

40 killed in Pakistani bus crash

REUTERS, Islamabad

At least 40 people have been killed in Pakistan's central Punjab province after a bus drove off a bridge, police said.

"More than 40 people have been killed in the early morning accident," Muhammad Ishaq, a police official of Dina town police station, some 50 miles southeast of Islamabad, told Reuters by telephone on Sunday.

He said the 55-seat bus plunged from the bridge into a small river killing more than 40 people and injuring seven.

"We have shifted the bodies to the mortuaries of different hospitals in nearby towns so we don't have the exact figure but it is more than 40," Ishaq said.

Court summons Benazir to appear in person

APP, Rawalpindi

An Accountability Court here has summoned former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to appear in the Court to contest a corruption reference on June 4.

The Judge AC No. 2 Mansur Ali Khan had directed her to appear in the court to contest the ARY Gold corruption reference filed by the NAB. Benazir spouse Asif Zardari is the co-accused in the said case.

If the accused Benazir failed to appear in the court on June 4, the proceedings to declare her proclaimed offender could be initiated, under the CrPC. The Court had also issued advertisements to the local press in the regard.

Top Kashmir militant gunned down by troops

AFP, Srinagar

Indian border guards on Sunday shot dead top Islamic militant Manzoor Ahmed Ganai in Indian-administered Kashmir, officials said.

Ganai, who was also called Rafiq, was the deputy chief commander of the pro-Pakistan Tehreek-ul-Mujahedin group and carried a bounty of 200,000 rupees (4,160 dollars) on his head, a spokesman of India's Border Security Force (BSF) said.

Indian border guards killed Ganai in an encounter near Nowgam, on the outskirts of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar, after being tipped off that he would be visiting the area.

The border guard spokesman said Ganai was gunned down after he tried to drive past the security cordon on his motorcycle, not heeding calls to stop.

ETA leaders jailed for 45 years

XINHUA, Madrid

The Spanish National Court sentenced 45 years in jail to Jose Luis Arrusolo Sistiaga, one of the historic leaders of the Basque Separatist Group ETA.

The highest juridical authority of Spain said in his sentence issued on Saturday that in this sentence, 30 years are for terrorism murder, 12 for terrorism crime and three for robbery.

The ETA's leader was detained in 1997 in Burdeos, France, and extradited in August of 2001 to Spain.

ETA is a Basque-language acronym for Basque Homeland and Freedom. The Spanish government and the European Union (EU) considered ETA as a terrorist group.

Lankans hope talks will bring peace

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lankans, enjoying a respite after two decades of civil war, are hoping talks with Tamil rebels will bring peace and allow them to rebuild their economy.

Since the start of the year, Shortly after the pro-peace United National Party came to power and initiated reconciliation, the country's Board of Investments (BOI) has launched an aggressive campaign to woo investors.

Arjuna Mahendran, appointed BOI head by the current government, told Reuters in an interview this week Sri Lanka wanted to exploit its advantageous location.

"We want to exploit our logistics, the fact that we are just 15 kms (9 miles) away from the main sea route across the Indian Ocean from the Suez Canal to the Straits of Malacca.

"That is why the Indian Oil Corporation IOC.BO wanted Trincomalee for storage of bulk oil, so they can have big tanker vessels coming and depositing it here and have feeder vessels taking it to various parts of India," Mahendran said.



PHOTO: AFP

A Pakistani travel agent (L) hands over tickets to United Nations officer in-charge Sean Crowley and his wife Kiris Crowley in Islamabad on Sunday. The United Nations confirmed on Saturday that it had decided to evacuate the families of its staff from Pakistan and India as a precautionary measure. The families of United Nations staff in Pakistan and India are to be evacuated amid fears that tensions over Kashmir could flare into a war between the nuclear rivals.

US must hit terror first: Bush

REUTERS, AP, West Point

President George W. Bush told the nation's future military leaders the United States must be ready to launch a preemptive strike in the war on terrorism, warning of an unprecedented threat of chemical, biological or nuclear attack from "terrorists and tyrants."

"The dangers have not passed... because we know the terrorists have more money and more men and more plans," Bush told the first class to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point since the September 11 attacks.

Previewing the daunting challenges ahead, Bush said on Saturday the cadets would be asked to hunt down terrorists hiding around the world, and prevent America's enemies from acquiring nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

"Our enemies have declared this

very intention and have been caught seeking these terrible weapons," Bush told the graduates, who wore "dress gray" cutaway coats with gleaming brass buttons. Ceremonial swords dangled at their sides.

Without mentioning Iraq by name, Bush declared: "We cannot put our faith in the words of tyrants who solemnly sign nonproliferation treaties and then systematically break them."

"If we wait for threats to fully materialise, we will have waited too long. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge."

Bush has denounced Iraq as part of an "axis of evil" threatening to spread weapons of mass destruction, suggesting it could be the next U.S. target in the war against terrorism.

In the face of concerns among European allies that an attack

against Baghdad would be rash and destabilizing, Bush said last week he had "no war plans on my desk."

But in his address at West Point, Bush vowed to hold his ground.

