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News analysis: Taliban insurgents step up attacks in Afghanistan

By Abdul Haleem

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Taliban militants fighting the Afghan government have stepped up their attacks during the holy month of Ramadan, demonstrating their ability to expose the weaknesses in Afghanistan's security apparatus.

"By conducting indiscriminate attacks in the holy month of Ramadan, the Taliban on one hand wants to expose the government's weak security and on the other hand, to demonstrate that they are capable of carrying out attacks anytime and anywhere in the country," Nazari Pariani, the editor in chief of the Daily Mandegar observed.

But Pariani said that by killing people, particularly civilians, during the fasting month of Ramadan has only exposed the Taliban ideology that it has no respect for Ramadan and Islamic values.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world observe roza or fast from dawn to dusk during which drinking, eating, fighting between Muslims and even using harsh language are forbidden.

However, during the last few days the Taliban, which is practicing the fundamentalist brand of Islam, have stepped up their attacks on the run-up to Eid-ul-Fitr, which is the culmination of the month-long fasting and the holiest day among Muslims.

Eid-ul- Fitr would probably fall on Saturday or Sunday depending on the sighting of the new moon.

In the latest wave of violent incidents, a roadside bomb struck a military van in the northern Baghlan province on Thursday killing seven soldiers of the Afghan National Army (ANA), an army official Janullah Khan confirmed.

In the previous attack in Khost province on Wednesday, 11 civilians were injured when a Taliban loyalist threw a hand grenade at a group of workers near the entrance gate of a U.S. base in Khost city, the capital of Khost province.

Zabihullah Mujahid, who claims to speak for the Taliban in talks with media via telephone from unknown location, said that the Taliban had already warned people working for the foreign troops to stop working for them or face the music. "Since they did not heed our advice, our mujahidin (holy warriors) punished them," Mujahid said.

A day earlier on Tuesday, 25 people including four policemen were killed and 50 others, including seven police sustained injuries, as a group of six suicide bombers targeted Zaranj city, the capital of southwestern Nimroz province 790 km southwest of Kabul.

An official of the Interior Ministry has confirmed the report and blamed the Taliban for the attack.

On the same day, according to Interior Ministry, 11 people, including 10 civilians and one policeman, were killed and 36 others were injured as an explosion rocked Dashti Archi district in Kunduz province 250 km north of Kabul.

"Taliban, by intensifying attacks in the month of Ramadan, want to gain ground and boost the morale of their supporters at home and abroad," a Kabul University professor and political analyst Faizullah Jalal said.

Jalal said that the Taliban sanctuary is in Pakistan's tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan.

According to Jalal, for carrying armed attacks during Ramadan, the Taliban would only "defame" itself. "Since killing people during Ramadan is forbidden in Islam, the Taliban would further lose its support even among its backers," the analyst said.