

## Suu Kyi urges party activists to be active

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi exhorted members of her party to be politically active during a visit to the township of Kyimyindaing Friday.

In a speech to the National League for Democracy's (NLD) township office in west Yangon, Aung San Suu Kyi reminded party members that they must be active and serve the people.

"We established the NLD with the purpose of serving the people and we must be able to serve them under any kind of circumstances. I am very glad to see that we are united and active," she said.

"We need to be strong mentally to be able to serve the people under any kind of circumstances. It will not do if we are politically active only under safe and secure conditions."

## Nepali king to visit India

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's King Gyanendra is to make his first official visit abroad since he ascended the throne following the massacre of his brother King Birendra and nine other royals, a palace statement said Friday.

"Their majesties King Gyanendra and Queen Komal are scheduled to pay an official state visit to India from June 23 to 28, at the invitation of Indian president K.R. Narayanan and Mrs Usha Narayanan," it said.

The king will travel to India after ceremonies and rituals marking the anniversary of the royal killings.

King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and seven other royals were shot dead at the royal palace on June 1 last year by crown prince Dipendra, who then killed himself.

## Japan's House votes to ratify Kyoto Protocol

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's parliament on Friday approved enabling bills for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, a UN pact aimed at fighting global warming which has been rejected by the United States.

The upper house gave its approval with 229 votes in favour and none against, 10 days after the lower chamber voted for the ratification.

With parliament procedures completed, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's cabinet is likely to give its final approval for ratification by June 4, officials said.

The UN protocol, the first coordinated world response to tackling global warming, was drawn up as a "framework" agreement in Kyoto, western Japan, in 1997, but it took nearly four years to flesh out the deal with a book of rules and procedures.

## India, Myanmar to reopen consulates

AFP, New Delhi

India on Friday said it was reopening a consulate office in Mandalay while giving Myanmar the go-ahead to open its mission in the eastern Indian metropolis of Calcutta.

"The (Indian) consulate will be a medium-sized one with a proposed strength of eight Indian officers and staff," cabinet spokesman Pramod Mahajan told reporters after a cabinet meeting chaired by Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

India had initially opened a consulate in Mandalay in 1953 as this was the second largest city in Myanmar, he said.

"Mandalay also had a sizeable Indian origin community and was a commercial centre," an official release by the Indian government said.

"It was closed down in December 1979 after the then Burmese government alleged that the activities of the consulate were incompatible with its diplomatic nature," the release added.

The government of India had also agreed to the re-opening of the Myanmar consulate in Calcutta, Mahajan said.

## Going high-tech in war

AFP, San Francisco

A Virginia company said Friday it will market a wearable computer that is bullet-proof, another sign that combat and law enforcement are going high-tech.

Xybernat Corporation said it is teaming with Second Chance Body Armor to co-produce Xybernat's "Tactical Wearable Computer," which will be integrated within bullet-proof body armor for the military and police.

"Domestic applications of this technological innovation in the post 9-11 era are myriad, from nuclear power plants to seaport, airport and building security," Xybernat said in a statement.

# Musharraf walks tightrope as tensions with India mount

AFP, Islamabad

Fiery Indian rhetoric over Kashmir could throw Pakistan's leader off-balance as he walks the tightrope between domestic and international popularity, analysts say.

Diplomats here say President Pervez Musharraf was quietly bowing to international demands to stamp out militant incursions into Indian Kashmir while trying to keep his public happy that he is strong enough to deal with New Delhi.

But ordinary Pakistanis do not take kindly to Indian aggression and the war of words may soon have them calling for action.

"Musharraf seems to be genuinely working to cut off movement of militants to Indian Kashmir, but it will be counter-productive if India press things at gunpoint," one diplomat observed.

Political analyst Mohammad Afzal Niazi said: "Pakistan has been doing it quietly but Indian rhetoric was not helpful."

"If the international community tries to push Pakistan further than it has already travelled then the attitude of the Pakistani people would be that if this is not enough to avert war then let it be so."

