

Pakistan warns of strong response to nukes grab

Islamabad tests nuclear-capable cruise missile

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's military vowed a strong response to any international attempt to seize its atomic arsenal as the army successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable cruise missile on Tuesday.

The security of Pakistan's estimated 50 nuclear warheads has been under global scrutiny since President Pervez Musharraf imposed a state of emergency on November 3 citing Islamist violence and political turmoil.

But the chairman of Pakistan's joint chiefs of staff, General Tariq Majid, blasted reports by "vested and hostile elements in the international media" about the security of its nuclear weapons, an army statement said.

"Suggestions have been made that our assets could either be neutralised or taken away towards safer place to prevent them from falling into wrong hands," the statement quoted Majid as saying after witnessing the launch of the locally developed Babur (Hatf 7) cruise missile.

"Although no responsible state in the world can contemplate such an impossible operation, yet if some-

one did create such a scenario he was confident that Pakistan would meet the challenge strongly," the statement said.

"Pakistan's nuclear assets are very safe and secure, and the nation need not worry on that account. There is a very strong security system in place, which can ward off all threats, internal as well as external."

Musharraf and caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Mian Soomro congratulated scientists and engineers involved in Tuesday's test launch "on this very important success", the statement said.

The statement said that the test of the 700-kilometre (440-mile) range Babur missile would "consolidate Pakistan's strategic capability and strengthen national security".

DU braces

Now that charges have been framed against the detained, it means the government has gone for judicial process concerning them. And now it might take a long time to get them released, resulting in an unhealthy campus situation," he told this correspondent when contacted.

Acting Duta President Prof Tazmeri SA Islam said they hoped that charges would not be framed against the detained teachers and students. But they are still hopeful that the detainees would be freed within the stipulated period of two weeks.

She also said they are in touch with the government, and continue negotiations on the matter.

Meanwhile, all the four detained teachers are said to have refused to go for mercy petition. Sanjeeb Hossain, son of detained teacher Prof Anwar Hossain, said he asked his father and the others in court yesterday about mercy petition. But they refused to seek mercy.

HUMAN CHAIN ON DU CAMPUS
A group of DU students under the banner of 'Students against Repression' formed a human chain at Aparajeyo Bangla demanding release of detained teachers and students.

In a press release, they said if all the detainees are not released immediately, they would go for a tougher programme.

Battle

UN climate chief Yvo de Boer said that the range was only meant to guide subsequent negotiations, but that including it was not vital. He said the most important goals for Bali were to set an agenda and a deadline for subsequent talks, not set targets.

"These figures do not do not prejudice the outcome of negotiations," de Boer said.

Australia, despite its sudden embrace of the Kyoto pact, has shied away from supporting the interim target range, saying it must await the conclusion of a study sometime next year.

"We recognise the need for an interim target," said Penny Wong, Australia's minister for climate change. "We have a clear process of scientific and economic analysis to determine what that interim target should be."

Canada and Japan also oppose inclusion of the suggested figures. Environmentalists urged them to reconsider.

"This is not the direction we need to be going in. The stakes are too high for this kind of political games," said Alken Meyer with the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The struggle over targets coincided with the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Kyoto accord in Japan.

The Kyoto pact requires 36 industrial nations to reduce carbon dioxide and other industrial, transportation and agricultural gases blamed for global warming by an average 5 percent below 1990 levels in the next five years.

The US is the only major industrial nation to reject Kyoto. President Bush contended the emissions cuts would harm the US economy, and should have been imposed on China, India and other fast-growing poorer economies.

The rest of the world hopes to enlist the United States in the next, post-Kyoto phase of internationally binding greenhouse-gas reductions. The change in US administrations after next November's presidential election is expected to introduce a new attitude on climate change.

Many are hoping Australia, following its decision to sign Kyoto, will play a leading role.

"At this critical stage, the ministers now have to step up and ensure these negotiations deliver and fulfil the wishes of the Australian people," said Stephen Campbell from Greenpeace. "They also have to fulfil the expectations of the bulk of the global community as well."

SSKOP holds rally

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Oikyo Parishad co-convenor Mozammel Haque presided over the meeting addressed by Oikyo Parishad leaders Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Fazole Imam, Ruhul Amin Gazi, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Md. Motiur Rahman Talukder, Abul Hashem, Md. Khairul Islam, Altaf Mahmud, Omar Farukh, Sardar Farid and Azizul Haque Banna, among others.

