

# Indian ambassador frisked at US airport

## Delhi to protest

BBC ONLINE, AFP, New Delhi

India's ambassador to US has been pulled from an airport security line and frisked by a security agent in Mississippi, it has emerged. The hands-on search took place last week even after Meera Shankar's diplomatic status was revealed. Some reports said Meera, who was on her way from a conference, was singled out because she was wearing a sari. The Indian embassy in Washington has strongly protested about the incident. The search took place on 4 December at the Jackson-Evers International Airport, news agency Press Trust of India quoted an Indian Embassy official as saying. Meera was about to board a flight to Baltimore after attending an event at Mississippi State University. She was taken to a VIP waiting room despite staff being told that she was an ambassador, he said. She was later pulled from a security line and patted down by a female Transportation Security Administration agent. Protocol normally exempts diplomatic envoys and other dignitaries from such searches. "This is unacceptable to India and we are going to take it up with the US government and I hope things could be resolved so that such unpleasant incidents do not recur," External Affairs Minister SM Krishna told reporters in Delhi. "There are well-established conventions, practices as to how diplomats are treated. I am surprised at the way our ambassador has been treated for the second time in three months," Krishna said. In September, Meera suffered a similar experience at a Chicago airport. The US embassy in New Delhi said it had no comment on the incident at the Jackson-Evers International Airport.



A demonstrator protests outside the University of London in central London yesterday as thousands of students prepare to take part in protests against government proposals to let universities triple tuition fees. The proposed change -- which would see students at English universities charged fees of up to 9,000 pounds (14,200 dollars, 10,700 euros) a year -- have exposed deep tensions within the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition.

# New video shows Lankan war crimes

AP, Colombo

New video evidence has emerged linking Sri Lanka's military to the execution of prisoners during the final hours of the country's decades-long civil war last year, international human rights groups said yesterday. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said the grisly content of a five-minute video clip aired by Britain's Channel 4 television last month warrants a United Nations investigation. The video was an extension of a short clip aired by the station last year showing blindfolded, naked men being shot dead at close range. The latest video shows the naked body of a young woman with a blood-spattered face identified by Tamil media as "Isaipriya," a news reader with the Tamil Tiger rebel television station. A dozen other men and women, some with hands tied behind their backs, also lay dead beside her. New York-based Human Rights Watch said an acquaintance identified the body as Isaipriya. It said the video links the Sri Lankan army's 53rd division, which conducted the final battle with the boxed-in rebels on a small beach strip, with summary executions. "This horrific new evidence demonstrates graphically that the Sri Lankan army engaged in summary executions of prisoners during the final days of fighting in May 2009," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The government's failure to investigate these serious war crimes in the face of overwhelming evidence shows the need for an independent, international investigation," Adams said. Sri Lanka's government said it "categorically denies that the Channel 4 News TV video is authentic."

# BNP backs

FROM PAGE 16 party's Naya Palan office yesterday afternoon, said they have extended support to the hartal.

The Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday unanimously adopted the National Education Policy-2010. Delwar said whatever cooperation is needed BNP would provide to make the hartal successful.

He said whoever will carry out movement and call hartal for the interest of people and in favour of their legitimate demands BNP would stand by them.

In this context, he recalled BNP's support to a previous hartal called by the National Committee for protection of gas, oil, minerals, natural resources, electricity and ports.

The BNP secretary general also mentioned the police action on a procession of Olama Mashayek on Tuesday that foiled their programme to submit a memorandum to the Speaker with an appeal not to pass the national education policy without amendments.

Delwar said they would certainly stand behind Olama Mashayek who speaks for 92 percent Muslims of the country.

The BNP leader also demanded immediate holding of election to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). He alleged that the government is conspiring to control the DCC by appointing a partisan administrator as it has "no support from people".

He termed the government's logic to divide DCC as an "evil-motive", saying it is not acceptable.

He, however, said like big cities of other countries in the world it can be divided into zones for the convenience of the administration.

Asked about deployment of a small number of army in municipality election, Delwar said the ruling party would try to do whatever necessary to manipulate the election results in favour of it by using the Election Commission.

# Rains get

FROM PAGE 16 millimetres (mm) was recorded in Ishwardi in 24 hours, Abdur Rahman, a Met office official, told The Daily Star.

