

Pakistan refuses to close 42 'terror' camps: India

Don't expect miracles from dialogue, says Antony

AFP, Indo-Asian News Service, Vasco

Indian Defence Minister AK Antony yesterday said Pakistan "was not taking serious steps" to destroy 42 terror camps on its soil.

Stating that India was "exploring all possibilities", Antony also said he did not expect any "miracles" from the dialogue with Pakistan.

Antony said 42 militant training camps were operating in Pakistan and accused the country's government of making little effort to close them.

The accusation came after the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan met last month for the first official talks since the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, which India blames on Pakistani militants.

"All the terror camps in Pakistan are active. Pakistan has not taken any serious steps to destroy these camps," Antony told a press conference on the sidelines of the launch of Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) offshore patrol vessel (OPV) Vishwast at the port town of Vasco in Goa state.

"Pakistan has not taken serious steps to destroy these terror camps," he said.

Reiterating that Pakistan had not taken serious steps to control the terror apparatus directed at New Delhi, Antony said that despite this, India would continue to talk to Pakistan.

"However, I do not expect any miracles," Antony said. The foreign secretaries of the two countries had held talks last month, in the first structured dialogue since 26/11.

Pakistan has in the past routinely denied allegations that it arms, funds and trains anti-India terrorists.

Speaking on the issue of infiltration by militants from Pakistan into India, the defence minister attributed it to Jammu and Kashmir's fast-paced return to normalcy.

"Kashmir is becoming normal. Violence is less. This situation cannot be tolerated by forces inimical to India," he said, adding that since "normalcy was coming to Kashmir fast, infiltration was increasing."

He said the Jammu and Kashmir Police had now become "efficient and committed."

Earlier, ICGS Vishwast was commissioned by Antony in the presence of the director general ICG, Anil Chopra, and Goa Chief Minister Digambar Kamat.

Baradar would be deported to Afghanistan

Says Pak minister

ANI, Karachi

Despite the Lahore High Court order preventing his extradition, Pakistan Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar has said Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's second-in command, would be handed over to Afghanistan after a case is registered against him in Pakistan.

Talking to media persons here, Mukhtar said Baradar's extradition would not hamper the reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

"Baradar is offender as he had entered into the country without passport, and we have to register a case against him first," The Nation quoted Mukhtar, as saying.

Replying to a question regarding India's alleged involvement in the wide spread violence in Pakistan, he said Islamabad would not issue any statement in this regard unless it has evidence.



People from India's Gorkha minority stage a sit in protest in New Delhi yesterday to voice their demands for a separate Gorkha state in northern West Bengal.



Thai riot policemen stand in a pool of blood after supporters of deposed Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra spilled blood they had collected at Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's residence as part of an anti-government protest in Bangkok yesterday.

Thai protesters hurl own blood at PM's house

AP, Bangkok

Red-shirted protesters hurled plastic bags filled with their own blood into the residential compound of Thailand's prime minister yesterday, hoping their shock tactics will bring down his government.

Several thousand later gathered in front of the US Embassy, saying they wanted to tell the international community that their government was illegitimate. A protest leader, Jatuporn Prompan, went into the embassy compound, where he said he talked with US diplomats.

Riot police first blocked all approaches to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's walled compound. But after negotiations, three dozen demonstrators were allowed to squeeze through the police cordon carrying about six 1.3-gallon (5-liter) plastic jugs filled with frothy blood over their heads.

They splattered blood across Abhisit's front gate and poured some of it into plastic bags that they hurled at the home, leaving the walls, roof and grounds smeared with red.

A heavy afternoon downpour ended as the blood spilling finished, leaving dark red puddles in the street that a white-suited medical cleanup team quickly hosed away. Some climbed on the prime minister's tile roof to remove the empty, blood-soaked bags.

The incident in the Sukhumvit Road area, home to many wealthy Thais and expatriates, followed similar "blood sacrifices" Tuesday at Abhisit's office and the headquarters of his Democrat Party. The dramatic acts grabbed attention, but put the "Red Shirt" protest movement no closer to its goal of forcing new elections.

US missile attacks kill 10 rebels in Pakistan

Militants kill 5 policemen at checkpoint ambush

AP, AFP, Islamabad/ Peshawar

US missile strikes killed at least 10 militants in northwest Pakistan yesterday, as attackers armed with rockets and petrol bombs killed five policemen in a pre-dawn ambush.

In the first attack, the drones fired four missiles at a vehicle and flattened a nearby house near Miran Shah, the main town in the North Waziristan tribal region, killing six militants, an army and an intelligence official said.

About 50 minutes later, drones fired three more missiles at a vehicle in Madakhel town, about 40km west of Miran Shah, killing four insurgents, the officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to the media.

Other militants were also wounded in the two strikes, they said.

Earlier suspected Islamist militants armed with rockets and petrol bombs ambushed a security checkpoint in northwest Pakistan,

killing five policemen before dawn Wednesday, officials said.

