

# Pakistani Taliban claim deadly UN office attack

Agencies of world body keep offices shut, 6 militants die as Pak jets bomb Taliban hideouts

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani Taliban said yesterday they carried out the suicide attack on a UN compound that killed five aid workers and closed UN offices nationwide in the worst attack in the capital in months.

Four Pakistanis and an Iraqi were killed Monday when a man dressed in military uniform breached strict security measures and detonated explosives in the heavily fortified office of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Islamabad.

Azam Tariq, a spokesman for the umbrella Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) movement, vowed further onslaughts against foreign and local targets.

"This attack was launched by us -- we claim responsibility," Tariq told AFP by

telephone from an undisclosed location.

"The WFP is promoting the US agenda. They are silent on massacres and do not comment on killings in Waziristan and other areas," Tariq said, referring to a lawless northwest tribal district where the US has launched missile strikes.

"Such types of suicide attacks will continue in future. We will target all people and offices working for American interests. We have sent more suicide bombers in various parts of the country and they have been given targets."

The bloody strike on a humanitarian target provoked worldwide outrage, and forced the United Nations to close their offices across the country.

"We are assessing the security situation. Today (Tuesday) the offices are closed," said UN spokeswoman Ishrat

Rizvi.

"We hope that the offices will be open soon... The closure of the offices will affect the operations but our effort and intention is to continue our humanitarian assistance."

Interior Minister Rehman Malik has already blamed the blast on Taliban militants avenging a military push against them in northwest Swat valley.

On Monday, Pakistani fighter jets bombed Taliban hideouts in South Waziristan, killing six militants, intelligence officials said.

Military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas told the private Samaa TV channel that an operation in the area was "inevitable", but gave no timescale.

Tariq vowed fierce resistance against any offensive in their stronghold.



Photograph taken on Oct 4 shows new Pakistani Taliban chief Hakimullah Mehsud (R) speaking with a local media representative in Sarogha area of South Waziristan along the Afghanistan border. Hakimullah Mehsud appeared in front of the local media persons on October 4, dispelling rumours of his death and vowing "severe" new attacks.

## US trying to make Pak army impotent

Says ex-Pak minister

ANI, New York

A former Pakistan minister has criticised the Gilani government for agreeing to the terms and conditions attached with the Kerry-Lugar Bill, saying the United States is trying to 'defang' the country and destroy the armed forces.

"People think this government has sold us to the Americans again for their own selfish interests," The New York Times quoted Jahangir Tareen, as saying.

Tareen said Washington is trying to reduce the Pakistan Army's capability so that it is unable to counter India's growing influence in the region.

## US goals steady in Afghanistan

Obama invites bipartisan leaders to help chart strategy

AP, Washington

President Barack Obama's top defence and diplomacy advisers said the United States retains the Afghanistan war goal that he outlined just two months into his presidency to sideline al-Qaeda but changing circumstances require a reassessment of how to get there.

A "snap decision" on whether to add more US troops would be counterproductive, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Monday.

Whatever the president decides, the military will salute, Defence Secretary Robert Gates said.

"It's important that at the end of the day that the president makes a decision that he believes in," Hillary added.

The question of whether to further escalate the conflict after adding 21,000 US troops earlier this year is a major decision facing Obama and senior administration policy advisers this week.

Obama invited a bipartisan group of congressional leaders to the White House on Tuesday to confer about the war. And Obama will meet twice this week with his national security team.

Divided on Afghanistan, Congress takes up a massive defence spending bill this week even before the president settles on a direction for the war.

Gates appealed Monday for calm amid the intense administration debate over the flagging war, and for time and privacy for the president to

come to a decision. Gates' remarks stood as an implicit rebuke of the man he helped install as the top commander in Afghanistan, Gen Stanley McChrystal, for lobbying in public for additional troops Obama may decide to forgo.

In two separate appearances Monday, Gates made the point that Obama needs elbow room to make strategy decisions about the war as the internal White House debate goes increasingly public.

"It is important that we take our time to do all we can to get this right," Gates said at an Army conference. "In this process, it is imperative that all of us taking part in these deliberations civilians and military alike provide our best advice to the president candidly but privately."

## Lanka seeks foreign cash for war refugees

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka will tap foreign donors to raise more cash to look after over 250,000 people displaced by its offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels, a minister said Monday.

"We are drawing up a fresh appeal to meet our running costs next year that will include funds for livelihood support and resettlement projects," Minister of Disaster Management Mahinda Samarasinghe told reporters in the capital Colombo.

Sri Lanka already received 225 million dollars in aid pledges just before the fighting ended in May to look after civilians who lost their homes, he said.

Some 195 million dollars of that pledge money has been received so far, Samarasinghe added.



