

US can't topple Saddam like the Taliban, says Iraq

REUTERS, Amman

Iraq said on Friday the United States would not be able to topple President Saddam Hussein the same way it overthrew Afghanistan's Taliban, as Washington demanded Iraq disarm "now" and ruled out any talks.

The United States ignored calls for a new UN Security Council resolution to approve any American military action against Iraq while key ally British Prime Minister Tony Blair faced opposition from his own party to a US-led attack.

"The United States' position is that the Iraqi regime needs to abide by its obligations -- there is no room for negotiations or discussion -- they need to do so and do so now," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters with US President George W. Bush on his August vacation.

McClellan repeated US insistence that Iraq carry out commitments made after the 1991 Gulf War to disarm.

In a sign of rising tension, US jets attacked an anti-aircraft missile site in a "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq in response to what the US military said were repeated Iraqi attempts to shoot down US and British jets

patrolling the zone. It was the eighth raid in less than two weeks.

But Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said Washington knew it could not overthrow Saddam the same way it ousted the Taliban. "We don't want to compare the two; Iraq is not Afghanistan," Ramadan told reporters in Beirut. "I believe that the US administration is convinced of that."

Iraqi opposition sources said they were planning to meet in September to elect a government backed by the United States.

But Ramadan said: "This talk about the Iraqi opposition is insignificant, something that doesn't merit a reply. It doesn't exist, and has no roots on the ground in Iraq."

The White House has pressed for preemptive action against Baghdad, brushing off a groundswell of unease among European allies, Muslim states and broader world public opinion.

"We owe it to our children, we owe it to our grandchildren to make sure that the world's worst leaders do not develop and deploy the world's worst weapons," Bush said in a fund-raising speech that did not mention Iraq specifically.

Two new polls out on Friday showed Americans less enthusias-

tic of a potential war with Iraq.

A poll for Time Magazine and CNN found that support for a US ground invasion of Iraq at 51 per cent while 40 per cent of those surveyed opposed such an action. Last December a similar poll found 70 per cent in favour and 22 per cent against.

A Newsweek poll showed 62 per cent would support military force against Iraq but fewer than half, 49 per cent, would support sending large numbers of ground troops into Iraq.

The Newsweek poll also showed a large majority believing it important for the United States to build support among European allies and in the United Nations before taking action. And 51 per cent said Washington should win the support of Arab countries friendly to the United States.

The two polls, each of just over 1,000 people, were conducted on Aug. 28 and 29.

Military and security experts say a war with Iraq could still be months away. They said there were few signs of the kind of buildup required for an invasion of Iraq, or even of a consensus on what shape it should take.



An Awami League activist bangs on a passenger bus at Gulistan in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Peaceful protesters

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page Plan of Implementation they are working on, and start afresh.

Environmental groups in Johannesburg are furious that US President George W Bush is snubbing the summit, sending Secretary of State Colin Powell in his place, and have branded the United States as an arch-polluter which puts the interests of its big corporations above the environment.

The United States hit back Friday at groups opposing genetically modified food, accusing them of preventing GM corn donated by the United States as relief food from reaching millions of people in southern Africa facing the threat of famine.

Meanwhile, a 510-million-dollar programme was launched to boost the access of millions of impoverished Asians to clean water and sanitation.

The Water for Asian Cities Programme, jointly undertaken by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UN-Habitat, aims to contribute to the UN goal of reducing by half the 1.2 billion people without access to clean water and some 2.4 billion to proper sanitation by 2015.

To achieve this, an additional 1.5 billion people in Asia must be given access to adequate sanitation facilities and 980 million to safe water.

"Of the world's population without access to clean water, almost two-thirds live in Asia and even a greater number lack sanitation, therefore if we are to meet the millennium development goals, Asia needs to be the focus of action," said ADB president Tadao Chino.

The programme kicked off with a 10-million-dollar grant -- contributed equally by the two organisations -- with the ADB to top up another 500 million dollars in loans for water supply and sanitation projects over the next five years, Chino said.

UN-Habitat executive director Anna Tibajuk said between 50 and 70 per cent of the population living in slums and squatter settlements in many developing countries had no adequate basic services and the poor often paid up to 20 times more for their water than the rich.

