

15 students crushed to death by speeding Indian train

AFP, Bhopal

At least 15 students were crushed to death yesterday by a speeding train at a railway station in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, a local administrator told AFP.

The students were sitting on a railway track in the Sukhi Sevania station, about 30km from Madhya Pradesh's state capital Bhopal, when they were knocked down by a speeding engine, said the official.

"They got off their own train at the Sukhi Sevania station and were queuing on the adjacent tracks, waiting to board their train again, when a speeding engine came and hit them," said Sanjay Shukla, the local district administrator.

"At least 15 people have died in the accident," he said, adding that most of the victims were aged between 17 to 20.

Hundreds of relatives later Sunday crowded the state-run Hamidia Hospital in Bhopal where the bodies were taken for identification.

An AFP photographer said chaotic scenes were witnessed at the hospital, where relatives broke down when they saw the badly broken and mangled bodies.

Split threatens Ukraine amid autonomy calls

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine's Russia-friendly regions have begun to threaten to declare autonomy if rallies by the pro-West opposition snatch victory from their man, fanning fears that a disputed presidential election could tear the country apart.

The November 21 election has polarized this former Soviet republic on Russia's western edge, with the nationalist Ukrainian-speaking west backing opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko while the industrialized Russian-speaking east supports pro-Moscow Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich.

Fears of a real split in this country of 48 million began to rise when western regions, citing widespread voting irregularities, refused to recognise the official results that handed victory to Yanukovich.

But as the political winds appeared to shift during the week in favor of the opposition, Yanukovich bastions started airing their own demands for autonomy and a refusal to accept a Yushchenko presidency.

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated Saturday in the east's Donetsk, a Yanukovich bastion, in support of a referendum that would declare the coal-mining center an autonomous region if Western-leaning Yushchenko becomes president.

"If someone tries to ignore our opinion then we will lawfully turn to the option of a referendum to change the (regional) constitution and make our region self-sufficient," Anatoly Bliznyuk, the governor of the Donetsk region, told the cheering crowd.

The calls for sovereignty in the east sparked anger among the region's Yushchenko supporters, who came out on the streets in the name of a single state.

In the eastern city of Kharkiv about 30,000 people, mostly Yushchenko faithful, demonstrated Saturday in favor of Ukrainian unity and against creating an autonomous area in southern and eastern Ukraine.

Meanwhile more than 3,000 people gathered in the Black Sea port city of Odessa, a Yanukovich

stronghold, late Friday and threatened to declare independence if Yushchenko were to become president.

They also urged for an assembly to be called of representatives of southern Ukrainian regions to discuss the possibility of creating a "new Russian territory" that would be independent of both Moscow and Kiev.

The calls and counter-calls have sparked worries in the state government in Kiev.

Lawmakers held an emergency session Saturday in which parliament speaker Volodymyr Litvin warned of "a revolutionary situation" in Ukraine, with media "playing up the east-west divide."

He denounced "blackmail from local leaders who are manipulating separatist sentiment."

Lawmakers from both camps later joined together to declare the election invalid in a non-binding resolution, increasing the chances the supreme court will throw out the results when it begins to review Monday an opposition appeal.



Deputies from the opposition jubilate during an emergency session of the Ukrainian Parliament in Kiev Saturday. Ukraine's parliament declared the nation's disputed presidential election invalid and called for the dissolution of the central election commission in an overall non-binding resolution.

Taliban attack on aid agency: 3 killed

REUTERS, Kandahar

Dozens of Taliban guerrillas attacked the compound of an Afghan aid agency with rocket-propelled grenades and machineguns yesterday, killing three guards, officials said.

The two-hour attack on the compound of the Voluntary Association for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan in Delaram, a town in the western province of Farah, began before dawn.

The aid group's director Najmuddin Mojaddidi said two guards of the agency were killed along with another working for an Indian firm that shares the compound.

He said one his guards was missing and three working for the Indian firm upgrading the town's main road link were critically wounded. He declined to name the Indian firm.

A Taliban spokesman, Abdul Latif Hakmin, confirmed the guerrillas had carried out the attack, but said the intended target was a military post next to the aid agency compound.

Mojaddidi said 20 guerrillas took

part in the attack about 620km southwest of the capital Kabul. An official of the Afghanistan NGO Security Office said as many as 40 guerrillas could have been involved.