"In the world we have entered the only path to safety is the path of action and this nation will act," he said. He added that all Americans must be "ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives."

Bush brushed aside critics who accuse him of acting unilaterally.

AP adds: The United States will strike pre-emptively against suspected terrorists if necessary to deter attacks on Americans, President Bush told West Point graduates Saturday. "The war on terror will not be won on the defensive," he said.

Warning of the continuing danger, he said: "We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt its plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge."

Partying, picnics at palace

AFP, London

A host of stars, Charles and Camilla seated in the royal box and 12,000 picnickers outside Buckingham Palace: Queen Elizabeth's golden jubilee weekend kicked off with a lavish concert of classical music.

What began in a festive, sun-bathed atmosphere climaxed after two hours of classics with fireworks and rousing fanfares - "Land of Hope and Glory," of course, and the national anthem.

It was the first concert of its kind in the grounds of the palace and was attended by 18 members of the royal family.

Then, as the crowds began slowly drifting away, the queen led some of the stars of the night onto a podium at the front of the palace.

It was a spectacular start to four days of festivities for the queen's 50

years on the throne, concluding Tuesday in a royal state procession and what is likely to be Britain's biggest ever street party.

Stars of a different style of music - Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, Elton John and others - will line up in the queen's back garden on Monday evening for another open-air concert.

If it proves anything like Saturday's pageant of classical music, it will be the hottest ticket in town.

"We do like classical music, but we're here mainly because it's a once in a lifetime experience," said Matthew Smith.

"It's something to tell our children later," said the Scot, 19, who, like the other invitees, won his free ticket in a ballot.

They watched a star-studded array of performers including cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, soprano

Dame Kiri Ti Kanawa and baritone Sir Thomas Allen.

Outside, thousands watched on giant screens. Across the world the concert was broadcast to some 40 countries.

The build-up had begun earlier as, basking in the sun, the crowds gathered in the gardens after going through tight, airport-style security check.

Each person was given a picnic lunch: smoked salmon, "jubilee" chicken and strawberries and cream, washed down with half a bottle of champagne.

They ate on the grass. The dress code was relaxed - jeans and sleeveless T-shirts for some, hats and bow ties for others. Some, mindful of the British weather, came armed with coats and umbrellas.

India warns Pakistan of N-retaliation

Delhi won't act impulsively: Fernandes

REUTERS, New Delhi

India would retaliate in the event of a nuclear strike by Pakistan, and must be prepared for mutual destruction on both sides, India's Defence Secretary was quoted as saying.

In an interview with the weekly magazine Outlook, which hit news stands today, Yogendra Narain said India was prepared for conventional war turning nuclear.

"But Pakistan is not a democratic country and we don't know their nuclear threshold," he said. "We will retaliate and must be prepared for mutual destruction on both sides."

On Saturday, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf sought to calm international fears that a military stand-off with India could escalate into nuclear conflict, saying it would be unthinkable.

With a million soldiers massed along the border, there are fears that war could be triggered by another spectacular attack against India by Pakistan-based Islamic militants.

In response to such an attack, Narain said surgical strikes by India would be the "realistic option," not all-out war. And they could come at three hours' notice.

Such strikes would target militant bases in the Pakistan-ruled portion of

Kashmir, the Himalayan region that has been the flashpoint for two of three wars between India and Pakistan since their independence from Britain in 1947.

"Surgical strikes are the realistic option," Narain said. "But we also know that there will be retaliation on other parts of the border from Pakistan. It'll escalate and will not be confined to one region."

Meanwhile, Defence Minister George Fernandes said yesterday India would not act impulsively in its dispute with its rival Pakistan but would keep pressing its neighbour to stop supporting terrorism.

"India will not be impulsive. Neither will we waiver in our determination for the simple reason that what we have been fighting and will continue to fight is the war against terrorism," Fernandes said in a speech to an Asian security conference in Singapore.

"All we expect of the Musharraf regime is that it desist from supporting terrorism," Fernandes said, referring to the government of Pakistani military leader General Pervez Musharraf.

The nuclear-armed neighbours have about million men facing each other across their border and the international community mounts a major effort to defuse the standoff.

"We are not threatening the territorial integrity of Pakistan, nor do we have any animosity against the people of Pakistan," Fernandes said.

US to try shock therapy, logic to douse Indo-Pak rhetoric

AFP, Washington

Two heavyweight US envoys travel to India and Pakistan this week, hoping that a dose of shock therapy and logic will douse flaming rhetoric, which has sparked fears of the world's first nuclear war.

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, a barrel chested Vietnam War veteran and confidant of his boss Colin Powell, will leave on Tuesday for meetings in Pakistan and India on June 6 and 7.

Veteran Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will then add his brand of gruff plain speaking to an expanding diplomatic drive to head off a South Asian war when he arrives in the region after a visit to Europe.

They will arrive days after the United States and a host of Western nations Friday warned citizens to leave India and Pakistan, saying that boiling regional tensions could yet erupt into war.

Washington has made frequent public calls on both sides for calm, and on Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to stamp out incursions by Islamic militants into Indian controlled Kashmir.

But officials have declined to further detail of proposals to end the crisis they say they have put before both sides.

