

Suspected US missile kills 12 Pak militants

AP, Islamabad

A suspected US drone fired two missiles yesterday at an alleged hide-out connected to a Taliban leader who has threatened to attack Washington, killing 12 people and wounding several others, officials said.

The attack came a day after Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a police academy in the eastern city of Lahore, saying it was retaliation for U.S. missile strikes on militant strongholds along the Afghan border. Mehsud also vowed to launch an attack on Washington or even the White House in phone interviews with The Associated Press and local media.

The FBI, however, said he had made similar threats previously and that there was no indication of anything imminent.

A local intelligence official told The Associated Press that the compound attacked Wednesday in a remote area of the Orakzai tribal region near the Afghan border belonged to one of Mehsud's commanders.

Up to 30 suspected militants were at the compound when it was hit, and the Taliban have moved the dead and injured to an undisclosed location, he said.

CMs asked to up security for VVIPs in India

PTI, New Delhi

The Centre has written to the chief ministers of all the states to ensure tight security for nearly two-dozen VVIPs, including Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her children Rahul and Priyanka, during the election campaign.

The letter, written by Union Home Minister P Chidambaram, has listed out 'dos and don'ts' to be ensured by the state police and paramilitary forces during their electioneering, official sources said on Wednesday.

UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, her children Rahul and Priyanka and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh have got the cover of elite Special Protection Group (SPG).

122 outfits

FROM PAGE 1 government's control," he said.

The workshop was organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) at its conference centre at Gulshan in the city.

Shafique said Qawmi madrasas will get government facilities if they come under the government's control.

The law minister said the religion-based terrorism began in the country after 1975 when changes were brought to the constitution through martial law proclamation that opened the door of religious politics.

"It would not have been so easy for fundamentalists to take to terrorism if the 1972 Constitution had remained intact," he added.

The minister said, "If the article 38 of the 72 constitution is restored religious political parties automatically would cease to exist."

Without clarifying the question whether the government would restore the constitution of 1972, he said, "Wait and see; the government is only two and a half months old."

Regarding the madrasa education he said modern education should be introduced in madrasas so that madrasa students could also compete in the job market, business and other fields.

He said merging the money-laundering act with that of the anti terrorism act would help the government fight Islamist militancy as money laundering is linked with terrorism.

Differing with some points of the law minister former adviser to the caretaker government Maj Gen (ret) Moimul Hossain Chowdhury said, "It is not the amendment to the constitution rather it is the economic problem that gave rise to militancy."

Moimul said the reasons behind Islamist militancy lie with the gulf of difference between rich and poor, our education system, unemployment and overall law and order situation.

BEI President Farooq Sobhan, former IGP Nurul Huda, former adviser to the caretaker government Shafi Shamai also spoke.



PHOTO AFP
This image released by the US Geological Survey (USGS) and the Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO), shows Mount Redoubt in Alaska as it erupts on March 31, 2009, hurling ash and smoke high into the atmosphere. The last significant blast from Mount Redoubt began in December 1989.

Manpower market

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The recruitment might begin after three to four months when Malaysia is expected to return to its political and economic stability.

Both Bangladesh and Malaysia were embarrassed as jobless workers are living here and there, even under the bridge, said Mosharraf.

The minister went to Malaysia on March 28 to see for himself the situation. Bangladesh workers are in and meet the ministers concerned and employers there.

He met Malaysian Human Resources Minister Dr Subramaniam and Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

"When I was talking to workers tears welled up in my eyes," he said referring to his visit to a house where the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur sheltered 150 jobless workers.

The minister said workers lost their jobs because unscrupulous businessmen hired excessive workers, for example a company needs 20 workers but hires 100 instead," he said.

"Problems are on both sides. Malaysian ministers said their people cannot be saints when thousands of crores of taka fly in the air," Mosharraf Hossain said, hinting corruption at the manpower recruitment business.

He said it happened before the present government came to power and now the government would have to take stern actions against agencies involved in such malpractices.

Asked if Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur failed to verify the genuineness of job approvals that led to hiring excess workers, the minister said it surely had lapses.

There has been shortage of manpower in labouring of the commission but now it is being addressed, he noted.

Cancellation of visas of 55,000 jobseekers was basically a political decision, the minister

G20 protesters

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Especially in Britain, bankers have been lambasted as being greedy and blamed for the recession that is making jobless ranks soar.

Protesters waved banners reading "Banks are evil," "Eat the bankers," and "0% interest in others."

One protester dressed as the Easter bunny managed to hop through the police cordon but was stopped before he could reach the Bank of England. Another black-clad demonstrator waved a fake light sabre at officers.

Musician and political activist Billy Bragg said the time was now to make a difference.

"It's better than sitting down shouting at the television at these bankers," he said. "We cannot go back to the way things were before to the million-dollar bonus culture."

