

## 7 policemen killed in landmine blast

AFP, Ranchi

Seven policemen on patrol were killed on Tuesday when their vehicle hit a landmine in India's eastern state of Jharkhand, police said.

"The landmine was triggered by insurgents," state inspector general of police R.R Prasad told AFP.

He said no group had immediately claimed responsibility.

The attack took place in Latehar district, some 110 kilometres (70 miles) from the state capital Ranchi.

The police patrol was moving between the Betla and Garo areas when their vehicle hit the mine. All died at the scene.

Two militant groups, the Maoist Communist Centre and the People's War Group, operate in eastern India.

## Police extends detention for Indonesian terror suspect

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian police said yesterday they will extend the detention of terror suspect Abu Bakar Bashir for 40 days when the original warrant expires on Friday. "We will extend the detention by 40 days," said a national police spokesman, Prasetyo.

He said the detention warrant issued on October 20 expires on November 22 but declined to give further details.

The fiery Muslim cleric is accused by Singapore and Malaysia of being the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional terror network which is suspected of a role in the October 12 bombing in Bali.

The Indonesian police chief leading the Bali probe has described the cleric as a founder in Malaysia of Jemaah Islamiyah.

Bashir is not accused of a role in the Bali blast which killed more than 190 people. He is a suspect in a series of church bombings on Christmas Eve 2000 and in a plot to assassinate Megawati Sukarnoputri before she became president.

Bashir, 64, was detained while he was in hospital at Solo in Central Java. Police moved him by force on October 28 to the police hospital in Jakarta.

## 2 children killed in mortar explosion in Kabul

AFP, Kabul

Two young children were killed when they picked up an unexploded mortar bomb while playing in a brick factory in Kabul, an international military peacekeeping force spokesman said yesterday.

Major Mike Edwards, of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), said the explosion was one of two involving children and explosives in the city.

"In the second incident a child had his hand blown off by a butterfly mine. ISAF is saddened by these incidents," he said.

ISAF and coalition forces hunting extremists in Afghanistan collect and dispose of tonnes of abandoned munitions each day, a legacy of 23 years of conflict in the country.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) some 120 to 150 people are killed and injured each month by unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan. The ICRC says around 200,000 Afghans have been disabled by explosions.

## Dozens feared dead as infighting hits Myanmar ethnic army

AFP, Bangkok

Fighting between factions of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), an ethnic militia aligned with the Myanmar junta, is feared to have left dozens dead, Thai military sources said yesterday.

"There was internal fighting and a massacre in the DKBA, but we cannot confirm the number of casualties, we are checking," said Major Prayoon Phonok, commander of a civil affairs taskforce in the Myanmar border region.

"Initially I heard some 50 DKBA militia were killed, but it is still unclear," he told AFP.

The Karen National Union (KNU), a rival militia which is waging a decades-old guerrilla war against Myanmar's military government, said some two dozen DKBA members were killed in the gun fight on November 16.

KNU secretary general Pado Mahn Sha said an armed group of 60 junior and low-ranking DKBA left their base inside Myanmar and took a position on a nearby hill to wage an all-day assault on their former headquarters.

Myanmar government troops joined the battle to support the DKBA leaders at the headquarters in Myaing Gyi Ngu, he said.

# UN inspectors say Iraq offers cooperation

AFP, Cyprus

Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director Mohamed El Baradei arrived in Cyprus Wednesday morning, saying their talks with Iraqi officials had been constructive.

They had flown out of Baghdad earlier after receiving promises of total cooperation from Iraq to resume the disarmament process.

Blix, head of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), told journalists he and El Baradei had "good discussions with representatives of the Iraqi government, and we were assured they will fully implement" the recently adopted UN Security Council resolution on disarmament.

He described the conversations as "businesslike and professional."

In response to a question, he said did not want to "prejudge what Iraq will say," when it submits a report on December 8 in which it is required to give a full report on its alleged programmes for weapons of mass destruction.

But he said he was confident that "war can be averted."

Asked if he were more hopeful than when he arrived in Iraq on Monday, Blix said "we've come some part of the way; we look forward to continuing." The UN Security Council "wants assurances" that Iraq is free of weapons of mass destruction, "and we have to get those assurances."

ElBaradei said he and Blix had impressed on the Iraqis that inspectors want "an accurate and complete report" on December 8, and "they made it clear they will do everything possible to cooperate with us."

While describing their trip as a "constructive visit," he added that Baghdad's verbal commitment "has to be translated on the ground."

Blix said the Iraqis "were somewhat concerned about the short time for presenting such a big report, and they had particular concern on reporting on the peaceful industries, like the chemical industry, which are devoted to peaceful purposes. They have quite a lot of that, and they were quite concerned about it."

