

France rejects Iran's request for talks

AP, Tehran, Iran

France rejected Iran's request for more talks on the Islamic republic's nuclear program, saying yesterday that Tehran first must suspend its atomic activities.

Iran asked for a ministerial-level meeting with France, Germany, Britain and the European Union, but its decision to resume some uranium enrichment-related activities "means that it is not possible for us to meet under satisfactory conditions to pursue these discussions," French Foreign Ministry spokesman Denis Simonneau said in Paris.

"Iran must return to a complete suspension of these activities."

U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns supported the idea that Iran should suspend its program and return to talks.

"There is a consensus that Iran should turn back, return to negotiations and suspend its nuclear program," Burns told reporters in Bombay, India, during a South Asia tour. "But that's not the path Iran is on now."

The Bush administration sent Burns to London to coordinate a strategy with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia on dealing with Iran. Burns conceded differences

MANPOWER EXPORT

Cabinet body for anti-trafficking, punitive clauses in govt policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A meeting of the cabinet subcommittee on manpower yesterday asked the expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry to incorporate some new provisions in a draft manpower export policy before finalising it.

The provisions are on checking human trafficking in the form of illegal manpower export and on punitive measures against Bangladeshi expatriates if they call strikes or get involved in the politics of the host countries.

The meeting held at the Cabinet Division also deliberated on how to stop irregular migration in the name of tourism. The subcommittee will hold its next meeting within a month, where it will finalise the government's manpower export policy now being drafted, meeting sources said.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan chaired the meeting, participated by Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, State Minister for Civil Aviation Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam.

The ministries of expatriate welfare, civil aviation and home affairs will hold a number of meetings and include the provisions in the policy before finalising it in the next month's cabinet subcommittee meeting, Quamrul Islam told The Daily Star.

The policy would be made public after cabinet approves it, he added.

The government undertook the initiative to prepare a comprehensive manpower export policy in 2003, but it has spent almost two years merely discussing the draft.

Though over 2.50 lakh people leave the country every year for jobs abroad, there is not and never was any policy guideline for manpower export, which has been damaging the sector a lot.

Bangladesh to be linked

Chittagong. The project is expected to be completed next month, although its Turkish contractor Hesfibel was supposed to finish the 160 km long installation by last November.

An international consortium has assigned Fujitsu and Alcatel to install the half a billion dollars South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe-4 (SEA-ME-WE-4) submarine cable line.

The submarine system will span about 20,000 km across the Indian and western hemispheres providing an ultra fast terabit per second connectivity. Bangladesh will receive a 10 gigabit bandwidth which is enough for the country's next 10 years' internet and telephony demands. Presently it uses about 150 megabit bandwidth.

The engineers of Fujitsu and Alcatel last month finished installing all necessary equipment in a

remained after Tuesday's meeting.

"We reached a consensus on some points ... others need to be worked on," he said.

Burns repeated U.S. demands that the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency refer Iran to the Security Council where it could face sanctions for resuming research on centrifuges used in uranium enrichment. Russia and China oppose sending Iran to the Security Council.

Earlier yesterday, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also brushed aside suggestions about a possible resumption of negotiations with Iran.

"There's not much to talk about," Rice said during a photo session at the State Department with the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana.

Rice noted that Iran recently broke a suspension on research into atomic activities.

Solana agreed that "there is not much point" in resuming talks if there is "nothing new on the table."

Rice said Iran must not be allowed to have a nuclear weapons capability or "to pursue activities that might lead to a nuclear weapons capability."

Iran's foreign minister earlier told state radio the nation's chances of being referred to the Security Council were slim. Manouchehri Mottaki did not give a reason for his view, but emphasized that Iran wanted to restart negotiations with Britain, France and Germany.

The European states, with U.S. backing, were calling for a Feb. 2 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency to discuss taking action against Iran following Tehran's decision earlier this month to resume small-scale enrichment of uranium a process that can produce material for atomic reactors or bombs.

Huge arms

FROM PAGE 1

Chhara area. The 500-strong raiding party comprising privates from Ali Kadarn Army Cantonment and Naikkhongchhari BDR Zone led by the zonal commander, Lt Col Abdur Awal, stormed the camp and captured the Rohingya rebels, BDR sources said.

In the last operation before yesterday's, the security forces on January 3 arrested three other Arakan Liberation Party cadres in the same area and recovered a British light machinegun, an AK47 and five M16 rifles, two .303 rifles, seven Pakistan-made guns, 32 magazines and 7,000 bullets.

