

## Indian Muslims to appeal over Ayodhya ruling

AFP, Lucknow

An Indian Muslim forum yesterday said it would contest a court ruling which divided a contested religious site between Hindus and Muslims in a verdict seen as favouring the Hindu litigants.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board, a private body set up in 1973, "unanimously" decided to challenge the September 30 ruling of the Lucknow High Court in India's Supreme Court, forum spokesman MA Rahim Qureshi said.

According to the ruling, the site in the northern pilgrimage town of Ayodhya would be split, with one third going to Muslims and the rest to Hindus, including a spot in the centre where they plan to build a temple to their god Ram.

"We feel the ruling suffered from a number of infirmities and the board considers it the right and obligation of Indian Muslims to challenge the judgement," he said in Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh state.

Zafaryab Jilani, the lawyer for the Muslim group Babri Masjid Action Committee, which had claimed the whole site, said Muslims would not surrender their claim on the site in Ayodhya town in Uttar Pradesh.

"This issue can only be sorted out when the claim of Muslims is upheld. We can not surrender our claim," he added.

In 1992 the razing of a 16th-century mosque on the site by Hindu zealots sparked riots that killed more than 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, in some of the worst sectarian violence since partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

Hindus, who were pleased that the court ruling respected their belief that the central dome of the razed mosque had stood over Ram's birthplace, too plan to appeal the high court verdict to push their claim to the entire site.



A Pakistani man receives charity food in Lahore yesterday on World Food Day. The United Nations has issued a record two-billion-dollar appeal for funds to deal with the aftermath of the disaster, which UN agencies say affected 21 million people and left 12 million in need of emergency food aid.

## DIFFERENT bites

### Obama's half brother married teen

AP, Nairobi

President Barack Obama's polygamist half brother in Kenya has married a 19-year-old woman more than 30 years his junior. Malik Obama, 52, told a Kenya news station that the teen quit school and wanted to get married.

"She decided she doesn't want to go back to school. She wants to get married now. She came here, and what am I supposed to do? So we are married," Malik Obama said on the video broadcast by NTV.

### Hezbollah's gift for Ahmadinejad an Israeli rifle

AP, Beirut

The leader of Hezbollah gave Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a unique gift to cap off his two-day trip to Lebanon an Israeli assault rifle captured during the militant group's 2006 war with the Jewish state.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah presented the weapon in a felt-lined box with a row of bullets during a meeting at the Iranian embassy in Beirut late Thursday, Hezbollah said in a statement.

Hezbollah and Israel fought a 34-day war in 2006 after the Shia militant group captured two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid. Some 1,200 Lebanese and 160 Israelis were killed in the fighting.

### US town offers house for free

BBC ONLINE

A Pennsylvania town has offered prospective homeowners a bargain: a free house, if they take it away.

East Manchester acquired the three-bedroom ranch-style house for the land underneath, which it needed for future expansion of municipal facilities.

Officials deemed it cheaper to give the house away than raze it or refit it for rental. Anyone who can move it and clear the land can have it, they said.

"The house really isn't A-1," said public works director David Gentzler.

"We don't want to get into the rental business," Gentzler told the BBC.

### US missile attacks kill 9 in Pakistan

AP, Mir Ali

Suspected US unmanned aircraft launched two missile strikes in a Pakistani tribal region along the Afghan border, killing nine people, Pakistani intelligence officials said.

A militant attack on an army checkpoint killed five Pakistani soldiers elsewhere in the northwest on Friday, other officials said.

The missile attacks targeted two villages near Mir Ali in North Waziristan, intelligence officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk with the press.

The officials said three were killed Friday during the first missile strike, which hit a vehicle in Machi Khel. The dead have not yet been identified, but the village is known to house a mix of militants from the Afghan Taliban and local Pakistani insurgent groups.

The second missile strike occurred several hours later, killing six suspected militants at a house in Aziz Khel.

