SOUTH ASIA

US-India nuke deal faces next crucial vote

Officials in Delhi keep their fingers crossed

AFP, New Delhi

Indian officials were upbeat yesterday after a controversial civilian nuclear energy deal with the United States sailedthrough a Congress committee, but were keeping their fingers crossed ahead of an equally crucial vote by another panel.

A senior Indian official welcomed the 37-5 vote Tuesday by the Foreign Relations Committee in the House of Representatives in favor of the agreement that will allow India to acquire civilian nuclear technology.

Pakistan hangs 4 who gang-raped Christian girl

AFP, Multan

Four Pakistani Muslims convicted of gang-raping a 14-year-old Christian girl were hanged Thursday after losing a six-year legal battle against the death sen-tence, an official said.

The men, Omar Hayat, Mubarik Ali, Muhammad Ashraf and Shehzad Ahmed, were executed at the central jail in Faisalabad, an industrial town in central Punjab province, a superintendent at the prison told AFP by telephone.

They were convicted of raping the teenaged girl in December 1999, but had appeals against their death sentences rejected by higher courts.

Officials said there was no religious motivation behind the

Christians make up less than three percent of Pakistan's mainly Muslim population and often work in low-paying menial jobs.

Gang-rape is punishable by death under special laws intro-duced by Pakistan in 1993.

With this vote, "a major hurdle" had been crossed in the implementation of the deal -- clinched during the visit of US President George W. Bush to India in March -- the official told Indian reporters.

But, he cautioned, "We are not quite there yet" -- referring to another vote due later Thursday by the US Senate Foreign Relations committee and to clearance still needed at a later date by the US Congress and the Senate.

The margin by which the bill will be approved by the Congressional and Senate committees will help New Delhi gauge the kind of support the bill will get in the full Congress and Senate, another official said.

The bill seeks to amend sections of the US Atomic Energy Act of 1954 that currently prevents the United States from trading nuclear technology with nations, such as India, which are not party to the Non-

Proliferation Treaty. Under the deal first agreed by Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in July last year, the United States will aid the development of civil nuclear power programs in India in return for New Delhi placing its civil nuclear facili-ties under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

India tested nuclear weapons in 1974 and 1998 and was as a result banned by the US and other mostly industrialized nations from buying fuel for atomic reactors and other related equipment.

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.

They say the deal could free up India's "limited domestic nuclear fuel-making capacity to produce highly enriched uranium and plutonium for weapons.

Concern Worldwide is a non-governmental, international, humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's

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Concern Bangladesh will shortly commence work on its Haor Initiative for Sustainable Alternative Livelihood (HISAL) Project which will be implemented over a five year period with a primary focus on extreme poverty in 29 union under 5 Upazilas of deep haor area (Kishoregani, Sunamgani and Hibigani

Districts). HISAL project will advocate for greater services and resources being allocated to Haor and the

project will work for reducing community vulnerability to shocks and increase livelihood options of 21,688

targeted extreme poor households living in the deep Haor area through improved access to and use of

resources and services. The project will work with a number of partner organisations and wide range of

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of three referees by 13 July 2006 to: Human Resources Department, Concern Bangladesh, G.P.O.

Please mark the envelope with the position applied for. Any canvassing will result in the withdrawal of an

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· Strong facilitation skills to support the PNGOs and excellent writing and presentation skills

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This position will be based in Mymensingh with frequent travel to the field.

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. Masters in Development Studies/Social Sciences or Statistics.

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Main Responsibilities of the position:

Main Responsibilities of the position:

Main Responsibilities of the position:

involving the government and NGOs.

Requirements:

Requirements:

for advocacy.



Vietnam's newly elected Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung (C) waves as he leaves the national assembly that ended its summer session yesterday. Dung was confirmed as vice-chairman of the powerful National Council for Defence and Security by the national assembly, with the new president Nguyen Minh Triet as Chairman.

Top court strikes down S Korean media bills

They are aimed at muzzling press freedom, most judges observe

South Korea's constitutional court struck down new media bills yesterday, saying parts of the legislation were geared to muzzling press

The court took specific aim at one clause which would limit the circulation of South Korea's top three newspapers.

"The clause is in violation of business equality and freedom of the press." the 7-2 majority ruling of the nine justices said.

Two new laws, championed by South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun's ruling Uri Party, were

CONCERN

July 28 but now will have to be revised and resubmitted to parliamentforapproval.

Citing anti-trust concerns, the Newspaper Law set out to limit the combined circulation of the top three newspapers to 60 percent of the market, and curb the circulation of any one newspaper to a maximum 30 percent.

Press freedom advocates have said the measure was an attempt to silence newspapers unfriendly to Roh, a former human rights lawyer who took office in 2003. He has had an uneasy relation-

ship with conservative dailies, accusing them of distorting his policies or publishing inaccurate

The three top newspapers, the conservative Chosun Ilbo, Dong-a Ilbo and pro-business JoongAng Ilbo, currently hold more than 70 percent of the market.

