

SC releases Varun Gandhi for 2 weeks

ANI, INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the release of Bharatiya Janata Party leader Varun Gandhi on parole for a period of two weeks after it received an undertaking from him that he would not indulge in communally sensitive and hate speeches.

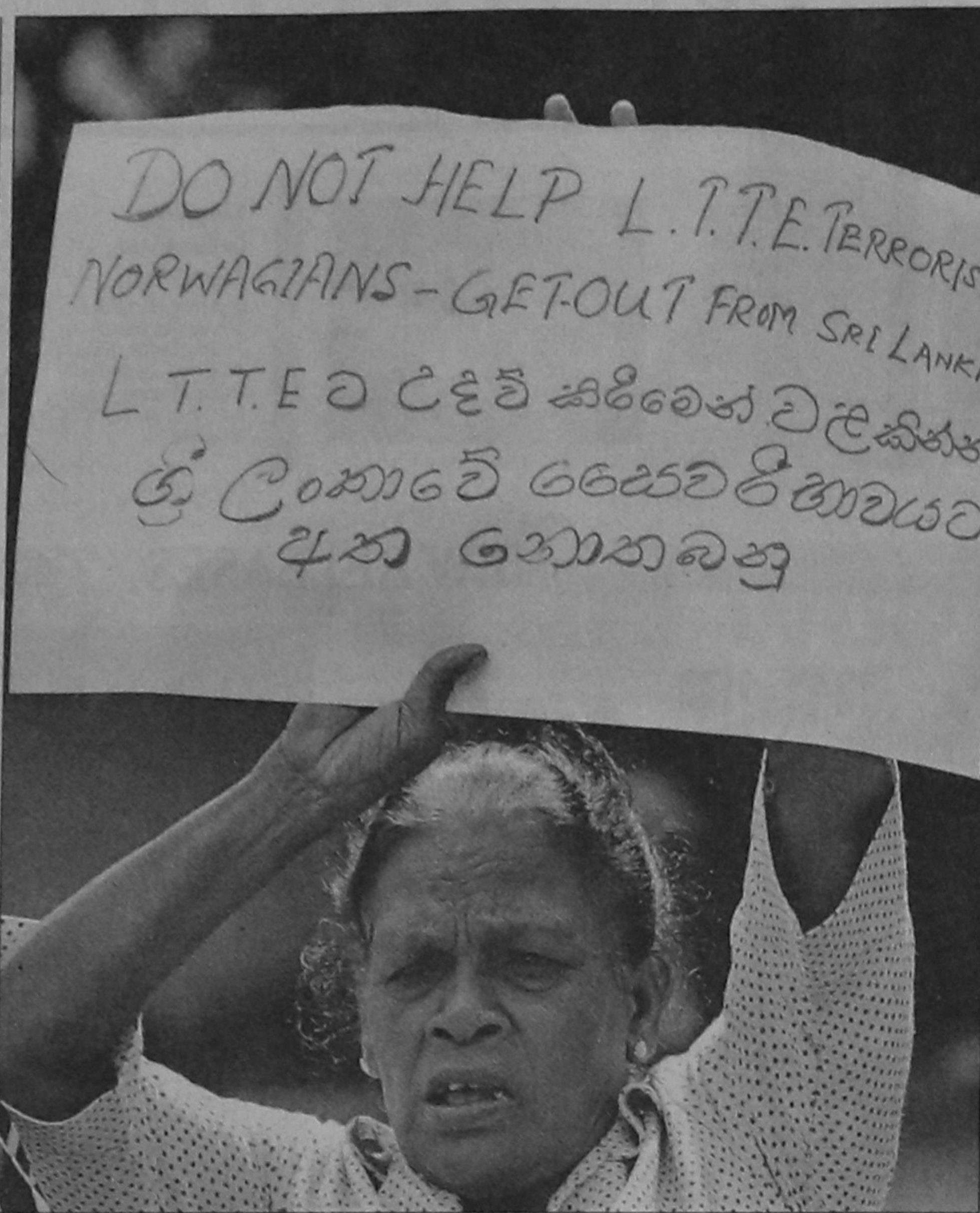
The apex court, however, said that Gandhi would have to give a new undertaking to the District Magistrate of Etah and furnish a bond of Rs50,000.

A bench of Chief Justice KG Balakrishnan, Justice P Sathasivam and Justice JM Panchal ordered Varun Gandhi's release, pending a final decision on his lawsuit challenging his detention under National Security Act (NSA) by the Uttar Pradesh government.

