



US President George W. Bush and Romanian President Traian Basescu chat yesterday during a bilateral meeting at the Protocol Villas in Neptun, Romania. US President George W. Bush called on Nato allies to send more troops to Afghanistan and make the mission there a top priority.

Bush urges allies to send more troops to Afghanistan

AFP, Bucharest

US President George W. Bush warned yesterday that "innocent civilians will pay the price" if Nato fails to send more troops to Afghanistan to snuff out "terrorists" still lurking there.

"Our alliance must maintain its resolve and finish the fight," said Bush in Bucharest in a speech ahead of the start of his last Nato summit as US president. "We ask other Nato nations to step forward with additional forces."

"The terrorist threat is real, and defeating the enemy is the top priority," he added, as Nato leaders prepared to debate ways to enhance the transatlantic mission's deployment in Afghanistan.

"If we do not defeat the terrorists in Afghanistan, we will face them on our own soil. Innocent civilians in Europe and North America will pay the price."

The United States and Nato allies with troops confronting the Taliban in the south of Afghanistan are pressing other nations for bigger contributions to the 43,000-strong Nato-led International Security Assistance Force.

Canada, which has suffered rising casualties, has made its continuing presence in southern Afghanistan conditional on others providing at least 1,000 troops as reinforcements along with helicopters and unmanned aircraft.

The nearly seven-year conflict in Afghanistan -- a lair for Osama bin

Laden's al-Qaeda network -- has risen to the top of the agenda at the Nato summit that begins later Wednesday and runs through Friday in the Romanian capital.

Bush, eager to leave a positive foreign policy legacy as he prepares to exit the White House, said Nato was no longer a "static alliance" designed to fight a tank war with the Soviet Union in Europe.

Rather, it had evolved into an "expeditionary alliance" that needed 21st century capabilities to deal with a new set of security challenges.

President Nicolas Sarkozy has promised more French troops for Afghanistan, but his prime minister Francois Fillon said Tuesday that details of the mission had not yet been decided.

New Pak govt bares fangs for showdown with Musharraf

PTI, Islamabad

Signalling that it is ready for a showdown with President Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's new government has said "extra-constitutional steps" taken by him during emergency rule last year are not part of the Constitution as parliament is yet to endorse them.

"No individual is authorised to amend the constitution and parliament alone can take such an action only with a two-thirds majority," new Law Minister Farooq Naek has said.

Naek said the coalition government led by the PPP has committed to reinstating the judges sacked by Musharraf, including former Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, within 30 days of coming to power.

The 30-day countdown for reinstating the deposed judges had begun on March 31, he told reporters.

The constitution had not been amended since 2003 when parliament passed the 17th Amendment to give Musharraf sweeping powers, said Naek, who was earlier the lawyer for slain PPP chief Benazir Bhutto and her widower Asif Ali Zardari.

The Supreme Court formed after the emergency had endorsed the Provisional Constitution Order issued by Musharraf on November 3, 2007 when emergency was imposed without having the authority to do so, Naek told reporters.

Referring to allegations by Supreme Court Bar Association president Aitzaz Ahsan that conspiracies were being hatched to subvert the reinstatement of the judges, Naek said the lawyers' movement should avoid making such statements and instead trust the government.

Zimbabwe opposition claims victory

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's opposition on Wednesday pre-empted the official results of the country's general elections, declaring its leader Morgan Tsvangirai had delivered a knock-out blow to President Robert Mugabe.

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) secretary-general Tendai Biti told a press conference that Tsvangirai had won 50.2 per cent of the votes in Saturday's presidential election against 43.8 per cent for Mugabe, and it had also beaten the ruling ZANU-PF party in a simultaneous parliamentary poll.

The announcement prompted an angry reaction from the government in Harare, with the information minister saying the party should have waited for the official electoral commission to make an announcement.

"He (Tsvangirai) is above the 50

percent threshold needed to avoid a run-off," Biti told reporters in the capital Harare.

