

US Congress body backs nuclear deal with India

AFP, Washington

A controversial civilian nuclear energy deal between India and the United States cleared its first major hurdle Tuesday, easily winning approval by a US Congress committee.

The House of Representatives International Relations Committee voted 37-5 in favor of the agreement.

"This is a defining moment in our relationship with the great nation of India," said Representative Tom Lantos, the panel's top Democrat and a primary sponsor of the bill.

"After decades of disengagement punctuated with hostility, we now have the opportunity to achieve what will be a historic geo-strategic realignment of the worlds

largest democracy, India, with the worlds oldest democracy, the United States," Lantos told lawmakers in arguing for the legislation.

Democratic and Republican leaders in both Houses of Congress have expressed strong support for the bill, which is due for a vote in the full House next month.

"In terms of the impact of this legislation on the new geostrategic alignment between India and the United States for the balance of the 21st century, the importance of this legislation cannot be overstated," Lantos said of the deal forged last year between US President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is expected to take up the legislation next week.

Despite the easy approval, the bill has not been without controversy.

Some lawmakers have expressed doubts about extending civil nuclear technology to India, which is not a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Republican representative Jim Leach, lamented what he said was "a sad day in the world of arms control and the rule of law."

"Anyone who wants to present this as a happy day is making a serious mistake," he said, adding that officially sanctioning India's nuclear program "is a foolish direction to go in."

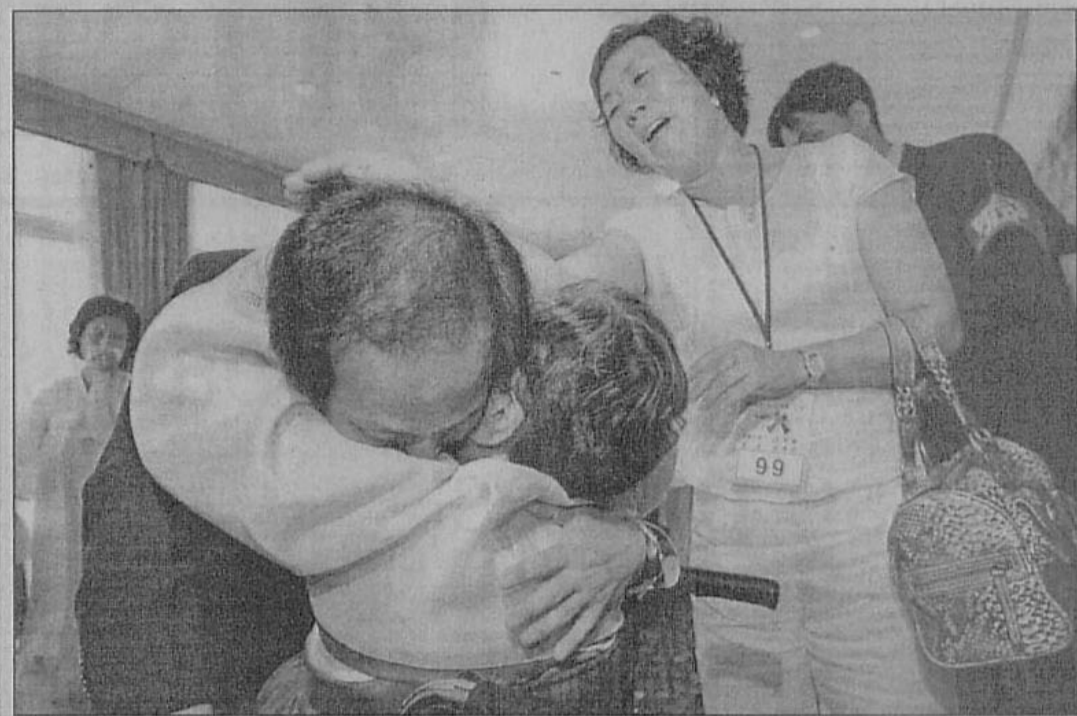
Under the deal, the United States will aid the development of civil nuclear power in India in return for New Delhi placing its

civil nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency inspections.

The US Atomic Energy Act of 1954 currently prevents the United States from trading nuclear technology with nations that have not signed up to the NPT. It has to be amended for the deal to be effective.

India tested nuclear weapons in 1974 and 1998 and is currently banned by the United States and other major powers from buying fuel for atomic reactors and other related equipment as a result.

Still, some legislators opposed to the deal say it would not only make it harder to enforce rules against nuclear renegades Iran and North Korea, but also set a dangerous precedent for other countries with nuclear ambitions.



