

## Russia insists its nukes are secure

AP, Moscow

Russia insisted Friday its nuclear arsenal is secure, angrily rejecting US allegations that tens of thousands of aging Soviet weapons may not be fully accounted for.

The Foreign Ministry described US Defence Secretary Robert Gates' remarks on uncertainties about the old Soviet arsenal as being "groundless insinuations."

The ministry stressed that all nuclear weapons in Russia have been under reliable protection since the 1991 Soviet collapse despite the nation's economic turmoil.

"Despite all the difficulties our country faced in the beginning of the 1990s, standards of security and physical protection of Russian nuclear arsenals remained high," the ministry said in a statement.

"There have been no 'leaks' of nuclear weapons."

The angry statement reflected a growing chill in Russia-US ties badly strained over US missile defence plans, Russia's war in Georgia in August and other issues.

## Aid trickles in to Pak quake zone

### Disease spreads among survivors

AFP, Wam

Hundreds of children left homeless in quake-hit southwest Pakistan are suffering from potentially deadly diseases, a health official said yesterday, as aid trickled in to the remote region.

Relief goods began reaching devastated villages in mountainous Baluchistan province, more than two days after the 6.4-magnitude quake struck, killing up to 300 people and leaving thousands more homeless.

As foreign governments and humanitarian organisations pledged money and support for the relief effort, volunteers on the ground included Islamist militants, finding their strong faith a help in the deeply conservative area.

But strong aftershocks kept thousands of people whose mud-brick houses were flattened sleeping in the open in sub-zero temperatures, exposing children and the elderly to sickness.

"Due to the cold hundreds of children are being treated for pneumonia, abdominal diseases, diarrhoea and chest problems," the district health officer of the stricken hill town of Ziarat, Ayub Kakar, told AFP.

Tents, blankets and clothes for people sleeping in the open in villages near Ziarat were still in short supply as winter sets in. Medicines and antibiotics were also lacking, he added.

"We fear the death toll will rise. Such diseases, if not treated in time, are life-threatening," Kakar said.

Most of the population in the impoverished region are children, he added, estimating that between 25,000 and 30,000 of them were affected, including psychologically.

Children could be seen running after cars on the road adjoining the affected areas begging for food and drink, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, militant groups, some of whom were among the first on the scene after the 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan that killed 74,000 people, found favour in remote villages, distributing food, medicine and shelter.

One of them, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, has been listed by the United States as a "terrorist organisation" because is the political wing of the outlawed Kashmiri militant group

Lashkar-e-Taiba.

A Jamaat-ud-Dawa volunteer, who gave his name as Abu Abdullah, insisted however that they were not playing politics at a time of suffering and vulnerability.

"We believe in serving people," said the 40-year-old, a veteran of the Mujahideen insurgency against the Soviet army in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the Kashmir conflict, told AFP.

"We are not doing any politics here and we are making every effort to provide relief to the survivors."

Labourer Nasrullah, 30, lives in a remote village near Wam, one of the worst-affected villages. His six-year-old daughter, Aasia, was badly injured in the quake but was now receiving treatment by Jamaat-ud-Dawa medics.



Pakistani earthquake survivor family sits in an open space on a hilly area of Wam, one of about eight sparsely populated villages surrounding the town of Ziarat yesterday in the area worst hit by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake. Pakistani soldiers scrambled to get aid to victims of a powerful earthquake that has killed up to 300 people and left thousands of villagers homeless.



US Presidential nominee Sen Barack Obama (D-I) (L) greets supporters during a campaign rally at Verizon Wireless Virginia Beach Amphitheater on Thursday in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Obama continues to campaign against Republican presidential nominee Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) as Election Day draws near.

## Obama, McCain turn on the turnout machines

AFP, Washington

Four days before the presidential election, campaign chiefs for rivals Barack Obama and John McCain are firing up the most intense and targeted voter turnout operation in US history.

Next Tuesday, Democrat Obama and Republican McCain must put their White House aspirations in the hands of campaign footsoldiers in swing states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Florida and Virginia.

In a close election, a few

thousand votes can make a difference in a battleground state.

Both political parties scan voter data in minute detail, studying people's political preferences, key issues, and where they live to fashion tailored political messages in a practice known as "micro-targeting."

Democrats hope this year's surge in registered voters backing their party, Obama's huge fundraising edge and sheer enthusiasm whipped up by his

campaign, especially among young voters and African Americans, will be decisive.

Republicans are relying on their famed 72-hour turnout operation, which helped President George W. Bush narrowly capture two terms in the White House.

