

World leaders stand by Londoners

AFP, Paris

World leaders have lashed out at the bombers behind the latest attacks on London, vowing to unite against terrorism and praising Londoners' grit in the face of fear.

Tetchy relations with France were put to one side, traditional allies such as the United States, Australia and Ireland rallied behind Londoners, and the European Commission vowed to press for anti-terrorism measures across the bloc.

"This second attack unfortunately confirms that terrorism constitutes a permanent threat from which nobody is safe," the European Commission said in a statement.

The European Union had a strategy to fight terrorism, it said.

"We need to implement this without any delay."

The United States expressed "shock, outrage, horror at yet another senseless and evil act."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking in Israel ahead of talks on the Middle East conflict, said she was confident that Londoners would react to the latest incidents with the same resilience they had shown two weeks ago.

"We just live in a world where, sadly, these kinds of security measures are necessary," New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said in announcing the new police searches of subway passengers' backpacks and packages.

At the White House, spokesman Scott McClellan said US President George W. Bush has been kept closely informed about the new

bomb attacks. "We are monitoring the situation closely," he said.

French President Jacques Chirac, who had swept aside Franco-British squabbles over the future of the European Union to support Blair after the deadly July 7 attacks on London, reiterated France's solidarity with Britain.

"I wish to express to the British people and to Prime Minister Tony Blair the solidarity and support of France, and I want to reiterate our determination to fight terrorism together," he said during an official visit in the Madagascan capital Antananarivo.

King Mohammed VI of Morocco, whose country was hit by deadly urban bomb blasts two years ago, said the latest attacks were "criminal, cowardly acts that go against the noble religious ideals of peace,

tolerance, living together and the sanctity of the right to life."

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul of Turkey, whose country has also been targeted in bomb attacks, said "we condemn terrorism wherever it strikes and whatever its goals are."

And Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who was lunching with British Prime Minister Tony Blair during an official visit to London when the news broke, said his country would stand steadfast with Britain.

"Canadians stand united with the British people and people around the world in denouncing all acts of violence and terrorism," said Anne McLellan, Canada's deputy prime minister and minister of public safety and emergency preparedness.

London Muslim cleric predicted more terror attacks

AFP, Washington

Just hours before the latest attacks on London's transport system, one of Britain's most radical Muslim clerics predicted more violence against the country, The New York Times reported yesterday.

"Unless British foreign policy is changed and they withdraw forces from Iraq, I'm afraid there's going to be a lot of attacks, just the way it happened in Madrid and the way it happened in London," Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed told the paper in a telephone interview from London late Wednesday.

Three near-simultaneous blasts took place on London Underground trains at lunchtime the next day, with a fourth going off on a bus around an hour later. The bombings caused no injuries but police said they were similar to those seen on July 7, when at least 56 people died and more than 700 were hurt.



Commuters get out of their train in the Charing Cross tube station in London yesterday a day after a series of explosions on the London transport system. Separate explosions across London have taken place at Warren Street tube station, Oval tube station, Sepherds Bush tube station and Hackney road. The explosions come in the wake of the London terror attacks on London's transport systems on the 17th July 2005.

PHOTO: AFP



Pakistani men pull a car away from a burning police motorcycle, which was torched by activists of the six party Islamic alliance, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) during a demonstration in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistani Muslim hardliners protested against a crackdown on Islamic militants ordered by President Pervez Musharraf this week in response to the July 7 London bombings.

PHOTO: AFP

UK cops seek tough new powers

THE GUARDIAN, London

British police Thursday night told Tony Blair that they need sweeping new powers to counter the terrorist threat, including the right to detain a suspect for up to three months without charge instead of the current 14 days.

Senior officers also want powers to attack and close down websites, and a new criminal offence of using the internet to prepare acts of terrorism, to "suppress inappropriate internet usage".

They also want to make it a criminal offence for suspects to refuse to cooperate in giving the police full access to computer files

by refusing to disclose their encryption keys.

The police would also like to see much clearer information given to the public about the threat level, the creation of a specialist border security agency and further discussions about the use of phonetap evidence in terrorist cases.

