

## Shaky Lanka govt faces split over peace

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's shaky new government faced an internal rift yesterday as its main coalition partner protested against the handling of the peace process with Tamil rebels and other policy issues.

The differences between President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance and its ally, the Marxist JVP, were no longer restricted to the handling of the peace drive, the privately run Sunday Island reported.

"Our differences are sharp and growing," the Island quoted a JVP spokesman as saying.

The state-run Sunday Observer said the JVP "appeared to be perturbed" over Kumaratunga appointing two more cabinet ministers and expanding the cabinet to 37

although the original agreement was to limit the number to 35.

Political sources said other differences included key appointments to head state organisations.

The JVP decided at a meeting Thursday to lodge a protest with the president over alleged violations of their agreements, sources in the Marxist party said.

Kumaratunga joined hands with the JVP to topple the government of Ranil Wickremesinghe after accusing him of conceding too much to Tamil Tiger rebels during Norwegian-brokered peace talks.

The leftist alliance narrowly won the April 2 election but lacks a simple majority in the 225-member parliament where the

joint opposition is larger than government benches.

The government lost a crucial election last month for the post of parliamentary speaker which went to Wickremesinghe's main opposition United National Party.

The ruling coalition was divided on the handling of the peace process even before the election, but had cobbled together a broadly defined agreement on ending the Tamil separatist conflict which has claimed over 60,000 lives since 1972.

Kumaratunga's party advocates granting limited autonomy to minority Tamils while her JVP partners insist that there should be no devolution of power, only a decentralisation of the civil administration.

## BHUTANESE KING SAYS Himalayan kingdom ready for democracy

AFP, New Delhi

The King of Bhutan, whose family has ruled supreme over the Buddhist state for a century, said he wants to give up his hereditary powers and turn the Himalayan country into a democracy.

In an interview published yesterday with the Indian newspaper The Statesman King Jigme Singye Wangchuk said he hoped to become only a "constitutional head."

"Bhutan and its people are ready to have a democratic political system," he said. "And it will be based on parliamentary democracy."

"This is something that we want to do. There is no pressure on me at all, certainly not from within the country," said King Wangchuk, who ascended the throne at age 17 in 1972.

His family has ruled the landlocked kingdom since 1907 and he has gradually introduced reforms. He started Bhutan in 2002 by

starting a process to revise the constitution to put more power in the hands of his two million subjects.

In the interview, the king declined to set a timetable for a political transition, saying he wanted to avoid the experience of developing countries where shifts to multi-party rule have "often not done well."

He said a democratic constitution would be put before a national referendum.

"Clause by clause, article by article, it (the constitution) will be discussed with scholars and villagers, with (the) business and finance community, with all the people," the king said.

He said Bhutan should not be out of step with other countries in South Asia, most of which have democratic constitutions.

"Bhutan cannot have a different political system than what prevails in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation," he said, referring to the seven-nation regional bloc.



PHOTO: AFP  
Saudi special forces take position in front of the Oasis housing compound, where hostages are being held by suspected al-Qaeda militants, in the eastern oil city of al-Khobar yesterday. The corpses of at least nine people were carried out of the apartment building after Saudi special forces stormed the building to free hostages held by the militants, who had rampaged through this oil centre killing at least 17 people the previous day.



PHOTO: AFP  
A Pakistani demonstrator (C, background) throws back a teargas shell to police forces as others throw stones during a demonstration staged to protest the killing of Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, in Karachi yesterday. Shamzai, a leading Sunni Muslim cleric with close links to Afghanistan's ousted Taliban militia, was gunned down by unknown attackers outside his home which have triggered violent demonstration across the city.

## Top pro-Taliban cleric killed in Karachi

REUTERS, Karachi

A senior pro-Taliban cleric in Pakistan was gunned down yesterday outside his mosque in the southern city of Karachi, and his death unleashed violent protests in which at least eight people were hurt.

Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, who had called for a "Jihad," or holy war, against the United States after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, was fatally wounded, police said. His son, another relative, a bodyguard and a driver were also hit.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack or whether it was a sectarian killing.

"As soon as we sat in the car, we heard gun shots and we immediately ducked," the cleric's relative, Rafiuddin, told reporters. "I felt a strong pain in my leg. I had been shot and then I saw Mufti Shamzai Sahib covered in blood."

