

Take 'menace' by horn, Pranab tells Pakistan

THE TELEGRAPH, THE ASIAN AGE ONLINE, New Delhi

India yesterday repeated that Pakistan must crack down on terror camps in its territory and asked the world community to address what it described as the "biggest menace" today.

"I request the Pakistani authorities not to divert the attention of the international community, but to take courage in both hands and dismantle the terrorism infrastructure and take stiff measures against the perpetrators. Only then will such issues be adequately addressed," foreign minister Pranab Mukherjee said.

India expressed shock at the audacious attack on Sri Lankan cricketers in Lahore, and said terrorism based in Pakistan was a grave threat to the entire world.

"The terrorism infrastructure facilities available in Pakistan must be completely

dismantled and the perpetrators (of the attacks) brought to justice, otherwise perpetration of these types of incidents will take place," he added.

Mukherjee also said the international community would have to address the problem of terrorism. "Terrorism is taking place in different parts of the world. Terrorism is the biggest menace in the post-World War II era and should be tackled," he said.

India minced no words in pointing out that terrorism emanating from Pakistan was a threat to the whole world.

"Terrorism based in Pakistan is a grave threat to the entire world. It is in Pakistan's own interest to take prompt, meaningful and decisive steps to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure once and for all," foreign ministry spokesperson Vishnu Prakash said.

Sources said this was yet another incident that proved that Pakistan was a

hotbed of terrorism.

Mukherjee recalled that India had pulled out of its tour of Pakistan after the Mumbai attacks -- Lanka decided to send its team to fill the gap.

"It was not a pleasant decision (to cancel the tour) but we were constrained to take it because the security situation in Pakistan was not safe," the minister said, calling on Islamabad to "take strict measures" against those responsible.

Home minister P Chidambaram condemned the attack and said: "The security for the Sri Lankan cricket team was hopelessly inadequate."

Minister of state for external affairs Anand Sharma, in turn, said the attack "underscores the enormity of the threat" that emerges from terrorism centred in Pakistan. He noted that India had been insisting on dismantling the terror infrastructure in Pakistan and this attack has once again highlighted the need to do so.



Pakistani hockey team officials and players place flowers to pay tribute to the victims at the site of the deadly ambush on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore yesterday.

Colombo suspects LTTE role in Pak attack

THE ASIAN AGE ONLINE, New Delhi

Sri Lankan foreign minister Rohitha Bogollagama, directed by President Mahinda Rajapakse to rush to Pakistan from Nepal on Tuesday, said the hand of forces sympathetic to the LTTE, in addition to Pakistan-based Islamist terrorists, could not be ruled out in the attack on Sri Lankan cricketers in Lahore.

Sri Lankan sources said there was considerable speculation about the LTTE's role, but added Colombo would wait for investigations to be complete. Bogollagama said while he didn't want to "jump to conclusions", he couldn't "rule out the involvement of any terrorist organisation at this moment".



Priyanka wont be joining politics soon

THE ASIAN AGE ONLINE, Lucknow

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra told Congressmen in Amethi on Tuesday that they would have to wait for "some more time" for her entry into active politics.

"I am not going to contest the election this time. I am here to take care of my mother's and brother's constituencies Rae Bareilly and Amethi so that they are free to campaign across the rest of the country," Ms Vadra told reporters during a one-day visit to Amethi.

Congressmen in Amethi had unitedly asked Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to join active politics during her visit.

Vadra met party workers and locals before returning to New Delhi in the evening. She, however, refused to comment on statements made by other leaders.

According to a senior party worker, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra told them that she would now be frequently visiting Amethi and Rae Bareilly for the campaign. The media was kept away from the meetings.

Later, while addressing volunteers at the end of the Sewa Dal camp at Gauriganj, she said: "The training that you have received at the camp will be put to test next month when elections begin. It is going to be a decisive battle between victory and defeat, and we will have to win. But remember the victory will not be ours it will be a victory of your love and affection."

Failure not an option: Zardari

THE DAWN, Washington

'Failure is not an option' in Pakistan's battle against terrorism, President Asif Ali Zardari said in an op-ed piece published in yesterday's Wall Street Journal.

