

## FRESH PAK OFFENSIVE

## Thousands of people flee South Waziristan

AFP, Islamabad

Up to 45,000 people have left their homes in a Pakistani tribal district bordering Afghanistan, many fearing a military offensive against Taliban warlord Baitullah Mehsud, an official said Monday.

Fighter jets were pounding Mehsud's strongholds in South Waziristan, where the military is preparing a full-scale offensive, while militants have stepped up resistance with rocket attacks on troops, officials said.

"The total figure for people who have moved out of South Waziristan is about 45,000," Colonel Waseem Ahmed, a spokesman for the Special Support Group for internally displaced persons, told AFP.

He said most people had moved out of the region as part of winter's normal seasonal migration, to live in adjoining northwestern districts, but had not gone back, fearing an offensive.

"The number of the recent migration is between 12,000 to 15,000," Ahmed said, adding that they were living with host families outside South Waziristan and that so far no camp had been set up for them.

"We expect the number to rise to 60,000," he

said.

Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal regions are wracked with violence and are known as a hub for Taliban and al-Qaeda rebels who fled to escape the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001.

South Waziristan is Mehsud's stronghold, and the US -- which has been a vocal supporter of Islamabad's anti-Taliban push -- alleges that al-Qaeda fighters are in the region plotting attacks on Western targets.

Overnight Sunday, troops came under attack in the region.

Pakistan military said Monday that offensives launched in April against Taliban militants in northwestern Swat valley were nearing an end, after killing nearly 1,600 militants.

Worsening Taliban-linked attacks have killed almost 2,000 people in the nuclear-armed country since July 2007.

Around 2.5 million people have already fled the army's offensive against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants, in one of the world's most pressing humanitarian crises.

The United Nations has appealed for 543 million dollars to provide the displaced with food, medicine, shelter and other assistance.

## Pak Army, govt at loggerheads over fate of Fazlullah

ANI, Islamabad

There seems to be an apparent lack of communication between the Pakistan government and the military, when it comes to determining the current status of Swat Taliban chief Mullah Fazlullah.

While Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's Advisor on Interior Affairs, Rehman Malik has claimed that security forces have 'encircled' Fazlullah, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that it cannot 'confirm' reports about the status of the Taliban commander yet.

Talking to media persons here, Malik said troops have spotted Fazlullah's hideout, and have blocked all his escape routes.

"By and large we know the location where he is hiding. Nothing confirmed can be said at this stage without seeing his (Fazlullah's) dead body," Malik said.



Indian paramilitary soldiers stand guard as villagers return after watching a helicopter transporting administrative officers at Lalgarh, in the Midnapore district, some 120km west of Kolkata yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## West Bengal govt accepts central ban on Maoists

PTI, Kolkata

The Left Front government in West Bengal today accepted the Centre's ban on the CPI (Maoist) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"This is applicable for the entire country, all states and we have accepted it. But how to implement it is the government's business," Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee told reporters after a cabinet meeting here.

The chief minister said the Centre had only included the CPI (Maoist) in the list of 34 organisations, which had been banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"This had become necessary as the People's War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), which figured in the list, had merged to form the CPI (Maoist)," he said.

Bhattacharjee said that during his discussion with Union Home minister P Chidambaram in Delhi recently, he had come to know the Centre was initiating the measure.

But the West Bengal government on Monday said it will look into the legal implications of Centre's ban on CPI-Maoist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to ascertain if it was binding on it.

## Maoists offer talks as cops reclaim Lalgarh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Lalgarh

Maoist extremists were willing to talk to West Bengal's Communist government in the presence of the "intelligentsia" if the operation against them in Lalgarh were stopped, a senior leader said on Tuesday as forces continued to sanitise the area and prepare for the next phase of security action in nearby Ramgarh.

"If the operations are withdrawn and the intelligentsia takes the initiative, we are prepared to hold talks with the government. Of course, representatives of the intelligentsia have to be present during the talks," Maoist leader Sagar told the Star Ananda Bengali news channel.

