INTERNATIONAL

Gilani backtracks on end of offensive

17 militants killed in attacks

AFP, AP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said Saturday the country's army Waziristan, a key battleground in the stance. fight against Islamist insurgents.

After hailing the military operation a success during a visit to Lahore, the be concluded, it could have been in a prime minister later in the day appeared to backtrack somewhat, saying military operations were not

South Waziristan in October to clear the tribal district of Taliban strongholds, prompting a surge in bomb blasts and attacks in retaliation.

"The operation has finished in South Waziristan, but I can at least officials said.

South Waziristan. Now there is a discussion of taking it to Orakzai Agency," Gilani told reporters in Lahore.

Later, in the southern port city of had driven the Taliban out of South Karachi, Gilani took a more cautious

> "If somebody gathered an impression that the military operation would different context," the Associated Press of Pakistan quoted him as saying.

"This operation has continued with great success and the strongholds of About 30,000 troops poured into militants have been captured and a large quantity of weapons and ammunition has been recovered."

"I cannot give the time-frame when we will conclude military operation in

provide this information that success rate is very high in this area," he said.

He said that militants would be pursued if they took refuge in other places such as Orakzai, to which many are thought to have fled.

Meanwhile a military statement said that helicopter gunships and troops had killed 17 militants in central Kurram, one of the seven northwestern tribal districts of Pakistan.

Pakistani soldiers battled militants in a tribal region close to the Afghan border yesterday, killing 17 insurgents but losing two of their own men in skirmishes in an area where al-Qaeda and the Taliban have long sought sanctuary,



Pakistani students light candles to condemn terrorism in Lahore on Saturday. Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said on Saturday the army had driven the Taliban out of South Waziristan, a key battleground in the nation's fight against the Islamist extremism.

India tests nuclear-capable missile

AFP, Bhubaneshwar

India successfully tested a nuclear-capable ballistic missile from a ship near the east coast yesterday, a defence official said.

The Dhanush, which has a short range of 350 kilometres (220 miles), is a navy version of the surface-to-surface Prithvi missile and can carry both nuclear and conventional warheads.

The missile was successfully fired from a ship in the Bay of Bengal, said SP Das, director of Integrated Test Range, a unit of India's Defence Research and Development Organisation.

"The test met all the requisite parameters," he said.

Pak woman, 20, shamefully auctioned

ANI, Jacobabad

In a shameful and bizarre incident, a 20 year old girl was sold in an open auction for 2,70,000 rupees in Badani Bhutto village here.

According to reports, the girl named, Azizan, was sold off by her brothers in an open auction where a 50-year old man, Bilawal Bhutto, emerged as the highest bidder and bought the girl.

The girl is said to have been abandoned by her husband, and was living with her brothers along with her two children.

Later, Azizan was married to Bilawal, who initially paid 2,10,000 rupees as token money. The groom will take the bride to his house only after paying the rest of the amount.

Indo-Pak forces trade | Pakistan must pressure fire along border

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, PTI. Jammu

Indian and Pakistani border guards yesterday exchanged gunfire in Jammu and Kashmir after Pakistani forces tried to push Islamist militants into India, official sources said.

The gun battle erupted after Pakistani Rangers fired in Ramgarh sector along the border early in the day to push in infiltrators, according to Border Security Force (BSF) sources.

The Pakistanis fired at Ballad post on the Indian side, the sources said. The BSF, which mans the 198-km-long border in Jammuregion, retaliated.

The exchange of fire lasted for

more than 15 minutes, the sources said. BSF troopers were engaged in efforts to trace the footprints, if

any, of the infiltrators. The BSF Sunday foiled the infiltration bid by suspected militants along Indo-Pak border in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir.

The incident came a day after Indian Home Secretary GK Pillai visited the international border and called for 'extra vigilance' on India's borders.

A group of suspected militants were seen moving near the International Border (IB) in Ballard border out post (BoP) area in Ramgarh sub-sector, 50 kms from here, around 1.30 am, police said.

Handout photograph shows Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paying tribute to those killed

during the December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament as Congress party president

Sonia Gandhi (L) and opposition leader LK Advani (2nd L) look on in New Delhi yesterday.

Afghan Taliban

Says Petraeus

AFP, Manama

US General David Petraeus said yesterday that Pakistan needs to put pressure on the leadership of Afghan Taliban operating inside its borders if long-term progress is to be made in Afghanistan.

