



Give up arms or get killed

Indian army tells Kashmiri militants after deadly attack on forces

REUTERS, Srinagar
India's top military commander in Kashmir yesterday told mothers to get their militant sons to surrender or see them dead, as security forces intensified a crackdown in the disputed region after a suicide bomber killed 40 paramilitary police.



College students and teachers hold candles during a vigil to pay tribute to CRPF personnel who were killed in south Kashmir last week, in Kolkata, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

The Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant group claimed responsibility for Thursday's attack on a security convoy, but the Pakistani government has denied any link to the blast, which has ramped up tension between the nuclear-armed rivals.
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, facing a general election by May, has come under domestic pressure to exact revenge, and has said he has given a free hand to security forces to administer a "strong response".
Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan denied in a televised address that his country had anything to do with the bombing. He said Pakistan and was ready to talk with India on terrorism but would retaliate if attacked.
The Indian commander in its part of divided Kashmir, Lieutenant-

three militants, including the suspected organiser of the bombing, in a 17-hour military operation in which five troops and a civilian were also killed.
Dhillon said one of the militants killed on Monday was from Indian Kashmir while the other two were from Pakistan.
Jammu and Kashmir, a former princely state on the border between India and Pakistan, has been in dispute since the partition of India in 1947. Control is split between the two countries but each claims the region in full.
The neighbours have fought three wars since 1947, two of them over Kashmir. They have fought countless skirmishes along their de facto border, which the United Nations monitors, in the Himalayan region.
The bomb attack has sparked outrage in India with calls for revenge circulating on social media, and rising animosity towards Kashmiri Muslims in other parts of the Hindu-majority country, to the alarm of rights groups.
The government has warned against rising communal tension.

ANALYSIS: KASHMIR TERROR ATTACK

Many Indians rally behind PM Modi

REUTERS, New Delhi
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has suffered a series of political reverses in recent months but widespread anger after 40 troopers were killed in an Islamist militant attack last week could lead to a surge in support for his Hindu nationalist party.
As emotions run high following the deadliest attack on security forces in decades, Modi, who faces a general election by May, said he had given a free hand to security forces to avenge the killings in Kashmir, the region disputed with arch-foe Pakistan.
Tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals have ratcheted up and shouts of "down with Pakistan" and "blood for blood" have reverberated at funerals of the victims. Many Indians have held candle-lit marches across the country demanding the government "not forget, not forgive".
The attack has been claimed by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group but the Pakistan government has denied any responsibility.
Rakesh Kumar, a 32-year-old part-time teacher in Kasba Bonli town in the western state of Rajasthan, said he was now inclined to vote for Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the national election after backing the main opposition Congress in a state vote late last year.
"If he teaches Pakistan a lesson, support for him will rise," Kumar said in a telephone interview. "It's a matter of the country's security, and we need to see what he can do for us."
The BJP was ousted from power in three major states, including Rajasthan, in December, and Modi has been blamed for weak rural incomes and an inability to provide employment to the millions of young Indians entering the job market each year.

Mamata questions timing of attack

THE HINDU ONLINE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday raised questions on the timing of the terrorist attack at Pulwama before the Lok Sabha polls, and asked why the incident was not prevented despite "intelligence inputs."
"How have they [Pakistan] got this encouragement before elections? After parliament is over, when this type of thing happen, as a citizen of the country, I am in doubt. Why have we not taken action against Pakistan earlier? Why at the time of elections, you tell me?" Mamata questioned at the State Secretariat.
Referring to the suicide attack, the Chief Minister said that, like all in the opposition, she wants strong action against terrorists, but emphasised the need to fix responsibility.
"Why were 2005 jawans in 78 vehicles were allowed in one convoy when the government had intelligence inputs and information that attacks could happen?" she said.
The Trinamool Congress (TMC) chairperson repeatedly referred to "intelligence inputs" and, browsing through her phone, claimed to have a copy of an intelligence notification of February 8. "My phone is tapped by intelligence agencies. I am telling you officially that I have evidence of it and I will place it before you at the right time," she said.
Mamata also alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other pro-Hindutva organisations were stoking public outrage following the attack to incite unrest in West Bengal.
West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh hit back at Mamata, saying that while the entire country is demanding "tough action against the enemy", the TMC is opposing tough action against Pakistan.