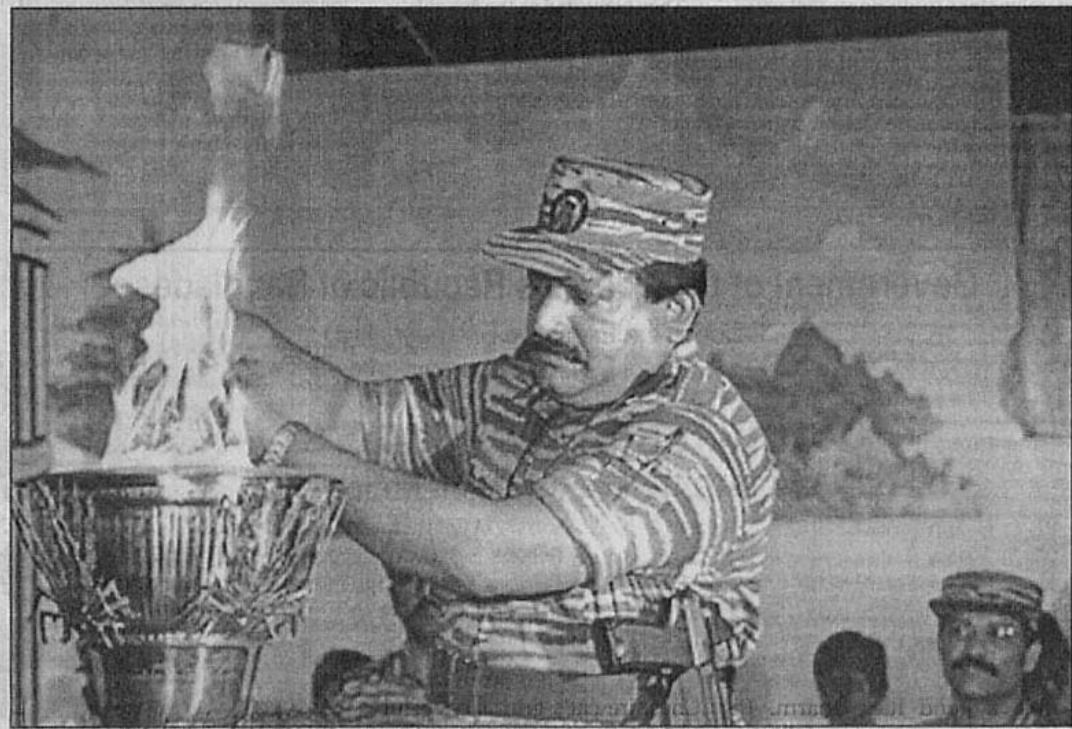
"They fired heavy machineguns and rocket-propelled grenades," Mojaddidi said.

The Afghan aid agency has been running agricultural projects in Farah funded by various UN agencies since the 1990s and has been attacked in the past by suspected Taliban guerrillas.

The radical Islamic Taliban movement has declared a holy war against US-led foreign forces in Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai's government and local and foreign aid workers.

More than 1,000 people, including dozens of aid workers, have been killed in militant-related violence since August last year that has severely disrupted aid work in the south and east where the Taliban and their Islamic allies are most active.

The Taliban vowed to disrupt presidential elections held last month and won by US-backed incumbent Hamid Karzai, but these passed off relatively peacefully.



In this handout picture, Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran lights a flame Saturday in the rebel-held northern Sri Lankan region of Wannu to honour some 17,800 guerrillas killed fighting government forces since 1982. Prabhakaran warned that he was running out of patience and could resume his freedom struggle unless the government agreed to his blueprint for self-rule.

EU threatens to slap sanctions on Iran

REUTERS, Vienna

France, Britain and Germany told Iran Saturday if they had not reached a final agreement to freeze key parts of its atomic programme by Monday, they would not stop moves to seek sanctions against Tehran, diplomats said.

"The Iranians were told that if there's no deal by Monday, they (the EU) would no longer block a referral to the UN Security Council when the (UN nuclear watchdog) reconvenes," a Western diplomat told Reuters. The Security Council has the power to impose economic sanctions.

But the diplomats said neither the EU nor Iran wanted the talks to collapse. They said it would be a big humiliation for the Europeans and could escalate the standoff over Tehran's nuclear plans into an international crisis.

The United States, which has been pressing for Iran's case to be referred to the Security Council,

accuses Tehran of wanting to build a nuclear bomb. Iran, though oil-rich, says its program is aimed solely at generating electricity.

Last week, Iran promised the EU it would halt all activities related to uranium enrichment -- a process that can create atomic fuel for power plants or weapons -- in return for an EU pledge to neutralise the threat of economic sanctions.

The ink on the hard-won accord was barely dry, however, when Tehran demanded an exemption for some 20 enrichment centrifuges for research. European diplomats said this was impossible and could only deepen suspicions Tehran had a secret arms programme.

