



Pakistani army soldiers patrol near the suicide attack site near the main town Miranshah of North Waziristan Saturday. At least 62 Pakistani people were killed in three suicide attacks in the last two days following a bloody raid on Red Mosque.

Karzai slams Pak madrasas for teaching violent extremism

AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Hamid Karzai criticised some madrasas in Pakistan for teaching violent extremism yesterday, as he forgave a teenager who said he was sent across the border to carry out a suicide attack.

"Today we're facing a very regretful, painful fact," Karzai told a media conference, joined by 14-year-old Rafiq-Ullah and his father Mati-Ullah, from Pakistan's troubled Taliban-dominated South Waziristan tribal region.

"A child of Islam that his father had sent to a madrasa for education was tempted by the enemies of Islam to carry out a suicide attack," he said.

"I forgive you," Karzai told the boy -- who was detained in May in eastern Khost province, where the boy said he was sent to carry out a suicide attack on the governor -- giving him 100,000 Afghan (2,000 dollars) to travel back home.

Asked whether he had a message for Pakistan, the Afghan president said Kabul wanted good ties with Islamabad, a key US ally in its war on terror.

"The message of the Afghan people is one of kindness, the message of mercy," he said. "It's the message of having good relations, brotherly relations."

"It's the message for trade and exchange," he added, "not to deceive the children of people and encourage them to carry out suicide attacks, destroying themselves, their families and other Muslims."

Kashmir could become symbol of Indo-Pak peace: Manmohan

AFP, Jammu

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday said the disputed Kashmir region could become a symbol of cooperation with arch-rival Pakistan as he promised to continue peace talks with Islamabad.

Singh, on a day-long visit to Kashmir's Jammu region, repeated a pledge he first made in 2005 that "borders (between India and Pakistan in Kashmir) cannot be changed, but they can be made irrelevant."

The neighbours, who have fought two of their three wars since 1947 over Kashmir, both claim the region in full but administer it in part. "I hope and believe that Kashmir can, one day, become a symbol of India-Pakistan cooperation rather than of conflict."

"There can be no question of divisions or fresh partitions, but the line of control can become a line of peace," he said, referring to the de facto border that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Singh also added that New Delhi would deal firmly with an Islamic insurgency against Indian rule in its zone of Kashmir that began in 1989 and has so far claimed more than 42,000 lives, according to official figures.

"We are firm in our resolve to fight terrorism and to end the black-mail of terror in this peace-loving state," he said.

India accuses Pakistan of aiding separatists who are battling Indian troops, a charge Islamabad denies.

On the slow-moving peace talks with Pakistan on Kashmir and other disputes, started in January 2004, Singh said New Delhi would "continue our dialogue with Pakistan, despite difficulties ... because I genuinely believe that there is no alternative but to work for building peace."

"I reiterate that I am for ending a 60-year-old legacy of bitterness with Pakistan," he added.

Typhoon misses Tokyo, loses strength

AP, Tokyo

A typhoon expected to hit Tokyo missed the capital and moved toward northeastern Japan yesterday after leaving five people dead and forcing tens of thousands to evacuate.

Authorities said Typhoon Man-Yi was losing strength as it passed southwest of Tokyo, with sustained winds of 56 miles an hour.

As of midday Sunday, more than 40,000 people had been evacuated. Forecasters warned of continued heavy rains, high waves and strong winds, according to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency.

Earlier in the day, rescuers found the body of a 79-year-old farmer who was swept into a river after going to check on his rice field in Tokushima, on the western island of Shikoku, according to agency spokesman Yukihide Nakashima.

Australia not extraditing Indian doctor

AP, Brisbane

An Indian doctor accused of supporting the foiled car bomb attacks in London and Glasgow will not be extradited to Britain while he faces charges in Australia, the attorney general said yesterday.

Muhammad Haneef, 27, was charged Saturday with providing support to a terrorist organisation by giving his mobile phone SIM card to British suspects Sabeel and Kafeel Ahmed when he moved to Australia in July 2006. He faces a maximum of 15 years in prison if convicted.