"Put simply he has won this election... Morgan Richard Tsvangirai is the next president of the Republic of Zimbabwe, without a run-off."

Biti said the party believed that the government was trying to massage the results and pointed to a front-page story in Wednesday's Herald newspaper that said there was now likely to be a run-off as neither man had a clear majority.

"The state media has already begin to prepare the people for a run-off in 21 days... If that is the position this party will contest the run-off," he added.

Biti also said that, based on its own calculations, the MDC had won a total of 110 seats, including 11 lawmakers who are part of a splinter faction.

Mugabe's ZANU-PF party had won 96 out of the overall 210 seats, he added.

The party decided to release its own figures as the official electoral commission had so far failed to declare any results from the presidential election, which took place on Saturday.

The commission has also yet to declare the final outcome of the parliamentary election, which was held simultaneously.

In a press conference on Tuesday night, Tsvangirai had declined to proclaim himself the winner and said that he was prepared to wait for the commission to make an announcement.

Information Minister Ndlovu Sikhanyiso slammed the MDC for jumping the gun.

"Why rush to announce the results before the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission finishes?" he told AFP.

N Korea exporting rockets to Myanmar

AFP, Tokyo

North Korea has started exporting multiple-launch rockets to military-ruled Myanmar, after the two nations agreed to normalise ties last year, a Japanese television report said yesterday.

The weapons exports are in violation of economic sanctions imposed on North Korea after the communist state conducted a nuclear test in October 2006, Japan's public broadcaster NHK reported, citing unnamed diplomatic sources.

It said "full-scale" exports of the weapons had been handled by an unnamed Singapore trading company.

Multiple-launch rockets are 24 centimetres (9.4 inches) in diameter and about one metre (yard) long, each with a range of about 65 kilometres (40 miles), the report said.



Democratic US presidential hopeful Illinois Sen Barack Obama greets supporters during a town hall meeting at the Wilkes University on Tuesday in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Democrats undecided how to end war

AP, Washington

Democratic leaders returned from their spring break this week to declare that Iraq is in turmoil and that they will continue to try to force President Bush to end the war. But facing another uphill battle, party members are undecided on whether to try to cut off money or take a softer approach that is more likely to succeed.

They will have to decide soon. Congress has approved only \$86.7 billion of the Bush administration's \$196.4 billion request for war spending this budget year, which began Oct. 1. Most of the money is required by the military, which says it is about \$102.5 billion short and will run out this spring.

By early May, the House is

expected to consider spending legislation addressing the military's needs, with the Senate following suit. And by the end of May a separate policy bill should arrive that authorises billions in defence programmes.

The legislative push will come after Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Iraq, and Ryan Crocker, the US ambassador there, report to Congress on the status of the war on April 8-9. The two officials are expected to tell lawmakers that impressive security gains and modest political progress have been made since last year's buildup of US troops, and that troop withdrawals can continue this fall only after officials ascertain that the drawdown wouldn't hurt security.



Combo of recent pictures of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe (L) and Morgan Tsvangirai, Zimbabwe opposition leader.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Endgame for Mugabe

THE INDEPENDENT, Harare

Whisper it quietly, but Zimbabwe may be witnessing the final days (if not hours) in office of the only leader it has ever known. While the people of this ruined country waited last night for their electoral voice to be heard, reports from high-level talks between aides of Robert Mugabe and the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai suggested they were edging closer to accomplishing the previously impossible.

After 28 years of seemingly unshakeable authority in which all opponents have been sidelined, exiled or killed the "old man" as Zimbabweans call him, was reported to be considering relinquishing power. Saturday's elections went so strongly against the ruling party, that it is understood he has been advised to quit now rather than face a humiliating second round against his hated rival, Tsvangirai.

Sources close to the talks said that an "exit package" was being negotiated that could see the 84-year-old retire or even, according to one scenario, leave the country. While an agreement was far from settled, Mr Mugabe was believed to be seeking immunity from prosecution as well as guarantees relating to millions of pounds worth of assets held in a number of countries.

