

Pakistan tells Britain to stop passing the buck on terror

AFP, London

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said yesterday that Britain should not "pass the buck" by blaming Islamabad for all its home-grown terror plots.

Qureshi told the Independent newspaper that Pakistan can help the West in tackling extremist groups but urged it to be "more sensitive" about the political difficulties Islamabad faces in maintaining domestic support for the fight.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said that three-quarters of terror plots in Britain come from the mountain areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Terrorism a by-product of Pakistan's past mistakes: Zardari

ANI, AFP, London

President Asif Ali Zardari has revealed that extremism was a by-product of Pakistan's past mistakes and was deliberately created during the 1980s.

He said the employment of a liberal policy encouraged religious fanaticism and achieved of certain strategic objectives of terror perpetrators.

"What we are witnessing today is the outcome of that policy of the 80's and even earlier. The policy of using religious extremism as an instrument of war. We in Pakistan have paid a very heavy price for this policy," The News

quoted Zardari, as saying.

Addressing a gathering at London's International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), Zardari pointed out that militants and militancy were not created in a vacuum; they have been the product of a deliberate policy to fight the rival ideology.

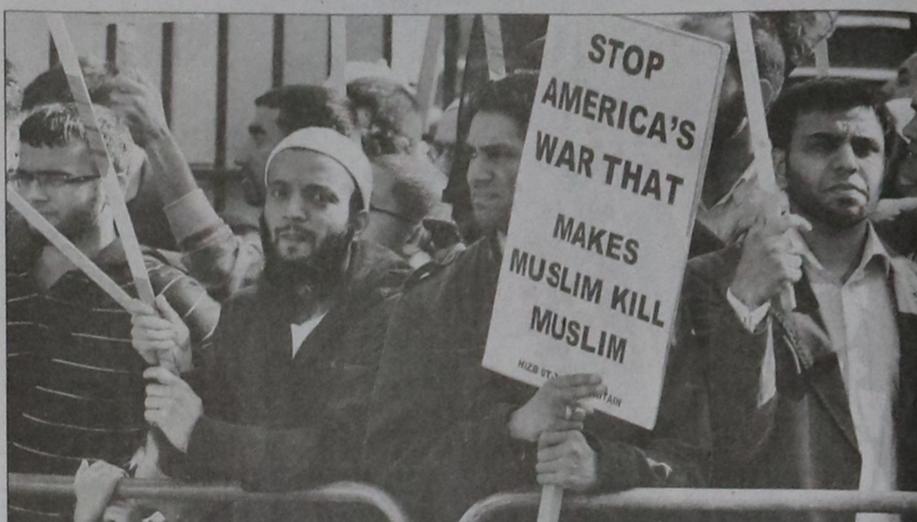
The free world adopted a novel strategy that was based on the exploitation of religion to motivate Muslims around the world to wage jihad, he added.

Furthermore, Zardari pointed out that the strategy may have worked well but some serious mistakes were also made as the world aban-

doned Afghanistan in a hurry and no thought was given to its stability after the withdrawal of foreign forces.

"After the retreat of foreign forces, Afghanistan was abandoned and left at the mercy of the warlords and the Jihadis. Pakistan has suffered more than others. For decades we had to host and continue to host millions of Afghan refugees," he said.

Zardari took issue with the accusation that many of the terror plots unleashed against the world originated in Pakistan, but acknowledged that many "passed through" his country.



Anti-Zardari protesters await the arrival of President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan who made a special address on "Pakistan: Strategic Challenges & Opportunities", at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London on Friday.



Congress Party general secretary Rahul Gandhi (R), Communist Party of India (CPI-M) leader Sitaram Yechury (C) and former Indian railway minister Laloo Prasad Yadav (L) chat at an iftar party at the residence of the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Friday.

Kashmir on high alert following border firing

ANI, Akhnoor

Security was beefed up in the Akhnoor sector and in the Jammu region on Friday following an incident of border firing from the Pakistani side.

Further, all entry and exit points were sealed and vehicles were being checked.

Earlier on Thursday, at least two Border Security Force (BSF) jawans were injured in a cross border firing from the Pakistani side. The incident took place at the Pargwal Post in the Akhnoor Sector.

AK Sarolia, Inspector General of Border Security Force (BSF) Frontier Jammu, said on Friday that a flag meeting with the Pakistan side has been arranged and a protest has been lodged against the border firing.

India agrees to share partial intelligence info with Pakistan

ANI, New Delhi

The Indian government has reportedly agreed to partially share the intelligence it has acquired with regard to the 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai and other possible attacks by Pakistani groups with Pakistan, but sources told a private television channel that New Delhi would also continue monitoring Islamabad's handling of the six dossiers handed over to it by New Delhi.

The report also said that New Delhi will tread the cautious path as far as intelligence sharing is concerned, as it is concerned about possible

misuse and misinterpretation, and about this compromising the 26/11 probe.

