



Pakistani residents stand beside the burning wreckage of a car belonging to militant group Lashkar-e-Islam during security operation in Bara, a town of Khyber agency, on Saturday.

Dialogue only way forward for Pakistan, India, says Gilani

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani Saturday said that dialogue with India was the only way forward for the nuclear-armed rivals if they want to beat the militants.

"If we do not go for dialogue that means that we strengthen terrorism," Gilani told a press conference in Islamabad he had called to brief the media about his meeting this week with Indian Premier Manmohan Singh.

"Therefore it is in the interest of both the countries and the way forward only is dialogue," Gilani added.

The rare meeting between the Indian and Pakistani premiers this week in Egypt ended with a pledge to cooperate on terrorism that has triggered anger and consternation back in New Delhi.

Singh faced criticism back home from the opposition and a section of the Indian media for conceding too much ground to Gilani on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement summit.

A joint statement from the two leaders said that action on terrorism "should not be linked

to peace talks between the South Asian rivals.

Gilani brushed aside a Friday statement from the Indian prime minister in parliament that there would be no resumption of formal peace talks with Pakistan until Islamabad brings those behind last year's Mumbai attacks to justice.

"Whatever he (Singh) has said on the floor of the house in India, I think that is the stand which we took and I think that would really help the two countries to move forward," Gilani said.

The peace process between the neighbours was put on hold following the November 2008 attacks on India's financial and entertainment capital in which 166 people died.

New Delhi has blamed the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and said it has "overwhelming evidence" that "official agencies" in Pakistan were involved in plotting and carrying out the 60-hour siege.

Gilani said Pakistan was probing the case. An anti-terrorism court in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi Saturday adjourned proceedings against five accused including the alleged mastermind Zakiruddin Lakhvi till July 25.

Indo-Pak Foreign Secy-level talks to be held in Aug

ANI, Islamabad

The Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan are expected to meet again next month to set up the agenda for the scheduled talks between the Foreign Ministers of both countries on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

The UN General Assembly is scheduled to be held in mid-September, so it is pertinent that the Foreign Secretaries of both India and Pakistan would meet before that, sources said.

The venue and date for the meeting is yet to be finalised. The itinerary of the meeting would be finalized after Nirupama Rao assumes charge as the next Foreign Secretary of India, The Nation reports.

Rao, who is currently serving as Ambassador in China, succeeds Shivshankar Menon. Menon will retire on July 31.

Pakistan committed to fighting terror: Hillary

US 'confident' of climate accord with India

AFP, New Delhi

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton defended yesterday Pakistan's commitment to fighting terrorism, while warning that the perpetrators of last year's Mumbai attacks must be brought to justice.

"We believe there is a commitment to fighting terrorism that permeates the entire (Pakistan) government," Hillary told reporters in New Delhi during her first trip to India as Washington's top diplomat.

India suspended its peace dialogue with Pakistan after the attacks on its financial capital and insists that Islamabad has yet to take sufficient measures against those responsible to warrant a resumption of the process.

Pakistan is a key US ally in the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda on its border with Afghanistan, and Washington has been wary of taking sides in the dispute over Islamabad's handling of the Mumbai aftermath.

"We are certainly watching and expecting there will be justice and those who launched the horrific attacks in Mumbai will meet their day of reckoning," Clinton said, without specifically mentioning Pakistan.

"al-Qaeda, the Taliban and many other terrorist organisations are connected in a way that is deeply troubling to us and also to India," she added.

India has blamed the Mumbai attacks, which killed 166 people, on the banned Pakistani militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

Pakistan has arrested five people

suspected of involvement in the assault, including the alleged mastermind, Zakiruddin Lakhvi. Their trial is expected to begin in the next week.

Kicking off her India visit in Mumbai on Saturday, Clinton called for a global fight against terrorism -- a theme she repeated in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, Hillary said Sunday she was confident of bridging key divisions with India on how to combat climate change ahead of a high-stakes conference later in the year.

"I am very confident... that the United States and India can devise a plan that will dramatically change the way we produce, consume and conserve energy," Hillary told reporters in New Delhi after what she described as a "very fruitful" meeting with Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh.

