

Yemen transition deal falls through

Saleh refuses to sign deal again

REUTERS, Sanaa

Western and Gulf diplomats failed yesterday to persuade Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to sign a deal that would ease him out of power and make him the third Arab leader ousted by popular protests, diplomats said.

Saleh, a political survivor who had already twice backed out of signing at the last minute, was under intense diplomatic pressure to seal the Gulf-brokered deal to end three months of protests against his rule.

"It failed," one of the diplomats told Reuters. A Gulf diplomat said the Gulf Cooperation Council bloc of Yemen's wealthy oil-exporting neighbours may withdraw its initiative as a result.

The warning came as a mob of armed Saleh loyalists encircled the United Arab Emirates Embassy trapping the US, British, Saudi and European ambassadors inside.

The deal would have given Saleh immunity from prosecution, ensuring a dignified exit after nearly 33 years at the helm of the

Arabian Peninsula state, located on a shipping lane through which 3 million barrels of oil pass every day.

Hundreds of armed Saleh loyalists rallied against the deal yesterday, blocking main roads and preventing a Gulf mediator from leaving the United Arab Emirates embassy to head to the presidential palace in Sanaa for the signing, witnesses said.

Armed Yemeni government loyalists trapped Arab and Western diplomats inside an embassy yesterday to block the signing.

The United States and Saudi Arabia, both targets of foiled attacks by al Qaeda's Yemen wing, are keen to end the Yemeni stalemate to avert deeper chaos that could give the militant network more room to thrive.

More than 170 protesters have been killed in a crackdown on demonstrations, part of the wave of uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East that swept aside the leaders of Tunisia and Egypt.



Protesters wear masks with the nuclear sign as they display a banner reading 'Nuclear power - a dissembled future' during a demonstration near the Swiss town of Doettingen, some 45 km northwest of Zurich yesterday. Some 14,000 people took part in a demonstration against the use of nuclear energy.

PHOTO: AFP

Al-Qaeda chief warns of new London attack

US spies in Britain to foil attack

ANI, Washington

Al-Qaeda's new leader Saif al-Adel has vowed to launch attacks on London to avenge Osama bin Laden's killing by US special forces in his Abbottabad compound in Pakistan. The Sun quoted Taliban chiefs as saying that 51-year-old al-Adel is determined to make Britain and the US pay a price for killing his group's leader.

He warned that London would be the first to face a renewed 7/7 atrocity that had left 52 dead, as terrorist cells have already been dispatched there and are waiting for orders to attack. Taliban chiefs also said al-Qaeda's caretaker leader al-Adel meaning 'Sword of Islam' has ordered his followers to organise large-scale international operations like 9/11.

He also urged them to "crush the infidels" in US and the UK to take revenge of bin Laden's death.

"Our new leader has asked for a big plan for London. He believes the UK is the backbone of Europe and must be crushed. This

will be followed by attacks in other western countries. London was picked out because we have a big representation in the UK," Taliban spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan said.

Meanwhile a media report said that more than two dozen US spies are currently in Britain to foil any such possible attack.

Some 25 CIA agents are roaming the streets of Britain with orders to report their intelligence findings to their US bosses in the wake of revelations of terror plot in Manchester masterminded by late Osama bin Laden and uncovered by America but not shared fully with the UK, the 'Daily Express' reported.

British spy agency MI5 was told of the so-called "Easter shopping" bomb plot, in which an al-Qaeda cell planned to blow up British landmarks, but they were not given any details, the newspaper said.

The main suspects were arrested in 2009 but then released as the US failed to give Britain enough information to secure convictions.

US had inside info of Laden's hideout

PTI, London

Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik believes the US had a mole right inside Osama bin Laden's Abbottabad hideout and this was how the al-Qaeda chief was tracked down to the compound, a media report said yesterday.

Top US officials said after the raid that they were only partially certain of Osama's presence inside the USD 1 million mansion, but Malik says only definitive information could have led them right to the room where bin Laden was killed, according to a report in The Sunday Times.

The report also says that bin Laden's Saudi wives believe it was his younger Yemeni wife Amal who betrayed him.

N Sudan takes control of disputed Abyei

Seizure by North 'act of war': South

AGENCIES

Sudan's northern army has taken control of the disputed Abyei region and is clearing it of armed groups from the South, a minister from the northern government said yesterday.

South has denounced seizure as an act of war.

A southern military spokesman told the BBC the North had attacked the oil-rich area with 5,000 troops, killing civilians and southern soldiers.

