

Nobel laureate Obama faces Afghan war decision

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama's first task after being anointed Friday as this year's greatest peacemaker will be to decide how to wage war in Afghanistan.

Obama sensationally won the Nobel Peace Prize less than nine months into his presidency, with the jury hailing his "extraordinary" diplomatic efforts on the international stage.

Now he faces the monumental decision over how to proceed in an unpopular and deepening war in which hundreds of American lives have been lost this year, and whether or not to commit even more troops to Afghanistan.

Obama is the fourth US leader to win the distinguished award, but he is certainly the only Nobel laureate forced to make such a monumental decision about a US war immediately after earning the

distinction.

Obama may decide on US commander General Stanley McChrystal's request for up to 40,000 more troops for Afghanistan as early as Friday, when he holds the latest in a series of meetings with his top diplomatic, military and intelligence advisers on war policy.

Infusing the atmosphere of that meeting no doubt will be the extra weight on Obama's shoulders as a global peacemaker, and the reactions from around the region.

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai immediately congratulated Obama on Friday, saying he was the "appropriate" person to win the peace prize.

"His hard work and his new vision on global relations, his will and efforts for creating friendly and good relations at global level and global peace make him the appropriate recipient of the Nobel

Peace Prize," Karzai spokesman Siamak Hirai told AFP.

The country's Taliban insurgents however condemned the award to Obama as "unjust," saying the president had "not taken a single step towards peace in Afghanistan."

"We have seen no change in his strategy for peace," said Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Islamic fundamentalist militants.

"He has done nothing for peace in Afghanistan," Mujahid told AFP. "He has not taken a single step for peace in Afghanistan or to make this country stable."

The stunning Nobel announcement came just hours after the White House said the Taliban poses less of a threat to US security than the al-Qaeda movement, raising speculation that Obama may not opt for a vastly increased counter-insurgency force in Afghanistan.

Suicide attack kills 6 in Afghanistan

AFP, Khost

A suicide attack in southeastern Afghanistan killed six guards working for a road construction company, while Nato forces killed 15 Taliban insurgents elsewhere, officials said.

A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at the Sky construction company in the Jadran district of Paktia province, local governor Abdul Wali Jadran told AFP.

"Six security guards of the company were killed and another three were wounded in the blast," Jadran said.

Separately, Nato and Afghan soldiers killed a Taliban commander and 11 of his men in an overnight operation in western Herat province, said Jalandar Shah Behnam, the Afghan army corp commander for western Afghanistan.



PHOTO AFP
This Philippine coastguard handout aerial photo shows buildings and cars in the flooded northern Philippines town of Pangasinan. The death toll from two weeks of unprecedented storms across the northern Philippines soared past 540 after landslides consumed homes and neck-deep floods inundated towns.

