

Afghans eye power-sharing deal

AFP, Kabul

Afghan factions met in Germany on Wednesday to continue hammering out a historic power-sharing deal...

Despite assurances to the contrary, there has been concern that the Northern Alliance -- a loose coalition made up of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and other minorities -- may be reluctant to share power with Pashtun tribes in the south...

MNLF rebels free hostages

AFP, Zamboanga

Eighty-nine hostages walked free and their captors also got away Wednesday as the government agreed terms to end a deadly Muslim revolt in the southern Philippines.



Armed followers of suspended renegade Muslim Governor Nur Misuari depart from a forested area of Zamboanga City on Wednesday leaving behind the 89 people they had held captive.

to end a revolt that claimed 27 lives in two days of fighting. Asked what her government planned to do to the rebels, Arroyo said the issue was a "tactical matter" that would be left to the armed forces.

ULFA calls for peace talks

REUTERS, Guwahati

A rebel group fighting for an independent homeland in the northeastern state of Assam has called for peace talks with New Delhi, raising hopes of an end to two decades of insurgency in the tea- and oil-rich area.

ULFA Chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa said in a statement late on Tuesday. "A political dialogue is the only way out for peace in Assam and to solve the burning problem of the state," he said.

Madhuri Dixit's appeal

AFP, Bombay

Indian film star Madhuri Dixit has appealed to the government to stop the "mass murder" of elephants in northeastern India, where 31 elephants have died in the past two months.

Gunmen abduct 9 civilians in Aceh province

AFP, Banda Aceh

A group of armed men has abducted nine people including a local radio reporter in Indonesia's rebellious Aceh province, rights activists said Wednesday.

Zimbabwe dismisses UN report

AFP, Harare

The Zimbabwe government has dismissed as false a damning UN report implicating it in the looting of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the state-run Herald said Wednesday.

'Laden may have nukes'

AP, London

While there is no proof Osama bin Laden has nuclear weapons, a wide range of international analysts say he has been trying to acquire them for years and may have succeeded, or be close.

that any weapon of mass destruction had actually been produced. Many experts fear bin Laden has a "dirty bomb" or could quickly construct one.

Prison revolt ends: N Alliance

AFP, Qala-E-Jangi

Northern Alliance forces Wednesday retook the prison fortress here, wiping out the last pockets of resistance of a rebellion that left hundreds of pro-Taliban captives dead.

those who were resisting this morning," said General Abdul Atif, one of the commanders who led the assault. "In total we killed 450. None wanted to surrender."

UN accuses Y'slavia of sheltering war criminal

AFP, United Nations

UN war crimes prosecutor Carla Del Ponte accused the Yugoslav army on Tuesday of sheltering indicted Bosnian Serb war criminal Ratko Mladic, and said she knew he was living in Belgrade.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (L) shows Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra the way during an official welcoming ceremony at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Planet with atmosphere outside solar system

AFP, Washington

A team of astronomers using the Hubble Space Telescope has, for the first time, directly detected the atmosphere of a planet outside our solar system and analysed its chemical makeup, NASA announced Tuesday.

Nepal seeks arms from India to battle Maoists

AFP, New Delhi

Nepal's army chief General Prajwal S.J.B. Rana visited India earlier this week to ask for speedy delivery of military supplies in the wake of Maoist insurgent violence in the Himalayan kingdom, reports said Wednesday.

series of attacks which left 200 rebels and around 80 soldiers and police dead. The Indian Express newspaper said Wednesday the meeting between the two army chiefs was kept a closely guarded secret and was to be described as a "courtesy call".

Asia needs billions of bucks to improve environment

AP, Phnom Penh

Asian nations are suffering from an annual shortfall of at least \$30 billion and need more funding promised but not delivered -- from developed nations to turn the tide of environmental degradation.

Asia, and that the key to victory was alleviating mass poverty on the continent. "Our challenge today is poverty reduction in a socially, environmentally and economically acceptable manner," said Kim Hak-Su, executive secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in a policy paper.

delegates are also urging that developed countries honor a commitment to reach a United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance.

Indo-US talks on defence cooperation begin

AFP, New Delhi

India and the United States Wednesday began talks on long-term defence cooperation as well as the Afghanistan situation, a government spokesman said.

Former-Israeli minister jailed

AFP, Jerusalem

A Jerusalem appeal court said Wednesday it had confirmed a suspended jail sentence of 18 months passed on former transport minister Yitzhak Mordechai in April.

would raise the matter with the US, but it was not clear whether Fernandes brought up the issue with Admiral Blair during their 30-minute meeting. During his three-day trip, Blair will visit the city of Jodhpur in the desert state of Rajasthan, to meet heads of army and airforce units stationed along India's borders with Pakistan.



Indian film director Goutam Ghose speaks to spectators after he received the "Montgolfiere d'Argent" (the Silver Balloon) for his film "Dekha", in the "3 Continents" film festival in Nantes, western France on Tuesday.



US President George W. Bush (R) speaks during a ceremony honoring the 2001 US Nobel Laureates in the East Room at the White House on Tuesday in Washington DC.