



Suspected Pakistani militants were presented at a media briefing in Bara yesterday. A bloody clash with security forces left at least 12 militants dead with 90 arrested as arms and ammunition were discovered during a search operation in the Shalobar area in Bara Tehsil of Khyber Agency. Pakistan's PM Yousuf Raza Gilani said yesterday that the army had driven the Taliban out of South Waziristan and the government is discussing taking the battle to Orakzai tribal region.

Pakistan says S Waziristan offensive over

Al-Qaeda denies killing civilians

AP, Islamabad/ Cairo

Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said the army has finished its operation against the Taliban in the South Waziristan tribal region but may now pursue militants in another area along the Afghan border.

Gilani said yesterday that the army had driven the Taliban out of South Waziristan, a key battleground in the nation's fight against the Islamist insurgency and the government is discussing taking the battle to Orakzai tribal region.

The Armed forces this year

launched multiple operations across the northwest tribal belt bordering Afghanistan, the stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban and a haven for al-Qaeda fighters and other militants.

"The operation has finished in South Waziristan, now there is a discussion of taking it to Orakzai agency," Gilani told reporters in eastern city of Lahore.

Pakistan's military has recently launched air strikes at militant targets in Orakzai.

The UN says thousands of people have fled the area.

Orakzai has long been the main base of Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud.

Many militants in South Waziristan are believed to have gone to Orakzai.

Al-Qaeda denied on Saturday that it was behind a series of bombings in Pakistan that have killed hundreds of civilians, saying in a new English-language video that such attacks were un-Islamic.

US-born al-Qaeda operative Adam Gadahn, who commonly delivers the organization's English messages, said the extremist network was being framed by the US and Pakistani intelligence services for the bloodshed.

"The perpetration of such deplorable acts and the pin-

ning of responsibility for them on the Mujahideen, only serves the enemies of Islam and Muslims, who are today staring defeat in the face," he said, also blaming the media for implicating al-Qaeda in the attacks.

"The mercenaries of the ISI, RAW, CIA or Blackwater are the real culprits behind these senseless and un-Islamic bombings," he added.

RAW is the Indian intelligence agency, while Blackwater is the private security firm now called Xe Services whose involvement in the killings of Iraqi civilians have tarnished its reputation throughout the Muslim world.

CIA ends Blackwater's Pakistan contract

Blackwater denies covert help

AP, Washington

CIA Director Leon Panetta has cancelled a contract with the former Blackwater security firm that allowed the company's operatives to load missiles on Predator drones in Pakistan.

Panetta cancelled the contract earlier this year and the work is being shifted to government personnel, a person familiar with the contract said Friday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the classified program.

Blackwater is now known as Xe Services. A spokesman was not immediately available for comment on the contract cancellation. The New York Times first reported the con-

tract's existence in August.

The CIA's Predator program targets senior al-Qaeda operatives and Taliban in Pakistan's tribal area along the border with Afghanistan, but the agency has never publicly confirmed its role in the operation.

Since Jan. 28, 2008, there have been at least 67 suspected US missile strikes into Pakistan, according to Pakistani intelligence officials and witnesses interviewed by The Associated Press after each strike.

There was a fresh strike Tuesday, according to Pakistani officials. The target of that attack was identified Friday by a U.S. government official as Saleh al-Somali, a senior al-Qaeda operations planner.

US intelligence has concluded that al-Somali was responsible for the terror group's operations outside the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, reaching into activities in Africa, the official said, and is suspected of being involved in plotting attacks against the United States and Europe. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss covert operations.

News of the cancellation of the contract came on the heels of published reports late Thursday that Blackwater security operatives joined CIA agents in "snatch and grab" raids that took place regularly between 2004 and 2006, when violence from the insurgency in Iraq was escalating.

Maoists blow up Indian police post

PTI, Malkangiri, Orissa

In a pre-dawn attack, Maoists blew up a newly-constructed police outpost building in Orissa's Malkangiri district yesterday.

