

Pak Senate passes bill on human rights

DAWN ONLINE

The Senate yesterday approved a formation of the Human Rights Commission, DawnNews reported.

According to the unanimously approved Human Rights Bill 2012, no intelligence agencies would be able to detain any citizen illegally.

The bill also stated that the Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence agencies would be answerable to the commission and the parliament.

The commission could survey any jail or any clandestine prison to check illegal confinements, it added.

The bill would also restrict foreign funding to the NGOs in the country without prior approval.



A Palestinian protestor runs away from tear gas, fired by Israeli soldiers, in the village of Nabi Saleh in the occupied West Bank yesterday during clashes after the villagers organised a march in protest against the annexation of village land in favour of the construction of the Israeli settlement of Hallamish.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel won't debate publicly before Iran action

AFP, Los Angeles

Israel does not need a "public debate" before taking military action against Iran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday, reiterating that all options remain on the table.

Speaking in Los Angeles, he said economic sanctions were the first course of action in pressing the Islamic republic to give up its nuclear ambitions and its threat to the Jewish state, but not the only one.

"I think we have to try first sanctions, and then we shall see," he said, noting that "in the case of South Africa, sanctions did the job," as they arguably did in Libya and Ukraine.

"If we have to choose, let's start with the non-violent ... saying very clearly (that) all other options are on the table," he told an

audience in Beverly Hills.

Pressed about the threat of military strikes against Iran -- much discussed during a visit by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington this week -- Peres said: "I don't think that we have to make a public debate ahead of time."

In Washington last weekend Peres vowed that Israel "shall prevail" if forced to fight Iran, which he referred to as "an evil, cruel and morally corrupt regime" bent on controlling the Middle East.

"Iran's ambition is to control the Middle East, so it can control a major part of the world's economy. It must be stopped. And it will be stopped," the Nobel Peace Prize winner told a powerful pro-Israel lobbying group on Sunday.

India sends traders to Iran defying pressure

AFP, New Delhi

A 70-member Indian trade delegation headed to Iran yesterday to explore "huge" commercial opportunities created by US-led sanctions against the Islamic republic over its disputed nuclear plans.

The visit comes despite criticism from pro-Israel groups in the United States and other critics who have accused India of undermining international efforts to isolate Iran over its disputed nuclear programme.

Indian Commerce Secretary Rahul Khullar said this month Iran holds "huge opportunities" for India's exports of textiles, tea, rice, wheat and other foods, as well as pharmaceuticals, engineering and infrastructure projects.

The visit sees India walking a diplomatic tightrope as it seeks closer ties with Iran while deepening its relations with the United States and Israel, a key arms supplier and trading partner.

India has said it will abide only by UN sanctions and will not implement others imposed unilaterally by the United States and European Union.

India urges regional unity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday said political differences among South Asian countries should not be allowed to stop the processes of regional integration in the region.

"We should not allow political differences to stop the processes of South Asian integration," Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon said inaugurating the third South Asian Relations Conference.

He noted that South Asia has more than its fair share of insurgency, radicalism, terrorism and extremism and said "but none of these issues has prevented South Asia from emerging as one of the fastest growing sub-

regions of the world in the past decade and out-performing most other sub-regions".

Menon said it was an open question whether the region has institutions to address the real issues of political instability and security challenges it faced.

He urged scholars attending the conference to discuss cooperation in security frameworks and architecture for South Asian region to address issues like terrorism, maritime security and cyber security.

Over 30 scholars and experts from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan are participating in the two-day conference organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Association of Asian Scholars.

Afghanistan, US sign prison transfer deal

AFP, Kabul

The United States yesterday signed a deal transferring control of the Bagram prison to the Afghan government, marking a breakthrough in negotiations on a strategic treaty between the two nations.

The accord, which will see authority over the prison transferred gradually over six months, was inked by Afghan Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak and the US commander in Afghanistan, General John Allen, at a signing ceremony.

The handover of the prison -- sometimes called Afghanistan's Guantanamo Bay -- has been a key sticking point in talks between Washington and the Afghan government on concluding a long-term strategic partnership treaty. President Hamid Karzai has repeatedly demanded in the name of Afghan sovereignty that the prison and its 3,000 inmates be transferred before he signs any deal governing Afghan-US relations after Nato combat troops pull out in 2014.

Human rights campaigners have regularly criticised the prison, saying it fails to comply with international norms as some inmates are detained arbitrarily without trial or knowledge of the charges against them.

News of the deal -- initially said to involve "detention facilities" but no temporary holding centres run by the United States -- came shortly after Karzai and President Barack Obama spoke by video conference Thursday.

One other major condition Karzai has set before signing a treaty on long-term partnership is an end to night raids by US-led special forces, which target Taliban leaders in their homes.