The US has sharply escalated its use of unmanned drone missile strikes targeting militants in Pakistan's border region in the last two months.

## FBI got tip about Headley in Mumbai attacks

REUTERS, Washington

The FBI received a tip three years before the 2008 Mumbai attacks that an American man who helped scout the targets was tied to the Pakistani group behind the plot, the Washington Post reported on Friday.

The man, David Headley, pleaded guilty in March to a dozen US terrorism charges related to the Mumbai attacks in which 166 people were killed, and to a plot to attack a Danish newspaper that had published cartoons in 2005 that lampooned the Prophet Mohammed.

He admitted to scouting the targets for the Islamist militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and agreed to help investigators and give testimony against others in exchange for a promise that he would not be extradited to India, Pakistan or Denmark.

The Washington Post reported that the FBI received a tip in 2005 about Headley's involvement from his wife after the two were in a domestic dispute that resulted in his arrest.

Headley's wife told them in interviews that he was active in LeT, had trained in Pakistani camps and had looked for night-vision goggles, the newspaper reported, citing unnamed officials and sources close to the case.

## US soldier faces court martial over Afghan killings

AFP, Los Angeles

A US soldier who allegedly killed three Afghan civilians for fun is to face a full court martial, military authorities said.

Specialist Jeremy Morlock, one of a group of accused soldiers, faces charges of premeditated murder in the deaths of three Afghans killed between January and May this year.

The decision to take the case to a full court martial trial comes after preliminary hearings at the end of September.

"The case will now come under the control of a military judge who will arraign the accused," said a statement issued by the Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Seattle, in the eastern US state of Washington, on Friday.

No date has yet been set for the court martial trial, it said, adding that Morlock faces possible life in jail without the option of parole if convicted on all charges.

He faces three charges of pre-meditated murder and one of assault, as well as one each of conspiracy to murder and conspiracy to assault. He is also accused of trying to block an investigation, and using a controlled drug.

Morlock is one of five soldiers charged with murder in the case; seven others are accused of trying to block the investigation. They also face charges of using hashish and severely beating a comrade who blew the whistle.

## India 'orders probe' into CW Games corruption

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian government has launched an official investigation into allegations of corruption and mismanagement during the preparations for the Delhi Commonwealth Games, reports said yesterday.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) national watchdog ordered the probe into various Games-related projects a day after Thursday's closing ceremony, the Press Trust of India said.

"The audit work for the Commonwealth Games is related to work payments, contracts and leasing of sports equipment among others," the official news agency said.

A high-powered panel of investigators headed by a former chief of the CAG will submit its report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by January.

The panel will look into "the organisation and conduct of the Games, fix

responsibility for the alleged irregularities and also prepare a dossier on the lessons learnt for future events," The Indian Express newspaper said.

Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, one of the driving spirits behind the frantic last-minute preparations for the Games, warned those found guilty would be punished.

"The prime minister has said that whatever has gone wrong will be dealt with severely and eventually (those involved in) corruption will not get away," Dikshit told NDTV.

"There is a mystery about tickets. People said stadiums were empty but tickets were not available and so what happened?" she said.

The October 3-14 event involving 71 nations was the costliest Commonwealth Games in history, with an initial organising budget of two billion dollars that was estimated to have swollen to at least three

times that size.

The soaring costs and highly publicised construction delays fuelled intense criticism of the Games organising committee, in particular its chairman Suresh Kalmadi.

Under-fire Kalmadi, a leader of India's ruling Congress party, insists that the accusations of poor construction have nothing to do with his committee.

Other reports said federal revenue authorities will separately probe charges of financial wrongdoing while the Central Bureau of Investigation will scrutinise tenders handed out by Kalmadi's team to buy sports equipment.

Delhi Police Commissioner YS Dadwal separately told a news conference he would launch a police investigation once the complaints reach his department.

"The rules are well defined," he said when asked if he would examine cases of alleged wrongdoing.

