THE WORLD

A former Nepalese Maoist combatant bids farewell to his friends as he leaves a Maoist camp in Dudhali of Sindhuli district in eastern Nepal yesterday. More than 200 young men and women swapped their blue People's Liberation Army (PLA) uniform for civilian clothes and began their journey home after an official ceremony at the Sindhuli camp in central Nepal.

Ex-child soldiers leave UN camps in Nepal

AFP, Sindhuli

ANI, Islamabad

More than 200 former child soldiers who fought for the Maoists in Nepal's bloody civil war said an emotional goodbye yesterday to the UNmonitored camp where they have lived for over three years.

The young men and women swapped their blue People's Liberation Army (PLA) uniforms for civilian clothes and began their journey home after an official ceremony at the Sindhuli

The Pakistan Supreme Court

has said "Gestapo-like situa-

tion" was prevailing in the

country, emphasising that

top military officials and

other influential people were

involved in several cases of

This was observed by a

three-member bench of the

apex court, consisting of

human rights violations.

camp in central Nepal. They are the first of almost

24,000 former Maoist fighters confined to UN-supervised camps to be formally discharged and their departure is seen as an important step forward in Nepal's faltering peace process.

But they face an uncertain future, and many broke down in tears as they said farewell to their former comrades in arms in the camp.

"It will be really hard to break my ties with the PLA and

'Gestapo-like reign of terror'

Justice Javed Iqbal, Justice

Mohammad Sair Ali and

Justice Raja Fayyaz Ahmed,

which was hearing various

petitions regarding the miss-

ing persons, who were indi-

vidually picked up by the

and Majors are always men-

tioned when we took up the

issue of kidnapped persons

in the SC. Who had given

"The names of Brigadiers

intelligence agencies.

prevailing, says Pak SC

I'm going to miss all my friends in the camp so much, said 22-year-old Ambika Shrestha, who was 17 when she joined the rebel army.

Most of those leaving are now adults, but some were as young as 13 when they joined the Maoists in their decadelong battle against the state, and have had little formal education.

"My hands have only been trained to use guns," said 23year-old Bhawana Chaudhary, who also joined up at 17.

them power to do so?" The

Nation quoted Justice

Ahmed, as saying on

that some persons were kept

in detention under the law as

they allegedly committed

crimes. However, they alleged

that they were kept in deten-

tion illegally, which was not

justice, he explained.

Justice Sair Ali observed

AFP, Riyadh

defeat in May.

The youngest son of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden left Iran in late December and is now in Damascus, the Saudicontrolled newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat reported on Wednesday.

Bakr bin Laden had spent the last eight of his 16 years in Iran before being allowed to leave to Syria, the Londonbased newspaper said, citing Omar bin Laden, another son of

the world's most wanted man. In Damascus he was reunited on December 25 with his Syrian mother Najwa al-Ghanem, one of Osama bin Laden's wives, Omar said.

UN envoy warns of Afghan mission failure

Suicide bomb kills 8, acting governor wounded

AFP, United Nations/ Kabul

The outgoing UN special envoy to Afghanistan warned Wednesday that the international mission in the country would fail if the strategy is not changed while eight people were killed in suicide bombing vesterday.

Kai Eide told the Security Council that he was "deeply worried about negative trends" in Afghanistan, warning they could become unmanageable if not reversed soon.

His statements come despite notable achievements by the world body in the areas of education, health and institution building since US-led forces ousted the Taliban in 2001.

LTTE chief's

father dies

in custody

The elderly father of Sri Lanka's

slain Tamil rebel chief Velupillai

Prabhakaran has died in military

custody, officials said yesteday.

Thiruvenkadam Velupillai,

believed to be in his early 80s,

died on Wednesday at an army

base outside Colombo, a mili-

tary official said, adding that he

had been in "protective cus-

tody" since the Tamil Tigers'

Laden's son left

Iran for Syria

AFP, Colombo

"I am worried about growing impatience in public opinion in donor and troopcontributing countries about the frustration in the Afghan public over what they see as a failure to meet their expectations," he

Eide, who is to relinquish his post in March, also alluded to the difficulties Natoled and Afghan troops were having in confronting the emboldened insurgency.