The United States says they are a vital element in the anti-Taliban campaign, but the Afghan government says they violate the sanctity of families in their own homes and cause civilian casualties.

In early January, Karzai gave the United States a one-month deadline to hand over the prison, later extending it to March 10.



Pakistan appoints new ISI chief

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday appointed a new head of its powerful military intelligence agency -- an organisation which has been accused of maintaining links with Taliban militants in the past.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has appointed lieutenant general Zaheer ul Islam, corps commander Karachi, as new director general Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), a senior government official told AFP.

A statement later issued by Gilani's office confirmed the new appointment but gave no details.

"The outgoing ISI chief lieutenant general Ahmed Shuja Pasha is retiring on March 18 and Islam will take up the position then," the official said.

Wife betrayed Laden!

New report says its his eldest wife who sold him

AGENCIES

Osama bin Laden spent his last days sidelined by al-Qaeda and slipping into dementia, possibly betrayed to the Americans by a jealous wife and his own deputy, a Pakistani investigator says.

Retired brigadier Shaukat Qadir said he spent eight months investigating the al-Qaeda chief's life in Pakistan, using his army connections to visit the villa in Abbottabad where he lived and died, and securing access to confidential documents.

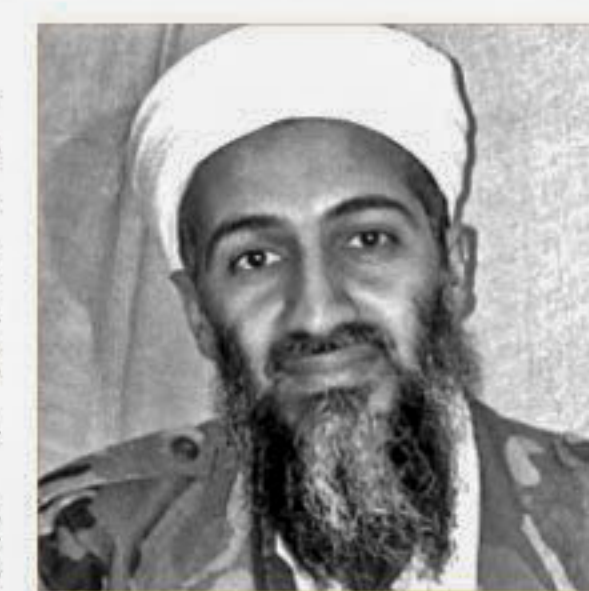
He says he spoke to Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agents who interrogated bin Laden's wives and saw their interview transcripts, all thanks to a close relationship with Pakistan's army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani.

The Abbottabad house was suddenly demolished, without explanation, by the Pakistani authorities late last month. Analysing the scripts, Qadir pieced together the most comprehensive account yet of the al-Qaeda leader's life after he fled the Tora Bora mountains of Afghanistan in late 2001.

According to Qadir, Bin Laden may have had a kidney transplant back in 2002, which would explain why his known kidney ailment did not require him to undergo dialysis treatment while on the run.

There were 27 people, including bodyguards and members of Bin Laden's extended family living in the house when the al-Qaeda leader was killed. They had all got on well until the arrival of Khairiah Sabar in early 2011, Qadir said.

"When Khairiah came, everybody else was very suspicious of her. They didn't trust



Osama bin Laden

her at all," Qadir told the Guardian. "I am also of the view that actually the person who sold him [Bin Laden] out was Khairiah, not the fictitious courier who the US keeps talking about being al-Kuwaiti."

Aged around 62, Khairiah made her way without her children to Abbottabad on Bin Laden's instructions. The US raid followed within two months of her arrival.

The other two wives, Siham, a Saudi aged around 54 and Amal, a Yemeni aged around 31 had lived with Bin Laden since he moved into the Abbottabad home in mid-2005.

At one point, when pressed by Siham's adult son Khalid about why she had come, Khairiah said it was because she had "one final duty" to perform for Bin Laden. It seems that even Bin Laden feared that she would turn him in, and he "kept telling" the other two wives to leave, but they refused, Qadir said.

Despite being apparently cured of kidney failure, Bin Laden was suffering from a degenerative disease, which caused premature senility, Qadir said. As a result, al-Qaeda's "shura", or leadership council, sent him into early retirement around 2003 in Pakistan.

The Qadir investigation places Bin Laden in South Waziristan, in the tribal area close to the Afghan border, in the early years after 2001. He later travelled back into Afghanistan and then, in 2004, he made his way into northern Pakistan, to the Swat area. Following that, after a few months further south in Haripur district, he eventually moved into the purpose-built Abbottabad home in May 2005.

