

# al-Qaeda rebuilding in Pakistan: US

REUTERS, Washington

al-Qaeda's leaders are holed up in a secure hide-out in Pakistan, from which they are revitalising their bruised but resilient network, US intelligence chief John Negroponte said on Thursday.

In an unusually direct statement on the whereabouts of the militant group's top echelon, Negroponte told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that Pakistan is the centre of a web of al-Qaeda connections that stretches across the globe into Europe.

"al-Qaeda is the terrorist organisation that poses the greatest threat to US interests," the US director of national intelligence said in his annual assessment of worldwide threats against the United States and its interests.

"They are cultivating stronger operational connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hide-out in Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Europe," he said.

It appeared to be the first time in congressional testimony that Negroponte has singled out Pakistan as the locale for the headquarters of the network. It is accused of the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington that killed about 3,000 people in 2001.

Up to now, US officials have said that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and his second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahri are hiding somewhere along the rugged mountainous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Negroponte did not cite bin Laden or Zawahri by name and did not say where in Pakistan US intelligence believes al-Qaeda

leaders are hiding.

Negroponte, who became US intelligence chief in April 2005 and will soon leave to become deputy secretary of state, told the same panel a year ago that al-Qaeda's leadership posed a threat to the United States from bases in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area.

"We have captured or killed numerous senior al-Qaeda operatives, but al-Qaeda's core elements are resilient. They continue to plot attacks against our homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties," he said on Thursday.

US officials have long complained about Islamist militant activity in Pakistan, which has been blamed as a source of increasing Taliban and al-Qaeda attacks in neighbouring Afghanistan.

"Pakistan is our partner in the war on terror and has captured several al-Qaeda leaders. However, it is also a major source of Islamic extremism," Negroponte said in written testimony submitted to the panel.

"Eliminating the safe haven that the Taliban and other extremists have found in Pakistan's tribal areas is not sufficient to end the insurgency in Afghanistan but it is necessary."

He noted the political problems facing Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf due to a potential for tribal rebellion and a backlash by Islamic political parties opposed to the US military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"With elections expected later this year, the situation will become even more challenging for President Musharraf and for the US," Negroponte said.

## Rapid raids to capture

**FROM PAGE 1**  
DOHS, Mirza Abbas' house in Shahjahanpur and Salahuddin's house in Demra.

None of the persons alleged to be on the list of 'corruptionists and godfathers' could be reached over the phone yesterday although sources said Moudud Ahmed is staying in his residence.

Troops searched Haji Selim's house on Water Works Road in Lalbagh and took position in front of his house, according to the sources.

Troops also took position in front of Nasiruddin Pintu's house on Moneshwar Road, the sources said. Talking to The Daily Star, Pintu however denied the presence of army personnel in front of his house and the authenticity of the report of a raid.

The army arrested Kamal Majumder from his Banani house around 1:30am yesterday. As they knocked on his door in C Block, Kamal himself opened the door. He was handed over to Gulshan police around 4:00am.

"The army personnel arrested him on charge of patronising political clashes," duty officer Jasim (full name could not be known immediately) of Gulshan Police Station told The Daily Star.

He was later taken to the office of riot police in Mirpur-12 for interrogation. Gulshan police said he was also sent to court. Kamal's family

## 2 outlaws killed

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under Khoksa upazila at about 2:30pm on Thursday and took him to Kushtia Rab office for quizzing.

On his statement, the Rab team along with Santu started for Patilidangi to recover hidden firearms and arrested his accomplices.

When they reached Simulia village under the upazila at about 3:30am, Shantu's cohorts opened fire, prompting the elite force to retaliate.

During the "shootout" Santu tried to flee from Rab vehicle and received bullets. He died instantly, while his accomplices managed to flee, Rab sources said.

One shutter gun and two bullets were recovered from the spot. Police said Santu was an accused in three murder cases filed with Rajbari and Khoksa police stations.

According to our Jhenidah correspondent, a team of Rab-6 arrested Mohiuddin Mohi, 48, at Vaina village under Harinakundo upazila at around 12:10pm on Thursday and took him to Rab office in the district town.

Following his confessional statement, the Rab team, taking Mohi with them, went to the village at about 1:30 am yesterday to recover hidden firearms and arrest his cohorts.

Sensing the presence of the Rab men, some members of the outlawed outfit opened fire. Rab returned fire.

