

Two killed in Pak militant raids on banks

AFP, Quetta

Heavily armed militants looted several banks in Pakistan's Balochistan province yesterday before clashing with security forces, with one policeman and a civilian killed, authorities told AFP.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack in southwest Pakistan, where ethnic Baloch separatists have stepped up attacks on security forces in recent years.

"It was an organised heist in which at least three banks were looted of about 150 million Pakistani rupees (around \$530,000)," a police official in the Panjgur district said.

"They tried to loot two more banks before clashes erupted with security forces, forcing them to flee," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to talk to the media.

DEADLY FLOODS Indonesia to revoke 22 forestry permits

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia will revoke more than 20 forestry permits across the country, the forestry minister said yesterday, after deadly floods and landslides devastated parts of the northwestern island of Sumatra.

Environmentalists and experts have pointed to the role forest loss played in flash flooding and landslides that this month killed more than 1,000 people and washed torrents of mud into villages.



The government will revoke 22 forestry permits that encompass more than one million hectares of land, forestry minister Raja Juli Antoni told reporters.

More than 100,000 hectares covered by the cancelled permits were on Sumatra, he said. "With the addition of another one million hectares today, around 1.5 million hectares of our forests have been regulated," he said.



Moroccans look at a destroyed vehicle and other debris following a flash flood in the coastal town of Safi, about 300 kilometres (186 miles) south of the capital Rabat, yesterday. The death toll from flash floods that hit the coastal town over the weekend rose to 37, local authorities said.

PHOTO: AFP

AL leaders planned the attack to derail polls

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arrested Kabir, a close associate of Faisal, from Narayanganj and later handed him over to the DB, Rab officials said.

The case statement further alleged the attack was premeditated and executed by the accused and his unnamed associates, facilitators, and financiers – both directly and indirectly – following instructions from "others".

It said that Hadi played an active role in the July 2024 uprising and later helped form the political-cultural platform "Inqilab Moncho". It added that he had continued to make critical statements against the Awami League and demanded its ban over allegations of crimes against humanity. Hadi became a target of hostility and received multiple threats, particularly after videos of his speeches and rallies spread on social media, it said.

Following the Election Commission's announcement of the election schedule on December 11, Hadi had intensified his campaign activities as an independent aspirant for Dhaka-8.

The case further alleged that fugitive AL leaders and activists at various levels, led by Sheikh Hasina, have been involved in open and covert conspiracies since August 5, 2024 – when the Hasina-led AL government was ousted.

It added that Faisal had infiltrated Hadi's election campaign several days before the attack and was present with him on the day of the shooting.

The case said Hadi's family members and political associates are now feeling insecure, while leaders and activists of other political parties intending to contest the election are living in fear following the incident.

Law enforcers, however, have yet to arrest the prime suspect Faisal and one of his associates, Alamgir Sheikh, amid reports that they may have fled to India.

They suspect Alamgir was

another held, cops searching other suspects

Kabir, also known as Datbhanga Kabir, who was arrested yesterday from Narayanganj, is originally from Patuakhali but had been living in the Adabar area of the capital. After the shooting incident, he went into hiding in the Baktabali area of Fatullah, said Lieutenant Commander

Photographs obtained by law enforcement show Faisal and Alamgir campaigning with Osman Hadi near the Shilpakala Academy.

RAB officials said Kabir was among those who accompanied Faisal to Inqilab Cultural Centre on December 4, a fact corroborated by CCTV footage.

The investigation is ongoing, and efforts are underway to identify and apprehend other individuals involved in the incident.

According to DB sources, prime accused Faisal and his associate Alamgir may have fled to India early Saturday via the Halaughat border points in Mymensingh.

Meanwhile, several other suspects are under surveillance.

A DB source, seeking anonymity, said a private car had been kept ready since the morning in the Paltan area on the day of the incident – for the assailants to escape in case of any trouble.

"Police are looking for the driver of the rented car, as the suspects hired it beforehand. Investigators are also trying to find out if the driver was aware of the plan."

Law enforcers also said Faisal's wife sent Tk 10,000 and Tk 30,000 separately to the driver's phone number after the incident.

Investigators are also trying to trace the firearms used in the shooting.

Yesterday, BGB detained two associates of Philip Snal, who is suspected of assisting the attackers flee to India, from Sherpur's Nalitabari border area.

However, our Mymensingh Correspondent reports that BGB Sector Commander Colonel Sarkar Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman yesterday told a press briefing, "We are not sure whether the attacker fled to India through the Mymensingh border or not. We are still working on this."

Colonel Mostafiz added that law enforcement agencies are considering both possibilities – that the attackers have fled or are still hiding in the country.

HADI AIRLIFTED TO SINGAPORE

Following an emergency government decision on Sunday, critically injured Hadi was flown to Singapore by air ambulance yesterday.

Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser, at a press briefing after the air ambulance's departure around noon, said the government communicated with Singapore General Hospital via teleconference before the transfer.

