

Another blast kills 7 in Pakistan

AFP, Quetta

Seven people were killed and 15 others were injured yesterday when a bomb exploded in a market in troubled Baluchistan province in the latest violence to hit Pakistan, police said.

The blast happened as passengers were waiting at a mini-van stand in the main market in Dera Bugti town in the southwestern province, which is in the grip of a low-level insurgency.

"There was a bomb explosion in the main bazaar and seven people were killed and six are wounded," local police officer Hazoor Baksh told AFP.

Another police officer said 15 people were wounded and a van was completely destroyed in the blast in Dera Bugti about 250 kilometres southeast (155 miles) of provincial capital Quetta.

"We are investigating if the bomb was planted in the van which was parked near a passenger van," local officer Mohammed Baluch said.

The attack comes after 138 people were killed in a suicide bombing targeting former premier Benazir Bhutto during her homecoming parade in the southern port city of Karachi late on Thursday.

The blasts -- the worst suicide bombing in Pakistan's history -- ripped through a crowd numbering tens of thousands of supporters welcoming her return to Pakistan after eight years in self-imposed exile.

Bhutto has since pledged to stay in Pakistan to combat militancy and fight general elections in January, seen as a key step to returning the Islamic republic of some 160 million people to civilian rule.

EC invites JP

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on Thursday to sit with them (EC) to hold talks on electoral reforms," JP presidium member Ziauddin Bablu yesterday told The Daily Star.

In the letter, addressed to JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader, the EC invited JP for holding talks on electoral reforms on November 1.

The EC's decision is likely to bring an end to the row between the two factions over getting invitation for talks.

Both the factions sent letters to the EC to claim that they were the mainstream JP and should be invited to hold dialogue with it on electoral reforms.

Last month, the commission asked Rawshan-led JP to explain under which constitutional basis Rawshan proclaimed herself the party chief.

The EC is yet to be given reply in this regard, Golam Moshi, self-proclaimed secretary general of JP told The Daily Star yesterday.

In a dramatic move, Rawshan Ershad, senior presidium member of Jatiya Party (JP), proclaimed herself the acting party chief on June 26 and unveiled plans for intra-party reforms seeking to dethrone HM Ershad. She also introduced Presidium Member Golam Moshi as the "new secretary general" replacing the incumbent, Ruhul Amin Hawlader.

Prof Anwar

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Merely releasing four detained teachers will not heal the wounded dignity of Dhaka University, rather the release of incarcerated teachers and students of all public universities and normal academic activities at the university are necessary.

Dr Anwar also said students and people also have a sense of dignity like that of the army and care should be taken that this does not get hurt further.

The statement regretted that some part of this statement was not broadcast in full for which confusion spread among the public.

It said Dr Anwar still believes that his spontaneous urge touched the army members and that they will no longer nourish anger at teachers and students, adding that he spoke for lifting the state of emergency soon and urged the government to declare the schedule for the general elections.

The statement said even after his apology and promise of the chief adviser in his address to the nation that nobody will be arrested other than 36 people, students were arrested.

Ayesha said her family members are anxious after seeing the condition of Dr Anwar who has been suffering from hearing problem due to fungus infection.

Outlaw

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enforcers, the outlaws fired on Rab members prompting them to retaliate, said a Rab press release.

Salam was killed on the spot. Rab recovered two firearms, three rounds of bullet and a sharp weapon from the scene.

Salam was accused in a number of cases including 16 for murder, said the press release.

Dhaka calls

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The Bangladesh delegation, led by the health adviser, also proposed access to micro-credit and micro-finance to be recognised as a contributing sector to women empowerment and improvement of maternal health.

The adviser also held a bilateral meeting with Dr Thoraya Obaid, executive director of UNFPA, on the sidelines of the conference.

Dr Obaid praised Bangladesh's success in the areas of health and family welfare, particularly in improving reproductive health, and reducing maternal and infant mortality.

The health adviser sought continued support of the UNFPA towards the implementation by Bangladesh of health-related Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDG5 on reducing maternal mortality.

The adviser is leading a six-member delegation to this global conference, organised jointly by UNFPA, the UK, DFID and Women Care International.

