

# Slapping UN sanction on Iran won't be easy: Rice

'Tehran central banker for global terrorism '

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice conceded Thursday it would take tough diplomacy to agree UN nuclear sanctions on Iran and suggested worried countries take their own action.

Rice made her comments in a day of congressional testimony where she also called Tehran the "central banker" for global terrorism and a partner with Syria in destabilising the Middle East.

UN atomic watchdog chief Mohamed ElBaradei has warned it will be hard to strike a compromise on Iran's nuclear programme without letting it do small-scale enrichment work -- something the West firmly rejects, diplomats told AFP.

A Western diplomat close to ElBaradei's International Atomic Energy Agency said it should not be seen as the IAEA director endorsing Iran doing uranium enrichment, which can make atom bomb material, but as recognition of political reality.

The chief US diplomat claimed a major success in reporting the dispute over Iran's nuclear activities to the Security Council, which has the power to slap sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

But she added, "I do not underestimate the challenge that we have in getting robust actions, should Iran continue to defy the international community when we go into the Security Council."

"There are many different interests that will be represented there, by many different countries, and we will have to work very hard to get robust measures," Rice told the House International Relations Committee.

The United States faced opposition from Russia and China, two of Iran's major trading partners, which have a veto on the 15-member Security Council.

Looking at a possible impasse in the world body, US officials have been speaking of the possibility of countries using their own economic leverage to rein the Iranians in. Rice was more explicit Thursday.

"If you do not get everyone to agree, there may be some measures that like-minded states can take that will still have a significant effect on the Iranian economy," she told the legislators.

The United States says it has exhausted its own sanctions against Iran after cutting diplomatic relations and virtually all economic ties since the seizure of US hostages in Tehran in 1979.

Four days before leaving on a trip to the Gulf for talks on Iran and other issues, Rice also sought to focus world attention on what she called a threat that goes beyond Tehran's suspected bid to build a nuclear bomb.

"It's not just Iran's nuclear programme but also its support for terrorism around the world. They are, in effect, the central banker for terrorism," she told the Senate Budget Committee.

She also said that one of the biggest challenges in the Middle East was the Iranian regime's "policy of destabilisation of the world's most volatile and vulnerable region."

"It is Iran's regional policies that really are concerning as we watch them, with their sidekick Syria, destabilising places like Lebanon and the Palestinian territories and, indeed, even in southern Iraq."

The United States has accused Iran of supporting militant groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, as well as Iraqi insurgents and Palestinian movements such as Hamas that are opposed to peace with Israel.

Rice's testimony came a day after she and other US officials signalled Washington's intention to launch a broadened diplomatic

offensive against Iran calling it a "strategic challenge" to the world.

She said she would travel to Egypt and the Gulf next week for talks with the Arab allies on how to contain a regime she says is bent on "political subversion, terrorism, and support for violent Islamist extremism."

Washington hoped to put the spotlight on Tehran at a meeting of senior envoys from the Group of Eight industrial powers in Moscow next week, and plans were in the works for a Nato session specifically on Iran, officials said.

Iran was also expected to top the agenda when Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov makes his first visit to Washington as Moscow's top envoy on March 6 and 7.

As its contribution to ratcheting up the pressure on Iran, the US House of Representatives voted 404-4 Thursday to approve a resolution condemning Iran for resuming its nuclear activities.

Iran, which insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, pursued its own diplomatic manoeuvrings Thursday to counter the American diplomatic onslaught.

Iranian parliament speaker Gholam Ali Hadad-Adel started a two-day visit to Cuba, proclaiming that Tehran was "facing imperialism in the front lines" and needed the Marxist-ruled island's continued support.

Rice also reiterated Thursday the US assertion that the autocratic clerical regime in Tehran was stomping on the democratic aspirations of its people.

On Wednesday, she told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the US administration would ask Congress for 75 million dollars to campaign for democratic reforms in Iran, mostly through around-the-clock television and radio broadcasts.



PHOTO: STAR

A mother breaks down on her bed at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday, hearing the news that her newborn child has been stolen.

## Women addicts

FROM PAGE 1

number of female drug addicts is increasing in the society," said Mirza M Khan, a physician who has been treating drug addicts in the city for a long time.

LACK OF INFO

Though some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have conducted surveys on female drug addicts, their focus was limited to the injecting drug users (IDUs), who constitute one of the groups in the highest risk of spreading HIV/Aids. Almost all the IDUs covered by these surveys belonged to the lower class, with a large portion comprising sex workers. But no study has been carried out so far by any agency that gives a picture of drug addiction among the women of middle and upper classes. There is a serious lack of information here.

The Rapid Situation Assessment survey recently carried out by CARE Bangladesh reports an 'alarming rise' of drug abuse among women.

Of the female respondents, 55 percent were married. More than half of them were either illiterate or had not completed primary schooling. Of the rest, 35 percent had secondary schooling and 26.7 percent primary education.

Only 7.9 percent of the female drug addicts surveyed were living with their families, 46.3 percent living at brothels, 24.8 percent on footpaths, 18.2 percent at railway stations, and 14 percent at urban and suburban slums.