South Sudan is due to become independent in July, but Abyei's status remains to be determined after a referendum on its future was shelved.

The UN has called for an end to fighting between the two sides.

Some 20,000 people, almost the whole population of the town, have fled, aid agency MSF has told the BBC.

Spokesman Raphael Gorgeu said residents had moved to Abok, about 45km south of Abyei, and were fleeing further south.

He said 42 people wounded in the fighting in Abyei had been treated at a local MSF hospital.

The seizure of Abyei followed two days of skirmishes, artillery fire and at least one air raid. A UN Security Council mission is in the capital, Khartoum, and was due to visit Abyei today (Monday), but this has now been cancelled.

The BBC's James Copnall in Khartoum says that in a clear demonstration of who is now in charge of Abyei, President Omar al-Bashir issued a decree dismissing the region's administration.

Abyei had been governed by a joint body comprising northerners and southerners, led by a southerner.

The North says it acted after 22 of their men were killed in a southern ambush on Thursday.

The UN said the northern troops who were ambushed were being escorted out of Abyei by UN peacekeepers.

Asian Leaders agree Nuke pact

BBC Online

The leaders of Japan, China and South Korea have agreed yesterday to set up an early warning system to alert each other of emergencies at nuclear facilities.

Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan agreed to the measure after a meeting in Tokyo with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak.

The leaders said nuclear experts would also share more data in future.

Japan was hit by an earthquake and tsunami on 11 March, which wrecked the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

China and South Korea have been critical of Japan's handling of the crisis in recent weeks.

In a joint statement the three leaders promised they would work more closely on nuclear issues.

Woman scales Mount Everest twice in 10 days

PTI, Itanagar

A woman from Arunachal Pradesh created history by climbing Mount Everest twice in 10 days and also became the first woman mountaineer in the world to achieve the feat twice in the same season.

Anshu Jamsenpa, a 32-year-old mother of two children, unfurled the tricolour and an Arunachal logo at the summit of the 29,035 feet peak on Saturday at 5.05am local time, official sources said.

She had earlier been on the top of the world on May 12.

Hailing from West Kameng district, Anshu offered a short thanks-giving prayer to Lord Buddha on reaching the summit.

Another Arunachalee girl Tine Mena also scaled the world's highest peak on May 9.

Differences with Obama exaggerated: Netanyahu

REUTERS, Washington

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected talk of a crisis in Israeli-US relations ahead of a speech yesterday by Barack Obama to a pro-Israel group which could give the president a cool reception.

"The reports of a disagreement have been blown way out of proportion," Netanyahu was quoted as saying on Saturday by a spokesman, as Obama prepared to address the annual assembly in Washington of the pro-Israel lobby organization AIPAC.

"It's true we have some differences of opinion, but these are among friends," the spokesman quoted him as saying.

Netanyahu appeared to be trying to calm any anger toward the president and limit damage from their open disagreement on Friday over the territorial starting line for peace talks leading eventually to an independent Palestinian state.

Obama's proposal that talks start on the basis of Israel's 1967 borders met with

howls of protest in Israel. A right-wing group called for an anti-Obama protest at the US Embassy in Tel Aviv on Sunday.

But some Israeli media also asked if Netanyahu himself stoked an air of crisis.

Contrary to impressions that he was surprised by Obama's speech, reports on Sunday confirmed he was told over 24 hours ahead of time that Obama would propose a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, and had called Washington to try to get the president to change his mind and his text -- without success.

When Obama went ahead, Netanyahu, who was about to board his flight to Washington, issued a strong statement rejecting the suggestion. Officials seemed taken aback and an aide, asked if Netanyahu had been forewarned, said: "No comment."

"The Americans ambushed us," a source close to the prime minister was quoted as saying in the pro-Netanyahu daily Israel Hayom.

JAPAN QUAKE Ocean floor moved 79 feet sideways

PTI, London

The 8.9-magnitude earthquake which triggered a massive tsunami and devastated coastal region of Japan was so powerful that it shifted the ocean floor sideways by 79 feet, scientists have claimed yesterday.

The immense amount of seismic stress that remain there following the March 11 earthquake has also put the region at risk of further powerful earthquakes, the researchers warned.

The journal Science has published three new papers about the effects and causes of the March 11 quake, which paints a picture of an earthquake hot spot much more complex and potentially dangerous than scientists had ever anticipated.

