



Qadeer Khan top suspect

AFP, Islamabad

The architect of Pakistan's nuclear program Abdul Qadeer Khan is the prime suspect in a probe into alleged nuclear leaks to Iran and Libya, two senior government and military officials told AFP yesterday.

Evidence collected so far strongly points to Khan's involvement in the alleged leaks in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they told AFP.

"There is sufficient evidence of linkages between a handful of individuals in Pakistan and the international black market mafia trading in nuclear technology, with Khan being a primary figure in the shadowy business," the government official said, on condition of anonymity.

Meddlesome MPs turn UPs redundant

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The union parishad (UP), the most important and lowest tier of local government, is becoming increasingly dysfunctional. Lawmakers allegedly sideline local UP chairmen in development works in violation of constitutional provisions.

According to the constitution, parliament shall confer on local government bodies powers to impose taxes for local purposes, prepare their budget and maintain funds. But in reality, it is the lawmakers who call the shots.

Mohammad Ali Khan, chairman of Mannargaoon UP of Sunamganj, said he feels he has been made redundant as most of his responsibilities as UP chairman have been taken over by the local MP, adding that he has practically

no role in initiating any development work.

"We are left out of the decision-making process when it comes to development work in our areas. We don't have any right to utilise funds sanctioned for any project and have been virtually relegated to the role of silent spectators," he said.

Khan's views were echoed by Idris Ali, chairman of 15 Chanahara UP of Chittagong. "MPs are now the main obstacle to strengthening the local government. Not all their activities in their constituencies have sanctions of the constitution. If this trend continues, it is pointless to maintain UPs as local government units and they should be abolished," said an angry Ali.

The government's promise to strengthen the local government bodies has so far fallen flat. The situation has worsened since 1991

when the parliamentary system of government was introduced and undue intervention by lawmakers in UP activities became more and more common.

The UP chairmen's association, a national platform of UP chairmen, is organising a movement to realise their demands it submitted to the government. The association sent letters to all chairmen across the country asking them to be united to strengthen the UP.

The demands include strengthening the local government as per the constitution, stopping the lawmakers from interfering in UP activities, increased remuneration package for UP chairmen, more financial power of the UP, improved logistical support and withdrawal of all restrictive orders that dwarf the

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Khulna attacks part of a blueprint: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has once again accused Hawa Bhaban people of making a hit list to kill at least 25 AL leaders in Khulna in a move to destroy the party's organisational strength in the region.

The attack on AL leader Manzur Moshed Khan Labu in Khulna and killing of a party activist in Bagerhat on Thursday are part of a plot hatched at Hawa Bhaban, the leader of the opposition in parliament told newsmen after visiting critically injured Manzur at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Manzur, general secretary of Sonadanga upazila unit of the AL, is at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the DMCH and doctors said he was not out of danger.

Earlier at a meeting with professionals on January 15, Hasina said, "I have received information about a Hawa Bhaban plot to murder at least 25 of our (AL) promising and

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THE STRENGTH WITHIN



PHOTO: STAR

Nurjahan along with her son caters to customers at the roadside Rangpur hotel she once worked for and now owns because of the money she borrowed from a local NGO as micro-credit.

On tracks to better life

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

Sitting on the cashier's seat in a busy roadside hotel that she now runs with her sons Razzaq and Hasan, Nurjahan recalls the days she spent begging on footpaths in Rangpur to feed her three children.

"We used to work for someone else in this hotel. Razzaq and Hasan used to wait the tables and I used to cook. But it was the same as always -- we were still eating hand to mouth."

Nurjahan has since worked as a maid, cleaned streets and saved her meagre income in a savings account with an NGO. She borrowed micro-credit to help the youngest of her children through school. But a time came when needs became greater and dreams needed more money to come true.

"My son was kicked at least five times," said Nurjahan, recalling the day her son was humiliated at workplace -- a hotel -- two years ago. "Amid all his moans and groans, Razzaq

asked me if I had money. He said he wanted to start a hotel.

The next day, Nurjahan went to the NGO and asked if she could take a loan bigger than the amount usually given. They obliged under a scheme that encourages entrepreneurs for bigger business ventures and help break out of a pattern of micro-credit that does not allow a significant increase in their income.

Nurjahan explains her life-changing decision. "A friend told me to save some more money for my children. In the end, what she said came back to me and I took the loan for their future."

The eldest son, Razzaq, already knew about a hotel that was to be rented and took Nurjahan there. They have since rented the hotel.

It has been a struggle for Nurjahan, with no experience in running a restaurant. "The whole family works together, but still falls short of profit and has to pay bills and rent. We have still managed to pay back

our loan," she added.

With a sudden smirk, however, Nurjahan says: "So, we're now thinking we should renovate the restaurant for a better look and perhaps bigger space."

Incorporating children into enterprises is also evident in Shamsunnahar's bakery. Fifteen years ago, Shamsunnahar and her young sons started to make sweets and baked little cakes on her shabby stove for local bakeries. With no land, no money and a bedridden husband, all of their income went straight to feeding her family and left nothing for expansion.

"I had to send my sons to work for bigger bakeries to get extra income for the family, but they were continuously humiliated," Shamsunnahar said. "I have my pride and I didn't want to let my sons' pride be hurt that way either -- I asked them to come home."

