

# Obama warns of nuke terrorism

BBC ONLINE

President Barack Obama has said the biggest threat to US security is the possibility of a terrorist organisation obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Speaking on the eve of a nuclear security summit in Washington, he said leaders from 40 states should focus on how to secure nuclear material.

He said groups like al-Qaeda would not hesitate to use nuclear devices.

Neither North Korea nor Iran, two states with disputed nuclear ambitions, have been invited to the summit.

The two countries are viewed by the US as violators of the non-proliferation agreement.

Syria was also left off the invitation list because the US believes Damascus has nuclear ambitions, the Associated Press news agency notes.

But the leaders of nuclear states like India, China and Pakistan are among those coming to Washington for the

biggest gathering of world leaders in the US capital in decades, says the BBC's Mark Mardell.

While the issue of what to do about Iran's nuclear ambitions is not on the agenda, it will be at the centre of many discussions.

**'SOUTH AFRICAN EXAMPLE'**

Leaders or other representatives of 47 states are attending the summit.

"The single biggest threat to US security, short-term, medium-term and long-term, would be the possibility of a terrorist organisation obtaining a nuclear weapon," Obama said.

"This is something that could change the security landscape in this country and around the world for years to come.

"If there was ever a detonation in New York City, or London, or Johannesburg, the ramifications economically, politically and from a security perspective would be devastating."

Obama praised South Africa for being the first country to abandon a nuclear

weapons programme.

South Africa had, he said, acquired special standing as a "moral leader" for voluntarily dismantling its nuclear programme in the 1990s.

He thanked its President, Jacob Zuma, for the leadership his government had shown on non-proliferation.

Israel is being represented at the summit only by a deputy prime minister amid reports that its government is worried that Turkey and Egypt might use the occasion to raise the issue of its nuclear arsenal.

Last Thursday, President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty reducing each country's deployed nuclear arsenal to 1,550 weapons.

Earlier in the week, Obama approved a new nuclear policy for the United States, saying he planned to cut the nuclear arsenal, refrain from nuclear tests and not use nuclear weapons against countries that did not have them.

## Clashes in Pakistan kill 40 militants, four soldiers

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

Forty militants and four soldiers were killed in fresh clashes in Pakistan's tribal region near the Afghan border, government officials said yesterday.

Asmatullah Kkhan, an official at the local administration, said dozens of militants attacked a security check post in the Shirin Darra area of Orakzai tribal district early Monday with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

Troops repulsed the attack after around two hours of shooting, and jet fighters pounded militant positions around Shirin Dara and in two other villages later on.

"According to the information we are receiving from the area, around 35 miscreants are killed while four soldiers died and seven more were injured," said Khan, adding that the sides were still exchanging sporadic fire in the area.

## Nepal scraps MRP deal with India

ANI, INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kathmandu

The Nepal Government has revoked its decision to give the contract of printing Machine-Readable Passports (MRPs) to India.

A cabinet meeting held on Sunday evening at the Prime Minister's residence, decided to revoke the decision.

Speaking to reporters here, Government spokesperson and Information Minister Shankar Pokhrel said, the cabinet has decided to revoke the decision to give the MRP printing contract to India.

The meeting also decided to instruct the Foreign Ministry, which has signed an understanding with Security Printing and Minting Corporation (SPMC) of India on the MRP deal, to ask the Indian corporation to halt the printing process.

The Cabinet has instructed the Foreign Ministry to begin a fresh process of awarding MRPs printing contract through a global tender.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sujata Koirala has expressed her dissatisfaction of the decision not to print the passports in India.

Meanwhile, Nepal's opposition Maoist party has called off the nationwide general strike declared yesterday, after Prime Minister Madhav

Kumar Nepal agreed to scrap the controversial deal with India to print modern Nepali passports.

"We had primarily called the general strike to protest against the government's decision (to award the passport contract to Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India)," Maoist chief and former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda said. "We are withdrawing the strike."

However, the Maoist chief added that his party's demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal would continue.

Prachanda also criticised the scrapped passport deal with India as the 'possibly worst blot in Nepal's history' and the gravest attack on national security.

The passport row, which could lead to the fall of the current government, began in January after the foreign ministry cancelled a bidding process started in 2004.

A letter written by the Indian ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood to Nepal's Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala a month earlier and tabled by Maoist MP Narayan Kaji Shrestha in parliament Sunday indicated that the Indian government had sought to bag the contract on the ground it would address India's security concerns due to the open border India shared with Nepal.



Right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) youth activists shout slogans against Germany during a protest in New Delhi yesterday. The BJP demanded an apology from Germany for the "undiplomatic" remarks made by a German parliamentary delegation about Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi during a recent visit to the state.