A US State Department official confirmed negotiations were under way, saying they followed indications that Mr Tsvangirai would secure a majority in the presidential election but fall short of the 51 per cent required to avoid a run-off.

However, both the ruling party and the opposition were at pains to quash the rumours. "Any speculation about deals and negotiations is speculation, because the results have not been announced," said Mr Tsvangirai in his first public appearance since Saturday's vote. "Let's wait for [the electoral commission] to complete its work, then

we can discuss the circumstances that will affect the people."

And a junior minister in Mugabe's government said: "There is no need for a deal... there are no negotiations whatsoever."

As speculation swirled, Zimbabwe's electoral commission continued its theatre of the absurd. The official results, released at a trickle, continued to show the ruling Zanu-PF party and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) running neck-and-neck in terms of parliamentary seats. However, these results contradicted both the findings of independent election observers and the results amassed by opposition polling agents nationwide.

Three days after the poll, there had still been no official results concerning the presidential vote. A second round, which would have to be held within 21 days, appeared unlikely, after massive resources were poured into Saturday's poll, much of it in the form of crude vote-buying by Zanu-PF.

One scenario is that Mugabe would stand aside and allow an alternative candidate from Zanu-PF to contest a second round. But that also carries the risk that the opposition would unite and the angry populace would give an even more resounding "No" to Zanu-PF than they did four days ago. "There is no way that Mugabe wants a second round. He would lose badly and be humiliated," said a senior diplomat close to the election crisis. Mugabe himself ruled out a run-off before the weekend, saying there was no "second round in this boxing match".

Zimbabwe's two main cities remained calm, although riot police have been dispatched for nightly patrols, and roadblocks mounted outside all major towns. But Harare was awash with wild rumours. The wildest of those that "Comrade Bob" had already fled the country was quashed after he was spotted in the suburbs by foreign diplomats.

NWFP Assembly slams CIA chief's statement

THE DAILY TIMES, Peshawar

The NWFP Assembly on Tuesday passed a unanimous resolution calling on the federal government to take serious note of a statement made by United States CIA Chief Michael Hayden.

Hayden had said the US was interested in targeting the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan where he said al-Qaeda had been planning attacks against the West.

Awami National Party's (ANP) Mian Iftikhar Hussain tabled the resolution. Hussain said all differences should be resolved through dialogue and not by use of force.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) parliamentary leader Pir

Sabir Shah said Pakistan's integrity was "in danger" because of "US interference."

PML-Quaid (PML-Q) parliamentary leader Qalandar Lodhi condemned what he called "foreign interference in Pakistan's internal affairs."

ANP President Asfandiyar Wali told reporters the democratic process had begun and the provincial assembly "will sit together, analyse the situation and devise ways and means of how to talk to the Taliban and resolve the problem."

Wali said his party was in contact with "some of the Taliban" and wanted to resolve the problem by peaceful means.

NEW ARRIVAL

TK. 800



- Perforated leather upper
- Padded insole
- Light weight outsole
- Comfortable
- Fashionable

marie claire®

Ultimate destination for ladies' fashion

Available in selected Bata shoe stores

For more product information please visit Bata website: www.batabd.com

Life's Good

১৫শী বার্ষিকী

100% Free With Sure Discount*

To welcome the Bengali New year 1415, LG-BUTTERFLY offers an amazing Discount like the Nor'wester.

Buy an appliance from any LG-BUTTERFLY Showroom or approved dealer and get a Scratch Card. Scratch it and get 100%, 75%, 50% & 25% Discount. Also win to the tune of Taka 10,000, 9,000, 8,000, 7,000, 6,000 & 5,000 and more amounts of sure Discount.

Please contact your nearby LG-BUTTERFLY showroom or approved dealer.

*Discount not applicable beyond the price of the appliance

Butterfly Marketing Ltd., 71 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Phone : 7169148, 7169150-3
Fax: 88-02-9561318, E-mail: info@butterfly-lg.com, Website : www.butterfly-lg.net

BUTTERFLY
Committed to Care