

PHOTO: AFP
A Pakistani police commando (L) carries in his right hand a rocket launcher used by gunmen during an attack on a bus which was carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP
In this frame taken from television unidentified gunmen fire their weapons during an attack on a vehicle carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore yesterday.

Lahore attack bears hallmarks of Mumbai

Says Pak official

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan said that yesterday's ambush on the Sri Lankan cricket team bore all the hallmarks of the Mumbai attacks as the country speculated who could have been responsible for the brazen raid.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility and the gunmen fled after a furious shootout with Pakistani police, flinging open the doors to a host of possible culprits as the authorities launched a city-wide manhunt.

Officials and commentators alluded to extremists linked to Pakistan's al-Qaeda

and Taliban infested north-west; Islamist groups spawned in Kashmir; Indian intelligence and Tamil Tiger separatists in Sri Lanka.

Pakistan denounced the attacks as the work of "terrorists," painting the nuclear-armed Muslim nation as a victim in the global "war on terror."

"The attack resembles the Mumbai attacks," Khaled Farooq, chief of police in Punjab province, told reporters in the eastern city of Lahore.

"That was also a commando action and this is also a commando operation,"

Farooq said referring to Mumbai, where gunmen killed 165 people last November.

New Delhi blamed that 60-hour siege on Pakistan's banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, spawned from Pakistan's conflict with India over the fate of the divided Himalayan territory of Kashmir.

But Farooq, the top police officer in Punjab which borders India, said the "attackers looked like Pashtuns" -- hinting that those behind the assault may have links to Pakistan's semi-autonomous and wild tribal areas.

Killings jeopardise Swat truce

AFP, Peshawar

A fragile ceasefire in Pakistan's insurgency-hit Swat valley was hanging by a thread yesterday after two soldiers were killed in an ambush and suspected Islamists kidnapped two local officials.

Pakistani troops and Taliban fighters traded accusations about violating a two-week ceasefire in the northwest former ski resort -- ripped apart by a brutal insurgency waged by Islamist hardliners trying to enforce Sharia law.

The soldiers were escorting a water tanker in Swat valley's Matta district when a group of militants fired on them, a secu-

city official told AFP.

In the ensuing gunfight, which lasted about an hour, three soldiers were wounded, the official added on condition of anonymity.

"Two of the injured soldiers died later at a medical facility," the official said.

"The militant attack is a clear violation of the peace agreement. The security forces are exercising restraint and complying with the accord," the military said in a statement.

Muslim Khan, spokesman for Swat militant leader Maulana Fazlullah, said the soldiers were attacked because they moved without giving prior information.

"We had an agreement that whenever the army wanted to move, they should inform us, so that we can alert our men not to feel threatened," Khan told AFP.

Thousands of Fazlullah's militants have spent nearly two years waging a terrifying campaign to enforce sharia law in the area, beheading opponents, bombing girls' schools, outlawing entertainment and fighting government forces.

The Sharia deal triggered alarm in the United States, Europe, Afghanistan and India, amid concerns it will embolden militants throughout the north-west, which is rife with Taliban and al-Qaeda extremists.

Terror infrastructure in Pakistan threat to world, says Pranab

PTI, New Delhi

In the wake of attack on Sri Lankan players in Lahore, India today said terrorism based in Pakistan is a "grave" threat to the entire world and warned that such incidents would continue unless Islamabad promptly takes "decisive" steps to dismantle terror infrastructure.

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee asked Islamabad to focus on dismantling terror infrastructure rather than diverting attention of world community to other issues.

"What clearly emerges from this... Unless the infrastructure and facilities that are

available to terrorist organisations within Pakistan are completely dismantled and perpetrators of terrorist attacks are brought to justice, repetition of these incidents will take place," Mukherjee said at a joint press interaction with Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Ivailo Kalfin.

Drawing parallel between the Mumbai terror strike and the attack in Lahore, he said "Once again we would request Pakistan not to divert attention of the international community but to address this problem and dismantle infrastructure of terrorism available there and take strict measures against perpetrators of these attacks."

