

India hopeful of wrapping up N-deal by Sept: Sibal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

India is "hopeful" of getting the support of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and wrapping up its nuclear accord with the US by September, Science and Technology Minister K. J. Somaiya said before leaving for Finland and Sweden.

"I will be going to Finland and Sweden tonight. The response is positive," Sibal told IANS in an interview here when asked about whether India was confident of getting the support of the 45-nation NSG for the deal which seeks to re-open doors of global nuclear business for India.

"Let's see what happens. We are

hopeful they will support us," Sibal, who returned from Geneva Friday morning, said when asked about his impression of sceptics in the NSG who have some reservations about the nuclear deal.

Sibal confirmed that the IAEA board was meeting on Aug 1 to decide on approving the India-specific safeguards pact and expressed confidence that the proposed pact will mass muster with the UN watchdog.

"The process is on. Beyond that I don't want to say anything right now," Sibal added on a cautious note.

"Hopefully, we should be able to," Sibal replied when asked whether India was confident of wrapping up the nuclear deal with

the US by September as Washington indicated two days ago.

Sibal also underlined that India was hopeful of getting support of China with whom the country's relations have grown significantly over the last few years.

Every country counts in the NSG as it operates by consensus.

A couple of days ago, US ambassador David Mulford had said that the US was keen to convene the meeting of the NSG in the first week of August after the approval of the India-specific safeguards agreement by the IAEA board at its meeting Aug 1.

The NSG process is likely to be completed in August so that the 123 agreement can be endorsed by the

Congress in September before Washington and New Delhi ink the bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement.

Sibal is among a handful of ministers and diplomats who have been deputed by the government to go to various NSG countries and allay their concerns about some aspects of the nuclear deal which they suspect will impinge negatively on global non-proliferation regime.

Sibal's brief is to convince two of the difficult countries in the 45-nation NSG -- Finland and Sweden -- which are known for strong non-proliferation sensitivities and have serious reservations about the very use of nuclear energy on safety and environmental grounds.

CPM denies linking Speaker's office to cash-for-vote scam

PTI, New Delhi

Senior CPM leader Sitaram Yechury yesterday strongly rebutted a report quoting him as saying that the Speaker's office was involved in the alleged cash-for-vote scam.

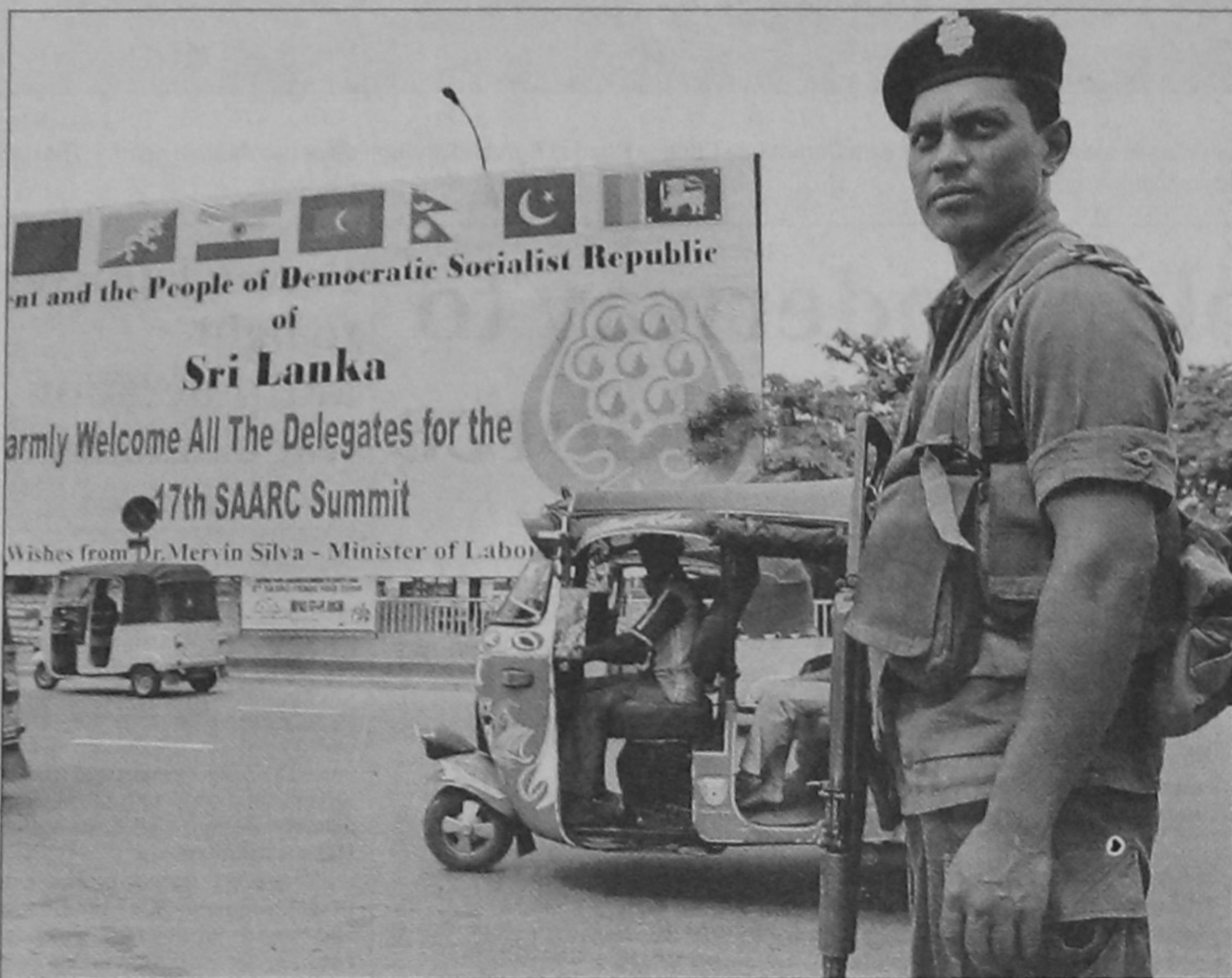
"This is a complete distortion of what I had said," Yechury said from Bangalore over phone.

