



US Democratic presidential candidate Illinois Senator Barack Obama and former candidate Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) greet supporters during a rally in Unity, New Hampshire on Friday. Obama said Friday that he, the Democrats and the American people need both Hillary and Bill Clinton on board to change the nation.

Obama, Hillary appeal for Democratic unity

AP, Unity

Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton sought Friday to turn the page on their bitter, history-making fight for the Democratic presidential nomination, declaring the next chapter is about beating Republican John McCain.

Choosing a small New Hampshire community aptly named Unity for their first joint appearance since the campaign ended, Obama and Hillary Clinton stood on a platform before thousands of cheering, shouting supporters and took turns praising each other and urging party solidarity. She called the nominee-in-waiting a standup guy and he declared: "She rocks. She rocks."

They came together in this hamlet where each won 107 votes in January's primary. Body language rivalled campaign rhetoric as attention-getter of the day. And a pair rendered distant by a marathon campaign acted like teammates, alternately exhorting the rank-and-file to put any recriminations behind them.

Hillary Clinton noted that they had stood "toe to toe" against each other in a primary season fight that began almost two years ago and declared the time has come to "stand shoulder to shoulder" against the GOP. They seemed equally determined to regain a White House that their party hasn't seen since her husband, President Clinton, left at the start of 2001.

"To anyone who voted for me and is now considering not voting or voting for Sen. (John) McCain, I strongly urge you to reconsider," said Hillary Clinton, beseeching her supporters to join with Obama's "to create an unstoppable force for change we can all believe in."

In turn, Obama praised both Hillary Clinton and her husband as allies and pillars of the Democratic Party.

"We need them. We need them badly," Obama said. "Not just my campaign, but the American people need their service and their vision and their wisdom in the months and years to come because that's how we're going to bring about unity in the Democratic Party. And that's how we're going to bring about unity in America."

Somali Islamists snatch aid workers: UN

AFP, Mogadishu

Islamist militants kidnapped two Swedes working for the United Nations and a Somali aid worker when the fighters seized control of a town Saturday, several sources told AFP.

Local residents and aid workers said the insurgents attacked the town of Hodur, 370km west of the Somali capital Mogadishu, around 4:30 am (0130 GMT) but then withdrew.

"The two UN mine action workers were taken from the IMC (International Medical Corps) compound. We don't know their whereabouts and they were taken after Islamists took control of the town," a UN official told AFP on condition of anonymity, saying both were Swedish nationals.

A UN security official in Nairobi confirmed their abduction.

Widespread intimidation in Zimbabwe vote

US to call for UN action against Mugabe as world body sees no condition for fair polls

AP, Harare/Seoul

Roaming bands of government supporters heckled, harassed or threatened people into voting in a runoff election Friday in which President Robert Mugabe was the only candidate, ensuring he will remain in power despite international condemnation of the balloting as a sham.

Residents said they were forced to vote by threats of violence or arson from the Mugabe supporters, who searched for anyone without an ink-stained finger the telltale sign that they had cast a ballot.

The Herald, Zimbabwe's state-

run newspaper, reported Saturday that there was "massive voter turnout." A newspaper commentary said the turnout was "a slap in the face for detractors who claimed this was a 'Mugabe election' that did not have the blessing of the generality of Zimbabweans."

The Herald's report contradicts reporters and independent observers in Harare who saw low turnout despite the reports of intimidation. As polls closed at 7 p.m., officials at one Harare station said they hadn't seen a voter for several hours.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who withdrew from the runoff after an onslaught of state-sponsored violence against his

Democratic Movement for Change, said the results would "reflect only the fear of the people."

"What is happening today is not an election. It is an exercise in mass intimidation," he said at a news conference.

The UN Security Council unanimously agreed that the conditions for free and fair elections did not exist and it was a matter of deep regret that elections went ahead," said US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who is current council president.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called the vote a "sham," and said the United States was drafting a UN resolution calling for tough

action against Zimbabwe's government to prevent it from further abusing the country's population.

"It is time for the international community to act," Rice told reporters on her way to Seoul, South Korea. "It is hard to imagine that anybody could fail to act given what we're all watching on the ground in Zimbabwe."

Rice declined to specify what will be in the proposed resolution, which could be submitted as early as Monday, but said there "has to be a deterrent effect from the international community at this point to (halt) further intimidation, further violence against the population."

Rice urges N Korea to give up all N-weapons

AFP, Seoul

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pressed North Korea Saturday to take the next step and give up its atomic weaponry after it disclosed some nuclear secrets and demolished part of its reactor.

Rice was speaking during a visit to South Korea for talks with her counterpart Yu Myung-Hwan to discuss the next step in a drawn-out international diplomatic effort to persuade the communist state to disarm.

