

# Hamas ready for truce if Israel ends blockade

Tel Aviv dismisses offer as 'not serious'

AFP, Cairo/Jerusalem

Hamas on Thursday agreed to a phased truce that would only extend to the West Bank in a second stage in return for an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza, Egypt's official MENA news agency said.

But Israel on Friday dismissed as "not serious" a Hamas proposal for a six-month truce in Gaza that could later extend to the occupied West Bank.

"Unfortunately, this appears not to be serious at all," government spokesman Mark Regev said after the Islamist movement told Egypt it agreed to implement a ceasefire in Gaza that could be extended to the West Bank within six months.

Senior Hamas official Mahmud al-Zahar, a former Palestinian foreign minister, said that the

Islamist group had agreed to a ceasefire in Gaza first, which would be extended to the West Bank within six months, MENA reported.

Zahar spoke after he and former interior minister Said Siam held talks with Egypt's pointman on Palestinian affairs, intelligence chief Omar Suleiman.

"The movement has agreed for a period of calm in Gaza in the framework of a national consensus, which would be extended to the West Bank after six months," Hamas said in a statement carried by MENA.

"The period of calm must be reciprocal and concurrent; there must be a lifting of the blockade and the opening of the border crossings, including the Rafah crossing, to take place when the calming takes effect."

The proposal also states that if Israel were not to accept a

ceasefire, Egypt would open the Rafah border crossing.

The Rafah crossing, the only gateway to the Gaza Strip that bypasses Israel, has been mainly closed since Hamas took control of Gaza in June last year.

On January 23, Palestinian militants demolished the border barricades between Gaza and Egypt, sending hundreds of thousands of Gazans flooding into Egypt to stock up on vital supplies.

Egyptian and Hamas forces resealed the frontier on February 4.

Suleiman has invited other Palestinian factions for meetings Tuesday and Wednesday to discuss Hamas's truce proposal, MENA reported.

Egypt has been serving as go-between in the truce negotiations with Israel, which blacklists Hamas as a terror group and refuses any

direct contacts.

Israel has sealed off Gaza to all but very limited humanitarian aid since the Islamist group seized control of the territory from forces loyal to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in June.

The United Nations stopped distributing aid in the Gaza Strip on Thursday after running out of fuel as the Israeli terminal that supplies the Palestinian territory remained shut.

"We have just stopped the distribution of all food aid to 650,000 Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip because of the lack of fuel in our storage in Gaza," said Adnan Abu Hasna, a spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) office in Gaza.

"We also stopped transporting students and officials in the Gaza Strip," he told AFP. "Not a litre of fuel came from Israel."



Pakistani lawyers and political activists protest in Lahore on Thursday demanding the reinstatement of judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf. Pakistani Information Minister Sherry Rehman said that the Pakistan's ruling coalition has set up a committee to implement their understanding on reinstatement of judges.

## No breakthrough on Pak judges' reinstatement

THE DAILY TIMES, Islamabad

Stalemate on the restoration of sacked judges continued in the second meeting of the ruling coalition partners at Parliament House on Thursday.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) said the talks continued smoothly and progress was encouraging, but the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said nothing could be said about the outcome of the negotiations.

"We cannot say what will happen in future," Senior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan of PML-N said. "We are firm on our stance on the restoration of the sacked judges and will not compromise," he added.

"Things are where they were on day one. Both the parties are stuck to their guns," a PML-N insider told Daily Times. He asked

not to be identified. "The talks are likely to continue for two or three more days, but nothing can be said about their outcome," he said.

He said the negotiations would continue and that another round of talks would be held later on. "Right now we have to go to a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani. We will meet again at 10:30pm," he said.

Asked if the National Assembly session set to be prorogued today might continue until a breakthrough, he said: "National Assembly session is no problem. It can be called at a 24-hour notice." Ha hinted that PPP Co-chairman Asif Zardari and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif might meet today.

Law Minister Farooq H Naek pf PPP said: "There is nothing going wrong with dialogue. Everything is absolutely okay. Talks are going

on smoothly and we will soon reach an agreement." He said the talks were going "in a positive direction." "Concrete result (will come) very soon."

