



PHOTO: AFP
A mother clutching her child cries as she and other survivors of Superferry 9 arrive at the port of Zamboanga yesterday after being rescued from sea after the ferry sank early yesterday while a handout photo shows Superferry 9 sailing along Manila Bay.

Mullen, Gates push for joint US-Pak operation against Taliban

ANI, Washington

Stressing on the need for destroying militant safe havens in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen has said Islamabad is a key ally in the new American strategy to defeat the Taliban.

Terming the joint US-Pak policy against extremism as a 'pincer approach', Admiral Mullen said Pakistan's efforts against the militants in FATA should be backed by applying pressure from the Afghan side.

"And that kind of continuing pressure that eventually will provide security for their own people so that, in fact, their own people, who now protect al-Qaeda, turn them out. This 'pincer approach' would squeeze the militants from both sides, although it's going to take some time to create that pressure," Admiral Mullen said in a policy briefing at the Pentagon.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said

despite FATA being outside the jurisdiction of America's Afghan command, the overall strategy for the region did address this issue.

"This strategy treats the issue of militancy as a regional problem, and therefore, it covers both Afghanistan and Pakistan," The Dawn quoted Gates, as saying.

Both Gates and Admiral Mullen rejected the notion that it is time for the US to leave Afghanistan and focus on anti-terrorist operations from a distance.

"I absolutely do not think it is time to get out of Afghanistan. And, I think that the notion that you can conduct a purely counter-terrorist kind of campaign and do it from a distance simply does not accord with reality," he stressed.

"The reality is that even if you want to focus on counter-terrorism, you cannot do that successfully without local law-enforcement, without internal security, without intelligence," Gates added.

Rosaiah sworn in as Andhra CM

All 34 ministers also take oath

ANI, PTI, NDTV, Hyderabad

Senior Congress leader K Rosaiah was sworn into office as the caretaker Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh yesterday. All 34 ministers also took oath of office.

Three ministers, supporters of the demand to make YSR's son Jaganmohan Reddy his successor, had reportedly indicated earlier that they would not take oath under Rosaiah, but eventually all 34 ministers were sworn in.

Governor N D Tiwari administered the oath of office at his official residence, thus ending three days of legal and political confusion.

Governor Tiwari consulted legal experts and decided that the ministers will need to take oath afresh to fulfil a constitutional requirement following swearing-in of a new Chief Minister.

Former ministers P

Ramachandra Reddy, J Krishna Rao and Syed Ahmadullah said they were only willing to work as ministers under YSR's son Jaganmohan Reddy.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has maintained that the leadership issue in the state will be decided after the seven-day mourning period for the late chief minister is over.

It has said that it will depute central observers to meet MLAs and MPs in Hyderabad next week to decide on who will succeed YSR.

It has warned the MLAs and MPs not to take any step that goes against the party's constitution.

The Governor has also asked state Chief Secretary P Ramakanth Reddy to explain the legal and constitutional position after meetings with state Advocate General Seetarama Murthy.



PHOTO: AFP
Pakistani exhibition visitors gather by a display of aircraft at the Air Force's Defence Day celebrations in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan's armed forces staged a display of their capacities as they celebrated Defence Day, a commemorative day of the war fought against neighbouring India in 1965.

Afghan tanker raid may have broken Nato rules

ANI, Washington

A German commander in Afghanistan ordered an airstrike that killed scores of civilians last Friday based on intelligence from only one source in possible violation of Nato rules, The Washington Post reported.

The newspaper said that a Nato fact-finding team estimated that about 125 people were killed in the bombing near the city of Kunduz, at least two dozen of whom -- were not insurgents.

The German officer, whose name was not disclosed, first received grainy live video transmitted from a US F-15E fighter jet, at a German tactical operations centre, showing numerous black dots around a fuel truck hijacked by the Taliban.

Each dot was a thermal image of a human but without enough detail to confirm whether they were carrying weapons, according to the

paper.

At the same time, an Afghan informant was on the phone with an intelligence officer at the centre, insisting that everybody at the site was an insurgent.

The commander ordered a 500-pound (225-kilo) satellite-guided bomb to be dropped on each truck. The vehicles exploded in a fireball, incinerating many of those standing nearby.

But The Post said the decision based largely on a single human intelligence source appeared to violate the spirit of a tactical directive aimed at reducing civilian casualties that was recently issued by US General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of the Nato mission in Afghanistan.

The directive states that Nato forces cannot bomb residential buildings based on a sole source of information and that troops must establish a "pattern of life" to ensure that no civilians are in the target area, the paper noted.

According to the New York Times, one former Indian Air Force chief has declared China and not Pakistan as India's biggest threat.

Perched above 10,000 feet in the icy reaches of the eastern

Sino-India border row hots up over use of multilateral institution

ANI, Tawang

Himalayas, Tawang is the biggest tinderbox in Sino-Indian relations. According to the NYT, in recent months, both countries have stepped up efforts to secure their rights over this rugged patch of land.

It is a conflict rooted in Chinese claims of sovereignty over all of historical Tibet. From India's point of view, Tawang is an integral part of the country and to safeguard it, a huge Indian military buildup is on.

Army trucks have been hauling howitzers along rugged mountain roads. Soldiers drill in muddy fields. Military bases appear every half-mile in the countryside, with watchtowers rising like concertina wire.

With the border with China just 23 miles away, Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, 316 miles, and Beijing, 2,676 miles, the Indian side is of the view that with the PLA engaged in big deployment at the border, at Bumla, there is a necessity to do the same on its side of the border.



