

INDO-CHINA BORDER

Manmohan backs 'practical' solution to end dispute

AFP, New Delhi

India and China would look for "practical, pragmatic" measures to end border disputes, which took the two countries to war in 1962, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said.

Singh, who met his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao on Friday at a regional summit in Hanoi, also said the two Asian giants must ensure "peace and tranquillity" on their militarised border.

"We reaffirmed the two countries' resolve to find a practical, pragmatic and mutually satisfactory solution to the border problem," Singh told reporters late Saturday on his way back from a tour of Japan, Malaysia and Vietnam.



In this photograph taken on Friday shows, China's Premier Wen Jiabao (L) talks with India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (R) during a gala dinner with other Asian leaders at the 17th Asean Summit in Hanoi. India and China would look for "practical, pragmatic" measures to end border disputes, which took the two countries to war in 1962, Manmohan yesterday.

The two neighbours have disputed territory in Kashmir and along the border between Indian state of

Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet.

Improved economic ties and many rounds of talks have left the border disputes unresolved since the brief but bloody 1962 war.

In Hanoi, Wen told Singh that the two nations should "steadily ensure friendship" and "increase mutual trust in politics", according to China's foreign ministry website.

India remains wary of China's growing presence in South Asia, including investments in ports in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

The two fast-developing economies are also in a race to strengthen their presence in Africa with joint ventures, investments and oil projects.

Karzai criticises US-Russia raid

BBC ONLINE

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has criticised the first joint operation by Russian and US agents to destroy drug laboratories in his country.

Karzai said he had not been informed of Russia's participation - a sensitive issue in Afghanistan ever since the Soviet occupation ended 21 years ago.

He called it a violation of Afghan sovereignty and international law.

Russia said more than a tonne of heroin and opium, with a street value of \$250m (£157m), was destroyed in the raid.

Officials in Moscow have in the past accused coalition forces in Afghanistan of doing little to tackle drugs, and thereby helping to sustain the estimated 2.5 million heroin addicts in Russia.

Yemen arrests woman over US bomb plot

AP, BBC ONLINE, REUTERS, London/sanaa

Yemeni authorities on Saturday arrested a woman suspected of sending two mail bombs found on cargo planes and are searching for more suspects believed linked to al-Qaeda, Yemeni security officials said.

The officials said the woman was detained as part of the manhunt as authorities search for a number of suspects believed to have used forged documents and ID cards that played a role in the plot that was thwarted Friday.

US investigators have said the mail bombs were headed to two synagogues in Chicago, raising fears of a new al-Qaeda campaign against Western targets.

The same person constructed the Yemen parcel bombs and the device worn by the "underwear" bomber who botched an attack over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009, the US counter-terrorism chief said yesterday.

"I think that the indications are right now based on forensic analysis that the individual responsible for putting these devices together is the same," John Brennan told ABC's "This Week" news program.

The Yemeni officials said the suspects were believed linked to the terror network's faction in Yemen.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh told reporters in the capital, Sanaa, that the United States and the United Arab Emirates had provided him with information that helped identify the woman as a suspect.

One of the two bombs posted from Yemen last week was transported on two passenger planes before being seized in Dubai, Qatar Airways says.

The device was carried on a Qatar Airbus A320 from Yemen's capital Sanaa to Doha, the company told the BBC.

The bomb used PET explosive, which is difficult to detect using normal airport security screening.

A second device was found at East Midlands Airport in the UK. Both bombs were hidden inside printer toner cartridges.

Until now it had been thought that both devices had been transported using cargo planes.

The British authorities says the bomb seized in the UK was believed to have been designed to go off during the flight.

Interior minister Theresa May said the device, found at a British airport on Friday, was a working bomb that could have exploded.

"The target may have been an aircraft and had it detonated the aircraft could have been brought down," May said after a meeting of a government crisis committee.

- Dubai bomb was flown on passenger planes
- UK says bomb could have brought down plane

US MIDTERM ELECTION 2010

Tea Party faces crucial test

AFP, Washington

The arch-conservative US Tea Party movement, fuelled by anger at President Barack Obama and the sour economy, now faces a defining test of its strength and future in Tuesday's elections.

