



PHOTO: AFP

South Korea's opposition party lawmakers and security guards remove pro-Roh Uri Party lawmakers who block the Speaker's chair before voting could start in Seoul yesterday. The South Korean National Assembly voted 193 votes to two to impeach President Roh Moo-Hyun, the parliamentary Speaker announced. Roh was suspended from office after opposition lawmakers passed an historic impeachment vote, leaving the country in political chaos.

'Madrid bombings signal new threat to Europe'

AFP, Berlin

As Europe digested the full horror of the Madrid bombings, commentators in yesterday's European newspapers feared that the attack signalled a new and growing terror threat putting the continent on alert.

Many likened it to the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, not only for the shock of the indiscriminate killings but because of a suspicion that it might have been the work of extremists linked to al-Qaeda.

Even if, as the Spanish government believes, the bombings were the work of the Basque separatist group ETA, it showed how extremists were learning from each other, they argued.

"What happened in Spain was

the al-Qaedaisation of terrorism in Europe," the German daily Die Welt said.

It signalled "the implementation of a tactic invented by Islamists, which does not pursue a political goal such as the overthrow of government but finds its value in causing the most pain possible in the worst chaos."

Al-Qaeda, the group headed by Osama bin Laden blamed for the 2001 suicide attacks in the United States that killed more than 3,000 people, "deserves at least to be described as the moral co-author of these crimes," commented the French daily Liberation.

According to The Times of London, the seeming intention of the bombers to cause large-scale civilian casualties marked a change in the terrorism tactics witnessed

inside Europe.

"Indeed, their very brutality seems to many characteristic of the attacks carried out by al-Qaeda and its sympathisers," it said in an editorial.

Europe was now facing "something wider: international understanding among extremists, who copy each others' methods, supply each other with arms and co-ordinate attacks on their common enemies."

Belgium's Le Soir agreed. "Basque terrorism or Islamic terrorism, Europe now has proof that it is also sheltering bin Ladens or that it has become their target," it said in an editorial.

Austria's Die Presse said Europe now had to be on increased guard.

Bush, Kerry step up attack on each other

REUTERS, Washington

President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry escalated their campaign battle on Thursday, with Bush launching television ads criticising Kerry by name and Kerry fighting back against the "Republican attack squad."

Bush, shrugging off recent criticism for using images from the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in his campaign ads, traveled to New York to appear at a groundbreaking ceremony for a 9/11 memorial, bowing his head in prayer and calling it "a devastating blow."

Bush launched his campaign's first attack ads, accusing the Massachusetts senator of planning to raise taxes by \$900 billion, weaken the Patriot Act that expanded law enforcement powers and seek UN approval for defending the United States.

Kerry, facing criticism for calling his Republican critics on

Wedn-nesday a "crooked, lying group," refused to apologise for his remarks and said the claims in Bush's ads were false.

"There is a Republican attack squad that specialises in trying to destroy people and be negative," Kerry told reporters after a series of meetings with Democrats on Capitol Hill. "I think the president needs to talk about the real priorities of our country."

Kerry said Bush was attacking him because he "can't talk about his positive vision for America, because at each turn he has put this nation on the wrong track."

Kerry, returning to Capitol Hill for only the second time this year, held meetings with House and Senate Democrats and the black and Hispanic caucuses before concluding the day by meeting with former rival John Edwards, who dropped out of the race last week, and dozens of his top financial supporters.

Advani attacks Congress for promoting dynastic rule

PTI, Coimbatore

Continuing his Bharat Uday Yatra in the dusty plains of the south, Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani yesterday stepped up his attack on Congress party accusing it of promoting "dynastic" politics.

He also rejected DMK chief M Karunanidhi's allegation that it was Jayalithaa-Advani alliance in Tamil Nadu.

"I have nothing against the children as they are youth and have a right to contest elections. But we are against the dynastic rule in the country," he told reporters before his yatra started for Bangalore on its third day.

Advani, who made a brief reference to Priyanka and Rahul on Thursday in Palakkad, said the BJP had nothing against them.

ROK in shock over Roh impeachment

THE KOREA HERALD/ ANN, Seoul

South Koreans knew for days it was a possibility, but most were still shocked after the National Assembly impeached President Roh Moo-hyun.

