

India-France nuclear deal likely this month

India and France could sign a major nuclear trade agreement at the end of this month, but only once a landmark India-US nuclear pact has been ratified by the US Congress, a minister said here yesterday.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will attend an EU-India summit in the French city of Marseille and is expected to hold bilateral talks in Paris on September 29.

According to Ashwani Kumar, the Indian minister of state for industry, the nuclear agreement has already been drawn up.

The documents are ready for signatures. When it comes to bilateral agreement, I see no difficulty, Kumar told AFP.

"We hope it should be possible by the end of this month," he added.

The details of the accord are believed to have been finalised back in January when French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited India.

Last week, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which controls the export and sale of nuclear technology worldwide, amended its rules to allow India to buy equipment and expertise to fuel its fast-growing economy.



More and more diarrhoeal patients are coming to ICDDR,B at Mahakhali following the outbreak of cholera-like diarrhoea in different parts of the city. The picture was taken yesterday.

Bush to welcome Karzai Sept 26

AFP, Washington

US President George W Bush will host President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan on September 26 for talks on the war amid tensions with Pakistan over cross-border violence, the White House said yesterday.

Bush "looks forward to discussing with President Karzai the state of the international community's efforts to improve security, governance, and reconstruction in Afghanistan," spokeswoman Dana Perino said in a statement.

The talks -- their first since a May meeting in Egypt -- will come after the US president attends his final UN General Assembly before leaving office in January 2009.

"This meeting provides President Bush and President Karzai the opportunity to discuss security, the expansion of the Afghan National Army, the upcoming Strategic Partnership talks, and the implementation of political and economic reforms," said Perino.

It also comes amid tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which accuses its neighbor of tolerating extremists who cross the border to attack US- and NATO-led forces as well as Afghan targets.

88pc sanitation coverage achieved in rural areas

BSS, Dhaka

Sanitation coverage has been improving substantially in rural areas of the country since 2003 despite challenges in achieving 100 percent success by 2010 due to natural calamities.

Officials of the water and sanitation wing of Local Government Division said on Thursday that sanitation coverage in rural areas has already reached 88.22 percent in June this year against 28.77 percent achieved during the period of baseline survey in 2003.

Quoting the survey report, they said sanitation coverage in the municipal areas went up to 88.12 percent in 2008 from 33.21 percent in 2003 and in the city corporation areas to 85.03 percent in 2008 from 69.92 percent in 2003.

The improvement in sanitation coverage was possible due to increased public awareness and their motivation towards achieving sustained health benefits, they added.

The baseline survey in 2003

revealed an appalling scenario in sanitation and set a national goal to attain total coverage by 2010. An expert team prepared a strategic plan in this regard.

According to the survey, only 33 percent households had hygienic latrines while 25 percent had unhygienic ones in 2003. Besides, 55 million people representing about 42 percent households did not use any form of latrines during the period.

The issue of sanitation received international attention in 2000, when the UN General Assembly endorsed eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), out of which two are directly linked to sanitation and environmental sustainability.

Shams Uddin Ahmed, deputy secretary of the ministry of local government, now engaged in formulating sanitation policies and strategies, told the news agency that frequent natural calamities made it difficult to ensure 100 percent sanitation coverage in the country.

"It is just like a monkey's vain effort to climb up a slippery

bamboo," he said, adding that sanitation services have been disrupted due to impacts of natural disasters, particularly floods and cyclones.

He further said, "The government has made it compulsory for the upazila administration to spend 20 percent funds of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for raising the sanitation coverage."

The government, he said, decided that 90 percent of the allocation must be used for procurement of sanitary latrines for free distribution among the hardcore poor.

Shams Uddin said the government is now proceeding with the "horizontal learning" programme under which steps have been taken to promote the best practices of sanitation from people to people, house to house and village to village.

The programme is now being implemented in nine upazilas and two more upazilas will be brought under the programme very soon, he added.

Ban hopeful of consensus on peace, security in UNSC

PTI, United Nations

Admitting that major powers in the Security Council have been unable to reach agreement on some of the key issues, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said it would be "too hasty" to characterise the situation as "going back to so-called cold war."

