



China turns up heat on Taiwan president as election looms

China yesterday described Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian as "immoral" and warned the island's voters not to be tempted by Chen's pro-independence platform in March 20 elections.

'Yangon, Suu Kyi ready to work for democracy'

Myanmar Prime Minister Khin Nyunt is committed to taking his country to democracy and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is ready to work with him on it, UN special envoy Razali Ismail said yesterday.

French Senate votes ban on religious insignia in schools

A controversial government bill that bans the wearing of conspicuous religious insignia in state schools cleared its final hurdle with ease in the French parliament Wednesday despite loud protests inside and outside the country.

Mass burials for Pak Shias

Grieving Shia Muslims gathered in Pakistan's violence-hit southwest city Quetta yesterday for mass burials of the nearly 50 people killed in one of the country's bloodiest-ever sectarian attacks.

Britain 'satisfied' with Pak nuclear probe: Straw

Britain is satisfied with Pakistan's cooperation in investigating nuclear proliferation by its chief nuclear scientist, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said yesterday.



Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali (R) shakes hands with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw prior to a meeting in Islamabad yesterday. Straw is on a three-day visit to Pakistan.

Pro-Maoist group calls strike in Nepal

A general strike called by union backers of Nepal's Maoist rebels emptied the streets of the Himalayan kingdom's ancient capital and shut businesses, shops and schools yesterday.



Former Chief Minister of Karnataka and Dalit Leader S. Bangarappa (L) addresses the media after joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as BJP president Venkaiah Naidu (R) gestures at party headquarters in New Delhi yesterday.

Corruption in NDA govt to be an election plank, says Sonia

Alleging that there was rampant corruption in the NDA government, Congress president Sonia Gandhi said yesterday her party would make this one of its main planks in the Lok Sabha elections.

China frees top democracy campaigner

Leading dissident Wang Youcai has been released from a Chinese jail and was Thursday on a plane to the United States following behind-the-scenes pressure from Washington, a US-based rights group told AFP.

Pakistan denies offering Nigeria nuclear power

Pakistan yesterday rejected Nigerian claims that its armed forces chief offered this week to help the African state acquire nuclear power.

Top judge attacks changes to Britain's asylum law

Britain's top judge Wednesday launched a strong attack on key reforms by Prime Minister Tony Blair's government, warning that plans to limit asylum seekers' rights of appeal were against the rule of law.

UK now relies more on foreign medics

Britain's growing dependence on foreign workers to keep its ailing National Health Service (NHS) afloat is illustrated by new figures showing that a record 44,443 health workers were signed on last year from outside the European Union (EU).

409 pharmacists, 389 physiotherapists, 384 radiographers, 201 dental surgeons, 189 psychiatrists and 208 social workers from overseas nations outside the EU.

ing hours in the NHS, with many hospitals situated in crime-ridden, run-down areas of the country.

Lankan candidates pull out of election amid death threats

Four private election monitor organisations here jointly expressed concern over the murder of two political activists in the Batticaloa Monday and said they expected more trouble.

Two killed as helicopter crashes near UK airport

Two people were killed when a civilian helicopter crashed near an airport in southern England Wednesday, police said.