

# MOVE TO COUNTER IRAN THREAT US readies arms deal with Saudi Arabia

AFF, Washington

The United States is readying a major arms package for Saudi Arabia with an eye to countering a changing threat from Iran, a senior US defence official said.

Defence Secretary Robert Gates is expected to discuss the US recommendations with the Saudis next week in a visit to the kingdom with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the official said Friday.

"We've been working very hard on the Saudi arms package, which we believe is critical to the overarching architecture that we believe we are going to need ... to deal with the changing strategic threat from Iran and other forces," the official said.

The official who the briefed reporters on condition of anonymity said discussions with Congress on the arms package have just begun and that no announcements were expected during Gates' visit to Saudi Arabia.

"What there may be is discussion about what the administration is willing to go forwards with (and) ... what we would recommend to the Hill and others," she said, referring to Congress on Capitol Hill.

The Pentagon provided no details on the arms package, which will reportedly total 20 billion dollars over the next decade.

But administration officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said it would include selling Saudi Arabia advanced weapons known as Joint Direct Attack Munitions, or JDAMs.

JDAM is a low-cost guidance kit converting existing unguided

free-fall bombs into accurately guided "smart" weapons.

Munition equipped with such kits can attack simultaneously multiple targets in a coordinated strike by single or multiple aircraft.

JDAM weapons were extensively used by the United States in recent conflicts. More than 650 of them were dropped during the 1999 operation in Kosovo, more than 4,500 during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2002 and over 6,500 during the invasion of Iraq in March-April 2003, according to defence experts.

The package also will include new weapons for the United Arab Emirates, another US ally in the Persian Gulf, and both military and economic support to Egypt, the officials said.

Meanwhile, the Boston Globe reported in March that it is believed to include air and missile defence systems, advanced early warning radar aircraft, and light coastal combat ships.

The New York Times reported in April that the package had been delayed because of Israeli concerns over the sale to Saudi Arabia of certain precision guided munitions.

Gates and Rice are expected to emphasise US commitment to the region's security at a time when there is fierce debate at home of whether to withdraw US forces from Iraq.

Congress has the power to block such sales, but the White House is hoping to avoid a major fight on the issue.

Israel, meanwhile, is reported to have asked for the F-22 Raptor, the stealthy US fighter jet, which is difficult to see on radar.

## CA donates

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Hanif Sanket, singers Syed Abdul Hadi, Subir Nandi and Andrew Kishore.

Cultural Affairs Adviser Ayub Quadri and Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim were present.

Earlier on July 10, the CA had donated Tk 4 lakh from the same fund for treatment of the ailing singer.

## RU plans

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Hossain admitted the move of listing the teachers' names under directions of the higher authorities.

Some 200 RU teachers under the banner of Progressive Teachers' Society (PTS) went on a day's leave en masse in an extraordinary move demanding release of Hasina.

Chairmen loyal to BNP-Jamaat have already submitted leave applications of the teachers of their departments, sources said.

The authorities handed over the leave petitions to the intelligence officials, sources added.

Several teachers, who went on leave, told reporters that the intelligence officials have phoned them to inquire about Thursday's programme.

They also expressed concern over the investigation by the university authorities and the intelligence officials and were fearful of further harassment.

Abdus Sobhan, PTS convener and also a syndicate member, strongly protested the authorities' move and said they have no right to collect the leave petitions.

## Hasina

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Tawfique said she is passing her days in apprehension that 'criminal justice system' would not work in the extortion case against her, and she would not get justice.

He quoted Hasina as saying, "System of criminal justice will not work here as it failed in 1975 after the killing of Bangabandhu and most of his family members."

The counsel entered the special jail on the Jatiya Sangsad compound at 2:40pm and discussed with the former prime minister the case against her for over one and a half hours.

On the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) notice for submitting Hasina's wealth statement, he said the authorities are playing a double standard. "Authorities seized all papers and documents from Hasina's residence and then the ACC asked her

to submit wealth statement within seven days ... What the ACC did is not consistent with due process."

Through her counsels, Hasina once again alleged that the government has planned to keep her away from election by convicting her in false cases. She urged the people to be united to uphold their constitutional rights.

The AL chief accused the government of violating the constitution. The government is making new laws which are contrary to the constitution, and even state of emergency does not support such laws.

She asked her counsels to file writ petition against her arrest and urged the people to protest any illegal activities of the government.

**FAMILY MEMBERS MEET HER**  
Family members and relatives yesterday visited Hasina for the first time at the special jail.

