



Indian father Padmo Ram Das, 32, takes his daughter to a safer ground leaving his flooded house in Boroma, 70km from northeastern Assam state capital Guwahati yesterday. Eight people drowned in rising waters across India, bringing to 29 the death toll from annual floods which have already displaced 300,000 people.

PHOTO: AFP

# Iran risks int'l ire over push for uranium enrichment

AFP, Tehran

Iran has thrown down the gauntlet by telling Britain, France and Germany it intends to resume work towards uranium enrichment, retaliating for a resolution they sponsored that criticised Tehran for failing to live up to pledges of total cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

Iran has not confirmed charges made Thursday by Washington's top arms control official, John Bolton, that it had told the trio of its plans and that this was a direct violation of Iranian pledges to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The foreign ministry has said only that Hassan Rowhani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and top nuclear negotiator, had sent a letter to the trio's foreign ministers and to IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei that "outlined Iran's point of view on nuclear technology and its use."

But Berlin, London and Paris

confirmed Bolton's charges on Friday, and said they were preparing a joint response to Iran's announcement it was breaking a deal with them over the centrifuges.

All expressed disappointment at the letter sent to them, in a move Bolton described as proof of the Islamic republic's intent to work on a secret nuclear weapons programme.

"We are disappointed at the Iranian decision," a Foreign Office spokesman in London told AFP, adding: "We don't understand why they've taken this decision."

A German spokesman said: "The foreign ministry in Berlin regrets the announcement made by the Iranian authorities."

And a diplomatic source in Paris said France had received the letter and was consulting the other two states on how to respond to the violation of their deal.

"We are working together with the British and the Germans toward a common and coordinated position

on the matter," the French source said.

Bolton, hawkish undersecretary of state for arms control and security, said Washington had always suspected that the Iranians had not completely stopped centrifuge production.

"They have not, at least at this point, said that they would resume actual enrichment activities, but it seems to me perfectly obvious that Iran is not producing components for uranium centrifuges to use them as knickknacks in Iranian livingrooms," Bolton said.

"This is an act of defiance of the IAEA Board of Governors, it is a thumb in the eye of the international community," he said.

"It has been our view, it remains our view (and) Iran's action today confirms our view that its nuclear weapons programme is a threat to international peace and security and should be referred to the UN Security Council," Bolton said.

# 3 UN polls workers killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Three people working on Afghanistan's elections were killed yesterday in a bomb attack in the country's east, the first deaths of UN voter registration workers since the process began, the United Nations said.

A bomb, planted inside a minibus carrying the workers to voter registration sites in eastern Nangarhar province, exploded before 8:00 am (0330 Saturday), UN spokesman Manoel de Almeida e Silva told AFP.

"The information we have now is that three of them were killed and that three or four are seriously wounded," he said.

"They were all Afghan, they were all women."

Local officials confirmed the attack and said three people had died.

"Among the three killed, one of them is the child of one of the women killed," deputy security director of Jalalabad city Abdul

Rehman said.

The vehicle has been destroyed, he added.

A minibus rented by the electoral secretariat exploded Saturday morning killing at least two people, deputy governor Asif Qazizada said.

The vehicle had left its office in eastern Jalalabad city and was on its way to Shinwar district when the blast occurred.

"As soon as they are two kilometres out of Jalalabad city, the bomb -- already placed inside the car itself -- explodes killing two women working for the electoral commission and injures another 11," provincial commander Hazrat-i-Ali said.

The driver, who was not injured, has been arrested and is facing interrogation, he said.

Voter registration has been going on in preparation for September's first presidential and parliamentary elections since December 2003.

# POWER TRANSFER ON JUNE 30 US troops to enjoy immunity in Iraq

AFP, Washington

Troops in the US-led coalition in Iraq will remain immune from prosecution by Iraqi courts after the handover of power to an interim government on June 30, officials said Friday.

US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said Washington had put the final touches on a decree by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) granting forces immunity after next Wednesday.

"It's finished today, it's going up to Baghdad," Armitage told the Senate Armed Forces Committee.

"They want obviously (to) make sure that the new government sees it, and is not in opposition to it. There have been discussions continually about it," he said.

"The combination of the CPA

Order 17 as amended and UN Security Council resolution 1546 is felt by all to give us sufficient protections," he said.

General Richard Myers, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the shield from prosecution could not be withdrawn by the interim government.

"My understanding of this issue is that the CPA orders cannot be repealed or modified until Iraq's permanent government is in place to enact legislation," Myers told the committee.

"So they stay effective through that period," which will be about six months until a new government is elected and in place).

"We feel that our forces are protected," Myers said.

There are 138,000 US troops in Iraq.

# Tigers won't attend talks to review truce

## LTTE steps up child soldiers recruitment: UNICEF

AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels told Scandinavian monitors they will pull out of a meeting to review Sri Lanka's truce after the government admitted military elements supported a renegade guerrilla, an official said Friday.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) told the Scandinavians they would not attend the joint meeting with security forces scheduled for Saturday in the eastern town of Akkaraipattu, a spokeswoman for the monitors said.

She said the Tigers gave no reason for the pull-out, but two days ago a Tamil newspaper said the rebels planned a boycott of the meets to protest alleged military backing to a breakaway guerrilla leader known as Karuna.

