

Zawahiri urges Afghans to fight 'invaders'

AFP, Paris

Al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri called on the people of Afghanistan to rise up and fight foreign forces after a surge in violence between US-led forces and rebels, in a new internet video Thursday.

"I urge the Muslims of Kabul in particular and across Afghanistan in general to fight the invaders... to join forces with the mujahideen to chase out the invaders and liberate Afghanistan," he said.

Zawahiri was said to be speaking the day after rioting on May 29 in the Afghan capital Kabul following a traffic accident that left 20 people dead and scores injured.

The violence erupted after a heavy US military truck lost control and ploughed into several vehicles at the northern entrance to the city during rush hour.

Zawahiri said in the video, which lasted less than four minutes, that the violence was "new evidence of the crimes perpetrated by American forces against the Afghan people."

India holds talks with northeast rebel groups

AFP, Guwahati

taking the negotiations very seriously," the official said from New Delhi.

Federal minister without portfolio Oscar Fernandes and peace interlocutor K. Padmanabhaiah were heading the Indian side in the Amsterdam talks, while the NSCN-IM team was led by guerrilla leaders Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah, the officials said.

"Several important points already given in our charter of demands are likely to be discussed in the talks," senior NSCN-IM leader Kariboi Chawang said from Nagaland's commercial hub Dimapur.

"That includes formalising the historic rights of the Naga people to stay under one administrative setup."

The NSCN-IM has been fighting for more than six decades to unite all Naga-inhabited areas of the

northeast by slicing off parts of three neighbouring states to add to the mountainous Nagaland province.

The demand for the merger that would unite 1.2 million Nagas has been strongly opposed by the surrounding states of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

The NSCN-IM and New Delhi have observed a ceasefire since August 1997, renewed annually. The latest truce expires on July 31.

The rebels and the government have held at least 50 rounds of peace talks in the past nine years on ending one of South Asia's longest-running insurgencies.

The meeting in New Delhi, the third between Patil and representatives of ULFA, is being held against a backdrop of explosions this month blamed on the rebels in Assam that killed eight and wounded nearly 100.



One killed in grenade attack on Kashmiri dervish's home

AFP, Srinagar

One person was killed and 16 injured Thursday in a grenade attack on the home of a so-called dervish in revolt-hit Indian Kashmir, police said.

The attack in the town of Sopore, 50 kilometers north of the summer capital Srinagar, was on the house of Abdul Ahad Sopore, who has attracted scores of followers believing he can heal the sick.

"His followers were hurt in the explosion as well as a policeman," a police spokesman said.

Dervishes are linked to a mystic Islamic sect called Sufis who sometimes dance in a trance-like state while praying to God.

Islamic groups in Indian Kashmir waging a separatist insurgency have called for stricter interpretations of Islam, including bans on practices such as Sufism.

But the attack on Sopore, who escaped unhurt, was not apparently linked to religion, police said.

Sri Lanka bishop relates terror in church

IANS, Colombo

Sri Lankan navy personnel opened fire and hurled grenades in a church packed with frightened Tamils, killing six men and women and injuring dozens, a church leader has complained to the Vatican.

Bishop Rayappu Joseph has given a horrific account of the attack on the Lady of Victory church at Pesalai in north-western Mannar district on Saturday. The explosion severed the head of a 75-year-old Tamil Catholic woman.

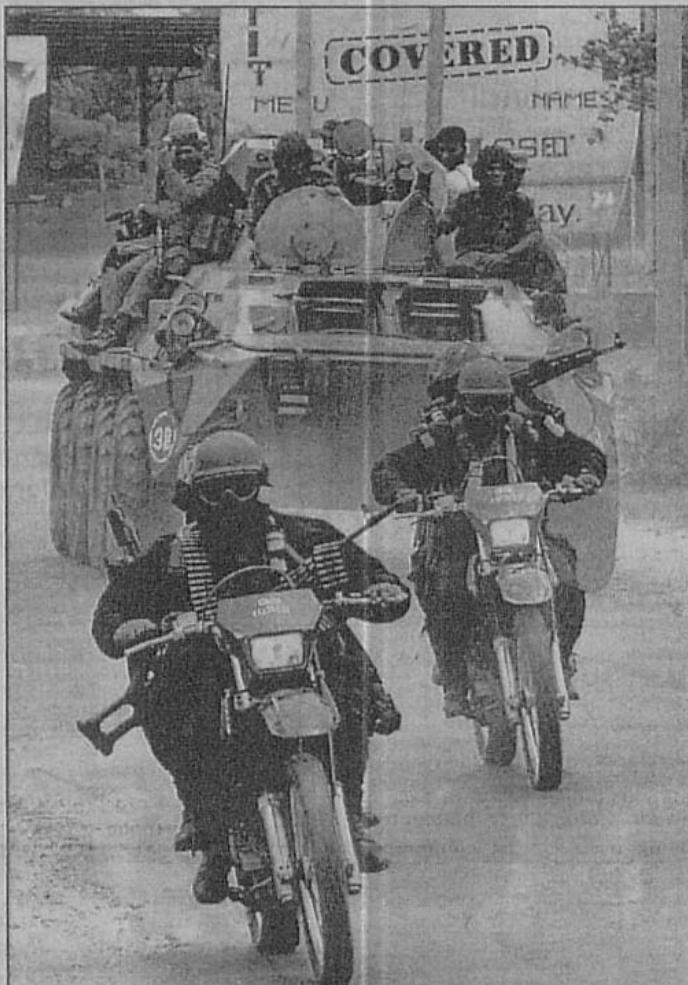
Other navy personnel fired through keyholes indiscriminately, killing two more Catholics and Hindus each and a Muslim.