Musharraf has given clear peace assurances to a string of foreign delegates and maintained Thursday that Pakistan would not strike unless first attacked by India.

The diplomat contacted by AFP said Musharraf had apparently told British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who visited this week, that he was

taking action against the militants. But he also reportedly said India should back off and not make the going tougher for him.

Musharraf told the nation during Straw's visit that he would not allow his territory to be used as a base for the export of terrorism.

And on Wednesday a visiting Japanese envoy said Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar had assured him that Islamabad would step up efforts to curb movement across Kashmir's de facto border. However the foreign ministry here would not confirm the statement.

Analyst Niazi said those waiting for a drop in violence should remember Kashmir's Islamic insurgency has been going on for 13 years.

"The international community takes a more balanced position, instead of taking all that India is saying as a gospel," Niazi said, referring to New Delhi's accusations that Pakistan is arming the militants.

"The 13-year insurgency is a reaction to Indian repression in Kashmir and has its own indigenous dynamic too."

"The Indian gung-ho attitude is creating a war passion in Pakistan, where religious extremists are standing by to pounce on the government if it is seen to be compromising on Kashmir self-determination."

The Muslim-majority Himalayan region of Kashmir is regarded by Pakistan as its strategic and economic jugular vein as its three main rivers originate from there.

It is also a highly sensitive political issue and a flashpoint with India. The two powers have fought two of their three wars over the province plus a mini-conflict in Kargil in 1999.



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistan's paramilitary officer Major General Hussain Mehdi (R) meets with troops at the eastern frontline near Wagah border with India, some 55 km from Lahore on Thursday. Pakistan's military said on Thursday that troops had been redeployed from its western border with Afghanistan to the eastern flank with India amid dangerously rising tensions between the neighbours.

## Israel detains Fatah chief during Nablus incursion

AFP, Nablus

The Israeli army arrested the local chief of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement during its reoccupation of the West Bank city of Nablus on Friday, Palestinian security sources said.

Israeli soldiers captured Issam Abubakr at his parents' home in Nablus, which they raided along with a neighbouring refugee camp, they said.

The sources said Abubakr was among six Palestinians detained so far in the raid, which witnesses said involved infantry units backed by around 50 tanks, armoured vehicles and personnel carriers under cover of helicopter gunships.

Israel says the operation is aimed at preventing attacks against civilians in Israel and against Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

The Jewish state believes Fatah is implicated in bombings carried out by its radical offshoot, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which has claimed four attacks in Israel in the past 10 days.

However, Fatah has tried to

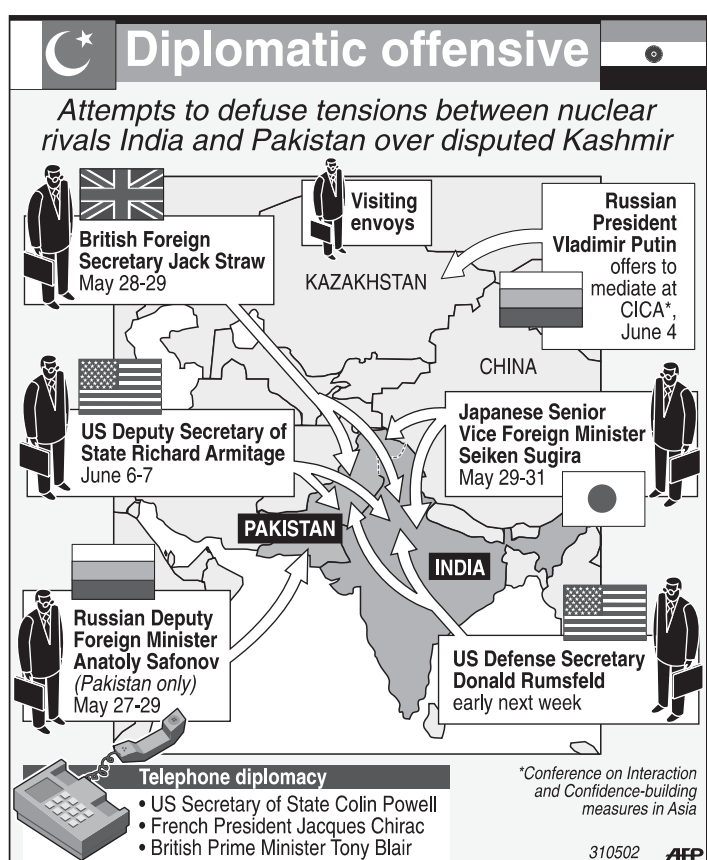
distance itself from the attacks and Al-Aqsa.