7 CU students

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Officer-in-Charge of the same police station Mohammad Alamgir said they identified the accused after scrutinising video footages, photographs and interviewing witnesses.

Chittagong Bureau In-charge of Dainik Sangram Hossain Didar termed inclusion of Tipu's name in the charge sheet intentional as according to him, the reporter made a series of reports on different irregularities in the university just before the August 22 incident.

Advisory council

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the ongoing Durga Puja and expressed satisfaction over law and order situation and security ensuring celebration of the puja by the Hindu community across the country peacefully and jubilantly.

Members of the council of advisers attended the meeting at the CA's Office. Cabinet secretary, CA's press secretary and other secretaries concerned were present.

Foreign nationals

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grounds that locals are able to do the same task. At an inter-ministerial meeting the Bui decided to hold two meetings a month instead of one to speed up the process of approving work permits.

The board has so far approved 1,140 new work permits and renewed about 1,460 permits on a two-year term basis in the last nine months.

Foreign nationals are working in Bangladesh in mainly textile and telecom sectors, buying houses, hatchery plants, aviation, cement, glass, software and re-rolling industries.

Pakistani and Indian workers dominate the work market here, especially in the textile sector.

EC to look

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have to visit door to door to seek vote during the next parliamentary election as there will be a ban on holding election showdowns, putting up graffiti, pasting posters and hanging banners.

He said a candidate could contest from three constituencies at an election as demanded by the political parties.

Gazipur Deputy Commissioner Syed Mizanur Rahman presided over the programme, also addressed by Municipal Chairman Mozammel Haque. General Officer Commanding of Ninth Division Maj General Mohammad Ashab Uddin was also present.

Food inflation

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and June '07, the global commodity price index increased by 11.14 percent.

During the period, price of soybean oil increased by 24.5 percent in international market, wheat 9.17 percent, palm oil 41.68 percent and rice 5.5 percent, the report adds.

The BB report says net food production in the last fiscal year was 248.75 lakh tonnes against the requirement of 251.68 lakh tonnes. For the first time in recent years, food production was less than requirement, as per the data.

Besides, food import was also less in the last FY as the country imported 24.23 lakh tonnes of food. During the FY 2005-06 import of food items was 25.63 lakh tonnes.

The recent flood also affected production of *aus* and *aman* paddy, resulting in a rising trend of rice prices in the local market. "Chances are very slim of a lower rice price in recent time," said a BB official.

According to the latest Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) report, prices of per kilogram of coarse rice increased by 27.78 percent, while in case of wheat the increase was 60.98 percent in the last one year.

AL to propose

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the party received invitation from the Election Commission (EC) for a dialogue.

Earlier, AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta also called for such a dialogue to resolve the current political crisis in the country.

Syed Ashraf said the AL wants the government and political parties work toward a single goal. And for that reason, they should sit together to work out a resolution to the current crisis.

"Alternative measures" work only when there is no dialogue. And these "alternative measures" are detrimental to the democracy and politics of the country, said Ashraf.

On the EC's invitation, Ashraf said the commission has sent the letter on Friday, seeking names of 10 leaders of his party for the dialogue with the EC scheduled for November 4 and the ALCWC will sit tomorrow to decide if his party would join the dialogue with EC.

"If the meeting opts for the dialogue, the agenda for the dialogue and the names of party representatives will be finalised," the acting general secretary said adding that the AL, on behalf of the 14-party alliance, would present a common electoral reform proposal to the EC.

The AL leader hoped that democracy would be strengthened through the dialogues called by the EC and the dialogues would usher in a peaceful atmosphere in the country.

Syed Ashraf reiterated that detained AL president Sheikh Hasina would be released through the legal and constitutional process and the party would participate in the next elections under her leadership.

The AL acting general secretary said his party wishes to take part in

the upcoming local government elections including the election at city corporations and preparations are underway in this regard. He, however, said a suitable political environment is necessary for a party to be able to take part in the elections.

Referring to reforms in the AL, Ashraf said reforms would be carried out in the party from within, not due to pressure from outside. Those who are in favour of reforms are in favour of Sheikh Hasina and there is no division in the party over the issue, he observed.

