

Indians Hunted Out In Kabul Attack: Washington Post

Washington: (IANS) Pakistani militant group Lashkar-i-Taiba (LeT) orchestrated last month's deadly attack on two Kabul guesthouses with the suicide bombers searching for Indian victims, the Washington Post reported recently, citing an Afghan intelligence official.

Investigators had concluded that LeT was involved in the attack based on evidence that it was carried out by a team of suicide bombers who spoke Urdu and who were searching for Indian victims, it said in a report from Kabul citing Afghan intelligence spokesman Sayed Ansari.

"Afghan officials 'very close to the evidence' had determined that one of the bombers involved in Friday's Kabul attack yelled, 'Where is the Indian director?' as he stormed one of guesthouses," Ansari was quoted as saying.

Others had also sought out Indians, Ansari said. "This kind of information, where the Indians are, is not the ability of the Afghan Taliban to know," said Ansari as cited by the influential US daily.

The Afghan Taliban had previously asserted responsibility for the assault saying it was targeting foreigners. Six Indian nationals, including two army doctors and an engineer, were among those killed in the attack, as were eight Afghans, an Italian diplomat and a French filmmaker.

The assessment, if true, could signal a departure for the group, blamed for the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, which has long focused on fighting India over Kashmir, the daily said.

The Post said the claim by Afghan intelligence could not be verified Tuesday, and it contradicts the conclusions of other observers. A US military intelligence official cited by the Post said he believed the Haqqani network, a Pakistan-based Afghan militant group, was behind the attack.

Indian officials have said they suspect that the two groups worked in concert to stage the raid.

"Still, the involvement of LeT would have significant implications. It could undermine frag-

ile peace efforts between longtime foes Pakistan and India, whose foreign secretaries met last week," the Post said.

India had previously implicated Pakistan in the 2008 bombing of India's embassy in Kabul, saying Pakistani intelligence had collaborated with militants, it noted.

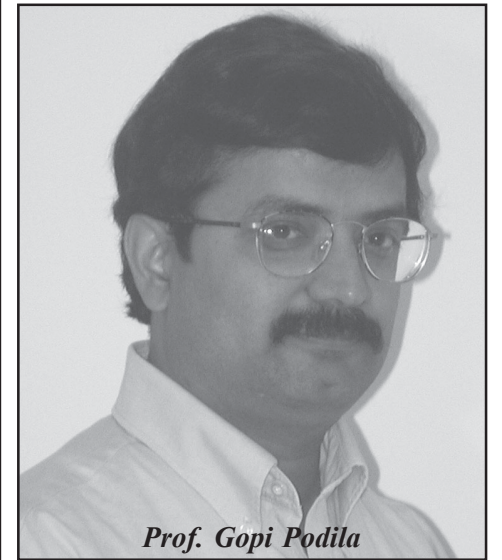
The Post quoted Maj. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, the top US military intelligence official in Afghanistan, as saying that a growing number of the LeT's fighters are streaming into that country's south for combat experience.

"They are aligning with the Taliban," it said citing Mohammad Saad, a retired Pakistani brigadier and security analyst.

Saad said that several members of LeT are training with associates of the Haqqani network in North Waziristan, a Pakistani tribal region bordering Afghanistan, but that language challenges have forced most of them to work alongside Afghan fighters inside Afghanistan.

Indian Professor Killed In Alabama Varisty Shooting

Washington: An Indian American professor was among three faculty members killed in a shooting at the University of Alabama in Huntsville by a fellow professor apparently miffed at



Prof. Gopi Podila

being denied tenure.

Gopi Podila, chairman of the biological sciences department, and two other biology faculty members were shot dead in a third floor conference room and three others were wounded in the incident last month.

Amy Bishop, a Harvard-trained biology professor arrested outside the building where the shooting occurred, has been charged with one count of capital murder, which means she could face the death penalty if convicted, media reports said.

University spokesman Ray Garner identified the two others killed as Maria Ragland Davis, professor of biotechnology and plant genomics; and Adriel Johnson, professor of physiology.

Of the injured, Joseph Leahy, professor of microbiology, and Stephanie Monticciolo, department assistant, were in critical condition.

Luis Rogelio Cruz-Vera, professor of molecular biology, was stable.

Authorities have not released a possible motive for the shooting, but Huntsville Times said Bishop was reportedly upset over being denied tenure.

Authorities say the researcher opened fire during an afternoon faculty meeting at the University of Alabama's Huntsville campus, killing the three colleagues and injuring three other employees.

Bishop was taken into custody outside the Shelby Center of Science and Technology without incident about 10 minutes after the 3.57 p.m. shooting, sources cited by the Times said.

Bishop joined the faculty in 2003. Her areas of research focused on the role of gases, especially nitrous oxide, on the central nervous system.

Her lab was working on the development of a "neural computer" that would use living neurons - taken either from stem cells or fish. She was also known for her work on cell growth.

