



Afghan and foreign security forces are seen at the site of a blast, which struck vehicles with the Nato-led force in Kabul yesterday. Six foreign soldiers from the Nato-led force in Afghanistan were killed when a suicide car bomb struck Italian vehicles in Kabul on Thursday.

Suicide attack kills 6 Italian soldiers, 10 Afghans

AP, Kabul

A suicide car bomber attacked an Italian military convoy on a road in Afghanistan's capital yesterday, killing six Italian soldiers and 10 Afghan civilians, officials said.

The suicide bomber rammed his explosives-filled car into two Italian military vehicles about midday, Italian Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa said in Rome. He said six of those aboard were killed and four wounded.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility, saying in a text message that they had ordered had carried out the suicide attack against foreign forces.

The explosion shattered

windows in buildings about half a mile (a kilometre) away and shook offices and homes throughout the central Afghan neighbourhood that houses a number of embassies and military bases.

Charred vehicles littered the area around the blast site a road just off a main traffic circle that leads to the airport. An Associated Press reporter saw at least six vehicles burned, including an Italian Humvee, and two burned bodies that were later covered with plastic sheets.

Defence Ministry spokesman Gen. Mohammad Zahir Azimi said at least 10 Afghan civilians were killed and 52 wounded.

Shopkeeper Feraudin

Ansari said he felt the blast in his store about 50 yards (metres) from the site. Windows were broken in all the shops on the street. He said he was angry at Nato forces for patrolling in downtown areas.

"Why are you patrolling inside the city? There is no al-Qaeda, no Taliban here," 25-year-old Ansari said. "My shop is destroyed and my head hurts from the blast."

The explosion was the fourth major attack in the capital in five weeks.

In the latest, a car bomb exploded Sept. 8 near the entrance to the military airport in Kabul in an attack on a Nato convoy, killing three civilians. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the blast.

Nepali Maoists call for new national flag

AFP, Kathmandu

Maoist lawmakers in Nepal have demanded the national flag be changed to reflect the country's new status as the world's youngest republic, a party spokesman said yesterday.

Nepal's last king left the throne in 2008 after the Maoists won landmark elections and voted to abolish the country's 240-year-old Hindu monarchy.

But the sun and moon that appear on the flag are associated with the Rana and Shah dynasties that once ruled Nepal, and the Maoists say it should be changed to reflect the country's new status.

"We and some other parties think it would be best to change the flag to reflect the spirit of the country," Maoist spokesman Dinanath Sharma told AFP.

Qaeda commanders killed in US strikes in Pakistan

10 militants die in Swat offensive, PM slams missile strike

AP, AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani officials say al-Qaeda's operations chief in Pakistan and an Uzbek operative are believed to have been killed in American missile strikes in the northwest of the country earlier this month.

An intelligence officer and a senior government official said yesterday that operations chief Ilyas Kashmiri was believed killed in an attack on Sept. 7 in North Waziristan.

They said a strike on Sept. 14 is suspected to have killed the Uzbek, named Nazimuddin, but who also was known as Yahyo.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media about the topic.

A US counterterrorism official said last

week Kashmiri was in charge of al-Qaeda's paramilitary operations in Pakistan.

Earlier Pakistan killed 10 insurgents and arrested a militant commander accused of beheading troops in the northwestern Swat Valley, notching up more successes in an offensive that has been welcomed at home and in the US, an army spokesman said Thursday.

Sher Muhammad Qasab was captured this week at an undisclosed location in the valley, said Col Akhtar Abbas.

Pakistan's army launched an offensive in April after militants seized control of much of the valley in the country's volatile northwest. It has cleared much of Swat and killed more than 1,800 insurgents, although sporadic militant attacks continue.

Abbas said Qasab who had a bounty of

10 million rupees (\$121,000) on his head had beheaded many troops in Swat when the Taliban was in control.

The 10 militants were killed by security forces Thursday as they tried to sneak into the region's main city of Mingora, Abbas said.

The army announced Friday the capture of five other Swat Taliban commanders, including spokesman Muslim Khan and commander Mahmood Khan. The arrests were the first time the army had captured any senior commanders in the offensive.

