

MUMBAI CARNAGE Pak minister blames Indian agencies

PTI, New Delhi

Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik yesterday blamed Indian security agencies for their "failure" to prevent the Mumbai terror attack and alleged that Indian non-state actors were involved in the massacre.

Malik also said had there been interaction between Pakistan and India and regular sharing of information, the 26/11 attack could have been prevented.

He said Pakistani-American terrorist David Headley had conspired with al-Qaeda terrorist Ilyas Kashmiri, a retired major of Pakistan Army and three Indian terrorists - Abu Jundal, Jabbiullah and Fahim Ansari - and roamed freely and plotted India's worst terror attack.

"So it is not a state sponsored drama, state sponsored action. It is action by non-state actors. Triangular nexus between Headley, (Ilyas) Kashmiri, the enemy of Pakistan, a Major who deserted the



Rehman Malik

Pakistan Army, having joined LeT and of course three Indians," he said delivering a lecture at Observer Research Foundation.

Malik said during investigation, it has come to be known that they carried out recce of the targets and shot films uninterrupted and without notice of law enforcement agencies.

"Now the agencies failed. Both here and Pakistan. So, we have failed. Why? Because, there was no interaction between Pakistan and India," he said.

The Pakistani leader advised Indians not to hide matters of terror and investigation else things would may go out of hands.

Referring to LeT terrorist Abu Jundal, who was present in LeT control room during 26/11 attack and was deported from Saudi Arabia recently, Mr. Malik said Jundal had confessed that he was a known criminal, having been charged in many cases.

Violence continues around Pak airport

AFP, Peshawar

Six people were killed yesterday as police and troops battled militants armed with automatic weapons, grenades and mortars in northwest Pakistan's Peshawar, a day after a deadly Taliban raid on the city's airport.

Fierce firing broke out after police acting on an intelligence report stormed a building near the airport, where a suicide and rocket attack on Saturday killed five civilians and five attackers and wounded 50 other people.

The assault late Saturday, claimed by the Pakistani Taliban, sparked prolonged gunfire and forced authorities to close the airport, a commercial hub and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) base in Peshawar on the edge of the tribal belt.

It was the second Islamist militant attack in four months on a military air base in nuclear-armed Pakistan. In August 11 people were killed when heavily-armed insurgents wearing suicide vests stormed a facility in the northwestern town of Kamra.

Police backed by troops launched a raid early yesterday on a building under construction near the airport following reports that five militants who fled after the airport attack had taken refuge there, said provincial information minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain.

In the subsequent shootout three militants and a policemen were killed, police said, while two other officers were wounded.

The clashes ended after six hours when the two remaining militants detonated their suicide vests inside the building, another senior police officer, Imtiaz Altaf, told AFP.

Avalanche kills 6 Indian troops

AFP, Srinagar

An avalanche on the high-altitude Siachen glacier that is disputed between India and Pakistan killed at least six Indian soldiers yesterday when their outpost was swept away before dawn.

Thousands of soldiers from both nations endure bitter conditions on the glacier, which is dubbed "The world's highest battleground", due to the long-running territorial dispute.

An estimated 8,000 troops have died since 1984, almost all of them from avalanches, landslides, frostbite, altitude sickness or heart failure rather than combat.

"The avalanche struck a forward post early on Sunday morning, burying 7 soldiers," army spokesman Lt Col JS Brar told AFP.

Body of royal hoax nurse reaches India

AFP, Mangalore

The body of an Indian-born nurse who was found hanged after taking a hoax call to the hospital treating Prince William's wife arrived in Mangalore yesterday following a memorial mass in London.

Jacintha Saldanha, 46, apparently committed suicide a day after answering the prank telephone call from two Australian radio DJs to the hospital where Catherine was admitted during the early stages of her pregnancy.

Her funeral is expected to take place today near Mangalore in Shirva, the home town of her husband Benedict Barboza. He accompanied her body to India along with their son, 16, and daughter, 14.

