

US wants
'long-term'
Pakistan ties
Says Hillary

AFP, Paris

The United States wants "long-term" security ties with Pakistan, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday, moving to soothe tensions raised by the killing of Osama bin Laden near Islamabad.

"It is in our national security interests to have a comprehensive long-term security partnership... with Pakistan," Clinton told reporters in Paris on the sidelines of a development meeting of the OECD economic organisation.

"They have been actively engaged in their own bitter fight with these terrorists," she added.

LATEST LEAKS

Pakistan was misusing war funds

AGENCIES

The United States Embassy in Islamabad was extremely concerned about the misappropriation of money given to Pakistan as reimbursement of costs of fighting terrorist outfits such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

A number of cables sent between 2007 and 2009 to Washington by US Ambassador Anne W Patterson called for a thoroughgoing review of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), set up by the US after the 9/11 attack to reimburse its key allies the costs of providing assistance in the 'global war on terror.'

The cables suggested that money given for providing logistical, military

and other support to US military operations were "diverted" and that reimbursement claims made by Pakistan's military were "seriously inflated."

US aid has also led to quarrels between Pakistan's civilian government and its armed forces over how US military funds were spent, according to WikiLeaks, highlighting the turf battles and lack of transparency over billions of dollars.

US diplomatic cables in 2009, published by Dawn newspaper, showed then Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin asked the US embassy to keep him informed of American aid given directly to the Pakistani military, saying the "Army Chief of Staff General Kayani does not pass on this information."

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Pakistan trims US military mission as mistrust grows

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's government has told the United States to halve the number of military trainers it has stationed in the country, the latest sign of spiraling mistrust between the two allies since the killing of Osama bin Laden.

Pakistan informed the United States in the last week or two that it would not need some US Special Forces trainers advising the Pakistani military, the Pentagon said. Pakistani security officials said the decision came three days after the al-Qaeda leader's death.

"We don't need unnecessary people here. They cause problems for us instead of being helpful," said a Pakistani security official, who asked to remain anonymous. He said the withdrawal might start by early June.

Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan said there had been "no real change" to the small US military training mission in Pakistan.

The number of trainers currently in Pakistan was not disclosed but Lapan said the entire military mission has ranged between 200 and 300 people.

Other Pakistani and US military sources in Pakistan said the special forces training component formerly numbered around 120 and would be drawn down to less than 50.

Other US troops are involved in helicopter maintenance, liaising with the Pakistani military and aid efforts. It is unclear if they will also be withdrawn.

The raid that killed bin Laden at his compound in Abbottabad, 50

km northwest of Islamabad, intensified U.S. questions about Pakistan's possible role in sheltering militants, straining an already fragile relationship.

Many Pakistanis see the raid as a clear violation of its sovereignty and some lawmakers have asked for a review of ties with Washington, which gives Pakistan billions of dollars in aid to help in the war against Islamist militants, especially in neighbouring Afghanistan.

As the United States starts to withdraw troops from Afghanistan this year and some US lawmakers are urging the Obama administration to reconsider assistance to Pakistan in the wake of the bin Laden raid.

Obama to attend Asia summit

AFP, Jakarta

US President Barack Obama will attend the East Asia Summit (EAS) on the Indonesian resort island of Bali on November 19, a local official said yesterday.

Bali provincial government spokesman Ketut Teneng said US Ambassador Scot Marcel had informed the regional authorities of Obama's intention to attend the regional strategic dialogue, which also includes China and Russia.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is to visit Bali in July, when the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is holding its Regional Forum dialogue from the 15th to the 23rd, he said.

'No return to war' over Abyei

Vows South Sudan president

REUTERS, Juba

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir called on north Sudan yesterday to withdraw its forces from the disputed Abyei region but said there would be no war over the incursion and it would not derail independence.

North Sudanese armed forces seized control of the oil-producing Abyei region on Saturday, forcing tens of thousands to flee and sparking an international outcry seven weeks before south Sudan secedes to form a new nation.

"We will not go back to war, it will not happen," Kiir told reporters in Juba, the capital of south Sudan which is due to become independent on July 9.

Abyei was a key battleground in Sudan's last north/south civil war and both sides see it as a symbolic emblem. The region is used all year round by the Dinka Ngok people, who have strong ethnic links to the south, and for part of the year by northern Misseriya nomads.

Southerners voted for secession in a January referendum, a vote that was promised in a 2005 peace deal that ended the last conflict.



JS special body looks

FROM PAGE 1

They however did not take any decision on the issue, and decided to sit again tomorrow to explore more options and finalise a proposal, the sources added.

The move came following the Supreme Court's recent verdict that the present interim government system is unconstitutional and void, but the system may be practiced for holding two more parliamentary elections for the sake of "safety of the state and its people".

"We will soon sit with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who will give a decision on the possible structure of caretaker government," a member of the committee told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

Contacted over the phone, main opposition BNP's senior leader Moudud Ahmed said their party wants the existing system of caretaker government to continue.

In the face of erstwhile opposition Awami League's demand, a BNP-led government in 1996 introduced the present system of caretaker government, through the 13th amendment to the constitution, for holding parliamentary polls.

Moudud said if there is any need for bringing changes to the existing system, the government should bring a bill.

"We will give our reaction after going through the bill if placed in the parliament," said Moudud, also a former law minister.

Another member of the special committee told The Daily Star that the prime minister herself referred to the Pakistani model of caretaker government, for examination.

Copies of the constitutional provisions for the caretaker government system in Pakistan were distributed among the special committee members yesterday, the meeting sources said.

A committee member said if the Pakistani model is chosen for Bangladesh, the president will appoint a caretaker prime minister and a caretaker cabinet on dissolution of the parliament.

The president will consult the outgoing prime minister and the leader of the opposition in the outgoing House to appoint a caretaker prime minister. Then the president will appoint members of the caretaker cabinet on advice of the caretaker prime minister, the special committee member added.

Members of the caretaker cabinet including its chief and their family members will not be eligible to contest in the immediately upcoming parliamentary election, the committee member said.

Moudud however said the system in Pakistan is not a caretaker government in real sense, it is something different. "We do not sup-

BNP goes gaga over

FROM PAGE 20

Nayapaltan and ended at Jatiya Press Club.

Party's standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan addressed a rally before the procession. He termed the honour a rare gesture as it happened for the first time in last 166 years.

New Jersey State Senate on May 23 honoured Khaleda Zia, now in USA, as a fighter for democracy.

Both the treasury bench and opposition members unanimously adopted a resolution honouring Khaleda Zia, mentioned party

Vice-chairman Shamser Mobin Chowdhury, also a member of her entourage.

Acting Secretary General of BNP Mirzul Islam Alamgir also greeted the party chief for her successful trips to the UK and the US.

"Her visits will boost the relations between Bangladesh and these countries. The honour given by the New Jersey Senate to Khaleda Zia for her contribution to establish democracy, combat terrorism and empowerment of women made the countrymen proud," he said in a statement issued yesterday.

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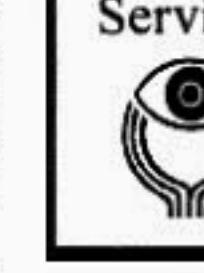
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