"They assured us they will do everything possible to make sure the declaration would cover all activities," he added.

He told journalists that both he and Blix would be returning to Iraq periodically "if things go normally, but obviously we would have to if there is a crisis." Blix is scheduled to pay a courtesy call to Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides Wednesday morning and will leave Cyprus later in the day.

ElBaradei said he will remain in Cyprus until Thursday, but did not say what his plans were.

Larnaca is the logistics and support base for the inspectors entering and leaving Iraq.

The inspectors have a mandate from the Security Council to find the biological, chemical and nuclear weapons that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's regime is suspected of developing.

If Iraq does not cooperate, it will face "severe consequences", expected to be military action led by the United States, which has pushed the Security Council to act against Saddam.

## Race to contain tanker disaster

BBC ONLINE

Strong winds and rough seas are hampering efforts to tackle the ecological disaster in north-west Spain after a tanker laden with sticky fuel oil broke up and sank.

The giant oil spill from the Prestige has prompted urgent international calls for tighter controls on the movement of single-hulled oil tankers in coastal waters.



PHOTO: INTERNET

An armada of tugs and clean-up vessels from around Europe has approached the scene, about 210 km off the Spanish coast, but huge waves have prevented them containing surface oil.

Winds are threatening to blow more oil ashore from the 26-year-old Bahamas-registered tanker, which split in two on Tuesday. Its hull had cracked during a storm last Wednesday.

Ecologists, soldiers and volunteers are racing to rescue tar-coated sea birds and clear the black sludge covering more than 80km (50 miles) of Galicia's coastline.

Dozens of inlets and coves are affected, from Cape Finisterre north to the city of La Coruna.

The Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, has vowed to make whoever is responsible pay for Spain's worst shipping disaster in 10 years.

Adding to the debate over who is to blame for the disaster, the Chief Executive of Smit Salvage, the Dutch company which tried to save the ship, has told the BBC that the ship should not have been moved.

"The structural damage was

due to be outlawed in Europe for another 13 years, but Spain has said it will push for the proposed European Union ban to be brought forward.

The French President, Jacques Chirac, called for "draconian measures" to prevent such shipping disasters.

"I am horrified by the inability of those in charge, politically, nationally and particularly at European level, to take action to stem the laxity which permits these ships fit only for the dustbin to carry on," he said.

It remains unclear if the oil inside the Prestige will disperse if the ship breaks up further.

Environmentalists warn that if the entire cargo of some 70,000 metric tons spills, the resulting damage could be double that caused in the Exxon Valdez disaster off the coast of Alaska in 1989 - one of the worst ever.

Up to 4,000 tons spilled from the ship before it went down.

Lars Walder, of Smit Salvage, said: "It is hoped the majority of the oil has stayed within the vessel, but that part of the ocean is 3.5km deep and we must still wait and see what happens."

Experts say the low sea temperature may delay the seepage of oil from the compartments that split and might even solidify the cargo.

The Spanish authorities have suspended fishing along the 100-kilometre stretch of coastline from Roncudo to Cape Tourinan, and financial compensation has been promised to local fishermen.

Whole communities depend on fishing in the area, which is famous for its shellfish, octopus and crabs.

To the south, Portugal is bracing for the possibility that oil could foul its Atlantic beaches and rich fishing grounds.

certainly not improved by the five days of towing into heavy seas...we would have been better off in a sheltered area, in which the damage would not have increased and we could have had much easier and rapid control of the vessel," Hans van Rooy said.

However, he said that the decision rested with politicians rather than scientists.

"It became too much the art of politicians, and the proper debate on the damage and the safety and the possibilities never took place...we would have preferred to have a proper debate with experts, and not with politicians," Mr van Rooy added.

Single-hulled tankers are not

## Musharraf under fire over new anti-terror law

AFP, Islamabad

President Pervez Musharraf came under sharp criticism yesterday for enacting an anti-terror law empowering security agencies to detain suspects for up to a year without charge.

The London-based rights watchdog Amnesty International voiced "concern" that the new legislation violates a range of internationally-agreed human rights, while local press expressed fears it could be used arbitrarily for political motives.

Musharraf, a key US ally in its global war against terrorism, on Saturday amended the 1997 law after seeking approval from his cabinet last month.

The Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2002 gives police the right to pick up

any person suspected of ties to groups involved in terrorism or sectarianism, whether or not they are banned, and detain them for 12 months without charges.

Previously authorities could detain suspects for up to three months without charges.

Detaining anyone for up to a year on the mere suspicion that they may be associated with an organization which may not even be classified as an illegal group, violates a whole range of internationally agreed human rights," Amnesty said in a statement received here Wednesday.

