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Pakistan won't rule out foreign hand in attack

Local LeT militants blamed for targeting cricketers

AFP, PTI, Lahore/ Islamabad

Pakistan's interior ministry chief said yesterday he could not rule out foreign involvement in the Sri Lankan cricket attack, as press speculation mounted that home-grown militants were to blame.

The preliminary investigations in the attack on Sri Lankan cricket team have suggested that Lashkar-e-Taiba activists, who went underground after a crackdown on the group last year, could have carried out the assault.

Local newspapers on Friday suggested that preliminary investigations pointed to the involvement of home-grown militant outfits, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which India blamed for the Mumbai attacks.

The initial probe suggested that a group of "headstrong" LeT activists, who

went underground and hid in the garrison city of Rawalpindi after the crackdown on the terrorist group and its front organisation Jamaat-ud-Dawah, had acted on its own and carried out the attack, the Dawn newspaper quoted its sources as saying.

Though officials did not confirm the involvement of the LeT, the daily said they categorically ruled out the possibility of the involvement of India's Research and Analysis Wing or the LITE in the attack as no evidence had been found so far in this regard.

Investigators probing the assault on the cricket team believe the attackers received commando training in the camp of LeT's operations commander Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi as their modus operandi had similarities with that of the terrorists involved in the Mumbai attacks.

Six Pakistani police and two civilians were killed on Tuesday when gunmen ambushed the team en route to a Test match in the eastern city of Lahore. Seven Sri Lankan cricketers and a coach were among 19 people wounded.

"I cannot rule out (involvement of a) foreign hand in the incident," Rehman Malik told reporters in Lahore.

He was asked if Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam could be linked to the attacks -- which have triggered serious international concern about Pakistan's ability to combat Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked militants.

"We are keeping this aspect in mind," said Malik.

Malik's comments appeared to contradict remarks widely attributed to him on Thursday, denying any foreign

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Biplabi Nari Sanghati demonstrates at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday demanding steps against repression and equal rights. The demonstration was organised in observance of International Women's Day tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

BDR KILLING CASE Baki OSD, replaced by Nisharul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CID Special Superintendent of Police Nisharul Arif was appointed the supervising officer of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters' killing case yesterday replacing Abdullah Hel Baki.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) sources said Special SP Baki was made officer on special duty (OSD) and transferred to police headquarters yesterday.

Baki became controversial as he allegedly tried to divert the investigation of 10-truck arms haul case in Chittagong.

Nabajuti Khisha, officer-in-charge (OC) of Lalbagh police station, filed the case on March 1 in connection with the killings at BDR headquarters. The case was later shifted to the CID.

Bird flu spreading afresh

Fowls culled in Netrakona, Gaibandha

STAR REPORT

Avian influenza has started spreading in different poultry farms across the country again as department of fisheries and livestock detected the bird flu virus and culled birds at different places.

Up to March 3 this year, a total of 16,63,702 chickens were culled since 2007 when bird flu was detected first in the country.

Authorities yesterday culled 2,095 chickens and destroyed 205 eggs following detection of bird flu in Netrakona and Gaibandha.

Earlier on February 28, 188 chickens were culled and 60 eggs destroyed, according to the website of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

Our correspondent from Netrakona reported that a total of 1,595 chickens and 205 eggs were destroyed at a poultry farm at Kendua upazila in Netrakona.

Officials at Netrakona District Livestock office said they detected bird flu virus at a poul-

try farm owned by Russell Ahmed at Rampur village under Kendua upazila Thursday night.

"The virus was found when dead chickens of the farm were examined at the district livestock laboratory by rapid antigen detection test (RADT)," said an official.

The laboratory test was conducted on information that over a dozen of chickens died in the farm during the last three days, officials said.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: The livestock department of the district yesterday culled around 500 chickens at Uttar Kazibari village under Sadullahpur upazila immediately after detection of bird flu virus in the areas.

Sources said some 18 poultry birds died at the farm owned by Abdul Hannan. Following the death of birds, Upazila Livestock Officer Dr Uttam Kumar Das took samples of the dead chickens and found the existence of avian influenza in the body of a bird.

A team later collected 500 poultry birds, including chickens, and destroyed the birds on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Indian tycoon brings Gandhi memorabilia back home

AFP, New York

Mahatma Gandhi's meager possessions are to return home after a flamboyant Indian tycoon paid 1.8 million dollars at a New York auction, to the relief of the independence leader's great-grandson.

Tushar Gandhi told AFP Friday of his "relief and delight" that his revered ancestor's round glasses, worn leather sandals, pocket watch, plate and bowl would be repatriated, and said they belonged in a museum.

The 49-year-old, who runs the Mumbai-based Mahatma Gandhi Foundation, said he felt "relief that it's been secured for India and delight that it will come back to India and be available for generations of Indians to see."

