

CPI-M to stick to not sending troops to Iraq

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

The CPI-M will maintain its steadfast stance against sending troops to Iraq even under the UN banner.

"There is talk in some quarters of sending troops to Iraq under the UN flag, but we will not allow the sending of even one soldier," said Anil Biswas, a top leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the largest Left group in parliament.

He added, "We are a non-communal country. So why should we antagonize Iraq when we have always maintained good relations with them. The CPI-M accounts for 43 of the 62 Left MPs, whose support to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's coalition government is crucial."

Biswas said the "bogy of the UN mandate" in support of sending Indian troops to Iraq rings hollow because the US and its allies had earlier ignored the same organisation when they went ahead with their military strike against the country.

"If the UN resolutions are a yardstick, then how did the US and its allies ignore the resolution against military aggression on Iraq?" the CPI-M politburo member asked at a lecture here Tuesday.



Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri (L) gestures as he talks with US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage during a meeting in Islamabad yesterday. Armitage has started a day of intensive talks with Pakistani leaders here on counter terrorism, Pakistan-India relations and developments in Iraq.

US for ending all forms of Kashmir violence

Pakistan yet to dismantle all militant camps: Armitage

AFP, Islamabad

US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage called yesterday for a halt to all violence in Kashmir, reiterating that Pakistan had not yet dismantled all camps used by militants in the region.

"I was correctly quoted (in India Wednesday) when I just noted that all the terrorist camps have not been dismantled (in Pakistani Kashmir)...." Armitage told reporters after talks with Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar.

But "it has to be noted that (while) there are lots of different kinds of violence there, some across the LoC (Line of Control), there is other indigenous violence," he said. "It all should stop so the people of Jammu and Kashmir can have a prosperous life and prosperous future."

India also needed to ensure human rights were upheld in the territory under its control, Armitage said.

"There is absolutely no question that there is violence and violation of human rights (in Kashmir). We have discussed this with our Indian friends," said Armitage, who arrived here late Wednesday after talks in New Delhi.

Pakistan and India have fought two wars over Kashmir, a major portion of which is controlled by New Delhi. A Muslim separatist campaign in Indian Kashmir has left tens of thousands of people dead since 1989.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting the insurgency by sending armed rebels into territory controlled by New Delhi.

The two nuclear-armed states stepped back from brink of war in late 2002 under US diplomatic pressure and have been engaged in peace talks since January this year.

They have taken a series of mutual confidence-building measures including a reciprocal ceasefire since November last year

along the Line of Control -- the de facto border dividing Pakistani-controlled and Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Armitage and Khokhar held hour-long talks before jointly addressing a news conference.

Their discussions covered bilateral relations, cooperation in the war against terrorism, Pakistan-India relations and the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Armitage said he had not made any new request for Pakistani troops to be deployed in Iraq.

Islamabad refused a request by Washington last year to send troops to Iraq and has not taken any decision so far on a fresh US request this year to contribute troops to protect planned UN missions in Baghdad.

When asked about the criticism of Pakistan's effort in the war against terrorism by US ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, Armitage said the envoy was based in Kabul and saw things from a

narrower perspective.

"Those of us who have a larger responsibility and see the total aspect of what Pakistan is doing in the global war on terror have a view that is quite more pronounced in the positive."

Armitage said relations between the two close allies in the war against international terrorism were excellent.

"For the United States, let me say that we are completely satisfied with where we are in our relationship. We will look to move forward in a way that is mutually acceptable."

Armitage said the US administration was currently reviewing Pakistan's request for military equipment to help the country in its anti-terrorism fight.

Armitage later met Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri. He also met Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz, who is to take over as the country's prime minister next month.

Foreign workers in Saudi systematically abused

Some even treated like slaves: Rights group

AFP, London

Foreign workers in Saudi Arabia are systematically abused and exploited, some of them living in conditions akin to slavery, Human Rights Watch (HRW) charged yesterday.

"We found men and women in conditions resembling slavery," said Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of HRW's Middle East and North Africa Division, summing up a 135-page report by the New York-based rights watchdog released here.

Discrimination against women in the conservative oil-rich kingdom compounds the plight of female workers, some of whom have been victims of sexual abuse and forced confinement, according to the report.

Asians form the bulk of foreigners in Saudi Arabia, who according to Labor Minister Ghazi al-Gosali number 8.8 million.

This compares to an indigenous population of about 17 million.

The report details "the pervasive abuses foreign workers endure," showing "the abysmal and exploitative labor conditions many workers

face, and the utter failure of the justice system to provide redress," HRW said in a statement.

