



Handout photo shows Pakistani Army Chief General Ashfaq Kayani (R) speaking with US Defence Secretary Robert Gates during a meeting yesterday in Rawalpindi. Gates warned on Thursday that Taliban safe havens along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border must be tackled or both nations would suffer "more lethal and more brazen" attacks.

## No new Pak Army offensive for 6 to 12 months

Terror havens on Pak-Afghan border to spell trouble for both nations: Gates

AP, AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani army said yesterday during a visit by US Defence Secretary Robert Gates that it can't launch any new offensives against militants for six months to a year to give it time to stabilise existing gains.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates warned yesterday that Taliban safe havens along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border must be tackled or both nations would suffer "more lethal and more brazen" attacks.

Writing in Pakistan's The News at the start of a two-day visit to Islamabad, Gates stressed Washington's commitment to Pakistan and praised military offensives launched against the Pakistani Taliban in recent months.

But US officials have made clear that Washington is anxious to see

Islamabad also target the Afghan Taliban within its borders and al-Qaeda-linked militants using the northwest tribal region to plot and launch attacks into Afghanistan.

"It is important to remember that the Pakistani Taliban operates in collusion with both the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qaeda, so it is impossible to separate those groups," Gates wrote.

"If history is any indication, safe havens for either Taliban, on either side of the border, will in the long run lead to more lethal and more brazen attacks in both nations," he added in the editorial.

But the Pakistani announcement probably comes as a disappointment to the US, which has pushed Pakistan to expand its military operations to target militants staging cross-border attacks against coalition troops in Afghanistan. Washington believes such action is criti-

cal to success in Afghanistan as it prepares to send an additional 30,000 troops to the country this year.

The comments by army spokesman Maj Gen Athar Abbas clearly indicate Pakistan will not be pressured in the near term to expand its fight beyond militants waging war against the Pakistani state. Whether it can be convinced in the long term is still an open question.

"We are not talking years," Abbas told reporters travelling with Gates. "Six months to a year" would be needed before Pakistan could stabilise existing gains and expand any operations, he said.

The Pakistani army launched a major ground offensive against the Pakistani Taliban's main stronghold near the Afghan border in mid-October, triggering a wave of retaliatory violence across the country that has killed more than 600 people.

## 3 killed in Pak bomb blast

AFP, Khar

A roadside bomb yesterday killed two anti-Taliban tribal elders and a woman travelling on a bus in Pakistan's lawless northwest, officials said, adding 20 other passengers were injured.

The incident happened in Salarzai district in the tribal region of Bajaur, a day after a similar bomb planted in the road injured a provincial parliamentarian in the northwest capital Peshawar.

"It was an improvised explosive device which exploded as the bus headed to the region's main town of Khar," local government official Mazhar Ali said, confirming that about 20 people were injured in the blast.

Senior administration official Abdul Kabir said one woman died on the spot while two others succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

## Musharraf 'equal beneficiary' of NRO, must be held accountable: Pak SC

ANI, Islamabad

Holding former President General Pervez Musharraf an 'equal beneficiary' of the now defunct amnesty law, the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), the Supreme Court has called Musharraf to be held accountable for giving shape to the controversial law.

Adding a special note to the NRO judgment, Justice Sardar Muhammad Raza Khan viewed the NRO as a grave violation of the Constitution.

"Musharraf was an equal beneficiary of the ordinance. As observed by us, it was a deal between two individuals and not (national) reconciliation ... such a deal ... is tantamount to a grave violation of the constitution."

The note said that Musharraf should also be held accountable for "perpetuating corruption and violating the Constitution."

"No doubt, such a beneficiary is not a party to the ... (existing) petitions, but so are the other

beneficiaries taken care of in our judgment," The Times quoted the memo, as saying.

The note said that all beneficiaries of the NRO must be dealt equally, equitably and without discrimination.

It may be noted that in December last year, a 17-member judge bench, headed by Chief Justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, had declared the NRO as "unconstitutional" and "invalid from the outset".

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government may file another petition seeking review of the Supreme Court's verdict on the controversial amnesty law, the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO).

Responding to a question raised by Opposition Leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan in the National Assembly, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Babar Awan said the government is examining the detailed judgement of the apex court, which nullified the NRO from the date of its enforcement.

## UN worried by violence ahead of Lanka polls

Opposition alleges post-polls coup plan

AFP, United Nations

UN chief Ban Ki-moon is alarmed by the growing violence in Sri Lanka, including the reported slaying of political activists, ahead of the upcoming presidential elections, his spokesman said Wednesday.

