

Congress must overhaul immigration: Bush

AP, Washington

President Bush urged lawmakers yesterday to come together on the complex and emotional issue of immigration, calling it "a critical challenge" now before the nation.

"We need a system where our laws are respected. We need a system that meets the legitimate needs of our economy. And we need a system that treats people with dignity and helps newcomers assimilate into our society," he said in his weekly radio address. "We must address all elements of this problem together, or none of them will be solved at all."

There are an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the country, and passions run high on what to do about them. Bush wants to establish a temporary worker program for some of them and create a path to citizenship albeit a difficult one for many. He says it is unrealistic to propose that millions of people be deported.

What he likes to call comprehensive immigration reform was once Bush's top domestic priority.

But the president was stymied by members of his own party, who controlled Congress until January. While business and industry are demanding more low-wage workers, many conservatives reject the president's

approach as putting the interests of illegal immigrants before those of American workers.

The Senate passed a plan last May that would allow illegal immigrants a chance at citizenship and create a temporary guest worker program for new arrivals. But the proposal died in the House, where tough new border security measures were the priority.

Last October, Bush signed a get-tough bill that authorized 700 additional miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Since then, the White House has been emphasizing that new efforts along the border are having an impact, while quietly looking for bipartisan compromise on broader legislation.

Bush says he is determined to enact something and it's one of the few issues on which he might be able to claim victory with Congress in Democratic hands.

He gave that effort a renewed push by devoting his radio address to the topic, and making it the subject as well of a commencement speech he was giving Saturday afternoon at Miami Dade College in Florida.

Bush said the talks are bearing fruit, persuading some who had doubts about comprehensive reform to now be open to it.

Quality education

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He said more than half of primary school students, especially those with disabilities, living in urban slums, or those who are from ethnic minorities and ultra-poor families, drop out before completion.

Manzoor also said difference of quality in various streams of education—Bangla, English and madrasah—has reinforced divisions rather than facilitating social mobility.

"Education system and personnel management do not permit professionalism in key specialised areas and technical functions and decision-making," he said.

Rascheda K Choudhury, director of Campe, noted in her opening remarks that the constitution states the access to education as a right of the Bangladeshi people, but it should be a basic human right.

She said all Bangladeshi children must be enrolled in schools by 2010 to achieve universal primary education by 2015. As the children from minority and indigenous groups and shoal areas alongside the disabled children are absent from schools, they need to be enrolled at the earliest.

Immediate past education minister Osman Farruk said there is a need for greater examination of the factors behind the high dropout rates. He identified infrastructure, quality of education, materials and distance as the principal factors.

Farruk also noted that primary education has to be made attractive to students, with a greater focus on teaching quality and a strengthened school feeding programme.

He said there is no point in self-gratification with inflated literacy figures.

Former caretaker government adviser and secretary Akbar Ali Khan expressed his fear that the education-related MDGs might not be implemented due to lack of funds.

He said Bangladeshi students only get \$1 a day while meeting the MDGs requires \$55 per day for each student by 2010. Akbar compared this lack of education funds from donors with high agricultural subsidies given in Europe.

He stressed that in lieu of these funds, a smarter strategic vision is required which needs to engender more innovative, non-conventional methods of education.

Former education minister ASHK Sadique said political commitment can sustain education policy and the policymakers have to look at the policy from a global perspective.

Unesco Country Representative Malama Meliese hoped Bangladesh will soon sign the UN Convention Against Discrimination in Education. He stressed that the government needs to implement policies and structures that ensure the sustainability of education if it is to meet the education MDGs.

Former adviser CM Shafi Sami observed that there is a need for political will for improvement in education while it also requires simultaneous improvement in human security.

Former cabinet secretary Sadaat

Hasina

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Hasina, who was previously barred from entering the country by the current caretaker administration, is now planning to return home any day after May 3.

She will deliver a lecture at London School of Economics on May 1 and meet Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon on May 3.

Meanwhile, Awami League presidium member Suranjit Sengupta and BNP leader Brig Gen (Retd) Hannan Shah have urged Law and Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hosein to disclose the names of their party leaders who suggested reforms by keeping Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia abroad.

Hossain said there is no need to be pessimistic about education in Bangladesh as primary school enrollment currently stands at 97 percent. He also said the current caretaker government should leave major education policy decisions for the next elected government to make.