Attorney General Philip Ruddock said the case would most likely be tried in Australia.

"In relation to extradition, Australia would not normally surrender a person for extradition where there were outstanding matters that had to be dealt with here," Ruddock told Network Ten.

Haneef was ordered to remain in custody in the eastern city of Brisbane until at least Monday while a magistrate decides whether to release him on bail.

Under Australian laws, bail can only be granted to those charged with terror-related offences in "exceptional circumstances."

Haneef's wife maintained her husband was innocent and pleaded with authorities to help free him, Indian media reported Sunday.

Britain urged to legalise illegal immigrants

AFP, London

Half a million illegal immigrants should be given the right to stay in Britain, a leading centre-left think-tank said yesterday, arguing that to do so would benefit the country's economy.

The Institute for Public Policy Research, favoured by former prime minister Tony Blair, said that regulation could swell Britain's coffers by about one billion pounds (1.47 billion euros, two billion dollars) per year.

Forcible deportation, on the other hand, would cost the country 4.7 billion pounds and was not feasible, it added, citing government estimates that it could take up to 30 years to complete at current rates of removal.

Authorities said Typhoon Man-Yi was losing strength as it passed southwest of Tokyo, with sustained winds of 56 miles an hour.

As of midday Sunday, more than 40,000 people had been evacuated.

Forecasters warned of continued heavy rains, high waves and strong winds, according to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency.

"The simple truth is that we are not going to deport hundreds of thousands of people from the UK," he said in a statement.

"Our economy would shrink and we would notice it straightaway in uncleaned offices, dirty streets and unstaffed pubs and clubs.

Tribal militants scrap peace accord with Pakistan govt

AFP, Miranshah

hunt down foreign militants.

Council leaders released the statement Sunday to protest new troop movements, amid sharply heightened tensions after last week's army attack on Islamabad's pro-Taliban Red Mosque, which killed 80 people, mostly militants.

After the raid, Musharraf vowed to crack down on extremists and deployed extra troops to areas including the Swat district of North West Frontier Province and North Waziristan's Dera Ismail Khan area.

Suicide attacks using explosives-packed cars against military convoys in both regions killed more than 40 people and wounded scores more at the weekend.

North Waziristan militant commander Abdullah Farhad had on Saturday threatened "guerrilla war" if government troops did not abandon checkpoints by Sunday in a dispute that has been brewing for weeks.

Sunday's pamphlets said tribal elders would refuse dialogue with authorities who had failed to pull back troops from up to 25 checkpoints.

"We had signed the agreement for the safety and protection of the life and property of our people," the statement said. "But the government forces continued to launch attacks on the Taliban and have killed a number of people."

"The decision we are taking today is in the interest of the people."

Los Angeles archdiocese to pay \$660m for abuse

AP, Los Angeles

The nation's largest Catholic archdiocese has settled its abuse cases for \$660 million, by far the largest payout in the church's sexual abuse scandal, The Associated Press has learned.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the plaintiffs reached the deal Saturday, said Ray Boucher, the lead plaintiff's attorney. The archdiocese and the plaintiffs will release a statement Sunday morning and hold a news conference Monday, he said.

An anonymous source with knowledge of the deal placed its value at \$660 million, by far the largest payout in the church's sexual abuse scandal. The source spoke on condition of anonymity because the settlement had not been officially announced.

'US will remain Britain's closest ally'

AFP, London

Foreign Secretary David Miliband insisted yesterday that the United States would remain Britain's most important ally under new Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

After signals that London would distance itself Washington under Brown's premiership, Miliband sought to quash such notions, calling Britain's relationship with the United States "vital."

"With a new Brown government some people are looking for evidence that our alliance is breaking up," Miliband wrote in the News of the World, Britain's biggest-selling newspaper.

