

UN urges Karzai to fight corruption

AP, AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council joined calls Friday on Afghan President Hamid Karzai to fight corruption, with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calling the country's political situation "delicate" following deeply flawed elections.

In a tepid statement, the Council "acknowledged" rather than welcomed the conclusion of the tumultuous electoral process where Karzai was declared the winner after challenger Abdullah Abdullah withdrew from a runoff race saying it could not be free or fair.

Afghanistan yesterday rejected criticism of Karzai by foreign leaders and the senior UN official in the country, accusing them of disrespecting the country's sovereignty.

Kai Eide, the UN's special representative to Afghanistan, was among those who this week warned Karzai that he could lose international support unless his new government tackled endemic official corruption.

The Afghan foreign ministry issued a statement rejecting such criticism, saying it breached "accepted international norms" and "violated respect for Afghanistan's national sovereignty".

On Saturday the foreign ministry in Kabul issued a statement rejecting such criticism, saying they breached "accepted international norms" and "violated respect for Afghanistan's national sovereignty."

Abdullah on Wednesday called Karzai's victory illegal and his government a failure, saying the president's tainted administration would not be able to check corruption or fend off the Taliban.

Ban acknowledged there were problems with the elections, following a closed-door meeting briefing the Security Council on his recent trip to Afghanistan.

"It is obvious that the political situation remains delicate," Ban said. "Clearly, the recent elections were seriously flawed."

More foreign troops certain in new Afghan plan: US

AP, Brussels

A top Pentagon official says President Barack Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan will be certain to include reinforcements of foreign troops.

"I think we're very close to a decision in the United States. It will be a matter of a couple or maybe a few weeks," Undersecretary of Defense Michele Flournoy said according to an official transcript released Saturday.

Flournoy, the Pentagon's policy chief, led a US delegation that briefed Nato ambassadors Thursday on the administration's review of the Afghan war. Officials released a transcript of her remarks from that meeting.

"No one is talking about leaving Afghanistan, or even standing pat. We are increasing our commitment and we're talking about how best to do that with both civilian and military resources," Flournoy was quoted as telling Nato ambassadors.

Investigations into Friday's incident were ongoing and no further details were available, he said.

In what appeared to be a reference to the same incident, however, the Afghan defence ministry said mem-

7 Afghan troops killed in Nato airstrike

AFP, Kabul

bers of the Afghan army and police had been killed.

"Due to a Nato forces air strike on November 6 in Badghis province seven Afghan security personnel (both Afghan army and national police) were martyred and also some were wounded," it said in a statement.

"The commando brigade informs us that foreign forces also sustained some casualties," it said.

The incident is believed to have taken place during a clash involving Isaf and Afghan soldiers searching for two paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division who went missing Wednesday during a routine supply mission.

Local police said a party looking for the two missing soldiers clashed with Taliban and that alliance aircraft were called in to provide support.

The defence ministry made no reference to a clash between the joint forces and Taliban militants.

Police said the casualties occurred when the air strike mistakenly targeted international troops.

