

# Pak foreign minister in India for peace talks

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan's first woman foreign minister urged India and Pakistan to shed the "burden" of history as she arrived in New Delhi yesterday for peace talks between the nuclear-armed rivals.

Hina Rabbani Khar is scheduled to meet her Indian counterpart SM Krishna today for the first foreign minister-level dialogue in a year.

Khar said both countries needed to move forward as "friendly neighbours" who have "learned lessons from history but are not burdened by history."

She also stressed the stake each has in the other's future and the joint responsibility they carry for ensuring a stable South Asia region.

India suspended peace talks with Islamabad after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which it blamed on Pakistan-based militants.

Since then, both countries have taken tentative steps to get the process

back on track, focusing on basic confidence-building measures and leaving aside core territorial disputes.

Indian Defence Minister AK Antony, speaking at a military ceremony yesterday, stressed the importance of keeping the peace process going, even without any short-term breakthroughs.

"Our hope is that through dialogue, we will be able to find a solution in the long run," he said.

Analysts say relatively uncontentious trade and border issues, allowing freer movement of people and goods across the heavily militarised border,

offer both sides the chance to make advances.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said last week during a trip to India that she was "encouraged" by the dialogue between Indian and Pakistani leaders.

But there is little chance that today's talks will lead to progress in resolving the issues that have bedevilled the neighbours' relations for the last 60 years, bringing instability to South Asia.

Alexander Neil, an Asia analyst at the London-based Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), said levels of distrust were still far too high to push the dialogue ahead in any meaningful way.

"Public statements will be made on cooperation against terrorism but in reality there will not be any substantive progress... and the net result, I am sure, is simply that the status quo is maintained," Neil told AFP last week.

Today's meeting with Krishna marks a high-profile debut for Khar, who was only appointed foreign minister last week.



Hina Rabbani Khar



Pakistani prisoners after being released by Indian authorities prepare to cross the Wagah border into Pakistan yesterday. India released 91 Pakistani prisoners as a goodwill gesture before the scheduled peace talks between the foreign ministers of both the countries planned to be held in Delhi.

## NEWS IN brief

### Storm batters Philippines, 10 people dead, 5 missing

REUTERS, Manila

Ten people died and five fishermen were missing in the central Philippines as storm Nock-Ten battered the main island of Luzon, suspending schools and grounding domestic flights and ferries, local officials said yesterday.

The weather bureau raised storm alert levels in nearly 30 provinces in northern Philippines as Nock-Ten gained strength and speed, bringing heavy rains, and was spotted about 50 km northeast of Daet,

### Yemen Qaeda chief pledges support for Zawahiri

AFP, Dubai

The chief of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula reaffirmed yesterday his group's backing for Ayman al-Zawahiri as Al-Qaeda's new leader, the SITE Intelligence Group said.

Nasser al-Wuhayshi, "pledged allegiance to newly appointed al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in an audio message released on jihadist forums on July 26, 2011," said SITE, which monitors traffic on jihadist

### Blair says he's not a victim of 'despicable' phone hacking

AFP, Melbourne

Former British prime minister Tony Blair yesterday described phone hacking by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. as "despicable", but said he did not believe it happened to him.

Blair, in Australia for a speaking tour, would not comment on whether 80-year-old Murdoch should resign from the global empire he has built over decades, but weighed into the debate with comments on media relations.



## Karzai draws terms for future US ties

AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Hamid Karzai yesterday outlined conditions governing negotiations for a future strategic partnership with the United States as he met defence chiefs at his palace.

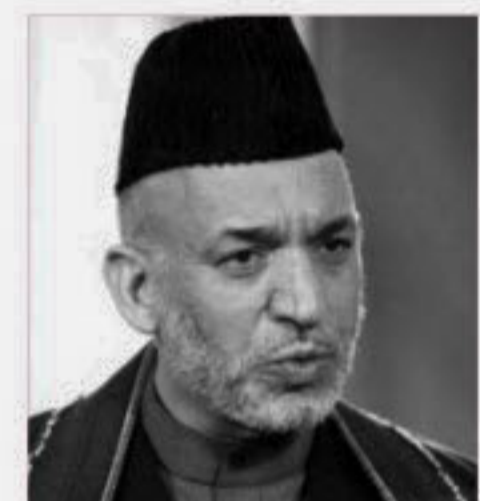
The new US ambassador in Kabul, Ryan Crocker, has said the US has no interest in permanent military bases in the country and does not want to project its influence in the region by remaining in Afghanistan.

But fears remain among many Afghans over any long-term American presence in the country following the departure of all foreign combat troops by the end of 2014.