The Swat offensive has been praised by the United States, which wants to see Pakistan fighting militants hiding out in its rugged northwest who are blamed for plotting and carrying out attacks on US and Nato forces in neighbouring Afghanistan.

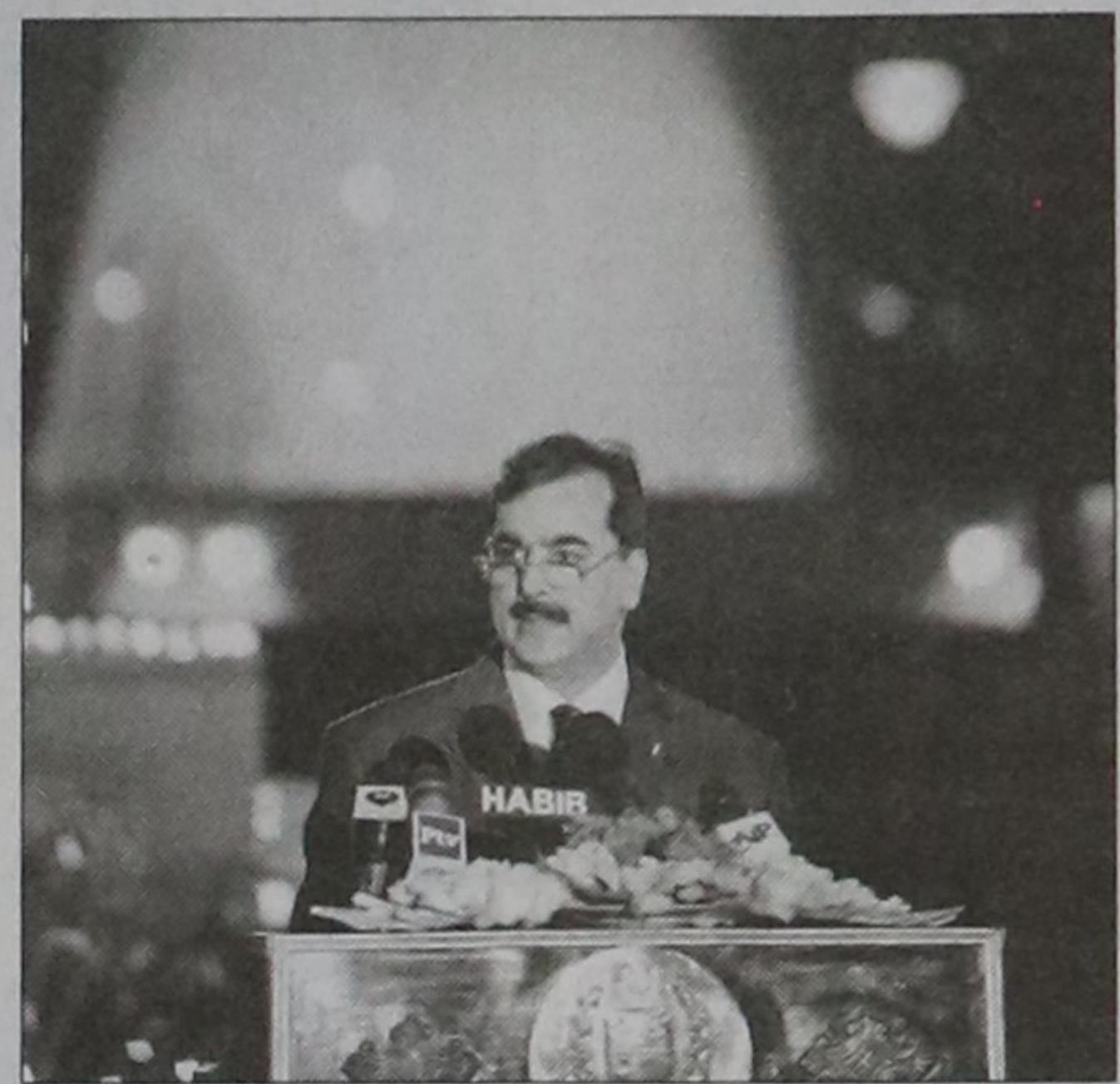
Pak FM plays down meet with Indian counterpart

AFP, Multan

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi Wednesday played down prospects of Islamabad improving ties with New Delhi when he meets his Indian counterpart in New York this month.

