

Pak militants attack Nato supply terminal

Troops kill 26 militants in northwest

AP, AFP, Peshawar/Islamabad

Dozens of suspected militants fired rockets early yesterday at a transport terminal in northwest Pakistan that is used to ship supplies to Nato troops based in Afghanistan, police said.

Pakistan's army says troops backed by artillery and helicopter gunships have killed 26 militants near the Afghan border.

The army said in a statement Saturday that the militants were killed in an operation in Mohmand, a frontier region where security forces have been battling Taliban militants for months.

At least 12 shipping containers were damaged in the attack at the Farhad terminal in Peshawar, capital of troubled North West Frontier Province, local police official Zahur Khan told The Associated Press. He said police opened fire at the insurgents but they managed to flee.

The attack came less than a day after a suicide bomber blew up in a packed mosque in North West Frontier Province's Khyber tribal region, killing 48 people and wounding scores more in the worst attack to hit Pakistan this year.

Afghan-based US and Nato forces get up to 75 percent of their supplies via routes that pass through Khyber and a southwestern Chaman border crossing areas where Taliban militants are believed to be operating.

The strikes took place in Mohmand, one of seven lawless tribal districts in northwestern Pakistan, where Taliban militants are active.

"At least 26 militants were killed and eight others wounded in helicopter gunship firing," a security official told AFP.

"A militant hideout was also destroyed during the strike," he said and added that there were no casualties for the security forces.

The militant death toll could not be confirmed independently as the area is sealed off under military operations.

Local administration official

Syed Ahmed Jan said a night curfew was imposed in Mohmand before the launch of the ground operation.

The tribal areas have been wracked by violence since Afghanistan's Taliban regime was toppled by the 2001 US-led invasion, prompting hundreds of fighters to flood the region.

Islamic militants were suspected in Friday's deadly mosque attack, apparently to avenge recent military operations in the area aimed at protecting the Nato supply route, authorities said.

The route passes in front of the mosque, where about 200 worshippers were present at the time of the blast.

Shortly after the attack, tribal police detained two suspects who were making a video near the mosque and investigators believed the men were linked to those who orchestrated the bombing, two local security officials said Saturday.

The officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media provided no further details and only said the men were still in police custody and being questioned.

Several security officers were also killed in Friday's attack, which came hours before President Barack Obama unveiled a revised strategy to "disrupt, defeat and dismantle" the al-Qaeda terrorist organisation and the Taliban militants operating in Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan.

Afghan and Pakistani officials praised Obama's emphasis on civilian aid to their countries, saying it would be an effective way to deal with the growing militant violence.

Militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan have often killed scores of Pakistani civilians in attacks. Mosques and funerals have been targeted before, but Friday's blast was seen by many as almslbing new depths of evil.

"What kind of holy war is this? Only poor people have been killed," said Asfandiyar Wali, head of the ruling secular party in the northwest. "This is not about implementing

Islamic law, this is not about holy war. This is outright insurgency."

Tariq Hayat, the top administrator of the Khyber tribal region, said 48 bodies were found in the rubble, and he predicted the death toll would likely rise. More than 100 people were wounded, medical officials said.

Pakistan has been hit by scores of attacks by al-Qaeda and Taliban militants since the Muslim country withdrew its support for the Taliban in Afghanistan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and supported the US-led invasion of that country.

Trial process

FROM PAGE 16 assisted the criminals directly will also face the trial.

The law minister said the committee formed by the home ministry has also decided to appoint prosecutors to file cases against the war criminals and to form a tribunal for holding the trial of the cases.

He informed that the government has sufficient information about the criminals to bring them under trial.

The government can seek expert assistance from the United Nations (UN) during the trial of the war criminals, he said.

2 more BDR

FROM PAGE 16 assistance to meet the medical expenses. Based on advice of the physicians concerned, the DG granted him Tk 5.5 lakh that has already been adjusted to his hospital bills.

About sepoy Roich Uddin, another release said he got admitted to the BDR hospital on June 3, 2005 with kidney condition. On January 29 this year, he was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

On March 4, he was transferred to the Kidney Hospital. "While under treatment he passed away at 5:10pm on March 9," it was reported.

