# No 'war' with Pakistan military: Zardari

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari says his government is not "at war" with the army and judiciary after a scandal over an unsigned memo asking for US help in curbing the might of the military.

Tension between the powerful army and Zardari's weak civilian administration soared over the note, allegedly delivered to then US Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen in May and made public by an American-Pakistani businessman in October.

"We are not at war with the court. We are not at war with the military. There is no war," Zardari said in excerpts of an interview to private Geo television which is to be broadcast late yesterday. "You think it is a clash, but I say it is

The businessman, Mansoor Ijaz, has claimed that Zardari feared the military might overthrow his government and

part of evolution. This clash will evolve

and then simmer down."



accused then Pakistani ambassador to the US, Husain Haqqani, of crafting the memo with the president's support.

Haqqani, who later resigned his post, has denied the allegations and told Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper earlier this week that the charges were "false" and part of a "psychological war" against him.

He also voiced fears about his safety saying "there are clear security con-

by 2013.

this month, despite possible

arrest, in order to participate in

a parliamentary election due

address a rally via video in

Pakistan's biggest city and

commercial hub, Karachi,

sources in his recently formed

All Pakistan Muslim League

Speaking in favour of relations with Israel

could make Musharraf more unpopular,

especially among militants who made sev-

eral attempts on his life with bombings

because of his support for the US "war on

Those same groups want the destruction

Pakistan has been a staunch supporter of

According to an October 2009 U.S. diplo-

demands for a Palestinian state. Pakistan

and Israel, however, have maintained covert

matic cable published by WikiLeaks, the

head of Pakistan's main spy agency, the

Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), said he had

contacted Israel officials to head off poten-

tial attacks on Israeli targets in India.

contacts for decades, officials have said.

terror" following the 9/11 attacks.

of Israel.

Today, he is scheduled to

cerns given the hysteria generated against me".

The United States on Friday appealed for Pakistan, Washington's uneasy ally in the "war on terror", to treat Haqqani "in a way that is fair, that's transparent".

Zardari's deeply unpopular government is opposing an investigation ordered by the Supreme Court into the unsigned memo, contending that only a parliamentary committee on national security is entitled to investi-

"In my view, the parliament is supreme," Zardari replied to a question about the outcome of two separate judicial and parliamentary probes.

The opposition and intelligence chief want an independent inquiry.

The court probe puts fresh pressure on the president, who visited Dubai in December over health fears, with most observers expecting early elections sometime in 2012.



Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim speaks during his "Free Anwar" tour in Kuantan, some 253 kms from Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Malaysian police said they would allow a rally for opposition leader Anwar to take place when the court delivers a verdict in his sodomy trial at the start of next week. The move is seen as a rare concession in the Southeast Asian country where public protests are usually quashed. PHOTO: AFP

# Pakistan should consider Kenyan jets kill 60 ties with Israel: Musharraf

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan should consider establishing ties with Israel, said exiled former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, remarks likely to anger many in the Muslim-majority country where he hopes to make a political comeback.

"There is nothing to lose by

trying to get on Israel's good side," Musharraf, a former army chief, told the liberal Israeli newspaper Haaretz in an interview carried on its website.

"Pakistan also needs to keep readjusting its diplomatic stand toward Israel based on the mere fact that it exists and is not going away."

That kind of talk could comfort Israel, which is increasingly nervous because Islamist groups opposed to the Jewish state have been making political gains in Arab states following revolts that brought down autocrats in the region.

Israeli officials were not immediately available for comment on Musharraf's remarks.

Musharraf, who resigned in 2008 in disgrace, has said he plans to return to Pakistan

Somali insurgents

AFP, Nairobi

Kenyan fighter jets killed at least 60 Islamist Shebab insurgents in southern Somalia in the latest assault by regional countries to heap pressure on the extremist rebels, officials said yesterday.

"Levels of casualties were very high in air strikes on Friday," Kenyan army spokesman Colonel Cyrus Oguna told reporters, adding the bombing raids hit rebel positions in Garbahare in southern Somalia's Gedo region.

"Provisional casualties are that Al-Shebab lost 60 or more fighters, and more than 50 were injured," Oguna said, adding that nine "technicals" -- pick-up trucks mounted with guns -were destroyed.

Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab rebels have repeatedly dismissed Kenyan casualty reports as lies, and it was not possible to confirm the deaths independently.

