

# US denies switching terms of Taliban talks

**Karzai slams US after shooting suspect flown abroad**

AFP, Washington

The White House on Thursday denied Taliban claims that it had changed the terms of an Afghan reconciliation dialogue, a move the militia said prompted it to walk out of talks.

"The terms have been as I've stated them on many occasions," said White House spokesman Jay Carney, citing a need for the Taliban to lay down its arms, renounce al-Qaeda and abide by the Afghan constitution.

The Taliban said it had suspended contacts with the United States in Qatar, just days after a shooting spree by a lone US soldier left 16 Afghans dead.

"It was due to their alternating and ever-changing position that the Islamic



Emirat was compelled to suspend all dialogue with the Americans," a statement posted on the Taliban website said.

Making no mention of Sunday's murders, the militia complained that a US representative presented a list of conditions at the last meeting "which were not only unacceptable but also in contradiction with the earlier agreed

upon points."

The statement confirmed that Taliban representatives had held talks in Qatar with their US counterparts over a prisoner exchange as well as the opening of a liaison office in the Gulf state.

Meanwhile, President Hamid Karzai yesterday accused the United States of failing to cooperate over a massacre of 16 Afghans blamed on an American sergeant, raising public tensions between the two countries.

His comments underscored deep Afghan anger over the shootings, one day after he said international forces should leave villages, potentially jeopardising Nato operations two years before combat troops are due to leave Afghanistan.

**Nato chopper crash kills 16 in Afghanistan**

REUTERS, Kabul

A Nato helicopter crashed into a house on the outskirts of the Afghan capital, Kabul, on Friday, killing 12 Turkish soldiers on board and four Afghan civilians on the ground, Turkey's military and a senior Afghan police official said.

"Twelve of our military personnel on board the helicopter have been martyred," the Turkish general staff said in a statement in Ankara. A team had been sent to the scene to investigate, it said.

Two women and two children were among those killed when the helicopter crashed into the house.

The cause of the crash appeared to be a technical fault.

# Zawahiri urges Pakistanis to revolt against govt

AFP, Dubai

Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri has called on Pakistanis to revolt against their government and military in a video posted on the Internet yesterday, US monitors said.

In a 10-minute speech uploaded to jihadist forums, Zawahiri argued that the Pakistani authorities only represented US interests, according to a statement from SITE Intelligence Group.

Zawahiri, shown standing in front of a green curtain, urged Pakistanis to follow the example of the Arab Spring as the military could not be expected to turn against America despite a deadly US strike on Pakistani troops in November.

"Our brothers in Pakistan! Our people in Pakistan! This treacherous army and bribe-taking government have plundered



your wealth," he said in the video.

"They have ruined your economy and destroyed your world as well as your hereafter. What then are you waiting for?"

"Take a lead from your brothers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria who are standing up against oppression and oppressors with their bare chests exposed and offering sacrifices so that victory may be ordained for them."

Zawahiri also said that unless its demands, including the release of slain Al-Qaeda chief Laden's family, were met, Al-Qaeda would not release an elderly American development expert who was captured in Pakistan last August.

Long al-Qaeda's number two, Zawahiri took over the helm of the group after Bin Laden was killed in May 2011 in a US special forces night raid deep in Pakistan.

## India hikes defence budget

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Utility helicopters and others weapons and systems for the three defence services, are expected to be clinched this year.

Over Rs 79,500 crore would be spent on purchasing modern weapon systems and military hardware, said Mukherjee, adding that this allocation is based on the present needs and any further requirement for the security of the nation.

The country plans to spend over \$ 100 million on defence acquisitions in the next five to 10 years. The Indian finance minister also announced reduction in personal income tax across various slabs, a populist move that also takes into account the fact that inflation is still not at comfort levels.

The Rs 1.8 lakh threshold for zero tax has been raised to Rs 2 lakh while incomes up to Rs 5 lakh will now fall in the 10 percent tax bracket.

Mukherjee also raised the slab for 20 percent tax rate from up to Rs 8 lakh to up to Rs 10 lakh. Those who earn more than Rs 10 lakh a year will now be taxed at 30 percent, a change from the earlier slab of over Rs 8 lakh.

