

# Pak Taliban leaders waiting for a suitable time to strike

*Pakistan needs Swat clean up to win war*

ANI, AFP, Islamabad

The Taliban leadership has shifted to mountains to regroup and strike back at a suitable time, The Nation reports.

After losing hundreds of their low cadre militants in fierce clashes with the Pakistani Army, the central leadership of Swat-Taliban has simply left the valley and hopes to emerge stronger at the right time.

"The Taliban have received heavy casualties and hundreds of their low cadre militants have been killed in the clashes with the Army in the Swat valley," a Pakistani Army official said.

He added that the Taliban in Buner and Dir have also employed a similar strategy. They have decided to retreat and wait for a suitable time to remerge and challenge

the writ of the government.

According to the official, the Taliban would either opt for hit and run policy or wait to engage in wide battle once again with the Army.

The most likely strategy for the Taliban would be to carry out small assaults here and there, as they have just suffered a huge loss, he said.

Meanwhile, after days of intense fighting, the Pakistan security forces are now searching the Taliban leadership in the nearby mountains.

An army source said the security forces were trying their best to take out the Taliban leaders, as they don't want to give them an opportunity to regroup and regain their lost strength.

The official added that the security forces had besieged Charbagh in Swat

where some senior militant commanders were believed to be holed up.

Meanwhile, bereft of services and struggling without proper food, frightened civilians stumble past damage from Pakistan's offensive in Swat, wondering whether the government can win the war.

"They (militants) devastated my beautiful home town. They ruined the future of my children," travel agent Rehman Ullah told AFP after emerging from his house during a recent break in the curfew in the valley's main town of Mingora.

He closed his office, took his wife and children south to safety, but returned to protect his property during the fighting, which has gone into a lull since Pakistan declared the town back under government control.