The attack took place at Speen Qabar checkpoint, some 20km southwest of Peshawar, the capital of North West Frontier Province, where militants routinely attack security forces.

Dozens of militants lobbed rockets at the checkpoint, then opened fire with automatic weapons before throwing petrol bombs, setting it on fire, senior police official Mohammad Karim Khan told AFP.

"Three Frontier Constabulary personnel and two policemen were martyred in the attack and the sixth policeman posted (at the checkpoint) is the lone survivor, but he is also wounded," Khan said.

Khan blamed the attack on Lashkar-e-Islam, a militant group active in the neighbouring district of Khyber, which is part of Pakistan's lawless and semi-autonomous tribal belt bordering Afghanistan.

35 killed in fiery Afghanistan bus crash

AFP, Kabul

At least 35 people were killed Wednesday in a fiery collision between a bus and a truck on a treacherous pass in northern Afghanistan, the interior ministry said.

The bus was travelling north from Kabul along the narrow Salang pass when it "had an accident with a truck, as a result of which 35 passengers, including women, men and children, were killed," a ministry statement said.

The Salang pass connecting northern and southern Afghanistan is a notoriously dangerous stretch of road, and the scene of avalanches in February that killed 170 people.

The interior ministry said Wednesday's accident appeared to have been caused by the "narrow width of the road and the carelessness of the driver."

Obama talks Afghan war with Karzai in video call

Suicide bombers in burqas killed in town

AFP, Kabul/ Kandahar

US President Barack Obama held a video call with Afghan head of state Hamid Karzai to discuss the war on the Taliban and progress in eradicating corruption, the Kabul government said Tuesday.

In the Monday "teleconference" which lasted more than an hour, Obama reaffirmed "US long-term commitment for a prosperous and stable Afghanistan," Karzai's office said in a statement.

Karzai's government depends on the support of Washington and other Western allies in the battle against insurgents destabilising much of the country through shadow administrations and connections with drug traffickers.

In fresh violence, two suicide attackers dressed in burqas were killed in a gunfight outside the offices of a US aid group in Afghanistan on Wednesday near the site of a major US-led military operation.

Three people, including two foreigners, were wounded in the shoot-out with guards at the International Relief and Development (IRD) compound in Lashkar Gah, capital of volatile Helmand province, Afghan officials said.

"The two suicide bombers were shot and killed by the IRD guards. Luckily their explosives did not explode," provincial spokesman Daud Ahmadi told AFP.

"Three people working for IRD have been wounded in today's incident," he said.

MRP to delay by at least 2 months

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including passports and visas, to scan the documents in automated system, which is fast and less prone to error.

All members of the organisation in 2005 agreed to shift to MRPs by April 1, 2010. The handwritten passports however will remain valid until the date of expiry mentioned in the books.

IRIS officials said they were trying to open LC since the company signed the contract with Bangladesh government on February 17.

"There was an agreement to open a letter of credit in favour of our firm within a week of signing the agree-

Jamaat

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children's fair at Rajshahi Shishu Academy premises marking the 90th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu and the National Children's Day.

Claiming itself a non-political organisation, the SKS is selling biographies of the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina and used Bangabandhu's name on their banner mentioning him as the "Father of the Nation", which many see as a strategy for surviving the Awami League government tenure.

They also tried modern songs to attract children and juveniles.

Many of the organisers of the SKS are allegedly affiliated with different Jamaat-Shibir associated organisations including Phulkurir Asor, Prottoy Shilpi Goshthi and Bikalpa Shahitto Sangsad.

The civil society and pro-liberation people of the city expressed concerns over the SKS alluring bright children by offering money for their writings and publishing them in magazines and books.

A concerned parent M Aftab Hossain said, "I did not let my son join SKS when I came to know about it. They are cheating people masking their real face."

Founder director of SKS Gazi Salauddin, who had reportedly edited a number of Shibir publications on behalf of Prottoy Shilpi Goshthi and is involved with Phulkurir, Bikalpa Shahitto Sangsad, denied his involvement with Shibir.

Former director of RU unit of Bikalpa Shahitto and Sangskriti Sangsad Suaib Hossain claimed himself an SKS adviser.

He is also the assistant director of Jamaat controlled Islami Bank Foundation backed organisation Rajshahi Sangskriti Kendra.

ment. But the official procedure is eating up a lot of time," the IRIS official said.

He said they couldn't import required equipment for not having the LC.

Brig Gen Refayet Ullah, director of the project to introduce MRPs and machine-readable visa (MRV) in Bangladesh, regretted it saying the LC should have been opened much earlier.

He told The Daily Star that they expected to finish the whole process fast but it is taking more time than they had anticipated.

Abdul Mabud, director general of Department of Immigration and Passport, said a few things including opening of LC remain pending with different ministries.

"We are working hard to complete the primary tasks," he added.

The local agent of IRIS said they need to train people,

develop a network between the passport offices across the country, finalise passport design and security features to produce MRPs.

Both the IRIS agent and the project director said it might take the entire April month to complete all procedure for producing MRPs.