The Huntsville campus in northern Alabama, not far from the Tennessee line, has about 7,500 students. The university is known for its scientific and engineering programmes and often works closely with the NASA space agency.

US Sikhs Press Obama For Action Against Taliban

Washington: Washington based Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) has condemned the beheading of two Sikhs by the Taliban in Pakistan as a 'barbaric act' and asked President Barack Obama to intervene and take up the matter strongly with the Pakistan Government. The victims identified as Jaspal Singh and Mahal Singh, who were kidnapped a month ago from Bara in the Khyber Agency, were beheaded in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan and their heads sent to a gurudwara (Sikh temple) in Peshawar.

In a letter to the President Obama, delivered via White House officials, Dr. Rajwant Singh, Chairman of SCORE, said, "We Sikhs in the United States are outraged by this heinous crime by the Taliban against two innocent Sikhs and we are deeply concerned about the lives and property of Sikhs in Pakistan. U.S. Government must press upon the Pakistan Government to take stern action against the perpetrators of these horrendous acts. It is the primary duty of the Pakistan government to intervene on behalf of the Sikhs and other minorities and protect them from any atrocities committed by Tehrik-e-Taliban or any other group.

"It is important that U.S. government con-

veys our deepest concerns to the Pakistan Government via U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke. Since last year the religious freedom of the Sikhs has been threatened and they have been forced to leave their centuries old dwellings in the Orakzai Agency and adjacent areas. We are appalled that some Sikhs in Pakistan were being coerced into becoming Muslims. Last year some Sikh families had been taken hos-



Dr. Rajwant Singh

tage in Pakistan and forced to pay 'jiziya' (religious tax). These kinds of atrocities cannot be tolerated at any cost and we must ask for security and well being of all communities in Pakistan."

Dr. Singh further stated, "We pray for the families of the victims and in this critical time, we stand by our brethren in Pakistan. We have received number of calls and emails from Sikhs all across America expressing their outrage about the situation in Pakistan. As American citizens, we request you to express our sentiments to Presi-

dent Zardari. We will continue to work with the State Department, congressional leaders at the Capitol Hill and the White House on this issue."

SCORE had written a similar letter about the Sikh plight to President Obama last year prior to his meeting with President Zardari at the White House. According to the White House officials, Obama raised the issue of security and safety of Sikhs and minorities with the visiting Pakistani leader.

Two other Sikhs, Gurvinder Singh and Gurjit Singh, are still reported to be in the custody of the Taliban groups. Jaspal Singh was taken while travelling in Khyber district a month ago. His body was found on Sunday. Mastan Singh was kidnapped in the Orakzai region at about the same time.

The SGPC has also urged the Pakistan government to ensure safety and security of Pakistan-based Sikhs in the wake of increasing Taliban threats to them.

The four Sikhs had gone to the area to collect their business dues, when they were allegedly kidnapped by the Taliban, who demanded a ransom of 30 million rupees for their release.

Last year, Taliban militants took over shops and homes of 35 Sikh families and kidnapped community leaders in Ferozkhel, Orakzai Agency.

US Wants India To Raise Foreign Equity Cap In Defense

Washington: (IANS) Calling India a "rising global power", Washington has asked New Delhi to undertake new reforms and raise the cap on foreign equity in Indian defense firms to give more opportunities to US companies interested in defense sales in India.

"India is a rising global power, soon to be the world's most populous country, with a trillion dollar-plus economy," Robert O. Blake, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs, told the Washington International Business Council here recently.

Noting that President Barack Obama had called India an "indispensable" nation during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's state visit, he said: "The strength of India's economy makes it the powerhouse of South and Central Asian regional growth."

"The Indian economy has been one of the fastest growing economies in the world since 2003, averaging 8 to 9 percent growth in recent years," Blake said and suggested: "If India can sustain its economic reforms, it has the potential to sustain close to double digit growth rates for many years to come".

"Reforms to date have made Indian companies leaders in areas such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, and

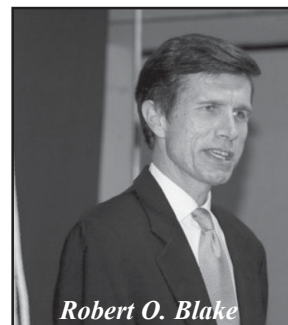
now increasingly, in manufacturing as well as in clean energy," he said.

Blake also hoped "the Indian government will seize the opportunity to undertake new reforms that will both attract new investment and propel higher growth.

"We are also urging the Indian government to raise the cap on foreign equity in Indian defence firms from 26 percent to 49 percent to provide more opportunities for US companies interested in defence sales in India."

The US had "some important recent sales with the C-17s, C-130Js, and the P8 maritime patrol aircraft", Blake said, adding:

"But there are significant new sales on the horizon, up to \$18 billion worth of contracts, for which American companies are competing".



Robert O. Blake