Some were ashamed, others angry and many fearful of how the decision will affect the country.

Results of the impeachment vote came at 11:55 a.m. Many huddled around TVs in supermarkets and shops around the country. Some sighed at the speaker's announcement, others simply shook their heads.

"It is so lamentable," office worker Kim Jong-wan, 40, said. "It is so shameful at the same time. The impeachment will raise great disturbances. I am afraid that it will endanger our economic and political situation."

Said civil servant Lee Dong-hun, "I was so disappointed by the politicians. I am too frustrated to say anything else. The lawmakers' behavior is mean and childish."

Some agreed with the impeachment and predicted better times ahead.

"It is the proper decision though

some confusion may follow for the time being," homemaker Lee Eun-young, 34, said. "But the country will be soon be stabilized when a good and qualified president takes office instead of Roh."

Business owner Lee In-geun, 58, agreed.

"President Roh must resign owing to his misgovernment," he said. "If he stays in power, Korean society cannot avoid more confusion."

Most who spoke with The Korea Herald opposed the impeachment. And a poll taken just days before the vote suggested about 60 per cent of South Koreans felt the same way.

"It is ridiculous," said angry office worker Lee Sun-young, who is in her 20s. "If someone has to be impeached for small things like President Roh was, all politicians in Korea must be impeached. Today will be recorded as a shameful day in our history." Yonsei University student Jamie Kais said, "He did not do enough things wrong to be impeached." Like many others, this foreign student fears the National Assembly's decision will plunge the country into confusion.

Vajpayee says

India, Pakistan should look at 'innovative ideas'

PTI, New Delhi

Maintaining that public opinion in India and Pakistan should lead politicians to "pragmatic and acceptable" solutions to their problems, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee yesterday said the two countries should look at "innovative ideas" to resolve differences.

It is public opinion in both countries which has to lead the politicians to "pragmatic and acceptable" solutions to bilateral problems, he said delivering the keynote address at the two-day India Today conclave here.

"That is why we have been advocating intensification of trade, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and sporting links, so that public opinion in both countries can be mobilised in support of the peace dividend," he said.

Observing that India has consistently used the language of cooperation, detente and dialogue in its neighbourhood policy, he said the agreement reached with Pakistan in January flowed from this consistent stand that it is only bilateral dialogue which can solve problems and that this dialogue cannot be pursued or sustained if terrorism continues.

New Delhi has also held that these problems including that of Jammu and Kashmir should be addressed in this dialogue, he said.

In his speech, the Prime Minister referred to the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, outlined three-pronged strategy for the future, including promoting productive employment, and had a pot shot at those deriding the NDA government's India Shining campaign.

Bush renews Iran sanctions

AFP, East Meadow

US President George W. Bush on Thursday renewed sanctions barring US firms and citizens from oil dealings with Iran, citing the "unusual and extraordinary threat" from Tehran.

In a decree, Bush said Iran had not allayed US concerns about its alleged "support for international terrorism, efforts to undermine the Middle East peace process, and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them."

The US leader's decision -- which extends by one year sanctions initially imposed by then-president Bill Clinton on March 15, 1995 -- came amid fresh tensions between Washington and Tehran over Iran's nuclear programme.

"The actions and policies of the Government of Iran continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security,

foreign policy, and economy of the United States," Bush said in a statement.

Reuters adds: Washington and its allies faced tough resistance yesterday as non-aligned members of the UN atomic watchdog rejected a resolution that sharply criticises Iran's nuclear secrecy and keeps the door open for sanctions.

In backroom meetings at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Canadian, Australian and European diplomats on the IAEA's Board of Governors negotiated with diplomats from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to revise a draft IAEA resolution.

The United States, France, Britain and Germany agreed this week on an Australian-Canadian draft text that "deplores" Tehran's withholding of sensitive information from the IAEA and highlights a military link to Tehran's nuclear program.

LTTE, renegade rebels point gun at each other on bank of a river

AFP, Trincomalee

Armed rival factions of Tamil Tiger rebels were face-to-face on the banks of a river dividing an area held by a breakaway group, the main guerrilla movement said here yesterday.

