

# 600 detained in Pak militant crackdown

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani security forces have rounded up about 600 suspected militants and Islamic clerics in a week-long crackdown that followed the July 7 London attacks, officials told AFP yesterday.

In the ongoing raids, police and security agencies were on the lookout for more suspects across all four provinces and in the Pakistan-administered part of Kashmir, the Himalayan state also claimed by India, they said.

Of those arrested, 295 belonged to militant groups banned by President Pervez Musharraf in the past three years.

"They have been held under the Anti Terrorism Act, which gives

police authority to keep them under detention for a year without indicting them before a court," a senior interior ministry official told AFP.

The remaining 300 detainees included clerics, mosque prayer leaders and others taken into custody for inciting anti-Western and sectarian hatred through sermons and provocative literature, he said.

"The campaign against militancy and extremism is ongoing, and the police is on alert to nab elements promoting extremism and violence," the official said.

Police launched the raids after British Prime Minister Tony Blair urged Pakistan to move against radical madrasas or Islamic schools following news that some of the

London bombers had recently visited the South Asian country.

Pakistani officials have denied the crackdown is linked to the attacks in London, which killed at least 52 people and the four British suicide bombers, three of whom were of Pakistani origin.

Musharraf, a key ally in the US-led 'war on terror', has repeatedly vowed to curb extremism in Pakistan, which played a frontline role in the 1979-1989 anti Soviet jihad in Afghanistan and the 2001 US-led invasion of that country.

Since assuming power in a bloodless coup in October 1999, General Musharraf has tried to curb extremism by banning 10 militant groups.

The parties Musharraf outlawed

in 2003 were Islami Tehreek Pakistan, Millat-e-Islami Pakistan and Khudamul Islam.

In January 2002 the military ruler also banned Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad along, along with three other extremist organisations: the Sunni militant group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, the Shia militant group Tehreek-i-Jafria Pakistan and Tehreek-i-Nifaz-e Shariat Mohammadi.

Earlier in August 2001 he banned Sunni militant group Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and its Shia counterpart, Sipah-e-Mohammad.

The government has also put the Jamaatul Dawa party on a watch list under the country's tough Anti Terrorist Act.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian commuters walk through the waterlogged highway leading to Mumbai's airport, after torrential rains paralysed India's financial capital yesterday. The city's weather bureau said that Mumbai received 944.2 millimeters (37.1 inches) of rainfall in the last 24 hours, the heaviest rainfall ever in a single day in Indian history. Landslides have killed 99 people and trapped at least 130 in India's western state of Maharashtra following flash floods caused by lashing monsoon rains.

## 'Beyond Kyoto' pact in the offing

REUTERS, Canberra

The United States, Australia, China, India and South Korea are likely to unveil this week a regional pact to combat greenhouse gas emissions by developing environmentally friendly energy technology, Australia said on Wednesday.

Environment Minister Ian Campbell said the countries had been working on a regional pact to tackle climate change beyond the Kyoto protocol, which requires rich nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2008-12.

The United States and Australia have refused to sign Kyoto, which came into force in February, because they say the pact unfairly excludes developing nations such as India and China. South Korea has ratified Kyoto.

"It's quite clear the Kyoto protocol won't get the world to where it wants to go ... We have got to find something that works better -- Australia is working on that with partners around the world," Campbell told reporters on Wednesday.

# Iraq wants quick US withdrawal

Algerian diplomats, 4 GIs killed amid Rumsfeld visit

AP, REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraq's transitional prime minister called yesterday for a speedy withdrawal of US troops and the top US commander here said he believed a "fairly substantial" pullout could begin next spring and summer.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said at a joint news conference with Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld that the time has arrived to plan a coordinated transition from American to Iraqi military control throughout the country.

Asked how soon a US withdrawal should happen, he said no exact timetable had been set. "But we confirm and we desire speed in that regard," he said, speaking through a translator. "And this fast pace has two aspects."

First, there must be a quickening of the pace of US training of Iraqi security forces, and second there must be

closely coordinated planning between the US-led military coalition and the emerging Iraq government on a security transition, he said.

"We do not want to be surprised by a withdrawal that is not in connection with our Iraqi timing," he said.

Speaking earlier with US reporters travelling with Rumsfeld, Gen. George Casey, the top American commander in Iraq, said he believed a US troop withdrawal could begin by spring 2006 if progress continues on the political front and if the insurgency does not expand.

Rumsfeld was planning to get a firsthand look at the training of Iraqi security forces by watching a demonstration by a group of Iraqi special forces soldiers using live ammunition at a training range run by American troops.

Meanwhile, four US soldiers were killed when their vehicle struck a roadside bomb in southwest Baghdad, the

US military said on Tuesday.

The military said in a statement the incident occurred on Sunday night but gave no further details.

Earlier about 10 gunmen emptied their automatic rifles into a bus carrying Iraqi workers from a factory west of Baghdad on Tuesday, killing up to 17 people, police and hospital sources said.

The group of al-Qaeda's Iraq frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi said it has killed the two Algerian diplomats it kidnapped last week in Baghdad, according to an Internet statement issued Wednesday.