Roich too applied to the BDR DG for financial help to meet the treatment expenditure. He was given Tk 8 lakh as medical grants, the press release said.

Ctg clash

FROM PAGE 16 been trying to "grab" the land. It is a Khas land and marked as the site of Bandar Graveyard, he claimed.

Saiful Islam, brother-in-law of Nawab, refuted the allegations saying the villagers tried to protect the land from "land grabbers". He added Nawab bought the land from one engineer Malek 17 years ago. It is not a graveyard, he claimed.

He however said if the government identifies the land as a mass grave they would donate it for a memorial.

ADC (Revenue) of Chittagong Zafar Alam told The Daily Star the government had earlier identified the land as Khas land and given it to the Korean EPZ.

"Later, Nawab Ali filed a case with the court claiming him as the proprietor of the land. The court imposed an injunction on the land," he added.

Witnesses said around 100 people, mostly freedom fighters and Awami League leaders and activists from Anwara, gathered at the hilly site of Mohalkhan Bazar around 9:30 am to attend a prescheduled programme for setting a memorial plaque there.

State Minister for Liberation War affairs ABM Tazul Islam and local AL lawmaker Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury were scheduled to attend the programme. But they did not come as the programme was rescheduled for April 10, said organisers.

Sources say the minister did not come as he was informed about the dispute centring the land.

In spite of the postponement, some of the organisers decided to visit the spot.

As they along with some freedom fighters approached the site, some 200 villagers including a number of women from North Bandar village resisted them resulting in a clash.

Deputy Commander of Upazila Muktioddha Sangsad Shah Alam said Pakistan army with the help of local collaborators killed about 156 people including freedom fighters and their relatives in this area.

Police arrested four people in this connection. A huge number of police were deployed.

Subsidies, not cash

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will have to generate more revenues while it will need to give subsidies to the affected sectors. He sought more cooperation from the banking sector to lessen the negative impacts of global recession on domestic economy.

The government will need a lot of foreign aid and pro-active private-public participation to address the harsher days ahead, Muthith added.

Prime minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Mashur Rahman said the country's bailout packages may not work because competing countries have bigger export volumes and have given bigger bailout packages.

Stressing both market and product diversification for bagging more export earning, he said the country would suffer further as demands from importing countries have decreased.

Mirza Azizul Islam spoke for immediate release of arrears cash incentives to exporters, increasing government employees' salary, revisiting banks' interest rates, developing the power and energy sectors, and reducing duties and taxes to address recession.

Former finance minister M Syeduzzaman urged the government to take even unpopular decisions, if necessary, for the development of the country.

BNP lawmaker MK Anwar suggested that the government reduce the fuel oil price further since its price declined substantially on the international market. The prices of diesel and kerosene may be fixed at Tk 35 per litre from the existing Tk 44, he said.

Pointing out that global recession has also led to the decline in essentials' prices worldwide, he said, "Unfortun-

nately we are threatened by recession. Cost of doing business has greatly increased."

Economist Atiur Rahman emphasised creation and protection of employment, protection of the agriculture sector, especially the poultry, which opens up scope for self-employment, development of infrastructure, more investment in ICT and skills development and constant monitoring.

Quoting a recent World Bank report, Mustafizur Rahman in his keynote paper said almost 40 percent developing countries are highly exposed to the poverty effects of the crisis. He said 56 percent countries are moderately exposed and only less than 10 percent face little risk. The report tags Bangladesh as highly exposed to the poverty effects of recession.

Mustafiz divided the crisis in three parts--the first wave of crisis is a crisis in financial sector, the second wave in credit, and the third one in consumer economy. He said the third wave appears to have started to hit the increasingly globally integrated economy of Bangladesh. The next budget offers an opportunity to undertake medium term anti-recessionary and targeted initiatives in view of the challenges. The first two waves did not affect Bangladesh, he added.

Mustafizur Rahman said the government has three policy choices. First, the government can take advantage of fiscal space in the 2008-09 budget; secondly, targeted measures should be of clear time-bound nature; and thirdly, policy thrust should be on instruments that are relatively easy to monitor and can be more easily targeted.

ACC

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Earlier on October 3, 2007, ACC Assistant Director Syed Ahmed filed the case against Mollah with Ramna Police Station. The charges include concealing information about wealth worth over Tk 2 crore.

