US warns of terror strikes in Delhi

BBC ONLINE

The US has issued a travel alert saying that there are "increased indications" that "terrorists" are planning attacks in the Indian capital,

The alert listed some popular shopping areas and advised Americans travelling or residing in India to be vigi-

Delhi police chief YS Dadwal told Reuters that "threats are there", and the police were "wide awake" to it. The alert came after bombs

exploded at the weekend outside a cricket stadium in the southern city of Bangalore. The US advisory men-

tioned Chandni Chowk, Connaught Place, Greater Kailash, Karol Bagh and Mehrauli as places which are 'attractive targets for terrorist groups".

Australia has also put out an advisory warning tourists to avoid the same areas.

Most of these places contain busy, crowded markets, which are popular with locals and foreigners alike.



Afghan refugee

children wave from a truck at the **United Nations Commissioner for** Refugees (UNHCR) registration centre on the outskirts of Peshawar yesterday prior to their departure for their homeland Afghanistan. About 1.7 million Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan after fleeing civil war and Taliban rule in their homeland.

PHOTO: AFP



Early Afghan pullout would be worse than 9/11: Merkel

AFP, Berlin

Pulling out of Afghanistan too soon would be "far more disastrous" than 9/11 because of the danger of extremists getting hold of nuclear materials, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday.

"The international community went in together, and we will pull out together. If we do not then the consequences, I am convinced, would be far more disastrous that the results of the September 11, 2001 attacks," Merkel said.

"Just looking at the map makes this clear. Right next door to Afghanistan is nucleararmed Pakistan, and we have to assume that another neighbour, Iran, is also doing everything it can to become a nuclear power," she said.

In a spirited defence of the deeply unpopular mission following the deaths of seven German soldiers this month, Merkel noted that a recent international conference had agreed "nuclear terrorism is one of the world's biggest security dangers."

US denies role in Benazir's killing

PTI, Islamabad

The US yesterday dismissed as "false" and "outrageous" the allegations made by former Inter-Services Intelligence agency chief Hamid Gul that the United States government was involved in the assassination of former premier Benazir

Noting that Gul had "repeatedly asserted the outrageous and baseless claim" during appearances on two TV news channels, a spokesman for the US embassy said, "The US rejects this and other false allegations regularly made by Lt Gen (retired) Gul about its policies and activities."

The spokesman said that at the time of Bhutto's murder in December 2007, the US "swiftly and publicly condemned" the act and called for an independent investigation.

Rajapakse's

new speaker

(UPFA).

the 225-seat assembly.

Wednesday.

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE,

Detained Fonseka attends parliament

Jayaratne sworn in as prime minister

BBC ONLINE

Defeated Sri Lankan presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka has been released from detention to appear in the opening session of parliament.

The general, who is being court martialled, called for the "rule of law" in an attack on his arch-rival, President Mahinda Rajapakse.

His comments were his first remarks in public since his detention on 8 February on corruption charges.

He travelled under escort from military custody to take up his seat.

Gen Fonseka fell out with the president after the defeat of Tamil Tigers rebels last May.

He was beaten by Rajapakse in presidential elections of January 2010.

JAYARATNE AS PRIME MINISTER

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has appointed one of his party's elder statesmen as

prime minister.

DM Jayaratne, a former teacher in his 70s, was sworn in on Wednesday. MPs will choose a new Speaker yesterday.

Rajapakse is working out who will be in his new cabinet after final official results confirmed his alliance had won a landslide in parliamentary elections.

The result was delayed for nearly two weeks because of repolls in some areas hit by violence the first time round.

"What the country needs is democracy, rule of law, personal freedoms and media freedom," Gen Fonseka told members of parliament attending a swearing-in ceremony for the body's 225 lawmakers.

During the ceremony, he and other party heads were permitted to offer congratulations to its new speaker - Chamal Rajapakse, the president's brother.







