

STUDENT MURDER India warns Australia on ties

AFP, Melbourne

Australia yesterday "unreservedly" condemned the murder of an Indian national as New Delhi angrily slammed the attack and warned it could hurt bilateral ties.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard stressed that Australia welcomed foreign students after accounting graduate Nitin Garg, 21, was stabbed by unknown attackers Saturday night before collapsing in the Melbourne burger restaurant where he worked.

Indian students have been hit by hundreds of alleged race attacks, prompting street protests last year and damaging Australia's lucrative international education industry.

700 Pak civilians killed in US drone strikes in 2009

ANI, AFP, Peshawar

Of the 44 predator strikes reportedly carried out by US drones in Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan over the past 12 months, only five were able to hit their actual targets, killing five key al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders, but at the cost of over 700 innocent civilians.

Most of the attacks were carried out on the basis of human intelligence, reportedly provided by the Pakistani and Afghan tribesmen, who are spying for the US-led allied forces in Afghanistan.

According to the statistics compiled by Pakistani authorities, the Afghanistan-based US drones killed 708 people in 44 predator attacks targeting the tribal areas between January 1 and December 31, 2009.

For each al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorist killed by US drones, 140 innocent Pakistanis also had to die.

Over 90 per cent of those killed in the deadly missile strikes were civilians, The

Dawn quoted authorities, as saying.

The success percentage for the drone hits during 2009 was hardly 11 per cent.

On average, 58 civilians were killed in these attacks every month, 12 persons every week and almost two people every day.

Of the five successful predator attacks carried out in 2009, the first one came on January 1, which reportedly killed two senior al-Qaeda leaders - Usama al-Kin and Sheikh Ahmed Salim - both wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Kin was the chief operational commander of al-Qaeda in Pakistan and had replaced Abu Faraj Al Libi after his arrest in 2004.

The second successful drone attack was conducted on August 5 in South Waziristan that killed the most wanted fugitive chief of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Baitullah Mehsud along with his wife.

In the latest attack on Sunday, US missiles flattened an extremist hideout in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt, killing five militants in a recent spike in drone attacks,

Pakistani officials said.

The attack targeted a house in Mosakki village, about 25 kilometres (16 miles) east of Miranshah, the main town in North Waziristan, and was the third suspected US missile attack in the tribal district in less than a week.

"There may have been an important figure hiding in the house," a Pakistani security official in Miranshah told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak about the sensitive strikes.

"A total of five militants have been killed, two are local and three are foreigners. One among the foreigners is an Arab," the security official said, adding that the identity of the other two was not yet known.

Suspected US drones have increasingly targeted North Waziristan, a bastion of al-Qaeda fighters and the Haqqani network that attacks US and Nato troops fighting against the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani police commandos escort US militant suspects as they leave an anti-terrorist court after a hearing in Sargodha yesterday. Five US militant suspects were remanded back into custody by a Pakistani court after telling judges they wanted to "help their Muslim brothers" in war-torn Afghanistan.

Five US nationals to be indicted on terror charges in Pakistan

ANI, Lahore

The five US nationals arrested last month in Pakistan will be indicted under different sections of Anti-Terrorism Act on Monday when they will be presented in Sargodha District and Sessions Court.

Waqar Hussain Khan (22), Virginia, Ahmed Abdullah Mani (20), Virginia, Ramay S Zamzam (22), Iman Hasan Yamar (17), California and Omar Farouk (24), Virginia, were arrested in Sargodha on December 9, for "plotting terror attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan."

"They will be charge-sheeted under sections 11-I-F and 11-V-N of the ATA for hatching criminal conspiracy against the state and plotting terror attacks here and abroad. The maximum sentence for the offence is life imprisonment," Sargodha District Police Officer Dr Usman Anwar told Dawn.



PHOTO: AFP

People take part in a candle lit vigil in the western suburbs of Melbourne yesterday where Indian student Nitin Garg was fatally stabbed on January 2.

Major parties not ready to buy Zardari's conspiracy theory

ANI, Islamabad/Hafizabad

Senior politicians of various political parties in Pakistan have rejected the intense campaign launched by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leadership against state institutions and the media, saying that its a pre-emptive strategy to influence the upcoming detailed judgment of the Supreme Court on the NRO.

The politicians also said that they did not see any conspiracy or even the slightest threat to democracy or the country as portrayed by Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari.

Senior political analysts and politicians say that the PPP leaders have shown immaturity of the highest level by talking of breaking up the country simply to avoid the situation they will face when the NRO judgment is implemented, The News reports.

Former Jamaat-e-Islami chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad said that the present Government and the country were facing no threat whatsoever from any institution.

"If someone is pointing towards the Army, I would like to say that the past army rule has ruined almost all the national institutions and has caused unbearable losses to the country. No one will ever accept any kind of military intervention and the present Army not only knows this but also about its lost image," Qazi said.

"People have lost their trust in the Army and everyone will not only oppose but will stand in front of any intervention from the Army's side," he added.

Earlier, Zardari had said that hidden forces were conspiring against democracy in the country.

5 US, British troops killed

AFP, Kabul

Four US troops and a British soldier have been killed in Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, the first reported fatalities of 2010 after a record number of foreign deaths in the conflict last year.

Four American soldiers serving with Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) died in a roadside bomb blast in a

southern Taliban hotspot on Sunday, the coalition said in a statement.

Their deaths follow the killing last week of seven American CIA agents in a suicide attack inside a military base and four Canadian soldiers and a journalist in a roadside bombing. Both attacks were claimed by the Taliban.

"Four Isaf service members from the United States died

yesterday following an IED strike in southern Afghanistan," the Isaf statement said, referring to an improvised explosive device--the Taliban weapon of choice.

An Afghan police official told AFP the soldiers were killed in Panjwayi district in Kandahar province, a flashpoint of Taliban unrest. A Taliban spokesman said the headline militia was behind the attack.

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'Tigers most endangered species'

PTI, London

Tiger has been named the most endangered major species of the world and according to the latest count there are only 3,200 of them left.

The WWF said it intended to intensify pressures to save the animal by classifying it as the most at risk on its list of 10 critically endangered animals.

"We have created a list of ten critically important endangered animals that we believe will need special monitoring over the next 12 months," said Diane Walkington of the WWF.

"This year will also be the Chinese Year of the Tiger, and so we have put it at the top of our list. It will have special importance," he underlined.

The future of this majestic animal is threatened by poachers, the destruction of their habitat and climate change.

The total number of tigers has fallen by 95 percent in the past 100 years.

Karzai sacks convicted Kabul mayor

AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has fired the mayor of Kabul, who was sentenced to a jail term over corruption charges last month, and appointed an engineer to take over in the capital, his office said yesterday.

Mir Abdul Ahad Sahebi was convicted in a primary court in early December and sentenced to four years in prison on charges linked to corruption. He was released on bail pending appeal and swiftly returned to work.

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