Tough law for education

FROM PAGE 1

discourage private initiatives in the education sector.

Private schools must be brought under a regulatory mechanism so that they can't charge exorbitant fees, but it would not be proper to control private schools this way, she observed.

Besides, it should also be taken into consideration whether the government has the capability to deal with thousands of private schools when it is struggling to stop "admission trade" in a number of private schools, she

added.

According to the draft, compulsory primary education will be up to class VIII from class I and a few subjects including Bangla, English, religious studies, moral education, Bangladesh studies, information technology and science will be made compulsory in general schools, madrasas and kindergartens.

On the other side, the secondary level will be from class IX to XII. The draft also says class XI and XII will be

added to the existing secondary schools and class IX and X will be opened in higher secondary colleges.

The draft says the subjects of Bangla, English, Bangladesh studies, mathematics, and information technology will be compulsory in general, madrasa and vocational streams with examinations on uniform question papers to ensure uniformity.

However, at O and A levels, two subjects -- Bangla and Bangladesh Studies -- will compulsorily be

included. The draft says the teaching activities at O and A levels will have to be conducted with the government's approval.

All the educational institutions at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels must take registration from the authorities stipulated by existing laws or rules and any violation will be considered as a punishable crime. The violators will be fined Tk 1 lakh or awarded six months' imprisonment or both.

The draft further says the government will take steps to audit the financial and other activities of the pre-primary and primary schools.

A fulltime or part-time teacher with special training on education of disabled or other communities will have to be appointed in every primary school, the draft suggests. It adds that registration of the institution will be cancelled and Tk 1 lakh will be fined if any school defies it.

On admission in the primary level, it says the institutions will arrange lottery for enrolment in class I if the number of admission seekers is higher than the number of available seats.

But, for subsequent classes, separate admission tests will have to be arranged if the number of admission seekers gets higher than available seats.

The draft says a separate 'Non-government Teachers' Selection Commission' will be formed to appoint teachers in non-government primary schools, ebtedai madrasas, secondary schools, dakhil madrasas

and colleges.

It adds a single person cannot be elected or nominated as the president and member of the managing committees of more than three non-government educational institutions.

It also says no university can be run on commercial purpose and the University Grants Commission and other agencies will monitor their activities.

No private university or foreign university in Bangladesh without approval from the authorities concerned can run branch campus, study centre and tutorial courses.

If any institution runs only on commercial purposes or any private university or foreign university runs branch campus, study centres and tutorial courses without approval, the responsible persons will be fined Tk 10 lakh or awarded five years' imprisonment or both.

The education ministry will form an autonomous Permanent Education Commission for implementing the education policy, it adds.

"Many countries in the world have the law and we are now formulating it to bring all education related things under a legal coverage," Education Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

"The draft of the act has already been prepared and will be finalised at a ministerial meeting soon," he said.

Once finalised, the draft would be sent to the cabinet for approval and then to parliament following the procedures, he added.

NOTICE FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

On ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Study:

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is currently undertaking the detailed engineering design of three bridges on the Dhaka-Chittagong National Highway (N-1) i.e. Kantchpur, Meghna and Meghna-Gomti Bridges under the financial assistance from Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA). The Project will prepare the detailed engineering design for the construction of main bridge, approach roads, river training works (RTW), bridge end facilities (service areas, Construction yards, etc.). The construction of the project components will involve massive activities which have impacts on the environment.

The Process:

The Project is being categorized as Category "A" project. In accordance with the requirements of Donor's & Environment Considerations and Environmental Conservation Rules (1997) of Bangladesh, GoB and JICA Guideline requires two-stage public consultations; once during the early stages of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) field work and other when Environmental Impact Assessment report is available. Upon completion of the study an EIA report documenting the process will be submitted to RHD with JICA and other line agencies. This report also be available for public review.

Public Consultation:

This is the first-stage public consultation and is scheduled to allow the public meet the project team, discuss the study objectives, environmental issues, and mitigation measures for major environmental impacts and provide opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Interested people's are invited to attend the meetings in the following location:

Kantchpur Site:

Date: March 15, 2012 (from 10:30 am to 1:00 pm)
Location: The office of the Executive Engineer(RHD) Narayanganj Road Division, Shimrail, Kantchpur, Narayanganj.

Meghna Site:

Date: March 15, 2012 (from 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm)
Location: Meghna old Ferryghat (Bhaliakandi Side)

The consultation will invite various stakeholders and display showing the preliminary alignment, environmental concerns and social aspect, RHD and consultants will be on hand to answer any questions.

(Md. Saiful Haque)
Additional Chief Engineer, RHD
Bridge Management wing
Roads and Highways Department

Takeo SHOJI
Environmental Specialist
JICA Study Team