In this handout picture provided by the Sri Lankan President's Office, President Mahinda Rajapakse gifts a shawl to his newly elected Member of **Parliament son Namal Rajapakse** in Colombo yesterday. The younger Rajapakse equalled a record held by his father as the youngest lawmaker by winning a seat at the age of 24.

PHOTO: AFP

Gunmen kill Pak politician 19 militants, one soldier killed

BBC ONLINE, AFP, Peshawar

Gunmen have killed a former member of parliament and three other men in an attack on their vehicle in northern Pakistan's volatile Charsadda district.

Alamzeb Omarzai was Charsadda's MP from 2002 to 2008. Since then he has been a member of a group linked to the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP).bullets on it," a local police official told the BBC.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's security forces yesterday killed 19 militants, while one soldier also died in fighting in the northwest, a bastion of Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked fighters, officials said.

Troops used heavy artillery to target suspected insurgent bases in two villages in the tribal district of Orakzai.

Extending weekend, Pakistan plans to tackle power deficit

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's prime minister yesterday announced a radical plan to tackle the nation's debilitating energy shortages, including extending the weekend and banning all-night wedding parties.

Daily power cuts hit homes throughout the country, with some Pakistanis in rural areas without electricity for most of the day, fuelling discontent, crippling industry and triggering violent protests. Pakistan is able to produce only about 80 percent of its

required electricity, officials have said, a crisis blamed on soaring demand, debt, a lack of investment, corruption and a creaking distribution system. A raft of new measures, effective immediately, was

announced after a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Yousus Raza Gilani, who said the plan would save 500 megawatts of electricity per day across the country. "Never before in the history of Pakistan has such a conference

been held with participation of all provincial chief ministers and other stakeholders, showing that all are on board to resolve the energy crisis," Gilani said. In an effort to curb electricity usage, markets will be ordered to close at 8:00pm, government offices banned from using air

conditioning before 11:00am, and lavish wedding celebrations

Talk of Iran fuel sanctions a joke'

AFP, Tehran

Plans by world powers to choke off fuel supplies to gasoline-thirsty Iran is a "joke," Iranian oil minister Masoud Mirkazemi said yesterday.

"This talk of imposing sanctions on gasoline has become a joke," Mirkazemi told reporters on the sidelines of Iran's annual international oil exhibition being held in Tehran.

ensure safety of the witnesses. The

law ministry will draft the law and

place it as a bill in parliament after

ted that the process will take some

tioned that in America witnesses

are even taken to other places to

give safe accommodation during

trial so that no-one can harm them.

Ahmed said more tribunals could

be formed under the current law i

investigation into the crimes

against humanity committed in

1971 digs out evidence against a

determine whether more investi-

gators or lawyers are required for

He added investigations would

large number of criminals.

the trial.

In reply to a question, Shafique

The minister, however, admit-

Citing an example, he men-

the cabinet's approval

time to be completed.

Maoists in Flights take off but Govt goes FROM PAGE 1 India gaining the court, he observed. "Considering the whole scestrength nario, we are planning to formulate a law, first time in Bangladesh, to

ordered to last no more than three hours.

The top policeman in the Maoist rebel bastion of Chhattisgarh warned yesterday that the insurgents were gaining strength in the central Indian state.

AFP, Raipur

Police director general Vishwa Ranjan told AFP that at least 1,300 left-wing insurgents were operating in and around Chhattisgarh, the worst-hit state where 76 policemen were massacred earlier this month.

"They have upgraded their warfare capabilities," the officer said in an interview in which he conceded that the guerrillas had gained the upper hand in eight of the state's 19 districts.

He said the rebels had organised themselves into military-style platoons of 33 fighters each.

Some of the platoons had been dispatched to nearby insurgency-ridden states of Maharashtra, Orissa Jharkhand and West Bengal to

scale up violence.

ash limits Norway, Sweden AP, Brussels

European airports sent thousands of planes into the sky yesterday after a week of unprecedented disruptions, but shifting winds sent a new plume of volcanic ash over Scandinavia, forcing some airports in Norway and Sweden to close again.