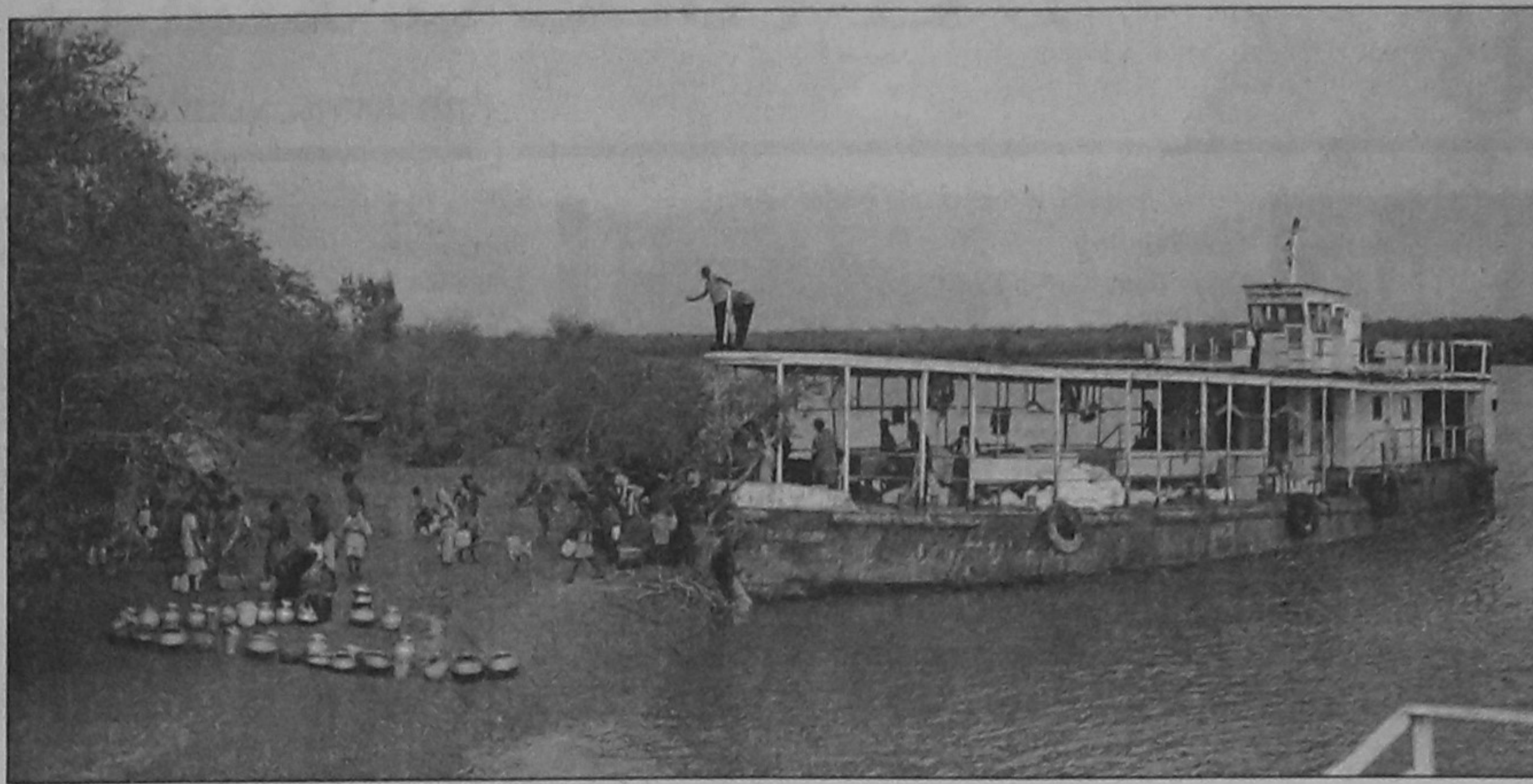


PHOTO: AFP

Indian villagers collect drinking water from a launch at a cyclone-affected village of the Sunderbans, the world's biggest mangrove forest, some 170km south of Kolkata yesterday. Cyclone Aila slammed into the coast of Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal on May 25, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless after a tidal surge washed away villages, roads and livestock.



PHOTO: AFP

Freed Pakistani students jump from an army truck as they arrive in Bannu yesterday. Pakistan's military said it had rescued 80 students and staff snatched by Taliban gunmen as fears grew of spiralling rebel attacks to avenge a military offensive in the northwest.

## Taj on leave

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for running stories that Sohail resigned as a result of personal enmity with her.

Sources said Hasina asked Sohail to go on leave, as she does not want to see any controversy over the issue like the one that developed during the regime of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Sohail's father, the first prime minister of Bangladesh Tajuddin Ahmed, was dropped from Mujib's cabinet creating widespread criticism in and outside the party.

"He (Sohail) was not happy as he hardly had any role in various affairs of the ministry. He used to remain in the dark about many important decisions," said a high-profile source in the government.

The source said Sohail's comments regarding the deaths of two students of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute in "crossfire" and preventing former state minister for power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku from leaving the country, despite having High Court permission, upset his superiors in the government.

"Even the prime minister summoned him recently and gave him a piece of her mind which made Sohail frustrated and emotional," said the source.

His aides said Sohail was staying in his official residence and was yet to change his position. "I made the decision considering my family and reputation of my family," one of his aides quoted him as saying.

The aide said according to 58 (1) (Ka) of the constitution, a minister's resignation, except the prime minister's, becomes immediately effective if the minister places his or her resignation letter before the prime minister for forwarding it to the president.

While talking to The Daily Star last week, Sohail hinted that he might leave the country for US if he failed to perform his duties properly. "I have nothing to lose since I [personally] have nothing to gain," he said.

None could confirm whether the prime minister accepted his resignation as of Tuesday.

A source in the Prime Minister's Office, however, told The Daily Star last night that the matter would be resolved soon. The source said some of the party leaders and ministers, including LGDR and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam, were trying until late last night to persuade Sohail not to resign.

Ashrafur had a meeting with Sohail last night in this regard.

"We have requested him (Sohail) to change his mind and he became a little bit flexible from his earlier firm stance. He may reconsider his decision," Azgar Ali Rashid Khan, president of Kapsia upazila unit of Awami League, told The Daily Star. Sohail was elected from Gazipur-5 constituency that includes Kapsia upazila.

A close friend of Sohail quoting him said he might change his mind in the interests of the country and its people. "I may consider changing my decision if I am allowed to perform honestly maintaining my principles," Sohail was quoted as saying.

## Speaker to ensure their presence now

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assured us of taking all measures in this regard as per parliamentary rules and procedure," Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, chief of the parliamentary body, said at a briefing after meeting with the speaker yesterday.

He said no government organisation or official has the right to ignore the directives of parliament or any of its committees. "They (the ACC bosses) violated the laws and rules and undermined the dignity of the sovereign House," Alamgir said.

"The speaker will decide the date and time of their appearance before the committee," he later told The Daily Star.

Commenting on the assistance sought, the speaker said he would take decision in line with the rules and regulations after the parliamentary body applies to him in writing.