Religious Affairs Minister Ijazul Haq told Pakistan television that the shooting was a condemnable act of terrorism.

"This is purely a terrorist act by those who want anarchy and chaos and who want to create sectarian tensions," he said.

Provincial security adviser Aftab Sheikh told Reuters that it had been known Shamzai's life was under threat and the government had provided him with armed bodyguards.

"It was a targeted killing and according to our information about 10 to 12 people were involved," he said. "It is a continuation of recent acts of violence and terrorism."

The crackle of gunfire was heard after violent demonstrations broke out in several parts of Karachi. Small groups of Shamzai's followers came out on the streets, pelting vehicles with stones and burning tires.

A Reuters correspondent at the scene said thousands of people, many carrying batons, had gathered near Shamzai's Islamic school, located in a central commercial area, and had set fire to two banks, several shops and a petrol station.

"There is a lot of smoke in the air from the burning tires and building, glass is scattered all around from damaged vehicles, and people are really charged," he said.

"There is heavy shelling of tear gas and police fired gun shots in the air to disperse the crowd," another witness said.

## SELECTION OF PRESIDENT

# US-led coalition & Iraqi Council at loggerheads

AFP, Baghdad

The US-led coalition and Governing Council were at loggerheads yesterday over the council's preferred choice of tribal leader Ghazi al-Yawar as Iraq's first post-Saddam Hussein president, officials said.

"They want to impose someone on us. We won't accept this. This is not the way to hand over sovereignty," leading Kurdish member Mahmud Othman told AFP.

Bremer and UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi were said to prefer Adnan Pachachi, a Sunni moderate and former foreign minister during the 1960s.

But the Governing Council has rallied behind Yawar, a leader of the Shammari tribe, one of the largest in Iraq.

Othman said prime minister-apparent Iyad Allawi, whose nomination was announced Friday, was also a US choice.

"He was an American candidate.

They brought him to the council. We supported him," he said. In return, the Governing Council wanted US officials to bless their choice of Yawar.

Amid the wrangling, Othman accused the United Nations and the coalition of conniving together at the expense of Iraqis, despite the fact that Brahimi was not at the meeting.

"They are at one with everything," leading Kurdish member Mahmud Othman told AFP.

"They just want to impose their will on us," he added, echoing fears from analysts that Iraq's first government after the US-led invasion will not be fully independent despite the scheduled June 30 transfer of power.

Talks are to continue and a decision made Sunday, Othman said.

Another Iraqi official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the coalition and United Nations

intended to propose candidates from outside the Governing Council in an effort to overcome the stalemate.

But Othman said no other names had yet been mooted for the largely ceremonial post.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council is headed for a contentious debate this week on a US-British draft resolution on Iraq after the rest of the interim government is named in Baghdad.

With Friday's announcement that Iyad Allawi had been tapped to become prime minister when a caretaker government assumes office on June 30, the council is now one small step closer to a vote on the draft.

China, France and Germany -- with Russia taking a quieter role -- are pushing for changes to the text to strengthen the commitment of full sovereignty for Iraqis once the US occupation has formally ended.

## Jamali looks for meeting with Singh to talk peace

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali called his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh Saturday and told him he was looking forward to an early meeting between the foreign secretaries of the two countries to move peace talks forward, officials said.

Jamali congratulated the Indian leader on his recent appointment and reiterated Pakistan's resolve to bring about a durable peace between Pakistan and India and forge "cooperative relations with all countries of the region," an official statement said.

The Indian PM said "his government would move forward with a positive approach for improvement of relations," it said.

"We should continue to move forward with confidence building

measures as this would facilitate and pave the way for discussions on Kashmir," the statement quoted the Indian leader as saying.

Pakistan says durable peace between the nuclear-armed neighbours is dependent upon a solution to the Kashmir issue acceptable to the two countries and the people of Kashmir.

The neighbours have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two of them triggered by their dispute over the Himalayan region, which is divided between them.

The meeting was agreed in the dialogue roadmap drawn up by foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan at their meeting in Islamabad in February.

The talks are scheduled for June but exact dates remain to be settled.

