

Sarkozy condemns Karachi on Mumbai attacks

AFP, Mumbai

French President Nicolas Sarkozy condemned Pakistan yesterday for allowing extremists "safe havens" in its tribal border areas, as he paid tribute to the victims of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Sarkozy, in Mumbai on the last day of a four-day visit to India, said it was "unacceptable" that terror networks could find refuge in Pakistan and use it as a springboard to attack India, French troops in Afghanistan or other countries.

"It is unacceptable that India's security can be threatened by groups of terrorists acting from neighbouring countries," he said at the Oberoi hotel, one of the luxury hotels besieged by militants in November 2008.

"It is unacceptable for Afghanistan and for our troops that the Taliban and al-Qaeda find safe haven in the border regions of Pakistan. We know the price that the Pakistani people are paying for terrorism."

"But it is unacceptable for the world that terrorist acts should be masterminded and carried out by terrorist groups in Pakistan."

"I call on all Pakistani authorities to step up their efforts and show that they are resolute in combating these criminals," he added, vowing that "there will be no limit to operational co-operation" in counter-terrorism with India.

Sarkozy, accompanied by his wife Carla Bruni, earlier placed a wreath at a memorial in the south of the city for 18 police officers who lost their lives in the carnage.

The wave of attacks, which also targeted a Jewish centre, a popular tourist restaurant and the city's main railway station, killed 166 people in all, including two French nationals, and injured more than 300.

The deadly assault has been likened to those on the United States on September 11, 2001 and was blamed on the banned, Pakistan-based Islamist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), with help from elements in Pakistan's military.



French President Nicolas Sarkozy (R) delivers a speech as first lady Carla Bruni-Sarkozy listens during a function in Mumbai yesterday. President Sarkozy said it was "unacceptable" that terror networks could find safe havens in Pakistan, as he paid tribute to victims of the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

China hits back at criticism over N Korea

REUTERS, Beijing/Seoul

China yesterday hit back at the United States and its Asian allies for their refusal to talk to North Korea, saying dialogue was the only way to calm escalating tension on the divided Korean peninsula.

China took a more belligerent tone a day after US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hosted her South Korean and Japanese counterparts in Washington, calling a report that it was shielding Pyongyang's nuclear program an "irresponsible accusation."

Washington, Seoul and Tokyo have been lukewarm toward Beijing's proposal for emergency talks between the six regional powers, worried they could be perceived as rewarding Pyongyang for its deadly attack on a South Korean island two weeks ago.

They want China to bring its ally North Korea to heel, pressure Beijing has repeatedly resisted.

"The responsibility of maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia should be shouldered by all parties in the region," China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a regular news conference.

Husband implicated in honeymoon killing

BBC ONLINE

The husband of a woman murdered on her honeymoon in South Africa plotted his wife's death, one of the men charged with her killing has told prosecutors.

Shrien and Anni Dewani, 28, from Bristol, were travelling in a taxi last month when it was hijacked. Mr Dewani was let go but Mrs Dewani was shot.

A Cape Town court heard taxi driver Zola Tongo was offered 15,000 rand (£1,500) by Mr Dewani to kill his wife.



Shrien and Anni Dewani SOURCE: INTERNET

Mr Tongo, 31, was on trial for murder after agreeing a plea bargain.

Mr Tongo was charged along with Xolile Mnguni, 23, and Mziwamadoda Qwabe, 25.

Reuters news agency reported that state prosecutor Rodney de Kock read the plea bargain agreement to the court and said: "The deceased was murdered at the insistence of her husband."

Mrs Dewani, from Sweden, was kidnapped while the taxi was travelling through Gugulethu township on 13 November.

Her body was found inside the abandoned taxi the following day. Her wristwatch, a white-gold and diamond bracelet, her handbag and her mobile phone were stolen.

Mr Dewani, 31, from Westbury-on-Trym, was released unharmed. The couple had been married for two weeks.

Mr Mnguni and Mr Qwabe will appear before Wynberg Regional Court on 25 February before a full trial at Western Cape High Court at a later date.

Allawi threatens to quit Iraqi govt

AFP, London

Iyad Allawi, who won the most votes in Iraq's elections, threatened to quit a power-sharing government in an interview with Britain's Times newspaper yesterday.

"Power-sharing is not happening," Allawi said. "It is not set to work in a meaningful way... If it does not change, I will not participate."

Despite being lauded by international leaders including US President Barack Obama, Iraq's power-sharing pact has looked fragile ever since it was agreed last month after an eight-month impasse.

Despite his Iraqia block narrowly winning elections in March, Allawi has seen religious parties coalesce to form the biggest grouping in the new parliament led by Prime Minister-designate Nuri al-Maliki.