## Hillary hopes Nepal would complete constitution

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton voiced hope yesterday that Nepal would complete work on a constitution, saying it was key to consolidating democracy.

In a greetings message for Nepal's New Year, Clinton said that the holiday offered an opportunity to "reflect on new beginnings and possibilities."

"As Nepal's friend and partner, the United States hopes that the coming year will see continued consolidation of democracy, including the promulgation of a new constitution, that will keep Nepal on the path of progress and prosperity," she said.

"We look forward to strengthening the partnership between our governments and the friendship between our people," she said.

## Brown's party unveils polls manifesto

AFP, London

Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Labour Party set out its manifesto pledges yesterday ahead of May 6 elections, vowing no big spending commitments as it battles to rein in Britain's huge debt.

The governing centre-left party pledged to protect public services from cuts designed to tackle a record deficit as Britain emerges from recession, according to widely leaked excerpts from the key policy document.

In office since 1997, Labour hope their manifesto will help them overturn opinion polls that have consistently put the main opposition Conservatives ahead.

The economy has dominated campaigning so far, with Labour presenting the election as a crossroads between continuing the road to recovery or veering off to financial disaster.

"There are no big new spending commitments, but there is a determination for every penny to be used wisely, and, as present plans make clear, to give the maximum protection to frontline public services," Brown says in the manifesto.

At the launch in Birmingham, central England, Labour was to argue that businesses are key to restoring jobs and growth, and promise not to raise the basic rate of income tax.

In addition, it pledges reforms to the voting system and parliament's unelected upper House of Lords following last year's row over lawmakers' expenses.

### News in brief

#### New Pak state name sparks deadly riots

AFP, Islamabad

Six people were killed when furious mobs protesting at plans to rename Pakistan's North West Frontier Province after its Pashtun majority clashed with police, officials said yesterday.

More than 200 ethnic Hazara people gathered in the north-western city of Abbottabad chanting slogans against the government and demanding a separate province, local administration chief Muneer Azam said.

The protesters set a police station on fire, torched a police vehicle, pelted police with stones and blocked roads, he said.

#### Kashmir govt threatens to sack employees

ANI, Srinagar

The Jammu and Kashmir government yesterday warned state government employees, who have been protesting against the imposition of the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), to resume their work immediately or they would be terminated from their services.

With the strike entering its tenth day, the government has now threatened to terminate the services of those employees who do not report for duty immediately.

## Thai PM under pressure after EC's call

### Abhisit says govt remains unified, army chief for election

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's election body called yesaged weeks of mass demonstrations, terday for the dissolution of the ruling party, piling the pressure on embattled Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva after the bloodiest political unrest in 18 years.

The move, which centres on allegations of an illegal multi-million-dollar donation to the Democrat Party during the 2005 election campaign, raises the stakes in the long-running standoff between Abhisit and the "Red Shirt" anti-government protesters.

The demonstrators, who are demanding snap elections and the resignation of Abhisit, paraded their dead through the streets of Bangkok on Monday after 21 people were killed in bloody clashes on Saturday.

Abhisit accused "terrorists" of inciting the violence and insisted the government remained united in how to tackle the crisis pitting Thailand's elite military-backed rulers and the country's impoverished rural poor.

"The government is unified and deter-

mined to solve this problem."

Both the government and protesters appeared more deeply entrenched than ever following the deadly clashes that also left more than 800 people injured and caused a trail of destruction through popular tourist areas.

A spokesman for the Democrat Party, Buranaj Smutharak, said it would challenge the election commission's recommendation, which refers to a donation made when Abhisit was deputy leader of the party.

"The case is not over yet. It must be investigated by the attorney general and then go to the constitutional court," he said.

But experts said the commission's call was significant in a country where the last government in 2008 was brought down by a court ruling.

The Reds charge that the current government is illegitimate because it came to power in 2008 after a court ousted allies of former prime minister and telecom tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra from power.

"The prospect of the party being dissolved will really spook the Democrats and this could really change the political

landscape very quickly," said Michael Montesano, a fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

The Red Shirt movement, which has been pushing the election authorities to act on the Democrat Party allegations, said earlier Monday that the time for negotiating with Abhisit's government was over.

"There will be no talks with the government. We will not talk with killers," said Reds leader Jatuporn Prompan. "What else is there to talk about?"

Army chief Anupong Paojinda said he supported early elections to end the crisis that has gripped Thailand since Thaksin, who is now living in exile, was ousted in a bloodless coup in 2006.

"We must return to politics to solve the problem. It must be ended by political means," Anupong told reporters, suggesting that he was reluctant to use force again to put down the protests after the weekend bloodshed.

Seventeen civilians, including a Japanese cameraman, and four soldiers were killed after the army launched a crackdown on the Thaksin supporters who have staged weeks of mass demonstrations.

