

US, N Korea to talk nuke in Beijing

AFP, Washington

High-level talks between the United States, North Korea and China on the Korean nuclear crisis will be held in Beijing over three days from April 23 to 25, a State Department official said yesterday.

The talks will be the first direct high-level contact between Washington and Pyongyang since the crisis broke in October.

The official, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said a second round of discussions was possible and even likely as Washington did not expect the Beijing talks to produce quick results.

"We do not anticipate an immediate breakthrough," the official said.

The format of the talks appears to be a compromise between the US demand for multilateral discussions and North Korea's insistence on a one-on-one dialogue with Washington.

But two notable absentees at the dialogue will be South Korea and Japan, which closely coordinate policy with Washington on the crisis.

Reuters said, earlier President Bush approved a plan to begin negotiations with North Korea in Beijing. The officials confirmed a New York Times report that China had agreed to act as a full participant in the talks.

The development came after the communist North signaled last week-end it was willing to go along with a US demand for multilateral talks, after having insisted for months it wanted to talk only to Washington about its suspected nuclear arms plans.

The relatively quick US-led victory over Iraq appears to have played an important role in prompting North Korea to reconsider its position, although analysts said the diplomacy to reach the weekend announcement must have taken some weeks, and probably included pressure from Pyongyang's main ally, China.



A US Ranger officer walks past a copy of French painter Ingres lying in the rubble of the residence of Saja al-Tikriti, the wife of Uday, eldest son of toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, in Baghdad's main presidential palace yesterday.

Farming fumbles on cost factor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

High production cost and poor output price have made farming a non-profitable venture, pushing farmers more towards non-farm activities in recent years.

Farmers from 62 villages of 57 districts yesterday told a workshop that there were going through hard days as rice price is not commensurate with increased production cost.

In line with their concern, the keynote presenter of the workshop, renowned economist Dr Mahabub Hossain, noted in his paper: "It's a matter of grave concern that with the rise in foodgrain production, farmers' income did not mark any increase. Because, grain price did not increase at par the rise in costs of agricultural inputs. Moreover, with the growth in

population size, land availability per family has decreased."

The Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Socioconsult Limited jointly organised the two-day workshop titled "Demand for Improved Rice Technologies in the Context of Transformation of the Rural Economy in the 1990s" at the BRRI campus at Gazipur.

Farmers said rise in input, fuel and irrigation prices, adulteration of fertiliser, non-cooperation by the agricultural extension workers and corruption in foodgrain procurement system are some major hurdles for them.

Borhanuddin Master of Jhenidah, Alauddin Sarkar of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Iran won't recognise US-led Iraq govt

AGENCIES, Tehran

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said yesterday his country will not recognise a US-installed interim administration in Iraq and will support Syria if it is attacked.

It was the first time a senior official had defined Iran's already well-known stance on a postwar Iraq.

"We will not recognise any administration other than an all Iraqi government. However, we are not seeking tension or confrontation with anybody," Khatami told reporters after a Cabinet meeting.

On Tuesday, retired US Gen. Jay Garner, chosen by the United States to lead the interim administration, opened a conference in Ur, Iraq, with the goal of shaping Iraq's postwar government.

"The Iraqi nation will not accept any foreign rule," Khatami said. "It is in the interests of morality, civility and international law that an administration representing all Iraqi ethnic, religious groups take over in Iraq and in the long term a government is elected on the basis of one vote for each Iraqi citizen."

In the first official Iranian comment on US claims that Syria was hosting members of Saddam Hussein's regime, Khatami said the rhetoric was a "bluff" and that Iran would support Syria if attacked.

"Syria is on the front line against Zionist pressures, defending the cause of the Palestinian nation, freedom and peace in the region. We will defend Syria but it doesn't mean we will engage in military confrontation," he said.

Mujibnagar Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Historic Mujibnagar Day will be observed today commemorating the formation of Bangladesh's first government in exile at a Baidyanathola mango grove in Meherpur district on this day in 1971.

Later, the place was renamed as 'Mujibnagar' showing respect to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was declared president and supreme commander of the armed forces.