The Western military officer who spoke on condition of

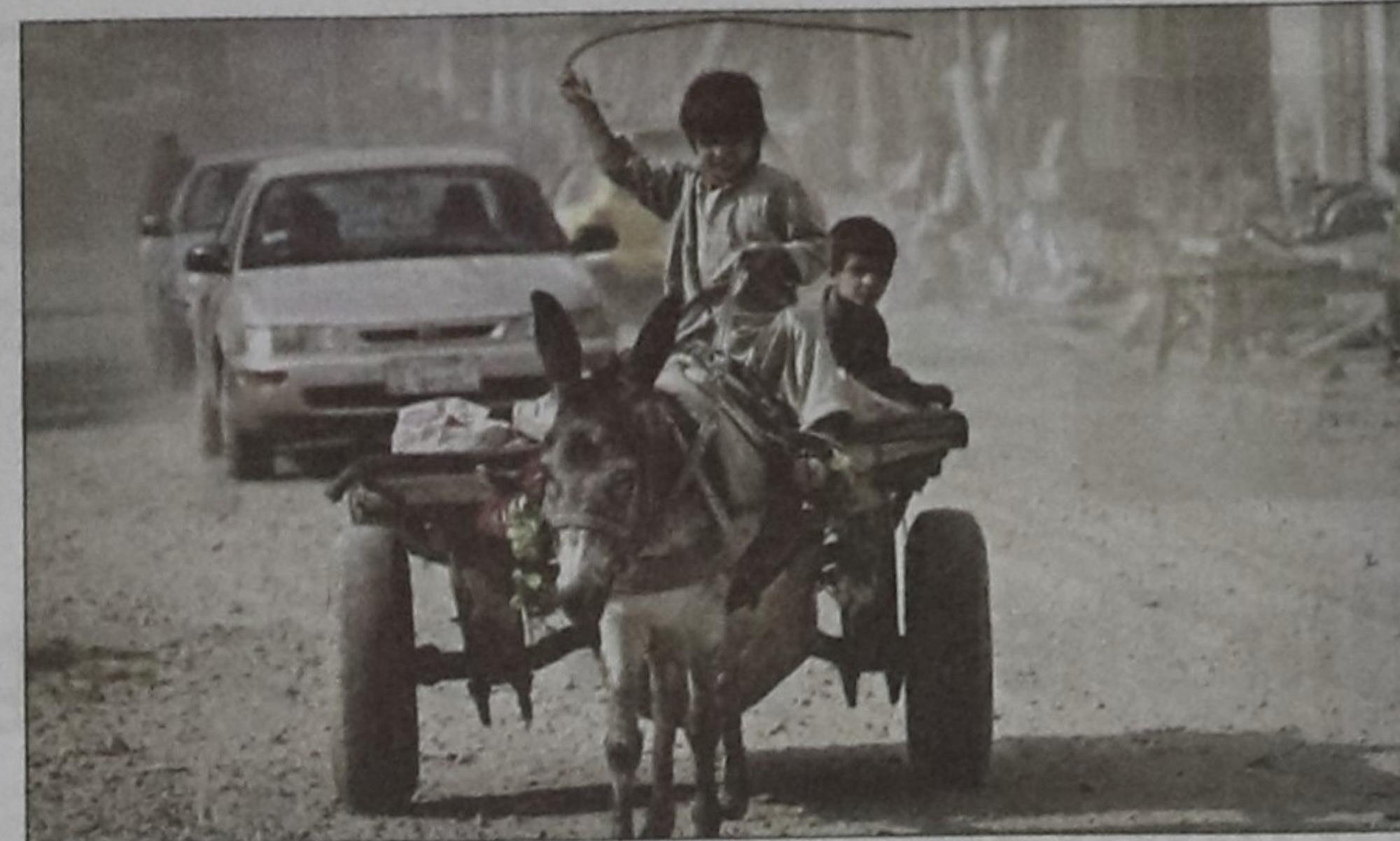


PHOTO: AFP
An Afghan boy whips a donkey pulling a cart in Kabul yesterday as a search operation continued for two US paratroopers missing in remote northwest Afghanistan. Nato said 25 soldiers were wounded during the hunt following a clash with militants.

Afghan police said the two had drowned while trying to retrieve cartons of food that had been dropped into a river.

More than 100,000 troops under Nato and US command are in Afghanistan fighting a Taliban insurgency now at its deadliest in the eight years since US-led troops toppled the Islamist regime.

US President Barack Obama is currently considering a request from military commanders to boost troop numbers by up to 40,000, a decision not likely to be made public for a number of weeks.