On Friday, Western diplomats said Iranian negotiators had agreed to drop the demand, paving the way for a comprehensive deal with the EU on an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution that would make the voluntary freeze a binding commitment for Tehran.

Iraq's no to polls despite security worry

17 more bodies found in Mosul

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's landmark January polls looked set to take place as planned, although ongoing violence yesterday did nothing to alleviate the security concerns of the proponents of a delay.

Yet another car bomb exploded on Baghdad's perilous airport road, while US patrols in Mosul yielded their grim daily crop of bodies as insurgents continue to intimidate the population in the northern city ahead of the elections.

"There were 17 bodies discovered on Saturday -- in addition to the 15 discovered the day prior," Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hastings told AFP.

This brought to at least 57 the number of bodies, mostly belonging to members of Iraq's security

forces, found in the city since November 19.

Iraqi and US forces, which have been involved a vast operation to root out the insurgency in Mosul for more than a week, arrested 43 suspects on Saturday alone, a US military statement said.

The headquarters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party in western Mosul were attacked by gunmen in a car, a security official said. Guards fired back, wounding one of the attackers.

A car bomb exploded on the road leading to the airport road in Baghdad, wounding two soldiers and damaging a military vehicle, the US military said in a statement.

Meanwhile US-led troops continued to sweep insurgents strongholds across the country, arresting more than 100 suspects since the start of the five-day-old crackdown in the lawless badlands south of Baghdad.

US forces, backed by British and Iraqi troops, regained control of the town of Latifiyah, which had been a no-go zone for months and earned the nickname of "Fallujah's second name".

US marines were still clearing Fallujah, three weeks after they launched the largest post-war military operation in Iraq, in a bid to reclaim rebel bastions ahead of the elections.

Nepali Maoists reject PM's deadline

AFP, Kathmandu

The leader of Maoist rebels battling to overthrow Nepal's constitutional monarchy has dismissed as a "deep-seated conspiracy" a government deadline of January 13 to begin peace talks.

"The government deadline for talks has tarnished the prospects for peace dialogue and made it more complicated," the chairman of the Nepal Communist Party-Maoist (NCP-M) Purna Kamal Dahal, alias Prachand, said in a statement late Saturday.

"The deadline for peace talks... is nothing but a deep-rooted conspiracy to stick to power and to serve the reactionary forces," he added.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba said Thursday the government would go ahead with planned general elections if the rebels refused to come to the talks table but set no date for polls.

More than 10,000 people have

died since the Maoists took up arms in 1996 to topple the king in the Himalayan nation.

Deuba was named premier by King Gyanendra in June with a mandate to hold peace talks with the rebels and stage general elections.

But he told reporters Thursday the government's patience was running out and unless the rebels agreed to peace talks by January 13, the process for holding elections would be set in motion.

The rebels are holding out for direct talks with the king and want the negotiations to include their call for elections for an assembly to draft a new constitution that eventually envisages setting up a communist state.

In his statement, Prachand reiterated his previous position that the rebels are prepared to hold peace talks only under international mediation and provided constituent assembly elections are held in a free and peaceful atmosphere.

Colombian rebels plotted to kill Bush

AP, Bogota

Colombia's main rebel group asked followers to mount an assassination attempt against President Bush during his visit to Colombia last week, Defence Minister Jorge Uribe said. There was no evidence Saturday that rebels even tried to organize such an attack.

Uribe told reporters late Friday that informants said the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as the FARC, told followers to attack Bush during his four-hour visit in the seaside city of Cartagena last Monday, where he met with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe.

The defence minister, who is no relation to the president, said security forces were on full alert during the visit. About 15,000 Colombian troops and police, along with US troops and Secret Service agents provided security. There was no indication Bush's life was ever in danger.

Sharon, Abbas willing to hold talks

AP, Jerusalem

Israel is ready to coordinate its planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip with the new Palestinian leadership, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in a published interview, saying he wants to take advantage of new opportunities created by the death of Yasser Arafat.

In separate interviews with Newsweek magazine, both Sharon and interim Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said they would be willing to meet after the Jan. 9 Palestinian presidential election. Both leaders also vowed to make efforts to restart the US-backed "road map" to peace, a stalled plan that calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state next year.

The comments reflected the new atmosphere of reconciliation since the Nov. 11 death of Arafat, whom Israel accused of backing violence.

Sharon has said he drew up his "unilateral disengagement" plan to

withdraw from all of the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements next year when it became clear to him there was no "partner" on the Palestinian side. He has so far refused to negotiate the pullout with the Palestinians.