Asked whether some of the dissident reformist leaders were feeling insecure about attending tomorrow's ALCWC meeting, Ashraf said he spoke with many of the leaders, but no one told him that they felt insecure.

Severe organisational actions would be taken against any member of the party for causing any untoward incident, he said seeking cooperation from the authorities concerned.

Bandits fling

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of the Brahmaputra Express soon after it pulled out of Gafargaon station for Baharudabad Ghat at about 9.30pm.

The hoodlums threw the victims onto the ground as the latter tried to resist them, locals added.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Officer-in-charge at Gafargaon Police Station, however, could not confirm whether robbers threw the two men to death, saying they could have died from falling from the crowded rooftop.

The injured were admitted to Gafargaon Upazila Health Complex.

Next national polls

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Asked about the move, Jatiya Party (Ershad) Presidium Member Ziauddin Bablu said no one wants to go back to the time preceding January 11, the day the president declared the state of emergency amid political turmoil and cancelled the parliamentary polls slated for January 22.

"We want a patriotic nationalist force in the greater interest of the nation," he told The Daily Star.

Mahbubur Rahman said once the alliance is formed they would announce an agenda for national consensus on some key issues like culture of hartal and parliament boycotts.

They would look to mount a challenge to the AL-led 14-party combine which has lately been active to gain strength in the context of changing political scenario.

Jatiya Party (Ershad) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had joined the AL-led grand electoral alliance before the January 11 changeover. But that alliance disbanded soon after the parliamentary election was suspended.

The AL has recently been working to strengthen bonds with the 14-party components. But it has

yet to take any step to rebuild relations with the Jatiya Party and the LDP.

Meanwhile, some other sources said that in response to a message communicated by some senior leaders, Khaleda Zia has voiced her reservations about bringing back to the fold expelled secretary general Bhuiyan, expelled joint secretary general Ashraf Hossain, Chairperson's Adviser ZA Khan, City BNP President and Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, former lawmakers Zahiruddin Swapna and Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul.

She has directed Khandaker Delwar to continue talking to others who have been siding with Bhuiyan but now want to return to the party, sources said.

Leaders close to Khaleda Zia want the party to unite before the talks with the EC, leaving out the six leaders. They fear that the six might seek to cause disorder in the party again over the leadership issue.

"They tried to split the party to serve their personal interests during the crisis time. The leaders and workers will never trust them again," a pro-Khaleda leader yesterday told The Daily Star.

Subsidy for PDB

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from power plants and sales at Tk 2.37. Only a few years back, the PDB's average power purchase price stood at Tk 2.15 per unit and the sale price was around Tk 2.4. Back then, systems loss had been the key factor for the PDB's losses.

During this fiscal year, PDB's losses from power sales will hover around Tk 600 crore while in the previous fiscal year, the losses were around Tk 1,100 crore. The PDB had been incurring about Tk 400 crore losses a year from the late nineties to 2002-03. This losses exceeded Tk 879 crore in fiscal 2005-06.

The PDB has been asking the government for many years to rationalise power tariff. At least, the lowest tariff should be such that the PDB's financial position remains at a break-even point, it proposed.

The PDB is forced to sell power at a loss-incurring rate to Rural Electrification Board (REB), Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco) and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa), which take 80 percent of power. It sells the remaining 20 percent power to general customers at a higher price rate.

"It is interesting that though the REB purchases power from the PDB at a rate of around Tk 2 per unit and sells the same at around Tk 4 it incurs losses due to its own mismanagement," noted an expert of the PDB.

The government had long ignored timely adjustment of power tariff apparently to remain popular," he said. "But everything has a just price and at some point you have to either pay the just price or see switching off of the power plants one by one," he added.

There are more than 70 lakh power customers across the country with the peak demand for power exceeding 5,200 megawatt (MW)

Durga Puja

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The August day is preceded by the signature festivities of Mahalaya, the first day of the extravaganza, Sashthi, Saptami, Ashtami and Nabami.

