

Pakistan and India open fourth Kashmir border point

AFP, Muzaffarabad

Pakistan and India opened a fourth crossing point on the disputed Kashmir border Monday to allow aid to flow to victims of last month's devastating earthquake, officials said.

But as with the other three that opened last week, Kashmiris themselves will not be allowed to cross the Line of Control (LoC) that divides the Himalayan territory.

"The Tatta Pani-Mendher crossing on the Line of Control in Kashmir opened at 10:30 am (0530 GMT)," a senior Pakistani military official in the area said. Tatta Pani is on the Pakistani side and Mendher is in the Indian sector.

Senior officers shook hands over the frontier and Pakistani and Indian troops exchanged aid supplies for quake-hit families on both sides, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.



PHOTO: AFP

Jordanian students wave national flags and pictures of King Abdullah II during a rally at the Jordanian University in solidarity with the King and the government yesterday. The speedy arrest and televised confession of an alleged would-be Iraqi suicide bomber has bolstered the image of Jordan's intelligence services but risks stoking tension with Iraqi expatriates, officials said Monday.

Iraqi woman confesses to Jordan blasts

REUTERS, Amman

An Iraqi woman confessed on Jordanian television on Sunday that she had tried to blow herself up alongside her husband in an Amman hotel last week in one of three attacks that killed more than 50 people.

The woman, identified by police as Sajida al-Rishawi, appeared in a headscarf and a long black coat describing her attempts to detonate an explosives-laden belt at a wedding celebration in the Radisson hotel.

"We went into the hotel. He (my husband) took a corner and I took another. There was a wedding in the hotel. There were women and children," Rishawi told state-run television.

"My husband executed the attack. I tried to detonate and it failed. People started running and I ran with them."

The television show included other pictures which appeared to show Rishawi operating a mechanism covered in plastic and wearing explosives with a red wire strapped to her

body.

Rishawi's husband and two other suicide bombers belonging to al Qaeda in Iraq killed themselves and 54 other people in three simultaneous attacks at the Hyatt, Radisson and Days Inn hotels.

It was not clear under what circumstances Rishawi gave her confession. She spoke with an Iraqi accent and said she came from the Iraqi city of Ramadi.

International human rights groups say Jordanian police extract confessions from detainees under duress, but the woman spoke calmly.

Officials said Rishawi is the sister of Samir Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi, a dead former aide to Jordanian-born al Qaeda in Iraq leader, Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Al Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for the blasts.

Al Qaeda in Iraq said in an Internet statement that a married couple and two other men -- all Iraqis -- had carried out the bombings at hotels frequented by Western security contractors who operate out of Iraq and by diplomats.

Most of those who died were Jordanians attending weddings.

Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister Marwan al-Muasher told reporters all four bombers were from Iraq's western desert province of Anbar, a Sunni guerrilla stronghold bordering Jordan. Ramadi is the capital of Anbar province.

AUSTRALIA SAYS

Nuclear reactor may have been terror target

AFP, Sydney

Islamic militants arrested last week on charges of plotting a major terrorist bombing were caught by police near Australia's only nuclear reactor last year and underwent "jihad training" at outback camps west of Sydney, police alleged in documents released on Monday.

A police fact sheet submitted in court here also alleged that the spiritual leader of the 18 Muslims arrested in Sydney and Melbourne urged his followers to unleash "maximum damage" as part of a holy war.

The 20-page document, tendered in court on Friday but not released to the public until Monday, said three of the 18 had been stopped by police acting suspiciously near the Lucas Heights research reactor in suburban Sydney.

The men said they were in the area to ride a trail bike that was in the back of their car, but when questioned separately gave differing accounts of their activities, police said.

Police later found that a lock on a gate to a reservoir on the grounds of the facility had recently been cut, the document said.

The government's Australian Nuclear Science and Technology

Organisation (ANSTO), which operates the Sydney reactor, played down any threat.

ANSTO issued a statement saying the area where the men's car was noticed "is regularly used by the public for trail bike riding and bush-walking" and that security agencies at the time did not see the trio as a threat.

It also said the fencing that had been cut near the reservoir was hundreds of meters from the reactor and not part of the ANSTO facility.

Police and security agents detained the 18 before dawn on November 8 in the country's biggest counter-terrorism operation.