Most foreign insurgents in Iraq are Saudis

AFP, Washington

Most foreign fighters and suicide bombers in Iraq come from Saudi Arabia, despite attempts by US officials to portray Syria and Iran as the main culprits of violence, The Los Angeles Times reported yesterday.

Citing an unnamed senior US military officer and Iraqi lawmakers, the newspaper said about 45 percent of all foreign militants targeting US troops and Iraqi security forces were from Saudi Arabia, 15 percent from Syria and Lebanon, and 10 percent from North Africa.

Official US military figures made available to The Times also show that nearly half of the 135 foreigners in US detention facilities in Iraq are Saudis, the report said.

8 dead in attacks in eastern Afghanistan

AFP, Khost

governor Mohammad Akram Khpalwak.

To the north in neighbouring Paktia province, unknown assailants opened fire on the chief of Showak district late Saturday, gunning down two of his bodyguards, deputy provincial police chief Ghulam Dastgir told AFP.

In volatile southern Helmand province, where insurgent attacks occur almost daily, three "very important" Taliban figures were killed on Saturday in clashes with security forces, the defence ministry said in a statement.

And a suspected suicide bomber died late Saturday in eastern Khost province when the explosives he was carrying apparently blew up prematurely, a local spokesman said.

More than 50,000 Western troops, the bulk of them under a Nato-led International Security Assistance Force, are deployed in Afghanistan.

India set to elect first female president amid mudslinging

AFP, New Delhi

India is set to elect its first female head of state in a two-way election this week, the run-up to which has been the most vitriolic in recent memory, analysts say.

Pratibha Patil, 72, nominated by the Congress-led government, is seen as a shoo-in thanks to support from the ruling coalition and its supporters in the secret ballot to be held on Thursday by an electoral college made up of state and federal lawmakers.

But accusations that Patil shielded members of her family over accusations of murder and abetting suicide have led to charges by the media that her term could be undermined by scandal.

Patil's candidature for the largely ceremonial post was announced as opinion polls showed most Indians favoured a second term for the incumbent president Abdul Kalam, who was the previous Hindu nationalist government's choice.

But Kalam pulled out of the presidential race after the Congress and the opposition Hindu nationalist-dominated alliance could not agree on fielding him for another term.

Though the Congress defended its selection, saying it was giving a woman the chance to occupy the top post in a country where women face heavy discrimination, the opposition said Patil was named due to her loyalty to India's Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.



Sri Lankan government soldiers pose with national (L) and Tamil Tiger (R) flags atop the Thoppigala Rock, some 270km northeast of Colombo Saturday. Security forces captured Thoppigala, the last bastion of LTTE guerrillas in eastern Sri Lanka, following months of heavy fighting.

AFP, Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels killed at least 16 government soldiers for the loss of three of their own fighters in heavy clashes in northern Sri Lanka Saturday, the guerrillas said.

The two sides claimed to have inflicted heavy casualties in the weekend fighting with the military saying at least 16 government soldiers and three rebels were killed.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they resisted a two-pronged military assault and captured several bodies of Sri Lankan soldiers killed in the pre-dawn fighting.

"More than 16 Sri Lankan army troops were killed and around 45 others were injured in the clashes," the Tigers said in a statement.

The defence ministry admitted heavy fighting and placed its own losses at least 10 soldiers killed and 34 wounded. The ministry said "a large number" of Tigers were also killed.

Meanwhile, four civilians were bound and shot dead execution-style in northern Sri Lanka near the scene of heavy battles between troops and Tamil rebels, a police official said Sunday.

The bodies of the four were found shot in the head Sunday with their hands tied behind their backs in Vavuniya district.

"Four people were found shot dead at Vavuniya," said a police official in Vavuniya, 260km north of Colombo.

"An investigation is under way," he said adding that it was unclear who was behind the killings.

The four were killed in the same region where security forces and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fought pitched battles on Saturday, officials said.

Sri Lankan troops used war planes and long-range weapons to attack suspected Tamil Tiger positions as fresh fighting broke out early Saturday, the ministry said.

Fighter jets pounded suspected