Earlier, the Israeli army made a large-scale incursion into the West Bank town of Nablus early on Friday, reoccupying most of the Palestinian self-rule town and the nearby Balata refugee camp, security sources on both sides said.

The incursion, which Palestinian witnesses said involved infantry units, backed by around 50 tanks, armoured vehicles and personnel carriers under cover of helicopter gunships.

Israeli forces were controlling most of the northern West Bank town Friday morning, according to Palestinian witnesses, but did not however enter the Old City, which was the scene in March of some of the 20-month-old intifada's fiercest fighting.

An Israeli spokesman said a bomb had exploded near a tank in Balata, while Palestinian sources reported exchanges of fire in the refugee camp.



## FBI gets more leeway in bid to thwart terrorism

AFP, Washington

Attorney General John Ashcroft on Thursday unveiled new guidelines granting the Federal Bureau of Investigation more leeway in its investigations, in a bid to thwart terrorist attacks on the United States.

"FBI men and women in the field are frustrated because many of our own internal restrictions have hampered our ability to fight terrorism," Ashcroft said at a press conference here.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, he said, the FBI and the Justice Department launched a "concerted effort to free the field agents ... from the bureaucratic, organizational and operational restrictions and structures that hindered them from doing their jobs effectively."

Ashcroft said the new guidelines will permit FBI agents to enter public places freely and observe what is happening there, in the event that

terrorist activities are suspected.

"For the purpose of detecting or preventing terrorist activities, the FBI is authorized to visit any place and attend any event that is open to the public, on the same terms and conditions as members of the public generally," the attorney general said.

He also said that agents will have free rein to surf the Internet and track potential terrorist activities online, "even when not linked to an individual criminal investigation."

Agents had previously been restricted from both types of activities, Ashcroft said, adding that the restrictions had provided a "competitive advantage for terrorists."

But he cautioned that, while agents will be able to launch or reopen investigations without prior approval from FBI headquarters, they are not being given complete autonomy and their actions will still fall within constitutional boundaries.

## 'Indian nuke warheads dwarf Pakistan's'

AFP, Washington

India has up to 150 nuclear warheads while Pakistan could only call upon a third of that total at most, Jane's defence publications said Thursday, as fears persisted the two rivals were slipping towards a disastrous war.

Although both sides have declined to give details of the size or capability of their arsenals since shocking the world with rival nuclear weapons tests in 1998, a survey by Jane's Strategic Weapons Systems has estimated their destructive potential.

India may be able to deploy a 20 kilotonne device from a MiG, Jaguar or Mirage aircraft, and could be able to deliver a bomb of a similar size on Prithvi, Dhanush and Agni ballistic missiles, the article said.

"It is estimated that India probably has between 50 and 150 nuclear warheads available," the survey, released by the London-based group here Thursday, said.

"Analysis from some sources

suggests that there is sufficient weapons grade uranium and plutonium available to India to build more warheads."

Pakistan's program is less advanced, but it probably has between 25 and 50 nuclear warheads available, the report said.

"Pakistan's planned yield for its larger nuclear weapons design was 20 to 25 kilotonnes providing a warhead that would probably be fitted to Shaheen and Ghauri ballistic missiles."

