



Robert Gates arrives in Iraq to begin second leg of his tour of major war zones.



Imran Khan has offered to mediate between the government and the Taliban.



US envoy Stephen Bosworth said talks with N. Korea were very useful.

International

kiosk UK migrants to get identity cards

London: Skilled migrant workers and their dependants in Britain will receive an identity card for foreign nationals when they successfully apply to extend their stay in the country, from January.

Under regulations approved by the British parliament, all Tier 2 applications made inside the UK on or after January 6, will involve enrolment of the applicant's biometric information. Migrants in other categories such as students must enrol their biometrics and obtain an identity card for foreign nationals. — PTI

Miliband in expenses row

London: British foreign secretary David Miliband has courted controversy as it was found that he used his office expenses to pay for photo shoots. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, the foreign secretary spent almost 30,000 pounds of taxpayers' money on repairs, decorations and furnishings in five years.

Mr Miliband's use of a professional photographer will be made public for the first time on Wednesday when the UK Parliament publishes all recent MPs' claims. The report found that he used his office expenses to pay for two photo shoots amid speculation that he was pushed by a section of the party. — PTI

Court notice to Aziz, Pervez

Islamabad: Pakistan's Supreme Court on Thursday issued notice to the attorney-general on a petition calling for the point of view of former military ruler Pervez Musharraf and former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz over the controversial National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), reports our Pakistan correspondent.

Mr Musharraf had promulgated the NRO in 2007 to withdraw political cases against the politicians, including the incumbent President, Asif Ali Zardari. The National Reconciliation Ordinance, which has now lapsed, is being heard in the top court which may order reopening of all the withdrawn cases.

5 Americans detained in rebel raid

Washington/Islamabad, Dec. 10: Five young Muslim American men from the Washington suburbs who disappeared late last month were detained in Pakistan on Wednesday in a police raid on a house linked to a militant group, American and Pakistani officials said. One of the men had left behind an 11-minute video calling for the defence of Muslims in conflicts with the West and suggesting that "young Muslims have to do something," said one person who had seen the video, describing it as a farewell of sorts. Another person who viewed it called the video "disturbing," though he said it was not a martyrdom video of the kind sometimes made by extremists planning suicide attacks.

The five young men were detained at a house in Sarogdha in Punjab Province that was occupied by Khalid Farooq, the father of one of the young men, Umer Farooq, according to an official familiar with the case. The elder Mr Farooq is believed to have ties to Jaish-e-Muhammad, a banned Pakistani militant group, a government official said. Pakistani news reports



Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) supporters protest against the US in Lahore on Thursday.

also said security officials linked the house to the militant group. The men, ranging in age from the late teens to early 20s, were not accused of any crime; their intent remained mysterious, and both American and Pakistani officials

emphasised that they were still gathering facts. One of the men, Ramy Zamzam, 22, is a dental student at Howard University, where he received an undergraduate degree this year with a major in biology and chemistry, according to his

Facebook page. But their disappearance and resurfacing in Pakistan came amid broad concern in the United States about a rash of terrorism cases that appeared to be homegrown. Nihad Awad, national executive director of the

Council on American-Islamic Relations, an advocacy group that is working with the families of the men, cautioned against hasty conclusions about the episode during a news conference in Washington with Muslim leaders. — NYT

militant training in Pak: Hillary

Expressing concern over series of arrests of US nationals as terror suspects, US secretary of state Hillary Clinton has said much of the training and direction for terrorists comes from Pakistan and the border area with Afghanistan. "We know that much of the training and the direction for terrorists comes from Pakistan and the border area with Afghanistan," Ms Clinton told reporters at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the state department. It has always been a concern, Ms Clinton said when asked about several cases of home grown terrorists in the country. "We know we've got to work more closely with both Afghanistan and Pakistan to try to root out the infrastructure of terrorism that continues to recruit and train people who are willing to do what is alleged with Zazi, David Headley, and others in the recent cases that have come to light," she said.

iran 'Diplomat, N-scientist among 11 held by US'

Tehran, Dec. 10: Iranian media published a list on Wednesday of 11 Iranians, including a truck driver, a former diplomat and a nuclear scientist, who it claims are being held in the US or other countries. The Mehr news agency said the foreign ministry is "vigorously" pursuing diplomatic means to obtain the release of the Iranians, three of whom have allegedly been detained in countries outside the US on Washington's request. Among those mentioned in the report are nuclear scientist Shahram Amiri and Alireza Asgari, a former deputy defence minister who disappeared in Turkey three years ago and has been transferred to the US, according to Mehr, which cited unspecified documentary evidence. The report came out on the same day Saudi Arabia strongly rebuffed claims it was involved in the disappearance of Amiri, who the Iranians claim was kidnapped in June while on pilgrimage to Mecca, and is now being held in the US. — AFP

