

Divided Indian EC meets to discuss polls

PTI, New Delhi

The Election Commission is today meeting with political leaders to invite their suggestions on the Lok Sabha polls likely to be held sometime in April-May.

In all 47 political parties including seven national parties have been invited for the meeting being chaired by Chief Election Commissioner N Gopalaswami and other two Election Commissioners Navin Chawla and S Y Quraishi.

This is the first time that all the three Election Commissioners would sit together to chalk out strategy for the Lok Sabha polls after the stand-off between Gopalaswami and Chawla and the report about the former seeking removal of the latter came out in public.

India asks Pakistan to act against terror

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, PTI, New Delhi

India yesterday urged Pakistan to act with "sincerity and decisiveness" against the perpetrators of the Mumbai carnage and said it was in the interests of the region if they were brought to book.

"The onus now is on the government of Pakistan to act with sincerity and decisiveness against the perpetrators and controllers of such attacks," Defence Minister AK Antony said while inaugurating the 11th Asian Security Conference in New Delhi.

"It is in the interest of this region and the rest of the world that such perpetrators of wanton violence are brought to justice and the infrastructure of terror is eliminated," the minister added.

India has blamed the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba for the November 26-29,

2008 Mumbai mayhem that claimed the lives of more than 170 people, including 26 foreigners, and injured more than 300.

India January 5 submitted a detailed dossier to Pakistan pointing to the involvement of elements from its country in the Mumbai attacks.

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said Sunday its Federal Investigation Agency had examined the dossier and had submitted a report that would soon be shared with India through diplomatic channels.

Earlier contradicting National Security Adviser MK Narayanan's claim that Islamabad has reverted on Mumbai attacks dossier, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday asserted that India is yet to receive any official response from Pakistan.

"That he (Narayanan) has said in his own way. The fact of the matter is that after they (Pakistan) received material from us, we have not received any official communication about the progress of investigation conducted by them," Mukherjee told reporters here when referred to the NSA's comments.

Narayanan had in a TV interview two days back claimed that Pakistan had reverted on the Mumbai attacks dossier, asking questions to which answers were being given.

"What I am aware of is that after the receipt of the dossier by Pakistan, the Pakistan government has reverted to us and asked number of questions to which answers are being provided... I presume they are yet to receive replies to the second set of queries they have made," the NSA had said.



Pakistani people cross over a damaged bridge after it was destroyed by militants in the Khyber district yesterday. Suspected militants blew up the bridge in northwest Pakistan closing a crucial supply line for Nato troops in Afghanistan as the military reported killing 35 extremists in the region.

Pakistan militant attack halts US, Nato supplies

AP, Peshawar

Militants blew up a bridge in northwest Pakistan yesterday, temporarily cutting a major supply line for Western troops in Afghanistan, a government official said.

The attack was the latest in a series on the Khyber Pass by insurgents seeking to hamper the US-led mission against the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan.

It follows the abduction Monday of an American UN worker in the southwest of Pakistan, an attack that underscored the fragile security in the country as it battles al-Qaeda militants.

Hidayat Ullah, a government official in the Khyber

tribal area, said the bridge was around 25km northwest of the main city of Peshawar. He said trucks carrying Nato and US supplies were unable to cross it.

It was not immediately clear whether supply convoys could bypass the damaged bridge and still reach Afghanistan.

Up to 75 percent of the supplies destined for US and Nato troops in landlocked Afghanistan travel through Pakistan after being unloaded at the port of Karachi. Most are driven along the Khyber Pass.

Pakistan has dispatched paramilitary escorts for supply convoys and cracked down on militants in Khyber, but attacks have persisted, adding urgency to US and Nato efforts to find

alternative supply routes.

The American was kidnapped as he travelled to work in Quetta city in Baluchistan, a province that partly borders Afghanistan but has largely been spared the al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgency in the northwest.

Police said Tuesday they were questioning several Afghans about the abduction of John Solecki, who headed the UN refugee office in the city, but were not treating them as suspects. His driver was shot and killed in the attack.

