



Afghans gather at the site of a blast in Khost city yesterday. As a car hit a roadside bomb, three died and three children were injured in the capital of Khost province in the east.

CIA chief holds talks with PM in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

CIA chief Leon Panetta yesterday held talks in Pakistan and found agreement on intelligence cooperation as President Barack Obama nears a decision on troop deployments to Afghanistan, Islamabad said.

Panetta held talks with Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on Washington's policy review in Afghanistan, said the premier's office in a brief statement.

It was his second visit since taking office this year and comes a week after US National Security Adviser James Jones held similar talks in Pakistan.

Panetta and Gilani agreed on "operational functioning between the two militaries and intelligence agencies" to eliminate the terror threat, it said.

The US embassy was not immediately reachable for comment.

Obama has said he is weeks away from unveiling a long-awaited war strategy review in neighbouring Afghanistan,

Six MPs and peers face fraud charges in UK expenses scandal

ANI, London

At least six British MPs and peers may face criminal charges of fraud into the abuse of the Parliamentary expenses system following investigations by Scotland Yard.

According to a report, the charges are against Labour MPs Elliot Morley, David Chaytor and Jim Devine, and peers Baroness Uddin, Lord Hanningfield and Lord Clarke of Hampstead.

The MPs are likely to face court on counts of fraud, for which the maximum sentence is 10 years, or false accounting for which the maximum penalty is up to seven years, The Telegraph reported.

Keir Starmer, the Director of Public Prosecutions, is expected to make a decision on whether to prosecute the politicians before the General Election in January.

The report further said that a team of detectives, assessing and investigating cases for the past five months since disclosure of the widespread abuse of parliamentary allowances, is on the verge of finalising their files on the MPs.

8 killed in US missile strike in Pakistan

Three cops killed by bomb while militants gun down 5 Pak soldiers

AP, AFP, Mir Ali

A suspected US missile strike killed at least eight militants yesterday in northwestern Pakistan, officials said, the second attack this week in an area believed to hold many insurgents who fled from an army offensive elsewhere in the Afghan border region.

Separately, three policemen were killed by bomb blasts while five Pakistani soldiers were reported dead in clashes late Thursday in an area previously cleared by the army, demonstrating the difficulty of containing the militants.

A US drone fired two missiles at a compound being used by suspected Taliban militants in a village near Mir Ali in North Waziristan, according to two intelligence officials who

spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to release the information.

The compound was destroyed and eight bodies were pulled from the rubble, the officials said, adding that two other suspected militants were wounded.

The targeted compound in the village of Shakhwadi was owned by two brothers, and Taliban militants were frequently seen visiting the building, which was cordoned off after the missile strike, the officials said.

Another suspected US missile strike killed three militants and wounded four just after midnight Thursday in Shana Khuwara village in North Waziristan, officials said.

Underscoring their resilience, officials said five Pakistani troops and six militants were killed in a gunbattle at a security outpost

in the Bajur tribal region, the site of a military campaign against Taliban militants that ended with a declaration of victory in March.

Three police officers were killed and four others wounded when a remote-controlled bomb destroyed their vehicle in Peshawar early Friday, said city police Chief Liaquat Ali Khan.

The bomb packed with steel pellets tore through a Pakistani police vehicle on the outskirts of the northwestern city of Peshawar early Friday, killing three police men, officials said.

It was the second attack in Peshawar in less than 24 hours, after a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a court building on Thursday, killing 20 people.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Top militants killed in Philippines
AFP, Zamboanga

Philippine troops have killed one of the top commanders of the al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group, the military said yesterday.

The death of the Islamist militant, Abdulla Ajijul, in a special operation on the southern island of Basilan Thursday is "a significant gain" in Manila's anti-terror campaign, regional military spokesman Major David Honiveros said.

"He was an ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group) urban terrorist leader ... responsible for kidnapping and bombing incidents in the area," Honiveros said.

Pakistan nets UN attack suspect

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan police said Friday they were holding a suspect in connection with a suicide attack at a UN office last month and a string of other bombings in the capital Islamabad.

"Five blasts took place in Islamabad in 2009, four of them have been investigated and he is involved in all four of those blasts," Islamabad police chief Kalim Imam told a press conference.

Russian ship freed from Antarctic ice

AP, Moscow

A Russian shipping company says that its icebreaker carrying more than 100 tourists, scientists and journalists on an Antarctic cruise has freed itself from ice and reached clear water.

The Captain Khlebnikov icebreaker got stuck in sea ice earlier this week near Snow Hill Island in the Weddell Sea. Officials have said that people onboard were in no danger.