On April 21 last year, ACCAD and investigation officer (IO) Mahabubur Rahman submitted charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka showing 25 people as prosecution witnesses.

On November 20, the HC delivered judgment ruling that ACC's sanction (permitting its officials) to file the graft case against Mollah was legal.

The HC observed that the provisions for all three ACC commissioners to sanction filing a case, submitting a report in 30 days since opening of an enquiry, and investigation report in 60 days since filing of the case were directory, not mandatory.

It also said the anti-graft body's receiving investigation reports from its officials and approving charge sheets for submission in the case were done with lawful authority.

The petitioner's counsels argued before the court that the commission's filing the cases and not completing the investigation within the stipulated time were illegal.

Earlier, the HC stayed the case proceedings in over 200 graft cases and issued rules on the government and ACC asking them to explain why the proceedings should not be quashed or declared illegal.

Sudan

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that garments and other manufactured goods are available in Bangladesh.

She stated that Bangladesh would open its diplomatic mission in Sudan "soon," which would further strengthen the existing "excellent bilateral relations."

3 killed

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of Hatishura of the same upazila.

The two injured--Bablu Sheikh, 35, and Farid Hossain, 45--are now undergoing treatment at Khulna General Hospital.

The accident happened around noon when they were removing soil near the riverbank.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Khulna Medical College morgue for autopsy. A general dairy was filed with Tero Kheda Police Station in this connection.

Varun Gandhi

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hearing Monday, BJP leader Kalraj Misra told IANS.

The court sentence came shortly after Gandhi said that he was "ready to go to jail" over the anti-Muslim speeches he denies making but which have ignited a huge controversy.

Earlier, Gandhi reached the court complex with a large number of supporters shouting slogans hailing him and waving BJP flags.

Initially, the judge told his lawyers that there was no warrant against Gandhi and if he wanted to surrender he must file an affidavit mentioning the sections under which cases have been registered against him.

Clad in a maroon-coloured kurta, Gandhi told reporters here in Pilibhit, around 350 km from Lucknow: "I will do whatever possible to instil confidence in my people, my community and my country. I will not step back. I am prepared to go to jail to stand by my principles."

Around 50 BJP workers were arrested here Saturday after they blocked roads and clashed with the police while waiting for Gandhi. They were charged with unlawful assembly.

Security forces were deployed at the Pilibhit border, officials said.

Gandhi courted controversy after he allegedly made communally venomous speeches while seeking votes. Once the speeches surfaced in CD, he alleged the CDs were doctored.

The Election Commission came down heavily on him and suggested that he should not be fielded as a candidate in the Lok Sabha election. The BJP refused to do that.

On Friday, Gandhi withdrew his bail application from the Delhi High Court and decided to court arrest.

The Election Commission wants criminal charges to be filed against him for his speeches.

In New Delhi, Congress spokesman Kapil Sibal described Gandhi's surrender and arrest as a "drama."

"A drama is being enacted by Varun Gandhi. I am sure that (BJP leader LK) Advaniji is in tune with it. Without his consent, it would not have happened," Sibal said.

SL offensives kill 31

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government-declared No Fire Zone," the Ministry said. This has also increased the number of injuries among the civilians fleeing the LTTE areas, it said.

Earlier more than 2,100 civilians fled in one day from Sri Lanka's northern war zone where the military is squeezing the Tamil Tiger rebels into a smaller area as it pushes to end 25 years of civil war, the military said Friday.

The displaced, including 900 children, crossed over Thursday to military-controlled areas in Puthukkudiyirippu, near the edge of the front lines in the northeast of the island, said military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara.

It was the largest number of civilians to flee in a single day in several weeks, Nanayakkara said.

An average of 1,000 civilians a day have fled the area in recent weeks, highlighting the danger they face as the military has driven the rebels into just 8.4 square miles (21 square kilometers) of jungle and beach on the northeastern coast.

In a statement posted on its Web site Friday, the military said it killed 29 rebels. It said 13 were killed in a battle near Puthukkudiyirippu, while army snipers killed another 16. It did not say when the clashes took place.

The area on the coast includes a so-called "no-fire" zone, but the United Nations and aid groups have accused the rebels of firing from the zone and of forcing tens of thousands of terrified civilians to go with them, sometimes using them as human shields.

