large number of troops along its western border with Pakistan, which has responded by pushing its army to forward posi-

Meanwhile, India and Pakistan could use a regional meeting in Nepal next week to hammer a way out of the current political and military deadlock, media reports said Saturday.

"There will be sideline bilaterals though not at the top... barring some major catastrophe -- which is not hard to imagine given our relationship and history," a senior, unnamed official was quoted as saying by The Times of

Indian's Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh could meet with his Pakistani counterpart Abdul Sattar in Kathmandu, he said.

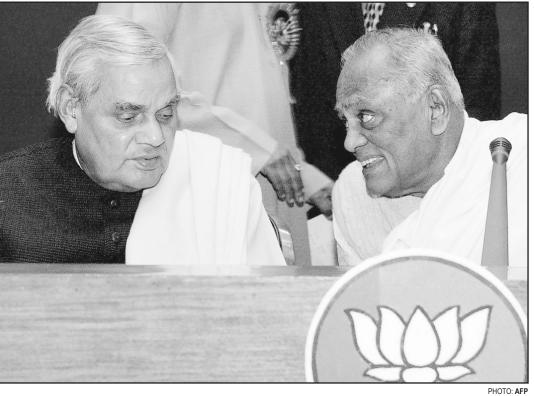
There was no official confirmation from India of the planned meeting. The official added that the current state of relations between the two

South Asian nuclear rivals was "not as bad as it appears" A three-day summit-level meeting of leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is due to begin in

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has confirmed he will attend. Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on Friday indicated he would go to Nepal and also expressed his willingness to meet with Vajpayee "I don't mind meeting him (Vajpayee). But as I said once before, you can't

clap with one hand." he said in Islamabad. "And if there is a willingness from the other side, then there is a willingness from my side." he added

New Delhi has yet to formally react to the offer.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (L) speaks with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Janakrishna Murthy during the BJP National Executive meeting at the parliament annex in New Delhi on Saturday. Leaders of India's ruling right-wing Hindu nationalist BJP began a crucial meeting to discuss worsening relations with neigh bouring Pakistan with the party chief throwing his weight behind Vajpayee.

The American base at Guantanamo US to use naval base to detain fighters captured in Afghanistan UNITED STATES Cuantanamo **FLORIDA** Miami 117 km2 enclave (includes 49 km2 on land)

India, Pakistan urged to show restraint

Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi has urged India and Pakistan to avoid a military confrontation over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, the Libyan JANA agency reported Friday.

In messages to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vaipavee. Kadhafi said that "the mobilisation of troops from the two countries at the border is useless and will not solve the problems".

He said he was very worried about the situation in Kashmir, especially as both India and Pakistan possess nuclear arms.

In a speech delivered in Syrte. on the Mediterranean coast, Gaddafi accused unnamed "imperial forces" of being behind the tension between the two south Asian nations.

"The goal of these forces is to divide south-east Asia and to

he believed that "India is not hostile to Islam because a third of its population are Muslims.

"The colonial forces do not want to see Muslim strength in this fertile region of the globe," he added Gaddafi said he had telephoned

the leaders of both countries to "urge them to work for peace".

He also announced that he would send an envoy, Salem ben Amer, to India and Pakistan to "verify the truth of the accusations" made by both countries. Relations between India and

Pakistan have plunged since an armed attack on the Indian parliament earlier this month which New Delhi accuses Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence of master-

Over the past week, the two sides which have fought three fullscale wars since independence in 1947, have made major deployments of troops and military hard-

US hunt for Laden to continue: Bush

US President George W. Bush made a fresh vow to track down terror suspect Osama bin Laden "dead or alive," rejecting suggestions that the US campaign in Afghanistan may soon wind down.

Bush, on vacation at his Texas ranch, said he was focusing on events in South Asia, a region where US troops were hunting for bin Laden and nuclear rivals India and Pakistan were sliding into a new Cold War.

Pakistani officials said that if bin Laden strayed onto their territory he would be seized, and they promised they would not start a war with India after Washington expressed concern that the crisis could impinge on the US-led war on terrorism.

Bush was quick Friday to discount suggestions by a member of

more than 3,000 Americans dead US operations might no longer be needed once pockets of resistance by Bin Laden's al-Qaida network

"We're going to be there for a while, and I don't know the exact moment when we leave, but it's not until this mission is complete," said Bush, flanked by General Tommy Franks, who commands US troops

were quelled

in the war in Afghanistan. Franks said the campaign "will take as long as it takes," defining the mission as an insurance operation designed to keep the interim government on its feet and promote

The Pentagon also indicated that it could not rule out more raids -even if Kabul's new government asked for a halt -- as it continued to mete out retribution for the September 11 terror attacks that left

across three US states. Mohammad Habeel, spokesman

for Afghan Defence Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim, suggested earlier in Kabul that a judgment should be made as to whether the US campaign should continue once the last al-Qaida fighters were captured or killed.

The interim Afghan government took power on December 22, replacing the toppled Taliban regime, which fell victim to a US air campaign launched in retaliation for its refusal to hand over bin Laden the top suspect in the September 1 terror attacks on the United States.