The first meeting of the committee was held on Wednesday. Naek, Information Minister Sherry Rehman, Leader of the House in Senate Mian Raza Rabbani and Interior Affairs Adviser Rehman Malik represent the PPP in the committee. Chaudhry Nisar, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Petroleum Minister Kawaja Asif represented the PML-N.

The two teams held separate meetings prior to Thursday's session. "The PML-N team held talks in Chaudhry Nisar's chamber, where they also consulted Nawaz Sharif," a source said. Sherry and Naek consulted Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani before the session, sources said.

## Manmohan asks parties to avoid scare mongering on prices

PTI, New Delhi

With opposition and the Left allies attacking the government on rising prices, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today asked political parties not to indulge in "scare mongering" and create an environment of scarcity that would only help speculators and hoarders.

The Prime Minister's sharp words came after a meeting he had with the Left leaders led by CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat to discuss the issue of rising prices. The government's outside supporters and the Opposition parties have been scathing in their attack on the government on its handling of the price situation.

The government is taking all necessary steps to deal with the problem and there is no need for political parties to indulge in scare mongering, Singh said.

"The prime minister urged all political parties to eschew the temptation of politicising the misery of the people and warned against creating an environment of scarcity which would only encourage speculators and hoarders," a press release issued by Singh's Media Advisor said after the meeting.

## Thai PM denies plan for snap election

AFP, Bangkok

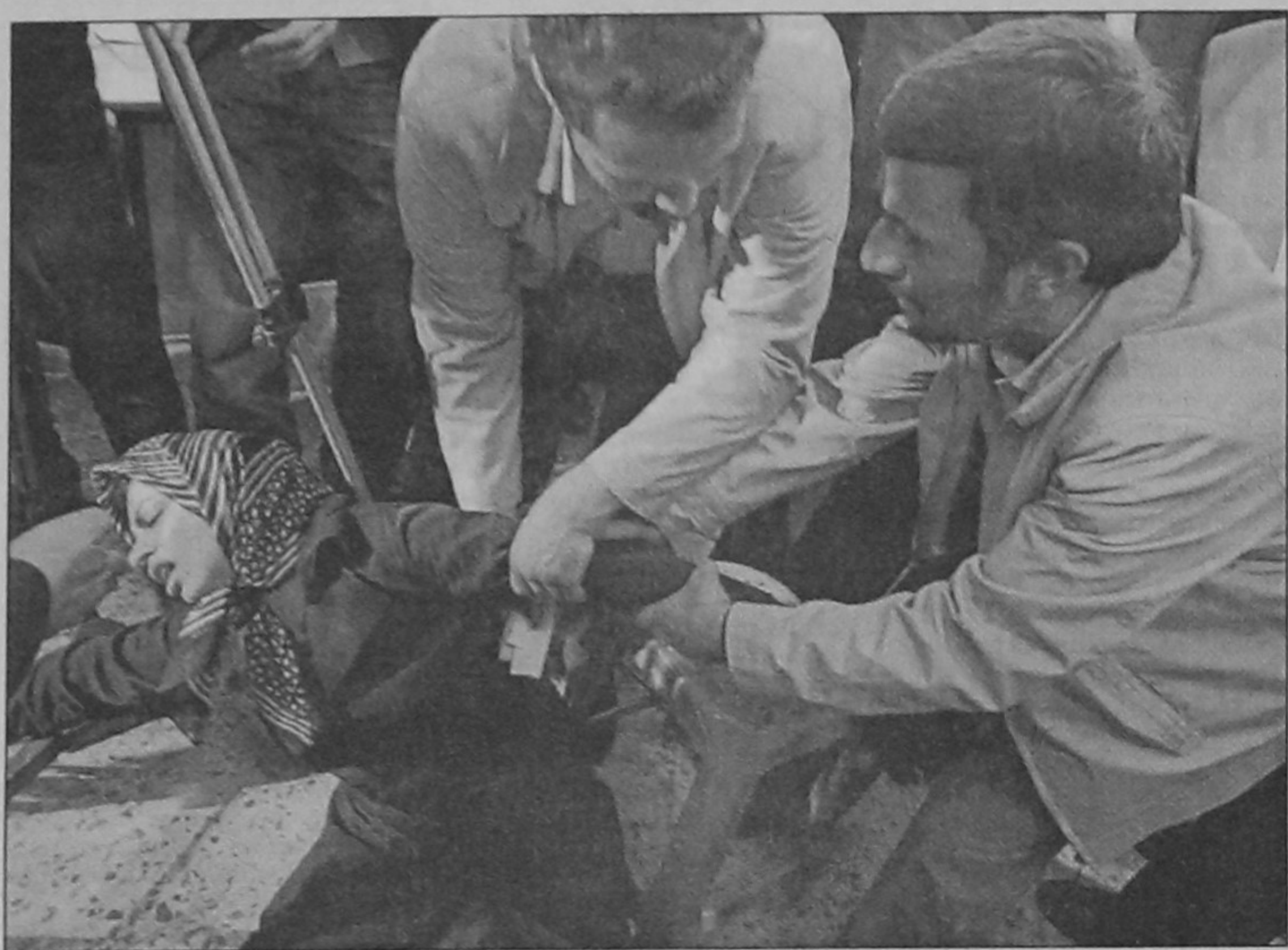
Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej on Friday denied having said he would call snap elections once amendments to the constitution are complete.