The leader of the political wing of the main Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), S. Thilak, said their fighters were poised against the faction of regional commander V. Muralitharan in the adjoining Batticaloa district.

"Both sides have their cadres camping on the two banks of the Verugal river that marks the district border," Thilak told reporters here after talks with a visiting Norwegian peace envoy, Erik Solheim.

Thilak said although the two factions were facing each other across the river, there had been no fighting between the two groups, which, according to the military, were within small-arms range of

each other.

Both sides have sought to play down fears of an internecine war, but government forces have been placed on alert to avoid getting dragged into a fresh conflict.

The military here said it was concerned after hearing explosions overnight from an area held by the Tigers but that the blasts later turned out to be a rebel training exercise.

Norwegian envoy Solheim was visiting Trincomalee, 260 kilometres (160 miles) northeast of the capital Colombo, as part of a previously arranged visit to review the Oslo-arranged ceasefire between the Colombo government and Tigers.

Solheim told reporters after his talks with Thilak that they were keeping out of the internal rift within the LTTE, which entered Norwegian-brokered peace talks with the Colombo government in September 2002.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers admitted yesterday for the first time that a renegade rebel had fighters under his command but warned he was pushing himself into a "dangerous corner."

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said eastern commander V. Muralitharan, who broke away from the guerrillas last week, had a fighting force but insisted his support was declining.

Earlier, the LTTE's main leadership based in the island's north, maintained that Muralitharan, better known by his military name Karuna, was acting alone and had no backing among Tiger guerrillas.

"Cadres under Karuna's command are distancing (themselves) and deserting him gradually," the LTTE's northern-based political leader S.P. Thamilselvan was quoted as saying by the Tamilnet.com website.

"Karuna is increasingly facing danger from among his own group of cadres."



PHOTO: AFP

Photo shows the front pages of South Korean newspapers yesterday with pictures of impeached President Roh Moo-Hyun. The South Korean National Assembly voted 193 to two to impeach President Roh Moo-Hyun yesterday, the parliamentary Speaker announced.

Spring hunt for Laden heats up

AFP, Islamabad

The snows are melting on the rugged passes of the Afghan-Pakistan frontier, foreign dignitaries are trooping through Islamabad and Pakistan is under pressure over the sale of nuclear secrets.

While nobody will openly admit the three scenarios are linked, rumours are swirling that pressure is building on President Pervez Musharraf to allow US troops on Pakistani soil to finish off the hunt for the world's most elusive prey: al-Qaeda supremo Osama bin Laden.

Visits in the past fortnight by the British and French foreign ministers, next week's visit by US Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Musharraf's sudden visit to Riyadh at the week-end have triggered speculation that the pressure is on Musharraf to let foreign troops in.

Israel strives to gain US backing for Sharon's disengagement plan

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli officials continued talks here yesterday with three US envoys to outline further Ariel Sharon's plan for a unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians.

The hawkish prime minister, meanwhile, saw his popularity rating fall to an all-time low, with a fresh polls showing 57 per cent of his fellow citizens are not pleased with him.

Assistant US Secretary of State for Near East Affairs William Burns, National Security Council number two Stephen Hadley and its Middle East director, Elliott Abrams, arrived in Israel Thursday to discuss Sharon's plans to withdraw from 17 of 21 Gaza Strip settlements.

Sharon has said he will start implementing his disengagement plan in the next few months if there is no progress in the internationally

drafted roadmap for peace with the Palestinians.

The three met Friday morning with Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and Sharon's chief of staff, Dov Weisglass, US diplomatic sources told AFP without elaborating on the content of the talks.

Shalom has made no secret of his opposition to the disengagement plan and warned that its adoption could lead to far-right parties pulling out of Sharon's coalition and provoking early elections.

The foreign minister will travel to Washington next week to discuss the plan with US officials and will also meet with the United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, who is in the United States, was slated to resume talks Friday with officials there in a bid to obtain their crucial backing ahead of a possible visit by Sharon.

Chandrika's party to scrap presidency if elected

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's new alliance with Marxists said yesterday it would scrap the powerful presidency and halt privatisation if it won April 2 parliamentary polls.

