

# India now counting cost of troop deployment

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's huge and costly deployment of troops and heavy armour on the border with Pakistan is in its second month and there are no signs of a lowering in tension with its nuclear-armed neighbor.

Several defence experts say the 45-day-old build-up has served its limited purpose and could start telling on the troops so that government leaders and top military brass will have to review it.

"In strategic and operational terms, the development has brought about the military persuasion expected of it," said retired lieutenant-general VR Raghavan.

"No more gains can be expected to accrue in its continuance," he said, adding that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf would be held to a pledge to fight terrorism.

An estimated million troops face

each other across the border in a crisis triggered by an attack on the Indian parliament on December 13 which New Delhi blamed on Pakistani-based guerillas operating in disputed Kashmir.

"Readiness for war cannot continue forever, you either finish it off or come back," said retired major-general Afsir Karim. "It was a show of force, it had its impact, but it's over now."

India has made a troop pull-back conditional on Islamabad halting the flow of Islamic militants into rebellion-torn Kashmir, but this may not be evident until the summer when the snows melt and infiltration normally starts.

Fewer rebels have tried to enter Kashmir from Pakistan in recent weeks, but Indian officials say this is mainly because the mountain passes are closed by unusually heavy snowfall.

Indian leaders privately say the

stalemate could be more quickly ended if Pakistan honors their second demand, that it hand over 20 men accused of criminal and terrorist acts in India.

"Handing over these people, at least the 14 Indian nationals, would be a visible demonstration of Pakistan's declared commitment to fight terrorism," said a minister, adding that such the move could help start the de-escalation process.

Pakistan, which detained hundreds of religious extremists, and shut down their offices just before and after a landmark speech by President Pervez Musharraf last month, has made no move to hand over any of the wanted men.

Instead the two sides have stepped up the war of words, with Islamabad accusing New Delhi of involvement in the kidnapping of US reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan, and plans for a nuclear test.



PHOTO: AFP

Police and bomb disposal squad inspect the damaged office of Land Revenue in Kathmandu on Friday. Maoist rebels planted the bomb injuring four people.

# Iraq seeks UN intervention to head off US strike

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq called on the UN Security Council Friday to intervene at once to head off an eventual US military strike against the country.

"The US administration's threats against a number of countries, including Iraq, constitute an aggression and a crime endangering international peace and security and thus make it incumbent on the UN Security Council to intervene immediately," said Ath-Thawra, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath Party.

"The threats issued by the United States against Iraq, Iran and North Korea as part of its so-called 'anti-terror campaign' contravene" UN conventions, it said.

"The fact that the United States is a permanent member of the Security Council does not give it the right to attack another member state of the United Nations, which is required to uphold the rights of its members," the Iraqi daily wrote.

The states at the receiving end of American threats are entitled under the UN Charter to request an extraordinary session of the General Assembly to discuss those threats, "which are an aggression that the world body is supposed to stop," Ath-Thawra added.

Iraq says it expects to be the target of a fresh military offensive by the United States, where administration

officials have in recent days toughened their line toward Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, raising concern among many US allies in the Middle East and Europe.

On Friday, Iraq said it would carry out a "routine test" of its warning sirens, which usually signal an air raid, in the capital Baghdad.

"Warning sirens will sound in some parts of Baghdad today (Friday) as part of a routine test," said an official of the civil defence department, cited by Ath-Thawra.

"This will be done in the framework of regular maintenance work ... by civil defence bodies to ensure that the sirens are working after some of them stopped functioning as a result of the bad weather conditions which recently hit the country," the official said.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Thursday Washington was determined to topple Saddam and would act alone if necessary to change the regime in Baghdad.

President George W. Bush has branded Iraq part of an "axis of evil," along with Iran and North Korea, that must forcibly be prevented from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq has so far rejected the return of UN arms inspectors, who pulled out of the country in December 1998, and says it does not have mass destruction weapons.

# Attack on Israeli tank: 3 soldiers killed

AFP, Jerusalem

An Israeli army spokesman said Friday that three Israelis killed Thursday were members of the crew of a Merkava tank, the first to be destroyed in a Palestinian attack.

"All three were soldiers, and the attack also slightly wounded another member of the five-man crew of the tank," the spokesman said.

The tank was hit by a roadside bomb in the Gaza Strip as it arrived on the scene of an earlier blast aimed at a settler convoy near the settlement of Netzarim.