"I have never said anywhere that I will dissolve the house," he told reporters.

"What I have said clearly is that once the amendments to the constitution are complete, there will be a provisional section stipulating when it will come into force."

Thai official media reported from Kuala Lumpur Thursday that Samak told Thai diplomats and businessmen at his nation's embassy that he would call new elections after amendments to the constitution were finished.

Samak Friday declined to say whether he would complete his four-year term but expressed optimism that amending the constitution would not lead to another political crisis or military coup.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad helps a woman who fainted after meeting him; inside a polling station in Tehran during the second round of parliamentary elections yesterday.

## Iran to finalise new parliament in run-off poll

AFP, Tehran

Iranians started voting Friday in the second round of legislative elections expected to tighten the conservatives' grip on parliament after reformists were hurt by pre-poll disqualifications.

Around half the electorate are eligible to vote to choose MPs for the 82 seats in the 290-seat chamber which were not decided outright in the first round on March 14. Previously, state media reports had spoken of 81 seats.

The most closely watched competition will be in Tehran, where in the first round conservatives won all 19 of the seats decided outright. Eleven seats are still available and reformists will be hoping to pick up a handful of these.

Under Iranian election law candidates needed at least 25 percent of the vote to be elected outright in the first round. Polls for the second round run-offs opened at 8:00 am (0330 GMT) and close at 6:00 pm (1330 GMT).

## 185 Lankan soldiers die in Jaffna battle

AFP, Colombo

At least 165 soldiers were killed and 20 more went missing in a major battle with Tamil separatists this week, military sources told AFP yesterday as journalists complained of unofficial censorship.

With reports of higher casualties emerging -- making Wednesday's clash the bloodiest in recent years -- the authorities extended "unofficial" censorship to hospitals and funeral parlours where photographers and reporters were shut out, a media rights group said.

The death toll from the sources were far higher than official defence ministry casualty figures, which gave 43 soldiers dead and 38 missing from Wednesday's fighting in the northern peninsula of Jaffna.

"Some of the senior officers have been told that the army lost 185, including 20 who are still listed as missing," said a military source who declined to be named. "We are trying to establish the fate of the missing."

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Thursday returned via the international Red Cross the bodies of 28 soldiers they had captured.

The government also reported killing more than 100 rebels and wounding 100 more in the pre-dawn offensive along the

Muhamalai front lines on the peninsula.

The Tigers said only 25 of its fighters were killed.

Official defence ministry casualties reports and LTTE figures can seldom be verified because the government prevents journalists from visiting war zones and territory held by the rebels.

The ministry claims 3,105 rebels have been killed already this year -- more than intelligence estimates of the number of LTTE fighters, which was put at 3,000.

Wednesday's confrontation was by far the biggest battle since Colombo withdrew from a Norwegian-arranged truce in January.

The Free Media Movement (FMM) said the authorities had prevented photographers taking pictures of military casualties moved to hospitals in the aftermath of the fighting.

Soldiers also provided tight security at undertakers to block the media.

"It is highly likely that these measures have been taken after heavy losses faced by the Sri Lankan army earlier this week after fighting intensified in the north," the FMM said in a statement.