The bench ordered Varun's temporary release dismissing the Uttar Pradesh Government's stiff opposition.

The court said Varun would be released on Thursday after submitting an affidavit to Etah jail authorities, swearing that he will not make provocative speeches during the poll campaign. He would be filing a similar affidavit later to the Supreme Court by Monday.

Varun's lawsuit challenging invocation of NSA against him would come up for hearing on May 1.



A Sri Lankan activist shouts slogans and waves a placard as she takes part with others in a demonstration outside the entrance to the Norwegian Embassy in Colombo yesterday in a protest demanding the expulsion of the diplomatic mission. The demonstrators were pressing for severing ties with Norway after the Sri Lankan embassy in Norway was attacked by anti-government Tamil demonstrators last week.

Lanka advances on rebels despite calls for truce

President tours captured Tiger political HQ

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka said yesterday it had made fresh advances into the area still held by Tamil Tiger rebels, ignoring global calls for a truce to spare thousands of civilians trapped by the fighting.

Arguing the civilians were being used by the rebels as a human shield, the defence ministry said its forces were engaged in "the world's largest hostage rescue operation undertaken by a conventional armed force in modern times."

The Tigers are hemmed into a narrow strip of northeastern coast, where up to 100,000 civilians are also holed up, according to the United Nations.

The pro-rebel website Tamilnet said

ground troops backed by helicopter gunships were "deploying maximum firepower" in an attempt to breach rebel defences.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have retreated into a 20-square kilometre area that the government had designated as a "safe zone" for beleaguered civilians, and remnants of the rebel army are still resisting.

The UN has said both sides in the long-running ethnic war may be guilty of war crimes, with the government accused of shelling civilian areas and the Tigers of keeping people hostage.

On Wednesday, Britain and France added their voices to a wave of international condemnation of the LTTE -- but also urged the island's hawkish President

Mahinda Rajapakse to agree a ceasefire.

"It is clear that the LTTE have been forcefully preventing civilians from leaving the conflict area and we deplore their determination to use civilians as a human shield," British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and his French counterpart Bernard Kouchner said in a joint statement.

"We urge President Rajapakse to announce a new pause," it said, adding that "democratic governments are rightly held to higher standards for civilian protection than terrorist organisations."

Rajapakse had ordered a two-day ceasefire earlier this week to mark the traditional New Year, but dismissed a rebel offer of a permanent truce as an attempt to regroup.

IAEA inspectors quit N Korea

AP, Seoul

UN nuclear experts ordered to leave by North Korea amid an escalating standoff over the regime's recent rocket launch departed the country Thursday.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency left the main site in Yongbyon north of Pyongyang after removing seals and surveillance cameras, a diplomat close to the UN agency said Wednesday. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to release the infor-

mation.

They arrived in Beijing on a flight Thursday from Pyongyang, but declined to speak to reporters.

Four US experts monitoring the nuclear plant in Yongbyon also were preparing to depart after North Korea ordered them out, the State Department said.

The expulsions come after the Security Council unanimously condemned North Korea's April 5 rocket launch as a violation of previous resolutions barring the North from ballistic missile-related activ-

ity. The US, Japan and other nations have accused North Korea of using the launch to test long-range missile technology since the delivery systems for sending satellites and missiles are similar.

North Korea, which claims the right to develop a space programme, said it launched a satellite into orbit and reacted furiously to the UN censure by vowing to boycott international disarmament talks and restart its nuclear programme.

China, which is Pyongyang's only major ally, but backed the UN rebuke, urged calm and restraint.

40pc railway land Japan promises Pakistan up to one billion dollars

Tokyo donors meet opens today

AFP, Tokyo

Japan promised up to one billion dollars in aid to Pakistan yesterday on the eve of a Tokyo donors meeting expected to raise at least four times that amount for the poor and crisis-riven country.

Prime Minister Taro Aso said Pakistan's stability was important for Southwest Asia and for "the peace and stability of the international community" after meeting Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari.

The World Bank has said it expects loan and grant aid pledges of four billion to six billion dollars when 27 countries and 16 organisations attend the one-day Tokyo conference and a "Friends of Pakistan" meeting.

Washington has put Pakistan at the heart of the fight against al-Qaeda and President Barack Obama has unveiled a sweeping new strategy to turn around the Afghan war and defeat Islamist militants on both sides of the border.

Leading al-Qaeda members, including leader Osama bin Laden, are widely believed to be holed up in Pakistan's lawless tribal areas

near Afghanistan.

