

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, 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, Walid 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.

Pakistan and US officials said they were getting the same reports and were reasonably confident in them, but did not have forensic evidence such as 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

Tipai dam

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At the rally, speakers underscored the need to strengthen national unity against the construction of the dam to "radicate the government's 'confusion' about the matter.

Prof Muzaffar Ahmad inaugurated the long march with a call to protect the people's sovereignty.

Prof Muzaffar said, "The nation's sovereignty goes neither with the lawmakers nor the parliament, let alone the government. I inaugurate this march with a call that the parliament upholds the people's sovereignty."

It was announced at the rally that after reaching Sylhet, the participants would march on towards the border with India.

The long march participants walked to Muktagon from the Shaheed Minar and later boarded a bus towards Sylhet.

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

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

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

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

Joint convener of Bandarban district BNP and former leader of Bangladeshi 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 arrangements.

Parbatya Chhatram Jana Kishore Samity (PCJS) 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.

PCJS Bandarban 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.

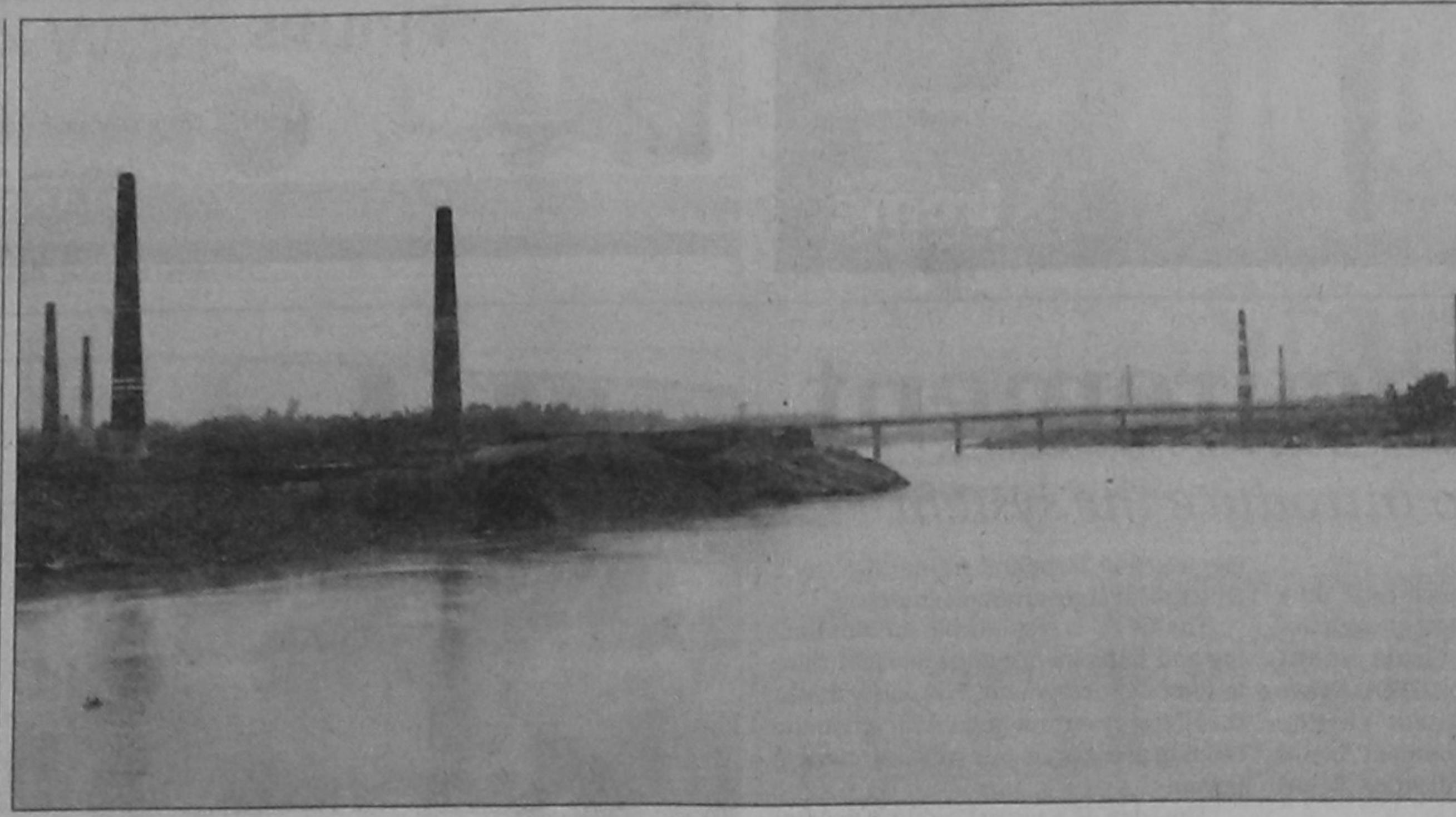
Govt eyes

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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 CPTI 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 Lauhognaj rivers at Mirzapur of Tangail significantly narrowing the rivers down.

Insane for a son

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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.

Brick traders choking Tangail rivers

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that Boro Boppa on his 40 decimals of land was all husk and no grain in the last season while Ali Akbar of Palashoti 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. Kaisron 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 increased 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.

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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.

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Domestic help's

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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.

Mohammed Liton, driver of a private car in the building said, "Around