

## WIKILEAKS' DISCLOSURE US warns Assange on possible leak

BBC ONLINE

The US has written to the founder of whistleblower site Wikileaks, Julian Assange, requesting him not to release a cache of diplomatic files.

The release of classified State Department documents is against US law and will put "countless" lives at risk, the letter warns.

Wikileaks says it is set to unveil a new set of documents, bigger than past releases on Afghanistan and Iraq.

Assange has said the US authorities are afraid of being held to account.

The latest leak is expected to include documents covering US dealings and diplomats' confidential views of countries including Australia, Britain, Canada, Israel, Russia and Turkey.

The letter from the US state department's legal advisor Harold Koh was a response to correspondence from Assange, who had written to the US ambassador to Britain, Louis Susman.

Assange had asked which individuals would be put at risk due to the leak, the State Department said.

A senior American official told the BBC that Assange was offering to negotiate over limited redactions.

In response, Koh demanded that Wikileaks return official documents to the US government.

"We will not engage in a negotiation regarding the further release or dissemination of illegally obtained US government classified materials," Koh stated in the letter.

'Seven times larger'

Koh's letter adds that the publication of the documents would endanger the lives of "countless" individuals - from journalists to human rights activists and bloggers - and put US military operations at risk.

Correspondents say the letter is a rare move for the US administration, and reflects the government's concern about the implications of the possible leak.

Wikileaks earlier this week that the next release would be nearly seven times larger than the nearly 400,000 Pentagon documents related to the Iraq war it published in October.

It has not confirmed when the documents will be made public, but there is some speculation that the release will take place on Sunday.



South Korean protesters hold candles during a rally opposing a joint military exercise between South Korea and the US, in Seoul yesterday. The naval exercise designed to deter North Korea, after the communist state warned of "unpredictable consequences" if the drill goes ahead. PHOTO: AFP

## Berlusconi 'personally invited escort'

AP, Rome

A self-described escort has said Premier Silvio Berlusconi personally invited her to two parties at his villas where young, foreign women were plentiful.

Nadia Macri told Sky TG24 Sunday that she believed many of the women were minors, but didn't know for sure since they didn't talk among themselves.

Macri is the latest woman to recount evenings spent at Berlusconi's villas allegations that have fuelled a political crisis that has brought the government to a no-confidence vote in two weeks.

Italian newspapers have published transcripts of Macri's testimony to prosecutors in which she said Berlusconi paid her euro 10,000 for sexual favours at the parties.

## CLIMATE SUMMIT KICKS-OFF TODAY Cancun meet may go Copenhagen way

THE TIMES OF INDIA ONLINE

Despite Mexico's promise not to do a Copenhagen on the climate talks which begins in Cancun today -- a bid to override the hardnosed but protracted climate negotiations with a super-imposed political summit of heads of states -- it may just end up doing that.

Sources in the government said, PM Manmohan Singh had received a last-minute invite for a heads of state summit planned in the second half of the UN climate negotiations in Cancun on December 9. The PM will not be able to attend the summit since he would be preoccupied with the Indo-US summit.

But the plan to hijack the actual UN negotiations, where every word is debated tediously, by bringing in heads of states to come up with a last-minute half-deal, which could also be a face-saver for host-deal, has not gone down well with India.

The sudden attempt to set up a high-level summit, which technically is not a part of the UN negotiations, is being seen in Indian quarters as a way to gloss over the persisting differences between the developed and developing countries -- with a political statement being bandied

out at the last moment. The chance of such a statement emerging despite substantial differences always remains high. Besides, there is a growing pressure on the heads of states to show off something 'substantial' emanating from their gathering.

The bad odour of Copenhagen talks, where the developed countries blocked talks at the negotiating level while the Danish government tried to broker an accord without reference to the UN principles had created an atmosphere of distrust between the two blocks that is yet to fade away.

The Copenhagen talks had witnessed an unprecedented scene --- with various heads of states personally negotiating over phrases and words of the accord -- that finally got brokered.

