

## DPRK threatens to quit NPT

### US has no plan to attack, ROK opposes slapping sanctions

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has hinted that it could pull out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as Washington said it had no plans for a military strike to resolve a deepening nuclear crisis.

In a statement late Sunday, North Korea's foreign ministry blamed the United States for the collapse of a 1994 accord under which Pyongyang agreed to freeze its nuclear program and to stay within the nuclear safeguard treaty.

The 1994 Agreed Framework (AF) helped North Korea find itself "in a special status" where its withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was suspended until the construction of light-water nuclear reactors by a US-led consortium, the statement said.

"And the US began ditching even the AF, thus putting this special status of ours in peril," it said.

North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT in March 1993, triggering a nuclear crisis that brought the Korean peninsula to the brink of war.

Three months later the Stalinist country suspended its threatened NPT withdrawal after the United States agreed to start dialogue on improving ties with North Korea.

"We have been left with no option but to consider self-defensive means to cope with the threat in order to protect the nation's dignity and right to existence," the statement said.

Pyongyang, however, left open the door for dialogue with Washington to end a showdown over the country's renewed nuclear program.

In Washington, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said the United States had no plan to strike North Korea, which is still technically at war with South Korea after the 1950-1953 Korean War ended in stalemate.

"Military action is never off the table in the sense that it is not an option," Powell told CBS television. "We just don't think the circumstances at this time require us to point a gun at someone's head."

But he said President George W. Bush "always has every option." The nuclear crisis dragged South Korea's stock index down 4.5 percent Monday to 627.55. Fears over a US-North Korea showdown and US-Iraq tensions also pulled share prices down in other Asian countries.

The 1994 deal has fallen apart since US revelations in October that North Korea is running a weapons program based on enriched uranium technology.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has prepared a policy of putting financial and political pressure on Pyongyang, The New York Times reported Sunday.

Under the plan, US officials are willing to negotiate, but only if North Korea first dismantles its nuclear weapons program.

If it refuses, the UN Security Council could threaten economic sanctions, while the US military might intercept missile shipments to deprive North Korea of money from weapons sales, the daily said.

Meanwhile, South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung on Monday expressed clear opposition to any US-led sanctions against North Korea, saying pressuring and isolating the communist state would not work.

Kim, who is to step down in February, told a cabinet meeting: "Pressuring and isolating communist countries have never been successful - Cuba is one example."



Workers build the separation fence between Umm Al-Fahm in northern Israel and Anin in the Palestinian West Bank on Sunday. After two years of conflict, the Israeli government launched the construction of a 350-kilometre security fence which loosely follows the Green Line in a bid to prevent Palestinian militants from infiltrating into Israel.

## Pak PM wins confidence vote in parliament

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali on Monday won a confidence vote in the National Assembly in what was being seen as the first test of his ability to run the first civilian government here in three years.

Jamali, head of a military-backed coalition that enjoys a razor-thin majority in the 342-seat parliament, won 188 votes.

"Consequently, the resolution for the vote of confidence in Zafarullah Jamali, the prime minister of Pakistan, has been passed," Speaker of the National Assembly Chaudhry Amir Hussain told parliament.

The tally was 16 votes more than he earned during the chamber's elections November 21, when parliament picked the premier to lead the first civilian government since President Pervez Musharraf took power in a 1999 military coup.

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Philippine President Gloria Arroyo speaking before a monument to national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, at a park in Baguio City Monday. Arroyo announced that she would not run for president in the 2004 presidential elections.

## Iraq seeks Muslims' support

### US ups pressure on Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq wants effective support and concrete action from Arab and Muslim nations to help resist US threats to invade, a leading newspaper said Monday.

"What Iraq asks (of Arab and Muslim countries) is concrete action and an effective stance and not calls to solve the crisis, said Babel, a tabloid run by President Saddam Hussein's elder son Uday.

The daily said the Arabs should "stand up against the US policy of hegemony," and the world should ask the United States "to start by ridding the Zionist entity of its weapons of mass destruction to give credibility" to the demands it is making on Iraq.

The government's Al-Jumuriyah daily said the Arabs should "stand in the same trench as Iraq and state that any aggression against Iraq would be considered an aggression against all Arab states."

The Arabs should also "stop making shameful statements justifying the American military presence in the Gulf," where a huge US buildup of forces is underway.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Colin Powell warned Sunday the stand-off with Baghdad "can't go on indefinitely," as Iraq's neighbours made contingency plans in the event of a war.

"I think that this can't go on indefinitely," Powell told NBC's Meet the Press. But he said United States would wait to hear from UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix before taking any decisions.

"It's a situation we are monitoring closely," he said.

Powell insisted US President George W. Bush wanted a peaceful solution but said that US troops were prepared to take action against Baghdad.

"We are taking prudent actions, positioning our forces so that they will be ready to do whatever might be required," he told Fox News Sunday.

In an apparent U-turn by the kingdom's rulers, Saudi Arabia has reportedly agreed to let US forces use airbases and a key command centre on its soil, a move that would boost a US-led campaign both logistically and diplomatically.

