



PHOTO: AFP
Pakistani soldiers take up position after an attack on the entrance of army headquarters in the garrison city Rawalpindi yesterday as a helicopter flies overhead (inset). The attack on Pak army headquarters ended with four attackers killed.

Taliban planning to carry out more suicide attacks

Warns Pak intelligence

ANI, AFP, Lahore/Peshawar

Pakistan intelligence agencies have warned that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) may carry out a series of suicide attacks across the country including Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Chaklala and Peshawar.

An intelligence report said the Taliban may target important government installations and eminent personalities.

"The TTP could target installations of law enforcement agencies and the military, important personalities and the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex," The Daily Times quoted the reports, as saying.

The Taliban has already sent two separate teams of suicide attackers for the purpose, the report said.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the suicide car bombing in Pakistan's north-western city of Peshawar has risen to 52 after three more people died in hospital overnight, police and health officials said Saturday.

The massive blast ripped through a

packed market at midday on Friday killing at least 49 people and injuring over 100.

Charred corpses were strewn in a shopping area of the city's main Khyber Bazaar, with cars reduced to burning wrecks and a city bus destroyed and flung on its side.

"Three seriously injured died in the hospital and 15 more are in serious condition," said doctor Hameed Afridi, the chief executive of Peshawar's main Lady Reading Hospital.

"We are trying our best to save their lives," Afridi said, adding that 47 dead bodies have been identified and handed over to relatives.

Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik blamed the Taliban for the attack and said it could force the army to bring forward a planned operation to wipe out militant strongholds in the northwest tribal region bordering Afghanistan.

Peshawar is the main city in the northwest and has been a frequent target of extremists linked to al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

"They are compelling us to launch the operation in South Waziristan early. We will take a decision on the operation against terrorists over the next few days," Malik told reporters in Islamabad on Friday.

It was the sixth bombing in Peshawar in four months in which 77 people have been killed. It comes as the Pakistani Taliban have vowed to increase attacks to avenge the killing of their leader Baitullah Mehsud in a US drone strike in August.

"Senior police experts are investigating the blast, we have got some clues which can not be disclosed at this juncture," Liaqat Ali, police chief of the troubled capital Peshawar told AFP.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani "strongly condemned" the bombing, expressing his government's resolve to continue action against extremists, his office said in a statement.

The military is wrapping up a fierce offensive against Taliban rebels in the northwestern Swat valley launched in April.

Pakistan blocks 2 news channels

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan took two news channels off the air Saturday that had been covering attempts by soldiers to capture two militants who broke into army headquarters in an attack on the complex.

Geo and SAMA channels, known for critical reporting of the government, were blocked from broadcasting Saturday evening. Government officials were not available for comment.

A message from Pakistan's media regulatory body appeared on those channels announcing it was temporarily suspending transmission of "independent news TV channels" until further notice. Several other TV news channels also known for their hard-hitting reporting continued to broadcast.

Like other news channels, the stations had been covering an attack early Saturday on the army headquarters compound by Islamist militants. The military said that two attackers had infiltrated the complex and were holed up inside.

US still sees Pakistan with suspicion: Musharraf

ANI, Lahore

Former Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf has said that even though the US considers Islamabad as an important ally in its 'war on terror', Washington sees it with suspicion.

Speaking on the National Public Radio's 'Talk of the Nation' programme, Musharraf said Pakistan continues to face an 'existential threat' from India.

He, however, said establishing peace in the region was both "a requirement, and a compulsion" for the two neighbouring states.

Musharraf stressed that the US should not hold back Pakistan from taking 'essential measures' in response to the

threat of an attack from India. Defending the Pakistan Army's stance over the controversial Kerry Lugar Bill, the former general said he supports the Armed Forces in their objection.

It is worth mentioning here that the Pakistan Army has objected to the terms and conditions attached with the bill, terming them as 'humiliating' for the country.

The bill clearly states that the huge monetary assistance being provided could be scrapped if the country fails to root out militancy from its soil. It also mentions that banned outfits such as the LeT, Taliban and al-Qaeda, which operate from within Pakistan's geographical boundaries should be weeded out of the region.

7 accused of Mumbai attack in Pak court

AFP, Rawalpindi

Seven suspects accused by India of involvement in last year's Mumbai terror attacks that killed 166 people were Saturday produced in an anti-terror court in Pakistan, a defence lawyer said.

"Both defence and prosecution lawyers gave their arguments in the proceedings, the proceedings lasted for about three hours," defence lawyer Shahbaz Rajput said.

He declining to provide further details saying the judge had advised both sides against it.

The November 26-29 siege of the Indian city left more than 300 people injured when 10 heavily armed gunmen targeted luxury hotels, the city's main railway station, a popular restaurant and a Jewish centre.

5 militants killed in Kashmir as India foils infiltration bid

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops killed five Islamic militants, three of whom were trying to sneak into Indian Kashmir from the Pakistani side of the disputed region, the army said Saturday.

"We have killed three militants and foiled their attempt to enter our side from across the Line of Control (LOC)," Indian army spokesman JS Brar said.