A day after delivering a long-awaited nuclear declaration, the North on Friday blew up the cooling tower at its Yongbyon reactor in a televised event to affirm its commitment to denuclearisation.

Rice said she and Yu had extensive talks about efforts to verify the declaration, which covers nuclear

facilities and the production of bomb-making plutonium, but not weapons.

Critics point out that it also does not address concerns about a suspected secret highly enriched uranium (HEU) weapons programme. Not does it answer suspicions of nuclear proliferation to Syria.

The North, in a separate document, has merely acknowledged the US concerns about both issues and promised to try to resolve differences.

"In the next phase we do have to move on abandonment. That is the purpose of six-party talks," Rice said.

"There are documents that are referred to in the declaration concerning those two issues, HEU and proliferation," she told a press conference with Yu.

News Analysis

Complex issues remain on N Korea nukes

AP, Seoul

It took years of talks, coddling and concessions to prod North Korea to step back from its decades-long effort to make atomic weapons, leading to Friday's dramatic destruction of its nuclear reactor cooling tower.

That was the easy part.

Past experience suggests North Korea will seek more rewards before it moves further to disarm. If Pyongyang actually hands over the nuclear bombs believed to be in its arsenal, the country's most valuable bargaining chips, the communist leadership would only do so after a long wish list of demands is granted.

The North has repeatedly shown a talent for brinkmanship, along with a mastery of playing countries against each other. And Pyongyang is just getting started.

Hints of the problems to come emerged just hours after the reactor tower tumbled to the ground in a cloud of dust and smoke.

While praising the US for starting to remove sanctions, North Korea's Foreign Ministry said it would closely watch whether the other sides from the arms talks meet their commitments.

"What is important in the days

ahead is for the US to fundamentally drop its hostile policy toward the (North), a policy that compelled (North Korea) to have access to a nuclear deterrent," the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

So far, the United States and other countries have agreed to give the North the equivalent of 1 million tons of oil for disabling its main nuclear facility and providing a list of nuclear programmes. The US is also moving to eliminate some sanctions against the regime.

The North has 45 days to agree on procedures to verify its declaration, the date by when the US plans to remove the country from a State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism.

The next and far more complicated phase of the disarmament process is for North Korea to abandon and dismantle its nuclear weapons programmes. So far, the other countries have not said what they will give the North in exchange for doing so.

For dismantling its reactor, the energy-starved country is expected to demand a new reactor of a type it would use solely for generating electricity.

Under a 1994 disarmament deal

with the US, the North was offered two reactors for power. But construction was abandoned long before they were completed amid the latest nuclear crisis that began in 2002, when the US accused Pyongyang of pursuing a secret uranium enrichment programme.

The North still wants the reactors, and won a concession in a September 2005 agreement that other countries would talk "at an appropriate time" about a new reactor.

To finally end the nuclear threat, the US will want the North to hand over its bombs. But in exchange, North Korea will likely demand security guarantees from Washington and normal diplomatic relations between the two countries.

As early as Monday, the chief negotiators from the six nations involved in the nuclear talks North and South Korea, the US, China, Japan and Russia will meet in Beijing to begin discussions on the specifics of how North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programmes will be verified. The key element that requires verification is the amount of plutonium North Korea says it has produced. Officials say that may take several months to determine.