General Secretary of the National Press Club Kamal Uddin Sabuj and General Secretary of Dhaka Reporters Unity Elias Khan also addressed the meeting.

Rice import

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speed up the process. In case of a re-tender for a purchase, the PPR allows a gap of 28 days, which is going to be curtailed to 10 days.

In case of supply, the PPR suggests that only the lowest bidder be given the deal. The relaxation will allow the authorities to assign the second or third lowest bidder if the lowest one fails to deliver.

According to existing regulations, the authorities can spend up to 15 percent higher than the budget upon approval of a procurement proposal. The relaxation will allow them to spend up to 100 percent higher.

"We have relaxed the PPR for three reasons," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, who chaired the economic affairs meeting, told the press at the planning ministry.

Firstly, we want to increase our inventory of food. Secondly, we apprehend many of the importers who have opened letters of credit with banks for rice import may fail to actually deliver the rice.

"Finally, the international response to our demand for rice is very poor. The importers are not getting adequate offers. These reasons have led us to relax the PPR."

He added that the existing food inventory ensures supply up to March. "We're taking the move to ensure that there won't be a supply shortfall after March," he added.

Sources said the government needs to import at least five lakh tonnes of food before March to ensure food security afterwards.

Regarding India's offer to import five lakh tonnes of rice, the adviser said, "We've not yet decided whether it will be state-to-state or the private sector will also be involved."

Food ministry sources said the country needs to import 30 lakh tonnes of food to cover its deficit caused by two phases of floods and cyclone Sidr. But the country has so far imported only 7.42 tonnes of food until November, say Bangladesh Bank data.

The world is currently undergoing a food crisis due to higher consumption in several emerging economies including China. Widespread use of farmland in the Americas for sugarcane cultivation to produce methanol is also responsible.

Leading food exporting countries including India by and large have also refrained from exporting food.

Mainul

anyone can demand unconditional release at any point of investigation or trial. The government can also withdraw the charges against anyone anytime.

When asked about the government's withdrawing the cases filed against the DU teachers, Mainul did not give any direct answer and said, "The government can do everything. But would it not need to justify?"

The matter regarding their release needs to be resolved through legal procedures, he said while talking to reporters at the law ministry.

"Some legal steps need to be maintained to get the benefit of options in a legal procedure," he said when asked whether the DU teachers can be freed before Eid.

Expressing his contentment at the release of four Rajshahi University (RU) teachers, he said, "A respectable solution has been made in the case of the Rajshahi University teachers. Something similar needs to be done in the case of Dhaka University."

Negotiation is on between the two sides, he said. "This is a process between the two sides. Both sides will have to reach an agreement," he added.

Both the sides need to maintain due legal procedures, he said.

On the claim of convicted RU teachers' wives that they did not demand presidential pardon, the law adviser said, "I am happy that they are freed. Teachers are respectable people and I want that they do not get entangled in such difficulties. I am not thinking about the language [of the letter]."

Asked whether the government placed a petition before the president for clemency of the RU teachers, Mainul said, "I cannot give details about this. You see the president has the power to pardon and he has exercised this power."

Asked again who submitted the petition, Mainul said, "Their [teachers'] wives."

On whether they submitted the petition directly to the president, he said, "I cannot give you these details. The petition certainly reached the president, otherwise how could he pardon them?"

Meanwhile, the law adviser called on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday and thanked him for the clemency to the RU teachers.

Birshreshtha Hamidur

FROM PAGE 1

The 17-year-old freedom fighter attacked and destroyed two Pakistani military posts in a frontier area of Sylhet before falling in a hail of bullets on October 28, 1971.

His fellow freedom fighters buried him at Hatimarachara village of Tripura.

On behalf of the nation, President Iajuddin Ahmed, also the supreme commander of the armed forces, formally received Hamidur's coffin and placed floral wreath over it from Comilla reached the National Parade Square amid 21 gun salutes at around 10:40am.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed placed floral wreaths on the coffin draped in the national flag as part of the state ceremony.

A munajat was offered seeking divine blessings for the departed soul. A brief life sketch of the war hero was read out before the prayers, recalling his life and valiant fight during the Liberation War in 1971.

Earlier, six army personnel carried the coffin on their shoulders from the vehicle and put it on a podium set at the National Parade Square. Military bugle played the last post as the president, the chief adviser and other dignitaries and people of various professions stood in solemn silence.