The United People's Freedom Alliance said in its election manifesto it hoped to revert to a parliamentary system and called the executive presidential system the root of the country's ills.

Under Sri Lanka's current system, the president is head of state and chief of the armed forces while the parliament pulls the purse strings.

Kumaratunga used her powers last month to dissolve parliament, where her party was in opposition and the prime minister was her longtime adversary Ranil Wickremesinghe.

But unless Sri Lanka's constitution is changed, she cannot run again as head of state when her second term ends in December 2005.

The 48-page manifesto of the alliance, which she formed with the Marxist JVP or People's Liberation Front before calling the snap election, also promises to keep up talks with the Tamil Tigers to end 30 years of ethnic bloodshed.

The alliance vowed to maintain a February 2002 ceasefire between the rebels and government troops, even though both Kumaratunga and the JVP have been critical of the Norwegian-brokered truce in the past.

The manifesto called for greater role for the state sector with a plethora of subsidies.

"The railways, cluster bus companies, petroleum, electricity, ports and airports, water and state banks will not be privatised," the alliance said, adding it would set up an agency to run "non-strategic" state enterprises.

The centrepiece of the platform is the rewriting of the 1978 constitution to sidestep a required two-thirds majority in the 225-member parliament.

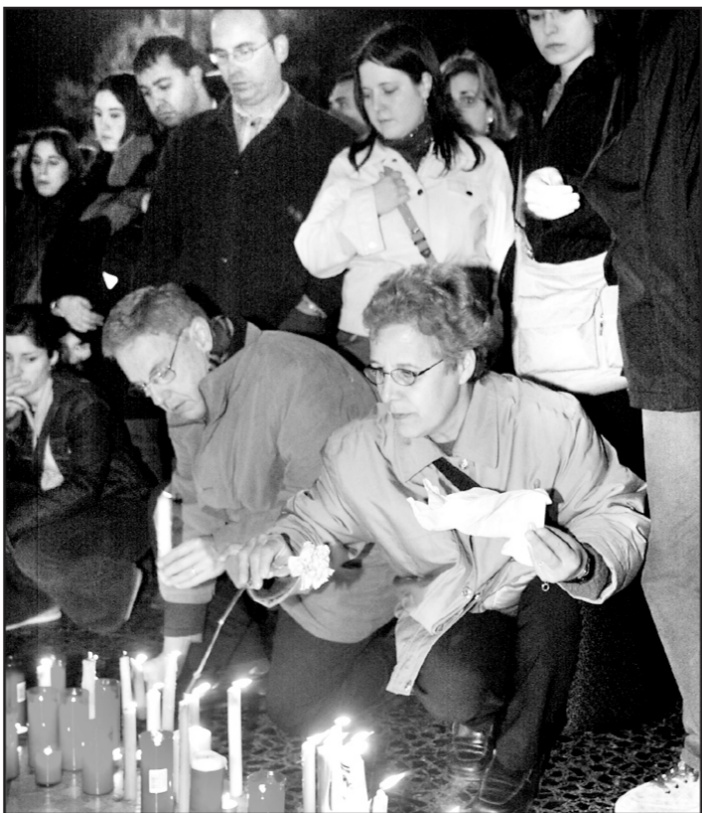


PHOTO: AFP

Hundreds of people light candles and leave flowers in Catalunya's square, Barcelona Thursday for the victims of the bomb attacks in Madrid. At least 198 people were killed and some 1400 injured early Thursday in near-simultaneous explosions on three trains in Madrid at the height of morning commuter traffic, the Spanish Interior Ministry said.

Nehru speech destroyed by gunfight in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Original footage from Kashmir's partition including film of a historic speech by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru were destroyed in a gunbattle with rebels, an official said yesterday.

The entire film, video and audio archives kept at the government information department in Indian-administered Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar was reduced to ashes when the building caught fire during a rebel attack Tuesday.

"All the important events captured on camera and audiotapes after 1947 have been lost," a senior official at the information department told AFP.

He said the department would contact state-owned radio and television to see if they had copies of the destroyed footage.

Major losses include film from October 1947 of Indian troops arriving in Kashmir to repulse incursions by Pakistan-backed tribal fighters.