## 'Vajpayee anguished but indecisive over Gujarat religious riots'

AFP, New Delhi

India's former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was "anguished" over Hindu-Muslim bloodshed but indecisive due to political compulsions from his right-wing base, his government's legal adviser said.

Soli Sorabjee, who resigned last week as attorney general after Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist-led coalition lost power, said the premier was "actually very anguished" when riots broke out two years ago in the western state of Gujarat.

"He was very upset about it. But unfortunately he did not take any decisive action," Sorabjee, who was appointed by Vajpayee, told the weekly magazine Outlook.

"Because, I suppose, of his own political compulsions. Gujarat was a BJP government, Narendra Modi was the chief minister, there may have been other reasons," he said.

## BABRI MOSQUE CASE 'Advani was rescued by CBI'

PTI, New Delhi

The Ayodhya demolition case, from which Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader L K Advani was "rescued" by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), should be "put back on the rails" and the inquiry into Tehelka expose on corruption in Defence deals during National Democratic Alliance (NDA) rule should be proceeded with transparency, senior Congress leader and Union Minister Kapil Sibal said yesterday.

The eminent lawyer, who played an important role in the Congress campaign during the recent elections as party spokesman, alleged that Ayodhya demolition case trial has been "derailed" with CBI dropping Advani's name from the list of accused and asserted that it should be "put back on rails" by proceeding against all those originally booked.

## Malaysia opens prison doors to quash claims of Iraq-style abuses

AFP, Kamunting Detention Camp

Malaysia at the weekend opened the doors of a key prison camp for terror suspects to the media for the first time in a bid to dispel allegations that detainees were tortured like those in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.

But rights activists and opposition leaders charged the government was not being genuine because most of the alleged abuses took place at secret police cells during initial investigations rather than at the prison in central Perak state.

A total of 104 detainees, including 23 foreigners, are being held in Kamunting under the harsh Internal Security Act (ISA) which allows indefinite detention without trial.

For the first time since it was opened late 1973, the media was allowed access Saturday to follow Deputy Internal Security Minister Noh Omar as he met detainees to verify allegations they were subjected to Iraq-style abuses.

But most of the detainees told Noh the abuses occurred in police custody during the initial 60-day interrogation before being sent to the camp.

"I was stripped naked and they kicked my chest. They grabbed my neck and slapped me repeatedly," said an alleged member of the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terror group from Sabah state on Borneo island.

"They asked me many questions that are unrelated to my arrest such as how I make love to my wife," he said, adding he was also accused of being involved in a bomb plot in Australia during the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

Noh said he would investigate but defended the police action as "tactics" to get information and said it could not be compared to abuses meted out to Iraqi prisoners by US troops.

"We will investigate but there is no evidence right now," he said.



PHOTO: AFP  
(L-R) Former US president Bill Clinton, US President George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush joke around during dedication ceremony for the World War II Memorial Saturday in Washington, DC. The long awaited memorial opened last month and is being formally dedicated to war veterans.

## Israeli missiles kill senior Hamas man

### Two others slain in attack

REUTERS, Gaza

Two missiles fired by an Israeli helicopter killed a high-profile Hamas militant commander on his motorcycle and two comrades in Gaza City early yesterday, Palestinian witnesses said.

Hamas sources identified the commander as Wael Nassar and said he and one of the other slain militants masterminded a May 11 ambush in which six Israeli soldiers were blown up when their troop carrier rolled over a mine during a raid into Gaza City.

Palestinian medics said seven civilians, including a woman and two children, were wounded in the missile strike into Gaza City's Zeitoun district, an Islamist militant hotbed and target of the recent army

incursion. An Israeli army spokesman confirmed the missile strike, saying it had eliminated two senior militants responsible for planning suicide bombings and other attacks that had killed numerous Israeli soldiers and civilians.

Witnesses said Nassar and a Hamas military-wing comrade riding with him on his motorcycle were killed by the first missile. The second missile crashed close by moments later, killing another Hamas man in the street.

Hamas militants crowded into the mortuary that took in the three bodies, some of them kneeling to weep while others fired their rifles furiously in the air, shouting Allahu Akbar ("God is Greatest") and vowing revenge.