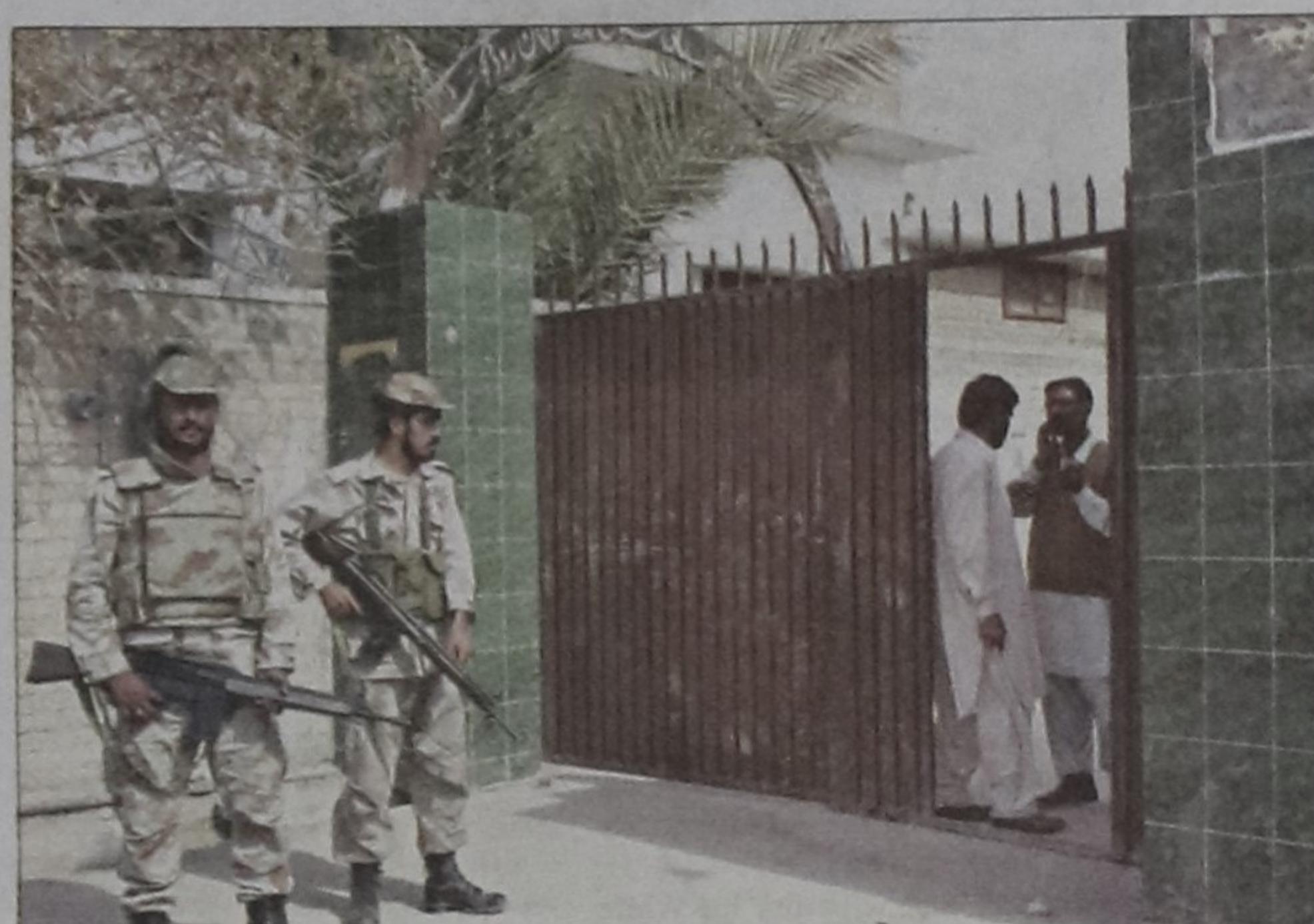


PHOTO: AFP
Pakistani security personnel stand guard at a state-run junior school after a grenade attack there in Baluchistan province's capital Quetta yesterday. Two teachers and a student were injured when suspected militants hurled a hand grenade at the girls' school.

Pakistan to talk with India on terrorism

ANI, PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan would soon discuss the issue of India's involvement in terror activities inside its geographical boundaries with New Delhi, Foreign Office (FO) spokesman Abdul Basith said on Friday.

Reiterating that the security forces have recovered Indian weapons, maps, documents and ammunitions during search operations in South Waziristan, where the military is engaged in an intense battle with the Taliban, Basit blamed India for not taking Islamabad's commitments against terrorism seriously.

Except for India, the world had acknowledged Pakistan's sacrifices in eliminating terrorism from the region, he said.

"India is the only country that does not acknowledge our services in terror elimination. That is indeed unfortunate. India immediately

starts blaming Pakistan whenever a terrorist attack happens on their soil," The Daily Times quoted Basit, as saying.

Despite having information of alleged Indian involvement in fomenting unrest in Pakistan, Islamabad had remained cautious and waited for "concrete evidence" about the abetment of terrorists, he said.

This is the second in the last two days when Pakistan has raked up the issue of India's alleged hand in terror activities inside its territory.

On Friday, Pakistan Foreign Office had said that New Delhi must explain its role in promoting terrorism in the country.