Sheikh Razia Naser, Sheikh Khadiza Khanam, Sheikh Shelly Jaman, Sahana Yasmin Shampa and Farmina Khanam entered the special jail at 4:25pm and came out at 6:00 pm.

They however avoided the press. **AL LEADERS VISIT WAZED MIAH**  
AL leaders yesterday visited ailing nuclear scientist Dr Wazed Miah, husband of Hasina, at Square Hospital in the capital.

They demanded immediate release of the AL chief, saying she should now stay beside her husband.

The government will have to bear all responsibility of the consequences of not allowing Hasina to look after her husband in his present health condition, they said.

The AL leaders who visited Dr Wazed included Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Matin Khosru, Advocate Sahara Khatun, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and AKM Jahangir Hossain.

"Condition of Dr Wazed is not good," Sajeda told reporters later.

Khosru said although the present government is a non-partisan one, it is behaving cruelly.

Dr Wazed is suffering from heart problems, diabetes and high blood pressure. He was shifted to Square Hospital from Bangladesh Medical College Hospital on Thursday night.

## More interactions

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Advisers since January 14 to June 30. Of them, 115 have already been implemented while the remaining 90 are at various stages of implementation.

It was also apprised that 14 ordinances were given final approval in the council meetings during the period, and nine of those were promulgated. "The rest of the ordinances are under the process of promulgation," according to the Chief Adviser's Press Secretary, Syed Fahim Munaim.

Nine advisory committees were either constituted or reconstituted in between January and June.

The decisions taken by the government include delegation of financial and administrative powers aiming to further increase dynamism of the administration, updating the laws and rules and regulations, formulation of citizens' charter in all utility service-providing organisations and quick settlement of various incomplete matters, including pension cases.

Chaired by the chief adviser, all advisers and secretaries concerned attended the meeting at the CA's office.

# Jamuna flows

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upazilas inundated and at least 1.20 lakh people marooned, our Netrakona correspondent reports.

Newly affected unions are Krishnapur, Khaliajuri Sadar, and Nagar of Khaliajuri upazila, Kaital and Binni of Madan upazila, Jaria of Purbadhala upazila and Magan of Mohanganj upazila, Netrakona WDB sources said.

Around 155 educational institutions were forced to close as they were deluged by flash flood.

Water levels of the Someshwary, Magra, Kongsha and Dhanu, the four major rivers of the district, continued to rise. The Dhanu was flowing 59cm, Someshwary 31cm, Kongsha 19cm and Mogra 17cm over their danger levels, Netrakona WDB sources said.

Around 35 metres of Netrakona-Kalkamanda road was washed away at Gutarabazar and Rajarabazar under Kalkamanda upazila yesterday morning. One kilometre of the Shibganj-Ranikong road went into the gorge of the Someshwary yesterday noon. The river also devoured 20 dwellings in Shibganj area yesterday morning.

Many flood-affected people have taken shelter on nearby higher lands and flood shelters, while some are marooned in their houses.

The flood situation in Rangpur has deteriorated as the water level of Teesta rose at Mornea, Kolkond and Lakhmitari unions under Gangachara upazila, our correspondent in Rangpur reports.

At least 8,000 families of the newly flooded 12 villages of the upazila were marooned.

The Teesta embankment at Kochua is at serious risk of being washed away as the river has changed its course. Bangladesh Army and locals are placing sandbags at three vulnerable points of the embankment.

Executive Engineer of Rangpur WDB Akmol Hosen said locals and the army placed 14,000 sandbags at Kochua point to protect the embankment but they are still worried whether it would hold.

The Teesta in Nilphamari is flowing 15cm over the danger level at Teesta Barrage in Dalia, our correspondent in Nilphamari reports.

Around 10,000 flood-affected people are passing their days in miseries. WDB officials at Dalia said the water level might rise even further if India opened all the gates of Gojal Doba Barrage.

A small boat capsized around 1:00pm in Teesta near Tapur Char in Dimla upazila with 14 people on board. Chairman of the union concerned told The Daily Star that locals managed to rescue everyone.

Abdul Latif, chairman of Purbo Chhatnai union, said strong currents of the Teesta at Bhasanir Char and Tapur Char washed 15 houses away yesterday.

The district administration allocated 15 tonnes of rice and 25 more cartons of biscuits yesterday in addition to Friday's allocation.

Rising water level of the Jamuna left over 30,000 people marooned yesterday at 32 villages

under Bhuapur upazila in Tangail, our correspondent in Tangail reports.