The envoy also urged peace and reconciliation between the Kabul government and the insurgents. "A peace and reconciliation process

must be launched and become an integral part of the political agenda," he noted.

Meanwhile, a suicide bomber wear-

others in eastern Afghanistan, an official The attack happened in Gardez, the provincial capital, at 4:30 pm (1200 GMT),

ing an explosives-filled vest Thursday

killed eight people and wounded 24

In Kabul, the acting governor of an Afghan province plagued by Taliban violence has been wounded in an explosion in his compound, a senior police official said Thursday.

A total of four people, including acting governor of Khost province Tahir Khan Sabari, were injured in the explosion, said the provincial criminal investigation chief Gul Dad Mandozai.



Afghan university students set fire to a US flag and an effigy of US President Barack Obama during an anti-US demonstration in Jalalabad yesterday. Hundreds of students took part in a demonstration protesting an incident in which schoolchildren were killed and many others wounded on Wednesday.

Lanka opens key road to Jaffna

AFP, Jaffna

Sri Lanka yesterday opened the main road to the northern peninsula of Jaffna, heartland of the island's minority Tamils, seven months after Tamil separatists were defeated.

The A-9 highway had been closed since 2006 when Tamil Tiger rebels mounted an offensive to retake the peninsula, which had fallen into government hands in 1995.

Competing attempts to control the A-9 led to bloody battles claiming thousands of lives on both sides.

Social services minister and Jaffna member of parliament Douglas Devananda told visiting journalists and businessmen that travel restrictions still in place may soon be lifted.

"We are currently working out the modalities to ease the travel restrictions on foreigners to the north," Devananda said on Thursday.

From Thursday, the A-9 would be open around the clock, he said.

defeated by the military in May.

Much of the road was in rebel-held territory before the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were finally

Manmohan visits critically ill Jyoti Basu

ANI, INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kolkata

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited the AMRI hospital in Salt Lake to see CPM leader and former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, whose health condition is still reported to be critical.

The medical board treating Basu and now comprising eight specialists was assessing his condition. "He has been a fighter all his life. And now also

he is fighting." Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee also accompanied Dr Singh to the nursing home and spent some time inquiring about Basu's health.

"He is stable with ventilator support. His condition is the same as it was late Wednesday," AMRI hospital Medical Superintendent Debasish Sharma told IANS.

CPI-M politburo member Sitaram Yechuri, who visited Basu Thursday morning, claimed the 96-year-old leader was responding to a new course of antibiotics.

26/11 MUMBAI ATTACK

Pak court refuses acquittal of accused

ANI, Rawalpindi

An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Rawalpindi, Pakistan has rejected petitions seeking acquittal of six out of seven accused allegedly involved in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in 2008, which killed over 160 people.

The ATC Judge Malik Muhammad Akram Awan rejected the petitions filed by Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, Ammad Amin Sadiq, Mazhar Iqbal, Abdul Majid, Jamil Ahmed, Shahid Jameel Riaz and Mohammad Yunus Anjum, The Nation reports. Earlier, the same court had

held its decision after lawyers from both sides concluded their arguments on three different petitions.

gun battle with Indian security forces in Srinagar yesterday. Commandoes stormed the hotel in Kashmir where two militants had been holed up for nearly 24 hours, killing the gunmen and bringing an end to the siege.

Kashmir gunbattle ends as 2 attackers killed

AP, Srinagar

Wednesday.

Government forces in Indian-controlled Kashmir shot and killed two suspected rebels yesterday, ending a more than 20hour-long gunbattle that paralysed the region's main city.

The attack was the first prolonged gunfight in Srinagar since 2006 and raised concerns about a possible spike in violence in the tense region after years of declining attacks.

The heavily militarised territory is claimed in its entirety by both India and neighbouring Pakistan both nuclear armed nations and the dispute has sparked two wars between the rival countries.

The attackers entered a crowded shopping area in Srinagar on Wednesday afternoon and hurled hand grenades and opened fire at a group of soldiers, killing one police officer and one bystander, according to police official Farooq Ahmed.

The assailants then took refuge in a hotel, where they held off troops throughout the night. Early Thursday, government forces fought their way into the hotel, killing the men, said Ahmed.

