

3 civilians killed in Afghan army base bombing

AFP, Kabul/Khost

Three civilians were killed and four Afghan soldiers were wounded Friday when a suicide car bomb exploded in front of an army base in southern Afghanistan, officials said.

The blast occurred in Shahjoi district of Zabul province, provincial vice governor Gulab Shah Alikhil told AFP.

"The driver of a vehicle blew himself up in front of the (Afghan army) base, killing three civilians who were employees queuing to enter. Four soldiers were also wounded in the explosion," he said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but it had the markings of a number of other bombings by the Taliban insurgency in the province.

Attacks regularly target Afghan and international forces, civilians are often the victims.

52 LTTE cadres killed, airstrip falls to army

PTI, Colombo

At least 52 LTTE militants were killed in pitched battles with the Sri Lankan security forces which overran rebel forward defence lines in the Jaffna peninsula and captured a Tamil Tigers' airstrip in nearby Kilinochchi, officials said yesterday.

"Smashing the conventional notion that the Tigers' Forward Defence Lines in Muhale and Kilaly cannot be challenged, troops in Jaffna yesterday overran the first LTTE Forward Defence Line in the strategic bottleneck and the lagoon to the north and south of the Jaffna-Kandy Highway killing over fifty militants," the army said.

With the breaching of the Tigers' Jaffna defence line, Sri Lankan forces have now mounted a two-pronged fresh offensive on the Tiger headquarters of Kilinochchi from the south and the north.

The Lankan troops have apparently been bogged down on the outskirts of

Kilinochchi from the South and are now making a fresh bid to capture the strategic town from two sides.

Elaborating on the week-long pitched battles leading to the breach of the Jaffna defence line, a military spokesman said: "The fire fighting resulted in the loss of over 50 LTTE militants besides injuries to several others."

Casualties caused to the Sri Lankan troops were comparatively very low in the fighting that lasted for a few days continuously, he claimed.

However, the pro-rebel Tamilnet.Com website reported that 130 government soldiers were killed and another 450 wounded in this week's fighting.

"The Sri Lanka army soldiers who were sent on offensive mission into the no-go zone in Kilaly and Muhale were trained for a 'do-or-die mission,'" it said.

"The capture of the LTTE Forward Defences in Kilaly and Muhale spreading over a few kilometres would further weaken

the morale of the LTTE since the troops would soon also be able to dominate major intersections on the Highway," the army said.

Meanwhile, Task Force 1 now marching towards LTTE stronghold in Parathan in Kilinochchi has captured one of the LTTE airstrips located in the Nilval area in Pooneryn yesterday, it said.

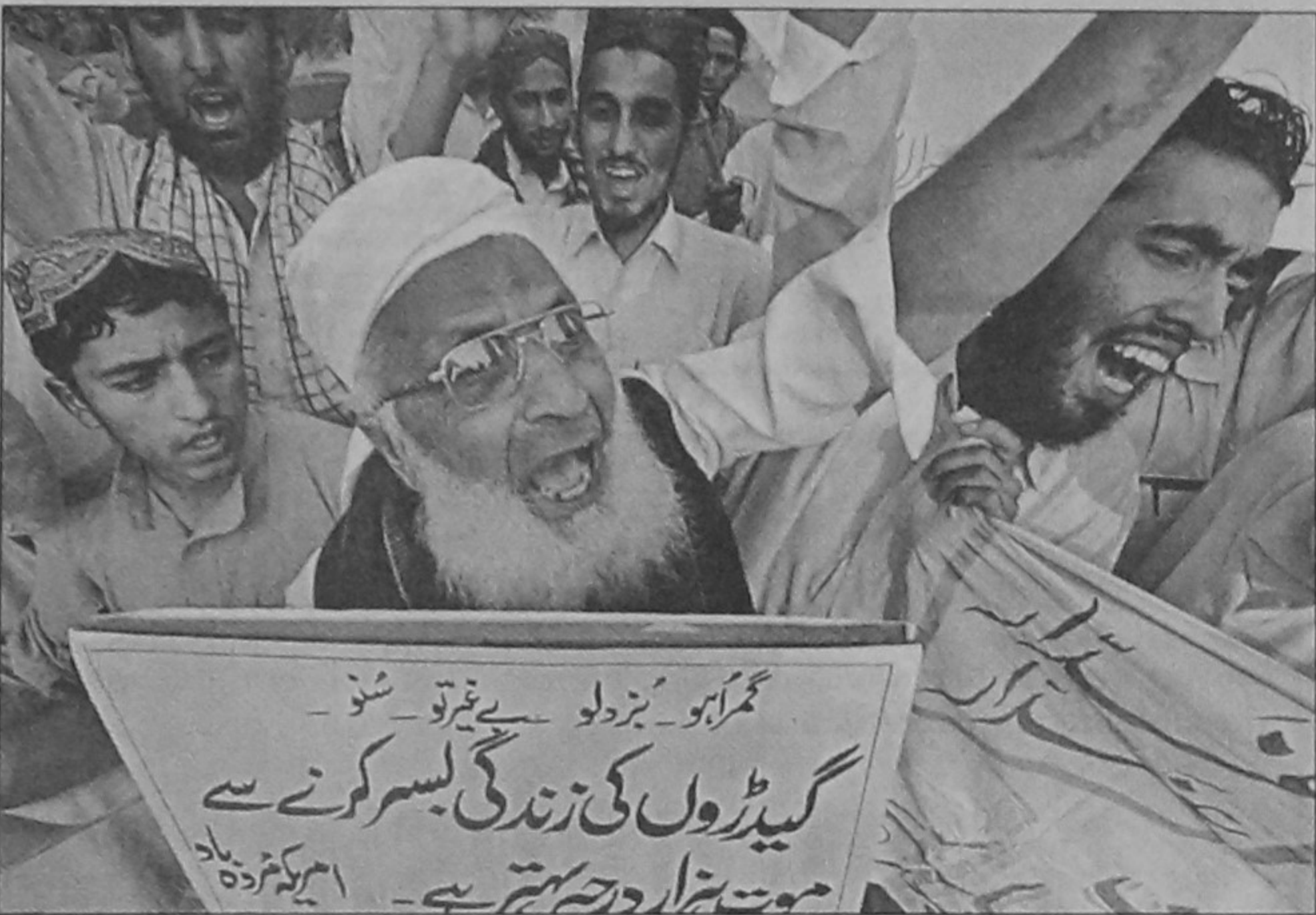
According to the defence sources, the airstrip is about 200 metre in length and that the LTTE had demarcated a stretch of the B-69 Pooneryn-Parathan main road also to be used as an emergency landing strip for its aircraft.