In his speech, Mukherjee also proposed slashing the government subsidy burden and called for expediting the pace of economic reforms.

High oil prices have swelled India's subsidy burden to roughly 2.5 percent of the GDP. Mukherjee called for reducing that to less than 2 percent in the next fiscal year.

"We have to accelerate the pace of reforms," he told parliament.

The minister set a target of selling Rs 300 billion (\$ 5.96 billion) worth of stakes in state-owned companies for the next fiscal year, roughly in line with forecasts. India has raised just Rs 139 billion in the current fiscal year from stake sales, far below its budgetary

target of Rs 400 billion.

Mukherjee said he expected the Indian economy to grow by 7.6 percent in the next fiscal year, up from an expected 6.9 percent in the current year but below the 8.4 percent growth of the previous fiscal year.

The Indian budget presented in Parliament today substantially increased financial assistance to Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries.

Aid allocation to Bangladesh has been pegged at Rs 30 crore for financial year 2012-13. It was Rs 8 crore last year.

The assistance for Bhutan has been raised to Rs 2,638 crore from that of last year's Rs 2,030 crore while for Nepal to Rs 270 crore from last year's Rs 150 crore.

Assistance to Latin American countries was also raised from last year's Rs 0.50 crore to Rs 15 crore for the coming financial year.

## MPs join hands in climate battle

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on people most vulnerable to climate change - wherever in the world they may be," said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, chairperson of All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change, reading out the declaration.

Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Forest organised the three-day event with support from UNDP.

Parliamentarians from Bangladesh, Canada, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, the East African Legislative Assembly, Indonesia, the Maldives, Mali, the Netherlands, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Samoa, Scotland, Senegal, Sri Lanka, South Africa,

Tanzania and Uganda attended the meeting.

According to the "Dhaka Parliamentary Declaration" all MPs endorsing the declaration can join the network whose action plan and statement of principles would be elaborated by the steering committee by the end of April this year.

The network's immediate actions would include forming a steering committee to decide policy priorities and seek funding to organise gatherings and employ a small secretariat, Saber said.

The parliamentarians at the meeting committed to collaborate across party-political boundaries to work for the welfare of those most affected by climate change and establish parliamentary

committees to monitor and oversee climate-related policies.

The members of the parliament would work to enhance their capacity, develop integrated local, national and regional frameworks for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction, prioritise funding for energy efficiency projects and renewable energy, says the declaration.

They would foster dialogue with the civil society, constituents, NGOs, businesses and involve people in the policy-making process, Saber said.

The members also committed to abolish fossil fuel subsidies in a gradual manner that does not hurt the poorest and ensure avail-

ability of alternatives.

Besides, they would review government budgets, expenditures and legislation regarding climate change, monitor disbursal of international climate finance to ensure transparency.

Addressing as chief guest, Jatiya Sangsad's Speaker Abdul Hamid said, "We need to make sure that the poor and vulnerable in our countries, often removed from international negotiations, forge alliances that work across parties and use cross-party caucuses to educate and empower MPs to operate more effectively," he said.

Stating that climate change causes poverty, affects human security and has a negative impact on global economy, he said, "We parliamentarians have an important role to play. We have to ensure that there is a policy shift. We have to rise to the challenge and act united."

UNDP Resident Representative Robert Juhkam called upon the MPs to rise above traditional politics.

"As you all acknowledge, it is a humanitarian issue and a development concern. I therefore call on all parliamentarians to seek out common interests, forge alliances that work across parties and use cross-party caucuses to educate and empower MPs to operate more effectively," he said.

Jatiya Sangsad Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and Abdul Momin Talukder, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest ministry, also spoke.

## White rice linked

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Qi Sun of the Harvard School of Public Health told AFP.

"But at the same time people should pay close attention to the other things they eat."

"It's very important to address not just a single food but the whole pattern of consumption."

In the British Medical Journal (BMJ), Sun's team said the link emerged from an analysis of four previously published studies, carried out in China, Japan, Australia and the United States.

These studies followed 350,000 people over a timescale from four to 22 years. More than 13,000 people developed Type 2 diabetes.

In the studies carried out in China and Japan, those

who ate most rice were 55 percent likelier to develop the disease than those who ate least. In the United States and Australia, where consumption of rice is far lower, the difference was 12 percent.