The Manila-based ADB and UN-Habitat earlier signed a letter of intent to launch the regional programme, with further details expected to be unveiled in March next year. A separate agreement was sealed with the Netherlands government, which has pledged 2.8 million dollars as a training grant.

Dutch Development Cooperation Minister Agnes van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven took a swipe at the United States which

has locked horns with the European Union over a proposal to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and decent sanitation by 2015, with Washington baulking at agreeing to any timetables.

"Sanitation is without any doubt a clear priority to alleviate poverty ... it is a shame that the (summit) is still negotiating on targets for sanitation. Action should have been the keyword a long time ago, so let's move on," she said.

In cases highlighting Asia's severe water shortage, UN-Habitat said some 2.5 million people in Dhaka's slums had inadequate water and sanitation provision and 70 percent had no sewers, resulting in tens of thousands of children dying each year from waterborne diseases and polluted water.

For Bangladesh's six million residents, about half depend on public fountains and these often have broken taps or pipes and nearly a third of the population has no access to piped water.

The Asian water programme is an extension of UN-Habitat's Water for African Cities program launched in 1999; so far some 10 million dollars have been invested in projects in seven African cities.

Altaf orders action

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coming from the opposite direction had to stop also as onlookers, gathered near the Jessore-bound bus, were blocking the road.

The report mentioned that the driver of Hasina's car pulled over and stopped the engine when the Satkhira-bound bus came in front of it. At that time, cars of Kolaroa Thana protection, KMP protection and Satkhira District Police protection were at the front, and the car of ASP circle of Satkhira district was at the rear. The officer-in-charge of the Kolaroa Thana with the help of other police personnel quickly removed the Jessore-bound bus and truck, and Hasina's motorcade proceeded without obstruction.

The motorcade stopped again when it reached Tulshidanga Square, about 300 to 400 yards from BNP office. When the OC of Kolaroa Thana approached Sheikh Hasina's car to find out the reason for stopping, he came to know that the motorcade stopped as one of the cars in the back had got stuck. The OC then went to the car at the rear and soon the car joined the motorcade. The motorcade then proceeded and passed Satkhira district without any obstruction.

The sound of a blank shot was heard when the motorcade was passing through Tulshidanga. Later, it was known that the shot was fired by a member of the private protection team of the leader of the opposition.

The report mentioned that the OC of Kolaroa Thana came back to the police station on completion of his duty after seeing off Hasina's motorcade at the Satkhira border. At that time, reporters of Kolaroa and Satkhira Press Club came to the thana and complained that they

were harassed by Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal workers while covering Hasina's visit. A case was filed in this regard and the main accused in the case, one Lucky, was arrested and efforts are on to arrest the other accused.

The report added that the deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police visited the spot. The OC of Kolaroa Thana has been directed to keep the situation under control and take legal action against those responsible for stopping the Jessore-bound bus.

Musharraf

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However, analysts say Musharraf considers Bhutto a greater threat given considerable popularity she still enjoys in the country.

Musharraf, who extended his rule for five more years through a controversial referendum in April, says Sharif and his family made a promise to stay out of politics for 10 years when they went into exile in Saudi Arabia in 2000. The family denies this.

Among the steps Musharraf has taken to bar the two former rulers from returning to power is a decree that states that prime ministers can serve only two terms.

Both Sharif and Benazir have been premier twice before.

Benazir's lawyers have challenged the laws barring her from the elections in the provincial high court in Sindh and a hearing on her petition is expected on September 11.

Hasina

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in the country.

She said BCL being a mature organisation runs on the basis of idealism and to establish the ideals of Bangabandhu. She called upon the BCL men to continue their fight for justice.

"It is not possible to suppress the truth and justice through torture and repression," she said and asked the student front of her party to fight for the cause of the people.

BCL acting president Marufa Akhtar Poppy presided over the meeting, which was also addressed by BCL acting general secretary Saifuzzaman Shikhar. Senior AL leaders including Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Jalil, Matia Chowdhury, Vice-Principal Abdus Shahid were present.