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PHOTO: STAR

The Daily Star yesterday celebrated its 13th founding anniversary by holding a reception dinner at Saffron Restaurant at Gulshan in Dhaka yesterday, attended by ministers, ruling coalition and opposition leaders, academics and other personalities. The picture shows some important guests, clockwise from left, State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Quamrul Islam, PM's Political Secretary Mosaddak Ali, LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Industries Minister Matiar Rahman Nizami, PM's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury, ICC-B President Mahbubur Rahman, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, senior Awami League leaders Munaim Sarker, Abdus Samad Azad, SAMS Kibria, AHSK Sadique and Land Minister Shamsul Islam.

Bush, Blair among Nobel nominees

REUTERS, OSLO

President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair are among nominees for the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize before a Sunday deadline for nominations despite failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

"Nominations are pouring in," said Geir Lundestad, director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute. He said he gets letters and up to 1,500 e-mails a day from people either supporting or denouncing candidates.

Among nominees are the European Union to mark its expansion to include former East bloc states. Pope John Paul, the Salvation Army, former Czech President Vaclav Havel, Chinese dissidents are also among nominees.

"Bush and Blair definitely still deserve it," said Jan Simonsen, a right-wing

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Road mishaps kill 14

Five of a family among the dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen people were killed and 23 others injured in separate road accidents in Joypurhat, Gazipur, Comilla and Magura districts yesterday.

Five of a family and a rickshawpuller were killed in Joypurhat, three each in Gazipur and Comilla, and two in Magura.

In Joypurhat, six members of a family were killed and three injured in a tragic road accident at Gudripara in Panchbibi upazila, according to UNB.

Police said the accident occurred when a Hili-bound bus

rammed a rickshaw van at around 2:00pm.

Two died on the spot, one on the way to a local hospital and three others succumbed to their injuries at the hospital.

The dead are Taher Ali Pradhan, 80, Farida Banu, 35, Pari Banu, 28, and her daughters Sathi, 10, and Mahmuda, 8 and rickshaw van puller Ainul Hossain.

The injured were admitted to Adhunik Hospital in critical condition.

Taher Ali along with his family members was going to bring his newly-wed grand daughter back home from her in-laws' house at

Bel Amla village in Sadar upazila.

In Gazipur, three people were killed and 15 others injured in two separate road mishaps on the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway.

The first accident occurred at Teknagapa in Sadar upazila at about 4:00pm when a bus overturned, killing passengers Shahid, 25, and Tofazzal, 46, on the spot and injuring 15 others.

Four of the injured were admitted to Gazipur Sadar Hospital, the rest released after first aid.

In another mishap, Abul Hossain, 50, was run over and killed by a bus

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Prayer Timings		
January 31		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-45	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-50	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Most Britons think Hutton report was 'whitewash'

AGENCIES, London

The majority of Britons -- 56 percent -- think a judicial inquiry which probed the suicide of arms expert David Kelly and exonerated Prime Minister Tony Blair of wrongdoing was a "whitewash", according to a poll published yesterday.

Despite senior judge Lord Hutton's inquiry rapping the BBC for a faulty story on Iraqi weapons, the YouGov survey for the Daily Telegraph found that 67 percent of people trusted the BBC to tell the truth, compared with 31 percent who trusted the government.

The BBC's top executive resigned Thursday leaving the

revered public broadcaster rudderless after the head of the board of governors also quit following condemnation by a judge of inaccurate reporting of the government's case for war.

The organisation apologised unreservedly and Blair declared an end to the feud.

But yesterday, ousted director general Greg Dyke said he did not accept much of judge Lord Hutton's report and that he could have stayed if the BBC's board of governors had backed him.

"I don't accept all of it," Dyke told BBC Radio. "I, others at the B B C

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Two abductors held in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police arrested two abductors and recovered Tk 50,000 from a house at Nabarun in Sonarpara in the early hours yesterday after the miscreants released their victim on payment of ransom.

The miscreants called Abdul Mukit, son of Abdul Jalil of Dheunagar village in Beanibazar and an expatriate in Abu Dhabi, out of a tea stall at Sheola Bazaar and drove away with him in a microbus on January 21.

The kidnapers demanded Tk 5 lakh in ransom from his family over mobile phone on January 23 and agreed to release him on payment of Tk 2 lakh.

Mukit's brother Abdul Aziz Ranu filed an abduction case with Beanibazar Police Station.

The abductors released Mukit on January 25 after they were paid the ransom in Majorjilla area.

Police made an enquiry about the mobile phone, which changed hands thrice after the first sale and arrested Delwar Hossain, 28, son of Nur Miah, and his cousin Shahabuddin from the latter's house.

3 household flasks, not bombs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The abandoned containers that created a bomb scare in Baridhara diplomatic enclave in Dhaka on Thursday proved to be three household thermal flasks containing wax-like materials.

Army bomb experts yesterday took the materials to the cantonment and examined them, putting an end to the panic in the diplomatic zone.

Earlier, the containers found on Park Road prompted a security alert and over 100 armed police and plainclothes police guarded the area.