The heavily-militarised LOC divides Kashmir between nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan which both claim the whole territory and

have fought two wars over it.

The army said the militants were killed in the northern Gurez sector after they were sighted early Saturday along the LOC.

Also, two militants were killed in separate overnight gunbattles with Indian troops in southern Kashmir, the army said.

Earlier this month, India's defence minister accused Pakistan of encouraging militants to cross into Indian Kashmir, saying Islamabad is "always trying to push the maximum number of people into Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir".



PHOTO: AFP
Indian supporters of the Trinamool Congress Party take part in a bike rally in Itanagar, capital of Arunachal Pradesh, northeast India yesterday. With the final countdown for the October 13 State Assembly polls in Arunachal Pradesh, the state is working for peaceful elections in the Himalayan region, which shares a 2,000km border with China.

ARUNACHAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION Congress favourite to win

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Itanagar

The ruling Congress party has emerged as the frontrunner in the coming assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh, with the fractured opposition unlikely to spring any surprises.

Elections to the 60-member legislature is scheduled for Oct 13 but voting would take place for just 57 seats. Three candidates have been declared elected unopposed.

The three are Chief minister Dorjee Khandu and Congress members (incumbent) Tsewang Dhondup from Tawang constituency and debutant Jambej Tashi from Lumla.

The chief minister was elected unopposed from the Mukto constituency in Tawang district bordering China in 1999 and 2004 as well.

"We are sure to win the elections hands down as people will vote for development and stability. Our government has been able to provide a major boost to the overall economic progress of the state," Khandu told IANS.

A total of 157 candidates are in the fray for the Oct 13 elections.

Apart from the Congress that had fielded candidates in all the 60 seats, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has put up 30 candidates and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) 22. The surprise entrant is the Trinamool Congress, which

has 28 candidates in the fray. Of the 28 candidates fielded by the Trinamool Congress, five are former Congress ministers and 10 are incumbent legislators from the ruling party who were denied the ticket this time.

"Our main campaign issue is development and good governance. People know what we did in the past. We are confident of their support," said Congress MP Takam Sanjay.

There is no opposition in the present 60-member house - the Congress has 45 members and enjoys the support of 13 independent legislators and two legislators from the regional Arunachal Congress party. Six of the independents have applied for Congress membership.



PHOTO: AFP
Indian flood victims search their damaged home for salvageable items in the village of Rajoli in Mahaboobnagar district, some 240km south of Hyderabad yesterday. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has called deadly floods in the country's south a "national calamity" and assured victims they would receive full support in rebuilding their lives.

Army won't be used against Maoists: Indian PM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, ANI, Bangalore/Gadchiroli

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday affirmed the government's determination not to succumb to the increasing threat of Maoists but ruled out the use of the army against them.

"It shows the measure of challenge we face. We will never succumb," Singh told reporters in Raichur, about 400 km from here, after he made an aerial survey of the flood-hit areas in parts of north Karnataka.

"We are not talking of using armed forces. Police and paramilitary forces will be mobilised," the prime minister said.

Maoists had killed 17 policemen in Gadchiroli in

Maharashtra Thursday in the latest attack by them on police and police stations.

Meanwhile, the Centre is dispatching 3,700 Border Security Force (BSF) personnel to nab the Maoists responsible for killing 20 policemen in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Thursday.

Currently, there are 3,300 men of the Maharashtra anti-Naxal force - the C-60 and the central paramilitary force.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has already pressed two Mi17 copters for the joint operations being carried out by the Maharashtra and the Chhattisgarh police.

Meanwhile, state Home Minister Jayant Patil has said the Government will continue to fight the menace.

Hamis seeks new date for Palestinian unity deal

AFP, Cairo

A Hamas delegation met Egypt's intelligence chief Omar Suleiman yesterday to try to set a new date for the signing of a Palestinian unity deal, a member of the Islamist movement's team said.

"We have met General Omar Suleiman" but the results of the talks in Cairo will be announced later, Mohammed Nasr told AFP.

However, another Hamas

official, Ezzat al-Rashq, told Al-Jazeera television that the movement could "not shake hands with (Palestinian leader Mahmud) Abbas at this point in time" to seal an Egyptian-mediated deal.

He called first for an apology from Abbas over the Goldstone report on the Gaza war last December-January.

The Hamas team led by exiled senior political leader Mussa Abu Marzuk travelled

to Cairo to request "a new, appropriate date for the new session of inter-Palestinian dialogue," a Hamas spokesman in Gaza told AFP earlier.

"The atmosphere is not right for the signing of an accord," he said.

Hamas, which rules Gaza, has asked Egypt to delay the signing of the deal which Cairo as mediator had announced for later this month, a source within the Islamist group said on Wednesday.

OBAMA'S NOBEL WIN World press divided

AFP, Paris

The world's media were divided yesterday after the shock award of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama, with some calling it a victory for ideals and others condemning it as deeply politicised.

