

# Obama urges world to tear down walls of division and hate

AFP, Paris

Barack Obama headed for Paris yesterday on a European tour that saw 200,000 cheering fans turn out in Berlin to hear the US presidential hopeful call for the world to tear down walls of division and hate.

The Democrat got a rock star welcome for his speech Thursday in Berlin's Tiergarten park, but there he was to make no public appearance except a press conference after meeting President Nicolas Sarkozy before going to London.

There are few votes for any US presidential candidate in being seen to be close to France. John Kerry, the Democratic nominee in 2004, was pilloried by some conservatives just because he could speak French.

But the arrival of the Illinois senator has sparked much excitement in France, where polls mirror those across Europe to show he is the candidate most people want to succeed President George W. Bush in the November vote.

"Obama" read the front-page headline Friday in the Liberation newspaper, which said that "the Democratic candidate fascinates the world and shows he has the makings of a president."

The election last year of the rightwing pro-US Sarkozy greatly improved US-French relations, which were poisoned by France's staunch opposition to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq under then president Jacques Chirac.

Sarkozy told Friday's edition of Le Figaro newspaper that 46-year-old Obama, whom he met in 2006 in Washington along with his 71-year-old Republican rival John McCain, was a "friend."

"Unlike my diplomatic advisors I never believed in Hillary Clinton's chances. I always believed that

Obama would be nominated," he added.

Obama's national security spokeswoman Wendy Morigi said: "President Sarkozy has made the bilateral Franco-American relationship and the transatlantic alliance a centerpiece of his presidency, and Senator Obama looks forward to discussing how to build on these important initiatives."

Repairing relations between the US and Europe -- strained over the Iraq war -- was a theme of Obama's Berlin speech, where he said that "the walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand."

"The walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christian and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down," he said, echoing former US president Ronald Reagan's 1987 call to tear down the Berlin Wall.

The Berlin event took the White House race abroad in a way never seen before, and confirmed Obama as a global political phenomenon.

It came during a Middle East and Europe tour -- that took him to Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Jordan -- designed to show voters back home that Obama is a safe pair of hands on foreign policy.

But the Berlin speech was short on specifics, and Obama's foes will likely accuse him of empty rhetoric.

McCain, a Vietnam veteran and former prisoner of war who has long been an influential voice on foreign policy and defence, took a swipe at his rival on Thursday, visiting a German sausage restaurant in Ohio.

He said he would love to give a speech in Berlin, but only as president.

## Drug cocktail boosts HIV survival by 13 years

AFP, Paris

Anti-HIV drugs have slashed death rates among people with the AIDS virus by nearly 40 percent since combination therapy was introduced in 1996, boosting their life expectancy by some 13 years, a study says.

It is the biggest-ever assessment into the effectiveness of highly active antiretroviral therapy -- the triple cocktail of drugs that suppress, but do not eradicate, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Publishing on Friday in the British weekly medical journal The Lancet, researchers report on 14 ongoing studies into more than 33,000 HIV-infected people living in Europe, Canada and the United States.

These people started antiretrovirals in one of three phases -- from 1996-1999; from 2000-2002; and from 2003-2005.

From 1996 to 2005, 2,056 patients died, but mortality fell by around 40 percent in the course of this period. Life expectancy at the start was 36.1 years but rose to 49.4 years at the end.

"These advances have transformed HIV from being a fatal disease, which was the reality for patients before the advent of combination treatment, into a long-term chronic condition," says the paper.

The team is headed by Robert Hogg, a professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada.

The study found that people who were treated earlier after infection and had a higher number of CD4 immune cells at the start of the therapy had a better life expectancy.

Despite the greater overall survival chances, there remained a big gap in life expectancy between people on antiretrovirals and the general population, the authors found.

In a rich country, an HIV-positive person starting the drugs at the age of 20 will on average live another 43 years, to the age of 63, while a non-infected person will survive to around 80, according to

## Serial blasts

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pioneer of India's outsourcing sector.

Soon after the blasts, the IT companies downed their shutters and asked their employees to go home, a representative for the software companies told AFP.

Bangalore has been relatively free of the militant attacks that have plagued other parts of the country, although one person was killed and four wounded in an Islamist attack at a premier science institute in the city in December 2005.

Intelligence sources said it was too early to say who may have been behind Friday's attacks.

"We are looking at the pattern of the explosions, and are trying to work out who is behind them and why," a federal intelligence Bureau official told AFP. "We hope to find out very soon."

this data.

The mortality figures culled in the study are not detailed enough to explain this discrepancy, the authors admit.

Nor -- given most people with HIV are under 50 -- are there yet any figures to compare survival among older HIV-infected people compared with non-infected counterparts.

