

India braces for backlash after Mumbai blasts

REUTERS, Mumbai

India stepped up security nationwide yesterday to head off any Hindu-Muslim violence as grieving families of the victims of twin car bombings in the financial capital Mumbai prepared to cremate their dead.

Police have blamed the bombings, which killed 48 people, on an outlawed Muslim students group, acting along with a Pakistan-based Kashmiri separatist.

Among the victims were eight people from western Gujarat state, where at least 1,000 people, most of them Muslims, died last year in revenge killings following an attack on a train carrying Hindu pilgrims from the northern holy town of Ayodhya.

The eight Gujaratis, whose bodies were being taken back on Tuesday to their home town of Surendranagar, had been on a pilgrimage to a Hindu festival and were in Bombay on holiday.

K. Chakravarthy, Director-General of the Gujarat police, said authorities had posted police along the route where the bodies of the eight Gujaratis would be returned for cremation.

In Mumbai, police raided slums and picked up people for questioning about Monday's bombs, which were planted in two taxis.

Bloodstained footpath, broken glass and debris marked the blast sites, one at a crowded gold and jewelry market, the other near the Gateway of India, a huge waterfront arch built by India's former British rulers.

But the city opened for a normal working day with its usual heavy traffic and packed trains.

"Every moment, I feel there is danger in Mumbai. But still, I have to put my life on the line and go out to work today," said Sheikh Abdul Sheikh, a 32-year-old tailor waiting at a bus stop.

Financial markets rallied, shrugging off the blasts. The key 30-share index was up 2.14 percent in late morning trading after closing down 2.92 percent on Monday. Currency and bond markets also recovered.

Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani was to fly to Bombay to visit some of the 150 injured in the attacks.

Kagame wins polls in Rwanda

AFP, Kigali

Close on ten years after the Rwandan genocide, incumbent President Paul Kagame declared himself the victor in presidential polls in the early hours of Tuesday morning with roughly fifty percent of the votes counted.

Partial results from Monday's poll, the first multi-party presidential election since Rwanda gained independence in 1962, showed Kagame winning 94.3 percent of the popular vote.

The figure was based on results from 51 out of a total of 106 voting districts in Rwanda following Monday's vote.

"Victory! Victory! Thank you for this victory," Kagame told more than 15,000 supporters gathered in Kigali's biggest football stadium.

"Victory to say there are many challenges ahead of us. Victory for men, for women, for young people, for all Rwandans, a victory that brings hope, a victory to show all those who think they know Rwanda that they don't. A victory that will reassure everyone, even those who didn't vote for this victory."

However the camp of the main opposition candidate for the presidential vote swiftly cried foul, claiming a lack of transparency in the election process.



A collage of the morning edition city newspapers in Mumbai yesterday shows pictures after bombs exploded in the city the day before. India's commercial capital is limping back to normalcy after two bombs hidden in taxis exploded Monday afternoon near a Hindu temple and the Gateway of India—a busy tourist spot—killing at least 52 people and leaving 143 others injured.

Mumbai in mourning

AP, Mumbai

Hindus and Muslims alike mourned yesterday for victims of the worst terrorist attack in a decade in India's financial heart of Mumbai, while the death toll from the twin car bombings rose to 52, with 150 people wounded.

As relatives went to morgues to claim their dead or visited the injured in hospitals, investigators of Monday's bombings focused their probe on Muslim militants.

These included groups that Hindu-majority India alleges are backed by Muslim Pakistan—sparking fears of increasing tensions just when relations between the nuclear-armed neighbors appeared on the mend.

Pakistan, however, condemned the carnage as "wanton targeting of civilians," and the United Nations and the United States also denounced the attack.

"Acts of terror are intended to sow fear and chaos among free peoples," President Bush said in a statement. "I hope that the perpetrators of these murders will be identified quickly and brought to justice."

Indian police and officials said they had no direct evidence of who carried out the bombings and no group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed Hindus as well as Muslims.

"I can say it is a terrorist group,



PHOTO: AFP
Harsh Solanki, a five year old Indian boy, holds his bandaged hand as he looks from his family's fifth floor apartment which overlooks the Temple of Mumbai. Harsh was injured by flying glass on Monday, when a bomb in a taxi exploded in the street under his family's apartment. Two bombs exploded in the city killing 52 people and injuring more than 140 others.



Mayawati resigns

AFP, Lucknow

The chief minister of India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, quit Tuesday amid a growing rift with her coalition partners over an abortive project to develop the world famous Taj Mahal monument.

Mayawati, who like many Indians uses only name, had plunged India's most politically crucial state into turmoil on Monday by offering to quit when she met governor Vishnu Kant Shastri.

Following Mayawati's offer of resignation, her coalition ally, India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), announced it was withdrawing its support for her regional Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which champions the cause of India's lower castes.

"I strongly condemn the bomb-

World leaders slam Mumbai blasts

AFP, Hong Kong

The international community condemned the deadly twin car bombings that rocked Mumbai, voicing outrage yesterday at the attacks that left at least 50 people dead and around 150 injured.

With the United Nations still in shock after the attacks on the UN offices in Baghdad last week which killed 23, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called the bombings "despicable acts of terrorism" that could only be condemned.