Pakistan last weekend triggered international condemnation when it test fired Abdali, Ghauri and Ghaznavi nuclear capable missiles.

It could also probably deploy a smaller device by aircraft, the report added.

The report warned that even 10 to 20 warheads could inflict devastating death tolls on any of India and Pakistan's teeming cities, following other assessments this week that reached a potential of millions of deaths in any nuclear conflict in South Asia.

# Kashmir makes contingency war plans for civilians

AFP, Jammu

Indian Kashmiri authorities have made contingency plans in case of war with Pakistan, including special training for medical personnel, blackout exercises and putting blood donors on alert, officials said Friday.

"If the current tensions spin out of control preparations for taking care of the civilians are complete," B.D. Sharma, deputy controller of the state government's Civilian Defence body, told AFP.

"The contingency plan will become operational in the event of a war," Sharma said.

The state authorities have divided the winter capital of Kashmir, Jammu, into six regions and 12,000 volunteers have been trained to handle emergencies and give first aid to the victims.

"The volunteers include 700 students drawn from the National Cadet Core," a student organisation that assists the military and the police in national emergencies,

Sharma said. "There will be an acute shortage of staff in case of a war. So we are training as many people as possible to take care of war casualties," he said.

A full battalion of soldiers has been put on standby to become blood donors if necessary, while civilian donors have also been alerted.

Red Cross personnel will also be mobilised.

Fifteen electric sirens have been installed in Jammu and the state government is planning to hold a "blackout exercise" within a week to train citizens how to respond during air raids.

Schools, government buildings and universities will be converted to hospitals to house the injured spilling over from hospitals.

"In case that, too, does not suffice then community halls spread around Jammu can be used as temporary treatment units for people suffering from minor wounds,"

H.L. Goswami, the principal of the government's Medical College, said.

Hospitals in Jammu, both government and private-owned, can only accommodate about 1,200 patients.

A number of first-aid centers will be set up for the more than 130,000 Kashmiris expected to flee from border areas to Jammu should war break out.

"The six zones are allocated to a total of 500 voluntary officials or wardens who will take charge and advise the people what is to be done when war breaks out," Sharma said.

Radio communications have been established at various points to link remote towns and villages.

"The ambulances of the hospitals and the Red Cross Society will be fully equipped and functional and a list of equipment such as cardiac monitors and life-saving drugs has been prepared," Goswami said.

# US says no to military bases in Lanka

AFP, Colombo

The United States Friday denied it had plans to establish military bases in Sri Lanka following an agreement between the armed forces of the two countries.

"The US has no interest in acquiring military bases anywhere in Sri Lanka," the US embassy said in a statement.

It followed a press report here Sunday which said the US was expected to provide more training opportunities for Sri Lankan security forces, with the prospect of joint military exercises in exchange for providing access to facilities here.

The embassy said the United States was due to enter into an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) with Sri Lanka

in July, formalising the already increased military co-operation between the two countries.

"The US has acquisition and service agreements with 56 countries, including a number of Asian countries. These are relatively low-level agreements designed to address modest needs in a manner convenient to both parties," the US embassy said.

ACSA allows US forces to exchange food, fuel, transportation, ammunition and equipment where they are unable to arrange their logistics nationally.

"ACSA is not a means to acquire major arms... It is not a means to acquire bases," the embassy said.

In March, the US assistant

secretary of state for South Asia, Christina Rocca, on a visit to Sri Lanka announced that Washington was seeking increased military co-operation with Sri Lanka.

She said the US would also take a higher profile in supporting the island's Norwegian-backed peace process with Tamil Tiger rebels in light of the changes in the global political situation since the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US.

In the past month, two US war ships taking party in "Operation Eduring Freedom", and patrolling the western Indian Ocean region, have called at Sri Lanka's main sea port of Colombo.