"Frankly speaking, I am not expecting any major breakthrough during the meeting" with India's Foreign Minister SM Krishna, Qureshi told reporters in the central Pakistani city of Multan, his hometown.

Qureshi said that he will meet Krishna on the margins of the UN General Assembly



Pakistan Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani addresses media representatives during an iftar party hosted at his official residence in Islamabad on Wednesday. Gilani said that US missile strikes on tribal areas targeting Taliban militants infringed on his country's sovereignty.

No 'immediate' decision on more Afghan troops

Says Obama

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama warned on Wednesday he would make no "immediate" decision on troops for Afghanistan, a day after the top US military officer said extra US soldiers would probably be needed.

As more and more Americans sour towards the eight-year war, even as expectations mount of a deeper US role in the conflict, Obama promised a painstaking review of strategy before taking such life and death decisions.

Obama spoke as his aides presented lawmakers with a set of proposed benchmarks to measure progress in the US-led fight against an increasingly violent insurgency, amid

growing anxiety over the war in Congress.

"My determination is to get this right. I'm going to take a very deliberate process in making those decisions," Obama said after talks at the White House with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

"I just want to be absolutely clear, because there's been a lot of discussion in the press about this, that there is no immediate decision pending on resources."

"You don't make determinations about resources, and certainly you don't make determinations about sending young men and women into battle without having absolute clarity about what the strategy is going to be."

2 journos face cases, threat

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Asked if he had a hand in filing of cases against the two journalists and coercion by the cadres loyal to him, Golam Moula Romi MP told The Daily Star, "Go to the plaintiffs and ask them why they filed the cases. If they tell you that I asked them to file the cases, I'll admit my guilt."

Roni also told a correspondent of The Daily Star to do his 'own duty' and not to phone and disturb him any further.

When contacted, Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner Md Reaz Ahmed said he was informed about some recent cases filed against a few newsmen in his district. The lawmaker had told the DC that the local journalists should take the reconciliation step first, the CAdded.

The deputy commissioner also added that he had requested the MP to make a move to resolve the uneasy situation.

Tarana Halim, also a ruling party lawmaker, on Tuesday submitted a notice in parliament on the topics of repression on newsmen in Patuakhali.

Harunor Rashid, Golachipa upazila chairman and also president of upazila AL, told The Daily Star that

filed the case accusing 20/25 persons, all known as cronies of local lawmaker including Israt Hossain Abbas, president of BCL Golachipa upazila unit, as they attacked on two journalists Salahuddin, and Abu Taher Bappa, district correspondent for BanglaVision, on September 9 when they were going to Golachipa from Patuakhali for their professional duties.

Rab-8 team rescued the rights body-Human Rights Today Bangladesh (HRTB)-reported that unidentified terrorists at Mirer Bazar in Gazipur killed the executive director of 'Samprotik Somoy' MM Ahsan Baru on August 26 this year. The HRTB also says a total of 25 journalists were killed in last 16 years in the country.

Benapol correspondent of the daily Sangbad Debul Kumar Das was seriously injured by a group of criminals at Benapol in Jessor on 13 August.

In Chuadanga, the Amar Desh correspondent Dalim Hossain has been put behind bars after a ruling party lawmaker from Chuadanga, Salaiman Haque Joarder Salam and his brother municipality mayor Reazul Islam filed a case on September 1 against 80 including two journalists Dalim Hossain and Shah Alam of the Prothom Alo.

Pakistan to help India in trial of Mumbai attackers, says Zardari

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has reiterated that Islamabad is ready to cooperate with New Delhi to bring the Mumbai attack perpetrators to justice.

In an interview with a British daily, Zardari said Pakistan would not allow its soil to be used against India.

"Pakistan is ready to cooperate with India to punish the perpetrators of terror attacks in Mumbai. Pakistan has assured that it would not allow its territory to be used against India for any acts of terror," The Nation quoted Zardari, as saying.

