

# Anti-riot troops, elite commandos to be deployed in Gujarat

**AFP, New Delhi**

India is sending 2,000 anti-riot troopers and elite commandos to riot-hit Gujarat to help "supercop" K.P.S. Gillput down an eruption of sectarian violence that has claimed more than 900 lives, officials said yesterday.

Another 1,000 policemen from the northern state of Punjab are expected to reach Gujarat to prop up Gill's reported plans to raise a non-partisan squad to stem the rioting of the past two months.

"Eight companies (2,000 soldiers) of the Central Reserve Police Force are being dispatched to Gujarat from various parts of the country," a home ministry official in New Delhi said.

The official also said some 200 "Black Cat" commandos would leave soon for Gujarat to help Gill, who is credited with ending a Sikh separatist campaign in Punjab that claimed 50,000 lives in the 1980s.

The fresh deployments in Gujarat, where army contingents are already positioned, came amid reports by television networks of a public burning of a Muslim resident in the town of Vatwa and other sporadic violence late Wednesday night.

Gujarat's police department has been squarely blamed for playing a partisan role in the riots which have largely targeted Muslims.

The Indian government last week recalled "supercop" Gill from nine years of retirement and appointed him security advisor to Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, with a brief to restore normality in the state where 100,000 Muslims are covering in relief shelters.

The move stemmed from swelling international and domestic criticism of Modi as well as the central government for failing to end one of India's worst outbreaks of sectarian violence since independence five decades ago.

Gill, who has a fearsome reputation for dealing with internal unrest, has called for men he had trained when he was police chief of Punjab.

Punjab Chief Minister Amrinder Singh immediately accepted Gill's request but the mobilisation has yet to begin, highly-placed sources in the home ministry said.

"It seems he is still planning, because once he goes into action in Gujarat we won't be surprised if he steps on some toes," the source said of Gill's law-and-order methods such as his controversial bullet-for-bullet policy.

The towering official is known not only for the successes in Punjab but also for his role in battling tribal insurgencies in the northeastern state of Assam where he was police chief in the mid-1990s.

He earned the nickname "supercop" for leading police teams into deadly gunbattles with Sikh separatist guerrillas in Punjab.

Gill has described the situation in Gujarat as "exceedingly bad," saying his first priority would be to "put an end to the violence and then try to bring the two communities together."

"Gujarat is an issue the whole nation is concerned with and on which the government has to deliver," he recently said.



**PHOTO: AFP**  
Pakistan's Naval Chief Admiral Aziz Mirza (R) briefs French Defence Minister Michele Alliot-Marie (C) about the suicide bombing incident near the wreckage of a bus in which 11 French nationals were killed in the troubled port city of Karachi on Thursday. Alliot-Marie, immediately after flying in, went to see the 10 French citizens lying wounded, one in critical condition and then visited the site of the worst-ever suicide attack in Pakistan.

# Bus bombing an act of Int'l terrorism : Musharraf

## Injured Frenchmen evacuated from Pakistan

**AP, Karachi**

President Pervez Musharraf, who ordered security forces on maximum alert, said the bus bombing in Karachi that killed 11 French workers and three Pakistanis and hospitalized 23 people Wednesday was an act of international terrorism. He met security advisers to prevent any new attacks.

An Interior Ministry official blamed the attack on "external elements," saying they could either be members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida organisation or agents of Pakistan's eastern neighbour and archrival, India.

"This act of international terrorism has to be met with full force," Musharraf said on state television. "My government has the complete resolve for meeting this threat."

Musharraf called an emergency national security meeting in the capital, Islamabad, after the attack Wednesday and was continuing urgent consultations yesterday, officials said.

An Interior Ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Musharraf ordered security

along the border with Afghanistan further strengthened to stop al-Qaida and Taliban fighters fleeing US-led coalition forces.

Pakistani Information Minister Nisar Memon told reporters in Karachi that Pakistan is seeking the help of French experts to investigate Wednesday's bombing. The Interior Ministry has said Musharraf also asked anti-terrorism experts from the United States and Japan to join the investigation.

"We think this bombing was the result of Pakistan's support for the international community in the war against terrorism," Memon said, but added that Pakistan would persist in its efforts. "We have taken more measures to combat terrorism."