Taliban releases video of captured US soldier

AFP, Kandahar

The Taliban has released a 28-minute video showing a US soldier reportedly captured by the hard-line Islamist group in Afghanistan last month, officials and witnesses said yesterday.

The clip released over the weekend shows a Western male -- purportedly a US soldier who went missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan on June 30 -- sitting cross-legged on the floor wearing a traditional Afghan outfit.

The shaven-headed young man, who sports a small beard and appears nervous and frightened, answers questions in English while drinking green tea.

Although the Pentagon has not released the identity of the missing soldier, a US military

spokesman in Kabul confirmed that the man appearing in the video is the soldier who went missing last month.

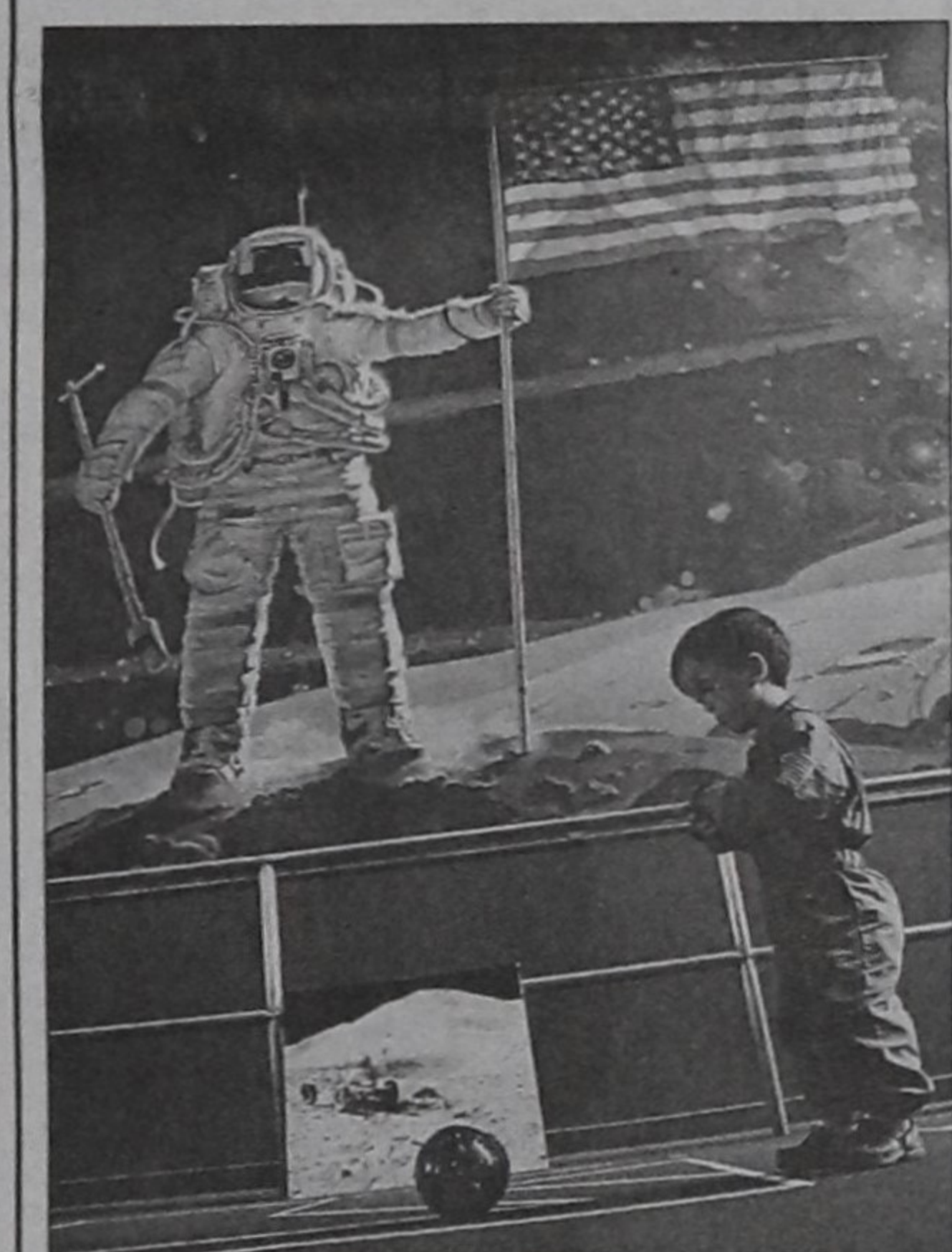
"I was captured outside of the base camp. I was behind a patrol, lagging behind the patrol and I was captured," the soldier tells an unseen questioner.