"(To make) the really significant progress in Afghanistan that will be necessary over time... it would be very helpful if additional pressure could be put (by Pakistan) on the leadership of the elements that are causing problems in Afghanistan," the head of the

reporters on the sidelines of the sixth Manama Dialogue security conference.

President Barack Obama's administration has pressed Islamabad to act against Taliban and al-Qaeda sanctuaries inside its borders, saying that success in Afghanistan depended on disrupting cross-border safe havens.

When asked about Petraeus' comment, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, also in Bahrain for the security summit, said: "We have put in a lot of pressure. And we US Central Command told intend to continue to do that.

Myanmar junta chief's Britain vows renewed future still uncertain

AFP, Chiang Mai

As Myanmar gears up for rare elections due next year, eyes are turning to the fate of the country's ageing military strongman, Than Shwe, and a possible succession, exiled activists say.

Described by critics as reclusive, paranoid and deeply in thrall to astrology, the 76-year-old "Senior future is safe," said Naing General" has ruled the coun- Aung, secretary general of the try with an iron grip since Forum for Democracy in 1992, but is now in the twilight Burma. of his career.

approved in a widely criticised with him. He is an isolated 2008 referendum says that the State Peace and Development Council -- the junta that Than Shwe heads -- must hand over power to a new national assembly after the elections.

Than Shwe may take over the new presidential position

provided for by the constitution to maintain his hold on power, according to opposition activists living in exile in Thailand.

But after constantly striving to increase his power, he now faces underlying resentment from within the regime, the activists say. When he eventually quits, "Than Shwe will make sure his

She added, however: "Than A new constitution Shwe has only close circles

> Aung Naing Oo, a Myanmar political analyst in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai, predicted it would be "interesting to see how he leaves politics because he cannot leave right away".

effort to rout Taliban

Brown visits Afghanistan

AFP, Kandahar Airfield

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown vowed a renewed effort to defeat the Taliban insurgency, hailing the next months as critical while meeting troops in Afghanistan yester-

Brown made an unannounced visit two weeks after ordering 500 extra British troops into the war alongside a surge of 30,000 American forces as part of a sweeping new US strategy to turn

around the eight-year war. President Hamid Karzai at a southern province where the

2001 US-led invasion. In an unusual move,

Brown spent a foggy night on the sprawling base in a simple room with limited heating, sharing a shower bloc and latrine with troops, before heading into a breakfast meeting with British commanders.

inspected new military hardware, including drones, that London has dispatched to Afghanistan in a bid to counter controversy over alleged short supplies, and wished British ing every day" and said the He held talks with Afghan troops Christmas greetings.

"The combined effort of doubled in the last three years. military base in Kandahar, the allied forces with the Afghan government is the way we will done in a way that is calcu-Taliban were born and one of defeat the insurgency, the way the deadliest battlefields for we will stop al-Qaeda having Nato and US troops since the any space to operate in

Afghanistan," he told a news conference with Karzai.

"I think the next few months are obviously critical," Brown told reporters travelling with him. The extra deployment,

which will boost the number of British forces in Afghanistan to more than 10,000, would The prime minister arrive "in the next few days", he added.

Brown said equipment for the British mission, which is the second-largest behind the US contingent, was "improvnumber of helicopters had

"These things are being lated to weaken the Taliban and show they can't win this campaign," he said.

Unified curriculum for primary edn

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She said her government is now moving towards introducing pre-primary classes in all schools to get more students enrolled.

The present government is committed to enrolling all school-age children by 2011 and achieving full literacy by the year 2014," she said, adding that at present 91 percent of school-age children go to schools.

The prime minister pointed out that the government is implementing multifaceted programmes to ensure access, retention and qualitative improvement of primary education under the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II).

She said 40,000 additional classrooms, 397 upazila resource centres, and 398 school-cumcyclone shelters are being constructed under this programme. Recruitment of 45,000 teachers in primary schools will also significantly reduce the existing teacher-student ratio of 1:49, she added.

'Teachers' training has also been given immense importance under the project," while special attention is focused on children belonging to vulnerable groups and indigenous communities, she said.

Hasina said measures have also been taken through learning centres to include out-of-school children and those who never enrolled. Besides,

opportunity for basic education and skill training has been created for working children in six divisional cities and this programme will be expanded in all 64 districts, she added.

