



Nawabzada Nasrullah, Chairman of the 15 party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD), rejects Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf's election as president through the April 30 referendum while speaking at a press conference in Islamabad on Friday. Nasrullah said we cannot have cooperation or coalition with any party or alliance which support Musharraf.

US presses for Indo-Pak talks after pullback

EU hails de-escalation

AFP, New Delhi

The US ambassador to New Delhi, Robert Blackwill, called Friday for India and Pakistan to resume dialogue after the arch-rivals ordered their troops to pull back from their borders.

"We continue to believe that resumption of serious dialogue between India and Pakistan over a long term and in a sustained and serious way on all issues that separate them -- including Kashmir -- is a good idea," Blackwill told reporters after meeting India's National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra.

"The decision about how India relates to Pakistan is totally up to the government of India," he said.

"As India and Pakistan face differences, we think talking about them in a serious manner is better than not talking about them."

India said Wednesday it would pull back a substantial number of troops deployed for nearly a year on the border with Pakistan -- except in the hotly disputed region of Kashmir.

Pakistan said the next day it

would follow suit. However, India ruled out any immediate resumption of talks with Pakistan.

Nearly one million troops from the two nuclear-armed countries were deployed eyeball-to-eyeball after a December 13 attack on the Indian parliament, which New Delhi said was carried out by Pakistan-backed Islamic extremists active in Kashmir's separatist insurgency.

The United States has conducted several rounds of shuttle diplomacy to ward off a confrontation between India and Pakistan, both vital allies in its "war on terrorism."

Earlier report says, the European Union and United States on Friday welcomed the announcement by India and Pakistan that they would start to withdraw troops from their common border, and urged fresh talks between the nuclear rivals.

"The European Union welcomes the announcement by the government of India to withdraw a significant number of troops from the Indo-Pakistani border... (and) the response by Pakistan and their

announcement of withdrawal of troops," the Danish EU presidency said in a statement.

"The decision underscores the government of India's willingness to de-escalate the conflict and play a stabilising role in South Asia," it added.

Pakistan said Thursday it would withdraw its forces from the Pakistan-India border to their peace-time locations, a day after India decided on a phased withdrawal of its forces from the neighbours' heavily fortified frontier.

"The European Union again calls on India and Pakistan to resume as soon as possible a diplomatic dialogue on all issues that divide them, including Kashmir" the statement added, offering EU help to defuse the current crisis.

Moreover, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw Friday welcomed a decision by India and Pakistan to pull back troops from their borders, and called for the arch-rivals to resume dialogue.

Ivory Coast truce signed

AFP, Abidjan

Ivory Coast pulled back from the brink of civil war Friday, with a ceasefire signed exactly four weeks after mutineers and ex-soldiers staged an uprising that threatened to destabilise all of west Africa.

Regional mediators succeeded midday Thursday in winning rebel support for a deal to end the violence that split Ivory Coast in two, with the rebels controlling the northern half of the country.

President Laurent Gbagbo announced 12 hours later on state television that he also had accepted the deal, which clears the way for political talks to address the rebels' grievances.

He also asked France to provide troops to patrol a buffer zone between the two sides for one week, and to help local government get its public services running again in the rebel-held areas.

Chandriks's party says no to snap polls

AFP, Colombo

The party of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga said Friday it would not call snap elections as favoured by the government.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's government, which is in an uneasy cohabitation with the president, says it needs an early vote to ensure stability as it brokers peace with Tamil Tiger rebels.

Kumaratunga has the power to call elections any time after December 5, one year after the last parliamentary polls.

Benazir summons party leaders to Dubai

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's self-exiled ex-premier Benazir Bhutto has summoned top Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leaders to Dubai for talks amid growing doubt at their chances of sitting in government, party officials said.

The PPP's parliamentary leader Makhdoom Amin Fahim will head to Dubai Saturday to brief Bhutto on his marathon round of negotiations with other political parties.

