



PHOTO: AFP  
Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi (C) looks on following a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell (L) at a hotel in Yangon yesterday. The most senior US official to visit Myanmar for a decade and a half held talks with Suu Kyi after the ruling junta allowed the detained Nobel laureate to make a rare public appearance.



## Pakistan in 'state of trauma' over blasts

AFP, Rawalpindi

The anxious wives were on the phone again to their husbands in the Pakistani garrison town of Rawalpindi, a terrorist target where daily routine can turn to horror in an instant.

"She's very worried," Abdul Habib said after putting down the receiver while visiting a friend's carpet shop close to the site of a bombing which left 35 people dead.

Not far from the carpet shop, Junaid Anwar Baig's wife had also phoned.

"She calls two or three times a day," said Baig, 62, who sells copper ornaments and other handicrafts.

"She always says: 'Be careful. Don't move around.'"

Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked extremists have carried out a two-year campaign of attacks that have killed more than 2,400 people in Pakistan, which has a population of around 167 million.

The indiscriminate killing, beamed into living rooms by television channels broadcasting round the clock, is cultivating a state of fear and uncertainty across Pakistan.

"The whole nation is in a state of trauma," said Naima Hassen, a psychologist who has

counselled victims of the attacks.

There have around 300 blasts since the wave of violence began. Last week in northwestern city Peshawar 118 people -- many of them women and children -- died in a market bombing that was the country's second-worst attack.

"The problem is this: you can't stop it," said Habib, 57. "Anything can happen at any time. Mentally, everybody's upset."

That feeling of helplessness is common, said the psychologist.

"They feel that they are unable to cope with this terrorism," she said.

Along Mall Road, a wide, busy street in front of the carpet shop and Baig's business, they have already had a lot to cope with.

In the latest attack to strike this city adjoining the capital Islamabad, a bomber on a motorcycle blew himself up close to people queuing for their salaries outside a Pakistani bank and hotel, police said.

The bomb site, still blocked by police, is about 200 metres (yards) from army headquarters where last month 10 gunmen kept up a nearly 24-hour siege that left 23 people dead and deeply embarrassed the military.

**Obama's half brother recalls abusive father**

AP, Guangzhou

President Barack Obama's half brother has broken his media silence to discuss his new novel, the semi-autobiographical story of an abusive parent patterned on their late father, the mostly absent figure Obama wrote about in his own memoir.

In his first interview, Mark Nidesandjo told The Associated Press that he wrote "Nairobi to Shenzhen" in part to raise awareness of domestic violence.

"My father beat my mother and my father beat me, and you don't do that," said Nidesandjo, whose mother, Ruth Nidesand, was Barack Obama Sr.'s third wife. "It's something which I think affected me for a long time, and it's something that I've just recently come to terms with."

Like his novel's main character, Nidesandjo had an American mother who is Jewish and who divorced his Kenyan father. The novel, which goes on sale Wednesday by the self-publishing company Aventine Press, is one of several books in the works by relatives of the president.

President Obama's parents separated two years after he was born in Hawaii in 1961. The senior Obama, a Kenyan exchange student, divorced the president's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, in 1964 and had at least six other children in his native Kenya.

**Indian PM reaches out to tribal groups**

AFP, New Delhi

India's prime minister yesterday appealed for better protection of indigenous tribal groups who have been courted by increasingly active Maoist rebels.

Manmohan Singh told chief ministers of India's 29 states to end harassment of tribal people, who often face widespread exploitation and discrimination from government and local officials.

"There has been a systemic failure in giving the tribals a stake in the modern economic processes," Singh said in New Delhi.



PHOTO: AFP  
US President Barack Obama (2nd R) speaks beside Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt (C), the European Council High Representative Javier Solana (2nd L), and President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso (R) during the US-European Union Summit in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday.

## EU, US join forces to combat global warming

**Merkel calls for a climate protocol in speech to American lawmakers**

AFP, Washington

The European Union and the United States join forces yesterday to combat global warming ahead of a key UN-backed climate summit next month, but the Europeans warned Washington that not enough had been done.

Fresh from a White House meeting Tuesday with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who also made a heart-felt plea for a climate protocol in a speech to US lawmakers, US President Barack Obama held talks with European Union leaders to assure them his administration supported clinching a new treaty in Copenhagen in December.

