



An Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier searches passengers at a checkpoint in the Arghandab district near Kandahar yesterday. About 500 Taliban massed near Kandahar city on Monday as Afghan and Nato security forces sent reinforcements after a brazen rebel attack that busted more than 1,000 prisoners out of jail.

Gunmen kill 4 Shia Muslims in Pakistan

AP, Islamabad
Gunmen opened fire on a vehicle carrying four Shia Muslims in northwestern Pakistan Tuesday, killing them all, officials said. It was unclear whether the attack was sectarian.
It was not immediately known who killed the men as they drove through the town of Hangu, local police official Umar Hayyat said. Police were investigating, he said.
Ghani ur-Rahman, Hangu's former mayor, said the four men were money changers, but the motive behind the attack was unclear.
Hangu and other towns in northwest Pakistan bordering Afghanistan have seen many sectarian attacks recently. On Monday, a bomb exploded at a Shia mosque in the town of Dera Ismail Khan, killing four worshippers.
Scores of people have reportedly died in months of intermittent fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Kurram, a mountain valley next to the frontier.

Nepali Maoists issue 24-hr ultimatum to PM

THE KATHMANDU POST/ ANN, Kathmandu
Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist has given a 24-hour ultimatum to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to facilitate formation of the next government.
In a meeting with PM Koirala at his official residence in Baluwatar on Monday, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal said Maoists will quit the government if consensus is not reached on formation of the next government under Maoist leadership by Tuesday evening.
'We will pull out of the government if Prime Minister Koirala doesn't prepare the environment for us to form the government,' said senior Maoist leader Dr Baburam Bhattarai, who accompanied Dahal.
'PM Koirala must step down for us to form the next government.'

Nepali Congress is intentionally prolonging the government formation process, Bhattarai said.
During the meeting, Dahal said the issues of people's liberation army (PLA) management and return of confiscated property should have been settled before the Constituent Assembly (CA) election. He (Dahal) told Koirala that Maoists would not accept any condition before formation of the next government.
'All the issues raised by Nepali Congress (NC) can be dealt with along with the formation of the next government,' Bhattarai said, adding, 'But the conditions shouldn't obstruct government formation.'
On the question of president of the republic, Dahal proposed that the president be elected by a majority vote in the constituent assembly if consensus is not reached.
'We will never accept Girija Prasad Koirala or Madhav Kumar Nepal as the presidential candidate in the name of power sharing,' Bhattarai said, questioning, 'On what basis can they claim the top post?'
He said Maoists, being the largest political party, have a legitimate claim over both the post-president and prime minister.
'But we are expressing our generosity by proposing a candidate from a smaller political party for president,' he said.
PM Koirala reiterated that Maoists should first settle all other issues including management of arms and armies, return of confiscated property and dissolution of the military structure of the Young Communist League, a Maoist affiliated youth organisation, before claiming the right to form the next government.
Koirala told Dahal that the people's mandate was for consensual politics.
Koirala's party, Nepali Congress held an urgent meeting of its senior leaders and the members represented in the three-party joint task team to thrash out a future strategy following the Maoist ultimatum.
In the meeting, the leaders reiterated they could not support Maoists in formation of a new government until the former rebels commit themselves to implementing past agreements.
The leaders also decided to stick to the party's stance despite the Maoist threat to quit the government.
'We are clear that Maoists should form the government as the largest party, but that does not mean they should not abide by any agreement signed in the past and we should always surrender to their threats,' said NC spokesperson Arjun Narsing KC, after the meeting.

Taliban prepare for battle outside Kandahar

Militants destroyed bridges around nine or 10 villages, Mohammad said.
'Last night the people were afraid, and families on tractors, trucks and taxis fled the area,' said Mohammad. 'Small bridges inside the villages have been destroyed.'
The Afghan army flew four plane loads of soldiers to Kandahar from the capital, Kabul, on Tuesday. Canadian forces have also moved in to the region.
'When we get permission from commanders, we will attack the Taliban,' Mohammad said.
The Taliban assault Monday on the outskirts of Kandahar was the latest display of strength by the militants despite a record number of US and Nato troops in the country.

No threat of war with Pakistan

Says Afghan spokesman
AFP, Kabul
A spokesman for President Hamid Karzai yesterday downplayed the Afghan leader's threat to attack militants in Pakistan, saying that there was no intention to start a war with the neighbouring country.
US-backed Karzai said this weekend that his war-ravaged country would be justified in striking at Taliban insurgents on Pakistani soil in what he called self-defence.
'The president is not announcing that we are going to war with Pakistan. We do not intend to go to war with Pakistan. We believe in good relations,' Karzai's spokesman Homayun Hamidzada told reporters in Kabul.
'The president used that strong language to convey a message. Pakistan is a sovereign state and should behave responsibly,' he added.
Hamidzada said Kabul expected Islamabad, which is a fellow ally in the US-led 'war on terror,' to stop Taliban militants crossing the border into Afghanistan.
'As a sovereign nation you would not allow any other elements to use your territory against another sovereign state and Pakistan is a sovereign state,' Hamidzada said.
He added that Pakistan 'needs to make sure that their territory is not used by terrorist elements against Afghanistan.'
Pakistan summoned the Afghan ambassador to the foreign office on Monday to receive a strong protest over Karzai's comments. It also pledged to defend its sovereignty.