The group said it was urging the government as well as the LTTE to respect the right to information.

## Afghanistan govt wary of Pak-Taliban 'peace deal'

AFP, Kabul

Afghan Foreign Minister Rameez Dardar Spanta said Thursday that any peace deal between Pakistan and Taliban fighters would only fail and terrorism should instead be tackled globally.

The United States has also expressed concern about a possible deal after representatives of both sides said Wednesday the new government in Islamabad had drafted an agreement with rebels along the Afghan border.

"We believe that any efforts by any country in our region to have a separate peace deal with international terrorism, such efforts will fail," Spanta told reporters.

"Past experiences have proved that such efforts will only result in those who make such efforts becoming the victims," he said.

A peace deal between Pakistan and pro-Taliban tribes in the semi-autonomous tribal regions of North Waziristan in September

2006 was criticised in Kabul, where officials said it resulted in an increase in attacks in Afghanistan.

That deal was broken after Pakistani troops stormed Islamabad's Red Mosque to evict militants, leaving 100 dead.

Spanta said the countries needed to work together with their international partners in a "clear, continued and coordinated fight against terrorism."

"Finding a peaceful way to decrease terrorism in all countries, not only in one place, is an issue that all sides should act upon," he said.

Islamabad launched talks with the Taliban soon after a new government was formed following elections in February, amid concerns that President Pervez Musharraf's military approach was spanning more violence.

The aim is to transform a month-long lull in a wave of suicide bombings into a permanent peace with the Taliban, who have fought the government since

Govt of the People's Republic of Bangladesh					
Bangladesh Betar Maintenance Section Administration Building Agargaon, Dhaka-1207					
Invitation for Tender					
Sealed tenders in triplicate are hereby invited from the bonafide distributor/supplier/genuine bidder for the undermentioned goods with the following conditions.					
1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Information.			
2.	Agency	Bangladesh Betar.			
3.	Procuring entity name	Director General, Bangladesh Betar.			
4.	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.			
5.	Invitation for	Supply of Recordable CD and Re-Writable CD for Bangladesh Betar on free delivery Dhaka basis.			
6.	Invitation Ref. No. & date	MES/3/2471/2008-978, Dated: 22-04-2008.			
7.	Procuring method	Open tendering method (National Competitive Tendering).			
8.	Budget & source of funds	GOB.			
9.	Tender package No.	-			
10.	Tender publication date	29-04-2008.			
11.	Tender last selling date	At 4.00pm (BST) on 14-05-2008.			
12.	Tender closing date & time	At 11.00am (BST) on 15-05-2008.			
13.	Tender opening date & time	At 12.00 noon (BST) on 15-05-2008.			
14.	Name and address of the office(s)	Address			
	Selling tender document	Station Engineer, Maintenance Section, Bangladesh Betar, Administrative Building, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.			
	Receiving tender document	Senior Engineer, Maintenance Section, Bangladesh Betar, Administrative Building, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.			
	Opening tender document	Senior Engineer, Maintenance Section, Bangladesh Betar, Administrative Building, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.			
15.	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting	Not applicable.			
16.	Eligibility of tenderer	All eligible tenderers except of Israel.			
17.	Brief description of goods and services	Supply of 1,000 Nos of Re-Writable CD (700 MB, 1X-4X), 1,000 Nos. of Recordable CD (700 MB) and 5,000 Nos. of Re-Writable CD (700 MB) for Bangladesh Betar on free delivery Dhaka basis.			
18.	Price of tender document	Tk 500/- to be deposited (non-refundable) in the form of Treasury Challan to the code 1/3351/0001/2366 on the account of Director General, Bangladesh Betar.			
	Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in weeks/months
19.	1	Supply of Recordable CD and Re-Writable CD for Bangladesh Betar on free delivery Dhaka basis	Maintenance Section, Bangladesh Betar, Agargaon, Dhaka	Tk 20,000.00 (twenty thousand) only in the form of Pay-Order/Bank Draft/Bank Guarantee from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh Bank in favour of the Director General, Bangladesh Betar	2 (two) weeks
20.		Name of official inviting tender	Md. Taimur Rahman.		
21.		Designation of official inviting tender	Station Engineer on behalf of Director General.		
22.		Address of official inviting tender	Maintenance Section, Bangladesh Betar, Administrative Building, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.		
23.		Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: +880-2-9123057, Fax: +880-2-9112475		
24.		The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.			
Md. Taimur Rahman Station Engineer for Director General					