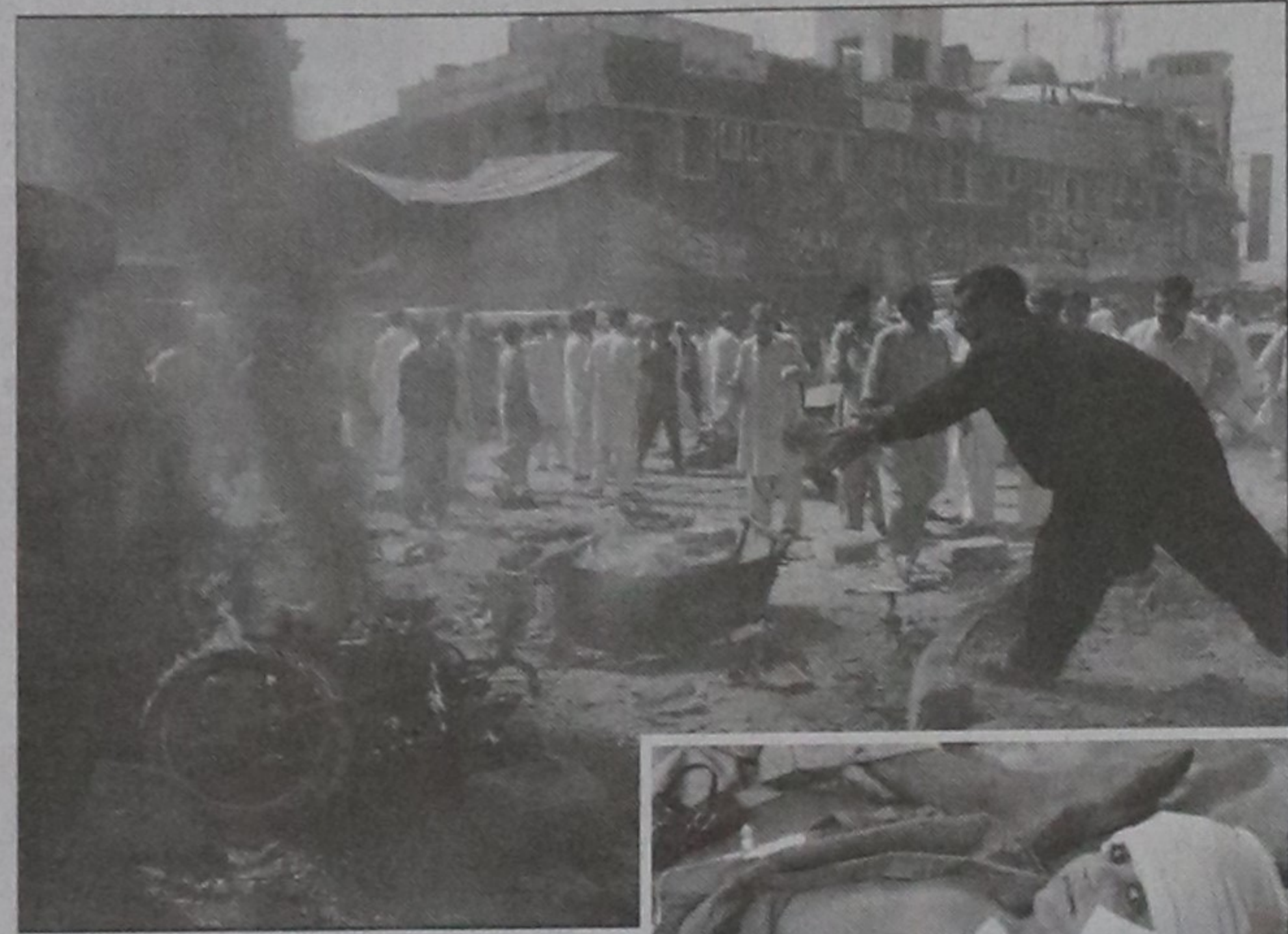


PHOTO AFP
A Pakistani bystander throws a handful of sand as he tries to extinguish a burning motorcycle after a car bomb blast in Peshawar yesterday while an injured Pakistani boy lies on a hospital bed following the blast that killed 49 people.

India signals offensive against Maoists

17 cops killed in fresh attack

AFP, New Delhi/Mumbai

India looks set for a major offensive against Maoist rebels, whose growing influence and increasingly brazen attacks have been branded a national security failure, officials and sources said yesterday.

"A new anti Maoist plan has been approved by the cabinet. States hit by this insurgency are instructed to follow the new plan and get their act together," senior home ministry official Kashmir Singh told AFP on Friday.

The cabinet met Thursday just hours before left-wing guerrillas gunned down 17 policemen in western India, the latest in a series of assaults in an increasingly lethal insurgency.

At least 150 Maoists attacked the policemen in a

forest village in Maharashtra state, near the border with Chhattisgarh state where the rebels have their stronghold.

"One senior officer and 16 constables have died," police inspector SD Mundhe told AFP by telephone.

"The rebels have fled to the Chhattisgarh (state) border," Mundhe said. "We cannot search for them in the dark."

The Maoists attacked the local police in a gunfight that lasted more than two hours, Mundhe said. The attack in the village of Laheri began around midday, police said.

Security sources cited by the media said the new strategy was for a large-scale, coordinated offensive involving seven states worst affected by Maoist violence, with support from federal security services.

Landslides kill 181 in north Philippines

AFP, Pangasinan

The death toll from two weeks of unprecedented storms across the northern Philippines soared past 540 yesterday after landslides consumed homes and neck-deep floods inundated towns.

At least 181 people were killed in a series of rain-triggered landslides overnight Thursday and on Friday in mountainous regions of the Philippines main island of Luzon, officials in those areas reported.

Meanwhile, the downstream farming plains of central Luzon were inundated with waters that reached two storeys high after dams in the mountains could not hold the phenomenal amount of water that has fallen on the region.

"The rains in this area are unprecedented," the executive officer of the National Disaster Coordinating Council, Glen Rabonza, told AFP.

"We are stretched, no doubt, but we are responding in the best way we can."

The crisis showed no signs of easing as tropical storm Parma, responsible for the past week of rains, continued to hover just off Luzon.

Further south on Luzon in the nation's capital, Manila, nearly 300,000 homeless survivors were packed into makeshift evacuation camps following record rains on September 26 that killed at least 337 people.