The Association of Chief Police Officers published its list of 11 further changes in the law it wants after meeting Mr Blair and security services chiefs yesterday.

M15 and M16 wanted yesterday's meeting to discuss Britain's entire counter-terrorism strategy and how to fill the intelligence gaps exposed by the London bombings.

Whitehall officials confirmed that, as reported in yesterday's Guardian, the security and intelligence agencies want a new system of plea bargaining. Convicted terrorists would be given lighter sentences if they supplied information before their trials.

Suspects would be given the chance to provide information in "intelligence-only" interviews and none of the information would be used against them in trials.

Officials also said M15 was "in principle" in favour of the product of phone taps being used as evidence in trials.

Papers reflect on 'lucky escape'

BBC ONLINE

London's "lucky escape" sums up the feeling in most papers after four attempted bombings brought renewed fear and chaos to the capital's streets.

"Is this how we must now live?" asks the Daily Mirror next to images of armed police and terrorised Londoners.

The Guardian reports on a manhunt for four would-be "suicide bombers" said to be on the run after the attacks.

"I stared into bomber's eyes," a London Underground passenger tells the Daily Mail.

The passenger, Abisha Moyo, describes seeing a young man lying

arms outstretched and eyes closed on top of a rucksack near Shepherd's Bush station.

Many of the papers carry detailed witness accounts from the four blast scenes, with the Independent describing "screams of panic as passengers stampede to escape" one of the Tube blasts.

"We smelt burning wires," Sofiane Mohellabi, who was at the Warren Street incident, tells the paper. "People started running for their lives and screaming. I said my prayers and waited for it to happen."

The Sun, quoting police sources, says the attack was a "virtual carbon copy" of the 7 July bombings and reports that one of the devices was packed with nails.

9/11 ATTACK PLOT

India jails al-Qaeda suspect

AFP, Mumbai

An Indian court yesterday jailed a man for plotting to crash passenger jets into the House of Commons and the Tower Bridge in London on September 11, 2001.

The court in the western Indian city of Mumbai handed down a seven-year prison term to Mohammed Afroz, who had also confessed to plotting with a group of al-Qaeda operatives to attack Melbourne's Rialto Towers and the Indian parliament in 2001.

Afroz told the police in Mumbai after fleeing from Britain to India four years ago that he and seven al-Qaeda terror cell operatives planned to hijack the passenger jets at Heathrow and fly them into the two London landmarks.

The suicide squads which included men from Afghanistan and Pakistan booked themselves on two Manchester-bound flights but the group panicked and fled just before they were due to board.

Afroz was arrested at a Mumbai city hotel in October 2001 and charged under a tough anti-terror Indian law.

Indian judge A. P. Bhargale charged Afroz with criminal conspiracy, forgery and for "committing depredation on territories at peace with India," court officials said.

Rallies against Pak crackdown fall flat

REUTERS, Islamabad

An Islamist call for nationwide protests in Pakistan against a crackdown on militants after the July 7 London bombings fell flat yesterday with rallies in big cities failing to attract more than a few hundred people.

More than 300 militant suspects have been detained across Pakistan since revelations that three of the four London bombers were British Muslims of Pakistani origin who had visited the country before the attacks.

Pakistan's main alliance of Islamist parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, called for protest rallies after Friday prayers, when tens of millions of Pakistanis visit mosques.

But like previous calls for demonstrations against President Pervez Musharraf's support for the US-led "war on terror," it failed to draw big crowds.

Up to 700 Islamists, most of them teenagers or in their 20s, chanted anti-Musharraf and anti-US slogans at Islamabad's Lal or Red Mosque, which was raided by security forces searching for militants on Tuesday.

Some shouted slogans in support of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's fundamentalist Taliban government, which was overthrown by US-led forces after the al-Qaeda attacks on

US cities on Sept. 11, 2001.

The protesters pelted a police post with stones, destroyed lamp posts and set fire to a police motorcycle.