## Communists meddle in Philippine vote

AFP, Zamboanga

The Philippine military yesterday accused communist rebels of killing three soldiers and abducting politicians as part of extortion efforts linked to national elections.

Such attacks by the 3,000-strong New People's Army (NPA) have increased sharply recently as the rebels take advantage of politicians' vulnerabilities ahead of the May 10 elections to raise funds, the military said.

The three soldiers were killed on the outskirts of the southern city of Davao on Sunday as they were patrolling for NPA members who were collecting money from political campaigners, said Major General Carlos Holganza.

Sunday's incident came after NPA guerrillas last month briefly held three campaigners for a Davao mayoral candidate and burned their

truck after the politician refused to pay their extortion demands, according to the military.

In another area of the restive southern island of Mindanao on Sunday, NPA guerrillas abducted another mayoral candidate and his aide after they failed to pay extortion demands, said local military spokesman Captain Emmanuel Garcia.

The military said last month the communists were set to rake in millions of dollars from extortion this year, thanks to protection money forked over by politicians running in the elections.

Candidates for posts ranging from village councillor all the way up to the president are being asked to pay between 5,000 and 20 million pesos (110 and 435,000 dollars) or their campaigners will be attacked, the military warned.

#### Ousted Kyrgyz leader vows to defy arrest

BBC ONLINE

Ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has rallied his supporters, days after violence in the capital, Bishkek, overthrew his government.

Speaking to a crowd in his village of Teyit, Bakiyev accused the interim government of acting like "gangsters".

He said any efforts to arrest him would end in bloodshed.

His comments came after the government's deputy leader said a "special operation" was being planned against him.

Almaz Atambayev accused Bakiyev of "hiding behind a human shield" in his home region in the south of the country.

The interim government, which is led by critics of Bakiyev's government, has told him to step down formally or face arrest.

#### Six dead as Italy train derails

BBC ONLINE

A train has derailed in northern Italy, killing at least six people and injuring 20 others, media reports say.

The accident occurred in a mountain valley following a landslide near the winter sports town of Merano, close to the border with Austria.

Many of the injured were in a serious condition; the Ansa news agency said citing rescue officials.

The accident took place at 0905 (0705 GMT). Ambulances and emergency crews are heading to the scene.

## 50 BDR members jailed, 1 acquitted

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imprisonment. The court also fined them Tk 100 each.

This is the second verdict of a BDR special court set up for trying accused mutineers of the paramilitary force. The same court on April 7 delivered a verdict in a case against 29 accused BDR members of 25 Rifle Battalion in Panchagarh.

In the judgment, Maj Gen Mainul said all facts and evidence proved that the accused were involved in the mutiny in Thakurgaon BDR Battalion on February 26.

Nayeb Subedar Md Shahidullah Biswas and Sepoy Md Shajahan were sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment, Habildar Md Abdul Haque, Sepoy Arifur Rahman Majumder, Subedar Maj Khondaker Mohammad Mohosin, Sepoy Md Meraz Ali and Sepoy Md Nahidur Rahman to six years, Sepoy Md Jahirul Haque and Assistant Lance Nayek Md Siddiqur Rahman for five years and six months, Lance Nayek Md Selim Mia, Sepoy Md Zakir Hossain, Nayek Md Anamul Haque, Lance Nayek Md Nurul Islam and Sepoy Habibur Rahman for five years, Sepoy Md Ali Akbar and Assistant

Nayeb Subedar Md Fazlur Rahman Bhuiyan for three years, Sepoy Md Razu Ahmed, Sepoy Md Ruhul Amin, Assistant Sepoy Md Nazmul Huda and Assistant Sepoy Md Saiful Islam for two years, Assistant Lance Nayek Md Anwar Hossain, Habildar Golam Mostafa and Sepoy Md Amzad Hossain to 13 months of rigorous imprisonment.

Habildar Md Jalal Uddin, Lance Nayek Abdul Basher, Sepoys Rezaul Karim, Mohammad Arshad, Md Jasim Uddin, Md Pappu Mondal, Md Manjurul Basher, Md Akhteruzzaman, Masum Billah, Md Halim Rana, Md Selim Reza, Ebne Masud Rana, Ziaur Rahman and Md Sabur Uddin were awarded six months' rigorous imprisonment.

Habildar Rezaul Karim, sepoy Abdullah Al Mamun, Md Ekabbar Ali, Mohammad Zillur Rahman, Md Hanif Uddin, Md Rabiul Islam, Md Moksedul Haque, Md Babul Akhter, Shahin Mahmud, Mahmud Elias, Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, Md Mir Hossain and Wasim Akram Haque, Lance Nayek Md Nurul Islam and Sepoy Habibur Rahman for five years, Sepoy Md Ali Akbar and Assistant

Nayeb Subedar Saiful Islam, now on leave preparatory to retirement (LPR), was acquitted.

