

Pakistan ready to retaliate if India strikes

CNN-IBN, New Delhi

The Pakistan National Assembly has passed a unanimous resolution condemning the November 26 Mumbai terror attack but has also warned India against undertaking surgical strikes in any part of Pakistan.

Pakistan's army chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has said Pakistani armed forces would give an "equal" response within few minutes if India carried out any surgical strike inside their territory.

Kayani said this at a meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari at the Awan-e-Sadr on Wednesday.

The Army chief apprised the President of operational preparedness of the armed

forces.

"The armed forces are fully prepared to meet any eventuality, as his men are ready to sacrifice for their country," Pakistan daily The News quoted Gen Kayani as telling the President.

Zardari believed in gearing up efforts for peace, which should otherwise not be taken as a sign of weakness, the paper said.

He said, "Pakistan wanted peaceful and cordial relations with all its neighbours, but the threatening statements of Indian leadership were creating an atmosphere of aggression and harming the regional environment."

The President added, "We are keeping a close watch on all the latest developments and threatening tones of Indian leader-

ship."

He said all the national security agencies, the army, political leadership and public were completely united to bafflely meet any aggression against Pakistan.

"Islamabad is in touch with all friendly countries which were being briefed about Pakistan's peace efforts and the hostility shown by India."

"We do not want any war with India, as that would prove detrimental to both our nations," the President was quoted as saying.

Zardari, however, expressed his satisfaction over the preparedness of the Army and said all necessary resources would be provided to the armed forces. He said, "We have the right to defend our borders in case of any aggression."

British soldier, 4 road workers killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

A British soldier was shot dead in Afghanistan on Christmas Eve, the same day a US soldier died in a separate attack, officials said yesterday as international mortar fire killed four road workers.

The Royal Marine, whose identity was not released, was killed Wednesday while trying to drive "enemy forces" from a compound in the southern province of Helmand, the British defence ministry said in a statement.

"The death of this Royal Marine is a tragic loss and coming so close to Christmas, this is particularly poignant," said the British military's spokeswoman in Helmand, Commander Paula Rowe.

Ten killed in Muslim rebels' attacks in Philippines

AFP, Cotabato

Ten people were killed when Muslim separatist guerrillas launched attacks and occupied a village in the southern Philippines, military and police officials said yesterday.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels attacked Midungo village in the southern island of Mindanao with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles on Tuesday, said military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Julio Ando.

The militants killed nine residents and wounded another, he said, updating an earlier toll of six after three more deaths were discovered.



PHOTO: AFP

A Christian woman holds her child as they attend the Christmas Day mass at the Church of the Nativity in the West Bank city of Bethlehem yesterday. War and economic hardship loomed over Christmas celebrations across the world.

UN condemns Myanmar rights violations

AP, United Nations

The UN General Assembly on Wednesday strongly condemned widespread human rights violations in Myanmar and called on the government to free political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

The sharply worded resolution, sponsored by the United States, Israel and many other countries, was approved by a vote of 80-25 with 45 abstentions.

Myanmar accused the assembly of "blatant interference" in its internal political process and said it will not be bound by the resolution. Unlike the more powerful Security Council, General

Assembly resolutions are not legally binding but carry weight because they reflect the views of the 192-member world body.

Myanmar's representative, who was not identified, told the assembly the country had made significant political strides and was now on track for a smooth transition to democracy, with a seven-step political process including multiparty elections in 2010.

But the resolution expressed "grave concern" at the failure to include members of pro-democracy leader Suu Kyi's party and other political parties and some ethnic groups "in a genuine process of transition to democracy."

Pope calls for ME peace, African stability

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI called yesterday for peace in the Middle East and stability in Africa during his traditional Christmas speech in St Peter's Square.

"May the divine light of Bethlehem radiate throughout the Holy Land, (bringing) forth rich fruit from the efforts of all those who (shun) the twisted logic of conflict and violence," he said, addressing thousands of pilgrims gathered in the square and millions of viewers on television.

In the Middle East, "the horizon seems once again bleak for Israelis and Palestinians," said the 81-year-old pontiff after nearly four years on the papal throne.

Benedict also spoke out strongly about greed, saying

Germans save Egyptian ship from Somali pirates

AP, Kuala Lumpur

A German military helicopter rescued an Egyptian ship from pirates who shot and injured a crew member while trying to board the vessel off the coast of Somalia on Thursday, an official said.

The bulk carrier with 31 crew was passing through the Gulf of Aden on its way to Asia when it was chased by gun-toting pirates in a speedboat, said Noel Choong of the International Maritime Bureau's piracy reporting centre.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian demonstrators chant slogans during a protest in the West Bank city of Nablus in support of Ahmed Saadat, jailed leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), yesterday. Saadat was captured during the controversial Israeli storming of the West Bank Palestinian Authority prison in Jericho in March 2006, where he was serving time over the 2001 assassination of far-right Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi.

Israel vows to end Hamas control of Gaza

AP, AP, Cairo

ing en route to the West Bank town of Bethlehem for Christmas Day celebrations. Security officials had no additional information on that report.

"Enough is enough. The situation is going to change," Livni said in Cairo after meeting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip since a truce expired six days ago.

