

Mehsud alive

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naming an heir.

Pakistani intelligence officials acknowledged Saturday that the missile strike said to have killed the Taliban chief was carried out with Islamabad's help, indicating growing coordination between the two countries despite Pakistan's official disapproval of the strikes.

Mehsud deputy, Hakimullah, and Taliban spokesman Maulvi Umar each called two separate Associated Press reporters Saturday to say that Mehsud was alive. They pledged evidence of his continued existence would be brought forth in the coming days.

The reports of his death "are just to discourage and destroy the morale of the Taliban," Umar said.

Umar said Mehsud was with his fighters "sound and fit," and not even injured. He said Mehsud would not be provoked into coming out so soon into the open because that would make him a target.

Hakimullah is one of the potential successors to lead the militant group. However, intelligence agents said it appears likely that Hakimullah may be passed over for the top position in favour of another Mehsud aide, Waliur Rehman.

Asked if Mehsud could call AP, Hakimullah said it was not possible at the moment. And asked why he did not refute the reports of Mehsud's death earlier in the week, the militant did not answer.

Mehsud's aide Kafayat Ullah told AP a day earlier that Mehsud was killed with one of his two wives Wednesday in his stronghold in the South Waziristan tribal region.

"I confirm that Baitullah Mehsud and his wife died in the American missile attack in South Waziristan," Taliban commander Kafayat Ullah told AP by telephone.

A local tribesman, who also spoke on condition his name not be used, said Mehsud had been at his father-in-law's house being treated for kidney pain, and had been put on a drip by a doctor, when the missile struck. The tribesman claimed he attended the Taliban chief's funeral.

Pakistani and US officials said they were getting the same reports and were reasonably confident in them, but did not have forensic evidence such as a body for irrefutable confirmation.

Pakistan considered the al-Qaeda-linked Mehsud its No. 1 internal threat. He was suspected in the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and numerous suicide attacks across Pakistan.

The US initially viewed him as less of a threat than other Taliban fighters, mainly because he tended to go after Pakistani targets instead of American and Nato troops in Afghanistan. That view appeared to change as Mehsud grew in strength.

Two Pakistani intelligence officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media, said the CIA launched the missiles after Pakistan passed along a confirmed report that the militant chief was staying at his father-in-law's home.

A video of the attack was shared with Pakistani authorities.

In it, Mehsud's vehicle is seen parked inside a sprawling compound and Mehsud was also visible, said one of the intelligence officials. The official declined to give more specifics, such as exactly

where Mehsud was. He said that intelligence reports from informants said Mehsud's body was mutilated, but did not say if the informants had seen the remains.

Last year, a senior Pakistani intelligence official said Mehsud had died of kidney failure due to diabetes complications. But a Taliban spokesman and a doctor denied the report the same day and Mehsud re-emerged.

Pakistan has routinely condemned the American missile strikes, saying they violate its sovereignty and anger the local population, especially when civilians are killed. Analysts suspect that public stance is simply a face-saving measure for the government, and that it secretly cooperating in the attacks.

In any case, a strike that kills Mehsud would be a huge boon for the Pakistanis, and it might nudge them to go after militant leaders the US sees as a greater threat to its interests in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Taliban fighters have been mulling who will succeed Mehsud as their top commander had yet to announce a decision three days after his death, a possible sign that a power struggle is shaping up among his followers.

Details about the Mehsud succession talks were murky. Those involved in the meeting, or Shura, in South Waziristan have cut off their communications, likely out of fear their gathering could be targeted by another missile.

The exact location of the meeting also was kept secret, though a tribesman said it appeared to be somewhere in the Ladhia area.

Dozens of militants, including Arabs, were heading to the gathering, but a large area was cordoned off and locals were restricted in their movements, said the tribesman, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter and fear for his life.

Abductions

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information of their release.

Meanwhile, Bandabhar district administration in the context has convened an emergency meeting at the collectorate conference room in Bandabhar today. Ruling Awami League lawmaker from Bandabhar U Sai Sing Bir Bahadur would attend the meeting, sources said.

Terming the overall situation alarming, Thoai Hree Marma claimed at least seven abducted persons were killed in the last few years as they failed to pay ransom or denied to pay it.

Hla Thoai Hree added that it could not be ascertained if there were any political patrons behind the criminal activities.

Bangalee leaders, however, consider the incidents of abduction in Bandabhar hill district as an adverse effect of withdrawal of army camps from there.

