



PHOTO: AFP

Indian schoolchildren hold placards calling for calm and peace and Muslim men shout peace slogans on the eve of the long-awaited Ayodhya ruling at the Allahabad high court, during a peace rally in a Muslim-majority neighbourhood of Mumbai yesterday.

Indian SC hears Ayodhya verdict deferment plea today

PTI, New Delhi/lucknow

Ruling out reconciliation, Sunni Central Waqf Board and Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha yesterday said the Ayodhya title suit verdict by the Allahabad High Court should not be delayed further, as the Supreme Court prepared to hear tomorrow the plea to defer the judgement.

The submissions by the two key parties to the suit in separate affidavits before the Supreme Court came even as senior Congress leader and Union Finance minister Pranab Mukherjee said contesting parties have to resolve the issue through discussions or accept court verdict.

Nirmohi Akhara, also a key party in the suit, said it would request the apex court for deferring the case for three months to help find a solution through negotiations.

After the High Court verdict due to have been pronounced last Friday was

stayed the previous day for a week, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice S H Kapadia will tomorrow decide the fate of the special leave petition seeking postponement of the judgement.

The petition by a retired bureaucrat Ramesh Chand Tripathi wanted the possibility of an out-of-court settlement to be explored.

Mohammad Hashim Ansari, 90, the oldest litigant and another main party, also wanted the verdict to be pronounced before October 1 -- the date when one of the three judges in the High Court's Ayodhya bench is due to retire.

Asked about the Centre's stand on the 60-year-old dispute, Mukherjee said in Sagardighi in West Bengal, said "The two contesting parties who filed the Ayodhya title suit have to resolve the matter among themselves through discussions. If it was not possible, then the court verdict has to be accepted."

Sunni Central Waqf Board's Counsel Zafaryaq Jilani told PTI in Lucknow that an affidavit has already been sent in which a prayer has been made for pronouncement of the verdict by October 1 since one of the judges in the three-judge bench of the special full bench is retiring.

"The issue cannot be resolved through negotiations as the negotiations have not been able to bring about any result so far. It would be in the interest of justice that the high court may kindly be permitted to announce the judgement by October 1 as one of the judges is retiring on that day", Jilani said outlining the prayer that would be made by Sunni Waqf Board and Hashim Ansari before the Supreme Court.

Both the parties would also cite some earlier attempts made for negotiation between 1986 to 2003, Jilani said.

Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha (ABHM) said it has decided to oppose

the petition for mediation to find a solution to the Ayodhya suit and would press for the court verdict quickly.

"We have filed an affidavit in the SC today against the petition filed for deferring the verdict and to allow mediation to find a solution to the contentious dispute", state president ABHM Kamlesh Tiwari said in Lucknow.

ABHM there was no chance of an amicable solution at this point of time.

Nirmohi Akhara's counsel R L Verma said a prayer would be made before the Supreme Court for giving three months time for resolving the issue through reconciliation.

"It would be prayed that three months be given for resolving the issue through reconciliation and as for the retirement of one of the three judges in the three member bench of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad high court, a prayer would be made for extension, he said.

Pakistan takes over as chair of UN nuke watchdog

AFP, Vienna

Pakistan, which refuses to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and was home to a notorious nuclear smuggling ring, was named head of the UN nuclear watchdog's governing board here yesterday.

At a special one-day meeting, the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-member board of governors appointed "by acclamation" the head of Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission, Ansar Parvez, as its chairman for the next 12 months, taking over from Malaysia.

The board of governors is the IAEA's most important policy-making body after the 151-nation general conference and meets five times a year.

Its rotating chair is appointed for a period of one year with the main task of presiding over debates and helping the board of governors reach consensus decisions.

Parvez said he saw no problem with the choice, even though Pakistan, like India and Israel, refuses to sign the NPT.

Pakistan has held the chair before and India has done so twice.

Some observers see Pakistan as a potential problem because it was home to a nuclear-smuggling ring run by scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb and a national hero.

Khan publicly confessed in 2004 that he shared atomic secrets with Iran, Libya and North Korea, although he later retracted his remarks.

Maoists 'threaten' to kill policemen

BBC ONLINE

Maoist rebels in India have threatened to kill four policemen they took hostage last week unless Maoist prisoners are freed, officials say.

They abducted seven policemen in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh state, on 19 September. Three of them were found dead in forest two days later.