Saldanha's body arrived a day after the nurse's children told a service at London's Westminster Cathedral that her death had created "an unfillable void" in their lives.

"We will miss your laughter, the loving memories and the good times we had together. The house is an empty dwelling without your presence," her daughter Lisha said.

A London inquest last week heard that Saldanha, who moved to Britain around 12 years ago, had been found hanged in staff accommodation on December 7 and that there were no suspicious circumstances over her death.



Jacintha Saldanha

North Korea marks 1st death anniversary of late leader

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un led thousands of officials yesterday in a memorial ceremony for his late father and ex-ruler Kim Jong-Il, days after a successful long-range rocket launch.

The ceremony followed a mass rally two days earlier hailing the launch of the three-stage rocket, a move which was condemned by the UN Security Council and seen by many countries as a disguised ballistic missile test.

Kim Jong-Il, who ruled the communist state for 17 years, died of a heart attack on December 17 last year.

His youngest son Jong-Un immediately took over, the second dynastic succession by the Kim dynasty which has ruled the isolated country for more than six decades with an iron fist and a pervasive personality cult.

Officials in black suits and uniformed military leaders convened in a cavernous stadium in the capital Pyongyang Sunday morning for the hour-long memorial event, which was televised live on state TV.

Jong-Un, stone-faced and clad in a black Mao suit, sat on stage with dozens of other top officials against the backdrop of a giant red flag featuring a large portrait of a smiling Kim Jong-Il.



Kim Jong-Il

It was unclear what memorial events were scheduled on Monday, the anniversary day.

The North said the apparently successful launch -- its second after a much-heralded but botched mission in April -- was a scientific project to put a weather satellite into orbit.

But the United States and other nations viewed it as a disguised ballistic missile test banned under UN resolutions triggered by its past nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

Islamists claim

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The two sides' positions drew out the deep uncertainty and division seen in Egypt over the past three weeks, a period marked by mass protests and deadly clashes.

A small majority of 56.5 percent voted for the draft charter put to half of Egypt's 51 million voters on Saturday, according to the Freedom and Justice Party, the political branch of President Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood.

Egyptian media reported roughly the same figure, which fell short of the landslide the Brotherhood had been hoping for to quiet the restive opposition.

But the opposition National Salvation Front coalition said in a statement that it "will not recognise any unofficial result," and will wait for the formal tally after next Saturday's second round of voting.

It reiterated an allegation that the balloting had been "marred by irregularities and violations," but the statement did not repeat the Front's overnight assertion that two-thirds of voters had rejected the draft charter.

Mohamed ElBaradei, a former chief of the UN nuclear energy agency, tweeted of the first round: "Country split, flagrant irregularities, low turnout, disillusion with Islamists on the rise. Illiteracy remains a hurdle."

Violence between the charter's supporters and opponents flared in Egypt's two largest cities, Cairo and Alexandria, before and after the referendum, with police repelling an Islamist attack on the liberal Wafd party headquarters in the capital on Saturday night.

On December 5, clashes between pro- and anti-Morsi protesters outside the presidential palace killed eight people injured hundreds, prompting the army to deploy troops and tanks around the compound.

If the constitution is approved, Morsi hopes it will end a tumultuous transition almost two years after a popular uprising overthrew president Hosni Mubarak and ushered in interim military rule before Morsi's election in June.

Liberals and Christians had boycotted the assembly that drafted the charter, complaining that the Islamist-dominated panel ignored their concerns.

The Brotherhood and its Freedom and Justice Party threw its formidable organisational machine behind a "yes" campaign for the draft constitution.

But many opposition voters were especially hostile towards the Brotherhood, which the National Salvation Front believes wants to usher in strict Islamic laws.

Sally Rafid, a 28-year-old Christian voter, said: "There are many things in the constitution people don't agree on, and it's not just the articles on religion."

International watchdogs, the UN human rights chief, the United States and the European Union have all expressed reservations about the draft because of loopholes that could be used to weaken human rights.

Analysts said it was likely -- but not certain -- that the draft constitution would be adopted.