The EU-US summit goes into its second day Wednesday for talks with US Energy Secretary Steven Chu, after the Europeans pressed Washington to take action on climate change and Obama stood shoulder to shoulder with his European allies in pressing to redouble efforts to combat global warming.

"All of us agree that it is imperative for us to redouble our efforts in the weeks between now and the Copenhagen meeting to assure that we create a framework for progress in dealing with (a) potential ecological disaster," Obama said after talks with European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

Merkel, in a rare speech to a joint session of Congress, compared the battle over climate change to the struggle to bring down the Berlin Wall two decades ago next week.

She also backed Western calls for emerging nations to do more. "I'm convinced that once we in Europe and America show ourselves ready to adopt binding agreements, we will also be able to persuade China and India to join in," she said.

But even as she and Obama stressed the need to solidify a framework agreement at Copenhagen, US Republican lawmakers boycotted a committee meeting on an Obama-backed bill to set the first US requirements on curbing carbon emissions blamed for global warming.

Asked what impact Merkel's speech might have on the US debate, Senator James Inhofe, the top Republican on the committee looking at the climate legislation, said: "None whatsoever."

Barroso, who praised Obama for having "changed the climate on climate negotiations," said he was "worried by the lack of progress in negotiations" ahead of the December 7-18 climate meeting that aims to seal a treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol before it expires in 2012.

"Of course we are not going to have a full-fledged binding treaty, Kyoto-type, by Copenhagen," Barroso told reporters. "This is obvious. There is no time for that."

An international meeting next year in Mexico could be used to finalize a treaty, but Barroso said Copenhagen needed to come up with the framework of the deal, and that the world's largest economy in particular should take a lead role.

"What we are asking is the United States to show leadership in this, such an important issue," Barroso said.

After meeting with Obama, he said he was "more confident now" about Washington's commitment, but also warned against protracted negotiations akin to the stalled Doha round of trade liberalization talks.

Reinfeldt, whose country currently holds the rotating EU presidency, said the United States should at least agree on targets for cutting emissions and on financing for developing nations.

## US, allies give Karzai 6 months to perform

**Abdullah terms his foe's re-election illegal**

ANI, AFP, Washington/Kabul

The United States and its allies have reportedly given Afghan President Hamid Karzai six months to sideline his brother and reduce corruption or risk losing American support, Afghan officials have told The Times.

Senior palace insiders said that President Obama delivered the ultimatum when he congratulated Karzai on his re-election on Monday.

Top of his demands was action against corruption, the appointment of "reform-minded ministers" and several high-profile scalps to prove Karzai's commitment to cleaning up his Government.

"If he doesn't meet the conditions within six months, Obama has told him America will pull out," said an official with access to Karzai's inner circle.

"Obama said they don't want their soldiers' lives wasted for nothing. They

want changes in Cabinet, and changes in his personal staff," he added.

Meanwhile, former presidential challenger Abdullah Abdullah said Hamid Karzai's re-election as Afghan leader was illegal, accusing his rival Wednesday of lacking a mandate to deliver on pledges of unity and reform.

Three days after pulling out of a runoff against the incumbent, Abdullah said a subsequent decision by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to hand Karzai another five years in power had no basis in law and underlined its bias.

But the former foreign minister refrained from calling on his supporters to take to the streets.

"This (IEC) decision does not have a legal basis," Abdullah told reporters.

"Such a government which lacks legitimacy cannot fight corruption."

"A government which comes to power

without the people's support cannot fight phenomena of terrorism, unemployment, poverty and hundreds of other problems."

The President's half-brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, has repeatedly denied claims that he controls Afghanistan's billion-dollar heroin trade.

As he head of Kandahar's provincial council, he is the main powerbroker in the south of the country, but the President has refused to remove him, insisting that there is no proof of wrongdoing.

In his acceptance speech Tuesday, Karzai vowed to eradicate the "dark stain of corruption," which he admitted had undermined faith in his regime.

Afghan officials said efforts are on to find Wali Karzai a new position.

The American Embassy is understood to have warned Karzai it will start collecting evidence against Wali Karzai if he is not removed from Kandahar.