Responding to Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao's remarks, the Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson said: "India must explain its own conduct in sponsoring and abetting terrorism and militancy in our region."

90,000 displaced in Lanka conflict return home: UN

AFP, Geneva

About a third of those displaced during the conflict between Sri Lanka government and the Tamil Tigers have returned home over the past three months, the UN refugee agency said Friday.

"Some 90,000 internally displaced people have returned to their villages in Sri Lanka's north and east over the past three months, under the ongoing return plan of the Sri Lankan government," said Andrej Mahecic, spokesman for the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

These include 39,000 people who have headed home in the last two weeks "as part of the government's efforts to accelerate the process," he added.

In addition, 16,500 people, including the elderly, pregnant women and people with disabilities, have been released from camps and are now staying with host families, said Mahecic.

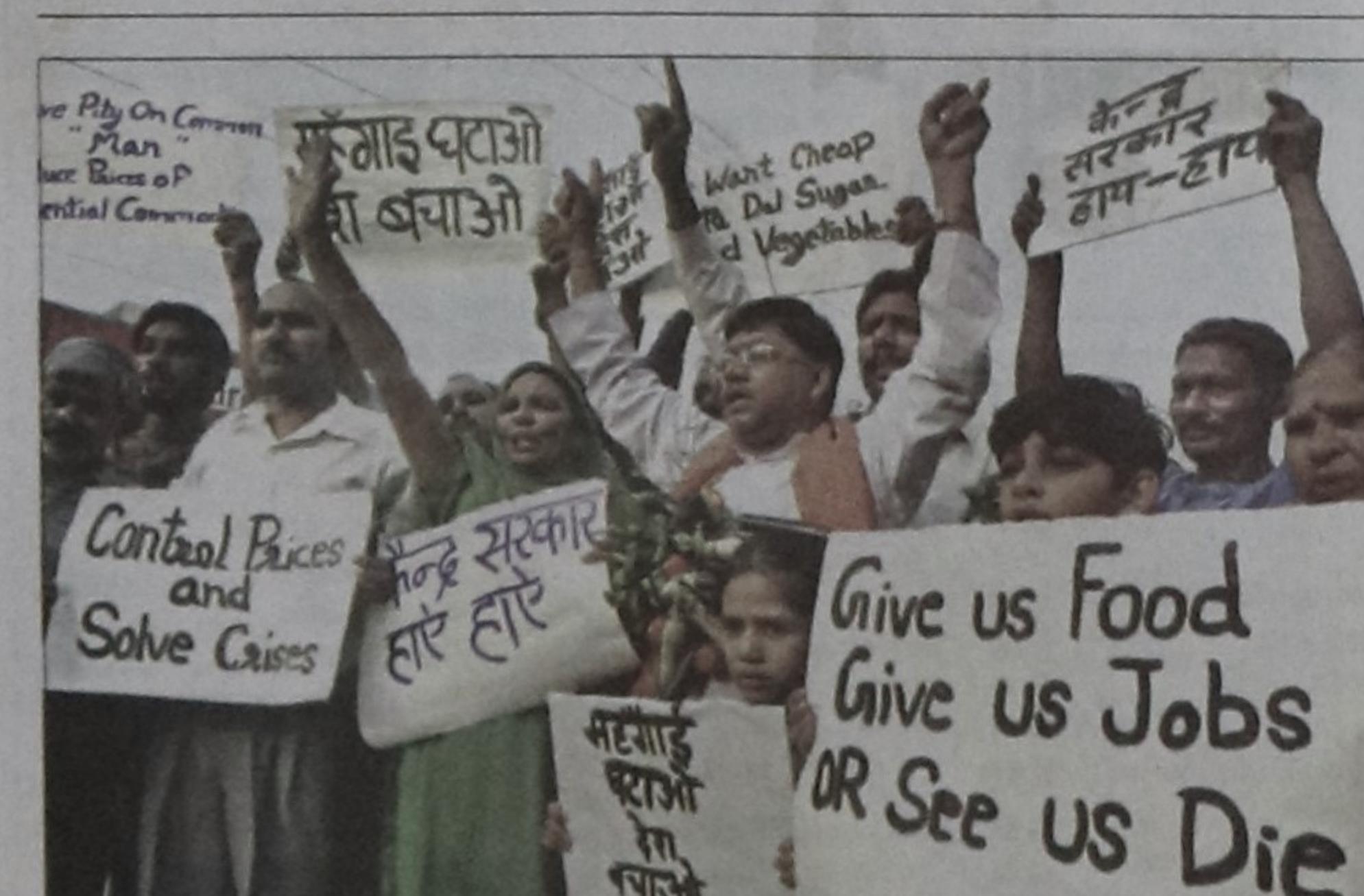


PHOTO: AFP
Activists from India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wear vegetable garlands as they shout anti-government slogans at a protest against food price rises in New Delhi yesterday.