Indian security forces have been battling Maoists in several states.

This month, Maoist rebels released three policemen they had held hostage for eight days in northern Bihar state.

They abducted the policemen after a gunfight in which seven other officers were killed.

The rebels say they are fighting for the rights of the poor and the landless.

Last year, the Indian government launched a major offensive against the Maoists in several states. The insurgency is seen as the country's biggest internal security challenge.

12 Maoists killed in Jharkhand

PTI, Jamshedpur

Around 12 Maoists have been killed in the massive anti-Naxal operation launched jointly by security forces of Jharkhand and Orissa since Saturday in Saranda forest, a top police official said yesterday.

Jharkhand Director General of Police Neyaz Ahmad said that ten to 12 Maoists have been killed since Saturday, with some of the bodies having been found.

Meanwhile, the Maoists blew up a hostel and panchayat bhawan at Anandpur and triggered three landmine blasts in the Tiriloshi jungle this morning, CRPF DIG Bhanu Pratap Singh said.

Security personnel had camped at the panchayat bhawan and hostel nearly two months ago.

Two helicopters, CRPF personnel, CoBRA personnel, state armed police and district police together with securitymen of neighbouring Orissa were taking part in the operations.

The security personnel smashed two training camps, a bunker and seized two weapons and five grenades.



PHOTO: AFP

A man threatens to kill himself beside a giant statue of late Chinese leader Mao Zedong at the Zhongshan square in Shenyang, China yesterday. He was later apprehended by police. In China, suicide accounts for 3.6 percent of all deaths, and 30 percent of suicides worldwide, far above its proportion of the global population.

N Korea's political elite meet over succession

REUTERS, Seoul

Isolated North Korea has summoned its political elite to a rare ruling party meeting on Tuesday in a move analysts expect will herald the start of the succession process of ailing leader Kim Jong-il's youngest son.

Regional powers will be keeping close tabs on the Workers' Party conference, the biggest meeting of its kind in the secretive state for 30 years, for any signs of change which could impact the destitute state's economic and foreign policies.

Intelligence officials say Kim Jong-un, the 20-something son of the state's "Dear Leader", was identified last year as next in line to the dynastic throne in a country with enough fissile material for at least six to eight nuclear weapons.

Analysts say Tuesday's conference will provide a first time for the young Kim's political debut, and present him for the first time to the isolated country's 23 million residents.

Experts say the most market-friendly outcome is an approximate continuation of the current system. The biggest concern is any signs of regime collapse that could result in internal unrest, massive refugee flows and military exchanges.

China and Japan are the world's number two and three economies and, with South Korea, account for close to 20 percent of global economic output. Instability on the Korean peninsula could have grave implications for the global economy.

"Should the conference itself open the door for an orderly leadership change and in one way or another economic reform, we see a great deal of underlying, long-term economic benefit for a united Korean economy," said Gooheon Kwon, Korea economist and co-head of research at Goldman Sachs in Seoul.

"Current North Korean risk can be seen to have its downsides, but the potential for united Korean economy in the future offers promising medium and long-term upsides."

Maoist chief meets PM Calls on Nepali Congress to pull out of the prime ministerial race

NEPALnews.com

Unified CPN (Maoist) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal UCPN (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal called on Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal at the latter's official residence in Baluwatar yesterday morning.

The latest political situation including the issue of integration and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants were chiefly discussed during the meeting, it is learnt.

At the meeting, PM Nepal is said to have pressed for pushing ahead the task of Maoist army integration for its early completion.

In response, Dahal said he was confident that the integration process will start very soon and that it will be completed within the next four months as had been agreed in the recent agreement between the government and the Maoists.

The Maoist chief, however, said that the refusal of Nepali



PHOTO: INTERNET

L-R: Madhav Kumar Nepal and Pushpa Kamal Dahal

Congress to quit the prime ministerial race has further deepened the political problem and asked PM Nepal to call on NC leaders to pull out of the prime ministerial election.

The request comes a day after NC leaders said their party is ready to withdraw candidacy for the post of Prime Minister if the Unified CPN (Maoist) parts with arms and armies and renounces violence.

Meanwhile, PM Nepal has called a meeting of ten political parties in the ruling coalition to find a solution to the current political problem created by the ongoing prime ministerial debate.

