

Pakistani residents look at a damaged room yesterday after a missile hit a house in the village of Mohammad Khel in North Waziristan. A suspected US missile destroyed the house in Pakistan tribal region bordering Afghanistan on Friday, killing around 20 al-Qaeda-linked militants, mostly foreign nationals.

## Separate blasts kill 5 in Indian towns

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

At least five people were killed and 80 injured in two separate bomb explosions set off by suspected terrorists in western Indian towns of Malegaon and Modasa in Maharashtra and Gujarat states respectively on Monday night.

The blast in a hotel in Muslim-dominated Malegaon, a powerloom town, left four persons dead and 80 wounded.

At least 38 people were killed and over 100 wounded in a serial bomb explosions in and around a mosque in Malegaon in 2006.

Immediately after the blast in Malegaon, a mob pelted stones on police leaving eight policemen, including an officer of the rank of Additional Superintendent, wounded.

A silver coloured motorcycle was found at the blast site, raising suspicion that the explosive device was kept on it, local police said.

The other bomb went off in Modasa town of Gujarat's Sabarkantha district killing a 15-year-old boy and injuring ten persons, district superintendent of police RB Brahmabhatt said.

# 38 killed in rebel-army fighting in Turkey

AFP, Ankara

Fifteen Turkish soldiers and 23 Kurdish rebels were killed after an audacious rebel attack near the Iraq border, the army said Saturday, in the bloodiest skirmish in a year.

The attack by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels on a military post is likely to ratchet pressure on Ankara to hit back at the militants who use rear bases in neighbouring northern Iraq to strike.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he had cancelled a two-day visit to Mongolia and would immediately return home from Turkmenistan to discuss Ankara's response.

An army spokesman said that fighting erupted Friday afternoon when a group of rebels attacked a border post in Semdinli town, Hakkari province, under cover of heavy weapons' fire from bases in northern Iraq.

"Most of our losses were caused

by heavy weapons' fire from the north of Iraq," General Metin Gurak, the head of the general staff's press department told the Anatolia news agency.

Turkish forces responded with artillery fire and attack helicopters pounded rebel positions while additional forces were dispatched to the area.

Turkish fighter jets and artillery units also struck at a group of rebels in the north of Iraq, about 10 kilometres (about six miles) from the station, which was attacked.

"Twenty-three terrorists were neutralised in the clashes. It is not yet clear how many terrorists were killed by artillery fire and in the strikes by the air force," Gurak said.

He added that two soldiers remained unaccounted for after the fighting which lasted late into Friday night and that a search was underway to find them.

Gurak initially said two soldiers were wounded in the fighting, but Prime Minister Erdogan, speaking in televised remarks from

Turkmenistan, raised the number to 20.

"Our struggle (against the PKK) will continue with determination. We will discuss what methods we will follow in this struggle," he added.

Anatolia reported that Erdogan was expected to chair a meeting of civilian and military leaders at 1400 GMT in Ankara to assess the developments.

Friday's attack comes a day after the end of a three-day ceasefire the PKK announced for Eid-ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival marking the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting.

The PKK -- considered a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union -- has been fighting for a separate state in the mainly Kurdish south-east of Turkey since 1984.

According to figures recently released by the Turkish army, the 24-year campaign by the rebels had cost the lives of 32,000 Kurdish rebels, 6,500 members of the security forces and 5,500 civilians.

Turkey claims that thousands of PKK militants are holed up in rear bases in the Kurdish-run north of Iraq from where they stage cross-border attacks on Turkish targets.

Ankara also accuses the autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq, of failing to take steps against the rebels who it says are able to move freely in the mountainous enclave and obtain arms and explosives.

The Turkish army, under a one-year parliamentary authorisation obtained last October, has carried out air strikes and a week-long ground incursion against PKK targets, using intelligence passed on by Nato ally United States.

The authorisation expires on October 17 and the Turkish government said last week that it will ask parliament to extend the mandate by one year.

Lawmakers returned from summer recess on October 1 and are expected to vote on the matter in the coming weeks.

## US offers India \$375m deal for smart missiles

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington

The Pentagon has notified the US Congress of its offer to sell India CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Weapons (SFW) worth \$375 million to help the "Indian Air Force to develop and enhance standardisation and operational ability with the United States".

This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to strengthen the US-India strategic relationship, the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) told the US Congress Sep 30, a day before the Senate approved the India-US civil nuclear deal.

It will also help "improve the security of an important partner, which contributes to the overall peace and economic progress in South Asia," the agency said, assuring lawmakers "the proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region".

The proposed sale comes three weeks after US offered India a \$170 million deal for the sale of two dozen Harpoon air to ground anti-surface missiles during Defence minister AK Antony's visit to Washington.

"India intends to use the Sensor Fuzed Weapons to modernise its armed forces and enhance its defensive ability to counter ground-armoured threats."