National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFP CSP)	
Ref: NFP CSP/RGS/Call-PR/2008/02	Date: 23 April 2008
<b>CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS UNDER THE PROGRAMME FUNDED RESEARCH (PR)</b>	
<p>The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Government of Bangladesh are implementing the NFP CSP with financial support from European Commission (EC) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objective of the NFP CSP Research Grant Initiative is to assist in improving research and dialogue in civil society to inform and enrich the implementation of the National Food Policy.</p> <p>The NFP CSP invites research proposals with a clear socio economic focus to be considered for funding under the Programme Funded Research. The research proposal(s) must address a topic that falls under one or more of the following research themes:</p>	
<p>In the area of <b>Food Availability</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specialization vs. Diversification in Food Production and the Role of Trade and Trade Policy</li> <li>2. Accessibility of Inputs for Food Production</li> <li>3. Technical Efficiency and Assessment of Post-Harvest and Other Losses</li> </ol> <p>In the area of <b>Physical and Social Access to Food</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Targeting Methodologies for Food Security Safety Net Programs</li> <li>5. Relief and Food Delivery Processes in Vulnerable Regions and Seasons</li> <li>6. Social Access to Food in Monga-Affected Areas</li> </ol> <p>In the area of <b>Economic Access to Food</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Livelihood Patterns and Coping Strategies of the Ultra-poor, Including Disadvantaged Groups</li> <li>8. Access to Common Property Resources and Income Generation</li> <li>9. Non-Rice Food Prices and Markets and Economic Access to a More Diversified Diet</li> </ol> <p>In the area of <b>Utilization of Food for Nutrition</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Food Composition Tables With Special Reference to Indigenous Foods</li> <li>11. Promotion of Functional Foods for Additional Health Benefits</li> <li>12. Dietary Diversity of the Urban Poor, Including the Urban Poor</li> </ol> <p>In the area of <b>Cross Cutting and overarching themes</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Issues in Measurement of Food Security, Vulnerability and Poverty</li> <li>14. The Economic and Social Value of Nutrition and Food Security</li> <li>15. Disadvantaged Regions, the Disabled, Elderly, Children and Ethnic Minorities</li> </ol>	
<p>A description of the above themes is included in the Research Needs Digest (RND) obtainable from the website <a href="http://www.nfpccsp.org">www.nfpccsp.org</a>. Grants will be awarded to the best research proposals specified within the above themes, to conduct substantive research programmes. Grants will range from US\$ 30,000 to US\$ 50,000 (in BDT equivalent) per approved research proposal and will have to be completed within 18 months from the date of award. Interested non-profit institutions can submit research proposal(s) following the Guidelines for Submission, Selection and Implementation of Research Proposals (reference: NFP CSP/RGS/Guidelines/2007/01) which can be downloaded from the website <a href="http://www.nfpccsp.org">www.nfpccsp.org</a> or obtained together with the RND sending an e-mail to <a href="mailto:rgi@nfpccsp.org">rgi@nfpccsp.org</a> writing rgil in the subject. Interested applicants are requested to carefully read the Guidelines before preparing the research proposals. Queries may be sent by e-mail to <a href="mailto:rga@nfpccsp.org">rga@nfpccsp.org</a> by Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008. Answers will be posted on the website <a href="http://www.nfpccsp.org">www.nfpccsp.org</a>. Failure to comply with the Guidelines will lead to the rejection of the proposal.</p> <p><b>The deadline for submission of research proposals is Thursday, 12 June, 2008 at 4.30 pm (Bangladesh Time).</b> Incomplete applications, applications submitted by FAX or email, or applications received after the deadline will not be accepted. Three hard copies of the research proposal (signed original and two photocopies) and one electronic copy (e.g. CD ROM) should be submitted in a sealed envelope mailed or delivered to the following address:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Research Grants Administrator</b> National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme (NFP CSP) FAO Representation in Bangladesh; House No. 37, Road No. 8, Dhanmondi Residential Area - Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh</p>	
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