The speaker, advisers to the caretaker government, chiefs of the three services, family members of Birshreshtha Hamidur Rahman and other Birshreshthas, political leaders, freedom fighters, senior civil and military officials, diplomats, distinguished personalities

and members of the armed forces were among others present to pay homage to the valiant freedom fighter.

On behalf of the family members of seven Birshreshthas, mother of Birshreshtha Abdur Rouf placed wreath on Hamidur's coffin.

The speaker, the deputy speaker and political leaders, among others, also placed wreaths.

Hamidur's three brothers and two sisters burst into tears during the ceremony.

"We are glad as my brother's body has been brought back home. It would have been better if the body was brought back when our mother was alive," Hamidur's youngest sister Rizia Khatun told The Daily Star. Hamidur's mother passed away in 2005.

Rizia said that though her brother made the supreme sacrifice for the country's independence, no significant development has been made in his village home where the villagers are still poor.

RU teachers
The four teachers, meantime, joined their respective departments yesterday. They were given two-year jail terms on December 4 for breaking the emergency power rules by bringing out a silent procession on the campus on August 21.

Two other teachers and two university staff are still behind bars on charge of abetting torching a DGFV vehicle during the violence. The verdict in the subsequent case is due today.

"The teachers were freed following a government general amnesty. There are two parts in the court judgement -- the conviction and the sentences. So far as we know, the president cleared them of the punishment only. If it is so, we must try to clear them of the conviction too," said Golam Anif Toppa, who argued for the teachers in court.

He said they need to go ahead with the appeal proceedings even if the president's clemency covers both conviction and punishment because the government has not withdrawn the case.

"We don't want to give anyone the scope for creating problems in the future," said another defence lawyer.

An education ministry letter to the university vice chancellor, however, said the presidential pardon covered both the conviction and the sentences. The Daily Star obtained a copy of the ministry's letter.

The lawyers, however, said a home ministry letter to the jail authorities created the problem in which the ministry said the president pardoned only the jail terms and monetary fines.

The four teachers, meantime, demanded the release of their two other colleagues and four Dhaka University teachers after joining the departments yesterday.

Vice chancellor Dr Altaf Hossain said, "As per the education ministry letter, the four teachers will not face any problem as to their jobs... even the period they spent in jail will be counted as job period."

Rajshahi University Teachers' Association in a press release yesterday called on the government to release all teachers and students of Dhaka and Rajshahi universities. Raza welcomed the government for freeing the four teachers.

Ex-MP Zafarullah
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aid to detained AL chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Zafarullah was set free at 7:45pm.

But Lalbagh police immediately picked up the AL leader from the jail premises and took him to the police station.

On what charges he was taken to the custody afresh could not be known.

Zafarullah was arrested by a team of the joint forces at his Gulshan residence on March 18 in connection with an extortion case. Later, he was put under detention under the Special Powers Act.

He was recently secured bail from the High Court.

DIG (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told the news agency that Lalbagh police arrested Kazi Zafarullah on the jail premises at about 8:00pm.

face sufferings due to lack of roads and other facilities.

She requested the government to announce the college named after Hamidur a government college and take steps so that Hamidur's relatives can obtain government jobs and financial help.

After the ceremony at the National Parade Square, Hamidur's coffin started the last ride for the graveyard in a motorcade.

His remains were reburied with the highest state honours and proper military honours with another gun salute when the coffin was being lowered to the grave.

On Sunday, the remains of the war hero, exhumed from his first grave in Tripura, were handed over to a Bangladesh delegation. After an overnight halt in Comilla Cantonment, Hamidur's coffin finally reached Dhaka yesterday morning.

A motorcade carrying the coffin started its journey from Comilla Cantonment at 6:05am.

Thousands of people lined the streets as the motorcade carrying the Birshreshtha's coffin, draped in the national flag, passed by.

The liberation war affairs secretary and armed forces division officials received the coffin in Dhaka.

As the 33 Infantry Division soldiers carried the coffin into the city, thousands of people crowded the highway to pay their respects to the war hero.

Hamidur is the youngest of the seven war heroes posthumously conferred Bangladesh's highest gallantry award for their role in the country's Liberation War. He was born at Khorda Khalishpur in Moheshpur upazila of Jessore on February 2, 1953.

Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Chhatra Union placed wreaths to the grave of Hamidur, says a press release.

War criminals

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Ratna, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Air Vice Marshal (ret) AK Khandakar, Mili Rahman, wife of Birshreshtha Matiur Rahman, Numan Ahmed Khan, executive director at IED, Rokeya Kabir, executive director of Bangladesh Nat Pragati Sangha and Sahara Khatun, Awami League leader and vice president of Mohila Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

The speakers said female freedom fighters' contributions towards the liberation war were never properly recognised and they were not given due honour and respect either.