Joint convener of Bandabhar district BNP and former leader of Bangalee Equal Rights Implementation Council Prof Osman Gani alleged that the armed miscreants would consider the remote areas of Chittagong Hill Tracts as their haven as the government is withdrawing army from there without making any alternative security arrangements.

Parbatya Chhattagram Jana Sanhati Samity (PCJSS) leader Dipayan Khisa said, incidents of toll collection from development projects are taking place all over the country. So, the recent army pullout and regional political activities have no connection with the kidnapping, he added.

Dipayan Khisa alleged that the local law enforcers and civil administration have failed to ensure security of people.

PCJSS Bandabhar district Senior Vice President Joly Mong said people are waiting to see the establishment of civil administration in CHT after an end of the "army rule" in light of the historic peace agreement.

However, the office-bearers of another regional political organisation United People's Democratic Front made no comments in this regard.

Govt eyes

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system, e-payment, e-signature and e-security.

In around 50 countries, e-GP has been proved as an effective tool in the fight against corruption, promotion of integration and stimulation of greater productivity not only at government level but also in small and medium enterprises.

The main intention of CPTU is to gradually introduce e-GP in the government's procurement system and ensure that all stakeholders comply with the Public Procurement Act, 2006 and the Public Rules, 2008.



Over two dozen brick kilns occupy the Bonshai and Lauhoganj rivers at Mirzapur of Tangail significantly narrowing the rivers down.

Brick traders choking Tangail rivers

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that Boro paddy on his 40 decimals of land was all husk and no grain in the last season while Ali Akbar of Palashtoli village has to chop his eight mango trees down as those did not bear fruits.

Describing situations alarming, Dr Mohammad Sirajul Islam, chairman of Environmental Science and Resource Management department in Maulana Bhasani University of Science and Technology, explained that the brickfield owners are using not only wood or coal for burning bricks but also

tires causing an environmental disaster to the point of making the agricultural fields barren.

Sunlight is very important for photosynthesis, a process that converts carbon dioxide into organic compounds releasing oxygen, but due to the contaminated smoke in the air, crops and trees fail to get sufficient sunlight, he added.

On the other hand, the black smoke is also one of the leading causes of different diseases in human body. Kasiron Begum, 60, of Chitteshwari village told The

Daily Star that her asthma problem get acute as soon as the brick kilns starts releasing smoke.

Dr Dulal Poddar, director of Kumudini Hospital in Mirzapur, said the smoke released from the brickfields causes chest diseases like asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia and also the breathing problems.

"Children can be the worst victims of the diseases," he added.

Local administration is yet to take any effective step against the river grabbers, as most of the brickfield owners

are local influential having political clouts, sources said.

Most of the brickfields use timber instead of coal to burn bricks defying the rules, they alleged.

The brickfield owners, however, denied allegation of grabbing rivers and claimed rivers changed their course naturally.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Mirzapur Zinnat Rehana said authorities would take legal steps against the brickfield owners who grabbed the shorelines of the rivers.

However, she could not give any timeframe.

Air Force

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"The air force is proceeding with the dream to build a digital air force keeping consistency with the honourable prime minister's vision," the report says.

It says the budgetary allocation for the air force has been decreased in the last two financial years.

The allocation was increased to 20.90 percent of the total defence budget in FY 2005-06 from 18.56 percent in 2004-05. In FY 2006-07, the air force was given 20.97 percent of the total defence budget. But the allocation was decreased to 15.57 percent in FY 2007-08 and 15.11 percent in FY 2008-09.

In the report, the air force has demanded either 25 percent of the total defence budget or a special allocation in the next 10 years.

Most of the budgetary allocation is spent for maintenance, salaries and allowances, supplies and services and instalments of previous purchases. Only 4-6 percent of it is spent for major purchases, the report says.

In defence of purchasing new equipment, the report says it is facing tremendous difficulties in playing due role with the aged aircraft.

The force has over 160 planes—fighter, transport and training aircraft—and helicopters, of which 70 percent are aged over 20 years and 18 percent inducted in the last 10 years, says the report.

It says the air force has planned to set up overhauling plants for the existing F-7 fighter planes and MI helicopters. If two plants are set up in the country, two to three F-7 aircraft and three to four MI choppers could be overhauled each year and will not require sending abroad.

