

Japan plans extra \$2.1b in military spending

AFP, Tokyo

Japan plans to spend an extra \$2.1 billion on missiles, fighter jets and helicopters, an official said yesterday, as it tries to strengthen defence capabilities with concerns growing over a rising China.

The cash injection over the next few months comes on top of regular military spending for 2012-13. It is separate from a request for a rise in the military budget for the next fiscal year which policymakers called for on Tuesday.

"We will request 180.5 billion yen to be allocated to military spending from a stimulus package," a defence ministry spokesman told AFP, adding that some of the money would be used to buy PAC-3 surface-to-air anti-ballistic missile systems and modernise four F-15 fighter jets.

The announcement came a day after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party said Japan would increase military spending for the first time in 11 years in the next fiscal year starting April.

US plans to leave no troops in Afghanistan

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama would consider a plan for post-2014 Afghanistan that would leave no American troops in the country, a senior US official said, ahead of talks with President Hamid Karzai later this week.

Officials however stressed that Obama, mulling how quickly to draw down US soldiers from the country, would not be guided by specific future troop levels, but would decide the fate of the American presence based on strategic needs.

Asked whether Obama would consider a scenario in which all US troops left and there was no residual force in Afghanistan, Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security advisor said: "That would be an option we would consider."

"We wouldn't rule out any option. We are not guided by the goal of a certain number of troops in the country. We are guided by the objective that the president has set," Rhodes told reporters Tuesday.

Obama's goals are to ensure that Afghanistan's new national army has the capacity and equipment to defend itself and to ensure that al-Qaeda cannot make a post-war comeback and again find safe haven, he said.

Ahead of the meeting with Karzai, reports citing US defence sources have put forward a range of possible plans -- including the "zero option" for the residual level of the American commitment to Afghanistan.

The Wall Street Journal reported late last week that the Pentagon had prepared plans for a smaller presence in Afghanistan at the insistence of the White House.

The newspaper said the plans now prepared by the Pentagon call for leaving roughly 3,000, 6,000 or 9,000 US troops in the country.

The presence of US troops in Afghanistan after 2014 will also have to be governed by a status of forces agreement, which Obama and Karzai are expected to discuss at their talks at the White House tomorrow.

GSP scrapping

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putting embargo on exports from Bangladesh, citing so-called violation of human and worker rights."

"However, the possibility of such embargo in practice seems less likely, as it could be against WTO rules and other international norms," the draft position papers said.

The withdrawal of GSP for Bangladesh is likely to be widely publicised around the globe and would negatively impact the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Bangladesh, the paper added.

The paper also said the news of GSP withdrawal on the grounds of unsafe and hostile working environment might encourage the US consumers to shy away from purchasing Bangladesh-made products.

The withdrawal might also tarnish the image of Bangladesh's higher achievements of Millennium Development Goal (MDG), the paper said.

Asked, Commerce Secretary Mahub Ahmed told The Daily Star, "I will hold meetings with the officials to finalise the country's position regarding United States

Trade Representative's (USTR) GSP hearing in the US."

He said the ministry would also place progress reports of the commitment of the previous hearing that took place on January 24, 2012.

Bangladesh is now preparing the position paper for the next hearing, as the USTR office has sought by January 31 the stakeholders' opinions on possible withdrawal, suspension or limitation of GSP.

A Federal Register notice said the GSP subcommittee under the Trade Policy Staff Committee is considering recommending that the GSP benefits given to Bangladesh be withdrawn, suspended or limited, the notices said.

The GSP subcommittee thinks Bangladesh did not make much progress in addressing labour rights issues.

The next hearing, the fourth of its kind, might take place in March, just within one and a half years of the last hearing.

Generally, the USTR calls for GSP hearing in every three years, but this year it is taking place earlier due to the devastating fire incident at Tazreen Fashion Ltd in Ashulia on November 24, 2012. A total of 112 workers died in the blaze.

Bangladesh first attended the USTR hearing

on GSP in 2007, the second hearing was held in 2009 while the third on January 24 last year.

In the third hearing Bangladesh pledged to introduce Better Work Programme of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Finance Corporation (IFC), according to the copy of the hearing. The Daily Star obtained the copy of the third hearing of USTR.

The government also committed to launch a project in collaboration with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) to establish dormitories for female workers in Chittagong.

"The facilities are expected to open in two years. Plans for similar facilities in other cities are on cards. The benefits here include school, hospital and day care centres and entertainment facilities," the document said.

The paper also said a future integrated trade policy for Bangladesh, which is under early development, will include consideration of labour issues.

Bangladesh government also committed to work with the USAID and its projects, which are concerned with the enhancement of labour rights, to ensure sustainability and reform.

EC for tougher rules

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director, director, secretary, general manager, or any other officer of any authority, by whatever designation he is called, may be prosecuted.

If found guilty, he may be sentenced to jail for a maximum of three years and fined Tk 50,000, or may get both penalties.

According to the proposal, the word "authority" refers to any department of the government, statutory public authority or statutory body, registered company, partnership firm, society or association.

In defence of such a proposal, a senior EC official said the EC has taken the initiative to enforce effectively the provisions stipulated in the constitution and the RPO.