Kenya sent troops across the border into Somalia in October to battle the hardline militants it blamed for a spate of attacks on home soil, and are fighting alongside Somali pro-government forces.

Progress has been slow, with Kenyan forces at first bogged down in mud, but the army has been keen to portray an upbeat message of its chance of success against the insurgents.

"We will keep hitting them until their spine is completely broken ... and we will relish that moment," Oguna said, adding that Kenya's official combat losses so far are six soldiers killed by enemy fire and 22 wounded.

Kenyan forces also seized the village of Fafadon and the village of Elade in Gedo region, he said.

Pollution rise 'worsens' S Asia's winter smog

**BBC ONLINE** 

A rapid rise in air pollution from fossil fuels and biomass burning has worsened winter smog and extended its duration in many parts of South Asia, scientists and officials have said.

In Bangladesh, India and Nepal the temperature has plummeted and clouds of fog and smoke hang in the sky blocking sunlight for several days.

Normal lives have been affected with many flights diverted and suspended and trains delayed because of low visibility.

Experts say they have noticed that the intensity of smog has grown in the Indo-Gangetic plains in the last few years, leading to increased impacts.

"Since 1990 onwards, there has been increase in the number of [smog-affected] days in northern India," says BP Yadav, director of the Indian Meteorological Department.

increase every year. There are, of course, year-to-year fluctuations.

"It is not a linear trend showing an

mainly during winter season." The number of such patients, particularly "But there are more years that have seen

Nepal's Department of Hydrology and Meteorology director-general Keshav Prasad Sharma agrees the issue of smog is becoming increasingly serious in the plains in southern Nepal bordering India.

"Until 10 years ago, we did not have such dense fog for long durations like we have these days," he says. "Although the 10-year period is too short

for statistical trends, it is indeed being seen as a major issue now."

Some are also investigating whether the conditions can be linked to health problems in parts of the region.

"None of our patients died of hypothermia," says senior consultant physician Gaurang Mishra of a regional referral hospital in south-eastern Nepal where dozens of people have been reported to have died during the last three weeks that saw many smoggy days.

"They mostly suffer from chronic pulmonary obstructive disease that is caused by burning of wood and cow-dung cake and pollution from industries and vehicles,

children and elderly people, is also in the rise in Bangladesh.

RACE TO WHITE HOUSE

# Republican hopefuls gird for key debate

AFP, Manchester

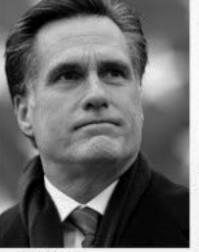
Frontrunner Mitt Romney and his rivals for the Republican presidential nomination faced off yesterday in a high-stakes debate ahead of New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation pri-

The showdown, held by tradition on

the campus of tiny Saint Anselm college here, comes as a fresh batch of opinion polls show Romney with a vast lead over the crowded field but with Christian conservative Rick Santorum surging. According to an NBC-Marist survey,

Romney was ahead with 42-percent support, followed by Texas congressman Ron Paul with 22 percent and Santorum with 13 percent.

The debate -- the first since Romney edged Santorum by just eight votes out of the 120,000 cast in Iowa's caucus -will give the candidates a prime-time shot at denting Romney before the



**Mitt Romney** 

**Rick Santorum** primary vote on Tuesday.

"I'm ready for what anyone wants to bring my way. Got to have broad shoulders in this business. As was said long, long ago, politics ain't beanbags, Romney said in an interview with Bloomberg TV.

Santorum, a former senator from the key battleground state of Pennsylvania, has mostly avoided attacking Romney by name but has mocked the former Massachusetts governor's shifting views on issues that

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put him at odds with conservatives.

"I can tell you, you may not agree with me on every issue and I suspect you don't. But what you know is that I agree with me on every issue," Santorum said at a town hall meeting this week in Brentwood.

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich, who blamed his disappointing fourth-place Iowa finish on negative ads by Romney's allies, has been attacking Romney as they both crisscross the small northeastern state.

"It's a joke for him to call himself a conservative," said Gingrich, who polls show running fourth behind Romney, Paul and Santorum but ahead of former US China envoy Jon Huntsman

and Texas Governor Rick Perry. Perry, who skipped New Hampshire after a woeful fifth place in Iowa to campaign on friendlier ground in South Carolina, will need to convince voters he deserves a second look after shaky performances in prior debates.

UNIVERSITY

OF MANITOBA

## Christians flee attacks in northeast Nigeria

dense fogs."

