

MAOIST ATTACKS IN INDIA 2005-2010

- 2005**
Sept 4: Twenty-four paramilitary soldiers die in a blast triggered by suspected Maoists in Chhattisgarh.
- 2006**
Feb 28: Rebels kill at least 25 anti-Maoist campaigners after ambushing a convoy of trucks in central Madhya Pradesh state.
April 29: Fifteen people kidnapped by Maoist rebels are found dead in a Chhattisgarh forest.
- 2007**
March 4: Maoist rebels assassinate a federal MP and five other people as they attended celebrations of the Hindu festival of Holi in Jharkhand.
March 15: Maoist rebels kill 55 policemen in Chhattisgarh.
July 10: Twenty-four Indian troopers and 20 Maoist insurgents are killed in a gun battle in Chhattisgarh.
Oct 27: Rebels kill 18 people, including a former minister's son, in an attack at a football match in Jharkhand.
- 2008**
July 16: A Maoist landmine kills 21 police commandos in Orissa.
2009
Feb 1: Fifteen police officers are killed in western Maharashtra state in a shootout with Maoists.
July 12: Rebels kill 30 policemen in two ambushes in Chhattisgarh.
Oct 8: Seventeen policemen are gunned down in Maharashtra.
Oct 2: Rebels kill 16 villagers in eastern Bihar state in an apparent land dispute.
2010
Feb 15: At least 25 policemen die after Maoists overrun a security camp in West Bengal state.
April 6: Rebels kill 75 policemen in a jungle ambush in Chhattisgarh in the worst-ever Maoist massacre of security forces.
May 17: A Maoist landmine in Chhattisgarh tears the front off a bus, killing 24 civilians and 11 police personnel.
May 28: Maoists allegedly sabotage a railway track in West Bengal, causing a packed express train to derail, killing at least 80 people.

SOURCE: AFP



Relatives mourn outside one of two mosques stormed by gunmen in Lahore yesterday. Gunmen dressed in suicide vests stormed two Pakistani mosques belonging to a minority sect in Lahore killing at least 80 people and reducing prayers to a bloodbath. More on page 1.

PHOTO: AFP

Death and desperation at wrecked train site

AFP, Sardiha

"Please help. My daughter, I can't find her," begged Mamoni Bagh, grabbing a harried rescue worker near the mangled wreck of the train carriage she had been comfortably sleeping in hours before. Bagh was one of scores of passengers searching desperately for family still trapped in the twisted carcass of a high-speed passenger train derailed by Maoist rebels in a remote district of West Bengal in the early hours of yesterday. The accident claimed so far 80 lives. "I was pulled out, but nobody has been able to find my daughter. I have been shouting for hours for someone to look for her," Bagh said. The 30-year-old housewife had been travelling with her husband and eight-year-old child Nargis to Mumbai when the train

careened off the tracks, flinging passengers violently around their compartments, some of which were crushed as they slammed into an oncoming goods train. Her badly-injured husband, Sheikh Nazrul, was also pulled from the train and evacuated to hospital by helicopter. Ahmed Ali Gazi, 20, said he had been standing near the door of his carriage and was flung onto the side of the track by the force of the derailment. "I saw that the carriage had overturned and I tried to force my way back in to find my two sons and my brother-in-law, but it was impossible," Gazi said, his face buried in his hands as he wept. Thirteen of the train's carriages jumped the tracks and the four that collided with the freight train presented emergency workers with a gruesome and daunting task. "These coaches are completely crushed and it's very tough to find any

space to get inside them," said Tarun Sinha, a civil defence official helping to coordinate the rescue effort. Rescuers were using bolt cutters to try to force a way into the carriages, but had to work around horribly injured passengers caught in the mass of twisted steel. "Some of them are so badly trapped that the best we can do for the moment is try to give them some sort of first aid where they are," Sinha said. Teams of paramedics stretched the injured away from the site, with the worst cases being airlifted out by air force helicopters doing regular shuttle runs to the nearest hospitals. One survivor, Vinayak Sadna, said, "I ended up stuck between two seats with an iron bar crushing my hand," Sadna said. "I was trapped for three hours before I was pulled out. My wife is still missing."