Addressing a press conference yesterday, he expressed his "sincere" hope that they would be able to agree on the issues of peace and security which constitute their primary responsibility.

The question came up in the context of sharp differences between Russia and western powers over Kosovo and Georgia. Russia still regards Kosovo to be a part of Serbia but the western powers have recognised its independence. Russia has recognised two breakaway regions of Georgia which western powers assert are part of the country.

US MISSILE STRIKES

Pak army vows to safeguard country's territorial integrity

AFP, AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's army vowed yesterday to safeguard the country's territorial integrity under the leadership of its new democratic government, an official statement said.

The statement came at the end of a two-day meeting of army commanders, amid nationwide anger over a raid by US ground troops last week and repeated missile attacks in the troubled tribal regions bordering Afghanistan.

The main opposition party yesterday called on parliament to meet in a joint session to devise a strategy to deal with cross-border attacks after the latest suspected US missile strike that killed 12 people in Pakistan's northwest.

American forces in Afghanistan are stepping up efforts to hit Taliban and al-Qaeda militants in what they call safe havens in Pakistan's border regions, despite stiff protests from Islamabad.

Chaudhry Nisar Ali, a senior leader of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's opposition party, demanded the government convene a joint session of parliament to discuss and devise a strategy on what he called an increasing and alarming number of the US strikes inside Pakistan.

"This is very serious and very concerning to us," he said. Two intelligence officials told The Associated Press that missiles struck a home near Miran Shah, the main town in the North Waziristan tribal region, before dawn Friday.

The meeting of the top brass was chaired by army chief General Ashfaq Kayani, a day after he criticised cross-border raids by US-led coalition forces, officials said.

Addressing the commanders Kayani said that "all elements of the National Power under the new democratic leadership will safe-

guard the territorial integrity of Pakistan with full support and backing of the people of Pakistan," the statement issued by the military said.

Kayani on Wednesday said that the country would defend its sovereignty "at all cost" and no external force would be allowed to conduct operations inside Pakistan.

The cross-border raid last week by US-led coalition troops based in neighbouring Afghanistan, killed 15 people. Pakistan's government condemned the raid as "shameful," saying that only civilians had been targeted.

In Washington, US military chief Admiral Michael Mullen said Wednesday he had ordered the military to draw up a new strategy that encompasses insurgent safe havens in Pakistan.

Amid strained relations between two key war on terror allies, Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani Thursday endorsed General Kayani's criticism of the US raids in the tribal belt.

Mediterranean diet helps ward off strokes, cancer: Study

AFP, Paris

The so-called Mediterranean diet cuts the risk of heart disease, cancer and neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's, according to research released yesterday.

Piece-meal evidence over the last three decades has shown that a diet rich in grains, fruit, vegetables and olive oil but stingy on meat and dairy promotes health.

But a meta-study published in the British Medical Journal is the first to sift through all this data in an attempt to quantify the overall benefits.

"Our findings support a simple recommendation: eat in a more Mediterranean way because it reduces the incidence of chronic disease," the lead researcher, Francesco Sofi of the University of Florence, told AFP by phone.

Pouring over a dozen scientific surveys conducted since 1966 and involving more than 1.5 million people, Sofi and a team of researchers in Italy created a scale of one to nine corresponding to different

food groups. Someone who consumed all the healthiest foodstuffs and largely avoided the harmful ones -- a theoretically perfect Mediterranean diet -- would score a perfect nine, he explained.

The study found that a bump of two points anywhere in the scale -- moving, say, from zero to two, or from six to eight -- corresponded to a "significant" reduction in overall mortality," Sofi said.

When broken down by disease, such a shift in dietary habits lowered the risk of death from cardiovascular disease by nine percent and from cancer by six percent.

The study also evaluated a recent set of findings on the impact of diet on neurodegenerative disease, and concluded that going Mediterranean decreased the incidence of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's by 13 percent.

These results are "clinically relevant for public health," and suggest that getting one's daily calorie intake from these food

groups could play an important role in preventing major chronic diseases, Sofi said.

