

Obama seeks \$3.1 bn aid for Pakistan to defeat Al Qaeda

US President Barack Obama has sought \$3.1 billion in non-military aid for Pakistan and \$4.0 billion for Afghanistan "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda" by better "governance, reconstruction, and other development activities to counter extremists".

The non-military assistance is in addition to almost \$30 billion more proposed for the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq with \$548.9 billion outlay for defence in Obama's record \$3.8 trillion budget for 2011 sent to the US Congress Monday.

The non-military aid is part of \$56.8 billion outlay proposed for the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID),

and other international programmes "to advance the interests of the United States through engagement, partnership, and the promotion of universal values". "In addition, funding is provided for ongoing support, logistics and security for the existing US Missions in Afghanistan and Pakistan and new funding is provided to support over 500 additional civilian staff in Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to execute the President's strategy," the White House said.

Obama also sought \$4.5 billion supplemental funds for fiscal 2010 "to advance the President's strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan and to help facilitate the military-to-civilian transition in Iraq." The budget also set "high-performance"

goals for the State Department including strengthening "Afghanistan's and Pakistan's capacity to effectively provide services to citizens and enhance the long-term sustainability of development efforts..."

Pakistan meanwhile urged the US-led NATO forces to take it into confidence before launching operations in areas adjacent to its borders in Afghanistan.

"Pakistan's army should be taken into confidence before launching any offensive by US-led coalition troops at areas, adjacent to Pakistan's border," army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani told a visiting NATO commander, Online news agency reported, quoting sources. "The coalition forces should ensure that no terrorist or extremist enters in

Pakistan's area during the operation," Kayani told Lt Gen William B. Caldwell, commander of the NATO training mission in Afghanistan.

The remarks come as NATO and the Afghan army are planning their biggest joint offensive since the beginning of the Afghan war in Helmand and other areas. The Helmand province, located in southwestern Afghanistan, is the world's largest opium-producing region, responsible for over 40 percent of the world's total production.

Kayani and Caldwell discussed the planned offensive, the security situation in Afghanistan and the new US for the war-torn nation, military sources said. Relations between the Pakistani army and NATO as well as the training of

Pakistani army officers by NATO were also discussed, the sources added.

Pakistan has been repeatedly complaining about the continuing US drone strikes against the Taliban in its North and South Waziristan areas along the Afghan border that have claimed some 700 lives since they began in mid-2008. Pakistan has also asked for drone technology to enable it conduct the strikes to stem criticism of the attacks at home but the US has invariably turned this down. In a concession of sorts, US Defence Secretary Robert M. Gates, during a visit here last month, announced that Washington would provide unarmed reconnaissance drones to Pakistan to enable closer surveillance of the border areas.

Muslim Heritage Exhibition in London

More than 15,000 people have rushed to visit a recently opened exhibition at London's Science Museum. Launched on the 21st January, the landmark exhibition highlights the scientific heritage the world has inherited from Muslim civilisation. The venue has been inundated with visitors and the Museum's Director has described their latest attraction as a "blockbuster".

1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World, which is sponsored by the Jameel Foundation, traces the forgotten story of a thousand years of science from the Muslim world, from the 7th century onwards.

The free exhibition, which runs from the 21 January to 25 April 2010, will look at the social, scientific and technical achievements that are credited to the Muslim world, whilst celebrating the shared scientific heritage of other cultures. It features a diverse range of exhibits, interactive displays and dramatisation, all of which acknowledge the Muslim world's contribution to many modern inventions, spanning fields such as engineering, medicine and architecture, and can trace their roots back to Muslim civilisation.

The launch of the exhibition marks the beginning of a global tour that will visit the world's most respected museums and centres of learning over

the next four years.

Professor Chris Rapley, Director of the Science Museum, commented: "The thousand year period from the 7th century onwards was a time of exceptional scientific and technological advancement in the Muslim World, spanning China, India, Persia, Africa and Arabia. This is the period in history that gave us huge advances in engineering, mathematics, chemistry and physics. With over 15,000 objects in our collection spanning many different cultures, the Science Museum provides the perfect platform for this exhibition, as a place which encourages innovation and learning amongst visitors of all ages."

One of the iconic focal



features of this exhibition is a five-metre high replica of the 'Elephant Clock' - a visually striking early 13th century water clock, the body of which contains symbols referring different cultures and is featured alongside a short feature film starring Oscar-winning actor Sir Ben Kingsley as Al-Jazari, inventor of the fabled clock.

Professor Salim T S Al-Hassani, Chairman of 1001 Inventions, explained: "The Elephant Clock is an early 13th century machine which gives physical form to the concept of multi-culturalism. This engineering marvel featured an Indian Elephant, Chinese Dragons, a Greek water mechanism, an Egyptian

Phoenix, and wooden robots in traditional Arabian attire. It embodies cultural and scientific convergence of civilisations and is an appropriate centre-piece for an exhibition about the roots of science and technology."

Other striking exhibits featured in this interactive exhibition include:

- * Model of an energy efficient and environmentally-friendly Baghdad courtyard house.
- * A large 3 metre reproduction Al-Idrisi's 12th-century world map.
- * Model of Zheng He's Chinese junk ship - originally a 15th century wooden super structure over 100 metres long.
- * Medical instruments from a thousand year ago,

many of which are still used today.

• Model of a 9th-century dark room, later called Camera Obscura, which Ibn al-Haytham used to change our understanding of vision and optics.

Fady Jameel, speaking on behalf of the Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation, said: "One of the most important aims of our foundation is to promote global education projects and this 1001 Inventions exhibition at one of Europe's most prestigious museums will help achieve just that through increasing understanding about a fascinating period of history and discovering how it impacts us in today's modern world".

The exhibition will run from 21st January until 25th April 2010

Musharraf seeks support to launch party

Former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf is busy mustering support to launch his own political party, media reports said.

Musharraf spent a busy week in Abu Dhabi before flying back to London - holding marathon meetings with his lawyers, political partners and retired officials, including his close aide Major General Rashid Qureshi, the Online news agency reported. He discussed issues related to forming a new political party and his possible return to Pakistan. "Musharraf is weighing possibilities of going back to launch himself as a political force," a leading politician said requesting anonymity.

He said the purpose of the meetings was to discuss various aspects of the new political party.

Musharraf resigned from presidency in August 2008 after a row caused by his decision to impose emergency in the country and sack judges to save his presidency.

Sources told Gulf News that Musharraf's party would mainly comprise of politicians who parted ways from the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), which he launched with Chaudhry Shujat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, who defected from Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party.



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