PHOTO: AFP
Nepalese Maoists chant slogans against the appointment of two new Indian priests to the Himalayan nation's main Hindu temple Pashupatinath in Kathmandu yesterday. The post-Maoist government followed historical precedent in appointing two Eirahmin priests from south India, sparking protests from the Maoists who had sought to bring Nepalese priests.

News in Brief

3 policemen shot dead in Pakistan
AFP, Islamabad

Three policemen have been shot dead near the Pakistani capital Islamabad in apparent assassinations in the insurgency-troubled country, a senior police officer said Sunday.

The bodies were discovered early Sunday near Hasan Abdal town about 40 km west of Islamabad.

Four rebels slain in Philippines
AFP, Manila

Army soldiers killed four communist guerrillas in the southern Philippines just days after the collapse of the latest attempt to revive peace talks with the insurgents, the military said yesterday.

The soldiers clashed with about 26 guerrillas of the communist New People's Army (NPA) near the town of Loreto in the southern island of Mindanao before dawn on Sunday, a military report said.

Tamayo offered hope for the relatives of those still missing, saying some may have drifted away in life rafts or been picked up by private boats that took part in the rescue.

Philippine Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro also said local officials were checking to see if any survivors had already reached shore.

The ferry issued a distress call around 3.30 am (1930 GMT Saturday), 11 kilometres (seven miles) off the coast of Zamboanga peninsula and some 19 hours into its journey from General Santos City.

Regional coastguard chief Commodore Rudy Isorena said the cause of the accident was not yet clear and the weather in the area had not been too bad.

"We cannot say yet as to the cause as the attention right now is being given to the search and rescue of passengers," he said.

However tropical storm Dujuan, off the Philippines' northeast coast, has heightened the seasonal southwest monsoon winds, bringing rough weather across the country, according to the weather bureau here.

Deadly ferry accidents are common in the Philippines, especially during the typhoon season.

Ferries, from large ones such as the Superferry 9 to small wooden dugouts with bamboo outriggers, form the backbone of mass transport in the archipelagic nation of 92 million people.

Aside from bad weather, poor maintenance, overcrowding of vessels and lax enforcement of regulations have also contributed to the disasters.

The coastguard report said the Superferry 9, a steel-hulled vessel made in Japan in 1986, had reported having 968 people on board, below its legal capacity of 1,120 passengers and crew.

Authorities and passengers said some people had jumped into the water in panic as the vessel began to tilt to the right, while others were able to get into life boats.

"The ship shifted suddenly and some people just panicked," Roger Sicharon, one of the passengers from the stricken vessel, earlier told DZMM radio by mobile phone as he waited to be transferred to another ship by life raft.



PHOTO: AFP
A Pakistani man stands among the debris of his house destroyed during military operations against Taliban militants near Bara on Saturday. Pakistani forces killed at least 43 Islamic militants and destroyed their headquarters in the lawless Khyber tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

Lanka expels UN official over war comments

ANI, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government said yesterday it had ordered a senior United Nations official to leave the country over comments he made about the recently ended war against Tamil Tiger separatist rebels.

James Elder, spokesman for the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), appeared regularly on foreign television news channels and in print media discussing the bloody ethnic conflict and its effects on young people.

"His visa has been cancelled from September 7 and he was ordered to leave immediately. But the UN appealed for more time and we extended until September 21," PB Abeykoont, Controller of Immigration and Emigration, told AFP.

Abeykoont said the government took the decision some months ago based on "adverse remarks made to the media", but he declined to give further details.

Elder, an Australian passport holder, has been working for Unicef in Sri Lanka since July last year and had a residence visa valid until 2010.

The Sri Lankan government maintained tight control of media coverage of the fighting, banning virtually all access to the conflict zone in the northeast and issuing few visas to international reporters.

Before the government's defeat of the Tiger rebels in May, Elder spoke of the "unimaginable hell" suffered by children caught up in the last stages of the war.

In April he said hundreds of children had been killed in the previous months of battle and that those who survived were "living in dire circumstances, caught in the crossfire".

Elder had also called for the government to lift its restrictions on aid groups that have been trying to help hundreds of thousands of war refugees still detained in makeshift state-run camps.

The Sri Lanka government has shown little patience with critics of its military offensive to crush the Tigers, dismissing concerns expressed by the United Nations, the United States and dozens of rights groups.

Unicef said on Sunday it was seeking more details on Elder's visa status.

"James Elder has been Unicef's voice advocating on behalf of those who do not have a voice -- children and the most vulnerable," Sarah Crowe, Unicef's regional chief of communications, told AFP from New Delhi.

"We strongly feel that he should continue to act as an impartial advocate on behalf of Sri Lanka's most vulnerable women and children."

Elder declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

Nepal's Maoists protest against Indian priests

ANI, Kathmandu

Nepalese Maoists blocked roads across the capital Kathmandu on Sunday to protest against a decision to appoint two Indian priests at the country's holiest Hindu temple.

Hundreds of demonstrators chanted "Down with Indian priests" and "Appoint Nepalese priests" as they brought traffic to a standstill.

On Friday, the priests were performing purification rituals before taking up their new posts when they were attacked by Maoists wielding iron rods.

"Security has been increased to avoid any further violence," Chabbi Raman Bhattarai, a police officer at the protests, told AFP.

He said the Indian priests, who suffered minor injuries in the attack, performed their daily rituals on Sunday without interruption.

"We stopped the entry of devotees for a few hours to let the priests do their worshiping," said Bhattarai.