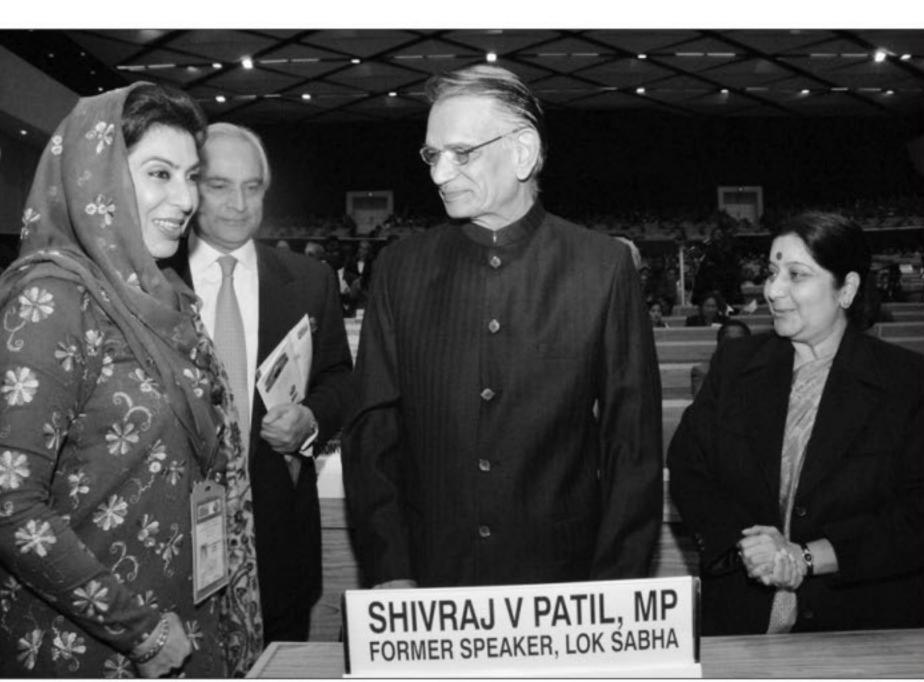
INTERNATIONAL



Pakistan National Assembly Speaker Fehmida Mirza (L) meets with Indian opposition leader Sushma Swaraj (R) and senior Congress Party leader and former parliament Speaker Shivraj Patil at the 20th conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth Countries in New Delhi yesterday.

democracy: Manmohan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

As India faces the twin security problems of terrorism and Naxal violence, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday said extremist ideologies posed a challenge to tenets of democracy and no quarter should be given to such forces.

He also called for giving women a "more meaningful voice" in the political and developmental processes.

Inaugurating the 20th conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth countries here, Singh said "the growth of extremist ideologies is threatening civilised existence everywhere."

"The proponents of such ideologies are challenging the tenets of democracy and representational politics by resorting to intimidation, terror and other manifestations of intolerance. We should not and we cannot give any quarter to such forces, said the Indian Prime Minister.

He, however, said that "at the same time we should look at ways and means by which such forces can be eliminated without undermining our democratic foundations."

Singh said the role of presiding officers has come into sharper focus as the task of running parliament smoothly, giving due representation and voice to all sections, has become more complex and challenging. Singh said it was "impera-

tive that women are given a more meaningful voice in our political and developmental processes.

Extremism poses threat to US overhauls terror watchlists

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama was set to unveil new security reforms Tuesday, after a Christmas Day bomb plot prompted a US review of intelligence gaps and an overhaul of terrorism watchlists.

Obama, who has denounced "systemic" intelligence failures in the bombing attempt, was scheduled to meet Tuesday with US intelligence chiefs on findings of two reviews into a Nigerian man's bid to bring down a US-bound

An administration official told AFP the president would unveil an "initial series of

reforms" following the meet-

The talks will focus on reviews of the botched attack on a Northwest flight as it approached Detroit, as well as improved intelligencesharing.

"There's already been a rescrubbing of all the different lists," White House spokesman Bill Burton told reporters, referring to watchlists of those with suspected terrorist ties and the narrower list of those barred from boarding USbound flights.

"Probably thousands upon thousands upon thousands of names were scrubbed, and probably dozens were moved to different lists."

Obama has directly linked the al-Qaeda network, responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, to the bid to blow up the Northwest jet carrying 290 people.

Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 23, allegedly tried to detonate explosives as the plane was approaching Detroit from Amsterdam, but the explosives failed to detonate properly and he was overpowered by passen-

The administration has ordered tightened security measures for incoming passengers.

US 'determined' to carry out drone attacks despite Pak opposition

ANI, Islamabad

Despite a senior Pakistani security official warning that a surge in US drone attacks in Pakistan's Tribal Areas "would be a risky step," the US is determined to "take action against terrorists and their networks when opportunities present themselves".

