

# Sindh govt urges Pak Army to walk in

Karachi violence toll rises to 37

ANI, AFP, Karachi (PPP). Concerned over the deteriorating law and order situation in Karachi, Sindh Home Minister Dr Zulfiqar Mirza has called upon the Army to play its due role and take over the city.

Addressing the Sindh Assembly, Mirza compared Karachi's present situation with that of Swat, and said that the military must be called in to stabilise the financial capital.

"If I was given the opportunity to act without the reconciliation process, I would have hanged all political rogues and hooligans publicly in the City squares within three months," a charged-up Mirza said.

He termed the current spate of target killings in the city as politically motivated, and said that the perpetrators are shifting their base within Karachi, but the authorities have failed to take any action.

The new wave of political violence in Karachi has killed at least 37 activists from rival parties in the last five days, police officials said Wednesday.

The Awami National Party (ANP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which have a history of bitter relations, claim their workers have been shot dead.

Both parties belong to the local governing coalition in southern province Sindh, of which Karachi is the capital, led by President Asif Ali Zardari's main ruling Pakistan Peoples Party

# Pakistan 'kills up to 80 militants' in offensive

AFP, Sawai

A Pakistani military commander said Tuesday a new air and ground offensive had killed up to 80 militants in the northern extremity of the lawless tribal belt on the Afghan border.

The paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) stepped up an offensive targeting Taliban havens in Bajaur district after a suicide bombing killed 17 people at a military checkpoint on Saturday.

Bajaur, which is at the northern tip of the semi-autonomous tribal belt, has seen a spike in attacks and Pakistan is under US pressure to do more to eliminate the extremist menace to ease the conflict in Afghanistan.

The raids are concentrated around Mamoond, about 12km northwest of Khar, a notorious Taliban hideout, which Pakistan failed to clear in past offensives against militant havens.

"When we started the operation it was estimated that there were about 1,000 militants present in the area and 80 of them have been killed so far," Colonel Rana Munawar told reporters at a briefing in the village of Sawai.



Pakistani troops patrol in the rubble of destroyed hideouts following a military operation against militants in Sawai, some 22km northwest of Khar on Tuesday. A Pakistani military commander said on Tuesday a new air and ground offensive had killed up to 80 militants in the northern extremity of the lawless tribal belt on the Afghan border.



Sri Lanka's former army chief and defeated presidential candidate General Sarath Fonseka addresses the media at the election secretariat in Colombo yesterday. Fonseka and opposition leaders called on the Elections Commissioner with remains of burnt ballot papers, which they claimed had been cast in favour of Fonseka.

# Mumbai on alert after terror threat

ANI, Mumbai

The Mumbai police have stepped vigil after terror threat to three railway stations including the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), which bore the brunt of the November 2008 terrorist attacks.

Railway Protection Force personnel could be seen frisking every passenger at CST Railway Station while local police set up pickets and searched vehicles thoroughly on Tuesday.

"I believe that after the 26/11 attack, the police has become very alert, and whatever threat the terrorists might give I don't think they will succeed in their plans," said Sanjay Merolia, a commuter.

"Everywhere the police is very alert, and the search is on to avert any mishap, the police has been performing their duty accordingly, trying their best," added Prashant Gaikwad, another commuter.

Mumbai has witnessed a series of terror attacks at sunset on November 26, 2008. In gunmen had landed on Mumbai shores by boats and fired randomly inside a railway station, a Jewish settlement, a cafe and two luxury hotels.

Several people were held hostage for the next three days and at least 166 died before commodes smoked out the last of the terrorists on November 28 last year.

# Pakistan could be key to Taliban reconciliation

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's links with Taliban leaders believed based in the country could prove vital to the Afghan government's renewed push to make peace with the insurgents, a potential benefit from relationships that have been relentlessly criticised by the US.

But experts warn that even Pakistan, which armed and funded the Taliban in the 1990s, is limited in its ability to push through a deal since Afghanistan, the US and the Taliban itself are likely to be suspicious of what Islamabad wants in exchange. Pakistan could also act as a spoiler in the process if it believes its interests are not being served.

US officials have expressed scepticism of reconciling with

high-level Taliban leaders, preferring instead to focus on persuading junior fighters to switch sides by offering them homes and jobs along with relatively moderate higher-level members of the regime toppled by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

American reluctance is driven by hostility toward senior Taliban figures, many of whom have links with al-Qaeda, and the belief they will be unwilling to cut a deal until their battlefield momentum is reversed.

But there has been a flurry of recent activity related to reconciliation, including Afghan President Hamid Karzai's announcement last week of a planned peace conference that he hoped would include Taliban members. The president trav-

eled to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday in an attempt to enlist the support of the country, which also has historic links to the Afghan Taliban.

Karzai has said he is willing to welcome back any militants who renounce violence and recognise the Afghan constitution. However, the Taliban have always set the withdrawal of international troops as a precondition for any negotiations a demand that Karzai has called unrealistic.

Karzai has also called on Pakistan to help with reconciliation, acknowledging the country's unique position to influence the process because of its links with the Taliban and their decision to flee to Pakistan following the 2001 US-led invasion.

