



The roads beneath the 11.8-km Mayor Mohammad Hanif flyover are in such a bad shape that vehicles cannot move even a hundred metres without a few bumps. In the photo, a worker is trying to plug potholes on a road in Wari yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# Pakistan pounds Taliban after military base attack

REUTERS, Peshawar

Pakistani jets killed 16 suspected militants in bombing raids near the Afghan border yesterday, and police arrested dozens of people, security officials said, the day after Taliban militants killed 29 people in an attack on an air base.

The attack on the base on Friday was the deadliest ever militant attack on a Pakistani military installation and is likely to undermine already rocky ties with Afghanistan.

Hours after the attack, Pakistan's military spokesman pointedly noted that communications intercepts showed the Pakistani Taliban gunmen were being directed by handlers in Afghanistan.

Yesterday's air force raids targeted militant bases in the Tirah Valley, which straddles the Afghan border and is a main smuggling route between the two countries, two Pakistani security officials said.

"All those killed in the bombing were Pakistani militants," said one security official in the northwestern city of Peshawar.

On Friday, 13 gunmen stormed the Badaber air base, about 10 km (6 miles) south of Peshawar in an attack a Pakistani Taliban spokesman said was retaliation for bombing raids on their

bases along the Afghan border. Police said they picked up around 50 residents living near the base on suspicion of helping the militants organise the attack.

Shafiq Malik, head of the Peshawar bomb squad, said the attackers carried enough firepower to occupy the base, but that some of their weapons had malfunctioned. Each man had an assault rifle, two improvised explosive devices, and several rocket propelled grenades, but some of the grenades misfired, he said.

"Their mission was occupation of the air base," he said.

For decades Pakistan nurtured Islamist militants as allies against rival India, and to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

But it has been fighting some militant factions since after it sided with the United States following the Sept. 11, 2001, al Qaeda attacks on U.S. cities.

Pakistan launched an offensive to dislodge Pakistani Taliban from their northwestern stronghold of North Waziristan in 2014 and there has been fighting in various places, including the Tirah Valley, since then.

For years Pakistan and Afghanistan have traded accusations of not doing enough to stamp out insurgents on either side of their long, porous border.

## Announce separate pay scale now

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The minister, who was outside the country for more than a week and returned home on Friday, invited the teachers for the one-and-a-half-hour talks. Earlier on June 14, the teachers met the minister and submitted a memorandum.

The federation said teachers wanted a specific proposal about the talks with the cabinet committee before October 19 or, if possible, before the Eid.

"The finance minister would go abroad on September 22 and return possibly on October 19. We told the minister [Nahid] that there is no scope to wait till October 19 as the teachers will not allow us to do so," said Prof Kamal.

The teachers said they would continue with their movement and the talks simultaneously.

Prof Farid Uddin said they had informed the minister about their main demand — formation of a separate pay structure for them.

"We have been voicing our demands time and again, but the teachers took a firm stance this time. The teachers have been downgraded frequently in order to promote one particular cadre service," he observed.

The teachers expressed the hope that Nahid would discuss the issue with his cabinet colleagues and stress the importance of their demand so there could be a solution within a short time.

"Otherwise, we have to go for a tougher stance which will not be good for anyone," he said.

If the educational institutions get destabilised, the entire country will be in turmoil and development would be disrupted, he warned.

"We requested our minister to make sure that teachers' dignity is downgraded from that in the seventh pay scale," he added.

The education minister assured the teachers that they would reach a "proper solution" to the problem soon.

He said the government had formed a cabinet committee as it put due importance on the teachers' demands.

"It is an important committee formed with senior ministers. They will review the demands," Nahid said, adding, the prime minister was always sympathetic about teachers.

Asked about a separate pay scale for teachers, he said the committee would definitely discuss it.

He hoped the university admission tests or the classes would not be dis-

rupted in the meantime.

Answering a question, Nahid said, "We did not sit here for a decision. We have discussed the problem and ways to solve it."

The teachers under the banner of FBUTA have been demonstrating since May 14 to press home their four-point demand including revision of the eighth national pay scale and a separate salary structure. They intensified their agitation after the government had approved the new pay scale.

### COLLEGE TEACHERS' WORK STOPPAGE

Teachers of all 305 government colleges began a two-day work stoppage programme yesterday protesting against "discrimination in the new pay scale" and abolition of selection grade and time scale.

No classes or tests were held on the first day.

The college teachers, under the banner of BCS General Education Association, also held rallies on their campuses.

"The new pay scale has hiked salary but put teachers in a lower grade," said Prof IK Selim Ullah Khondaker, secretary general of BCS General Education Association.

Contacted, the education minister said he would sit with them soon.

## Western media 'welcome' in China, Xi tells Murdoch

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping has told Rupert Murdoch that Western media organisations are "welcome" in China, despite the continued blocking of numerous foreign websites for their reporting on the country.