REUTERS, Maiduguri

Hundreds of Christians have begun to flee northern Nigeria after dozens were killed in a series of attacks by Islamist militants who issued an ultimatum to Christians to leave the

mainly Muslim region or be killed, witnesses said yesterday. A Nigerian newspaper Tuesday published a warning from Boko Haram, a movement styled on the Taliban, that Christians had three days to get out of northern Nigeria.

Since the expiry of that ultimatum, attacks in towns in four states in northeastern Nigeria have left at least 37 people dead and hundreds of Christians are fleeing to the south, according to residents and a Red Cross official.

# Degradation

**FROM PAGE 20** 

norm before the Liberation War. "In the 1960's, when we were students of Dhaka University, student politics was clear and fair."

He said nothing but fair politics had helped him become a leader and also a minister, although he had been at the grassroots level.

"Today, it is not necessary. If the top leadership wishes, you can be a minister," said the senior politician.

"If university authorities and the government decide to hold the elections, the situation will change," he said, pinning some hopes. His remarks came at a

time when Bangladesh Chhatra League, a pro-AL student body, once again is in the spotlight over its recent involvement in violence and a rape attempt. The AL leader said the

education system was very forum for South Asian good in the country. But youths to discuss as to what some students were creating problems and earning bad name for the government.

"Unfortunately those who are creating problems a former minister in are not really students," he said, "Leaders of student organisations are not students. Without being a student, how can you be a

leader?" Tofail, hailing the partici- state had an elected governpation of youths in the LiberationWar, said many had sacrificed their lives for the

"In our time, we did not want anything for ourselves. Rather, we wanted to sacrifice our lives for the nation."

On the recent attack on a procession of students protesting tuition fee hike at Jagannath University, he said while some students protest an increase in fees, some others beat them. "We never sawit happen in our time."

The veteran leader, however, said whatever was happening, the country had a bright future "if we can go forward by taking lessons from the past".

Former president of SCCI Tariq Sayeed and Indian parliamentarian Mani Shankar Aiyar also spoke on the occasion. Tariq Sayeed said Saarc

countries should allow elections to students unions in the universities. "We should have another

they can do to improve relations among the countries of the region," he said. Mani Shankar Aiyar, also

Manmohan Singh's cabinet, said inequality was on rise in South Asia despite economic growth, especially in India and Bangladesh.

Aiyar said every Saarc ment but the galloping inequality might be a destabilising factor unless it was addressed.

#### 11 dead in New Zealand balloon crash

AFP, Wellington

A hot air balloon burst into flames and crashed in New Zealand yesterday after hitting a power line, killing all 11 people on board as their families watched on in horror.

The balloon came down in calm weather near Carterton, a small town north of the capital Wellington and a popular area for ballooning, in New Zealand's worst aviation disaster in more than 30 years.

As the balloon was preparing to land, it hit power lines, causing sparking in the basket carrying the pilot and 10 passengers, police inspector Brent Register said.

### Jamaica 'to break links with UK'

**BBC ONLINE** 

Jamaica's new Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, has said she intends to make the island a republic, removing Queen Elizabeth as the head of state.



In her inaugural address, Simpson Miller Simpson Miller said the time had come for Jamaica to break with the British monarchy and have its own president.

The announcement comes ahead of celebrations to mark 50 years of Jamaican independence from Britain.

The Queen's grandson, Prince Harry, is due to the visit the island this year.

#### Russian Church head urges Kremlin policy change

**BBC ONLINE** 

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church has said the Kremlin should heed the recent mass protests over ballot-rigging and adjust its policies.

Day, Patriarch Kirill said it would be a "very bad sign" if the authorities ignored the protesters. He added that he could not take sides in the elec-

In a televised message on Orthodox Christmas

tion dispute. However the Church, which counts about 70% of

Russians as members, has close links to the Kremlin. It is unclear whether this is the patriarch's first

comment on the election protests which gripped Moscow last month, but Russian commentators said it was unexpected.



E-mail: mrem@northsouth.edu, sirajul@northsouth.edu, www.northsouth.edu/html/mrem.pdf or http://www.northsouth.edu/html/des.html#bsenv

**Contact Information** DESM, North South University, Bashundhara, Dhaka 1229. Tel: 88 02 8852000, ext. 2201, 2202, 01732604068 (MREM) and ext. 2059, 01817640355 (DESM)

independence of the country.