"Rainfall in the capital was 81mm in the last 30 hours till 12:00 noon yesterday," said another Met official.

Meanwhile, rainfall also caused the mercury to drop, with a lowest temperature of 17 degrees Celsius recorded in Rajshahi and Jessore yesterday.

During night time, temperature may drop by a couple of degrees more all over the country, according to the forecast.

Hundreds of commuters including office goers and students struggled to reach their destinations, as transport crisis paired with the incessant rain took a toll on them. Many parents said they were compelled to send their children to school as final examination was going on.

"I could not manage a rickshaw to take my son to school," said Nayar Sultana, a working mother in city's Uttara whose son Faiyaz is a student at Milestone School.

"Usually it takes us only seven minutes whereas it took us 45 minutes to reach school and my son was already soaked in rain," she added.

"With the exam about to begin I had no other option than to leave him in that state," she explained.

However, many schools started their classes and examinations late considering the rainy weather. Many office goers also showed up late for work as there were very few buses, rickshaws and taxicabs on the roads. They also complained of severe traffic jam at Asadgate, Mohakhali, Nilkhet, Banani and Moghbazar.

# Upbeat note at UN climate talks

AFP, Cancun

Climate negotiators voiced hope that UN-led talks would iron out differences to reach an accord on fighting deforestation and assisting poor countries worst hit by global warming.

One year after the Copenhagen climate summit ended in widespread disappointment, the United Nations and host Mexico have tried to keep hopes in check by concentrating on building blocks to a future deal.

With talks due to end on Friday, many negotiators believed they could come to agreement in three key areas: the architecture of a global climate fund, aid to discourage deforestation, and verification of countries' climate pledges.

"I am cautiously optimistic that we will achieve what we came here for," Brazilian negotiator Luiz Alberto Figueiredo told reporters late Wednesday.

Brazil's Environment Minister Izabella

Teixeira added: "Now begins the process of closed rooms, nervous negotiators, starving and working through the night."

**DEFORESTATION**

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expected that the more than 190 countries meeting in the beach resort of Cancun could agree on ways to curb deforestation, a leading cause of carbon emissions blamed for climate change.

"We need to provide hope to a global public growing cynical about small progress in meetings on climate change," Ban said at a side event.

The clearing of forests for timber or farmland accounts each year for 12 to 25 percent of the world's carbon emissions as lush tropical vegetation balances off industrial pollution.

Wealthy nations have pledged 4.5 billion dollars to curb deforestation. The top donor is oil-rich Norway, which has already worked with Indonesia on a wide-ranging plan to preserve rain forests.

"It's almost there. It's ready. But now we are looking for it to be simplified to see how we can get the benefits," said Nepal's Forest Minister Deepak Bohra.

**CLIMATE FUND**

A draft proposal also spelled out the technicalities for setting up a global climate fund to administer assistance to some of the poorest nations most at risk from drought and other extreme weather from rising temperatures.

The European Union, Japan and the United States all pledged before the Copenhagen conference to contribute to a 100 billion-dollar-a-year climate package for poor nations.

In a revision, the text explicitly calls for a role for women in the fight against climate change. But some environmentalists criticized the draft for removing a reference to ensuring that 50 percent of assistance goes toward helping people adapt to climate change.

# US strategy is paying off in Afghanistan: Gates

AFP, Kabul

Defence Secretary Robert Gates on Wednesday said he was "convinced" the US strategy in Afghanistan was paying off, a year after President Barack Obama ordered reinforcements.

Signalling the outcome of a White House review of the war due out this month, Gates said his visit to key battlefronts over two days confirmed that the Taliban was losing ground and undermining pressure.

"I will go back convinced that our strategy is working and that we will be able to achieve key goals set out by President Barack Obama last year" and endorsed by Nato allies at a November summit, Gates told a joint press conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"The bottom line is that in the last 12 months, we've come a long way, making progress that even just in the last few months has exceeded my expectations," he said.

US officials and commanders have suggested for months that they will stick with the current strategy, but Gates' emphatic public comments -- his strongest to date -- leave little doubt that Washington will maintain its massive troop presence with no major withdrawal on the horizon.