UNSC moves closer to Iraq compromise

Saddam vows revenge after swearing in ceremony

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council appeared on Friday to be moving closer to compromise on an Iraq resolution after President Saddam Hussein started a new seven-year term with a call on his people to be ready for war with the United States.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Friday that a compromise solution on sending weapons inspectors to Iraq was looking increasingly likely.

"I think that the council will approve a new resolution about strengthening the possibilities of inspectors and sending them to Iraq again with the demand that Iraq

fulfills their demands," Annan said, as reported through an interpreter.

"If it (Iraq) continues not to report to the Security Council then the council can take a decision about the consequences," he told deputies in Kazakhstan's capital Astana during a 12-day tour of eastern and central Asia.

A debate is raging about "whether we need one resolution where it will be stated that if Iraq does not comply, then all necessary means will be used to resolve this question," Annan said.

Alternatively the inspectors could be allowed to return to report their findings before the council takes a 12-day decision, he added.

The Security Council has been meeting in open session to discuss the Iraq issue ahead of a crucial vote on the conditions under which UN weapons inspectors will return to Baghdad, which they left in 1998, to verify Iraqi assertions that it has no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

The United States, backed by Britain, has been pressing for a single resolution that would trigger automatic military action if Iraq fails to allow unfettered access to suspected weapons sites.

France, largely backed by Russia, favours two resolutions, with a second vote needed to authorise military action.

But a compromise looked imminent in the deadlocked council, with Washington about to offer a deal acceptable to fellow permanent members France and Russia.

Saddam himself took a leaf out of Bush's book on Thursday, branding America an "evil tyrant" and Iraq a force for good as he was sworn in for seven more years after winning 100 percent of the vote in a presidential referendum on Tuesday.

In a reversal of roles, after the US president called Baghdad part of an "axis of evil," the Iraqi strongman painted a picture of battle between good and evil.

And he urged his countrymen to be ready for a major war.

'Pakistan gave N-tech to N Korea'

Washington seeks peaceful solution

REUTERS, New York

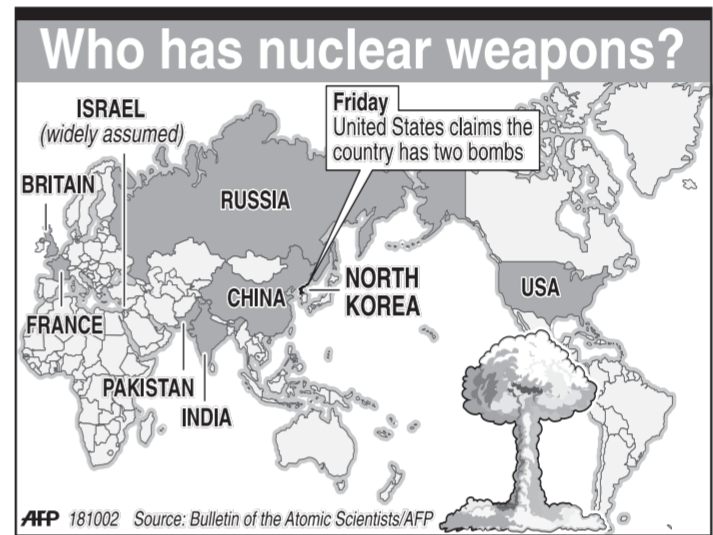
American officials have concluded that Pakistan was a major supplier of equipment for North Korea's clandestine nuclear weapons program, The New York Times reported in its online edition late on Thursday.

Pakistan provided North Korea with equipment, which may include gas centrifuges used to create weapons-grade uranium, as part of a deal made in the late 1990s, the paper said, citing current and former senior American officials.

In return, North Korea supplied Pakistan with missiles it could use to counter India's nuclear arsenal, the Times quoted officials as saying.

North Korea admitted on Wednesday that it has had a uranium enrichment program for years, in defiance of a 1994 Agreed Framework under which it promised to freeze its work on nuclear weapons.

The paper quoted a spokesman for the Pakistan Embassy as saying it was "absolutely incorrect" to accuse Pakistan of providing nuclear weapons technology to North Korea.