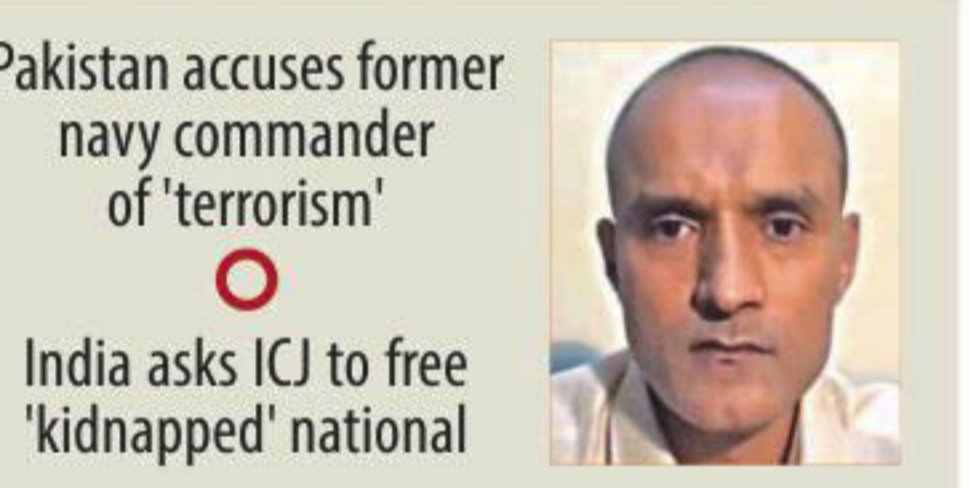
INDIAN DEATH ROW 'SPY' IN PAKISTAN

Rivals clash at UN court

AFP, The Hague

An Indian man on death row in Pakistan for alleged spying committed "terrorist acts" including targeted killings and kidnappings on New Delhi's orders "to create anarchy", Islamabad's lawyers told the UN's top court yesterday.
On the second day of hearings at the International Court of Justice, Islamabad's lawyers urged judges to dismiss India's case to save Kulbushan Sudhir Jadhav from execution, accusing New Delhi of "political theatre".
The tense legal standoff between India and Pakistan at The Hague-based ICJ coincide with a sharp spike in tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours after a suicide bombing in restive Kashmir last week.
Jadhav, 48, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court in 2017, with New Delhi dragging Islamabad to the ICJ -- set up in 1946 to rule in disputes between countries -- over the case.
A former navy commander, Jadhav was arrested in the restive southwestern province of Baluchistan in 2016 and in 2017 the ICJ issued an urgent order telling Pakistan to stay his execution.
Yesterday, Pakistan's Attorney General Anwar Mansoor Khan told ICJ judges that Jadhav ran a network "to carry out despicable terrorism and suicide bombing, targeted killing, kidnapping for ransom and targeted operations to create unrest and instability in the country".

"His unlawful activities were directed at creating anarchy in Pakistan and particularly targeted the China-Pakistan corridor," Khan told a 15-judge bench.
But Jadhav did not act on his own, Khan added. A confession by Jadhav obtained by Pakistani officials "speaks of India's state policy of sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan," he said.
"Commander Kulbushan Jadhav... entered Pakistan with a predetermined aim, on the instructions of the government of India to assist, plan and cause terrorism in Baluchistan... and other places in the country," Khan said.
India renewed its arguments Monday around the sensitive issue of Jadhav's arrest and death sentence, insisting he was not a spy and that he was kidnapped in Pakistan.
New Delhi on Monday told judges that Jadhav's rights were violated during his trial and that India had no consular access to its citizen.
India's lawyers asked judges at the ICJ, also called the World Court, to order Pakistan to free Jadhav immediately.
Jadhav was accused of working for the Indian intelligence services in Baluchistan, a province bordering Afghanistan, where Islamabad has long accused India of backing separatist rebels.
The ICJ's decision will likely come months after this week's hearings.



Pakistan accuses former navy commander of 'terrorism' India asks ICJ to free 'kidnapped' national

'Afghan peace talks will be affected'

REUTERS, Kabul

Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan yesterday said that peace talks between the United States and Afghan Taliban militants would be affected if India resorted to violence against Pakistan in response to a deadly bombing in the Kashmir region.
The remarks by Zahid Nasrullah come as tension between the nuclear-armed neighbours has risen sharply over the killing in Indian-controlled Kashmir on Thursday of 40 Indian paramilitary police in a suicide bomb attack claimed by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group.
US envoys say Pakistan has an important role to play in the Afghan peace effort, given its links to the Taliban.
Taliban representatives are due to meet US special peace envoy Zalmay Khalizad in Qatar on Feb 25 in the next round of talks to end America's longest war.



Although still tipped to win, pollsters had said before the attack that the ruling party could fall short of a majority in the general election.
No polls have been published since the attack, but political analysts say the anti-Pakistan wave has become a rallying point for the BJP.
Yogendra Yadav, a former pollster and now a political activist, said the Kashmir attack would be a distraction from economic challenges facing the government.
"Ever since those issues have emerged, there have been systematic attempts to divert attention, some by design, some by accident," he said.
"The consequence (of the attack) would be to bring the spotlight on issues of national security, which is exactly what the ruling party may have wanted."
Modi has often spoken about adopting a more muscular approach to Pakistan, after a surprise visit to the neighbour in 2015 failed to improve ties.
On Monday, he said any hesitation to take action against militancy and those who support it was akin to encouraging the menace.
"Terrorism is a very serious threat to global peace and stability," Modi said. "The brutal terrorist attack shows that the time for talks is over."



