

## Suicide bombings on Pak minorities kill 44

AP, Quetta

Suicide bombings targeting religious minorities killed at least 44 people in Pakistan yesterday, sharply driving up the toll of sectarian assaults in a country already battered by massive flooding.

A blast killed at least 43 people in the southwestern city of Quetta at a Shia procession calling for solidarity with Palestinians, Police Chief Ghulam Shabir Sheikh said. He said 78 people were wounded and several were in critical condition.

Protesters dragged wounded people into private cars as burning motorcycles sent clouds of black smoke billowing through the streets. The bodies of the dead and wounded lay strewn across the road.

Some Shia youths fired in the air after the blast, and Qazi Abdul Wahid, a senior police official, said officers were trying to control the situation.

Shiite leader Allama Abbas Kumaili appealed to participants to remain peaceful.

"We understand these are attempts to set Sunni and Shia sects against each other," he said.

The attack in Quetta was the second this week on Pakistani Shiites, who by some estimates make up about 20 percent of the population in the mostly Sunni Muslim country, although figures are imprecise and disputed.

A triple suicide attack Wednesday night killed 35 people at a Shiite ceremony in the eastern city of Lahore.

Kumaili said the attacks against minority sects were a result of government failure.

"Our government concentrates all its efforts to secure VIPs. Common men are not their priority," he said.

Government officials have said they cannot protect outdoor gatherings from attacks, and Interior Minister Rehman Malik called Thursday for Shiites to hold religious ceremonies indoors.

Baluchistan provincial Police Chief Iqbal said officials had warned organisers of the Quetta ceremony to stick inside a security cordon after



intelligence agents received reports about a possible terror attack.

"They violated the route," Iqbal said. "We had warned them not to extend their rally out of the cordon."

Wednesday's attack in Lahore, and a host of other assaults on religious minorities, was claimed by the hardline Sunni Pakistani Taliban, which is seeking to overthrow a Western-backed government shaken most recently by flooding that has caused massive displacement, suffering and economic damage.

Earlier Friday, a suicide attack on a mosque belonging to the minority Ahmadi sect killed at least one person and wounded several others in the northwest Pakistani town of Mardan.

Military and law-enforcement officials also have

been battered by militant violence, particularly along the border with Afghanistan. Officials said a roadside bomb attack in the capital of the north-west's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Friday killed one police officer and wounded three others.

The floods, spawned by heavy rains weeks ago in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and elsewhere in the mountains of northern Pakistan, have killed more than 1,600 people and affected about 20 million people. The waters are still swamping rich agricultural land in the southern provinces of Sindh and Punjab.

Flood victims say they have received little government help, and most assistance has come to them from private charities. The International Committee of the Red Cross warned Thursday that survivors' anger was beginning to hamper those aid efforts.

About 500 survivors blocked a key road in the Sindh town of Ghoro on Friday to protest inadequate food and drinking water.

"We have blocked traffic today to draw government attention toward our problems. We are living at a government building without food," said Deedar Ahmad, 25, who said he fled with about 1,000 people from a nearby flooded village.

Survivor Ali Nawaz said the government had housed flood victims but was not providing food, electricity, water or adequate shelter.

"We cannot sleep because of the fears of snakes," he said.

The flooding, and anger over the government response, has raised fears about the stability of Pakistan's government, seen as a problematic but essential Western ally in the fight against Islamist militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan's own restive tribal areas.

The Pakistani Taliban has issued veiled threats against Western aid workers but a recent wave of attacks have focused instead on religious minorities, particularly Shiites and Ahmadis.



Relatives of the 33 miners trapped at the San Jose mine in Copiapo, 800km north of Santiago, attend a mass at the mine on Thursday. The 33 Chilean miners trapped underground longer than anyone on record will soon be able to see and talk to loved ones through a video link, Health Minister Jaime Manalich said Thursday.

## Wild chimpanzees are learning how to outwit human hunters

BBC ONLINE

Across Africa, people often lay snare traps to catch bushmeat, killing or injuring chimps and other wildlife.

