

Peshawar mayor among 12 killed in suicide bombing

The city mayor was among 12 people who were killed Sunday when a suicide bomber struck at a bustling livestock market close to this Pakistan frontier city, less than a fortnight after a massive bomb blast killed over 110 people here.

Police officer Liaquat Ali Khan said the bombing was targeted at Mayor Abdul Malik, who was wounded and taken to hospital where he died.

The attack took place outside the cattle market in the Adezai area, located 25 km south-west of Peshawar, the capital of restive North-West Frontier Province that borders Afghanistan.

Khan Zamir, an eyewitness, said that he was buying goats for the upcoming Eid celebration when an explosion ripped through the market.

'The place turned into hell where the dead and injured were lying everywhere,' Geo News quoted Zamir as saying. Two of his relatives were badly injured in the explosion.

Seven vehicles were destroyed and buildings were damaged in the powerful blast that spread panic in the area. The market was crowded with shoppers and goats being sold.

Malik, who had survived several previous attempts on his life, headed the local militia formed against militants operating in the nearby Khyber tribal region, DPA reported.

'Malik had survived several attacks on his life in the recent past, since he turned against the militants,' Sahibzada Anis, a police official, was quoted as saying.

'But today (Sunday) the militants have finally killed him.'

Senior Superintendent of Police (Operation) Karim Khan said the blast seemed to be a suicide attack.

Terrorists based in Khyber Agency and Darra Adamkhel are suspected to have carried out the attack in which over 30 people were injured.

The wounded were rushed to Lady Reading Hospital where nine of them were in a critical condition.

This city faced this year's worst terror attack Oct 28 when over 110 people were killed in a massive bombing at a crowded market.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gillani have strongly condemned the blast. Gilani said that those involved in such attacks were enemies of the state and would be brought to justice.

Pakistan has witnessed a series of terror strikes as the army battled the Taliban in mountainous South Waziristan. The Taliban have vowed to retaliate over the US drone attacks, one of which killed their leader Baitullah Mehsud in early August.

The latest wave of militant violence started with a suicide bombing at the offices of the UN World Food Programme in Islamabad Oct 5. Five employees of the agency were killed.

The heavily fortified Pakistani Army's General Headquarters had come under attack Oct 10 when 10 terrorists in military uniform laid siege to it. At least 19 people, including nine raiders, died in the 22-hour standoff. One militant was arrested.

On Oct 15, gunmen wearing suicide vests stormed two police academies and the offices of Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency in Lahore. A car bomber struck at a police station in the northwestern town of Kohat. At least 38 people including 11 insurgents were killed in a single day.

A day later, 25 people were killed and 27 injured in a series of blasts across Pakistan. Eighteen people died in a landmine explosion in Mohmand Agency while seven were killed when a suicide bomber struck at an air force base in Attock district. Eight people were injured in the Peshawar bombing.

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