

Pakistan PM urges 'new beginning' with India

Pak parliament passes anti-India resolution

AGENCIES

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called for a "new beginning" in relations with India in comments published yesterday, as tensions remained high over the disputed region of Kashmir.

Even as Sharif talks of peace with India, Pakistan's National Assembly yesterday passed a resolution accusing Indian troops of "unprovoked aggression" on the Line of Control (LoC) and extending support to the "struggle" of the Kashmiri people, reported PTI.

Recent clashes across the heavily militarised LoC, which divides the Himalayan territory between India and Pakistan, have raised the temperature between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Sharif, in remarks published by the Associated Press of Pakistan, said it was vital India and Pakistan became "good friends".

"Let us make a new beginning. Let us sit together to resolve all outstanding issues in a friendly manner and in a peaceful atmosphere," he said in comments made Monday to the state news agency.

India's army yesterday accused Pakistan of firing across the LoC

late on Monday in the latest confrontation.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two over Kashmir.

"We must become good friends. Hold each other's hands. We must sit together with open and clean heart,"

Sharif said, adding that Pakistan had "a lot of love and affection" for the Indian people.

However, the resolution, moved by Pakistani science and technology minister Zahid Hamid endorsed Sharif's "forceful statement" for effective steps to ensure the ceasefire on the line of control and to improve the atmosphere by engaging constructively to build trust and confidence.

The Pak assembly reiterated that Pakistan "shall continue to extend diplomatic, political and moral support for the just and legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people for the realisation of their right to self-determination, as enshrined in the UN security council resolutions".



UN chief urges legal drone use in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

UN chief Ban Ki-moon waded into the controversy surrounding US drone strikes during a visit to Pakistan yesterday, insisting they must operate within international law.

The CIA has carried out hundreds of missile strikes on suspected militants in northwest Pakistan since 2004 and the campaign is a major thorn in relations with the US.

Washington views the strikes as an important tool in the fight against al-Qaeda and Taliban militants, but Islamabad condemns them as a violation of sovereignty and international law.

Ban addressed the controversial weapons in a speech at the National University of Science and Technology in Islamabad, where he opened a new building.

"As I have often and consistently said, the use of armed drones like any other weapon should be subject to long-standing international law, including international humanitarian law," he said to applause from an audience mostly made up of soldiers.

"This is a very clear position of the United Nations. Every effort should be made to avoid mistakes and civilian casualties."

The United States insists the drone strikes are legal and in May President Barack Obama laid out strict guidelines for their use.

Britain's Bureau of Investigative Journalism says the US has carried out nearly 400 drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004, killing up to 3,500 people, including hundreds of civilians.

Ban arrived in Islamabad for a two-day visit amid high tensions between Pakistan and India over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Egypt's coup deadly for Arab democracy

Says Tawakul Karman; clashes reported in Cairo

REUTERS, Cairo

Tawakul Karman, who shared a Nobel peace prize for her pro-democracy campaigning in Yemen, has said she views the Egyptian army's overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi as a death knell for Arab democratic movements.

The removal of Morsi, Egypt's first freely elected leader, on 3 July "reset the clock" on the gains made since a popular uprising ended 30 years of Hosni Mubarak's one-man rule in 2011, she said on Monday.

Meanwhile, supporters of Morsi protested outside several ministries yesterday in further defiance of a government ultimatum to dismantle their sprawling Cairo protest camps.

Police fired tear gas to break up brief clashes that erupted between Morsi loyalists and residents of a central Cairo neighbourhood, AFP reported.

Loyalists of the deposed president have set up two huge Cairo protest camps and have held near-daily demonstrations for his reinstatement since his overthrow by the military on July 3.

"The first emerging democracy in Egypt's history and the first in the region since the Arab spring is quickly being dismantled," said the 34-year-old Yemeni mother of three.

Karman, the first Arab woman and second Muslim



woman to win the Nobel peace prize, was turned away from Egypt on 4 August after she announced on social media her intention to join Muslim Brotherhood protesters at a huge pro-Morsi vigil in Cairo.

"Denying me entry means only one thing. Egypt's new government is returning to the autocratic ways of the past. They are not willing to tolerate difference in opinion," she said.

Karman described Morsi's fall as part of a broader counter-revolution gripping the region and said remnants of governments toppled in 2011 and 2012 were clawing their way back into power.

"The Arab spring is about building democracy. A military coup is the antithesis of that. It undermines everything," she said.

"The destruction of Egypt's revolution means death for the Arab spring."

Karman also criticised the refusal of the US, which gives Egypt \$1.5bn in mostly military aid, to condemn Morsi's removal by the army as a coup. Washington would be legally obliged to cut off the aid if it did so.

