



PHOTO: AFP

Indian health workers wearing protective suits register the number of chickens to be slaughtered collected at the Hingona village of western Maharashtra's Jalgaon District yesterday. More than 17,000 chickens have been slaughtered in India's western Maharashtra state in a door-to-door campaign following a new outbreak of avian flu.

US won't push Australia to sell uranium to India

REUTERS, Sydney

The United States will not push Australia to supply uranium to India after Washington signed a landmark civilian nuclear energy deal with the South Asian giant, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday.

Under the US deal agreed earlier this month, India will receive US nuclear technology in return for separating its military and civilian facilities and opening the civilian plants to international inspections.

India wants to buy uranium from Australia, which has more than 40 percent of the world's known reserves of the mineral, but Canberra maintains it will not sell to countries, such as India, that have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"The issue of whether or not one decides to participate in the fuel supply is a quite separable issue and it is one for the Australians to determine but not one that is at issue with the United States by any means," Rice told a news conference.

Tigers warn Lanka of return to violence

AFP, Kilinochchi/Colombo

Tamil Tiger rebels told peace broker Norway yesterday that the Sri Lankan government was reneging on promises to disarm paramilitary units, and said the island could see a resurgence of violence.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they informed Norway's top envoy Hans Brattskar that Colombo was going back on promises made during talks last month in Switzerland.

"There is a conspicuous absence of action," LTTE's political wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan charged, saying this "only tends to aggravate the situation and lead back to the status quo of December-January."

At least 153 people were killed during two months of almost daily bloodshed before the two parties agreed to meet in Switzerland and

try to save their February 2002 truce that was arranged by Oslo.

"The understanding reached in Geneva should not be allowed to go into lapse, for it would have serious impacts in the progress of the process and not at all (be) conducive to build confidence and mutual trust between the parties," Thamilselvan said in a statement in English after talks with Brattskar.

There was no immediate word from the Norwegians on the talks at Kilinochchi in LTTE-held territory in the island's north.

Thamilselvan also accused government-backed military units of abducting children in a bid to shift the blame to the Tigers for alleged recruitment of underage soldiers in recent weeks.

Both sides have traded charges since the two-day talks near Geneva last month amid rising tensions in the island's restive east.

Colombo agreed to disarm paramilitary units opposed to the Tigers, but the guerrillas said earlier this week that continued attacks put the next round of talks scheduled for April 19 in jeopardy.

The LTTE's chief negotiator Anton Balasingham on Sunday accused Colombo and its paramilitary units of launching a second assault against them since the Swiss talks.

"The Geneva peace talks (in April) will face grave danger if the Sri Lanka government refuses to disarm Tamil paramilitary organisations and continues allowing them to launch offensive military operations against our positions," Balasingham said.

The government has accused the Tigers of recruiting child soldiers in violation of the truce agreement.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka said Wednesday it would request an

international crackdown against Tiger rebels after a New York-based rights group alleged they were extorting millions of dollars from Tamils living abroad.

The Colombo administration welcomed the report by Human Rights Watch and said it would take up the question of Tiger extortion with foreign governments, particularly those in the West where the group said the problem was acute.

"We are deeply concerned about the Tiger fundraising abroad and the foreign ministry will be taking up this issue with the concerned governments," government spokesman and Media Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said here.

The 45-page report accused the Tigers of "exporting the terrors of war to Tamils living in the West" and extorting money from up to 800,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living abroad.

Nepali parties ask Maoists to halt crippling blockade

AFP, Kathmandu

A road blockade dictated by Maoist rebels crippled transport in Nepal for a third day yesterday, driving up food prices and prompting political parties to urge the guerrillas to call off the protest.

The rebels ordered all vehicles to be kept off roads in and out of the capital, district headquarters and other towns in efforts to oust King Gyanendra, who sacked the government and seized direct control a year ago.

"The blockade is causing more hardship to the public than the royal government," said Pradeep Nepal, spokesman for the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

"We have appealed to the Maoists to withdraw their blockade immediately," Nepal told AFP.

Last November, sidelined political parties entered a loose alliance with the rebels in a bid to restore democracy. Indian and Nepalese media have reported that the Maoists and seven-party alliance

were holding fresh consultations in New Delhi.

Gyanendra justified his power grab by saying the government had failed to put down the decade-old Maoist insurgency that has claimed over 12,500 lives.

In the capital, vegetable shop owner Sadhana Khadgi said that she had received no new stock for the past two days.

"Vehicles that bring the vegetables have not been running and prices have doubled. People are not buying with the new prices," she said.

Bill on Indo-US nuke trade placed in Cong

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

A bill to amend the Atomic Energy Act to facilitate the US-India civilian nuclear deal is being introduced in the US Congress.

The bill was introduced yesterday by Henry Hyde (Republican from Illinois) and Tom Lantos (Democrat from California) in the House of Representatives and by Richard Lugar in the Senate.

Congressional sources, however, said that the bill was not

expected to come up for hearing before the end of the month.

"There is no timeframe to it," one official said.

Introduction of the bill adds a legislative dimension to a measure that Bush and his close team have pursued with a great deal of conviction.

It also caps days of pronouncements by many administration members in support of civilian nuclear cooperation with India, including a particularly upbeat endorsement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.



Bangladesh embassy in Indonesia organised a discussion meeting marking the Ekushey February and International Mother Language Day. Picture shows Nasim Firdaus, Bangladesh Ambassador to Jakarta (3rd L), is addressing the meeting. Director of UNIC Abdullah Saleh Mbamba (1st L) and former Indonesian education minister Prof. Dr Fuad Hassan (2nd L) also spoke on the occasion.