So far, Mexico has been trying hard to keep different country and groupings on board with informal talks as well as 'pre-COP' meeting that was held as a run-up to the November 29 meet.

With everyone agreeing that the 193 countries, who are party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, would not be able to conclude a complete deal by Copenhagen, the hosts had instead suggested a Copenhagen Accord style 'Cancun Mandate' that most countries have rejected.

## Haitians take part in polls amid cholera epidemic

BBC ONLINE

Haiti has begun voting in its elections, as the earthquake-hit nation continues to battle a deadly cholera epidemic.

Up to 4.7m registered voters can cast their ballots for one of 18 presidential candidates, as well as parliamentary deputies and senators.

Violence and concerns over fraud have already overshadowed the elections.

The polls are the first since a devastating earthquake struck in January, killing 230,000 people.

Some 11,000 United Nations peacekeepers are helping provide security and logistical support to the process in a country where infrastructure is poor and many earthquake victims still live in tented camps, mostly in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

## 2G SCAM No hope for parliament BJP rejects Pranab's plea

IANS, New Delhi

The fortnight-long stalemate in Parliament over the alleged 2G scam is unlikely to end on Monday as an unrelenting opposition yesterday rebuffed the government's fresh request to it to give up the demand for a joint parliamentary panel probe into the scandal. Finance minister Pranab Mukherjee on

Sunday spoke to the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) leaders Sushma Swaraj and LK Advani in a bid to break the parliament logjam over the demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the controversial second generation telephony spectrum allotment of 2008.

Swaraj, a new entrant on micro-blogging site Twitter, wrote Sunday afternoon: "Mukherji spoke to me & Advaniji some time back and told that JPC was not possible."

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said the finance minister "appealed that we give up our demand for JPC... We told Pranab Mukherjee that we could not give up demand for JPC".

The Parliament logjam during the winter session that began November 9 has stalled the legislative business of the government.

The two houses had some 115 working hours scheduled in the first 11 days of the session. The opposition, which has united over the 2G issue, and the government are blaming each other for the wasted parliament time that has also cost the national exchequer over Rs.80 crore.

## Obama back on the hard court, as spectator

AP, Washington

A day after it took 12 stitches to patch a busted lip President Barack Obama suffered during a game of pickup basketball, he was back on the hard court Saturday as a spectator.

Obama took the whole family to Howard University, where they watched the Oregon State Beavers defeat the Howard Bison, 84-74. His brother-in-law, Craig Robinson, is the Oregon State coach.

Obama was joined by his wife, Michelle; her mother, Marian Robinson; and daughters Malia and Sasha. Coach Robinson's wife, their infant son, and his two children from a previous marriage also attended. They sat in the first row on the Oregon State side, just above the court. Several family members, including Obama and Robinson, showed their OSU spirit by wearing black and orange the school's colours.

Obama paid close attention to the game, leaning forward in his seat at times. He occasionally snatched popcorn or sipped bottled water, and at one point 9-year-old Sasha reached over and kissed her father on the cheek opposite his stitched lip.

He stayed seated at halftime as spectators clustered around to snap photos of him.

The president was injured Friday morning during a game of basketball with friends and family at Fort McNair in Washington when an opposing player's elbow accidentally struck him in the mouth. Doctors stitched him up after he returned to the White House.

## Israeli gunfire wounds four Gazans

AFP, Gaza City

Israeli soldiers yesterday shot and wounded four Palestinians as they searched for building materials near Gaza's border with Israel, medical sources said.

A 15-year-old boy was among those shot in an area north of the town of Beit Hanun, according to a spokesman for Gaza's emergency services.

The Israeli army confirmed its fired towards a number of people "approaching the border fence" after they refused to respond to warnings shots.

"The troops fired towards their lower bodies and identified hitting one of them," a spokesman said. He had no information about the other three casualties.