It cited the universal declaration of human rights which proclaims that "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

"Instead of honouring the exist-

ing legal safeguards, the government has chosen to write bad practice into law by introducing the new amendment," it said.

In an editorial captioned "A black ordinance" the Daily Times said the new law "bypasses the courts, the parliament, and is dangerous as it will spread more terror in civil society rather than ridding society from terrorists."

"The most tragic aspect of this law is that after one year in detention the badly mauled prisoner may be released being told that he was totally innocent," it said.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on Monday condemned the new law as "arbitrary and draconian."

## Rebels attack railway station in India

AFP, Hyderabad

Suspected Maoist rebels stormed a railway station in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh early yesterday and blasted it with dynamite, causing disruption but no casualties, an official said.

The attack comes a day after rebels of the outlawed People's War Group (PWG) bombed a bus in the state, killing 14 people and injuring 17.

Yesterday's attack took place at Tumalacheru railway station in the state's Guntur district, and about 300 kilometres (190 miles) south-east of the provincial capital Hyderabad.

"Around 40 people came to the Tumalacheru station at around 1.30 in the morning (2000 GMT Tuesday) and asked the five or six people on duty to vacate the premises. Then they blasted the building, which has totally collapsed, but the train track is still safe," railway spokesman P. Krishnaya told AFP.

The latest rebel assault comes in the wake of stepped-up action by the police against the PWG. The fresh wave of violence has left nearly two dozen people dead in the last 10 days.

## UK freezes 'terror' group's cash

AP, London

The British government has frozen the accounts of an organization believed to be linked to Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaida network, the Treasury has announced.

Treasury chief Gordon Brown instructed the Bank of England to ensure that all financial institutions should freeze any assets of the Benevolence International Foundation.

The Treasury said there was strong evidence linking the foundation with bin Laden, including personal contacts between senior Benevolence International Foundation officials and al-Qaida members involved in the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The Treasury said Britain's Charity Commission also was freezing the funds of the similarly named group Benevolence International (UK), though it had no immediate grounds for suspecting the British organization.

The Treasury said the freeze on the group's funds was a temporary and protective measure.

Last month, the Chicago-based head of the Benevolence International Foundation was charged in the United States with bankrolling bin Laden and his followers.



PHOTO: AFP

Opposition protesters are enshrouded in tear gas during a rally against the government takeover of the metropolitan police department in Caracas on Tuesday. The protestors claim Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, in putting the police under the Interior Ministry instead of Caracas' mayor, exceeded his authority and violated the country's decentralisation process.

# Caracas flares up as army takes over police force

## Protestors clash with National Guards

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan National Guard troops on Tuesday hurled tear gas canisters at protesters demonstrating against President Hugo Chavez and his decision to have the army take over the capital's police force.

Despite the clashes, there were no immediate reports of injuries, as the eight-kilometre march to the National Assembly capped three days of deepening unrest.

However, protesters severely disrupted traffic, blocking the major highway from Caracas into the capital's main square, Altamira Square, in both directions.

Opposition mayors, guarded by troops, delivered a petition to lawmakers to demanding city autonomy and decentralisation, in response to the measures ordered by Chavez Saturday.

Prior to the switch in control of police oversight, the Metropolitan Police in Venezuela's most important city was run by Caracas mayor and Chavez nemesis Alfredo Pena.

"I am proposing a peaceful civilian rebellion to toss out this government," Pena told reporters Tuesday. "I am proposing a democratic solution at the ballot box before that man (Chavez) is driven out by gunfire."

But at the Miraflores presidential palace Chavez insisted that "the police replacements are constitutional, valid and legal."

"In fact, I think it should have been done earlier," Chavez said, after Pena on Monday took the issue to the Supreme Court.

"The government had to step in

as the force was in anarchy after a month of striking," demanding back pay, Chavez said.

"Here in Caracas there are police death squads," Chavez charged, alleging that metropolitan police had switched rubber bullets for metal ones coated in salt so that wounds do not heal.

On November 12, two people were killed and 14 were injured as police clamped down to rein in Chavez supporters.

Washington on Tuesday stressed the need for dialogue above all, and urged Caracas to avoid violence at all costs, saying it was watching the situation "very closely."

"Violence has got to be avoided... completely," US State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said.

"And certainly, again, the bottom line remains the maintaining of the constitutional order and not taking any actions outside of that."

Chavez on Tuesday also slammed opposition plans for an open-ended general strike from December 4, aimed at pressing him to allow a referendum on whether his term in office -- which runs through 2006 -- should be cut short.

Chavez and his supporters say that, according to the constitution, a referendum can only take place as of August 2003, half way through a president's six-year term.

"They have tried to paralyse the country three times and they have failed," said the elected leftist-populist president and former paratrooper.