Similar rallies were held in the cities of Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar. Many of the protesters were students from Islamic schools, or madrasas, some of which are accused of being breeding grounds for A

The protests followed a televised address to the nation by Musharraf on Thursday night in which he called for a holy war against preachers of hate and announced steps to rein in militant madrasas and groups seen as having influenced the London bombers.

Young girls who took part in a protest in Islamabad in the morning, some of them not yet in their teens, carried placards saying: "Uncle Musharraf, I am not a terrorist" and "Mr Tony and Bush, we are human beings also."

Mairaj-ul-Huda, an MMA leader in Karachi, questioned why there should have been a crackdown in Pakistan.

"British nationals are involved in the London blasts," he told a rally of about 600 supporters in Karachi. "Why then is there a crackdown on religious institutions and religious scholars in Pakistan?"

AFP, London

London commuters showed signs of jitters yesterday, a day after apparent would-be suicide bombings on the capital's transit system suggested that the deadly July 7 attacks were not an isolated incident.

Whereas commuters were largely defiant after the first attacks that killed 56 people, they betrayed traces of nervousness after Thursday's failed attacks on three Underground subway trains and a double-decker bus.

"Yes, I'm afraid. I always take the Tube (subway) to go to work but now I feel more confident with the bus," said Ehelena Osaki, 24, told AFP in the City financial district.

"The bus also is worrying me a bit but you've got to get to work, no? I'm too young to die."

News that police had shot and killed a man at an Underground subway station in south London on Friday will likely do little to calm nerves.

Commuters faced disruption on the sections of London's transport network, with two Underground

lines closed and three running a restricted service. Several stations on other lines were also shut down.

On street level, buses were running a full service, but diversions were in place near two of the four sites of Thursday's incidents.

David Roberts, 29, who rode a bicycle to work, said that two incidents in as many weeks were "putting fears into people's minds."

"I wouldn't go in the Underground with my two children. I would fear too much for their safety."

Former Myanmar PM gets 44-year suspended jail

AFP, Yangon

Former Myanmar prime minister Khin Nyunt received a 44-year suspended sentence after being convicted yesterday on eight charges including bribery and corruption, legal sources said.

A secret tribunal also handed down considerably stiffer jail terms to two of Khin Nyunt's sons, just days before Southeast Asian ministers meet in Laos to discuss whether Myanmar takes over the helm of Asean next year.

"Former prime minister Khin Nyunt was sentenced today," a source closely following the trial in Yangon's notorious Insein prison told AFP. "The total punishment was 44 years on eight charges."



Activists of the Nepali Congress-Democratic Party are restrained by riot policemen outside the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) in Kathmandu yesterday where former Premier Sher Bahadur Deuba and former minister Prakash Man Singh are scheduled to appear.

PHOTO: AFP

'Iraqi forces unable to cope alone'

9 Iraqis killed in attacks

AFP, Baghdad

At least nine people, five of them policemen, were killed in Baghdad yesterday as authorities hunted for two kidnapped Algerian diplomats and the Pentagon acknowledged that only a small number of Iraqi security forces are ready to fight insurgents unaided.

The bodies of another two policemen brothers were found shot through the head and chest on wasteland in the east of the capital after being taken by gunmen from their home Thursday, the defence ministry said.

A third brother, a Sunni Arab imam who was seized with them, was later also found dead.

Five more policemen, two of them wearing civilian clothes, were killed and one wounded in three drive-by shootings in Baghdad, police said. Two civilian passers-by were also killed in one of the attacks.

Another two civilians were killed and three wounded when a bomb exploded on a highway near Latifiyah, some 40km south of the capital. Police said the explosion, which damaged three civilians cars, was meant for a nearby Iraqi army convoy which escaped unscathed.

Meanwhile, the Algerian embassy in Baghdad said it had received no word on the fate of two diplomats seized by gunmen as they were driving away from the mission Thursday.

"We are waiting, but so far we have received no news about them," said diplomat Abdel Wahab Fellah.

The abduction of Ali Belaroussi, the 62-year-old charge d'affaires, and Azzedin Belkadi, 47, marked the second high-profile kidnapping this month after Egyptian ambassador-designate Ihab al-Sharif was taken on July 2 from a Baghdad street and later reported killed.