"This is an existential battle. If we lose, so too will the world. Failure is not an option," the president said a day after a Mumbai-style attack on members of Sri Lanka's cricket team in Lahore killed eight people including six Pakistani policemen and two civilians.

Tuesday's attack, said Zardari, 'shows once again the evil we are confronting.' Speaking for his government, Zardari also said 'we have not and will not negotiate with extremist Taliban and terrorists,' adding that the recently struck deal in the troubled Swat Valley was not with the Taliban.

'The clerics with whom we have engaged are not Taliban,' he said, adding that Pakistan had made clear to the clerics 'that it is their responsibility to rein in and neutralize Taliban and other insurgents' in their area.

Zardari warned, however, that 'our security forces will act accordingly' if the Swat Valley authorities were unable to control the insurgents.

He also said the government would not tolerate the closure of any girl's schools in Swat Valley, insisting that the education of young women is mandatory.

'This is not an example of the government condoning or capitulating to extremism -- quite the opposite,' he said in response to international criticism that the women of Swat Valley were being sacrificed for the sake of regional security.



Portraits of President Gloria Arroyo are vandalised by peasant women with mud during a protest outside the House of Representatives in Quezon city in suburban Manila yesterday. The demonstrators called for the implementation of "genuine agrarian reform bill" after the government comprehensive agrarian reform programme expired in December.

Scrutiny of RTI

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needed, major change can be brought in future," Obaidul Quader, chairman of the committee, told the reporters after its meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The committee chief said he will place its report in parliament on Sunday or Monday as the bill has been finally scrutinised proposing some amendments to ensure right to information of the people.

He did not elaborate any change made in the bill, but said all most all the provisions made earlier will remain the same in the right to information ordinance.

Media representatives at the meeting suggested the committee for not exempting the organization of intelligence agencies totally from abiding by the provisions of the bill to provide information if any one seeks.

The committee assured them of considering their suggestions, meetings sources said.

The immediate past caretaker government promulgated the right to information ordinance to ensure peoples' access to information in a bid to ensuring good governance.

But the effectiveness of the ordinance ceased to have effect on February 25, as it was not ratified in parliament within the timeframe as per the constitution.

Later, the government placed a bill in parliament to enact a law for continuation of the provisions made in the now defunct ordinance with retrospective effect from the date of promulgation of the ordinance.

Members of the committee Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, Sukumar Ranjan Ghosh, BM Mozammel Haque, Sarah Begum Kabari, Anisul Islam Mandal and Sharier Alam were present in the meeting.

Journalists Riazuddin Ahmed, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Manzurul Ahsan Bulbul and Sanjida Sobhan, a representative from NGOs, attended the meeting.

NEWS ANALYSIS Attack exposes Pakistan failures

AFP, Islamabad

The Sri Lankan cricket attack was a huge breach of security and has exposed the Pakistan government's weaknesses in the face of the threat from Islamist militants, analysts said yesterday.

The ability of heavily armed gunmen to penetrate a landmark square in Pakistan's cultural capital Lahore in broad daylight, ambush an international cricket team and then escape proves nowhere in the country is safe, they said.

"Security agencies are incapable of providing security. Islamist militants and extremists now challenge the entire state. The situation is very dangerous for us," said A H Nayyar of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Islamabad.

The nuclear-armed Muslim power, a key US ally in the war on terror in South Asia, has allowed or been unable to stop Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters forging a de facto safe haven along its lawless northwest border with Afghanistan.

For decades, Pakistan's ISI military intelligence agency fostered Islamist militant groups in Kashmir and Afghanistan, but the menace has increasingly turned on the US-allied government, sowing nationwide chaos.

More than 1,600 people have been killed in attacks in the past 22 months and after although more than 1,500 security forces have died in battle with the Taliban, the government has failed to shore up peace or authority.

"The state and its institutions are failing and that is very scary. The writ of the state has eroded and these actors (militants and terrorists) have grown so strong that they now are capable of challenging the state," said Nayyar.

"If military and security agencies cannot control these things, we are doomed."

A year after parliamentary elections elected the first civilian government in nine years, political reform is frustrated. In just a few months in office, President Asif Ali Zardari has abysmal approval ratings.

The economy -- in freefall from the global recession and isolated from foreign investment -- is afloat because of an emergency 7.6 billion dollar bail-out from the International Monetary Fund combined with US aid.

