

'Internal error' downs NSA website

AFP, Washington

The National Security Agency's website went down for several hours Friday, but the US spy service known for hacking into computer networks blamed the outage on a technical mistake.

The website, NSA.gov, went down in the afternoon, setting off speculation on Twitter that the site may have suffered a denial of service attack by hackers.

But an NSA spokesperson denied the claims, saying they were "not true."

The website was operational again around 10:30 pm (0230 GMT Saturday).

The hacker group Anonymous joked about the incident in a tweet, without saying if it had played any role. "Aw don't panic about nsa.gov being down. They have a backup copy of the internet," it said.

The loosely organized, international hacker collective has frequently clashed with US authorities over file-sharing as well as allowing banks to handle donations to the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks.

Germany, Brazil want UN privacy resolution

Angry Berlin to send delegation to US

AFP, United Nations

Germany and Brazil are working on a UN General Assembly resolution to highlight international anger at US data snooping in other countries, diplomats said.

Meanwhile, German spy chiefs will travel to the United States next week to demand answers following allegations that US intelligence has been tapping Chancellor Angela Merkel's mobile phone, as a row over US snooping threatened to hurt transatlantic ties.

Documents leaked by former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden showing sweeping US surveillance on ordinary citizens' Internet searches and telephone records have already sparked outrage worldwide.

But the furore has intensified after allegations that world leaders including the presidents of Brazil and Mexico have been among spying targets.

This week, the scandal widened to Europe, with allegations that Merkel's phone was being tapped, prompting Berlin to summon the US ambassador -- a highly unusual move between the close allies.

The spying row has prompted European leaders to demand a new deal with Washington on intelligence gathering that would maintain an essential alliance while keeping the fight against terrorism on track.

The 28 leaders also warn that while the bloc and the United States share a "close relation-



ship", it must "be based on respect and trust".

Germany and Brazil are also working on a UN General Assembly resolution to highlight international anger at US data snooping in other countries, diplomats said Friday.

The resolution would not mention the United States but would call for extending the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to Internet activities.

"The aim is to send a message to those who abuse the system," said a UN diplomat involved in the talks.

Meanwhile, Michael Morrell, who served as deputy director and acting director of the CIA, told CBS television's "60 Minutes" programme that Snowden was a traitor to his country.

"I think this is the most serious leak -- the most serious compromise of classified information in the history of the US intelligence community," he said.

Iran hangs 16 in reprisal for guard killings

AFP, Tehran

Gunmen killed at least 14 Iranian guards on the Pakistani border, in a rugged area used by drug traffickers, prompting Tehran to retaliate by hanging 16 "rebels," reports said Saturday.

The ambush on the porous border happened overnight in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, home to a large community of minority Sunni Muslims, unlike the rest of Shia-dominated Iran.

In retaliation for the attack, the Iranian authorities said that they executed 16 "rebels" yesterday held at a prison in the region.

Deputy Interior Minister Ali Abdollahi said that the guards had been killed during the ambush set by Iranians who were "members of hostile groups".

He added that "three soldiers have been taken hostage and taken to the other side of the border in Pakistan," without giving further details.

Saudi women defy female driving ban

REUTERS, Riyadh

A few women filmed themselves driving in Saudi cities yesterday, defying government warnings of arrest and prosecution to take part in a campaign against men-only road rules, activists said.

But some others stayed at home, put off by phone calls from men who said they were from the Interior Ministry, reported organisers of the demonstration against an effective ban on women drivers.

"I know of several women who drove earlier today. We will post videos (online) later," one of the campaign organisers told Reuters by phone.



Five videos were published on the campaign's YouTube feed and Twitter yesterday morning, dated October 26 and purporting to show women driving in Riyadh, the oasis region of al-Ahsa and the city of Jeddah.

King Abdullah has pushed some cautious reforms, expanding female education and employment. But he has also been careful not to open big rifts with conservative clerics.

Mosques across Saudi Arabia broadcast sermons on Friday telling women to stay at home.

However, supporters of the campaign can point to increasingly public support for the idea of women driving in the media and among prominent Saudi figures.

Kurds rout Syria jihadists

Car bomb kills 40 near Damascus as fears mount for trapped Syrians

AFP, Damascus

Fierce clashes raged yesterday after Syrian Kurds seized from jihadists a crossing on the Iraqi border, a key supply route for weapons and fighters in the 31-month war, activists said.

UN and Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi meanwhile was in Iran as he presses efforts to build a consensus for a Geneva conference aimed at ending the conflict that has killed tens of thousands.

Fighters from both sides were killed in the border clashes, which came a day after Syria's government and its opponents traded blame for a car bomb attack on a mosque that left dozens dead.