The justices ruled that it was up to Korean people to choose which

newspaper to read, not the law.
"There is no great danger of

scheduled to come into effect on illegal trading (by the three newspapers) as their status in the market is up to the choice of subscribers," said the ruling.

But the court upheld parts of the new legislation, including a requirement that newspapers release information on their circulation and advertising income.

Roh has said the new laws would increase competition in the print media, while the Chosun and the Dong-A dailies which brought the suit said the government wanted to assert control over the newsroom."

The ruling was a new blow for Roh following his party's crushing defeat in local elections in May, which were seen as a referendum on the president's performance ahead of presidential polls next

The Uri Party remains the major party in the National Assembly with 142 of the 299 seats. But public support for Uri and Roh has been sagging.

Police kill six Maoists in Chhattisgarh

AFP, Raipur

Indian police shot dead six Maoist guerrillas and arrested three others in a raid on a rebel hideout in central India, police said Thursday.

The six died in a fierce shootout late Wednesday with police in a forested area north of Raipur, capital of the tiny state of Chhattisgarh, police said.

A woman Maoist rebel was among the three arrested in the raid in Dantewada district, one of the areas worst hit in the state by insurgent activities, inspector general T.J. Lonkumer said. More than 175 people -- includ-

ing security personnel, Maoists and civilians -- have been killed in a wave of violence since January in Chhattisgarh. An estimated 50,000 villagers,

caught in the conflict between the rebels and security forces, have fled their homes and taken refuge in 27

government relief camps.

The Maoists -- who have taken control of 10 of Chhattisgarh's 16 impoverished districts -- say they are fighting for the rights of poor and landless farmers.

Briton jailed for double murder in Singapore

AFP, Singapore

A British businessman was sentenced to 24 years in prison Thursday for killing his Singaporean chauffer and the driver's Chinese girlfriend.

Michael McCrea, 48, who was sent to Singapore from Australia after losing an extradition battle, was sentenced to the maximum 10 years each for two counts of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

He received an additional four years for causing evidence to disappear in relation to a murder, his lawyer Kelvin Lim told AFP.

McCrea was "very shocked" by the length of the sentence, Lim said. He and his client had expected a maximum 16 years in prison, back-dated to June 2002 when McCrea and his girlfriend Audrey Ong were arrested by Australian police, Lim

The couple had fled to Australia after the killings in January that year. McCrea admitted on Monday to strangling his driver Koh Nai Guan, 46, and using a plastic bag to suffocate Lan Ya Ming, 29. Court was told that McCrea had a fight with the driver who had used the word "slut" to describe McCrea's Singaporean girlfriend, local radio reported.

SRI LANKAN VIOLENCE

Truce monitors hold crisis talks

Five Nordic nations went into crisis talks here Thursday to try to salvage Sri Lanka's faltering ceasefire, as the slaying of a top army general underscored the threat of full-scale

Peace broker Norway's talks with the four other members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) opened in Oslo amid uncertainty over the role of foreign truce observers on the South Asian sland, organisers said.

The meeting was called after the Tamil Tigers demanded that monitors from European Union nations Finland, Sweden and Denmark quit the mission, saying they could o longer be neutral following an EU ban on the Tigers.
The SLMM has suspended its

monitoring of sea movements after a Tiger rebel attack last month saw the sinking of a Sri Lankan navy gunboat. SLMM said its monitors aboard another Sri Lankan navy

crafthad a narrowescape.

Five Sri Lankan sailors were killed in a battle off the island's north-western coast Wednesday, the same day major general Parami Kulatunga who was killed by a suspected Tiger suicide bomber

More than 820 people have been killed in the latest upsurge in fighting in Sri Lanka's embattled northern and eastern regions confining an Oslo-brokered 2002 ceasefire to paper and raising doubts over orway's role.

The London-based human rights watchdog Amnesty nternational Thursday urged Sri Lanka to better protect civilians amid an upsurge in violence citing

UN figures of tens of thousands displaced since April.

'The state's failure to provide adequate security and to ensure that attacks against civilians are prosecuted has resulted in widespread fear and panic," said Purna Sen, Amnesty's Asia-Pacific director.

"Almost every major attack in recent months has had a devastating ripple effect as people flee from their homes and villages in search of sanctuary.

A total of 39,883 people have been displaced in Sri Lanka's embattled north and east since April, according to United Nations

With the worsening security situation, Norway has been strug-gling to get the parties back to the

"There is no question of Norway pulling out," Norway's International Development Minister Erik Solheim said last week. "Our patience is almost unlimited but those who are impatient are the civilians." The LTTE's demand that SLMM monitors from EU countries

be replaced is deeply regrettable and will weaken the SLMM in a critical period," Solheim said. The Tiger demand would force

37 out of the 57 monitors now in Sri Lanka to quit, leaving only those from Norway and Iceland and effectively hamstringing the SLMM. Odd Naustdal, Solheim's infor-

mation officer, said the meeting was kept low-key for now, with no news conference or press releases scheduled, "although this could change"

"The meeting is an internal working meeting to discuss the SLMM," he told AFP.

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