Sunday, Pena and other opposition mayors along with dozens of

protesters were tear gassed as they tried to enter a police facility in eastern Caracas.

Late Sunday, an explosive device hit the anti-Chavez television station Globovision, triggering a fire that destroyed three cars.

Monday, demonstrators blocked a main highway in Caracas and also were hit by tear gas to clear the roadway.

Under the constitution, a general confidence referendum on elected officials, including the president, can only be called by the president, the National Assembly or 10 per cent of voters - or 1.2 million people.

Opposition leaders have given Chavez one month - until December 4 - to call the referendum. If the president fails to do as requested, they are threatening a general strike.

Chavez opponents have been attempting to oust him for more than a year, succeeding for less than 48 hours in April during an aborted coup.

Since then, mediators from the United Nations development program, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former US president Jimmy Carter and the Organisation of American States (OAS) have tried unsuccessfully to bring the two sides together to talk out their differences.

Despite rising tensions, OAS Secretary General Cesar Gaviria, who is trying to mediate in a negotiated solution, said the two sides still were at the negotiating table seeking a political settlement at the ballot box. The sides have met six times so far, and were expected to do so Wednesday.

# US Senate okays homeland security department bill

REUTERS, Washington

The US Senate handed President Bush a major victory on Tuesday by passing a bill to create his proposed Department of Homeland Security to better protect against another Sept. 11-type attack.

With the 107th Congress drawing to a close, the Senate gave its blessing to the legislation on a 90-to-9 vote a week after it sailed through the House of Representatives, 299-121.

The measure would implement the biggest US government reorganization in a half-century by folding into the new anti-terror department all or parts of 22 federal agencies, including the Coast Guard, Secret Service and Border Patrol.

While neither the FBI nor the CIA

would be part of the new Cabinet-level department, the legislation seeks to bolster the analysis component of their intelligence information.

A chief aim is to avoid a repeat of the breakdowns in communication between the two agencies exposed by the hijacked airliner attacks last year on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon near Washington.

Bush, in a statement, said he looks forward to signing the legislation into law, saying it would "help our nation meet the emerging threats of terrorism in the 21st century."

"This legislation will improve the security of all Americans in the age of insecurity that we entered after Sept. 11," said Sen. Joseph

Lieberman, a Connecticut Democrat.

Lieberman first proposed a Department of Homeland Security a month after the Sept. 11 attacks. Bush offered a largely similar proposal eight months later.

In addition to merging two dozen agencies into a 170,000-employee department, the bill would:

-- Provide the president broad authority to hire, fire and transfer workers at the department in the name of national security;

-- Permit guns in airline cockpits as a last line of defense against hijackers;

-- Extend by one year the deadline for screening of all airline baggage;

-- Provide broad exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act.

# Dove-ish former general wins Israel's Labour leadership

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Dove-ish former general Amram Mitzna won Israel's Labor Party leadership ballot, pledging to remove Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip within a year if he becomes prime minister in a general election 10 weeks away.

But opinion polls have shown that the Haifa mayor, a newcomer to national politics, has no chance of defeating popular right-wing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of the Likud party in the Jan. 28 vote.

A surge of gun and suicide bomb attacks on Israelis in a two-year-old Palestinian uprising for an independent state has prompted many

Israeli voters to swing to the right.

Israeli troops killed a Palestinian militant in the West Bank city of Tulkarm Tuesday, witnesses and medics said. They said four passers-by were also killed.

The army arrested 36 Palestinian militants in the West Bank overnight, many sought for involvement in attacks.

"We will separate from the Palestinians, either with an agreement or unilaterally," Mitzna, 57, said as Israel's main opposition party cast ballots. "If I am elected, I will evacuate settlements in the Gaza Strip within a year."

Seven thousand Jewish settlers live in fortified enclaves in Gaza

among more than a million Palestinians. Commentators noted the dove-ish turn of the center-left party, but the daily Yedioth Ahronoth warned Mitzna that evacuating settlements was not a central enough issue to be a major voter-winner in the election.

"If Mitzna has something real to say, he should say it now," it wrote in an editorial.

Mitzna's victory over incumbent Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, the hawkish former defense minister who led Labor out of Sharon's ruling coalition last month over spending for Jewish settlements, returned the party to its left-wing roots.



Mr. A.B.M. Abdus Salam, concurrently accredited Ambassador of Bangladesh in Afghanistan talking to Mr. Hamid Karzai, President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan recently in Kabul on matters of mutual interest specially on Bangladesh's participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Pop star Michael Jackson has admitted he made a "terrible mistake" in dangling a baby over a hotel balcony as he greeted fans. The singer caused a stir when he appeared with the child in Berlin, precariously clutching his son out of fifth floor window, and draping a towel over the baby's head.