"Supporting the overthrow of a democratically elected leader sets a precedent. It will destabilise the region and the world in the long run. The US administration has yet to learn the lesson of the Arab spring revolutions," she added.

NEWS IN brief

Iraq violence kills 13

AFP, Baghdad

Attacks in Iraq killed 13 people yesterday, including four who died in a blast targeting Shia worshippers, while militants bombed a major oil pipeline to Turkey, halting exports, officials said.

The attacks are the latest in a surge in violence that security forces have failed to curb, despite carrying out major operations against militants said to have resulted in scores of arrests, including 82 on Monday.

The attacks came a day after bombs targeting a cafe, a football field and a market in areas north of Baghdad killed 28 people.

Canada makes work visa difficult

TNN, Bangalore

Just as the US, Canada too is tightening its temporary foreign worker program (TFWP) that allows foreign nationals to work in Canada for short periods. The effort is to improve employment opportunities for its locals.

Effective July, employers in Canada will have to pay \$275 as processing fee for each application that they file to bring in a foreign worker. Till now there was no fee. The new fee is non-refundable in case the

Czech cabinet resigns

AFP, Prague

The Czech government formally resigned yesterday after losing a confidence vote last week, ahead of snap elections to drag the country out of a deepening political crisis.

A request to dissolve parliament which would trigger early elections has been filed by three major parties, which together hold 122 out of 200 seats, and a vote will take place on August 20.

Under the constitution, parliament can only be dissolved with the president's consent, and he must set an election date to

Floods in Nepal kill seven

AFP, Kathmandu

A flooded river swept away part of a small village in northeastern Nepal yesterday, killing seven people, a local police official said.

According to the latest government figures, more than 100 people have been killed in floods and landslides triggered by rains during the monsoon, which runs from June to

Afghan issue may cloud Indo-Pak ties

REUTERS, Baramulla/new Delhi

Pakistan-based militants are preparing to take on India across the subcontinent once Western troops leave Afghanistan next year, several sources say, raising the risk of a dramatic spike in tensions between nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan.

Intelligence source in India believe that a botched suicide bombing of an Indian consulate in Afghanistan, which was followed within days last week by a lethal cross-border ambush on Indian soldiers in disputed Kashmir, suggest that the new campaign by Islamic militants may already be underway.

Members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant outfit in Pakistan, the group blamed for the 2008 commando-style raid on Mumbai that killed 166 people, told Reuters they were preparing to take the fight to India once again, this time across the region.

And a US counter-terrorism official, referring to the attack in Afghanistan, said "LeT has long pursued Indian targets, so it would be natural for the group to plot against them in its own backyard".

Given the quiet backing - or at least blind eye - that many militant groups enjoy from Pakistan's shadowy intelligence services, tensions from a new militant campaign are bound to spill over. Adding to the volatility, the two nations' armies are trading mortar and gunfire across the heavily militarised frontier that divides Kashmir, and accusing each other of killing troops.

Hindu-majority India and Islamic Pakistan have fought three wars since independence in 1947 and came close to

NEWS ANALYSIS

a fourth in 1999. The tension now brewing may not escalate into open hostilities, but it could thwart efforts to forge a lasting peace and open trade between two countries that make up a quarter of the world's population.

"With the Americans leaving Afghanistan, the restraint on the Pakistani security/jihadi establishment is going too," said a former top official at India's Research and Analysis Wing

(RAW), the external intelligence arm.

"We are concerned about 2014 in either scenario. If the jihadis (Islamist militants) claim success in Afghanistan, they could turn their attention to us. Equally, if they fail, they will attack in wrath."

But Pakistan, which has a border with India to the east and with Afghanistan to the west, has concerns of its own. It sees India's expansive diplomacy in Afghanistan as a ploy to disrupt it from the rear as it battles its own deadly Islamist militancy and separatist forces. Vying for influence in a post-2014 Afghanistan, it worries about India's assistance to the Afghan army, heightening a sense of encirclement.

Hafiz Sayeed, founder of the LeT, has left no doubt that India's side of Kashmir will become a target, telling an Indian weekly recently: "Full-scale armed Jihad will begin soon in Kashmir after American forces withdraw from Afghanistan."

This time the additional risk will be the rivalry between India and Pakistan over Afghanistan itself, one that threatens to become as toxic as the 60-year dispute in Kashmir.

Now, 7-year-old raped in India

CNN ONLINE

A 7-year-old girl was raped in a train's toilet compartment in central India over the weekend, police said yesterday.

The incident comes amid widespread outrage in recent months over sex crimes across India.

The child was lured away from her mother and her friend by a man in a park in Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh state, on Friday, railway police superintendent KC Agrawal told CNN.