AFP 181002 Source: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists/AFP

The paper did explain how or why U.S. officials came to the conclusion Pakistan was supplying vital equipment to North Korea but it quoted American officials as saying the two countries had "a perfect meeting of interests."

It added American officials now estimated that the North Korea nuclear project had started around

1997 or 1998, roughly the same time Pakistan tested the missiles it received from North Korea.

Meanwhile, the United States said on Thursday it wanted a diplomatic solution to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program rather than threatening military action as it has against Iraq for its alleged arms programs.

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said he believed North Korea already had "a small number" of nuclear weapons, although U.S. intelligence has not confirmed this, and other U.S. officials suggested that North Korea probably needed foreign help to develop its uranium enrichment program.

North Korea admitted it had the secret nuclear weapons program -- in violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework under which it agreed to halt its nuclear efforts -- at a session with U.S. officials in Pyongyang on Oct. 4.

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Al-Qaida still a big threat: CIA

REUTERS, Washington

CIA Director George Tenet said on Thursday al-Qaida has reorganised, is in an "execution phase" and intends to attack Americans overseas and on U.S. soil, amid a threat situation as serious as in the months leading up to last year's Sept. 11 attacks.

Tenet, at a joint hearing before the congressional intelligence committees, also said the CIA and the FBI could not be flawless all the time in fighting the terror threat.

"The threat environment we find ourselves in today is as bad as it was last summer, the summer before 9/11," Tenet told the committees. "It is serious, they've reconstituted, they are coming after us, they want to execute attacks."

He issued a dire assessment. "When you see the multiple attacks that you've seen occur around the world, from Bali to Kuwait, the number of failed attacks that have been attempted, the various messages that have been issued by senior al-Qaida leaders, you must make the assumption that

al-Qaida is in an execution phase and intends to strike us both here and overseas, that's unambiguous as far as I am concerned," Tenet said.

Earlier this month American troops were attacked in Kuwait and a bombing in Bali killed more than 180 people. Qatar's al Jazeera television recently broadcast tapes it says are of Osama bin Laden and his top aide Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The United States launched a war on terrorism last year with a military campaign in Afghanistan to destroy bin Laden's al-Qaida network, which it blamed for the hijacked plane strikes that killed 3,000 people on Sept. 11, 2001.

Despite routing al-Qaida forces and making some key arrests around the world, the United States has not found bin Laden.

The CIA chief also hit back at critics of U.S. intelligence lapses, saying the spy agencies lacked precise details to prevent the Sept. 11 attacks even though they knew bin Laden was plotting to kill many Americans.

"In the months leading up to 9/11,

we were convinced bin Laden meant to attack Americans, meant to kill large numbers, and that the attack could be at home, abroad or both," Tenet said at the hearing. "And we reported these threats urgently."

Indications were that "multiple spectacular attacks" were planned and some plots were in the final stages, Tenet said.

"And when we grew concerned that so much of the evidence pointed to attacks overseas, we noted that bin Laden's principal ambition had long been to strike the United States."

"Nevertheless with regard to the 9/11 plot, we never acquired the level of detail that allowed us to translate our strategic concerns into something we could act on," he said.

It was the last of a string of open hearings held by a joint inquiry of the House of Representatives and Senate intelligence committees investigating Sept. 11 intelligence failures. The inquiry's final report is expected to recommend changes to the spy agencies.

Work stress doubles risk of heart disease death

REUTERS, London

Healthy people with stressful jobs who work long hours but get little satisfaction from what they do have twice the risk of dying from heart disease as satisfied employees, according to a study.

Job stress has been known to trigger heart problems in people who already have cardiovascular disease. Now Finnish scientists have now shown that even in healthy people the pressures of work can take their toll.

"Work stress seems to be an independent predictor of death from cardiovascular diseases," Mika Kivimaki, of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, told Reuters Friday.