Nato launches airstrikes in Pakistan 50 killed

AP, Kabul

Nato helicopters in eastern Afghanistan launched rare airstrikes into Pakistan, reportedly killing more than 50 militants after an outpost near the border came under attack from insurgents, officials said Monday.

International forces also pressed forward with a key combat phase in their drive to rout Taliban fighters around the southern city of Kandahar, an operation that is key to U.S. military strategy to turn around the Taliban from undermining the Afghan government.

The airstrikes into Pakistan came after the insurgents attacked a small Afghan security outpost near the border, and Nato justified the strikes based on "the right of self-defense," a spokesman said.

Palestinian leader Abbas delays decision on peace talks

BBC ONLINE

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas says there will be no quick decision on whether to continue talks with Israel.

He said he would respond to Israel's lifting the ban on building in West Bank settlements after next week's meeting of Arab leaders in Cairo.

On Sunday, he had warned talks renewed earlier this month would be a "waste of time" unless the ban continued.

The 10-month moratorium came to an end at midnight (2200 GMT on Sunday).

Bulldozers started levelling ground for 50 homes in the settlement of Ariel in the northern West Bank, Israeli media reported, and similar activity was also reported in the settlements of Adam and Oranit. But construction work was expected to be slow because of the Jewish holiday of Sukkot.

With peace negotiations are in the balance, Mr Abbas is in a difficult position and he may be forced to compromise, says the BBC's Jon Donnison in Ramallah.

Under pressure from the United States, there are signs Palestinian negotiators may accept the moratorium on building is not officially going to be extended, as long as no major construction takes place in the coming weeks and months, our correspondent adds.

Speaking at a Paris press conference with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Mr Abbas said he would discuss the settlement issue with Palestinian negotiators in Ramallah on Wednesday, and the 22-member Arab League in Cairo next Monday.

Painless laser device to replace X-rays It will spot early signs of disease

BBC ONLINE

Portable devices with painless laser beams could soon replace X-rays as a non-invasive way to diagnose disease.

Researchers say that the technique could become widely available in about five years.

The method, called Raman spectroscopy, could help spot the early signs of breast cancer, tooth decay and osteoporosis.

Scientists believe that the technology would make the diagnosis of illnesses faster, cheaper and more accurate.

Raman spectroscopy is the measurement of the intensity and wavelength of scattered light from molecules.

It is already being used in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. For instance, Raman lasers are used to measure flame characteristics. By studying how fuels burn, pollution from the products of combustion can be minimised.

Michael Morris, a chemistry professor at the University of Michigan, US, has been using Raman for the past few years to study human bones.

So far, he has been working on cadavers, but he says that Raman could prove effective in living patients.

"You can replace a lot of procedures, a lot of diagnostics that are out there right now. The big advantage is that it's non-invasive, pretty fast - much faster than classical procedures - and more accurate," he told BBC News.

When a person is sick, or about to become sick, the chemical mix in the tissue is quite different from that in healthy tissue, scientists say. So the Raman spectrum changes depending on the tissue it analyses, Professor Morris explained.

"Raman gives you a molecular fingerprint, a composition of whatever it is you're measuring," he said.

"In diseased states, the chemical composition is either slightly abnormal or very markedly abnormal, depending upon the diseases."

The diagnoses could be carried out in a matter of minutes and without need for an X-ray.

Australian troops to be charged over Afghan deaths

AFP, Sydney

Three Australian soldiers will face charges including manslaughter over a raid in Afghanistan that left five children dead, Australia's chief military prosecutor said on Monday.

The court action follows an operation in February last year to clear a compound in Uruzgan province where Australian forces believed a Taliban leader was hiding.

Director of Military Prosecutions Brigadier Lyn McDade said the three "will be charged with various service offences, including manslaughter, dangerous conduct, failing to comply with a lawful general order and prejudicial conduct".

A suspected insurgent was also killed in the night raid, while four people were wounded. Two of the servicemen said they would vigorously fight the charges, which are being laid after an Australian military investigation.

"We will strenuously defend the charges and we look forward to the opportunity of publicly clearing our reputations, as well as the reputation of the Australian Defence Force," they said through their lawyers.

A defence department spokesman said at least one special operations soldier will face a manslaughter charge, along with a count of dangerous conduct.

Another of the accused has been charged with failing to comply with a lawful order while the charges against the third accused have not yet been released because the soldier is travelling overseas.