

# India faces pressure to scrap Pak peace talks

## Indian parliament in uproar over Kashmir attack

AFP, New Delhi

India's government yesterday faced mounting pressure to put proposed peace talks with Pakistan back in the deep freeze after a deadly cross-border attack on its troops in disputed Kashmir.

The opposition accused the government of letting Pakistan off the hook over the killing of five soldiers in Kashmir, as the attack overnight Monday triggered uproar in parliament.

Defence Minister AK Antony told parliament Tuesday that "20 heavily armed terrorists along with persons dressed in Pakistani Army uniforms" had staged the ambush.

India's army had initially blamed the attack on regular Pakistan troops but later withdrew the statement.

"Our defence minister has given a clean hit to Pakistan," Sushma Swaraj, lower house leader of the opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, told parliament.

The defence minister "has let the country down. He must apologise to the nation," she said as the uproar forced parliament's adjournment.

Analysts said the killings had jeopardised efforts to arrange a meeting between India's

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his new Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in New York in September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Senior BJP leader L K Advani told lawmakers "this is no time for talks" between the nuclear-armed rivals as news channels ran footage of the arrival of the soldiers' flag-draped coffins in New Delhi.

With elections due by May 2014, analysts said the government cannot afford to look soft on Pakistan -- with which India has fought three wars, two over the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir.

The Congress-led government has been keen to engage with Pakistan.

Pakistan has denied involvement in the attack and Indian and Pakistani commanders spoke by hotline and discussed the incident yesterday, a Pak military source told AFP.

Singh called an all-party meeting for Wednesday night to seek the opposition's support for the meeting with Sharif, who made rapprochement a key theme of his election campaign.

Former Indian foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh said "a high-level dialogue between two prime ministers right now is unlikely to yield any breakthrough".



Activists of the All India Anti-Terrorist Front shout anti-Pakistan slogans as they burn an effigy of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency during a protest against the death of five Indian Army soldiers in cross-border exchanges, in Amritsar, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## NEWS IN brief

### Gilani's son abducted by banned outfit

IANS, Islamabad

Three months after former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's son went missing from Pakistan's Punjab province, a proscribed militant group has claimed responsibility for Ali Haider Gilani's abduction, the Geo News reported on Tuesday.

Abu Yazeed, a spokesperson for the outfit calling itself Al-Mansoorien Brigade, said Ali Haider Gilani was in their custody and safe. Ali Gilani was kidnapped on May 2 during an election campaign

### Pakistan floods toll rises to 84

AFP, Islamabad

Monsoon rains triggering floods have killed 84 people across Pakistan in the last week and affected more than 80,000 others, officials said yesterday, warning of further downpours.

The official said that contingency plans remained in place as heavier rains are expected next month.

### 12-day Eid holiday in S Arabia, Qatar

GULF NEWS ONLINE

Saudi Arabia and Qatar have topped the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) list of Eid Al Fitr holidays with each country giving their public sector employees 12 days off.

The two countries are far ahead of the other four GCC member countries where the holidays will be either four or five days.

### India summons Lanka envoy

PTI, New Delhi

India yesterday summoned the Sri Lankan high commissioner and issued a demarche on the issue of 114 Indian fishermen lodged in Lankan jails.

India made a formal demarche was made against the large number of Indian fishermen who are in their custody, official

### Argentina claims Falklands at UN again

AFP, United Nations

Argentina's President Cristina Kirchner renewed her country's demand for talks on the sovereignty of the British-ruled Falkland Islands at the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

In March, Falkland Islanders voted 99.8 percent to remain a British territory. But Argentina rejected the vote as meaningless and Kirchner has repeatedly staked its

## Tunisia crisis nears 'moment of truth'

AFP, Tunis

Tunisia's political crisis neared its "moment of truth" yesterday after tens of thousands of people poured onto the streets of the capital to demand the government's resignation.

Newspapers said the North African country's Islamist rulers and their detractors must open a dialogue on ending the crisis gripping the North African state before it is too late to talk.