Indian villagers waded through floodwaters in Oleru village of Guntur district some 400km from Hyderabad yesterday. Aid workers used helicopters and boats to try to reach survivors of massive floods in southern India that have killed at least 280 people in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and forced nearly 1.5 million people to take refuge in relief camps.

## India steps up flood relief

AFP, Raichur

Aid workers used helicopters and boats to try to reach survivors of massive floods in southern India that have killed at least 280 people, officials said yesterday.

Days of heavy rain and flash floods in the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have forced close to 1.5 million people to take refuge in relief camps.

Authorities stopped evacuating residents and have instead focused on getting medical aid to them to prevent an outbreak of disease.

Rescuers recovered more bodies, bringing the death toll in Karnataka alone to 194.

Water levels were receding in many places, but aid workers had to use helicop-

ters and relief boats to distribute essential supplies to low-lying villages cut off from road transport.

"In a few pockets, relief has not reached in time. There are concerns about providing food, blankets and medicines to displaced people," HV Parashwanath, secretary of Karnataka's disaster monitoring agency, told AFP.

Residents complained that electricity and drinking water were scarce, and that the prices of essential items such as rice and vegetables had shot up.

Thousands of relief camps have been set up to shelter at least 800,000 displaced people in Andhra Pradesh, and around 550,000 in Karnataka, according to government figures.

## New sensors to detect chemical arms in seconds

ANI, Washington

Scientists at Queen's University Belfast are developing new sensors to detect chemical agents and illegal drugs within seconds, which will help in the fight against the threat of terrorist attacks.

The devices will use special gel pads to 'swipe' an individual or crime scene to gather a sample which is then analysed by a scanning instrument that can detect the presence of chemicals within seconds.

This will allow better, faster decisions to be made in response to terrorist threats.

The scanning instrument will use Raman Spectroscopy, which involves shining a laser beam onto the suspected sample and measuring the energy of light that scatters from it to determine what chemical compound is present.

## 'Masters of light' win Nobel physics prize

AFP, Stockholm

Three physicists won the 2009 Nobel Prize yesterday for work on fibre optics and light sensing that helped unleash the Information Technology revolution.

Charles Kao, Willard Boyle and George Smith were hailed by the Nobel jury as "the masters of light" for transforming communications from copper-wire telephony and postal mail to the era of the Internet, email and instant messaging.

"This year's Nobel Prize in Physics is awarded for two scientific achievements that have helped to shape the foundations of today's networked societies."

"They have created many practical innovations for everyday life and provided new tools for scientific exploration," it said.