Syed Nazrul Islam was made acting president in the absence of the Bangabandhu who had been arrested by the occupation Pakistan army on March 26, 1971.

The Mujibnagar government with Tajuddin Ahmed as its prime minister led the country's nine-month Liberation War that continued till the Pakistani occupiers' surrender on December 16.

At the very outset of the ceremony to install the government, a guard of honour led by a contingent of police was given. Syed Nazrul Islam took the salute and hoisted the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 17		6-21 pm
April 18	5-35 am	

Prayer Timings		
April 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-26	6-32
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Chandrika's visit to cement political ties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The upcoming visit of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga is not likely to add a fillip to the economies of the two countries, but it would strengthen their political ties, diplomatic sources said today.

Chandrika arrives on April 19 on a two-day visit during which her itinerary would remain mainly confined to meeting the Bangladesh leaders.

Trade between the two countries revolves around US\$10 million a year and there is not much room to ratchet it up soon, diplomatic sources said.

Sri Lanka exports cocoa, palm oil, rubber and ceramic products worth about \$6.5 million while Bangladesh exports pharmaceutical products and sugar worth about \$3.5 million a year.

Pointing out that Sri Lanka's key export earners include garments, tea, manpower and tourism, almost similar to Bangladesh's exportables, diplomats said there was no chance of dramatic trade expansion between the two countries.

"In the tourism sector, Sri Lankans may be able to practically help Bangladesh tap its own potentials," said a source, "but for now, the Sri Lankan President is mainly focussing her attention to improving the brotherly ties between the two countries."

The Sri Lankan leader would call on President Iajuddin Ahmed on April 19

and meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on the next day before leaving Dhaka.

She would visit the National Mausoleum at Savar, meet Sri Lankans working in Bangladesh at a reception and hold a press conference during the tour.

About 1000 Sri Lankans have invested about \$90 million in financial, insurance and other sectors in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has a small investment in a joint venture paper manufacturing project in Sri Lanka.

Govt patronising criminals: Hasina

HASAN JAHID TUSHER and MD. ALIMUZZAMAN
from Tungipara in Gopalganj

Leader of the opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the main task of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government was to "patronise criminals and loot the country's wealth."

Asking the government to stop terrorist activists and curb corruption immediately, the AL chief warned that Khaleda Zia would be tried on the soil of Bangladesh for her "misrule and misdeeds."

The AL chief was addressing a meeting, after inaugurating Bashuria Shenerchar High School in Tungipara upazila.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

BMA confce in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 8,000 doctors from across the country will attend the Bangladesh medical conference and installation ceremony of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) today in the city.

The medical conference will be the biggest ever congregation of doctors in the country.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the ceremony at the Bangladesh-China Friendship conference hall as the chief guest. The health minister, the state minister for health and the health secretary will also be present as special guests. The big assembly of private and public medical practitioners is the first in a decade being hosted by

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Shibir calls indefinite strike at CU

BSS, Ctg

The Chittagong University (CU) unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) has called an indefinite strike on the campus from today demanding implementation of its five-point demand.

The demands include immediate withdrawal of showcase notice on two Shibir leaders, expulsion of Chhatra League activists, punishment to those involved in the March 18 incident and the attack on proctor's vehicle, an ICS press release said yesterday.

The ICS also brought out a procession on the CU campus and held a meeting on at the CU railway station yesterday.

Tipu assault case Hazari, 12 others chargesheeted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Former MP and Feni Awami League leader Joynal Abedin Hazari and 12 others have been chargesheeted in journalist Tipu Sultan assault case.

Feni thana police submitted the charge sheet to a magistrate's court here yesterday.

The other accused are Bidhan Majumder, Shahjahan Saju, Kohinoor

Alam, Choto Arzu, Swapan, Shohag, Taslim Hazari, Emdadul Haque, Masud, Razaul Karim Milki, Bablu and Rubel.

Of them, Bidhan, Saju, Arzu, Shaif, Emdadul and Taslim Hazari are now on bail while seven others including the main accused Hazari are still at large.

Angered by a report on demolition of Sultan Memorial Girls' School for not inviting Hazari as

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3