

Two boys killed in Afghan blast

AFP, Khost

A suicide bomber blew up an explosives-filled car near international troops in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, killing two Afghan boys and wounding a NATO soldier, officials said.

The bombing just outside the city of Khost was the second suicide attack in Afghanistan since Thursday, when a blast in Kabul killed six civilians and wounded four soldiers deployed as part of a US-led coalition.

Taliban militants claimed responsibility for both attacks.

A NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) spokesman who asked not to be identified confirmed one soldier had been hurt in the blast.

The alliance force, made up of around 47,000 soldiers from nearly 40 countries, does not release the nationalities of its casualties. However most foreign soldiers in eastern Afghanistan are US nationals.

Khost deputy police chief Mohammad Yaqub said two children -- both 13 years old -- were killed and at least two civilian men injured in the attack.

Taxi driver Mohammad Al'waz told AFP from the site soon after the bombing: "I can see a car on fire and another car flipped on its side next to the road. Lots of foreign troops are in the area and have sealed off the bombing site."

Fahim denies forming forward bloc in PPP

Refuses to quit race for PM post

THE DAWN, Islamabad

Pakistan People's Party's senior vice-chairman Makhdoom Amin Fahim met Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman here on Friday.

Talking to reporters outside the Parliament Lodges after the meeting, Fahim denied reports that he was forming a forward bloc in the PPP.

"It is an allegation," he said, adding that he did not want a split in the party. His desire, he said, was to see it remaining strong and united.

However, he said, it was the responsibility of all the top leaders to keep the PPP united.

He said his meeting with Maulana Fazl was 'apolitical' and he had a personal relationship with the JUI-F chief.

"We have been meeting in the past. We did not discuss the issue of the nomination of a candidate for the prime minister's post," he said.

Sources said Fahim also wanted to meet Awami National Party chief Asfandyar Wali Khan but the latter "excused himself because of his busy schedule".

Replying to a question, Fahim said it would be wrong to say that the ANP chief had refused to meet

him. He said the meeting with the ANP leader had not been scheduled.

Meanwhile, sources told Dawn that in his meeting with PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday night, Fahim had refused to withdraw from the race for the office of the prime minister on the request of Zardari.

They said Fahim told Zardari that he would withdraw from the race only if Zardari himself wanted to become the prime minister. He was not ready to accept any other person's nomination, they said.

When Maulana Fazl was asked if he would support Fahim's nomination as a candidate for the prime minister's post, he said: "We have always considered Makhdoom Sahib as the prime minister but there are some issues within his party and I have no right to comment on it." He said he wanted to see the PPP remaining a united party.

When contacted, PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar said there was no bar on members of the party meeting any political leader, particularly of the coalition partners. He said there was nothing unusual in Fahim's meeting with Maulana Fazl.

Sri Lankan in court over Heathrow alert

AFP, London

A Sri Lankan national appeared in court in London yesterday charged with endangering aircraft after a major security alert at the city's main Heathrow airport.

Ketheeswaran Uthayakumar, who has no permanent address in Britain, was remanded in custody after a short hearing at Uxbridge Magistrate's Court in west London. He will appear at the same court on Thursday.

The 27-year-old was detained on Thursday afternoon by armed police on the north runway at Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports, forcing the cancellation of a number of flights.

The security breach came a day before Queen Elizabeth II opened a new terminal at the airport.

China's Hu Jintao secures 5 more years

AFP, Beijing

Hu Jintao, China's Communist Party chief, was given five more years as president at an elaborate parliamentary ceremony yesterday, but his orchestrated victory was overshadowed by turmoil in Tibet.

Hu, 65, was the only candidate for president and received the support of 99.7 percent of the votes cast at the annual session of the National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament.

Meanwhile, missing political star Xi Jinping saw his future as China's next leader virtually secured after the parliament elected him vice-president.

Badawi rejects calls to step down

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has said he will continue as prime minister despite calls to quit, but promised change in his administration after its humiliating election performance. Badawi has been under pressure to resign since his Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition took a beating in March 8 polls, conceding four states and a third of parliamentary seats in unprecedented losses.