Bangladesh Economic Association President Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmad said there is a need for a special arrangement for students who are left behind. He said there is a need for greater monitoring of maintaining a minimum standard of education quality in primary schools.

Ahmed noted that making primary education free is not enough and supplementary services need to be given to induce poor students to schools.

Prof Zillur Rahman Siddique, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, said there needs to be greater and innovative community participation in education policy-making.

Abdul Quayum, joint editor of Prothom Alo, said a greater social role to supplement the bureaucratic and administrative policy making on one hand.

Umpires: Steve Bucknor (West Indies) and Aleem Dar (Pakistan).

Play starts

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straight title and fourth in all, both unprecedented achievements in the nine-edition history of the World Cup.

They came into this match on the back of a record run of 28 games unbeaten in World Cup cricket, including 22 straight wins.

They are unchanged from the side that beat South Africa by seven wickets in Wednesday's semifinal in St Lucia.

This match is also set to be fast bowler Glenn McGrath's last before retirement. The 37-year-old is appearing in his fourth successive World Cup final, having also been on the losing side when Sri Lanka beat Australia in 1996.

Ahead of the final, he has 70 World Cup wickets; his 25 to date in the 2007 edition already a record for a single event.

Sri Lanka, whose team contains three survivors from the side that won the World Cup 11 years ago (Sanath Jayasuriya, Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran), are also unchanged following their 81-run win in Tuesday's semifinal against New Zealand in Jamaica.

Fast bowler Dilhara Fernando, whose five overs against the Black Caps cost an expensive 45 runs, retained his place despite reports from Sri Lanka he would be dropped.

Australia beat Sri Lanka by seven wickets in Grenada when the sides last met in a Super Eights, second round, World Cup match on April 16.

However, for that match Sri Lanka were without strike bowler Lasith Malinga, then suffering an ankle injury but now set to play his first one-dayer against Australia, and rested left-arm quick Vaas and off-spinner Muralidaran.

This match also sees West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor extend his own record by standing in a fifth successive World Cup final.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA: Matthew Hayden, Adam Gilchrist, Ricky Ponting, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Michael Hussey, Shane Watson, Brad Hogg, Nathan Bracken, Shaun Tait, Glenn McGrath.

SRI LANKA: Upul Tharanga, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Chamara Silva, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russell Arnold, Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga, Muttiah Muralitharan, Dilhara Fernando.

Umpires: Steve Bucknor (West Indies) and Aleem Dar (Pakistan).

Sirajganj plant

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requesting not to be named.

The Power Cell has not even cancelled the contract of its technical director whose level of competence and fairness has been questioned over the last two years. "On the contrary, the two-year contract of the technical director is likely to be extended again by May," said a source. The technical director is supposed to provide all clarifications to the bidders.

"There are five bidders awaiting the Power Cell's response. Of them, we can safely say that AES, Summit-Globelac, YTL and GMR are the competent ones we would like to have in any given power bids," he said, adding, "So, rendering the Sirajganj bid is simply pointless."

The tenders for the Sirajganj project have seen a series of bad decisions in the past. The first tender failed to attract enough bidders while the second tender in 2003-04 lacked competition but bagged an offer from the local Summit Power. The World Bank and the ADB were ready to finance Sirajganj Power.

However, in early 2004, the then prime minister Khaleda Zia cancelled the tender at its final stage without any explicit reason and sent it for re-tendering. But under the influence of Hawa Bhaban and with incompetent manpower handling technical issues, the Power Cell failed to launch the third tender until late 2006.

Ex-MP Ilyas Ali

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asked him to pay Tk 20 lakh in toll.

Otherwise he would not be allowed to contest the polls scheduled for February 25 the same year.

He further alleged that Siraj Khan and Abul Hossain, on behalf of Ilyas Ali, took Tk 5 lakh from him on February 7, 2003.

In Sathkira, another extortion case was filed against former Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Gazi Nazrul Islam with Shyamnagar Police Station, according to the Urban Poor.

Ministries asked

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neighbouring countries and looked at options at how its benefits can be delivered to everyone'.

Currently the government

restricts VoIP operations and plans

to draw up the guideline to streamline VoIP operations to reduce huge revenue losses from illegal operations.

