

# US spying on govts won't stop: Obama

AFP, Berlin

The US intelligence service will continue to spy on foreign governments, President Barack Obama said in an interview broadcast Saturday, although he assured Chancellor Angela Merkel that he would not let intrusive surveillance harm their relationship.

The frank admission comes a day after Obama curtailed the reach of mass US National Security Agency phone surveillance sweeps, but said bulk collection of data would go on to protect America from terrorists.

In Friday's long-awaited speech aimed at quelling international furor over the widespread eavesdropping revealed by Edward Snowden, Obama also said he had halted spy taps on friendly world leaders.

But Obama told German television ZDF's *heute-journal* that intelligence gathering on foreign governments will continue.

"Our intelligence agencies, like German intelligence agencies, and every intelligence agency out there, will continue to be interested in the government intentions of countries around the world. That's not going to change," he told *heute-journal*.



## TURKEY PROTESTS

Protesters chant slogans against newly proposed restrictions on the use of the internet and against the Turkish government during a protest on the Istiklal Avenue in Istanbul on Saturday. Turkish riot police fired tear gas and plastic bullets to break up the protest by an estimated 2,000 people against the embattled government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

PHOTO: AFP

## NEWS IN brief

### Huge Ukraine rally defies anti-protest law

AFP, Kiev

Police and protesters clashed in the centre of the Ukrainian capital Kiev on Sunday after 200,000 turned up for an opposition rally in a show of defiance against strict new curbs on protests. Police used tear gas and smoke bombs in a bid to disperse protesters.

### Hollande's partner leaves hospital

AFP, Paris

President Hollande's partner emerged from a week's stay in hospital Saturday as the French leader faced calls to clear up his personal life after his affair with an actress was made public. First Lady Valerie Trierweiler left the Paris hospital, where she had been admitted on January 10 suffering from nervous exhaustion and low blood pressure, for a residential residence in Versailles, a source in her office told AFP.

### Indo-Pak trade thru' Kashmir suspended

AFP, Muzaffarabad

Trade between India and Pakistan across the de facto border in Kashmir has been suspended following the arrest of a truck driver accused of smuggling 114 kilograms of heroin, a Pakistani official said yesterday. He added that 49 Pakistani trucks and their drivers were being held on India's side of the border following the incident, while Pakistan had retaliated by holding 27 trucks.

### 4 killed as lightning strikes plane

AFP, Jakarta

A light aircraft crashed and burst into flames on a beach in eastern Indonesia yesterday after being hit by lightning, killing all four people on board and eyewitness said.

### SUNANDA DEATH PROBE

## Husband offers full cooperation

PTI, New Delhi

Indian Union minister Shashi Tharoor recorded his statement before the subdivisional magistrate yesterday who is investigating the death of his wife Sunanda Pushkar under mysterious circumstances in a five-star hotel here.

During his over half-an-hour long deposition at SDM Alok Sharma's office in south west Delhi, Tharoor is understood to have narrated events prior to the death of his wife Sunanda.

52-year-old Sunanda was found dead in a south Delhi hotel suite on Friday night, two days after her Twitter spat with a Pakistani journalist Mehr Tarar over an alleged affair with Tharoor. However, Sunanda and Tharoor had issued a joint statement declaring they were happily married.

Investigators said the couple had



## Flying car spreads its wings

AFP, Bratislava

Mankind's primordial dream of flight is taking off with a new twist as a Slovak prototype of a flying car spreads its wings.

Inspired by the dreamy books about flying by French authors Jules Verne and Antoine de Saint Exupery, Slovak designer and engineer Stefan Klein has been honing his flying machine since the early 1990s. Klein has designed cars for BMW, Volkswagen and Audi.

His elegant blue-and-white vehicle for two is six metres (20 feet) long so it fits neatly in a parking space or a garage and tanks up at any filling station. But once it reaches an airport it can unfold its wings within seconds becoming a plane.

Klein's dream took to the skies in September when he piloted the Aeromobil during its first wobbly test flight. Once airborne, it can reach a top speed of 200km/h and travel as far as 700 km, consuming 15 litres (4 gallons) of petrol per hour.

## RESTAURANT ATTACK Taliban reject US' call to lay down arms

DPA, Kabul

The Afghan Taliban yesterday rejected a call by the United States to put down their weapons and start peace talks with the Afghan government.

The White House on Saturday urged the insurgent group to lay down its arms. The call was part of a condemnation of a Taliban attack on a Kabul restaurant which claimed the lives of 21 people, including two American professors.