## Returnee

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Since the visa was fake, the recruiting agent failed to provide him with any job after he reached Malaysia.

He returned to Bangladesh on May 22 this year after spending 10 months in Malaysia under the custody of a human rights organisation, Razzak said.

When he went to Azad's residence at Gopalpur yesterday with his uncle Muslim to get back the money he paid to Azad, the manpower agent and his two sons Rony and Mony beat him with iron rods, Razzak alleged.

When contacted, Officer-in-charge of Gopalpur Police Station Mohammad Ekhlassuddin said they knew nothing about the incident.

"If we receive any complaint, we shall take necessary steps," he added.

## Russian FM

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when he visited Moscow last year.

He also expressed appreciation for the Russian support in the energy sector and stated that Bangladesh was keen to procure fertiliser from Russia.

They also reviewed the current global situation, including the issues of Kosovo and Georgia.

Ifekhar told Sergey Lavrov that Bangladesh is a very responsible international actor and will continue to contribute to global stability which was necessary if countries like Bangladesh were to achieve their "development aspirations".

Meanwhile, speaking to the media in Singapore, Ifekhar also said Bangladesh was a peaceful and peace-loving country urged restraint on both Thailand and Cambodia in their border dispute over an ancient temple.

He also hoped that "the matter could be resolved through dialogue in the spirit of Asian solidarity".

"Both Thailand and Cambodia are our close friends and we find the dispute between them painful for us. We believe any bilateral dispute can be resolved peacefully through dialogue. Confrontations never help," he said.

The foreign adviser also welcomed the "Six Party Talks" on North Korea that took place in Singapore on the sidelines of the Asean Regional Forum, particularly the contact at the level of secretary of state of the US and the North Korean foreign minister.

"Like many others Bangladesh is pleased with this development and hopes that it will help ease tension," Ifekhar said.

## Flood

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people of these areas have started moving to higher grounds.

Meanwhile, erosion on the Jamuna has taken a serious turn for worse at the five upazilas. Around 300 homes in Sirajganj municipality have been swallowed up by the raging river.

Workers of WDB are dumping sacks of sand and rubble on the bank to protect the locality from erosion, WDB officials said.

Our correspondent in Netrakona reports: The flood situation in Netrakona is improving especially in the bordering areas of Durgapur and Kalmakanda. However, the situation is deteriorating in the low-lying areas, Netrakona WDB sources said.

The newly flooded unions are Kalmakanda Sadar, Pogla, Barkapon in Kalmakanda upazila and Jangail union in Durgapur upazila.

The water levels of the Someshwari, the Mogra, the Kongsha and the Dhanu are flowing above their danger levels.

River erosion has deteriorated on the Someshwari. A 2km stretch of road of the Shibganj-Ranikong road in Durgapur upazila, the only link between Durgapur upazila headquarters and bordering villages, went into the Someshwari.

Sources said most of the houses in Kalmakanda upazila headquarters have gone under two to three feet of floodwater.

Many areas of Mohanganj and Khaliyauri upazila headquarters have also been inundated by floodwater.

Road communication between the district headquarters and Durgapur upazila Sadar has snapped as a portion of a road near Janzail Bazar was damaged by floodwater. Road communication between Netrakona district headquarters and Kalmakanda upazila Sadar is also disrupted.

A correspondent in Munshiganj reports: More low-lying areas of the district went under water due to the rise in the water level of the Padma yesterday.

District Relief Officer Rawshan Alam said they are ready to face the situation with Tk 97,000 and 49 tonnes of rice in their relief fund.

## Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

each other for the incident.

AL General Secretary in the US Sajjadur Rahman blamed President Prof Khalid Hasan for creating chaos at the airport and demanded his expulsion, News World reports.

The other group blamed Sajjad, Mamudunnabi Baki, Faruk Hamid, Syed Bosarat Ali and Dr Siddiqur Rahman for the incident.

Ena, however, reported that the incident took place after Khalid was expelled from the party for his alleged involvement in anti-organisational activities.

Hasina blasted the two groups of agitating leaders and activists, saying, "Do you want to tarnish the image of Bangladesh?" Then she left the airport.

Earlier in the morning, an anonymous caller informed the airport authorities that a chaotic situation would occur if more than five persons are allowed to enter the airport to receive Hasina.

Hasina is supposed to undergo eye treatment and a few medical tests in Washington. Dr Hasan Mahmud, who is accompanying Hasina in the USA, told the press that she is likely to go to Florida for eye treatment and then fly for London again.

Hasina arrived in America on June 12 for treatment after she was released on bail. She left for London via Canada on July 6.