The outcome may decide whether the loosely knit network, which has shaken up US politics despite lacking central headquarters, formal leaders, or a slate of official candidates, has staying power beyond the bitter 2010 campaign.

The group draws much of its strength from a wing of the Republican party that views government with deep suspicion and preaches cuts in taxes and government spending as the solution to sluggish growth.

Tea Party standard-bearers made headlines by shocking establishment Republicans in Alaska, Delaware, Kentucky, Nevada and Utah primaries -- and by taking controversial stances party insiders fear may scare off independents.

Republican insiders predict the group's energy will help power big gains in the congress next week. They hope that anger at the economy will lead voters to overlook comments that in another election year might doom a candidacy.

"Voters today seem to respond a lot less critically to 'gotcha' moments

than they have in the past," according to a Republican party strategist in Washington, who requested anonymity to speak candidly about the movement.

Obama gets 90pc approval rating

AFP, Washington

With three days to go to the US midterm elections, President Barack Obama's approval rating soared to 90 percent on Saturday -- but only among the tens of thousands who gathered in Washington for a rally hosted by two liberal comics.

Most of the people who participated in text-message poll conducted among the estimated 200,000 who turned out for the Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear hosted by funnymen Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, said they support Obama and want his administration to focus aggressively on a jobs-creation agenda.

An overwhelming majority -- 90 percent -- approved of the President, and more than half -- 56 percent -- approved of him strongly, the poll found.

Democrats, who fear losing the House of Representatives and seeing their Senate majority sharply reduced, have gleefully highlighted gaffes and eyebrow-raising moments from Tea Party candidates.

Some have raised the prospect of armed uprisings if they lose, branded the global scientific consensus on climate change a "hoax," and condemned landmark civil rights legislation -- then quickly backtracked in the face of an outcry.

A key test of the duelling approaches will come in Nevada, where Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is fighting for his political life against Tea Party candidate Sharron Angle, whom he narrowly trails in some polls.

Reid has branded Angle as too extreme to be given the reins of government, and she has tarred him as an career politician in lockstep with the Obama White House.

Another open question relates to how Tea Party Republicans will govern, and how their often tense relationship with establishment and moderate Republicans will affect the party after November 2.

"It will be a relationship best described as 'trust but verify,' according to Todd Harris, a top strategist for Republican Senate hopeful Marco Rubio of Florida, a Tea Party darling who is favoured to win.



Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi (C) walks with Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi (2R) and Speaker of the Indian Parliament Meira Kumar (L) after they paid their respects at Shakti Sthal in New Delhi yesterday on the eve of the 26th assassination of the then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi.



This photograph taken around 3:00 pm (0800 GMT) shows residents on motorcycle rush out from Indonesia's Jambu Village as Mount Merapi releases massive searing clouds of gas and ash yesterday triggering fresh panic among locals.

Myanmar to watch media closely before election

REUTERS, AFP, Yangon/Sydney

Myanmar's military government has ordered local journalists representing foreign news organisations to attend mandatory field trips ahead of its Nov 7 election in an apparent move to restrict reporting of the controversial poll.

Journalists will be sent to different parts of the country to accompany diplomats on state-sponsored guided tours, and media will be barred from going within 50 metres of polling stations, the Information Ministry said yesterday.

Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd yesterday said he held "very grave reservations" about Myanmar's upcoming election, the first to be held in that country in two decades.

Myanmar's government is refusing to allow foreign election observ-

ers or international media into the country for the November 7 vote which has been criticised as a sham election intended to put a civilian face on military rule.

Rudd said Myanmar's decision to hold elections should have been a moment to be welcomed "for a country that has suffered under repressive military rule since 1962."

But he said: "We have very grave reservations about the elections."

Foreign journalists and observers have been barred from attending the election, the first in two decades in the former British colony and widely dismissed as an elaborate stunt to cement the military's 48-year grip on power.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, on a visit to China, has held talks with foreign minister Yang Jiechi on the situation in Myanmar ahead of the country's

much-criticised election next week.

