



BJP members burn an effigy of Pakistan-based Taliban during a protest against the militants at the India-Pakistan Wagah Border yesterday. Taliban militants in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt kidnapped and beheaded a Sikh after relatives failed to pay ransom for his release.

## Taliban militants behead Sikh in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Taliban militants in Pakistan's lawless tribal belt kidnapped and beheaded a Sikh after relatives failed to pay ransom for his release, an official and a Sikh community member said yesterday.

Jaspal Singh was one of three Sikhs abducted in Bara, a town in Khyber district, in late January, an administrative official told AFP by telephone from the area on the Afghan border.

His body was found on Sunday in the neighbouring tribal district of Orakzai.

"Militants later handed over the dead body to his relatives," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

New Delhi condemned the "barbaric act", which came just days before India and Pakistan are to resume dialogue for the first time since the Mumbai attacks in November 2008, which suspended peace talks between the arch rivals.

## Bomb kills 8 in Swat

Pak cops net another Taliban leader

AFP, AP, Peshawar/Washington

A suicide car bomber targeting an army convoy killed at least eight people in Pakistan's Swat district yesterday, just months after the military claimed to have quelled a Taliban insurgency.

The bomber blew up a vehicle packed with explosives as security forces drove through Mingora, the main town of Swat where the military has sought to reassert control after putting down the Islamist uprising.

Shops and cars were damaged in what was the deadliest attack in the former tourist district once frequented by Westerners since a suicide bomber flung himself at a military convoy killing 45 people on October 12 in Shangha.

Local television footage showed a car enveloped in flames and black smoke billowing down a street, as casualties lay on the ground in blood-soaked clothing. Soldiers rushed to the scene and ambulances ferried away the wounded.

Frightened women and children could be seen scurrying from the scene.

"Eight people have been killed and 19 injured. It was a car bomb blast," Qazi Ghulam Farooq, Mingora police chief, told AFP by telephone.

Mohammad Idrees Khan, senior Swat police official, confirmed the death toll.

"It was a suicide car bomb.... The target was an

army convoy," Major Mushtaq Ahmad Khan from the Swat Media Centre told AFP.

Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gilani condemned the bombing.

"Such inhuman acts of terrorism would not be able to shatter the determination of the people of Pakistan and the people of Swat... to curb this menace and fight the insane extremists," a statement from his office said.

Swat has been held up as a success story in Pakistan's fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda linked militants by local and US officials, who praised the offensive for apparently ending a two-year local Taliban insurgency.

Earlier Police in northwest Pakistan arrested Mulvi Kabir, one of the top 10 most wanted Taliban leaders and a former Taliban governor of Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, Fox News reported on its website Sunday.

The network, citing two unnamed senior US officials, said that Pakistani police captured Kabir in the Naw Shera district of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province.

The capture is a "significant detention," a senior US military official in Afghanistan told Fox.

Information leading to Kabir's capture was obtained from Mullah Baradar, the Taliban's second in command, whose arrest was announced on February 18 following a joint US-Pakistani operation, according to Fox.

## Graft Claims Donors suspend funding for education in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

International donors in Nepal yesterday suspended millions of dollars in funding for education programmes following allegations of corruption against a government minister.

The move follows reports that Education Minister Ram Chandra Kuswaha is being investigated by a parliamentary committee over undisclosed financial irregularities. He denies any wrongdoing.

Losing the funds is a major blow for Nepal, one of the world's poorest countries, which depends on foreign governments and aid agencies

for around 25 percent of its 48-billion-rupee (650-million-dollar) education budget.

"Our funds have been suspended. We hope the suspension period will be very short as it is the children who will suffer," said Ove Fritz Larsen of the Danish Embassy in Kathmandu, which coordinates international donors.

"It has been a very difficult decision, but we want to see the outcome of the government's investigations."

The foreign funds were destined for the school sector reform plan, a government programme aimed at reducing poverty in Nepal by providing

schooling for all.

Currently only 80 percent of students in Nepal complete primary education, with girls and children from low-caste communities most likely to dropout.

The donors, which include the World Bank and the UN children's agency Unicef, took the decision after meeting finance ministry officials to discuss the corruption allegations, the details of which have not been made public.

AFP could not immediately reach the Public Accounts Committee -- the parliamentary committee conducting the investigation -- for comment.

## Pakistan talks pinned on terrorism

Says Indian foreign secretary

AFP, London

Indian foreign secretary Nirupama Rao said Pakistan dismantling terror networks was an "absolute must" if this week's attempt to resume dialogue between the two neighbours is to go anywhere.