Indian supporters of the Gorkha People's Liberation Front (GJM) shout slogans as they stage a protest in Darjeeling, some 85km from Siliguri yesterday during the first day of an indefinite strike in the areas of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Mirik and the nearby hills.



Indian school-goers and others cross a flooded street in Kolkata yesterday. An overnight rainfall flooded streets of the city and caused massive traffic disruptions as flash floods and mudslides unleashed by heavy monsoon rains have claimed 25 lives and displaced 200,000 people in northeastern India.

Fresh clashes in Lanka: 13 killed

Council planned to save civilians
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Colombo
Even as Sri Lanka's defence ministry yesterday said that 11 Tamil Tigers and two soldiers had been killed in two separate gun battles in the northwestern district of Mannar, a state-run newspaper reported that the president is keen on setting up a security council to protect civilians from terrorism.
The ministry issued a statement saying troops attacked and destroyed a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) bunker and killed six rebels in a gun battle southwest of Periyamadhu in Mannar on Monday.
It added that, in a separate incident, soldiers attacked two LTTE bunkers in Mullikkandal area around 9.45 am on Monday, killing five Tamil Tigers. Two soldiers were also killed while another suffered injuries.
There was no immediate reaction from the rebels.
Quoting official sources, the Daily News reported that President Mahinda Rajapaksa had decided 'to invite all parties to establish an All Party People's Security Council' to protect civilians.
According to the report, the move is aimed at 'reaching an all party consensus to protect the civilian polity from the threat of the LTTE'.
'Preliminary talks pertaining to the matter are expected to commence next week,' it added.
Over 200 civilians have been killed in a series of bomb blasts since the beginning of the year.

Pranab meets Karat to push nuke deal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi
External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee met CPI-M leader Prakash Karat for half an hour Monday night and sought the Left's support in finalising an India-specific safeguards agreement with the IAEA - a crucial step in the conclusion of its nuclear deal with the United States.
Mukherjee, who heads the 15-member United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-Left nuclear panel, had a one-hour talk with Karat during which he reiterated the government's request to allow them to finalise the safeguards agreement that is applicable only to India before International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Mohamed El Baradei completes his term in July, well placed sources confirmed to IANS.
Mukherjee is believed to have told Karat that the communists' apprehension that finalising the IAEA pact would put the politically contentious agreement on auto pilots 'wrong'.
The UPA-Left panel holds a crucial meeting Wednesday. According to the sources, Mukherjee, considered the most important member of the cabinet after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, told Karat that the Left has to 'trust' the government and that the government has not taken any steps without the communist allies' consent so far.
Karat reportedly told Mukherjee that the Left still has apprehensions over the deal but he would discuss the minister's new appeal with the other Left allies and get back to the government. The meeting was held from 8.30-9.30 p.m. at Mukherjee's residence, the sources said.

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6 'suicide bombers' held during Pakistan march

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistani authorities arrested six would-be suicide bombers last week during a protest by lawyers demanding the reinstatement of sacked judges, a top official said yesterday.
They also seized a quantity of explosives and arrested several other people during the so-called 'long march,' Rehman Malik, the prime minister's advisor for the interior, told parliament.
'Authorities have arrested six suicide bombers during the long march,' Malik said. 'We have also seized some 45 kilograms (99 pounds) of explosives and arrested few people from Lahore.'
Malik gave no further details of the plot to attack the march, which was called by lawyers and activists to urge the government to restore judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf under emergency rule in November.
The march ended peacefully in Islamabad on Saturday, with former premier Nawaz Sharif telling a crowd of tens of thousands of people that Musharraf should be made to 'pay for his crimes.'
'The government is not sleeping. We are doing our best to break their (militants) network and punish the culprits,' Malik said on Tuesday.

Myanmar health system 'back on its feet': WHO

AFP, Geneva
The World Health Organisation said yesterday that the health system in cyclone-battered Myanmar was 'back on its feet,' but warned that disease risks remained.
'I think we were able to provide a response that helped the health system back on its feet,' said WHO health cluster coordinator Rudi Coninx, who has just spent several weeks in the country.
The WHO said it had played a key role in a comprehensive impact assessment conducted by the UN, the regional Asean grouping and

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