



PHOTO: AFP
These recent file photos show US President Barack Obama (L) and billionaire US financier Warren Buffet (R), who are very distant cousins going back to an indentured servant from 17th century France. Ancestry.com said on Tuesday.

Obama and
billionaire
Buffet are
distant cousins

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama and billionaire financier Warren Buffet are very distant cousins going back to an indentured servant from 17th century France. Ancestry.com said on Tuesday.

Experts from what is billed as the world's largest family history website traced the two men's lineage to Mareen Duvall, who immigrated to Maryland from France in the 1650s.

Duvall is Obama's ninth great-grandfather and Buffet's sixth great-grandfather, according to Ancestry.com, which earlier this year found that Obama has German roots and in 2007 said he was distant cousin of actor Brad Pitt.

Chicago court
rejects Tahawwur
Rana's bail plea

ANI, Chicago

A Chicago Federal Court on Tuesday denied bail to alleged Pakistan-born Canadian Lashkar operative Tahawwur Hussain Rana.

Rana is one of the two LeT operatives caught by the FBI in October on charges of plotting a major terror attack against India that left 166 people dead in Mumbai.

The court said Rana, if released pending a trial, has the means and know-how to flee the country to avoid a possible 30-year prison term.

Pronouncing her decision, US Magistrate Judge Nan Nolan told Rana, "I am sure you would be disappointed. But you have to keep doing the best you are doing."

ME peace deal possible in 6 months, says Abbas

PLO extends mandates of Palestinian president

AP, AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said in an interview published Wednesday that a peace deal with Israel could be reached within six months if Israel freezes settlement construction during that time.

Abbas said he proposed the six-month freeze to Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak in a recent telephone conversation.

Earlier the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) yesterday extended the mandates of both President Mahmoud Abbas and the Hamas-dominated parliament until elections can be held.

Abbas had called elections for next month but the Islamist group that drove his forces from Gaza in June 2007 has said it will not allow a vote in its territory until

"The Central Committee of the PLO took the decision that president Abbas and the Legislative Council will continue their duties until the next election in accordance with the Basic Law," PLO representative Qaid al-Ghul told AFP.

The decision by the powerful umbrella group was an attempt to prevent a constitutional vacuum after January 24, when the present mandates expire, as the Islamist Hamas movement has vowed to prevent a vote in their Gaza enclave.

Abbas had called elections for next month but the Islamist group that drove his forces from Gaza in June 2007 has said it will not allow a vote in its territory until

there is a national reconciliation agreement.

"I suggested to him (Barak) three weeks ago that Israel freeze all construction in the settlements for six months, including east Jerusalem," Abbas told the Israeli daily Haaretz. "During this time we can get back to the table and even complete talks on a final status agreement. I have yet to receive an answer."

Israel has rejected Palestinian and US demands that it halt settlement construction in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, war-won lands the Palestinians want for their state. A freeze is mandated by the US-backed "road map" peace plan.

Forest dept rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

resources. These villagers are legally settled inside the forest and are allowed to collect fuel wood for domestic use. But this practice is rarely reflected in the news item.

People living in surrounding villages of the forest frequently try to steal forest resources. Forest Department along with the Co-management Committee is working together to protect the forest from thieves.

Sometimes forest officials as well as members of the Co-management are brutally assaulted by the goons. Hossain claimed that participatory forestry management proved to be a huge success in resource restoration and improvement of the forest.

The published pictures of felled trees are from deep forest, where it is most troublesome to carry those. These fallen trees are left there to decompose and improve fertility of the soil.

Meantime, Range Officer of Habiganj in another rejoinder to a news headlined "rainforests ravaged" said the report is baseless. He blamed the local people for attempts to fell and smuggle trees of the forest. He said the range has insufficient staff who cannot guard the forest properly.

As for the range officer's rejoinder, it does not contradict The Daily Star report and rather acknowledges the illegal logging going on there.

Maoists plan to take over Nepal's capital

PTI, Kathmandu

A new political confrontation seemed to be looming over Nepal with the Maoists threatening to take over the capital Kathmandu as part of their drive to form parallel governments at regional level.

The Maoists, who have already announced formation of parallel governments in 10 districts, have threatened on Wednesday to take over the capital to turn it into New Autonomous Region.

Maoist chairman Prachanda will inaugurate the new autonomous region later on Wednesday as Nepalese Congress Party warned the ultra Leftists to desist from such tactics as it may lead to "biggest political and social confrontation".

Nepalese Congress' statement comes after various disgruntled ethnic bodies vowed to protest any such unilateral decision to delineate the autonomous states.

Hasina meets Manmohan on Jan 11

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diplomatic sources say people of both the countries are pinning high hope on opening a new chapter in Indo-Bangla relationship. And they expect the breaking of fresh grounds in not-so-warm ties of past several years and creation of a right atmosphere for resolving long-standing issues between the two next-door neighbours.

The officials are fine-tuning issues to be tabled for discussion. "This time we will be going with adequate preparations and officials of ministries concerned are doing massive homework so that there is no lapses from our side," said a high official at the foreign ministry.

He said the ministries of foreign affairs, home, commerce, finance, power and energy are regularly holding meetings and discussing long-standing issues of water sharing, border demarcation, enclaves in adverse possessions, trade gap and preparation of Bangladesh's position paper.

Foreign ministry officials said Sheikh Hasina is expected to begin her India visit on January 10. Preparations are going on to finalise the arrangements.

India has also agreed to give transit facility to Bangladesh to go to Nepal and Bhutan using Indian territory.

Two governments will

sign five bilateral agreements including an extradition treaty during Hasina's visit. Three of the agreements are related to combating terrorism and criminal activities and two are related to purchase of electricity and expansion of trade and commerce.

They said although Dhaka is yet to confirm the date, officials are working keeping it in mind that Bangladesh might accept the India-proposed date.

Earlier, Hasina was due to

begin her visit to India on December 18 but it was

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