About 50 armed ultras stormed the outpost at Salim in Mathili area and triggered a landmine blast to blow up the building after driving away its lone watchman, Superintendent of Police Satyabrata Bhoi said.

The rebels had blown up the old police outpost about three years ago.

US men with al-Qaeda link taken to Lahore

AFP, AP, Lahore/ Islamabad

Five US men arrested in Pakistan on suspicion of plotting "big" terror attacks had contacted someone linked to al-Qaeda and were arrested before a scheduled meeting, police said yesterday.

The men have been questioned by the FBI and Pakistani officials, accused of seeking to engage in militant activities and trying travel to the northwest Taliban heartland, officials said Friday.

Intelligence officials said

five American Muslims held in Pakistan on allegations of seeking to join militant groups have been taken to a facility for terror suspects in the eastern city of Lahore.

They say the five men face further questioning in the city, a major base for Pakistani military and intelligence.

Sargodha police official Tahir Gujar confirmed Saturday the men were no longer there. Two intelligence officials say they were taken to Lahore. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to

speak to the media.

The men arrested on Wednesday in Sargodha, about 180 km south of Islamabad, are US citizens with origins in other countries, including two Pakistani-Americans, officials said.

"They contacted a man known only as 'Saifullah', who has links with al-Qaeda, and they were set to go to Mianwali town on the day they were arrested to see him," an official close to the investigation told AFP on condition of anonymity.

TELANGANA STATE 20 ministers resign

AP, Hyderabad

Amid mounting street demonstrations and violence, 20 state ministers resigned yesterday to protest India's decision to carve a new state out of its southern region of Andhra Pradesh.

Trouble erupted after the federal government in a surprise move Wednesday agreed to give in to an 11-day hunger strike by a senior politician, K Chandrasekhara Rao, who demanded the creation of the new state of Telangana out of the vast state of Andhra Pradesh.

Pakistan must assist US more to quash al-Qaeda: Obama

PTI, Washington

President Barack Obama has said Pakistan must cooperate more with the US to go after and wipe out al-Qaeda and insisted that American involvement in Afghanistan was not open-ended.

Obama described the tribal territories that straddle

between Afghanistan and Pakistan as the "epicentre of the violent extremism directed against the West... and the United States".

"Ultimately, in order for us to eradicate the problem, to really go after al-Qaeda... we are going to need more cooperation from Pakistan. There is no doubt about that," the US

President said in an interview to CBS to be broadcast on Sunday, excerpts of which were released yesterday.

Obama's comments came as reports emerged that a senior al-Qaeda operations planner Saleh al-Somali was killed in an American missile strike this week in western Pakistan.

UN asks Lanka to free child soldiers

BBC ONLINE

A senior United Nations envoy asked the Sri Lankan government to release all detained Tamil Tiger child soldiers and reunite them with their families.

The UN special envoy on children and armed conflict made the call while on a five-day visit to the island.

Maj Gen Patric Cammaert said that examples from across the world showed that children recovered better from trauma when living with their families.

The envoy met nearly 300 children forcibly recruited by the rebels.

"Hundreds of children are still missing or separated from their parents. They must be reunited as soon as possible," the Dutch UN official told reporters.

"The best practice in other parts of the world show that children recover better from traumatic experiences when living with their loved ones."

He said children in government-run camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) were also at risk.

Asia populated by immigration from its South East: Study

AFP, Seoul

Pan-Asian research on genetic data suggested that ancestors of modern-day Asians probably migrated from Southeast Asia into East and North Asia, researchers said yesterday.

The new study confirmed that Asia was populated primarily through a single migration from Southeast Asia, dismissing the theory that there were two major immigration waves including one through Central Asia.

According to the four-year study by researchers from 10 Asian countries and the United States, Asian ancestors probably settled in India before migrating to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

From there, one or more groups apparently travelled north to Northeast Asia,

they said.

"The new study showed ancestors of Asian populations probably came east through Southeast Asia and further migrated northward," Jong Bhak, the director of Theragen Bio Institute told AFP.