Government troops have been accused of shelling the zone. The government denies the charges. The area is off limits to the media, and the rebels, formally known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, could not be reached for comment because communication with its stronghold has been cut.

On Thursday in New York, John Holmes, the UN's top humanitarian official, said the international organisation estimates 150,000 to 190,000 civilians are trapped by the fighting and cannot escape, resulting in dozens of deaths each day.

Amnesty International on Friday became the latest group to call for a cease-fire to allow the civilians to leave. The government has said the rebels must lay down their arms first for there to be any stop in the fighting. The rebels have used cease-fires in the past to rearm and regain strength.

"We cannot stress enough the importance of an immediate pause to allow the displaced to leave before thousands more are killed," Sam Zarifi, director of the Asia Pacific region at Amnesty International, said in a statement.

63 BDR jawans

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five-day remand for interrogation.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) probing the mutiny case filed with Lalbagh Police Station produced the BDR personnel before the Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and prayed for a seven-day remand for four of them.

Bhola kids

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Investigators are quizzing Russell to find out others involved with the militant den at Ram Keshab village in Borhanuddin upazila of Bhola. The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) busted the madrasa on Tuesday and recovered huge firearms, ammunition and explosives.

Three other suspected militants--Abul Kalam, Abdul Halim and Jasim--are also on a 10-day remand for interrogation by a six-member team led by ASM Azimul Huq, assistant superintendent of police for Lal Mohan circle.

Sources said police collected the addresses of five orphans in different villages in the upazila yesterday and took statements from three of them, reports our Barisal correspondent.

Eleven children of the orphanage are now under the custody of their relatives and local government representatives.

Meanwhile, officials investigating the incident said apart from the 11 names mentioned in the first information report, they have detected several other people who used to visit the Green Crescent Madrasa. The investigators however refused to divulge their names.

They also said accused Saifuddin Badal, who has been absconding, was tasked with drawing funds from the madrasa's bank account and spent those. "Once we can arrest Badal, we may make important breakthrough into the investigation," said an investigator.

Meanwhile, law enforcers continued drives to hunt down the seven accused mentioned in the FIR. They are Maulana Mufti Mohiuddin, Saifuddin Badal, Humayun Ahmed, Abul Kalam, Hasan Saifuddin, Yunus Sharif and Mizanur Rahman.

The statement said the Tigers were holding civilians hostage and was "reported to have deliberately attacked civilians that have tried to escape from areas under their control."

The military says more than 55,000 civilians have escaped since the beginning of January.

All are being put into temporary camps, and the government said Thursday it had decided to transfer the management of camps from the military to a civilian agency, upon the recommendation of Holmes.

International Committee of the Red Cross and UN refugee officials will be present when people are screened to make sure they are not rebels, said Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management Mahinda Samarasinghe.

The Tamil Tigers have a history of forcible recruitment, including of children, since they began fighting in 1983 for an independent state for the Tamil minority, which suffered decades of marginalisation at the hands of governments dominated by the Sinhalese majority. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

CEC

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He said this while speaking at a meeting in Shahjahanpur Upazila Parishad Auditorium yesterday on the by-election to Bogra-7 (Gabtoli-Shahjahanpur) constituency.

He said the Election Commission is accountable only to the president.

The CEC, on the first day of his four-day tour of northern region ahead of the by-elections on April 2, held meetings with election officials in Shahjahanpur and Gabtoli.

He said this time there is a provision for three polling agents instead of one. He said anybody found to have possessed illegally any electoral materials will be prosecuted.

Bogra Deputy Commissioner Humayun Kabir presided over the meetings where Returning Officer Syed Mohammad Musa also spoke.

The CEC is scheduled to go to Kurigram via Rangpur today. Before his departure for Kurigram, he will hold similar meetings with election officials of Bogra-6 constituency.

Hasina

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approve amendments the party brought to its constitution ahead of the December 29 parliamentary poll to meet the EC criteria for getting registration.

It is mandatory to hold the council within six months (Jan 25 to June 25) of the first sitting of the first session of the ninth parliament to ratify the provisional changes it brought to its constitution as per the amended Representation of the People Order.