"The missiles will assist the Indian Air Force to develop and enhance standardisation and operational ability with the United States. India will have no difficulty absorbing these missiles into its armed forces," the DSCA said.

"There will be no adverse impact on US defence readiness as a result of this proposed sale," it added.

The SFW - a 1,000-pound class weapon - is designed to accurately detect and defeat a wide range of moving and stationary land and maritime target threats with minimal collateral damage, while not leaving a single hazardous dud.

India, DSCA said, "has requested a possible sale of 510 CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Weapons, 19 CBU-105 Integration test assets (12 live tails, seven inert tails) and five CBU-97 Integration test assets as well as associated equipment and services". The total value, if all options are exercised, could be as high as \$375 million.

New Delhi, the agency said, has requested offsets for the deal, but at this time agreements are undetermined and will be defined in negotiations between India and the contractor. The prime contractor will be Textron Systems Corporation of Wilmington, Massachusetts.

Textron Defence Systems describes its SFW as "the first and only combat-proven, clean battle-field weapon of its kind in US Air Force inventory".

The SFW contains 10 BLU-108 submunitions, each with four smart Skeet warheads, for a total of 40 warheads. One SFW can simultaneously detect and engage many fixed and moving land combat targets within 121,400 sq mts.

## Palin power fails to whip up magic for McCain

AFP, Denver

Despite a gutsy debate performance by Republican VP pick Sarah Palin, she failed to turn the tide in the race for the White House, leaving John McCain struggling to revitalize his slipping bid, analysts said Friday.

Just over four weeks until the November 4 elections, McCain has yet to seize the upper hand from his Democratic rival Barack Obama and has been left trailing in a series of polls.

On Thursday his campaign admitted that it was pulling out of Michigan, effectively surrendering the midwestern state to the Democrats, and would instead focus on six swing states.

And with more bad news on the economic front, McCain was Friday to hold a rally in Colorado before retreating to his Arizona ranch for the weekend, in a highly unusual disappearing act at the height of the campaign.

Palin had stood her ground against Democratic rival Joseph Biden late Thursday in the only vice presidential debate of the 2008

White House race, firing off rapid, well-rehearsed talking points.

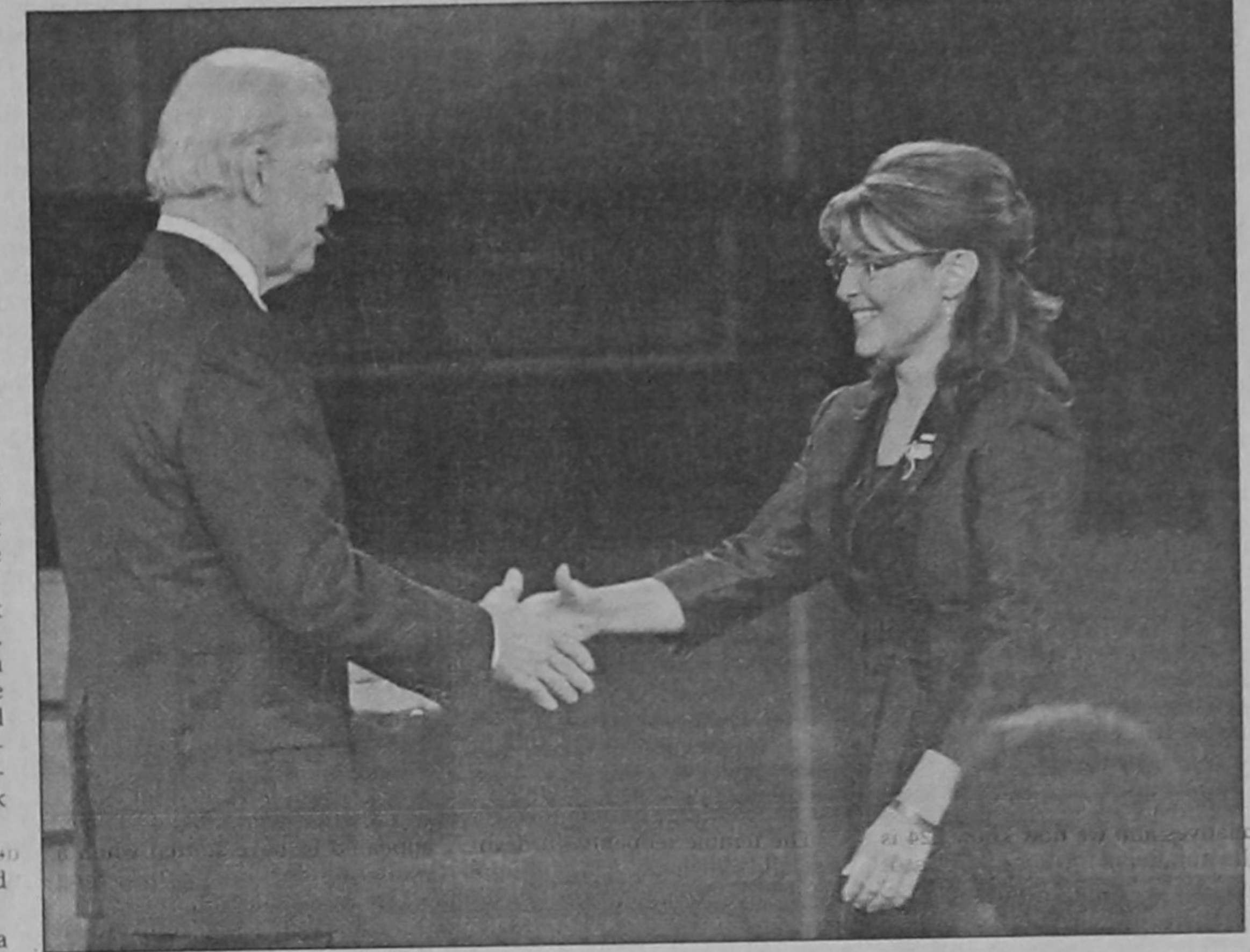
The performance by Palin, the first time Alaska governor plucked from obscurity by McCain in late August to be his running mate, will have thrilled the party's conservative base, following days of concern over her ability.