Regarding the Cabinet Division

report on the government's performance, Fahim said between

January 12 and March 20, the caretaker government held 20

meetings, discussed 60 issues and took 81 decisions.

Earlier on April 16 and 22, two

extortion cases were filed against the ex-lawmaker.

Gazi Nazrul surrendered to the

joint forces on March 9 after his

name was published in the second

list of corruption suspects. He is now

in Sathkira jail.

The report also stated that seven

advisers committees have been

formed and they have held a total of

16 meetings, while the government

has promulgated three ordinances.

Inflation to cross 10pc

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people due to oil price hike.

The study estimated that industrial production will fall by 2.2 percent. However, most of the fall in prices is likely to impact upon the small and medium enterprises.

The reduction of poverty will be halted meaning that the past record of nearly 1% drop in the poverty rate per annum will be wiped out due to higher inflation and its subsequent impact on the economy, it said.

The urban economy largely consists of service sectors and some of the industries.

However, according to the analysis, urban service sector will not be significantly affected by the increase in fuel price. Analysis has shown that in current prices the service sector's value addition will rise by 4.16 percent but in real terms the value rise is only 0.12 percent.

While the economy is projected to slow down by nearly 1% due to higher inflation, the government, however, gets a positive boost due to increase in the government revenue earnings.

The study said government revenue will register an increase by 1.32 percent or nearly Tk 627 crore whereas its expenditure will also rise due to inflation in the economy about 0.82 percent to Tk 498 crore. Thus, the government's net income (in nominal terms) will increase by Tk 129 crore.

This gain is the net benefit for the government due to increase in fuel price; and consequently under ceteris paribus condition, there will be a fall in budget deficit by 1 percent," it said.

In their policy recommendations, the study said against the backdrop of sustained (net) loss over two years, price increase is justified on all possible criteria that one may think of.

However, ad hoc jumps are more harmful to the economy and the costs of adjustment become more painful. In addition, the price increase came during a period when there was upward pressure on prices for various other reasons, it said.

The revised price regime will

generate net positive earning to the government. Therefore, two options may be considered: to lower the price marginally, or to find better instruments to distribute subsidy (out of the net earning) to targeted sectors and people.

"For establishing credible policy regime, we favour the second option, and suggest that the first option remains open for review in the coming months," it said.

To effectively administer the subsidy plan (for agriculture) the study suggested using 'fuel coupon' issued to the irrigation pumps used in agriculture.

"Similar to the arrangements under monthly cash allowances administered through the banks and relying on lists prepared locally with assistance from DSW and later from MVCA, one may use the good office of the Bloc Supervisors (DAE) and local bodies to identify the irrigation pump operators who may receive 'pump-subsidy' from the bank on the condition that the irrigation prices are not raised from the last season."

Subsidy to small and medium sized producers using diesel for their production could be provided in the aforementioned manner or by reducing VAT rate for them, it said.

In the press release issued yesterday, police claimed that they arrested the former lawmaker from room 110 of Hotel Sea Queen at Gulshan at around 1:35am with a pistol, two magazines and four bullets.

The hotel authorities however said that they were not aware of any raid in the hotel on Friday night.

Rafiqul Anwar was included in the second list of the government's 50 corruption suspects.

15 killed

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kilometers (21 miles) northeast of the provincial capital of Peshawar, police and local officials said scores of people could have been injured.

The border province has a large community of Afghan refugees, most living in camps in the troubled region.

Pakistan has been hit by attacks including five suicide bombings this year, killing more than 50 people.

2 aides

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God Gift International Recruiting Agency at Gulshan.

A gang of four extortions including the two arrestees fired twice at Baki Billah, the security guard of the recruiting agency, at around 8:30am and left the scene running.

Hearing the gunshot, locals screamed out for help and a nearby police patrol led by Sub-Inspector Somen Barua chased the criminals. The police caught up with the assailants near Road 43 and seized the two loaded firearms -- a pistol with four bullets and a revolver with six.

Their two other cohorts -- Setu and Zahid -- however managed to dodge arrest.

The guard was admitted to a local clinic with bullet injuries to his left arm.

Officials of the recruiting firm said Khandakar Tanvir Islam had been demanding Tk 5 crore from the owner of the firm over the last couple of months by sending messages and calling over the phone from India.

Both the arrestees confessed that they carried out the attack under instructions of Sabir, who runs criminal activities for most