The air force has so far overhauled Bell helicopters 65 times and PT-6 planes 76 times at its own maintenance unit. In the last two years, five fighter aircraft were overhauled in the country with the help of foreign consultants, the report says.

CHT army camps

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Police and army sources said the process of withdrawal of the Magaichhari camp was hampered for over an hour in the afternoon as Bangalee settlers staged a protest in front of it against the withdrawal.

Laxmichhari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Salim Uddin listened to the settlers' demands and assured them that he would convey their message to the higher authority concerned.

The withdrawal resumed after the settlers left the place declaring further movement today.

The sources meanwhile said army members of Dashbill camp left the camp but their ansar associates were still there. Laxmichhari zone Commander Lt Col Shariful Islam said they would hand over the land of the camps to its real owners. He, however, declined to name the landowners.

About 5 acres of land was being used for the Magaichhari camp and about 6 acres of land for the Dashbill camp.

Domestic help's

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down from the 16th floor. When she reached seventh floor she fell off and landed on the concrete awning of the third floor from where locals rescued her.

Locals rushed her to DMCH with injuries in her head and chest.

Rekha at DMCH told The Daily Star that her mistress beat her as she requested her to let her go home the previous morning, the day she was supposed to visit her village home.

At one stage her mistress locked the door of the apartment, leaving her inside alone and left the house, she added.

"My mistress mercilessly beat me up with a cricket stump when I was watering plants on the balcony. I decided to run away by climbing down the balcony grill risking my life," she said.

She said she had to do domestic chores from early morning to late night and was severely beaten up if she was found even with a minor fault.

Mohammad Liton, driver of a private car in the building said, "Around 10:00am I saw a crowd of several hundred people in front of the building. As I went over I found a girl climbing down the balcony grill of the eighth floor."

When contacted a security guard of the building said while the girl was climbing down, he informed the mem-

Sand lifters

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the area to lift a huge volume of sand selling at over half a million taka each day.

These powerful dredgers have been operating round the clock since June 25 filling large barges, each with capacity of up to 9,000 cubic feet of sand, in less than an hour. They are sent to the country's largest market in Amin Bazar, some 10 kilometres upstream.

In a letter to Ali Associates International, BIWTA's Senior Deputy Director Golam Kabir informed the company that his office had decided to suspend all work orders related to sand lifting on the basis of violation of clauses in the contract. Copies of this letter were also sent to police and Rab headquarters.

The large scale dredging operation near the densely populated locality on the riverbank created panic among the residents who had, in August 2004, witnessed an unprecedented erosion that devoured over 100 houses including six-storey buildings caused by such sand piracy.

An elderly resident of Basila said the Buriganga was dredged scientifically a few years ago to pave the way for the water ministry's Circular Waterway Project. The permission for sand extraction cannot be justified. The deal to sell sand and make crores of taka at the cost of their homes, land and river must be investigated, he demanded.

bers of the apartment committee and all the people of the apartment building.

Locals alleged the apartment committee did not come forward to the girl's help.

Rekha could not identify the floor where she used to work and even she did not know the name of her employers.

Police said employer Zakir Hossain filed a general diary with Paltan Police Station in this connection. Nobody was arrested as of 10:30pm.

Stabbing spree

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to hack Alea's child after injuring Alea. He wounded Alea's husband Osman too when he took the child onto his lap."

Locals had encircled him but did not dare to disarm the deranged man. Faruque then attacked Megha and her brother who were playing nearby.

He then injured a few others before locals finally caught Faruque, gave him a beating and handed him over to police. He was taken to Midford Hospital.

Locals said Faruque was a drug addict and he often attacked neighbours.

Police could not interrogate him at the hospital, as his condition was serious yesterday.

ODIs today

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five-match series at the Queen's Sports Club in Bulawayo.

Shakib Al Hasan's men enter the battle with the tag of 'favourites' and the pressure will be on them to carry on their good form as well as maintain their recent success against the African opponents.

Bangladesh last played against Zimbabwe at home in January this year where they bounced back to win the series 2-1. On the other hand they last toured Zimbabwe in 2007 and won the series 3-1.

But most importantly the morale of Jamie Siddons's charges is high despite their seven-wicket loss in the lone practice game against Zimbabwe A on Friday as they whitewashed West Indies in both Test and one-day series before arriving in the south African country.

State-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) and TEN Sports will telecast the match live from 2:20pm Bangladesh time.

