

Iran threatens global retaliation if attacked

Tehran to ignore UNSC demand

AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader boldly warned the United States yesterday that it would be "harmed" across the globe if it decided to attack the Islamic republic over its disputed nuclear programme.

The stern warning came as hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed the regime would resist any UN Security Council demands for a halt in uranium enrichment, at the centre of fears the country could acquire nuclear weapons.

"The Americans should know that if they launch an assault against

Islamic Iran, their interests in every possible part of the world will be harmed," Ayatollah Khamenei was quoted as saying by state television.

"The Iranian nation will give a double response to any strike," the top cleric warned in one of his toughest threats ever.

The UN Security Council has given Iran until Friday to freeze enrichment work, which makes what can be fuel for civilian nuclear reactors but also material for a bomb.

Iran has rejected the demand, insisting it wants only to generate electricity. The deadlock could open

the door to UN economic sanctions or even military action, something the United States has not ruled out.

"The alert and decisive nation and government of Iran... will not pay attention to these threats," Khamenei said in a speech to factory workers in Tehran.

The previous day, Khamenei had also said the Islamic regime was ready to share nuclear technology with other countries. The US ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, said this showed "how irresponsible Iran is and why it represents, in our view, a grave

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Crows seek respite from the scorching summer heat having dips into water of a ditch in Suhrwardy Udyan in the capital yesterday.

Nepal Maoists lift blockade

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's powerful Maoists lifted a blockade of the capital yesterday following a plea by the country's premier-designate ahead of the first parliamentary session in four years.

The Maoists were forced into a U-turn following the public outpouring of joy when embattled King Gyanendra late Monday handed control to politicians after weeks of violent street protests against his outright rule.

Gyanendra announced parliament, which he dismissed in 2002, would sit on Friday as he conceded power in the face of the protests in which many sought to dislodge the world's last Hindu monarch. Authorities had warned the protestors they could be shot on sight.

Gyanendra seized total power almost 15 months ago after sacking the government, accusing it of corruption and of failing to quell a decade-long Maoist rebellion.

The Maoists, who have a loose alliance with seven leading political parties, initially rejected the king's move saying it did not answer their key demand for a constitutional review of the role of the monarchy.

The rebels want a legislative body, called a constituent assembly, to draft a new constitution, which would likely clip the king's powers.

The opposition, now led by three-time former premier Girija Prasad Koirala, 81, said the main business Friday would be to call for a constituent assembly to placate

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Fresh list has over 1cr new voters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday fixed May 3 for publication of the draft voter list which is likely to introduce over one crore new voters in addition to those in the existing electoral roll.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said the new voter list will see an increase of voters by 14 per cent on average—about 1.1 crore—from that of the existing one. The number of voters in the existing electoral roll prepared in 2000 finally stood at 7.8 crore after revisions during different local body elections.

An EC meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz in the chair yesterday took the decision to publish the draft voter list. It, however, did not fix the date for publication of the final electoral roll.

In accordance with the decision, the EC fixed May 3-May 21 period for submitting claims and objections on the draft voter list, which the revising authorities will resolve from June 6. The resolutions will be then compiled by June 25.

CEC Aziz, Election

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JS session starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 21st session of the Jatiya Sangsad is likely to witness heated debates on issues like Kansat killings, police atrocities on journalists and opposition activists, militancy, price hike of essentials and electoral reforms.

The routine session of parliament will start at 5:00pm today.

The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of parliament will sit prior to the session to fix its duration and business.

"We will join the Business Advisory Committee and demand discussions on various burning

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143m ton choice coal ready for mining

Shows survey in Pirganj of Rangpur

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

A geological survey has identified a 143-million-ton reserve of high-quality bituminous coal in eight underground layers in a 2.52sqkm area at Khalashpir under Pirganj upazila that can be profitably mined.

A survey of Geological Survey Department in 1959 to 1962 first detected the large coal deposit at Khalashpir. The department in another survey estimated the reserve to be 800 million metric tons in a 25sqkm area.

But, since then the government had not taken any step to explore or mine the coal until 2004, when it commissioned Hosaf International Consortium to conduct the just-concluded survey. Hosaf launched the survey in January 2005.

Out of the initially identified 25-sq-km reserve area, the Hosaf survey demarcated the coal in 2.52sqkm section as suitable for commercial extraction and that in the remaining 22.48-sq-km not viable for profitable mining.

The Khalashpir coal contains a high-level of energy, a Hosaf official told The Daily Star, adding a pound of it can generate as much as 10,500 British thermal units of heat. It also has only one per cent sulphur, which is rare in the country.

The reserve of such rich coal offers the government an opportunity to set up a coal-fired power plant in Pirganj and thus reduce the existing severe power crisis to a large extent, the survey report observed.

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Hike in freight charges to cut export earning

Fruit, vegetable exporters fear

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh may lose Tk 500 crore annually in export earnings due to a decision of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to increase freight charges for fruit and vegetable items, exporters said.

Speaking at a news briefing yesterday leaders of Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters' Association (BFVAPEA) said they received a notice from Biman informing them about the hike in freight charges which will go into effect on May 1.

They urged the government to intervene to make Biman withdraw the decision. The latest fee increase is the tenth in a row since March last year, they said.

BFVAPEA organised the briefing at a local hotel in the capital.

Protesting the hike in freight charges the association will bring out a procession from Muktangan in the city on Sunday that will march towards Biman headquarters.

In a written statement, BFVAPEA President Md Farid Uddin Ahmed said around 500 members of the organisation have been exporting fruits and vegetables to about 15 Middle Eastern and European countries for the last 30 years.

The exporters have been earning Tk 500 crore a year in revenues by exporting these products, he added.

Farid Uddin said freight charges were increased to \$2.12 from \$1.12

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Tigers surrender meekly to lose ODI series

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia thrived on a timely unbeaten 103 by Andrew Symonds to ensure the one-day series victory with a match in hand when the world champions inflicted a 67-run defeat on Bangladesh in the second match at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar continued his good form

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Prayer Timing		
April 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

ILLEGAL STRUCTURES ON ROADS, HIGHWAYS

No eviction drive before next polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided not to go for any massive drive against illegal structures on the roads and highways this year apparently in view of the reaction among the electorate before next general elections.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, who presided over a high-powered meeting yesterday, asked the officials concerned for maintaining a 'go slow' policy in

case of removal of illegal structures.

The minister told the meeting that the eviction drive at the fag end of the four-party coalition government's tenure might have a negative impact on the voters in the next general elections, meeting sources said.

The meeting decided that none would be allowed to import buses before getting route permits.

The minister expressed dissatisfaction over the activities of Dhaka

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