

Mixed UN report on Iran nuke plan

REUTERS, Vienna

UN inspectors delivered a mixed report on Iran's nuclear activities yesterday that failed to either confirm or disprove US allegations the country is secretly trying to build nuclear weapons.

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a confidential report circulated to diplomats and obtained by Reuters that Iran planned a test of a uranium conversion facility soon.

It said Iranian technicians had told IAEA inspectors they planned to convert 37 tons of "yellowcake" uranium into uranium hexafluoride - which one Western nuclear expert said could in theory be enough to build five atomic bombs.

Iran insists the only purpose of its nuclear program is electricity generation. It denies having done any uranium enrichment close to the level needed to fuel a power plant, let alone weapons.

The U.N. agency said it "continues to make steady progress in understanding the (Iranian nuclear) program," though its investigation is not complete.

"It is a work in progress," a senior Western diplomat said of the investigation, adding that the IAEA's sixth such report on Iran was "a mixed bag."

The report will be discussed at a meeting of IAEA Board of Governors in September, when Washington is expected to renew its call for the board to report Tehran to

Opposition chief whip gets phone threat

UNB, Dhaka

An anonymous caller yesterday phoned Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shaheed and threatened him with dire consequences.

The opposition chief whip said the caller, perhaps a young man, phoned to his parliament office intercom no. 2375 at about 2:10pm.

Shaheed told the news agency that he could not understand the motive behind this threat

He said his family members had also received abusive phone calls 4-5 months back. Barely a year ago, his house in Srimangal came under attack twice. He wrote letters to then home minister Altaf Hossain and the speaker, but no action was taken.

Jalil says can prove

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general secretary said, "Those who opposed the Liberation War and assassinated Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are the ones behind the attack. They wanted to massacre the AL leadership or, in other words, destroy the democracy and sovereignty of the country and erase it from the map."

He lambasted the government for not carrying out to completion any of the probes into the arms hauls in Chittagong and Bogra and the series of bomb blasts, and thus exposing the criminals involved. "Instead, the prime minister in her statement in the Jatiya Sangsad accused the AL for those," he mentioned, adding in such circumstances how can the investigations be neutral?

Jalil said, after the August 21 carnage, if there were even a minimal democracy in the country, the government would have immediately resigned.

He reiterated that AL would not sit in dialogue with the government unless it identifies those responsible for the grenade attack by a neutral international probe and punishes them.

Speaking at the meeting AL Presidium Member Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir condemned the govern-

Boycott

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contended that this court could not hear the writ, as the junior judge (Justice Dhar) of the bench is the subject matter of boycott of the court.

Barrister Abdur Razzak, counsel for the petitioners, conceding to the contention of Barrister Rokan sought to take back the writ. The court granted the prayer.

Coming out of the court, Barrister Razzak told the newsmen that he would move the writ in another bench. He said the lawyers have the right to practice in the courts. But the SCBA has taken away the right and imposed punitive measure of cancelling the membership of the Bar if any lawyer defied its decision.

The SCBA in its general meeting on Aug 29 adopted a resolution to boycott the chief justice's court as he ignored the lawyers' demand for cancellation of the swearing-in of 19 additional judges appointed on what they said were political grounds.

Advani briefly detained

BBC ONLINE

Indian police yesterday briefly detained the country's main opposition leader, Lal Krishna Advani, during protests against the arrest of a colleague.

Advani refused a police request to move during a demonstration in the southern city of Bangalore against the arrest and jailing of Uma Bharti.

Advani and other Bharatiya Janata Party leaders had been held to prevent violence, police said.

They were later released without charge, police said.

Police in Bangalore, capital of southern Karnataka state, say more than 1,000 demonstrators were held at the rally.

Detentions without charge to prevent disturbances regularly occur in India.

Bharti of the Hindu nationalist BJP was sentenced to 14 days in custody in August over charges that she incited Hindu-Muslim violence 10 years ago.

Advani had agreed to head a week of demonstrations beginning yesterday against her detention.

"We will continue this peaceful agitation in the name of truth and justice for the next seven days," Advani told the rally before police intervened.

The demonstrations are scheduled to end with a public rally on 8 September to be addressed by former prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The government in Karnataka agreed on Monday to drop all charges against Bharti, who resigned as chief minister of Madhya Pradesh state before she was arrested.