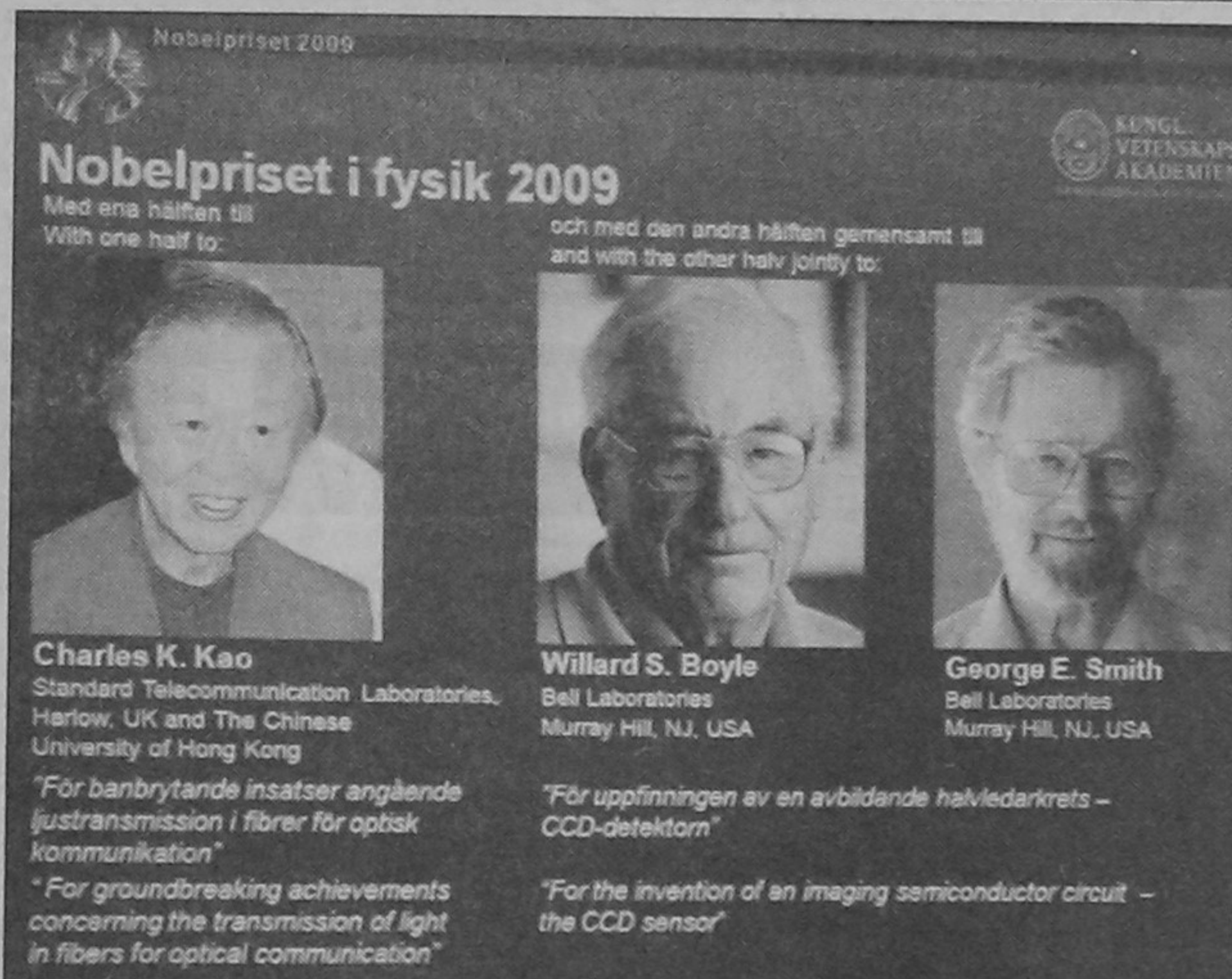
One of them is the fibre-optic

cable, which enables transmission of data at the speed of light, and the other is the digital sensor that is the digital camera's "electronic eye," the Nobel jury said.

Kao, who has British and US nationality but has been based in Hong Kong, was awarded half of the prize for groundbreaking achievements in the use of glass fibres for optical communication.

"If we were to unravel all of the glass fibres that wind around the globe, we would get a single thread over one billion kilometres (600 million miles) long -- which is enough to encircle the globe more than 25,000 times -- and is increasing by thousands of kilometres (miles) every hour," the jury said.

The 1966 discovery by Kao, now 75 and retired, means that "text, music, images and video can be transferred around the globe in a split second," it added.



File portraits of (from L) Britain's Charles Kao, Willard Boyle and George Smith of the US, winners of the 2009 Physics Nobel Prize winners, projected during the announcement at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden.

## Better care at birth could save 600,000 lives a year: Study

AFP, Cape Town

Improved health care for women giving birth in poor countries could save about 600,000 of the two million babies who die every year, according to a study released yesterday.

While most women in developed nations deliver their babies with the help of a skilled attendant, 99 percent of baby deaths happen in poor homes in Africa and South Asia in areas with few doctors, resources or equipment.

The report, published in the International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, was released at an international conference in Cape Town.

"Each year over two million babies and mothers die at birth. The huge numbers hide multiple personal stories of loss. Each death is a tragedy to a family -- actually, a double tragedy since almost all these deaths could be prevented," said Joy Lawn of Save the Children in the United States.

## Gas exploration

FROM PAGE 16

The committee also said at present corruption and irregularities are also going on in the power and energy ministry and asked the ministry officials to go tough on checking those.

It said the committee members will visit the ministry soon to talk to some officials about curbing corruption and irregularities.

Shubid Ali also outright rejected the allegation of national committee to protect oil, gas and mineral resources that the government has made a blue print to hand over the country's resources to the foreign companies in exchange of mutual interest.

"Without reading the contact properly they (the national committee) are talking silly. Ours is sovereign country. How come anyone can snatch our sovereignty," a lamenting Shubid Ali asked.

On corruption, the committee chief said corruption is still going on in the ministry including meter reading. "We have asked the ministry officials to check corruption at any cost," he said.

Asked about the proposed talk with the leaders of the national committee to protect oil and gas, Shubid Ali said, "We will take time to sit with the leaders of the national committee as they have split into several factions." "We will sit with them later at a conve-

nient time," he added.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary body on September 16 said they will arrange a views exchange meeting with the leaders of the national committee in its next meeting to discuss the much-debated awarding of three offshore gas blocks to the foreign companies.

The leaders of the national committee on September 20 said they are ready to sit with the standing committee if they are invited formally.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs on August 24 approved oil and gas exploration bids for three off-shore blocks under the condition that the explorers would not work in the internationally disputed maritime areas until the dispute is resolved.

As per the cabinet decision, the two companies are allowed to explore the areas of the blocks not claimed by Myanmar or India.

The national committee that enforced a half-day hartal in the city on September 14 gave an ultimatum to the government till October 15 to cancel the decision of giving offshore gas exploration rights to the two foreign companies.

It claims the contracts would oblige the government to export up to 80 percent of the gas to be extracted from the offshore fields.