STRAUSS-KAHN SEX SCANDAL

Wife mortgages mansion to raise bail bond

PTI, Washington

Disgraced former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn's wife has put her mansion in the US on the block to raise US dollars six million as bail bond to get her husband, facing sexual assault charges, released from New York's Rikers Island prison, a media report said.

The 62-year-old French politician's bail was set at US dollars one million in cash and a US dollars five million insurance bond, which his wife, heiress and French television presenter Anne Sinclair, raised by mortgaging her mansion in Washington DC, the Daily Mail online reported.

If her husband absconds, she will forfeit the money and the house in the exclusive Georgetown district, which she bought in



Anne Sinclair

2007 for US dollars four million, the report said.

Strauss-Kahn is charged with sexually assaulting a 32-year-old African-origin chambermaid at a Times Square hotel eight days back.

After being let out of the notorious Rikers Island prison on Friday, where he was being held, the former managing director of International Monetary Fund spent in a US dollars 4,300-a-month apartment.

His wife is also understood to be paying the rent for his "golden cage" on the fourth floor of an exclusive block of flats near the site of the former World Trade Center, the report said.

Sinclair is also said to be paying 150,000 pounds for armed guards, who have been posted outside the apartment, to ensure the French politician does not try to flee to France.

Series of blasts kill fifteen in Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

Explosions killed at least 15 people and wounded 74 in the Baghdad area yesterday, including a suicide bombing targeting Iraqi soldiers north of the capital, security officials said.

Violence in Iraq has decreased sharply since the height of sectarian conflict four years ago, but bombings, assassinations and other attacks are carried out daily by a weakened Sunni Islamist insurgency and Shia militias.

At least 11 Iraqi troops were killed when a bomber blew up his car among a group of soldiers investigating a car bomb outside a checkpoint on a main street in Taji, 20 kilometres north of Baghdad, said the capital's security spokesman, Major-General Qassim al-Moussawi.

"Two vehicles exploded in Taji. The first was a parked car bomb. They were trying to defuse it, when another driver blew himself up," he said.

Iraqi security forces and police are often targeted by insurgents as Washington prepares to withdraw the remaining US troops at year-end, more than eight years after the invasion that toppled Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein.

Four roadside bombs and a parked car bomb also targeted a Federal Police base in Amil District yesterday, southwestern Baghdad, killing two civilians and wounding 15 including three policemen, a security official said.

LATEST LEAKS

Did US ignore Benazir's security fears?

NDTV ONLINE

Did America fail to do enough to help protect Benazir Bhutto? Just two months before her assassination and only days after she had returned from an 8-year exile to contest the Pakistan elections, Bhutto had asked the United States to evaluate her security and recommend additional resources for maximum safety. The US Embassy in Pakistan strongly recommended not doing this.

Two cables sent from the embassy to Washington, detail Bhutto's meeting with then US Ambassador Anne Patterson at the former's home in Karachi. These cables, revealed by WikiLeaks and accessed exclusively by NDTV, focus on Bhutto's security fears.

The cable reads, "Bhutto requested, in writing, that USG (United States Government) undertake an evaluation of existing executive security procedures and recommendation of additional resources necessary for maximum safety." Ambassador recommends that we meet with members of her staff and provide list of security contractors who could provide this assessment."

Patterson said she "strongly recommended" against providing such an evaluation as she was certain there would performance gaps revealed that would not meet American standards of training and equipment.

The Ambassador also said the Pakistan government was responsible for Bhutto's security. "The USG should either undertake full responsibility for Bhutto's personal security or not. We also believe it highly unlikely that the PPP (Benazir's party) would follow professional recommendations not to hold rallies in large crowds. Protection of prime ministerial candidates is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan."

Benazir seemed to have made the



Benazir Bhutto

written request based on her having heard that the US government had provided such assessments in the past. Ambassador Patterson said the US had provided security for former President Aristide of Haiti and President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan, "but, in these situations, the security was basically turned over to American contractors supervised by official US personnel. The Ambassador doubted it would be consistent with a political campaign."

The security fears that Benazir voiced that day stemmed largely from a bomb attack on her homecoming rally in Karachi on October 19, 2007. She had just landed and left the airport when there were bomb blasts. Benazir escaped but over a 130 people were killed and hundreds injured. The US Ambassador noted in another cable sent a couple of days after the first that Benazir was dissatisfied about the way the Pakistan government was investigating the bombing.

She told the US officials that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) had complained about the "high level of security" provided her. Bhutto said the government should relax the law to allow her own guards, to be armed.