She said to increase the rate of enrolment at primary level her government would set up children-friendly learning centres with facilities of midday snacks and new schools in villages in chars, haors, baors, Monga-affected areas and other poverty-prone remote places where there is no school.

The coverage of Primary Stipend Programme will be expanded from the existing 4.9 million students to 7.8 million to bring most poor students under it, said Hasina. Stipends are also being provided at present to female students of secondary and higher secondary levels to encourage to ensure EFA goals in this region," said Hasina. them towards higher education.

Hasina said the school-feeding programme will be expanded to chars, haors, baors, hills and Monga-prone areas where enrolment and retention rate in primary schools is very low because of extreme poverty.

She said 77.8 million textbooks will be distributed free among students up to secondary level in printed and distributed free among the students of primary schools in the 2009 academic year," she

"The government is committed to making the country free from hunger, poverty, illiteracy and corruption as envisioned in our election manifesto 'Vision 2021'," said the Awami League chief. "Education is the tool for achieving the dream. The government has already developed a national ICT policy and ICT-based new education policy for implementation of the vision."

man."

The prime minister urged all South Asian nations to work together to ensure education for all in the region.

"We believe that realities of the 21st century demand education for excellence and excellence for all. In a global village, under performance in one corner affects the welfare of individuals in the other corner. Therefore, we have to work together

Education ministers and secretaries from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan and a number of education experts, EFA coordinators and NGO activists are attending the two-day long ministe-

rial meeting of South Asia Education for All Forum. The opening function was also addressed by Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, State 2010. "About 47.7 million textbooks have been Minister for Primary and Mass Education M Motahar Hossain, and Wang Jo King, director of Asia Pacific Regional Bureau of Education of Unesco, Bangkok.



Sri Lanka's ex-defence chief General Sarath Fonseka addresses a press conference as main Marxist leader Somawansa Amarasinghe (L) looks on in Colombo yesterday. Top Tamil Tiger leaders were shot dead in cold blood as they surrendered during the final stages of Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist war, the ex-army chief said in remarks published Sunday.

Legally binding deal not in sight

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be resolved. The high level segment of the negotiations starts today after a one-day break following a weeklong multi-level discussions.

texts on transfer of technologies like wind and solar power to developing nations and promoting use of forests to soak up greenhouse gases, said delegates taking part in the negotiation process.

climate financing, negotiators said.

The longer it takes to curb the emission of carbon the more it would take for adaptation.

In the longer term, the UN estimates the fight against global warming is likely to cost \$300 billion annually from 2020, largely to help developing

nations adapt to impacts such as of the UNFCCC, said at the same press droughts, cyclones, glaciers melting, conference, "We really can not come floods and heat waves.

minister of India, clearly said here that indicated we need to do that within they would not agree with any 'peaking next six to twelve months in 2010." The negotiators have advanced on year of greenhouse gas emission.

carbon emissions but stands firm on its rejection of a "peaking year". Nor will India accept international scrutiny and if it does not happen this time it of voluntary domestic measures to But miles to go on sharing the burden tackle climate change, says of greenhouse gases emissions and about Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to The Times of India.

COP15, said on Saturday at a press briefing here that there is a strong political will for an agreed outcome in Ahmed, CEO of Centre for Global Copenhagen adding that this is the Change based in Bangladesh. time for 'core discussion'.

out with a legally binding agreement in Jai Ram Ramesh, the environment Copenhagen but as the ministers

But the Bangladeshi negotiators India is willing to curb its growth in and climate experts said this is the first time around 130 chiefs of states are going to gather to agree on something would not be possible to bring them together after six months or so.

"There are so many international conventions signed by secretaries of Connie Haggard, the chair of the the countries that nobody obeys until it is all about the interest of developed countries," says Dr Ashsan Uddin

He said the negotiations are all But You de Boer, executive secretary about numbers. That is, how much

carbon the developed countries want to curb by 2020 and then how much money they want to put on the table and how much the affected countries really need is a issue they have not agreed on yet.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Chan0ges (IPCC), the UNsponsored science network, recommends that reductions average in the 25-40-percent range to keep global temperature increases below 2 degrees C (3.6 F) above preindustrial levels and head off the worst of global warming.

But what the parties are committing to curb so far here is not more than 8 to 14 percent of global emission on average.

UNFCC general secretary urged the world ministers saying that they need to get next level of position and need to get level of actions so that the leaders can act for what people outside are waiting for.