The meets are aimed at sorting

out problems relating to the implementation of the Norwegian-brokered ceasefire in place since February 2002 to ensure that minor incidents do not lead to a complete breakdown of the truce.

The government admitted Thursday that elements of the military had supported a renegade rebel commander despite the Tigers' warnings that capitalising on the split could push the country back to war.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels have stepped up recruiting hundreds of child soldiers despite pledges to free all underage combatants among their ranks, UNICEF said Saturday.

The United Nations children's agency said the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were going back on its promises not to enlist anyone below the age of 18 years and that a major recruitment drive was underway.



PHOTO: AFP

A Nepalese female activist carries a flaming torch as she takes part in an anti-monarchy demonstration in Kathmandu Friday. The activists held the demonstration in defiance of a government ban as they demand the reinstatement of democracy to the Himalayan state.

# US, EU offer strong Nato support in Iraq

AP, NEWMARKET-ON-FERGUS, Ireland

The United States and the European Union offered strong support yesterday for Iraq's urgent request for Nato help in training security forces to deal with rampant violence and foreign terrorists.

In a joint statement at a summit with President Bush, the United States and European Union said the fledgling government in Baghdad "needs and deserves the strong support of the international community" if Iraq is to become a free and democratic nation.

The United States and 25-nation EU pledged to help reduce Iraq's estimated \$120 billion foreign debt, support the training of Iraqi security forces as well as the economic and political reconstruction of Iraq. The 14-point statement said it also supported United Nations' help in rebuilding Iraq and setting up elections no later than Jan. 31, 2005.

The statement expressed a common commitment to support the Iraqi people and its new

interim government as they "build a free, secure, democratic, unified and prosperous country at peace with itself, its neighbors and with the wider world."

The document also stated that the United States and EU support the mission of the multinational force for Iraq, which includes protecting the UN presence there.

"We recognise the vital need to combat terrorism and maintain security and stability in Iraq," the declaration said.

"We stress the need for full respect of the Geneva Conventions. We also support the training and equipping of professional Iraqi security forces, capable of assuming increasing responsibility for the country's security."

Iraq has been a touchy issue in Europe, causing major rifts between the United States and allies such as France and Germany who opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq. Both France and Germany have been hesitant about enlarging Nato's role in Iraq, but have left the door open to training programs.

The EU statement said its mem-

bers "support the training and equipping of professional Iraqi security forces, capable of assuming increasing responsibility for the country's security, as requested by Prime Minister (Iyad) Allawi."

Allawi sent a letter to Nato this week pleading for "urgent help" from the alliance to build up Iraqi forces "to defeat the terrorist threat and reduce reliance on foreign forces."

From Ireland, Bush heads to Turkey where he will join leaders of the 26-nation Nato alliance at summit talks Monday and Tuesday focused on Iraq. Administration officials expressed confidence that Nato would accept a bigger role in Iraq, offering to train security forces and provide equipment.

The United States had once hoped Nato would send peace-keeping troops to Iraq, but that idea died under fierce opposition from France and Germany.

On the economic side, the United States and the EU signed an agreement Saturday to make the EU's planned satellite navigation system compatible with the existing US Global Positioning System.

# UN experts call for int'l force in Palestinian territories

AFP, Geneva

UN human rights experts called on Friday for the Security Council to approve an international protection force to bring an end to Israeli rights violations in the Palestinian occupied territories.

"We would urge the (UN) Security Council to authorise an international protection force in the occupied Palestinian territories to ensure that human rights violations cease," the UN rapporteurs, officials and independent experts said in a statement issued following a meeting in Geneva.

The text, which also condemned Palestinian suicide bombings against the Israeli population, voiced "strong concern regarding continuous violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the occupied Palestinian territories."

# Jaya Bachchan, Anil Ambani elected to Rajya Sabha

PTI, Lucknow

All eleven candidates in the fray, including Anil Ambani, Jaya Bachchan and Lalit Suri, were elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh in the biennial elections yesterday.

The others who were elected unopposed were former Union ministers Arun Shourie and Murli Manohar Joshi (both BJP), BSP leader Mayawati, Satish C Mishra (BSP), Bhagwati Singh and Ram Narayan Sahu, Nand Kishore and Kamal Akhtar (all SP).

While Ambani stood as an independent candidate supported by SP, Suri contested as an independent supported by BJP. Bachchan stood as an SP candidate.

# India blacklists 21 NGOs

THE STATESMAN/ ANN, New Delhi

The minister of social justice and empowerment, Ms Meira Kumar, Friday said that 21 of the 1,050 NGOs working in different fields had been blacklisted by the ministry for non-utilisation of funds sanctioned to them.

"Their next phase of funds has been held back and steps have been initiated to recover the funds from them," she told reporters at a function here to release the National Survey of the Extent, Pattern, and Trends of Drug Abuse in India.

These 1,050 NGOs together got 22.5 crore in the last year.



PHOTO: AFP

Korean-Americans protest the war in Iraq outside the South Korean Consulate Friday in New York City. The protesters also commemorated the death of Kim Sun-il who was murdered in Iraq by insurgents.