

# Afghan airlines facing ban from EU air space

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's international airlines are facing a possible ban from European air space on safety grounds as early as next week, officials said yesterday.

Acting transport minister Daoud Ali Najafi said he would go to Brussels to present an action plan to the European Union's air safety committee that was authorised by President Hamid Karzai earlier this week.

"I hope I can convince the Europeans not to ban Afghan airlines from flying into Europe," he told AFP.

"President Karzai has authorised me to establish a civil aviation authority under the transport ministry with exclusive authority to regulate Afghan civilian airlines," he said.

The EU's air safety committee is set to meet on Tuesday to consider banning all Afghan airlines because of a lack of safety standards, a senior European official said.

"The main issue is a lack of adequate safety oversight of Afghan carriers," he said, speaking on condition he not be identified.

The ban would apply to the privately-owned Kam Air, Safi Airways and Pami Airways, which fly to Germany, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Central Asia and the Gulf. State-owned Ariana Afghan Airlines is already banned from the EU.

No Afghan airlines fly to the United States.

Najafi said that regulations complying with European, United States and international standards had been drawn up and would be distributed to the companies before he left for Brussels early next week.

"Safety is the heart of aviation and we have a plan for international assistance, licensing, certification, mechanical, maintenance and training," he said, adding: "Mechanical help is necessary."



Youth activists from across Asia demonstrate outside the Nepalese parliament in Kathmandu yesterday. The activists called for the Himalayan nations new constitution, which is currently being drafted to be include 'the right to food'.

# Half of Nepal's under-fives stunted by hunger: Report

AFP, Kathmandu

Half of Nepalese children under five years old suffer from stunted growth as a result of a chronic lack of food, the government and the United Nations said in a report released yesterday.

Political instability and a decade-long civil war have also left more than a third of Nepal's 12.6 million children living below the poverty line, the study found.

"Malnutrition is a real obstacle to the survival, growth and development of children," said Gillian Mellsop, Nepal representative for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"The serious effects of under-nutrition at a young age can be irreversible, and can ultimately hinder the development status of the whole nation."

"Every second child aged under five in Nepal is stunted or has a low height for their age -- a result of chronic under-nutrition."

# OVER AAFIA'S JAIL Muslims should take revenge: Zawahiri

AFP, Dubai

al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri called on Muslims yesterday to avenge the sentencing of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani scientist jailed for 86 years by a US court, the SITE monitoring service said.

Zawahiri made the appeal in an audio message entitled "Who Will Avenge the Scientist Aafia Siddiqui," which was released on jihadi forums, the US-based SITE Intelligence Group said.

On September 23, a New York court jailed Siddiqui, 38, for the attempted murder of US servicemen in Afghanistan, in a high-profile case sparking outrage in Pakistan.

Siddiqui, a mother of three, was found guilty of grabbing a rifle at a police station in the Afghan town of Ghazni where she was being interrogated in July 2008 and of trying to gun down a group of US servicemen and FBI agents.

# Myanmar's Internet 'under attack' ahead of election

AFP, Yangon

A massive cyber attack has crippled Internet services in Myanmar ahead of Sunday's election, IT experts and web service providers say, raising fears of a communications blackout for the vote.

Internet users in the military-ruled country reported slow connections and sporadic outages for more than a week, and some suspect the junta may be intentionally disrupting services to block news flowing out.

Web service providers have blamed the troubles on outside attacks.

"Our technicians have been trying to prevent cyber attacks from other countries," a technician from Yatanarpon Teleport Co. told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"We still do not know whether access will be good on the election day," he added.

A technician from private web provider RedLink Communications Co. said there was still intermittent loss of Internet connection.

"The technicians are trying to fix it... We cannot tell exactly when it will be back to full service," he said. "We don't know the source of the attack yet."

Experts say Myanmar's Internet system has been overwhelmed by a flood of incoming

messages known as a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack.