Deputy Leader of the House and senior AL Presidium Member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury was made co-chairman of the Constitution Amendment Committee and Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin is the member secretary.

AL chief will announce other members of the committee later that will incorporate her partymen and members from different professions including lawyers and journalists.

Briefing the newsmen AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader MP said party council would be held within the EC-stipulated time.

"A sub-committee has been formed to work on the party constitution and declaration to bring necessary amendments to it," said Quader.

He said, "Before the council central leaders will visit different districts, upazilas and thanas and hold councils where necessary as part of holding the national council."

Quader said the party presidium would decide soon about countrywide visits of senior leaders.

Quader said Hasina, at the meeting, asked her cabinet members and partymen to work together to thwart evil attempts to destabilise the government and the country.

"Evil forces are still conspiring; we will have to work together," Quader quoted Hasina as saying.

The AL chief termed the BDR mutiny a deep-rooted conspiracy and said real culprits would be brought to justice at any cost. The ALCWC meeting thanked Hasina for tackling the BDR incidents properly, he added.

Hasina also directed her partymen to work for the welfare of the people adding: "Our great victory has created great expectation among people and which is why we must have to work for the changes we pledged."

Hasina urged her party leaders to win hearts of people through their good behaviour and work to fulfill the expectations of people who voted them to power. The ALCWC chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate Pahela Baishakh on April 14 and historic Mujibnagar Day on April 17. Senior AL leaders will attend the programme marking the Mujibnagar Day.

Sangsad to seal

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from the executive in line with the Supreme Court (SC) directives.

The provision proposed to be incorporated in the new legislation has already drawn the ire of the Judicial Service Association.

If included, it will override the CrPC provisions opposed to it.

Noted jurist Shahdeen Malik yesterday told The Daily Star that government cannot delegate judicial power to anyone without consulting the apex court.

He said the provision recommended by the parliamentary body does not require the government to consult the Supreme Court before authorising the administrative magistrates to take cognisance of offences.

As it goes against the spirit of judiciary separation, the law ministry should not include the provision in the law, he observed.

According to the provision, the government will have to specify why and for how long it is delegating the cognisance power to an executive magistrate, said sources in the law ministry.

The executive magistrates will take cognisance of offences like the judicial magistrates do. But they will have to send the offences to the competent courts for trial.

The admin cadres lost the power to take note and hold trial of offences with separation of the judiciary around 16 months back.

The standing committee's recommendation came in line with their argument that they need the authority to run the administration effectively.

The new law will also give a legal cover to the judicial magistrates' activities in over last one month.

As the twin ordinances separating the judiciary were not ratified in parliament and ceased to have effect on February 25, the High Court asked the government to explain under which legal authority the judicial magistrates were functioning.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said he will not propose curtailing the government authority to appoint executive magistrates in metropolitan areas.

The government was given the power in judiciary separation ordinances that came into force on November 1, 2007. It retains the power in

the proposed law as well.

Bangladesh Police Service Association has been calling for the government to scrap away with that as they fear the district magistrates in the metropolitan areas might dictate law enforcers in the cities.

But Shafique dismissed their apprehension as unreasonable. He said the judiciary separation ordinances.

"Why are they [polices] expressing their concern now," he questioned.

He said there is no scope for the executive magistrates to influence the metropolitan police as the law enforcement agencies have legal buffer against that in their own laws.

Equal edn

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observed on March 17 on the occasion of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birthday.

Some 80,000 children took part in the competition. Of them, 120 participants received prizes from the PM as winners in various categories.

Congratulating all the participants, Hasina lamented that till today many children in the country do not get two square meals a day.

"Bangabandhu did not make the country independent to see such a reality. The Father of the Nation's dream was to present you (children) a bright, prosperous future," she said.

She also deplored that children are still being used in some hazardous works despite the ban on child labor in the country.

The children need to be groomed in the light of modern science and technology as they are the future of the nation, Hasina said.

The premier asked the parents to bring up their children imbued with the spirit of real history of the 1971 Liberation War.

She also said the children will have to be groomed with the lessons of morality to avert the rich-poor discrimination.

"The inequity between the rich and the poor is increasing day by day. But we dream of such a country where there will be no discrimination among the people," Hasina said.