

Hillary sees 'new day' for US and Pakistan

Islamabad seeks energy, Kashmir roll in talks

AFP, Washington

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday the United States had started a "new day" with Pakistan in hearing its concerns, but some of Islamabad's requests were set for a cool reception.

Hillary opened a first-of-a-kind "strategic dialogue" with Pakistan, hoping to show the country's widely anti-American public that the United States wants a relationship that goes beyond short-term battles against Islamic militants.

In an early-morning ceremony timed for broadcast in Pakistan, Hillary said she wanted to speak directly to its people, acknowledging that the two nations "have had our misunderstandings and disagreements in the past."

"There are sure to be more disagreements in the future, as there are between any friends or, frankly, any family mem-

bers," she said.

"But this is a new day. For the past year, the Obama administration has shown in our words and deeds a different approach and attitude toward Pakistan."

"The dialogue we seek is not only with the government of Pakistan, but you the people of Pakistan," she said, vowing that both she and President Barack Obama had a "personal commitment" to building ties with Islamabad.

Pakistan was a Cold War ally of the United States and the two nations helped arm Islamic insurgents who ousted Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989. But US concerns mounted and it distanced itself from Pakistan until the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The US Congress last year approved a giant five-year, 7.5 billion-dollar aid package for Pakistan, hoping to chip away support for Islamic extremism by build-

ing schools, infrastructure and democratic institutions.

But in a nod to the continued powerful role of Pakistan's military, the United States invited General Ashfaq Kayani, the army chief, to take part in the dialogue, along with Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

Qureshi expressed gratitude for US assistance and pledged that Pakistan would keep up the fight against Islamic extremism. But he made clear that Pakistan wanted benefits in return.

Qureshi said that Pakistan was seeking "non-discriminatory" access to energy resources as well as a "constructive" role by the United States on its dispute with India over Kashmir.

"Pakistan is committed to doing its part to facilitate the world community's effort for peace and stability in Afghanistan," Qureshi said.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (L) and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi (R) participate in a discussion at the State Department yesterday in Washington, DC. Hillary hosted a forum that focused on US-Pakistan strategic dialogue.

Locked fire escape blamed for high casualties in Kolkata bldg

Toll rises to 24

AFP, New Delhi

Firefighters in the Indian city of Kolkata blamed a locked fire escape yesterday for the high death toll from a blaze in a prestigious colonial-era building that killed 24 people.

In all, 240 firefighters battled for eight hours on Tuesday to control the fire on a major commercial street in central Kolkata, capital of the state of West Bengal, state fire service chief Gopal Bhattacharya said.

Of the 24 dead, four were killed when they jumped out of windows while two more died in hospital, Bhattacharya said.

"The bodies of 18 others burnt to death were recovered from the staircase of the building. The door to the top roof was locked. They could have been alive if they had reached the roof," he told AFP.



Democratic National Alliance supporters protest in Colombo Tuesday. Sri Lankan opposition groups demanded the release of former army chief Sarath Fonseka, who attempted to unseat the president in January elections.

Local miners confine

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Around 1,100 miners again went on the indefinite strike from Monday midnight demanding implementation of the 2008 tripartite agreement signed among the miners, BCMCL and CMC and XMC.

The deal recommends 8 percent salary increase of the miners each February but it did not happen accordingly last February, the miners said.

Energy Adviser to the Prime Minister Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury told The Daily Star that State Minister for Mineral Resources Enamul Haq and State Minister for Land Mostafizur Rahman Fizar would visit the mine area today to deal with the issue.

He also said the government is discussing the matter with Chinese embassy in Dhaka to resolve the crisis.

Food stocks in BCMCL complex have run out due to the indefinite strike, sources said.

"We are seeking help from Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to prevent any humanitarian disaster as our food stocks are being depleted quickly," said Habib Uddin Ahmed, DGM (underground operation)

and also president of Barapukur Coal Mine Officers' Welfare Association.