The new airspace restrictions applied to northern Scotland and parts of southern Norway, Sweden and Finland, said Kyla Evans, spokeswoman for Eurocontrol, the European air traffic agency.

But nearly all of the continent's 28,000 other scheduled flights, including more than 300 flights on lucrative trans-Atlantic routes, were going ahead. Every plane was packed, however, as airlines squeezed in some of the hundreds of thousands of travellers who had been stranded for days among passengers with regular Thursday tickets.

Airlines said there was no quick solution to cut down the backlog of passengers, for most flights were nearly full anyway and no other planes were available.

"Quite frankly we don't have an answer to this," said David Henderson, spokesman for the Association of European

Airlines. Some travellers got a break. Authorities chartered a luxury

cruise ship the Celebrity Eclipse to pick up 2,200 tourists in the northern Spanish port of Bilbao on Thursday and bring them back to England. A British Royal Navy ship also arrived in Portsmouth, southern England, carrying 440 troops coming home from Afghanistan and 280 civilians back from Santander, Spain.

At the programme, legal experts, eminent justices and ministers replied to 48 questions raised by different quarters since independence regarding the trial of war crimes. Ekattorer Ghatak

Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for secular Bangladesh, organised the programme at the Supreme Court Bar Association office. The speakers reached a con-

sensus over the fact that the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, which was amended in 2009, is able to ensure international standard of fair trial.

They said the Act entertains every concern and concept of international standard for human rights and trial including provisions for self-defence, appeals with higher court and a transparent trial procedure.

"The trial against crimes against humanity will be held in an open court. The accused will have the right to self-defence and a convict will enjoy the right to appeal against conviction. And we have reformed the Act to make it up-to-date as much as possible. What else is needed to ensure an international standard?" commented ruling Awami League

standard, you have to show specifically what it is. Those raising question about international standard of the 1973 Act are either lying or ignorant about it," said eminent lawyer Shahdeen Malik.

lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta.

"If you talk about international

The legal experts present at the programme said the Act is "broadly compatible with current international standard" according to the International Bar Association.

Acting president of Nirmul Committee Shahriar Kabir, Justice Golam Rabbani and Justice Syed Amirul Islam, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, Chief Prosecutor of International Crimes Tribunal Golam Arif Tipu, former ambassador Waliur Rahman, lawyers Shahdeen Malik and Dr Turin Afroz, Prof Mizanur Rahman and member of Law Commission Prof M Shah Alam replied to the 48 questions at the programme chaired by Prof Kabir Chowdhury.

Tejgaon link road 'Pre-emptive'

FROM PAGE 1

know that on the basis of information from some ministries and departments, public representatives, political activists and voters in the constituency are being arrested just two days before the by-polls.

"Such pre-emptive arrest without directive from of the commission is unlawful. However, law enforcement agencies' members engaged in election duties must take legal actions against people involved in activities disrupting law and order," the EC letter said.

Talking to journalists yesterday at the EC Secretariat, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain said everything would be under the commission's control till the polling is over.

Directive from any ministry

or department will not be taken into consideration, he

Meanwhile, a BNP delega-

take steps to ensure a congenial atmosphere for voters so that they can freely go to polling stations tomorrow and cast votes without any intimida-

The three-member delega-

tion led by BNP standing compass the Bijoy Sarani intersecmittee member Nazrul Islam Khan alleged that ruling Awami League (AL) men are snatching hope of saving time but it turned out to be a bad decision," he said, national identity cards of voters in Char Zahiruddin area adding, "There should have been to force them to vote for the AL an overpass to manage horrendous tailbacks from Bijoy Sarani candidate. At the meeting, the BNP

intersection. team however did not demand Hundreds of vehicles that deferral of the by-polls by a took the just-inaugurated link week while party candidate road were stuck on it at Bijoy Major (retd) Hafizuddin Sarani intersection, Kazi Nazrul Ahmed made the demand on Islam Avenue and Tajuddin Wednesday. Sarani during daytime on Tuesday and Wednesday. The "We did not discuss deferral

of the polls," Nazrul told journalists later. Replying to a question, he

said the BNP candidate might have raised the demand considering the situation in the constituency, and recovery of

will now slowdown heavy traffic on Mohakhali-Moghbazar road as well.