The worst of the overnight landslides appeared to be in remote Benguet province, where 120 people were confirmed killed in five towns, said provincial governor Nestor Fongwan.

Another 38 people were confirmed killed in the mountain resort town of Baguio, officials there said.

Across all of the northern Philippines, the confirmed death toll from the landslides was 181.

This was on top of the 25 people killed earlier by Parma in northern Luzon.

In the farming region of Pangasinan province to the southwest of the provinces where the landslides occurred, thousands of people were stranded on rooftops in dangerously similar scenes to those in Manila a fortnight ago.

Days of rain from Parma forced authorities to open the gates on five dams, sending water cascading through dozens of towns in Pangasinan, which has a population of 2.5 million people.

Suu Kyi talks sanctions with Western diplomats

AP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta leader allowed detained Myanmar pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi a rare meeting with Western diplomats yesterday to discuss sanctions imposed against the military-ruled country.

The Nobel Prize winner, who remains under house arrest, was driven to a government guesthouse to meet with diplomats of the United States, Great Britain and Australia, according to the officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the press.

The meeting lasted about one hour. After it concluded, Suu Kyi was driven back to her lakeside residence, where she has spent 14 of the last 20 years under house arrest.

Suu Kyi sent a letter to junta leader Senior Gen. Than Shwe on Sept. 26, stating her willingness to cooperate with the military government to have the sanctions lifted and seeking permission to meet with Western diplomats in order to understand positions of governments that imposed the sanctions.

The 64-year-old democracy icon had previously welcomed sanctions as a way to achieve political reconciliation with the pro-democracy movement. Suu Kyi's opposition party has insisted on concessions from the government if they are to work together, particularly the freeing of political prisoners.

Suu Kyi requested meetings with diplomats from the US, European Union and Australia and said she needed to meet her party to understand their position on sanctions.

After the letter, Myanmar Relations Minister Aung Kyi met with Suu Kyi twice within a week. The second meeting took place Wednesday.

British Ambassador Andrew Heyn described Friday's meeting as a "fact-finding mission" by Suu Kyi.

2 die in raid on Indonesian militant hideout

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian anti-terror forces killed two people and arrested two others during a raid Friday on a militant hideout believed to be linked to July 17 suicide bombings, a police source said.

"Two were killed during the raid while two others were arrested alive," the counter-terrorism squad source told AFP.

He said police were looking for Syaifudin Zuhri bin Jaelani, an Islamist extremist accused of recruiting two suicide bombers who detonated themselves at the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta in July, killing seven people.