Although authorities blamed external forces, many Islamic militants inside Pakistan have close links to al-Qaida. They have vowed revenge for Musharraf's banning of five militant groups earlier this year after he sided with the United States in its anti-terrorism campaign and war in Afghanistan.

AFP adds twelve French nationals injured in a suicide bombing in Karachi were evacuated to Paris

Thursday, Defence Minister Michele Alliot-Marie said.

She told a press conference that two medical teams, one German and the other French, accompanied the wounded people on board a German medical plane.

Alliot-Marie made a lightning visit to Pakistan following Wednesday's suicide car-bombing outside the Sheraton Hotel, in which 11 French nationals and three Pakistanis were killed.

The French victims were naval engineers and construction workers helping the Pakistani navy build submarines under a contract between Paris and Islamabad.

A French doctor who rushed from Tajikistan Wednesday to assist with the treatment of the injured told AFP they would survive, although one remained in intensive care.

Alliot-Marie earlier Thursday visited the injured in hospital and inspected the site of the blast, where police were still sifting through the twisted wreckage of the bus and the bomber's car.

# US pushes sex abstinence at UNGA



**PHOTO: AFP**  
A young delegate attends a seminar at the United Nations' 27th Special Session of the General Assembly on Children on Wednesday in New York.

**REUTERS, United Nations**

The United States on Wednesday stressed sexual abstinence as part of its vision of a better life for children at the opening session of a U.N. global summit on young people.

Listing "healthy behaviors and right choices" for children, Health Secretary Tommy Thompson said U.S. efforts have included "strengthening close parent-child relationships, encouraging the delay of sexual activity and supporting abstinence education programs."

"As President Bush has said, abstinence is the only sure way of avoiding sexually transmitted disease, premature pregnancy and the social and personal difficulties attendant to nonmarital sexual activity," Thompson said.

Thompson was addressing the first session of a three-day special meeting that has drawn representatives from more than 180 countries, including more than 400 children, to focus on health, education, the spread of AIDS and the exploitation of children as soldiers, slave workers and prostitutes.

In opening the conference before Thompson spoke, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said adults

have failed children in these areas, telling the hundreds of children who will for the first time be participants at a U.N. meeting.

"These rights are obvious," Annan said. "Yet we, the grown-ups, have failed you deplorably in upholding many of them... We, the grown-ups, must reverse this list of failures."

The first young speaker, 13-year-old Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta of Bolivia, did not pull her punches, reinforcing the theme of victimized children and complicit adults.

"We are the world's children," Arrieta said through an interpreter, her fresh face just visible over the lectern in the cavernous U.N. General Assembly hall. "We are street children. We are the children of war. We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS. ... We are children whose voices are not being heard. It is time we are taken into account."

On the rights of children, the United States sides with some Islamic nations and the Vatican in holding up a final document for this three-day meeting because of opposition to mention of family planning services that critics say implies abortion.

# Nepal vows to crush Maoist rebels

## 100 killed in a week, Deuba seeks US help

**AFP, Washington**

Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on Wednesday vowed to crush Maoist "terrorists" who he said were bent on destroying the country's hard won democracy, as the military suffered a bloody setback in fierce fighting back home.

Deuba placed his government's battle against Maoist insurgents in the context of the global war on terrorism launched by President George W. Bush, whom he met at the White House on Tuesday.

"We are in the midst of our fight against terrorism," said Deuba in a speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for scholars.

"Maoists are bent on destroying Nepal's hard earned democracy." "We will leave no stone unturned, and liberate our people from terror."

Deuba, who will call in London on the way home, argued that the rest of the world must help rid the Himalayan kingdom of the scourge of Maoism, -- which he compared to Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge movement of the 1970s.

Meanwhile, close to 1,000 people have been killed in a week of fierce

fighting in the Nepalese Maoists' mountain stronghold of Rolpa, officials said Thursday as the kingdom's prime minister pleaded for more support on a visit to Washington.

The Maoists, pounded since last week by army helicopters and ground forces, had late Tuesday launched a counter-offensive, sacking a security post near Gaam village in Rolpa, some 298 km west of the capital Kathmandu.