"I think the right place for them should be in the Gandhi National Museum in Delhi because that's a museum which was created to keep and safeguard Gandhi memorabilia after his death," he added.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Sudan's expulsion of NGOs puts millions at risk

UN agencies warn

AFP, Geneva

UN agencies warned yesterday that Sudan's decision to expel 13 international aid groups will leave more than a million people without food or health care and could threaten thousands of lives.

The 13 Non Governmental Organisations, including Save the Children and Doctors without borders (MSF) account for half of the relief aid delivered in the region of Darfur, the UN humanitarian coordinator's office (OCHA) said.

They often act as subcontractors to UN agencies delivering official international relief aid, especially to some 4.7 million people affected by strife in Darfur, including 2.7 million displaced.

"If the government does not reconsider its position, with the departure of the NGOs 1.1 million people will be without food, 1.5 million people will be without health care and more than one

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Committee to advise on JS security

UNB, Dhaka

An 11-member committee, headed by Deputy Speaker Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali, was formed yesterday to put forward recommendations for beefing up security in parliament.

The committee was formed at a meeting held at Sangsad Bhaban with Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate in the chair, said a handout.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun, Whip Nur-e-Alam Chowdhury and Parliament Secretary were, among others, present at the meeting.

Various important matters relating to gearing up security in parliament were elaborately discussed at the meeting.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SHIKDER

Without informing the authorities concerned, large hoardings are being installed in the port city creating public hazards. The photo was taken near Tigerpass.

Hoardings reappear in Ctg posing fresh risk

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

A good number of removed hoardings reappeared in the port city during the last several weeks while installation of new colossal ones are going on making a mockery of urban planning and increasing visual pollution of Chittagong City.

Around 670 hoardings were removed in a drive after the January 11, 2007, changeover to improve the city's beauty. But a number of ad firms started reinstalling them and erecting new ones without even informing the authorities concerned.

Two new gigantic hoardings have already been set up inside the perimeters of Zia Smriti Shishu Park (Zia Memorial Children's Park) and a graveyard adjoin-

ing Chittagong Circuit House and Sholoshahar-2 intersection.

The stalled installation work of two humongous unipole hoardings at Dewanhat overpass resumed recently. They pose a great risk to motor vehicles, trains and pedestrians on and under the overpass.

On Bangladesh Railway land, at the Tigerpass end of Dewanhat overpass, reinstallation of another hoarding is completed while erection of three huge pillars have been completed for a titanic hoarding.

Two more giant billboards have been erected at Agrabad Badamtoli intersection. The pillars of one of these hoardings occupy a section of the pavement.

All fingers are mainly pointed at adver-

tising firms Ad-Valley of Mohiuddin Bachchu, Relation Ad of Farid Newaz and Munir Ahmed, Richi Art and Green-valley for littering the port city with hoardings.

Ad-valley started reinstallation of two unipole billboards at Dewanhat Overpass, two at Agrabad Badamtoli and one at Oxygen intersection. It had got lease of the space and got the permission from public relations (PR) section of Bangladesh Railway for one of the hoardings before 2007. It had got permission for the rest from Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

However, CCC officials concerned say that the firm started reinstallation of hoardings without renewing its licence, paying a large amount of outstanding

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Mugger beaten to death in Keraniganj

UNB, Keraniganj

An alleged mugger was beaten to death at Khejurbag in Dakkhin Keraniganj yesterday morning while fleeing after mugging money from a businessman.

Police also recovered a pistol, one bullet and two live bombs from his possession.

Witnesses said the mugger was caught red-handed by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Prayer Timing		
March 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Fraud-hit Satyam gets nod for 51pc stake sale

AFP, Mumbai

Shares in India's fraud-hit Indian outsourcing firm Satyam jumped yesterday after it was given the green light for a global bidding process to sell off a 51 percent stake in the company.

Satyam's government-appointed board said it would "initiate the process to invite expressions of interest" from bidders shortly.

Satyam has been battling for survival since January when its founder B. Ramalinga Raju, now in jail, stunned the corporate world by declaring he inflated the firm's balance sheet by more than one billion dollars and fudged its profits for years.

Shares of India's fourth-largest outsourcer surged 19.94 percent or seven rupees to 42.1 on the Mumbai stock exchange following news that the sale had been given regulatory approval.

Satyam says it wants to find a buyer soon -- even though it could be months before the full truth about the disgraced outsourcing giant's finances emerge.

The Business Standard reported Thursday that IBM, the world's largest computer services provider, was one of the leading contenders for the stake. IBM has declined comment.

If IBM won the race to acquire Satyam, it would become the largest IT services player in India, with more than 125,000 staff. Satyam employs over 50,000 people.

Analysts said Satyam's low-cost structure could give IBM the leverage to compete with Indian IT service providers. Indian engineering firm Larsen & Toubro and the Hinduja group have also been mentioned as potential suitors.

Under the approval given by market regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2