

# US lawmakers slam Iraqi PM

## Urge drawdown of US troops

AFP, Washington

Top US lawmakers from across the political divide on Sunday expressed impatience with Iraqi leader Nuri al-Maliki and called for a withdrawal of US troops to begin.

Republican John Warner, one of the Senate's most influential voices on military affairs, amplified his bombshell demand of last week that President George W. Bush should start a limited troop withdrawal from Iraq by Christmas.

"Our troops have performed magnificently, under brilliant leadership, and have done precisely what the president asked," he told NBC television.

"But the government, under the leadership of Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, have totally failed to put the other part of that partnership in place, namely deliver greater security."

Bush last Wednesday defended Iraq's beleaguered prime minister as "a good man with a difficult job," seeking to dispel any sense that Washington is distancing itself from the government in Baghdad.

As pressure mounted on Maliki, top Shia, Sunni and Kurdish leaders announced in Baghdad they had agreed to resolve key disputes that have aggravated sectarian divisions and plunged the country into political turmoil.

A statement from President Jalal Talabani's office late Sunday said the leaders agreed to ease restrictions on former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath party serving in government ministries, to hold provincial elections -- a key demand of Washington -- and help security forces in stopping the bloodshed.

The White House quickly seized on the news as an encouraging sign of political progress.

"Today's agreement is an important symbol of their commitment to work together for the benefit of all Iraqis," White House spokeswoman Emily Lariviere said in a statement.

The agreement by the Iraqi leaders covered issues that are among "benchmarks" designated by Congress as a condition for continued US support.

The deal, which still needs to be approved by parliament, comes as Bush faces mounting calls at home for a change in course in Iraq and two weeks before a pivotal progress report on Iraq is presented to the US Congress by top US officials.

Bush has launched a campaign to fulfil demands for an early pullout of US troops, saying his surge strategy deploying an additional 30,000 troops shows promise and needs to be given more time to work.

## BNP MP Beltu

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to meet them at Kaligni BNP office in February 2002. They threatened to file cases against him unless he gave them Tk 5 lakh.

Later, Farid provided them Tk 2 lakh. As he failed to give them the rest of the money the accused abducted him and filed a false case with Kaligni Police Station on February 18, 2002, adding the plaintiff.

Jehnidah first class magistrate Dil-Afroz directed the Kaligni OC to take necessary steps in this regard.

## Curfew lifted

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proper steps against activities contrary to existing laws and discipline in order to protect life and property of people in the future," it stated.

The government also sought cordial cooperation from peace-loving people of the country in the interest of maintaining a stable situation.

# S Asian nations

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for each country, the World Bank (WB) report said growth in Bangladesh appears to have been more pro-poor than other South Asian countries -- with Nepal being an exception.

"Bangladesh now has one of the fastest rates of poverty reduction in South Asia," said Xian Zhu, country director of the WB.

In his speech, Zhu explained that 57 percent of the country's population was living below the poverty line in 1991 and the rate of poverty came down to 49 percent in the year 2000.

Over the period of 2000 to 2005, the rate further declined and settled down to 40 percent as around 6 million people were helped out of poverty, he added.

Speaking as a discussant on the WB report, Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), raised questions about the quality and nature of data that was used in the report.

Debabriya pointed out that in comparison with other countries of the region, number of samples used by BBS in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) was too few.

In similar national surveys, Pakistan collected 76,000 samples and Sri Lanka 25,000. Whereas, Bangladesh collected only 10,080 samples during the

## Azad Chowdhury denies his 'link' with DU violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AK Azad Chowdhury has denied his involvement in the recent incidents of violence on the university campus and their fallout across the country.

"With grave concern, I've been watching that various confusing news are being published implicating me in the recent student protests at the Dhaka University and the regrettable events thereafter," he said in a statement yesterday.

He said he was not involved in any way in the incidents.

"News published alleging my involvement in the incidents are not true at all," Prof Azad added.

## New policy

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areas like Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet," said an official of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

He said Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Fakhruddin Ahmed gave instructions to the ministries concerned to take measures so that the workforce of the poverty-stricken areas may have more access to jobs abroad and improve their earnings and economic status of their families as well as the communities.

The labour migration has so far appeared to be based on tradition. For example, a group of people in Sylhet first migrated to the UK, which was followed by thousands of others from the same district as they were relatives of the migrated group.

