



A handout photo from detikSurabaya.com shows soldiers (Picture L) searching for victims in the fields around the burning crash site of Indonesian military transport plane in Magetan in East Java Indonesia yesterday. Picture R shows soldiers searching for victims in the wreckage of a Hercules C-130 plane. At least 97 people were killed.

Prabhakaran made 2 last attempts to flee: Navy

PTI, Colombo
 LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran made two last-minute attempts to escape to India or Malaysia, but these came too late as the Sri Lankan Navy had put up an effective naval blockade by then. These failures left no option for Prabhakaran, who had earlier hoodwinked and outmaneuvered the Sri Lankan security apparatus, to stay put in the northern war zone and fight to the last. Prabhakaran made these attempts as Sri Lankan forces made major advances into the rebel-held territory this year, naval spokesman D K Dasanayake told PTI. "He had attempted to flee to India or Malaysia but he couldn't as the Navy has strengthened its vigilance," he said. Media reports had earlier said that the LTTE leader may try to escape to a South Asian country through sea route. Prabhakaran's body was yesterday recovered near a lagoon in Puthumathalan in the northern region.

US to end 'incoherent' Pakistan policy

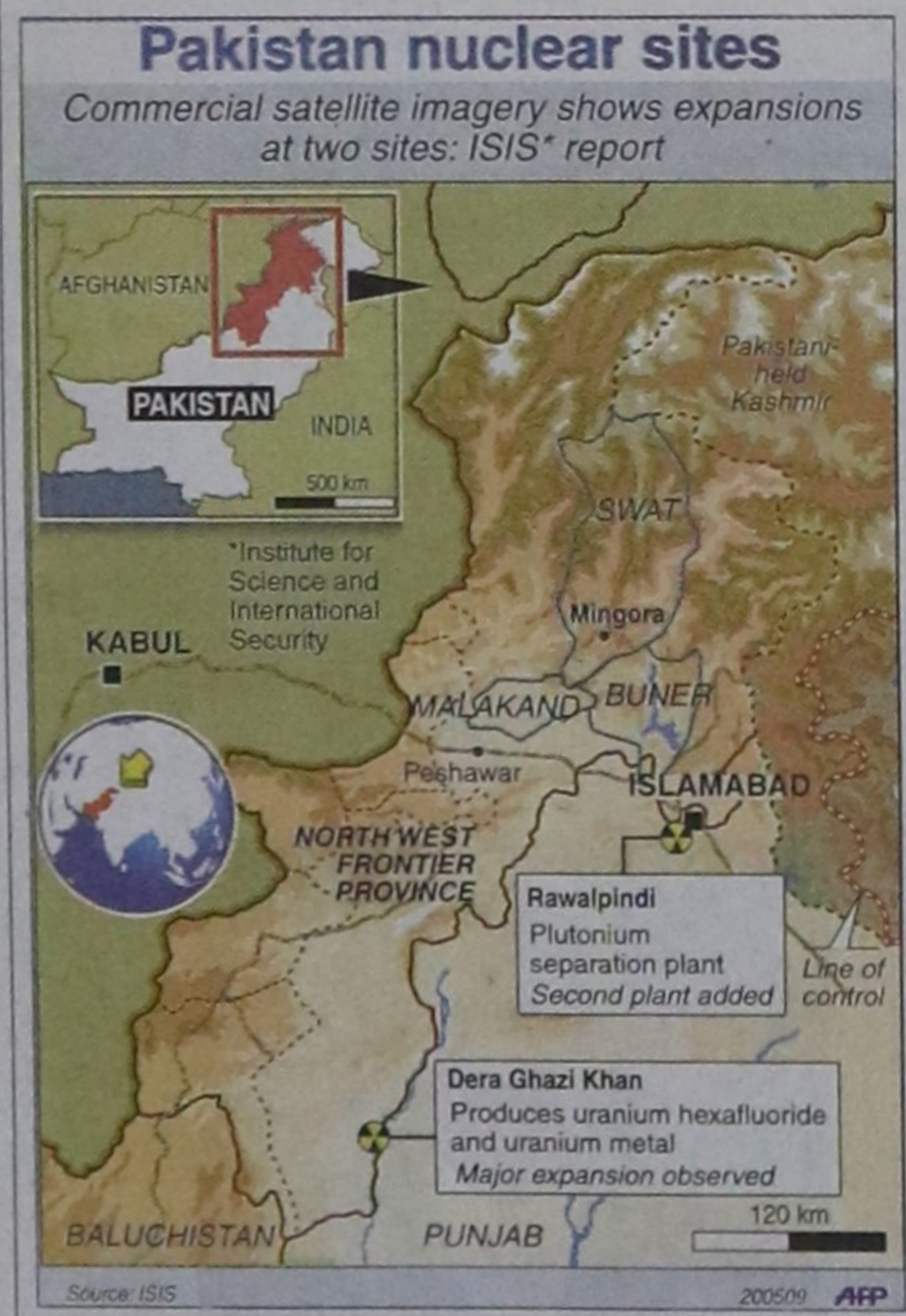
PTI, Washington
 Promising to end "incoherent" US policy towards Pakistan, the Obama Administration has sought "very clear and transparent" ties between the two countries. Acknowledging that the US is responsible for the current mess in Pakistan as it quietly walked away from the country after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the Obama administration's policies towards Islamabad would be qualitatively different. "I think when we ask the question it is fair to apportion responsibility to the Pakistanis. But it's also fair for us to ask ourselves what we have done and how we have done it over all these years? And what role did we play in the situation that the Pakistanis currently confront?" she told reporters. She was replying to a question on the billions of dollars that have been given to Pakistan in the past, but which have not yielded desired results for the US. "I think that it is fair to say that our policy toward Pakistan over the last 30 years has been incoherent," she said, adding that she did not know any other word to use.