Karzai said Afghanistan's conditions included foreign forces working within Afghan legal rules, US troops not taking prisoners or maintaining jails, and an end to controversial night raids by elite commandos.

He gave no details how the demands would shape negotiations, as he addressed heads of the army, police and intelligence services in a speech marking the end of the first phase of security transitions from foreign to local forces' control.

"There are many other conditions on the economy and sovereignty and all other aspects... and about respect to the Afghan constitution," Karzai said.



## PRISON SHOOTING 17 killed in Mexico

AFP, Ciudad Juarez

At least 17 persons were killed in a shootout in a Mexican prison in the border city of Ciudad Juarez during a breakout attempt, officials said yesterday.

Authorities said inmates took weapons from security forces late Monday and exchanged gunfire with police and soldiers for over an hour at the prison in the city on the US border with El Paso, Texas.

Manuel del Castillo, spokesman for the city, said that after the shootout, police entered the prison and found 17 dead, including one woman.

The border city is considered the most violent in Mexico, with rival drug cartels battling to control the lucrative narcotics trade.

## More deaths, arrests in Syrian crackdown

AFP, Nicosia

Security forces have killed another three people and arrested so many that Syria has become a "huge prison," activists said yesterday, as the crackdown on dissent shows no signs of easing.

Two men and a woman were shot dead on Monday in separate incidents in and around the flashpoint central city of Homs and in the northwestern city of Idlib, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

They were killed by security forces manning checkpoints, the Observatory's chief Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP in Nicosia yesterday.

One man was killed as he was heading to

work in Homs, a bastion of anti-regime dissent where the army has been conducting a bloody crackdown since last week, he said.

Another man was shot dead on Monday night when security forces manning a checkpoint in Talbissah outside Homs opened fire, Abdel Rahman added.

The woman was riding a motorcycle with her husband and child in Idlib, and they had just driven past a security checkpoint when she was killed, he said.

Abdel Rahman also reported "heavy gunfire" yesterday in Homs.

Meanwhile, the National Organisation for Human Rights accused the Syrian authorities of turning the country into a "huge prison" by arresting hundreds of people, despite lifting emergency rule in April.

## Libya accuses Nato of bombing clinic, killing 7

AFP, Zliten

Libya accused Nato of a deadly raid on a medical clinic as Britain joined France in saying strongman Moamer Gaddafi may be allowed to remain in his oil-rich country if he gives up power.

The top US military officer Admiral Michael Mullen meanwhile spoke of "stalemate" in Nato's Libya campaign but still voiced optimism the strategy would lead to the departure of Gaddafi.

The reported Nato air strike on the small clinic in Zliten east of Tripoli occurred Monday morning, a local official told an AFP correspondent on a guided media tour of the

western town.

Government minders said the air strike had killed at least seven people.

The foreign journalists saw a completely destroyed building with a crescent sign at its entrance and the ground littered with surgical gloves, oxygen bottles, pharmaceuticals and stretchers, but no victims.

In other parts of Zliten the reporters were shown three damaged food storage buildings and another still on fire, which the government minders also blamed on Nato.

Strewn around the site were hundreds of smouldering bags of rice, tomatoes and vegetable oil, as firefighters tried to extinguish the flames.

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## No published stories based on hacking

Says Daily Mail

REUTERS, London

UK newspaper group Daily Mail and General Trust has not published any stories based on hacked messages, its chief executive said, as rival News Corp battles a phone-hacking crisis at its now defunct News of the World tabloid.

Martin Morgan said DMGT was considering launching its own mass-market Sunday tabloid to fill the gap in the market left by the News of the World, and had seen an improvement in circulation of its mid-market newspaper the Mail on Sunday.

"We're considering whether there's a gap in the market for a new Sunday title," Morgan told journalists on a conference call after the group reported a 2 percent increase in underlying revenue for the quarter to end-June on yesterday.

"Our titles have not published stories based on hacked messages," he said, adding that the company saw no need for an internal investigation into its newsgathering practices.

Finance Director Stephen Daintith, a former CFO of News Corp's British newspaper operations, said the Mail on Sunday had picked up about 500,000 in circulation since the News of the World's closure, helped by a cover price cut.

Its circulation rose to about 2.4 million from 1.9 million, compared with the 2.7 million the News of the World typically sold before it was shut down two weeks ago.

The News of the World has admitted hacking into the voicemails of celebrities to rake up stories, but a revelation earlier this month that a murdered schoolgirl had had her phone hacked turned the affair into a matter of national outrage.



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