"We have opened investigations, and our various teams are working on this case and the effort is to safely recover the man," said senior officer Wazir Khan.



This undated photograph issued by the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry yesterday, shows the interior of an abandoned house and an underground bunker, which is believed to have belonged to the leader of the Tamil Tiger rebels in the island's north.

Patients flee hospital under attack in Lanka

AP, Colombo

Patients are fleeing a hospital that was hit four times by artillery shells in the war between Tamil Tigers and government forces in northern Sri Lanka this week, the Red Cross said yesterday.

The development came as independent observers handed The Associated Press dramatic pictures and video, showing scores of civilians killed or maimed. The images offered a rare glimpse of the growing toll the civil war is taking on the estimated 250,000 civilians trapped in the all-but-sealed conflict zone.

Even the wounded being treated at a hospital in Puthukkudiyiruppu were not safe. Artillery slammed into the hospital three times Sunday, killing nine patients and injuring 20.

It was hit again on Monday and three

people were killed and 10 injured, said Sarasi Wijeratne, the spokeswoman of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Colombo.

The hospital is one of the last functioning medical facilities in the area where the Tamil Tigers are fighting a last-gasp battle for survival.

"People have started to leave the hospital because they don't feel safe there," said Wijeratne. "Those who are able to move are going away in search of safer places or to find shelter in less exposed locations."

The ICRC is negotiating with both sides to secure safe passage for the sick, and for wounded people to be evacuated, Wijeratne said.

"We need security assurances. Civilians have to be protected under international humanitarian laws," she said.

The civilians are trapped along with the rebels in a 115-square-mile (300-square-kilometer) slice of jungle and rural area, surrounded by government forces.

Taliban violence spreads in Afghanistan: US report

AFP, Washington

The Pentagon said Monday that insurgent violence was on the rise across Afghanistan and that international forces lacked the troops and resources to control the country's south.

In a report to Congress, the US Defence Department described a dramatic increase in insurgent attacks in the spring and summer of 2008, saying the period marked the worst violence since the Taliban's ouster in 2001.

A resurgent Taliban was challenging the Kabul government for control of the south and east of the country, "and increasingly in the west," the report said.

In the south, "where resources are not suffi-

ciently concentrated, security cannot be established or maintained," it added.

"In such areas, the full military, governance and economic spectrum of the COIN (counter-insurgency) strategy cannot be implemented and the insurgents retain their hold on the local Afghan population."

The report, delayed for months pending the outcome of various strategy reviews, came as President Barack Obama weighed urgent military requests for up to 30,000 more US troops in Afghanistan, nearly doubling the US force there.

The report's account of growing violence in the country was underscored by a suicide bombing on Monday that killed 25 policemen in the southern town of Tirm Kot.

Zardari asks US to give aid, share information

THE DAILY TIMES, Islamabad

President Asif Ali Zardari called for increased US aid to Pakistan's ailing economy and enhanced intelligence sharing between the partners in the war on terror, in a meeting with a six-member US congressional delegation on Monday.

The president urged the US Congress to pass the legislation for financial assistance to Pakistan as early as possible, saying the measure would strengthen Pakistan's efforts against terrorism,

sources privy to the meeting told Daily Times.

They said the president also highlighted the issue of US drone attacks inside Pakistani territory and sought the congressional delegation's support for Pakistan's stance that such attacks hinder Islamabad's efforts for broader support against terror.

A statement by the Presidency said that the president and the visiting congressmen "discussed bilateral relations and the regional situation".

UN envoy wraps up Myanmar trip after talks with Suu Kyi

AFP, Yangon

The UN's Myanmar envoy was wrapping up his trip to the military-run nation Tuesday after meeting democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi but with no prospect of crucial talks with senior junta members.

Ibrahim Gambari arrived on Saturday aiming to nudge the junta toward democratic reform and initiate dialogue between the military rulers, detained Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

He held talks with Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday morning. She had refused to meet the Nigerian diplomat on his previous visit to Myanmar in August

2008, apparently after he failed to secure any concrete pledges from the regime.