Speaking in London, Rao -- the most senior civil servant in the Indian foreign ministry -- said attacks on Indian soil originating in Pakistan would be at the core of her talks with her counterpart Salman Bashir.

"Out of our desire for peaceful relations with Pakistan, we have repeatedly taken initiatives in the past to improve the relationship," she said.

"The dark forces of terrorism have sought to erase the good that stemmed from such well-intentioned initiatives. We are now making another attempt at dialogue with Pakistan."

"However, calls of jihad, hostility and aggression continue to be made openly against India."

"This reflects the real and tangible difficulties that we face in dealing with Pakistan," said Rao in a speech titled "Perspectives on Foreign Policy for a 21st century India" at the International Institute for Strategic Studies think-tank.



Pro-Telangana advocates hold placards during a protest in New Delhi yesterday demanding immediate formation of the proposed Telangana state carved from Andhra Pradesh.



Nepalese pedestrians walk on the main market street during a strike against the abolition of the world's last Hindu monarchy organised by the pro-royalist party in Kathmandu yesterday. Shops remained shut and vehicles stayed off the roads after the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal (RPP-N), a minor political party that wants Nepal to revert to a Hindu monarchy, slapped the strike.

## Worst democracy is better than best dictatorship

Says Gilani

ANI, Lahore

In an apparent attempt to gather public support for his troubled government, Pakistan Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gilani has said that even the worst form of democracy was far better than the best form of dictatorship.

Addressing a ceremony here, Gilani said Pakistan can ill-afford to hold mid-term elections at the present time when it is facing a number of issues.

He urged the people of the country to join hands and safeguard democracy.

"It is necessary for all of us to defend democracy and not set a deadline for its fall. The country can not afford to live with weak democracy. It is a

panacea for the country's problems. Even the worst democracy is better than the best of dictatorship," The Daily Times quoted Gilani, as saying.

Gilani also criticised people comparing President Asif Ali Zardari with former general Pervez Musharraf, saying it is 'unjust' to compare a democratically elected President with a 'dictator'.

## India charges British duo

AFP, New Delhi

Two British planespotters detained in New Delhi last week have been charged with illegally intercepting communications between pilots and airport authorities, police said Monday.

Stephen Hampston, 46, and Steven Martin, 55, were held last Monday at a hotel near the international airport after staff raised concerns about their suspicious behaviour.

## Kashmir won't tolerate HR abuse: Governor

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Governor NN Vohra yesterday reiterated the state's commitment to ensuring zero tolerance towards human rights violations.

Vohra, during his 50-minute address to a joint sitting of the Jammu and Kashmir legislature on the opening day of the budget session, said: "The government will uphold human rights at all costs" and there would be "zero tolerance towards those indulging in human rights abuses."

Human rights violations have become a major issue because of the stone pelting demonstrations in Kashmir and the use of firing and tear gas against those throwing stones.

The governor recalled how a huge voter turnout during the 2008 assembly elections had demonstrated the faith of the people in democracy. It also highlighted the way the government was moving to 'give employment to the unemployed'.

## China, India adding to e-waste timebomb: UN

AFP, Nusa Dua

Mountains of discarded computers and mobile phones could soon pose serious threats to public health and the environment in developing countries without swift action, the UN said yesterday.

"Sales of electronic products in countries like China

and India and across continents such as Africa and Latin America are set to rise sharply in the next 10 years," the UN Environment Programme (Unep) said in a report.

"And unless action is stepped up to properly collect and recycle materials, many developing countries face the spectre of hazardous e-waste

mountains with serious consequences for the environment and public health."

The report entitled "Recycling -- from E-Waste to Resources" was released at a meeting of Basel Convention and other world chemical authorities prior to Unep's Governing Council meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

## Brown under pressure as anti-bully chief speaks out

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown was under fresh pressure Monday after an anti-bullying charity said his staff had contacted them amid allegations about the leader's volcanic temper.

Christine Pratt, chief executive of the National Bullying Helpline, said that there had been three or four contacts made by Downing Street staff in recent years.

"What we are saying is staff in his office working directly with him have issues and have concerns and have contacted our helpline," she told the BBC.

The anti-bullying chief said she decided to go public with her concerns after being angered by ministers leaping to defend Brown over book extracts published Sunday claiming the prime minister terrified staff with his temper.

The new book by political journalist Andrew Rawnsley claims Brown grabbed one staff member by the jacket lapels and shouted at him, punched the back of a car seat after receiving bad news and repeatedly swore at advisors.

Brown is also accused of having "turfed a (secretary) out of her chair and (taken) over the keyboard himself" because she was "not typing fast enough", while a seat in his official car was allegedly "flecked with black marks" where he stabbed it with his pen in frustration.

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