"The secretary-general utterly condemns the terrorist bomb attacks today," a statement released Monday by Annan's spokesman said.

"He is adamantly opposed to all acts of terrorism, from whatever quarter."

US President George W. Bush, whose administration has waged an anti-terror drive since the September 11 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, offered condolences to India's lower castes.

"Acts of terror are intended to sow fear and chaos among free peoples. I hope that the perpetrators of these murders will be identified quickly and brought to justice," Bush said.

"I strongly condemn the bomb-

ings," Bush said in a statement. "On behalf of all Americans, I send condolences to all affected by today's tragedy and to the government and people of India."

The bombs, hidden in the rear seats of taxis, exploded during the lunch-hour rush at the temple of Mumbai and a square in front of the Gateway of India monument.

Russia's foreign ministry likened the explosions to attacks against civilians by Chechen suicide bombers, who earlier this month killed 50 people in southern Russia when they blew up a military hospital.

"Russia resolutely condemns the terrorist acts in Mumbai (Bombay) and is confident that those who organised and carried them out will be tracked down and severely punished," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Russia shares the Indian people's grief over the death of innocent people and it sends its condolences to their families and relatives," it said.

China expressed its shock at the blasts, with foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan offering sympathy for the families of the victims, while other countries, including Canada, New Zealand and Australia, voiced their outrage.

US troops raid homes in Iraq's 'Sunni triangle'

REUTERS, Baghdad

Saddam's top aides -- "Chemical Ali" Hassan al-Majid and former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan. But Saddam himself remains on the run, despite a \$25 million price on his head.

Senior US officers based in one of Saddam's former palaces in Tikrit say they believe the deposed president is in disguise and moving every few hours to evade capture.

The persistent guerrilla ambushes, and last week's devastating truck bomb attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad that killed at least 23, have led to calls for a wider UN role and more troops on the ground.

But Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on Monday that troop levels were adequate, though he would not hesitate to recommend boosting forces if it became necessary.

Abbas and his security chief Mohammed Dahlan have pledged to

Israel awaits action from Abbas against militants

Hamas vows revenge at funerals

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel vowed yesterday to continue its pursuit of militants in the absence of action from Palestinian authorities, arresting two activists in a hospital and staging an incursion into the West Bank town of Jenin.

But in a sign that he may be about to line up concrete action against hardline groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, moderate Palestinian prime minister Mahmud Abbas was to travel to Gaza City later Tuesday where he would host a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

"This meeting will focus on the issue of the security ... and what steps the government should take on the ground," a close aide to Abbas told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Abbas and his security chief Mohammed Dahlan have pledged to

take on the hardliners in the wake of a massive suicide bomb on a bus in Jerusalem a week ago which left 21 people dead and hammered the final blow to the coffin of a seven-week-old truce called by Palestinian factions.

There has been little sign of action so far after orders were issued to confine the groups' weapons after the Jerusalem bomb. Israel has dismissed the demolition of tunnels in the Gaza Strip used to smuggle arms from Egypt as little more than a ploy to oust hardline leaders.

The nearly three-year-old confrontation showed no signs of abating, with Israel locked into military mode and the Palestinian government bogged down in a power struggle between Yasser Arafat and his moderate prime minister.

Pakistan must handover wanted criminals: Advani

PTI, Mumbai

yesterday's incidents".

Meanwhile, surveillance all over the metropolis and the state has been stepped up following the twin blasts in Mumbai and in view of the ongoing Kumbh Mela in Nashik, according to Director General of Police OP Babi.

"Surveillance from air and at ground level would be intensified at Nashik in view of the ongoing Kumbh Mela," Babi told reporters after the high-level meeting at Mantralaya here on Tuesday.

The Deputy Prime Minister, who held talks with Maharashtra Chief Minister Sushilkumar Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Chagga Bhujbal and senior police officials at the airport, said he hoped the state government would be able to arrest the culprits and make suitable arrangements for the future.

Advani said: "This raises

doubts about the credibility of

Islamabad's condemnation of



PHOTO: AFP
Pakistani bomb disposal experts inspect the wreckage of a fireworks shop which was destroyed by a powerful firecracker blast in Muzaffarabad yesterday. The explosion on late Monday in the fireworks store killed at least six people and wounded 14 others.

AFP, London

The judicial inquiry into the death of weapons expert David Kelly was hearing Tuesday from Britain's top intelligence chief, as it inched closer to testimony later this week from Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Sir John Scarlett, chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which coordinates the work of Britain's intelligence agencies, was to appear before the inquiry headed by Lord Brian Hutton.

The 30-year MI6 veteran was due to be grilled on what political pressure, if any, he came under during the preparation of a September 2002 dossier on Iraq and weapons of mass destruction—a key plank in Blair's case for taking Britain to war.

Kelly was the source of a BBC report in May alleging that Downing Street "sexed up" the dossier, which



PHOTO: AFP
Sister Nirmala, (C) successor to Mother Teresa, along with Nuns and volunteers of Missionaries of Charity celebrate the 93rd birthday of Mother Teresa while standing around her mausoleum at the Mother House in Kolkata yesterday.