

'I was kidnapped', says Pak envoy to Afghanistan

AP, Cairo

Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan appeared in a video aired Saturday by an Arab satellite channel, saying he was kidnapped by Taliban militants more than two months ago.

Ambassador Tariq Azizuddin, flanked by his driver and his bodyguard, was shown sitting on the ground amid green brush in front of three masked men wearing traditional robes and holding automatic weapons.

"For 27 days, we have lived comfortably... They take care of us and they respect us," Azizuddin said, in comments dubbed over in Arabic. The roughly two-minute clip appeared on Al-Arabiya television.

It was the first word from Azizuddin since he disappeared Feb. 11 near Pakistan's volatile border with Afghanistan.

But his reference to having been held for 27 days suggests that the video was made more than a month ago.

Pakistan test fires long-range missile

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan successfully test fired a long-range ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead on Saturday, the military said.

The Shaheen-2 missile was launched from an undisclosed location and has a range of 1,245 miles. The military said the missile has the capability to carry conventional and non-conventional warheads.

Saturday's launch was witnessed by new Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, who congratulated the scientists and engineers for "achieving an important milestone in Pakistan's quest for sustaining strategic balance in South Asia," the military said in a statement.

It quoted Gilani as saying that the defence needs of the country would remain a "high priority" for his elected government.

Although Pakistan routinely tests various versions of missiles in its arsenal, the latest one came weeks after a new government, dominated by the party of slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, took office after winning elections in February.

Maoists to lead new govt in Nepal

Prachanda wants talks with king

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's Maoists said yesterday they would lead the next government as they staged a victory rally with poll results showing them on track to emerge as the country's biggest party.

The April 10 polls were the climax of the 2006 peace deal between the Maoists and mainstream political parties, and the former rebels have confounded analysts and diplomats who forecast they would come in third at best.

"We will lead the next government after the final results of the elections. The people's mandate has clearly given us the responsibility to head the new government," Maoist information minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara told AFP.

Mahara's statements came as Maoist supporters feted the party's strong showing on the outskirts of the capital Kathmandu.

Earlier Nepal's Maoist leader

said Friday he will meet the country's embattled king to try to persuade him to step down before the monarchy is abolished following a Maoist election win.

The ultra-leftists are ahead in last week's crucial polls for a body that will abolish the monarchy and rewrite the constitution.

"I will take the initiative to talk

to the king in person," Maoist leader Prachanda said in an interview on state-run television.

"He should understand and respect the people's verdict and what the people want and leave the palace voluntarily."

Cheering supporters wreathed party leader Prachanda -- whose nom de guerre means the "fierce one" -- with marigold garlands and smudged red powder on his forehead as musicians beat drums in celebration.

A beaming Prachanda waded into crowds of supporters in the market place where the rally was held, shaking hands and waving to people watching from building

windows above the crowds.

"Namaste, namaste," Prachanda said repeatedly to well-wishers, pressing his palms together and bowing his head slightly in the traditional form of salutation used in South Asia.

Until two and a half years ago, Prachanda, a former school teacher turned revolutionary, lived underground and was wanted by Interpol.

Along the route to the rally, the road was bedecked with signs featuring the traditional communist symbol of the red hammer and sickle -- and the words Comrade Prachanda -- which the Maoists had used as their campaign symbol.



Indian activists of the right-wing Hindu Shiv Sena organisation burn an effigy of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during a demonstration in Amritsar yesterday, held to protest rises in the cost of basic commodities. The protesters urged the central government to halt steep rises in the prices of vegetable, rice, cooking oil and other essential commodities.



Former rebel leader and Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist Prachanda is greeted by supporters during a victory rally in Kirtipur on the outskirts of Kathmandu yesterday. Nepal's Maoist leader has said he will meet the country's embattled king to try to persuade him to step down before the monarchy is abolished following a Maoist election win.

Pak govt bringing bill to maintain power balance of PM, president

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan's new government is finalising a constitutional amendment bill to ensure the balance of power between the President and the Prime Minister, Law Minister Farooq Naqvi said yesterday.

The law ministry is preparing the draft of the bill that is aimed at curbing President Pervez Musharraf's sweeping powers, including the power to dissolve the parliament and to dismiss the elected Prime Minister and his government, officials said.

Naqvi indicated that the proposed amendment bill will address presidential powers that were inserted in the sixth and seventh schedules of the Constitution through controversial amendments made by Musharraf after he assumed power in 1999.

The sixth schedule contains several laws that cannot be altered or repealed without the assent of the President, including the National Accountability Bureau Ordinance.

Though Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani had announced in parliament that the NAB would be abolished, the government has not been able to make headway in this matter as it cannot take any step without Musharraf's concurrence.

Speaking to reporters here this morning, the Law Minister said, "As far as the constitutional amendments are concerned, we have got to (ensure) the balance of power between the President and the prime minister.

"And we have got to see the sixth schedule of the Constitution which gives the power to the President not to let any amendment be made in the constitution with regard to the laws."

The sixth schedule contains

IAEA official to fly to Tehran for more nuclear talks

AFP, Vienna

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

At issue are the so-called "alleged studies" handed over to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), suggesting discrepancies in Tehran's declared programme and possible weapons work.

"A team led by Olli Heinonen will travel to Tehran early next week for meetings with Iranian officials about the 'alleged studies,'" said IAEA spokesman Mohamed El-Beltagy.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The deputy director general of the UN's atomic watchdog will fly to Tehran next week for new talks on sensitive areas of Iran's disputed nuclear programme, a spokeswoman said Friday.</p