A court hearing yesterday at which she was expected to be released was postponed until Saturday.

Bharti, a firebrand Hindu nun, is one of the most charismatic politicians in the BJP.

She is accused of participating in a rally in Karnataka in 1994 which led to clashes between Hindus and Muslims after she unfurled the Indian flag over a prayer ground disputed by both communities.

Several people were killed in riots that followed.

WB okays

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credit will help improve governance in the education sector, which has repeatedly been identified as a major development challenge facing Bangladesh, the WB pointed out.

Given the strong linkages between poverty reduction and human capital development, delivery of high quality education, especially to poor people, is a major goal of the government's poverty reduction strategy.

The credit from the International Development Association (IDA), the WB's concessionaire lending arm, carries a 0.75 percent service charge and has 40 years to maturity with a 10-year grace period.

Bangladesh

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high commissioner to take an initiative to relax the lengthy procedure of issuing visa for Bangladeshi citizens.

Law and order in Bangladesh and issues related to mutual benefit also came up for discussion, meeting sources said.

Choudhury assured the state minister of taking initiative to increase manpower recruitment from Bangladesh.

Quamrul Islam will leave Dhaka for a visit next week to four Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to explore the possibilities of increased manpower export there.

Razzak undergoes

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Siddique, Mamtaz Hossain, Enamul Haque Shamim, Ajoy Kar Khokan, Nazrul Islam Babu, Nasima Ferdousi, Sahabuddin Farazi and Bahar Mia have gone for medical check-up.

The health of another AL leader, Neela Chowdhury, who is receiving treatment at city's Shamorita Hospital, meanwhile, is not improving. Doctors yesterday said removal of all the splinters from her body is not possible and suggested her to undergo treatment abroad.

However, Neela told The Daily Star last night that her passport was sent to the AL office yesterday, as the party considers sending her abroad.

Charge framing

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Up to seven assailants shot Rabbani on city's Muradpur Road on April 11. He was going to KEPZ site with five colleagues in a microbus.

Rabbani, also former Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) chairman, was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital and to Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka the same day. He went into a coma the next day and remained unconscious until he died at Bamroongrad Hospital in Bangkok on April 24.

Police pressed charges on June 29, accusing seven including Engineer Abu Naser Chowdhury, former general manager of the KEPZ, and Humayun Kabir, former security officer.

Of the accused, three including Naser and Humayun went into hiding and the rest are behind bars.

The charge sheet has showed 45 people including six policemen as prosecution witnesses.

\$2b Tata investment

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and considering the subsequent hartals and announcement of a month-long opposition programme to unseat the government.

Affirming that the political unrest has made the investment 'chancy', Mosharraf Hossain said it made some top Tata principals including Group Chairman Ratan Tata to defer their visit to Dhaka from September 6, as was scheduled, to mid-October.

Asked if the government was certain about the Tata delegation's October visit, Hossain told The Daily Star that it all depends on the situation then on the political front.

"They are scared by the series of hartals," he noted.

The state minister also apprehends that the perturbation of such a heavyweight investor is sure to send negative signals to other potential investors who now would be more sceptical and cautious in investing in Bangladesh.

"But, if we have received investment from industrial majors like Tata, it would definitely have boosted the foreign investors' confidence," he underscored.

According to other meeting sources, in its initial proposal Tata has sought uninterrupted gas supply at a reasonable price for at least 20 years to set up three industrial units - a power plant, a steel mill and a fertiliser factory.

The group asked for suitable land in one of the four districts -- Ishwardi, Sirajganj, Jessore and Khulna - to build a 1000-megawatt power plant and a steel mill with an annual production capacity of 2.4 million tonnes of steel.

Its fertiliser factory with a planned annual production capacity of one million tonne Tata wants to set up in Chittagong.

The group proposes to export

Women activists

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the leaders of the main opposition," she said, demanding an impartial probe into the violence.

Frontline AL leader Motia Chowdhury alleged more than 20 people were killed in the August 21 attack and police hid some bodies.

Motia said the attackers also wanted to free a number of killers from Dhaka Central Jail where a grenade was found on the day.

"The present government has been killing popular leaders of the opposition in a systematic way and the August 21 attack was not an isolated incident," she alleged.

Citing police atrocities on women and opposition demonstrators during hartals, she accused the government of using law-enforcers to suppress women and the opposition.