The strategy involves nearly 100,000 US troops plus more than 40,000 allied forces, engaged in a bloody, painstaking counter-insurgency fight as well as a costly effort to train and arm the Afghan army and police.

# Thai ruling party survives ban threat

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's ruling Democrats escaped a political ban yesterday for the second time in less than two weeks, clearing the way for premier Abhisit Vejjajiva to lead the party into an election battle next year.

The case centred on allegations of an illegal multi-million-dollar donation to Thailand's oldest party during its 2005 national election campaign, when Abhisit was deputy leader.

The Constitutional Court voted 4-3 to dismiss the charges on the basis that the legal process was not conducted properly, a judge announced.

# Latest WikiLeaks disclosure

AFP, Paris

Key points in the latest secret US diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks:

The United States thinks China is a "pernicious economic competitor with no morals" whose booming investments in Africa are propping up unsavoury regimes, according to a February 23 cable by the US consul-general in Lagos.

The US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Johnnie Carson, was quoting as giving the frank assessment in a meeting with oil executives in Nigeria.

"China is not in Africa for altruistic reasons," he said. "China is in Africa for China primarily."

US officials pushed China to free dissident Liu Xiaobo, winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, in the weeks after he was first detained.

In late 2008, only two weeks after Liu was first held, then ambassador to China Clark Randt "urged the Chinese government to release him and stop harassing peaceful dissidents", according to a confidential memo.

Current US ambassador Jon Huntsman

took up the cause in 2009, writing to Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi after Liu was imprisoned on subversion charges for co-authoring Charter 08, a manifesto for democratic reform in communist China.

Documents showed that Washington put intense pressure on Berlin to not enforce arrest warrants against CIA agents involved in the 2003 abduction of a German citizen mistakenly believed to be a terrorist.

Khaled el-Masri, an unemployed car salesman of Lebanese origin, was captured in late December 2003 as he entered Macedonia on a vacation. Local authorities mistook him for an al-Qaeda operative with a similar name and turned him over to the CIA.

Masri said he was held and tortured in a secret US prison in Afghanistan before US agents realised their mistake and released him, five months later.

In a February 2007 cable, the US deputy chief of mission in Berlin, John Koenig, emphasised to German Deputy National Security Adviser Rolf Nikel "that issuance of international arrest warrants would have a negative impact on our bilateral relation-

ship". A cable revealed that Nigeria's leadership was in total confusion over who was in charge early this year with then-president Umaru Yar'Adua thought to be in a "semi-comatose state".