Asked about the US-led invasion that toppled the hardline Taliban government in 2001, the man replies: "Since I've been here and I've seen how these people live and function, we have indeed invaded an independent state."

"We're told that civilian casualties that soldiers like myself inflict on populous are simply something that we have to accept in a time of war and that we're told that they don't matter," the soldier adds.



Handout photo shows Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Vice President and artisan Gauriben Ramabhai presenting an embroidered door hanging made by her mother 80 years ago to visiting US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in acknowledgement of her support to SEWA, in Mumbai on Saturday.



Five-year-old Ashton Mitchell of Arlington, Virginia plays with a robot toy in front of a painting of an astronaut walking on the moon at the National Air and Space Museum on July 16 in Washington, DC. Forty years ago Apollo 11 launched on a historic flight from Cape Canaveral Florida carrying astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin and Michael Collins and landed on the moon on July 20, 1969.

US marks 40 years since man first walked on the moon

AFP, Washington

The United States today proudly marks the 40th anniversary of its conquest of the moon, a triumph of scientific endeavour now remembered at a time when US dominance in space is increasingly uncertain.

President Barack Obama kicks off a week of events when he meets Monday at the White House with the crew of the Apollo 11 mission, who became the first to accomplish the dream of ages and walk on the surface of the moon.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," said astronaut Neil Armstrong as he stepped down from the lunar lander on July 20, 1969, as an estimated 500 million people on Earth crowded round televisions and radios.

Four decades ago, at the height of the Cold War, the US achievement was a huge morale booster to a country mired in the bloody Vietnam war, ushering in a new sense of confidence and challenging concepts of science and religion.

"Armstrong is on the moon -- Neil Armstrong, 38-year-old American, standing on the surface of the moon, on this July 20, 19 hundred and 69," intoned US newscaster Walter Cronkite. "Whew, boy," exclaimed Cronkite, who died this week aged 92. "There he is, there's a foot coming down the steps. So there's a foot on the moon."

But dreams that one day we might all be able to travel to the stars have been rudely brought down to earth.

Only 12 men, all Americans, have ever walked on the moon, and the last to set foot there were in 1972, at the end of the Apollo missions.

Now ambitious plans to put US astronauts back on the moon by 2020 to establish manned lunar bases for further space exploration to Mars under the Constellation project are increasingly in doubt.

Possible audio of Swat Taliban chief surfaces

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's army is investigating whether the leader of the Taliban in the northwest Swat Valley, said to have been wounded in an airstrike, delivered a recent radio address, a spokesman said Sunday.

A local resident said the voice on the recording Tuesday was definitely Maulana Fazlullah's, but that he sounded sombre and sick.

Fazlullah long used illegal FM radio transmissions to rally militants and sow fear among residents in the valley, a scenic former tourist haven that largely fell prey to militancy more than two years ago.

The transmissions mostly stopped after the army launched its latest offensive in Swat nearly three months ago.

The operation has strong backing from the US, which wants Pakistan to clear safe havens for militants who threaten the war effort in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Myanmar detains dozens for observing death of Suu Kyi's father

AP, Yangon

Authorities in military-run Myanmar detained dozens of opposition party members yesterday as they returned from ceremonies marking the death of the father of jailed pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, witnesses said.

The arrests came after riot police set up barricades around the Martyr's Mausoleum where the official ceremony took place to commemorate the death of Gen Aung San, the country's independence hero.

At least 50 members of the opposition National League for Democracy party were walking in small groups when they were arrested, witnesses said on condition of anonymity for fear of official reprisal.

It was not immediately clear why police detained them.

Some of the NLD members had been attending a ceremony at party headquarters to mark Gen. Aung San's death 62 years ago, while others had been at the official commemoration.