"(We) welcome foreign media and correspondents to cover China stories, introducing China's development to the world, and helping the world grasp the opportunities (afforded by) China's development," Xi said Friday as he met with Murdoch in Beijing, the Xinhua state news agency reported.

The News Corp chairman was received at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, known as the symbolic heart of the Chinese Communist Party.

"We are very happy, in my newspapers and different news outlets, to try and foster more understanding between our two countries (the United States and China). I think not just on a formal basis, but also with people themselves," Murdoch told the state-run China Daily, which ran their meeting on its front page.

Murdoch's visit precedes the Chinese head of state's upcoming visit to Washington, which the tycoon assured Xi would be covered in full, according to Xinhua.

It also comes as Murdoch's entertainment subsidiaries look to expand in the Chinese market, with 21st Century Fox reportedly seeking a Chinese partner to build theme parks built around popular films and television shows such as "The Simpsons".

The Chinese head of state's comments have surprised some observers given the government-ordered blocking of the Chinese-language websites of the New York Times, Bloomberg News, Reuters and Murdoch's own Wall Street Journal.

China's treatment of foreign correspondents has also been widely criticised after new reporters for The New York Times and Bloomberg were not given residence visas — apparent retaliation for investigative stories on the wealth amassed by leaders' families.

Since becoming party chief in November 2012 and state president in March 2013, Xi has spearheaded a crackdown on corruption within the party and government that has seen low-ranking "flies" and once high-flying "tigers" brought down.

## 7 policemen withdrawn

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constituency. And under the law, police officials like officers-in-charge cannot be withdrawn without informing the EC after the polls announcement.

Family members of the victims demanded exemplary punishment to the police members who shot their loved ones and the officials who ordered the shooting.

Meanwhile, authorities yesterday formed two committees to investigate the police action that also left more than 30 others injured, six of them bullet-hit.

Additional DIG (discipline) Alamgir Alam will head the three-member committee formed by the Police Headquarters. The committee has been asked to submit its report in three workdays.

"The committee will look into who played what role during the incident, and necessary actions will be taken in line with the findings," said Mahfuzul.

Separately, an additional district magistrate will lead the committee formed by the Tangail district administration.

### THE TORTURE

On Friday afternoon, police opened fire during a clash with locals who were protesting the torture of a woman and her son by Rafiqul Islam Roma of Satoria village in Kalihati.

Locals said Roma had been harbouring a grudge against a teen boy of Atharodana village of the same upazila for "having an affair" with his wife.

On Tuesday, he called the boy and his mother to his house and beat them up when they came. The woman was also allegedly sexually harassed.

On information from villagers, police however rescued the boy and his mother and arrested Roma.

Protesting the torture, hundreds of people from Atharodana, Hamidpur and several other villages took to the streets around 4:30pm on Friday.

They also tried to lay siege to Kalihati Police Station later in the afternoon.

As they reached College Gate area, police intercepted them and following an altercation, baton-charged and fired teargas shells.

Agitating locals responded by throwing brickbats and blocked Tangail-Mymensingh road at different points for four hours till 8:00pm.

Some demonstrators also tried to

snatch the firearms from police when cops fired 60-65 bullets, witnesses said.

### 'EXCESSIVE FORCE'

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra said police used excessive force on the demonstrators, and demanded legal actions against those responsible.

"Police are meant to protect people. Then how come they killed my son?" said Amena Begum, mother of victim Shamim Mia, 30, of Ghatail upazila.

Shamim, father of two minor sons, had been preparing to go to Saudi Arabia for work. He had submitted papers and money for the trip.

Shyamal Chandra Das, a barber, was just 20.

"My son was hit in the head when he was crossing the road to get some water," said his father Robi Chandra Das.

Shyamal died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"He did nothing wrong to the cops, but they shot him. I want justice," said his mother Bharoti Rani.

Asiya Khatun, the widow of victim Faruk Mia, said police shot her husband when he had gone to Kalihati Bus Stand to buy some rice.

The mother of two minor children said, "How will I raise my kids? What was his fault? Why did the cops shoot him?"

Meanwhile, police yesterday released the seven people who were detained during Friday's clash.

They also filed two cases against several hundred unnamed villagers on charges of assaulting cops and obstructing them from doing their duties.

Tangail deputy commissioner announced a compensation of Tk 50,000 each for the families of the three dead and free treatments for the injured.

### ASK CONCERNED

In a statement, ASK said people had a right to hold protests, but resorting to violence was unacceptable.

On the other hand, law enforcers should follow some specific standards while discharging their duties, it said, adding that law enforcers should respond in a balanced way.

The rights body said law enforcers must follow the international standard and be utmost careful, especially when using deadly weapons.

"Ain o Salish Kendra demands an independent and impartial investigation into the incident," it said.

## Cattle-laden truck hijacked in city

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it to stop, said Tanzimul Islam, whose father Nazrul Islam owned 14 of the 15 lost cattle "worth around Tk 15 lakh".

When the truck pulled over, five to six persons came out of the van and dragged down driver Swapan and Tanzimul from the cabin and three others from the rear.