Over the last couple of years, military, paramilitary and law enforcement forces have recovered a mammoth amount of explosives, firearms and ammunition from the remote Naikkhongchhari forests. Since February 2004, seven USA-made M79 rifles, three M16 rifles and 12 sawed off barrels of M16 rifles, 451 bullets and eight威力 made rifles have been recovered from Tombray and Eidgor areas of Naikkhongchhari.

In a series of operations in June to August last year, a machinegun and a submachine carbine (SMC), 21 rifles including eight of .12 bore, 33 foreign pistols, TNT, 22,655 bullets and a large quantity of combat equipment were seized.

In the first week of September last, a British heavy machinegun and an SMC, 20 AK47 rifles, 32 German pistols and some 30,000 bullets were captured at Lembuchiari in Naikkhongchhari.

And in December last, the BDR seized several Russian AK47 rifles and .79mm German pistols in the same upazila.

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Major demands

FROM PAGE 16

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman also told journalists a few days ago that the government is unlikely to nationalise the services of the non-government primary schoolteachers immediately due to pressure on the economy.

On December 29, the non-government primary schoolteachers postponed their fast-unto-death programme following the government's assurance to meet their demands within 15 days.

They also presented the 14-point alternative demands softening on their previous one-point demand to nationalise their jobs, considering the government's financial constraints. They rather demanded that the government nationalise their jobs in phases.

Govt mulls

FROM PAGE 16

court has been beefed up for providing additional security to the court and judges.

The meeting asked the police to provide gunmen for the women and children repression control court judges who come by private cars and decided to provide police escorts to the minibuses carrying the members of the judicial associations.

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AUG 17 BLASTS Jessore cops files another case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, JESSORE

Police have lodged another case accusing 14 arrestees of involvement in the series bomb blasts on August 17 last year.

The accused are Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) 'Ehsar' Matir Rahaman Masud of Gangni in Meherpur, Rakibul Alai Nuruddin of Mohonpur, Rajshahi, Aslam, Habib, Nayem, Liton, Hasan, Mintu, Amin, Tahur, Zahid, Shafik and Emran.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwali Police Station Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal lodged the case on Tuesday.

Earlier in August last year, nine cases were filed with the police station in connection with the series blasts. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted a charge sheet in the cases, accusing five people.

Matiar and Rakib, arrested by Rab and police on December 30, confessed in the court of a first class magistrate on January 9 that they were involved in the bomb blasts in front of Kotwali Police Station.

Zakaria has worked in various posts at the EC Secretariat for the last 30 years. He was the secretary to the EC Secretariat from April 1, 2002, to January 15 this year, a day before his controversial appointment as an election commissioner.

After taking oaths, he blasted election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali on Monday for opposing the ongoing fresh voter listing.

He became even more offensive

Zakaria finds

FROM PAGE 1

he said the reporters at first talked to the two new election commissioners and then to the two other election commissioners - M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali. "You are putting us face to face," Zakaria said in an annoyed tone, adding, "It has been too much. There needs to be a limit."

Zakaria also declined to say whether or not the task for preparing a fresh voter list is going on even after the HC directives for revising the existing one as "the matter is related to the court".

As the secretary to the EC Secretariat, Zakaria under the directives of the chief election commissioner (CEC) had ordered the filed level manpower to continue their task of preparing a fresh voter list, ignoring the January 4 directives.

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PM blasts AL

FROM PAGE 1

She reminded that her party had participated in the election under the Election Commission and caretaker government. And BNP and alliance formed the government after holding of a fair election.

The next elections will be free and fair and people will cast their votes for BNP as the party believes in the politics of development, production and people's welfare, the prime minister said.

Today it is clear to the people that the BNP believes in the politics of development, production and people's welfare while "another party indulges in politics of chaos, destruction, terrorism, arson and anarchy".

Khaleda, also chairperson of the ruling BNP, expressed the optimism that the next election will be held in 2007 and people will again bring the BN and alliance to power.

Speaker at the rally, chaired by SCBA Vice President Shah Mohammad Jahurul Haque, expressed deep concern that the democratic order will be destroyed with the 'politicisation' of the EC, which they noted is one of the basic institutions which ensures exercise of their franchise.

Appointment of the new election commissioners clearly proves the BNP-Jamaat coalition government has politicised the administration, police and judiciary to manipulate the next general election, said Barrister Md. Amir-Ullisal.

He alleged that Zakaria was the key person in all vote rigging during Ershad's autocratic rule and also the BN rule. So, his appointment as election commissioner is not at all acceptable, and it shows the present

SCBA ignored the other two election commissioners - M Munsef Ali and Mohammed Ali. Appointment of the two new election commissioners is intended to justify his unconstitutional move and contempt of court, the SCBA said.

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