"There is no way to protest democratically in the country," she

PM pledges ICT

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the ICT sector and said the government would welcome foreign investment by providing all necessary assistance.

The prime minister handed over cheques and certificates to 44 students at secondary, higher secondary, polytechnic and graduation levels.

From now on the poor and talented students will be given Shaheed Ziaur Rahman ICT scholarship every year on the basis of specific policy guidelines, she said.

Referring to additional allocation for the universities to increase the number of skilled ICT programmers and trainers, Khaleda said about 4,000 ICT professionals with graduation and diploma degrees are being produced every year from public and private universities, and polytechnic institutes.

Besides, a good number of workers with primary knowledge and skill on computer operation are also being produced every year from 300 computer training institutions in the private sector, she added.

Education Minister Osman Farruk, State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon and Education Secretary Faruk Ahmed

Siddiqui also addressed the function.

The prime minister referred to the government's various measures for ICT development including signing of the agreement for linking Bangladesh with the information super highway, opening of telecommunications and ICT sector for private investment, formation of telecommunication regulatory commission, duty-free import of computer hardware and software, creation of ICT incubator in Dhaka, introduction of three-year term ICT internship, formation of ICT business promotion council and setting up of ICT business centre at California.

She said the Bangladesh Bank has created a Tk 300 crore fund to enable the new software farms to take financial assistance.

The prime minister said ICT could accelerate human resources development, enhance employment generation, and increase production and development.

She said the government has identified ICT as a priority sector and taken measures for its development.

Ministers, vice-chancellors of various universities, academics, students and teachers attended the function.

Shibir men chop dead

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Police and college sources said Shibir activist Golam Kibria had assaulted Sohag early Wednesday night near the new dormitory of the college and some other students took an initiative to settle the matter.

Accordingly, Sohag informed college unit JCD President Mizan of the incident and college unit Shibir Secretary Mamun agreed to sit for a settlement half an hour later. But soon after, Shibir men laid a siege to the dormitory and attacked JCD men.

They chopped Sohag with 'ramdao' injuring him fatally and fled the spot. He was

Rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at about 1-20am.

Later, police and Rapid Action Battalion officials led by two magistrates searched the college and the dormitory as well as the nearby MC College and Sylhet Sarkari College dormitories.

Police nabbed two shibir cadres - Zahed Hossain of village Bhatiana

steel and power to India. In case of fertiliser, it plans to export only after meeting the domestic demand.

Meeting sources said the group's requirements are acceptable, as Bangladesh has similar agreements with foreign companies like AES Meghnaahat.

They also said, although Tata did not quote any price for the continuous gas supply, there are standard agreements with companies like Kafco, where there are provisions for compensation in case the seller or the buyer fails to supply or consume gas as stipulated in the deed.

BNP celebrates

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president and peace and progress of the country and welfare of its people.

The leaders and workers of BNP and its front organisations followed the prime minister to pay homage.

Senior ministers and BNP leaders and activists later went on a cleanliness drive in different parts of the city. BNP also distributed saplings among the people.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Environment Minister Tarique Islam, Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Jute and Textile Ministers Shajahan Siraj, DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, DCC ward commissioners and BNP activists launched the cleanliness drive in Sutrapur, Kotwali, Demra, Sabujbag, Khilgaon, Ramna, Tejgaon, Mirpur, Badda and Lalbag thanas.

BNP holds a discussion meeting at 4:00pm today at Mahanagar Natya Mancha. Khaleda will attend the function as chief guest.

Rokan defends formation of Bar's probe committee

UNB, Dhaka

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, convener of a six-member Supreme Court Bar Association probe body, on August 21 grenade attack has said they want to find out the culprits and evil forces involved in the heinous act.

"There should be no misunderstanding about our purpose. We want to unearth the truth and make the findings public. Our efforts are purely non-partisan and neutral," Rokan said in an interview with the private news agency yesterday, dispelling doubts about the probe body.

When pointed to the criticism of their venture, Rokan said the concept of public inquiry committee on events of national importance is not new. Citing an example he said similar inquiry committee was formed to probe the murder of Moizuddin Ahmed, a former MP, at Kaliganj during the Ershad regime. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, who is now vocal against the lawyers' inquiry committee, was a member of that probe body.