# Coalition forces prepare for major Afghan offensive

AFP, Kabul

Thousands of Afghan and Nato troops are preparing to launch a major offensive in southern Afghanistan, the hub of a Taliban-led insurgency that has raged for more than eight years, officials said yesterday.

The expected operation will be the first major assault since US President Barack Obama announced a surge of 30,000 American troops in December, matched by commitments of almost 10,000 extra forces pledged by Nato partners.

The Afghan defence ministry said the operation in Helmand province would be led by Afghan security forces as part of plans to hand over military and police responsibility to the Western-backed Kabul government.

"It will be a joint Afghan army, police, US Marines and Isaf forces operation led by Afghans," spokesman Mohammad Zahir Azimi told reporters.

He did not give the exact date of the operation, although it is expected to be launched around the Marjah region of the

troubled province within days.

The offensive appears to mirror one led by US Marines in Helmand's Garmsir region last year, clearing the area of Taliban, holding it and paving the way for development.

"We are going to go with the Afghan national security forces (to) clear, hold and build, and deliver alternatives for all the Afghans," Nato spokesman Eric Tremblay told reporters.

The operation will be one of the biggest since the war began, with thousands of troops focusing on a region considered a last bastion of Taliban control.

"In terms of strength there will be at least 1,000 Afghan national police, thousands of Afghan national army, and many thousands of Isaf troops," the Nato spokesman said.

Helmand, along with neighbouring Kandahar, is the heartland of the brutal insurgency, which has paralysed much of the Western-funded reconstruction drive that followed the fall of the Taliban regime in the 2001 US-led invasion.

The United States and Nato have 113,000 troops fighting the insurgents, with another

40,000 being deployed over coming months.

Most of the new influx will be deployed to the south, taking the fight to the insurgents as the emphasis of the war switches to development.

A senior Isaf military official told AFP this week the offensive would focus on the Marjah region, southwest of provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, to clear out Taliban insurgents who have been dug in for years.

"It's one of the last areas of Taliban control down there and we need to send a message that they're out of time -- either they get out of there, cross over or die," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Helmand is one of the world's biggest poppy growing regions, turning out the bulk of the country's opium worth around three billion dollars a year, which helps fund the insurgency.

Taliban-linked violence has claimed the lives of 1,618 foreign soldiers and thousands of other mainly civilian lives since 2001, according to tallies from the website icasualties.org and agencies such as the United Nations.

# Amnesty urges Lanka to end post-polls 'clampdown'

AFP, Colombo

Rights monitor Amnesty International urged Sri Lanka on Tuesday to end what it described as a post-presidential election "clampdown" on the media, political opponents and human rights activists.

Pressure on government critics has been mounting since President Mahinda Rajapakse was re-elected on January 26, defeating his former army chief Sarath Fonseka, the London-based human rights group said.

"Victory against the Tamil Tigers followed by a historic election should have ended political repression in Sri Lanka, but instead we have seen a serious clampdown on freedom of expression," said Madhu Malhotra, Amnesty's Asia-Pacific Deputy Director.



An Indian woman from the Telangana Joint Action Committee (T-JAC) holds up her palm showing the word Telangana written with henna in Hyderabad yesterday as she participates in a human chain, which was part of a week-long protest demanding the creation of a separate state of Telangana.

# Indo-Pak rivalry affects efforts to stabilise region

Says Mullen

ANI, Washington

Underlining the importance of resolving long pending issues between India and Pakistan, US Joint Chiefs Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen has said it is necessary to end the longstanding mistrust between the two neighbours in order to stabilise the region.

Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Mullen said Indo-Pak animosity was affecting America's efforts in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"South Asian security tensions and political dynamics significantly impact our objectives in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The longstanding animosity and mistrust between Pakistan and India complicates regional efforts," Mullen said while testifying on President Barack Obama's 2010-11 requests for 192 billion dollars for Afghanistan and Iraq wars in the next year and half.

Mullen called on for Washington's assistance to help both the nuclear-powered South Asian countries to reduce tension among them.

"While we acknowledge the sovereign right of India and Pakistan to pursue their own foreign policies, we must demonstrate our desire for continued and long-term partnership with each, and offer our help to improve confidence and understanding between them in a manner that builds long-term stability across the wider region of South Asia," he said.

"As part of our long-term regional approach, we should welcome all steps these important nations take to regenerate their back channel process on Kashmir," Mullen added.

# Plans on ports

FROM PAGE 1

The premier said her government plans to introduce computerised container terminal management system at Chittagong Port, construct backward linkage at terminals 4 and 5 at New Mooring container terminal, appoint private global operator for running the terminal.

She said two vessels, one for oily waste reception and another for solid waste, will be purchased to improve environment management of Chittagong Port.

"Radiation detection equipment will be installed at Chittagong Port under the US Megaports Initiative to prevent smuggling of nuclear and radioactive goods through global maritime system," the premier said.

The Karnaphuli container terminal will be constructed replacing expired jetties 11-13 at Chittagong Port. A multi-storey car-parking shed will be built at the port, she said.