Gazans regularly risk injury or death to search for gravel in the ruins of abandoned buildings along the frontier, despite the proximity to a 300-metre (330-yard) Israeli-imposed exclusion zone.



## US base in spotlight as Okinawa votes

AFP, Tokyo

Voters on the Japanese island of Okinawa were electing their governor yesterday, as Tokyo tries to reconcile the demands of its strained US security alliance with residents who want an American base moved.

Japan and the United States squabbled for much of the past year over the relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, amid hardening opposition on the southern island to the large US military presence there.

The base lies in an urban area of Okinawa, where residents have long complained about aircraft noise and the risk of accidents, and is set to be relocated to a coastal location on the island.

There are two main contenders in Okinawa's gubernatorial election -- incumbent Hirokazu Nakaima, 71, and Yoichi Iha, 58, former mayor of Ginowan city, which currently hosts Futenma.

Turnout as of 2pm (0500 GMT) stood at 24 percent, slightly down from the previous election in 2006. Voting was due to end at 1100 GMT with results expected around four hours later.

Whoever wins will have authority to block any offshore runway construction, potentially putting a major obstacle in the way of the base move -- and both are against the plan, preferring to see the base leave the island altogether.

Initially the government pledged to do exactly that, before performing a U-turn under Washington pressure.

## Cosmos may show echoes of events before Big Bang

BBC ONLINE

Evidence of events that happened before the Big Bang can be seen in the glow of microwave radiation that fills the Universe, scientists have asserted.

Renowned cosmologist Roger Penrose said that analysis of this cosmic microwave background showed echoes of previous Big Bang-like events.

The events appear as "rings" around galaxy clusters in which the variation in the background is unusually low.

The unpublished research has been posted on the Arxiv website.

The ideas within it support a theory developed by Professor Penrose - knighted in 1994 for his services to science - that upends the widely-held "inflationary theory".

That theory holds that the Universe was shaped by an unthinkably large and fast expansion from a single point.

Much of high-energy physics research aims to elucidate how the laws of nature evolved during the fleeting first instants of the Universe's being.

"I was never in favour of it, even from the start," said Professor Penrose.

"But if you're not accepting inflation, you've got to have something else which does what inflation does," he explained to BBC News.

"In the scheme that I'm proposing, you have an exponential expansion but it's not in our aeon - I use the term to describe [the period] from our Big Bang until the remote future.

"I claim that this aeon is one of a succession of such things, where the remote future of the previous aeons somehow becomes the Big Bang of our aeon."

This "conformal cyclic cosmology" (CCC) that Professor Penrose advocates allows that the laws of nature may evolve with time, but precludes the need to institute a theoretical beginning to the Universe.

## Prince William happy to wait for crown

AFP, London

Prince William feels there is no question of him becoming king ahead of his father Prince Charles, a report said, following a rash of polls in Britain showing subjects favouring such a move.

The Sunday Telegraph newspaper quoted a senior royal aide as saying 28-year-old William, second-in-line to the throne, had no desire to leapfrog the Prince of Wales to become king after Queen Elizabeth II's reign.

"There is no question in Prince William's mind that the Prince of Wales will be the next monarch," the aide was quoted as saying.

"Prince William is aware of the speculation, but he is very thick-skinned. He knows his place

in the royal family and he considers himself to be very low down the food chain. He has no desire to climb the ladder of kingship before his time.

"He is very close to his father and incredibly supportive of him and his work as the Prince of Wales."

Both of them will let nature take its course. There is no suggestion from anywhere within the institution that a generation will be skipped.

Last Sunday, three polls suggested that most Britons wanted William and his new fiancée Kate Middleton to be their next king and queen, leapfrogging Charles and his wife Camilla to the throne.



Prince William

People wait to vote in front of a polling station yesterday, during the second round of Presidential election in Gagnoa. Voters flocked to polling stations in the crucial presidential polls aiming to end a decade of instability, amid pleas for calm after a build-up marred by deadly violence.

PHOTO: AFP