"People are unhappy over what has transpired over the last four years since I took over," said Badawi in an interview broadcast on national television late Friday.

"I accept in good faith the decision of the people," he said, but added that the coalition had nevertheless attained a "strong majority".

Badawi's address came hours after the son of former premier Mahathir Mohamad revived calls for his resignation.

Internet brings images of clashes from "closed" Tibet

Digital technology crosses barriers where media access is controlled

AFP, Paris

Travellers' images and witness accounts of the deadly violence that rocked Lhasa Friday crisscrossed the Internet in near real time, opening up a widening channel of information in defiance of the Chinese authorities.

Amateur cellphone photos and video clips showing what were described as confrontations between police and Tibetans protesting Chinese rule poured onto websites big and small, including those for major news media, Tibetan rights groups and tourist blogs.

Several people were killed and many others injured in the Tibetan capital, an official at the city's medical emergency centre told AFP. Radio Free Asia reported at least two people were killed by police gunfire.

The BBC news site (news.bbc.co.uk) showed half a dozen pictures submitted by readers of crowds and police in riot gear and appealed to the public to send in more photos and videos.

Websites monitoring human rights in Tibet also posted a slew of digital evidence of the clashes, along with accounts from those on the scene.

At least 900 people rioted in Lhasa, and more than 1,000 members of the security forces were sent to quell the unrest, the London-based Free Tibet Campaign said, citing Tibetans in the city.

The website of the Tibetan Centre of Human Rights and Democracy (www.tchrd.org/press) reported that "thousands of Tibetan monks and lay people converged and staged demonstrations in the streets of Sangchu County" in Gansu, and posted cellphone photos as evidence.

The website said that more than 500 monks from the Labrang Tashikyl Monastery took to the streets calling for independence, and police later fired live rounds into the air and beat the protesters.

A nother website (steve.ulrike.stivi.be), a personal travel blog run by two Belgians who happened to be in Lhasa when the violence erupted, said it had moni-



This picture released by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) shows Chinese Security forces opposing Buddhist monks as they march in Sangchu County, Gansu Province in North Eastern Tibet on March 14, 2008. Fresh protests involving Tibetan Buddhist monks erupted in China's northwest Gansu province yesterday with security forces using tear gas to disperse the biggest rally, campaign groups said. China has given the protesters till Monday to give themselves up.

tored events there over the previous four days, posting photos and video clips.

The site described a "peaceful protest" at the start of the week in the capital's Bakhor Square.

"Suddenly there is panic. Six or seven monks are arrested and driven away," as a large number of policemen arrive, they write. "Tibetans are very scared because of the stories about the prisons and tortures."

The site has attracted more than 150 comments, most of them thanking the travellers for their

"courage and journalistic fearlessness," and encouraging them to distribute their photos as widely as possible.

A few comments expressed skepticism, suggesting that the photos did not show violent repression.

Non-Chinese journalists are not allowed to travel to Tibet without permission, effectively sealing off the troubled region from regular outside scrutiny by the media.

But digital technology coupled with the Internet has made it nearly impossible to seal off parts of the

world where media access is closely controlled by the authorities.

Myanmar's military leaders were caught off guard when cellphone photos and transmitted images around the world showing soldiers shooting peaceful protesters led by Buddhist monks last September. At least 31 civilians were killed, and 74 are still missing, according to a UN report.

A month later the Myanmar junta cut Internet connections to the already isolated nation.



Former US Vice-President and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Climate change crusader Al Gore (L) shakes hand with Chairman, The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) and fellow Noble Laureate R.K. Pachauri during The Climate Project-India meeting in New Delhi yesterday. Calling for bringing in a new "global Marshall Plan to promote clean and renewable energy", Gore said the coming new administration in his country would have to play an active role in the field of climate change mitigation under the pressure of public opinion and India had the capability and technical know-how to lead the world in promoting renewable energy for achieving a low carbon economy.

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