

Pak troops end al-Qaeda hunt in tribal belt

AFP Anoor Adda

Pakistani forces have wrapped up one of their fiercest battles with al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters on the tribal-dominated northwest border with Afghanistan, killing eight militants and capturing 18, the military said yesterday.

"Eight terrorists were killed and 18 captured alive," spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan told AFP, revising the original toll of 12.

"The operation culminated late in (Thursday) evening."

Two Pakistani troops were killed and two wounded in the day-long firefight, which began at 5:30 am (0030 GMT) when commandoes besieged a suspected al-Qaeda hideout in mud-walled tribal homes five km from the border in Anoor Adda in South Waziristan tribal district.

The heavily-armed fighters had been observed by Pakistani authorities crossing back and forth from Afghanistan's Paktika province near

the Taliban-controlled district of Barmal and the Afghan border town of Shkin.

They were believed to have been involved in attacks on US troops which left one US soldier dead on Monday, army officers said.

The operation was launched just days after US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage criticised Pakistani security forces' commitment to hunting al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants, saying: "I do not think that that affection for working with us extends up and down the rank-and-file of the Pakistani security community."

Armitage was due to land in Islamabad late Thursday for talks with President Pervez Musharraf but at the last minute postponed his visit until Saturday citing illness.

Armitage has said he plans to raise with Musharraf the growing problem of Taliban and al-Qaeda insurgents regrouping in Pakistan and infiltrating back into Afghanistan.



PHOTO: STAR

On the occasion of World Lions Service Week, the International Association of Lions Clubs Multiple District 315 took out a procession in the city yesterday.

September 11 attack Judge bars prosecutors from seeking death for Moussaoui

AFP, Washington

In a stinging rebuke to the government's case, a US judge on Thursday barred prosecutors from seeking the death penalty for Frenchman Zacarias Moussaoui, the only person charged in the September 11 attacks.

Judge Leonie Brinkema ruled that prosecutors cannot present evidence at trial saying Moussaoui helped plan the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, in which about 3,000 people died.

Each of the six charges against Moussaoui is linked to the

September 11 terror attacks.

Brinkema has also said that Moussaoui cannot get a fair trial unless he can question imprisoned al-Qaeda leaders as defense witnesses. In January she ruled that Moussaoui should have access to the al-Qaeda leaders, which he claims will clear him of the charges.

Federal officials have refused access to the witnesses, citing national security issues.

The judge had even considered dropping all charges against Moussaoui, as the defence has requested.

"I think it's a great decision,

because it takes the death penalty off the table," said Gerald Zerk, one of three court-appointed lawyers for the Frenchman.

Moussaoui has been conducting his own defence, but Brinkema has assigned court lawyers to help.

"I don't know what the government will do, I won't even speculate on that," Zerk said.

Brinkema, whose court is located in the Washington suburbs of Alexandria, Virginia, "ordered that the government's Notice of Intent to seek a sentence of death and notice of special findings be and are stricken."

Morocco elected chairman of IUT governing board

The working session of the Governing Board of Islamic University of Technology (IUT), a subsidiary organ of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), was held at the Board room yesterday, says a press release.

It was attended by the members from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Morocco, and the representative of OIC Secretary General and IUT vice-chancellor.

The board elected Mohammed Seghrouchni, Moroccan ambassador to Bangladesh, as chairman.

Md Nurun Nabi, secretary of the labour and employment ministry, Humood F Al-Mudhaf, director general of public authority for applied education and training of Kuwait, and Khwaja Ijaz Sarwar, secretary of the ministry of labour and manpower ministry of Pakistan, were elected vice-chairmen.

Saeed Mohammad Al-Za'abi, UAE ambassador to Bangladesh was selected rapporteur.

The meeting will continue till tomorrow.

The board expressed the hope that with the concerted efforts of all, IUT would be able to achieve a new height of success in the years ahead.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at few places over Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.3 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and the lowest 23.0 degree at Mymensingh.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:43pm today and rises at 5:52am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature In Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.8	23.8	80	83
Chittagong	34.4	25.0	69	65
Rajshahi	33.6	24.8	80	85
Khulna	33.0	23.5	83	92
Barisal	33.0	26.0	78	85
Sylhet	33.2	23.7	87	76
Cox's Bazar	34.8	24.5	68	73

Tamil child soldiers start demobilisation

AFP, Kilinochchi

Sri Lanka's first foreign-backed bid to demobilise hundreds of child soldiers got underway Friday in this battle-scarred northern town with Unicef taking in 49 youngsters released by Tamil Tiger rebels.

Tiger leaders, government representatives and UN diplomats ceremonially lit a traditional coconut oil lamp to mark the opening of a transit home for child soldiers, but the children themselves were shielded from the international media.

Unicef did not allow journalists to interview the 27 girls and 22 boys who became the first batch of children demobilised by the Tigers under the project funded by the UN

agency.

"Our main concern is the children and we want to do everything possible to protect their identity and make it easier for them to go back to their homes," a spokeswoman for Unicef, the United Nations Children's Fund, told reporters here.

The children will sleep in bunk beds in the converted building before they are deemed ready to return to their families.