Despite recent success, Bangladesh are still behind in the overall winning record against Zimbabwe as they won 17 matches in 37 encounters and this series creates an opportunity for the Tigers to set the record straight.

But the strength of the Tigers' bowling has been reduced by the absence of leading paceman and captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and experienced left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak, both suffering injuries which ruled them out.

PM greets all

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Bonai, Tripura, Marma, Chakma, Garo, Santal, Urao, Munda, Khasia, Manipuri, Khoang, Lushai, Bom and Rajbongshi, the prime minister said their district and diverse cultures, traditions and values have enriched this country.

She recalled the contribution of the indigenous people in the country's struggle for independence.

"It is our duty to ensure that the indigenous people can live with equal dignity like others upholding their identities," Hasina said.

The government is pledged-bound to take special measures for the indigenous people, she said.

Special programmes have been taken for their economic development, Hasina added.

Besides, effective steps have been taken for implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Treaty signed during the tenure of the Awami League government in 1997, the premier said.

Climate change

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how the two countries view the challenges of climate change equity.

Although least responsible for the problem, Bangladesh is a country most at threat from climate change while the UK is often regarded as one of those--if not the leader--in shaping climate change policy.

In the statement, Saber Hossain Chowdhury said climate change for Bangladesh is a development challenge as well as an issue of human rights and justice.

"An equitable deal in Copenhagen will only be possible if we are able to have clarity and consensus on the concept of equity in climate change negotiations and this would then hopefully pave the way for resolving the burden sharing riddle. This enquiry will bring this question into sharp focus," he said.

Colin Challen said the need for the enquiry is overwhelming. "We want the result of this enquiry to be presented in Copenhagen." Many countries with very low carbon dioxide footprints, like Bangladesh, are prevented from benefiting from mechanisms like the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Challen added.

He further said Bangladesh has only seen two of these projects implemented in the entire history of the CDM, which for a country of 100 million plus population is clearly inequitable. Countries like Bangladesh did not cause climate change, but they also seem to be penalised for it. This enquiry will look at this and related issues.

In the statement, Saber and Challen sought for evidences by October 12, within 3,000 words and in electronic form, from all who are concerned to achieve, and are working towards, an equitable and fully inclusive deal on climate change in Copenhagen.

The submissions might be sent to sabercowdhury@yahoo.com and colinchallenmp@parliament.uk.

Insane for a son

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father chose to forget that he was a human being. He took his child in his arms and used a medicine dropper to force acid into her mouth, into her ears and on her feet. He also did not spare her anal passage.

The attack left Babli with a burnt throat, tongue and severe hearing impairment. She also suffered serious damage to knees, feet and anal passage. But the fighter that the little baby was, she kept her struggle to just stay alive and she was lucky enough to draw the attention of people who would help her.

Now eight years later, after sessions of continuous treatments, Babli can now not only eat on her own but also talk and even goes to school.

Bakhtiar Rana was never arrested and her mother Parul Akter still suffers from the trauma of witnessing the heinous attack on her child to kill her.

Parul who lives and works in Dhaka now told The Daily Star yesterday "Everyone apprehended she would die from the injuries she suffered but my brave daughter held on. She underwent at least six major operations over the last eight years since 2001.

A visiting surgeon from the USA first operated on Babli to try and repair her food pipe and throat. After that surgery she was able to drink liquid food and gradually was able to swallow semi-solid food.

In 2004, one of her damaged toes had to be amputated during surgeries to restore the use of her feet. In 2005, further surgery restored the use of her tongue. Then in January and March 2006, two operations by a visiting plastic surgeon from UK reconstructed her inner mouth.

All these operations were made possible because of the shelter given to the mother and child by the Acid Survivors Foundation since November 2000.

Parul told The Daily Star "We did not get justice in nine years and I now think that we will never get any justice because the law enforcement agencies say that Bakhtiar is still absconding."

"The joke is that Bakhtiar still lives where he used to live, has since got remarried and is now the father of two, including a son. Only the law enforcement agencies cannot find him."

A case has filed around a year after the attack under the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Doman Tribunals, Chittagong. After re-investigating the case, the

court finally accepted the charge sheet and the charges were framed in January 2003.

Monira Rahman, executive director of Acid Survivors Foundation, said "Both victims--mother and child--of this cruel violence has suffered severe traumatic disorder over the years."

Babli is a student of class-II in a city school and she is also learning to dance. She is quite good at dancing and has already performed at national level programmes despite the loss of a toe.