"If the Americans step up the (drone) attacks at what they suspect are locations of Haqqani's men inside Pakistan, that would be a risky step. The Americans cannot simply go by assumptions. First, all the facts must be ascertained," one security official in Peshawar told the Financial Times," The Nation quoted a senior Pakistani officer, as saying.

Thursday's suicide attack on a CIA base in Khost attack was linked by some US officials to a network created by Jalaluddin Haqqani, who is believed to be close to the Taliban.

Reacting to the Pakistani warning, a US State Department official said: "It should be clear that we stand ready to take action against terrorists and their networks when opportunities present themselves. Our counter-terrorist efforts are coordinated with foreign govern-

ments, including with Pakistan, as needed."

So far, Pakistan had neither been consulted by the US for information following the Khost attack nor has Pakistan volunteered any information.

"Our position is very clear. We are not connected to anyone who seeks to target the US in Afghanistan. We have a carefully built alliance with the US, we can't afford to disturb or indeed disrupt that," an official in the NWFP government said.

Earlier General Stanley McChrystal, the top US military commander in Afghanistan, has revealed that Pakistan and the US are planning to take joint military action against the Taliban on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border.

"In fact, we are developing a joint campaign plan so that we approach the entire problem together and as much as possible we can make our efforts synergistic," The Dawn quoted General McChrystal, as saying after visiting

He added that Pakistan and the US need to launch coordinated attacks against insurgents on both sides of the border to achieve the real objectives of the war on terror.

Iran repeats 'gradual' nuke fuel swap offer

Iran repeated yesterday its counter-proposal for a staged swap of its low enriched uranium (LEU) for nuclear fuel from abroad for a research reactor, leaving "details" open to discussion.

"If the other side expresses readiness for the gradual and staged swap, we will discuss the details," foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told report-

Iran has rejected an offer drawn up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) aimed at allaying fears about Tehran's nuclear drive by shipping most of its LEU stockpile abroad to be further enriched into reactor fuel.

Instead it has come out with its own proposal of a simultaneous and staged swap of LEU for reactor fuel.

World powers gave Iran until the end of 2009 to accept the UN-brokered deal but the deadline was ignored,

tions against the Islamic republic.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki insisted on Saturday that Tehran in fact had until the end of January to reach a uranium swap deal, stressing it will press on with plans to produce highly enriched nuclear fuel if there is no agreement.

Mottaki gave the West a one-month "ultimatum" to accept the Iranian counterproposal.

Mehmanparast stressed that Tehran considered three options for its nuclear fuel supply.

"Either we buy the fuel, or cooperate for swap or if they do not prepare grounds for these, we will pursue our own fuel production plan."

Iran is already under three sets of UN Security Council sanctions over its defiance and refusal to suspend enrichment, which lies at the heart of international fears about its nuclear programme.



Dubai's Burj Khalifa tower, the world's tallest skyscraper, is lit by fireworks during its opening ceremony in the Gulf emirate on Monday night. Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed al-Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, officially opened the world's tallest building, which stands at 828 metres high.

Dubai opens world's tallest skyscraper

AFP, Dubai

The financially troubled Gulf emirate of Dubai on Monday opened the world's tallest building, a glistening concrete, glass and steel pinnacle rising 828 metres (2,717 feet) out of the desert sands.

Blazing fireworks rippled up and down the massive structure after it was officially opened by Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed al-Maktoum. Known during construc-

tion as Burj Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad renamed the building Burj Khalifa, in honour of United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan. Sheikh Khalifa is also

ruler of Abu Dhabi, the UAE emirate which came to Dubai's help late last year to the tune of 10 billion dollars to bail out troubled property developer Nakheel, a subsidiary of Dubai World.

1,000 people homeless on Solomons after tsunami

AP, Honiara

Landslides and a tsunami destroyed the homes of about onethird of the population on a Solomon Island, but lives were likely spared as residents with memories of previous disasters fled quickly to higher ground, officials said yesterday.

From the air, extensive damage could be seen on a remote western island after a 7.2-magnitude temblor triggered the landslides in the Pacific Solomon Islands on Monday, said disaster management office director Loti Yates.

No injuries have been reported some 30 hours after the biggest in a series of quakes churned a tsunami wave that was up to 10 feet (3 meters) high as it ploughed into the coast, officials said.

However, more than 1,000 people have been affected after some 200 houses were destroyed on Rendova, an island some 300km from the capital Honiara. Only 3,600 people live on Rendova.

Photographs taken from police helicopters Tuesday showed debris lining the foreshore and damaged houses on the coasts of Rendova and Tetepare, as well as deep scars on hills and cliffs caused by landslides.



Handout photo released on Tuesday by the National Disaster Management Office shows an Australian policeman (L) delivering emergency supplies to survivors on Rendova after a series of powerful earthquakes and a 2.5 metre tsunami struck the Solomon Islands on Monday.

