

## White House rebuffs Ahmadinejad offer to debate Obama

BBC ONLINE

The White House has rebuffed Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's offer of a public "face-to-face" policy debate with US President Barack Obama.

The White House said the offer showed new UN sanctions were having an effect.

"We have always said that we would be willing to sit down and discuss Iran's illicit nuclear programme if Iran is serious about doing that," spokesman Robert Gibbs said.

"To date, that seriousness has not been there."

In a televised speech to expatriate Iranians, Ahmadinejad said he planned to be in the US for the UN General Assembly next month.

"We are ready to sit down with Obama face-to-face and put the global issues on the table, man-to-man, freely, and in front of the media and see whose solutions are better," Ahmadinejad said.



Five year-old Findlay Gledhill holds a banner as a group of Rangas (redheads) hits the streets of Melbourne, Australia yesterday protesting the view that there has been a lack of strong policies to reduce greenhouse pollution so far in the Federal election campaign. "When Julia Gillard became Prime Minister it was a great day for Rangas globally. However she's let us down badly on climate change" said the head of Rangas for Climate Action.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Static kill' to stop oil leak was successful

Says BP

BBC ONLINE

BP says the "static kill" of its ruptured Gulf of Mexico oil well has worked, a big step towards sealing it.

In the procedure, special drilling fluid known as mud is pumped into the well, forcing the oil back down.

BP said well pressure was being controlled by the pressure of the mud, which was "the desired outcome".

Meanwhile, a government report due to be published on Wednesday is expected to say that only 26% of the leaked oil poses any further danger to the environment.

About three-quarters of the escaped oil has already evaporated, dispersed, been captured or otherwise eliminated, according to a new analysis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa), reported in the New York Times.

'SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE'

BP began pumping mud into the well from vessels on the surface at 2000 GMT on Tuesday, in order to counter the pressure from the oil pushing out of the reservoir below the seabed.

BP spokeswoman Sheila Williams said the

drilling mud was currently holding the oil down.

"The well appears to have reached a static condition - a significant milestone," she said.

"The well is now being monitored, per the procedure, to ensure the well remains static. Further pumping of mud may or may not be required depending on the results observed during monitoring."

The well ruptured after an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in April which killed 11 workers.

The flow ended on 15 July, when BP closed a new cap it had put on the well. It could eventually seal the mouth of the well with cement.

The US government says the well leaked 4.9 million barrels of oil before being capped last month, with only 800,000 barrels being captured.

But it is expected to announce on Wednesday that only 26% of the oil released was still in the water or onshore in a form that possibly could cause new problems.

Most of that oil is either a light sheen at the surface or in a dispersed form below the surface, and federal scientists believe both forms are breaking down rapidly, the New York Times reports.

## 42 killed in Iraq attacks as Qaeda plants flag

AFP, Kut

Twin car bombs in south Iraq killed 33 people on Tuesday while al-Qaeda fighters hoisted their flag having shot dead five police in Baghdad, a day after the US vowed no delays to a major troop pullout.

The attack in Kut, 160 kilometres (100 miles) south of the Iraqi capital, the first car bombing in the city since the US invasion in 2003, occurred amid concerns that the conflict-wracked nation's security may be unravelling.

Overall, 42 people were killed in violence on Tuesday, officials said, just days after government ministries said more people died in unrest in July than in any month since May 2008.

The sudden spike in violence comes amid deadlock over the formation of a new government almost five months after elections.

## Israeli troops 'on own side' in Lebanon clash: UN

BBC ONLINE

The UN peacekeeping force says Israeli soldiers were operating on their own side of the border when fighting broke out with Lebanese troops on Tuesday.

Clashes erupted when Israeli troops tried to cut down a tree that both sides claimed was in their territory.

Four people - including two Lebanese soldiers, a Lebanese journalist and an Israeli officer - died in the clashes.

Israeli troops have returned to the area to finish the tree-clearing under Unifil's supervision, reports say.