Some political experts believe Obama may have assembled the most sophisticated "ground game" ever seen in US politics -- which is already at work driving up Democratic turnout in early voting states.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Obama-mania is sweeping world

AFP, Washington

Obama-mania is sweeping the world -- the Democratic presidential candidate is much more popular than Republican rival John McCain in surveys of people around the world.

But underlying Obama's global popularity is a lack of understanding of his ideas, experts say.

Obama is the preferred candidate of 42 percent of the people in the world, while only 12 percent would vote for McCain if they had the chance, according to a BBC survey of 2,500 people in 22 countries.

In Europe, Obama is particularly popular: more than 80 percent of Germans, French and Dutch have a favourable view of him, according to a poll sponsored by the German Marshall Fund.

By comparison, McCain's top score in Europe was in Portugal, where 35 percent liked him.

But Max Wolff, a lecturer at the New School University in New York, says there is a huge gap between Obama's image abroad and the reality of his policy ideas.

Outgoing President George W. Bush has become the incarnation of the worst of America as a religiously crazy, unsophisticated, heavily armed child of the worst European peasantry, Wolff told AFP.

On the other hand, he said, "Obama's image in Europe for those who like America is that he personifies all that is good in the US."

For them, Obama represents "a young, hopeful, multiracial society, an international creative child of

Europe; useful, energetic."

"But the two visions are fantasy," Wolff said. "The reality has nothing to do with that, although both of those elements are in the US."

Obama appears to both Americans and Europeans as someone who can bring about change. But in two major areas of responsibility, the economy and foreign affairs, Wolff says not to expect any 180 degree turn.

Among his economic advisers are Austan Goolsbee, from the University of Chicago, which Wolff says is "the ultimate orthodox neoliberal economic programme on earth"; Paul Volcker, "the architect of the monetary policy revolution under (president Ronald) Reagan"; and Jason Furman, who Wolff says has been "a free trade advocate for Wal-Mart."

On foreign policy, Obama counts among his advisers his vice presidential running mate Joe Biden, "one of the proponents of war in Iraq" and Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national security adviser of president Jimmy Carter who Wolff calls a "hawk".

For Julien Vaisse, a French historian at the Brookings Institution think-tank in Washington, one has to see Obama's economic, political and social policies from an American perspective.

While the Democrats are much closer to Europe than the Republicans, he said, Obama's plan to widen health care coverage is still very far from Europe's system of guaranteed access to health care for everyone.

## Sri Lankan troops capture Nachchikuda rebel base

PTI, Colombo

Stepping up its offensive against the LTTE, Sri Lankan army captured the rebels' key coastal base of Nachchikuda after a fierce battle that left "several" soldiers dead in the island's embattled north, where fighter jets also pounded a suspected sea Tiger bastion yesterday.

Security forces and Tamil Tigers clashed in Nachchikuda and Pandividdikulam areas of the rebel stronghold of Kilinochchi yesterday, the Media Centre for National Security (MCNS) said.

Several soldiers lost their lives and some others were wounded during the clashes, it said.

"However, after a fierce battle, the troops yesterday completely captured the strategically important Nachchikuda, an LTTE stronghold," the MCNS said.

In a separate incident, fighter jets raided a suspected hideout of a sea Tiger leader this afternoon, the Air Force said.

Air Force media spokesman Wing Commander Janaka Nanayakkara said the target was located in Jayanthanagar area, 2.5 kms west of Akkarayankulam tank in Kilinochchi. However, he said the exact damage caused by the attack has not been verified.

Meanwhile, "several" LTTE rebels were killed and a large number of them injured in Andankulam area in Mullaitivu yesterday, the MCNS said, adding a soldier also lost his life and a few others wounded in these incidents.

Subsequently, 40 anti-personnel mines were recovered by the troops in a search operation in the area, the military said.

In the Jaffna region, the LTTE killed three soldiers and wounded a few others in artillery and mortar attacks in Eluththumaduwal, Vempothukeni, Kanthirathan and Muhamalei yesterday, the MCNS said.

It said the LTTE also resorted to anti-personnel mine explosions and small arm attacks in these areas.

## Suicide blast kills 8 in NW Pakistan

AP, XINHUA, Peshawar/ Islamabad

A suicide bomber attacked the convoy of a regional police chief in northwestern Pakistan on Friday, killing three police officers and five civilians, officials said.

The attacker, who was on foot, hit the first vehicle in the convoy as it emerged from the police chief's residence in the city of Mardan. District mayor Himayat Ali said eight people died and another 15 were wounded.