Lankan opposition vows to end emergency laws General Fonseka winning the

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's main opposition vowed yesterday to immediately end the state of emergency that has been in place on the island for 27 years if its presidential candidate wins this month's election.

date, Sarath Fonseka, will scrap the tough laws that have been in effect almost continuously since 1983 to deal with the separatist Tamil Tiger rebels who were defeated in May last year.

"We already have a plan to amend laws and lift the state of emergency in the event of

election on January 26, spokesman Mangala Samaraweera said. Samaraweera said the

opposition alliance had also secured the support of ethnic minority parties whose votes may be crucial in a close fight between Fonseka and his The opposition's candi- former political boss President Mahinda Rajapakse.

The moderate Tamil National Alliance (TNA) agreed to back Fonseka's campaign after he signed a three-page programme that he hopes to implement in the island's former war zone, a party official said.

bomber was triple agent AFP, Amman

CIA Afghan base

A suicide bomber who killed eight people in an attack on a CIA base in Afghanistan was a triple agent who apparently duped his handlers that boasts he wanted to die a martyr were

just a cover, reports said. The Jordanian intelligence services had brought the bomber to eastern Afghanistan with the specific mission of finding al-Qaeda number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri, believing he was their double agent, US network NBC News reported late Monday, citing Western intel-

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Pakistan unwilling to join arms' race in S Asia

the Daily Times quoted

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Zardari expressed delight at

and defeat militancy," he said.

Zardari, as saying.

any threat to sovereignty.

Says Zardari

ANI, Karachi/ Lahore

President Asif Ali Zardari has clarified that Pakistan was a peace-loving country, and had no intention of participating in an arms race in South Asia.

His remarks came while he was addressing a passing-out parade of the Pakistan Naval Academy (PNA).

"Our desire for peace must not be taken as a sign of weakness. Our forces are ready to meet all the challenges and guard [the country] against all external and internal threats,"

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Moussaoui gets life sentence in 9/11 case

AFP, Washington

A US appeals court upheld He also said that the country Monday the conviction and must remain prepared to face life sentence of Zacarias Moussaoui for complicity in "The country is facing new the September 11, 2001 challenges to its security. attacks on the United States. Extremism is a big threat to our

The US Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit rejected claims by US lawyers for Moussaoui -the only person charged in the United States in the attacks that claimed nearly 3,000 lives that his guilty plea and sentences on six criminal conspiracy counts were invalid.

Industries to stop FROM PAGE 1

Company Ltd seeking government approval of a number of actions and interventions.

(mmcfd).

"Whether we will be able to

are now being flooded with complaints from general consumers. Agitated people in different areas also staged demonstrations in the past couple of weeks demanding improvement of gas supply.

"People can go without electricity, but they can't do without gas since it is needed for cooking food," commented a Titas official.

But it is not that only house-

the power sector, sources noted.

Transmission and Distribution Development Board Chairman

The energy ministry will hold a meeting today to discuss the proposals from Titas which include keeping CNG stations in the Titas gas supply area shut for two days a week. This would save gas totalling nearly 40 million cubic feet a day

handle this crisis within this month or not depends on the decisions of the energy ministry," said a Titas official. The country's main gas

supplier Titas Gas Ltd is now faced with more than 200 mmcfd gas supply shortfall. The Titas gas supply area now has a demand for 1,650 mmcfd gas demand, but it is getting 1,440 mmcfd. The country's total gas consumption presently is around 2,000 mmcfd.

As a result, households in and around the capital, including Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Gazipur, are facing a major problem every day -- gas stoves are running short of breath from the morning.

Consequently, Titas officials

holds are suffering badly. Industries, which use around 18 percent of gas from Titas systems, are also taking the blow. A dismal situation also prevails in over the years.

"Due to gas supply shortfall, we are unable to produce 800 megawatt of power," says Power

Alamgir Kabir. "There would not have been any load shedding this season had it not been due to low gas supply." At the energy ministry meeting today, various proposals of Titas will be reviewed. Titas sought permission for lowering gas supply to Siddhirganj

power plant to save eight

mmcfd. It can be diverted to

Narayanganj. Titas also seeks permission to suspend gas supply to the gas-fired NEPC barge-mount power plant and divert that gas to general consumers. This plant was supposed to be installed with a dual- fuel system last year so that it can operate on petroleum as well as

Titas proposes to reduce gas supply to Ghorashal fertiliser factory to divert that gas to Dhaka.

natural gas.

The company requested the government to take initiatives for use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) containers in parts of the capital where gas crisis is acute. This would help households cook conveniently.

Gas supply crisis is usual every winter as transmission pipelines narrow due to accumulation of condensate (a liquid gas by-product) for low temperature. But this year, the crisis has worsened due to a sharp rise in gas consumption.

Meanwhile, Titas has started surveying locations of old narrow gas pipelines in different areas of the capital. It had earlier decided to replace these pipelines as the number of consumers has multiplied

ligence officials. **\\\SPRING 2010**

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