"Your brothers in the military branch of the al-Qaeda Organisation in the Land of Two Rivers on Wednesday June 27 applied the verdict of the Islamic tribunal," said a statement published on an Islamic website whose authenticity could not be verified.

## Blair calls for promoting 'true face of Islam' in anti-terror fight

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair called yesterday for promoting "the true face of Islam" in the international battle against terrorism after talks here with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Blair, speaking at a joint press conference in London with Erdogan, added that cooperation with the secular Muslim state of Turkey had "been excellent both in terms of intelligence and the exchange of information."

The British premier underlined that combating extremist Islamists through promoting moderate Islam would stop extremists swelling in number.

"We need to look at ways of helping and supporting the proper, true face of Islam in taking on that small fringe of extremism that abuses the good name of Islam," Blair said.

"The cooperation we have had

from Turkey has been excellent both in terms of intelligence and the exchange of information," he added.

"Also the sense of solidarity that this is all civilised people from whatever position against barbaric people who commit these types of terrorist offences," he said.

"That message has got to be constantly reinforced so that the small number of extremists does not grow larger," he said.

"Constantly we need to be looking at ways in which we enhance the cooperation in the fight against terrorism and there will be strong statement, I hope, coming out of the United Nations Millennium summit in September on this," Blair said.

Erdogan added that terrorists were trying to force a wedge between Muslims and Western governments.

"The aim of terrorism is to bring the West and Islam against each other," he said.

## North Korea ready to dump nukes if US normalise ties

AFP, Beijing

North Korea said yesterday it would dismantle its nuclear weapons if the United States promises to normalise relations and drops plans to topple its regime, according to a source at six-party talks.

The Stalinist state said it was willing to allow any disposal of its atomic weapons to be verified, but did not say if this meant International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors could return to the country.

IAEA inspectors were thrown out of North Korea in December 2002 after the US accused the regime of running a uranium enrichment programme.

"In the word-for-word agreement, the DPRK pledges to liquidate its nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons program verifiably if the DPRK and the US normalise relations, build trust and remove the nuclear threat," North Korea's chief delegate Kim Kyong-hwan told the talks, according to the source who was in attendance.

## Egypt identifies body of probable bomber

Egypt had received warning of attacks

AP, AFP, Sharm el-Sheikh/ Cairo

Investigators identified an Egyptian as a probable suicide bomber in the weekend terror attacks at this Red Sea resort and were searching Tuesday for his suspected Islamic militant cohorts the first break in the probe.

A relative of Moussa Badran told The Associated Press that he disappeared after deadly attacks at two other Sinai resorts in October, and that some family members were detained afterward.

The development came as two security officials revealed that authorities received information of an imminent terror attack in Sharm el-Sheikh several days before the bombings Saturday. But they believed casinos would be targeted, so security was increased around those sites, not hotels.

The officials would not say where the tip came from but said headquarters in Cairo told security forces

in Sharm to be on alert and to step up measures around key locations.

It appeared authorities chose the wrong possible targets to watch, said one of the officials in Cairo. Both officials are close to the inquiry and spoke on condition of anonymity because the information was not authorised for release.

Security was heightened around casinos on the theory they would be attacked because Israelis come to Sharm for gambling, which is banned in their country.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian authorities had received a warning following the July 7 London bombings that the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh could be targeted, security sources told AFP yesterday in Cairo.

"Following the latest attacks in London, the Egyptian security services had received information that terror attacks could be perpetrated in Sharm el-Sheikh," a senior police source said.



PHOTO: AFP

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (R) smiles during a joint press conference with US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld at the presidential office in Baghdad's fortified "Green Zone" yesterday. Rumsfeld told Iraqi leaders to "get on with it" in preparing a new constitution, while an Iraqi official said US-led forces could hand over security for 10 cities by December.

## Ex-US senator urges Nepali king to restore democracy

AFP, Kathmandu

Former US senator Tom Daschle yesterday called on Nepal's King Gyanendra to reverse his February power grab and urged the release of sacked former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Speaking to reporters after talks with Gyanendra here, Daschle said all political prisoners should be freed and called for the scrapping of the anti-graft body which on Tuesday jailed Deuba and former public works minister Prakash Man Singh.

"All political prisoners including Deuba and Singh should be released and the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) dissolved," he said, referring to the powerful body set up by the monarch which critics say is being used to target opponents of his seizure of power.

"After the dissolution of the RCCC the corruption cases should be referred to the constitutionally-created Commission for Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA)," said Daschle, who arrived here last week at the invitation of the National Democratic Institute Nepal to assess the political situation.

## 5 rebels killed as strike cripples Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops shot dead five suspected militants yesterday, the army said, as a strike gripped the Kashmir valley in a fourth straight day of protests since soldiers mistakenly killed three boys.

The five died in four separate clashes spread across two districts bordering the Pakistan-controlled sector of disputed Kashmir.

An army spokesman said the dead were Islamic militants encountered during cordon and search operations.

The strike closed government offices, schools and many shops in Kashmir, correspondents reported. Traffic was light on Srinagar's roads and paramilitary troops were out in force.

"The strike is to protest the brutal killings of three innocent boys," said hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani, who called the action.

The stoppage came after Kashmir police intercepted a car packed with explosives on Tuesday night, officials said.