Hasina said the government has planned for bank protection and capital dredging from Sadarghat to the third Karanphuli Bridge to protect important establishments at Chittagong Port from possible risk, and ensure discipline berthing of ships and navigability in Karanphuli channel.

On the development of Mongla Port, Hasina said her government plans to collect cargo handling equipment, cutter suction dredger, dispatch boat, and carry out dredging at outer bar of the Pashur channel and harbour area of the port.

She said activities of Benapole land port will be brought under automation to bring dynamism and transparency in its functions. The port will also have its own cargo handling equipment. Besides, a project to modernise the port will be implemented in two phases, she said.

The premier said Bhomra land port and Barisal river port will also be developed.

Besides, railway network will be set up across the country as well as the network from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar will be expanded.

Hasina said the number of lanes on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway will be increased to six in phases as the process for upgrading the highway into a four-lane one has begun.

# DU student succumbs to injury

FROM PAGE 16

Centre (TSC) intersection demanding punishment of those responsible for Siddique's death. Police hurled teargas at them, which led to clashes between them and police.

The students pelted police with bricks near Mall Chatter and TSC area, witnesses said.

The students also ransacked the university proctor's office and demanded expulsion of Proctor KM Saiful Islam Khan. They claimed that the proctor allowed police to enter Sir AF Rahman Hall Tuesday, which led to police brutality and the death of Siddique.

Yesterday's hour-long clash between the students and police stopped when Chhatra League leaders intervened and prevented students from agitating. A huge number of law enforcers was deployed at the entry points of DU.

At least 25 people including policemen were injured in the Chhatra League factional clash at Sir AF Rahman Hall Tuesday. The factions clashed over establishing dominance at the dormitory. The central executive council of Chhatra League yesterday dissolved the committee of Sir AF Rahman Hall and expelled unit president Saiduzzaman Faruk in connection with violating organisational discipline, says a Chhatra League press release.

Police charged truncheons indiscriminately inside the dormitory compound Tuesday leaving many innocent students

injured, sources in Sir AF Rahman Hall said.

Rezaul Karim, roommate of Siddique, said a teargas shell shot by policemen from the balcony of room-503 hit Siddique when he and his roommates took shelter on the balcony of their room-404 from four teargas shells that police had hurled inside the room around 2:45am.

"Injured Siddique remained on that balcony floor for 40 minutes since we could not take him to hospital as we could not get out of the room fearing police attack," Rezaul added.

Syed Nurul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of Ramna Zone of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, refuted the allegation of firing the teargas shell on Siddique.

"It is not teargas shell, rather we think something heavy fell on his head when he was on the balcony," he said.

Three students of room-503 jumped from the floor during the clashes that day which left them badly hurt. They jumped after seeing their roommate Kamrul being beaten up by police. All four were receiving treatment at DMCH and University Medical Centre, dormitory sources said.

Shafiqul Islam, a physician of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, told reporters that Siddique died at 9:20am due to a sub-dural haemorrhage. Doctors also found a hole and a fragment of a metal in his head, he added.

Siddique's condition started deteriorating around 4:00am. He

was unconscious since being moved to the Intensive Care Unit of DMCH from the post-operative cell around 11:00am Tuesday, he added.

The body of Siddique was sent to his village home around 1:30pm after an autopsy. He was buried at the family graveyard after Magrib prayers, said Azaharul Islam, an uncle of the deceased.

Hailing from Golabari of Madhupur upazila in Tangail, Abubakar Siddique took admission for BA (Bachelor of Arts) Honours in 2006-07 session.

Abbas Ali, elder brother of Siddique, told The Daily Star that his brother was never involved in student politics. Echoing Abbas's voice, victim's roommates and dormitory sources said he was a former worker of voluntary blood-donation organisation Badhon.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique termed the death a killing and said exemplary punishment must be awarded to the people responsible. "Anarchy in the name of student politics will not be allowed on campus," he added.

He said Siddique was a meritorious student and his death like this cannot be accepted.

Later on however, he told The Daily Star, "I talked to the roommates of the deceased and they informed me that an object from above fell on his head."

The principal of DMCH said the victim was either hit with an iron rod or stone or something similar.

In the evening, Bangladesh Chhatra Union brought out a procession and held a protest rally in TSC area. A number of students vandalised two vehicles after the rally, sources said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh police produced eight arrested Chhatra League men, including Sir AF Rahman Hall Chhatra League president Saiduzzaman Faruk, before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in connection with Tuesday's violence. The court sent them to jail.

The syndicate of Dhaka University, the highest policy-making body, held a meeting last night and formed a nine-member probe committee to identify people responsible for the death of Siddique and the violence on Tuesday.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor Harun-or-Rashid is the convener of the probe committee. Other members are the proctor, five syndicate members and two professors.

The committee was asked to submit its report within 15 working days, university sources said adding that the committee was also asked to make recommendations for punishment of the culprits.

The syndicate also expressed condolence over the death of Siddique and decided to pay Tk 1.5 lakh to the victim's family, the VC said.