Philippines: Gunmen abduct 60, hold hostage

Manila (Philippines), Dec. 10: Suspected bandits abducted dozens of villagers in the southern Philippines on Thursday and were still holding about 60 of them hostage, including schoolchildren and teachers, officials said. The gunmen, believed to be former government-armed militiamen, seized about 75 people from the remote hamlet of San Martin in Agusan del Sur province and the local village school, but after negotiations with local officials released 15 of the students.

The police were pursuing the gunmen, who appeared to be using the hostages as human shields to escape after a clash with authorities in a nearby village on Wednesday, vice-governor Santiago Cane Jr. said. The volatile southern Philippines is plagued by banditry, loosely supervised

government-armed militias, and Muslim and communist insurgents. Police chief superintendent Jaime Milla said the gunmen in Thursday's abductions were former militiamen who have been dismissed and turned to banditry and extortion, targeting mining and logging companies in Agusan del Sur and nearby provinces. Cane said the police had clashed with the gunmen in another village, Purisima, on Wednesday, but no casualties were reported. He believed the gunmen were passing through nearby San Martin and took the hostages at the school to help win passage out of the area. "In my analysis ... the hostage taking was only for making them human shields," he said. "They want the standing warrant of arrest issued against them revoked." — AP

'Anti-social network' aims to be FB killer

Paris, Dec. 10: Facebook makes you despair? Social networking makes you want to end it all? You may be ready for online ritual suicide with the aid of a new website that helps you kill your virtual identity. "Impress your friends, disconnect yourself," is the slogan on www.seppukoo.com, a site that aims to subvert Facebook by offering its millions of users a glorious end and a memorial page to match.

"Rather than fall into the hands of their enemies, ancient Japanese samurai preferred to die with honour, voluntarily plunging a sword into the abdomen and moving it left to right in a slicing motion," the site notes. This form of ritual suicide was known as "seppuku." "As the seppukoo restores the samurai's honour as a warrior, seppukoo.com deals with the liberation of the digital body," the site



says. Today the enemy is not other bands of noble warriors but corporate media who use viral marketing to make huge profits by connecting people across the globe. "Seppukoo playfully attempts to subvert this mechanism by disconnecting people from each other and transforming the individual suicide experience

into an exciting 'social' experience." The site, which uses its own viral marketing strategy to lure in disgruntled social networkers, is part of a protest wave that sees Facebook as a potentially dangerous entity beholden to corporate interests. It offers ritual suicide for Facebook users in five easy steps. Willing victims must

first log in to seppukoo.com by typing in the same information they use to go on to their Facebook profile. They then choose one of several memorial RIP page templates before writing their last words, which the site promises to send to all their Facebook friends when they have taken the final step. Once the user has made that fatal final click, his or her Facebook profile is deactivated. But in what might be seen as a bit of a cheat, virtual life goes on after the ritual suicide. It comes in the form of testimonials friends can write on the memorial page or by rising in the seppukoo ranks by scoring points with every former Facebook friend who follows your lead and commits hara-kari. The top scorer in that game is currently a blonde woman who uses the name Simona Lodi and who passed into the post-Facebook world on November 5. — AFP

Blake: IDPs resettlement by January

Colombo, Dec. 10: Lauding the progress made by the Sri Lankan government in resettling the Tamil IDPs in Wanni and East, US has assured more assistance in developing the infrastructure for the displaced people in the region. "Large areas of the North remain heavily mined and reconstruction of infrastructure is at its beginning stages. The US stands ready to continue our assistance in these areas", US assistant secretary of state Robert Blake said. Blake who also visited the Vavuniya camps and witnessed the demining activities in North-western Mannar, also met Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollogama. — PTI

COP 15

DID YOU KNOW?

PARTIES WITH COMMITMENTS under the Kyoto Protocol (Annex B Parties) have accepted targets for limiting or reducing emissions. These targets are expressed as levels of allowed emissions, or "assigned amounts," over the 2008-2012 commitment period. Transfers and acquisitions of these units are tracked and recorded through the registry systems under the Kyoto Protocol. An international transaction log ensures secure transfer of emission reduction units between countries.

