

Civilians flee as India shells Pak Kashmir
Pakistan detains 100 activists of militant groups

AFP, Muzaffarabad
Indian troops shelled two southern districts of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir overnight Tuesday, sending more than 5,000 civilians fleeing the heavily militarised border region, officials said.



Amid the tense stand-off between the nuclear rivals, more than 5,000 people have fled their homes from 10 villages since Monday in the southernmost Bhimber district of Pakistani Kashmir, officials said.

official said. "People from seven other nearby villages also decided to leave their homes."
He said two school buildings had been vacated to house the evacuees.



Revellers in Times Square wave American flags which were handed out to those gathered to celebrate New Year's Eve in Times Square in New York on Monday.

Plane crashes at IBM HQs parking lot

AP, Armonk
A small plane crashed on Monday into a parking lot at IBM's headquarters, killing the pilot, officials said.

Bush praises Pakistan for its anti-terror efforts

AP, Crawford
President George W. Bush praised Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf on Monday for measures he has taken to quell terrorism, and urged Americans not to let down their guard in the new year.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that he understood his anger over the Parliament attacks, but continued to hope war would not break out between the two neighbours.

Hopes for ME peace rise as US envoy set to return

AFP, Gaza City
Hopes for a breakthrough in the stalled Middle East peace process jumped on Tuesday as US and Palestinian officials announced the return of Washington's special envoy after a dramatic drop in violence.

approved plans to defuse 15 months of violence and open the door to political negotiations.
Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said Zinni was due back Thursday to resume his mission of securing a lasting ceasefire that will allow peace talks to resume.

Red alert for summit in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu
Nepal has stationed armed guards around the clock, imposed major restrictions on traffic and will deploy helicopters later in the week to guarantee security for South Asian leaders holding a summit in the insurgency-rocked kingdom.

Cooperation (SAARC) summit, the chief security concern for Nepal's government is the Maoist rebels who broke a ceasefire in November.

accompany the motorcades, Pandey said.
The government has demolished some small homes in narrow streets near the summit hall, while police have asked families living near the site to identify any guests or tenants who live with them.

34 killed in Chinese fireworks factory explosions

AFP, Beijing
At least 34 bodies have been discovered in the rubble of a fireworks factory in eastern China flattened by series of explosions over the weekend, according to local press reports Tuesday.

US zeros in on Mullah Omar Kandahar spy chief in talks to get Taliban supremo

REUTERS, Washington
US intelligence, shows ousted Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar may be hiding near Baghdad, in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province, officials said on Monday.

list of most-wanted men from the Afghan campaign.
CNN said Marines in full combat gear appeared to be on their way to the area in support of an anti-Taliban Afghan operation aimed at capturing or killing Omar.

anywhere else."
Meanwhile, the intelligence chief of the southern Afghan city of Kandahar said on Tuesday he was in talks with local fighters in a neighbouring province to try to persuade them to hand over fugitive Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

Advance party of int'l force on way to Afghanistan

AFP, London
A small number of soldiers left on Tuesday to reinforce a UN-mandated international security force in Afghanistan, the British Ministry of Defence said.

the Gulf state of Oman, where they were due to switch to a British aircraft for the rest of the journey.

German spokesman said.
The new forces will be part of the British-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is due to comprise between 3,000 and 4,000 troops from several countries.

3 killed in New Year revelry in Philippines

AFP, Manila
At least three people were killed and 502 were injured by firecrackers and stray bullets in New Year revelry across the Philippines, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said here Tuesday.

Assam offers safe passage to militants visiting families

AFP, Guwahati
India's north eastern Assam state government on Tuesday announced a month-long safe passage for outlawed separatists who wanted to visit their families as a peace gesture aimed at building a rapport for talks.

"Militants can feel free to come to their families on the New Year, provided they don't bring arms and indulge in violent activities," Gogoi told AFP in an interview.

any solution and all problems and grievances can be solved only through meaningful political negotiations," Gogoi added.

ARGENTINA The democratically elected presidents
Timeline showing presidents: Raul Alfonsin (1983), Carlos Menem (1989), Fernando de la Rúa (1999), Ramon Puerta (2001), Eduardo Camano (interim).

Bushfires threaten Sydney

AFP, Sydney
Bushfires blazing around Sydney broke containment lines in scorching weather Tuesday to get to within 15 kilometres (nine miles) of the city centre.

an Ericson super chopper capable of dropping 9,000 litres of water on fires, fought to stop the flames spreading down to Lane Cove national park, a 10-minute drive from the city centre.

Fire Services spokesman John Winter said.
Roads were closed as thick smoke was blown towards the city.

Thousands march on Zambian court to protest vote fraud

AFP, Lusaka
Thousands of chanting protesters Tuesday marched on the building housing Zambia's High Court and Supreme Court, where opposition leaders asked a judge to block the announcement of a new president.



Pakistani paramilitary troops patrol near the last train from India near Wagah border, some 45-km from eastern city Lahore on Monday. The train service between the two nuclear arch rivals will be stopped on Tuesday as India announced suspension of cross-border train and bus services with Pakistan after the terrorist attack on their parliament on December 13.

Russian troops kill 73 rebels in Chechnya

XINHUA, Moscow
Russian federal troops killed 73 militants and mercenaries and captured 20 others in a special operation in Chechnya on Sunday, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, a Kremlin aide, said Monday.

Ebola death toll rises to 22 in Gabon, Congo

AFP, Geneva
An outbreak of Ebola fever in the border region between Gabon and Congo has killed 22 victims out of 30 known cases, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Monday.

Maldives to show its sinking feeling to SAARC members

AFP, Kathmandu
When South Asian leaders meet, they must get a sinking feeling listening to their smallest member state -- the Maldives -- which fears it may drown under the rising seas.

small and people will have to move out," a Maldivian diplomat in Colombo said.

A Sri Lankan diplomat said the grouping of the seven South Asian nations had traditionally failed to address the ocean problem faced by the Maldives.