



Pakistani volunteers and local residents search for the victims in the rubble following a suicide car bomb blast on the outskirts of Peshawar yesterday. The suicide bomb ripped through a Pakistan police station in the northwest city yesterday, devastating part of the building and killing four people.

PHOTO: AFP

No reprieve from suicide bombing in Pakistan

Another blast near college kills 4

AFP, Peshawar

A suicide bomber yesterday blew up a car packed with explosives near a college in Peshawar, killing four people in the latest attack on a city beset by Taliban-linked violence.

The bomber struck in a suburban road as children were going to school in the northwestern Pakistani city, devastating a mosque, destroying two rooms at a boys' college and bringing down one wall of a police station, witnesses said.

It was the fifth suicide attack in eight days to hit the sprawling city of 2.5 million people, which lies on the edge of Pakistan's lawless tribal belt, where US officials say al-Qaeda are plotting attacks on the West.

Attacks in the northwest have soared as 30,000 Pakistani troops press into Taliban strongholds in the hostile terrain near the border with Afghanistan, where 100,000 Nato and US troops are fighting a

deadly insurgency.

"The death toll is four and there are 26 injured," doctor Zafar Iqbal of the Lady Reading hospital told AFP. One child was among the dead and four people were wounded.

Witnesses said that a pick-up vehicle sped towards the police station and exploded nearby, leaving much of the building in ruins as ambulances raced through the streets of the densely populated suburb of Budh Ber.

Teacher Mohammad Shahid said he had just dropped off his children at school when he heard a deafening blast, which left a crater five foot deep and nine foot wide (one metre by two metres).

"I looked back and saw parts of a vehicle flung in the air and then the body of my neighbour fell on the ground near me. It was a horrible sight," he said.

Javed Khan, who drives a horse-drawn cart, said the car had sped towards him, forcing him to leap out of its path, before

the explosion hit.

"I fell on the ground. Shrapnel hit my forehead. I saw debris all around and people crying for help," Khan said.

Provincial police chief Malik Naveed told AFP that three paramilitary personnel deployed outside the police station were wounded.

"A chain barrier was placed to close the road leading to the police station. Our three Frontier Constabulary men, who were trained snipers, were posted there and got injured in the blast," he said.

"When the bomber broke the chain with his vehicle, one of the snipers fired at him and he was injured. That is why he could not reach close to the police station."

Pakistan's security forces are on the front line of a deadly al-Qaeda-linked campaign that has killed more than 2,530 people in 28 months in the nuclear-armed Muslim country and has recently increased in intensity.

US asks Pakistan to step up pressure on Taliban

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington

As President Barack Obama prepares to announce his new strategy for Afghanistan, his administration is stepping up pressure on Pakistan to expand and reorient its fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the New York Times reported yesterday.

As Obama travelled to Asia, his national security adviser, Gen James L Jones, was quietly sent to Islamabad to warn that failing to do so would undercut the new strategy and troop increase for Afghanistan, the influential US daily said citing

unnamed American officials.

His message, the daily cited officials as saying, was that the new American strategy would work only if Pakistan broadened its fight beyond the militants attacking its cities and security forces and went after the groups that use havens in Pakistan for plotting and carrying out attacks against American troops in Afghanistan, as well as support networks for al-Qaeda.

While Afghanistan has dominated the public discussion of Obama's strategy, which officials say could be announced as early as this week, Pakistan is returning to

centre stage in administration planning, the Times said.

The daily said General Jones praised the Pakistani operation in South Waziristan but urged Pakistani officials to combat extremists who fled to North Waziristan.

General Jones also delivered a letter from Obama to Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, in which Obama said he expected Zardari to rally the nation's political and national security institutions in a united campaign against extremists threatening Pakistan and Afghanistan, it said citing an unnamed official briefed on the conversations.

Indian nuke installations on high alert

PTI, New Delhi

Nuclear installations across the country have been put on high alert as it has been found that David Headley, a US citizen arrested by FBI on terror charges, had visited some states having atomic installations.

Sources in the Home Ministry said today that all the state governments having nuclear plants have been asked to step up patrolling and vigil around the facilities as precautionary measures.

They said that Headley, accused of plotting terror attacks in India on behalf of Pakistan-based LeT, had visited Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh -- all having crucial

nuclear installations - raising suspicion that nuclear facilities could be on the radar of the terrorists.

"The step is precautionary in nature. The states have been asked to increase the vigil and patrolling to thwart any sabotage attempt aimed at these vital facilities," a Home Ministry official said.

There are six major nuclear energy plants operational in the country- Narora in Uttar Pradesh, Kaiga in Karnataka, Tarapur in Maharashtra, Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu, Kakrapar in Gujarat and Kota in Rajasthan, besides several other research and development centres like Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Trombay.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh listens to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran Manouchehr Mottaki (L) during a meeting in New Delhi yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka's outgoing Chief of Defence Staff General Sarath Fonseka (C) pays tribute to fallen soldiers at the War Memorial in Colombo yesterday. Sri Lanka's president promoted his air force commander to be the country's top military officer to replace General Fonseka who quit following a rift with the government.

Suu Kyi seeks meeting with junta chief

AP, Yangon

Myanmar's detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has sent a letter to the head of the country's ruling junta seeking a meeting to discuss how she can work for the national interest.