At an emergency session on Tuesday, the UN Security Council expressed "deep concern" about the incident - the worst border clash for years between soldiers from Israel and Lebanon - and urged both sides to show the utmost restraint.

The leader of the Lebanese militant group, Hezbollah, said it would join the fighting if there were any more border clashes.

"The trees being cut by the Israeli army are located south of the Blue Line on the Israeli side," said Unifil spokesman Lt Naresh Bhatt in a statement, referring to the UN-drawn line of with-

drawal for Israeli forces from Lebanon that was agreed in 2000.

Unifil said the Lebanese government had "some reservations" concerning the Blue Line in this area, but noted that both sides had committed to complying with the UN's decisions on the border.

Israel has welcomed the Unifil finding, saying it "clearly corroborates" the Israeli version of events.

"Our routine activity yesterday was conducted entirely south of the frontier - on the Israeli side - and the Lebanese Army opened fire without any provocation or justification whatsoever," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel said its troops were fired upon while conducting maintenance work along the border, and that UN forces had been notified in advance. Lebanon said its troops opened fire after an Israeli patrol crossed the border fence.

Tensions are often high along the heavily fortified frontier, where Israel fought a 34-day conflict with Hezbollah in 2006.

Although Hezbollah did not take part in the latest violence, the group's leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, said his forces would not stand by idly if Israeli troops attacked Lebanese forces again.



Lebanese military taking photos as an Israeli military bulldozer removes a tree yesterday from the same place where it was working the previous day when clashes between these troops started along the border between the two countries. One Israeli soldier, two Lebanese soldiers and a Lebanese journalist were killed during the brief altercation.

PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: AFP

In this image made available by the Iranian President's office, the crowds wave and hold up posters as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses in Hamadan, 336 kilometres southwest of Tehran yesterday. Ahmadinejad's motorcade was not attacked by a grenade, an official in his media office told AFP, explaining that the earlier explosion was from a "firecracker."

## Jamaat wants

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initiative for the trial of war criminals and crimes against humanity is nothing but a "blue print" to destroy the opposition parties including the Islamic party.

Party's Acting Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam made the remarks at a press conference at the party's headquarters in the city's Moghbazar.

In a response to a question, the Jamaat leader said the 1971 killed millions of people and raped women but they did not side with the Pakistani army.

Asked as to why they did not protest against such brutality, Azharul said they had different political stance during the Liberation War and remained silent about the inhumanity due to "different reasons".

"But we did not commit any crime," he noted.

Asked what the Jamaat leaders' or the party's political move was during the Liberation War, he advised journalists to go through newspapers of that time.

In a query about the photograph of Golan Azam with the Pakistani army and Razakars in different Razakar camps published in The Daily Sangram, mouthpiece of Jamaat, Azharul told journalists to go through the High Court verdict in the case relating to his Bangladeshi citizenship.

Defending their stand against the ongoing process of trying war criminals, Azharul said, "It's a settled issue as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman brought an end to that process."

Replying to another query, he said no Jamaat leaders were involved with Shanti committee, auxiliary force of the Pakistani occupation army.

"Most chairmen of Shanti committees were either from Awami League or Muslim League. So Awami League or Muslim League will be responsible if any crimes were committed by the committees," Azharul said.

Meanwhile, the party yesterday in a statement criticised the filing of a writ petition by the president of Biswa Shanti Parishad demanding "purity" of Kurbani [slaughtering of animals on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha].

## Medvedev cuts holiday as wildfires kill 48

BBC ONLINE

Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev has interrupted his holiday to hold emergency talks on wildfires raging across central Russia.

The death toll from the disaster has reached 48, and seven regions are under a state of emergency.

Authorities are especially concerned about fires burning near a major nuclear research centre in Sarov.

Air pollution in Moscow has soared as the capital is blanketed in thick smoke from peat bog and forest fires.