"The Secretary General is concerned about the growing violence in the lead-up to the presidential election in Sri Lanka, including the reported killing of political activists," Martin Nesirky said in a statement.

Ban urged all Sri Lanka parties and their supporters "to show restraint and refrain from violence, to adhere to the electoral laws and rules, and to avoid provocative acts throughout the election period and its aftermath."

He stressed that the peaceful conduct of the election is of the "highest importance for long term peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka."

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's main opposition said yesterday it feared President Mahinda Rajapakse would use the military to remain in power if he was defeated in next week's elections.

Opposition candidate Sarath Fonseka accused the government of pushing senior army commanders to appear on state-run television to express their public support for Rajapakse.



Indian students at Osmania University shout slogans next to sketches of students believed to have committed politically-motivated suicides for creation of separate Telangana state during a peace rally in Hyderabad yesterday.

## Filipino militant killed by US missile in Pakistan

AP, Dera Ismail Khan

A Filipino militant wanted by the United States is believed to have been killed in an American drone strike close to the Afghan border earlier this month, Pakistani intelligence officials said yesterday.

If confirmed, the death of Abdul Basit Usman would represent another success for the covert programme of missile strikes that the US has carried out since 2008. There have been an unprecedented number of attacks this month following a deadly Dec. 30 militant attack on a CIA base in Afghanistan.

## Bidding process starts for Meghnaghat-2

FROM PAGE 16

the bid. In that case, the experienced partner must have at least 20 percent stake in the bid.

Meanwhile, an 11-member government team headed by Bir Bikram Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury is set to leave for the road show to attract investors in Singapore and New York. The team will also have Chief of Board of Investment SA Samad, secretaries from the ministries of power and law, chairmen of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, Power

Development Board, Petrobangla, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, a deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank and officials from the PDB. Each of them would address different aspects of investment in the country's energy sector.

The Bangladesh team will seek investors for four coal-fired 500 MW power plants in Meghnaghat, Zajira, Khulna and Chittagong. The government intends to use supercritical pressure technology for plants to ensure minimal green house emission while

the financing will be done on private-public partnership basis. The coal plants will need an investment of \$3 billion.

It will also seek investors for two large combined cycle power plants with capacity ranging between 300 MW and 450 MW for Bibiyana-2 and Meghnaghat-2 and one 150 MW plant in Bhola.

In addition, the road show will seek investors for two 100 MW peaking power plants in Kaliakoir and Savar aiming at meeting industrial needs, especially in the tannery sector. Both of these plants will have dual fuel capacity so that they operate on both gas and oil.

Considering the country's

ongoing and future gas crisis in a situation where huge number of gas-based power and industrial units have already been installed, the government plans to install an LNG terminal in the Bay of Bengal, preferably near the off-shore Sangu gas field system. The terminal will help easy off-load of imported LNG containers by ships and transmit the LNG into the national gas system. The terminal should have the capacity to deal with 3.5 million tonnes of LNG.

This terminal, a popular method for import or export of LNG worldwide, may cost around \$1 billion.

## Muslim police in Britain blast official anti-terror strategy

AFP, London

Muslim police in Britain have attacked the government's anti-terrorism strategy for triggering an upsurge in Islamophobia and deepening divisions in communities.

The National Association

of Muslim Police (NAMP) warned that the Prevent programme, which aims to combat violent extremism, was "stigmatising" Muslims by focusing on "so-called Islamist extremism."

The group said the real threat came from the growing

far-right movement.

"The hatred towards Muslims has grown to a level that defies all logic and is an affront to British values," said the association in a written submission to a parliamentary commission examining the anti-terror initiative.

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## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

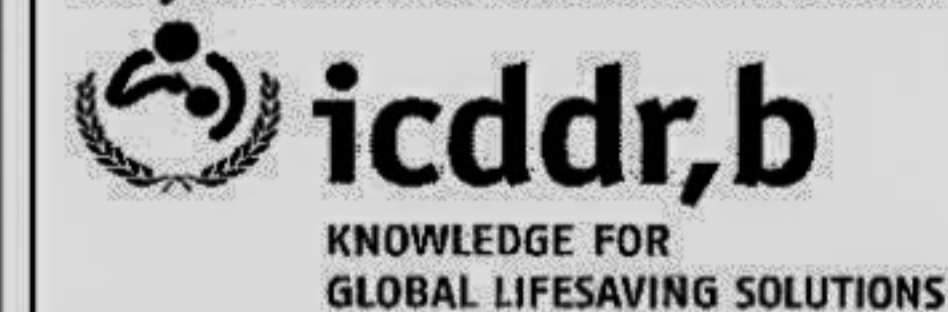
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