Later, when the students were coming out of the auditorium in processions chanting slogans in favour of today's haral of the AL, police chased them and charged baton, while Hasina was still inside the hall.

Plane crash

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A fire squad chief said some of the bodies had been hurled more than 200 meters from the site of the crash.

The accident was the third aviation incident in Brazil on Friday. Earlier, two mid-sized TAM airline jets made emergency landings in the state of Sao Paulo. No one was seriously injured in those accidents.

A TAM Fokker-100 jet landed in a grassy field a short distance from a farmhouse near the town of Aracatuba, 325 miles (520 km) northwest of the city of Sao Paulo. TAM said the plane had run out of fuel.

Another TAM Fokker-100 was forced to land at Viracopos airport in the city of Campinas, which lies about 100 km northwest of Sao Paulo, without any landing gear.

Chhabi Rani

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village of Rampal Upazila, 32-year old Chhabi Rani is single. Sources said during the AL regime from 1996, she, along with two AL activists, engaged in the business of raising shrimps in enclosures. After the political changeover last year, Chhabi allegedly developed close links with BNP leader Kazi Abdul Bashar who works as a demonstrator in a laboratory at Rampal College. But her relations with Bashar strained over possession of a shrimp enclosure owned by Chhabi.

According to Rampal police, Bashar forcibly occupied Chhabi's shrimp enclosure four months ago. Chhabi informed the OC of Rampal thana as well as the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Rampal about the matter. Later, OC Nasiruddin helped her regain control of the shrimp enclosure with the UNO's backing.

Later, Chhabi started lobbying the Manju-Mallick group of Rampal upazila BNP to ensure that her shrimp enclosure is secure from the attack of Kazi Bashar. This enraged Bashar who launched a pre-planned attack on her on August 21.

Meanwhile, Awami League has termed the government measures for medical care and security of

Chhabi Rani Mondal as eyewitness.

President of Bagerhat district Awami League and former state minister for social welfare Dr Mozammel Hossain said the government measures were designed to present a pretty picture of justice towards the minorities to the Indian foreign minister who recently visited Dhaka.

He said the issuance of show cause notices to Bagerhat DC and SP was also a deception to appease the minorities, adding that the government in fact has no intention to arrest the real culprits who assaulted and molested Chhabi Rani Mondal.

There has been no further progress in the investigation of Chhabi Rani assault case. Most of the FIR-named accused are still at large and are allegedly being sheltered by a top local BNP leader, said leaders of a BNP faction. Investigating officer of the case, Rampal thana OC Nasiruddin, however said he had no information in that regard.

Local Jamaat leaders blamed a faction of BNP for creating a rift in the four-party alliance in Bagerhat over the Chhabi Rani issue, but Rampal BNP's Majnu group differed saying that no such split exists.

Transmission after

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However, based on its lawyers' advice, it continued airing its programmes.

Although Bangladesh Television snapped its terrestrial link at 5:00pm, the ETV continued broadcasting via satellite.

Later the BTRC sent a fax to the ETV, notifying cancellation of all its radio frequencies. Eventually, the private television channel stopped transmission at 10:45pm.

However, the government was unhappy with the ETV for continuing its programmes Thursday evening even after the verdict was announced.

On the instruction of the "highest authority", police picked up a director and an assistant director of the BTRC from their residences and brought them to the Tejaagon police station at midnight Thursday.

Saud Ahsan, the officer-in-charge of Tejaagon police, claims he does not know how or why the

Violent incidents

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Basu (32) of Bagerhat, who suffered acid-throwing on August 23 due to political vengeance.

At least 43 children were killed in different incidents and 55 sexually abused. Sixteen kids were trafficked to different countries. The number of children tortured was 197, the report said.

Eight people were killed and nine abducted in border areas. Of the eight, six were killed by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and two by Khashia tribesmen coming from across the border.

The Odhikar said one journalist was murdered and ten were injured in different incidents. Twenty-five journalists were threatened and cases were filed against eight.

Finally after a long discussion, the confiscation plan was shelved.

Meanwhile, according to sources, a section of the government hierarchy is pressing the BTRC hard to find a way to seize ETV equipment.