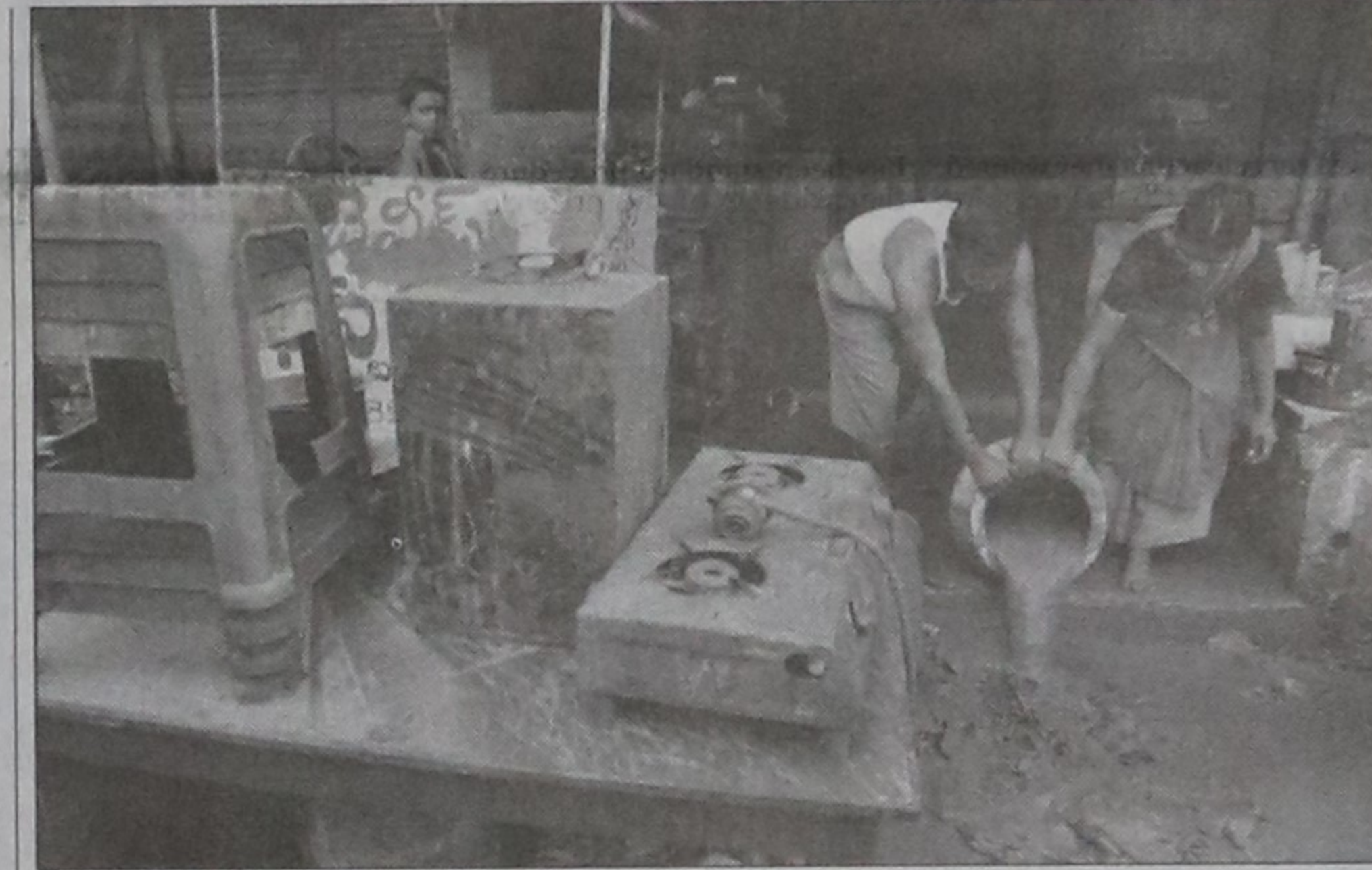


PHOTO AFP
Indian residents clear mud and debris from their homes in the village of Allampur in Mahaboobnagar District some 240km south of Hyderabad yesterday. Survivors of flash floods that killed more than 300 people in southern India began to return home Thursday to discover what was left of their houses and belongings.

Qaeda terrorist vows to behead enemies with a giant-size blade

ANI, London

A new terror video has surfaced showing an al-Qaeda terrorist waving a giant razor-sharp blade and vowing to achieve a victory for Islam over British and US troops in Afghanistan.

The Sun quoted a military source, as saying, "If anyone needed reminding, this is the face of the enemy."

In the video posted on a terrorist website, Abu Askar the German, brandishes the knife that could behead or dismember any hostage his terror group grabs.

"The bloodthirsty threat of Abu Askar the German and his giant cleaver is plain - anyone who opposes us will lose their heads," Terrorism expert and author Chris Dobson said.

Iran to 'blow up heart of Israel' if attacked

Says Khamenei aide

AFP, Tehran

Iran will "blow up the heart" of Israel if attacked by the Jewish state or the United States, an aide to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was quoted yesterday as saying.

"Even if one American or Zionist missile hits our land, before the dust is settled, Iranian missiles will blow up

the heart of Israel," state news agency IRNA quoted Khamenei's deputy representative to the elite Revolutionary Guards, Mojtaba Zolnour, as saying.

Iranian officials have repeatedly said that Tehran would carry out severe reprisals if Israel or the United States attack the country.

The United States and its

regional ally Israel have never ruled out a military option to stop Tehran's nuclear drive, which the West says is aimed at making nuclear weapons while Iran says it is solely for peaceful ends.

At the end of September, armed forces chief of staff General Hassan Firouzabadi dismissed Israeli threats against Iran, saying the Jewish state was a "paper tiger."

Nasa bombs the moon's surface to look for water

AFP, Washington

The United States blasted the surface of the moon yesterday with two rockets on a mission to look for water below the lunar surface that could be used by astronauts on future space missions, Nasa said.

At 1130 GMT the LCROSS satellite crashed into the Cabeus crater floor near the moon's south pole at around 5,600 miles (9,000 kilometers) per hour, followed four minutes later by a shepherding spacecraft equipped with cameras to record the impact.

Grainy thermal images carried on the US space agency's television station showed colder blue sites and warmer red sites on the moon's surface, but there was no apparent light flash as the rockets made impact.

Nasa said the blasts would kick up a plume of lunar dirt to an altitude of about 6.2 miles (10 kilometers) and produce a flash lasting about 30 seconds.

Cameras mounted on the 1,965-pound (891-kilogram) shepherding spacecraft were to beam live footage of the initial impact as the craft flew through the debris plume, collecting and relaying key data back to Earth before it too plows into the moon.