The official said, "Workers who went to Kuwait from Keraniganj of Dhaka would outnumber migrating workers of all the districts in North Bengal combined."

The expatriate ministry in the meeting proposed effective use of the BMET database of foreign-job aspirants, the official noted.

Allawi, whose mixed Sunni-Shia party joined a boycott of Maliki's government earlier this month, accused it of stoking sectarian violence and made clear he would be ready to return to politics if Maliki leaves.

"I lost my confidence ... in the process which is ongoing in Iraq, which is based on sectarianism, it's based on supporting militias to take the rule of law in their hands," Allawi said.

## CA updates

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The CA also apprised the president of the programme undertaken for keeping the prices of essentials stable and introducing marketing operations under OMS and VGF systems.

He said the government has taken up massive programme for agricultural rehabilitation in the affected areas through disbursing loan and supplying seeds, fertilisers and other inputs.

The VGF programme will start from September 1 and continue for four months in the flood-hit areas, the head of the caretaker government informed the president.

The government is also starting Open Market Sale (OMS) from September 1 for keeping the prices of essentials within the reach of the people. Under the OMS, one kilogram of rice will be sold at Tk 19, the agent told The Daily Star preferring to remain anonymous.

The government has to make mandatory for recruiting agencies to apply to the BMET for the required number of workers showing documents of requirements in a foreign country, he suggested.

According to him, such a mechanism would help reduce migration costs to a large extent, as the recruiting agencies will not be able to make hush-hush deals with the aspirant workers. If the agencies demanded extra money after a worker's selection, he or she could lodge a complaint to the government, he observed.

Prof CR Abrar, coordinator of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University (DU) and a professor at the Department of International Relations, lauded the government's move.

"The government can send workers from different districts based on quotas. For example, Malaysia is hiring many workers from Bangladesh. The government could make it mandatory that a certain number of workers must be sent to Malaysia from a particular northern district," he said.

Simultaneously, he said, BDR and Ansar-VDP also have taken initiative to send essentials through 200 centres.

Apart from taking massive rehabilitation programme, the government, with the assistance of the World Bank, also has undertaken a Tk 350-crore project in agricultural research sector.

Secretaries of the president and the chief advisor's offices were present during the meeting.

## Hasina's bail stayed

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operation of the ACC instructions for Hasina to submit a wealth statement. It ordered the anti-graft body to explain in four weeks why its order shall not be declared illegal.

The ruling did not secure for the detained former prime minister release as the Supreme Court by that time had stayed the previous HC order allowing her bail in the extortion case filed by Azam J Chowdhury with the Gulshan Police Station.

In reaction to yesterday's developments, the counsels for the AL chief said they would continue their efforts to free Hasina. Advocate Mahbubul Alam said they had expected that the Appellate Division would at least uphold the bail orders while the other matters would be left for the HC to settle.

Meanwhile, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka is scheduled to decide on September 5 whether the charges pressed against Hasina and the co-accused in Azam Chowdhury's case will be accepted or not.

On June 13, Managing Director of East Coast Trading Pvt Limited Azam Chowdhury charged Hasina and her cousin former health minister Sheikh Selim with extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him. Later police included Sheikh Rehana in the charge sheet.

On the same day, Noor Ali, managing director of Unique Group of Company, in his case filed with Tejgaon Police Station accused Hasina and her two relatives -- former AL lawmaker Sheikh Helal and his wife Rupa Chowdhury -- of receiving Tk 5 crore for helping his firm win a power plant deal in 1997. A probe report on the case is likely to be submitted to the CMM on August 30.

The government placed the two extortion cases under the emergency power rules on July 16, the day Hasina was arrested.

Rafique ul-Huq, Shafique Ahmed, former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru, and Fazle Noor Taposh, among others, have been moving for Hasina while Attorney General Fida M Kamal for the government side.

Meanwhile, a division bench of the HC continued hearing Hasina's long-standing plea for quashing the corruption charges against her in the purchase of combat aircraft MiG 29.

The Appellate Division yesterday also stayed the HC orders granting bail to business leader Abdur Awais Mintoo, who was arrested under the emergency power rules.

Earlier in the day, a huge number of AL leaders and workers, and lawyers massed on the court premises to hear the SC decision.