But a few chimps living in the rainforests of Guinea have learnt to recognise these snare traps laid by human hunters, researchers have found.

More astonishing, the chimps actively seek out and intentionally deactivate the traps, setting them off without being harmed.

The discovery was serendipitously made by primatologists Mr Gaku Ohashi and Professor Tetsuro Matsuzawa who were following chimps living in Bossou, Guinea to study the apes' social behaviour.

Snare injuries to chimps are reported at many sites across east and west Africa where chimps are studied, with many animals dying in the traps.

However, very few snares injuries have been reported among chimps studied at Bossou, which is unusual as the chimps live close to human settlements and snares are commonly laid in the area.

Now primatologists know why.

While researching the chimps, Mr Ohashi and Prof Matsuzawa, of the Primate Research Institute at Kyoto University, Japan, observed five male chimps, both juvenile and adult, attempting to break and deactivate snares.

On two occasions witnessed, the chimps successfully deactivated the traps set for them.

A typical snare, for example one made by the Manon people of Bossou, consists of a loop of iron wire connected by a vine rope to an arched stick, often a sapling.

The sapling puts tension into the rope and once an ani-



mal passes through the wire loop, the trap is sprung and the sapling pulls it tight, around the neck or leg of an animal.

Such traps cause indiscriminate damage, ensnaring any and all animals that come into contact with them.

But male Bossou chimps have worked out how to outwit the hunters and deactivate the traps.

"They seemed to know which parts of the snares are dangerous and which are not," Mr Ohashi told the BBC.

In the journal *Primates*, the researchers describe six separate cases where chimps were observed trying to deactivate snares.

Mostly, the chimps grasped the snare stick with their hands, shaking it violently until the trap broke.

Sometimes a chimp lightly knocked the sapling that holds the snare, before grasping it to break the trap.

But in all cases, they avoided touching the dangerous part, the wire loop.

In the video above, chimp can be seen seeking out and inspecting snares, without breaking them.

"We were surprised when we found this behaviour," says Mr Ohashi.

"This is the first report of chimpanzees breaking snares without injury."

The chimps' actions may also reveal something important about how chimps learn.

Often, chimps acquire new talents by trial and error.

For example, when trying to crack nuts, they might strike one stone onto an anvil stone and miss the nuts all together. Or they might use their hands to strike the nut, which is ineffective.

## Karzai slams Nato civilian killings

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has condemned an air strike by Nato-led forces which he said killed 10 election campaign workers, although US officials maintained it was aimed at an Islamist leader.

Nato said its airstrike on a car in northern Takhar province's normally quiet Rustaq district killed or wounded as many as 12 insurgents on Thursday, including a Taliban commander and a local head of an allied insurgent group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, responsible for attacks in Kabul and elsewhere.

However Karzai said the airstrike had killed 10 campaigners working for a candidate in Afghanistan's September 18 parliamentary elections.

"The rationale for the airstrike still needs to be fully investigated," the president said at a joint news conference in Kabul with Robert Gates, the US defense secretary.

Gates said he had not heard about civilian casualties, but said the attack had hit its intended target and promised an investigation.

"I am able to confirm that a very senior official of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was the target and was killed," Gates said.

"This is the first that I had heard that civilians may have been killed and we will certainly look into that," he said.

**CORRUPTION WORRIES**  
Increased violence and fears of corruption are threatening the parliamentary poll, with four

candidates and up to 13 campaign workers and supporters killed in recent weeks.

Gates said that while the fight against corruption must be led by Afghans, the US is working on new ways to prevent millions of US dollars flowing into the nation from bribery and graft.

Gates was responding to Karzai's complaints on Thursday about the tactics of two Western-backed anti-corruption units that recently arrested one of his top aides on suspicion of bribery, likening them to heavy-handed Soviet tactics.

Gates said two units - the Major Crimes Task Force and the Sensitive Investigative Unit, should operate under Afghan law, but added that the US will keep backing investigations into cronyism and illicit activities.

He also said US ambassador Karl Eikenberry and General David Petraeus, the top commander of US and Nato forces in Afghanistan, were developing new guidelines for how US funds are handed out for development and other projects.