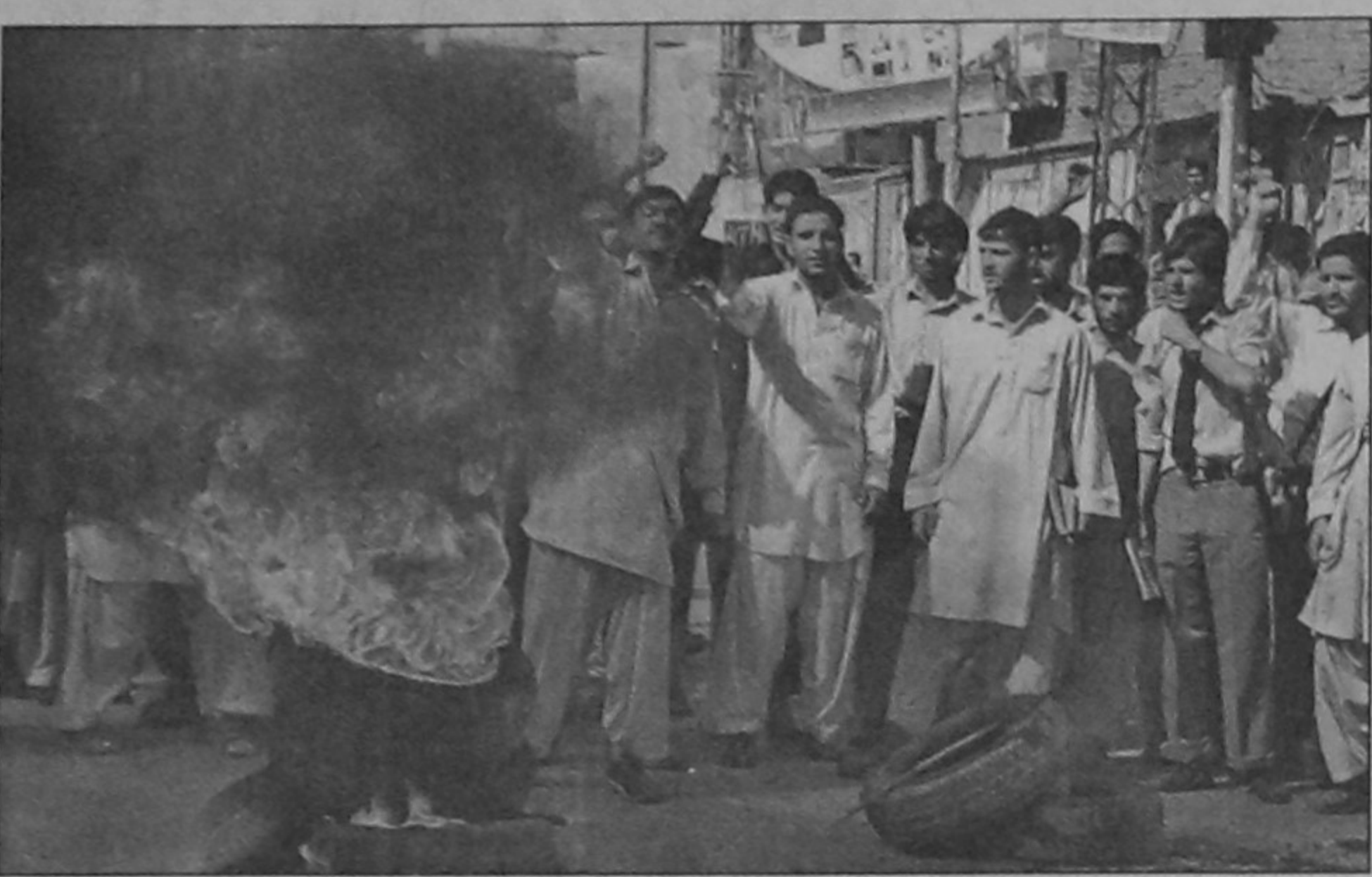
Two days ago, a group of anti Left Front intellectuals, including filmmaker Aparna Sen and theatre personalities Kaushik Sen and Shaonli Mitra, had visited Lalgarh, just about 200km west of state capital Kolkata, and called for a ceasefire after holding discussions with

people and groups active in the former rebel-held enclave where the state had virtually abdicated its role to hundreds of Maoist extremists.

Security forces, which began their operations six days ago and have succeeded in establishing control over Lalgarh, on Tuesday intensified patrolling in view of the 48-hour shutdown called by the Communist Party of India-Maoist and continued sanitising the area.

Security forces, comprising the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), its specialised anti-Maoist team CoBRA (Combat Battalion for Resolute Action), Border Security Force and the armed police, are likely to be joined by 1,000 more central paratroopers by Tuesday night.

A police source said a full-scale march to Ramgarh, 22 km from Lalgarh, where the Maoists had torched a police camp and driven out the civil and military administration earlier this month will begin after the reinforcements arrive.