Meanwhile, the aircraft carrier the USS George Washington and another carrier have been ordered to prepare to leave for the Gulf within four days, according to US television reports.

The Washington Post reported that US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has ordered a significant deployment of ground forces, combat aircraft and logistics support to the region -- usually the last phase of war preparations.

Some 15,000 US troops are already based in neighbouring Kuwait, where Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmed al-Fahd al-Sabah said he was ready to implement an emergency plan to guarantee oil production in the event of war.

"I cannot go into the details of this plan, but I can guarantee that production will continue, exports will continue and production of fuel needed locally and for export will continue," Ahmed told reporters.

Likewise, Powell told NBC's "Meet the Press," that any invasion force would take special care to protect Iraq's oilfields "and make sure that they are used to benefit the people of Iraq and are not destroyed or damaged by a failing regime on the way out the door."

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia appeared Sunday also to have reversed its position, after initially indicating it would not allow US forces to launch from its soil, as they did in the 1991 Gulf War.

The New York Times reported that US commanders have been given private assurances they will be allowed to run an air war from a sophisticated command center at Prince Sultan Air Base outside the Saudi capital.

Other Middle Eastern countries expressed concern over the effect of a regional war on their economies.



Iraqi women walk in a decorated market to mark the end of the year in Baghdad on Sunday. Iraqis are bracing for the worst amid reports of a massive US buildup in the Gulf and media speculation that war against Iraq will start mid-February.

## Musharraf warned India of 'unconventional warfare'

### 'Delhi was prepared for war'

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf revealed Monday he warned Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee earlier this year that Pakistan could step beyond conventional warfare if it had to defend its territory.

Musharraf, addressing an army corps reunion here, did not mention the threat of nuclear weapons, but said he was prepared to take severe measures at the height of crisis between the nuclear-armed arch-rivals.

"In my meetings with various world leaders, I conveyed my personal message to Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee that the moment Indian forces cross the line of control and the international border, then they should not expect a conventional war from Pakistan."

"I believe my message was effectively conveyed to Mr. Vajpayee," he added.

Tensions between the neighbours escalated dramatically after a deadly attack on the Indian parliament last December 13 which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-backed militants.

India and Pakistan deployed nearly a million troops to their common borders earlier this year, and relations reached crisis level.

"There were threats on the border after September 11 and particularly after the Indian troops were sent to the borders, but now all threats are over," he said.

"We have defeated our enemy without going into war," he added.

India has announced it has completed its pullback from the temporary forward positions along the mutually recognised border with Pakistan, but that extra troops remain in bitterly disputed Kashmir, the Himalayan state claimed by both countries and divided by a line of control.

"The enemy has withdrawn its forces and we are also withdrawing ours," Musharraf said.

In October, Musharraf said Pakistan "won't be the one to start a war" over the Kashmir region.

"But if they (India) start a war, we will defend ourselves vigorously and with determination," he said at the time.

Another report says, the outgoing Indian army chief General S. Padmanabhan said Monday India was fully prepared for a war with nuclear rival Pakistan earlier this year.

Hundreds of thousands of Indian troops were deployed along the border with Pakistan during Operation Parakaram after an attack on the Indian parliament in December last year which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based militants fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

After a ten-month military stand-off and intense international diplomacy, New Delhi began in October to pull troops back from the border, except in Kashmir.

"I can't confirm or deny... but the Armed Forces were fully prepared during Operation Parakaram... but a final decision on fighting a war or not can only be taken by the government," the outgoing army chief told reporters at a ceremony at which he was given a farewell as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).

It is interesting to remember last year's crisis between India and Pakistan. Everybody was afraid that a nuclear war was about to break out there. Then the international community came together, worked with the two parties."

Describing the situation in Kashmir as "difficult", Powell, however, expressed relief that with both sides deescalating, the threat of war has receded considerably.

## Indo-Pak leaders urged to hold talks

PTI, Washington

US has expressed hope that the New Year will usher in resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan on all contentious issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.

"I hope that in this new year we'll find a way for the two sides to begin a dialogue on all of the issues that are outstanding between India and Pakistan, to include Kashmir," US Secretary of State Colin Powell said.

Making a brief reference to Indo-Pak tension during an interview to the CNN, Powell claimed it was timely intervention by the international community that averted a nuclear confrontation between the Asian neighbours last year.

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## US probes into cloning claim

AFP, Washington

US authorities on Sunday said they have launched a probe into a sect's highly controversial claim that it has created the first human clone.

A cult known as the Raelian movement, which believes that human beings were originally created by extraterrestrials and that cloning is a path to immortality, claimed Friday to have created the first-ever carbon copy of a human.

The birth of the alleged baby girl clone named "Eve" has yet to be confirmed by independent experts.

"We are going to probe the circumstances surrounding this alleged cloning. And we've started steps to look into that," US Food and Drug Administration spokesman Brad Stone told AFP.