"Apart from his bullet-hit brain, his kidneys, heart, and lungs can, so far, be considered controllable. These are being roughly managed through various medicines and oxygen."

"We only ask for prayers for him. I can say this much: if Allah wills, Hadi may return with a certain degree of recovery."

Outrage erupts

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Inqilab Moncho while Hadi undergoes treatment, administered an oath before the crowd. "On the question of Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty, we will remain united beyond party lines. We will build resistance against any repressive, fascist and subversive politics that undermine the country's democracy, people's rights and national interests."

"We will not allow the Indian-backed Awami League – who are subservient to Indian hegemony, anti-people and anti-state forces, their collaborators, along with the cultural fascists who produce narratives in their favour, to engage in destructive politics in Bangladesh. We will not assist in their rehabilitation in politics."

Former information adviser Mahfuj Alam, who recently resigned from the interim government and was a key figure in the July uprising, said, "There is no use in showing civility... because enough is enough. We have been patient for too long."

After the fall of the Hasina-led government on August 5 last year, every house of "terrorists" belonging to the Awami League and its 14-party allies could have been destroyed, he said.

"But we showed restraint then and that has emboldened them to do this [shoot Hadi]. If forgiving them was a mistake, then we will take an oath to not forgive again. If we are not safe in Bangladesh, our enemies will not be safe either."

Mahfuj added that those who serve Indian interests or the interests of other foreign forces will also not be allowed to remain safe. "This is the basic condition. No one should attack us. If one body falls on our side, we will take a body from their side in return."

He called for a stronger cultural counter-movement to resist "culturally and intellectually" the teachers, media professionals and legal experts who oppose the July movement.

Speaking at the rally, Jamaat-e-Islam Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar described Hadi as a symbol of the people's unity against Indian hegemony.

"He is a blazing symbol of a fearless spirit in defence of Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty. How could the Chief Election Commissioner call the attack an isolated incident and still remain in office?... It was not just two shooters – a syndicate was involved in this incident. A section of the state forces was also involved."

into a tributary state of India, who want to reduce us to subservience and who want to engulf this country."

Whenever "July" came under attack, the chief adviser called for maintaining the "anti-fascist unity of July", he said, adding, "We are doing that – we are united. But your government has failed because you have not been able to arrest even a single armed agent of fascism."

Referring to the attack as a "package conspiracy to sabotage the election", he said those who carried out the attack will not allow a free and fair election.

Nahid Islam, convener of National Citizen Party, said the attack on Hadi was akin to an attack on July and Bangladesh itself.

He called for the resignation of the home adviser as "he is morally unfit to remain in office".

"For the past 16 years, the intelligence agencies have been used to suppress opposition parties and dissent. They demonstrated efficiency in enforced disappearances and killings, but after August 5, that efficiency seems to have vanished."

"Not only was victory achieved that day, but the resistance against Indian aggression also began from that very day, and it continues. Tomorrow, on Victory Day, we will not hold a victory rally; we will hold a resistance rally."

He further said it would be wrong for India to assume it can continue to interfere politically and meddle in the elections like before. "India's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity also depend on Bangladesh. Therefore, India must also be cautious and maintain a respectful and dignified relationship with Bangladesh."

People's Bangladesh Convener Ali Ahsan Zonaid said the syndicate involved in the attack on Hadi must be crushed to the ground. "The Indian agent network and any Bangladeshi agencies involved must be brought before the public and punished."

Ducsu Vice President Abu Shadik Kayem said the interim government has failed to ensure the security of citizens.

Fatima Tasnim Zuma, another Ducsu leader and an organiser of Inqilab Moncho, said, "How dare the Chief Election Commissioner call the attack an isolated incident and still remain in office?... It was not just two shooters – a syndicate was involved in this incident. A section of the state forces was also involved."

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Editors' Council condemns arrest of journo Anis Alamgir

FROM PAGE 1

Hanif Mahmud, read.

According to the council, Anis was called to the DB office on December 14, detained there, and shown arrested the following day in an anti-terrorism case.

Termining the action "unacceptable," the council said that if there are specific allegations against a journalist, they must be resolved through the conventional and just legal process, not by summoning them to the DB office and detaining them without charges.

The statement also highlighted that following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina regime on August 5, 2024, numerous journalists were implicated in "false murder cases," with many still imprisoned.

Despite assurances from the law adviser to take steps against such

harassment, the council noted that the cases has not been withdrawn.

Demanding the withdrawal of all baseless cases, it called for an immediate end to the harassment of journalists.

Meanwhile, Anis was placed on a five-day remand yesterday.

Early yesterday, Arian Ahmed, a central organiser of the July Revolutionary Alliance, filed the anti-terrorism case with Uttara West Police Station against Anis, actor Meher Afroz Shaon, Maria Kispotta and Imtu Ratish.

On Sunday, Anis was picked up from a gym in Dhanmondi and taken to the DB office on Minto Road.

He has worked at several media outlets, including print and electronic media. In recent times, he has drawn attention for his active presence and views on television talk shows.

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