Refuting allegation of BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, he said: "We have no clash with the judicial inquiry commission set up by the government. It will do its job and we will go ahead with our task."

He also dismissed the snide remarks of Communications Minister Nazmul Huda that the lawyers' probe body is farcical and a blueprint to implement the programme of Awami League. "Our six-member probe body represents all major political parties including Dr M Zahir of BNP. Only one Awami Leaguer, Barrister Amir-ul Islam, has been included in the body."

General members of the Supreme Court Bar Association formed the probe body in a resolution, which was adopted unanimously, said Rokan, also president of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Asked why they have formed an independent committee when the government already set up a judicial inquiry commission to investigate the tragic incident, Rokan said experiences showed no report of judicial commission was ever made public and the people never knew what actually happened. "We shall make our report public."

Moreover, when lack of confidence in the government grows, responsible citizens should come up to meet the public demand, he said

Asked how much time the lawyers' probe body will take to publish its report, Rokan said they have not yet set the deadline.

Govt staff

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where the government employees pay their own tax.

Of some nine lakh government employees, salaries of about 30,000 are taxable, an NBR official said, adding the government paid the NBR Tk 100 crore in taxes of public servants in the last fiscal year.

The NBR also made it mandatory for the government staff who have TIN (taxpayer's identification number) to submit income tax returns in the current fiscal year.

The NBR officials said the government made the provision in 2002 for the civil servants to mention their TIN in the salary bill. But it was found that although the employees mention their TIN in the salary bill, they do not submit income tax return in time, prompting the government to make the income tax return mandatory.

The government employees will also have to furnish information on their lifestyle with the income tax return as a deterrent to their tax dodging, the NBR officials added.

The government employees usually own land, houses and cars and have other income that is inconsistent with their salary, the officials added.

The NBR circular sent to the secretaries observed that the number of income taxpayers compared to the country's population is very few. The government has taken these measures to widen the income tax base for increasing its earning.

Email senders

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motives and others involved in the threat.

Police said the pair mailed the offices of the inspector general of police and Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) on August 25, threatening to raze down the PMO if it did not pay Tk 3 crore to Ahsan Habib Selim Reza of Tallabagh in Dhanmondi in a week.

Tracking down Dipu through the email, police arrested him on Tuesday at his house on New Elephant Road and seized his personal computer that they claim carried his links to the crime.

Pressed by the police, Dipu asked Wahid to go to Sat Masjid Road in Dhanmondi where they captured him.

Sub-Inspector Shahadat Hossain filed a case under the Speedy Trial Act (Law and Order Disruption) also the same day.

"They confessed to committing the crime to frame Ahsan," police said.

Hundreds held hostage

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yesterday in the Black Sea resort of Sochi for a second time and returned to Moscow. On arrival at the airport, he held an immediate meeting with the heads of Russia's Interior Ministry and Federal Security Service, the Interfax news agency said.

The standoff began after a ceremony marking the first day of the Russian school year, when it was likely that many parents had accompanied their children. About 17 militants, men and women, stormed the school and herded captives into the gymnasium. They forced children to stand at the windows and warned they would blow up the school if police intervened, said Alexei Polyansky, a police spokesman for southern Russia.

The ITAR-Tass news agency, citing local hospitals, reported that seven people died of injuries in the hospital and one was killed at the site during the seizure. Regional emergency workers told the news agency that two bodies were visible near the school, which has grades one through 11.

Fatima Khabalova, spokeswoman for the regional parliament, earlier said one of the dead was a father who brought his child to the school and was shot when he tried to resist the raiders. She also said at least nine people had been injured in gunfire after the hostage-taking, including three teachers and two police officers.

Kazbek Dzantiyev, head of the region's Interior Ministry, said that the hostages have threatened "for every destroyed fighter, they will kill 50 children and for every injured fighter - 20 (children)," the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

At one point, a girl wearing a floral print dress and a red bow in her hair apparently fled from the school, her hand held by a flak-jacketed soldier. An older woman followed them. Ruslan Ayamov, spokesman for North Ossetia's Interior Ministry told The Associated Press that 12 children and one adult managed to escape after hiding in the building's boiler room.

"I was standing near the gates, music was playing, when I saw three armed people running with guns. At first I thought it was a joke when they fired in the air and we fled," a teenager, Zarubek Tsumartov, said on Russian television.