Obesity, high blood pressure, lack of exercise, smoking and being overweight contribute to heart disease -- a leading killer in many industrialised countries. But Kivimaki and his colleagues,

who studied the medical histories of 812 healthy Finnish men and women in a metal industry company over 25 years, said job stress also plays an important role. "Even after controlling for the effects of conventional cardiovascular risk factors, high work stress was associated with a doubling of risk of cardiovascular death," he added.

Workers who had the highest job-related stress levels at the start of the study were more than twice as likely to die of heart disease, according to the study published in The British Medical Journal.

Work stress involves too much work as well as a lack of satisfaction and feeling undervalued and unappreciated.

Many people work long hours but if the effort is rewarding the stress is minimised. Kivimaki said job pressure is damaging when being overworked is combined with little or no control, unfair supervision and few career opportunities.

Jakarta signs pact with six nations to probe Bali blast

AFP, Kuta

Indonesia forged an agreement Friday with six nations to investigate the Bali terrorist bomb attack which left more than 180 people dead.

Major General Made Mangku Pastika, appointed Indonesia's chief investigator in the case on Thursday, vowed to intensify the probe with the foreign help.

The terrorist strike "was not only an attack on Bali but on international civilisation as well," he said.

Pastika said he signed a pact Friday with representatives of police forces from Australia, Britain, the United States, Germany, New Zealand and Japan to jointly investigate the case but with Jakarta playing a lead role in the probe.

"This morning we signed a cooperation agreement on the joint

investigations into the Bali blast in which the Indonesian police will be assisted by international police forces," he told a joint press conference with Graham Ashton, the chief investigating officer from Australia.

Australia suffered the biggest casualties in the attack at the Kuta southern district on Bali island.

So far, four detained Indonesians have been intensively questioned as witnesses in the bombing but are not classified as suspects.

Indonesian authorities have said both locals and foreigners were behind the terrorist attack but decline to provide specific details.

A leading Indonesian newspaper, Koran Tempo, on Friday speculated about the local military's possible involvement in the Bali carnage, saying it could have staged the blast to avenge

Australia's persistent backing of East Timor's independence. "The military is not satisfied with the current government and may also have done it in revenge for Australia's support for East Timor's independence," it said, without also ruling out the al-Qaida and the Aceh Muslim rebel network as possible suspects.

Meanwhile, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri is widely expected to issue a decree Friday granting sweeping powers to the government to combat terrorism, including arming itself with the death penalty and powers to detain suspects without trial.

Megawati will hold a limited cabinet meeting on Friday afternoon to finalise the decree after which she is expected to sign and proclaim it, officials said.

Sharon faces uproar over killing of 8 Palestinians

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon returned home Friday as the killing of eight Palestinians, including a pair of women and children, in the southern Gaza Strip put Israel in the hot seat once again over charges its army uses excessive force in the occupied territories.

Sharon landed in Tel Aviv after a triumphant two-day visit to Washington to strong criticism of Thursday's bloody incident in Rafah.

The deaths were the latest in a series of Israeli military operations that have blotted the army's reputation, including this month's raid on the central Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis that killed 17 Palestinians.

Thursday's toll included a four-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, two young men and two elderly women, Rafah hospital director Ali Mussa told AFP.

Witnesses said Israeli tanks fired three shells at houses and blasted them with heavy machine-gun fire after Palestinian militants fired on Israeli army bulldozers building a wall on the Egyptian border.



Noelle Bush, 25, daughter of Florida Governor Jeb Bush, looks around the courtroom before a hearing at the Orange County Courthouse on Thursday in Orlando, Florida. The court found her guilty of contempt of court for violating the terms of the treatment plan ordered after she tried to use a fake prescription to buy an anti-depressant in January.

Opposition asks Israel to stop 'cruel war machine'

AFP, Jerusalem

Left-wing opposition chief Yossi Sarid demanded Friday that Israel "stop its cruel war machine" after the killing by tank fire in the southern Gaza Strip of eight Palestinians, among them two children.

"It is no longer possible to explain or justify how so many innocent men, women and children" are killed by the army, Sarid said in remarks on Israeli public radio.

"How many times can we say 'we did not intend to', and who can still believe these excuses?" he added.

