

Clinton tells Pakistan to take decisive steps

Anti-Americanism will not end Pakistan's problems

AFP, Islamabad

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday the United States was more committed to Pakistan after the Osama bin Laden crisis, but urged the country to take decisive steps to defeat al-Qaeda.

Clinton is the most senior US official to visit Islamabad since relations between the wary allies went into freefall over the US Navy SEALs raid on May 2 that killed the al-Qaeda chief in the city of Abbottabad.

Shrouded in blanket security, she met Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, before talks with army chief Ashfaq Kayani and the chief of Pakistan's intelligence agency Ahmad Shuja Pasha.

The discovery that the world's most-wanted man was living just a stone's throw from Pakistan's equivalent of West Point raised renewed questions



Hillary Clinton

about complicity or incompetence within the US-aid dependent Pakistani establishment.

Clinton said the United States had "absolutely no evidence" that anyone at the highest level of government" knew where bin Laden was and she would return to Washington "ever more committed" to the relationship.

Pakistan, Clinton said, had been "very forthcoming in saying somebody somewhere" was providing support to bin Laden and that a probe was underway.

"This was an especially important

visit because we have reached a turning point. Osama bin Laden is dead but al-Qaeda and his syndicate of terror remain a serious threat to us both," Clinton said.

"Pakistan has a responsibility to help us help Afghanistan by preventing insurgents from waging war from Pakistan's territory.

"We look forward to putting those words into action and seeing momentum for a political resolution."

The government's alliance with Washington is deeply unpopular in Pakistan, where the bin Laden operation and a CIA drone war against militant commanders in the tribal belt fuels widespread anti-American sentiment.

"America cannot and should not solve Pakistan's problems. That's up to Pakistan. But in solving its problems, Pakistan should understand that anti-Americanism and conspiracy theories will not make problems disappear," Clinton said.

Obama is arrogant: Musharraf

CNN ONLINE

US President Barack Obama is showing "arrogance" in the aftermath of a mission that killed terror leader Osama bin Laden, said former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in an interview that aired on CNN Thursday night.

Musharraf further called the May raid an "act of war." "Certainly no country has a right to intrude into any other country," Musharraf told Piers Morgan. "If technically or legally you see it, it's an act of war."

President Obama said last week that, if the opportunity arose, he would do the same thing again.

Mamata to write autobiography

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

West Bengal's first woman Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will pen her autobiography which according to her is an attempt "to look at myself in a different light".

The book, slated to hit the market in August, will contain interesting anecdotes from her personal and life as a politician.

"It is an attempt to look at myself in a different light, to come face to face with another me, to rediscover my other self," says the 55-year-old Trinamool Congress chief, who was instrumental in dethroning the Left Front after 34 years in power.

The book will give a insight into "her early years as a politician" and bears "candid account of how a girl from very middle-class moorings suddenly got thrown into the deep end of regional and national politics," says the book's publisher Roli Books.

Many interesting stories of Mamata's life including her maiden foreign trip to Kuala Lumpur and how she made friends with a Thai girl there are in the book.

Equally interesting are the details about her first trip to the US where she bought chapsticks as gifts for her family back home thinking she was buying lipsticks.

Teenager breaks 7 summits record

BBC ONLINE

A boy of 16 has become the youngest person in the world to scale the highest mountains in every continent.

George Atkinson, from Surbiton, south-west London, began the Seven Summits challenge by scaling Kilimanjaro in 2005 and completed it by reaching the top of Mount Everest on Thursday.

He broke the record of US teenager Johnny Collinson, who completed the challenge at the age of 17 last year.

George's mother Penny said she felt "elated and emotional".

The British Mountaineering Council has confirmed George's record, who was aged 16 years and 362 days when he reached the summit of Mount Everest.

George, who turns 17 on Sunday, began the challenge of climbing the highest peaks in seven continents at the age of 11 by scaling Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

He then climbed Russia's Mount Elbrus in 2007 and reached the summits of Indonesia's Carstensz Pyramid and Argentina's Mount Aconcagua in 2008.

Mount McKinley in North America was next, followed by Mount Vinson in Antarctica which he climbed late last year.



George Atkinson

Pakistan now a 'fragile' state: India

AFP, New Delhi

India said yesterday that Pakistan had become a "fragile" state with militant groups nurtured as "an instrument of state policy" uniting in their battle against the government.

Home Minister P. Chidambaram issued the warning at the start of talks with US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, who was on a four-day trip to India to strengthen anti-terror cooperation between the two countries.

New Delhi has long accused its neighbour of harbouring militant groups, but analysts say it is becoming increasingly concerned that growing unrest in Pakistan could compromise the safety of the country's growing nuclear arsenal.

Chidambaram said in a statement that the "global epicentre of terrorism" was in Pakistan where "the vast infrastructure of terrorism in Pakistan has for long flourished as an instrument of state policy".

He continued: "Today, different terrorist groups, operating from the safe havens in Pakistan, are becoming increasingly fused; the society in Pakistan has become increasingly radicalised; its economy has weakened.

"The state structure in Pakistan has become fragile."

Chidambaram and Napolitano later said they had agreed to step up cooperation in security-related areas such as intelligence and technology sharing, forensics and mega-city policing to help combat threats to public order.

"We identified six areas and there will be many meetings in the next one year which will strengthen the strategic partnership between India and the US," Napolitano told reporters.

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Drop contempt petition

*HR body asks
Philippines Court*

The Dart Centre Asia Pacific called on the Philippines Court of Appeals to immediately drop its contempt petition against journalist Rowena Paraan, and Monette Salaysay, widow of Maguindanao massacre, according to a press release on Thursday.

It asked the court to work to a speedy resolution of the trials of the suspects of the infamous massacre November 23, 2009 that killed 58 people in Philippines.

The Dart Center said it believes the contempt accusations are aimed to hinder the free and fair trial of that infamous massacre.

8 US soldiers killed in Afghan blasts

AFP, Kabul

Eight soldiers killed in a bombing in southern Afghanistan were Americans, the Pentagon confirmed, in one of the worst single incidents in recent months.

Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan said the soldiers were killed by two successive blasts on Thursday in the same location in Shorabak district in Kandahar province.

Local border police commander Tafseer Khan Khogyani said the attack, which also killed two Afghan policemen, took place as coalition and Afghan forces were on patrol about 20 kilometres from the Pakistan border.

Kandahar is the birth-place of the Taliban.

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