

India mourns dead soldiers

● US backs India's right to defend itself

AFP | New Delhi, India

Thousands of mourners across India attended funerals yesterday for some of the 41 soldiers killed in a suicide bombing in Indian-administered Kashmir as a round-the-clock curfew remained in force in part of the restive region.

The paramilitary troops were killed on Thursday as explosives packed in a van ripped through a convoy transporting 2,500 soldiers in the disputed Himalayan region, the deadliest attack in a three-decade-old armed conflict. TV stations showed coffins wrapped in Indian flags being carried by thousands of people across their hometowns, such as Gaya in the east and Unnao in the north, after the bodies were flown to New Delhi late Friday where Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid a wreath.

India has accused Pakistan of harbouring the militants behind the attack, which has sparked nationwide outrage and some public calls for war against the nuclear-armed arch rival to



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gesturing as he walks next to coffins with the bodies of Indian troops killed in an attack in Kashmir, at Palam airport in New Delhi.

avenge the killings.

Two buses of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in the 78-vehicle convoy were targeted by the bomber on a key highway in the Pulwama district, just outside the main city of Srinagar.

The Pakistan-based Islamist

group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) claimed responsibility, and the vehicle was driven by a known local militant named Aadil Ahmad, alias Waqas Com-mando.

The powerful blast re-

duced one of the buses to a heap of mangled debris. Pictures showed bodies and body parts strewn all over the highway.

"I feel proud of the martyrdom of my son. I expect the government of India to avenge the killings," Brish Soreng, father of one



Mourners gather to watch the cremation at the funeral for Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) trooper Kaushal Kumar Rawat in Agra

of the soldiers, told reporters.

Modi on Friday warned that those responsible had made a "big mistake" and would pay a "very heavy price".

US National Security Advisor John Bolton called his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval, prom-

ising to work with India to "ensure that Pakistan cease to be a safe haven for JeM and terrorist groups that target India, the US and others in the region," according to a readout released by India's foreign ministry yesterday.

Archaeologists discover Incan tomb

Lima, Peru

Peruvian archaeologists discovered an Incan tomb in the north of the country where an elite member of the pre-Columbian empire was buried, one of the investigators announced Friday.

The discovery was made on the Mata Indio dig site in the northern Lambayeque region, archaeologist Luis Chero told state news agency Andina.

Archaeologists believe the tomb belonged to a noble Inca based on the presence of "spondylus," a type of sea shell always present in the graves of important figures from the Incan period, which lasted from the 12th to the 16th centuries.

The tomb had been broken into multiple times, possibly in search of treasure. But despite evidence of looting, archaeologists recovered items including vases.

The tomb also had unique architecture including hollows for the placement of idols.

Chero said the findings



A recently discovered burial chamber belonging to the Inca period at the "Mata Indio" archeological site in Lambayeque region,



Pottery found in a recently discovered burial chamber



Personal funerary adornments found in a recently discovered burial chamber

"demonstrate the majesty and importance of this site," located 1,000 kilometers (620 miles)

north of the capital Lima, and 2,000 kilometers from Cusco -- capital of the Inca em-

pire which stretched from southern Colombia to central Chile.

Declawed



A Palestinian veterinarian holds down the head of the lioness "Falestine" after being declawed, at the Rafah Zoo in the southern Gaza Strip. The zoo in the war-battered Palestinian enclave is promoting itself as offering the chance to play with the 14-month-old declawed lioness, which is supposed to be placid enough to meet visitors. It is the latest unconventional animal care practice in Gaza where there is no specialised animal hospital with a few dilapidated zoos competing for business.

India's newly launched fast train hits cattle hurdle

New Delhi, India

India's first semi-high speed train broke down yesterday after colliding with a cow on the tracks, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new passenger service.

The Vande Bharat Express, touted as India's fastest train and built under the Modi government's flagship "Make in India" programme, made its first journey Friday from New Delhi to the Hindu holy city of Varanasi.



Modi (2nd L) flags off India's first semi-high speed express train Vande Bharat Express at New Delhi Railway Station

But on its return to the capital the next day a collision with a cow disrupted electricity supply to four carriages and damaged the brake system, according to Indian Railways.

"The train later experienced technical issues and was stranded on the way to Delhi," Indian Railways spokeswoman Smita Vats Sharma said.

The train reached the capital "safely" ahead of its first commercial journey on Sunday, she

added. India is struggling to upgrade its colonial-era railway system which transports 23 million travellers each day.

The locally-made express train has a rated top speed of 180 kilometres (111 miles) an hour, 20 per cent quicker than the next fastest train in service.

Railway authorities say the train is expected to reduce the 850-kilometre journey between the two cities from 14 to eight hours.