The BTRC was set up less than a year ago and is meant to act as an independent body.

"If the government succeeds, it will be a big blow to the independence of the commission," commented a highly placed source seeking anonymity.

The BTRC chairman could not be contacted despite repeated efforts.

AL leaders

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platoons of BDR, 15 platoons of Armed Police Battalion and 1726 riot control police.

Nine deputy commissioners of the DMP, 11 additional deputy commissioners, 22 assistant commissioners and 57 inspectors will oversee the security measures.

Meanwhile, the AL in a statement yesterday protested police raids at the residences of party leaders and activists.

Dengue

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The victim was identified as Jahangir Hossain, 14, son of Abdul Khaleque of Charankhali of Shariatpur.

Sources said Jahangir was admitted to the DMCH on August 24 after suffering a fracture but on August 26 he fell seriously ill.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Satkhira clashes

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Chaired by president of the club Abu Ahmed, the meeting decided to hold a protest rally tomorrow and hand over a memorandum to the deputy commissioner for sending it to the prime minister.

The meeting warned of boycotting news about BNP if the demands are not met within three days.

Flip side of ban

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2000 CNG-run three-wheelers, of which around 1300 have been delivered so far. Of the 1300, not more than 800 are playing the city roads now, BRTA officials said.

In addition of this, Bangladesh Railway is introducing a shuttle train service between the capital and Tongi from today.

But these would be "far short of the requirement" in the absence of the 12,500 three-wheelers, transport sector experts said.

Earlier, Communication Minister Nazmul Huda had said that a large number of private sector transports would be playing the city roads from this month.

BRTA officials however said the number of transports of different modes would be "normal as before". Private sector transport owners have been watching the situation. It might take few months for them to introduce new vehicles on the city roads", said a BRTA official.

Illegals

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illegal immigrants were highlighted now while nobody made any noise about the criminal actions previously committed by some of them.

Nevertheless, Syed Hamid said the bilateral relation between Malaysia and the countries concerned was too valuable for it to be diverted by the current situation.

On the reported protest outside the Malaysian embassy in Manila over the alleged poor treatment of the illegal immigrants, he said what was important was that people must realise that Malaysia's actions were done within the ambit of its legal system to tackle the problem of illegal immigrants in this country.

Syed Hamid said Kuala Lumpur had done much by accepting Filipinos to work in this country, enabling them to send money back home to help their families, in line with Malaysia's "prosper-thy-neighbour" spirit.

ETV case

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management has asked journalists and others staffs to continue with their day-to-day duties.

There was a meeting at the ETV Bhaban yesterday, where the management briefed the employees on the situation arising out of the Supreme Court verdict.

Managing Director Simon Dring and Head of Programmes Nawajesh Ali Khan told the meeting that the employees would not be laid off and could continue with their regular duties.

Hartal today

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ists and supporters to march forward.

The processionists broke the police cordon and marched up to the Bangabandhu National Museum at Dhhanmondi, chanting various slogans in favour of the hartal and against the government. Hasina joined the procession in a car.

AL and its front organisations also brought out processions in other areas of the city but there was no interruption.

Opposition Awami League on Friday called the dawn-to-dusk hartal protesting ruling party activists' attack on Hasina's motorcade at Kolaroa on that day.

The motorcade came under the attack when she was going to Jessore from Khulna after seeing alleged rape victim Mahfuza Khatun at Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

Today's hartal is the eighth called by Awami League in the last 10

months of the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

Meanwhile, a UNB report says, AL rejected the ruling BNP's plea for withdrawal of today's hartal to allow it celebrate its (BNP's) founding day.

"The hartal has been called in national interest. We have not called it seeing programme of any party," AL Presidium member Abdul Jalil MP told the news agency yesterday.

Jalil said they called the hartal to "protest the attempt to kill the daughter of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman".

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan on Friday urged AL to call off its hartal.

Meanwhile, our Chittagong correspondent reports police swooped on a procession of BCL and arrested five of the processionists from New Market area yesterday.

The City College unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) brought out the procession in protest against the Friday's attack on the motorcade of opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and in support of today's dawn-to-dusk countrywide general strike.