Tens of thousands of people poured onto the streets of Tunis on Tuesday night to demand the government step down, and the crisis deepened further with the suspension of the elected National Constituent Assembly (ANC).

"We must move from a showdown on the squares and in the streets to a confrontation through arguments," said La Presse.

Analysts say the moment of truth has arrived. "No party, including Ennahda, can ignore the position of the UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union)... Ennahda can not carry on without taking on board the fact that the (economic and social) forces in the country do not agree with it," stressed political scientist Slaheddine Jourchi.

The powerful half-million strong UGTT has organised a general strike to try to force the government's hand.

Tunisia has been wracked by political unrest since the July 25 murder of opposition MP Mohamed Brahim, and Tuesday's protests marked the biggest anti-government rally since the assassination.

## Obama cancels Putin meet over Snowden asylum issue

### Will attend G20 meet in Russia; says al-Qaeda threat significant

BBC ONLINE

US President Barack Obama yesterday cancelled a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin after Russia's decision to grant asylum to intelligence leaker Edward Snowden, the White House said.

But Obama will still attend the G20 economic talks in St Petersburg.

A White House aide said Snowden's asylum had deepened the pre-existing tension between the two countries.

The former intelligence contractor has admitted leaking information about US surveillance programmes to the media.

The decision to cancel the talks, announced during a trip by the president to Los Angeles, comes the morning after Obama said he was "disappointed" with Russia's decision to offer Snowden asylum for a year.

During the interview, Obama also said the recent threat that caused the



United States to close its embassies throughout the Middle East was significant.

"It's significant enough that we're taking every precaution," Obama said. "It's a reminder that for all the progress we've made... this radical, violent extremism is still out there," Obama said. "We've got to stay on top of it."

The US State Department issued a worldwide travel alert on Friday warning Americans that al-Qaeda may be planning attacks in August, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. It initially announced the embassy closures would be only for

Sunday, then extended the closures of some by a week.

Asked whether the controversial surveillance programs helped lead to the intelligence that sparked the warnings, Obama said the programs were critical to counterterrorism work. But he said more needed to be done to assure Americans they were not being spied on themselves.

Snowden, an American former National Security Agency (NSA) technical contractor and CIA worker, in June leaked to the Guardian and Washington Post newspapers documents and details relating to NSA programmes that gather data on telephone calls and emails.

He spent more than a month in a transit area of the Moscow airport as the US pressured other countries to deny him asylum. On 1 August, he left the airport after the Russian government said it would give him asylum there for a year.

## US drone kills 7 in Yemen amid Qaeda threat

AFP, Aden

Al-Qaeda in Yemen was hit by a fresh strike from a US drone yesterday which left seven militants dead, tribal sources said, a day after Washington pulled its diplomats from the country fearing an attack by the jihadists.

The early-morning strike in Yemen's southern Shabwa province destroyed two vehicles, the sources said. Those who died were all members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Wednesday's raid was the fifth of its kind since July 28, with at least 24 suspected al-Qaeda militants killed in the strikes.

Washington at the week-end closed 19 embassies and consulates in the Middle East and Africa, citing intercepted communications among militants, reportedly including an attack ordered by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

On Tuesday, the US and its allies pulled staff out of their embassies in Yemen and stepped up security at missions across the Middle East amid fears of an imminent attack.

While the closures span cities across the Arab world, the focus of concern has been Yemen, where American forces are fighting a drone war against al-Qaeda's powerful regional affiliate.

According to media reports, the trigger for the pullback came when US intelligence intercepted messages between Zawahiri and Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the leader of AQAP.

The New York Times said the electronic communications revealed Zawahiri had ordered AQAP to carry out an attack as early as last Sunday.