Participants in the two Asian countries ate three or four servings of rice a day on average, compared to just one or two servings a week in the Western countries.

Diabetes affects nearly 350 million adults worldwide, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

White rice is the dominant form of rice eaten in the world. Machines produce its polished look by hulling and milling, leaving a grain that is predominantly starch.

Brown rice, by contrast, has more fibre, magnesium and vitamins, and a lower "glycaemic index," a measurement of sugar content, than white rice.

## Spelling Bee 2nd round

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The contestants will face a written competition followed by an oral one. The top six spellers of the division will go to the third level of the contest -- the TV round.

To similarly pick six winners from each division, the Spelling Bee team will visit Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Barisal and return to Dhaka by March 27.

With a slogan "Goodbye spelling mistakes," the first-ever spelling contest in the country has drawn attention of thousands of students from all over the country.

Online education material provider champs21.com is organising the contest.

Around 122 schools from across the country, including 60 from Dhaka and 12

Cadet Colleges, were visited by the champs21 crew to pick the top spellers from each school.

This made for some compelling competition in the first round whose online game proved even more fascinating. For example, the one between Mehedi Hasan of Dhaka Residential Model College and Sunjuk Jesun of St Joseph Higher Secondary School who

scored 2,652 and 2,557 to become first and second in the online contest.

They also happen to be the top two scorers in the country and are unlikely to be faced with some tough challenges with the third highest scorer having 1,530

points.

"I was the top scorer when Mehedi [Hasan] came in but then he toppled me and we have been competing hard ever since. Still, I think I can get a higher score than his," says a determined Jesun.

He adds that the online game has not only helped expand his vocabulary but also his fluency in English greatly. Even though he has his usual pressure of academic and extra-curricular activities, he makes sure that he takes time for spelling practice.

"I read the Spellato and also play the online Spelling Bee game for at least three hours, three days a week,

whenever I get time," he says. Sunjuk Jesun and Mehedi Hasan might have an intense rivalry but they also respect each other.

"I expect nothing but the best from him [Jesun]," says Mehedi.

Asked if he feels pressure for the next round, he said, "I try not to put pressure on myself but I'll definitely give it my best shot."

Mehedi became fourth in the competition's school round. He had little chance to make it through to the divisional round as only three top spellers were chosen for that round from each school save from Cadet Colleges.

But he put all that past him in the online game.

Israeli troops kill one on Egypt border

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli troops on Thursday killed a man and wounded and arrested three others in an exchange of gunfire on the border with Egypt, the Israeli army said.

Israeli soldiers on patrol along the Israeli-Egypt border spotted a group of men on Israeli territory and opened fire to stop them, after the usual warnings. There was also gunfire from the Egyptian side, a statement said.

After giving chase, the army arrested three injured suspects and evacuated them by helicopter to an Israeli hospital.

## EDCL ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208

### LOCAL RE-TENDER NOTICE

Tender ref: EDCL/PUR/LOCAL/TENDER/2012/413

Dated: 15/03/2012

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the reputed Contractors having experience for successful completion of construction works in any single work worth of Govt/Semi Govt./Autonomous bodies during the last 5 (five) years.

Name of work	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender Schedule	Time for completion after getting work order
Construction of ware house with RCC and steel framed structure at Thanthania, Bogra. (Details as per design drawing and BOQ)	Tk. 2.5% of quoted amount	Tk. 3,450.00/- set Non-refundable	06 (six) months.

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of Essential Drugs Company Limited, Dhaka on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

The tender will be accompanied by an amount of Earnest Money as mentioned above in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order/from any Schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of "Essential Drugs Co. Ltd." without which the tender will be considered as non-responsive.

The tenderers may drop their offer alongwith detailed work plan to the tender Box kept at the Purchase Departments, EDCL, Dhaka office till 12.00 Noon on 22/03/2012 which will be opened on 22/03/2012 at 12.30 Noon in presence of the tenderers/their representatives (if any).

EDCL authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

(Md. Ali Mukarram)  
Manager, Planning & Procurement Deptt.  
For: Managing Director.

TRAINING COURSES IN APRIL, 2012			
Duration with Time	Venue & Fee	Course Coordinator and Contact Number	



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