Local sources said badly affected 70 families of Jagatpura village of the upazila took shelter at the Nalin School playground.

Akhter Ali Sarkar, deputy commissioner (DC) of Tangail, yesterday visited the flood-affected areas of the upazila and assured locals of help. Earlier, Tk 20,000 and four tonnes of rice were allocated for the flood-affected people.

Rising water levels of the Jamuna, Padma, Kaliganga and Dhaleswari in Manikganj have worsened the flood situation, our Manikganj correspondent reports.

Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre's (FFWC) Aricha office sources said the Jamuna was flowing 48cm above danger level at Aricha Friday.

Shahadat Hossain, deputy general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation, said ferry services between Paturia and Nagarbari remains suspended as the Nagarbari terminal went under water.

Low-lying areas of Manikganj also went under water. Crops on the riverbank and adjacent areas were damaged due to the rising water. Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Department Mokbul Hossain Talukdar said.

## Credit growth

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within 13.5 percent and private sector credit within 14.5 percent in the current fiscal year.

On July 23, the central bank at a meeting of Fiscal Coordination Council suggested that the government should minimise its bank borrowing.

The BB data also shows an overall picture of current credit flow of the banking sector. The data shows that credit growth to the private sector in July-May period in the last fiscal year was 15.57 percent, which was 17.05 percent in the corresponding time of FY 2005-06.

Domestic credit rose by 16.25 percent in July-May in last FY and the increase was 21.61 percent during the same period of FY 2005-6.

Of the total domestic credit, the public sector share is about 26 percent.

The credit flow of four NCBs has decreased by 2.7 percent in January-May period of the year, but the picture was totally different last year. The credit flow of the NCBs increased by 3 percent in January-June in 2006.

The credit flow of 30 private commercial banks (PCBs) has increased by 3.6 percent in January-May this year, while the increase was 11.8 percent in January-June last year.

The flow of nine foreign commercial banks (FCBs) increased by 4.6 percent in January-May, which witnessed 13 percent growth in January-June last year.

The government-owned five specialised banks' credit flow decreased by 0.3 percent in the first five months against a 7 percent increase in January-June last year.

# New pricing policy

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The policy will also cover people displaced because of riverbank erosion and periodic eviction of informal settlers in urban areas (slum dwellers) and elsewhere for appropriate assistance and resettlement.

The Ministry of Land will execute the policy while the Asian Development Bank will provide the technical assistance for formulating it.

The state acquires private property every year for development work under the principle of "eminent domain", which leads to displacement of thousands of people. These people get deprived of land, livelihood and shelter. Their traditional resources also eventually shrink. A few NGOs have so far tried to mitigate the troubles of these people during such development work like the construction of the Jamuna Bridge following their own guidelines.

The 1982 ordinance assures financial compensation but the proposed national policy will try to lessen the psychological impact of the displacement.

Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain at a national workshop at the Brac Centre recently said, "We only pay cash for the acquisition of land when we take up any development project, but we should also look at its human aspect."

Besides, such acquisitions often force many landless people to abandon their age-old professions.

Under the proposed policy there are provisions for the rehabilitation of these segments of the people, said Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, deputy team leader and resettlement specialist of Bangladesh Consultants Ltd, the consultancy agency for formulating the draft policy.

"Once I came across a boatman, who fears he would have to give up

## Moitree Express

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said yesterday that they would discuss frequency of trips and security fencing.

"We will raise the topic of the frequency of trips again and we expect to finalise the date for starting the regular rail service," he said adding that the delegation members would hold meetings among themselves on board the train.

Meanwhile, following Bangladesh's objection to India's proposal of building security fences from the border to Gede point, India has sent a revised plan to Bangladesh. Home ministry is scrutinising it at present.

At the meeting in Dhaka, India proposed two trips per week, which will operate from Kolkata to Dhaka on Saturdays and from Dhaka to Kolkata on Sundays. Meanwhile, Bangladesh wanted at least four trips a week.

AE Ahmed had observed that it is not possible to operate four trips a week, since the proposed service would require dedicated rail lines, which is not there right now.

Belayet Hossain, director general, Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star, "Though India was insisting on two trips a week, we did not agree. We would try to increase the frequency."

The other issues both sides discussed at that time were fares and immigration and checking. The one-way fare for the train service was fixed at \$8 for regular coach seat, \$12 for AC chair and \$20 for AC sleeping berth for the 536km journey. All customs and immigrations procedures will be carried out at Dhaka Cantonment Station and India's Gede Station.

The non-stop train service will link Dhaka's Cantonment Station with Kolkata's Chitpur Station.