Certain quarters trying relentlessly to depose me, says Zardari

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has himself revealed that certain political quarters in the country are trying relentlessly to depose him from Presidency, and that he has thwarted three such attempts in the past.

Zardari, during an informal off the record talk with a representative delegation of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), said that there have been three attempts to dethrone him, but he has been able to defy the nefarious aims of his detractors.

Though his remarks were off the record, it was subse-

quently leaked to some private television channels, The Nation reports.

President spokesperson Farhatullah Babar, despite repeated attempts, was unavailable for clarifications on Zardari's disclosure.

According to sources, Zardari, during the meeting, vowed to strengthen democracy by bringing major changes in the governance system through major reforms.

Zardari said that he had set a deadline for parliament to do away with Article 58(2)b as well as the controversial clauses of the 17th Amendment by March next year.

Faheem Ansari seeks re-trial of 26/11 case

PTI, Mumbai

In a new twist to the 26/11 terror attack case, Faheem Ansari, accused of facilitating the crime perpetrated by terrorists, has moved the Bombay High Court seeking re-trial on the ground that he had no confidence in the judge.

Hearing Faheem's petition sent through the jail authorities, Justice J N Patel and Justice Amjad Sayed yesterday directed additional public prosecutor Rajesh More to file a reply within two weeks.

The High Court has also ordered appointment of a lawyer from the legal aid cell to argue the case on Faheem's behalf. Faheem has submitted that he did expect justice from the trial judge M L Tahaliyan as he felt that the proceedings were not being recorded properly.

Obama may meet Myanmar junta at US-Asean meet

AFP, Manila

The United States expects the leaders of all Asean nations to attend a summit in Singapore next week, US diplomat said yesterday, setting the stage for a possible meeting between Barack Obama and leaders of Myanmar's ruling junta.

Speaking at a meeting in the Philippines where officials are laying the groundwork for the inaugural US-Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) meeting, Washington's ambassador to the organisation, Scott Marciel, said: "We expect all Asean leaders to attend the summit in Singapore."

Marciel did not elaborate, but his comments indicate that Washington expects Myanmar's Prime Minister Thein Sein will be in Singapore on November 15, opening the door for a potential meeting with US Leader.

Washington has recently softened its stance towards military-ruled Myanmar after years of refusing to engage with the junta.

Marciel and his boss, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell, this week visited the reclusive state, the most senior US officials to do so since 1995.

As well as meeting leading members of the regime, they also met detained democracy campaigner Aung San Suu Kyi.

Blackwater hiring ex-Pak security officials on high salaries

ANI, Islamabad

Controversial private US security firm, Blackwater, is reportedly hiring ex-Pakistani security officials at mind-boggling salaries.

According to The Nation, the US firm has offered some of the retired Pakistani officials a whopping salary package of 60,000 dollar per month.

But what is more noticeable is that it has hired former CIA officer, Steven Cash to operate as Commander in Charge of its operations in Peshawar.

BRAC EPL Investments Limited and BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage Limited, previously known as Equity Partners Limited (EPL) and Equity Partners Securities Limited (EPSL) respectively, formally commenced operation under a new management team on October 1, 2009. BRAC Bank acquired 51% equity of both the companies in August of this year.

BRAC EPL Investments Limited and BRAC EPL Stock Brokerage Limited deliver a whole range of Investment Banking services including merchant banking activities such as Issue Management, Underwriting, Portfolio Management and Brokerage services. BRAC EPL shall also deliver value-added services such as Wealth Management, Corporate Advisory, Corporate Finance and Structured Finance. The institution will offer investment services to local and foreign investors as well as to non-residential Bangladeshis (NRBs). For the implementation and achievement of strategies and objectives, we are looking for professionals who can match our level of thinking in the following fields.

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