Despite growing evidence of its benefits, some specialists up to now have been reluctant to fully endorse the Mediterranean way.

"We need more studies to find out whether the diet itself or other lifestyle factors account for the lower deaths from heart disease," the American Heart Association says on its website.

Ironically, most of the more than dozen countries ringing the Mediterranean Sea are slowly abandoning their traditional foods in favour of more meat, saturated fats and processed foods, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

"The European diet has become too fat, too salty and too sweet," Josef Schmidhuber, an economist at the FAO, said earlier this month in a statement. "The traditional balance of foods found in southern Europe and Northern Africa" is declining into a moribund state," he said.

James P Grant School of Public Health BRAC University Admission to MPH Programme

BRAC University James P. Grant School of Public Health (BSPH) is now accepting applications from Bangladeshi nationals for its fifth Masters of Public Health (MPH) Programme beginning in February, 2009.

Features of the MPH Programme:

- MPH is a 51 credits programme which runs for 12 months, full-time (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
- Multi-disciplinary in design, the programme emphasizes development of the following public health competencies: epidemiology, biostatistics, medical anthropology, health systems management, health economics and health care financing, health communication, public health nutrition, demography, reproductive health, aging, and non-communicable diseases.
- Current faculty come from BRAC University, ICDDR,B, Columbia University (USA), Harvard University (USA), Johns Hopkins University (USA), George Washington University (USA), Karolinska Institute (Sweden), London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), and University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands).
- To facilitate experiential learning, the programme is residential, of which the first 6-month semester is spent in the rural setting of BRAC's Training and Resource Centre in Savar.
- The second semester is taught at ICDDR, B, Dhaka, where the students receive access to their many facilities including library, laboratories and field sites.

Fees:

- Total cost of the course for Bangladeshi students is taka 150,000 (including tuition and living).
- The School has separate policies for other developing countries and high income countries. (For detail visit <http://sph.bracu.ac.bd/>).

Admission requirements:

The MPH is particularly suited to individuals who wish to build or further enhance their career in public health or allied areas. Candidates fulfilling the following criteria are eligible to apply:

- A Bachelor's/ Master's degree (at least 16 years of education) in Medicine, Nursing, or any physical, biological or social sciences. Excellent academic records with no third division or with GPA of less than 3.0 (out of 4)
- Proficiency in English (written and spoken): A minimum TOEFL score of 250 on computer-based test or IELTS of 6.5 is desirable.
- At least 1 year experience in health related work.
- Computer literacy is must; skill in using data analysis software will be an advantage.
- Candidates must also attend (i) a written test in Logical Reasoning, Basic Arithmetic and English, (ii) Group interview and (iii) Individual interview.

**Application deadline:** October 08, 2008. Only short listed candidates will be called for written test and interviews. Application forms may be downloaded from the website or collected from BRAC University Admissions Office. For further inquiries please visit <http://sph.bracu.ac.bd/> (Tel. +88 (02) 8824051-4 Ext: 4164). Applications should include completed application form, detailed CV, and 2 copies of recent passport size photographs. Please mention "MPH programme 2009-10" on top of the envelope.

Applications should be sent to: Shahaduz Zaman, Ph.D. Coordinator, MPH Programme, School of Public Health, BRAC University, 66 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212 or email to [mrityunjay@bracuuniversity.ac.bd](mailto:mrityunjay@bracuuniversity.ac.bd) (PDF format preferred).

New Zealand PM sets Nov date for general election

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark called general elections for November 8 Friday with her Labour Party behind in opinion polls amid a slowing economy and her foreign minister facing the axe.

Clark, bidding for a fourth straight victory, told a press conference she believed the campaign would be a battle of trust.

"It is about which leader and which major party we New Zealanders trust our families' and country's future with," she said.

Opinion polls have shown Labour trailing the main opposition National Party for several months, although the gap narrowed to 6.5 percentage points at the start of September from 16 points earlier in the year.



As acute water crisis grips Maghbazar in the city, Wasa starts distributing drinking water to the residents of the area. People wait in a queue in front of Maghbazar Wireless Pump Station yesterday to collect water.

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