



Pakistani men check lists of arrested students from the Red Mosque on display at a government centre in Islamabad yesterday. President Pervez Musharraf, a US-backed military ruler, fuelled Islamist anger with this week's army assault on the pro-Taliban mosque complex in Islamabad that left 86 dead in a fierce 36-hour battle, most of them militants.

Indian doctor charged with supporting terrorists

AP, Brisbane

Australian federal police yesterday charged an Indian doctor with providing "reckless" support to a terrorist organisation by giving his mobile phone SIM card to two of the suspects accused in the failed British bomb attacks.

Muhammad Haneef, 27, is the second person to be charged over the botched attacks on London and Glasgow June 29 and 30. The other is Bilal Abdullah, who is being held in London on charges of conspiring to set off explosions.

British police tracked a SIM card in the possession of one of the men accused in the failed Britain bomb attacks to Haneef, and alerted their Australian counterparts.

At a bail hearing before the Brisbane Magistrates Court, authorities claimed that Haneef gave his SIM card to suspects Sabeel and Kafeel Ahmed when he left Britain in July 2006. Haneef is a distant cousin of the Ahmed brothers, with whom he reportedly shared a house in Liverpool for up to two years before moving to Australia.

Taliban leader vows more attacks against West

21 militants killed in clashes

AFP, Washington/Kabul

A commander of Afghanistan's Taliban militant group warned Western nations in an interview broadcast on US television Friday that they can expect more attacks on their soil.

Taliban military commander Mansour Dadullah, in the interview shown on ABC News, said the July 2005 suicide attacks on London's transport system, in which 52 people died, were "not enough" and that bigger attacks were coming.

"You will, God willing, be witness to more attacks," Dadullah told a Pakistani journalist in an interview ABC said was conducted four days earlier.

The commander of the Islamic group, which was ousted from power in Afghanistan by US troops after the September 11 terror attacks of 2001,

talks about his ability to operate inside neighbouring Pakistan.

"We have many friends," he said. "It is very easy for us to go in and out of the tribal areas (at the Afghan-Pakistani border). It is no problem."

Last month, ABC broadcast a video showing Dadullah presiding over a "graduation ceremony" of fighters trained by al-Qaeda and the Taliban somewhere in the Afghan-Pakistani tribal border region on June 9.

In that video, Dadullah already threatened members of the Nato military alliance deployed in Afghanistan.

"These Americans, Canadians, British and Germans come here to Afghanistan from faraway places," Dadullah said on the video. "Why shouldn't we go after them?"

In fresh violence two police and more than 21 suspected Taliban insurgents have been killed in

clashes in southern Afghanistan, authorities said yesterday.

Fifteen insurgents were killed when they attacked Afghan and US-led coalition patrol in the same day, the coalition said in a statement.

The coalition did not give a figure for the rebel casualties, but said more than 15 insurgents had attacked the patrol in Taliban-dominated Sangin district, which has seen heavy fighting this year.

They "repelled the attack using effective small arms, machine gun and MK-19 fire," the statement said, adding that "several Taliban were killed" and "several more wounded in the brief exchange."

Almost daily insurgent attacks have rocked Helmand, where the Taliban are most active, fighting an insurgency since their ouster from power by a US-led offensive in late 2001.

In neighbouring Helmand prov-

North Korean reactor to shut down within days

Pyongyang gets oil aid as promised

AP, Pyongyang

UN inspectors arrived in North Korea yesterday to monitor the communist country's long-anticipated promise to scale back its nuclear weapons programme, while the top US nuclear envoy said he expected Pyongyang's reactor to be shut down in a matter of days.

An initial shipment of oil aid arrived hours earlier Saturday, in return for Pyongyang's pledge to close down its main nuclear reactor. The move would be the North's first step in nearly five years toward the de-nuclearisation of the peninsula.

The 10-member team from the International Atomic Energy Agency was heading directly to Yongbyon, about 100km northeast of the capital, to begin monitoring the shutdown.

"We are going directly to the nuclear site at Yongbyon," IAEA team chief Adel Tolba told broadcaster APTN outside the Pyongyang airport. Footage

showed dozens of cardboard boxes being loaded onto the back of two trucks.

Tolba said the team would stay in North Korea as long as needed to complete its work.

After years of tortuous negotiations and delays during which the North argued its nuclear programme was needed for self-defence the reclusive communist regime said earlier this month that once it received the oil shipment, it would consider halting its reactor.