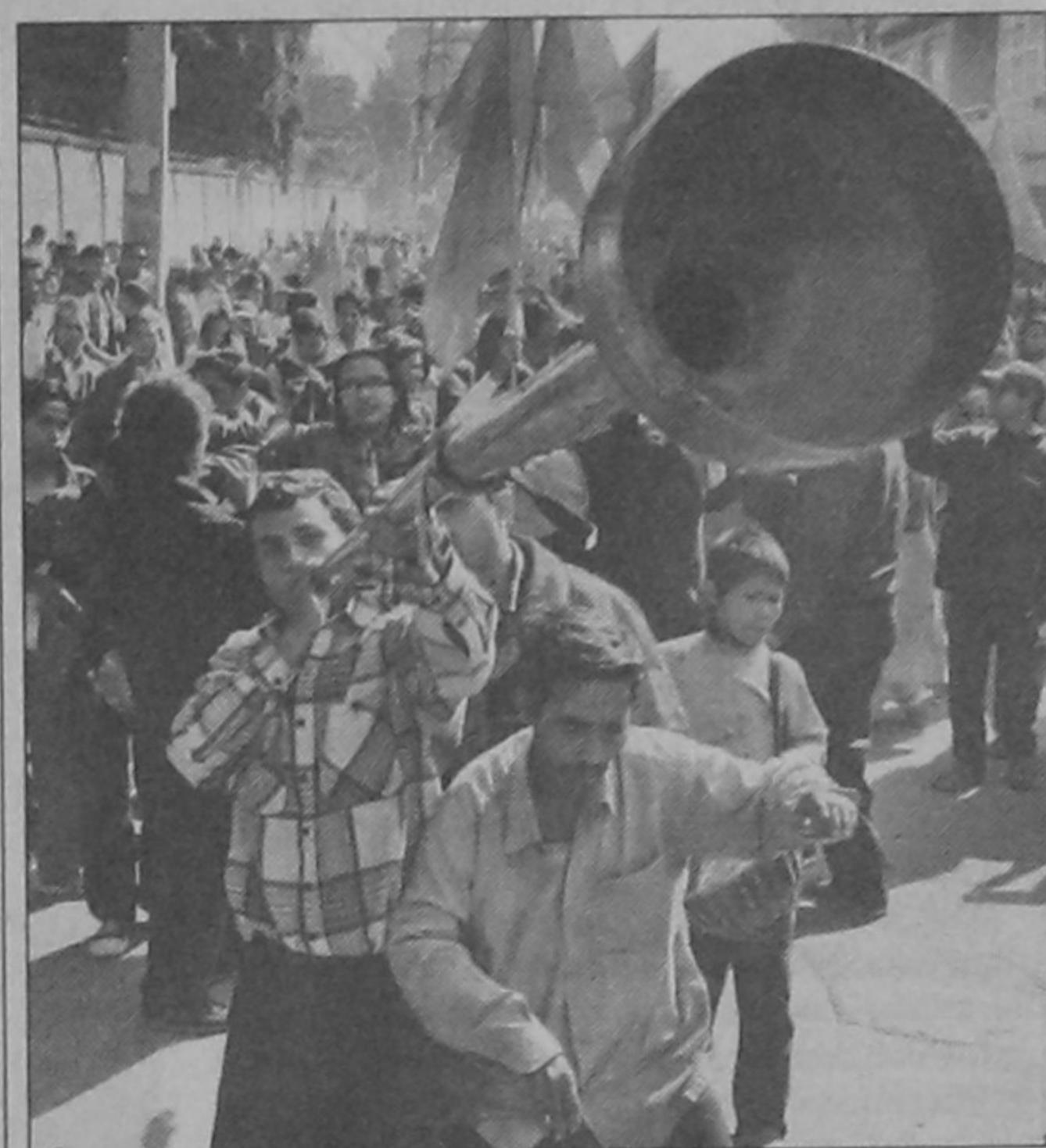


PHOTO: AFP  
United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) supporters dance during a protest against the government outside the government administration building at Singha Durbar in Kathmandu yesterday. Nepal's Maoists launched their protests aimed at destabilising the government in a dispute over the military that led to the Maoists' fall from power in May.

## 'Rogue' Afghan cop kills 5 UK soldiers

AP, Kabul

Five British soldiers were killed in a shooting in the southern Afghan province of Helmand, Britain's defence ministry said yesterday, in an attack Afghan authorities said was carried out by an Afghan policeman.

Tuesday's attack occurred in the Nad-e-Ali district of the country's volatile Helmand Province, and brings the number of British forces personnel who have died in Afghanistan to 229.

A Helmand police official said the attacker was a policeman. Nato said the soldiers had been at an Afghan police checkpoint when an individual picked up his weapon and began firing. The alliance said the attacker's motives were unclear, and that the incident was being investigated by Afghan authorities and Britain's Royal Military Police.