The parliamentary body had decided to discuss the problems faced by the ACC in discharging duties and its activities and procedures pursued during the two-year rule of the last caretaker government. The committee asked the ACC officials to appear at a meeting on April 12 with all procedural documents of those two years along with the organisation's latest annual and audit reports.

But the ACC officials refused to appear before the committee, saying they are accountable only to the president, not parliament.

The parliamentary body

summoned the ACC officials again at a committee meeting yesterday, but they neither appeared at the meeting nor sent the documents sought by the committee, questioning the jurisdiction of the parliamentary body to summon them.

Former ACC secretary Delwar Hossain, who is now the land secretary, appeared before the committee and apologised for his "failure to understand properly" the previous summons.

At the April 12 meeting, the committee accused the four of contempt of parliament and again summoned them to yesterday's meeting to explain their failure.

"I received the notice for the previous meeting on April 8, just four days before the meeting. I could not properly examine and understand the parliamentary procedure within the short period of time. But this time, I received the committee's notice well ahead. I got sufficient time to understand it," Delwar told reporters after yesterday's meeting.

At the meeting, Delwar explained his activities as the ACC secretary, particularly in February 2007 after the mass resignation of the then ACC bosses.

He claimed that his actions were correct since the last caretaker government later amended the ACC act and gave retrospective effect to his actions, including serving notices on 50 politicians and businessmen asking them to submit wealth statement.

"If they think I am respon-

sible for any wrong deeds, I am ready to accept any punishment," Delwar said.

The Cabinet Division in a report placed before the parliamentary committee also supported Delwar's explanations regarding serving the notices, meeting sources said.

The committee, however, did not agree with the explanations. Issuing notices without ACC's prior approval was illegal since parliament has not ratified the ordinance promulgated by the last caretaker government to this effect, it said.

The committee members blasted Delwar and asked him to explain under what capacity he made statements to the media before the April 12 meeting questioning the committee's jurisdiction to summon him.

Irked by the three ACC officials' refusal to appear before it for the second time, the parliamentary committee yesterday met with the speaker and informed him about the committee's decision to make them appear before it by any means, even by issuing warrants against them, meeting sources said. The committee chief and members requested the speaker to initiate legal measures.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on June 9 to discuss the performance of the Rural Electrification Board. "If they (ACC officials) appear before the committee on that day, we may discuss the functions of the ACC," the committee chief said.

## Kashmir holds key to peace in region

Says Pakistani PM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday urged India to resume the sub-continental dialogue process, holding that the resolution of the Kashmir dispute "holds the key to peace in the region."

"Kashmir holds the key to peace in the region. It must be resolved sincerely through dialogue," Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said while inaugurating the 43rd session of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council here.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council is the euphemism Pakistan uses for that portion of Kashmir it controls.

Noting that trade across the Line of Control (LoC) that divides Kashmir had resumed in spite of the 'pause' India had effected to the sub-continental peace process in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai carnage that New Delhi blames on elements operating from this country, Gilani hoped the dialogue would soon resume.

"Pakistan hopes the peace process will soon resume and will become result-oriented in addressing all outstanding issues including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir," the prime minister said.

## Education left in tatters

FROM PAGE 1

She managed to salvage a few of her books but those are no longer readable. Her test examinations are coming up. She needs a set of books immediately since she would sit for SSC exams next year.

"My parents do not have the ability to buy those again. Tell me who would buy a set of books for me," she said.

Every day Taslima crosses the mighty Kholpetua to go to school. Her future in studies looks bleak. "My test exams are approaching and I don't know what lies ahead." Like Khalid and Taslima, studies of thousands of students of Shyamnagar and Assasuni upazila of Satkhira have been seriously disrupted as Aila ravaged educational institutions and students' books and stationeries were washed away. Hundreds of Aila survivors took shelter in schools.

According to the district education office, academic activities of 548 educational institutions have been seriously disrupted because of cyclone Aila.

At least 114 secondary schools were destroyed while 282 were damaged in the Aila-hit areas of Satkhira. As many as 152 primary schools were either destroyed or damaged.

Almost all the educational institutions are being used as shelters and those will take one to one-and-a-half months to resume educational activities.

The literacy rate in the poverty-stricken upazilas is quite low and this cyclone would increase the number of dropouts, local education officers say.

Talking to The Daily Star, Panchanan Bala, primary education officer of Satkhira, said they have asked for 99,000 books for 12 unions of Shyamnagar and Assasuni upazilas from the Directorate of Primary Education.

"We hope to get them soon," he said.

He said they have also sent a letter to higher authorities informing them about the damage to educational institutions.

