

Myanmar 'flashing out militants'

Claims report as India 'finds 17 more terror camps' inside Myanmar

AGENCIES

As India mounts pressure on neighbours on alleged terror bases inside their territories, a report said Myanmar is flushing out militants of their territory.

The report came as Indian intelligence agencies have claimed that they have pinpointed locations of at least 17 camps of NE militants inside Myanmar.

A source told The Times of India the locations of these camps are within the 40km radius from the India-Myanmar border. But he did not disclose the names of the areas or outfits.

India and Myanmar share a 1,643km-long border — Arunachal Pradesh (520km), Nagaland (215km), Manipur (398km) and Mizoram (510km).

Almost all militant outfits of the region, which include NSCN (Khaplang), Ulfa(I), NDFB(S) and all Meitei outfits, are known to have camps in Myanmar's western front. The camps are reportedly in the Taga area across the Tirap-Changlang-Longding districts of Arunachal



Pradesh and across the border with Manipur and Nagaland.

According to a secret document, shared with North Block last night and exclusively accessed by Times of India, the day (June 9) commandos of 21 Para (SF) unit of Indian Army struck at two camps of the militants on the Myanmar side, a unit of

NSCN(K) hiding on the border sent a SOS message to the central headquarters of NSCN(K) in Taga region of the neighbouring country. Intercepted by Indian agencies, the message to SS Khaplang informed that Myanmar army was preparing to "flush out" the NSCN(K)'s mobile unit -5 cadres from Myanmar side to Indian side.

Top sources said that Myanmar army's cooperation has given a free hand to Indian security forces in launching counterattacks on the insurgents in the region, which will continue in the coming days too.

With around 15-20 insurgents from NSCN(K) and other allied groups reportedly crossing over from Myanmar for possible retaliatory strikes in the northeast, New Delhi has put the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam on alert.

The tightened vigil comes even as Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh held a meeting here on Thursday with the Army and intelligence brass to take stock of the situation in the wake of Tuesday's unilateral strikes by special forces on insurgent camps

in Myanmar. The meeting was attended by Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parikkar, India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and vice-chief of Army Lt Gen Philip Campos among others. They discussed both defensive and offensive strategies to take forward the operations against the insurgent groups of the Northeast based in Myanmar.

The meeting chaired by Rajnath expressed "satisfaction" at Tuesday's operation and agreed that the offensive against Northeastern insurgents' hideouts in Myanmar should be taken to its logical conclusion with further strikes, but in due coordination with the Myanmar authorities.

Sources said NSA Ajit Doval, who is due to visit Yangon soon, will brief the Myanmar leadership about the circumstances leading to India taking the bold step of ordering surgical strikes against militants operating from that country's soil.

Meanwhile, the government asked ministers and officials to exercise caution while talking of the surgical strikes in Myanmar. They were asked not to discuss finer details of the operation.

French court acquits DSK of pimping charges

REUTERS, Lille

Dominique Strauss-Kahn was acquitted of sex crime accusations by a French court yesterday, the final chapter in a transatlantic scandal that destroyed the political ambitions of a man once tipped to become his country's president.

A court in the northern city of Lille dismissed charges that the former International Monetary Fund chief's sexual escapades with prostitutes amounted to "aggravated pimping" -- the charge on which French magistrates sent him to trial.

The verdict came four years after sex assault accusations by a New York hotel maid ended his political ambitions and forced him to step down as head of the Washington-based IMF and ends Strauss-Kahn's legal battle on both sides of the Atlantic.

But media said the damage to his reputation after four years of occasionally salacious revelations about his sexual practices almost certainly ruled out a political comeback.

Having settled financially with Sofitel maid Nafissatou Diallo after New York prosecutors abandoned criminal charges in 2011, the 66-year-old stood accused in France of instigating the organization of orgies with prostitutes.

"He cannot be attributed the role of instigator," judge Bernard Lemaire said when reading out a verdict in the presence of Strauss-Kahn and 13 others. "He just availed of the sexual services of a group."

Strauss-Kahn and his lawyers had argued that he was a "libertine" with an appetite for rough sex but was unaware that women he frolicked with at parties and hotels in Paris, Lille and Washington, mostly while in the IMF post, were prostitutes.

While frequenting prostitutes is not a crime in France, procuring them is. A conviction on charges of "aggravated pimping" can carry a sentence of up to a decade in prison and a fine of up to \$1.7 million.

The Lille ruling closed a saga that began live on TV when Strauss-Kahn was shown walking handcuffed through New York streets after police escorted him off a plane about to leave for Europe.