All were Australian-born or naturalised citizens. Officials accused them of plotting a "catastrophic" act of terrorism, although no precise targets were alleged.

The arrests heightened security fears across Australia and sparked an extraordinary terrorism alert Monday in the third largest city, Brisbane.

Authorities in the east coast city announced in mid-afternoon that all public buses and trains would unload their passengers for 30 minutes during the evening rush hour due to three anonymous telephone threats.

SRI LANKA POLLS

Troops deployed amid pre-poll bomb fears

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka deployed troops amid fears of suicide bomb attacks against presidential candidates staging their final campaign rallies Monday ahead of an election later this week.

"Extraordinary measures" had been taken to strengthen security in Colombo for two key rallies ahead of Thursday's vote, to prevent a repeat of past pre-poll violence, said police deputy inspector general Pujith Jayasundara.

"We have called in the army to reinforce the police wherever necessary," Jayasundara told AFP. "We have received reports of possible LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) suicide attacks."

Joint police and army patrols were guarding rallies by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and his main rival, Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Opinion polls showed the rivals

running neck-and-neck.

Campaigning must end by midnight Monday under election rules in the island-nation torn by ethnic violence that has killed more than 60,000 people.

On the final campaign day of the 1999 presidential election, a suspected Tiger suicide bomber blew herself up, wounding President Chandrika Kumaratunga and killing 27 people.

On the same day, another Tiger suicide bomber targeted an opposition election rally, killing at least 12 people.

The rebels -- who have long demanded a separate Tamil homeland in the north and east of the island nation -- are not contesting this week's election and have said they have no interest in the outcome.

Jayasundara said a suspected Tamil Tiger gunman shot dead a rival Tamil activist here on Sunday night despite the tight security.

France extends anti-riot powers by 3 months

REUTERS, Paris

The French cabinet agreed to ask parliament for a 3-month extension to emergency powers and President Jacques Chirac prepared to address the nation on Monday over the worst urban violence in 40 years.

Although the violence dropped again overnight, police said youths destroyed 284 vehicles in petrol bomb attacks in the 18th straight night of unrest in poor suburbs in the Paris region and major provincial cities.

Disturbances erupted with the deaths on October 27 of two youths apparently fleeing police, but grew into a wider protest by youths of African and North African origin at racism, poor job prospects and their sense of exclusion from French society.

The violence peaked a week ago giving riot-weary residents hope of calmer days ahead.

"I think it's over. I think the young people have let out their anger, and I think the government got the message," said Bernard Moutei, 40, walking among the high-rise estates in the

Clichy-sous-Bois suburb where the unrest began.

Chirac, criticized for his low profile during the crisis, was to explain his decision to roll over the emergency powers in a television broadcast at 1900 GMT, the first time he will have addressed the nation directly on the violence.

The government is expected to introduce the measure to parliament on Tuesday and should secure a comfortable majority.

"This is a protective and precautionary measure," government spokesman Jean-Francois Cope quoted Chirac as telling a special cabinet meeting called to discuss the measure.

"It is a measure necessary to give law enforcement all the means they need to bring a permanent return to calm ... naturally this is a strictly temporary measure which will only apply where it is strictly necessary and with the full agreement of local elected officials," Chirac was quoted as saying.

3 detained in Indian Kashmir over New Delhi blasts

AFP, Srinagar

At least three people were detained Monday in Indian Kashmir in connection with New Delhi's deadly bombings, following the arrest of the alleged mastermind last week.

Police from New Delhi raided several places in the state summer capital Srinagar over the October 29 Delhi blasts that killed 62 people, said local police, speaking on condition of anonymity.

They said a man identified as Muhammad Hanief was arrested in the city's congested old district of Kawadara and two to three other people were picked up elsewhere for questioning.

The latest raids follow the capture of alleged mastermind Tariq Dar, a suspected member of Pakistan-based Islamic militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, in Srinagar Thursday.

Dar, who has not been charged, was linked to the blasts at two crowded markets and a bus in New Delhi, police said.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abba (R) share a light moment with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during their joint press conference in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday. Rice made a fresh stab at reviving moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace talks as new tensions flared with Israel's killing of a top Islamic militant.