Article 126 of the constitution says it shall be the duty of all executive authorities to assist the EC in discharging its functions.

Section 5 of the RPO says the EC may require any person or authority to perform such function or render such assistance for the purposes of holding parliamentary elections.

All executive authorities of the government shall assist the EC in performing its functions, it says.

But in the past, various departments of successive governments ignored the EC's requirements on many occasions. And the EC could not take any action against them, as there is no legal

provision that empowers it to take such step.

"This proposal was prepared to remove the deficiency," a senior EC official told The Daily Star yesterday asking not to be named.

When asked about the proposal, Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz declined to comment.

"We are working to finalise a set of proposals for bringing changes in the RPO. On finalisation, we will send them to the government to translate them into law," he told The Daily Star last night.

In the proposal, the EC suggested that the government consult it about appointments, postings and transfer of any civil servant during the parliamentary elections to keep the polls free from influence.

But the draft proposal gives an impression that the EC is sure that the next parliamentary election will be held after dissolution of the current parliament.

"From the date of dissolution of the parliament and until the formation of a new one, the government shall not take any decision relating to appointment, transfer and posting of officials of all ministries and of offices subordinate thereto without prior consultation with the commission," says the proposal.

But according to the current constitutional provision, the next parliamentary polls will be held within 90 days before dissolution of the current parliament.

Advertorial



A Successful China-South Asia Exposition: A New Chapter of Cooperation and Friendship between China and Bangladesh

Speech made by **Mr. Gao Shuxun, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province, China** at the promotion event of the 1st China-South Asia Exposition held in Dhaka on 8th January 2013 with the support of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)

I would like to extend an invitation to Bangladesh friends in all walks of life to the 1st China-South Asia Exposition, which will be inaugurated in Kunming, China in the coming June. Now, my excitement of meeting you friends, old and new, has mingled with my appreciation for your close attention to the 1st China-South Asia Exposition. Hereby, on behalf of the People's Government of Yunnan Province, China, I'd like to express my gratitude to Mr. Li Jun, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Mr. Shubhashish Bose, Vice Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh, Mr. Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, President of FBCCI and Chairperson of 8th China-South Asia Business Forum and all other friends present. My regards also go to those who have devoted themselves to the promotion of cooperation and win-win results between Bangladesh and Yunnan of China.

Enjoying a friendly neighborhood, China and South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, have shared a long history of cooperation and huge potentials of collaboration. It is not only our common desire but also our responsibility to increasingly enhance and develop the traditional friendship between the two countries. We are very pleased that, along with the progress of events such as China Kunming Import and Export Commodities Fair, the South Asian Countries Trade Fair, and China-South Asia Business Forum, Yunnan has further enhanced the friendly exchanges with South Asian countries, with increasingly improved bilateral relations and remarkable economic and trade, achievements. In 2008, the then Governor Qin Guangrong led an official delegation and paid a friendly visit to some South Asian countries including Bangladesh. In 2010, Premier Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh visited Yunnan. My province has also witnessed the visits by other friends from Bangladesh political, business, cultural and educational circles. All these efforts have promoted the all-dimensional exchanges and cooperation between our two sides.

Now, new requirements have arisen for closer friendly exchange and economic cooperation. The State Council of the People's Republic of China has recently approved to upgrade the China-South Asian Countries Trade Fair to the China-South Asia Exposition since 2013. The 1st China-South Asia Exposition will be held in Kunming, Yunnan from June 6-10, 2013, same period when the 21st China Kunming Import and Export Commodities Fair takes place. The principle and theme of the 1st China-South Asia Exposition is *All-round China-South Asia Partnership, Shared Opening-up, Pragmatic Cooperation, Win-win Results, and Harmonious Development*. The successful holding of the Exposition will continuously strengthen the economic, trade, cultural and academic ties between China and South Asia, including Bangladesh and even those around the Indian Ocean, and build an even bigger platform for our win-win cooperation and development.

The 1st China-South Asia Exposition will organize the following events:

I. The South Asian countries' exhibition. On the basis of exhibition hall of the South Asian countries, we will highlight the advantages and features of South Asian countries, especially tourism, culture, service trade and investment promotion. The contents and size of the exhibition will be multiplied and intensified in an effort to create more business opportunities for all participants.

II. Organize China-South Asia Sourcing event. A platform streamlining productions, purchases and sales will be built for targeted manufacturers and buyers from South Asian countries and China to match their business, get their deals, raise their trade volume and make their participation profitable. As the rotating chair country of the China-South Asia Business Forum, Bangladesh will undoubtedly make its due contribution to the success of the forum.

III. Organize Investment Promotion for South Asian Countries. The Expo will invite and organize relevant government organizations and business associations of South Asian countries to introduce their investment environment, promote investment projects, and provide participating countries and entrepreneurs with a platform to attract foreign investments and establish their overseas business.

IV. Hold the China-South Asia Business Forum. The Expo will invite Chinese leaders, the heads of governments of South Asian countries to deliver keynote speeches at the forum, so as to enhance mutual trust, deepen cooperation and facilitate the international influence of China-South Asia Exposition.