Emissions trading, as set out in Article 17 of the Kyoto Protocol, allows countries that have emission units to spare - emissions permitted them but not "used" - to sell this excess capacity to countries that are over their targets. Thus, a new commodity was created in the form of emission reductions or removals. Since carbon dioxide is the principal greenhouse gas, people speak simply of trading in carbon.

India won't accept emission targets

HARDEV SANOTRA
DC | COPENHAGEN

Dec. 10: India has rejected United States advice that it put its voluntary offer to reduce carbon intensity on the table with commitments before the global community. Secretary of the ministry of finance Vijai Sharma told Indian reporters that there was "no possibility" India would put its voluntary commitments before the international community. "We are a democracy and our commitments before Parliament are binding, but there can be no question of offering this to the international community or internationalising it".

He said India would be informing the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the national communication or Natcom project about the targets which it had voluntarily undertaken in the national action plan and its commitment before Parliament on reduction of carbon intensity of 20 to 25 per cent by 2020 from the 2005 level, but that would not extend to offering this as point of negotiation. On Wednesday, US special envoy on climate change Todd Stern had said that the offers made by China, India on climate change action, including cut



Youth activists of the 350.org group protest in Copenhagen on Thursday. — DC

in carbon intensity targets, had been noted, but for them to be effective they must be offered as binding targets and must be open to verification by the international community. Mr Sharma said India would also not lend itself to verification of its targets, and that the country was transparent enough in its dealing with the world to know that it's monitoring process domestically would be reliable enough. On carbon intensity targets, Mr Sharma said the details were still being worked out and would take a while to be

finalised. Asked to give his reaction on what Mr Stern said, Mr Sharma said the views had been noted, but it's not that India would accept everything that it was being asked to do. On the question of setting up a new mechanism under Copenhagen instead of extending the Kyoto Protocol which was legally binding on states, Mr Sharma said India was in favour of extending the protocol after it expires in 2012. The United States had not signed the protocol which provides for targets of reduction of carbon dioxide

by industrialised nations, also called Annex 1 countries. On Wednesday, Mr Stern had said the US would not accept the protocol or something similar, but a whole new structure needed to be put in place so that it could be legally binding on all parties. The executive secretary of the UNFCCC Yvo de Boer said that it would be very challenging to set up a new legally binding mechanism under the convention, since the Kyoto Protocol itself took eight years to be ratified.



Union Environment minister Jairam Ramesh will arrive in Copenhagen on Friday to find a divided G-77. Several subgroups under the G-77 have been urging for the redrawing of a new framework under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Before his departure, Mr Ramesh had stressed that India, China and Brazil had a basic framework in place and negotiations must take place under this ambit. He will now have to use all his skills to stand firm to India's position of an equitable settlement as enunciated by the PM.

Copenhagen diary

Youth activists of the 350.org group got even more vociferous on the fourth day of the Climate Change negotiations here in Copenhagen. As the crowd of delegates shivered past on a wet Thursday morning, lining up to enter the conference venue, the 350.org group decided to drive a gun, so to speak, to hold home their demand that the ones in full suits and overcoats must come out of the conference with an agreement to save the Earth, and them. Stripping right down to underwears in the freezing 6 degrees Celsius and 22 mph winds of Copenhagen, the group held placards saying, 'Don't leave us out in the cold'. "It is our world that you are destroying, our future and our children's children's future", shouted Chelsea Austen, who had come all the way from Texas, US.

About two days ago, 'Tiger Woods' was the No. 1 search query on Google. Suddenly, 'Copenhagen' has snatched that position. *Treehugger.com* says it shows that "the global society is overwhelmingly interested" in the conference and also notes that other terms like "climate change" and "global warming" also rank high.

Worried that wide disagreements over Climate Change financing for poor countries could wreck the Copenhagen conference, American billionaire George Soros has proposed that the IMF use its gold to fund developing countries take up the cause. He said the \$10 bn a year, three-year proposal being put forward by richer nations (and the UN) is "not much, it's not sufficient." Developing countries are demanding much more. Soros also proposed using the IMF's gold to provide loans to poor nations to finance their clean energy projects.

Sweden has pledged to give 800 million euros (\$1.2 bn) to help developing countries fight climate change. Swedish PM Fredrik Reinfeldt will announce the donation to a EU programme for a so-called "fast-start" financing fund on Thursday. Denmark, the host nation for the summit whose controversial proposal for an agreement has been vetoed by developing countries, has pledged 160 million euros. The total donation will be proposed at a meeting in Brussels. — Marianne de Nazareth