They said preparations have been made to set up 10 passport centres -- one each in seven divisions and in Mymensingh, Jessore and Gopalganj.

"Two floors at the Department of Immigration and Passport at Agargaon in the capital are being refurbished for the purpose," said the project director.

IRIS will work in Bangladesh for three years to implement the Tk 526 crore project to introduce MRP and MRV. Bangladesh will provide it with necessary manpower to complete the project, headed.

Benazir violated 'deal', says Musharraf

ANI, Washington

Former Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf has revealed that he and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto had entered a deal, according to which, all cases against her were to be dropped in return for which she had agreed to not to return to Pakistan before the elections.

Talking to reporters after addressing a gathering of 300 Pakistani Americans in Seattle, Musharraf said it was also decided that the restriction on becoming the Prime Minister for the third term would also be withdrawn, but Bhutto violated the deal and returned to Pakistan ahead of the elections in 2007.

"But she returned to Pakistan before elections and it was a violation of what we had agreed," The News quoted Musharraf, as saying.

When asked to comment on the possible role of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif, Musharraf said: "A person who I call a closet Taliban. I feel he'll be a bigger disaster. And also, he has a tendency of can't function with anyone."

Later, talking to an audience of hundreds of people, largely Pakistani Americans, in Bellevue, Musharraf said the Taliban's brand of Islamic extremism poses a serious threat to the nation.

"We need to ask ourselves, do we or don't we want a Taliban and al-Qaeda culture in Pakistan ... because every action then flows from that decision," Musharraf said.

'Cool Jupiter' widens search for exoplanets

AFP, Paris

Marking a further step in the hunt for worlds orbiting other stars, astronomers on Wednesday said they had found a cool planet the size of Jupiter that encircles a sun at searing proximity.

The work is a technical exploit in the field of exoplanets, as planets outside our Solar System are called, they said.

"This is the first (exoplanet) whose properties we can study in depth," said Claire Moutou, one of 60 astronomers who took part in the discovery. "It is bound to become a Rosetta Stone in exoplanet research."

More than 400 exoplanets have been spotted since the first came to light in 1995.

To the disappointment of those dreaming of a home from home, none has yet proved to be a small, rocky, watery world like our own.

Instead, most are "hot Jupiters," or huge gassy balls that are so close to their stars that their surfaces can be scorched to a thousand degrees Celsius (1,800 degrees Fahrenheit) or more.

CNG stations

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exporting the cheaper machinery to Bangladesh. CNG machinery importers and installing agents claim that filling station owners often fail to comply with instructions concerning safety.

A senior official from Rahimafrooz who spoke on condition of anonymity said that his company installed the equipment at Tasin CNG Filling Station in Abdullahpur, where the most recent blast took place.

The force of Tuesday's explosion caused the roof to blow off and injured four employees.

The official said they asked the authorities of Tasin CNG Filling Station not to install unauthorised parts and not to use the designated installation room for mechanical purposes.

The official alleges that authorities at Tasin CNG did not comply with these instructions.

Tasin CNG claims that the blast was the result of a booster pipe explosion.

Other dangers are created at refuelling stations when buses are allowed to park beside the station.

Bribes may be paid to the station owners to do so.

Seven buses were damaged in a fire at Cabex CNG Filling station at Kutubkhali in the city's South Jatrabari a few weeks ago.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque told The Daily Star that a massive drive will be conducted against refuelling stations that violate regulations by allowing vehicles to park at the station compound.

During the early 1990s, authorities from the Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Limited (RPGCL) began operating with five CNG filling stations in the capital.

Private sectors launched operations in 2003-4 and there are now 461 CNG refuelling stations across the country.

Advertisement for 'জরুরী নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি' (Urgent Job Vacancies) from 'কুইন মেরী কলেজ' (Queen Mary College). The ad lists various job openings with details on application procedures, dates, and locations. It includes a table with columns for 'ক্রমিক নং' (Serial No.), 'পদের নাম' (Post Name), 'বিষয়' (Subject), 'সংখ্যা' (Number), and 'যোগ্যতা' (Eligibility). The table lists positions like 'অধ্যক্ষ' (Principal), 'প্রভাষক/সহকারী অধ্যাপক' (Associate Professor/Assistant Professor), 'পদার্থবিজ্ঞান' (Physics), 'রসায়নবিজ্ঞান' (Chemistry), 'জীববিজ্ঞান' (Biology), 'গণিত' (Mathematics), 'ব্যবসায় নীতি ও প্রয়োগ' (Business Ethics and Application), 'হিসাব বিজ্ঞান' (Accounting), 'কম্পিউটার শিক্ষা' (Computer Education), 'সার্চিবিক বিদ্যা ও অফিস ব্যবস্থাপনা' (Archival Studies and Office Management), 'প্রদর্শক' (Demonstrator), 'ল্যাব এনিসিস্টেন্ট' (Lab Assistant), and 'গ্রহাণারক' (Observer). The ad also includes contact information for the college and a list of application procedures.