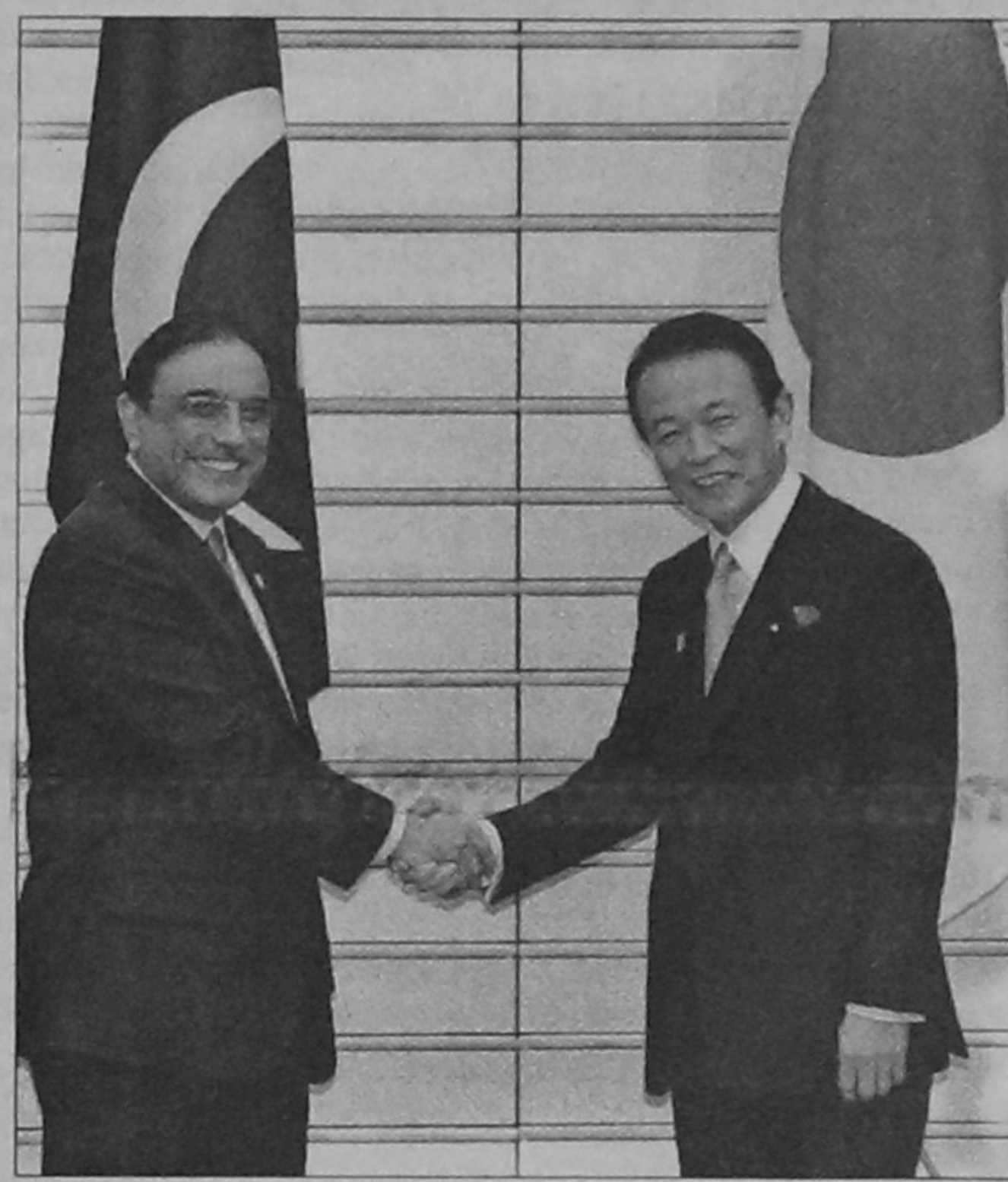
Obama has already thrown his support behind a bill to triple non-military assistance to 1.5 billion dollars a year to boost development in Pakistan, where up to 40 percent of people survive on one dollar a day or less.

Zardari stressed on the eve of the conference that his government was determined to fight Islamic militants but said it needed a "massive" aid drive similar to the US Marshall Plan for post-World War II Europe.

"We are determined to fight militancy to the end and will never permit the extremists to dictate their agenda on the people through guns and bullets," he wrote in the English-language daily Japan Times.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks -- which led the United States to invade Afghanistan and make Pakistan its regional strategic ally -- Islamabad has spent about 35 billion dollars fighting extremists, Zardari wrote.