Rab sources said Mohi was shot during the encounter and died on the spot while his accomplices managed to flee.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Harinakundo Police Station said Mohi was a regional leader of Sramajibi Mukti Andolan and wanted in five cases including two for murder.

## Punish plunderers to ensure fair polls: Oli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Executive President Col (retd) Oli Ahmed in a statement yesterday demanded arrest of the corrupt people and their punishment to ensure transparency and accountability in the country's politics.

The people who failed to hold the election even after wasting time and money should be identified and those who made the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) dysfunctional by enacting faulty laws should be brought to book, he said.

The officers in the police and civil administration who are linked to any political party should be suspended and replaced by competent and non-partisan officers, Oli said.

He demanded freeing the administration from politics, proper reconstitution of the Election Commission and preparation of a correct voter list.

The judiciary should also be made free of partisan influence to recover its pride, the LDP leader said.

"I think solution to these problems is possible with only a little intervention of the military," he said.

He blamed former chief adviser of the caretaker government President Iajuddin Ahmed and the leaders of BNP-Jamaat alliance for creating a 'critical political situation' in the country.

## BSF guns down

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sent to a Sakthira hospital morgue for postmortem, police said.

Cattle traders Afsar Ali and Kawsar Ali of village Basantapur told this correspondent that they along with the victims went to India to buy cattle on Wednesday.

BSF men of Rameswar camp in Hasnabad thana under South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal arrested Ratan Das and Nityanada Das at Rameswarpur on Thursday when they were returning to Bangladesh with the cattle, they said.

Later BSF men tortured them to death and threw the bodies into the river Ichhamati.

Officer-in-Charge of Debhata Police Station Pradip Das said they found marks of torture on the bodies.

Lt Col Md Asif Abdur Rouf, commanding Officer 41 Rifles Battalion, also confirmed the incident.

## 2 rivals

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Jhumur Biswas of Bhabanipur village, and Adil Uddin, 34, son of Tofael Uddin of Sailogari village.

According to police, a gang of GMF cadres picked up Moazzem and Adil from a tea stall at Sailogari Bazar at gunpoint at about 8:30pm.

They took the NBCP men to nearby Sailogari field, shot them point blank and left the scene. Both died on the spot.

Immediately after the killing, Simul Biswas, general secretary of GMF central committee, claimed responsibility for the killing, saying that they were traitors.

On information, police went to the spot at about 10:00pm, recovered the bodies, and sent them to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

A case was filed with Sadar Police Station, accusing Simul Biswas of the killing.

## Journos demand

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broadcasting of news by the private television channels within 24 hours.

Criticising and protesting the imposition of restrictions on the media, the journalists said the media and common people must not be the victims of the state of emergency.

They said it is rather those who looted public wealth while in power, repressed journalists, teachers, lawyers, political leaders and activists, and common people, and politicised the administration and judiciary should be punished now.

The journalist leaders said instead of suspending people's fundamental rights during the state of emergency action should be taken against those who resorted to corruption and abused power causing sufferings to common people.

Former Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) president Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, BFUJ Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Dhaka Union of Journalists President Altaf Mahmud and General Secretary Omar Faruk, Jatiya Press Club former general secretary Shafiqur Rahman, daily Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta, journalist leaders Farazi Ajmal Hossain, Amirul Momenin and Saiful Islam Talukder spoke at the meeting presided over by BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul.

They strongly declared that they will in no way accept any interruption in people's constitutional rights to know through a free flow of information.

The journalists community--united to uphold the freedom of the media--will be forced to declare tough countrywide programmes if the restriction is not withdrawn immediately, they said.

## Mokhles' last dirty trick

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claimed to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Bangla Service that he resigned from the post and was not removed.

Soon after the declaration of a state of emergency Thursday night, Mokhles unilaterally called all private television channels and radio stations and issued a verbal order to immediately stop broadcasting of all news bulletins and political talk shows.

He also slapped a ban on newspapers from publishing news or cartoons criticising the government.

When Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam queried President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday about the ban, the president said he was unaware of any such move and that if any such move has taken place it had been made without his knowledge.

The Public Information Department (PID) also informed The Daily Star last night that Mokhles personally ordered the PID to call the private television channels and radio stations for stopping their news broadcast.

Earlier, Mokhles repeatedly attempted to mislead the public by releasing to the media information that contradicted the decisions

taken by the council of advisers.

The last glaring example of Mokhles' misdeeds was revealed when former adviser Dhiraj Kumar Nath categorically contradicted a statement Mokhles had released to the public on January 9, 2007.