"For the first time, Mr. Gambari met for over an hour jointly with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and members of the central executive committee of the National League for Democracy," the UN said in a statement late Monday.

Photos released by the UN showed a thin, serious-looking Aung San Suu Kyi dressed in a blue sarong and chequered blue top talking with the diplomat.

The meeting appeared to make little headway, however, with Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD simply repeating their long-standing preconditions to dialogue.



Visiting UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari (2nd L) meets with democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi (R) along with members of the executive committee of her National League for Democracy party at the Sein Lei Kantha state guest house in Yangon on Monday.

India signs nuclear inspections deal

AFP, Vienna

India signed an inspections agreement with the UN atomic watchdog on Monday as part of a deal lifting a 34-year-old embargo on nuclear trade with New Delhi, the International Atomic Energy Agency said.

"An agreement between the government of India and the IAEA for the 'Application of Safeguards to Civilian Nuclear Facilities' was signed today in Vienna by IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei and Ambassador Saurabh Kumar of India," the agency said in a statement.

"The safeguards agreement, which is the result of several rounds of consultations conducted between India and the IAEA since November 2007, was approved by the IAEA board of governors in August 2008," the statement said.

The agreement would enter into force once it had been ratified by New Delhi, the watchdog continued.

Up until now, India had allowed IAEA inspectors regular access to six nuclear reactors under safeguards agreements concluded between 1971 and 1994.

But under the new agreement, "additional reactors are expected to be under IAEA safeguards in the future."

In all, New Delhi has agreed to open up 14 of its 22 declared civilian reactors to regular IAEA inspections by 2014.

The so-called safeguards agreement is a precondition for a US-led deal to allow nuclear nations to supply energy-hungry India with nuclear material and technology for civilian uses even though it refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

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Applications in plain paper along with complete Bio-data, copy of recent passport size color photograph and copies of certificates/testimonials should reach the Human Resource & Training Department, The Westin Dhaka, Main Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan, Dhaka 1212, by 10 February, 2009.

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সিলভা মেথড বৈজ্ঞানিকভাবে উদ্ভূত এবং ১৯৪৪ সাল থেকে জনপ্রিয় ও পরিসংখ্যান দ্বারা প্রমাণিত আত্ম-উন্নয়নের বিশ্ব শ্রেষ্ঠ কর্মপদ্ধতির পথ প্রদর্শক। নিজেকে নিজে পরিবর্তন করতে

SILVA METHOD

২৪ সপ্তাহের বাঙালিদের সহ বিশ্বের ১৩১টি দেশে আজ দেড়কোটির ও বেশি মানুষ নিজের জীবন নিজেরাই বদলে ফেলেছেন সিলভা মন-নিয়ন্ত্রণ পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগ করে। এই পদ্ধতিতে শ্রেনের সৃষ্টিশীল ক্ষমতাকে অধিক পরিমাণে ব্যবহারের কৌশল আয়তনের মাধ্যমে মনের বিশাল শক্তিকে কেন্দ্রীভূত করে নিজেকে একজন সফল মানুষ হিসেবে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করার পাশাপাশি আপন উন্নতি করতে পারেন-

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| ব্যক্তি জীবনে | ব্যবসায়িক জীবনে | বৈদাম্পনিক জীবনে | শৈল্পিক এবং প্রায় ক্ষেত্রে |
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| উদ্যোগী হতে | বিভিন্ন ক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধিতে | স্বাভাবিক কথায় | মাইন্ডন খুলে করতে |
| আত্মবিশ্বাসী হতে | ভাল মানবের পেতে | পারিবারিক শক্তি বৃদ্ধিতে | স্বাভাবিক কথায় |
| দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি মুক্তি পেতে | সাংগঠনিক ক্ষমতা বাড়াতে | সঠিক সঙ্গী নির্বাচনে | শেখার সময় সবল হতে |

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