US-based IT security firm Arbor Networks says the main state-owned Internet provider Myanmar Post and Telecommunications "suffered a large, sustained DDoS attack disrupting most network traffic in and out of the country."

The onslaught was "several hundred times" more than enough to overwhelm the country's terrestrial and satellite links, it estimated.

The motives for the attack were unclear, but "large-scale geo-politically motivated attacks -- especially ones targeting an entire country -- remain rare," Arbor Networks chief scientist Craig Labovitz wrote in a blog posting.

Some Internet users believe the authorities are intentionally slowing services ahead of Sunday's vote, the first in 20 years in Myanmar, which is also known as Burma.

"Although they said the connection has been attacked, it's hard to believe. I think they have been doing it intentionally for the election day to delay news reaching the international community," said Kyaw Kyaw, a 25-year-old university student in the main city Yangon.

The polls have been widely criticised by pro-democracy activists and Western governments as being aimed simply at prolonging military rule under a civilian guise.

# Rs 74 million spent on Pak PM's home, office

IANS, Islamabad

A whopping Rs74 million have been spent on renovating Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's official residence and his majestical secretariat in the past 30 months, reveal documents tabled in the National Assembly.

Minister for Housing and Works Rehmatullah Kakar on Wednesday submitted two separate official figures for the renovation cost of the Prime Minister's House and the PM Secretariat, the Express Tribune reported on Thursday.

The PM House renovation cost more than double the money spent on the PM Secretariat.

Kakar told the house that in the last 30 months, Rs 50.3 million were spent on the PM House.

# Pakistan to walk tightrope on Afghan peace

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan will need to walk a tightrope to secure its interests in US-backed reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan, at risk of being sidelined by the Taliban and the Kabul government, analysts say.

British and US newspapers have been awash with reports on the nature of peace efforts needed to end the nine-year Taliban insurgency and allow the 150,000 US-led Nato contingent in Afghanistan to withdraw.

The Taliban have denied any talks are taking place, and Afghan and Pakistani experts on insurgent groups dismiss such reports as Western propaganda.

But Pakistan is determined to ensure that an allied government is in power in Kabul once the United States and its allies have withdrawn their troops from Afghanistan.

Washington and Kabul agree there can be no peace in Afghanistan without cooperation from Pakistan, which has repeatedly offered to facilitate reconciliation efforts.

For 10 years, Islamabad has been America's ally in the war, despite widespread public opposition and militant bomb attacks across the nuclear-armed country that have killed more than 3,740 people in three years.

But Pakistan is not trusted fully by either the Afghan and US governments, which accuse its powerful military of continuing to foster the Afghan Taliban it spawned during the 1980s resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Afghanistan also share a large ethnic Pashtun population, which traditionally does not recognise the border drawn between the two countries in the British colonial era and from whom the bulk of the Taliban are drawn.

"We are in contact with all ethnic groups, not just Pashtuns, in Afghanistan," said one Pakistani official on condition of anonymity.

Yet Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said late last month that Afghan President Hamid Karzai had yet to brief the government on his plans.

"It is not necessary that we're in the loop at every stage or kept informed of all developments or meetings," said the Pakistani official.

Pakistan considers Afghanistan a strategic asset, where a friendly government in Kabul can help offset the increasing power flexed by arch rival India. Hence its diplomatic recognition of the 1996-2001 Taliban regime.



# Sonia, Tata in Forbes' most powerful people's list

PTI, Boston

Congress President Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Tata Sons Chairman Ratan Tata are among the five Indians named among the most powerful people in the world by Forbes in its this year's list of 68 people "who matter".

India's business tycoons Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani and steel giant ArcelorMittal Chairman Lakshmi Mittal also make this year's list.

China's President Hu Jintao has topped the 2010 Forbes list of the 'World's Most Powerful People'.

For the top spot, Jintao piped US President Barack Obama, who comes in at second place. Of the 6.8 billion people on the planet, Forbes' list comprises "the 68 who matter".