Troops have established their forward boundaries about 14 km west from Parathan and engaged in clearing operations at present, the sources added.

The three frontal military assaults at the central Kilinochchi battlefield led by troops of the 57 Division and Task Force 3 entered decisive phase at troops met resistance from LTTE, North of Kokavil, Murunkandy and North of Akkarayankulam yesterday.



A Sri Lankan policeman stands guard in the northern town of Vavuniya yesterday as a UN food convoy travels through the town towards Tamil Tiger rebel-held areas of the island. The UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross are pushing food and other supplies to the region where some 300,000 civilians are trapped by the ongoing fighting between government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels.



Divisions cloud meeting of Nepali Maoists

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's ruling Maoists began a national meeting Friday to hammer out their political future, with leftist hardliners arguing for greater state control in all sectors.

The Maoists are now Nepal's largest party, after winning polls earlier this year, but ideological rifts have emerged between factions headed by Prime Minister Prachanda -- whose nom-de-guerre means "the fierce one" -- and senior ideologue Mohan Baidya.

The Maoists battled Nepal's security forces to a standstill over a decade of bloody civil war launched in 1996 to topple the monarchy and establish a communist state.

Since the peace deal that saw them place their fighters and weapons under United Nations monitoring, they have pushed through the end of the unpopular monarchy and embraced multi-party democracy.

But the transition from feared guerrillas to Nepal's strongest political force has been tainted by persistent opposition accusations of violence and intimidation.

On Thursday, protesters shut down Kathmandu after the discovery of the decomposing remains of two young men who were allegedly abducted and killed by the Maoists' youth wing a month ago.

Prachanda favours multi-party competition and working with the private sector, but the faction led by Baidya believes the Maoist revolution will not be over until there is state control in all sectors of society.

Indian PM appeals against caste, religious divisions

AFP, New Delhi

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urged Indians yesterday to reject centuries of ethnic and religious divisions, warning they would be manipulated by politicians to fracture the country.

His comments follow a rise in communal and ethnic tensions among India's masses in the form of politically motivated violence, sectarian riots and bomb attacks.

"Competitive politics must not be allowed to divide our people on the basis of religion, caste or region," Singh told a gathering of prominent Indians in New Delhi.

"Stop identifying yourself in terms of how the past has shaped you," he said.

"Who looks at our nuclear scientists or space engineers in terms of their narrow social identities or their religious beliefs?" Singh asked the audience.

"Who asks them what their caste is or religion is? Who asks what their language is or region is? We only ask what their achievement is. It is their work that defines them."

Singh's remarks come as Indian police were investigating whether Hindu militants along with a senior army officer have been involved in a series of terror strikes in the country that began last year.