HRW documented how foreigners detained in Saudi Arabia have been denied consular visits and forced to sign confessions that they could not read, the statement said.

The report also lists "cases of beheading in which the embassies and families of the condemned men were not informed of the executions until after they were carried out," it said.

Information obtained from Asian women who had recently worked in Saudi Arabia pointed to a "widespread practice of forced, around-the-clock confinement of women in unsafe conditions," the rights watchdog alleged.

"In one case, some 300 women from India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines worked 12-hour shifts, six days a week, cleaning hospitals in Jeddah."

"At the end of each work day, they were returned to crowded, dormitory-style housing, with 14 women sharing one small room lined with bunk beds. The doors to the rooms were locked from the outside, deny-

ing the women any freedom of movement for the two or three years of their contracts," it said.

HRW said it examined four cases of women who were victims of forced confinement and sexual abuse, including rape.

"In all four cases, the perpetrators -- three of whom were alleged rapists -- did not face criminal investigation or prosecution. The report also has information about women whom Human Rights Watch found in a prison in Riyadh who were serving sentences for illegal pregnancies," the statement said.

HRW said it conducted most of the interviews for the report in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines with workers who had recently returned from Saudi Arabia after it was denied permission to carry out field research there even though a delegation was invited to the kingdom last year for talks with officials.

In a series of recommendations, HRW urged Riyadh to "suspend implementation of death sentences for Saudi citizens and foreigners until it can be determined independently that torture was not used and confessions were not coerced."

Mandela, Bill Gates team up to fight TB

AFP, Bangkok

The charisma of Nelson Mandela and the cheque book of Bill Gates joined forces at the world AIDS conference here yesterday to lay assault on tuberculosis, a companion killer disease to HIV.

Mandela, an iconic figure at the global AIDS forum, branded tuberculosis -- of which he himself was once a victim -- a silent slayer in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, while Gates' charity unveiled a 44.7-million-dollar grant to help the search for fighting TB at the grass roots.

"Tuberculosis remains ignored. Today we are calling the world to recognise that we can't fight AIDS unless we take on TB, as well," Mandela said at a press conference. Mandela recalled his own experience with TB during his long imprisonment on Robben Island during South Africa's apartheid years, and his diagnosis with prostate cancer after his release.

In both cases, it had been vital to him to tell his friends and family about his health status and to closely follow the counsel of his doctors.

"In both cases I spoke about it openly, because once people were aware of the facts, they would support me," Mandela said.

Food stores looted by flood victims in Bihar

AFP, Patna

Desperate residents looted food stores yesterday in the flooded eastern Indian town of Darbhanga, while thousands of people perched on the roofs of their sinking homes were lashed by torrential rains, witnesses said.

Power supplies and telecommunications have been snapped by the rising waters, hampering relief efforts for residents trapped without food or drinking water for three days in the town 180km from the Bihar state capital Patna, officials said.

Hunger drove residents to plunder food grain stores in Darbhanga as relief trickling into the area proved inadequate, the officials said.

A state-run food warehouse was stripped of its stocks while the town administrator's flooded headquarters was also ransacked, they added.

Military helicopters, meanwhile, were air dropping food packets on the town jail where the rising waters have forced inmates to take refuge on the roof.

Darbhanga's chief magistrate Pradeep Kumar said 12 inmates overnight fled the complex after water entered their unlocked cells, adding that a second jailbreak attempt on Thursday was thwarted.

An army helicopter trying to pluck students off a medical college roof crashed during a sortie Thursday but there were no casualties, an air force spokesman said.

Some 1,000 students have been stranded on the rain-swept rooftops of the medical college and a town high school without food or drinking water since Tuesday.

Meanwhile, at least 35 people were feared drowned Thursday when a boat ferrying villagers fleeing their submerged homes sank in the flood-hit eastern Indian state of Bihar, police and witnesses said.

The boat carrying around 50 people sank in the Bagmati river, some 70km north of the state capital Bihar, a police spokesman said.

Witnesses told AFP that 15 people had swum to safety but the others were swept away by strong currents in the rain-swollen river.



A group of Indian people wait on the roof of a building in the flood affected town of Darbhanga some 100km north east of Patna, the capital of Bihar yesterday. Desperate residents scoured for food and clean water as floods swirled into Darbhanga and torrential rains lashed hundreds of people perched on the roofs of their sinking homes.

Chaos in parliament over fresh Godhra probe

Both Houses adjourned twice

PTI, New Delhi

The Indian government's decision to hold a fresh inquiry into the Godhra carnage yesterday led to turmoil in both houses of Parliament with agitated opposition members accusing the Centre of trying to divide people on communal lines, forcing their adjournment twice.