Washington has no idea of the whereabouts of bin Laden, who appeared in a new video broadcas on Arabic television on Thursday, o

AFP Laurence Saubadu Police in West Bengal ban rail, road blockades by protestors

Police in West Bengal on Saturday | AFP, Buenos Aires banned protests, which involve the blocking of roads and railways -- a regular occurrence in the eastern state and its capital Kolkata.

State home secretary Amit Kiran Dev said the acts were punishable under the Railway Act, Indian Penal Code, Motor Vehicle Act and the West Bengal Road Act. Violators would face imprison-

ment of two to five years and a fine,

"Blockades on the rails and roads on trivial issues are causing great trouble to commuters and halting the progress of the state," said West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya.

"We hope that political parties and the other organisations will understand the problem and cooperate with the government to tackle

US hails EU terrorist list

AFP, Washington

The United States on Friday welcomed the publication of the European Union's list of terrorist groups and individuals, saying it lays the groundwork for "greater cooperation" in battling terror.

US State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said in a statement that the move constitutes "another important contribution to the continuing fight against terrorism" and reflects "the EU's determination to 'combat terrorism in every

Myanmar junta frees 4 political prisoners

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's ruling junta has released four political prisoners from democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy

The military regime said in a statement late Friday that the four party members -- all women -- were freed from various prisons, bringing the total number of releases for the

The released were named as Khin Kyi Kyi, Tin Tin Aye, Khin Aye Cho and Khin Soe Win, according to

Argentine protestors set fire to Congress bldg

Top official resigns

Protestors stormed Argentina's Congress building early Saturday, setting fire to the curtains and destroying furniture, in the latest display of mass rage over the planned introduction of a new currency and the continued limited access to their bank accounts.

Police fired tear gas, rubber bullets and used water cannons to quell the rioters while firefighters

Police also used tear gas and water cannons to disperse thousands of protestors who gathered at the the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the presidential palace, demanding the resignation of top government officials accused of corruption in past governments.

On December 20 mass protests at the Plaza de Mayo led to the toppling of former president Fernando de la Rua, who was

President Adolfo Rodriguez Saa Carlos Grosso, a top official in

the new Rodriguez Saa administration, resigned early Saturday following the street protests

Grosso was one of the least popular figures named to the new government because of alleged corruption while he served as mayor of Buenos Aires during the presidency of former president Carlos



Argentine citizens gather in front of the presidential palace in Buenos Aires on Saturday protesting the week-old

Palestinians seek renewed US mediation for ME peace

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinian leaders are seeking renewed US mediation in the Middle East, asking Washington to send special envoy Anthony Zinni back to the region, amid signs that tensions on the ground are easing.

However the deadly violence continued in the Palestinian territories, as an armed man belonging to the radical group Islamic Jihad was shot dead by an Israeli patrol in the northern Gaza Strip.

The gunman, apparently setting out for a suicide attack, may have attempted the first violation of

Jihad's recent promises to halt attacks against Israeli targets. The call for Zinni's return came as Israel eased its blockade on the

holy town of Bethlehem The end of the blockade was a move aimed at allowing Christians to celebrate the Christmas season at the biblical birthplace of Jesus

It came after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said for the first time Thursday that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was making progress in his crackdown or

Islamic extremists. A statement by the Palestinian leadership on Saturday, called for a "quick return of Zinni and his team to proceed to the application of the Mitchell plan and the Tenet memorandum"

The internationally-backed Mitchell plan calls for an end to Israeli-Palestinian violence and the implementation of confidencebuilding measures, before a return

The Tenet memorandum is a blueprint for implementing a

Zinni was sent to the region in late November by US Secretary of State Colin Powell

Change in weather helps Australian firefighters

A weather change helped thousands of firefighters in their battle to contain 100 wildfires across Australia's most populous state on

A cool, moist sea breeze pushed fires, that have raged in New South Wales and around its capital, Sydney, back on themselves.

However, meteorologists warned that the fire threat would likely escalate Sunday when southern hemisphere summer temperatures are expected to soar and dry

as they reach the western suburbs of Sydney," said Kevin O'Loughlin of the New South Wales Bureau of Meteorology. "But we're still expecting the winds to swing back to northwesterly and strengthen."

The fires have been burning out of control for a week and officials say about half have been lit deliber-Firefighters used Saturday's

respite to make firebreaks and carry out controlled burning in forests and around threatened homes.

New South Wales Premier Bob Carr said such preventative measures might not be enough to end

"You are dealing here with exceptionally forceful and intensive fires," Carr told reporters after meeting with fire chiefs

Tinder-dry national parks were closed. National Parks and Wildlife Service Director-General Brian Gilligan estimated that thousands of animals have died or have been injured. but attempts to save them

must wait for safer conditions. "People should stay out of the parks and let nature take its course, he told Australian Broadcasting



Sixteen-month-old Jasmine Anderson plays with reporters' tape recorders as she is held by her mother Marcella Anderson at Midway Airport on Thursday in Chicago, Illinois. The girl was abducted from a local bus station on Christmas Eve and, after heavy news coverage, was found in West Virginia. A woman identified as Shelia Matthews has been charged with the

Alleged shoe bomber is 'lost soul'. says aunt AFP, London

Relatives of Richard Reid, the Briton who allegedly tried to blow up a US-bound plane, have rallied round to insist that he is not a real terrorist but just a "lost soul" who must have been brainwashed.