ZILLURON SC JUDGMENT

Awami League (AL) acting president Zillur Rahman yesterday termed the Supreme Court orders on Hasina's cases "better than worse" and vowed to carry on legal battle in their bid to free the AL president from detention.

"We are unhappy with the Supreme Court order but we have

been able to overcome the situation."

About filing of cases against a large number of people, the law adviser said, "Cases against a few people would do."

The adviser however made no elaboration in this regard.

Asked if the notion of a "national government" instead of the caretaker government would violate the constitution, Mainul said, "Why will the present caretaker government not be called a national government at its present position?"

Commenting on the recent incidents in Dhaka University, the law and information adviser said, "The situation that arose from Dhaka University was politically created. There were dreadful plans but we have been able to overcome the situation."

About filing of cases against a large number of people, the law adviser said, "Cases against a few people would do."

Terming the media the "fourth estate", the adviser said, "With the help of all we have overcome the serious situation. We have saved the nation from a civil war. We have been able to establish discipline," he said.

Asked about the government's plan of "roadmap to democracy", Mainul said, "We have taken initiative to separate judiciary from the executive and formulate acts for the political parties. We are working for holding a transparent election."

"It was the previous caretaker government's task to hold elections. But now our task is to restore democracy and hold elections because we came to power after democracy was destroyed."

"This government is working following a roadmap to democracy, not only a roadmap to election," he added.

On the recent incident on the Dhaka University campus, the lawyer said the AL chief advised the students and the people to remain calm.

## Obaidul Karim

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Court granting her bail in two "extortion" cases.

Hasina also apprehended that she would not get justice from the court in this situation, the lawyer added.

On the recent incident on the Dhaka University campus, the lawyer said the AL chief advised the students and the people to remain calm.

"This government is working following a roadmap to democracy, not only a roadmap to election," he added.

He wished the envoy and his family good health and happiness and also wished him every success in new assignment.

He also conveyed his sincere wishes to the King of Belgium and invited him to visit Bangladesh through the envoy.

The outgoing envoy also described the existing bilateral relations between the two countries as excellent and said the ties would be further strengthened in the days ahead.

The envoy also expressed his deep gratitude to the government and the people of Bangladesh for providing support and cooperation in discharging his diplomatic duties.

He stated that the people of this country "are very friendly, hard-working and courageous".

Military Secretary to the President Major General M Aminul Karim, Secretary M Sirajul Islam, Press Secretary Abdur Awal Howlader and officials concerned were present.

EC timeframe

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commerce for the mutual benefit of the two countries and urged the Belgian investors to invest in Bangladesh.

The government should know that the manpower receiving countries require and prepare the workforce in districts accordingly," the DU professor said.

He also argued that the WB report only considered economic growth to claim reduction of poverty in Bangladesh. The issue of increasing social discrimination during the same period should also have been considered while preparing the report.

Mahbub Hossain, executive director of Brac, chaired the first session of the workshop.

He also raised questions on the WB findings about inequality saying that it is impossible to draw the real picture of inequality in rural and urban areas without income analysis of households.

The impact of the drastic floods of 2004 on the entire economic activities was absent in the WB report, observed M Asaduzzaman, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said there is no doubt that poverty has been reduced in Bangladesh during the last few years, but it is debatable how many people really have gone under the poverty line.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud chaired another session of the workshop. Economist Atiur Rahman and Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed, former member of Planning Commission also spoke at the workshop.

On Sunday, a special court

## ACC notice

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submit her wealth statement within seven days proves that the issuance of notice to her by the commission was right.

"The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has given the verdict... The message is clear. The notice issued by the ACC (to Hasina) was right," ACC Secretary Mohibul Islam said in the commission's regular briefing in the Gulshan residence.

"We thought Sheikh Hasina would get bail but this order has frustrated us and I think justice is not being done to our president," he told reporters.

Supreme Court yesterday further stayed the High Court orders that granted bail to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in two extortions cases.

"The Supreme Court did not revoke the High Court order granting bail to Sheikh Hasina. So we have still hope to get justice," he said adding that they would start quick legal move for hearing of the writ petitions in Hasina's cases.

The AL, acting president requested the party men to face the situation with patience rather than being excited and aggrieved.

Terming the cases filed against Hasina baseless and fabricated, Zillur said their leader must not be punished under these cases. He hoped that the AL chief would be released.

"Falsehood never wins. Truth must win. One day we must get justice," said Zillur.

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