North Korean Kim Young-Nam (L) embraces his South Korean mother Choi Gye-Wol as his South Korean sister Kim Young-Ja (R) looks on during the separated family reunion in North Korea yesterday. Kim, 45, who was kidnapped in 1978 and married to a Japanese abductee, met his 82-year-old mother, at North Korea's scenic resort of Mount Geumgang.

8 suspected Maoists killed in Andhra

AFP, New Delhi

Police Tuesday gunned down eight suspected Maoist guerrillas in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, a report said.

Six of the slain guerrillas were women, the Press Trust of India quoted a police spokesman as saying in the state capital of Hyderabad.

The suspected rebels were killed following a fierce gunbattle with police commandos in the dense forests in the state's Mahabubnagar district, a Maoist bastion, he said.

Andhra Pradesh is one of 15 of India's 29 states where the outlawed guerrillas hold sway across vast swathes of the countryside. The rebels say they are fighting for the rights of neglected tribes and landless farmers.



General Secretary of Nepal's Communist Party (United Marxist Leninist) Madhav Kumar Nepal (C) is flanked by party colleagues during the swearing-in ceremony of the country's parliament and ministers in Kathmandu yesterday.



Muteiri grabs her chance in history

AFP, Kuwait City

It was not long ago that Fatma al-Muteiri, scion of an ancient bedouin tribe, was just another Kuwaiti woman.

Today, the divorced mother of four has secured a place in history by becoming one of the first Kuwaiti women to run in parliamentary elections, a little over a year after women won the right to vote and seek office in the conservative Gulf Arab state.

"You only get one chance to make history. I grabbed the chance, and I knocked down psychological and social barriers by announcing my candidacy" in Thursday's polls, Muteiri told AFP.

Along with a handful of bedouin women, Muteiri is one of 28 female candidates. A total of 253 hopefuls are vying for 50 parliament seats, with women making up 195,000 of the 340,000 eligible voters.

The modesty of her campaign contrasts sharply with the pomp and orchestration of her seven male rivals' election rallies in the 21st constituency.

Here, there are no air-conditioned tents, fiery speeches or lavish banquets.

Muteiri's campaign headquarters is at home in the Sabah al-Salem district, disparagingly dubbed "Motallakat" (divorcees) because it has many houses allocated for divorced women.

"Simplicity is the hallmark of my campaign. I couldn't afford to squander any money," said the petite former education ministry employee who now runs a beauty salon.



Kuwait elects new parliament today

AFP, Kuwait City

Kuwaitis elect a new parliament today after a highly charged campaign, with analysts predicting a strong showing by reformists that will set the stage for a showdown with the government.

Women will make history in the election both as first-time voters and candidates, one year after winning political rights.

Twenty-eight women are among 253 hopefuls vying for the 50 seats of the 11th parliament to be elected since the oil-rich Gulf Arab state embraced a parliamentary system in 1962.

Some 60 to 70 opposition candidates -- comprising Islamists, liberals and nationalists -- are standing. They include 28 of 29 outgoing MPs locked in a bitter dispute with the government that led to the dissolution of parliament on May 21.

"I believe most of the outgoing opposition MPs, if not all, will be re-

elected, in addition to a number of other reformists," said Ibrahim al-Hadban, political science professor at Kuwait University.

"I expect the majority in the next national assembly to be reformist MPs who specifically call for reforming the election system to cut the number of constituencies to five" from the current 25, Hadban told AFP.

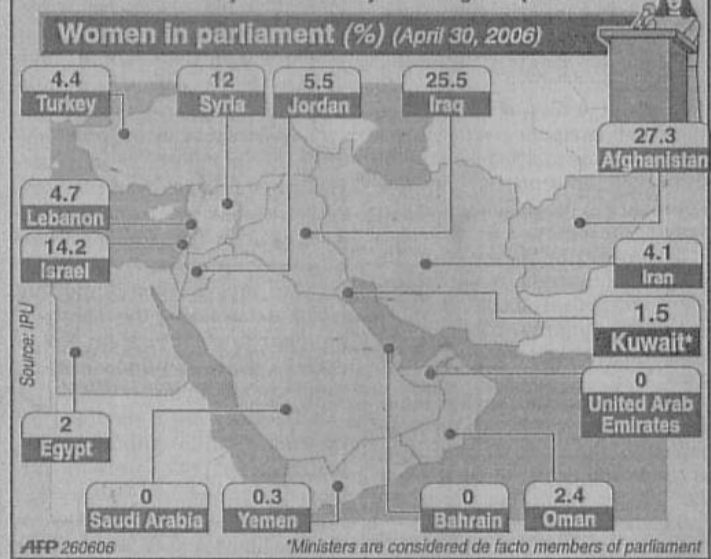
Outgoing MP and candidate Hassan Jawhar predicted the opposition would win 35 seats, while Nasser al-Abdali, head of the Kuwaiti Society for the Development of Democracy, expected them to take between 30 and 35.