The Kurds "took control of the Al-Yaarubia border crossing with Iraq at dawn after clashes with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and other rebels," the Syrian Observatory for

Human Rights said, citing activists.

The Kurds have been struggling to carve out an autonomous northeastern region similar to one in northern Iraq, further complicating the Syrian war.

Rebels fighting to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad have increasingly turned their guns on each other in the past few months, with jihadists clashing with the mainstream Free Syrian Army in the north, where the rebels control vast swathes of territory.

The seizure of the border post was another reported blow for the Islamists after Syrian state television said on Friday that Al-Nusra's leader, Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani, had been killed, but the al-Qaeda-linked group said he was in good health.

More than 115,000 people are estimated to have been killed, millions have been uprooted from their homes, and tens of thousands trapped by the relentless fighting.

The violence comes a day after a car bomb outside a mosque in Suq Wadi Barada, a town near Damascus, killed at least 40 people and wounded dozens more, according to the Observatory.

Elsewhere an army ambush killed about 24 rebels on the outskirts of Damascus, said the Observatory. SANA put the toll at 40.

UN and US officials have expressed concern about besieged Damascus suburbs, following reports of severe food shortages and rising malnutrition.

UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos on Friday called on the Security Council to put "sustained pressure" on Syria to allow access to some 2.5 million trapped civilians.

The Observatory described a similarly dire situation in the central city of Homs, where it said some 3,000 civilians were trapped in an area sealed off by regime forces for more than a year.

Toilet that turns human waste into energy

STAR DESK

Scientists from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have invented a new toilet system that will turn human waste into electricity and fertilisers and also reduce the amount of water needed for flushing by up to 90 per cent compared to current toilet systems in Singapore.

The system turns human waste into biogas - which can be used for cooking and generating electricity - and biodiesel.

Dubbed the No-Mix Vacuum Toilet, it has two chambers that separate the liquid and solid wastes. Using vacuum suction technology, such as those used in aircraft lavatories, flush-



ing liquids would now take only 0.2 litres of water while flushing solids require just one litre.

The existing conventional water closet uses about 4 to 6 litres of water per flush. If installed in a public restroom flushed 100 times a day, this next generation toilet system, will save about 160,000 litres in a year -- enough to fill a small pool 10 x 8 metres x 2m.

Associate Professor Wang Jing-Yuan, Director of the Residues and Resource Reclamation Centre (R3C) at NTU who is leading the research project, said that their ultimate aim is not only for the new toilet system to save water, but to have a complete recovery of resources so that none will be wasted in resource-scarce cities like Singapore.

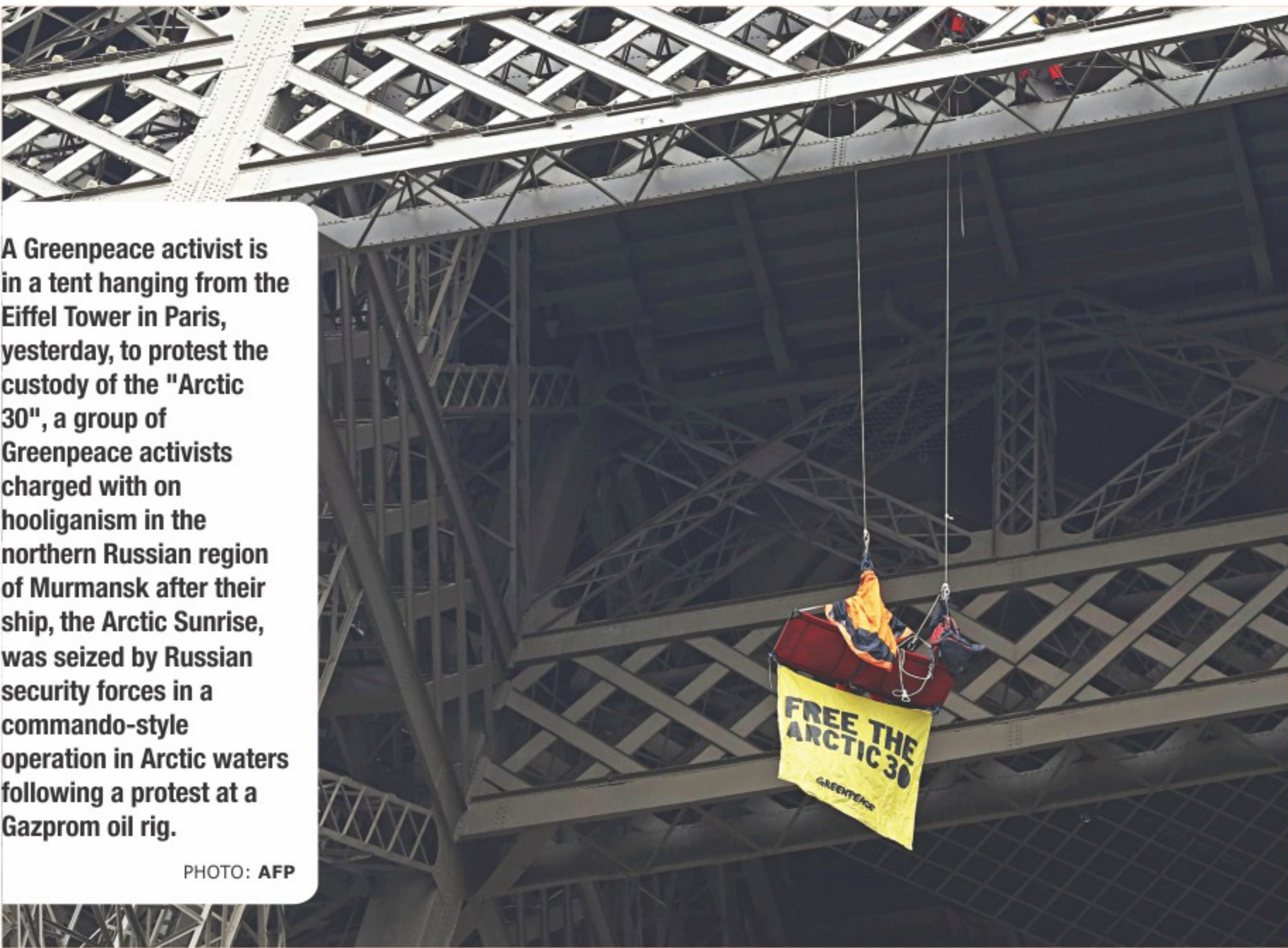
95 Boko Haram fighters killed in Nigeria