The affair felled one of the world's most powerful financial policymakers days before he planned to announce his candidacy in France's 2012 presidential election. "DSK", as he is known to many French, was runaway favorite in opinion polls at the time. Instead, Francois Hollande ran as the Socialist candidate and beat conservative incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy.



NEWS IN brief

Live wire falls on Indian bus; 20 killed

BBC ONLINE

At least 20 people have been electrocuted after a live wire fell on a bus carrying a wedding party in northern India. The incident took place in the Tonk district of Rajasthan province. It is not yet known what caused the electric wire to fall.

Moldova PM quits over 'fake diploma' scam

AFP, Chisinau

Moldovan Prime Minister Chiril Gaburici announced his resignation yesterday, just four months into the job, after being accused of faking his education credentials. Gaburici, who was questioned by prosecutors on Thursday over allegations he faked his high school diploma, said he hoped his stepping down would take the political focus off him and help ensure stability.

Murdoch unveils gradual exit from media empire

AFP, New York

Rupert Murdoch presented a succession plan at media-entertainment conglomerate 21st Century Fox on Thursday, passing his chief executive job to his son James and another key role to son Lachlan. A source close to the company confirmed the plan to AFP, saying James Murdoch would assume the CEO job while elder brother Lachlan would become executive chairman.

MERS emergency meeting next week

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization yesterday said it would call an emergency meeting next week on the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) as the death toll from the virus rises in South Korea. South Korea has suffered the largest outbreak of the virus outside Saudi Arabia. So far, 126 cases have been recorded in South Korea since May 20 when the first case surfaced. 11 of them have died.

Malaysia to deport naked selfie tourists

AFP, Kota Kinabalu

Four Western tourists were ordered deported from Malaysia yesterday after pleading guilty to obscenity charges for taking nude photos on a popular climbing peak, an act some in the country blamed for causing a deadly earthquake. The defendants -- Eleanor Hawkins of Britain, 24, Dutchman Dylan Snel, 23, and Canadian brother and sister Lindsey, 23, and Danielle Petersen, 22 -- were arrested earlier this week in the wake of the deadly June 5 quake which killed 18 people on Mount Kinabalu.

ALLEGED SPYING ON MERKEL

Germany drops probe on US

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany's top public prosecutor closed a year-long investigation into the suspected tapping of Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone by US spies, saying there was a lack of evidence that would stand up in court.

Dropping its probe in a case that had caused strains between Germany and the United States, the prosecutor said it could not find evidence backing allegations from former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden that Merkel's phone was bugged.

"The accusations made would not stand up in court with the means available for criminal proceedings," the federal prosecutors office in Karlsruhe said in a statement.

The two countries have been at odds over the NSA spying habits since Snowden's revelations last year showed the United States had listened in on many of its allies, including Merkel.

Federal Prosecutor Harald Range had launched the probe last June, saying there was preliminary evidence to show US intelligence had tapped the phone. But he said at the time there was not enough clarity to bring charges.

In December, Range had signaled that the investigation was not going successfully, saying it had failed to turn up any concrete evidence.

Snowden has sought refuge in Moscow. Merkel's government has shied away from bringing him to Berlin to testify to a parliamentary enquiry into the espionage, fearing it would further damage relations with Washington.



Yemenis search for survivors under the rubble of houses in the UNESCO-listed heritage site in the old city of Yemeni capital Sanaa, yesterday following an overnight Saudi-led air strike. The air strike by killed five people yesterday as it destroyed homes in the centuries-old heritage site UNESCO calls a "jewel" of Islamic culture. Sanaa's old city has been inhabited for more than 2,500 years and was a major centre for the propagation of Islam, boasting more than 100 mosques, 14 public baths and more than 6,000 houses built before the 11th century. PHOTO: AFP

MIGRANT CRISIS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Aussie PM dodges payment report to human smugglers

AFP, Sydney

Prime Minister Tony Abbott yesterday said Australia would do "whatever we need to do" to combat people-smuggling as he repeatedly refused to deny claims an official paid thousands of dollars to turn back a boat from Indonesia.

Indonesian authorities said they were investigating allegations told to local police that the captain and five crew of a boat carrying asylum-seekers were each paid US\$5,000 by an Australian immigration official to return to the Southeast Asian nation.

The boat was carrying asylum-seekers from Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, and had come ashore on Rote island in eastern Indonesia in late May after they were intercepted en route to New Zealand by the Australian navy.