Aid groups ask for access to Lanka battlefields

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT
 Centre received yesterday. The Sri Lankan government has barred journalists and international aid workers from the war zone for months, allowing only the Red Cross to periodically send a boat to the area to deliver food aid and evacuate the wounded. Ban's Chief of Staff, Vijay Nambiar, is currently in the country and is engaged with relevant parties on how best to respond to the humanitarian situation of the large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and initiate a process for early recovery and long-term reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. UN agencies are stepping up their efforts to assist the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the conflict. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that there are around 220,000 people who have already reached the IDP camps, and it is believed that another 40,000-60,000 people are on their way to the sites. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told reporters yesterday that the large influx of people poses "major humanitarian challenges" in terms of providing shelter and other basic services, such as food, clean water and medical services. "The conditions in these camps are certainly not ideal. They're not up to international standards yet but everybody is working very hard to try to make sure that they are," he stated. The head of the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) yesterday called for full and unimpeded humanitarian access so that women and children can receive the assistance they need, following reports that access to some IDP camps has become restricted.

India to help Lanka's Tamil civilians

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi
 Close on the heels of Sri Lanka announcing decimation of terror group LTTE and its chief V Prabhakaran, India yesterday rushed two of its senior officials as special envoys to that country to discuss rehabilitation of Tamil civilians who were affected by the cross-fire between Lankan army and the separatist outfit. Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said India is considering a Rs 500-crore aid package for Tamil civilians displaced by the conflict between Sri Lankan army and LTTE. National Security Advisor M K Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Shivshanker Menon left for Colombo where they will discuss with Sri Lankan government issues relating to rehabilitation of the Tamil civilians and devolution of powers for Tamils in northern and eastern areas of the island nation so that they can live with dignity. This is the second time Narayanan and Menon visited Sri Lanka. They had last time travelled to Colombo in April to impress the Lankan government to stop using heavy arms against LTTE in order to minimize killing of civilians who were being used as human shields by the LTTE. Just prior to his departure for Colombo, Narayanan had a meeting with Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi who champions the cause of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Karunanidhi's party DMK is a key constituent of India's ruling Congress-led UPA which returned to power in recent parliamentary elections. The two Indian officials are likely to request Sri Lanka to urgently take measures for political reconciliation with the Tamils in that country. They are also likely to get an idea how the Sri Lankan government plans to bring the Tamils into the mainstream, something President Mahinda Rajapakse did not outline in his televised address to the nation on Tuesday.



Map locating Pakistan's nuclear facilities at Rawalpindi and Dera Ghazi Khan, showing signs of expansion according to analysts at the Institute for Science and International Security.