Angry NDA members were on their feet as soon as both houses met on Thursday morning protesting Railway Minister Lalu Prasad's announcement of a fresh probe into the Godhra carnage.

The presiding officers first adjourned both the houses for 45 minutes and later till 2 pm after they found the members unrelenting.

In Rajya Sabha, the opposition

stalled proceedings leading to adjournment of the House for the day without transacting any business.

The turmoil on the issue had led to two adjournments in the pre-lunch session.

When the House re-assembled for the third time, opposition members trooped into the well shouting slogans and the Chairman adjourned the House for the day.

In Lok Sabha, the Speaker pulled up BJP-led opposition for their behaviour, saying they had no justification in rushing to the well of the House when he had promised they would be given opportunity to speak on the matter after the lunch recess.

As soon as Lok Sabha assembled, BJP leader VK Malhotra was on his

feet accusing Railway Minister Lalu Prasad of making a "provocative statement" on the Godhra incident, while replying to a debate on the Railway budget on Wednesday.

He said there was no need to order a fresh probe when the Gujarat Government was already investigating the matter.

Soon after Malhotra made his statement, BJP and Shiv Sena members trooped into the well raising slogans Lalu Hatao, Desh Bachao (remove Lalu, save the country).

This was immediately countered by members from treasury benches who shouted Modi Hatao, Desh Bachao (remove Modi, save the country) and phoot gaya, phoot gaya, RSS ka Bhandha phoot gaya (RSS is exposed).

'Lanka govt, Tigers asked to ban mines or risk losing aid'

AFP, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government and its main foe, the Tamil Tiger rebels, were warned Wednesday to formally ban anti-personnel mines or risk losing international financial support for demining.

At least 153 civilians have been killed and a further 889 wounded by mines since 1995, the Landmine Ban Advocacy Forum here said in a statement. It said many more soldiers and rebels had been killed by mines.

The Forum, which comprises international donors, humanitarian aid agencies, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations children's fund (Unicef), met here to urge Colombo to

endorse the Ottawa Convention banning the use and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines.

It also asked Tiger rebels to endorse the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment, which commits rebel and non-state groups signing on to it to outlaw the use of mines.

Both Colombo and the rebels, who have been observing an Oslo-brokered truce since February 2002, are supporting de-mining efforts and have their own teams picking out mines and unexploded ordnance in former battle zones.

"However, this is not enough to ensure continued support for mine clearance activities and neither is it consolation for those living in contaminated areas," the advocacy forums said.

US pledges to provide cheap AIDS drugs

THE NATION/ANN, Bangkok

The United States, which has severely been accused of keeping the price of HIV/AIDS drugs high through patent protection, Wednesday expressed their commitment to provide the cheapest possible HIV/AIDS drugs to those in poor countries.

"I have consistently and repeatedly expressed our intent to provide, through the Emergency Plan, AIDS drugs that are acquired at the lowest possible cost, regardless of origin or who produce them," said the US Global Aids Coordinator Ambassador Randall L. Tobias.

The US Congress has approved \$15 billion in January for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar) which is aimed to provide assistance for treatment and prevention for 15 countries, including Vietnam.

To be qualified for Pepfar, the drugs would have to receive an approval from the US Food and Drug Administration, a step that drug producers are reluctant to complete.

"I call on each of you today to urge every company manufacturing these drugs to file their applications as soon as possible so that we can begin funding these drugs as soon as possible," said Tobias.

The first public talk of this highest-level delegate of United States to the 15th International AIDS Conference Wednesday was greeted with heavy protest from activists who accused the superpower of making little efforts to provide generic drugs.

"Bush lies, people died, generic drugs now," a group of dozens of activists marched and shouted loudly before Tobias delivered his special lecture in the indoor stadium.