BSF to check

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The work related to maintenance of boundary pillars along the India-Bangladesh border also came up for discussions during the three-day meet at BSF headquarters in New Delhi from March 30 to April 1. BDR DG Brig Gen Mainul led a six-member delegation at the border conference.

On extradition of Ulfa leaders, Mainul said, "I'm not in a position to comment. But I can assure you as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has stated that the country will not harbour any one who harms our country or neighbouring country."

"We have shared our common concerns. We hope that we can resolve many issues in near future under democratically elected governments," said the BDR DG.

The chiefs of BDR and BSF earlier signed a Joint Record of Discussions.

38 rebels killed

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The LTTE as a full-time activist, the Ministry said.

"This is what to be expected in the coming days as more senior Tigers will be exposed to direct military attacks," it quoted a defence observer as saying, adding that the loss of Madivalahan was a major setback for the rebel outfit.

The government today also said that LTTE supremo V Prabhakaran's son Charles Anthony has been injured in clashes with the security forces. PTI

GDP growth

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could range between 4.5 and 5.5 percent, depending on the extent of the impact of global economic crisis on exports and remittance in the last quarter of the current fiscal year. Our GEP colleagues choose to present 4.5 percent growth for Bangladesh in order to highlight the downside risk," he said.

"I should emphasise that even this, what you may consider conservative growth forecast, is the second highest in the developing world—only China has a higher growth forecast—and the highest in South Asia. The forecast for India is 4 percent and Pakistan just 1 percent," he added.

Zahid Hossain also said the new GEP update projects a gloomier external outlook than what the WB assessed last November. "Global growth forecasts in this update have been revised downwards very significantly. Global GDP is projected to contract by 1.7 percent in 2009 instead of 0.9 percent global growth projected for 2009 in November. Growth in OEC economies—Bangladesh's main export markets—is projected to contract 3 percent instead of 0.3 percent contraction projected for 2009 earlier in November."

Zahid Hossain said, "World trade volume growth has also been revised downwards substantially. It is now projected to decline by 6.1 percent in 2009, a significantly sharper contraction in trade volumes of manufactured products (Bangladesh's main exports). In November, drop in world trade volume in 2009 was projected at 2.1 percent."

1,000MW plants

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh and Russia kicked off the talks on an agreement for constructing nuclear power plants and peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Russian team, which arrived earlier this week, presented an overview of the Russian nuclear technology on Tuesday.

Yesterday's talks focused on Bangladesh's current energy situation. "We discussed the existing infrastructure, transmission capacity, manpower and possible sites for setting up nuclear power units," said Neazuddin.

The science and ICT ministry will prepare a report on the talks and submit it to the prime minister.

A memorandum of understanding might be signed between the two sides if the negotiation succeeds, paving the way for reaching a final deal.

The Russian team also includes Nikolay Poznyakov, head of external affairs of Russian International Relations Department, who visited the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission in Savar yesterday afternoon.

Bangladesh has long been nursing a nuclear power plant site at Rooppur, feasibility studies for which certified the project as technically and economically viable. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) representatives, who visited the site in November 2008, also gave Bangladesh the go-ahead with the project.

The IAEA, which gave Bangladesh technical support, also suggested completing certain regulatory and safety tasks besides infrastructure development at Rooppur.

In line the 19-point suggestion of the IAEA, the government prepared a draft improving the existing nuclear law. Once the draft is finalised, it will be sent to Geneva for comments before being approved, said officials.

Earlier in 1980, Bangladesh's National Economic Council approved the proposal for installation of the Rooppur nuclear power plant.

The project had been originally taken up in 1961.

In recent negotiations, Dhaka has sought assistance from South Korea in setting up nuclear plants in Bangladesh.

A total of 431 nuclear power plants operating worldwide at present provide about 16 percent of the global electricity.

Cairn

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refuses to do so, Cairn can go to a third buyer.

The discoverer of Sangu gas field in Block-16 proposed to undertake a \$40 million work programme including a three-dimensional seismic survey in the proposed Companyganj "ring-fenced" structure.

But Petrobangla's decision goes in favour of Bapex, although the financially weak but gradually developing national petroleum exploration company does not plan to work in that area in the next few years.

"This could mean Chittagong will continue to suffer from gas crisis for many more years. If Petrobangla could fine-tune the Block-10 PSC and get Cairn to work there, there were chances of finding and developing gas from there, and taking it to the national grid 25 km away. It might have been a better solution," noted an official.

After three years of negotiation, the PSC for Block-10 was signed in July 2001 between Petrobangla and Shell and Cairn with the obligation to conduct seismic surveys covering 1,000 km and drill two exploratory wells. Shell later pulled out of Bangladesh, selling its stakes to Cairn that discovered Sangu field in 1996.

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