Tanzimul said he and his elder brother Masum, 24, their helpers Chandu and Thandu and the driver were forced into the van, tied up and beaten up.

Divided in two groups, the gang took the truck in one direction and the pick-up van in another, he added.

Tanzimul and four others were dropped at Hatirjheel. They were found by a team of patrol police and taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they received primary treatment for injuries they had suffered in the beating.

Azizur Mollah, one of the staff who were on the cattle truck, said they were dropped at a "unknown place" and they too were found by patrol police. The cops took them to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.

G.G. Biswas, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said they recovered the truck abandoned

in Ashulia on the city outskirts yesterday morning. It was all empty.

Tanzimul's father Nazrul reached Badda earlier with another consignment of cattle. He said he had bought 30 cattle at Tk 60,000 to 1,50,000 in the last couple of weeks. The cattle taken away by the gang were worth around Tk 15 lakh.

Over the last few years, he brought his cattle to the market in the city's Uttara area. But after counting a loss of around Tk 1.5 lakh last year, he chose Badda this time. Driver Swapan, who is known to him, also suggested bringing the cattle to Badda.

Police detained Swapan based on allegation from Nazrul.

The incident took place even after police pledged additional measures to ensure smooth movement of cattle-laden vehicles across the country ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

It was also in an important area that houses the parliament building.

Police usually set up a checkpoint in front of Rajdhani School near the NAM building on Manik Mia Avenue at night to avert untoward incident in Sangsad Bhaban area.

Wishing not to be named, a top official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Tejgaon division said the place

of the occurrence is the avenue's Asad Gate end, a few hundred metres off the checkpoint.

After the cattle truck hijack, the officer who was in-charge of the checkpoint that night was summoned early morning but he claimed to be completely unaware of the incident, said the DMP official.

## Long tailback on Dhaka-Tangail highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Thousands of passengers were stuck on Dhaka-Tangail highway for hours yesterday due to a 20km tailback.

The highway witnessed the gridlock as a truck went out of order in Mirzapur upazila's Natiyapara around 3:00am, said Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Gorai Highway Police Station.

Vehicular movement remained completely halted until the truck was removed from the highway around 7:00am, causing the traffic jam to stretch from Chandra intersection in Gazipur to Natiyapara.

switched off.

Rezaul, who lives next to Parvin's house, rushed there, but found its main gate padlocked. He scaled the boundary wall, entered the house's yard and noticed a leg inside a septic tank. As he walked near the tank, he found the bodies of his sister and father. Their throats were tied with two scarves.

Police on that night sent the bodies to Khulna Medical College Hospital for autopsies. The two were buried at Basupara Graveyard in the city yesterday.

Law enforcers detained three neighbours of the victims for interrogation.

Parvin married Ashiquar Rahman, a

travel agency official in Dhaka, after the last Eid-ul-Azha. Ashiquar said they were planning to settle in Dhaka, but failed as Parvin couldn't have a transfer order.

He claimed that criminals looted around Tk 50,000 and gold jewellery weighing around 6 bhoris (1 bhoiri= 11.664 grams) from the house.

Cops recovered a machete from outside the house and some cigarette butts from inside.

Commissioner Nibash Chandra Majhi of Khulna Metropolitan Police and top KMP officials visited the spot yesterday. They found that all the three rooms of the house were vandalised.

## Online school

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ABCDs of Bangla and English.

It's an online school. Located in Bangkali, a remote village in Dinajpur, the school offers pre-primary education to underprivileged children aged between four and five years.

Highly qualified teachers from Dhaka conduct the classes while two more teachers remain present at the classroom to oversee the kids.

Grameenphone, the leading mobile phone operator of the country, founded the school in association with Jaago Foundation and Agni Systems Ltd.

Head of External Communications of Grameenphone Syed Talat Kamal said an online school is almost the same as other schools. The only difference is that this school is equipped

with videoconferencing technology and high-speed internet connections.

"A teacher from Dhaka conducts the classes every day. So, the kids from a rural area get their basic education from highly qualified teachers," he said.

Built on a 15-decimal piece of land, the school has 40 students, two classroom teachers and some support staffs.

Though Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman inaugurated the school last Wednesday, its academic activities began three months ago.

"The school hours are from 8:30am to 12:30pm," said Tuli Chando, a classroom teacher.

"The kids love the classes here and they are learning quite fast," she

added.

Four-year-old student Monalisa Akter said, "I love to come to school."

Rabindranath Roy is happy that his son Bilas Roy is getting quality education at an early age. "I cannot afford to send my child to such a school that offers high-standard education. We all are really thankful to them [the founders] for the school."

Now other villagers, whose children were not enrolled in the school yet, are waiting for the next admission session, which the founders say will begin next year.

Grameenphone first launched an online school in August 2011 in Gazipur with 80 students, said Talat Kamal. "Now we have 10 schools in as many districts with a total of 693 children studying in those."