

UN halts Pakistan food aid after suicide bombing

BBC ONLINE

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has stopped food distribution in a tribal district in Pakistan where 45 people died in a suicide attack on Saturday.

An official told the BBC the suspension was temporary and that distribution would resume at the earliest.

A female bomber blew herself up near a large crowd receiving food aid in Khar town in the north-western Bajaur area.

The town is close to the Afghan border - a stronghold of Taliban who said they carried out the bombing.

US President Barack Obama condemned the attack as "outrageous".

Saturday's bombing was the latest in a string of recent attacks in Pakistan's north-west.

"As of now, we are in contact with the authorities both in Peshawar and in Khar and our intention is to reopen the four WFP hubs in Bajaur region as quickly as possible," WFP spokesman in Islamabad, Amjad Jamal, told the BBC.

"Such situations have arisen in the past, but we have always resumed our operations within two hours to 36 or 48 hours of the suspension, depending on the level of security threat."

Mr Jamal said Saturday's blast took place at a security post about 600m away from the WFP distribution hub.

"We had to close the place because it was put under curfew after the blast.

"We then suspended operations at the rest of our three hubs in Bajaur as well, as a precautionary measure," he said.

Pakistan's Taliban said they ordered the attack on the distribution centre, which is used by the World Food Programme and other aid agencies.

They said the rebels had targeted the local people - displaced members of the Salarzai tribe - because of their support for the Pakistani military.

An estimated 300 people were queuing for food at the time of the blast, with reports saying at least 100 people were injured in the bombing.

The tribal district of Bajaur, where the attack took place, has seen several military operations to clear it of insurgents.

The army had previously declared the operations a success and the area safe for the displaced to return to.

Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani said those responsible had no regard for humanity or religion, and that the fight against militants would continue.

The attack also came as Pakistan's military took action against militants in Mohmand, an adjacent tribal region, killing an estimated 40 rebels.

21 dead in China road accidents

AFP, Beijing

At least 21 people were killed -- including 14 schoolchildren -- and 25 injured in two car accidents in China yesterday, one of which involved over 100 vehicles, state press reported.

The 14 children died when the three-wheeled vehicle in which they were travelling plunged off a road in central Hunan province early yesterday, Xinhua news agency said.

Xinhua earlier said nine children were killed and one was missing in the accident, in Hengnan county.

Later it reported that the missing child was found dead, while four other children died after being taken to hospital. Six others were injured in the wreck.

In the second accident, seven people were killed and 15 injured during a pile-up involving over 100 vehicles on a fog-shrouded highway in south-west Guizhou province, Xinhua said in a separate report.

Visibility was less than 50 metres (yards) on the road when the pile-up occurred. Following the accident, traffic on the highway backed up for 20 kilometres (12 miles), the report said.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani people gather at the mausoleum of martyrs for Bhutto family in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh yesterday, on the third anniversary of death of the former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

Thousands mourn for Benazir

AFP, Pakistan

Thousands of Pakistanis gathered yesterday to mourn ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto on the third anniversary of her death and demand that her killers be brought to justice.

Loyalists descended on her grave in the southern village of Garhi Khuda Bakhsh from across the country, beating their chests and chanting "Bhutto was alive yesterday and Bhutto is alive today".

Bhutto, the first woman to become prime minister of a Muslim country, was killed on December 27, 2007 in a gun and suicide attack after addressing an election rally in Rawalpindi, near the capital Islamabad.

Two senior police officers were arrested last week for alleged dereliction of duty over the

assassination. Five alleged Pakistani Taliban militants held for nearly three years over the killing have yet to be indicted.

Bhutto's widower President Asif Ali Zardari pledged allegiance to his wife's policies and promised to stamp out Islamist militant groups, which have been blamed for killing more than 4,000 people across Pakistan since July 2007.

"We'll be fighting against extremism as guided by our martyred leader. We'll make Pakistan a peaceful and prosperous country," he was quoted as saying in an anniversary statement by state-run PTV.

Zardari, their two daughters and Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, from Butto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), visited her grave privately on Sunday.

Bomb kills 3 in Kandahar

BBC ONLINE

At least three people have been killed and at least 20 wounded in a car bomb explosion in the centre of the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, police say.

The dead were police officers who had lined up outside a bank to collect their salaries, officials said.

Some reports say that the car was driven by a suicide bomber.

Kandahar is a Taliban stronghold and has seen some of the worst fighting this year between militants and the international Nato-led troops.

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