## Shape up in exchange for aid

### World powers to Pakistan

AFP, Brussels

World powers told Pakistan that post-flood aid was part of a "two-way" deal on reform Friday, as Islamabad also offered to lend a hand to regional peace by facilitating Afghan-Taliban talks.

After US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton demanded Pakistan's "affluent and elite" be made to pay through tax changes, ministers attending a major aid meeting on Pakistan insisted there would be no gain without some pain.

For Pakistan to "become more stable," German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said "you can harvest as much money as you want, it won't be enough at the end of the day if there is no reform."

He said "an adjustment in the equilibrium between rich and poor in Pakistan" was fundamental.

The meeting of the Friends of Democratic Pakistan came as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank estimated damages for Pakistan's devastating floods since July at 9.7 billion dollars -- almost twice the amount of its 2005 earthquake.

The body gathers China, Japan and the United States alongside big European nations and other influential voices including Australia, Canada or Egypt, but not India.



Italian Minister of Defense Ignazio La Russa (L) greets the current commander of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, US General David Petraeus, prior a meeting yesterday in Milan. Petraeus will take part in Rome on October 18 in a meeting of the International Contact Group that will bring together top diplomats to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, including 10 representatives of Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) member states.

## UN chief slams Myanmar junta on rights ahead of polls

AFP, UN

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Friday expressed "grave concern" at the Myanmar junta's refusal to free opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi ahead of a November election.

The UN chief accused the junta of being "slow and incomplete" in meeting political commitments and said its refusal to hold talks with the international community was "deeply frustrating."

"In a report on human rights in Myanmar, Ban made repeated calls for the military government to free Aung San Suu Kyi if it wanted the November 7 election to have any international credibility.

Aung San Suu Kyi has spent most of the past two decades under house arrest. Her National League for Democracy (NLD) won the last election in 1990 but she was never allowed to take power. The junta has banned the NLD from taking part in this

vote.

The UN leader said that since he visited Myanmar in July 2009, the government has shown "some signs of flexibility" with acts such as releasing more than 130 political prisoners in September last year.

"However, the detention of other political prisoners and the continued house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remain of grave concern," he said in the report.

He called for "respect for the fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association for all citizens, including engagement in political debate and access to the media."

He added: "Failure to fulfil these responsibilities could seriously undermine the credibility of the elections."

The UN has been trying to engage the Myanmar government by arranging a visit to the country for Ban's special envoy, Vijay Nambiar.

But diplomatic sources said Myanmar had only agreed to invite Nambiar after the election and this was turned down by the UN leadership.

## Pakistan to bid for non-permanent UNSC seat

PTI, UN

Pakistan will try for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council next year and hopes to get India's support for its bid, the country's top diplomat to the world body has said.

"Next year we're trying for a Security Council seat (from the Asian region) and I believe that the Indians have said that they will support us there," Abdullah Hussain Haroon told PTI.

He also wished India well for its two-year tenure as a non-permanent UNSC member, beginning from January 2011.

Pakistan had supported India in the recent election for non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council.

## Nobel for Chinese dissident harms award's prestige

### Says Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan on Friday criticised the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, saying the decision politicised the accolade and harmed its prestige.

Liu, a 54-year-old former university professor serving an 11-year sentence for subversion, was awarded the peace prize on October 8 for his "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China."

Pakistan's foreign ministry in a statement said "Pakistan is surprised and deeply perturbed" over the award by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee.

"This decision runs contrary to the established principles for the award of the Prize and therefore cannot be seen to be detracting from the prestige associated with this award."

China is a strong ally of Pakistan and Islamabad draws heavily on Beijing for its defence and infrastructure needs.

The award sparked a furious reaction from China, which on Thursday said that Liu Xiaobo is a convicted criminal and the honour is equivalent of "encouraging crime."

The Pakistani statement said Liu was sentenced under Chinese law and "has done nothing that could possibly qualify him" for the award.