"But any such further intervention must be thought in

way," he said. added more waiting time for traffic from all three directions--Farmgate, Jahangir

Vehicles from Farmgate is allotted 120 seconds to pass the intersection, those from Jahangir Gate get 110 seconds and the ones from Bijoy Sarani direction have 90 seconds.

However, quite often vehicles have to wait eight minutes rather than five and a half to cross the intersection.

queues, he said.

road cannot adequately accommodate the waiting traffic and

long and 60 feet wide.

direction and it has increased the pressure on the intersection. Traffic from the new road has added three streams of vehicles to the Bijoy Sarani intersection

"I took the new road in the

vehicles get stuck behind long The link road is 1,114 metres

road was packed with vehicles yesterday during rush hours. Rahmatullah said the link road is an additional traffic

However, autorickshaw driver Malek does not think so. He took a trip from Mouchak to Jatiya "It has brought an additional Sangsad Bhaban and got stuck mess and the accumulated effect for 25 minutes on the link road is what we are facing now," he around 11:00am yesterday to

> integration with the proposed metro line and elevated express-A traffic police in Tejgaon area said the link road has

Gate and Bijoy Sarani--at Bijoy Sarani intersection.

The dual carriageway link

27, Standing Committee on Cooperation on tion at a meeting with the EC illegal arms. meeting of the Foreign Meanwhile, Election **Environment and Climate** yesterday alleged that police Commissioner Muhammed with one taking the left turn, and are harassing local leaders and Secretaries April 25-26 and Change, and the Agreement workers of the party in Bhola-3 Sohul Husein said everything one right while one goes straight Programming Committee on Trade in Services. forcing many of them to leave in Bhola-3 is under control, to Bijoy Sarani, he said. The other issues likely to meeting of senior officials on the constituency. and the polls must be held in a The link road, with a newly Sources at the Saarc be taken up would be energy April 24. They demanded that the EC free and fair manner. created intersection at Tejgaon,

Saarc Summit FROM PAGE 1 Secretariat in Kathmandu undertake a visit to Pakistan said Nepal would push for an after her last month's visit to effective regional mechanism China. But chances of her to cope with the climate visiting Pakistan anytime change. Bangladesh and soon is unlikely as she is due

and Japan in the next few There is an indication that Pakistan prime minister may visit Bangladesh before Sheikh Hasina's to Pakistan, sources said.

to visit South Korea, Russia

Besides the talks with the PMs of two countries, Hasina will also hold talks with the presidents of Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Afghanistan and her Bhutanese and in Dhaka said the summit is Nepalese counterparts.

Hasina will take up the issue Disaster Response of climate change at the Mechanism, the Convention

summit and it will be the burning issue in Thimphu. The very theme of the summit s Conservation of Environment and Climate.

support Nepal's effort to set rated during the summit. up a regional body, as both Regional issues like terrorthe countries will face the ism, extremism, early implemost drastic effects of climate mentation of South Asian change. Free Trade Agreement, and Meanwhile, Bhutan has expansion of tourism in the finished all the necessary region will figure in the meet, preparations for hosting the according to officials.

and food crisis and the effec-

tive implementation of Saarc

Development Fund (SDF)

The permanent secretariat of

SDF with initial fund of \$300

million will also be inaugu-

preceded by the Council of

Ministers meeting on April

summit, which will mark the Observers from China, 25th year of the establish-Japan, the European Union, ment of the regional body in Republic of Korea, the United Dhaka in 1985. States, Australia, Mauritius Foreign ministry officials and Iran will attend the sumexpected to sign three pacts --The 2-day summit will be

Sources said Sheikh - the Saarc Agreement on

Maldives are also likely to