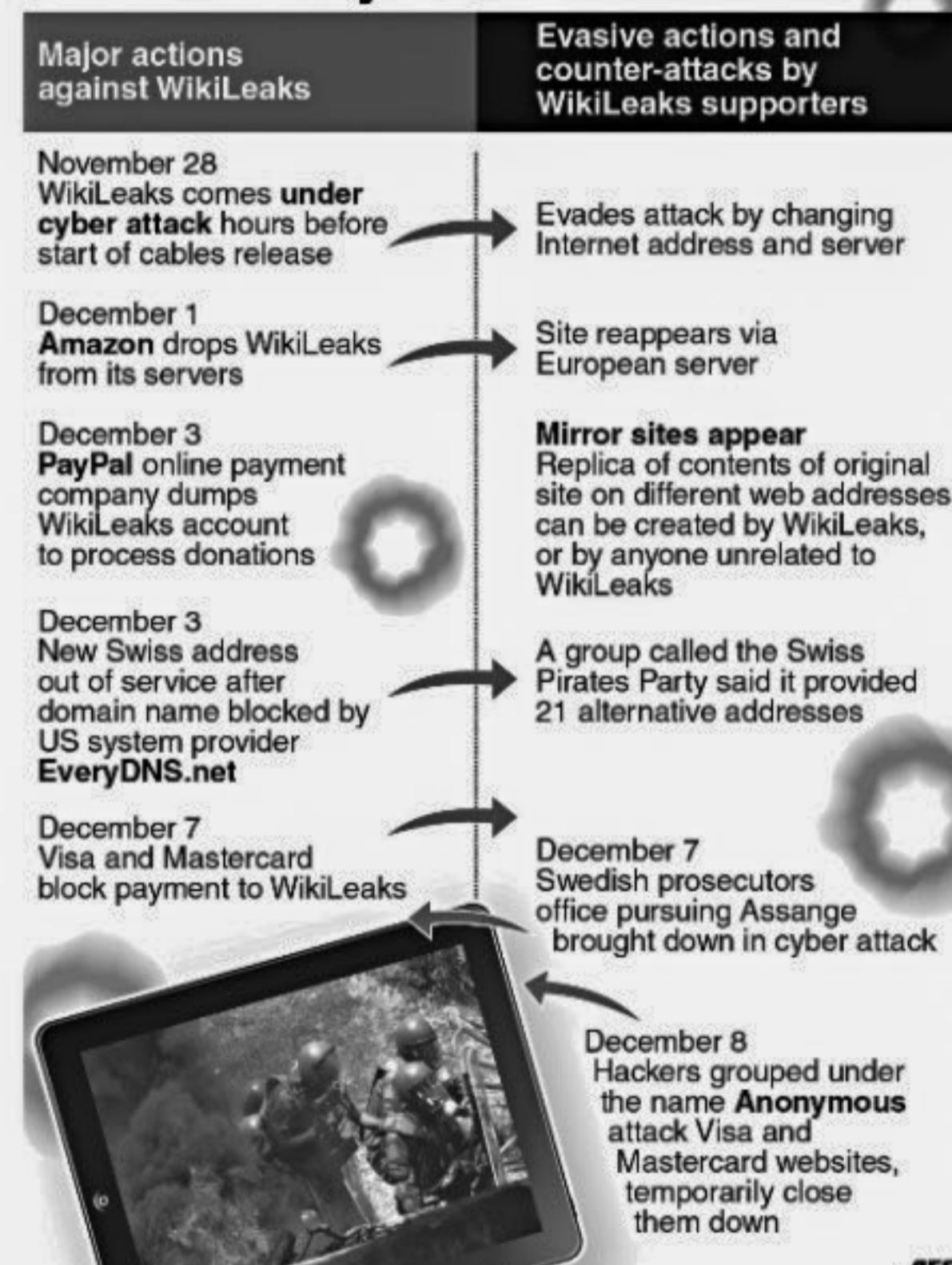
The cable, dated February 26, 2010, reported on a meeting between then-US ambassador Robin Renee Sanders and Goodluck Jonathan, who was Nigeria's acting president at the time. Jonathan became president in May after Yar'Adua's death.

"Jonathan told the ambassador 'everyone's confused' about who is in charge of Nigeria," according to the document obtained by WikiLeaks and published by British newspaper The Guardian.

"There has been an increase in the level of uncertainty in the internal political situation following ailing President Yar'Adua's return, which was shrouded in secrecy, during the early hours February 24."

Senior Australian politicians insisted the country's sports minister was not a "spy" for Washington after cables reportedly revealed he was a "protected" source for the United States.