"We strongly reject the American demand," Taliban said in a statement. "If America truly wants peace and stability for Afghanistan, then it should immediately withdraw all its forces from our land and leave the Afghans to their own wills and aspirations," it added.



Demonstrators shout slogans during a march in support of an Indonesian maid who was allegedly tortured by her employer in Hong Kong, yesterday. The alleged maltreatment of Erwiana Sulistyaningsih by her employer over the course of eight months renewed concerns over abuse of foreign domestic helpers in the southern Chinese city.

Taliban attack on Pak military convoy kills 20  
AFP, Peshawar

A bomb claimed by the Pakistani Taliban killed 20 soldiers and wounded 30 when it ripped through a military convoy in the remote northwest yesterday, officials said.

The attack, one of the deadliest to hit Pakistani security forces in recent years, happened in the city of Bannu near the North Waziristan tribal region which is a stronghold of militants linked to the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

"A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device caused the blast," a senior military official told AFP, adding the exact circumstances were unclear.

An official statement said 20 soldiers were killed and 30 injured in the attack, which hit one of the vehicles in the convoy at 8:45am.

The convoy was about to leave for the town of Razmak in North Waziristan when the blast hit one of the civilian vehicles hired to move troops.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan spokesman Shahidullah Shahid claimed responsibility.

"It was part of our fight against a secular system," he told AFP by telephone from an undisclosed location.

"We will carry out more such attacks in future," he said, adding the Taliban were seeking revenge for the deaths of their former chief Hakimullah Mehsud and deputy Walir Rehman -- both killed in US drone attacks.

Taliban insurgents have led a bloody campaign against the Pakistani state since 2007. They have carried out hundreds of attacks on security forces and government targets.

Bannu was the scene of a jailbreak last April when some 150 heavily-armed Islamists stormed a prison and freed 400 inmates including many militants.

## Modi mocks Congress over PM candidate

Says Sonia saved Rahul by not naming him for the post

AFP, New Delhi

India's opposition prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi yesterday mocked the ruling Congress party for refusing to name Rahul Gandhi as its choice for premier in upcoming elections.

In a speech in the capital, Modi said Congress president Sonia Gandhi did not want to sacrifice her son Rahul politically at the general elections in coming months, which the party is widely tipped to lose.

"I see a very human, sensitive reason for their (Congress's) decision. Would any mother sacrifice her son?" Modi told hundreds of officials from his opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"The mother thought 'no, save my son', Modi said to laughter and applause from BJP leaders, who have been meeting in New

Delhi to prepare for the general elections.

Sonia Gandhi on Friday batted away pleas from her Congress supporters during a mass meeting on African residents here, alleging that they were running a "sex and drug ring". The minister's post-midnight raid was widely condemned and could cast a shadow on India's diplomatic and economic ties with Africa.

Accusing a group of African nationals of running a "sex and drug racket" on the basis of some complaints he had received from residents, Delhi Law Minister Somnath Bharti, accompanied by party cadres, rounded up some African women in the early hours Thursday and forced them to go for a medical test. Noted lawyer Harish Salve told NDTV that one of the women was allegedly forced to give a urinary sample in public for a drug test.

India's foreign ministry yesterday said it has reassured ambassadors of some 20 African nations that authorities are not targeting their nationals.



## Floods displace thousands in Indonesia

AFP, Jakarta

More than 30,000 Indonesians have fled their homes in the capital due to flooding that has left five dead, officials said yesterday, with people using rubber dinghies and wading through waist-deep water to reach safer ground.

Many parts of Jakarta were under murky, brown water after days of torrential rain produced the city's first significant floods of the months-long rainy season.

Buildings in some parts of the sprawling capital, which has a population of more than 10 million and is regularly afflicted by floods, were half submerged, with roads unpassable in many areas.

Five people have so far been killed in the past week due to flooding.

Police sources said that it could be a case of drug overdose.



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A survey last week said that only 14 percent of voters believed Rahul Gandhi would make the best prime minister while 58 percent opted for Modi.

But Modi, a pro-business reformer with a reputation for running a relatively clean administration, is also known for his Hindu nationalist leanings and is accused by critics of turning a blind eye to savage anti-Muslim riots in his state in 2002.

## AAP faces flak over minister's vigilanism

IANS, New Delhi

The three-week-old AAP government in Delhi faced all-round criticism after its law minister mounted a vigilante-style raid on African residents here, alleging that they were running a "sex and drug ring". The minister's post-midnight raid was widely condemned and could cast a shadow on India's diplomatic and economic ties with Africa.

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