



French President Nicolas Sarkozy (L) talks with Indian Prime minister Manmohan Singh during an agreement signing ceremony in New Delhi yesterday.

Annan pushes for talks to end political turmoil in Kenya

15 killed in fresh clashes

AFP, Nairobi

Fresh clashes killed 15 people in Kenya, police said yesterday.

first meeting between President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga on Thursday...

AFP yesterday. "Five people have been hacked to death in Molo and Nakuru..."



An Indian health worker sprays disinfectant on the tyres of cars coming from a bird flu affected area as they cross the district border close to Kolkata yesterday.

Pak troops kill 30 militants

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani troops battled Islamic militants during a search for several hijacked trucks full of ammunition yesterday...

Helicopter gunships were also involved in the clashes in Dara Adam Khel, a lawless area of North West Frontier Province...

weapons bazaar -- to find four trucks containing munitions and supplies, the army said.

"Reportedly, 25-30 miscreants have been killed... Two Frontier Corps personnel embraced shahadat (martyrdom) and 10 others were injured..."

Chief military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas said skirmishes were continuing in the region including near a landmark Japanese-built tunnel leading from Peshawar to the northwestern city of Kohat.

Residents said all markets were closed and gunship helicopters were pounding militant bunkers in the hills around the arms bazaar and the tunnel.

Security officials said Dara Adam Khel had recently become a stronghold of the banned Sunni Muslim extremist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which has links to al-Qaeda.

Separately, troops yesterday continued to comb mountains in the tribal region of South Waziristan around the hideout of Islamist warlord Baitullah Mehsud, officials said.

Mehsud is accused by Pakistani officials and the US Central Intelligence Agency of orchestrating Bhutto's killing in a gun and suicide bomb attack at a political rally on December 27.



British Prime Minister Gordon Brown talks with Queen Rania of Jordan during the session "Corporate Global Citizenship in the 21st Century" at the World Economic Forum in Davos yesterday.

Egypt sets deadline for Gaza closure

AFP, Cairo

Egypt set a deadline yesterday for the border with Gaza to be resealed and began herding Palestinians back into the territory...

Egyptian security forces announced by loudspeaker in towns near the border with the Gaza Strip that the frontier would be closed from 1300 GMT...

At the main crossing point in the divided border town of Rafah, Egyptian security forces used electric batons to push back those trying to get into Egypt...

Egyptian armoured vehicles arrived with coils of barbed wire in readiness to reseal the numerous other border breaches through which Palestinians continued to cross into Egypt unimpeded.

However, for the first time in more than 48 hours, the flow of people back into Gaza was greater, many of them carrying boxes of foodstuffs, consumer goods and jerry cans of petrol.

Egyptian security forces also barred trucks of goods carrying everything from blankets to motorbikes from crossing the Suez Canal on their way from Cairo to replenish Rafah's depleted stocks...

A security source said the deadline was intended to give the hundreds of thousands of Gazans who have crossed over since militants blew holes in the border fence on Tuesday night sufficient time to return home.

"I only spent an hour there because the Egyptians told us that the frontier would be closed..."

Bush to visit five African countries

AFP, Washington

President George W Bush will travel to five African nations next month -- Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana, and Liberia -- on a trip expected to address issues including economic development and AIDS...

Afghans protest 'killing' of cops by US-led troops

AFP, Kabul

More than 300 demonstrators marched through a southern Afghan town for the second day yesterday in protest against the alleged killing of nine policemen and a woman in a US military operation, locals said.

The US-led coalition said it was investigating Thursday's deaths during a raid aimed at a Taliban commander, but added that its soldiers had only opened fire on men who were shooting at them and believed they were insurgents.

The protesters took to the streets after the burial of some of the policemen killed in the operation in the small town of Ghazni, about 100 kilometres south of Kabul.

"They are chanting, 'Death of America', 'Death to (President Hamid) Karzai' and of the governor..."

About 300 people took part in the demonstration, which ended at the provincial government headquarters, he said.