"This will set the stage for a showdown in the next parliament between the government and the opposition. I think we are headed for a hot political confrontation," Hadban said.

Outgoing MP and candidate Basel al-Rashed branded it the "dirtiest" campaign in Kuwait's history.

Middle East: women in parliament

Women remain a very small minority in the region's parliaments



AFP 260606

*Ministers are considered de facto members of parliament.

Pierre Cardin to stage a comeback as he turns 84

AFP, Paris

Sixty years after launching himself into the world of fashion, French icon Pierre Cardin has nothing to prove, but next week he will return to centre stage during men's fashion week, staging his first presentation in 10 years.

"I still think I have something to say," Cardin told AFP in an interview ahead of the July 4 show in Paris, at which he will unveil new creations for spring-summer 2007 on wooden mannequins - just two days after turning 84.

The designer - known for his bold, geometric avant-garde designs - says he is determined to show that he is still around and just as creative as he always was.

"If I'm getting dated they will see it ... perhaps they are right, I've never made any claims," he said, relaxing in his Paris office, lined with books, press cuttings and photos taken with some of the world's most famous personalities.

Cardin's return to the menswear calendar on the last of five jam-packed days of catwalk shows in the French capital will see him sharing the spotlight with one of the industry's top trendsetters - Hedi Slimane for Christian Dior, where Cardin got his start 60 years ago.

The son of an Italian immigrant, he was once "lucky enough to be the youngest fashion designer in Paris," when he started at Dior in 1946, and now he's "obviously the oldest", said Cardin.

Six decades later he has created a vast empire, licensing sales of some 800 products bearing his name in 170 countries including everything from clothing, to a chain of Maxim's restaurants, perfumes, hotels, design and cultural institutes such as the Espace Cardin in Paris and the Chateau Lacoste in France's Luberon region, once the home of the Marquis de Sade.

Quail feared extinct sighted after 74 yrs

AFP, Guwahati

A quail feared to have become extinct has been spotted for the first time in 74 years in India's northeast, officials said Wednesday.

The Manipur Bush-quail was sighted earlier this month by Anwaruddin Choudhury, a wildlife specialist who writes on birds for international publications, and wildlife officials in a park in Assam state, they said.

"This is good news for bird lovers across the world that the rare Manipur Bush-quail was sighted at our park. Everybody thought this small bird had become extinct," Manas National Park warden Abhijit Rabha told AFP by phone.

The grey-and-black streaked quail, which was once found in eastern India and Bangladesh, was last seen in 1932 in Manipur, according to the Red Data Book of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, an authority on bird sightings.

Tigers destroy naval patrol craft Schools shut amid bomb scare

AFP, Trincomalee

Tamil Tiger rebels destroyed a naval patrol boat and mortared military positions in the restive northeast Wednesday as schools in the capital shut amid fears of bomb attacks, the government said.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked a navy patrol off the Kalpiny lagoon and destroyed one of the patrol craft, government spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said.

"One patrol craft caught fire and the navy has requested the air force to provide them with fire-power against the Tiger boats," Rambukwella said. He said there were no immediate reports of casualties.

The Tigers also killed a soldier and wounded six other people, including three civilians, in two mortar attacks early Wednesday in the northeastern district of Trincomalee, defence ministry spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe said.

He said the military launched retaliatory mortar attacks against Tiger positions.

There have been sporadic attacks against military bases in the embattled northeast as a 2002 ceasefire between the government and LTTE appears on the verge of unravelling.

At least 820 people have been killed in an upsurge of violence since December, and Scandinavians monitoring the ceasefire say it is now little more than a paper agreement.

Amid the deteriorating security, peace broker Norway is expected to meet with other monitors in Oslo Thursday to decide the future role of truce observers on the island.

The Nordic ceasefire monitoring mission, or SLMM, was thrown into crisis last week when the rebels demanded the removal of observers from European Union members Finland, Sweden and Denmark after the EU outlasted the Tigers.

Khamenei says 'no use' talking with US

AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tuesday he saw "no use" in negotiating with the United States over its nuclear program and signalled again that Tehran was unwilling to freeze sensitive uranium enrichment work.

Although Khamenei said Iran was ready to ease international concerns over its disputed atomic drive, he said "negotiations with the United States are of no use for us. We have no need for such negotiations."

"We will not negotiate with anyone over the undeniable right of nuclear technology and using it," he added, indicating Tehran will refuse to bow to international demands to suspend uranium enrichment.