Yechury had actually said, "we understand the tapes on the allurement offered to the MPs have been sent to the Speaker's office. The truth should be out and only then will the credibility of the system be restored. Investigations if any, should be done at the earliest."

He said he had not at all mentioned anything about the involvement of the Speaker's office.



An Indian child paddles through floodwaters on a banana raft in the Matmara area of North Lakhimpur district, some 470km east of Guwahati yesterday. A third wave of monsoon floods have hit the Assam state with many districts affected including Majuli Island, the biggest river island in the world. Vast tracts of land have been inundated forcing residents of some 450 villages to take shelter on higher ground.



A Sri Lankan soldier stands alert as auto-rickshaws drive by in Colombo yesterday. Colombo has beefed up security in the capital of 650,000 residents ahead of next week's two-day meeting of heads of eight South Asian leaders.

4 civilians killed in Nato airstrikes in Afghanistan

AP, Kabul

Nato forces on Saturday fired on a vehicle that wouldn't stop at a checkpoint in Afghanistan's volatile south, killing four civilians and wounding three others, the alliance said.

Civilian casualties have been a sore point between Afghanistan's government and international forces that operate here. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has implored Nato and US-led coalition troops to avoid killing civilians, whose deaths undermine support for his already weak central government.

The latest deaths occurred in Helmand province in the south, the hub of the resurgent Taliban militant movement.

Nato said the vehicle was directed to stop but drove on. Nato forces then fired warning shots away from the vehicle but were "forced to fire at it when it refused to stop, fearing an insurgent attack," an alliance statement said.

Nato medical personnel tended to the wounded civilians,

including taking them by helicopter to a hospital. The bodies of the dead were taken to their village by two civilians who were not hurt during the encounter.

Nato said it "deeply regrets this unnecessary incident caused by the reckless actions of the vehicle driver."

Also, the US-led coalition said its troops had killed an insurgent while hunting for a militant.

The troops were searching compounds in Kapisa province northeast of Kabul on Friday when they encountered a militant who threatened them, a coalition statement said. It did not say if the militant killed was the one they sought.

Separately, police killed a district Taliban commander in northern Takhar province, on Friday, the Interior Ministry said. Mullah Osman was killed after militants attacked a police checkpoint near a coal mine, a ministry's statement said.

Afghanistan faces intensifying militancy nearly seven years after the US-led invasion ousted the hard-line Islamic Taliban movement from power.

Maoists set conditions for leading Nepal govt

THE KATHMANDU POST/ ANN, Kathmandu

In a new political development, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist has put forth three conditions for taking the initiative to form the next government.

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, at a meeting Thursday of the 25 political parties represented in the Constituent Assembly (CA), categorically set out the three conditions:

i) the recent alliance of the Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) must end;

ii) the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the 25 political parties must feature the majority agenda of the Maoists; and

iii) all political parties must give a written commitment that the next government will function unhindered for at least two years.

During the meeting, Dahal

expressed concern whether the recently forged alliance was just an electoral one or political.

"If it was a political alliance, we don't see any point in taking the initiative to form the next government," a party leader quoted Dahal as saying during the meeting.

Dahal also warned that his party will choose to remain in the opposition if there is no consensus on his party's conditions.

"If there is a consensus on our conditions, we are ready to take initiative to form the next government," Dahal told media persons after the meeting.