Medvedev, who was on his traditional summer break in the southern resort of Sochi, returned to the capital to chair an emergency meeting of the national security council on the crisis that was sparked by a heat wave.

On Wednesday morning 520 fires were still burning over an area of 188,525 ha (465,000 acres), the emergency ministry said.

In a 24-hour period, 403 new fires had been recorded and 293 had been extinguished, the ministry added.

Authorities said more than 2,000 fire fighters were battling fires near the Sarov nuclear research facility, in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

The head of Russia's nuclear agency, who supervised the operation on the ground, said the situation was under control.

"Nothing is threatening the centre's facilities," Sergei Kiriyenko told the Interfax news agency.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin met emergency services in the Voronezh region south of Moscow, one of the worst affected areas where hundreds of houses burnt down.

Thousands of people have lost their homes in 14 regions of Russia over the past few days.

About a fifth of Russia's grain crop has also been destroyed. Many children are being evacuated from summer camps threatened by fires.

## Piano 'played by Mozart' discovered in Germany

AFP, Berlin

An early piano believed to have been played by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has surfaced in Germany and could be worth millions of euros (dollars), a radio station reported yesterday.

Public broadcaster SWR said the instrument was built in 1775 and acquired in the 1980s by piano manufacturer Martin Becker in the southern German city of Baden Baden from an antiques dealer in Strasbourg, eastern France.

When Becker decided to auction off the fortepiano, a music historian noticed the offer and "had a hunch that it could be the same long-lost instrument that Mozart played whenever he was in Strasbourg," SWR said.

A historic oil painting in Vienna shows the composer Joseph Haydn, a Mozart contemporary, playing what may be the same instrument.

## Dodgy doctors warned

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the people. Why people would suffer due to indifference of the physicians in the rural areas?"

In this regard, Hasina cited the example of Gynaecology Department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where more than 35 gynaecologists are posted.

"Does the DMCH unit need so many gynaecologists? There are many hospitals in the country where mothers do not get timely and proper services of gynaecologists," she said.

The PM announced that the government will soon appoint nutritionist at every hospital in a bid to ensure ideal health of the child, mother and all others.

She gave the directive for amending the Alternative Baby Food Marketing Ordinance-1984 to make it time befitting in line with the proposals on baby food, nutrition and health adopted in the World Health Conference 2010.

She also issued an order for setting up breastfeeding corners and day-care centres at all institutions, including

government offices, banks, schools, colleges and shopping malls for greater interest of the mothers.

"An ideal environment is a must for breast feeding. Our mothers have to be given such environment wherever they go," she said.

Hasina said the last Awami League government had introduced day-care centres and breastfeeding corners at the offices, but the last BNP-Jamaat government had closed those.

However, these have been reactivated again and steps taken for setting up new day-care centres and breastfeeding corners, she added.

The PM in her speech reiterated the government's desire to increase maternity leave to six months from the present four months.

"I think maternity leave should be of six months as breastfeeding is suggested at least for six months after the baby's birth," she said.

"Nowadays parents do not take so many children as in the past; so it will not cause any harm to official duties if the maternity leave is extended to six months."

Hasina said the process is already underway to appoint 13,500 health workers for the community health clinics while more 582 physicians will be appointed soon. Already 3,000 new physicians have been appointed on ad-hoc basis.

On breastfeeding, she said it has to be ensured that the mothers breastfeed the babies within one hour of birth.

The premier emphasised on massive campaigns to make mothers as well as fathers aware about the importance of breastfeeding.

She also requested all particularly the husbands and other family members to be more attentive to a mother's health during pregnancy and after the birth of a baby.

The PM later went round an exhibition arranged on the occasion of the Breastfeeding Week at the lobby of the conference centre.

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, PM's Health Adviser Syed Mudasser Ali and State Minister for Health Capt (ret'd) Mojibur Rahman Fakir, among others, addressed the function chaired by Health Secretary Humayun Kabir.