

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

Democracy does deliver

Tuesday, September 29, 2009
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Much to the dismay of the government's detractors and contrary to the vilification campaign going on in the country against the elected leadership, the US Senate voted on Thursday to triple non-military aid to Pakistan to roughly \$1.5 billion per year.

The bill, approved unanimously, had been agreed upon between the Senate and House sponsors of legislation passed separately by each chamber earlier this year. The sponsors are Senators John Kerry and Richard Lugar. The bill has incorporated improvements over the earlier version of the Kerry-Lugar Bill passed by the Senate and the House. The vital aspect of the bill is that its language is far less prescriptive and stringent. Specific references to India as well as A Q Khan have been eliminated while the language related to nuclear proliferation is markedly toned down – from "ensure access of US investigators to individual suspected" to receiving cooperation "in efforts such as providing relevant information from or direct access to Pakistani nationals associated with such networks."

On Thursday, for the first time ever, major economic powers agreed to the formation of a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) to help the country build its tribal areas which have been the worst victim of the fight against the militants.

In an unprecedented show of solidarity President Barack Obama, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Gordon Brown co-chaired the meeting of Friends Democratic of Pakistan (FoDP). The participants included a galaxy of world leaders, such as President Sarkozy of France, Prime Minister Berlusconi of Italy, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, the prime ministers of Australia and Canada and World Bank president Robert Zoellick. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi termed the summit a "diplomatic success," stating that it represented a vote of confidence in the Pakistani nation.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown applauded Islamabad's campaign to rid the restive border areas of violent extremism and bring stability to the region. The British leader commended the leadership of President Zardari and the role of the armed forces for launching an effective offensive against the militants.

Earlier, US President Barack Obama reaffirmed his administration's commitment to economic cooperation with Pakistan.

The total amount of the bill passed by US Senate for FY 2009 is \$3021.0 million. \$1147.5 million would be given under the head of Development and Reconstruction out of which \$33.5 million will be given under the head of Child Survival and Health Programme whereas Economic Support Fund would receive \$1,114.0 million while \$11,02 million will be made available for the country in FY2010 with \$27.9 million and \$1,074.3 million on Child Survival and Health Programme and Economic Support Fund respectively.

Pakistan will receive a total of \$1103.1 million under the head of Security Assistance out of which foreign military financing would be \$300.0 million this year whereas \$700.0 million have been allocated for Pakistan Counter Insurgency Fund; \$13.3 million would be spent on Non-Profit, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Issues. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement would receive a total of \$87.5 million while \$2.3 million would be spent under the Head of IMET. It is worth mentioning here that \$298.0 million, \$22.7 million, \$155.2 million and \$ 4.0 million respectively would be given to the country under the same head in FY2010.

Pakistan will receive a total of \$255.4 million under the head of humanitarian grant; further details are that Migration and Refugee Assistance will be given \$69.6 million while Food for Progress will get \$31.0 million, PL480 \$36.3 million and International Disaster Assistance will be given \$118.0 million in the FY 2009. Migration and Refugee Assistance will receive \$20.0 million while no money has been reserved for Food for Progress, PL and International Disaster Assistance in the FY 2010. Total State Department operations will entail \$2,506.0 million in this financial year whereas it would be \$1602.0 million in the next financial year.

The Department of Defence will receive a total of \$515.6 million in which Counter- Narcotics will receive an

amount of \$63.3 million this year and \$38.4 million in the next financial year while \$25.0 million have been reserved for FATA Authority this year. Ensuring that the present government does not face any obstacle in its democratic dispensation a condition in the bill requires that the security forces of Pakistan do not subvert judicial processes. The aim of the legislation is to promote stability in the country.

It is worth mentioning that the bill underlines the importance of supporting Pakistan's national security needs to fight the ongoing counterinsurgency and improve its border security and control. However, it does not specify any amount or percentage. This provides the administration maximum flexibility and none of the conditions can set in motion automatic sanctions.

Previously, Pakistan was governed by a dictator and that regime weakened all our important institutions like the judiciary and the parliament. Even the media was brutalised and attacked when the crunch came. Today all our institutions are working for the betterment of the people. The judiciary and the parliament are respected by the executive. The media is free to examine and comment on the working of the government. Internationally, Pakistan stands in the strongest diplomatic position in its sixty two year history. Our leaders now stand shoulder to shoulder with the leaders of other democracies. And perhaps the most important message that President Zardari sends to our nation and to the world is that democracy does indeed deliver.

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