Leaders of the NC, CPN-UML and MPRF however said the alliance will not break up though they are ready to discuss the other conditions of the Maoists.

"The alliance will not break, rather it will expand further until the drafting of a new constitution," said NC leader Minendra Rijal, adding, "The Maoists also can join the alliance."

He said the Maoists can't claim

the leadership of the next government as it failed to continue the politics of consensus during the presidential election.

"We told the Maoists that any political party can take the initiative to form the government," he said.

CPN-UML leader Bhim Rawal echoed Rijal on the issue of continuing the alliance and said, "Further discussion among the political parties is required on the Maoist conditions."

A majority of small political parties including Tarai Madhes Democratic Party (TMDP), Sadbhawana Party and CPN (ML) proposed, however, that the Maoists should get an opportunity to lead the next government.

Hridayesh Tripathi of TMDP said the alliance of NC, CPN-UML and MPRF was forged for a specific purpose and it must now end.

He said the Maoists, being the largest political party, have the right to lead the next government.

Brown faces mounting calls to quit

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, hit by a third crushing by-election defeat in as many months, could be forced to quit unless he reverses his government's flagging fortunes, media said yesterday.

Brown's governing Labour Party saw the Scottish National Party (SNP) overturn its 13,507 majority in the Glasgow East constituency in a vote Thursday, indicating it is now haemorrhaging support in its heartland.

Labour members of parliament, fearful for their jobs at the next general election, were now urging senior ministers to tell Brown to step down or face being ousted after they return from holidays in September, newspapers said.

Most carried unattributed quotes apparently from the same sources, blaming the prime minister for their current woes, despite a united show of support Friday from his senior Cabinet colleagues.

One of the quotes from an unnamed minister said: "We cannot go any lower. We are at rock bottom. We are not a one-nation party any more. We are now a no-nation party."

Another quote read: "It's become clear that no-one can do any worse than Gordon. If it's happening in Scotland, what chance do we have in London and the southeast (of England)?"

Justice Secretary Jack Straw and the former defence secretary Geoff Hoon were both said to have been sounded out to approach Brown to get him to

stand down or face being ousted.

Both The Sun tabloid and the middle-market Daily Mail -- both actively courted by Labour because of their perceived influence on voters -- acknowledged the threat to Brown but held back from calling him to quit.

The Daily Mail's political editor said Glasgow East had left Brown facing "a battle for survival". "All talk now is not if, but when, an attempt is made to unseat him," he added.

In an editorial the newspaper said Brown's job was safe for now, but the knives would be sharpened in the run-up to Labour's annual conference on September 20, unless he turned things around in the next two months.

Hyderabad police to check for link with Bangalore blasts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Hyderabad

Investigations into eight terror blasts in Bangalore on Friday, which killed a woman and injured seven people, could be crucial for the ongoing probe in Hyderabad as the same terrorist groups are believed to be involved in recent attacks in both cities.

The bomb blasts in Bangalore may bring back to focus the probe into three bomb explosions that rocked this southern metropolis, that is fast rivaling Bangalore as an outsourcing hub, last year killing over 50 people. The investigators into the terror acts are yet to make any breakthrough.

Investigating agencies could not go beyond blaming some terror groups based in Pakistan and Bangladesh for the Hyderabad terror acts and picking up a few suspects.

Close shave for Pawar as plane crew forgets to shut door

PTI, New Delhi

A major air accident was averted when a Jet Airways flight with Union Minister Sharad Pawar on board returned to Delhi airport safely after it was found that a rear door was not locked properly.

Taking a serious note of last evening's incident, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) ordered suspension of at least two cabin crew members of the Delhi-Mumbai flight (9W362), which was carrying 122 passengers and the crew members, official sources said.

The private carrier immediately carried out the orders, suspending the two crewmembers, a Jet Airways spokesman said.

When the Boeing-737 reached a height of about 5,000 metres after taking off at 1725 hours, the cabin crew on the rear of the plane informed the pilot that they could hear "a hissing sound and see the sky through one corner of the door".

The Commander of the plane immediately reported emergency to the Delhi air traffic control, which asked them to burn fuel in the air in order to make a safe landing.



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05. Tender will be received in the Head Office up to 12:30 hours on 28.08.2008 and will be opened on the same day at 14:00 hours in presence of Bidders who may like to be present. No Tender shall be received after the above designated date and time.


06. Tenderers must visit the site and get acquainted with conditions of the site, the scope of works and available space before tendering.

07. For any clarification regarding preparation and submission of Tender the tenderers may contact the undersigned or the consultant of the project, BCL-DECON, House No. 95A, Road No. 4, Block-F, Banani, Dhaka-1213. Telephone: 986 2713-6.

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