The decision to share intelligence information follows a Pakistan demand that India share information with it about any possible attack inside India by Pakistani groups.

The Pakistan Foreign Office demand followed apprehensions expressed by Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram on terror strikes being planned by certain groups in Pakistan.

"We have repeatedly requested the Indian Government to share with us

whatever information it has in this regard," Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman said.

He said that the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India at their meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in Egypt in July had underscored the need to share real time, credible and actionable information on any future terrorist threats.

The spokesman said the two prime ministers had also agreed in Sharm el-Sheikh that "terrorism is the main threat to both countries."

Both leaders also "affirmed their resolve to fight terrorism and cooperate with each other to this end."

NEWS IN BRIEF

DNA test confirms Noordin death

AP, Jakarta

DNA tests have confirmed it was Southeast Asia terrorist leader Noordin Top who was killed days ago in a shootout with police, Indonesian police said yesterday.

Police used fingerprints to identify Noordin's body after a gun battle at a safe house in central Java on Thursday. DNA tests have confirmed those findings, National Police spokesman Nanan Sukarna said.

Rebels kill 2 cops in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Islamic militants have shot dead two policemen in a fresh outbreak of violence in restive Indian Kashmir, police said yesterday.

A group of heavily armed militants, fighting to end Indian rule in the scenic Muslim-majority Himalayan region, apprehended three policemen and snatched their weapons and mobile phones, police said.

Moderate quake hits Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

A moderate 5.5-magnitude earthquake jolted northwestern Pakistan Saturday, but there were no reports of casualties or damage, officials said.

Tremors were felt at 10:17 am (0417 GMT) in several parts of northwestern Pakistan including Peshawar, the capital of northwest frontier province, a seismological department official told AFP.

UN asks Lanka to probe human rights abuses

AFP, Colombo

A top UN official issued a strong call for "truth-seeking" into alleged excesses by security forces during the crushing of Tamil rebels as he ended a visit to Sri Lanka, a UN statement said yesterday.

"We feel that ideally the Sri Lankans should carry out a national process of truth-seeking and accountability," the UN's political chief Lynn Pascoe said in the statement issued in Colombo after his departure late Friday.

Pascoe, undersecretary general for political affairs, asked Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse to set up a process to ensure account-

ability for alleged war crimes, said the statement.

"The (truth-seeking) process has to be serious, independent and impartial," said Pascoe, a deputy to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Sri Lanka has consistently resisted US- and European-led calls for war crimes investigations, saying that no civilians were killed by its security forces.

With support from China and Russia, it has managed to stave off a UN Security Council debate on the issue.

"Coming to grips with the past is difficult," the UN statement said.

"Sweeping it under the rug could be a tempting shortcut,

but it can have a high price at a later time," the statement added.

The UN statement said reconciliation was important for the island's future.

"The UN has dealt with the aftermath of many conflicts around the world, and has learnt that moving forward and building peace sometimes requires finding a way to address issues of accountability," the UN statement said.

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).

UN probe to quiz Musharraf on death of Benazir

ANI, New York

United Nations investigators are preparing to question former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf about the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, amid mounting doubts over official versions of how she died and claims of a cover-up.

The Weekend Australian Magazine revealed Saturday evidence that a bullet - probably sniper fire from the high-velocity rifle - killed the former Pakistan prime minister.

The Musharraf regime said a "bump on the head" resulting from a Taliban or al-Qaeda suicide bomber killed Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007, shortly before an election she was expected to win.



Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) team look for patterns of irregularities in disputed ballots at Independent Elections Commission (IEC) warehouse in Kabul yesterday. The UN-backed ECC has ordered recounts at more than 2,500 polling stations, around 10 percent of the total, after it found "clear and convincing evidence of fraud".

Maoists planning human shields to thwart troops in Chhattisgarh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Dantewada

Worried after the massive assault launched by security forces and warned of more in the coming days, top Maoist leaders have started fleeing their landmine-protected hideouts in the Chhattisgarh jungles and are planning to put up human shields to thwart the troopers, top officials said Saturday. At least two dozen ultras were killed in the attacks Friday.

Reports that the government is preparing for the biggest assault on the Maoists has unsettled the rebels, the officials say.

Prachanda warns of revolt again in Nepal

ANI, Kathmandu

Maoist chairman Prachanda has threatened to launch a decisive revolt in Nepal if the Maoist-floated resolution motion on civilian supremacy were not debated in the Parliament.

Addressing a mass meeting here on Friday, Prachanda said such a revolt would sweep away all the relics of feudalism and establish people's rule.

He said his party has decided to become more flexible for finding solution of the current political deadlock through dialogue.

"Unless we ensure and bag victory, our revolt will continue. This time the reactionaries will be obliterated by the Maoists from the country's political scene," he added.

He also claimed that the commitment proposal floated by his party against the President's move would be passed in the parliament comfortably as some lawmakers from the UML and the Madhesi parties have assured of their support.