She is able to talk now, and though not clearly, doctors at Jibon Tari Hospital, run by ASF where Babli was treated, expressed hope that in time her speech will be totally alright.

Parul today works as an office assistant in Dhaka and supports herself and Babli.

"We hear every day that the government is so aware about acid crimes, but why is then Bakhtiar still free while my child suffers by the hour?"

"What is my child's fault? Why does she suffer alone still?" Parul said as she burst into tears while talking about the ordeal they have been through.

Babli is one of the many cases of acid violence. According to a report by Acid Survivors Foundation, 45 people fell victim to acid violence between January to June this year alone. Another 179 people in 2008, 192 in 2007, 221 in 2006, 272 in 2005, 325 in 2004, 411 in 2003, 490 in 2002, 349 in 2001 and 234 people in 2000 suffered similar attacks.

Cox's Bazar mayor

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is also the acting mayor, councillor Sirajul Haq, Ershad and Syed Karim.

Champa Uddin stated in the complaint petition a syndicate led by Sarwar Kamal was embezzling lakhs of taka through allowing projects in the town. Her protest against it enraged the acting mayor and his personal assistant Ershad. They insulted her calling her in a room of the municipality office. They also tortured her physically when she protested the incident.

Champa alleged councillor Sirajul Haq and Syed Karim tried to abduct her by taking into a CNG-run auto-rickshaw when she was leaving the municipality office.

Abul Kashem, officer-in-charge of Sadar Thana, confirmed the filing of the case.

However, Mayor Sarwar Kamal and councillor Sirajul Haq denied the allegation and said she filed the case to harass them socially.

Top regional terror

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victory in Indonesia's fight against militants and could significantly weaken the chances of more attacks, given the key planning, financial and motivational role he is believed to have played in terror networks.

Police spokesman Nanan Sukarna said officers believed Noordin, who is Southeast Asia's most wanted militant suspect, and two or three of his followers were inside, but could not immediately confirm their fate.

Minutes after the raid, witnesses said officers outside the house took off their helmets and were shaking hands with each other, suggesting all those inside had either been killed or captured. The firing ceased.

A police officer at the scene said a body was found in the bathroom of the house and authorities brought a coffin there. After about one hour, three ambulances left the house.

Earlier Saturday, officers raided a second house close to Jakarta where they shot and killed two suspected militants and seized bombs and a car rigged to carry them, said Police chief Gen Bambang Hendoso Danuri.

Danuri said one of those arrested had reserved a room in one of the hotels that was used by the terrorists before they attacked.

The house was about five km from the residence of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The Detik.com Web site, quoting an unnamed police source, said officers believed Yudhoyono's house could have been planning an attack there.

Officers circled the house in central Java province late Friday afternoon after making arrests in a nearby town. At one point, they sent remote-controlled robots into the isolated building to search for bombs.

Not long before they stormed the red-tiled building, officers dressed in black

behind a shield fired into the house from close range, while others fired repeated volleys from a hill behind it.

Indonesian police have been met with booby traps and suicide bombers in at least one other raid on a terrorist hide-out and approached the house with extreme caution.

Noordin is a Malaysian citizen who claimed in a video in 2005 to be al-Qaeda's representative in Southeast Asia and to be carrying out attacks on Western civilians to avenge Muslim deaths in Afghanistan.

Indonesian police have arrested more than 200 militants associated with the Jemaah Islamiyah terror network since 2002, including many with ties to Noordin, who they say has narrowly escaped capture several times.

Police have offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to his capture. Experts say Noordin was likely being hidden by a small network of sympathizers who might not agree with his tactics, but nevertheless believe they have a duty to shelter him.

Java, home to more than half of Indonesia's 220 million people, has long been the focus in the hunt for Noordin and his associates.

In November 2005, Azahari bin Husin, a top Jemaah Islamiyah bomb maker, was fatally shot by counterterrorism forces in east Java. Sariyah Jabir, another explosives expert, was killed in April 2006 during a raid on a militant hide-out in central Java.

Prosecutors say Noordin also orchestrated an earlier attack on the JW Marriott Hotel in 2003 and a blast outside the Australian Embassy in 2004, both in the Indonesian capital. al-Qaeda is believed to have helped fund several of the attacks.

Together the bombings allegedly linked Noordin killed more than 240 people, many of them Western tourists.