Government soldiers were searching the area for any leftover explosives and any other suspicious items, Ahmed said.

The fighting also wounded 10 others, including four soldiers, he said.



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9/11 trial security to cost \$200m a year: Mayor

AFP, New York

Security for the upcoming trial in New York of suspects in the 9/11 attacks will cost more than 200 million dollars a year, Mayor Michael Bloomberg saidWednesday.

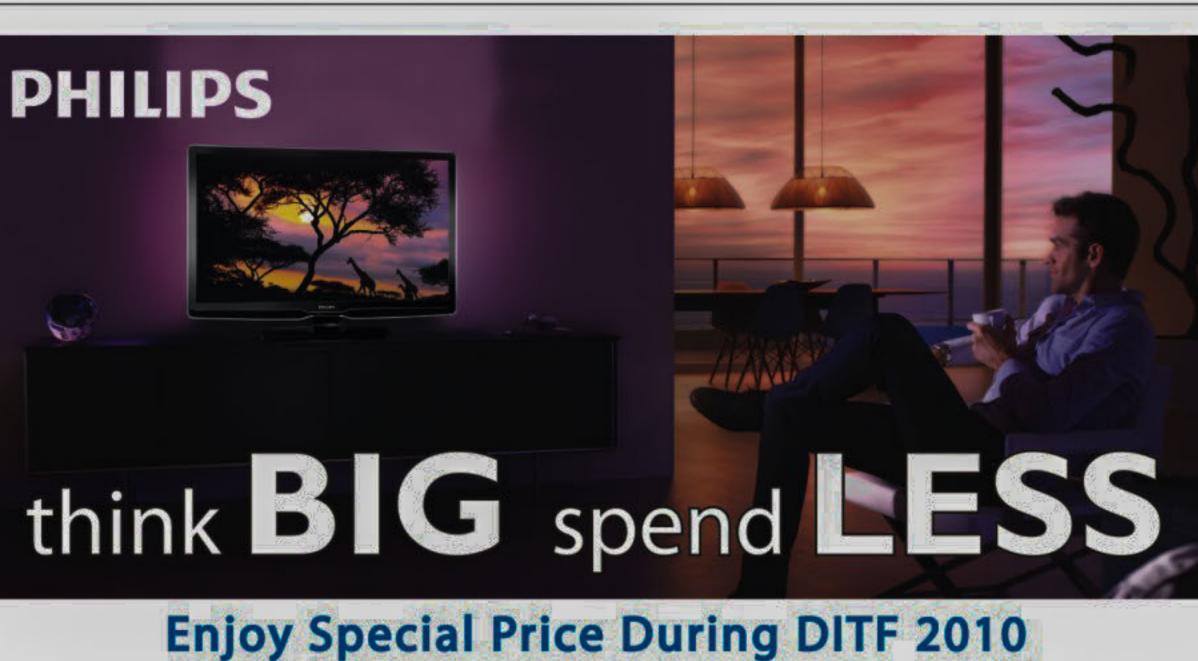
Giving the first estimate of the price tag for securing the highly sensitive trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four co-defendants, Bloomberg said the city would need federal assistance.

"We estimate the cost for security operations will be approximately 216 million dollars for the first year and 206 million dollars annually in subsequent years," Bloomberg wrote in a letter to the director of the federal Office of Management and Budget in Washington.

Bloomberg wrote that federal assistance was needed because New York's "financial resources are in short supply, and we have been forced to reduce our Police Department's headcount."

"As 9/11 was an attack on the entire nation, we need the federal government to shoulder the significant costs we will incur and ease this burden."

By comparison, he wrote, the 2004 Republican Party convention held in New York lasted a week and cost 50 million dollars for security.



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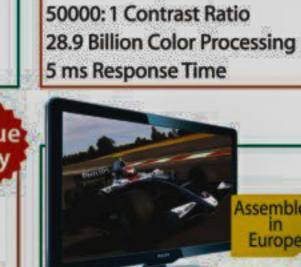
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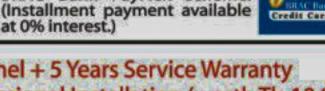
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