## Bogra GBB

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pay gas bills since going into operation last April.

The ministry said a gas-supply agreement was signed between PGCL and GBB Power Ltd on July 3, 2007 to supply gas to the 20 MW power plant.

According to the contract, GBB was supposed to submit an amount equivalent to three months' gas bills as security deposit before commencement of gas supply.

However, in view of the prevailing power situation in the country and a request made by the GBB to allow one week's time to submit the security deposit, PGCL commenced the supply of gas on March 24, 2008, upon receipt of an undertaking from GBB, the clarification said.

But, GBB failed to comply with their commitment and did not submit the security deposit on time. Subsequently, repeated reminders were issued to GBB to deposit the security money and also pay the monthly bills against consumption of gas.

Meanwhile, bills for the months of April and May 2008 were sent to them on May 5, 2008 and June 6, 2008 respectively for payment.

But GBB neither submitted security deposit nor paid the bills. However, PGCL received a bank guarantee on July 24 amounting to Tk 2.5 crore. The arrears bills are yet to be paid by GBB.

**OUR REPLY**  
The ministry did not contradict any information of the report. It only added a new piece of information that the PGCL received a bank guarantee on July 24, the very day that the report was published.

## Graft proceedings

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For instance, he said, the HC has already rejected a petition filed by AL President Sheikh Hasina for dismissal of the barge-mounted power plant graft case against her.

"She argued that as per section 6(A) of Criminal Law Amendment Act-1958, trial of a criminal case has to be completed within 60 days since a court's taking cognisance of it. After hearing the details, the High Court rejected the petition since it found the provision of 60 days for completing trial proceedings was not mandatory," added.

Khurshid said from now on the ACC should issue gazette notifications on the appointment of investigation officers on time and be more cautious in issuing notices to the graft suspects and their family members and giving its officials permission to file a case.

He also observed that the cases would have been running smoothly had the ACC counsels been more sincere, vigilant and efficient in convincing the court that the provision of 60 days for submitting the investigation reports was not mandatory.

Some 30 high profile political leaders including Sheikh Hasina, Abdul Jalil, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, M Shamsul Islam, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Mirza Abbas, Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, AKM Rahmat Ullah, AHM Mostafa Kamal alias Lotus Kamal, Lutfuzzaman Babar, Engineer Mosharrar Hossain, Salman Rahman, Ismail Hossain and Mirza Azam have filed petitions with the HC for bail as well as dismissal of the cases against them.

On July 21, an HC bench comprising Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad fixed July 27 for hearing the petitions following a time

prayer by Attorney General (AG) Salahuddin Ahmed.

The AG told the HC that as per a ruling issued by the Appellate Division it could not hear the bail prayers of the accused in the criminal cases filed under the Emergency Power Rules.

To buttress his argument, he cited the apex court's staying of five HC orders granting bail to the accused on July 20.

The HC bench asked the AG whether it could consider bail prayers of those without specific allegations against them. "Will the accused suffer in jail for years without trial if the investigation reports are not submitted within 60 days?" the court asked.

In reply, AG Salahuddin said he would make submissions interpreting these matters, but he needed time for that. The court then adjourned hearing on the petitions.

## Ershad

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meeting with Hasina in London recently.

The former president avoided a straight reply to a query on the meeting with Hasina during his stay in London.

He just said: "Keep it aside." Ershad, however, favoured upazila election before the general polls in a stark contradiction to the position of the Awami League.

The Awami League has said it will not endorse any plan for holding upazila election before the parliamentary election.

Ershad said if the date for upazila election is once announced, it will be very difficult to foil it.

"I think it would be good for all if all political parties take part in it."

He, however, said the matter of contesting the upazila election will be discussed in the grand alliance.

## Gulf, Saudi steps

FROM PAGE 1

NHRS, Dubai-based Gulf News reported on June 14.

The NHRS study says some provisions in the sponsorship system are contrary to the principles of Sharia as well as those of international human rights conventions and charters.

Against this backdrop, Saudi Arabia came up with a proposal for establishing companies to deal with foreign workers. Around 1.7 million Bangladeshis work in the kingdom.

Mohammad Al Dowais, director general for Legal Affairs of Saudi Arabia, said replacing sponsorship system with companies will help solve many problems faced by foreign workers, Gulf News reported.

At present, Saudis hiring foreign workers are their sponsors and are supposed to shoulder the responsibilities in this regard. But the new idea is that private companies will become labour pools and sponsors of foreign workers, and will supply these workers to citizens or corporate companies, according to a report in the Arab News.

