



Members of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) burn an effigy representing the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in Hyderabad yesterday as they protest the budget announced by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. India has vowed to rein in its gaping public deficit with a new budget that counts on higher tax revenue and sales of stakes in state firms to sustain the government's flagship social spending.

Danish paper apologises to Muslims in cartoon row

AFP, Copenhagen

Danish daily Politiken yesterday apologised to Muslims for possibly offending them by reproducing cartoons of Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (SM) in 2008, but said it did not regret publishing the drawings.

Politiken is the first Danish newspaper to formally apologise to those who may have felt offended by the publication of the cartoons.

It published on Friday an agreement reached with eight organisations from as many countries representing 94,923 descendants of the Muslim prophet.

Turkish PM warns army as coup probe widens

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned the army yesterday that no one is above the law as a probe into an alleged 2003 coup plan to oust the government widened with the detention of 18 more soldiers, media reports said.

"Those who make plans behind closed doors to crush the people's will must see that from now on they will face justice," Erdogan said in Ankara. "No one is above the law, no one has impunity."

The NTV news channel said 18 soldiers, one of them retired, were rounded up in 13 provinces in a second wave of

arrests over the purported plot to foment unrest and justify a military takeover against the Islamist-rooted government.

One of the suspects was the head of the paramilitary force in the central Konya province, the report said.

The massive investigation has rattled the country, raising fears of an open confrontation between the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) -- the off-shoot of a banned Islamist movement -- and the army, the self-declared guard-

ians of the secular system. Erdogan dismissed accusations that his party was trying to discredit the army to obtain a free hand in realising a secret Islamist agenda, hailing the probe as a sign of improving democracy.

US puts Brazil under spotlight amid push for Iran sanctions

AFP, Washington

The United States put Brazil under the spotlight Thursday as it tries to build support within the UN Security Council for tougher sanctions against Iran over its nuclear ambitions.

Brazil -- a current voting member on the 15-strong council but not one of the five permanent veto-wielding members -- has been reluctant to join the US push for sanctions.

The State Department announced that William Burns, the US pointman on talks with world powers on Iran sanctions, will travel to

Brasilia on Friday to pave the way for Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's own trip there next Wednesday.

"I wouldn't argue that Iran will be among the major issues we discuss with Brazil," Clinton's spokesman Philip Crowley told reporters when it was suggested Iran would be the main reason for Burns's visit.

While climate change and bilateral issues will also be discussed, "clearly Brazil is an emerging power with growing influence in the region and around the world, and we believe that with that influence comes responsibility," he said.

Gaddafi call for Jihad against Switzerland

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Benghazi

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has declared a Jihad against Switzerland in a worsening diplomatic row between the two countries.

Gaddafi criticised a recent Swiss vote against the building of minarets and called for Muslims to boycott the country.

"If Switzerland was our neighbour we would declare war," Gaddafi said late Thursday in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi at an event to mark the birth anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (SM).

"Muslims need to mobilise in all the Islamic countries of the world and refuse to allow Swiss planes to land, their ships to dock or allow Swiss products enter their countries."

'Mammoth iceberg may alter ocean circulation'

AFP, Paris

An iceberg the size of Luxembourg knocked loose from the Antarctic continent earlier this month could disrupt the ocean currents driving weather patterns around the globe, researchers said Thursday.

While the impact would not be felt for decades or longer, a slowdown in the production of colder, dense water could result in less temperate winters in the north Atlantic, they said.

The 2,550 square-kilometre (985 square-

mile) block broke off on February 12 or 13 from the Mertz Glacier Tongue, a 160-kilometre spit of floating ice protruding into the Southern Ocean from East Antarctica due south of Melbourne, researchers said.

Some 400 metres (1,300 feet) thick, the iceberg could fill Sydney Harbour more than 100 times over.

It could also disturb the area's exceptionally rich biodiversity, including a major colony of emperor penguins near Dumont d'Urville, site of a French scientific station, according to the scientists.



This undated photo released on Friday from the Australian Antarctic Division shows the Mertz Glacier, a 160-kilometre spit of floating ice protruding into the Southern Ocean from East Antarctica.

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