The heads of state, major religious figures, entrepreneurs and outlaws on the second annual list were chosen "because, in various ways, they bend the world to their will. Gandhi debuts on the 9th spot in this year's list of the world's most powerful people."

# Qantas grounds giant A380s after emergency landing

BBC ONLINE

The Australian airline Qantas has grounded its six-strong fleet of Airbus A380 airliners after one of the super jumbos made an emergency landing.

Qantas flight QF32 experienced engine trouble shortly after taking off from Singapore on its way to Sydney.

One of the engines exploded with a bang, a passenger told the BBC, and debris was found on an island below.

Singapore Airlines said its A380 flights would be delayed pending technical checks.

Qantas said the plane, with 433 passengers and 26 crew on board, experienced an "engine issue" over western Indonesia shortly after taking off from Singapore time at about 1000 (0200 GMT).

# Afghan attorney general probes polls complaints

AP, Kabul

Afghanistan's top prosecutor has opened an investigation into the country's electoral authorities, saying they have not clearly explained their reasoning for throwing out nearly a quarter of the votes cast in September's parliamentary polls, an official said yesterday.

Afghans had hoped the elections would be credible after last year's fraud-marred presidential vote, which soured relations between President Hamid Karzai and his Western allies.

General Deputy Attorney General Rahmatullah Nazari said electoral bodies have not clearly explained their decision to exclude 1.3 million ballots out of 5.6 million cast or about 23 percent from the Sept. 18 parliamentary election.



As US President Barack Obama to stay in the Taj Mahal Palace hotel during his visit in India on November 6, security has been enhanced around the hotel to ensure the utmost safety of US president. The picture shows an Indian police officer takes a roll call before deploying forces outside the hotel yesterday.

# Obama India's visit may be more style than substance

REUTERS, New Delhi

A weakened US President Barack Obama visits India this week to counter perceptions he has relegated the Asian power behind rivals China and Pakistan, but he may struggle to seal deals to help usher in billions of business.

Economic ties are booming but Obama's visit from Saturday to Monday may fail to live up to President Bill Clinton's 2000 trip that helped break the diplomatic ice, or President George W. Bush's visit in 2006 when a civil nuclear deal was hailed as a landmark in ties.

Obama's drubbing in the mid-term elections may also tie his political hands when it comes to bold policy moves on India as growing worries emerge that outsourcing in cities such as IT hub Bangalore is worsening mass unemployment in the United States.

It was a sign of the times that Obama told the Press Trust of India that India should open up its markets to US companies, a stance that may dominate a 10-day trip of Asia aimed at boosting US exports and jobs, crucial for his presidency's fate.

"Obama is going to be too preoccupied

domestically, and you won't see a more aggressive foreign policy going forward," said Amitabh Mattoo, professor of international politics at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

"On his upcoming trip, I think that the best India can hope for is a consolidation of the relationship established under President Bush."

An increasingly confident India wants recognition of its global weight. It wants a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and for the United States to allow exports of dual-use technology, banned after India's nuclear tests in 1998.

India's booming trillion-dollar economy is one of the few stars in a struggling world economy, offering US investors massive opportunities. There are reportedly more than 200 executives accompanying Obama on his visit to Mumbai and Delhi.

On the agenda will be lucrative defence ties. The United States has held more military exercises with India in the past year than any other country, and US firms Boeing and Lockheed Martin Corp are bidding for a \$11 billion deal for 126 fighter jets.

# 34 warships sent from America

PTI, New Delhi

The White House will, of course, stay in Washington but the heart of the famous building will move to India when President Barack Obama lands in Mumbai on Saturday.

Communications set-up, nuclear button, a fleet of limousines and majority of the White House staff will be in India accompanying the President on this three-day visit that will cover Mumbai and Delhi.

He will also be protected by a fleet of 34 warships, including an aircraft carrier, which will patrol the sea lanes off the Mumbai coast during his two-day stay there beginning Saturday. The measure has been taken as Mumbai attack in 2008 took place from the sea.

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