Fareastern Shipping Co. spokeswoman Tatyana Kulikova said Friday the icebreaker has reached clear water. She said it's now heading to Ushuaia on the Argentine coast.

Resumption of Indo-Pak talks very important

Says Hillary Clinton

ANI, Washington

Stressing that pending issues between India and Pakistan should be resolved amicably by both countries, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that a resumption of bilateral talks is very important.

In an interview with the BBC, the transcripts of which was released by the State Department here, Hillary said Washington is encouraging both countries to resume talks, which were discontinued after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

"We are encouraging them (India and Pakistan) to get back into dialogue. We think that (dialogue) is important. But with respect to any resolution, that's up to them," Hillary said in response to a query about whether the Obama administration is looking to play a part in the Kashmir issue.

"But it is clear that any solution has to come from the two countries themselves," she said.

India's official position is that Kashmir is an 'integral part' of India, while Pakistan maintains that Kashmir is a disputed territory whose final status must be determined by the people of the region and under the UN resolutions of 1948 and 1949.



PHOTO: AFP
Emergency rescue workers use boats and helicopters in a bid to help flood stranded residents of Cockermouth, in Cumbria, northwest England yesterday.

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PHOTO: AFP
Rescue workers inspect the train carriages of the Tata-Bilaspur Passenger Express yesterday that derailed after Maoist rebels blew up the railway tracks near the forest area of Manoharpur in the Singhbhum area of Jharkhand.

Armed Forces Day today

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recalling the supreme sacrifices of those who embraced martyrdom in the War of Independence.

The president, in his message, said the members of the Armed Forces achieved the trust and praise of the nation through their participation in combating natural disasters and nation building works apart from their regular activities.

He said, "The contribution of the members of the Armed Forces to the UN peacekeeping missions was acclaimed at home and abroad, and brightened the image of the country."

In her message, Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had formed a modern military force alongside developing the war-ravaged country after achieving the independence.

The force formed by him (Mujib) has been successfully demonstrating professionalism, proficiency and efficiency by their activities," she said.

Mentioning that the present government is giving due importance to further modernising the armed forces, she said alongside achieving the professional skills the members of the armed forces are also engaged in various public welfare oriented activities.

Hasina said the members of the armed forces also

proved the strong presence of Bangladesh in international peace process through participating in peacekeeping operations of the United Nations.

The day's programme will begin with offering special prayer at mosques in all army garrisons and naval and air force bases after Fazr prayers, seeking divine blessings for the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation and development and progress of the Armed Forces.

The president and the prime minister will place wreaths at 'Shikha Anirban' (eternal flame) at the Dhaka Cantonment in the morning, paying tribute to the members of the Armed Forces who embraced martyrdom in the War of Liberation in 1971.

Chief of Army Staff General M Abdul Mubeen, Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral SU Ahmed and Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahaman will also place wreaths at the 'Shikha Anirban' on behalf of the three services.

Similar programme will also be organised at Savar, Bogra, Chittagong, Ghatal, Comilla, Jessor, Rangpur and Rajendrapur cantonments and BNSTimur.

Different programmes have also been taken up at other army garrisons, navy ships and establishments and air force bases on the occasion to celebrate the day.

Navy ships dressed overall will remain open to people at Dhaka Sadr ghat, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal and Mongla from 2:00pm to 4:30pm.

State-owned Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and other private TV channels will telecast special programmes while the newspapers will publish special supplements on the occasion.

The chiefs of the three services will pay courtesy call on the president at Bangabhaban and the prime minister at Armed Forces Division at Dhaka Cantonment.

The Prime Minister will host a reception and meet the family members of Bir Sreshtas and other gallantry award winning freedom fighters at Dhaka Cantonment.

The chiefs of the three

Sleep 'boosts memory'

ANI, Washington

For anyone trying to remember a new skill, sleeping on it may be a good advice, says a new study.

Scientists carried out an experiment in which sleeping volunteers were played sounds associated with a memorised IANS.

When they awoke, they performed better in the tests, showing their memories had been reinforced.

The results add to growing evidence that sleep is important to memory processing.

Prior to their naps, the 12 study participants were taught to associate 50 images with random locations on a computer screen. Each image, for instance a shattering wine glass, was paired with a corresponding sound played over a loudspeaker.

After a number of repeated trials the volunteers became skilled at dragging the images to their assigned places. Next, participants were allowed to dose off in a quiet darkened room, and sounds corresponding to 25 of the images were played without them waking up.

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