Mardan lies in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan where police and

security forces are often attacked by Taliban militants.

Police chief Akhtar Ali Shah, who escaped unhurt, told reporters that he didn't see the attacker but heard a large explosion at the main gate moments after he got into his vehicle.


"I was the target but such attacks cannot stop us from doing our duty," said Shah.

TV footage showed a badly damaged police pickup truck just outside the police chief's residence and rescue workers loading bloodied survivors into ambulances.

No group claimed responsibility for the blast.

Rising violence as well as mounting economic problems are fanning concern for the stability of nuclear-armed Pakistan. The bloodshed has also put strain on the country's seven-year anti-terror alliance with the United States.

Islamabad accuses Washington of fanning religious extremism by carrying out unilateral missile strikes on suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda hideouts in its territory. US officials have praised a military crackdown in the Bajur region bordering Afghanistan that Pakistani officials say has killed 1,500 insurgents.

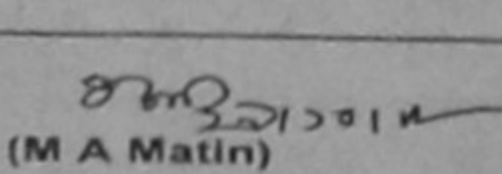


**Rural Development Academy Bogra**

### Invitation for Tenders

Memo: RDA/CIWM/SWP/25/2008/73 Date: 29-10-2008

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives, Rural Development & Co-operatives Division.
2. Name of Procuring Entity	Project Director Action Research Project on Command Area Development using Surface Water for Rural Livelihood Improvement by Replicating RDA Technology Centre for Irrigation and Water Management (CIWM) Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogra
3. Source of Fund	Government of Bangladesh (GOB)
4. Tender Package No	GD-06/08
5. Invitation for Tenders Ref & Date	Memo: RDA/CIWM/SWP/25/2008/73 Date: 29-10-2008
6. Tender Name	Supply and Installation/Placement of Office Furniture.
7. Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
8. Time for Completion of works	60 (sixty) days from the date of received of work order.
9. Eligibility of Tenderer	i) Dhaka based interior design/architecture firm that have similar work with 5 (five) years experience; ii) Up-to-date trade license, VAT, Income Tax Certificate. iii) At least 45 00 lakh taka single work order of similar works in Government organization. iv) Annual Turn Over at least 60.00 lac taka of similar work in last 3 (three) years.
10. Price of Tender Document	Tk. 1000.00 (One thousand) only
11. Amount of Tender Security	Tk. 40,000.00 (Forty thousand) only
12. Name and Address of the Office(s) Selling Tender Document	Deputy Project Director Rural Development Academy (RDA) Bogra- 5842, Bangladesh
13. Name and Address of the Office(s) Receiving Tenders	Director (Administration) Rural Development Academy (RDA) Bogra- 5842, Bangladesh.
14. Name and Address of the Office(s) Opening Tenders	Director (Administration) Rural Development Academy (RDA) Bogra- 5842, Bangladesh.
15. Last Date and Time for Selling Tender Document	23-11-2008 in office hour.
16. Last Date and Time for Submission of Tenders	24-11-2008, 12:00 noon.
17. Date and Time for Opening of Tenders	24-11-2008, 12:30 pm
18. Contract details of official inviting tender	051-51001 or 78602
19. Special Instructions	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.
20. Brief description of works	Interior Design, Supply and Installation/Placement of Office Furniture.

  
 (M A Matin)  
 Director

GD-4973



Indian women look on at Pan Bazaar, one of the blast sites in Guwahati yesterday. The death toll in serial bombings in India's northeastern Assam state rose to 77 after several injured people died overnight, the local health minister said.

## Congo rebel wants direct talks with govt

AP, Goma

With a ceasefire appearing to halt most fighting, a rebel leader said Thursday he wanted direct talks with the Congo government.

Envoy from the US and UN were sent in to help set up negotiations.

Sporadic gunfire could still be heard Thursday night in Goma, the provincial capital of eastern Congo, but the city was calm for much of the day.

That was in sharp contrast to Wednesday, when tens of thousands of residents, refugees and government soldiers fled in a chaotic torrent ahead of advancing rebels. When the sun went down, drunk soldiers pillaged and raped in Goma, killing at least nine people in their homes, according to UN

Radio Okapi.

"We want peace for people in the region," rebel leader Laurent Nkunda told The Associated Press by telephone after halting his advance on Goma and calling a unilateral cease-fire.

Nkunda also wanted to discuss his objections to a \$9 billion-dollar deal that gives China access to vast mineral riches in exchange for a railway and highway.