Allawi, a Shia Muslim, claimed that Iraq's political system meant a non-sectarian politician could never succeed.

He laid the blame at the feet of Iraq's Shia neighbour, Iran, and said Iranian leaders had a "red line" against him.

"There is a question mark on democracy now," he said. "People realise that Iran has the upper hand and they feel Iraq is controlled by foreign forces."

CLIMATE TALKS

China shows flexibility on issues of global cooperation

AFP, Cancun

Climate negotiators hailed a brighter mood as global talks enter the home stretch yesterday, with China voicing flexibility on issues of global cooperation that have dogged past sessions.

But the meeting at the Mexican resort of Cancun looked set to kick along some of the most divisive issues to future meetings -- most crucially, by how many countries will cut carbon emissions blamed for global warming.

Top negotiators from more than 190 countries launch on Tuesday the main phase of the two-week meeting, which comes a year after the much-criticized Copenhagen summit that produced a general agreement to work together.

China appeared to tone down its adamant past refusal at being part of a binding agreement that would include outside verification that it is making good on its pledges to curb emissions.

"China is willing to share with the world and we have a willingness to take an open and transparent attitude," Chinese negotiator Xie Zhenhua said.

"There is more consensus and our differences are being reduced," he said of the meeting. "At the end, there will maybe not be a satisfactory deal for everyone but an acceptable one."

With China now the world's top polluter, the United States considers tough, binding and verifiable commitments by the Asian giant to be the best way to sell any climate agreement in Washington.

But last month's election victory by the Republican Party, which includes sceptics of the science behind climate change, all but ended the prospect of the United States approving legislation to restrict carbon emissions.

On a brief visit to Cancun, US Energy Secretary Steven Chu said President Barack Obama was committed to meeting US pledges made in Copenhagen to curb carbon emissions by 17 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels.

"He absolutely feels that moving

toward a green energy economy is really about our energy security and about our financial security," Chu said about the president. "It's about our economy; it's about the future of the planet."

Chu's low-key visit, which included a PowerPoint demonstration at the beachfront conference, contrasts with the major push last year at Copenhagen, where Obama and other leaders personally hammered out the final deal.

Even if major emitters meet their stated goals, scientists say it is not enough to achieve Copenhagen's ambition of checking global warming at two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The Cancun conference is considering strengthening the target to 1.5 degrees as scientists warn that climate change is already wreaking havoc, with rising sea levels on course to threaten low-lying cities around the world.

Wendel Trio of environmental group Greenpeace likened Cancun to "a meeting of Emitters Anonymous."

"We want countries to recognize that there is a problem and that their figures are not going to help us deal with climate change," he said.

With few expecting a full-fledged treaty anytime soon, the European Union has led calls to extend the Kyoto Protocol past the end of 2012, when requirements under the landmark treaty are set to expire.

The EU pushed for tougher protests from Japan. It says Kyoto is unfair by not involving the two top polluters -- China, which has no requirements as a developing country, and the United States, which rejected the treaty in 2001.

Hoping to break the deadlock, host Mexico paired up developing and developed nations to sort out differences. Britain and Brazil were tasked with looking into the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

Brazil's negotiator, Sergio Serra, feared that Japan's firm position would "have a strong, negative impact on everything that can be negotiated here at the conference."

He hoped to reach a solution under which "if Japan can't completely change its position, at least it cannot be an obstacle to the conference's end result."

Outside the conference, Mexican authorities were stepping up security as busloads of activists and peasants plan to protest Tuesday against proposals to put the World Bank or markets in charge of climate assistance.

"What we're hoping to achieve is to influence the process. So far it's business as usual -- they're trying to make better business," said Paul Nicholson of farm workers activist movement Via Campesina.



A man rides a bicycle through the steam funnelling out from the heating system along a street in Beijing yesterday. Climate negotiators hailed a brighter mood as global talks enter the home stretch with China voicing flexibility on issues of global cooperation that have dogged past sessions.

Nations 'rewriting climate plan'

BBC ONLINE

The UN's former top climate official Yvo de Boer has accused developing countries, such as India and China, of trying to rewrite the Bali Action Plan.

He says this confuses negotiations between more than 190 nations that have started this week in Cancun, Mexico.

The meeting began last week amid low expectations. The number of heads of state expecting to attend the climate meeting is just 20, compared to the 120 who turned up at the Copenhagen summit.

This year's conference opened on Monday 29 November with marked divisions between industrialised and developing countries.

In an exclusive interview to BBC News, de Boer - who has taken up the role of climate adviser at KPMG consulting - said the agreement reached after a tough two weeks of negotiations in Bali, 2007 should be implemented "loyally" or abandoned for "something new".

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