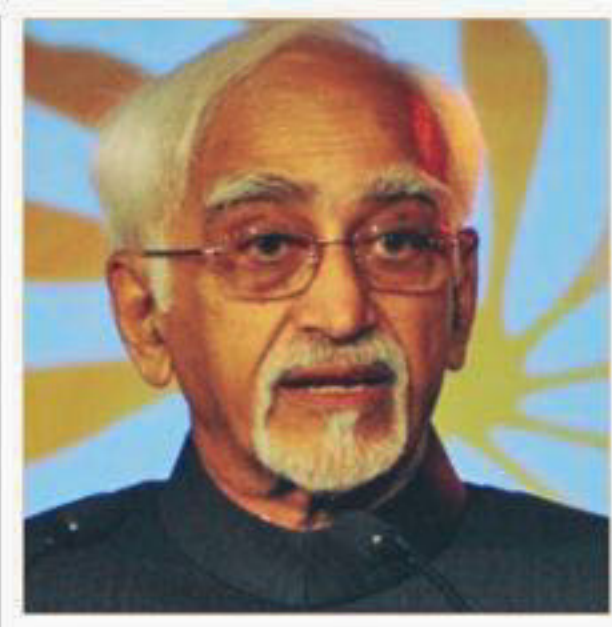
Police suspect that man then took her on board a train and sexually assaulted her in the toilet compartment of a carriage sometime between Friday night and Saturday morning.

The suspect "was apparently known to the friend of the child's mother," Agrawal said.

The alleged attacker, around age 40, remains at large.

Police teams, Agrawal said, have fanned out to capture the suspect, whose identity has not been disclosed.

The victim, who was found on Saturday morning at a train station, is under treatment at a hospital, and her condition is stable, police said.



Indian MPs behaving like anarchists

Says Hamid Ansari

AFP, New Delhi

A furious speaker of India's upper house of parliament yesterday accused lawmakers of behaving like a "federation of anarchists" after more unruly behaviour which has paralysed decision-making in recent years.

The current parliament, which was elected in 2009, is on course to be one of the least productive in post-independence Indian history with shouting, jeering and protests frequently forcing adjournments.

The latest session, which began on August 5, has also been severely disrupted by the government unable to pass any major legislation ahead of elections next year due to protests from opposition parties.

"Every single rule in the rule book, every single etiquette is being violated in this house!" the exasperated speaker of the upper house, Hamid Ansari, shouted above the din yesterday.

"If the honourable members wish this house to become a federation of anarchists then it is a different matter, because there is no order!"

His outburst led to criticism from the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the government, both of which asked him to retract the remark, but it gained sympathy among many on Twitter.

UN calls for talks on Rohingyas

AFP, Yangon

The United Nations has called for dialogue after another violent clash in a camp for dispossessed Rohingya Muslims in western Myanmar, as its human rights envoy toured the strife-torn area yesterday.

At least one person was killed and around 10 injured last Friday in the latest violence in Rakhine state, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said.

Conflict between local Buddhist and Muslim communities in the state last year left some 200 dead and 140,000 homeless.

"UNHCR is reiterating its call for peaceful dialogue and confidence-building between the (internally displaced persons) and government. We believe this is key to avoiding further violence," spokesman Adrian Edwards said in Geneva.

The statement coincides with a visit by the UN's outspoken human rights envoy for Myanmar Tomas Ojea Quintana, who has made Rakhine his first stop in a ten-day trip to the country.

Attacks against Muslims -- who make up an estimated four percent of Myanmar's population -- have exposed deep fractures in the Buddhist-majority nation and cast a shadow over its emergence from army rule.



This picture taken on August 7, 2013 shows a replica of the Eiffel Tower in Tianducheng, a luxury real estate development located in Hangzhou, east China's Zhejiang province. China's ability to reproduce foreign products is best known for imitation luxury purses and copies of Hollywood films. But knockoffs have ranged from a three-dollar version of Kate Middleton's engagement ring to fake Apple stores and an entire Austrian village.

Crisis talks fail in Tunisia

AFP, Tunis

Supporters and opponents of Tunisia's Islamist-led government were expected to flood the streets of the capital in rival rallies yesterday marking national women's day, after a bid to resolve a weeks-old crisis foundered.

The government led by the Islamist Ennahda party and its detractors have been locked in a bitter feud sparked by the murder in July of an opposition politician, the second such killing this year.

The government has called on its supporters to gather yesterday in the capital's central Habib Bourguiba Avenue, epicentre of the 2011 uprising. The opposition has called a rival rally from 1700 GMT to be attended by members of the powerful UGTT trade union confederation and a number of women's groups.

Indian auditor criticises Italian chopper deal

AFP, New Delhi

Indian auditors yesterday accused the government of breaking its own procurement rules to award a \$748-million helicopter contract to Italian-owned AgustaWestland, which is under investigation for bribery, the Press Trust of India reported.