The latest to spring forward in the suspect's defence is his aunt Madeline Reid, who told the Mirror newspaper Saturday that Reid, 28, had "found solace" in Islam and with other Muslims after a difficult relationship with his mother. "With him it was much more than

a religion, they became his family. "I do not believe for a second, from my conversations with him, that he was burning with hate for the West. He's no terrorist -- he's a lost

Red Cross visits Taliban prisoners in Kandahar

AP, Kandahar

Red Cross representatives visited a makeshift US detention camp in southern Afghanistan where American Marines have added 25 prisoners to the complement of reputed Taliban and al-Qaida forces held on suspicion of being or har-

boring terrorists. The new prisoners, turned over to US forces Thursday and Friday at Kandahar airport, were among the thousands captured by Afghan fighters as they took control of the

country from the Taliban militia. Shortly afterward, seven members of the International Committee of the Red Cross went to the camp to check the detainees medical conditions

"They visited the command and several persons, and are satisfied with our procedures," Marine Maj. Chris Hughes said. "With every group (of prisoners) we bring in, there are injured broken bones, dehydration or malnutrition. And they receive medical treatment throughout.'

The detainees, military officials said, are bound, blindfolded and separated from each other by concertina wire. Calls to International Committee of the Red Cross officials in Islamabad and Kabul went unanswered Saturday.

The number of prisoners jailed at the makeshift detention center has risen steadily this week, and the Pentagon was expecting the additions of a couple dozen daily in

coming days, a defense official said Friday in Washington condition of anonymity

As of Friday afternoon, the official said, the number of captured al-Qaida and Taliban figures in US custody was 70. More can be accommodated in Kandahar, he said, because Marines have expanded the facility there to hold some 250.

Eight more prisoners, including American John Walker Lindh, are being held on the Navy's amphibious assault ship USS Peleiu in the

American officials plan to transfer the Kandahar detainees to the US naval base in Guantanamo

19 Indian troops killed in accidental mine blast

AFP,Jodhpur

Nineteen Indian soldiers were killed and five injured when landmines they were laying along the border with Pakistan "accidentally exploded", officials said Saturday.

The incident took place at around 7.30 pm (1400 GMT) Friday near a border post at Gamnewala sector in Shahgarh, around 70 km from Jaisalmer town in the western desert state of Rajasthan.

"The mines exploded accidentally, causing the deaths," Jaisalmer district collector Kuldip Ranka told AFP. "The injured have been shifted to the military hospital."

Fifteen soldiers were killed on the spot while four died later in hospital, Ranka said. It was not immediately known

how many mines exploded or how many the team had been laying.

Indian Cabinet

amends POTO AFP, New Delhi

The Indian cabinet Saturday decided to amend a controversia ordinance to combat terrorism in the

Called the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO), the legislation was due to be passed by parliament during its winter session which ended on November 23.

from opposition parties who have termed it a "black law" which gives sweeping powers to security agen In a bid to appease the opposi-

tion, the government on Saturday

However, it met stiff resistance

made several changes to the original Nepal declares

one-day holiday for SAARC summit

AFP, Kathmandu The Nepalese government has declared January 4, the first day of a

Kathmandu, state-run radio said "Residents of Kathmandu have been given a day off on January 4 coinciding with the inauguration of the 11th SAARC summit," the report

the residents of the capital

Heads of the seven South Asian nations are due to hold a three-day

11 slain in attack on village in **Philippines**

Ten villagers and one gunman were killed when armed men, believed linked to Muslim rebels, raided a town in the southern Philippines authorities and survivors said

The attackers, dressed in a combination of military fatigues and jeans, opened fire late Thursday on residents of the coastal town of Naga in Zamboanga de Sibugay province, regional deputy army chief Brigadier General Angel Atutubo said.

At least six villagers were killed in the first volley. One of the attackers was also slain and another wounded in the crossfire, provincial police director Superintendent Arnulfo Perez said.

The gunmen seized four villagers and made them carry their dead and wounded. Perez said, revising earlier statements that five villagers were taken hostage.

When they were some way from the village, the attackers shot dead the four villagers, Perez said.

Mazoka declares himself winner in Zambian polls **AFP,** Lusaka

Millionaire businessman Anderson Mazoka declared himself the winner of Zambia's presidential election and warned Saturday of "chaos" if the electoral commission did not confirm that result

"The results which we have from our agents and monitors show that I have won. I urge the Electoral Commission to declare me the winner." Mazoka told a news confer-He said his party's figures gave

him 36 percent of the ballots cast. compared to 23 percent for his closest competitor Levy Mwanawasa of the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democray (MMD). "They are attempting to rig he

election, but I would like to warn the MD that any attempt to change the results will result in chaos in this country," he said.