He accused the Nepali Congress and the UML of opposing the idea of discussing the motion out of fear that the government would topple.

Pakistan police raid US-employed security firm

AP, Islamabad

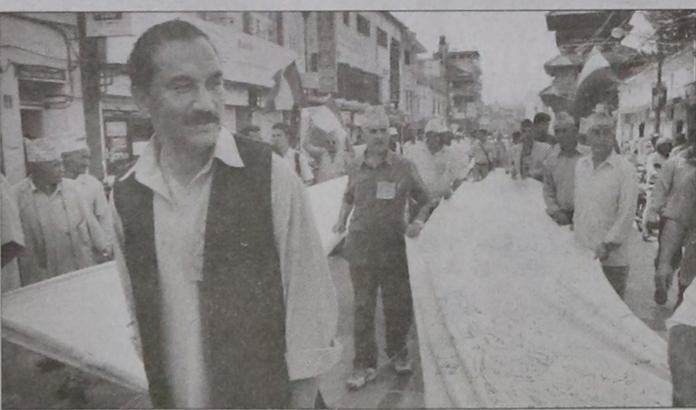
Pakistani police raided a local security firm that helps protect the US Embassy on Saturday, seizing dozens of allegedly unlicensed weapons at a time when unusually intense media scrutiny of America's use of private contractors has deepened anti-US sentiment here.

Two employees of the Inter-Risk company were arrested during the raids in Islamabad, police official Rana Akram told a news conference. Reporters were shown the disputed weapons 61 assault rifles and nine

pistols. Akram said police were seeking the firm's owner.

US Embassy spokesman Rick Snelshire said the US contract with Inter-Risk took effect at the start of 2009. It is believed to be the first contract the firm has signed with the US, said Snelshire, who did not have a figure for its amount.

"Our understanding is they obtained licenses with whatever they brought into the country to meet the contractual needs," he said. "We told the government that we had a contract with Inter-Risk, that Inter-Risk would be providing security at the embassy and our consulates."



Nepalese royal supporters march through the capital playing musical instruments and carrying a huge petition signed by more than 2 million people in Kathmandu on Friday. Hundreds of royal supporters rallied in Nepal's capital to demand a referendum on the future of the monarchy, more than a year after it was abolished.

Car bomb at Manipur governor's residence

ANI, Imphal

A major disaster was averted in Manipur when police detected a powerful car bomb inside the premises of the heavily guarded governor's residence on Friday.

According to reports, militants masquerading as social activists managed to sneak in the small car fitted with powerful bombs inside the premises.

Bomb disposal squad of the state police recovered the bombs and took them to a forested area to be defused.



A US Marine and an Afghan National Policeman wait to board a CH-53 helicopter as it lands at a forward operating base in Helmand Province, southern Afghanistan, on Friday.

UN hails release of Myanmar dissidents

AFP, United Nations

UN chief Ban Ki-moon welcomed Friday the release of a batch of political prisoners in Myanmar but urged the junta to free those still being held, including democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi.

"The Secretary-General welcomes the release of a limited number of political prisoners as part of a larger amnesty," Ban's spokeswoman Michele Montas said.

Earlier Friday, Myanmar authorities freed two journalists who helped victims of last year's Cyclone Nargis and released several opposition activists as part of an amnesty for more than 7,000 prisoners, according to witnesses.

'The Age of Stupid': A wakeup call on climate

AFP, Paris

Could we, the human race, really miss an ever-narrowing chance to save the planet from the ravages of global warming?

"The Age of Stupid," which will be screened in hundreds of venues around the world next week, contemplates this grim scenario with the open aim of galvanising a collective effort to prevent it.

Former UN chief Kofi Annan is expected to attend a special "green carpet" showing in New York Monday, on the eve of the world's first United Nations climate summit.

The film is a serious docu-

mentary dressed up as a futuristic climate thriller, with a few bits of animation thrown in to help explain the underlying science.

The story is told in the voice of an ageing archivist - played by A-list British actor Pete Postlethwaite - looking back from the year 2055 on a world devastated by climate catastrophe.

Ensnared in a sea-bound tower harbouring a complete digital record of human history, the sadder and wiser archivist pulls up image files that tell the story of real, flesh-and-blood people profited by the filmmaker, Franny Armstrong.

Grieving Pakistan villagers bury bomb victims

AFP, Peshawar

The death toll from a suicide car bomb attack in a crowded Pakistani market rose to 40, police said Saturday as grieving families buried their dead.

A suicide bomber drove an explosives-packed vehicle into the market in the north-west town of Ustazai Friday as families were buying supplies for a major religious festival marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

"We have recovered seven more dead bodies from the debris, 40 people are confirmed dead, all of them have been identified," Fazal Naem, a police spokesman in the nearby garrison town of Kohat, told AFP.