Sources said food stocks for the Chinese officials and staffs would become zero today and the food for BCMCL staffs was supposed to become zero yesterday.

Some 220 Chinese officials and employees and 150 BCMCL staffs along with their family members were staying in the complex.

A BCMCL official said, "Our family members can not go outside of the complex to buy essentials. Even a pregnant woman was not allowed to visit doctors while children to their schools. So, we feel totally insecure at BCMCL complex."

He said BCMCL, a wholly owned coal-mining subsidiary of Petrobangla, is not responsible for the pay of native miners as two contracted companies CMC and XMC had employed them.

While contacted, Md Abdul Jalil, deputy commissioner of the district, said steps have been taken to supply foods to the BCMCL complex.

An official of BCMCL

managed to come out of the complex on Tuesday night and filed a case against the agitating miners with Parbatipur Police Station.

On the same day, General Secretary of Barapukur Coal Mine Workers' Union Nur Islam filed a case with the police accusing Rafiqul Alam, a driver of the company, of hitting miners by his pick-up van.

The miners beat up Moyeed Uddin, a security guard, and Kamruzzaman, an electrician, yesterday when they tried to go outside of the complex. They were admitted to Parbatipur Health Complex.

An hour long tripartite meeting among BCMCL, XMC and agitating miners ended at XMC office at 4:30 pm yesterday without any outcome as XMC did not meet the demand.

Meer Abdul Motin GM (mining) of BCMCL, U Ba Hua of XMC and Zahedul Islam Ratan of mine workers' union were present.

Sujayet Islam, acting SP of the district, said the situation is under control though some isolated incidents happened there.

Mullah Omar appoints two new deputies

ANI, Kabul

Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar has named two new deputies to succeed his arrested military chief, Mullah Abdull Ghani Baradar.

The BBC quoted a senior Taliban leader as saying that the aim to appoint Abdul Qayyum Zakir and Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor is to send across a message that "one arrest will not affect our movement."

Mullah Baradar was arrested in Karachi in February in what was seen as a blow to the militants as they gear up to face a major Nato offensive this year.

Earlier the Taliban denied Mullah Baradar's arrest by Pakistani authorities but later a Taliban spokesman confirmed it.

"Such arrests will not deter us from carrying on our activities," he told Newsweek.

The role of both new Taliban deputies will be vital at

a time when the US is pouring in thousands of men as part of a troop "surge" before a withdrawal begins next year.

Abdul Qayyum Zakir, a former inmate at the US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, is said to be very popular with the younger generation of Taliban fighters because of his willingness to fight on the ground beside his men.

According to reports, Zakir was detained in Guantanamo Bay until 2007 and then deported to Afghanistan before being freed in 2008.

Soon after his release, he was back amongst his old comrades and has risen swiftly up the ladder.

Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor is seen as a key behind-the-scenes leader.

Mansoor, who was part of the original Taliban leadership prior to the 9/11 attacks, has been instrumental in managing Taliban logistics and raising funds, especially from the Gulf countries.

Some Jamaat leaders

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charge of war crimes after the investigation agency, likely to be formed today, starts working, a senior Jamaat leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

While talking to The Daily Star at his residence in the capital, he received a number of phone calls from other Jamaat leaders voicing concern about the start of the trial process and possible detention.

Jamaat leaders were still assessing the full implication of events to come.

The government has already imposed a restriction on their leaving the country and is keeping them under constant watch. Jamaat leaders Mohammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdur Razzaque had been barred from going abroad.

Jamaat high command has already directed party leaders to prepare for demonstration against detention, without waiting for any response from the BNP or other components of the four-party alliance, party insiders said.

Some Jamaat leaders met BNP Chief Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office last month and proposed waging a united movement against the government on various issues including "harassment of political leaders in the name of the trial."

But they received a lukewarm response from the BNP chief. She told them that movement against the government can be launched from their respective sides, said a Jamaat source.