A passenger train service between the two cities was introduced towards the end of the Awami League government in July 2001. One train had run on trial basis, but the service was cancelled after the BNP-led coalition came to power.

The train service between the two neighbouring countries was snapped some four decades ago with the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan.

## CU professor

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Sources said the syndicate earlier suspended Milton Biswas, a teacher of Bangla department, temporarily after a committee headed by Arts Faculty Dean Mansur Uddin Ahmed detected Milton's handwriting on the answer script of Zinat Sultana during the second year honours final examination in 2006.

The syndicate later formed another probe committee headed by Abdus Salam, which also found Milton guilty.

Sources said Milton would not get promotion in the next three years due to yesterday's decision.

The teacher would also not be allowed to take part in any examination related activities of the department for the next ten years, sources added.

Talking to The Daily Star, syndicate member Helal Uddin Nizami said they would not compromise on any irregularity.

"Rule of justice should be established in the university," Nizami said adding, "None will be spared if found guilty."

The employees' leader Nazim was terminated as he allegedly made an indecent proposal to a driver's wife while promising her a job.

Nazim also allegedly helped a student to get admission in the university school by altering his father's name.

He also took Tk 50,000 from an employee on master roll in return for regularising his job.

## Outlaw killed

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Charmilpara where Dulal and his cohorts were holding a secret meeting.

Sensing the presence of the police, the outlaws opened fire, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Police said Dulal received bullets during the "shootout" while his accomplices fled away. The bullet-hit outlaw was taken to Kushtia General Hospital where the doctors declared him dead, they added.

Police recovered one shutter gun and four bullets from the spot.

## Jute Mills

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The termination move will continue until 'unnecessary' workers of the seven jute mills are dispensed with, said a high official of Khulna zonal office of BJMC.

Several workers have said they will not leave their quarters until payment of their arrear wages and other financial benefits.

Hungry workers and their family members are now ready to launch a movement, said convener of Patkal Sangram Parishad Sarder Motaheruddin.

Huge security forces have been deployed in Khalishpur industrial belt to stave off any possible violence.

# Ex-Taliban lawmaker joins Korean hostage talks

AP, Kabul

Two lawmakers one of them a former Taliban member and several influential elders have joined negotiations with the hard-line militia to step up pressure for the release of 22 South Korean hostages, an official said yesterday.

A South Korean presidential envoy, Baek Jong-chun, was scheduled to hold talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Saturday, an official from the South Korean Embassy in Kabul said. She spoke on condition of anonymity because of embassy policy.

The Taliban has demanded the release of insurgent prisoners in exchange for the South Koreans, who were captured on July 19. One of the original 23 captives was shot to death on Wednesday.

A former Taliban commander Abdul Salaam Rockett, now a member of parliament has joined the talks, said Shirin Mangal, spokesman of the Ghazni provincial governor. A second lawmaker and several respected leaders from around Qarabagh, the area in Ghazni province where the hostages were taken, have also joined, he said.

"Today we are hopeful to get a good result because more and more elders have gathered from Ghazni," said Qarabagh police chief Khwaja Mohammad. "I hope the Taliban will listen to these negotiations now because they are neutral people elders from around Qarabagh district."

After the meeting on Saturday, the elders and clerics returned to their respective villages to ask other community leaders to join them in talks with the Taliban living in those areas, said Ghazni lawmaker Habib Rahman, who also attended the gathering.

"When the elders and clerics go to talk with the Taliban, they will

explain once again that taking hostages is not acceptable in Islam and Afghan culture," Rahman said.

He hoped the Taliban from other villages would be able to persuade the hostage-takers to release their captives.

"My message to the Koreans, in particular to the families of these men and women being held by the Taliban, is this: We are optimistic. Don't worry. We are doing our best ... Please be patient. A lot of people are involved today. Inshallah (if God wills it), they will not kill them," he said.

Afghan officials have said they are optimistic the hostages could be freed without further bloodshed, although the Taliban said the captives would be killed if their demands were not met.

Negotiators were struggling with conflicting demands made by the kidnappers, including the release of Taliban prisoners and ransom money.

Purported Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said the militants hoped the South Korean envoy would be able to "persuade the Afghan government" to swap imprisoned militants for the captives.

"If they don't release the Taliban prisoners, then the Taliban does not have any option other than to kill the Korean hostages," he said, reiterating an earlier threat.

Local tribal elders and clerics from Qarabagh have been conducting negotiations by telephone with the captors for several days.