The probe has been rejected by India's main Hindu nationalist opposition Bharatiya Janata Party as "politically motivated".

In September, India was slammed for anti-Christian attacks in the country's east, where more than 30 Christians have been killed by militant Hindus.

The country has also seen several attacks on migrant workers from poorer states in the western state of Maharashtra while a spate of unsolved bombings across India has claimed around 200 lives this year alone.

In his speech, Singh listed education, health care and basic amenities coupled with poverty eradication as the challenges before India today as he urged people to shun "extremist ideologies, political or economic".

In a message directed at the political leadership, Singh said people were seeking "well-being and sustainable livelihoods but they also seek fundamental freedoms..."

Supporters of Pakistani organisation Jamiat Tulba-e-Arabia shout slogans during a protest in Lahore yesterday against US missile strike in the country's tribal areas. A militant Taliban group warned of reprisals in Pakistan if there was another US drone attack as the government condemned the latest missile strike in its territory.

Nepal's ruling Maoists began a national meeting Friday to hammer out their political future, with leftist hardliners arguing for greater state control in all sectors.

Children (foreground) pose with placards as Pakistani Kashmiris protest near the United Nations office in Islamabad yesterday against the arrest and harassment of pro-separatist Kashmiri leaders in Indian-administered Kashmir. Indian authorities have detained more than two dozens prominent separatists and scores of activists to prevent demonstrations against state elections being held in Indian Kashmir.

BANGLADESH
Social Investment Program Project (IDA Credit no. 3740- BD)
Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI)
Baseline Study of Social Investment Program Project (SIPP)

- This request for expressions of interest follows the General Procurement Notice (GPN) for the Social Investment Program Project (SIPP) that appeared in the Development Business issue no. 588 of August 16, 2002.
- The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of the SIPP and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this credit towards eligible payments under the contract for a comprehensive Baseline Study of Social Investment Program Project (SIPP), referred to as the Consultancy. GOB and IDA have allocated additional resources and time to consolidate gains accrued from the first five years of implementation of the pilot with a special focus on institutional building, capacity building and livelihood improvement. The Closing Date of the current SIPP project is June 30, 2011. Social Development Foundation (SDF), the implementing agency is also expanding the SIPP approach into other regions and districts of Bangladesh via two additional operations: SIPP (Flood) and SIPP (Cyclone SIDR). Preparations are also underway for a larger-scale follow-on operation, SIPP - II, which is currently under preparation; and expected to be launched by mid 2009. Prior to that, this approach of development will be further tested in four additional poorest districts of the country, Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Sherpur, under the SIPP II pilot, planned to start in January 2009.
- SIPP will therefore soon be under implementation in many different districts in Bangladesh which include:
 - SIPP II pilot phase (Phase-IV) in about 40 villages of Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Sherpur districts;
 - Cyclone SIDR area (Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Pirojpur and Barguna districts) in about 500 villages;
 - Flood affected area (Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Kurigram, Bogra/Sirajgonj districts) in about 350 villages;
 - SIPP-II area to be determined, but likely covering 12 districts (including some of those above) and approximately 1500 villages; and
 - A sample of control villages – about 25% of program villages.

The expected duration of the consultancy service intended is maximum 6 months for the total baseline study, covering all four SIPP intervention areas above. The same firm may be hired for impact studies subject to satisfactory performance of each baseline studies

- The scope of work of the consultancy would include: (a) Formulate clear conceptual framework of the baseline study and identify the pertinent variables relating to project that should be included in the baseline survey and in for later impact evaluation (using the project Results Framework as a reference) (b) carry out the overall baseline survey for the four intervention areas including for SIPP II pilot villages (phase-IV), SIDR, Flood and SIPP- II; (c) Coordination and advise on all baseline surveys and impact studies related to SIPP; (d) documentation and communication of study findings, including analysis, report and datasets; and (e) impart training on baseline survey and impact evaluation and (f) ensure proper storage of all study data in SDF MIS for future use.

SDF now invites eligible organizations to indicate their interest in providing these services. Interested organizations must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform these services (annual reports, external evaluation reports, description of similar assignments, experience in similar baseline survey and rigorous impact evaluation on social issues, knowledge of local issues and community needs, experience in panel data collection, availability of appropriate skills in robust impact evaluation and econometric analysis (including panel-data based). This includes: (a) evidence of legal establishment for about seven years; (b) list of professional team with authenticated CV and availability; (c) evidence of the organization's bank account; (d) copies of recent annual and external audit reports; (e) proven track record of at least eight years experience in baseline and impact evaluation in social development and rural poverty issues mentioned in the scope of work; and (f) copies of recently completed two reports on baseline survey related to social development. Interested organizations should have extensive working experience in baseline and impact evaluation assignment in similar socio-economic and geographical characteristics. Experience and demonstrated evidence involving previous collaboration with international research bodies, especially in respect of panel data based analysis, would be an advantage. **No financial proposal should be submitted at this moment.**