V. Organize China-South Asia Ministerial Consultation Meeting. We will upgrade the China-South Asia Senior Officials Meeting on Economy and Trade, which was held concurrently with the South Asian Countries Trade Fair, to the China-South Asia Ministerial Consultation Meeting, at which we could more pragmatically explore and find solutions to difficulties and problems encountered in our cooperation.

VI. Organize China-South Asia Think Tank Forum. The Exposition will invite experts and scholars from South Asian countries and China to conduct think tank forums with selected topics focusing on key areas of interest of both South Asia and China, such as economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, so as to provide academic support to the exchanges and cooperation among them.

VII. Concurrently organize the 21st China Kunming Import and Export Fair (Kunming Fair). The 1st China-South Asian Exposition, the 21st Kunming Fair, ASEAN Chinese Business Fair, GMS Economic Corridor Week, and Southeast Asia, South Asia Television Arts Week will be organized in the same period so that business resources can be shared, advantages become complementary, and information channels be fully utilized, which will surely enrich exposition contents and increase its international participation and influence.

We sincerely hope relevant authorities of Bangladesh could render your strong support and provide the necessary coordination as follows:

Firstly, we are expecting you to report to your government as soon as possible that Chinese government will hold China-South Asia Exposition next year and welcome co-sponsorship of the Expo from the competent commerce authority of your country through your active coordination.

Secondly, we are expecting any effort you make in inviting your President or the head of Govt. to attend the Expo and relevant important events, and deliver a keynote speech in the forum. Besides, we also appreciate the assistance you give in inviting high rank political officials, business leaders, CEOs of top international enterprises to the Expo. From our side, we will also submit a report to the central government requesting the attendance of our national leaders accordingly.

Thirdly, we are expecting you to help promote China-South Asia Exposition in your industrial and business sectors by inviting or organizing interested capable enterprises or businessmen to the Expo for the purpose of introducing goods from South Asia and even from around Indian Ocean areas to China and vice versa.

Fourthly, we are expecting the suggestions and feedback of your side regarding the Expo, so as to improve the Expo programs and facilitate exhibition outcomes.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, thanks to the rapid development of modern transport and technology, cooperation between countries and regions have become more and more facilitated. It just takes 130 minutes to fly to Dhaka from Kunming, which makes our visit as convenient as a local one to our close relatives. I sincerely anticipate that we can get together in Kunming in this June, where you can always enjoy a breeze and blooms, to witness the grand exposition.

Last but not least, may China and Bangladesh enjoy friendship and our two people well-being!

Thank you all.

ENLISTMENT NOTICE

Samsung Bangladesh R&D Center (SBRC) is wholly owned subsidiary of Samsung Electronics (Korea). We have started our operations in Bangladesh in 2011 and currently expanding our operations. We have recently leased a new office for our operations and currently inviting "Enlistment offer" from reputed Interior Firms who can give us a one stop solution for our New Office Interior. The Prospective Firm can be any one of the Following:

1. Interior and Furniture Manufacturer
2. Furniture Importer
3. Consortium of Firms with One Leading Firm, responsible for the Whole Project

The Selected Firm should have the Proven Capability to work within a tight deadline and proven financial strength to handle a project of this magnitude. In this connection, the firm/s is/are requested to send its/their proposal/s in A4 size report cover file in a sealed envelop with the following Attested documents to the following address by 16 January 2013 - General Affairs, Samsung Bangladesh R&D Center Limited, Uday Tower 11th & 12th Floor, 57 & 57/A Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka.

Brief description of the firm
Copy of the valid trade license
Copy of the TIN certificate
Copy of the updated VAT registration certificate
Copy of the bank a/c certificate (letter from the bank mentioning a/c number)
Copy of the procurement client list with address and phone number.

Samsung Bangladesh R&D Center (SBRC) reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers in part or in full, may correct, modify or rectify discrepancy, if any in the offer document without assigning any reason whatsoever in the interest of SBRC.

High Commission of India Dhaka

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDY IN INDIA (2013-14)

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India is offering scholarships to meritorious Bangladeshi nationals under the following scholarship schemes for the academic session 2013-14 to pursue various courses in India at the Under Graduate, Post-Graduate and PhD level, except in Medicine:

- (i) India Scholarship Scheme (excluding engineering)
- (ii) Bangladesh Scholarship Scheme
- (iii) Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme
- (iv) Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) Scholarship Scheme
- (v) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Scholarship Scheme

Candidate should have proficiency in English. Further information along with application forms for these scholarships may be collected from the **Education Wing, High Commission of India, House No. 2, Road No. 142, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212** on any working day (Sunday-Thursday) from 1100-1300 hrs and 1500-1700 hrs from 13 to 17 January 2013, upon submission of the photocopy of mark sheet of the qualifying examination. Forms may also be collected from Assistant High Commission of India, Chittagong and Assistant High Commission of India, Rajshahi from 13 to 17 January 2013. **The last date for receipt of completed application forms at High Commission of India, Dhaka and Assistant High Commissions of India, Chittagong and Rajshahi is 24 January 2013.**