The South Koreans, including 18 women, were kidnapped while traveling by bus on the Kabul-Kandahar highway, Afghanistan's main thoroughfare. Ahmadi said the hostages were being held in small groups in different locations and that some of them were in poor health.

# Once bigwigs

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trial and 34 being investigated.

Quite a few senior and central leaders as well as a large number of grassroots level leaders of BNP and AL have been detained during the ongoing crackdown against corruption.

**CONVICTED LEADERS**

Former BNP ministers barrister Aminul Haque, Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu, Mir Nasir Uddin and Amanullah Aman, and former BNP lawmakers Ali Asgar Lobi, Nadim Mostafa, Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Abul Hossain Khan and senior leader Harris Chowdhury have already been convicted.

Former AL minister Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and former lawmakers Joyнал Hazari and Shamim Osman have been convicted by the trial court.

A trial court also convicted Jatiya Party Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju.

**DETAINED LEADERS**

Detained former ministers and senior leaders of BNP are Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Nazmul Huda, Tariqul Islam, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Mirza Abbas, Tarique Rahman, Lutfuzzaman Babar, Fazlur Rahman Patal, AKM

Mosharraf Hossain and Iqbal Hassan Mahmood.

Detained former BNP lawmakers are Sarwar Jamal Nizam, MA Hashem, Joyнал Abedin Faruk, Harunur Rashid, Hafiz Ibrahim, Mosaddak Ali Falu, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Manzurul Ahsan Munshi, Mizanur Rahman Minu, Majibur Rahman Sarwar, Salauddin Ahmed, Naser Rahman and MH Selim.

Detained AL leaders and former lawmakers are Abdul Jalil, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Kazi Zafarullah, Salman F Rahman, Mohammad Nasim, Obaidul Quader, Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Lotus Kamal, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, Rafiqul Anwar, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and Badruddin Ahmed Kamran.

AL leaders and former lawmakers Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Syed Abul Hossain, Mirza Azam, Sheikh Helaluddin, and Jahangir Kabir Nanok are on the run to evade arrest.

Former Jamaat-e-Islami lawmakers Dr Abdullah Taher, Gazi Nazrul Islam and Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury were detained on charge of corruption.

Liberal Democratic Party leaders Redwan Ahmed and Abdul Karim Abbasi were also detained.

# Musharraf talks

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politically weakened by his failed attempt to stop Supreme Court Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry and also faces an alarming upsurge in Islamic militancy.

The talks faltered when Benazir Bhutto, who leads the Pakistan People's Party from self-imposed exile in London, refused to agree to support Musharraf if he did not resign from the military. Geo television reported, citing unnamed sources.

A potential deal would include changing part of Pakistan's constitution that blocks Benazir Bhutto from becoming prime minister again. The Nation and other newspapers reported.

Benazir Bhutto served as prime minister twice in the 1980s and 1990s, but fled the country to avoid corruption charges after her second government collapsed.

Back-channel talks between envoys for the two leaders have been reported for months, and a face-to-face meeting between the two may indicate the sides thought they were close to a deal.

Musharraf has kept a low profile since the Supreme Court ended his bid to fire its chief judge, seen as a major setback to his plans to win a new five-year presidential term from lawmakers this fall.

The downturn in political fortunes comes as attacks have surged in Pakistan since an army assault on the pro-Taliban Red Mosque in Islamabad killed at least 102 people two weeks ago. A controversial security deal with tribal leaders on the Afghan border to contain Taliban and al-Qaeda forces has also collapsed.

With US pressure mounting on Musharraf to do more to stop extrem-

ists in the border region, Benazir Bhutto, whose party is Pakistan's largest opposition group, has been positioning herself as a champion of democracy and anti-terrorist campaigner.

In an interview with The Associated Press in a London earlier this month, Benazir Bhutto attacked Musharraf's record of fighting Islamic extremism but left open the possibility of returning to the country while he was still president.

Before she would return, she said the president would have to give up the power to sack the prime minister and dissolve parliament and show that free and fair elections could be held.

If he wanted to remain president, Musharraf must give up his role as army chief, she said.

## Writ petition

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have already received an approved copy of the power of attorney for Hasina's lawyers to fight the case against her.

She noted, "Hasina was arrested under normal laws but later the case was put under the emergency powers rules."

The joint forces arrested the AL chief in an extortion case on July 16 and produced her in a magistrate's court that sent her to jail.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case against Hasina and Sheikh Selim on June 13 for extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him. And Sheikh Rehana's name was included in the charge sheet as her 'involvement' in the extortion was found during investigation.