- Organizations may associate with others either in the form of "Joint Venture" or of a "Sub-consultancy" to enhance their capacity. In the case of joint venture all members shall sign the contract and shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire assignment and in case of sub-consultancy the lead firm will sign the contract. The associations should have real and well-defined inputs to the assignment. It is preferable to limit the total number of organizations in the association to a maximum of four.
- Organizations will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers, January 1997 (revised September 1997, January 1999 and May 2004 and Public Procurement Regulations dated October, 01, 2003 and recipient's Public Procurement Act 2006).
- Interested Organizations may collect ToR and further information from the Managing Director of SDF, at the address below between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on all working days.
- Expressions of Interest must be delivered to the address below by 4:00 p.m. on 15/12/2008

Managing Director

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Indian labourers buried alive at metro site

AFP, New Delhi

Two Indian construction workers were buried alive as they slept at a building site for the New Delhi metro, after a truck unwittingly dumped a mound of earth over them, police said Friday.

"The workers were sleeping on the road divider when a dumper dumped earth on them. They died due to asphyxia," Delhi Police spokesman Rajan Bhagat told AFP.

The accident took place late Thursday at the construction site of the capital city's metro system.

Two shot dead at Delhi farmhouse party

AFP, New Delhi

An alcohol-fuelled gathering of Indian property dealers ended on a bloody note when an enraged party guest shot dead two men at a farmhouse outside New Delhi, reports said Friday.

The victims, in their early-20s and early 40s, were taken to a hospital near Rama Vihar, where they were pronounced dead on arrival.

Two other men in their 20s were wounded and remain in intensive care, the Times of India reported.



Children (foreground) pose with placards as Pakistani Kashmiris protest near the United Nations office in Islamabad yesterday against the arrest and harassment of pro-separatist Kashmiri leaders in Indian-administered Kashmir. Indian authorities have detained more than two dozens prominent separatists and scores of activists to prevent demonstrations against state elections being held in Indian Kashmir.

India puts Kashmir toll at 47,000

AFP, Srinagar

The nearly two-decade old insurgency in Indian Kashmir has left 47,000 people dead, more than 20,000 of them civilians, according to official figures released Friday.

The figure did not include those labelled as having "disappeared" in the region since the unrest began in 1989 and a prominent human rights group said the real toll was certainly far higher.

Kashmir Chief Secretary S.S. Kapur said in a statement

that more than 20,000 civilians and 7,000 police and security personnel had died in what he described as "incidents of terrorism" in the past 20 years.

The same period had witnessed "the neutralisation" of 20,000 militant separatists seeking to end Indian rule in divided Kashmir.

The region's leading human rights group, the Coalition of Civil Society, said the real toll stood at more than 70,000 dead.

"Our figures are based on a proper survey," senior group

official Khurram Pervez said, citing 8,000 people believed to have disappeared after their arrest by security forces.

Kashmiri separatists say nearly 100,000 people have died in the unrest.

Violence had declined since India and Pakistan, which control the divided halves of Kashmir but claim the region in full, started a peace process in January 2004.

The nuclear-armed rivals have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir.

Myanmar comedian and sports writer given long prison terms

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's most famous comedian Zarganar was sentenced yesterday to 45 years in prison, while sports writer Zaw Thet Htwe was handed a 15-year jail term, according to Zarganar's sister.

Both were arrested in June after organising deliveries of aid to victims of Cyclone Nargis, which left 138,000 people dead or missing when it pulverised the country the previous month.

"(Zarganar) was sentenced to 45 years imprisonment on three charges... There are another four charges he has to stand trial for," Ma Nyein,

Zarganar's sister told AFP. She was not allowed to attend the sentencing at the country's notorious Insein prison.

"I am proud of my brother. He did the right thing for the people," she added.

Two men were also jailed by the military-ruled courts for their work in aiding the victims of the devastating cyclone.

One was sentenced to 29 years in prison, while the other was given a 15-year term.

Friday's sentences come after the courts last week imposed prison terms of up to 65 years on democracy activists who joined protests against the regime last year.



Handout photo from the Mandalay Gazette shows politician U Win Naing (L), comedian Zarganar (R) offering food and water to monks during a protest in Yangon on Sept 24, 2007. Myanmar's most famous comedian Zarganar was sentenced on Friday to 45 years in prison, while sports writer Zaw Thet Htwe was handed a 15-year jail term.