The prize-giving committee in Oslo named Obama the winner of the prestigious prize on Friday, hailing his "extraordinary" efforts in international diplomacy and hastening nuclear disarmament.

But the announcement proved as controversial as it was surprising.

The Washington Post's Dan Balz said there was amazement all around that the award had gone to "a president still in his first year in office with no major accomplishments internationally".

"The breadth of reaction, from exuberant gratification in some quarters to scorn and dismissal in others, underscored the political divisions over the direction of Obama's policies and the sharply polarised impressions of his leadership," wrote Balz.

The New York Times called it a "mixed blessing" for Obama that highlighted "the gap between the ambitious promise of his words and his accomplishments".

It said the award further demonstrated that Obama was still celebrated as the "anti-Bush" while in fact he had not shifted as much as he once implied he would from the previous administration's national security policies.

London's Daily Telegraph

said it was "one of the biggest shocks Nobel judges have ever sprung" and would also be seen as one of the most political, with nominations closing just 12 days after Obama took office.

France's Liberation wrote that, the prize was deserved "because he's Obama, with his life symbolically on three continents (and) because his success has become synonymous with dignity and hope."

But, the editorial said, "Could a Nobel Peace Prize laureate decide to attack Iran?"

India's Tribune declared "Obama is Nobel peace-maker", while the Times of India hailed a "Lifetime award for debutant Obama".

In China the unofficial Beijing News called it "an award of encouragement".

The paper said the Nobel jury's decision was more "symbolic" than anything else, and that it was "very clear that Obama's 'feats' are still purely verbal and it will be very difficult to implement them".

Japanese media said the award would increase global expectations of the Obama administration, with the mass-circulation Yomiuri Shimbun saying it was "an important task for him to achieve fruitful results from now on".

Egypt's Al-Dustur daily called the award "political hypocrisy".

"What's he done to get this prize?" the paper asked, recalling that US troops remained in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Middle East peace process was still deadlocked and Obama "hasn't done anything to oblige Israel to get rid of its nuclear weapons."

Clown beams message of water conservation from space

AFP, Montreal

The first clown in space, Guy Laliberte, has launched a 14-city poetic planetary extravaganza to promote clean drinking water, from the International Space Station.

The billionaire space tourist and founder of Cirque du Soleil described his journey as a "poetic, social mission."

The two-hour live One Drop show, broadcast online Friday included guests Al Gore, Bono, Salma Hayek, Peter Gabriel, Shakira, Canadian astronaut Julie Payette and a musical theatrical performance by Laliberte's circus troupe.

It kicked off with a reading of a poem by Man-Booker prize-winning author Yann Martel, describing a conversation between the Sun, the Moon and a drop of water. Throughout the show, several people read bits of the fable.

Former US vice president Gore used charts and video to warn of melting polar ice caps, water pollution, and extreme weather causing droughts and flooding.

"To solve the climate crisis and safeguard our planet and its beauty... will require global effort," he said.

Australian Tiffany Speight sang from the Sydney opera house. Inuit singer Elisapie Isaac belted out haunting lyrics in her native language, while rappers Fnaire performed from Morocco.

Indian MPs head to Lanka to study refugee camps

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Chennai

Ten MPs belonging to India's ruling alliance are headed to Sri Lanka Saturday and they said their main aim is to see the conditions in the camps where thousands of Tamils displaced by the war are housed.

"Our primary focus is to see how the internally displaced people are being maintained in the special camps in Sri Lanka and how the aid is being distributed to them," EM

Sudarsana Natchiappan, Congress MP and a member of the delegation, told IANS.

Nearly 300,000 men, women and children are housed in fortified camps set up in the island's north after the military crushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May.

"The delegation is one of (promoting) confidence building measures amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils, and the Indian and Sri Lankan governments," Natchiappan added.

'Moon bombing' mission may have hit 'dry hole'

ANI, Washington

Nasa's much-anticipated "Moon bombing" mission, in which it sent the LCROSS spacecraft to the Moon to strike a crater in order to collect frozen water, may have literally hit a "dry hole", as there were no billowing plumes of dust and ice visible after the impact.

According to a report in National Geographic News, Nasa's LCROSS mission sent two spacecraft "bombing" into the moon on October 9.

The craft successfully struck their target, a crater thought to harbour frozen water.

But, the much-hyped moon show that had been expected to accompany the impact, however, turned out to be a flop, as no billowing plumes of dust and ice were visible through backyard telescopes or on Nasa TV.

The low-impact collision had one Nasa expert musing that LCROSS may have struck a "dry hole."

At 7:31 am ET on October 9, a 2.2-ton empty rocket shot from the LCROSS probe hit the crater Cabeus A on the moon's south pole.

Four minutes later, LCROSS (Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite) performed its own kamikaze dive, which was the final act in its mission to detect evidence of water ice in the moon's shadowed craters.

"Whether or not sky-watchers could see the LCROSS crashes, Nasa insists they happened."

"I can certainly report that there was an impact," said LCROSS principal investigator Anthony Colaprete. "We saw the impact and we saw the crater," he added.

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