However, Sharon said Arafat's death made it possible to coordinate the pullout with the new Palestinian leadership and Abbas, who he said "was against terror."

"I am going to make every effort to coordinate our disengagement plan with the new Palestinian government one that can assume control over areas we vacuate," Sharon was quoted as saying.

"Israel will not evacuate under fire. We prefer a coordinated evacuation, but we will not tolerate any attacks during our withdrawal. We are speaking about thousands of people - children, babies, women, old people and animals," Sharon added.

Indian cop kills 7 colleagues in Kashmir

AFP, Singapore

An Indian policeman killed seven of his colleagues inside a camp in insurgency-hit India-administered Kashmir on Sunday before being shot dead himself, police said.

The incident took place around 12:40 am (0710 GMT) in northern Baramulla town, 55 kilometers (34 miles) north of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

Police said a constable from India's Central Reserve Police Force opened fire on his colleagues after an altercation broke out.

"Six CRPF personnel were killed and three others injured in the initial firing by an agitated policeman," a police spokesman said, adding the gunman was shot dead by one of the injured policemen.

He said one of the injured died in hospital later while the condition of two others was critical.

Two of those killed were officers, one of whom had scolded the constable on Saturday over alleged indiscipline, the spokesman said.

Aga Khan awards for 7 architecture feats

New Delhi

The Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and founder of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced the name of seven recipients of the Aga Khan Award 2004 for Architecture, says a press release issued in Dhaka.

The announcement at the historic Humayun's Tomb, marked the completion of the ninth cycle of the programme. The Award, which has a triennial prize fund of US\$ 500,000, is the world's largest architectural award.

Seven projects selected by the 2004 award Master Jury are: Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt; a primary school at Gando in Burkina Faso; self-built housing using sandbags developed by Iranian architect Nader Khalili; the restoration of Al-Abbas mosque in Asnaf, Yemen; a house built by two brothers overlooking the coast in Turkey and Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

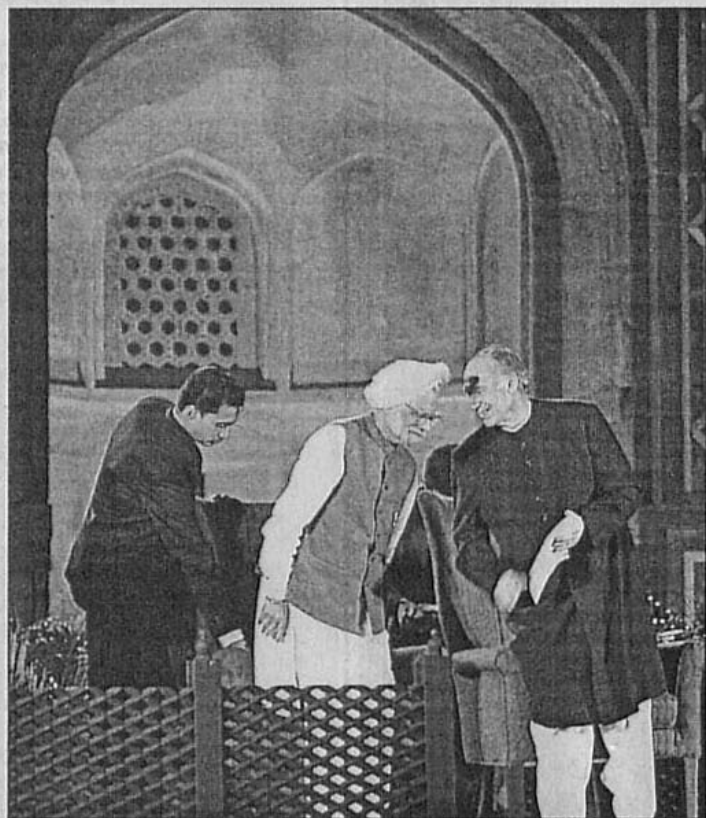
In his speech at the award ceremony, the Aga Khan remarked on the appropriateness of India as the venue for the event, given its rich cultural

heritage and pluralistic traditions. The Aga Khan emphasised that the Award for Architecture was a recognition of the work of architects and their clients, builders large and small, governments, planners, international organisations, grant-giving agencies, village organisations and individuals, all of whom were collectively responsible for the creation of a humane, and socially-supportive built environment that was important to improve the quality of life of people.

Praising the Aga Khan for the work done in restoring historical monuments, Manmohan Singh said this had been an instructive example in finding new and creative solutions to the age-old problem of allocating scarce resources in a developing country to the preservation of heritage.