Mokhles was appointed the president's press secretary in 2004 and was later given the extra-constitutional post of adviser to the president after Iajuddin took up the added responsibility of chief adviser to the caretaker government.

Bangabhaban sources accused Mokhles of violating regulations by attending the advisory council meetings and supplying confidential minutes of those meetings to the BNP while serving as the president's adviser.

On numerous occasions, Mokhles also spoke in those meetings--despite strong protests from the advisers--on possible courses of the caretaker government's action, sources added.

Government officials have alleged that Mokhles tried to exert his influence over postings and, in some cases, received money in exchange. He is also accused of demeaning senior government officials while speaking to them.

## Civil society

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that did not attend the oath-taking ceremony at the Bangabhaban, former adviser Hafiz Uddin Khan said, "I don't know if it is a bad omen as they did not come to the ceremony. We thought the decision (on new CG) came through consensus of all the parties. But the other major alliance seemed quite happy."

He went on, "I wish history does not repeat, and hope that both the alliances would support the new caretaker government."

Prof Muzaffer Ahmed said, "It seems one alliance may not support the new caretaker government."

He also thinks the 'new' CG, formed under a state of emergency, may have to face legal complications.

Terming Fakhruddin a neutral person, Muzaffer said, "He alone is not enough. Let us see who comprise his council of advisers."

Referring to the previous council of adviser's swearing in programme, former adviser major general (retd) Moinul Islam Chowdhury said, "Our political parties have kept up their tradition of not attending a function that a rival party attends."

Moinul further said, "It is not clear to the people whether it would be a caretaker government or an interim government."

He suggested that legal experts should give their views on the issue.

Former adviser Ali Akbar Khan hailed Fakhruddin as a 'capable person' but he declined to make any comments on political aspects.

Praising the new chief adviser, Hafiz said his council of advisers has a lot to do. "They must reconstitute the Election Commission and update the voter list properly even if they have to take help of the NGOs and others".

## Nizami

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communicated with KM Hasan so that he felt embarrassed and that led to the Awami League-sponsored violence on October 28, he added.

"But we did not see any influence of the diplomats on those who nurture the confrontational politics," he said.

As the BBC asked him whether Jamaat would participate in the election under the new caretaker government, he said they would take decision after examining the speech of the president and the steps he might take.

## US, UK reaction

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unable to resolve the impasse and that the government felt compelled to declare a state of emergency."

The US hopes the people of Bangladesh and the political leaders will approach these developments peacefully and in a manner consistent with rule of law and respect for civil and political liberties, including freedom of the press, the spokesman added.

He said, "We call on all parties to refrain from violence and provocation, and to work together to find solutions that will strengthen democratic stability and represent the best interests of the Bangladeshi people."

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Jianchao made the remark yesterday in response to queries from newsmen in the wake of President Iajuddin Ahmed's resignation from the post of chief adviser to non-party caretaker government and his declaration of emergency.

Liu hoped that the stakeholders involved would, in prior consideration of the interest of the country and its people, appropriately deal with the disagreement to safeguard peace, stability and development of the country, said a Chinese embassy press release.

## 4-party 'absent'

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asked about the party's stand on the latest political development.

However, a few leaders close to party Chairperson Khaleda Zia ensured that she got the invitation.

Khaleda went to her Banani office around 7:00pm followed a few minutes later by senior party leaders, including Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Standing Committee member and former minister M Saifur Rahman, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Vice-Chairman Nazmul Huda, former adviser to PM Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, former ministers Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Aman Ullah Aman.

Sources said the BNP leaders discussed the latest political situation.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mujahid and Joint Secretary General Mohammad Qamaruzzaman also met Khaleda, top leader of the four-party alliance, to discuss the matter.

Meanwhile, the scene at Hawa Bhaban was completely different yesterday. No leaders and activists--even those who had been regular visitors for the last few months--were seen on Hawa Bhaban premises yesterday evening.

## EC's poll activities

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Alam and EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar.

The ninth national parliamentary elections were supposed to be held on January 22 amid Awami League-led grand alliance's boycott of the polls. They had also decided to resist the polls. A total of Tk130 crore has been spent so far for the January 22 elections.

The acting CEC sat with the three ECs and the EC secretary at 11:00am and the meeting went on till lunch hour. The meeting resumed around 3:30pm. Neither the acting CEC nor the EC secretary talked to reporters about their discussions in the meeting.

Election officials from different districts and upazilas came to the EC office to receive election materials yesterday morning but the EC officials informed them about the postponement of the elections and sent them back. Buses and trucks were seen gathered in front of the EC office to carry the election materials to different districts and upazilas.

The printing of ballot papers also stopped, said a number of the EC officials wishing anonymity.

"Everything is now clear after the president's speech last night (Thursday)," Election Commissioner Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury told newsmen, adding, "But the EC is yet to give formal decision on postponing the elections."

"We will inform you of if any decision is made," he said.

Acting CEC Mahfuzur Rahman following the meeting said, "There is no news, no news. If there was any news, we (the EC) will let you know."

## JMB cadre held

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Hassan and Shoyeb were arrested with a huge amount of explosives and bomb making materials in Badda area of the capital early Wednesday.

The bomb making materials and other items seized from Tangail include 500 grams of zinc oxide, 100 grams of carbon powder, 800 grams of lead nitrate, eight plastic boxes, some masks, 16 plastic circuit boards, three cartridges, 11 negatives of films, 53 audio cassettes and one mobile phone.

The JMB cadre Selim Miah alias Babu, who rented the house at Karatia Bazar, however managed to escape arrest, Rab sources said.

Rab filed two separate cases against the arrested JMB cadre Arman with Tangail Sadar Police Station.

Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge (OC) of Tangail Sadar Police Station, said they will produce the arrested JMB cadre Arman in the court today, seeking remand.

## Low gas pressure

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on dispute resolution in the contract.

The United Group has not yet informed the power ministry the shipment date of its plant equipment. Meanwhile low gas pressure at Shahjibazar has also made the project uncertain for now.

The power rental agreement for Kumargaon 20 MW plant was initiated and finalised last week.

Dealing with the 20MW Barabkunda plant, Hosaf has already asked the authorities to extend project implementation time to 150 days from its original 90 days. Hosaf representative at the meeting also said it was unable to get finance under the contract which is valid for only three years, and "may be" extended further. Hosaf has asked the authorities to replace "may be" with "shall be" in the contract.

Gas pressure at Barabkunda is also much lower than required, and Petrobangla has said it will take about a year to ensure appropriate pressure.

Hosaf's Feni 20 MW project is also suffering from uncertainty due to low gas pressure among other glitches.

Hosaf's third deal is Neapara 50 MW barge-mount plant. Though Hosaf was given the notification of award on November 1, it now wants to shift the project to Baghabari, and then Shiklabaha.

But Hosaf now wants to set up a land-based plant, instead of a barge-mount one, and is asking the government to provide one acre of land. The bid bond for this project is about to expire now.

## Fakhruddin new CA

**FROM PAGE 1**  
boycotted the oath taking ceremony of Iajuddin as the CA, protesting his 'unconstitutional takeover of the post', attended yesterday's function in Bangabhaban.

Flanked by senior leaders of the party and its allies the BNP chairperson on October 29 attended the function of Iajuddin taking over as the CA, but none of them yesterday turned up at the ceremony of Dr Fakhruddin taking over as the CA. Leaders of BNP and its allies had also boycotted the oath taking ceremony of CA Justice Latifur Rahman on July 15, 2001.

AL President Sheikh Hasina and LDP President Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury flanked by other senior leaders of the parties and allies attended CA Fakhruddin's oath taking ceremony.

Only Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad and some of his party leaders attended both the ceremonies on October 29 and yesterday.

Two former chief advisers to caretaker governments Justice Habibur Rahman and Justice Latifur Rahman, Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain, Acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, secretaries of different ministries, chiefs of three services of the armed forces, foreign diplomats and other dignitaries also attended the ceremony yesterday evening.

Excepting the state run media and a private news agency, journalists were not allowed in Bangabhaban to cover the ceremony.

Cabinet Secretary Ali Imam Majumder conducted the oath taking ceremony that lasted ten minutes. Before administering the oath, the president appointed Dr Fakhruddin as the new CA in accordance with the Article 58(C) of the constitution.

Before appointing the new CA, negotiations took place between the two major political alliances to reach a consensus on Dr Fakhruddin.

Amid the resignation of Iajuddin from the post of CA and Dr Fakhruddin's assumption of the office, it has become a record in the history of the system of caretaker government introduced in 1996 by amending the constitution. This time, the caretaker government has already had two CAs and about to have 24 advisers including the would-be ten advisers.

Since the assumption of the office of CA, President Iajuddin had been giving rise to incessant controversies by taking unilateral decisions one after another on electoral issues.

In the last 75 days, Iajuddin decided unilaterally three times to deploy the armed forces, appointed two election commissioners -- one of whom had been an aspiring BNP candidate in the next election, made the Election Commission (EC) make a hurried announcement of an election schedule, addressed the nation without consulting the advisers, and transferred some high level officials.

Besides, the president on several occasions had remained reluctant to resolve the political crisis in accordance with the council of advisers' initiatives. He was even adamant about holding the January 22 parliamentary election without participation of all major political parties, ignoring repeated suggestions from the advisers and donor agencies that a 'one sided' election will not be credible.

As the EC had continued the preparation for holding the election on January 22 in line with the caretaker government's position, AL-led grand alliance announced a series of blockades, hartals and sieges to resist the

election, triggering apprehension of violence.

### PROFILE OF NEW CA

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed was born in Munshiganj. He obtained the first position in his class (first class first) in both BA (Hons) and MA from the Department of Economics in Dhaka University in 1960 and 1961. He received another master's degree in Development Economics from Williams College, USA and the Doctorate Degree in Economics from Princeton University.

He started his career as a lecturer of Economics in Dhaka University. Later, he joined the civil service of Pakistan. He served the government until 1978 when he joined the World Bank where he served until 2001. He joined as the governor of Bangladesh Bank in 2001 and his contract expired on April 30, 2005.

He has been the managing director of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), country's apex micro-finance organisation, since June 1, 2005.

## Rocket hits US embassy in Athens

REUTERS, Athens

Suspected leftist guerrillas fired a rocket at the US embassy in Athens yesterday but no one was hurt in the blast, police and government officials said.

In the most serious attack against the mission in 10 years, the small rocket launched from across the street shattered windows and woke up nearby residents in the central Athens area at 5:58 AM (0358 GMT).

"There are one or two anonymous phone calls which claim that the Revolutionary Struggle was behind the attack," Public Order Minister Byron Polydoros told reporters outside the embassy. "Most likely, it is an act by local perpetrators."

The leftist guerrilla group has emerged as the most serious domestic threat since the dismantling of the deadly November 17 group in 2002. It claimed an assassination attempt against Greece's culture minister in May and a bomb at the Economy Ministry, which wounded two people and damaged buildings 13 months ago.

"I am treating this as a very serious attack," US ambassador to Athens, Charles Ries, told reporters outside the mission. "The embassy was attacked in a senseless act of violence. There were no injuries."

Police said the 2.65 mm, east European-made rocket landed inside a toilet on the third floor, slightly damaging the glass facade and ceiling. No launcher has been found.

## Grand alliance

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Asked for his reaction to Dr Fakhruddin's take-over as chief advisor, Jailed said, "No comment... We will talk after the formation of a complete caretaker government."

JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu hoped that the new caretaker government would take steps to hold a free and fair election as soon as possible.

Alliance leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Kazi Zafarullah, Mohammad Nasim, Abdul Mannan, Asaduzzaman Noor and Ruhul Amin Hawlader were present at the briefing.

## Bush's troops plan

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questions when they testified before the House Armed Services Committee.

The new Iraq policy "represents the most dangerous foreign policy blunder since Vietnam, if it is carried out," said Senator Chuck Hagel, a member of Bush's own Republican Party, commenting on the president's late Wednesday speech.

"To ask our young men and women to sacrifice their lives, to be put in the middle of a civil war, is wrong," said Hagel, a Vietnam war veteran. "It's... morally wrong. It's tactically, strategically, militarily wrong."

Another Republican, Senator Norm Coleman, said "the cost is too great" in terms of US lives to support the Bush plan.

Democrat Joseph Biden ripped the Bush strategy as "a tragic mistake."

"The result will be the loss of more American lives and our military stretched to the breaking point with little prospect of success," he said.

Rice defended the Bush administration's reliance on the much-derided regime of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, which has failed to meet past US demands for robust action.

"I think he knows that his government is, in a sense, on borrowed time," she said.

Democrat Barack Obama told Rice about testimony in June by then-US ambassador to Baghdad, Zalmay Khalilzad, who said that Maliki had six months to bring the sectarian violence under control or Iraq would face a crisis.

"Six months have passed. The sectarian violence has worsened," Obama said. "What leverage do we have that would provide us some assurance that six months from now, you will not be sitting before us again saying, 'Well, it didn't work?'"

Rice said the Maliki government would have to meet certain benchmarks in the next months.

"Or else what?" Obama asked. "Or this plan ... is not going to work," Rice answered.