North Korea did not give any timetable for starting the shutdown but top US nuclear envoy Christopher Hill said it would happen over the next few days.

"I think it's a matter of today, tomorrow, maybe Monday," Hill told reporters in the Japanese resort town of Hakone south of Tokyo.

Hill also said he expected the North to submit a list of its nuclear facilities within months, as was agreed to in February's round of talks.

"We expect the comprehensive list in a matter of several weeks, possibly several months," Hill said.

The South Korean tanker No. 9 Han Chang, carrying 6,200 tons of heavy fuel oil, arrived Saturday at the North's northeastern port of Sonbong, and the oil was being unloaded, a Unification Ministry official said. The South Korean official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Saturday's delivery was part of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil the North has been promised in exchange for shutting down the Yongbyon reactor. Pyongyang eventually will receive 1 million tons of oil for dismantling its nuclear programme.

After the IAEA team installs monitoring equipment, personnel will remain at Yongbyon to ensure the reactor remains shut down, said a diplomat familiar with North Korea's file at the IAEA.

India plans national strategy to tackle global warming

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has asked policymakers to come up with a detailed national plan by November to tackle the effects of global warming, his office said yesterday.

Singh asked the members of his Council on Climate Change -- which held its first meeting in New Delhi on Friday -- to prepare a comprehensive roadmap for energy efficiency and sustainable development.

"Our government plans to undertake a major afforestation programme called Green India for greening six million hectares (15 million hectares) of degraded forest land," the prime minister told the meeting.

Singh said it would be one of the largest such afforestation drives in the world.

India, which contributes around four percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions, is one of the world's top polluters. But it has resisted growing international pressure to make commitments to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

India, along with China, is not included for targeted emission cuts under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the only global agreement that sets specific targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Kyoto deal requires industrialized countries to reduce emissions of six greenhouse gases by 5.2 percent by a target of 2008-2012 compared with their 1990 levels.

The panel did not set any targets to limit emissions.

"We should not have any targets. We can set our targets at the national level, but it's too early to say if the council will do that," said environmentalist Sunita Narain, one of the council members.

India blames the industrial nations for the problem, and has in the past called for further commitments from them to limit greenhouse gas emissions.



PHOTO: AFP

Former chief minister of Haryana state Omprakash Chautala (L) presents a bouquet to former chief minister of Tamil Nadu J Jayalalithaa as she arrives for a meeting at party headquarters in New Delhi yesterday. The Third Front have had their proposal that India's current President APJ Abdul Kalam serve a second term rejected by the Congress and Left-wing CPI(M) and CPI parties.



Fresh fighting erupts in Lanka

AP, Colombo

Government troops clashed with separatist Tamil Tigers in northern Sri Lanka, leaving one soldier dead and 12 others wounded, while warplanes pounded a rebel camp with airstrikes Saturday, the military said.

The fighting erupted when soldiers attacked and neutralised a rebel mortar position from where they were firing at government troops, in the Vavuniya district, said military spokesman Brig Prasad Samarasinghe.

He said the ensuing confrontation killed one soldier and left 12 others wounded.

Samarasinghe did not give details of rebel casualties, but said insurgents suffered heavy losses.

Also Saturday, the air force hit a rebel camp in northern Mannar district. No casualty figures were available, said an official, speaking on condition of anonymity citing policy.

The rebels' military spokesman Rasiah Ilangitharan was not immediately available for comment.

Iraqi MPs bristle under US push for oil law

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi lawmakers insisted yesterday they will proceed at their own pace in approving a controversial oil law -- a key plank for uniting the country's warring sects -- despite growing US pressure.

"The American side is putting pressure on us to pass the law in any form. They are concerned with the form of the law rather than the content of the law," said Omar Abdul-Sattar Mahmud from the Sunni National Concord Front, the largest Sunni parliamentary bloc.

The bill talks of equitable distribution of the country's oil wealth among the nation's rival Shia, Sunni and Kurdish communities and is seen by Washington as a key plan for ending the civil conflict in the country.

Mahmud's faction, along with the followers of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, are currently boycotting parliament, but Mahmud said his members were

participating unofficially in deliberations on the draft legislation.

On Thursday, the White House published an interim report in which it faulted the Iraqi government for making satisfactory progress on only eight of 18 security and political benchmarks set by the US Congress.

Baghdad was found to have made "unsatisfactory" progress on legislation explicitly endorsed by Washington as central to efforts to quieten sectarian violence, including the oil bill.