The deaths brought to 1,205 the number of people killed in the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, which broke out on September 28, 2000, including 922 Palestinians and 261 Israelis.

Israeli public radio said the attack was claimed jointly by the radical Islamic movement Hamas and an armed group linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction.

Meanwhile, Israeli tanks, armoured bulldozers and jeeps rolled into a civilian area south of Gaza City Friday destroying several houses, a police position and at least 100 hectares (247 acres) of farmland, Palestinian security sources said.

At least six tanks, three armoured bulldozers and several military jeeps were spotted in the area, according to the same sources.

The incursion started at dawn and was continuing at mid-day between the Karni border crossing, in the northern Gaza Strip, and the settlement of Netzarim, just to the south.

The operation took place close to where an Israeli tank was blown up by a Palestinian group Thursday night, leaving three crewmen dead and a fourth lightly injured.

# US, UK conduct joint nuclear experiment

REUTERS, Washington

The United States and Britain on Thursday conducted deep underground the Nevada desert their first joint nuclear experiment allowed under the global Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, officials said.

Officials said the subcritical nuclear experiment was aimed at maintaining the safety and reliability of both nations' atomic weapons without resorting to underground nuclear blasts.

The US National Nuclear Security Administration said the subcritical nuclear experiment took place about 960 feet (293 metres) beneath the earth's surface at 1:30 pm Pacific Standard Time (4:30 pm EST/2130 GMT) at the Nevada Test Site, 85 miles (137 km) northwest of Las Vegas.

In a subcritical nuclear test, there is no nuclear explosion, but scientists can use the experiments to draw conclusions about nuclear materials such as plutonium.

# Blaze at British migrant detention centre

AFP, London

Firefighters said Friday they had brought under control a major blaze at a British detention centre for asylum seekers, which reportedly allowed a number of detainees to escape from the facility and left six people injured.

According to media reports the fire at the Yarl's Wood centre in Bedfordshire, central England broke out after a riot sparked by anger at the treatment of a woman detainee.

An unknown number of detainees escaped from the centre, said to be Europe's largest detention facility for asylum seekers, and six people were injured, the reports said.

Some 50 firefighters were at the scene early Friday and said the fire, which destroyed part of the centre, was under control. It had broken out Thursday evening.

Police, who have not yet given a cause for the blaze, said they had evacuated between 250 and 300 people from the building.

Three detainees, two police officers and a member of staff at the

centre suffered slight injuries and needed hospital treatment, police said.

Officers believe some asylum seekers were able to escape during the chaos but are unsure of the exact number.

A Bedford police spokesman earlier told AFP: "It is a very strong possibility that the fires were started deliberately."

Mark Littlewood, from human rights group Liberty, said he had heard the disturbance was started after a woman detainee was badly treated.

He said: "There are rumours that the trouble began after a woman who was being taken to hospital to receive medical treatment was handcuffed."

"The early indications are that the conditions at the centre were pretty harsh. Sooner or later it's not surprising an incident like this would occur, which isn't to condone the violence."

The Yarl's Wood detention centre was home to 400 people when the blaze broke out. It was built last year to house 900.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf (L) delivers his remarks before the House International Relations Committee on Thursday on Capitol Hill in Washington DC as US Representative Henry Hyde, R-IL, (R) looks on.

# Musharraf declares himself greatest Pak democrat

AFP, Washington

President Pervez Musharraf, who took power after a 1999 coup, on Thursday declared himself Pakistan's greatest ever democrat, and mounted a strong defence of his "road map" back to free elections.

But Musharraf, fulfilling the final engagements of a three-day visit to Washington, said in a speech that even after the elections he has promised to hold in Pakistan in October, the national interest dictated that he had a role to play.

"I may be a military man, a man in uniform, yes I am, but I am more democratic than any government ever existing in Pakistan," he said.

"You need to come to Pakistan and see for yourself and see the truth of what I am saying," he told his luncheon audience at Washington's National Press Club.

Musharraf, who met President George W. Bush on Wednesday, said that he had started to introduce the "essence" of democracy to Pakistan, which he defined as democratic elections followed by sound, corruption-free governance.

"We are bringing the real essence of democracy which never existed in Pakistan," he said.

Musharraf said he had started by laying the groundwork for democracy by strengthening federalism and empowering the people at grass roots level, in local elections.

"We have already announced a road map," he said.

Musharraf's opponents have reacted sceptically to that road map, charging that the president plans to keep parliament on a tight reign and retain power for himself and the military's National Security Council, which has overseen the cabinet since the coup.