He said that although the sect, through its Las Vegas, Nevada-based company Clonaid, claimed to have done the cloning outside the United States, the FDA would still look into it.

"We want to check and see, first, whether the cloning did take place, and second, if it violated any of our laws," he said.

Although human cloning is not illegal in the United States, any kind of human trials would have required FDA approval as of 1998, Stone said.

"We inspected some facilities that (the Raelian sect) had in West Virginia in 2001 and had discussions with them which resulted in an agreement by them not to conduct any of their cloning research within the United States," he said.

Clonaid has been fighting to protect its credibility since the announcement made by its chief, Brigitte Boisselier, a French chemist and a bishop in the Raelian sect which believes that humans were cloned from extraterrestrials who came to Earth 25,000 years ago.

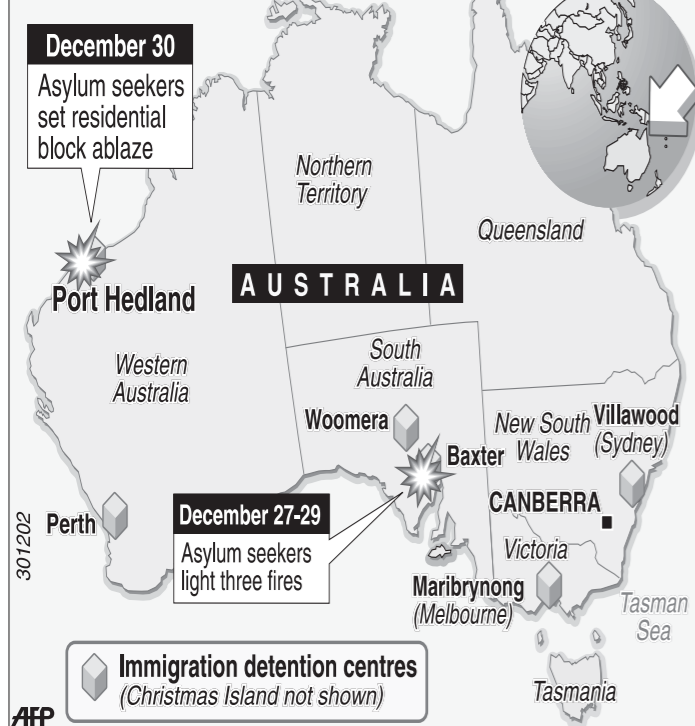
Leaders from around the world reacted to the announcement with skepticism and outrage.

The Vatican called the announcement an "expression of a brutal mentality, devoid of any humane or ethical considerations," while French President Jacques Chirac said cloning a human being should be made a worldwide crime.

The United Nations raised doubts about the report, citing a lack of scientific evidence.

"In the absence of scientific data, we can't automatically accept it as a fact," said Fred Eckhard, a spokesman for Secretary General Kofi Annan.

## Australian immigrants protest



## FBI launches manhunt for 5 Arab migrants

AFP, Washington

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation launched Sunday a public nationwide manhunt for five individuals of Middle Eastern descent, who are believed to have illegally entered the United States about five days ago.

Coming in the midst of a holiday season, the announcement was certain to spread new jitters among the already edgy public concerned about new deadly terrorist attacks on US soil.

The five, whose nationality officials assured was till unclear even to its investigators, have been identified as Abid Noraiz Ali, Iftikhar Khozmai Ali, Mustafa Khan Owasi, Adil Pervez and Akbar Jamal, according to a statement released by the FBI.

Their photographs posted on the agency's website showed five dark-haired men aged between 19 and 33 wearing casual Western clothes and sporting crew cuts.

But FBI officials warned the names and the dates of birth of the wanted men could be fictitious and offered no indication about their possible whereabouts.

"Although the FBI has no specific information that these individuals are connected to any potential terrorist activities, based upon information developed in the course of on-going investigations, the FBI would like to locate and question these persons," the bureau pointed out.

The five are suspected of having entered the United States, presumably from Canada, on or around December 24, as most Americans prepared to celebrate Christmas.

It was not immediately clear how the individuals managed to cross the border amid heightened post-September 11 security, whether they travelled individually or as a group, or carried any weapons.



A Gurung girl in traditional dress leads a New Year procession while men dance in Kathmandu on Monday. The ethnic Gurungs from western Nepal are celebrating "Loshar", their New Year which is the year of the sheep. Many Gurkha soldiers are from the Gurung community.

## 3 American doctors slain in Yemen

REUTERS, Sanaa

A Yemeni shot dead three American doctors and wounded a fourth US national at a missionary hospital in the south of the country, a Yemeni official said Monday.

Sources at the US embassy in Sanaa confirmed the victims were US citizens and said they were working at the Jibla Baptist hospital in Ebb province, some 170 km (105 miles) south of the capital.

The Yemeni official described the gunman as an Islamist militant. After he was arrested he told police that he had shot the two men and two women to "cleanse his religion and get closer to Allah."

Yemeni security sources linked the so far unidentified man to a member of an Islamist opposition party who had killed a prominent opposition official earlier this week.