AK Khandakar said, "Female freedom fighters directly took part in the liberation war, they provided food and shelter for other freedom fighters and even collected information on the location of Pakistani army and their local militia."

Hasna Banu, a freedom fighter in her seventies, said anti-liberation war forces must be tried. "We're ready to sacrifice anything, even our lives to bring the war criminals to justice," she said with an emotion-choked voice.

She said sometimes she had to live on leaves when camped in the jungles during the war.

"No one gave me shelter when I returned after the war," she said adding that freedom fighters "freed the country in order to live happily, but now I do have neither food nor shelter."

Mili Rahman said, "We should be united to complete the task of the freedom fighters in a bid to build a happy and prosperous nation." She urged all to be united in order to bring the war criminals to justice.

Female freedom fighters Dr Laila Parvin Banu, Nurjahan Khan, Krishna Rahman, Jannatul Ferdous and Zinnatunnesa Talukder also recounted their war memories.

Rangs bhaban

FROM PAGE 16

Rajuk engineers told journalists that 120 demolition workers from three construction companies and 50 Rajuk workers along with firefighters will carry out the rescue operation in two shifts starting in the morning with an aim of finishing the job by tonight.

Twenty Rajuk engineers will be supervising the rescue effort.

The demolition workers in the rescue team will install 8,000 steel rods, serving as supports to hold up the precarious structure, allowing the firefighters to go into the building without risking another collapse.

Rajuk however did not announce the rescue plan formally.

Meanwhile, relatives of the trapped men still remain in the dark about the fate of their loved ones and have been waiting in front of the building since Sunday.

One of the bodies, to be formally identified, is of Amirul, whose father Nozla Akhand has been waiting outside the building after making a long trip from Gaibandha to the capital two days ago.

"I am not going to leave this place until I receive my son's body," said Akhand, whose son's body has been hanging off the seventh floor.

Asked to comment on the government compensation of Tk 1 lakh for losing his son, Akhand replied, "I don't want the money I just want my son to get a proper burial."

The names of the other 10 trapped men are Fahid, Kaizad, Delwar, Farid, Amin Khan, Mannan, Rahim, Dawood, Ziru, and Farid. They all hail from Modhukhali in Faridpur.

Sirajganj power

FROM PAGE 16

Ventures GmbH from Germany, and a consortium of Summit Industrial and Mercantile Corp from Bangladesh and GE Energy LLC from USA.

The Power Cell is expected to complete the pre-qualification process within 10 days and move to the next stage of the bidding, the sources said adding that the tender is expected to be floated in the first quarter of next year.

These companies had also participated in the pre-qualification of the 450-MW Bibiyana Power Project in November. In addition, US oil giant Chevron, which is operating the Bibiyana gas field, has also participated in that bid.

The Power Cell has disqualified YTL for that bid and conditionally qualified Summit-GE and Powertek-Siemens.

Late last year, the Power Cell had initiated the pre-qualification process for the Sirajganj project and short-listed eight companies early this year.

A number of power ministry officials concerned said the government would have been better off by not cancelling that process as the main tender was yet to be floated.

The tenders for the Sirajganj Power Project have seen a series of bad decisions in the past and the first tender failed to attract satisfactory number of bidders.

The second tender in 2003-04 lacked competition, but bagged an offer from the local Summit Power that the World Bank and the ADB were ready to finance.

However in early 2004, then prime minister Khaleda Zia cancelled the tender at its final stage without any explicit reason and sent it for re-tendering.

But the Power Cell that used to be influenced by the instructions from the Hawa Bhaban and lacked competent human resources to handle technical issues could not even manage to launch the third tender until late 2006.

Eid-ul-Azha

FROM PAGE 1

Dr ASM Matiur Rahman in the chair.

Religious Affairs Secretary Muhammad Ataur Rahman, Islamic Foundation Director General M Fazlur Rahman, Additional Secretary of the Information Ministry Syed Hasinur Rahman, Principal Information Officer Iftekhar Hossain, Spasro Chairman M Nazmul Huda Khan, Deputy Director of the Weather Department Shah Alam, Principal of Govt Madrasa-e-Allia M Islam Gani, senior Pesh Imam of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mufi

Muhammad Nooruddin, and Chavkbazar Shahi Jame Mosque Khatib Kari Obaidullah, among others, attended the meeting.