"Some members were roughly taken into trucks, and those who ran away were chased," a witness said. Some who ran onto public buses were dragged out and taken away.

Gen Aung San and other government leaders were assassinated by gunmen during a Cabinet meeting on July 19, 1947, shortly after Britain granted independence to the Southeast Asian colony.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi marked the anniversary of her father's death inside Yangon's Insein prison. She is on trial on charges of violating the terms of her house arrest by giving shelter to an uninvited American man who swam to her lakeside home in May.

If convicted, she faces up to five years in prison. Her trial is to resume Friday.

Earlier Sunday, hundreds of riot police erected barricades secured with barbed wire and blocked streets leading to the Martyr's Mausoleum. More than two dozen trucks carrying riot police and four prison vans were parked near the monument, located near the famed Shwedagon pagoda.

Flags were flown at half-staff at the mausoleum as officials placed flowers at the tomb, and families of the slain leaders joined the tightly guarded wreath-laying ceremony.

Suu Kyi, 64, who used to attend the official ceremony, was absent for a sixth consecutive year and instead marked the day by donating food to patients at the hospital inside the prison, said Nyan Win, a spokesman for her party.

Martyr's Day was an important event on Myanmar's calendar for years, but has been gradually downgraded as Suu Kyi has become more popular, particularly since a 1988 pro-democracy uprising that was crushed by the junta.

Karzai seeks talks with Taliban

PTI, AFP, London

Observing that deployment of more foreign troops is not a solution to rid his country of extremists, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has appealed to the West to develop a new strategy for the war-ravaged nation, including talks with the Taliban, even their top leader Mullah Omar.

"Military operations are no longer enough," Karzai told "The Sunday Times" as the offensive against the Taliban in Afghanistan continued to claim the lives of British and other coalition soldiers.

"We have to rethink the way we do things -

without that there won't be any improvement. I don't think the increase in troops will address the problem. We need to concentrate on finding other avenues of defeating terrorism and seeking peace," the Afghan President said. Favouring negotiations with the extremists, he said the Taliban, who are willing to return, should be brought back to the society.

"We must engage in negotiations, bring back those Taliban who are willing to return, who have been driven out by fear and coercion and the mistakes we've all made. They are part of this country and must be brought back."

Lankan troops recover LTTE submarine

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan troops have recovered a submarine-type craft built by Tamil Tiger guerrillas in an area where they fought their final battle two months ago, the military said yesterday.

The craft was found on Saturday submerged about 500 metres (yards) off the coast of Vellamullivaikal in the district of Mullaitivu, the army said in a statement.

"Based on information provided by an informant... the

submersible was found and brought ashore with the help of army divers," the statement said.

Sri Lanka's navy has already begun investigations into the naval capability of the defeated Tamil Tiger rebels to establish how they acquired the technology and supplies, a military official said.

Several submersible devices had been found by the military in the run up to the final defeat of the Tamil Tigers on May 18 with the killing of the entire Tiger leadership at Vellamullivaikal.

US mulls special interrogation team for terrorist

AFP, Washington

US officials are looking into organising a team of interrogators from several government agencies to specialise in questioning high-value terrorist suspects, The Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday.

The small team will likely also be tasked with drawing up new interrogation methods, the Journal said, citing people familiar with a proposal that will be submitted to the White House.



Xiomara Hortencia Zelaya (L) and Xiomara de Zelaya (C), daughter and wife of Honduran ousted president Manuel Zelaya, join his supporters in a protest in Tegucigalpa on Saturday.

Honduras talks mediator suggests Zelaya return

AFP, San Jose

Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, who is mediating the Honduras crisis talks, proposed Saturday that ousted Honduran leader Manuel Zelaya return to office under the terms of a general amnesty.

Arias, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, made the suggestion to representatives of the deposed leader and de facto Honduran president Roberto Micheletti at talks underway here, while in the Honduran capital,

Tegucigalpa, Zelaya's supporters took to the streets demanding his return.

The seven-point proposal envisions Zelaya's return to power at the head of a government of "national reconciliation," and the declaration of a general amnesty absolving those who participated in and opposed his June 28 ouster.

"It's fairly probable we'll have an agreement within 48 hours," a diplomatic source close to the talks told AFP before talks began.

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