Azhar Ali, education officer of Satkhira, said they sent to the education ministry a list of 38 secondary schools that need help urgently.

"After cyclone Sidr, the government allocated money for books for the affected and I hope this time too the government will allocate money to buy books."

Anwar Hossain, a resident of Shubhadrakathi under Pratapnagar union in Assasuni, said the Kobodak devoured the lone primary school--Shubhadrakathi Government Primary School--long ago and classes were being held in his house.

"My house was washed away in the tidal surge," he said.

Shamim, Asadul and Al Amin, students of the primary schools, said all their books have become unreadable.

Class IX student Sumaiya of Shora-9 Primary School in Gabura union said she wants to continue her studies but perhaps fate will not allow her since she has to do the work of the entire household being the eldest of her siblings.

"My mother is seriously ill

and I need to do the household work of my five-member family," she said, adding, "No books, no pen, nothing to write on, how would I go on with my studies?"

Dabirunnesa, mother of three of the same village, said her daughter Nasima Akhter studies in class-VI at Burigoalini High School and did well in the first term exams. Like others, her books were destroyed too in the storm.

"If you have come to take our name for giving books please include the name of my daughter," she pleaded.

The situation is almost the same in Padmapukur, Anulia, Bhetkhali, Koikhal, Munshiganj unions of Shyamnagar upazila and in Pratapnagar, Anulia and Khajra unions of Assasuni upazila.

Many students still hope to get books and their educational institutions repaired.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the government has already assessed the damage to the primary schools and will provide books to students who have lost them.

"We shall repair the schools, which have been damaged," he said.

About students of high schools, Nahid said the government is still collecting information on the extent of the damage and will take measures soon so that students can take the exams.

## Blast at CNG

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walls of the toilet at the station and also damaged furniture, computers and papers in the station office.

The owner of the CNG station estimated that the total damage caused to the station would amount to nearly Tk 10 lakh. The owners of the station or fire service sources could not ascertain the cause behind the blast.

A worker at the station said he heard a loud bang from the room holding the generator. He then saw the station's office room on fire.

At the time of the blast, two CNG run three-wheelers were getting gas refills at the station. Drivers of both vehicles were injured.

Seven people working at the station also sustained burn injuries. All the injured were first taken to Narayanganj Hospital and later admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Of them, three are said to be in serious condition.

The explosion spread panic among the people in the area.

Station officer of Mondalpara Fire Service Abu Sayem Masum said they brought the fire under control in 15 minutes but could not ascertain its cause.

Nazmul Arefin, an engineer working at Mass, said the blast did not occur in the gas pump. Their power line was burnt, he said. Monzurul Haque, owner of the station and founder president of BKMEA, said they suspect an electric short circuit caused the fire.

## India to fight terrorism jointly with Saarc nations: Krishna

ANI, New Delhi

External Affairs Minister SM Krishna has asserted that India is determined to fight terrorism jointly with other countries.

After meeting with representatives of Saarc nations here on Monday, Krishna said that India would try to find a path of sustainable development with energy security along with other global partners.

"We will engage more closely with the global community and all our partners to deal with international terrorism and to find a path of sustainable development with energy security," he added.

He also said that India is the fourth largest

global economy in terms of purchasing power parity despite global impact of the recent economic crisis.

"Despite the global impact of the recent economic crisis, India remains among the fastest growing economies of the world," he added.

The Saarc is an economic and political organisation of eight countries in Southern Asia namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan.

Earlier Union Home Minister P Chidambaram tersely said on Tuesday that the Government of Pakistan was not all serious about investigating the terrorist attack on Mumbai between November 26 and 29, 2008.

## Four US soldiers among 29 die in Afghan unrest

AFP, Kabul

A bomb blast killed a family of six, including two children, near the largest US military base in Afghanistan yesterday as 23 militants and security guards died in gun battles, authorities said.

A suicide bomber destroyed a civilian vehicle about five kilometres (three miles) from the base, which is attached to the small town of Bagram, 50 kilometres north of Kabul, the interior ministry said.

Six people from the same family were killed

including two children, it said in a statement. Another child was wounded, it said.

"Two men, two women and two children are killed," ministry spokesman Zemarai Bashary told AFP. "This is an act of insurgents," he said.

Such attacks are usually directed at Afghan or Western security forces that are trying to put down a Taliban-led insurgency.

Afghan media reported that one of the men killed was involved with a company that provided security around the Bagram base. The Taliban claimed a suicide bombing in the area but said it was inside a building.

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