"Unfortunately there is one address to the situation of the people in the Gaza Strip, this is Hamas, Hamas controls them, Hamas decided to target Israel, this is something that has to be stopped and this is what we're going to do," she said in English.

"Yesterday's escalation was unbearable," Livni said after Gaza militants hit Israel with

their biggest rocket barrage in six months to avenge the killing of three fighters from the Islamist movement.

"Hamas needs to understand that our aspiration for peace does not mean that Israel will take this situation any longer," Livni said at a press conference with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit.

"Hamas's control of the Gaza Strip is not only Israel's problem... but what we are doing is an expression of the needs of the region."

"The situation in the Gaza Strip has become an obstacle on the way of the Palestinians toward a state," added Livni, who has vowed to topple Hamas if her Kadima party wins a general election in February.

Guinea coup leader declares himself new 'president'

AFP, Conakry

A junior army officer declared himself the new president of Guinea at the head of a military junta and ordered the government and top military brass to give themselves up by the end of yesterday.

The attack took place in the predominantly Shia Muslim district of Shola in northeastern Baghdad, sources from the interior and defence ministries told AFP.

"Four people were killed and 13 wounded when a car bomb that was parked on the side of the road blew up," an interior ministry source said.

Women were among the



Moussa Dadis Camara

ing the presidential palace and the government ministries, before dispersing peacefully.

Among them were many young people from the suburbs of the capital, disaffected after years of dictatorial rule.

"We no longer want the Conte system in Guinea. And if you are cutting down a tree, you must tear out all its roots," said Edouard, a 22-year-old student.

Conte had ruled with an iron fist since 1984 and within hours of his passing late Monday at the age of 74, a group of soldiers took control of the airwaves and claimed to have seized power.

Vacancy Announcement

We seek a world of hope, tolerance, and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security

care

Call for applications for an exciting opportunity to LEAD a large food security project team!

Food Security for Ultra Poor is a new 5 year project for CARE Bangladesh funded by the EC (EUR 13M) to be launched in Northeast Bangladesh targeting extreme poor women and their dependents. The overall objective of the project is to reduce extreme poverty and food insecurity of 55,000 ultra poor households. For sustainable improvement in food access and utilization, the project will address the underlying causes of social and economic exclusion, seasonal imbalances in food availability and affordability.

In partnership with three local NGOs - Assistance for Slum Dwellers, Sabalambay Unnayan Samity, and People's Oriented Program Implementation - the project will be implemented in Sunamganj, Kishoreganj and Netrakona districts.

Team Leader (1 position, based in Dhaka with extensive field travel) The duration of the proposed contract is 5 years from January 2009 to December 2013.

Job Summary:

The Team Leader (TL) is responsible for overall leadership of the project, including program implementation, management, administration and finances. In collaboration with the above named partners and the support of a strong field-based technical team, s/he will provide stewardship and direction. The TL will lead a community-led empowerment approach to address underlying causes of food insecurity. The expected results are increased inclusion and capacity of women from ultra-poor households, community based economic development interventions for the target group, and disaster risk interventions for improved access to food and equitable utilization of food for the ultra poor households.

Required Qualifications and Competencies:

- Masters degree in relevant field
- Minimum of 10 years professional experience in development, including 3 years of proven leadership leading a large team
- Demonstrated skills in managing finance and procurement of large donor funded project
- Well conversant with governance issues and rights-based programming principles
- Excellent verbal and written communication both in Bangla and English
- Other key competencies: networking and collaboration, negotiation, strategic decision making, problem solving, and advocacy

Most importantly, candidates need to be highly motivated and committed to CARE Bangladesh's vision, mission, and long term development work to significantly improve the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized, and capable of displaying great learning agility, support and encouragement of knowledge sharing across projects, to the ultimate benefit of all of CARE's mission wide initiatives.

Compensation: Monthly gross salary is Tk 107,000 plus other admissible benefits as per policy. Salary is negotiable for highly deserving candidate. Interested candidates who fulfill the above requirements are requested to send their CVs (with cover letter, recent passport size photograph, and contact details of two non-relative referees) to: CARE-Bangladesh, 20-21, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215 addressing Manager-HRD&M Department or to hr@carebangladesh.org on or before January 5, 2009.

Note: * Women are particularly encouraged to apply, * Any persuasion will disqualify the candidates, * Applicants who have relatives in CARE are discouraged to apply, * Only short listed candidates shall be invited for the interview, * Please write the position applied for at the top right hand corner of the envelope. Visit CARE web-site at: www.carebd.org



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani people gather in front of a collapsed building in Sukkur, some 370km northeast of Karachi yesterday. At least seven people were killed and 17 others injured when a five-storey residential building collapsed early Thursday in southern Pakistan.

Georgia, US to sign strategic accord Jan 4: Tbilisi

AFP, Tbilisi

Georgia and the United States will on January 4 sign a strategic partnership treaty that risks again provoking Russian wrath against Tbilisi, which earlier this year fought a brief war with Georgia over the breakaway region of South Ossetia.

"Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze and the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will sign a strategic partnership treaty on January 4 in Washington," foreign ministry spokesman