"This is a big day for the children who have been among the people at most risk during the conflict," said Ted Chaiban, the head of Unicef in Sri Lanka. "But, there are still cases of recruitment and it has to stop."

"We need to see an end to child soldiers in Sri Lanka."

DHAKA TODAY

Space week

The inaugural ceremony of 'World Space Week', organised by Bangladesh Astronomical Society, will be held. It will be followed by a multimedia video projection show on latest space explorations. Venue: Mirpur Bangla High School auditorium, Section-2. Time: 11.45am.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Dances with Wolves'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Seminar

A seminar on 'Media Role on Information Society: Perspective Bangladesh', organised by Bangladesh ICT Journalist Forum, will be held. Venue: Seminar room of IDB Bhaban, Agargaon. Time: 3.45pm.

Lions seminar

A seminar titled 'Prevent drug abuse: Ensure better tomorrow', organised by Dhaka Baridhara Lions Club District 315B1, will be held with Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain as chief guest. Venue: WVA auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.30pm.

Workshop

A workshop on 'National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan', organised jointly by the government and World Conservation Union, will be held with LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: BIAM

auditorium, New Eskaton. Time: 10.00am.

Discussion

On the occasion of its fourth founding anniversary, Meghbartan online magazine will hold a discussion on 'Internet technology and world mass resistance'. Venue: Central Public Library auditorium, Shahbagh. Time: 4.00pm.

Rotary Dhaka Central

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 1.30pm.

Rotary North West

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club, Shahbagh. Time: 6.30pm.

Musical evening

A musical evening by Subir Nandi, organised by av graph, will be held. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre, Gulshan-1. Time: 7.30pm.

Reunion

On the occasion of its 12th founding anniversary, Purbita-an organisation for women artists organises a reunion of its members. It will be followed by a prize giving ceremony of children's art competition. Venue: Bishwa Sahitya Kendra auditorium, Bangla Motor. Time: 9.00am and 4.30pm.

Sole power keeps elderly on their feet

AFP, Paris

Vibrating insoles, inserted into shoes, could help elderly people keep their balance, American researchers suggest in Saturday's issue of The Lancet.

Human balance is partly derived by "feedback" signals that travel to the brain from nerves in the feet.

Many people lose some of the feedback as they get older, which makes them wobbly and vulnerable to a fall.

Boston University biomedical

engineer James Collins and colleagues tested the idea of reviving the nerve response by stimulating the soles of the feet.

They set up two gel plates implanted with three small vibrators that delivered undetectable low-frequency noise to the soles of the feet.

The gadget was tested on 15 young people, whose average age was 23 years, and 12 older people, aged 73 on average.

The guinea pigs had to stand on the plates for 30 seconds with their eyes closed, then get off and do

three random walks, during which they were measured for how much they swayed.

Both the youngsters and the elderly benefited from a quick blast from the sole vibrators but the old ones especially so. Their motor control and stability improved significantly when they walked.

Collins suggests the idea could be turned into a plastic insole that would be inserted into shoes, giving the wearer a random vibration from time to time to perk up the foot nerves and enhance the feedback.

Pakistan should give up dream of annexing Kashmir: US expert

IANs, Washington

A leading US expert on South Asia says Pakistan should give up its "dream" of annexing Kashmir by force and the dispute with India over the region should be treated as one of people rather than territory.

Teresita Schaffer, South Asia programme director at the Centre for Strategic International Studies (CSIS), emphasised the need for Pakistan to give up its hopes of seizing Kashmir, saying the Line of Control (LoC) that divides the region between India and Pakistan was "almost certain to remain in place".

But even if the territorial divisions of the last five decades do not change, the political relationships would have to, she added while speaking at a seminar on "Democracy and Terrorism" here.

The seminar was co-hosted by the Asia Society Washington Centre and the Upadhyaya Foundation.

Other speakers at the seminar included Ved Nanda of the University of Denver College of Law, Peter Bergen, adjunct professor at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University and fellow of New America Foundation, and Kamal Kher, professor of pediatrics, George Washington University School of Medicine and Chief of Nephrology Division at the Children's National Medical Centre in Washington DC.

Schaffer, a former diplomat who has served in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, said: "Kashmir should be treated as a problem of the people and not as a dispute over territory."

"A settlement of the Kashmir

issue will need to create some kind of special status for Kashmir, but it must address Pakistan's chronic insecurity while putting an end to Pakistani efforts to change the contours of the region."

Pakistan's rulers and its Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) have played a central role in coordinating the efforts of the militants in Kashmir to engineer a "Jihadi conflict", making it all the more difficult for the resumption of bilateral dialogue between Islamabad and New Delhi, speakers said.

Some speakers suggested democratisation of Pakistan while others called for cutting off funds for militants operating from there and dismantling the network of madrassahs as possible steps for normalisation of ties between the neighbours.



Prof Fakrul Islam addresses the inaugural ceremony of the first website on the novels of Bangladesh www.bangladeshinovels.com at the Institute of Modern Languages Auditorium of Dhaka University on October 2. Chaired by Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, the function was attended by Director General of Bangla Academy Prof Monsur Musa, eminent scientist and fiction writer Mohammad Jafar Iqbal and Masuduzzaman. Author of the website Subrata Kumar Das described the site for the audience.