

Child traffickers arrested in India flood zone

Police in India's flood-hit north said yesterday they had stepped up operations and made several arrests to prevent an increase in child trafficking in the devastated region.

US did not warn of any strike, says Pakistan

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan said Thursday it was not warned about a suspected US missile strike in its northwest that came the same day a top American official assured Pakistani leaders of US respect for the Muslim nation's sovereignty.

Two intelligence officials told The Associated Press that the Wednesday missile strike targeted a compound in South Waziristan used by Taliban militants and Hezbi-Islami, another group involved in escalating attacks in Afghanistan.

lawless tribal regions near the Afghan border as bases from which to plan attacks on American and Nato forces in Afghanistan. A spate of alleged missile strikes, as well as the ground assault, signal American impatience with Pakistani progress in clearing out such sanctuaries.

Pakistan insists it is doing all it can, suffering heavy military losses as a result, and that unilateral attacks will simply deepen tribal sympathy for militants.



A Pakistani protester holds a burning US flag during a protest in Lahore yesterday. At least six people were killed when four missiles fired by suspected US drones on Wednesday struck a compound in a northwestern Pakistani tribal area near the Afghan border.



Pakistani anti and pro-government lawyers scuffle at a local court during a protest in Multan yesterday. Pakistani lawyers held protests in several cities demanding the government to reinstate judges, including Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, sacked by former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf.

300 Pak schoolchildren taken hostage by militants, freed by locals

PTI, Islamabad

About 300 students held hostage by three would-be suicide bombers at a school in northwestern Pakistan today were freed by armed local residents who stormed the building killing two of the militants in a gun battle.

explosives strapped to their bodies and they blew up during the gun battle. Police and local residents were not certain whether the militants blew themselves up or had exploded after being hit by bullets.

India, Nepal to reactivate committee on water

PTI, New Delhi

With India and Nepal agreeing to check recurrence of floods in Kosi river and putting on fast track projects to utilise water for irrigation and power generation, top officials of the two neighbours will meet this month in Kathmandu to streamline the process.

discuss various issues, including project reports on two upcoming dams in Nepal and means to control floods. Secretary, Water Resources U N Panjjar, will lead the Indian side.

has been set up to keep both the governments updated on issues of water resources at the highest level. The secretary-level committee is also part of the three-level system.

Hellish times for India's Christians

THE STRAITS TIMES/ ANN, New Delhi

A combustible mix of politics and religious zeal has been blamed for a surge in attacks on Christians in several Indian states. A pentecost group is at the centre of the violence that has rocked the southern coastal city of Mangalore, in Karnataka, since Sunday, less than a month after eastern Orissa state witnessed similar violence against Christians.

Catholics in Mangalore. Mangalore has the second-largest Christian population in the state after the capital Bangalore. Nearly a dozen churches, shops and Christian establishments have been attacked by Hindu fundamentalist groups although there have been no deaths reported so far, unlike in Orissa where 18 people have been killed and more than 20,000 made homeless.

While Bishop Aloysius D'Souza of Mangalore and other Christian groups have criticised the Karnataka state administration for its failure to protect the Church and other establishments, there was criticism of the NLF within the Christian community. Accusing the group of "poaching" Catholics, particularly those belonging to poorer classes, a Catholic priest was quoted by The Indian Express newspaper as saying "We are facing the music for the wrongs committed by New Life."

India, China hold boundary talks

PTI, Beijing

After a gap of one year, India and China is holding a fresh round of boundary talks in Beijing on Thursday amid strains in ties in the wake of attempts by Beijing to block a consensus on the India-specific waiver at the NSG meet in Vienna earlier this month. National Security Adviser MK Narayanan is heading the Indian delegation at the two-day talks while the Chinese side will be represented by State Counsellor Dai Bingguo.

dispute that was affecting Sino-Indian ties. This is the 12th round of boundary negotiations between the two sides since they appointed Special Representatives in 2003 to resolve the decades-old issue from a political perspective after the diplomatic parleys failed to yield results.

Lanka orders Tamils in Colombo to register

AP, Colombo

Sri Lankan authorities yesterday ordered tens of thousands of ethnic Tamils living in Colombo to register with police as fighting in the country's civil war grew fiercer. Meanwhile, the military said fresh fighting along the northern front lines killed 25 rebels and one soldier, while brushing off reports the Tamil Tigers had unleashed deadly chemical weapons against advancing troops.

scores of civilians far from the war zone. Authorities established a maze of roadblocks and checkpoints and continuously changed traffic patterns in Colombo in an effort to prevent new attacks. They have also required all residents of the north to register with the police upon their arrival in the city. Police spokesman Ranjith Gunasekera announced Thursday that every Sri Lankan who came to Colombo from the north in the past five years would have to reregister with police in a mass registration drive Sunday at police stations and other designated centers across the city.

districts of Kilinochchi, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar and Mullaitivu, he said. The overwhelming majority of those people are ethnic Tamils. "We will not harass people, but we will request 'Please come,' Gunasekera said, adding that the exercise was simply an effort by authorities to update their records. He did not say what would happen to those who fail to register. Ethnic Tamils living in the capital have complained of frequent police raids, harassment and arbitrary detentions as the fighting between government forces, dominated by the ethnic Sinhalese majority, and the Tamil Tigers escalated in recent years.

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