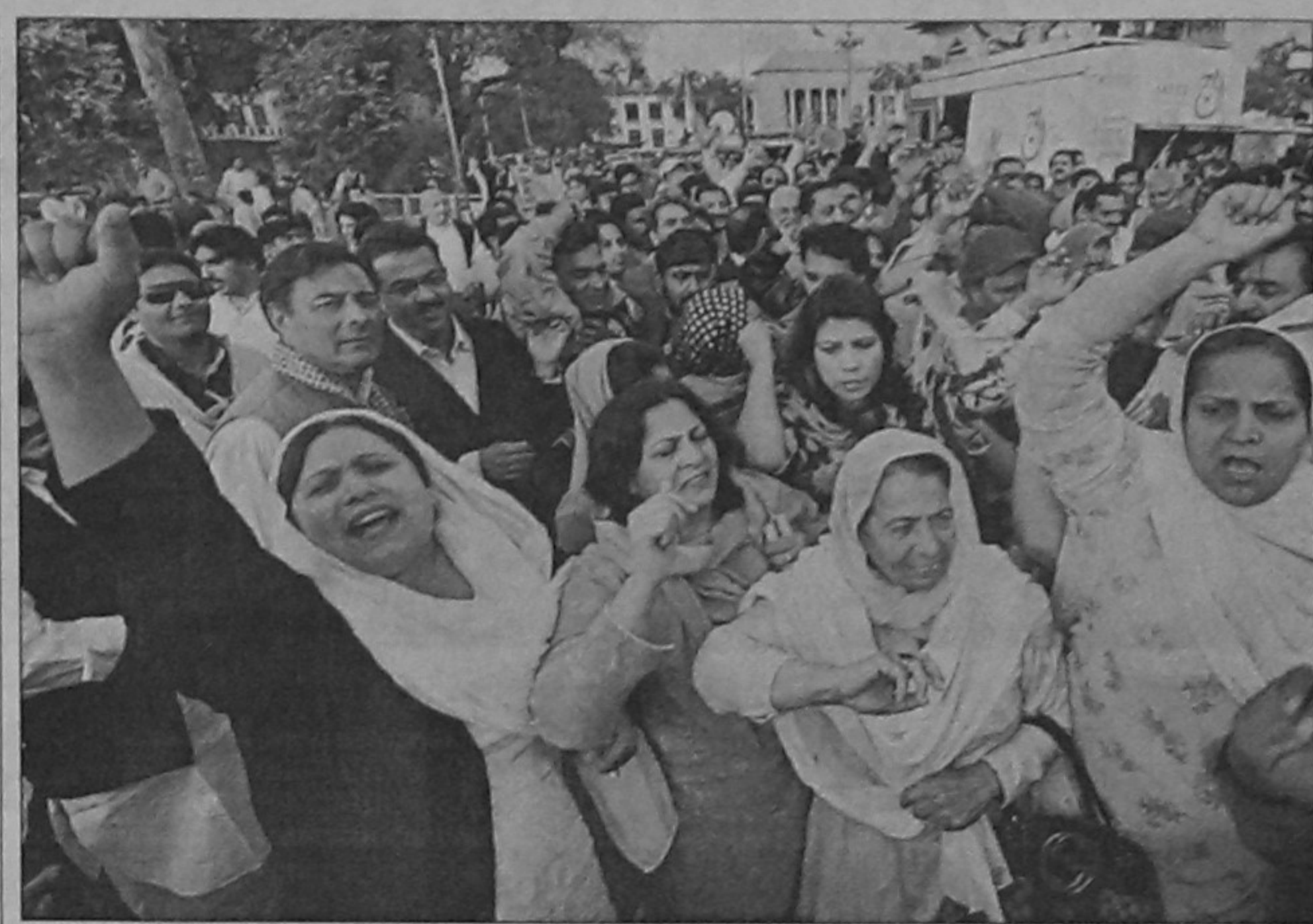


PHOTO: AFP
Pakistani legislators of Punjab province assembly protest outside the assembly in Lahore on Monday against the disqualification of former premier Nawaz Sharif from running for public office by court.



PHOTO: AFP
Kashmir's All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (R) shakes hand with Second counsellor Bruce Bourdon (L), Representative of France for India as part of an European Union delegation to Jammu and Kashmir state, in Srinagar yesterday.

International media mission call to Nepal to ensure press freedom

ANI, Kathmandu

The international media mission has urged the Nepal Government to ensure press freedom by shielding journalists and media houses from attacks.

The mission headed by President of the Asia Journalists' Association (AJA) Sang-Ki Lee here on Monday asked the administration to bring perpetrators to justice.

Expressing concern about the worsening situation of freedom of press Nepal, they urged the government to involve journalists in the Constitution-making process and enshrine press freedom in the new constitution.

UN backs Aug polls despite Karzai calls

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations expressed concern Monday at the prospect of presidential elections in Afghanistan in April as requested by President Hamid Karzai, and instead backed the previously planned August polls.

"An election before July would be, at least for security but mostly for logistical and technical reasons, very difficult to organise," said the under secretary-general for peacekeeping operations Alain Le Roy.

"That's why when the Independent Electoral Commission announced August 20 we supported it," he said at a press conference.

Nato meanwhile, expressed doubt that there is

sufficient security to ensure the safe conduct of elections, in Afghanistan if polls are moved up to April.

"Our concern is not the internal politics of the country. This is a sovereign country and they have not just the authority but also the structures in place to handle it," Nato spokesman James Appathurai said.

"Our business is security and we are in the process of enhancing our capability for elections that, until now, the Afghan independent electoral commission had designated to be for August," he said.

"We will be able to have more capability in Afghanistan to support an August election than we would if an earlier date would be chosen."

PPP, PML-N step up war of words as political crisis deepens

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan's main political parties today stepped up their war of words, with opposition PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif asking the people to rise up and join him in a "revolution" against President Asif Ali Zardari's regime and the ruling PPP criticising politics of confrontation.

PML-N president and former Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif ruled out any reconciliation with Zardari till he gave up his controversial powers to dissolve the

parliament and reinstated judges sacked during the 2007 emergency by former military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

The Sharif brothers, who have been barred by the Supreme Court from holding elected office, sharpened their attack on Zardari, whom they have held responsible for the verdict.

Addressing a rally at Narowal in Punjab, Nawaz asked the people to join the PML-N in ushering in a "revolution" against the current regime.

Accusing Zardari of con-

tinuing the policies of the former military regime, he said: "Musharraf's spirit has entered Zardari and he is doing the same things as Musharraf". Referring to the judges who had delivered the verdict against him and Shahbaz, he said: "These are Musharraf's hand-picked judges and they have been embraced by Zardari".

Information Minister Sherry Rehman, also a close aide of Zardari, said "inflexible confrontational politics" posed a "grave danger to Pakistan's hard-earned democratic federal dispensation".

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Food Security for Ultra Poor (FSUP) Funded by the EC, targeting extreme poor women and their dependents in Northeast (Kishoregonj, Netrokona, Sunamgonj) Bangladesh. The overall objective of the project is to reduce extreme poverty and food insecurity of 55,000 ultra poor households.	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation and Communication Specialist

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* Women are strongly encouraged to apply. Please refer to CARE Bangladesh's website for more details on special privileges for female staff.

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