Pakistan struggles to aid displaced thousands

AFP, Islamabad
 Pakistan struggled to provide relief for the 1.5 million people who have fled its anti-Taliban onslaught, admitting the enormity of the challenge as fears grew yesterday about a lengthening crisis. Pakistan ordered the offensive last month under huge US pressure to crush militants in the northwest, which Washington said threatened the very existence of the Muslim country and posed the greatest terror threat to the West. As the conflict ploughs on with no end in sight, concerns are mounting about how to cope with the displaced, uprooted in what rights groups have called Pakistan's biggest movement of people since partition from India in 1947. Tens of thousands of people are living in government-run camps, crammed into tents in the scorching summer heat with poor sanitation, full of anger against an offensive they say stripped them of their homes and crops. "Life in this camp is even worse than the life of animals," said Anna Rashid, a business administration student sheltering at a camp near the town of Mardan. "When I leave my tent, camp staff look at me as if I were a call girl. It is really disgusting and painful," Rashid told AFP by telephone. Rahim Gul, 80, said he had a small grocery in the northwest Swat valley, but his home was destroyed in the operation and he was forced to flee. "In the camps the government is killing us... I feel like vomiting because I stink so much. I wouldn't give food to a stray dog food with these utensils," Gul said. More than one million people are staying with relatives, complicating the international relief effort to reach the internally displaced persons (IDPs). "Neither we nor the government expected this number of refugees, of IDPs. The government is doing as much as possible to give support to the families," said Rienk Van Velzen, World Vision regional communications director. The United Nations said that around 1.5 million people left their homes this month and registered with authorities, joining about 550,000 IDPs who fled previous bouts of fighting in the troubled northwest. Dominique Frankefort, emergency coordinator with the UN World Food Programme (WFP), said two million people would need food until at least September. "We are catching up, if you have 200,000 additional IDPs coming in per day you cannot feed them immediately," he told AFP, adding: "There are very few non-governmental organisations and there is very little government assistance." Pakistan has appointed a well respected military officer, Brigadier General Nadeem Ahmad, to head its emergency response and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has called for an international donors' conference. President Asif Ali Zardari convened a top-level meeting of government and UN officials Wednesday on relief and rehabilitation efforts. The government and civil society faced a "gigantic task" in providing relief to the displaced people, whose number was likely to swell, Gilani said. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised what she described as a "national mood change" against the Taliban in Pakistan and unveiled 100 million dollars in humanitarian aid for the displaced. But Frankefort warned that there was only enough money to feed hungry refugees until mid-July and urged donors to step forward. "There certainly is not enough... we are struggling, we are currently borrowing from other projects," he told AFP.



Pakistani internally-displaced persons, fleeing from military operations against Taliban militants in troubled Swat valley and Buner, queue for relief supplies at a makeshift camp in Mardan Tuesday as Pakistan faces one of the world's worst displacement crises, with aid workers struggling to reach many of the two million people who have fled fighting.

Tamil doubts over rebel leader's death

BBC ONLINE, Colombo
 The Sri Lankan military has released pictures of Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran which it says prove conclusively that he is dead. State and private stations aired footage of what they said was the body of Prabhakaran, along with what looked like his Tamil Tiger identity card and tag. The army says his body has been positively identified with DNA testing. But rebel sympathisers say questions remain about when and how he and other rebel leaders were killed, and over apparently contradictory statements in relation to his reported death. Some among Sri Lanka's Tamil community and the influential Tamil diaspora doubt whether the rebel leader really is dead. "The government is eager to present this as its Ceausescu moment - with photographs of the body of the tyrant widely released to give the impression that a defining moment has been reached," one Colombo-based diplomat told the BBC - drawing an analogy with the filmed execution of the Romanian dictator in December 1989. "But there are questions surrounding Prabhakaran's identity tag. Is it really credible that a man reputed to have numerous lookalike doubles to avoid capture by the army would really carry this around with him?" The army says Prabhakaran's bullet-ridden body was found on the banks of the Nanthikadal lagoon, his last stronghold in north-east Sri Lanka on Tuesday morning. Earlier it said his body was found on Monday morning. Army spokesman Brig Udaya Nanayakkara said the rebel leader had been shot in scrubland - probably in fierce fighting. That statement contradicted an earlier announcement - made on state television but never verified by the army - that Prabhakaran's badly burnt body was discovered on Monday. It said Prabhakaran had been killed after he was ambushed by commandos as he made a desperate attempt to break through government lines in an ambulance. He had been badly burnt when his vehicle burst into flames, it said. State TV also said the rebel leader's body had been found with those of intelligence chief Pottu Amman and Soosai - the Tamil Tiger naval commander. But on Tuesday the army said Soosai's death had not been confirmed. Its version of events was first given by Gen Sarath Fonseka. "The good news from the war front is that the body of the leader of the terrorist organisation which destroyed the country for the last 30 years, Prabhakaran, have been found by the army. We have identified the body," he said. Gen Fonseka said the bodies of the rebels would be disposed without any formal funerals as "many of them were in bad shape". The private TV stations Derana and Swarnavahini showed soldiers surrounding what the troops said was Prabhakaran's body, with his distinctive moustache and regulation tiger-stripe camouflage fatigues. The government argues that there are perfectly innocent explanations for the differing accounts of Prabhakaran's death. "Prabhakaran is revered by some of them as the liberation hero fighting for their cause for over 30 years. Many of them will find it difficult to accept that he is no longer on the scene," says The BBC Tamil section's Jagadheesan Leklapodi. So far the most influential pro-rebel website, TamilNet, has not acknowledged the death.



An auto rickshaw driver reads a newspaper fronted with the latest photograph released by the government of dead Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in Colombo yesterday.

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