Pakistani students gather beside burning tyres during a protest against the targeted killing of a principal of a college in Quetta yesterday. Shops and markets observed a partial strike in the south-western city to protest the shooting of two Shia Muslims a day earlier.

PHOTO: AFP

## 17 people killed as Obama aide visits Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

The US military in Afghanistan briefed national security adviser James Jones yesterday on the boosted effort against Taliban insurgents as Afghan authorities reported new attacks that left 17 people dead.

"My picture of the security situation is that it is serious, and by serious I mean there are areas of the country where Taliban insurgents have been able to infiltrate the village structure," McChrystal told AFP.

"By doing that they have been able to establish shadow governance, intimidation of the population, limitations of governance and so they have been able to change the fabric of life," he said.

This was the "most dangerous thing" for Afghanistan because it could hinder the government's ability to establish authority and

bring in development -- both key to fighting an insurgency that feeds on lawlessness and poverty.

Jones arrived overnight tasked by US President Barack Obama with following up on the implementation of a new US strategy against an extremist insurgency that has seen record attacks this year.

He met US General Stanley McChrystal, who took command a week ago of US and Nato troops in Afghanistan, and other military commanders at the Kabul headquarters of the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf).

Jones was given an "overview of how we view the current situation and we discussed our Isaf and US objectives for the next few months," spokesman Rear Admiral Gregory J. Smith told AFP.

The briefing also covered US-led efforts to build the Afghan security forces, he said.

## People voted back Cong for a stable govt Says Prakash Karat

ANI, New Delhi

Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Prakash Karat has said the Congress party won the recently held general elections as a result of people's concern for a stable and secular government.

Talking to reporters here on Monday, Karat said, "Congress party's success is mainly due to the fact that people were concerned having a stable and secular government in the centre. The divisive communal politics of the BJP was rejected by the people and this was to the benefit of the Congress party."

## Taliban using stolen US made infrared patches to ward-off air attacks

ANI, Lahore

Several Taliban insurgents are making use of special US made infrared patches to prevent themselves from being targeted by American aircraft.

The Taliban fighters are using the patches, which emits 'friendly signals' to ward-off attacks by the US drones, The Washington Times has revealed.

The patches, which are designed to avoid fire during night-time battles, were stolen by the insurgents during raids on US supply convoys in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It is also feared that suicide bombers could utilise the patches to get closer to the US army bases in the region.

But, what is more startling and disturbing is that these custom made patches can be ordered over the internet for a mere 10 dollars each.

The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) is also alarmed over such developments.

The GAO, in its investigation recently, had found out that the patches could easily be bought using fake names with only a valid credit card.



This picture taken on June 21 shows a tribal leader, Qari Zainuddin (C), surrounded by his armed guard as he talks to media in the northwestern town of Dera Ismail Khan. Zainuddin, who aligned against feared Pakistan Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud was shot dead yesterday ahead of a planned military operation into Mehsud's wild northwest base.

PHOTO: AFP

## Poll shows extent of civilian suffering in wars

AFP, Geneva

A Red Cross survey of eight war-torn countries has found that more than half of the civilians polled were forced to flee their homes -- while in Afghanistan and Liberia torture was a common experience.

The opinion poll, released Tuesday, was conducted for the International Committee of the Red Cross among 4,000 people in Afghanistan, Colombia, Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines.

It is part of a campaign to highlight the impact of modern conflicts on civilians.

Nowhere was the sense of direct suffering more acute than in Afghanistan, -- which has been gripped by conflict for three decades -- and in Liberia, where brutal civil wars ravaged the country between 1989 and 2003.

In both nations, more than 40 percent of those polled said they had been tortured.

An average of 56 percent in the eight countries surveyed said they had been forced to flee their home at some point in time. That figure rose to nine people in 10 in Liberia; and more than three-quarters of Afghans.

"These figures represent millions of people who are struggling to provide for their children, who have been forced to flee their villages under threat, or who live in constant fear that someone they care for will be killed, assaulted or disappear," said ICRC Director of Operations Pierre Kraehenbuehl.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (R) talks with South Korean Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung-hwan during a meeting at Singh's residence in New Delhi yesterday. Myung-hwan is in India on a two-day official visit.

PHOTO: AFP

## Post-election crisis deepens in BJP

AFP, New Delhi

A crisis within India's main opposition, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), appears to have worsened a month after their drubbing in general elections.

The disastrous showing by India's right-wing has provoked a bitter leadership struggle and an even more intense debate over the party's future ideological direction, with members unsure whether to head for centre ground.

