

# Pak govt faces backlash over security failure

Roadside bombs kill ex-provincial minister, 7 others

AFP, AP, Peshawar

Pakistani authorities faced a furious backlash yesterday over security and medical failures after a suicide bomber struck a volleyball match killing 99 people, as the latest violence left a former provincial minister and seven others dead.

Authorities rounded up dozens of suspects after the volleyball attack and opened an investigation into poor medical care as doctors in the remote northwest struggled to treat casualties on the floor without enough medicine.

The attacker rammed a car bomb into a crowd of men, women and children watching the tournament in Shah Hasan

Khan village, a pro-government area in the district of Lakki Marwat, reducing the sporting event to carnage on Friday.

"There was nowhere in the whole district to treat the injured... The provincial health department is responsible for all this," Mannawar Khan, a member of parliament from the district, told AFP.

The health minister for North West Frontier Province conceded that only one doctor out of 10 at the hospital in Lakki Marwat had been on duty, conceding limited health care had "caused more human losses".

There were scenes of chaos at the hospital in the town of Lakki Marwat, which said it was short of medicine and

beds, overwhelmed with casualties.

The local peace committee that organised the match and heads an anti-Taliban militia blamed the government for failing to prevent the attack.

Roadside bombs, of the type deployed to such deadly effect by the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan, killed another six people in the northwest on Sunday, including a former provincial minister and pro-government tribesmen.

Ghani-ur Rehman, a controversial former northwest cabinet minister, and three other people were killed in the restive district of Hangu in an area with a history of Sunni and Shiite Muslim sectarian clashes.

# Unresolved water issues may trigger Indo-Pak war

Says Gilani adviser

ANI, Lahore

The impending issues over sharing river water between India and Pakistan could trigger a war between the two countries, Adviser to Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on education, Sardar Aseff Ali has said.

Talking to media persons on the sidelines of a seminar here, Ali said Pakistan could pull out of the Indus Water Treaty with India, if the latter does not stop violat-

ing the treaty by constructing new dams on the Indus River, a move which could greatly affect Pakistan's water share.

He said Islamabad might also take the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or the United Nations Security Council.

"Solution to the problem can not be found through sentimental rhetoric and the Indus Water Treaty is the proper forum for resolving the water crisis," The Daily Times quoted Ali, as saying.

Responding to a question regarding the Baglihar Dam project, he blamed former President General Pervez Musharraf for failing to prevent India from constructing the dam.

"India had served two notices to the Musharraf regime before the construction of the dam, but the Musharraf government did not respond to them. The Musharraf regime only raised hue and cry when the dam had become operational," Ali said.



Pakistani Shia Muslims shout slogans during a protest in Karachi on Saturday against the suicide bomb attack on Ashura procession. A suicide bomber targets Pakistan's largest procession of Shia Muslims on their holiest day, killing 43 people and wounding dozens more in the financial capital Karachi, sparking riots there on December 28, 2009.

'Zardari is a luckless president of a luckless country'

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has been unfairly criticised by media and people of Pakistan despite the fact that his wrongdoings have not come close to any of the earlier politicians of the country, according to Pakistani columnist Ayaz Amir.

"Has Zardari done anything which comes close to the unbeatable folly of the 1965 war? If anything undid us it was that foolish call to arms. We had set out to conquer Kashmir. At Tashkent we ended up lowering the basket of the Kashmir cause into the ground," The News quoted Amir, as saying.

"Do Zardari's alleged crimes measure up to the folly of General Yahya Khan who presided over the break-up of Pakistan? We couldn't stand the notion of meeting East Pakistani aspirations halfway, just as we are having a hard time now understanding Baluchi aspirations," he questions.

Amir points out that the frenzied crowds which protested against the corruption of the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Government in 1977, eventually got the former prime minister hanged, but along came the tyranny of General Ziaul Haq.



Afghan members of parliament watch during voting on President Hamid Karzai's cabinet nominees at Afghanistan's parliament in Kabul on Saturday. Karzai suffered a new blow to his authority with the rejection by parliament of most of his choices for cabinet, further prolonging political crisis in the war-ravaged country.