State radio said Thursday that 250 rebels and 104 security personnel were killed in the battle, plus several villagers who were used by the Maoists as human shields.

Some 600 Maoists had already died in the government's assault on Rolpa, most of them after security forces stormed their training camps in the Lisne area, local officials said.

The week-long bloodshed in the Rolpa area -- where the Maoists launched their "people's war" in 1996 -- would account for nearly one-quarter of the 4,000-plus death toll from the left-wing guerrillas' rebellion.

# Communists slam Putin policies

## AFP, Moscow

More than 20,000 Russian Communists denounced the pro-Western policies of President Vladimir Putin at a rally in central Moscow Thursday marking the 57th anniversary of Russia's victory in World War II.

The protesters, including bemedalled war veterans and pensioners draped in red flags and portraits of Soviet dictator Stalin, carried placards saying: "Putin has sold his soul to (US President George W.) Bush", "Stop the bourgeois reforms," and "Putin is killing the Russian people."



**PHOTO: AFP**  
Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during the military parade on the Red Square (Generals in the background are unidentified), celebrating the 57th Victory Day on Thursday. Vladimir Putin said that international terrorism in the 21st century was 'as dangerous as Nazism' during World War II.

# Andhra govt responds to PWG's truce offer

## AFP, Hyderabad

Efforts to broker a peaceful end to Maoist insurgencies have received a boost with the Andhra Pradesh government reacting positively to a ceasefire offer.

The state administration has to scale down police operations against the rebels and pledged safe passage if they entered into talks.

The move came a day after senior leaders of the People's War Group (PWG) announced a month-long ceasefire effective from Friday.

# Al-Qaida men get ready for Suu Kyi, junta prepare suicide attacks worldwide for fresh talks

## AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani intelligence agencies believe Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network is preparing to unleash a wave of suicide attacks around the world, a report said Thursday.

The terrorists had hundreds of men ready to die in attacks on the United States and its allies, the Dawn newspaper reported a day after a suicide bomber killed 14 people including 11 French nationals in Karachi.

Pakistani police have said they think al-Qaida may have behind Wednesday's car bombing, the worst ever terrorist attack against foreigners in Pakistan.

"The attack has all the hallmarks of a well trained international terrorist organisation," Interior Secretary Tasneem Noorani was quoted as saying.

"This kind of operation is not carried out by terrorist organisations operating within the country."

Intelligence sources were quoted as saying al-Qaida's cells could be activated at short notice and had spread away from the main theatre of war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan had become a prime target for its cooperation with the US-led war against terrorism.

**REUTERS, Yangon**

Myanmar's ruling military and pro-democracy opposition said on Thursday they were preparing for a new round of talks following the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest this week.

The talks have been stuck in a "confidence-building phase" over demands for the opposition leader's release since they were brokered by the United Nations 18 months ago.

The 56-year-old opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner was released from house arrest on Monday after 19 months.

"The release of Aung San Suu

# Briton climbs Mt. Annapurna via risky route

## AFP, Kathmandu

A British climber has scaled the world's 11th highest peak, 8,091-metre (26,544-foot) Mount Annapurna I, via the dangerous north face route, the tourism ministry said Thursday.

Alan Hinkes, 48, reached the top of the peak Monday morning after a night-long climb on the rocky and avalanche-prone route.

Mount Annapurna, some 298 kilometres (186 miles) northwest of Nepal's capital Kathmandu, was first conquered in 1950 by a team led by Frenchman Maurice Herzog.

Ascent by the north face route is considered by mountaineers to be the most technically difficult and dangerous.

# Brutal homecomings for Muslims in Gujarat

## AFP, Baroda

More than 100,000 Muslims displaced by India's worst sectarian bloodshed for nearly a decade are facing a hostile and often brutal reception as they try to return to their homes.

Even as the blood continues to flow in Gujarat state, where nearly 1,000 have been killed in more than two months of communal unrest, some of those who fled for the security of relief camps are doing their best to go back.

But more often than not, the homecomings are being marked by severe beatings and threats to

Hindus, shaving off their beards, allowing Hindus to travel in their vehicles, applying the Hindu "tilak" mark to their foreheads and vowing not to compete with Hindu businesses.