"The short answer is: the Australian government will do whatever we need to do to

keep this evil (people-smuggling) trade stopped," Abbott told radio station 3AW when repeatedly asked if crew had been paid by an Australian official.

"By hook or by crook, we are going to stop the trade," he said. "We have stopped the trade and we will do what we have to do to ensure that it stays stopped."

The Australian leader told reporters later he would not reveal any details of his government's border-protection policies "because I'm not in the business of implicitly or explicitly giving information to people smugglers".

Indonesia's foreign ministry spokesman Arrmanatha Nasir said Thursday that if the claims were correct "we would truly regret that something like this could happen".

Opposition immigration spokesman Richard Marles called on Abbott to reveal what really happened with the boat.



SOUTH CHINA SEA ROW

US asks China to stop island building, again

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter called Thursday on Beijing to stop building artificial islands in the disputed waters of the South China Sea, as he hosted a top Chinese general.

The visit to the Pentagon of General Fan Changlong, vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission, was relatively low key amid simmering tensions over the maritime dispute and a massive hack of US federal employees.

China insists it has sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea, a major global shipping route believed to be home to oil and gas reserves, but rival claimants accuse it of expansionism.

"Carter reiterated US concerns on the South China Sea and called on China and all claimants to implement a lasting halt on land reclamation, cease further militarization and pursue a peaceful resolution of territorial disputes in accordance with international law," the Pentagon said in a statement.

Carter had previously accused China of being out of step with international rules in its conduct in the South China Sea.

Unlike previous trips, including one last year, there was no joint press conference.

"The Chinese did request that there not be a lot of media attention around this trip," Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steven Warren said.

DEADLY BEACH BOMBING DURING GAZA WAR

No charges as Israel closes probe

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli army said on Thursday that it was dropping proceedings over a July 16 bombing of a Gaza beach where four children died during last summer's war.

"The... case has been closed following the completion of a criminal investigation," it said in a statement, adding that two other cases involving Palestinian deaths in the fighting had also been closed, but a criminal investigation had been launched in an attack on a cafe in which nine died.

Cousins Aheed Atef Bakr and Zakaria Aheed Bakr, both aged 10, nine-year-old Mohamed Ramez Bakr and 11-year-old Ismail Mohamed Bakr were playing on the beach in Gaza City when they were hit in strikes witnessed by journalists staying at a beachfront hotel.

The incident is among those likely to be presented by the Palestinians to the International Criminal Court as evidence of alleged Israeli war crimes.

On January 16 the ICC announced "a

preliminary examination" into Israel's actions over a period including the Gaza war in which about 2,200 Palestinians were killed, mainly civilians.

On the Israeli side 73 people were killed, of them 67 soldiers.

On April 1 the Palestinians acceded to the ICC with the goal of trying Israeli leaders



over alleged abuses in the Gaza war and alleged crimes relating to the occupation of the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

But the Israeli military has expressed confidence that its own internal probes will be sufficient to head off action by the Hague-based court.

The sorry tale of China's 'left behind' children

REUTERS, Beijing

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has ordered an investigation into the case of four "left behind" children who apparently committed suicide by drinking pesticide in a poor part of southwestern China, as millions of workers leave loved ones to find work.

In many rural parts of China, children are left in villages to be looked after by grandparents or other relatives while their parents work in the booming cities.

They are either not able to join their parents because of their jobs, or because in many cases they lack the paperwork needed to live in urban areas and access services like schools and health services.

The four children, one boy and three girls aged from five to 13, were left alone at home in Bijie in Guizhou province and died after drinking pesticide on Tuesday, state media said.

State television said that the eldest boy,

Zhang Qigang, left a letter saying "this has been planned for a long time, and today it is the time to go".

State media said that the father of the four children worked outside of the province, while the mother was also not around. They had to live on 700 yuan (\$112) a month their father sent them, had dropped out of school and lived off corn their father had planted last year.

China aims for 60 percent of the population of almost 1.4 billion to be living in cities by 2020, turning millions of rural dwellers into consumers who could be a driving force for the world's second-largest economy.

Chinese leaders have pledged to loosen their grip on residence registration, or hukou, to try to remove obstacles to the urbanization drive. Such registrations prevent migrant workers and their families from getting access to education and social welfare outside their home villages.



An Acehese woman convicted for "immoral acts" is lashed by a local government officer during a public caning at a square in Banda Aceh, Aceh province, yesterday. Three couples were publicly caned in Indonesia's Aceh yesterday after the unmarried university students were caught spending time alone together in violation of the province's strict Islamic laws. PHOTO: AFP