Under the fresh move, individuals or corporate employers will not have to deal with recruiting agencies, labour ministry, and embassies of the labour sending countries or the like. Malaysia established such companies called "outsourcing agencies", which however have been severely criticised by migrants rights groups for involvement of huge black money and exploitation of workers. This also led to a ban by Malaysia on hiring workers from Bangladesh.

When contacted, Prof CR Abrar, coordinator of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit of Dhaka University, said, "Saudi Arabia's proposal seems to be creating another tier in the labour migration process."

"Creating labour companies is unlikely to solve labour problems, rather it may worsen the situation... We need to create such a mechanism so that all the middlemen in migration process is eliminated and workers can get visas directly from the employers."

He noted that recent experience of Malaysia, where such labour companies have been created to deal with foreign workers, is not good.

"We should therefore discuss the issues at length with experts and government representatives from the labour sending and receiving countries to get the best out of the system to be established."

Prof Abrar said NSHR's proposal to form a government authority with offices across the country to directly look after labour issues would be appreciable. "Both the workers and employers should be made accountable."

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) President Ghulam Mustafa said establishing companies to create labour pools will lead to a situation in which they will snatch part of the workers' hard-earned money.

"These companies will be like parasites," he said. The government should also stop sending workers to Malaysia through outsourcing companies, he added.

Haque has gathered many BNP men under the Sammitia Nagorik Committee, headed by district BNP's former vice president advocate Nurul Haque, to run his campaign. But there are no Jamaat or other alliance men on the committee. The Jamaat-e-Islami played an important role in Haque's 2003 mayoral bid.

No Sylhet City unit BNP leaders were either seen at the press conference Wednesday from where he laid out his election manifesto. Haque's campaign has, however, ruled out any party feud.

On Haque's claim that he has had the support of his party's central committee, city unit BNP secretary general Nasim Hossain said such claims are baseless as the party has boycotted the election.

Senior BNP leader and former Sylhet pourasabha chairman AFM Kamal is also running for the mayor's office. He presents himself as an independent candidate though his campaign is manned by active BNP men.

Kamal also ran in the 2003 election, contributing to the defeat of his party nominated candidate MA Haque.

As the trouble continued, Begumganj UNO Monjurul Mannan along with additional policemen and teachers of the BATI went to the spot and tried to calm the students down.

But the students did not pay heed to the request and again started pelting the law enforcers with bricksbats, prompting them (police) to charge batons and fire tear gas and rubber bullets.

Sources said the clash left at least 50 people including the UNO, police and teachers of the institute injured.

The injured were admitted to Noakhali General Hospital, Begumganj upazila health complex and to different local clinics.

Police arrested 27 students and employees of the BATI in connection with the incident and filed two cases with Begumganj Police Station.

Internal feuds

FROM PAGE 16  
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## Ramadan items

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Prices of bashed, which is used in preparing different iftar items, rose by Tk 5-10 in retail markets. A kg of bashed (different varieties) was selling Tk 65-90 kg yesterday.

Prices of spices also rose. Price of cumin increased by Tk 40 per kg and that of cinnamon by Tk 30 per kg. Other spices were also selling at higher prices yesterday compared to those a week ago.

A trader said, "Every year, prices of these items usually go up about a month before Ramadan, but this year their prices started rising a bit earlier."

Both wholesalers and retailers hoard items which are used on a massive scale during the Ramadan, he added.

Meantime, green chilli, cucumber, tomato and aubergine, also used as iftar items, saw a hike in their prices over the last week. Prices of these items increased by Tk 2-10 per kg.

A kg of green chilli was selling at Tk 40-45 yesterday, rising from Tk 30-40 earlier.

Though the price of non-brand edible oil came down by Tk 2-3 per litre that of branded edible oil remained stable.

Nasim Reza, an employee of a private bank making purchases at a kitchen, said, "When prices of these items have already gone up, we do not know what will happen during the Ramadan."

OUR correspondent from Chittagong adds: Prices of different varieties of edible oil marked fall in the retail markets yesterday.

Price of soyabean and palm oil dropped by Tk 2 per kilogram.

One kilogram of non-brand soyabean oil was selling at Tk 116 while it was Tk 118 to Tk 120 a day before.

Retailers at different kitchen markets like Reazuddin Bazar, Karnaphuli Market and Bakshshirhat were found selling palm oil at Tk 98 per kg while the price was Tk 100 on Thursday.

## Begumganj clash

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the student was killed under the wheels of a speeding bus.

With the spreading of the rumour, the students of the institute came out of their dormitories, damaged several vehicles and put up a barricade on the road.

On information, police rushed to the spot and requested the students to remove the barricade. At one stage, chase and counter chase took place between the students and police.

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