Over the weekend, the party held what was slated to be a crucial summit of its top-ranking members, all of whom were said to agree that party policy should be recast towards "an inclusive, tolerant

philosophy."

What the party was hoping to do was take back some of the centre ground from the governing Congress party, whose resounding election win appeared to show Indian voters were uninterested in the sectarian politics of old.

But things did not work out that way for the BJP, with policy discussions cast aside and top party officials at each others' throats.

"The situation in the party is volcanic," senior BJP official Sushma Swaraj admitted before the talks.

"If the BJP does not make an assessment (of policy) now they will never recover," was the bleak assessment of another senior BJP leader, Jaswant Singh.

## MUMBAI ATTACK CASE

## Warrants issued against 22 Pakistanis

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Mumbai

A special court on Tuesday issued non-bailable warrants (NBWs) against 22 absconding Pakistanis wanted in connection with the terrorist attacks on Mumbai last year.

Accepting a plea by Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam, Special Judge M.L. Tahilyani passed the order this afternoon.

Only one Pakistani citizen, Mohammed Ajmal Amir alias Kasab, is currently in custody and undergoing trial for his role in the 26/11 attacks. His nine accomplices were gunned down during the 60-hour operations by the combined security forces during November 26-28 last year.

However, investigations by various Indian agencies, Kasab's confession and intelligence inputs have pointed to the involvement of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in the mayhem that claimed more than 170 lives.

## AN APPEAL TO THE HONORABLE PRIME MINISTER, GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Honorable Prime Minister,

The growth and development of the Construction Industry is an extremely important matter for Bangladesh because of the appalling inadequacy that still persists in respect of housing for our teeming millions and overall infrastructures, the speedy development of which have become very essential. The main ingredient of Construction Industry is concrete, 99% of which is still being produced by stationary mixer machines. Apart from the various qualitative inadequacies of this old conventional method, its use has been restricted / prohibited in the developed countries of the world. Further development and modernization of the conventional method of producing Concrete has become essential.

The present ratio between hand made concrete and the Ready Mix Concrete is 99%:1% while the latter is pollution free, environment friendly, emerging and has got huge potentials in the context of Bangladesh. In developed countries almost all concrete used in the construction are ready mixed whereas in our country its use is currently below 1% because of lack of awareness of its advantages.

In recent times a handful of Business Organizations took some initiative to replace this old, conventional method by more modern methods of concrete production. This advanced method of concrete production is expected to flourish with minimum patronization from the Government, leading to revolutionary change in the construction industry with the environment becoming free from pollution.

In the backdrop of this scenario, for the last few weeks, those few entrepreneurs are being pressurized from different VAT Offices for paying VAT on ready mix concrete which is basically the same concrete produced by conventional concrete mixer machines, except its production process being much more modern, efficient and environment friendly. If VAT is imposed on concrete produced in the modern method i.e. Ready mix concrete, its cost is bound to increase substantially over the cost of concrete produced in the conventional method. As a result, clients will lose interest in using Ready Mix Concrete and this new industry, whose manifold expansion is essential for the development of the nation, will be nipped in the bud. Construction industry will get a setback and pollution of the environment will continue unabated.

If VAT is imposed on this product then selling price of ready-mix concrete will go up and would go beyond the reach of environment conscious users and this industry wouldn't survive in the stiff competition with orthodox method of concrete manufacturing. These hindrances can only be removed if this industry is given a little support from the government's end, without which it wouldn't be possible for this industry to keep the pace of its progress.

In a bid to safeguard this emerging industry, we in the meantime, have held series of meetings with the Chairman as well as highups of NBR highlighting the existing problems and potentials of this industry and very recently we have made an effort to draw the kind attention of the honorable Finance Minister through the courtesy of a daily newspaper the Daily Star in this regard.

Honorable Prime Minister,

We have bestowed all the confidence on you and always rely on your wit and wisdom. While recounting the spirit of your generosity that you had extended in the past, we are certain that you won't allow anything that stands against your philosophy of sustainable growth of the economy leading towards the road of development for implementation of your long cherished Digital Bangladesh.

In the circumstances, we would humbly appeal to the Honorable Prime Minister to kindly do the needful to ensure use of Ready Mix Concrete to at least 30-40% out of the total use of concrete in the country and to keep imposition of VAT on Ready Mix Concrete in abeyance until necessary frame work/infrastructure for the same is achieved, on a national level.

READY MIX CONCRETE MANUFACTURERS