AFP, Maiduguri

Nigeria's army on Friday said it had killed 95 suspected Boko Haram fighters in raids in the country's northeast, as gunmen from the Islamist group battled security forces in a neighbouring area.

The army, which is battling to crush a four-year Islamist uprising in Nigeria, said it deployed bombs and ground troops to destroy insurgent camps in Borno on Thursday.

Army spokesman Mohammed Dole said that "74 suspected militants" were killed in the assault outside the Borno capital Maiduguri, where Boko Haram was founded more than a decade ago. The operation followed an assault Monday on Boko Haram camps in another part of Borno, which the military said left 37 Islamists dead.



A Greenpeace activist is in a tent hanging from the Eiffel Tower in Paris, yesterday, to protest the custody of the "Arctic 30", a group of Greenpeace activists charged with on hooliganism in the northern Russian region of Murmansk after their ship, the Arctic Sunrise, was seized by Russian security forces in a commando-style operation in Arctic waters following a protest at a Gazprom oil rig.

PHOTO: AFP

QJ sues MJ estate

Music producer demands royalties from pop legend estate

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Music producer Quincy Jones sued Michael Jackson's estate on Friday, seeking millions of dollars in royalties he said were generated from some of the star's biggest hits after the King of Pop's death.

Quincy also named Sony Music Entertainment, the parent company of Jackson's longtime label, Epic Records, in the breach-of-contract complaint.

He accused the music giant and the song company controlled by Jackson's estate, MJJ Productions, of denying him royalties, fees and profit-sharing as they exploited Michael's work through the posthumous concert film "This Is It".

His claim, brought in Los Angeles Superior Court, also mentioned two Cirque du Soleil productions based on Michael's music, accompanying soundtracks and the 25th anniversary edition of "Bad".

The lawsuit seeks at least \$20 million in damages -- \$10 million for each of two master contracts that Jones claims were breached in various ways under secret agreements between MJJ Productions and Sony after Michael died.

A lawyer for the Jackson estate issued a statement to the website TMZ.com saying, "To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Jones has been appropriately compensated over approximately 35 years for his work with Michael."

There was no immediate comment from Sony.



Small tsunami hits Japan after 7.1 quake

AFP, Tokyo

Workers at the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant were evacuated when a small tsunami hit Japan after a powerful undersea quake yesterday, highlighting the continued threat to the area devastated by the 2011 quake-tsunami.

The government Meteorological Agency warned people to stay away from the Pacific coast for nearly two hours as the tsunami, which was recorded as being as high as 55 centimetres in one place, rolled ashore.

The 7.1-magnitude quake struck at a shallow depth of 10 kilometres at 2:10am local time, according to the US Geological Survey. Japan's meteorological agency said the quake was an aftershock of the March 2011 tremor.