He said resumption of bilateral talks was very important, as only then both countries would be able to counter problems facing the region.

"In our view, the resumption of a sustained engagement and dialogue with India could ally each other's concerns. Both Pakistan and India need to avoid hostile propaganda and confrontation against each other," Zardari said.

Huge account flaws

FROM PAGE 1

under 14 ministries in the previous years.

The 13 other ministries are primary and mass education, environment and forest, agriculture, education, fisheries and livestock, women and children affairs, LGRD and cooperatives, communications, water resources, planning, post and telecommunications, health and family welfare, and commerce.

The office of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has blamed the irregularities and financial loss on lack of effective plans, violation of government financial rules and expenditures beyond project proposals.

The CAG is empowered by the constitution to audit and report on public accounts of the republic and all courts of law, and all authorities and officers of the government.

Detecting irregularities like payment without approval and imaginary purchase, the CAG recommended complying with rules in purchasing, appointing consultants and keeping all expenditures within the project proposals. It also recommended determining the irregularities and take necessary steps.

"Government auditing standards, audit code, audit manual and existing rules and regulations were properly followed while conducting the audit on the accounts of the

foreign funded projects," Mohammad Zaki Hossain, director general of Foreign Funder Project Audit Directorate, said in the preface of the audit report of FY2005-06. The parliamentary standing committee on public accounts will examine and dispose the objections.

PAYMENT WITHOUT APPROVAL

During the auditing, the CAG found that a company named Arab Construction was paid additional Tk 13.15 crore against the original work order of Tk 9.83 crore for the work in the 210MW Siddhirganj power project funded by Russia.

In response to the audit objections, the project office claimed that the additional payment was made for extra work.

The audit findings say the extra work was assigned to Arab Construction without floating any tender. But the project office claimed that it did not comply with the formalities to expedite the project work and save the government money.

The audit report says the cabinet purchase committee approved the payment of the additional amount.

LOSS OF TK 676 CRORE Auditing the accounts of fiscal years 2002-03 and 2003-04, the CAG revealed an instance of imaginary purchase of computers, computer hardware, five vehicles and iodine tasting kits spending Tk 7.50 crore from a foreign funded project under the health ministry.

The project office, however,

claimed that it had published the tender notice for the purchase in a newspaper.

The audit team found news-

paper clippings of the tender notice at the project office. But, interestingly, it did not find any tender notice published in the newspaper on that day.

The audit report says the audit team even examined the list and addresses of the suppliers but did not find any authenticity of those. The report recommended taking stern actions against those involved in the purchase.

While police registered all these cases against the Golachipa correspondents, they have so far declined to entertain a case filed by a journalist on September 9 on charge of attacks on newsmen by the cadres loyal to local MP.

Patuakhali district corre-

spondent for RTV Saluddin

UN voices concerns over delays in resettling Lankan refugees

AP, Colombo

A top UN official toured camps holding thousands of war-displaced civilians in northern Sri Lanka on Thursday, amid concerns over delays in resettling the refugees.

UN under secretary general for political affairs Lynn Pascoe, who arrived here late Wednesday, travelled to the northwestern district of Mannar and was to visit the main internment camps in the adjoining district of Vavuniya.

UN spokesman Gordon Weiss said Pascoe was also visiting the northern peninsula of Jaffna before returning to the capital and meeting with President Mahinda Rajapakse for talks on Friday.

He was sent by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who has voiced concern over delays in resettling the Tamil civilians living in the government-run camps.

Pascoe's discussions here would focus on "the resettlement of internally displaced

persons, political reconciliation and the establishment of a mechanism of accountability for alleged human rights violations in the context of the conflict," a UN statement said before he arrived here on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka has resisted calls for war crimes investigations into its recent crushing of the long-running Tamil separatist insurgency and managed to stave off a UN Security Council debate on the issue thanks to support from China and Russia.

The UN has said that up to 7,000 civilians may have perished in the first few months of this year when security forces escalated their offensive against the remnants of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Pascoe told reporters in New York on Monday that Ban was concerned about the slow implementation of commitments given to the UN chief when he visited the island after the end of the fighting in May.

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