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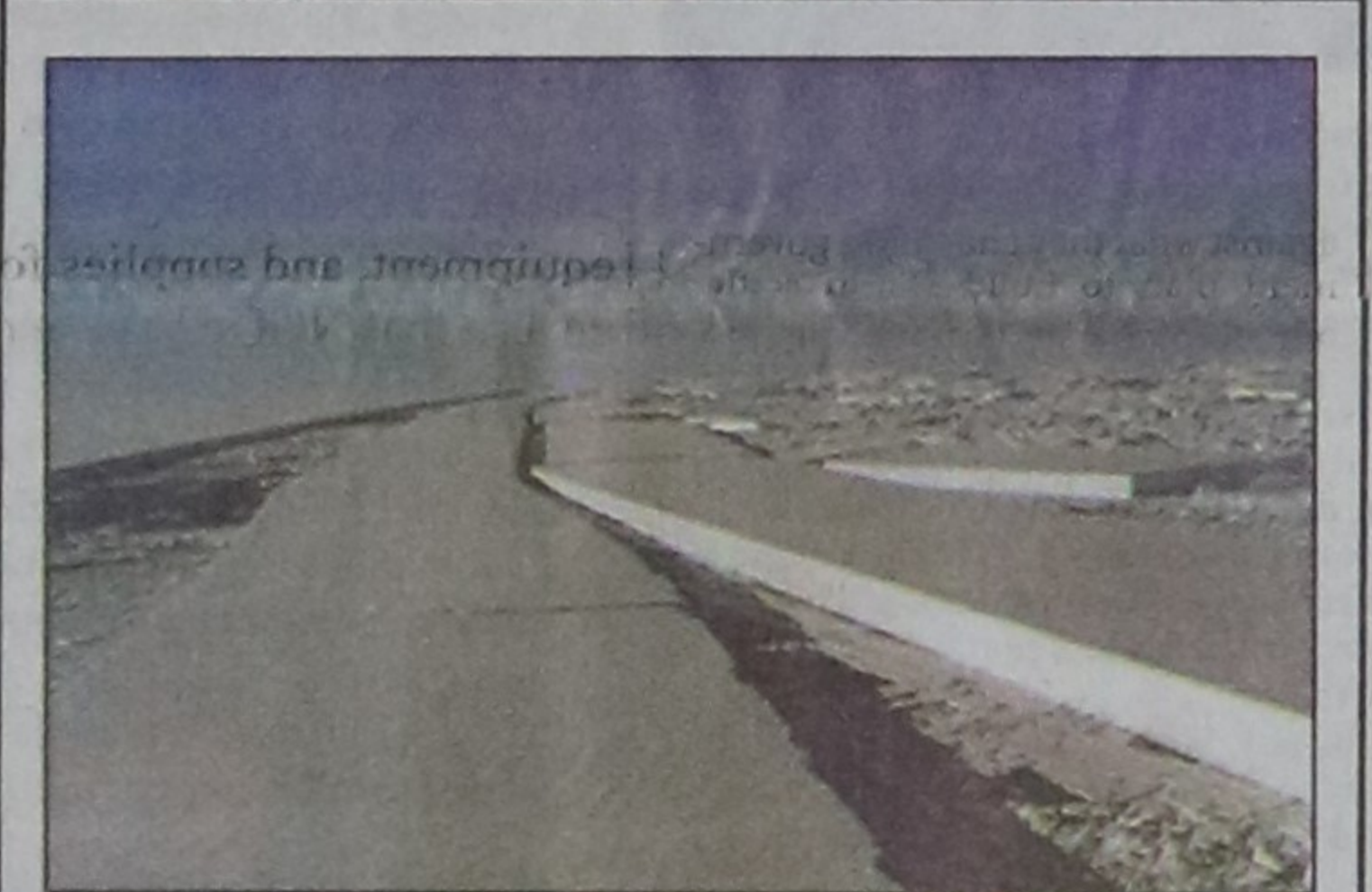
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File photo shows a chunk of ice that has started to break away from the Antarctic ice shelf. There could be a brief time this summer when there is no ice on the North Pole, a US scientist said Friday, blaming global warming that has melted the Arctic ice sheet over decades.

North Pole may have no ice this summer

Say US expert

AFP, Washington

There could briefly be no ice at the North Pole this summer, a US scientist said Friday, an event that would mark a new stage in the melting of the Arctic ice sheets due to global warming.

"We could have no ice at the North Pole at the end of this summer," Mark Serreze, a scientist with the National Snow and Ice Data Centre in Boulder, Colorado, told AFP in an interview.

"And the reason here is that the North Pole area right now is covered with very thin ice, the ice that tends to melt out in the summer."

If the ice, albeit briefly, were to break up completely this summer it would be the first time this had happened in human history.

Serreze put the chances of this occurring at 50 percent -- if it does happen, in September "it's possible" that ships could sail from Alaska right to the North Pole.

Last summer, melting ice allowed ships through the Arctic's Northern Passage linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans for longer than ever before.

Serreze pointed out that even if there were no ice left at the North Pole, there would be ice in other parts of the Arctic Ocean this summer.

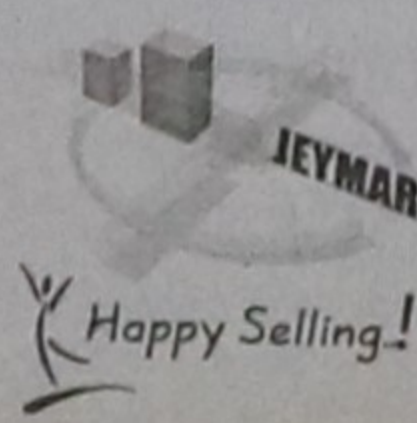
But he recognised the symbolism of an ice-free North Pole in the minds of the public, and said it was yet another indication of the environmental changes taking place because of global warming.

"There should be ice at the North Pole, and there might not be at the end of the summer and that is telling that something is wrong," he said.

"Clearly if you look over what we have seen in the past three years and where we were headed, we are in ... this long-term decline and we may have no ice at all in the Arctic Ocean in summer by 2030 or so," he said.

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