But she offered little of substance, and even though both sides claimed victory, the debate is unlikely to have swayed most voters who in recent weeks have been flocking to Obama's side.

"In the end, the debate did not change the essential truth of Ms. Palin's candidacy. Mr. McCain made a wildly irresponsible choice that shattered the image he created for himself as the honest, seasoned, experienced man of principle and judgment," The New York Times wrote.

"It was either an act of incredible cynicism or appallingly bad judgment."

A slew of polls have put Obama firmly ahead both nationally and in key swing states such as Ohio, Florida and Pennsylvania ahead of the polls.



Republican Sarah Palin (R) greets Democrat Joseph Biden (L) on stage for their vice presidential debate on October 2 at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri.



Activists of the Communist Party of India (CPI) hold placards and shout slogans during a protest in New Delhi yesterday against the visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to India.

## Twin suicide bombings kill 26 in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Twin suicide bombings near Shia mosques in Iraq's capital killed 20 people on Thursday as worshippers celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr, which ends the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, officials said.

Another six people were shot dead in an ambush north of Baghdad drawing condemnation from the United Nations.

Security officials said a suicide bomber blew himself up as he was being frisked outside the Al-Rasool mosque in Jadida, a Shia district of southern Baghdad, killing 12 people and wounding 30.

In the second attack, a bomber slammed his explosives-filled car into an Iraqi armoured vehicle at a checkpoint near a mosque in the nearby district of Zafaraniyah.

The blast killed eight people, including four Iraqi soldiers, and wounded 10 worshippers. A US military patrol came under a roadside bomb attack in Baghdad's Mansur neighbourhood at midday

the American military said. There were no immediate details.

UN envoy to Iraq Staffan de Mistura strongly condemned the series of "criminal bombings" and described the attacks as "particularly abhorrent".

He said the violence was aimed at men, women and children as they prepared to break their fast and celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, or while on their way on pilgrimage.

Iraqi policeman Ali Abdul Hussein, 33, said the bombing at the Rasool mosque would have been more serious had the bomber made it inside the building.

"I saw a man rushing to the checkpoint just outside the mosque," he told AFP. "I noticed his belt and shouted to my colleagues to stop the man. I also ran towards him but two colleagues ahead of me stopped the man."

Just then, the bomber detonated the explosives, killing the two policemen and sending Abdul Hussein flying. Wounded in the leg, he returned to the mosque after

taking victims to hospital. "If my two friends had not stopped the bomber outside, there would have been many more killed at the mosque," he sobbed.

Mosque security chief Mohammed Borhan, 29, pointed to the sidewalk where the suicide bomber's head landed, face to the sky. It was a few yards (meters) away from where the man detonated his explosives.

Borhan filmed the remains of the bomber. The man's face was almost perfectly intact, with eyes wide open and a hint of bewilderment. Slippers and shoes of those killed and wounded in the attack were scattered on the roadside.

Six people were also killed when gunmen opened fire at a minibus near Baquba, the capital of Diyala province, a security official said.

Meanwhile, the US military reported that four people had been killed and 15 wounded on Wednesday in a car bomb attack at a mosque in Balad, north of Baghdad, as devotees gathered for prayers.

## Pakistan calls for US nuke deal like India's

AFP, Multan

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on Thursday demanded a civilian nuclear agreement with the United States after Washington signed a similar deal with arch-rival India.