Hisham Kassem, an Egyptian analyst based in Cairo, predicted that if the new charter is adopted, that "is likely to take the country into some sort of paralysis or civil disobedience."

A "serious crisis" would also be likely to ensue for Egypt's already embattled economy, he added.

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Investigators have linked Nancy to five weapons: two powerful handguns, two traditional hunting rifles and a semiautomatic rifle that is similar to weapons used by troops in Afghanistan.

Her son took the two handguns and the semiautomatic rifle to the school. Law enforcement officials said they believed the guns were acquired legally and were registered.

Nancy, 52, had gone through a divorce in 2008 and was described by friends as social and generous to strangers, but also high-strung, as if she were holding herself together. She lived in a large Colonial home here with Adam, and had struggled to help him cope with a developmental disorder that often left him reserved and withdrawn, according to relatives, friends and former classmates.

At some point, he had dropped out of the Newtown school system. An older son, Ryan, did not live with Nancy.

In a statement yesterday night, her ex-husband, Peter Lanza, an executive at General Electric, said he was cooperating with investigators.

Nancy's brother James Champion, a former police officer who lives in Kingston, said yesterday that agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation had questioned family members on

Friday night.

Champion would not discuss whether Adam had a developmental disorder or mental illness.

He said Nancy had grown up and lived in Kingston with her husband and sons before they left in 1998. He said he had not seen Adam Lanza in eight years.

Nancy's sister-in-law Marsha Lanza, who lives in Illinois, said Adam Lanza had been home-schooled for a time because his mother was not "satisfied with the school."

Former classmates here described him as nervous, with a flat affect.

"He was always different -- keeping to himself, fidgeting and very quiet," said a classmate, Alex Israel.

"But I could always tell he was a supersmart kid, maybe just socially awkward, something just off about him. The same went for when I went to his house. His mother was always nice to me; she was a kind, typical suburban mom as far as I remember. As time went on, he continued to keep to himself and I branched out more, so not much contact with him after middle school.

"By the time high school came around, he did sort of disappear," she added. "I'd see him in the halls walking quickly with his briefcase he carried, but I never had a class with him and never saw him with friends. I was yearbook editor and I

remember he declined to be photographed or give us a senior quote or baby picture."

Some former classmates said they had been told that Adam had Asperger's syndrome, which is considered a high-functioning form of autism.

News reports on Friday suggested that Nancy had worked at the elementary school where the shooting occurred, but yesterday the school superintendent said there was no evidence that she had ever worked there.

The authorities said it was not clear why Adam had gone to the school.

Nancy was a slender woman with blond shoulder-length hair who enjoyed craft beers, jazz and landscaping. She often went to a local restaurant and music spot, My Place, where at beer tastings on Tuesday evenings, she sometimes talked about her gun collection, recalled an acquaintance, Dan Holmes, the owner of a landscaping company in Newtown.

"She had several different guns," Holmes said. "I don't know how many. She would go target shooting with her kids."

Many of those who knew Nancy in Newtown were at a loss to describe what she did for a living. Her brother in New Hampshire said she had

not been working, but had once been a stockbroker.

Louise Tambascio, owner of My Place, said Nancy volunteered occasionally.

"She stayed with Adam," Tambascio said, adding that, as a younger child, he "couldn't get along with the kids in school."

Nancy spoke often of her landscaping, Holmes recalled, and later hired him to do work on her home.

He recently dispatched a team to put up Christmas decorations at her house -- garlands on the front columns and white lights atop the shrubbery.

After the work was complete, Nancy sent Holmes a text: "That went really well!"

Jim Leff, a musician, often sat next to her at the bar and made small talk, he said in an interview yesterday.

On one occasion, Leff said, he had gone to Newtown to discuss lending money to a friend. As the two men negotiated the loan, Nancy overheard and offered to write the man a check.

"She was really kind and warm," Leff said, "but she always seemed a little bit high-strung."