"The death of five brave soldiers in a single incident is a terrible loss," British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said.

"They fought to make Afghanistan more secure, but above all to make Britain safer from the terrorism and extremism which continues to threaten us from the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan," he said.

Brown insisted he remained committed to ensuring his country's troops had "the best possible support and equipment and the right strategy, backed by our international partners, and by a new Afghan government ready to play its part in confronting the challenges Afghanistan faces."

Speaking to reporters in Kabul, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, who was the main challenger to President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan's recent fraud-marred election, expressed condolences to the soldiers' families.

**Outlaw dows call shots from India**

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and retreated instantly. They later considered themselves fortunate to find Zafar's body in a water body a few kilometres from their village next week.

During the phone conversations Shahin said they gave "death penalty" to Zafar two years ago at their self-styled court on charge of helping police arrest a bodyguard of GMF boss Aminul Islam Mukul.

Zafar's friend was talking about the horror at a restaurant in Bottoli on the outskirts of the town. Suddenly he sensed a waiter "spying" on him and whispered to this correspondent, "Leave the place immediately. The waiter might be a paid agent of Mukul-Shahin. We'll be in trouble then."

The network of different active outlaws outfit in 10 southwestern districts, especially in Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur and Jhenidah where JSD Gonobahini, GMF and Biplabi Communist Party, Red Flag faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-M-L) are active.

Abdul Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan-led Janajuddha faction of PBCP was also a strong group in the region but has weakened after the arrest and death of Tapan and his second-in-command.

Rab says these outlaws groups possess a huge number of firearms including sophisticated M16 and AK47 rifles, but no-one knows exactly how many weapons they have.

UNWRITTEN LAW  
To win a tender bid, contractors must give at least 15 percent of the project money to the outlaws in the southwestern region where it has become an unwritten law.

The death toll in so-called shootouts increased significantly since the crackdown as only 11 suspected outlaws died in that manner earlier this year.

The law and order also marks significant improvement, but people are still frightened as kingpins of the outlawed groups are still at large.

According to Rapid Action Battalion, thirteen factions of armed communist groups and

as many gangs named after the ringleaders concerned are operating in 23 districts of Khulna, Rajshahi, Dhaka and Barisal divisions.

A dangerous situation prevails in Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur and Jhenidah where JSD Gonobahini, GMF and Biplabi Communist Party, Red Flag faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-M-L) are active.

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"It doesn't matter who you are or which party you belong to. You must give them at least 15 percent of the project money three months prior to a tender

process to win the bid," says a construction contractor in Khulna.

Sources say the tender bids are awarded after talks between outlawed party chiefs and some local influential ruling party leaders. In return, the political party leaders also get a certain percentage of the project money, the sources add.

Allegations are rife that district Awami League General Secretary Azgor Ali and sader Jubo League Organising Secretary Mominur Rahman Momiz visited India a couple of months ago to meet GMF top leaders Mukul and Shahin.

It is alleged the objective of the meeting was to settle tender for Tk 18 crore development projects of Roads & Highways.

Momiz and his partners have recently won a Tk 2.8 crore tender bid as no-one else dared to compete, sources say.

Contacted, Azgor and Momiz denied all the allegations and claimed they had gone to India on treatment purpose.

Momiz initially denied winning any tender for an RHD project but later admitted that his partner Sarwar got a Tk 2.8 crore work order.

In dealing with the bid for Katakhal plant, the tender committee at first found selected Shasha Denims as the lowest bidder. Shasha Denims is yet another partner of Asian Entech. However, it was later found that Shasha Denims forgot to provide the bid bond.

The committee then switched to the next lowest bidder Summit Power. But it was soon found that Summit failed to install a land-based power unit, while the bid was rejected.

Following this finding, the committee stalled evaluating bids for this site. Till yesterday, the committee could not decide about the next course of action on this matter.

In many cases the lowest bidder has cited the efficiency of power plant machinery which the actual manufacturers themselves do not claim. Rental power is costly. The evaluation committee should not rush its decision based on half-baked review of tender documents," comments an official concerned.

## Controversy clouds PDB's rental bid

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four power projects by submitting fake claims which were not cross-checked.

The sources add the power board is likely to land with contracts that will fail to deliver plants just like what happened in the past.

PDB has not yet decided anything