# Afghan cabinet dispute is a 'setback': UN official

Parliament rejects 17 of Karzai's 24 picks

AP, AFP, Kabul

The head of the UN mission in Afghanistan said yesterday that lawmakers' decision to reject 70 percent of President Hamid Karzai's Cabinet nominees was a political setback that will only delay efforts to get a functioning government up and running. Kai Eide called parliament's rejection of 17 of Karzai's 24 picks on Saturday a "distraction" at a time when Afghanistan and the international community are trying to focus on urgently needed reforms.

He told reporters that Karzai now will have to spend political energy nominating new choices, prolonging the time before a functioning

government can partner with donor nations. The move also comes amid a military and civilian buildup attempting to stabilize the war-torn country.

Karzai spokesman Waheed Omar acknowledged Sunday that "this is obviously not good in terms of the functioning of the government, in terms of services." But he said all ministries were performing duties with caretakers filling any holes in the Cabinet.

The president was surprised by the rejections, said Omar, but emphasised the vote showed Afghanistan has a pluralistic political system.

"This is the beauty of democracy. We are exercising democracy," Omar said at a

news conference.

Karzai will submit new nominations for the unfilled ministerial posts, Omar said, but it was not clear when.

Among those rejected were the only woman, undermining Karzai's pledge to bring more women into government, and a warlord whose pick as water and energy minister was seen as a reward for support at the August 20 election.

"At a time when Afghanistan needs strong government, I think most of the ministers who did not get through were perceived by parliament as not being strong enough representatives of the nation," said MP Shukria Barakzai.

# 18 militants killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kunduz

Afghan and Nato forces have killed 18 militants in the northern province of Kunduz, where Taliban rebels are expanding their activities, an Afghan army officer said yesterday.

The militants were killed on Saturday after trying to ambush a patrol of Afghan forces and troops from Nato's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the Archi district of the province, said Colonel Abdul Wakeel Ihsas.

After the attempted ambush, a gun battle began and air support was called in, he told reporters.

"Eighteen Taliban were killed. Nineteen were wounded," he said. The dead included five rebel commanders and four foreign militants linked to al-Qaeda, he added.

There was no immediate comment from Isaf.

Afghanistan's Taliban-led insurgency has lasted more than eight years, since the Islamists were ousted in a US-led invasion in late 2001.

Nato and the United States have 113,000 troops in Afghanistan fighting the insurgents, who have spread their footprint over the previously peaceful north and east, inflicting record Western military casualties.

In the past year, Taliban activity in the north has focused on a supply route for materiel brought by truck from bordering Central Asian countries.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### One die as 2 trains collide in Turkey

AP, Ankara

A passenger train crashed head-on into another train in northwestern Turkey on Sunday, killing one of the engine drivers and injuring at least seven other people, an official said.

The governor of Istanbul, some 400km south of Bilecik, said the accident was caused by an electrical fault that led to a signal failure. The train went through a signal where it should have halted and slammed into another train that was stopped on the line.

### Maoists kill 3 in West Midnapore

PTI, Kolkata

Two brothers were among three persons killed by suspected Maoists in West Midnapore district, police said today. Around 40 persons, suspected to be Maoists, barged into the house of one Anath Singh (40) and Sateswar Singh, 35, at Shyamnagar village in Belpahar and chopped off their heads last night, they said.

The police recovered the bodies this morning and sent them for post-mortem. In another case, CPI(M) activist Jhantu Patra, a resident of Bamal village in Lalgarh, was shot dead allegedly by Maoists last night, the police said.

### India may buy US howitzers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

In a bid to hasten the artillery modernisation programme for the Indian Army, the defence ministry is considering buying ultra-light howitzers from the US, an official said yesterday.

"We are considering purchasing the ultra-light howitzers through the foreign military sales route," a senior defence ministry official said, requesting anonymity.

# Delhi on red alert as 3 terrorists flee from police custody

ANI, INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

Delhi has been put on red alert as three Pakistani militants, who were arrested for their alleged involvement in the December 2000 attack on Red Fort, escaped while being taken to the GB Pant hospital here on Saturday evening.

They were to be handed over to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) for deportation to Pakistan.

Delhi Police Sunday released photographs of the three Pakistani terrorists who escaped from a city hospital and announced a cash reward of Rs.50,000 each for information leading to their arrest.