বিজ্ঞপ্তি			
□ সন্ত্রাসী ও চাঁদাবাজদের ধরিয়ে দিন। □ সন্ত্রাসীদের অবস্থান ও তাদের অপরাধমূলক কার্যকলাপ সম্পর্কে তথ্য দিন। □ বিভিন্ন পুলিশ ইউনিটের ফোন ও ফ্যাক্স তথ্য প্রেরণ করুন। □ সংবাদদাতার নাম, ঠিকানা ও প্রেরিত তথ্যের বিষয়ে কর্তার গোপনীয়তা রক্ষা করা হবে। □ সমাজ ও দেশ থেকে সন্ত্রাস নির্মূলে সহায়তা করুন।			
ফোন, ফ্যাক্স ও মোবাইল নম্বর			
পুলিশ ইউনিটের নাম	ফোন নম্বর	মোবাইল নম্বর	ফ্যাক্স নম্বর
পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা	৯৫৬৩২৩৫ ৯৫৬৩৬৬১	০১১-০৮৫২৯০ ৯১২৬৩৩৩	৯১২৬৩৩৩ bdpolice@dhaka.net
ঢাকা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, ডিএমপি	৯৩০৬৪৪৮ ৯৩০২১৮৮ ৯৮৮০০৭২ ৯১১৬৮২৪	০১৭১-৮৮৩৭১৩ ০১৭১-১৭৩১০০ ০১৭১-৮১৬৮৮৭ ০১৭৩-০৩০৪০৫	৮৩২২৭৪৬ ৮৩৮২১০ ৯৩৩৫৮৬৬
র‍্যাপিড একশন ব্যাটালিয়ন (র‍্যাব), সদর দপ্তর, ঢাকা (দেশের যে ফোন এলাকা সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের জন্য)	৮৯৬১১০৫	০১১-৮১৬২০৫ ০১৭২-৯৯৩০১০৫ ০১১-৮১৮২৪৫	৮৯৬২৮৮৪ rabhqbd@yahoo.com
র‍্যাব-১ (গেলাশ, বাজা, ক্যান্টনমেন্ট, এয়ারপোর্ট ও উত্তরা থানা এলাকার সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের জন্য)	৮৯৬৩৪১৯	০১৭৬-০৯০৪৯২	৮৯৬৩৪১৮ rab1bd@yahoo.com
র‍্যাব-২ (বমনা, ধানমন্ডি, লালবাগ, হাজারীবাগ, কামরাঙ্গীরচর, কেরানীগঞ্জ, দোহার, নওরাবগঞ্জ থানা এলাকা সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের জন্য)	৭৬০৯৪২২	০১৭১-৮০০৪২৯	৭৬০৯৯১১ rab2bd@yahoo.com
র‍্যাব-৩ (সুজাপুর, মতিঝিল, ডেমরা, খিলগাঁও, শ্যামপুর, সবুজবাগ ও সিলেট শহর এলাকা সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের জন্য)	৭৬০৯৩৩৩	০১১-৮১৮২৫৩	৭৬০৯৯২২ rab3bd@yahoo.com
র‍্যাব-৪ (ভেঙ্গাপাও, মোহাম্মদপুর, কাকরালা, পটুয়া, মিরপুর, সাভার, ধামরাই এলাকা সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের জন্য)	৮০৫৯২৫৪	০১৭২-৯৯৩১৩৬	৮০৫৯২৫৩ bdrab4@yahoo.com
চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, সিএমপি	০৩১-৬২০৯৭৩ ০৩১-৬৩০৩২৬	০১৭১-১৭৬০৯৩ ০১৭৪-০৩০৪৯২	০৩১-৬২১০৬৫
মুলানা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, কেএমপি	০৪১-৭৪৪৮১৮ ০৪১-৭২০৫৬৭	০১৭১-৫৬৮৩৬৬ ০১৭২-৫১৪৮৮৪	
রাজশাহী মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, আরএমপি	০৭২১-৭৭৫৮৯৬ ০৭২১-৭৭৪৯৭২	০১৭১-২২৭৯২২	০৭২১-৭৭৪৪৬০
র‍্যাপিড একশন ব্যাটালিয়ন (র‍্যাব-৭), চট্টগ্রাম	০৩১-৮০০০৭৪	০১১-৭০৯৫১৬	০৩১-৮০০০৭৮ rab7bd@yahoo.com
র‍্যাপিড একশন ব্যাটালিয়ন (র‍্যাব-৫), জুশাহী	০৭২১-৭৫০৭৭০	০১৭১-৮০০৪২৪	০৭২১-৭৫০৭৭০ rab5bd@yahoo.com
৬ একশন ব্যাটালিয়ন (র‍্যাব-৬),	০৪১-৭৭৫১৯০	০১৭১-৮০০৪৪২ ০১৭১-৮০০৪১৮	০৪১-৭৭৫১৮৯ rab6bd@yahoo.com

ওয়ারিহ-উজ-জামান

উপ-সচিব ও সমন্বয়কারী

মিডিয়া সেল, স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার



Supporters of Filipino hostage Angelo de la Cruz burn a Stars and Stripes near the US embassy in Manila yesterday to denounce the US war in Iraq. They welcomed the troop pullout decision to save the life of the hostage. US State Department indicated that the Philippine decision to pull troops out of Iraq to save the life of a Filipino hostage could affect ties.