In his first reaction to the report, Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said it was "positive" but not entirely fair.

"We thought most of the report was positive but that does not mean that the report treated all the issues with accuracy," Maliki said, adding the country's political gridlock was to be expected.

"This is normal for a complicated situation like Iraq. We cannot say that the political situation in

Iraq is easy because it is the first time in our history that we have a national unity government."

With a month-long holiday scheduled to begin in August, the assembly will be hard-pressed to meet the benchmarks by September, when the US military will publish an interim report on President George W Bush's troop "surge" strategy.

Shortly after the report was published White House spokesman Tony Snow fielded questions from reporters about the holiday, which has drawn the ire of many in the United States.

"My understanding is at this juncture they're going to take August off, but you know, they may change their minds," Snow said.

"You know, it's 130 degrees (54 Celsius) in Baghdad in August."

Reminded that the heat affected the roughly 160,000 US troops in Iraq, Snow replied: "You know, that's a good point. And it's 130 degrees for the Iraqi military."

Israel blows hot and cold towards Syria

AFP, Jerusalem

While inviting new negotiations with Syria, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gives no sign that he is prepared to withdraw from the Golan Heights -- a prerequisite for such talks to succeed.

Through intermediaries he has assured Syria that Israel has no aggressive intentions towards its neighbour, but as recently as the beginning of July the Jewish state still staged extensive military exercises on the Golan.

The plateau was seized by Israeli troops during the 1967 Six Day War, and was later annexed unilaterally in 1981.

"This policy of hot and cold has a double aim -- to reduce the chance of war, which is perfectly justified, but also to give the impression of a relaunch of the peace process with Syria, which is all just for show," said Israeli analyst Eyal Zisser.

According to Zisser, a Syria and Lebanon expert at Tel Aviv University, "neither Israel nor Syria is in a position to take essential

steps towards making peace."

Zisser believes that Olmert must announce that Israel is ready to cede the Golan, which is "out of the question because his government is so weak and because of the strength of the settlers lobby."

And Syrian President Bashar al-Assad should "make a spectacular gesture towards future normalisation, such as coming to Jerusalem," which the expert also rules out.

Nevertheless the Israeli daily Maariv on Friday said substantial progress had been made recently towards a resumption of direct negotiations, which were suspended in 2000, through contacts by intermediaries.

The newspaper said the UN envoy on the peace process, Michael Williams, had told Israel that Damascus was disposed to distancing itself from the Lebanese Shia Hezbollah militia, the Palestinian Islamists of Hamas and the Iranian Union on Thursday.

"Syria doesn't want a war and Israel doesn't want one either, but that still doesn't mean a return to the negotiating table," he said.

US kills 6 militants using 'human shields' in Iraq

14 more people die in separate attacks

AFP, Baghdad

A US air strike in Iraq's restive Diyalah province killed six alleged militants who sheltered behind women and children on the rooftop of a building on Saturday, the military said.

In several raids in the northern and central regions of Iraq, the military detained another 18 suspected militants linked to bombing cells, it said in a separate statement.

Meanwhile, at least 14 people were killed in separate attacks in Iraq on Saturday.

In an early morning raid, gunmen stormed into a house south of Baghdad and opened fire on its residents, killing eight people and wounding another three, police said.

"Insurgents raided the house of the families of two brothers, killing eight people and injuring three people," Police Lieutenant Hamza al-Yaqubi said.

The killings took place in Al-Hamriyah village, near Hillah, 70km south of Baghdad, in a mainly Shia farming region. It was not immediately clear what motivated the attack.



Olmert may offer Abbas another carrot

AFP, Jerusalem

Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas are likely to meet next week as the Israeli premier mulls further measures to bolster the Palestinian president, army radio reported yesterday.

The two leaders last met on June 25 during a four-way summit in Egypt, at which Israel announced it was unblocking part of Palestinian customs duties that it has withheld for more than a year after Islamist Hamas came to power in the Palestinian territories.

Olmert also promised to free 250 Palestinian prisoners of Abbas's Fatah party in a move aimed to bolster the moderate leader in the face of Hamas, after the Islamists seized control of the Gaza Strip on June 15.

The radio report said that at the meeting on Monday in the West Bank town of Jericho, Olmert could announce further measures beneficial to Abbas.

Among them, said, could be creating a list of Fatah members belonging to armed groups who would no longer be pursued by Israel, something Abbas has asked for.