"We will decide on our next

course of action after observing the government's actions. If the government attempts to victimise Jamaat-e-Islami in the name of trial, we will see what to do," Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed told The Daily Star yesterday.

He however claimed that there is no war criminal in Jamaat-e-Islami.

Jamaat is also making preparation to face the trial legally.

Jamaat's legal wing comprised of a number of lawyers is working to defend party leaders who might be charged with war crimes, party sources said.

Separate files are being prepared on the party's top leaders with possible allegations against them and legal arguments to get them cleared of the allegations, a party leader said.

Jamaat also plans to challenge the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973 under which the trial will be held, he said.

"But will he challenge the law at the Supreme Court before it is used against any of us," the Jamaat leader said.

The severity of the Act also worries them because if charged under the act, an individual will lose his or her fundamental rights ensured by the constitution.

The party has also launched a massive campaign at home and abroad raising questions about the legality of the prosecution.

A number of Jamaat leaders have been in contact with foreign diplomats in Dhaka.

Some party men abroad are also keeping contact with some international organisations. The party prepared and published a number of documents, and sent those to the foreign missions labelling the government move as "politically motivated", a Jamaat leader said.

21 Taliban killed in Pak military assault

US missile strike kills 6

AP, AFP, Parachinar/Peshawar

Pakistan's armed forces launched an assault yesterday on Taliban hideouts in the northwest tribal belt, killing at least 21 militants in firefights and bombing raids, officials said.

The operation began hours after a US drone aircraft fired two missiles into a compound in North Waziristan tribal district near the Afghan border, killing at least six suspected militants in the latest strike by the spy planes.

Pakistani paramilitary troops began operations just after midnight Wednesday to flush out militants from the outskirts of the main town in the Orakzai tribal district, senior security officials in the region said.

Rasheed Khan said the military used ground forces and fighter jets during operations in the Orakzai tribal region and cleared out three militant strongholds. One soldier was wounded.

The military has launched several recent offensives to clear Orakzai of insurgents. The region is located in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province. Its remoteness makes it difficult to independently verify reported

casualties.

Orakzai is the base of Pakistani Taliban chief Hakimullah Mehsud, who officials believe was killed in a US missile strike early this year. The group insists he is alive, but has not provided any evidence.

The operation came hours after a US drone aircraft fired two missiles into a compound in North Waziristan tribal district near the Afghan border, killing at least six suspected militants in the latest strike by the spy planes.

"US drones fired two missiles on a militant vehicle parked outside a compound. At least six militants were killed and three others were wounded," a senior security official told AFP.

"The compound, being frequented by militants recently, was also destroyed in the attack," he added.

Another security official and two intelligence officials confirmed the missile strike and death toll.

Pakistani troops began operations just after midnight Wednesday to flush out militants from the outskirts of Kalaya, the main town in the Orakzai tribal district, a senior security official in the northwest city Peshawar said.

ACC seeks

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documents and papers concerning the allegations before being questioned.

The anti-graft body then assured the former premier that it would let her do so before questioning starts.

ACC sources pointed out that law does not allow them to send documents and papers to Khaleda.

The allegations concern laundering of about Tk 7.5 crore of public money for purchasing land for Zia Charitable Trust and misappropriation of funds for construction of Bhairab Bridge, causing a loss of Tk 100 crore to the state when she was prime minister, sources mentioned.

The money laundering probe also involves Khaleda's sons Tarique Rahman, senior vice-chairman of BNP, and Arafat Rahman Koko as they are also trustees of the charitable trust.

Sources said this time the ACC will request Khaleda to reply to its notice by the end of this month stating where and when it should question her on the allegations.

The commission issued its first notice on February 14 and the second on March 3. Khaleda replied to the latter on March 23.

If the former premier replies to the ACC's third notice the same way as she did in case of the previous ones, investigators would seek the commission's instructions for their next course of action.

The inquiry against Khaleda requires mainly her statement to be completed, said the sources.