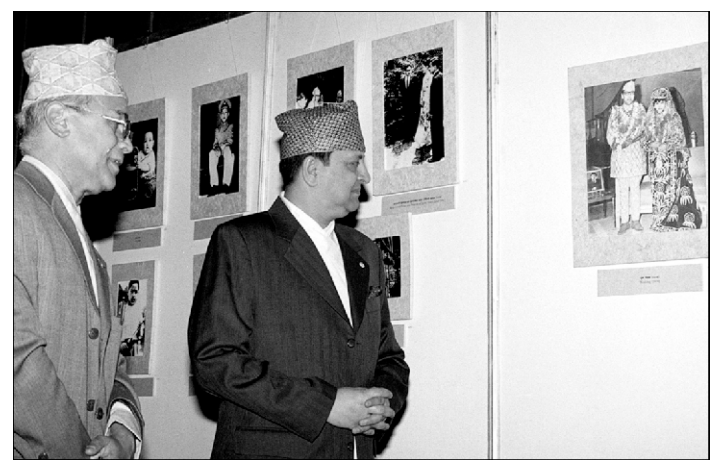


PHOTO: AFP  
King Gyanendra of Nepal (R) looking at a wedding picture of late King Birendra with Queen Aishwarya in photo exhibition in Kathmandu on Friday. The photo exhibition on late King Birendra's life displayed by photographer and Royal physician Doctor Khagendra Shrestha (L). The exhibition is open for five days on the occasion of the anniversary and memory of late King Birendra.

## Nepal mourns anniversary of royal massacre

AFP, Kathmandu

As Nepal prepares to mark the anniversary of the brutal massacre of its royal family, the country is struggling to come to terms with the death of a venerated figurehead.

King Birendra was murdered alongside Queen Aishwarya and nine other Nepalese royalty on June 1, 2001, when their son Crown Prince Dipendra sprayed them with bullets before killing himself.

One year on, Nepal is preparing to stage a series of events to commemorate Birendra's reign in an effort to salve the wounds which continue to cut deep into the nation's psyche.

"The massacre of King Birendra and nine other family members is an unforgettable and horrific tragedy for the Nepalese people," said the government's royal advisory chief Keshar Jung Rayamajhi.

"When I remember the assassination of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya by Crown Prince Dipendra for the sake of a woman whom he loved, I feel terrible," Rayamajhi said.

Dipendra was widely believed to have embarked on the killing spree after his family denied him permission to choose his bride.

Rayamajhi said Birendra was a "people's king" dedicated to democracy.

## Britain plans to toughen law on asylum seekers

AFP, London

Britain unveiled new proposals Thursday to cut the number of asylum seekers in the country, including powers to remove unsuccessful claimants to other nations -- such as France -- pending any appeal.

Under the plans, refugees who wanted to lodge an appeal against an asylum rejection would have to do so either in their homeland, or in a country they passed through en route to Britain, such as France or

Germany. The scheme would not apply to every asylum seeker, only those who could be returned to countries deemed "safe."

But a Home Office spokeswoman confirmed to AFP that it would include those who had made their way into Britain from the controversial refugee centre at Sangatte, northern France.

Under the new proposals, they would be returned to France as soon as they were refused asylum here even if they wanted to appeal.

## UNESCO, Pakistan to halt Afghan cultural plunder

AFP, Islamabad

The United Nations is planning a major initiative to halt the flow of priceless cultural artefacts plundered from Afghanistan and smuggled out through Pakistan, officials said Friday.

Pakistan is the main conduit for the illegal trade in stolen relics from the war-torn nation, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) assistant director-general for culture, Mounir Bouchenaki said.

"There is a terrible situation of illicit excavation which results in the illegal trafficking of objects which are transmitted through Pakistan," he told reporters.

"Pakistan is the main passage for illicit trafficking from Afghanistan."

Bouchenaki said the programme would be modelled on UNESCO's initiative to clamp down on illegal trafficking out of Cambodia and through Thailand during the turbulent years of the Khmer Rouge genocide.