Researchers found that genetic diversity among Asian populations increased from southern to northern latitudes.

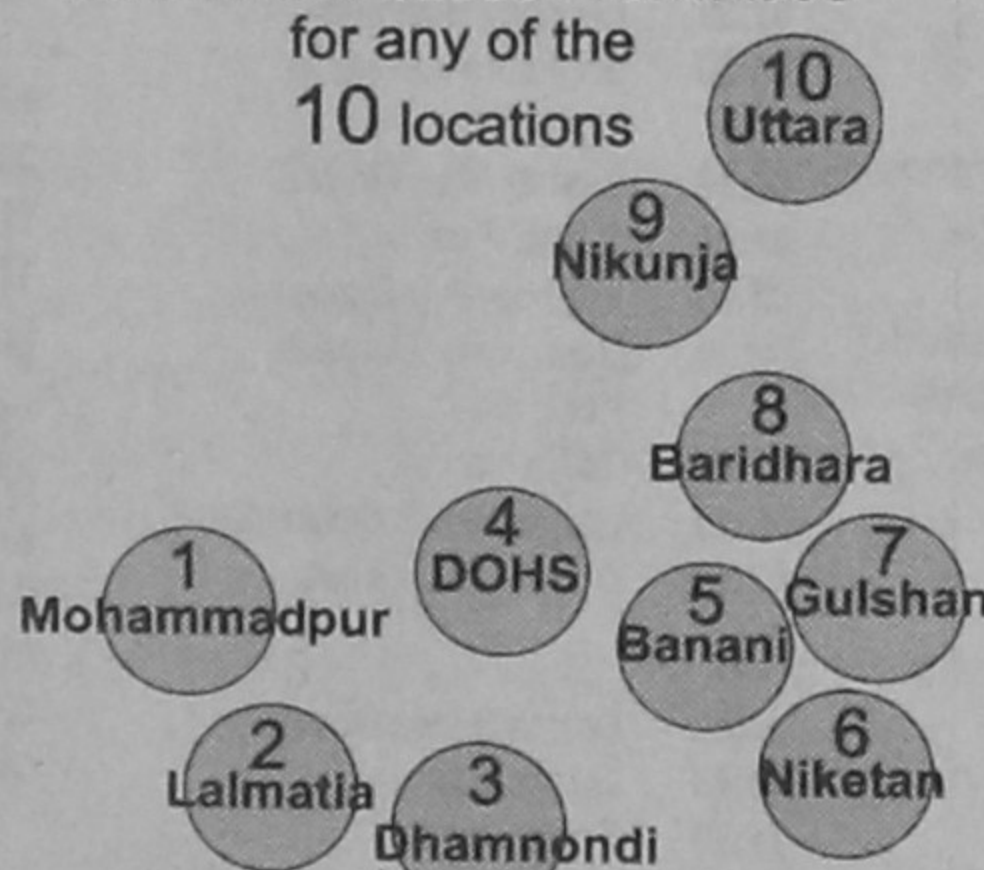
The study, which drew scientists from 40 institutions in 11 countries, was carried out by an international consortium supported by the Human Genome Organisation (HUGO).

HUGO is an international organisation involved in a worldwide project to map the human genome.

The results of this "landmark" study in Asia were published in this week's journal Science.

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Jailed US man in Myanmar in 'poor health'

AP, Yangon

A jailed US citizen, on a protest hunger strike for more than a week in military-ruled Myanmar, was not able to appear in court because of poor health, his lawyers said yesterday.

Myanmar authorities have accused Myanmar-born Kyaw Zaw Lwin of entering Myanmar to stir up protests by Buddhist monks, who led pro-democracy demonstrations in 2007 that were brutally suppressed by the junta.

Arrested in September, he was charged with forgery and violating the foreign currency exchange act.

One of his lawyers, Kyi Win, said he was told by the judge that his client did not appear at a court session Friday because of "poor health." The session was adjourned for a week.

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