During the current cycle of the Award, 378 projects were presented for consideration, and 23 were reviewed on site by outside experts.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture was established by the Aga Khan in 1977 to identify and encourage building concepts that successfully address the needs and aspirations of Islamic societies.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (L) talks with the Aga Khan, billionaire spiritual leader of the world's 15 million Shia Ismaili Muslims, during the 2004 Aga Khan awards for architecture ceremony at the Humayun's Tomb Saturday in New Delhi.

Thai PM calls for early election citing unrest

THE NATION/ ANN, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced Saturday that he planned to hold the general election earlier than February to avoid the threat of political upheaval.

"I have asked the Election Committee (EC) to call the next general election earlier," Thaksin told reporters in Narathiwat province, where he held a meeting with officials over security issues in southern Thailand.

"Politics is related to security and (unrest) in the three southernmost provinces. There has been an underground operation going on. Leaflets and CDs are being distributed," he said. "Political upheaval will put the country in even worse shape. The sooner the election campaign is held, the better it will be for the nation."

Bringing the election date forward will in no way guarantee that his Thai Rak Thai party gains an edge over its competitors, Thaksin said.

"The government can choose to dissolve Parliament, but we are not doing so, and every party will have

enough time to prepare itself for the election," he said.

Thaksin said no firm date had yet been decided as this would hinge on how much time the EC needed to organise the move, although it would be sooner than the scheduled date of February 13, which is when the prime minister's current term expires.

Democrat Party deputy leader Jurin Laksanawit attacked Thaksin for trespassing on the work of the EC by ordering it to reschedule a national election.

"The government has an obvious interest in the election. It cannot therefore interfere in the Election Commission's business," he said.

He also called on Thaksin to put an end to his weekly radio programme in the run-up to the election, arguing that opposition parties would clearly be disadvantaged by the government's manipulation of state media to serve as its official mouthpiece.

"If not, the government should allow opposition forces to have similar radio programmes of their own on which they can talk to the public," he said.

University of Dhaka
Admission in MSS, Women's Studies Programme: 2002-2003

- Admission is open to candidates (either Bangladeshi or foreign nationals) who have at least an Honours Bachelor Degree or its equivalent from any recognized Universities or at least a four years Graduation Degree from other Institutions/Universities in following subjects.
 - All Departments under the Faculty of Social Sciences.
 - Faculty of Arts: Bangla, English, Philosophy, Islamic History & Culture, History.
 - Faculty of Science: Statistics, Geography and Environment, Urban Planning.
 - Faculty of Biological Science: Psychology.
 - Institutes of the University of Dhaka: Institute for Educational Research (IER), Food and Nutrition, Social Welfare and Research, Institute of Statistical Research and Teaching.
- Necessary Requirements:**
 - Candidates must have Bachelor Honours or equivalent Degree (as detailed above) with second class/division.
 - Candidates, who have passed GCE 'O' Level, and 'A' Level should obtain at least B Grade in 4 (four) papers and C Grade in 3 (three) papers out of 7 (seven) papers.
 - No candidate with third class/division is eligible to apply.
 - Candidates with academic research and work experience on women's issue, gender and related fields are encouraged to apply.
 - Candidates will be selected on the basis of their past academic record and a qualifying examination (of 100 marks, of which 90 marks will be on written test, and 10 marks on oral test).
 - Candidates will be selected for oral test on the basis of obtaining at least 45% marks in written test.
 - Based on merit. 50% of the seats will be reserved for female students.
 - Those students who have appeared in fourth year (BSS) Honours final examination (2002) are eligible to apply by providing proof of appearance from relevant departments.
- Followings are the requirements for the candidates applying for Second Masters (MSS in Women's Studies):**
 - Candidates who have already passed Masters (in the abovementioned subjects) before 1996-97 session are not eligible to apply.
 - Among the 26 seats only 4 (four) will be reserved (two female and two male students) for second masters.
 - Those candidates who are in responsible jobs for at least two years are requested to apply through proper channel. In addition, they are required to have the recommendation of the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences for admission.
 - In addition to regular admission and other fees candidates will have to pay Tk. 5,000/= (five thousand) only to the concerned University authorities. They will not be eligible for allotment of seats in Halls.

Forms will be available during office hours 10AM-1PM, at the Department of Women's Studies, Arts Building, 4th Floor, Room # 5025, from December 4-23, 2004. Candidates are requested to submit attested copies of all certificates, mark sheets and two copies of passport size photographs along with the admission form by December 4-23, 2004. Information about date, time, and venue of the admission test should be obtained from the department.

Professor Nazmunnessa Mahtab
 Chairman, MSS Admission Committee 2002-2003
 Department of Women's Studies
 University of Dhaka