Ban met Yang in Shanghai on Saturday on his first day in China before attending the closing of the World Expo yesterday.

"In addition to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, (they) discussed the situation in the Korean Peninsula, Myanmar and Sudan," a UN spokesperson said in a statement emailed to AFP without giving further details.

Internet services in Myanmar have been sporadic and mostly unavailable for the past seven days, which activists believe is an attempt to restrict coverage and discussion of the election.

State media in Myanmar is tightly controlled and serves as the mouthpiece for the reclusive generals. Some foreign news organisations are permitted to hire local journalists vetted by the government.

Israeli PM to visit US next week

AP, Jerusalem

Israel's prime minister says he is heading to the US next week to discuss Mideast peace efforts with Vice President Joe Biden.

Benjamin Netanyahu's trip will be his first to the US since peace talks were launched last month at a White House ceremony. The negotiations have stalled over Israeli settlement policies in the West Bank.

Netanyahu told his Cabinet on Sunday that he will update Biden on the state of peace talks. He will also address a gathering of Jewish leaders in New Orleans.

President Barack Obama will be out of the country at the time.

The US has been trying to broker a compromise between Israel and the Palestinians to get peace talks back on track.

Lottery for admission

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money from them promising admission in reputed schools.

The admission tests in the 24 government high schools, usually at the top of limited-income parents' wish list, is so competitive that a child has to fight against at least seven others to get in.

Teachers and guardians believe that children at this tender age have to go through immense pressure to perform and it creates a kind of fear in them. They say that it is quite tough to assess merit at this age. They observe that private schools in the city would follow the system if the system is introduced in government schools.

"The lottery system would put an end to all the hassles we and the children go through," said Waliur Rahman, a parent who aspires to get his child into a reputed school.

Education officials say that the lottery system will help stop irregularities in the admissions process as well as stop influential people lobbying to get children in by bending the rules.

Some coaching centres are now

opposing the lottery system especially after Vigarunnisa's decision fearing loss of business. They have even started arranging demonstrations with parents against the lottery system.

Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) is preparing a plan for the new system. The plan would be sent to the education ministry soon.

"The proposal for introducing lottery system in the city's 24 public schools was discussed ahead of last year's admission but no decision was made. Now, we are considering it seriously," said Prof Noman-ur-Rashid, director general of DSHE.

"I personally believe that the existing admission test system puts intolerable pressure on the tiny brains and it should go," he told The Daily Star Thursday.

He said a meeting would soon be held in the education ministry to finalise the admission system for class I.

The 24 public schools accommodate around 2,000 children in class I. In the current academic year, about 50,000 admission forms were sold

by these schools.

Vigarunnisa Noon School authorities said they decided to introduce the lottery system from next year to ensure admission free of irregularities.

"The lottery would be held in presence of guardians, children and the media," Husne Ara Begum, principal of the school, told The Daily Star Thursday.

The school has 1,568 seats for class I and the lottery would be held for 1,440 seats as there are some reserve seats for the children of teachers and employees of the school, and sisters of the current students.

Forms will be distributed between November 7 and November 10 and the school authorities would interview the students when they submit the forms on November 12, 13 and 14 between 9:00am and 5:00pm, said the principal.

She said the interview would be conducted to disqualify girls who are too old for class I.

The lottery would be held in December, she added.

Man pulls shark's tail to save woman

AP, Perth

Officials say a female diving guide was bitten on the thigh and buttocks by a shark but was saved when another swimmer pulled the shark's tail.

Frank Pisani of Fremantle Sea Rescue said yesterday that an unidentified man grabbed the shark by the tail as it bit Elyse Frankcom in waters about 30 miles (50 kilometers) south of Perth.

Pisani said Frankcom started to sink to the bottom but the man grabbed hold of her and brought her to the surface and back on board the boat.

Frankcom had been guiding a group of people on a dive with dolphins on Saturday.

Department of Fisheries spokesman Tony Cappelluti says the 10-foot (three-meter) shark was either a great white or a whaler shark.