Rahul's riot remarks draw ire

The Nehru-scion receives blows from both Left and Right

THE TIMES OF INDIA ONLINE

Rahul Gandhi's comments on the Muzaffarnagar riots and the ISI fishing in troubled waters has come in for heavy criticism not just from the BJP but also from parties such as SP, CPI and JD(U), perceived to be favourably inclined towards Congress.

Rahul on Wednesday in Alwar blamed BJP for instilling anger, engineering riots and then asking why there is terrorism, in regards to the Muzaffarnagar riots.

He also said that an intelligence officer approached him and told him that several family members of the riot victims wanted to go away to Pakistan and so they were being tracked.

Recalling the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Rahul drew a parallel as to how it took him 10-15 years to quell his anger on the issue and how he saw his own "face in the plight of Muzaffarnagar's people".

On Thursday in Indore he narrated how the intelligence officer told him that people from Pakistan's intelligence agencies were talking to 15-16

ISI REMARK



Muslim boys and how the officer was trying to convince the youths not to keep contact with the approaches.

The BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi on Friday lit into Rahul for his comments and said that Rahul should either disclose the names of the boys, or apologise publicly for defaming the entire community.

He rubbed it in by asking, "How is ISI freely spreading its influence in the lanes of UP under your (Rahul's) very nose? What are you doing about it? You are behaving as a news agency, just giving news about what ISI is doing. You have to act against them."

SP leader Naresh Agrawal ques-

tioned the basis for Rahul's statement and said it cast doubts on the Muslim community. He added that if Rahul provided more details, Uttar Pradesh government would get the matter investigated.

Another SP leader, Azam Khan, said that Rahul should not speak irresponsibly as he blamed BJP on one instance for the riots and at the same time raised doubts on the dedication of the Muslim youths while "putting ISI in the dock."

CPI leader Atul Anjan blamed Rahul of trying to create tension and hatred in the country using Muzaffarnagar as a backdrop.

JD(U), which has been cosying up to Congress of late, also did not spare Rahul. Party spokesperson KC Tyagi said that dragging the whole community into the situation was an insult for Muslims.

The party also dismissed as a non-issue Rahul's invocations of the sacrifice of his family members. "Emotional issues like caste, religion or family sacrifices are non-issues this time," he said.

NEWSIN brief

Serbia buries Tito's widow

AFP, Elgrad

The widow of former Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito was buried with full state honours yesterday, the last symbol of the communist federation that broke up in the 1990s.

Jovanka Broz, who died of heart failure at the age of 88 on Sunday, will be buried next to her husband in the House of Flowers in Belgrade, where the communist strongman was laid to rest in 1980.

China: 253 students sickened by meal

CNN ONLINE

At least 253 students are undergoing treatment following suspected food poisoning this week in northern China, state media reported.

Victims suffered various symptoms, including stomach ache and vomiting after eating at the same counter in the school dining hall, the news agency said Friday.

The incident occurred Thursday at a middle school in Baotou, which is in China's inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Russia approves new anti-terrorist bill

AFP, Moscow

The Russian parliament has approved a bill toughening sanctions in terrorism cases ahead of the Winter Olympic Games next February, including a controversial measure that makes families of terrorists financially accountable for the damage.

The bill makes it possible for officials to investigate the property of relatives of "a person who has committed a terrorist act" and make such people financially accountable for damage done by this person, according to parliament documents. It also makes it a criminal offence punishable by up to ten years in prison.

Ten killed in Iraq violence

AFP, Baghdad

Attacks in Iraq killed 10 people yesterday, seven of them from the same family, security and medical officials said.

More than 580 people have now been killed this month, and 5,300 since the beginning of the year, according to AFP figures based on security and medical sources.

YouTube readying paid music service

AFP, New York City

Google's video-sharing arm YouTube is preparing to launch a paid music service this year competing against other streaming outlets, with the added feature of video, media reports said Friday.

The New York Times said the service designed for mobile devices would cost around \$10 a month for an ad-free service and would compete with services such as Spotify, Rdio and Rhapsody.

ODDLY enough

Mom sold 12 daughters' virginity!

CNN ONLINE

A mother of 14 in Colombia tried to make ends meet, police say, by pushing her daughters into "hell" and selling their virginity for a couple hundred dollars.

Margarita de Jesus, 45, was arrested this week. Authorities say the suspect would begin selling her daughters to men as soon as the girls turned 12 years old. She charged anywhere between 300,000 and 400,000 Colombian Pesos (\$160 to \$212) for a virgin.

But Zapata strongly denies the accusation.