Suspicion in both the school attack and the Moscow bombing fell on Chechen rebels or their sympathizers, but there was no evidence of any direct link. "In essence, war has been declared on us, where the enemy is unseen and there is no front," Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said.

The latest violence came around last Sunday's presidential elections in Chechnya, a Kremlin-backed move aimed at undermining support for the insurgents by establishing a modicum of civil order in the war-shattered republic. The previous Chechen president, Akhmad Kadyrov, was

killed along with more than 20 others in a bombing on May 9.

The militants inside the school released one hostage with a list of their demands, including the freedom of fighters detained over a series of attacks on police facilities in neighboring Ingushetia in June, ITAR-Tass reported.

They also seek talks with regional officials and a well-known pediatrician, Leonid Roshal, who aided hostages during the deadly seizure of a Moscow theater in 2002, news reports said.

Parents of the seized children recorded a videocassette appeal Putin to fulfill the terrorists' demands, Khabalova said. The text of the appeal was not immediately available.

The violence was the latest to plague the government of Putin, who came to power vowing to crush the Chechen rebellion. Terrorism fears in Russia have risen markedly following the plane crashes and the suicide bombing outside a Moscow subway station Tuesday night. The blast by a female attacker tore through a busy area between the station and a department store, killing 10 people and wounded more than 50.

A militant Muslim web site published a statement claiming responsibility for the bombing on behalf of the "Islambouli Brigades," a group that also claimed responsibility for the airliner crashes. The statements could not immediately be verified.

The statement said Tuesday's bombing was a blow against Putin, "who slaughtered Muslims time and again." Putin has refused to negotiate with rebels in predominantly Muslim Chechnya who have fought Russian forces for most of the past decade, saying they must be wiped out.

Several female suicide bombers allegedly connected with the rebels have caused carnage in Moscow and other Russian cities in a series of attacks in recent years.

Many of the women bombers are believed to be so-called "black widows," who have lost husbands or male relatives in the fighting that has gripped Chechnya for most of the past decade. Investigators of the plane crashes are seeking information about two Chechen women believed to have been aboard one on each plane.

Regional emergency officials said about 400 people including some 200 children were being held captive in the Belsen school, ITAR-Tass reported. A regional police official said the hostages had been herded into the school gymnasium. There were 17 attackers, both male and female, Interfax said, citing Ismel Shaov, a regional spokesman for the Federal Security Service.

(AP,AFP)

FBI in Dhaka to probe

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official will stay in Bangladesh. He, however, confirmed that Wilson is a special agent of the FBI having expertise in forensic.

The US embassy also confirmed yesterday that Counter-Terrorism Coordinator of the US State Department Cofer Black is set to arrive in Dhaka on Sunday.

Black, a former CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) official, is responsible for US efforts to improve counterterrorism cooperation with foreign governments and plays a leading role in the State Department's taskforces to coordinate responses to international terrorist incidents.

Wilson talked with the officials of local intelligence agencies and visited Sudha Sadan, the Dhanmondi house of Hasina, also the AL president.

During the over-two-hour visit to Sudha Sadan, Wilson examined the bulletproof sports utility vehicle of Hasina, which was riddled with bullets and grenade shrapnel while carrying her to safety, in the presence of her political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

Officials of the National Security Intelligence (NSI), Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) accompanied Wilson during the visit at around 2:30pm. Regional Security Officer of the US Embassy in Dhaka David Motley also accompanied him.

The FBI official examined the nature of damage to the vehicle, took snaps and collected evidence. The FBI will analyse the evidence

and prepare a report on the basis of the evidence. However the FBI official did not talk to reporters who gathered at Sudha Sadan.

Saber told waiting journalists that the FBI and intelligence officials went to Sudha Sadan to make forensic and ballistic examinations of Hasina's bullet-hit vehicle. He said the AL is only extending its cooperation in the investigation.

"The vehicle would have been better evidence if it had been examined instantly," Saber said.

The FBI is responsible for protecting the US and its citizens from future terrorist attacks. The responsibilities include upholding the law through the investigation of terrorists and terrorist-related activity and protecting the US from foreign intelligence activities.

Investigating violations of federal criminal law and providing leadership and law enforcement assistance to federal, state, local and international agencies are also FBI's tasks.