ALSO ON PAGE 1: INDIAN RAIL CRASH KILLS 80

US, Japan agree to keep Marine air base on Okinawa

AP, Tokyo

Washington and Tokyo agreed yesterday to keep a contentious US Marine base in Okinawa, with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama highlighting the importance of the Japanese-American security alliance amid rising tension on the nearby Korean peninsula. In a joint statement, the two allies agreed to move the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Henoko, in a less crowded, northern part of the island. The decision is broadly in line with a 2006 deal forged with the previous Tokyo government, but it breaks Hatoyama's campaign promise and has infuriated Okinawa residents who have complained about pollution, noise and possible danger from the bases across the island. In a news conference broadcast nationwide, Hatoyama repeatedly apologized for failing to keep his pledge to move the base off the island, which hosts more than half the 47,000 US troops stationed in Japan under a 50-year-old joint security pact. "I am sincerely sorry for not being able to keep my word, and what is more, having hurt Okinawans in the end," he said.

Obama visits Louisiana to assess largest US spill ever

REUTERS, Venice, Louisiana

President Barack Obama heads to the Gulf coast yesterday to assert control over the largest oil spill in US history as energy giant BP Plc battles deep on the sea floor to plug its gushing oil well. For a few hours, Obama will visit the Louisiana coast where the gloppy oil has permeated precious wetlands, closed down a lucrative fishing trade and angered locals still on the mend from 2005's Hurricane Katrina. BP yesterday said the cost of the disaster now was \$930 million, up from a \$760 million estimate on Monday. The cost is sure to multiply with clean-up of the spill, which has now surpassed the Exxon Valdez disaster off the Alaska coast in 1989. Yesterday's trip was Obama's second visit to the Gulf in the more than five weeks since a rig explosion killed 11 workers and unleashed the oil from a well head one mile down. His tour comes just a day after he vowed to "get this fixed" as criticism swelled over what many Americans see as a slow government response to one of the country's biggest environmental catastrophes. Even his 11-year-old daughter Malia is weighing in, asking "Did you plug the hole yet, Daddy?" Obama told reporters.

Another held in New York Times Square bomb case

AP, Islamabad

A Pakistani official says another man has been detained in connection with the main suspect in the Times Square attempted car bombing. The latest suspect to be questioned is a Pakistani named Humal Akhtar. The official requested anonymity because he works for Pakistani intelligence and is not allowed to comment on the record. He gave no other details about Akhtar. The primary suspect, Pakistani-American Faisal Shahzad, is being held in the United States. Intelligence officials have said around 11 people have been detained in the case in Pakistan.

North Korea accuses South of faking warship sinking

AP, Seoul

North Korea's powerful National Defence Commission accused South Korea yesterday of faking the sinking of a warship for which Pyongyang has been blamed and warned that the Korean peninsula was heading to "the brink of war." The comments were similar to other recent pronouncements but were made at a news conference, which is an extremely rare occurrence for the commission, the most powerful organ in the North and which is chaired by leader Kim Jong Il. It came as international pressure mounted on Pyongyang, and South Korea said the premier of the North's closest ally China said his country would "defend no one" once it decides who was responsible for the sinking.



South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak, right, toasts with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, left, during a dinner at the presidential Blue House in Seoul yesterday. Premier Jiabao was quoted as saying: China will not protect those who sank a South

PHOTO: AFP

China to 'defend no one' on ship sinking

AP, Seoul

China told South Korea yesterday that it will not defend whoever it determines is responsible for the sinking of a South Korean warship that killed 46 sailors, the South Korean government said. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made the comments after meeting South Korean President Lee Myung-bak amid tensions with North Korea following the March 26 torpedo attack near the disputed sea border on the Korean peninsula. South Korea, the United States and Japan have condemned North Korea after a multinational investigation blamed Pyongyang for the attack. China, however, took a cautious position. China will decide its stance after considering international probes and the reactions of all countries, Wen told Lee, according to a briefing by presidential adviser Lee Dong-kwan. "China will defend no one" whatever the outcome may be, Wen also said, according to Lee. China's backing would be key to any bid to condemn or sanction North Korea. Beijing, a veto-wielding permanent Security Council member, so far has refrained from committing to Security Council action against Pyongyang, its neighbour and traditional ally. South Korean President Lee Myung-bak would lay out the case against North Korea during talks with Wen, a South Korean government official said earlier, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with department policy. Wen and Lee met at the Blue House a day before a three-way summit that will also include Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama.