'Any clue pertaining to

their location can be given to the ACP (assistant commissioner of police) Special Cell. A reward of Rs.50,000 each will be given on their arrest,' a police official said.

The three terrorists - Abdul Razzak, 61, Rafaket Ali, 55, and Mohammad Saddique, 55, managed to give the Foreigners Regional Registration (FRRO) officials a slip at the G.B. Pant Hospital in New Delhi area Saturday.

The Delhi Police is now preparing a fresh case against the trio for violating the restraint order of the Foreigners Act.

The three had been arrested in 2000 along with 17 kg of RDX and 50 kg of heroin following which the court had sentenced them.

# Dense fog disrupts flights, trains for second consecutive day

Cold spell kills dozens of homeless in north India

ANI, AP, New Delhi

The cold waves in North India have delayed and disrupted many flights and trains on Sunday as well. Reports of flight and train disruptions have come from other cities also.

More than 30 people have died in cold weather-related incidents in northern India in the past 24 hours, including 10 people killed in train accidents caused by dense fog, police said yesterday.

A cold snap left at least two dozen homeless people dead in Uttar Pradesh state since Saturday, taking the death toll from exposure in the region to 40 over the last week, police spokesman Surendra Srivastava said. Last winter the state reported 151 cold-related deaths.

Some international flights coming into Delhi have been diverted to Mumbai. Almost 45 domestic departures and 25 arrivals have been delayed by two to five hours. The airport authorities are working overtime to clear the stranded flights quickly.

Nine domestic flights were cancelled and 12 others were delayed, said Airports Authority of India official.

The situation at the runway in Delhi, however, appeared better on Sunday than Saturday, but flights continued to be late. Airport sources said there was fog around midnight but the sky started clearing by Sunday morning.



Indians mill around a damaged coach after the Gorakhdham Express hit the stationary Prayagraj Express in dense fog at Panki Railway Station in Kanpur on Saturday. At least 10 people were killed and dozens injured in three separate accidents involving trains in the fog-bound northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, police and railway officials said.



Indian police personnel watch released Pakistani fishermen on their arrival prior to crossing over to Pakistan at the India-Pakistan Wagah Border on Saturday. In a goodwill gesture and to boost the peace process with Pakistan, the Indian government released 31 Pakistani fishermen who were in jail.

# 5 Indian cops suspended for dancing at don's party

ANI, Mumbai

The Maharashtra government has cleared suspension of five police officers for allegedly dancing in a party organised for a gangster.

Mumbai Police Commissioner D Sivanandan had recommended suspension of officers including Assistant Commissioner of Police Prakash Wani and Deputy Commissioner of Police VN Salve.

The recommendations were made in his report submitted to the Maharashtra government on Saturday.

This is for the first time that an IPS officer has been recommended for suspension for having underworld links.

# Indian anti-Naxal drive gets teeth with deployment of more forces

ANI, New Delhi / Raipur

The anti-Maoist offensive has gathered momentum with the Union Home Ministry clearing the induction of more Central paramilitary forces into the operation.

According to sources, the Central police personnel who were deputed for the Jharkhand Assembly election duty have been diverted to conduct anti-Naxal operations.

Forces have been deployed in the area to prevent violence during the recently held assembly elections.

After a meeting with the Director Generals of Police of five Naxal affected states the Home Ministry reportedly agreed to depute 33 more battalions of the CPMFs to the anti Naxal offensive.

The Home Ministry has released the forces in support of the state police in the operations.

Earlier this week, the Centre deployed a fleet of 10 Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Dhruv to assist forces engaged in the anti Maoists oper-

ations. The helicopters are stationed at Ranchi and Raipur.

The helicopters would be used both for transportation, evacuation of personnel as reinforcements for the operations and casualty evacuation purposes.

The Raipur based Operational Commander will be handling the air operations.

The ALH Dhruv helicopters recently inducted into the Border Security Force (BSF) air wing, stationed at Ranchi and Raipur are also likely to be pressed into the operation.

To bring down troop casualties and ensure immediate medical care over 80 specialist doctors have been appointed on a contract basis, who will be part of the anti-Naxal operations.

Meanwhile, it was reported that the combined force has initiated a flushing out operation in the Gadchiroli area of Maharashtra, which had seen a major attack on security forces in July 2009 in which 32 security personnel including a Superintendent of Police were killed.