The deal to purchase 12 luxury helicopters for use by VIPs came under scrutiny in India earlier this year after investigators in Italy began looking into allegations that AgustaWestland had paid bribes to foreign officials.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India's report, formally presented in parliament yesterday, said the defence ministry "deviated from procurement procedure and tender on several instances in the deal", according to PTI.

The auditors also questioned the decision of the former air force chief, SP Tyagi in 2007 to conduct the helicopter trials overseas.

India put payments to the companies on hold in February and threatened punitive action against the firm if any wrongdoing was uncovered.

Italian prosecutors suspect that kickbacks worth around 10 percent of the deal, or 50 million euros (\$68 million), were paid to Indian officials to ensure AgustaWestland won the contract, according to Italian media reports.

Cash was allegedly handed to Tyagi's cousin with more money funnelled via a web of middlemen and companies in London, Switzerland, Tunisia and Mauritius.

The chopper deal was cleared by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whose Congress-led government has been hit by a series of corruption scandals that analysts say could scupper the party's electoral chances in national polls next year.

India has already received three of the choppers. The rest were to be delivered by the end of 2014.

Kill yourself Mugabe says to opponents

CNN ONLINE

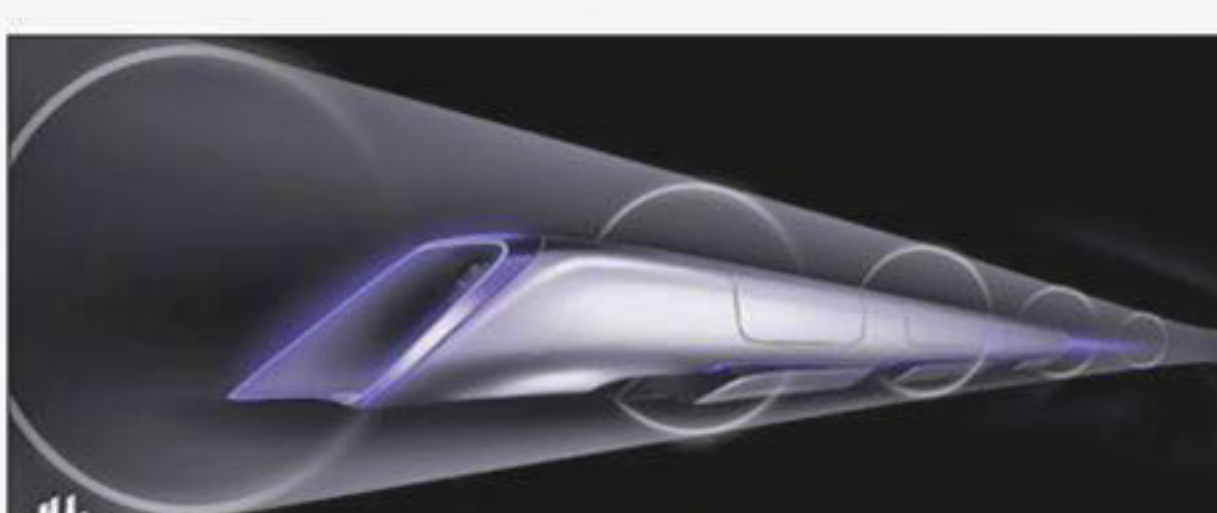
Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said Monday the West and his political opponents can commit suicide if they cannot accept his recent re-election.

"Those who can't stomach the defeat, you can commit suicide. Even dogs will not sniff their carcasses," said the 89-year-old leader while addressing an event to commemorate veterans of Zimbabwe's war for independence.

It was his first public speech since the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission declared him winner, with 61% of the vote, of the July 31 elections, beating Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai.

Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change last week challenged the election results, accusing the electoral commission of rigging the polls for Mugabe's ZANU-PF.

"We will never go back on our victory. We do not know what is retreating," Mugabe said. Tsvangirai -- who got 34% of the July 31 vote -- and officials of his MDC party boycotted the Monday event.



A transport for future

AFP, San Francisco

A design for a super-fast transport system dubbed "Hyperloop" -- carrying passengers in pressurised tubes at near-supersonic speeds -- was unveiled Monday by inventor and entrepreneur Elon Musk.

Musk, who heads electric carmaker Tesla Motors and private space exploration firm SpaceX, released a 57-page document describing the project, which he claimed could connect Los Angeles and San Francisco in 35 minutes.

Musk told a conference call this would be a new form of transport, different from traditional rail, and would carry passengers and goods in pods in a contained system elevated on pylons.

The system is capable of speeds reaching 1,220 kilometers (760 miles) an hour, or Mach 0.91, according to Musk's document.

As many as 28 passengers could ride in each pod and the system could even transport vehicles, according to the 57-page design plan.