"Pakistan alone cannot bear the huge social and economic burden of this war," the president wrote. "Clearly we need massive international assistance."



Pakistanistani President Asif Ali Zardari (L) shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso prior to their talks at Aso's office in Tokyo yesterday. Zardari is here to attend the meeting of Pakistan's donor countries, hosted by Japan and the World Bank.

Ex-Thai PM Thaksin granted Nicaragua passport

AP, Bangkok

Thailand's fugitive former leader Thaksin Shinawatra now has a Nicaraguan passport, complicating efforts to extradite him, as Thai authorities pressed ahead yesterday with a search for his supporters accused of leading violent riots in Bangkok.

The Nicaraguan government announced late Wednesday it had named Thaksin a "Nicaraguan ambassador on a special mission" to bring investment to the Central American country and issued him a passport in January.

The announcement came just hours after the Thai government said it had revoked Thaksin's personal passport, accusing him of stoking the unrest that paralysed the Thai capital earlier this week.

War crime trial

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BILIA and Bangladesh Heritage Foundation jointly organised the workshop on "Trends of Terrorism: National and Regional Implications."

Sahara said the government had already decided to form a tribunal and appoint prosecutors to conduct the trial of war criminals.

Academics and security experts at the daylong programme suggested forming law like the Foreign Contribution Regulatory Act (FCRA) of the USA under which the central bank will oversee the foreign funding for the NGOs, banks and other financial institutions.

They also strongly recommended modernising madrasa education in the country and build a society free of injustice and discrimination to check militancy and terrorism.

"Militant outfits like Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) were promoted during the last BNP-Jamaat alliance government," she said.

"But we are determined to root out them as we pledged in our election manifesto," Sahara said while speaking as the chief guest at the concluding session of the workshop.

She said there are no religion or geographical territories for the terrorists and therefore, cooperation at national, regional and inter-

national levels are a must.

It was the media and civil society that put pressure on the then BNP-Jamaat alliance government to take actions against militants and therefore cooperation between the government and civil society should be strengthened, Sahara said.

BILIA Director Wali-ur Rahman said a preliminary research of BILIA and its associate organisations found that madrasahs supplied 35 percent of the Army recruits till 2006, which was only 5 percent before the 2001 elections. Most of them came from Karmi madrasahs, he noted.

The government must bring the activities of Bangladeshi NGOs and hospitals under regulatory framework like the FCRA through which Bangladesh Bank can oversee sources and objectives of foreign funding.

Besides, the government also has to enact laws preventing the political parties from doing business. Islami Bank is a financial institute of Jamaat-e-Islami and it is allegedly funding militants, he said adding such activities must be stopped.

Journalist Shahriar Kabir told reporters during last BNP-Jamaat alliance government, the army, BDR and even civil administration were highly politicised where Jamaat men got a huge priority.

Changes brighten hope

FROM PAGE 1

refrain from interfering in functions of the crucial bodies, through which parliament can effectively oversee activities of the executive and fight corruption.

In the past, the government high-ups meddled in the functioning of the committees. The chiefs of the bodies who were junior in the ruling parties' chain of command could not do much to protest against the ill practice.

This time, several chiefs of the parliamentary bodies are senior leaders of the ruling Awami League and they have experience in running the administration.

Parliamentary affairs experts believe the committees will be able to play their due roles in holding the executive accountable to parliament.

Both the treasury and the opposition benches will have to demonstrate more tolerance, sincerity in making the House effective. They will have to rein in the lawmakers from misusing their powers that could undermine the dignity of parliament.

Lawmakers have already demonstrated the 'undue pressure' on the government in establishing their supremacy over the upazila parishads by making the government almost 'helplessness' in parliament.

The government was forced to change its stance over the role of lawmakers in the upazila parishads in the face of pressures from the lawmakers.

The incident might be an eye-opener for the ruling party to decide its next course of action on handling the lawmakers, who play a pivotal role in implementing the party's electoral manifestos.

Poverty alleviation, elimination of corruption and terrorism, trial of war criminals and establishment of good governance have been

enlisted as the main objectives of the AL-led government.

Without sincere and active role of the lawmakers, it is impossible for the government to achieve the goals. The lawmakers also need to understand and believe in their due roles to play in putting the country on the right track towards prosperity.

In previous parliaments, the ruling party with overwhelming majority failed to a great extent to deliver on the people's expectations, while the opposition opted to take to the streets most of the times rather than staying in the House.