Karzai pledged to work against corruption, which is undermining trust in his government and making it difficult to maintain international support for the war.

Gates is the most senior US official to meet with Karzai since the president's decision to intervene in the Salehi case and review the anti-corruption units.

Those actions were widely interpreted in the US as undermining efforts to clean up his government and as a slap in the face to his US backers.

## US, S Korea to hold further naval drills

AP, Seoul

South Korea and the United States will hold joint anti-submarine exercises in another show of force against North Korea, officials said yesterday, as Pyongyang renewed threats against the drills.

The exercises will be the second in a series of joint maneuvers the allies planned to conduct in response to the deadly sinking of a South Korean warship in March that they blame on the North. The two sides staged large-scale joint naval drills in July followed by South Korea's own naval drills last month.

The drills, set to run from Sunday through Thursday off the Korean peninsula's west coast, will involve about 17,000 US and South Korean troops, seven ships and two submarines as well as aircraft, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff and the US military in Seoul.

The exercises are "designed to send a clear message of deterrence to North Korea, while improving overall alliance anti-submarine warfare capabilities," the US military in Seoul said in a statement.

## UN calls meeting on food price concerns

BBC ONLINE

The United Nations' food agency has called a special meeting of policy makers to discuss the recent rise in global food prices.

The announcement came after Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin extended the country's ban on grain exports on Thursday.

This added to fears that prices of food staples would continue to rise.

The meeting will take place on 24 September, probably in Rome, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization said.

"In the past few weeks, global cereal markets experienced a sudden surge in international wheat prices on concerns over wheat shortages," the agency said.

"The purpose of holding the meeting is for exporting and importing countries to engage in constructive discussions on appropriate reactions to the current market situation."

Mr Putin did not say when exactly the Russian grain export ban, originally to run from 15 August to 31 December, would be lifted, but said that it would not be before next year's harvest had been reaped.

## Soldiers kill 25 in troubled Mexican border state

AP, Monterrey

Soldiers killed at least 25 suspected cartel members Thursday in a raid and gunbattle in a Mexican state near the US border that has become one of the most dangerous battlegrounds in the country's drug war.

A military aircraft flying over Ciudad Mier in Tamaulipas state spotted several gunmen in front of a building, according to a statement from Mexico's Defense Department.

When ground troops moved in, gunmen opened fire, starting a gunbattle in which 25 suspected cartel members died, according to the military. The statement said two soldiers were wounded.

Authorities rescued three people believed to be kidnap victims in the raid, according to the statement. The military said troops seized 25 rifles, four grenades, 4,200 rounds of ammunition and 23 vehicles.

Earlier, a military spokesman said the gunmen were believed to be on a property controlled by the Zetas, who started out as a gang of drug assassins but have since evolved into a powerful cartel.

Some local media reported 27 suspected cartel members were slain, citing unnamed police officials.

Violence has surged in northeastern Mexico this year since the Zetas broke ranks with their former employer, the Gulf cartel, resulting in a flare-up of drug violence in Tamaulipas.

Last week, Marines discovered the bodies of 72 Central and South American migrants believed to have been gunned down by the Zetas after refusing to work for the cartel, in what may be the deadliest drug gang massacres to date. The migrants' bodies were discovered at a ranch about 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the U.S. border in Tamaulipas.

Five days later, the mayor of the Tamaulipas town of Hidalgo, bordering Nuevo Leon state, was ambushed and killed in his car in an attack that also wounded his daughter.

In June, gunmen ambushed and killed the leading candidate for state governor a week before regional elections. And in May a mayoral candidate in Tamaulipas was assassinated.



Fireboats spray water as smoke pours from a fire on the Vermilion 380 production platform in the Gulf of Mexico on Thursday. Fire engulfed the offshore platform yesterday, 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of the Louisiana coast shortly after 9:00am (1400 GMT) and massive plumes of gray smoke billowed into the sky as rescuers rushed to fish out the workers. Workers said they managed to shut down the wells before evacuating the platform.