"The LCROSS science team is making their preliminary assessment of approximately four minutes of data collected from the LCROSS Spacecraft. Observatories involved in the LCROSS Observation Campaign are reporting in," the mission website said after the impact.

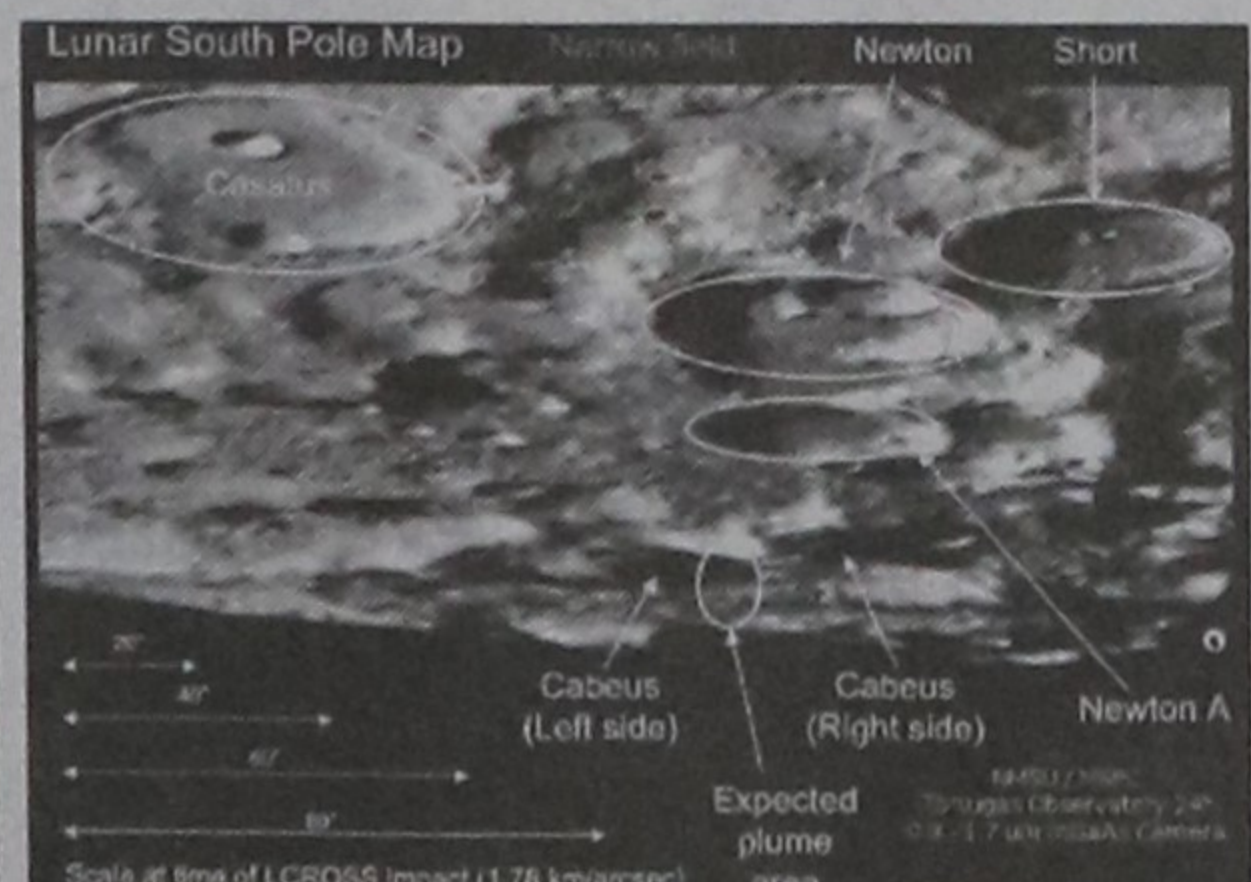


PHOTO AFP
This Nasa image shows a close-up of the lunar south pole with the LCROSS target crater Cabeus at bottom centre. Nasa is preparing a violent return to the moon on Friday as part of a mission to send a satellite and a rocket booster crashing into the planet's surface to look for water.

In solemn homage we remember the man who humbly held the beacon of entrepreneurship and paved the way for many others to advance.

Mr. Sheikh Akij Uddin, a man of substance and vision sadly left us on this day three years ago. May his legacy continue to inspire the promising potentials of Bangladesh.

In fond remembrance,
Bitopi Family

WORLD PALLIATIVE CARE DAY

10th October 2009

Palliative Care
...is care for people with illnesses that can not be cured.

- controlling pain
- giving support
- sharing problems
- relieving suffering

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