# Indian Maoists press for peace talks

AFP, Hyderabad

One of India's oldest and most violent Maoist groups is pressing for talks to end a 30-year-old insurgency that has claimed more than 10,000 lives in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

The ultra radical People's War Group (PWG) has been fighting an armed rebellion on a platform of land reforms and greater social justice in Andhra Pradesh's tribal and underdeveloped regions.

The group claims it has already "liberated" some pockets within the

state where it is running its own parallel government.

Now, however, the rebels are talking peace and have offered a three-month long ceasefire, calling on the state government to reciprocate and lift its ban on the group to facilitate negotiations.

The administration of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has been guarded in its response, while announcing that it would be ready for talks once the "modalities and agenda" have been worked out.

# Bush's Kyoto alternative irks allies, Democrats

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush unveiled an alternative to the Kyoto climate change treaty he spurned last year, to the dismay of environmentalists who saw the plan as a gift to corporate America.

"The Bush administration is sticking to the polluting policies that the energy industry asked for rather than taking the sensible steps that can protect our health," said Executive Director of the Sierra Club Carl Pope.

Bush, in one of his first actions

upon taking office in January 2001, yanked US support for the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which requires wealthy nations to cut to 1990 levels the emissions of greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.

Bush sparked a worldwide uproar with his decision to abandon Kyoto because he said it was likely to cost millions of US jobs.

On Thursday, he insisted the new plan, which would slow emissions growth by reducing "greenhouse gas intensity" - the ratio of emissions to economic output - by a target of 18 percent over 10 years, does not shortchange eco-

nomics growth.

"I will not commit our nation to an unsound international treaty that will throw millions of our citizens out of work. Yet, we recognise our international responsibilities," he said in an address at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration in nearby Silver Spring, Maryland.

"This is the common sense way to measure progress. Our nation must have economic growth. Growth is also what pays for investments in clean technologies, increased conservation and energy efficiency."

# Army must be punished for civilian killing: CM

AFP, Srinagar

Kashmir's chief minister Friday urged the Indian government to punish soldiers who were allegedly involved in the killing of a civilian, officials said.

"The army must court marshal the guilty," said Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah in a statement.

The army has claimed that government employee Abdul Ahad Bhat died in cross-fire between militants and the security forces in the town of Baramulla, 55 kilometres north of Srinagar, the state's summer capital on Wednesday.

But his family and other residents claim he was killed by Indian soldiers during a raid on his home.

"The chief minister has written to the (Indian) defence minister to try

the guilty personnel under the army act and award exemplary punishment," the statement said.

The Kashmir government has already ordered a magisterial probe into the incident, after thousands of residents took to the streets in protest at the killing.

Meanwhile, Kashmir's main separatist alliance, the All Party Hurriyat Conference, and the Employees Union have called for a one-day strike in Kashmir on Saturday to protest against the killing as well as "extra-judicial executions by Indian troops in general".

Meanwhile, Indian troops on Friday shot dead eight suspected Muslim militants who had crossed from Pakistan into Indian-controlled Kashmir.

# Milosevic back on offensive with more gruesome photos

AFP, The Hague

Slobodan Milosevic went on the offensive against NATO again Friday, showing his war crimes trial horrific pictures of dead babies and adults blown to bits by the alliance's 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia.

Milosevic, who has relentlessly attacked NATO and the West since beginning his defence on genocide and war crimes charges Thursday, showed image after image of death to press his case that NATO is guilty of war crimes.

He presented the court with pictures of a little baby covered with blood and dust lying stilled forever in a field, one young man with half his face sheared off, and the twisted remains of another with his



limbs bent at impossible angles.

Milosevic said they were all ethnic Albanians who were killed when a NATO bomb blew apart their convoy as they were returning to their home in Kosovo.

The alliance acknowledged that civilians died when a pilot mistakenly hit a refugee convoy in April 1999, but Milosevic claimed that it

had been targeted intentionally.

"We intercepted communication between the pilot and his command center," the 60-year-old former Yugoslav president told the court.

"The pilot says that it's not a military column, and that he can see peasants and tractors. And the response was 'Carry out your orders,'" he said.

"This is a highly eloquent though drastic example of the suffering of people," Milosevic said.

Legal experts say Milosevic will be allowed to continue to attack NATO and the West in his opening defence statement, but once the heart of the trial begins will be limited to cross-examining prosecution witnesses.