## Hospital taken over by touts

FROM PAGE 1

said something different. He said Safar had assured him of quick recovery of his son at lesser cost and also warned him that his boy "would not" get proper treatment at Nitor.

Sensing the presence of new persons Safar tried to get away. But as he failed, he talked. He said he works on behalf of an associate professor of Nitor who has a chamber at Shebika. He added he is paid Tk 1,000-5,000 in commission for hoodwinking each patient into the clinic of that Nitor doctor.

Safar's case is no exception at Nitor where patients are being routinely duped by dozens of brokers every day.

These brokers either demand money from the patients in exchange of providing them quick medical services or lure them to sub-standard private clinics.

The Nitor authorities boast of having 10 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, but all these arrangements appear futile in checking the broker menace.

Shahjalal, who came to Nitor for having an X-ray and plaster on his wounded left hand, said he had to seek help of a broker finding no other alternative.

"I first came here on September 9 and had to give the broker Tk 400 for plaster and another Tk 150 for the X-ray.

Next week during my second visit I had to pay him again Tk 200 and also Tk 50 for the X-ray department's duty staff's breakfast," Shahjalal said.

Refusal to grease their palms would only "cause more trouble as they will ask you to come later on one pretext or another," said Shahjalal.

Abu Taher, a broker who claimed to be a staff and also a freedom fighter, was found busy dealing with the patients at the emergency gate that day.

Posing as guardians, these correspondents sought his help for plastering a patient's broken legs.

He demanded Tk 600 for the service, for which normal official charge is only Tk 120.

"Give me Tk 600, I will arrange everything very quickly; otherwise you will have to wait three to four hours to get to the duty doctor," Abu Taher warned.

By 1:40pm Faruk Hossain of Manikganj had already waited for two hours to get his daughter's broken hand plastered. A broker turned up and made arrangement for the treatment in exchange of Tk 300 in no time.

Besides these irregularities, allegations are rife that doctors are minting money out of the patients' pockets in collusion with a section of medical support service providers.

Patient Bablu Mandal

described how a doctor forced him to buy expensive treatment materials from a trader of his (doctor's) choice.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nitor Director Prof Dr KH Abdul Awal Rizvi admits the broker issue and involvement of some hospital staffs in realising money illegally from the patients.

He however claims, "The situation is much better now and we're working sincerely to keep the hospital broker-free and improve the services as well."

Rizvi mentions the hospital's severe shortage of workforce. He says, "Every day around 400 patients receive treatment outdoor and 160 others emergency services at the 500-bed hospital. But there are only 104 doctors against a requirement of at least 200. That's why patients seeking treatment at the outdoor and emergency departments have to wait for long."

On supply of drugs and other health care materials, he says, "We can provide most of the drugs but supply of some materials like plaster, rod and gauge is not adequate."

"We've already set 10 CCTV cameras and have a plan to set 10 more at different points in the hospital to strengthen the monitoring system to check anomalies," Rizvi adds.

## Faruq provoked

FROM PAGE 1

to be careful in making statements or reports on this case.

At the start of the hearing Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told the court that different lawyers and journalists on television talk shows are making different comments on the consequence of the case, which is not right.

The court can pass order asking the lawyers and journalists to be restraint in making comments, he said.

Barrister Mamun told the court the counsels for both the state and the defence of the case should be restraint in delivering statements on the case.

The attorney general's office should be careful in delivering statements, as he had earlier said that the case would be resolved within this year, he said.

The court said not only both the parties in the case but all including the media should be restraint on the matter.

The apex court yesterday adjourned the hearing and fixed 9:30 am today for further hearing on the appeals of the five convicts.

The five convicts -- dismissed army personnel Syed Faruque Rahman, Sultan Shahariar Rashid Khan, Mohiuddin Ahmed, AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, and Bazul Huda -- who are in jail now, filed the appeals with the

SC in October, 2007.

Mamun in his submission yesterday concluded placing the statement of Syed Faruque Rahman, and started placing confessional statement of another convict, Sultan Shahariar Rashid Khan.

He will also continue submission today.

After the hearing, Mamun told reporters that Syed Faruque Rahman was forced to make confessional statement to the magistrate and then judge of the High Court Justice Md Ruhul Amin in his verdict of this case did not accept this statement.

He said another judge of the High Court Justice ABM Khairul Haque in his verdict accepted the statement.

Mahbubey Alam told journalists at his office that the media can publish reports on the proceedings of Bangabandhu murder case but nobody can make comments on TV talk shows on who are innocent and who will get released.

Meanwhile, the courtroom of the case was shifted to room no 2 from room 3 of the Appellate Division. The first day's hearing was held at room no 3, which is smaller in size than courtroom 2.

A number of lawyers and journalists were present at the courtroom during the hearing.