Evidence of a new strategy emerged however in recent days as top US officials previewed the horrific human and diplomatic price India and Pakistan would face if they

fought a nuclear war.

It seems that the United States and other Western nations believe that India and Pakistan's leaders have not thought through the implications of using the nuclear weapons produced after their atomic tests in 1998.

US officials say privately they are disturbed by the notion that either side may not fully comprehend the impact of an atomic exchange and may believe it could survive a "limited" nuclear war.

A Pentagon official said Friday that between nine and 12 million people could die in South Asia's teeming cities in a "worst-case" nuclear war.

That apocalyptic vision is likely to form part of Rumsfeld's case.

"We've done a lot of thinking about that here, having had nuclear weapons for 55, 57, 58 years now," Rumsfeld said Thursday, adding that he would be prepared to share US intelligence on the carnage that would be wreaked by nuclear war.

"So we've given a lot thought to their use, what the immediate effects are, and what the lingering effects are, and what the secondary effects can be."

Powell is of the same mind. "In my conversations with both sides, especially with the Pakistani side, I have made it clear that this really can't be in anyone's mind, I mean, the thought of nuclear conflict in the year 2002?" he said on PBS NewsHour Thursday.



PHOTO: AFP

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II with her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, and their oldest son, the Prince of Wales (R) in the gardens of Buckingham Palace to attend a classical concert while fireworks light the gardens (R) on Saturday night during the Queen's Golden Jubilee Prom at the Palace.

India under pressure to hit terrorists: Fernandes

AFP, Singapore

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes sought a global commitment to force Pakistan to crackdown on terrorism Sunday, warning that New Delhi faced "intense" pressure to launch an attack on "terrorists" in the disputed Kashmir region.

But Fernandes said that while India will continue its struggle against terrorism, it "will not be impulsive" in its dealings with Pakistan.

"All we expect from the Musharraf regime is that it desist from supporting terrorism," he told defence ministers and policy makers from North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific at an Asian security conference here.

Cross-border incursions from Pakistan-controlled Kashmir into the Indian zone were part of the same war on terrorism born from the September 11 attacks in the United States and deserved the same international response, Fernandes said.

As the United Nations and several countries began withdrawing diplomatic staff from South Asia in the face of growing war rhetoric, Fernandes accused Pakistan of fuelling fears by "threatening to use weapons of mass destruction".

But while both countries have one million troops massed along their common border, Fernandes played down the prospect of war.

Talk of a major conflict on the subcontinent rose following a statement by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf that Pakistan's existence was under threat, but the statement had "more drama in it than any reason," Fernandes said.

In a series of bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference, Fernandes has been warned that an India-Pakistan war could have catastrophic results for the region, and his playing down of the situation did not convince everyone.

"I don't think there's anything inevitable, this is a very difficult situation," US Senator Jack Reed said.

Al-Qaida warns US of fresh attack

REUTERS, Cairo

The pan-Arab daily al-Hayat has published what it says is a statement from an al-Qaida spokesman warning the United States to get ready for another attack.

"What is coming to the Americans will not, by the will of God, be less than what has come," the paper quoted al-Qaida spokesman Sulaiman bu Ghaith as saying in a statement.

"So beware, America. Get ready. Get prepared. Put on the safety belt," he said in a statement al-Hayat said was published on the www.alneda.com website.

The Web site, which has in the past regularly carried news on Afghanistan and statements it said came from Taliban leaders, could

not be accessed immediately by Reuters.

The site published a statement in April it said was from Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

Bu Ghaith, a Kuwaiti-born cleric who emerged as an al-Qaida spokesman after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, said al-Qaida would continue to hit Americans, Jews and their targets, either "individuals or institutions".

He cited what he described as America's anti-Muslim policies in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Indonesia and the Philippines as a reason for targeting the United States. He also complained Israel had acted against the Palestinians for 50 years with "American blessing".

ME situation far more dangerous: Tel Aviv

AFP, Reuters, Jerusalem

Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer warned top US Middle East envoy William Burns here Sunday that the situation in the region is far more dangerous than it appears.

"The situation in the region is serious and much more explosive than it appears since there are constantly warnings and very hard attacks planned by Palestinian terrorist organisations," Ben Eliezer said, according to a statement released by his ministry after the meeting.

"Lately, the Tanzim and Fatah have been active in the terrorist camp, and there is not the least order from Arafat or the Palestinian

Authority for this to stop," he said.

Israel has frequently accused the Tanzim - militiamen linked with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement - of carrying out attacks.

Reuters adds: Israeli troops kept their stranglehold on the West Bank city of Nablus and the nearby Balata refugee camp as international envoys pursued efforts to revive Middle East peace talks after 20 months of bloodshed.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana was due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Sunday before flying to Saudi Arabia on the latest leg of his regional tour.



PHOTO: AFP

Villagers from Gakrilyal fleeing their home wait on the roadside on Sunday at the Akhnoor army post, 30 km west of Jammu. The residents are leaving their village close to the Line of Control, the de facto border with Pakistan, after a woman from their village was killed and six other people critically injured when a Pakistani shell hit a bus.