HR bodies
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Centre (RIK) and Waste, Concern, urged the CA to not compromise the interest of a large number of people for the interests of a few in allocating such an open space for a golf course to be built on it.

They called on the CA to preserve the park space for its benefit to all people. They also sought due interference from the Chief Adviser in protecting and preserving other open spaces, parks, playgrounds of the country alongside the Suhrawardy Udyan.

"Suhrawardy Udyan is recognized in the Master Plan of Dhaka City as a 'precious legacy' of the city, considering its importance from historical, cultural and scenic beauty aspects the letter stated. It added that allocation of a large part of the Udyan to the Club would restrict a large number of people from employing the park as an open space.

Moreover the necessary infrastructure and water availability needed for the golf club cannot be ensured without compromising the public interests concerning the Udyan, the letter pointed out.

Shamsul Huda, Hamida Hossain, Advocate Sultana Kamal, S Rizwana Hossain, Architect Mobashsher Hossain, Zakir Hossain, Khushi Kabir, Abul Hasib Khan and Md Maqsood Sinha signed the letter on behalf of their organisations.

Water discord

FROM PAGE 16

work together on climate change. Iftekhar called upon the Indian and Bangladeshi civil society participants in the dialogue, to make a greater contribution to crucial bilateral issues, such as energy and connectivity.

Dev Mukherjee, a former Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, dismissed the water sharing issues, saying, "Personally I don't see any problem here in Bangladesh with regard to construction of dams or reservoirs in India and Nepal."

He however added that the two governments must realise, their relationship is mutually beneficial as 'what is good for Bangladesh is good for India'. He said the motto must be used to drive the efforts on trade, investment, and connectivity.

Rehman Sobhan said both countries must cooperate on addressing shared concerns such as climate change and recurring floods. He said the cooperation needs to be underpinned by a 'collective security approach' both on bilateral and regional levels.

The dialogue will deal with disaster management, development of water resources, energy sectors, and cooperation in trade, investment and communications. The participants will deliver recommendations on the issues on the last day of the talks.

Public poll candidates

FROM PAGE 1

absence were not satisfactory. It said had the counsel for the appellant told the court about security concerns beforehand, it would have ordered for police protection.

The affidavit said Safa's family was deeply concerned about the "misrepresentation, speculations, and exaggeration by the media". They were particularly worried about his recently married daughter whose "life could be jeopardised by further misleading publicity".

The court at one point remarked that Nawab Ali should consider quitting his job.

Earlier on November 20, the SC directed him to produce Safa and "state the facts from the stage of filing leave petition." The same day it fixed the date for passing the judgment.

Lately, the EC had moved for quick disposal of the appeal as it looks to incorporate the provision of eight-point personal information in its electoral rules.

The appeal had remained pending since December 19 last year when Justice Joyrul Abedin, the chamber judge, stayed the HC directives. The stay order came only a couple of days before the closing date for filing nomination papers for the January 22 general election, cancelled later.

A group of BNP-Jamaat alliance leaders and lawyers including former law minister Moudud Ahmed had worked to obtain the stay.

The original petition said the EC should ensure that the candidates cannot cheat the voters by their rhetoric. The constituents must be given access to personal information about the candidates so they could make the right choice.

AFFIDAVIT BY ADVOCATE-ON-RECORD
Nawab in the affidavit said he got to know Safa sometime in July 2005 when he came to his chamber.

Safa had studied up to class eight and still wanted to participate in parliament election as a social worker. But he feared he might face some kind of discrimination in the election if his educational qualification is published. And that is why he had decided to challenge the HC order.

The affidavit said locals of Swandip were of the opinion that sudden loss of a brother on November 27, 2006, might have influenced Safa to scrap his plan for election. It claimed he obtained nomination paper the same day his brother died.

According to the affidavit, Nawab sent his representative to Swandip to search for Safa following the SC order but to no avail. However, in the same statement Nawab described Safa as someone from a respectable family.

Grenades found
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Additional Superintendent of Police Moyeen Uddin Ahmed said those might have been left there by criminals.

Our Sathkira correspondent said a villager found the grenades at a bamboo cluster and immediately informed the police.

The district superintendent of police has confirmed the recovery and said they suspect the grenades might have been dumped during the Liberation War in 1971.

62 killed

FROM PAGE 1

most of the dead and injured there were students.

"The death toll is very high," the minister told reporters without giving a figure.

Hospital sources said 62 people were killed in the