Nyan Win, a spokesman for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, said yesterday that in her letter last week to Senior Gen Than Shwe she also sought permission to meet at her home with other members of her party's central executive committee.

Suu Kyi's party has long sought a dialogue with the government, but its advances have mostly been spurned. The initiative by Suu Kyi comes as United States is promoting a new policy toward the military regime, seeking to engage it through high-level talks instead of isolating it with sanctions.

MUMBAI ATTACK

I was sold to LeT by my father, says Kasab

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Washington

Ajmal Amir Kasab, the sole surviving terrorist of the group of ten sent by the Pakistan based terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba to attack Mumbai, says his father essentially sold him to the group.

Kasab, who was part of the pair that killed 50 and wounded more than 100 at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the city's main railway station, makes the suggestion in tapes included in a new documentary, 'Terror in Mumbai' airing on HBO Thursday.

Snatches of cell phone conversations - many never heard before - between the gunmen and their controllers in Pakistan, as well as video footage of the police with Kasab were aired Sunday in a preview of the documentary by narrator Fareed Zakaria in his GPS programme on CNN.

One of the tapes of Kasab's

interrogation points to how he got involved with the LeT terror group:

Kasab: He said, "These people make loads of money and so will you. (Inaudible) We'll have money, we won't be poor any more. Your brothers and sisters can get married. Look at these guys living the good life. You can be like them," he said.

Unidentified Male: Your dad said this?

Kasab: Yes. So, I said, "Fine, whatever."

Unidentified Male: What does he do for a living?

Kasab: He used to sell yogurt and potato snacks in the street.

Unidentified Male: How much did they give you? Did they put it in your account?

Kasab: There is no account. They gave it to my dad.

Unidentified Male: How much did they give him?

Kasab: I don't know. Maybe (ph) a few hundred thousand.

No Dhaka envoy for Berlin for two years

FROM PAGE 1

Mahmud did not go to Berlin although the German government had approved his appointment.

Earlier on June 12, 2007, Mahmud was appointed as the ambassador to Bahrain, but he did not join that post either.

Sources said he was apparently unhappy when the German embassy in Dhaka refused to issue visa for his domestic help as per Germany's immigration law. The embassy informed him that they would issue visa for one domestic help from Bangladesh after he (Mahmud) takes charge in Berlin and send a request letter from there as per the provision.

With the installation of Awami League government in January, instead of joining the post Mahmud began hectic lobbying to become foreign secretary. But his move proved to be a boomerang when he was made Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in June and sent into forced retirement.

Subsequently, Mahmud's

appointment to Germany was cancelled and the foreign ministry nominated former Bangladesh high commissioner to UK Gyash Uddin as the new ambassador to Berlin on contract.

Gyash also has not joined the post.

Foreign ministry sources said if Gyash Uddin does not take up his diplomatic assignment, it would be deemed very discourteous and make the German government very annoyed.

Some foreign ministry officials told The Daily Star that Gyash Uddin was reluctant to join the Berlin post arguing that this posting is a demotion for him because he had served as the high commissioner in London during the previous Awami League government.

During the previous AL rule between 1996 and 2001, Gyash was made high commissioner to UK while he was serving in the rank of a joint secretary. But senior diplomats or politicians normally fill this post. Later he went into retirement.

Foreign ministry officials

said past governments appointed diplomats of the rank of secretary as ambassador in Berlin, but Gyash Uddin retired from service as a joint secretary level official. The German government is apparently not happy with this appointment.

Germany is the second largest importer of Bangladeshi products and its import bill came to around \$2.5 billion in the last fiscal year.

The country has been a reliable partner of Bangladesh in development cooperation since 1972. An overall amount of 2.4 billion Euro in bilateral financial and technical cooperation has been committed by Germany so far.

Since 1978 the German development assistance is given exclusively as grants. Germany is contributing to the development cooperation of the European Union and other multilateral institutions like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the UN-Organisations working in Bangladesh.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Peace process on hold as Nepali Maoists protest

AFP, Kathmandu

He is famous for his fiery speeches, but Nepal's Maoist leader Prachanda projected a dramatically different image last week when he danced in the streets with one of the country's top actresses.

Pictures of the former warlord grinning awkwardly as he jiggled with the star during a mass anti-government protest dominated newspaper front pages in Nepal, where the former rebels have been working hard to soften their image.

For a man who spent years hiding in Nepal's jungles and hills, directing a Maoist guerrilla war that left at least 16,000 people dead and brought the Himalayan nation to its knees, it was a dramatic transformation.

The Maoists fought a decade-long civil war with the state that only ended in 2006, and are still listed as a terrorist organisation by many governments, including that of the United States. But they won landmark elections last year and

formed a government that lasted for eight months, before losing power in May when the president overruled their attempt to sack the head of the army.

Since then, they have severely hampered the coalition government that replaced them after their administration fell six months ago by holding regular protests and preventing parliament from sitting.

The peace process that began when the war ended in 2006 has also ground to a halt, and last week the Maoists brought tens of thousands of supporters on to the streets of Kathmandu, blockading the main government building, in a show of strength following the failure of negotiations with the ruling parties.

"The numbers they were able to mobilise and the fact they were able to keep control and maintain the peace indicate the protest was a success," said Maoist expert SD Muni, a professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies in Singapore.

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