The lawmakers spent most of their time and energy in fruitless criticism of their colleagues, lacking patience and tolerance, dodging responsibilities of making policies, enacting laws, overseeing the executive and bridging insights from their constituencies.

However, it was expected that the previous culture would end, as the ninth parliament was constituted following the December 29 elections triggering people's expectation for changes.

The then president Iajuddin Ahmed in his inaugural address also termed the new Jatiya Sangsad a "parliament for change."

The inaugural session of the ninth parliament unfortunately witnessed almost the same scenario as the lawmakers did not refrain from mudslinging.

In the inaugural session, the House passed a record 32 bills in 39 workdays and took some resolutions including one for calling on the government to initiate immediate steps for the trial of war criminals.

The House also took a bold stance against corruption and anomalies. It formed an all-party parliamentary probe body to investigate alleged corruption and anomalies in

the Parliament Secretariat during the seven-year tenure of immediate past speaker Jamiruddin Sircar.

Speaker Abdul Hamid also asked the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General to audit all the income and expenditures of the Parliament Secretariat since 1972.

In defence of the move, the Speaker rightly said the Parliament Secretariat must be free from allegation of corruption before it moves to ensure accountability and transparency of the executive.

If it is successful, it will be a landmark effort to fight corruption.

Ashraf warns

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are not functioning properly, it can abolish the local government tier. And a one-line bill will suffice to do so.

"Such instances are there in our country. Soon after Khaleda Zia came to power in 1991, she sacked all the upazila chairmen with a stroke of the pen. Later, the upazila laws too were repealed by the House," he told reporters at the secretariat.

His comments came a day after upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen threatened to declare the lawmakers persona non grata in their constituencies.

The newly elected local government officials have been calling for cancellation of the Upazila Parishad Act 2009 as it curtails their authority and requires them to accept the local MPs' advice.

Syed Ashraf said everyone should give the new law time. "I have suggested the upazila chairmen have patience. If this law does not work, parliament can always change it."

The government is planning to change the laws regarding city corporations and municipalities as well, he added.

Career Opportunity

Ranks Petroleum Ltd., a concern of Rangs Group & Exclusive Distributor of World renowned Shell Brand Lubricants for Bangladesh, would like to offer following positions for the professionals.

GENERAL MANAGER

The fundamental responsibility of this position is to look after the overall business of the company. He must have the competence to prepare annual budget for the management, set target for the team and meet the annual budget, organize market research to exploit market opportunities, involve in international supply-chain management of lubricants via direct communication with Principal, secure new business as well as to maintain business relations with existing clients to achieve specific business growth related to key customers and also liable for implementing professional profitable contract.

The incumbent would be preferably Graduate Engineer (Mechanical or Chemical) and MBA with extensive management level experience in lubricant industry. Aptitude to work under pressure with the team members and demonstrate superior communication skill & leadership quality is expected. Age not Exceeding 45 years.

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER

Reporting to the General Manager, the incumbent for this position would demonstrate his experience in marketing and selling of lubricants. The candidate would be a self-starter as part of a team and suited to a fast-paced, value-driven corporate culture. He would be a B. Sc. Engineer from a reputed university with 5-6 years of working experience. The main focus would be to secure new business as well as maintain business relations with existing clients to achieve specific business growth related to key customers and develop retail & industrial customers' network consuming lub oils; adopt special awareness program for motivating oil users; service centers; workshop and fleet owners to generate a brand fascination for Shell.

Interpersonal relationship, communication skills, leadership quality and willing to travel extensively would be required to qualify for this position. Age not exceeding 40 years.

MANAGER - CORPORATE SALES

The incumbent for this position would be in-charge of a sales team, selling lubricants directly to corporate industrial customers. Main objective would be to achieve the target set by the management for the team members and maintain solid knowledge of the market and competition, and align activities with strategic goals.

Minimum 5 years experience in corporate sales would be core competence for this position which will eventually prove the track record of leading a capable sales team. Minimum qualification would be Graduate in Commerce. Experience in lubricants industry, B. Sc. in Mechanical Engg. and MBA will be considered as added qualification. Age not exceeding 35 years.

Eligible candidates complying with the above conditions may apply with an application and CV along with a passport size photograph mentioning the name o the position on the envelope by 2nd of May, 2009 addressing to:

Managing Director
Ranks Petroleum Ltd.
Borak Tower (Level-2)
71-72, Elephant Road
Eskaton Garden, Dhaka-1000.



Shell Lubricants