He declined to elaborate, but in a post on his personal Web site, he said he felt a distance from her that was explained when he heard, after the shootings, "how difficult her

troubled son," Adam, "was making things for her."

She was "handling a very difficult situation with uncommon grace," he wrote.

She was "a big, big gun fan," he added on his Web site.

There are many gun enthusiasts in this area, residents said.

When some people who live near the elementary school heard the shots fired by Adam on Friday, they said they were not surprised.

"I really didn't think anything of it," said a resident, Ray Rinaldi. "You hear gun shots around here all the time."

For many of those on Yogananda Street, where the Lanzas lived, the recollections about Nancy Lanza were incomplete.

"Who were they?" said Len Strocchia, 46, standing beside his daughter as camera crews came through the neighbourhood. "I'm sure we rang their door bell on Halloween."

He looked down the block, then turned back to his daughter. "I'm sure of it," he said.

Nancy sister-in-law Marsha Lanza also struggled to make sense of events. "I just don't have an answer," she said, starting to cry. "I wish I had an answer for you. I wish somebody had seen it coming."

Traders spoil organic effort

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A number of farmers said had there been separate markets for toxic free vegetables, consumers would have shown more interest in buying those. And this would encourage more and more farmers to go for producing toxic-free vegetables instead of toxic ones.

There should be specific corners in markets including those in Dhaka for sale of the safe vegetables, they said.

Asked, agriculture officials in the areas with increasing use of IPM methods echoed the farmers' views about marketing their produce separately, and said this would enable consumers to buy those without worrying about health hazards.

Nazmul Islam, a farmer at Belabo in Narsingdi, who has been using pheromone trap and some other IPM methods for the last five years, told this

correspondent, "I feel bad when I see my produce is mixed with toxic ones. My efforts become meaningless."

Torikul Islam, a farmer in Jessore, said he opted for vegetable cultivation by using pheromone trap a decade ago when he came to know about the health hazards of using chemical pesticides. "I did it to ensure good health of my family members and those who purchase my produce," he said over the phone.

The number of farmers using IPM has increased over the years. But many are yet to go for it although it costs less than using pesticides. IPM practice however requires more time and care.

Cultivation of vegetables by using pesticides gives higher output and the produce looks better than those produced without using toxic substances.

And this might encourage many to go for it, said Torikul.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry in association with traders have opened four formalin-free fish markets in the capital in the face of growing worries about health hazards due to the use of toxic substances in foods.

But ensuring availability of toxicity-free vegetables and fruits to consumers has so far got little attention.

Only a handful of private sector firms such as Fresh and Safe Agro Ltd (FASAL) and online shopping portal -- amardesheshop.com -- by Future Solution Business (FSB) are buying and supplying toxicity-free vegetables to consumers in the capital.

Some superstores such as Agora and Meena Bazar have also taken initiative to

collect and supply toxicity-free vegetables.

These initiatives, however, are far from enough to enable farmers to sell all their safe vegetables.

Nazmul and some other farmers said they supply a specified quantity of vegetables to FSB. They have to go to nearby markets to sell the rest of their produce.

Agriculture officials say the number of farmers using IPM is growing due to the agriculture ministry's decade-long efforts to motivate farmers to cut use of chemical pesticides hazardous to health. The initiative was taken as rampant use of chemical pesticides for commercial cultivation of vegetables and fruits led to growing worries among people about health risks.

They mentioned that preservatives and dyes are being used by traders to

retain natural colour of vegetables such as tomato.

Asked about proper marketing of safe vegetables, Hemayet Hossain, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, Jessore, said, "We are trying to establish market linkage."

Mitul Kumar Saha, assistant general manager of Hortex Foundation, said their organisation has established 12 marketing and collection centres of toxicity-free vegetables and fruits.

Traders purchase those from these centres but the foundation is yet to devise any mechanism to reach those to consumers.

Sharmin Hossain, chairman of FASAL, said there are demands from customers for safe vegetables. Buy his company cannot meet that fully because it has only six outlets in the capital.