"The (Israeli) argument that Palestinians knowingly kill our civilians while Israel does it without premeditation is starting to wear out," he also said. "When we fire tank shells, not one but three, against homes, the results are predictable," he concluded.

Sarid was referring to the killing by the Israeli army Thursday of eight Palestinians, when it blasted two houses in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah with shells and heavy machine-gun fire.

Among the dead were a four-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, two young men and two elderly women, Palestinian medical sources said, while a dozen others were seriously hurt.

Israeli army spokeswoman Captain Sharon Feingold said the Israeli force had come under fire from "anti-tank missiles."

"This is another case of Palestinian terrorists using the civilian population to hide behind and conduct terrorist activity," she told AFP.

A senior Israeli official speaking on the return of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon from Washington Friday said, "The Israeli army is the one in the world that respects moral values the most. It does everything to avoid civilians being hurt, which includes its soldiers taking risks."

UN envoy meets leaders of Myanmar junta

AFP, Yangon

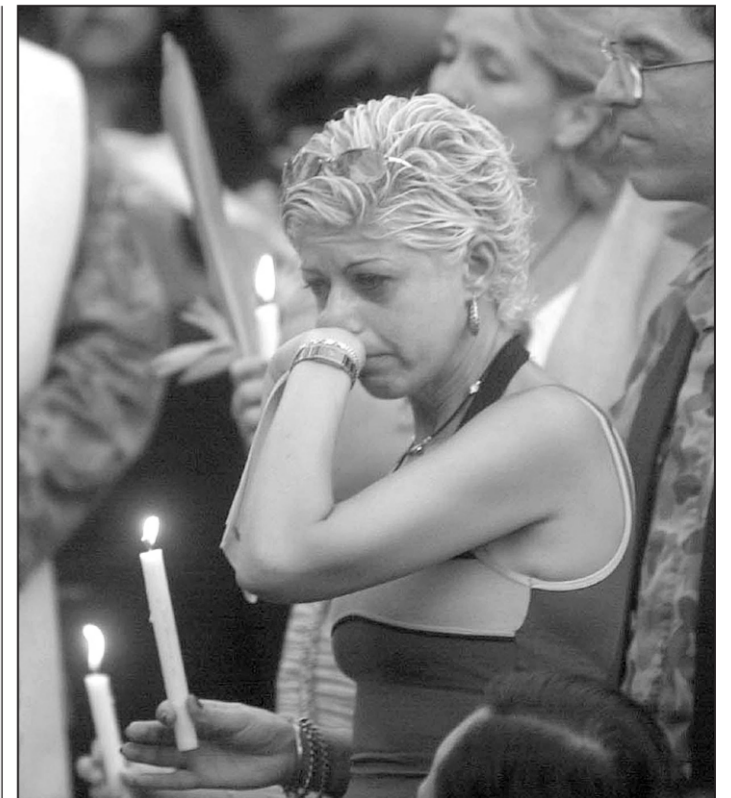
United Nations human rights envoy Paulo Sergio Pinheiro met leaders in Myanmar's military junta and UN agencies operating here Friday as he began his fourth mission to the country, officials said.

The Brazilian academic is expected to see democracy campaigner Aung San Suu Kyi before leaving Myanmar on October 28, but no date has been set for the talks.

After arriving in Yangon late Thursday Pinheiro was greeted at the airport by Deputy Foreign Minister Khin Maung Win and the pair met again for an hour on Friday morning.

He also held a conference with the heads of six UN agencies operating in Myanmar including the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation, officials said.

According to an official schedule, he is expected to see Foreign Minister Win Aung and Home Minister Colonel Tin Hlaing later Friday. On Saturday he is slated to see influential military intelligence chief General Khin Nyunt.



An unidentified Australian citizen weeps during a memorial service at the Australian consulate in Denpasar, Bali on Thursday. Australian Prime Minister John Howard arrived in Bali on Thursday to visit the blast site and to attend the service for the victims of the bombing that killed more than 180 people, including at least 119 Australians, and injured hundreds of others.