Last week Pakistan added political crisis to its woes when the Supreme Court disqualified the main opposition leader, Nawaz Sharif, from running for election, sparking furious protests that saw angry mobs clash with police.

"It is failure of governance," said Khurshid Ahmad, deputy head of the opposition Jamaat-i-Islami party and head of an independent think tank.

"The government is more interested in political games and horse-trading, and has totally ignored security dimensions which led to the breakdown of law and order and loss of human life," said Ahmad.

Hamid Nawaz, an interior minister under former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, said Zardari's government was too dependent on the West.

"We have not been able to put our house in order. We are disorganised and it is all because of the crisis in leadership that we are faced with."

DEATH IN POLICE CUSTODY Fresh uproar in Malaysia

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Rights groups and political parties yesterday demanded action against rogue police in Malaysia after a new autopsy revealed an ethnic Indian man died in police custody because of a beating.

A second post mortem examination on 22-year-old suspected car thief A. Kugan, released Tuesday, showed he died while being interrogated on January 20 from injuries consistent with being beaten. There were also a number of burn marks on his body.

* The second autopsy contradicted the first, which found that Kugan died from fluid in his lungs.

The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the second largest party within the ruling coalition, said it was "outraged and horrified" by the incident.

"It is not up to the police to act as prosecutor, judge and executioner," MCA spokesman Wong Nai Chee said in a statement.

"The police force should reveal the results of their internal investigations and take the necessary action against their personnel," he added.

Eleven police officers allegedly involved in the case have been transferred to desk duties.

Rights group Voice of the Malaysian People (Suaram) condemned the incident, saying Kugan's case was not isolated. It said there were 85 deaths in police custody between 2003 and 2007.

"(It) severely undermines the credibility of the police and other enforcement officers in detention centres," Suaram coordinator Tan Moon Hui said in a statement.

But Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar, who oversees the police, hit out at critics who he said were taking political advantage of the situation, state news agency Bernama reported.



A Pakistani security official points to a grenade and other weapons used by gunmen during an attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore.

24 detained after Lahore attack

FROM PAGE 1

weapons cache, anti-personnel mines and two unexploded car bombs were found at the scene.

A second security official confirmed around two dozen people had been detained in multiple raids in Lahore, where the assault took place. All the attackers fled and there has been no claim of responsibility.

One man was arrested in the hope of providing information about an alleged attacker traced through a discarded mobile phone card, an official said.

"Some people have been detained and the investigations are progressing in the right direction," Lahore city police chief Habib-ur Rehman said.

The attack is a serious blow for cricket in Pakistan, where millions follow the game passionately, and has deepened the isolation of a country now shunned by much of the

world cricket community.

In Manchester, match referee Chris Broad, who survived the attack, slammed the Pakistani security forces for providing insufficient protection.

"I am angry at the Pakistani security forces," said the ex-England batsman, adding he had expressed concerns for his safety before the tour.

"We were promised high-level security and in our hour of need that security vanished and they left us to be sitting ducks," Broad said, in comments that drew an angry response from officials in Pakistan.

"It was precisely because of police valour and bravery that the Sri Lankan team and the international umpires survived," police chief Rehman told AFP.

"How can he say that when six policemen died in the attack? I will talk to him tomorrow morning and then give my full reaction," Ijaz Butt, chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), told AFP.

Earlier, Butt admitted chances of international cricket returning to his country looked "grim" unless its security situation improved.

"If the situation does not improve then it is not possible to host matches in Pakistan," he said.

New Zealand Cricket's chief executive Justin Vaughan indicated it would call off its November tour of Pakistan, and the International Cricket Council raised doubts over whether the country could still co-host the 2011 World Cup.

India, whose team withdrew from a tour of Pakistan on security concerns after Pakistan-based militants were blamed for the Mumbai attacks in November that killed 165 people, said Islamabad was not doing

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For Further Details, Please Contact

Department of Life Sciences (Star Tower 10th Floor)
12 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka-1213,
Tel: 9885611-20 ext. 249, 318, 356, 372, 567, 375 & 371
Fax: 8823030 E-mail: nakhan@northsouth.edu
Website: www.northsouth.edu

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০৫-০৭ মার্চ, ২০০৯

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