The US Senate late Wednesday endorsed a landmark US-India nuclear pact, removing the final legislative hurdle for resumption of civilian nuclear trade between the two countries after three decades.

Pakistan, the world's only nuclear-armed Islamic nation, is a key US ally in the "war on terror" but it remains at the centre of global concerns over an international black market run by its top atomic scientist.

"You do not need to be worried, this is a step forward. Pakistan now will have the right to a similar civilian nuclear deal that India has gotten from the United States," Gilani told reporters in the central city of Multan.

"We do not want discrimina-

tion. Pakistan will make efforts for civilian nuclear technology and they (United States) will have to accommodate us," he added.

Pakistan has been locked in hostilities with India for more than six decades and the two countries carried out tit-for-tat nuclear detonations in 1998.

They launched a peace process in 2004, but the Indian nuclear deal has been a source of annoyance to Islamabad since US President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh first agreed to the deal in 2005.

Pakistan has an "energy security plan" envisaging an increase in nuclear power generation from the current 425 megawatts to 8,800 megawatts by 2030 to meet its growing energy demands.

Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme has been under the spotlight since a 2004 confession by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of its nuclear programme, that he sold atomic secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

## Mastermind of Baghdad bombings killed

AP, AFP, Baghdad

The US military says it has killed a senior al-Qaeda in Iraq leader suspected of masterminding deadly bombings in Baghdad.

The military says US troops acting in self-defence also killed his wife in Friday's firefight.

Saturday's statement identifies the man killed as Mahir Ahmad Mahmud Judu' al-Zubaydi, also known as Abu Assad or Abu Rami.

It says he directed the insurgent cell that was believed to be responsible for nearly simultaneous car bomb and suicide attacks that killed at least eight people on Thursday.

The troops came under attack from inside the building and fired back, killing Abu Rami and the woman.

The troops later found explosives inside the building and detonated them, according to the statement.

## Kashmir gunbattle leaves 14 dead

AFP, Srinagar

Thirteen suspected Muslim militants and an Indian soldier have been killed in one of the fiercest gunbattles in recent years in Kashmir, military officials said yesterday.

Major General V Goudar said the "heavily-armed militants" and soldier had been killed in a week-long battle in a mountainous region north of Indian Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

Goudar said the operation was conducted in "inhospitable, harsh and treacherous terrain" at an altitude up to 15,000 feet (4,572 metres).

Kashmir is in the grip of a 19-year insurgency against New Delhi's rule that has left more than 43,000 people dead by official count.

Violence had declined since India and Pakistan launched a peace process in 2004 to resolve all

pending disputes, including the one on Kashmir -- a scenic region they hold in part but claim in full.

Earlier Indian Kashmir imposed a one-month ban Saturday on public gatherings, the government said, in a move interpreted as a bid to scupper a planned rally by pro-independence Muslim separatists.

The order applied to gatherings of five or more in public spaces, a government statement said.

A committee spearheading recent protests against Indian rule had planned to hold a mass rally Monday in the main city of Srinagar.

Hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani has been placed under house arrest ahead of the proposed demonstration but other activists said they intended to march.

"Come what may, we would defy all the restrictions to make the rally a success," said senior separatist Yasin Malik.

## Tata abandons plant for cheapest car

AFP, Kolkata

India's Tata Group announced Friday it was scrapping a plant in eastern India slated to turn out the world's cheapest car after weeks of violent demonstrations by farmers whose land was seized.

The row over the high-profile Nano plant in Singur on the outskirts of West Bengal state capital Kolkata had emerged as a symbol of the clashing interests of India's small farmers and industry.

The announcement of the plan to relocate production of the Nano came after construction of the 90-percent completed factory in Marxist-ruled West Bengal was halted when protests made work impossible.

"You cannot run a plant when bombs are being thrown, you cannot run a plant when workers are being intimidated," Ratan Tata, chairman of one of India's oldest industrial houses the Tata Group, told reporters in Kolkata.



French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner (L) speaks during a visit with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to the West Bank city of Jenin yesterday. A Middle East peace deal is unlikely by the end of the year, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said Saturday, while urging Israelis and Palestinians to continue US-backed negotiations.

## Shoot-at-sight ordered in Assam after clashes

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Guwahati

Shoot-at-sight orders were issued on Saturday in Assam's curfew-bound district of Udalguri, where seven people were killed and more than 50 injured in clashes between two communities even as a cluster of villages were set ablaze, officials said.

"We have asked police, paramilitary and Army soldiers to shoot anybody found indulging in violent activities," Inspector General of Assam Police (Law and Order) Bhaskarjyoti Mahanta said.

Violence broke out Friday between two communities in Rowta in Udalguri district, about 100 km north of Guwahati.

"The situation is tense with the violence spreading to new areas in the district even as five more bodies were recovered, all of them shot at with poison-tipped arrows and hit with crude sharp implements," a police official said, requesting anonymity.