The incident took place when thousands of Tamils huddled in the church, Sri Lanka's biggest, following fighting between the Sri Lankan navy and fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

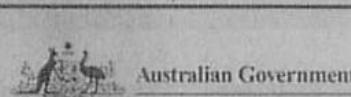
The outraged bishop said the church had been desecrated by unjust aggressors, the navy", TamilNet website reported.

"Today I buried the six civilians murdered by the navy at Pesalai," the bishop wrote on Sunday.

According to Bishop Joseph, much later, when the local navy commander met some 7,000



A Sri Lankan Special Force (SF) unit on motorcycles leads an army patrol outside Jaffna yesterday. The European Union, which last month banned the Tigers as a terrorist organisation, urged the Sri Lankan government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to negotiate a settlement to the conflict which has claimed more than 60,000 lives since 1972.



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Please read all the instructions carefully before making any enquiries. All queries should be sent to AusAID Canberra.

The ALA Scholarship Application Form and guidelines can be downloaded from www.ausaid.gov.au/scholar now.

Further Information: www.australienscholarships.gov.au

ala@ausaid.gov.au

Maoists refuse to disarm, accept UN supervision

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's Maoist rebels said Thursday they are not prepared to disarm but are willing to put their army and their weapons under the supervision of the United Nations.

The new government and the Maoists reached a landmark power-sharing agreement last week, but Nepal's home minister has said that the interim government cannot be formed until the Maoists lay down their weapons.

"We are not going to disarm. But to create a conducive environment for constituent assembly elections we are willing to neutralise our weapons and our army under UN monitoring," rebel spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara told AFP.

Under last week's agreement parliament will be dissolved and power shared in a new interim government, which is due to come into being within a month.

In the longer term the government has pledged to hold constituent assembly elections to form a body that will permanently rewrite the constitution, and most likely remove the king from politics permanently.

King Gyanendra was forced to give up 14 months of direct rule in April after weeks of often bloody protests organized by political parties and the Maoists.

Mahara said the rebels would not use arms during the constituent assembly elections and called on the army to match the move. A

ceasefire is currently in force.

"We are expecting UN monitoring and technical assistance for the management of arms from both sides," he said.

The question of the rebels laying down arms was not addressed in their eight-point agreement. But Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitala said on Wednesday the issue must be addressed before the power-sharing arrangement comes into effect.

"Formation of the interim government is not possible without settling the Maoists' arms issues," Sitala said.

The Maoists have been fighting to install a communist republic for the past decade at the cost of more than 12,500 lives.

Tibetan exiles to protest China's new rail link to Lhasa

AFP, Dharamsala

Tibetan exiles said Thursday they will protest next month's opening of the world's highest railway which links the Himalayan plateau with the rest of China.

Exiles said they would hold rallies outside Chinese consulates worldwide against the July 1 opening of the railway which they fear will lead to a flood of Chinese settlers into remote Tibet.

"This railway will have devastating consequences for our people as Beijing tries to overwhelm our population, dilute our culture and exploit our land," said Ngawang Woeber head of a group of former Tibetan political prisoners helping organise the protests.

Beijing has halted the railway, which spans 2,040 kilometres from Golmud in northwest Qinghai province to the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, as another step in modernising the region.

Construction began in 1958, seven years after China formally annexed Tibet after Chinese troops invaded a year earlier forcing the region's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to flee to the Indian hillstation of Dharamsala.

Construction began in 1958, seven years after China formally annexed Tibet after Chinese troops invaded a year earlier forcing the region's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, to flee to the Indian hillstation of Dharamsala.

Joining the band wagon, the Bramha Samaj of Portbandar on Thursday filed a police complaint against actor Aamir Khan, Yashraj Films and owner of Amber Theatre of Jamnagar in connection with the death of Pravin Joshi, who committed self-immolation to protest the screening of movie *Fanaa*.

"We have received complaint from the Bramha Samaj against Aamir Khan and others and have forwarded the complaint to Jamnagar police for necessary action," in-charge DSP of Portbandar HR Mulliana said.

Joshi self-immolated on June 11 in the toilet of Amber cinema hall to protest screening of *Fanaa*.

The screening of the film was withdrawn by the Cinematographer Exhibitors Association after the actor had taken a stand against Narmada dam issue and participated in the sit in organised by the Narmada Bachao Andolan and its leader Medha Patkar in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, the Bramha Samaj of Jamnagar has declared financial assistance of Rs one lakh to the family of Joshi.

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