According to ACC code of work, once its inquiry finds sufficient information about an allegation, it goes for filing a case and conducting a fully-fledged investigation.

Migrant workers unpaid

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"Migrants, many from Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nepal, are forced to work in hazardous situations, often against their will, and toil for 12 hours a day or more," the group said in a statement.

"Many are subject to verbal, physical and sexual abuse," it added.

Amnesty said most workers borrowed substantial sums to pay recruitment agents to secure a job -- only to discover too late that they had been given empty promises and could not afford to return home.

"Some are in situations close to bonded labour," it said, adding that laws allowing employers to hold workers' passports prevented them from leaving abusive workplaces for fear of arrest.

"Coercive practices such as these are indicators of forced labour," it said.

Amnesty said its findings were based on interviews with more than 200 migrant workers, many of whom told horrifying stories of being abused, beaten, threatened with death, or at the least unpaid for long stretches.

A 26-year-old domestic helper from Indonesia said she was raped twice and attacked with a hot iron by her employer after being accused of not picking up the phone quickly enough.

"I didn't know why he told me to turn on the iron. He shouted, 'Is that iron hot?' And then tried to iron me. Push the iron toward my body," the unidentified worker was quoted as saying.

Another worker, Mawar, who was only 15 when she came to Malaysia, said her recruitment agent burned her nipple with a

cigarette, and forced her to clean the floor with her tongue "just like a dog".

"Another time the agent forced me to eat five cockroaches while they were still alive. She also forced me to drink urine from other workers," said Mawar, whose nationality was not given.

Amnesty also documented over a dozen cases in which Malaysian immigration officials allegedly handed over Myanmar detainees to traffickers operating on Malaysia's northern border with Thailand between 2006 and 2009.

"The Malaysian government has the responsibility to prevent such abuses, but instead facilitates trafficking through its loose regulation of recruitment agents and through laws and policies that fail to protect workers," it said.

An official from the home ministry, which oversees the immigration department, said it would not respond to the allegations until it had an opportunity to study the report.

Amnesty said that workers often face indiscriminate raids from authorities and demands for bribes from police, and that those who cannot pay end up in detention centres in deplorable conditions.

The government said last year it was mulling new laws to enshrine conditions for foreign workers, after persistent complaints that they lack protection.

"Until Malaysia's labour laws offer effective protection and are effectively enforced, exploitation will continue," said Michael Bochenek, Amnesty's policy director who authored the report.

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Preparation of Adaptation Management Plan for Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change Through Coastal Afforestation Project in Bangladesh



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh seeks proposals from interested and well qualified organizations/vendors for "Preparation of Adaptation Management Plan for Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change through Coastal Afforestation in Bangladesh".

Submission of Proposal: The envelope should state "Proposal for Adaptation Management Plan for 4 sites of Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change through Coastal Afforestation in Bangladesh." and should be marked as 'Confidential' and addressed to the UNDP Procurement Unit, IDB Bhaban (12th Floor), Begum Rokeya Sharani, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207. The deadline for submission of Proposal is April 12th, 2010 before 11.00 AM. Proposals should be submitted in the Bid Box of the Procurement Unit in IDB Bhaban (12th Floor), Begum Rokeya Sharani, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.

All interested organizations may request the Bidding Documents from procurement.bc@undp.org by formal request to UNDP that will register firm on the list of participants, so that any correspondence, questions regarding the bidding documents and their respective answers can be sent to all bidders.

Submission Procedure: The offer should comprise of 2 separate sealed envelopes of technical and financial proposals.



Vacancy Announcement

Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts



United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces vacancy for the following position for "Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility" under "Service Contract" modality. The duration of the contract is one year initially and subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance.

1. IT Assistant - 1 position

For details of the Terms of Reference and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Hard copies of the TOR's can be collected from UNDP-CHTDF Offices of Dhaka, Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. Applications should be submitted no later than 7 April, 2010.

"Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Submitted documents will not be returned to the applicants"

"Qualified female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply"