

US committed to Indo-US nuclear deal

PTI, IANS, Washington/New Delhi

Maintaining that it is committed to the Indo-US nuclear deal, the US on Thursday sought to push the ball into India's court saying it was for the country's leadership to decide on the pact.

However, the US expressed confidence that the deal could be concluded in the near future in realisation of the Congressional timelines.

"This administration has been firm in its support for this - this deal. It continues to be so. Right now we're at a situation where this is with the Indian government and literally with the Indian people. This is a matter for them to decide and then follow through with," acting Spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos replied when asked if the initiative is "close to dead".

"We consistently stated that we stand behind this, that we continue to support it, and that we would like to move apace in terms of proceeding with it," he added.

World donors offer billions in aid for Afghanistan

AFP, Paris

The United States put up 10 billion dollars to rebuild Afghanistan yesterday as world donors responded to a funding appeal from President Hamid Karzai but warned more must be done to fight corruption.

Karzai sought support to finance part of a 50-billion-dollar development plan over the next five years to counter widespread poverty and a Taliban insurgency.

"What brings us together today is a concern for the destiny of a nation that has emerged from a dark past," Karzai told donors from more than 80 countries and international institutions in Paris.

Announcing a 10.2 billion dollar contribution, US First Lady Laura Bush said "Afghanistan has reached a decisive moment for its future. We must not turn our backs on this

opportunity."

President Nicolas Sarkozy announced French financial aid would be "more than doubled" with priority given to agriculture and health, bringing assistance up to 107 million euros (165 million dollars) over the next two years.

Japan doubled its aid to reach 550 million dollars while Germany put up 420 million euros over the next two years.

US officials said they expected 15 billion dollars (9.7 billion euros) to be raised, but European and UN diplomats stressed the conference must also tackle the more sensitive issue of how the funds are spent.

"I hope this conference will first of all provide an opportunity to reflect on our strategy," Sarkozy said.

Karzai is facing questions over his apparent inability to deal with corruption and opium production, seen

as prolonging the Taliban insurgency.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called for "active measures" to be taken to fight corruption, guarantee transparency and ensure that financial aid reaches those who need it.

"It is only by combating corruption and strengthening the rule of law that our commitment will be efficient," said German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

More than six years after US-led forces ousted the Taliban, Afghanistan remains mired in poverty and its people lack many basics while the extremist militia has pushed on with its insurgency in the south.

Some 47,000 troops from a NATO-led force are fighting the Taliban alongside 20,000 US troops. The violence has left 8,000 people dead in 2007 alone including 1,500 civilians,

according to UN figures.

Listing progress in building roads and clinics, fighting opium production and setting up a functioning government, Karzai nevertheless acknowledged: "There is a long way still ahead of us."

With a development plan on the table, Afghanistan needs "adequate, long term and predictable support," said Karzai.

Security remains Afghanistan's biggest challenge, he said, arguing that his government was fighting "international terrorists" funded from abroad, a reference to neighbouring Pakistan.

Karzai's ambitious blueprint focuses first on infrastructure, with plans to build roads, dams and power plants, but building up the army and security forces is also a priority along with developing agriculture.



French President Nicolas Sarkozy (first row, R), gestures as he poses with (L to R) US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, US First Lady Laura Bush and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai during a family photo of participants in the international donors conference to raise billions of dollars in aid for Afghanistan. Sarkozy inaugurated the one-day conference attended by delegates from more than 65 countries and 15 international organisations.



Co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, Asif Ali Zardari (C) arrives for a press conference in Karachi yesterday. Thousands of Pakistani lawyers and activists began a "long march" from Lahore to Islamabad, calling for the reinstatement of judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf.

Lankan army poised to capture Prabhakaran

AFP, AP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military is poised to capture the leader of the Tamil Tigers and is surging towards his jungle hideout, the defence ministry said yesterday.

Government forces were just 21 kilometres (13 miles) away from achieving their "final goal" of capturing rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, the ministry said, quoting army chief Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka.

He said security forces were attacking Mullaitivu, the northeastern coastal district where the 53-year-old Tamil separatist leader was believed to be based, from several fronts.

"The security forces are attacking Mullaitivu, Prabhakaran's hideout, from several directions," Fonseka said. "The army's aim is to capture Prabhakaran -- who is holed up in a bunker -- alive."

He said four divisions of the army

would "surge" towards the hideout of Prabhakaran who is wanted in Sri Lanka as well as neighbouring India for the 1991 slaying of former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi.

"They (troops) have to march forward another 21 kilometres to achieve the final goal," the army chief said adding that security forces had already captured "several hundred square kilometres" from the guerrillas.

It is not the first time in the decades-old conflict that the Sri Lankan authorities have said they were on the verge of capturing or killing Prabhakaran.

The leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has also been reported dead or injured on numerous occasions.

In fresh fighting government forces destroyed two Tamil Tiger rebel bunkers in Sri Lanka's embattled north while infantry clashes killed 13 rebels and two soldiers, the military said Thursday.

Israel in new Egypt talks on Gaza truce

Blast kills three Palestinians

AFP, Cairo/Gaza City

Israel joined a new round of Egyptian-brokered negotiations on a proposed truce in and around Gaza on Thursday after deciding to give the talks one last go while preparing for military action if they fail.

Amos Gilad, a top aide of Defence Minister Ehud Barak, arrived in Cairo for a meeting with Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, who has been mediating between Israel and Palestinian militant groups, officials said.

"Egyptian officials will hear from Mr Gilad the Israeli position on bringing about the period of calm," an Egyptian source told the official MENA news agency.

He "expressed hope that the truce between Israel and the Palestinians would come soon in order to lift the blockade imposed on

the Palestinian people," MENA said.

In Israel, Barak told reporters his country "must assess the possibilities of reaching a calm" but that "our duty is to ensure security around the Gaza Strip and we shall do so."

"Our military is strong and we are ready. As soon as the order is given, we will act," he added, stressing that Israel must first "try to reach the same results without turning to the armed forces."

Three people were killed and 32 wounded, including a four-month-old baby, in an explosion in a house in the north of the Islamist-run Gaza Strip on Thursday, Palestinian medics said.

Witnesses and the Hamas movement said the blast that levelled a house in Beit Lahia was caused by an air strike, but the Israeli military denied any involvement, saying it could have been an internal explosion.

Khaleda wants

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participate in the election. And for that, the state of emergency will have to be withdrawn."

Criticising the military-backed administration's ongoing anti-crime drive, she said, "Leaders and workers of the political parties are being harassed in the name of curbing crimes. They cannot stay in their houses due to the drive."

She demanded that the government stop the 'harassment' immediately and release all political leaders.

"We have no objection to arrests of criminals, but rounding up political activists will definitely hamper the process of creating an environment conducive to holding a free and fair election," she observed.

About the ongoing dialogue between the military-backed government and political parties, Khaleda said, "First, let there be a congenial atmosphere for talks and only then will we say whether or not to join the dialogue."

The BNP chief said the hike in fertiliser prices would affect the farmers badly. She also called for subsidies in agriculture and measures to ensure that essentials including rice and pulses are within buying capacity of the common people.

Referring to about 20 percent dearness allowance proposed in the budget for the government employees to cope with the price spiral, she asked what would happen to the other people facing similar problems.

"How many people are public servants? What about the rest? Take immediate steps for them as well," she continued.

Queried about the government's concern over her health, she replied,

"If they are that worried then why they are still detaining me?"

Earlier, Judge Khandaker Kamal Uz-zaman fixed June 18 for passing order on whether the trial should commence when there is already one going on in a case against Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina on similar charges.

The defence said the trial should not begin before the end of proceedings of the Niko graft case against Hasina since both the cases involve the same story, seizure list and evidence.

They said the BNP-led four-party alliance government only followed what had been initiated during the tenure of the immediate past AL government.

The prosecution said the postponement or adjournment of the trial proceedings is an absurd idea. They said the plaintiff and accused, time and place of occurrence in the cases are separate and that is why there are no grounds for postponement or adjournment.

Later, talking to the reporters, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain quoted Khaleda as saying that the law should be the same for all and the government would have to shoulder the responsibility if Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko die for lack of proper treatment.

Eight other accused including former law minister Moudud Ahmed were also produced before the court yesterday.

On December 9 last year, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Teigaon Police Station against Khaleda and 10 others on charges of abuse of power in awarding a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

Airstrike threatens to worsen US-Pak ties

AFP, Washington/Peshawar

The United States defended itself against charges its forces killed 11 Pakistani troops in an incident Wednesday that threatened to worsen already tense ties with its key ally over terrorism.

The US-led coalition in Afghanistan admitted carrying out an air strike in Pakistan Wednesday but said it targeted militants -- not

the Pakistani soldiers -- and that its response was coordinated with Pakistan.

Pakistan said a "cowardly" air strike by US-led forces killed 11 Pakistani troops on Wednesday near the Afghan border and warned that it had harmed cooperation in the war against terrorism.

The army accused the US-led coalition in Afghanistan of launch-

ing an unprovoked attack on a checkpoint in Pakistan's volatile Mohmand tribal zone while the foreign office demanded an investigation.

The incident, the worst of its kind since Pakistan joined the "war on terror" in 2001, comes amid growing unease in Washington and Kabul over Pakistan's efforts to negotiate with Taliban militants in the border region.

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নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

আইএসও:৯০০১:২০০০ সনদ প্রাপ্ত দেশের শীর্ষস্থানীয় বৈদ্যুতিক ওয়ারস এন্ড কেবলস উৎপাদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান বি আর বি কেবল ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিঃ এ বাল্ভব অভিজ্ঞতা ও যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন ইলেকট্রিক্যাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ার নিয়োগের উদ্দেশ্যে বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকের নিকট থেকে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

• শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা : বি.এস.সি ইন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং (ইলেকট্রিক্যাল এন্ড ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স)

• অভিজ্ঞতা : প্রার্থীকে SIEMENS, Telemecanique, Alen Bradley ইত্যাদি কোম্পানীর PLC, AC/DC Drives (Analog/Digital), Temperature Controller (Analog/digital) এবং অন্যান্য ইলেকট্রিক্যাল Trouble-shooting এর কাজে কমপক্ষে ৩ (তিন) বছরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা অর্থাৎ নিজে হাতে কাজ করার অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে এবং এধরনের কাজ তদারকি করে অংশগ্রহণের দ্বারা কাজ করিয়ে নেয়ার দক্ষতাও থাকতে হবে।

• বয়স সীমা : সর্বোচ্চ ৪০ বছর।

• চাকুরী স্থল : বিসিক শিল্প নগরী, কুষ্টিয়া।

• বেতন ভাতা : আলোচনা সাপেক্ষে আকর্ষণীয় বেতন ভাতাদি নির্ধারণ হবে। চাহিদার তুলনায় আরও বেশী অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন ব্যক্তির ক্ষেত্রে বেতন-ভাতাদিও তুলনামূলক ভাবে বেশী আকর্ষণীয় হবে।

প্রার্থী প্রার্থীগণকে সদ্য তোলা তিন কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ছবি, নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সনদ পত্রের ফটোকপি, অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র সহ প্রার্থিতা বৈতন ও যোগাযোগের জন্য মোবাইল/ফোন নম্বর উল্লেখ করতঃ পূর্ণ জীবন বৃত্তান্ত সহজিত আবেদনপত্র আগামী ২৫.০৬.২০০৮ ইং তারিখের মধ্যে ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক, বি আর বি কেবল ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিঃ, বিসিক শিল্প নগরী, কুষ্টিয়া এই ঠিকানায় পৌছাতে হবে। উল্লেখ্য দরখাস্ত করার পূর্বে ও পরে আরও বিস্তারিত জানা বা এ এই নিয়োগ সফলত্ব যে কোন বিজ্ঞাস্য থাকলে এবং দরখাস্ত দাখিল ব্যক্তিরকে সরাসরি সাক্ষাৎকার প্রদান করতে চাইলে মোবাইল নং ০১৭১৩-৪০২৫৯৯-এ যোগাযোগ করে জেনে নেয়া যাবে।

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The Economic Empowerment of the Poorest DFID Challenge Fund

Date: 13 June 2008

Harewelle International (www.harewelle.org) has been awarded a contract by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to manage the £65.0 million (USD\$130 million) "Economic Empowerment of the Poorest (EEP) Challenge Fund". The fund aims to assist Bangladeshi and International NGOs in scaling up their activities to assist in the 'graduation' of over one million of the absolute and extreme poorest people from poverty by 2015.

The EEP is now commonly referred to as SHIREE: the Bangla word for steps. The acronym resonates DFID's approach: **stimulating household improvements resulting in economic empowerment**. SHIREE is committed to working with those NGOs who are able to demonstrate their ability to target the economic bottom 10% of Bangladeshi households and show their experience in graduating them from poverty.

SHIREE will provide funding to NGOs via two grants:

- The scale fund: large-scale projects designed to bring rapid benefits to large numbers of poor people;
- The innovation fund: smaller projects designed to develop innovative approaches to reduce extreme poverty.

SHIREE now invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from eligible NGOs for their **scale fund** activities. The NGOs applying for the fund should be formally constituted and registered with the office of the Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau and have an annual turnover (revenue) of at least 10 crore Taka in Bangladesh, excluding micro credit/finance activities. At this pre-qualification stage, only information about the NGOs and their current activities is required. If selected, NGOs will be asked for details about their proposed ideas related to the use of the scale fund at a later date.

In order to facilitate the application procedure SHIREE will only accept EOIs (in English) online. Interested NGOs are requested to apply online at www.shiree.org using the drop down menu under **apply to us**. Applications will be accepted from 12th June onwards. The final application form should be completed electronically and submitted online no later than **3rd July 2008 by 1800 hours**, Dhaka time.

For detailed information on application procedures and priorities, all applicants are encouraged to visit www.shiree.org. Eligible NGOs may obtain further information from the website or from the SHIREE office during 0900 to 1700 hours on all working days. Visually or otherwise impaired persons may contact the office to make other arrangements for submission of EOIs. SHIREE will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with the preparation or delivery of the EOI whatsoever.

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