For Soni and his friends, the choice was simple: they went back to the relief camp where they have been living for the past eight weeks.

Anti-Muslim riots erupted in Gujarat following an attack on a train carrying Hindu activists in Godhra on February 27, in which 58 people were killed. Muslim families were raped, killed and burned out of their homes across the state.

Those conditions include withdrawing rape cases filed against

those who were beaten up by local tribals who had been hired by Hindus," Soni said.

"The village heads say we can only return back if we live in accordance to the conditions set by them," he added.

# Musharraf under fire after Karachi suicide bombing

## AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's military regime came under fierce criticism Thursday for failing to rein in religious extremists after a suicide bombing which killed 14 people including 11 French nationals.

National newspapers were scathing in their editorials, saying Wednesday's bombing was graphic evidence that terrorism is "stalking Pakistan with impunity."

Eleven French nationals -- navy workers helping Pakistan build submarines -- and three Pakistanis were killed when a man rammed a car packed with explosives into their minibus outside the Sheraton Hotel in Karachi.

President Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a coup in 1999, was quick to condemn the atrocity and announce tough new security measures, including more troops along the Afghan border.

"We feel that this act of international terrorism has to

# Schroeder backs extension of int's force in Kabul

## AFP, Kabul

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder gave his backing Thursday for the extension of the time limit on the multinational security force patrolling the Afghan capital Kabul.

Schroeder, who held talks with interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai during the first visit by a Western leader to Kabul since the fall of the Taliban, said he did not however support the force's remit being extended beyond the capital.

Schroeder told a joint press conference with Karzai that the 1,050 German troops who make up almost a quarter of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had contributed immensely to stability in Kabul.

# Sierra Leone polls crucial test for refugees

## AFP, Kountaya Refugee Camp

Makafoa Ngaujah, like several thousand other Sierra Leonean refugees sheltered in Guinea, is dying to go home; but only one thing keeps him back -- the May 14 presidential and parliamentary elections in his war-ravaged country.

Ngaujah, who was a manager in an insurance firm until he fled to Guinea in May 1998, said the polls, the first since the end of a decade-old civil war which was formally declared over in January, was a crucial litmus test.

"The reports from Sierra Leone are very pleasing but we are waiting for the elections. If there is no trouble after that we will go back," he said, speaking at the Kountaya refugee camp, some 760 kilometres (475 miles) southeast of Conakry.

# Jalalabad airport comes under rocket attack

## AFP, Islamabad

At least four rockets slammed eastern Afghanistan's key airport of Jalalabad but no casualties have been reported, the Afghan Islamic Press said Thursday.

It quoted provincial government officials as saying the rockets were fired from the southern flank of the facility late Wednesday at about 11:00 pm (1830 GMT).

The Pakistan-based private news service said the rockets landed some 500 meters north of the airport near the headquarters of the Afghan Army's First Corps.

However there was no report of any casualties so far, it said.

It said Wednesday's rocket attack on the Jalalabad airport was the first since the fall of Afghanistan's fundamentalist Taliban regime last year.

# India tests unmanned spy plane

## AFP, New Delhi

India on Thursday successfully tested an upgraded version of its indigenously developed unmanned spy drone "Lakshya" (Target) in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, defence officials said.

The Press Trust of India quoted scientists from India's state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), as saying that an upgraded Lakshya plane fitted with a new engine was flown across India's missile testing site called Chandipur-on-Sea in Orissa state.

"With Thursday's successful user trial the tests have come to a close," a DRDO scientist told the news agency.

The official, however, did not specify when the commercial production of the new Lakshya would begin.

# US Secy of State wins Liberty Medal for leadership

## AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Colin Powell has been awarded the 2002 Philadelphia Liberty Medal for his leadership in pursuing and promoting freedom throughout the world, prize organizers said Wednesday.

The award, which comes with a 100,000 dollar cash prize, was established in 1998 to honour groups or individuals who have shown leadership and vision in the pursuit of liberty of conscience or freedom from oppression, ignorance or deprivation.

Powell is being honoured specifically for forging the US-led international coalition against terrorism, his Middle East peace efforts and assisting the people of Afghanistan transform their nation, the organisers said.