He also wants the urgent disarmament of a Rwandan Hutu militia that he says works with the government and preys on his minority Tutsi people.

"It's not acceptable for government soldiers to be fighting alongside genociders," Nkunda said. "We want peace for people in the region."

Nkunda launched a low-level

rebellion three years ago claiming Congo's transition to democracy had excluded the Tutsi. Despite agreeing in January to a UN-brokered cease-fire, he resumed fighting in August.

He alleges the Congolese government has not protected ethnic Tutsis from the Rwandan Hutu militia that escaped to Congo after helping slaughter half a million Rwandan Tutsis in 1994's genocide.

Congo has charged Nkunda himself with involvement in war crimes, and Human Rights Watch says it has documented summary executions, torture, and rape committed by soldiers under Nkunda's command in 2002 and 2004.

Rights groups have also criticized government forces for atrocities and widespread looting.

## Rare, prehistoric-age reptile found nesting in NZ

AP, Wellington

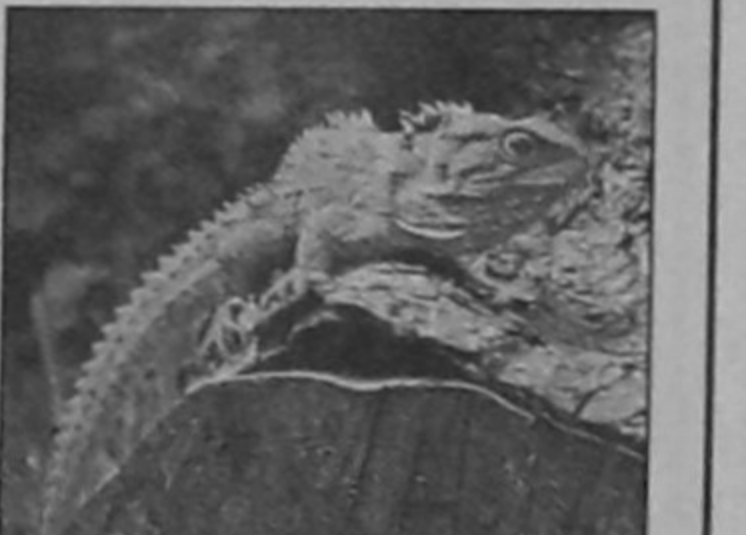
A rare reptile with lineage dating back to the dinosaur age has been found nesting on the New Zealand mainland for the first time in about 200 years, officials said yesterday.

Four leathery, white eggs from an indigenous tuatara were found by staff at the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in the capital, Wellington, during routine maintenance work Friday, conservation manager Rouen Epton said.

"The nest was uncovered by accident and is the first concrete proof we have that our tuatara are breeding," Epton said. "It suggests that there may be other nests in the sanctuary we don't know of."

Tuatara, dragon-like reptiles that grow to up to 32 inches, are the last descendants of a species that walked the earth with the dinosaurs 225 million years ago, zoologists say.

They have unique characteristics, such as two rows of top teeth closing over one row at the bottom. They also have a pronounced parietal eye, a light-sensitive pineal gland on top of the skull. This white patch of skin called its "third eye" slowly disappears as they mature.



In this undated photo supplied by the Karori Sanctuary, an adult tuatara lizard is seen basking on a tree stump at the Karori Sanctuary in Wellington, New Zealand.

## Libya offers to host Russian base

AFP, Moscow

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who visits Moscow Friday for the first time since 1985, will offer to host a Russian naval base in his north African country, a Russian newspaper reported.

"Libya is ready to host a Russian naval military base," the Kommersant reported, citing a source close to the preparations for Gaddafi's first visit here since the days of the Soviet Union.

The base could be located at the port of Benghazi, the source said.

"The Russian military presence will be a guarantee of non-aggression against Libya from the United States, which is not in a hurry to embrace Gaddafi despite gestures of reconciliation," the

newspaper said.

Kashafi's offer could also "ease the Kremlin's dissatisfaction" over his failure to fulfil agreements reached in April during a landmark visit to Tripoli by then-president Vladimir Putin, Kommersant said.

During the visit, Moscow agreed to cancel billions of dollars of Libyan Soviet-era debt in exchange for major contracts with Russian companies.

Those agreements included a promise by Tripoli to buy Russian arms, but "despite the agreement, Gaddafi still has not bought a single tank or airplane," Kommersant reported.

Russia was also disappointed that energy-rich Libya did not agree to join a "gas Opec" along with fellow gas exporter Qatar, Kommersant said.