The US administration said it did not view the comments as Iran's final word on the issue and would wait for a formal response to an offer from Washington and other world powers.

On June 6, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana presented Iran with an offer -- backed by Britain,

China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States -- of multilateral talks and a variety of incentives.

The offer -- which would pave the way for the first substantive contacts between Iran and the United States in decades -- is conditional on Iran first agreeing to suspend enrichment work, the focus of suspicions that the Islamic regime wishes to acquire nuclear weapons.

But Iran appears to still reject the key condition and continues to call for negotiations without any "preconditions".

"If they recognise this right, we are ready to negotiate over supervision controls," Khamenei said of Iran's nuclear programme, which the regime insists is merely aimed at generating electricity.

In Washington, the White House played down Khamenei's comments and said Iran's position remained unclear.

Asked whether Iranian leaders were signalling that they would ignore a US call for a formal response to the proposal in "weeks, not months," Snow replied: "Well, no they're not."

'Saddam trial unfair without US security for lawyers'

AFP, Washington

Former US attorney general Ramsey Clark said Tuesday that his client, Saddam Hussein, could not receive a fair trial in Iraq without US protection for defense lawyers, three of whom have been murdered.

"It's impossible to have a fair trial when you don't protect all the participants in the trial -- protection that only the United States can provide under the circumstances," Clark told a press conference in Washington.

Clark called for a protection program that would provide lawyers with body guards and move

their families out of Iraq. The lawyer said that without such protection, the former Iraqi leader would be subjected to "a show trial, a corruption of justice."

Along with the deaths of three lawyers, the most recent a week ago, Clark said: "Our witnesses have been intimidated."

Saddam and seven co-defendants are charged with executing 148 people in the village of Dujaal following an assassination attempt there against Saddam in 1982.

The defendants face execution by hanging if convicted in the trial set to resume on July 10. Last Wednesday, Khamis al-

Obeidi, 49, became the third defense lawyer slain since the start of the trial in October. Obeidi was abducted by twenty men and later shot dead in a Baghdad street in broad daylight.

Clark said the defense team was unable to present an effective case because lawyers had only minutes to call witnesses who went on the stand without being interviewed by the defense beforehand.

While defense lawyers operated under numerous handicaps, the prosecution had two years to prepare, he said.

Defense lawyers do not have the benefit of access to court room

transcripts, receive evidence only once it is presented in court and cannot even get a ride to Baghdad from the airport, according to Clark.

He said that on the most recent trips, when promised escorts failed to materialize, US officials told the legal team to take the bus.

"That was an intentional attempt to intimidate us," he charged, while the prosecution stays in a well guarded hotel and travels in armed personnel carriers.

He said he petitioned for 10 bodyguards and automatic weapons but only received three guards with handguns.

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Meghna Group of Industries is a leading business conglomerate having several industrial enterprises located at Meghnaghat engaged in production/processing of food grains, consumer products & other commodities and has a large trading wing engaged in bulk trade and marketing of food products and other commodities. **Meghna Group of Industries** is going to recruit suitable person for the following positions for its sister concern **United Sugar Mills Limited.**

- 1. Factory Manager - (Based in Meghnaghat) :**
The incumbent should have B.Sc. Engineering (Mechanical/Electrical/Chemical) with a minimum 10 (ten) years of practical working experience in running/maintenance of Sugar Refinery Plant. Should have capability to supervise the technical staff of the factory and perform overall responsibility for running a complete Sugar Refinery Plant. Should also have demonstrated skills to guide and develop other team members.
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The incumbent should have B.Sc. Engineering (Mechanical/Electrical) with a minimum 5 (Five) years of practical working experience in running/maintenance of steam turbine & Boiler of Power Plant or Diploma in Engineering (Mechanical/Electrical) with a minimum 10 (ten) years of practical working experience in running/maintenance of steam turbine & Boiler of Power Plant. Should have capability to supervise the technical staff of the power plant and perform overall responsibility for running the complete Power Plant of the factory.
- 3. Instrument Engineer - (Based in Meghnaghat) :**
The incumbent should have B.Sc. Engineering (Electrical/ Electronics) with a minimum 2 (two) years experience in working on instruments used for large industrial enterprise & Power Plants. Should have knowledge on PLC based machine operation, troubleshooting and instrumentation of modern machinery.

Intending candidates fulfilling the required prerequisites should send their application along with Bio-data, 03 (three) copies of photograph and 01 (one) copy of all degrees and experience certificates to the address mentioned below by 11-07-2006. Please write clearly the name of the post on the application and envelope.

Remuneration is negotiable for suitable candidates. Only short listed candidate will be called for interview.

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