Back Guaido or 'lose everything'

Trump tells Venezuela military

AFP, Miami

US President Donald Trump on Monday urged Venezuela's military to accept opposition leader Juan Guaido's amnesty offer, or stand to "lose everything," as a crisis deepened over President Nicolas Maduro's refusal to let in desperately needed humanitarian aid.
Bringing in humanitarian aid is crucial to the viability of Guaido, who has denounced Maduro's re-election last year as fraudulent and in January declared himself interim president, a move recognised by some 50 countries.
He has given the Maduro government until Saturday to let shipments of mainly US aid into the country.
Addressing supporters and Venezuelan expatriates in Miami, Trump said he had a message for officials helping keep Maduro in place.
"The eyes of the entire world are upon you today, every day and every day in the future."
"You cannot hide from the choice that now confronts you. You can choose to accept president Guaido's generous offer of amnesty to live your life in peace with your families and your countrymen."
"Or you can choose the second path: continuing to support Maduro. If you choose this path, you will find no safe harbor, no easy exit and no way out. You will lose everything."



Activists protest against US President Donald Trump in Lafayette Square, near the White House on Monday in Washington, DC. Sixteen US states sued Trump's administration Monday over his decision to declare a national emergency to fund a wall on the southern border with Mexico, saying the move violated the constitution. PHOTO: AFP

'US can't crush us'

Huawei's founder says world can't live without it

AFP, Beijing

The founder of Chinese telecom giant Huawei has hit back at US efforts to blacklist the company, saying defiantly that the world cannot do without Huawei and its "more advanced" technology.
"There's no way the US can crush us," Ren Zhengfei said in an interview with the BBC.
"The world cannot leave us because we are more advanced."
Ren, 74, also denounced as "politically motivated" the December arrest of his daughter, Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou, who is accused of violating US sanctions against Iran and faces an extradition hearing in Canada next month.
"We object to this," he said. "But now that we've gone down this path, we'll let the courts settle it."
The normally media-shy Huawei founder has been forced to step into the

limelight in recent months as the company has come under increasing pressure over espionage concerns and the US-led campaign to persuade other countries to ban its technology.
Last year, security concerns prompted Australia to ban Huawei equipment from its future 5G network. New Zealand has also blocked its largest telecom carrier from using Huawei technology for the next generation network, while the Czech Republic has reportedly excluded it from a 20-million-euro (\$22 million) tender to build a tax portal.
US prosecutors are also charging Huawei with stealing trade secrets, saying it offered rewards to employees for stealing technology from other rivals.
Ren shrugged off the growing pressure. "If the lights go out in the West, the East will still shine," he said. "America doesn't represent the world."



200 families trapped by IS in Syria: UN rights chief

AGENCIES

Some 200 families are trapped in a shrinking area of Syria controlled by Islamic State, whose forces are stopping many from fleeing, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said yesterday, calling for the families' safe passage.
The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are on the brink of defeating IS in its last pocket in eastern Syria, the village of Baghouz, where it estimates a few hundred Islamic State fighters and about 2,000 civilians are under siege.
Many of the families "..." continue to be subjected to intensified air and ground-based strikes by the US-led Coalition forces and their SDF allies on the ground," Bachelet said in a statement.
"We understand that ISIL appears to be preventing some of them if not all of them from leaving. So that's potentially a war crime on the part of ISIL," her spokesman

Rupert Colville told a news briefing.
The SDF attacking Islamic State have an obligation under international law to take all precautions to protect civilians who are mixed in with the foreign fighters, he said.
Meanwhile, a Kurdish-led force said yesterday jihadists defending their last dreg of territory in Syria will be "killed in battle" if they don't surrender.
SDF said they are trying to evacuate civilians trapped in the last half a square kilometre (0.2 square miles) of the Islamic State group's once-sprawling "caliphate" before storming the jihadist holdout.
"We are working on sealing and evacuating civilians and then we will attack. This could happen soon," spokesman Mustafa Bali said, declining to provide more details on the operation.
IS fighters "have only two options, either they surrender or they will be killed in battle," he said.

Jihadists will be killed in battle if they don't surrender: Kurd-led force

NEWS IN brief

Turkey court upholds convictions of journos

AFP, Istanbul
A Turkish appeals court yesterday upheld jail sentences against 14 opposition journalists in a long-running case targeting the Cumhuriyet newspaper -- one of the few remaining dailies to oppose President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Istanbul appeal court's verdict means 6 of the journalists would have to go back to prison. They were remained free pending trial.



Bernie Sanders to run for US president

AFP, Washington
Senator Bernie Sanders yesterday launched his second bid for the White House, taking direct aim at Donald Trump in an announcement that calls the US president a "pathological liar." Sanders, 77, joins an already crowded field of candidates seeking to win the Democratic nomination and take on President Donald Trump in 2020. The Democratic socialist made an unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 2016, losing out to Hillary Clinton.

BITS OF HISTORY (FEBRUARY 19)

2003: A Russian-built Il-76 military transport plane carrying members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard including 18 aircrew smashed into a mountainside in southeastern Iran killing all 276 aboard.
2008: Ailing Cuban leader Fidel Castro said that he will not return to lead the communist country, retiring as president 49 years after he seized power in a revolution and became a central figure of the Cold War.