Roger Waters takes The Wall back on road

AFP, London

Former Pink Floyd frontman Roger Waters has announced plans to take his cult rock opera "The Wall" around Europe and the United States, three decades after it was originally staged. The show, released as a double album by the British band in 1979, deals with complex issues of isolation and alienation and war, and Waters said it would be a tribute to the soldiers who have died in recent conflicts. "When we first did it, we were after the end of the Vietnam War, and we're right now in the middle of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, so there's a very powerful anti-war message in The Wall," he said at the tour launch Thursday. He added: "This production of The Wall is a lot more political, a lot more general, a lot more universal and a lot more all-encompassing than the original production was in 1980, which was largely an autobiographical exercise." "The Wall" is based around the character of Pink, who grew up fatherless in a war-ravaged nation before becoming a world-renowned rock star. The show was performed only four times during 1980 and 1981 and for the last time in 1990 in Berlin.

US toll passes 1,000 deaths in Afghanistan war

AP, Kabul

The American military death toll in Afghanistan surpassed 1,000 at a time when President Barack Obama's strategy to turn back the Taliban is facing its greatest test -- an ambitious campaign to win over a disgruntled population in the insurgents' southern heartland. More casualties are expected when the campaign kicks into high gear this summer. The results may determine the outcome of a nearly nine-year conflict that became "Obama's war" after he decided to shift the fight against Islamist militancy from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan, where Afghan insurgents find sanctuary. The grim milestone was reached when Nato reported that a service member was

killed yesterday in a roadside bombing in southern Afghanistan. The statement did not identify the victim or give the nationality. US spokesman Col Wayne Shanks said the service member was American -- the 32nd US war death this month by an Associated Press count. Already the new focus on the once-forgotten Afghan war has come at a heavy price. More than 430 of the US dead were killed after Obama took office in January 2009. The list of American service members killed in combat in Afghanistan begins with Sgt 1st Class Nathan Ross Chapman of San Antonio, Texas, a 31-year-old career Special Forces soldier ambushed on Jan. 4, 2002, after attending a meeting with Afghan leaders in Khost province. He left a

wife and two children. The base where a suicide bomber killed seven CIA employees last December bears his name. For many of the more than 94,000 US service members in Afghanistan, the 1,000-mark passed without fanfare. Captuss Nick Ziemba of Wilbraham, Massachusetts, serving with the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment in southern Afghanistan, said 1,000 was an arbitrary number and would have no impact on troop morale or operations. "We're going to continue to work," he said. The AP bases its tally on Defence Department reports of deaths suffered as a direct result of the Afghan conflict, including personnel assigned to units in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Uzbekistan.

Australia takes Japan to court over whaling

AP, Canberra

Australia said yesterday it will challenge Japan's whale hunting in the Antarctic at the International Court of Justice, a major legal escalation in its campaign to ban the practice despite Tokyo's insistence on the right to so-called scientific whaling. Japan's Foreign Ministry called the action regrettable at a time when 88 member-nations of the International Whaling Commission were discussing a proposal that could allow some limited whaling for the first time in 25 years. "We will continue to explain that the scientific whaling that we are conducting is lawful in accordance with Article 8 of the international convention for the regulation of whaling," said Japan's Foreign Ministry Deputy Press Secretary Hidenobu Sobashima. "If it goes to the court, we are prepared to explain that." Japan, Norway and Iceland, which harpoon around 2,000 whales annually, argue that many

species are abundant enough to continue hunting them. They are backed by around half of the whaling commission's members. Australia has declared the southern seas a whale sanctuary and has long lobbied for an end to whaling there. The government says Japan's hunt is in breach of international obligations, but has declined to release any details of how it will argue its case before the court in The Hague. The whaling commission has proposed a plan that would allow hunting without specifying whether it is for commercial or other purposes but under strict quotas that are lower than the current number of hunted whales. Commission Chairman Cristian Maquieira expressed optimism Thursday in Washington that the issue could be resolved at a meeting next month in Morocco. But senior US official Monica Medina said the current proposal would allow the hunting of too many whales, signalling difficult negotiations ahead.