General Service officers stand outside the burning Jomo Kenyatta international airport yesterday. A massive fire shut down Nairobi's international airport yesterday with flights diverted to regional cities as firefighters battled to put out the blaze in east Africa's biggest transport hub. PHOTO: AFP

## 62 rebels killed near Damascus

### Amnesty says Aleppo 'devastated'

AFP, Damascus

Syrian troops killed at least 62 rebels in an ambush near Damascus yesterday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Syrian military said those killed were members of the jihadist Al-Nusra Front.

"At least 62 rebels fell as martyrs, most of them youths, and eight others are missing after an ambush by regime forces at dawn near the industrial city of Adra," northeast of the capital, the monitoring group said.

Meanwhile, Amnesty on Tuesday said the whole neighbourhoods of Syria's second city Aleppo have been flattened over the past year of conflict, with residents bombed from the air and abused on the ground.

"Aleppo has been utterly devastated, its people fleeing the conflagration in huge numbers," said Amnesty International's Senior Crisis Response Adviser Donatella Rovera.

The report came as the London-based group released satellite images of several Aleppo districts, taken before and after clashes between government and rebel forces broke out.

Amnesty also raised concern for Aleppo's ancient cultural sites, among them the damaged ancient souks and the destroyed minaret of the historic Umayyad mosque.

## 'Snowden to release new US spy documents'

REUTERS, Brasilia

Glenn Greenwald, the American journalist who published documents leaked by fugitive former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden, plans to make new revelations "within the next 10 days or so" on secret US surveillance of the Internet.

"The articles we have published so far are a very small part of the revelations that ought to be published," Greenwald on Tuesday told a Brazilian congressional hearing that is investigating the US internet surveillance in Brazil.

"There will certainly be many more revelations on spying by the U.S. government and how they are invading the communications of Brazil and Latin America," he said in Portuguese.



nist for Britain's Guardian newspaper said he has recruited the help of experts to understand some of the 15,000 to 20,000 classified documents from the National Security Agency that Snowden passed him, some of which are "very long and complex and take time to read."

Greenwald told Reuters he does not believe the pro-transparency website WikiLeaks had obtained a package of documents from Snowden, and that only he and filmmaker Laura Poitras have complete archives of the leaked material.

After a meeting in June with Snowden in Hong Kong, Greenwald published in The Guardian the first of many reports that rattled the US intelligence community by disclosing the breadth and depth of alleged NSA surveillance of telephone and internet usage.

## Football match tragedy Karachi blast kills 11, injures 26

AFP, Karachi

A bomb blast in Pakistan's port city of Karachi early yesterday killed 11 people and wounded 26 others, police said.

The blast took place in the impoverished Lyari neighbourhood of the city after a football match.

"The bomb was planted on a motorbike that was parked outside the stadium, killing eleven people, many of them teenage boys," police official Tariq Dharejo told AFP.

Dharejo said the bomb was a remote-controlled device.

Local lawmaker Sania Naz from the Pakistan People's Party also confirmed the blast and put the death toll at 11.

She said those killed were aged from six to 15 years old.

Karachi, a city of 18 million people, contributes 42 percent of Pakistan's GDP but is rife with murder and kidnappings and has been plagued for years by ethnic, sectarian and political violence.

Football is popular in the area, with people of all ages playing the game.

## ODDLY enough

### Locked coffin skydiving

AP, Serena, Illinois

A daredevil freed himself from shackles and a locked casket while plummeting to the earth at 130 miles per hour on Tuesday, eventually parachuting gently into a northern Illinois field.

Anthony Martin, 47, waved to the cameras and the crowd that turned out to watch his stunt after he landed at a farm in Serena, Illinois, about 70 miles southwest of Chicago.

Martin said the escape was exhilarating but that he was disoriented



because the plywood casket whipped wildly from side-to-side while he picked the locks, and he struggled to open the door.

"I didn't feel any force, but what I felt was lot of jostling," he told the Associated Press. "It seemed to me like I had a glimpse of the ground for a second then it (the door) came back and I had to give it another push."

Martin, who began teaching himself to pick locks at age 6, somersaulted out of the box as he pushed his way to freedom.