The court awarded lesser punishment to 44 of the 51 accused as they sought mercy confessing to their guilt after the court framed charges against the accused on April 8.

On completion of hearing, the court on Sunday fixed yesterday for delivering judgment.

Maj Gen Mainul said the verdict would remain as an example in the battalion's history. All legal proceedings were maintained during the trial and the accused were given 69 days' time in place of 27 days for making preparation to defend themselves.

He said seven civilian lawyers and a BDR official were appointed for giving legal assistance to the accused.

The trial was held in presence of visitors, relatives of the accused and journalists.

Many convicts burst into tears after Mainul pronounced the verdict. A number of them said they were punished without any reason while the real culprits remain at large.

Prosecutor in the case Lt Col Mahfuz Alam, also command-

ing officer of 25 Rifles Battalion, told journalists that such a verdict was essential for a disciplined force.

Emran Chowdhury, one of the counsels for the accused, said there is no scope for questioning any witness according to the BDR law.

Public Prosecutor Mosharaf Hossain Kjol said justice has been done. He said there is no option to challenge the verdict as the special court is the highest court for BDR.

The court ordered the prosecution to send copies of the verdict to the BDR headquarters, deputy commissioner, jail superintendent and superintendent of police in Thakurgaon and all high-ups of 20 Rifle Battalion.

The trial began on February 3 and was adjourned on February 4 giving the accused 64 days to make preparation to defend themselves.

Nurul Islam Fakir, deputy assistant director of 20 Rifle Battalion, placed the charges against the 51 as the complainant on February 3.

Deputy Attorney General Biswajit Roy represented attorney general at the court. Public Prosecutor Monjurul Alam was also present.

## Hajj Policy

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Sheikh Hasina, the weekly cabinet also approved National Hajj Policy (2010-2014) and Hajj Package, fixing Tk 228,615 for each haji this year. Last year the amount was Tk 2,20,550.

"The cabinet approved both the amendment proposals of the two laws as elections to the local bodies have become essential," Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad told reporters at the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office.

Tenure of union parishad expired early 2008 while the municipality's in the middle of last year.

The Election Commission in last February asked LGRD and cooperatives ministry to amend the laws to hold the polls in between May and July. The last union parishad elections were held in between January 25 and March 16 in 2003.

"Union parishad elections will have to be held within 180 days of the end of the five-year tenure," said the press secretary.

About municipality elections, he said tenures of 245 pourasobhas out of 308 expired about three years ago.

"Formulating a new Hajj policy and package has become necessary following some requirements of the Saudi government about sending delegations, and administrative and medical teams for Hajj," he said.

A total of 75,000 pilgrims will perform the holy ritual this year from Bangladesh. Of

them, 15,000 pilgrims will go under government while the rest under non-government arrangements.

The cabinet meeting also approved a proposal for categorising national and international days to observe them with due respect.

The press secretary said the government will bear all expenses for observing the 'A' category national and international days. He said national days like Independence Day will be observed with full government expenses.

Azad said the government signed an agreement with Russia last year for peaceful use of nuclear power since they are committed to setting up the Rakkur Nuclear Power Plant to tackle the country's electricity crisis.

The government has fixed a target for taking power generation to 20,000 MW by 2021, Azad said.

Under the Bangladesh-Kuwait agreement on defence affairs, the Kuwaiti government provides salaries, allowances, and plane fares of Bangladesh armed forces members working in Kuwait.

An agreement signed between the Bangladesh government and the Russian Federation on use of nuclear energy for peaceful works, the Saarc Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS), and a Bangladesh-Kuwait agreement between the two defence ministries were also approved by the cabinet.

## Tight security

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said, "All measures to ensure fool-proof security have been taken."

"Excesses will not be encouraged in the name of security," he added.

The DMP commissioner said although they have no information on any terrorist attack on Pshela Baishakh, this is for the first time that an evacuation team and a post-incident management team will be entrusted with tackling any eventuality.

Shahidul Hoque said special weapons and tactics (SWAT), bomb disposal unit, dog squad, CCTV, rooftop police, plain-clothes women police teams will be deployed and metal detector archways would be placed at all major celebration venues.

The DMP commissioner said main deployment of forces would start around 4:00am on the day of celebration. Each person will be checked twice to make sure no terrorist act takes place.

Eight gates -- four for entry, four for exit -- will be set up around Ramna Park, which will be cordoned by the Lining Force of DMP.

Nine DMP teams will be on duty to check mugging at the celebration venues. Besides, intelligence surveillance will be in place.

Rab officials said they would set up 47 check posts and 38 CCTVs to monitor the areas.

According to Rab officials, they will also keep vigil over all important places like cinemas, zoos, parks and other establishments.