Festivities build up on Mahasaptami, Mahashanti and Mahanabami, culminating in Vijaya Dashami, which marks the end of Durga Puja.

Thousands gathered yesterday to celebrate the Mahanabami, followed by the Kumari Puja on Friday. They visited different puja mandaps at Dhakeswari National Temple, Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheswari Kali Mandir, and temples in Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar, Bangla Bazar, Mohakhali and Farm Gate areas.

Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Uddapan Committee has arranged a blood-donation programme at 11.00am today. They will also bring out a Dashami procession from Palashi intersection that will pass through the city down to Waiz Ghat, where the immersion will be held.

Leaders of different political, social and cultural organisations, meanwhile, continued to visit puja mandaps and exchange greetings with the Hindus.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, US Charge d'Affaires Geeta Pasi, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad, Dhaka City Police Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed yesterday exchanged greetings with people at the national temple.

The leaders of the Puja Committee, Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, Jatiya Party, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahajote, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Moitree Parishad, Shree Shree Ramshita Mandir and Bangladesh Chhatra Juba Oikya Parishad greeted the people on the eve of the Vijaya.

Gen Moeen

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of caretaker government is usually appointed for 90 days. But since this government is to remain in power for two years, it is difficult for 11 advisers to run the administration as each advisor is in charge of four ministries.

Gen Moeen said the government is examining the possibility of appointing "assistants" to the adviser by maintaining the constitution.

Earlier, the army chief had a meeting with Congressman and Co-Chair of Bangladesh Caucus in US Congress Joseph Crowley.

Anti-graft

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role to address it. He gave assurance of all sorts of US assistance in this regard.

BSS adds: Joseph Crowley also lauded different government initiatives including establishment of an independent election commission and for making a flawless voter list to hold a free and neutral election by implementing the election roadmap.

Gen Moeen also visited Jackson Heights in Queens, a commercial hub dominated by expatriate Bangladeshis. Exchanging greetings with them, the army chief expressed happiness over expansion of their businesses in the area.

The army chief later went to Florida where he was to attend a dinner in his honour Saturday night.

Laos wants

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Boupha told a press briefing yesterday after he met Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Md Touhid Hossain at the state guest house Padma in Dhaka.

Boupha, who is leading the first high-level delegation from Laos after diplomatic relations were established in 1988, also said they are interested to increase bilateral trade with Bangladesh.

"Bilateral talks were held to introduce each other's markets and explore different sectors," he said adding the two sides would take initiatives to open up consulates in both the countries and also look to improve air links and possible road links through Myanmar.

Bangladesh foreign secretary said they have agreed in principle to give visas to the businesspeople of both the countries upon their arrival to improve interaction between them.

He said the current trade volume between the countries is quite insignificant. "Laos is a medium size market, which we can penetrate and make significant inroads," he added.

Touhid said Bangladeshi pharmaceutical products have already achieved a good reputation in Vietnam and steps have been taken to explore more Southeast Asian countries.

Boupha will meet leaders of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry today and is scheduled to call on foreign adviser tomorrow.

Benazir vows

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She had mostly worked out a power-sharing deal with him, but his re-election as president earlier this month is now being challenged in the courts.

The United States, which sees Pakistan as a key ally in its "war on terror," led the global outcry to the blasts. The White House said Islamic extremists were likely to blame, and Washington offered help with the investigation.

Australia said the attack bore the hallmarks of al-Qaeda, while UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon denounced the bombing.

Iran's top negotiator

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accepted his resignation," state news agency IRNA quoted Elham as saying. "The appointment of Larjani's replacement is under study."

Rumours have been circulating in Iran for months that Larjani was unhappy and had offered to resign several times. But nothing had ever been confirmed by officials.

Elham offered no explanation for the resignation except to say that Larjani had "personal reasons" to step down.

"He said he wanted to have other activities in politics and had asked the president several times to resign from his post," he said, according to the Fars news agency.

Larjani, who took on his post after Ahmadinejad's election in 2005, was one of the most powerful figures in the Islamic republic, leading two years of sensitive talks with EU officials over Iran's nuclear programme.

He maintained Larjani's position that it would never yield in the nuclear standoff.

In his capacity as head of the Supreme National Security Council, he also handled other security issues, including the process leading up to the release of 15 British sailors arrested in Iran in March.

Iran is expected to appoint a deputy foreign minister, Saeed Jalili, to replace Larjani, the Iranian media reported.

Elham added that Iran's next meeting with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, scheduled for Tuesday in Rome, would go ahead with Larjani's successor.

It will take place "as scheduled with the new head of supreme national security council," he said.

Iranian media however said it was still possible that Larjani would take part in the meeting in some capacity.

The resignation also came after confusion of whether Russian President Vladimir Putin had handed over a message on Iran's nuclear programme during his landmark visit to Iran last week.

Larjani had said on Wednesday that Putin made a special proposal to break the deadlock over the nuclear programme in talks with supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during his visit to Iran on Tuesday.

But Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying by the semi-official Fars news agency: "There was no nuclear proposal."

Ahmadinejad did not explain his

contradiction of the remarks by Larjani, who is also an ex-head of state broadcasting.

Despite several meetings during the past year, Larjani and Solana have not overcome the deadlock over Tehran's refusal to suspend its sensitive uranium enrichment activities.

Solana must report to major world powers Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and the United States before mid-November on Iran's willingness to give up uranium enrichment in exchange for political and trade incentives.

The West, led by the United States, believes that Iran's nuclear programme is cover for a drive to develop an atomic bomb, but Tehran insists it is for civilian objectives only.

The UN Security Council has already imposed two sets of sanctions on Iran over its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment activities, a process that can be used both to make atomic fuel and in highly enriched form a nuclear weapon.

Frustrated by the slow pace in agreeing more UN sanctions, the United States and European allies like France are also pushing for unilateral action to step up the economic pressure on Iran.

Meanwhile, Iran yesterday warned it would fire off 11,000 rockets at enemy bases within the space of a minute if the United States launched military action against the Islamic republic.

"In the first minute of an invasion by the enemy, 11,000 rockets and cannons would be fired at enemy bases," said a brigadier general in the elite Revolutionary Guards, Mahmoud Chaharbaghi.

"This volume and speed of firing would continue," added Chaharbaghi, who is commander of artillery and missiles of the Guards' ground forces, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

The United States has never ruled out attacking Iran to end its defiance over the controversial Iranian nuclear programme, which the US alleges is aimed at making nuclear weapons but Iran insists is entirely peaceful.

Iran has for its part vowed never to initiate an attack but has also warned of a crushing response to any act of aggression against its soil.

"If a war breaks out in the future, it will not last long because we will rub their noses in the dirt," said Chaharbaghi.

Malaysia to ensure

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"Even if the workers go back first, we will still proceed with the claims and any money due will be sent to Bangladesh," he said.

He also pointed out that the Bangladeshi workers in general did not seem to be aware that they could have filed their complaints with the labour department.

By holding a strike and attempting to protest at their embassy, they ended up breaching their work contract and would only be able to claim for payment until the day they stopped work, he said. "If they don't come to work for two consecutive days, they are deemed to have breached their contract. They should have reported their complaints to us earlier as we can act fast and deal with their employers."

Ismail said the four textile factories are all owned by the same company and the company could be charged for not reporting relevant employment details including the number of foreign workers it was employing to the labour department.

All employers who employ foreign workers are required to file this report under the Employment Act 1955 within 14 days upon receiving a new batch of workers, but many employers do not comply, he added.

On why problems seem to be rife among Bangladeshi workers compared with workers from other countries, Ismail said some employers were still using recruiting agents despite being warned

against such practices.

"These agents are illegal. They could be either Malaysians or Bangladeshis who come here on social visit passes and hang around for a while to make contact with employers," said the director general. "The problem is, some employers take this lightly, even giving agents the power of attorney. The agents want to make a cut for themselves and that's how the workers are given false promises of higher pay."

Local scientists

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the mixture of the juice of 20-22 berry leaves and one litre water," he added.

The RDA has set up four "rural crops clinics" in Amrul union to train farmers about the processes of preparing such pesticides and their usage, Zakaria said, adding that field level officials of the