The deputy provincial police chief, Mohammad Zaman, confirmed the protest but said it was peaceful.

It follows a similar demonstration Thursday, hours after news of the killings emerged.

Afghan police and government officials said US-led coalition soldiers had opened fire on a group of policemen who had arrived at the scene of an operation against a Taliban commander linked to suicide bombings.

Helicopters called into the fight fired at several buildings, residents said.

The coalition conceded Friday that four Afghan police were wounded and had been taken to a military facility. But it was not clear who had wounded them, a spokesman said.

Indian PM hopes nuke talks with IAEA will conclude soon

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday said talks with the UN's nuclear watchdog on a pact allowing New Delhi to buy nuclear power plants and technology will be soon completed.

Indian negotiators have held several rounds of talks at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since last month.

The IAEA negotiations follow India and the United States signing a pact in 2006 reversing India's status as a nuclear pariah after three decades of international sanctions.

"One must recognise that international negotiations do take time," Singh told reporters in New Delhi at a joint press conference with visiting French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"Our discussions in the International Atomic Energy Agency are moving forward. It is our sincere hope that they can be concluded successfully without further delay."

India, which has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, needs to clear hurdles with the IAEA and the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group as part of the landmark nuclear cooperation deal with the United States.

The civilian nuclear energy deal -- regarded as Singh's main foreign policy achievement -- is however facing domestic pressure from the government's Communist allies who say the pact comprises India's strategic programme.

Sarkozy said he understood India's need to for nuclear power, and pushed France's position as a potential technology supplier.

"If we do not let India accede to civilian nuclear energy it will have to go to more polluting means," he said.

French nuclear technology was the safest in the world, Sarkozy said, adding France would help India get the IAEA waiver.

The French nuclear energy group Areva estimates that India, currently the fourth biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, will need 25 to 30 nuclear reactors.

As well as the United States and France, Russia is also eyeing fuel-hungry India as a major atomic energy market.

In an e-mail interview with the Hindustan Times newspaper published Friday, Sarkozy said India and France were "on the verge" of an agreement to engage in civil nuclear energy cooperation.

US not interested in permanent Iraq bases, says Gates

AFP, Washington

The United States has no interest in setting up permanent bases in Iraq, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said on Thursday, playing down concerns raised by negotiations on the future US military presence in Iraq.

Democratic critics have expressed fears that a planned "Status of Forces Agreement" (Sofa) with Iraq will tie the hands of future US presidents by committing the United States to a long-term military presence.

But Gates said, "I think it is pretty clear that such an agreement would not talk about force levels. It would not involve -- we have no interest in permanent bases," he told reporters.

"I think the way to think about the framework agreement is an approach to normalizing the relationship between the United States and Iraq," he added.

Some Democrats, including Senator Joe Biden, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, have demanded that any agreement be sent to the US Congress for approval.

Gates insisted discussions of the SOFA have barely begun and it is not yet clear what form it will take.

"I do know that there's a strong commitment inside the administration to consult very closely with the Congress on this," Gates said.

"But, you know, without any idea of what the form of an agreement is going to be right now, I think it's premature to talk about congressional agreement or executive agreement. I think we just don't know," he said.

State Department spokesman Tom Casey earlier said negotiations on a status of forces agreement with Iraq aimed to keep security options open beyond 2008 when the UN mandate for US forces ends.

For example, he added, it would give US forces the option of continuing to hunt members of Al-Qaeda and train Iraqi troops.

Such an agreement "is very much the model that we use for regular bilateral relations between the United States and most other countries in the world," Casey said.

When asked if the agreement would include any reference to permanent bases, he replied: "We're not seeking permanent bases in Iraq. That's been a clear matter of policy for some time. No, the agreement is not a basing agreement."

Advertisement for Khulna University of Applied Sciences (KUAS) featuring a table of fees and a list of courses.

Advertisement for GMG Airlines celebrating ten years, featuring flight details and a promotional offer for March 2008.