Sources and witnesses said, as soon as the procession brought out from City College reached New Market area police obstructed it. At this time police charged baton indiscriminately injuring some activists and leaders of BCL and picked up five of them.

The arrested are Dostogirul Haq, Sufiur Rahman alias Tipu, Mahbubul Alam, Afzal Junaed alias Jewel and Pulok Khastogir were later sent to jail custody.

City College BCL later held a rally on the college campus demanding immediate and unconditional release of the arrested BCL men.

JCD central body

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She however warned that the new committee would be formed with only youths and regular students. "There will be no place for non-students and criminals."

Khaleda, the chairperson of the ruling BNP, said she has directed her party's student affairs advisor on Wednesday to immediately form different committees without farther delay.

After the meeting, Aman met BNP's Joint Secretary General Tarique Zia and had a brief discussion on how to form the committee.

"I want a fresh leadership of the JCD comprising students and where there will be no place for non-students and mastans," sources quoted Tarique as telling Aman.

The BNP leadership is determined to reinvigorate its student wing across the country. After the formation of central and Dhaka University committees, initiative will be taken to form thana and district committees of the JCD.

JCD sources said most of the thana and district unit committees have expired eight to 10 years back. Due to long absence of leadership, serious backlog has been created in the JCD.

The last central and Dhaka University unit committees of the JCD were formed in December

2000. But a serious commotion was created as a large number of non-students, identified criminals and the aged were then included in different important positions.

A number of JCD leaders and workers had got themselves involved in many criminal offences after the BNP assumed power in October last year.

Following widespread reports of involvement of the JCD in criminal activities, Khaleda Zia had suspended the activities of the JCD's central committee on November 17 last year.

After the JCD's failure to tame the latest student movement on the Dhaka University campus, the BNP leadership realised the need for a strong student wing.

PBCP

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woman, the slain PBCP ringleader was directly involved in the murders of Dakop thana AL leader Multan Mir, shrimp trader of Koyra Ruhul Amin Gazi, JCD leader Wahiduzzaman Chanchal and three others in Paikgacha and Khulna city.

Police yesterday arrested four persons for interrogation. They are Kibria, 30, Munna, 28, Anarul, 30, and Mujibur, 32.

Japan, North Korea preparing for historic summit

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan and North Korea began laying the groundwork on Saturday for next month's unprecedented meeting in Pyongyang between the leaders of the two historic foes.

The move followed Friday's surprise announcement that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi would visit Pyongyang on September 17 for talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in a bid to resolve issues that have stymied formal diplomatic ties.

Japan, keen to make Koizumi's trip to Pyongyang a success, sent a senior foreign ministry official to Beijing yesterday for talks with North Korean officials there.

In this meetings with North Korean officials, Hitoshi Tanaka, director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceania Affairs Bureau, was expected to sound out what the North Korean leader would be willing to do to improve bilateral ties, Japanese officials said.

Hasina blames govt

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"The AL believes in peaceful, democratic movement and does not support any destructive act and killing of people."

Hasina also expressed her condolence to the family of Khorsheed Alam.

Meanwhile, different political and socio-cultural organisations condemned the attack on the AL chief's motorcade at Kolaroa in Satkhira Friday. They blamed the ruling party's armed cadres for the incident.

The organisations that condemned the attack are Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association, Sammiito Ainjibi Sommonoy Parishad, Sammiito Sanskritik Jote, Bangladesh Legal Aid Forum, Bangladesh Chhatra League, Muktiyoddha Sanghati Parishad, Committee for Annihilation of the Killers of 1975, Bangabandhu Ainjibi Parishad, Awami Ainjibi Parishad and President of JSD ASM Abdur Rob.

In separate statements yesterday, they demanded immediate arrest of and punishment to the attackers. Also, they criticised the law enforcers for not taking any action against them.

The attack has not only obstructed the security of the opposition leader, but also posed a threat to the future of democracy and

stability of the country, they said.

President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Biswas of the Workers Party of Bangladesh in a statement said the incident is a proof that the ruling BNP has resorted to 'autocratic means' to face its political opponents.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights Sigma Huda condemned