# WikiLeaks cyberwar



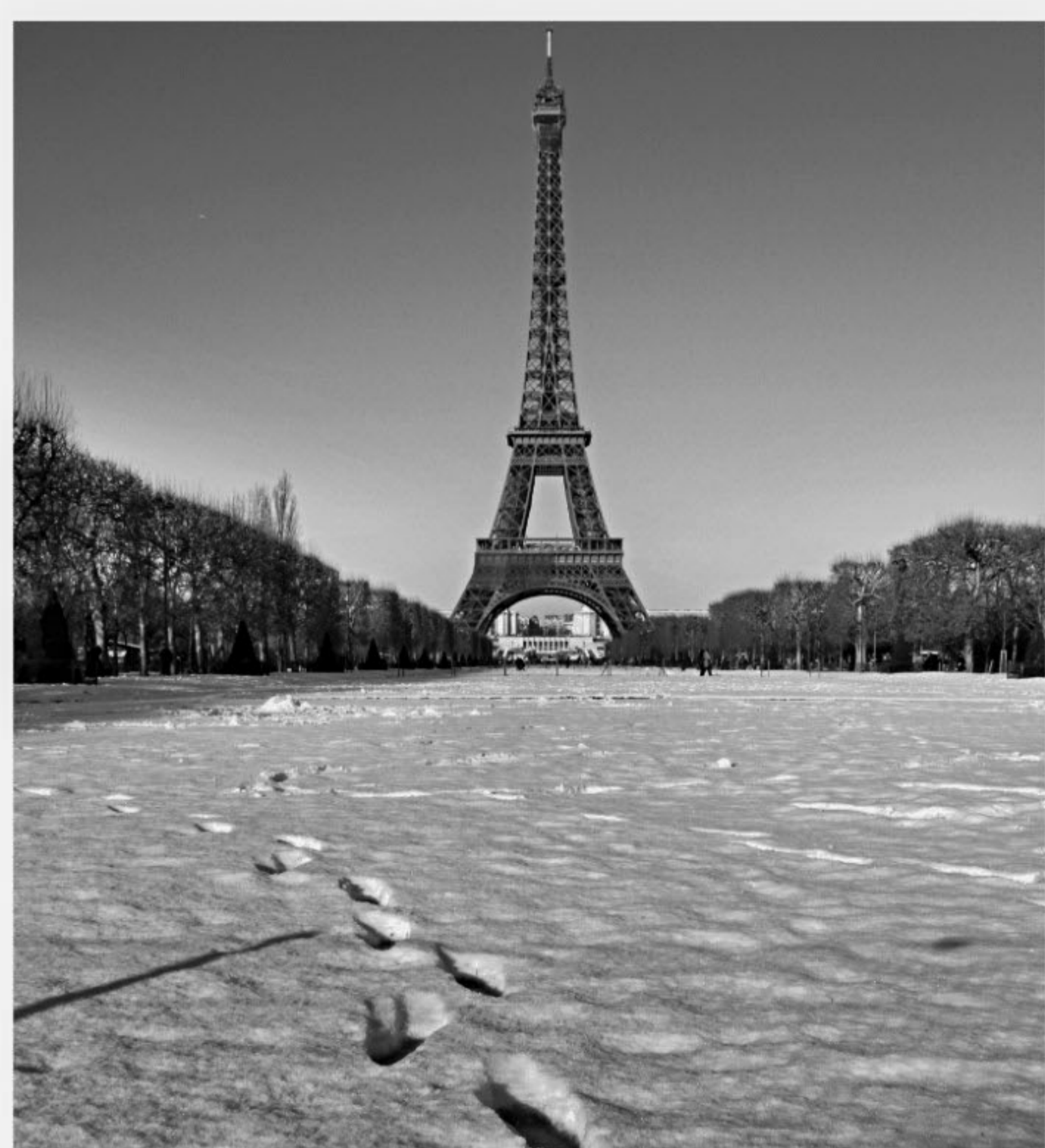
# UN rights chief concerned about pressure on WikiLeaks

AFP, Geneva

The UN's human rights chief yesterday expressed concern about pressure on private companies to stop providing financial or Internet services for whistleblower site WikiLeaks.

"I'm concerned about reports of pressure exerted on private companies, including banks, credit card companies, and Internet service providers to close down credit lines for donations to WikiLeaks as well as to stop hosting the website or its mother sites," Navi Pillay said.

"They could be interpreted as an attempt to censor the publication of information, thus potentially violating WikiLeaks' right to freedom of expression," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at a press conference.



Picture taken on the snow-covered Champs-de-Mars shows footsteps on December 9, 2010 in Paris, near the famous Eiffel Tower, one day after heavy snowfall. The snow reached yesterday 10 centimetres (4 inches) and flights in and out Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport were suspended for about an hour and a half and all buses in the capital stopped running.

# Abbas rejects talks without settlement moratorium

AFP, Cairo

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas yesterday stood firm on his demand for a halt to settlement building before talks with Israel can resume, as US officials scrambled to rescue the collapsing peace process.

"We will not accept negotiations as long as settlements continue," Abbas told reporters in Cairo after more than one hour of talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

It was not clear if Abbas had also ruled out indirect talks with Israel, which other Palestinian officials have said are likely to be the immediate way forward in Washington's stuttering attempts to secure a comprehensive peace deal in 2011.

The Palestinian leader said discussions with Mubarak had focused on "what comes after" Washington on Tuesday admitted that weeks-long efforts to persuade Israel to freeze settlements in the occupied West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem had failed.

Abbas, apparently still leaving the door open, said a final decision on talks would be taken in consultation with Arab and Palestinian officials.

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