Nearly 65 percent of the female respondents were commercial sex workers. However, the study also found that some nurses and female medical students take drugs in their dormitory rooms. In most cases, they started taking drugs at the age of 16 to 25 years.

Women are also engaged in drug pushing both in and outside the capital. The survey found women peddling drugs in the districts managing the police, the Detective Branch and the Criminal Investigation Department of police, and the Department of Narcotics Control.

## Train services

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measure in the wake of fuel crisis. Bangladesh Railway needs 2.41 crore litre of diesel annually to operate 140 trains, including 32 inter-district mail trains, on different routes of the eastern zone.

## Israeli reprisal plan

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government following Saturday's inauguration of parliament is the biggest crisis facing Olmert since he took over from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has been in a coma since January 4.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who joined Olmert and Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz at the talks, has said that once the new parliament is sworn in, Israel will consider the Palestinian Authority "a terrorist entity".

Chief among the recommended sanctions is an immediate freeze on the monthly transfer of millions of dollars in customs duties owed to the Palestinian Authority and which amount to a staggering one-third of the cash-strapped government's budget.

Mofaz has also proposed a ban on travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and that Gazans be prohibited from working in Israel.

The government is also mulling the option of taxing all goods destined for the West Bank and Gaza that cross its territory, effectively turning Gaza-Israel checkpoints into international borders.

Major construction projects in Gaza, including plans for a deep-sea port, will be frozen, also smashing hopes of reviving an airport destroyed by Israel after the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising.

The recommendations aim "to separate Israel gradually from a Palestinian Authority dominated by Hamas," said an official in the prime minister's office.

Mofaz was quoted by the Yediot Aharanot newspaper as saying that parliament's inauguration is "the sounding of the gong" marking the first steps towards a "Hamas-tine" which is a danger to the State of Israel".

In Gaza City, Haniya decried Israel's moves as "part of the policy of repression, terrorism and collective punishment against our people".

The new Palestinian parliament, in which MPs from the radical Islamist faction will occupy 74 out of the 132 seats, will be inaugurated on Saturday.

The group that is branded a terrorist organisation by the European Union, and the United States, is poised to form a coalition government under Haniya, the prime ministerial frontrunner.

Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas is to ask Hamas to respect all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, including the stalled roadmap peace plan, and reiterate his commitment towards negotiations.

There is concern that harsh sanctions against ordinary Palestinians could backfire, with Israel's campaign to isolate Hamas already meeting setbacks.

Although Brussels and Washington have threatened to curtail funding if Hamas does not renounce violence and recognise Israel's right to exist -- both have decided to wait until the new government is formed before taking any

decisions.

Russia, one of four sponsors of the stalled Middle East peace process, has also formally invited Hamas leaders to talks early next month.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow would continue to work with Hamas in the hope that the group will eventually become a legitimate part of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

## Plan to buy SS Norway abandoned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The intending buyer of the asbestos-lined ocean liner SS Norway has at last agreed to refrain from purchasing the vessel.

Lokman Hossain of the Jiri Subedar Steel Re-rolling Mills made the pledge at a meeting of the Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association (BSBA) held at the association office here yesterday, sources said.

The meeting chaired by BSBA President Zafar Alam unanimously decided that no member of the organisation would purchase or bring the toxic ship to Bangladesh for scrapping.

## 200 dead

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that the village had a population of 3,000 to 4,000 and expressed fears that as many as 2,000 people had been buried.

Lerias called for more rescuers to come to the site to help look for bodies as heavy earth moving equipment could not work in the mud, which officials said was more than six metres (yards) deep in many areas.

Volunteer rescue teams from the country's mining companies, skilled in digging through the earth to rescue people, were also going to the area, said President Arroyo said.

Gordon said the Red Cross said was trying to dispatch sniffer dogs to hunt for survivors.

Military helicopters were able to reach the area despite heavy clouds but the flights ceased after nightfall because the aircraft did not have night-flying capabilities.

Lerias said a smaller landslide later in the afternoon caused no damage but left many of the rescuers worried about a possible new disaster.

Relief groups called for drinking water, food, blankets and body bags to be brought to the scene.

Provincial board member Eva Dumol said in a radio interview that heavy equipment that was already in the area to clear up earlier landslides was being sent to the Guinasaugon area.

More than 5,000 people were killed in a combined flood and mudslide on Leyte in November 1991.

## Crossfire

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When they reached Mollapara Dargavita area of the village, Akhter's accomplices opened fire on the Rab men, forcing them to retaliate.

According to a Rab press release, Akhter was shot during the encounter and died instantly.

Akhter confessed to his involvement in extortion, murder, abduction, rape and bomb attacks in different areas of Khulna district, the press release added.

Rupsha police said the PBCP leader used to raise tolls from transport owners and shrimp traders of Rupsha upazila.

The Rab men recovered a single barrel gun and three bullets from the spot.

## Khulna

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committee of the city BNP.

Two platoons of Security Armed Forces (SAF) of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) have been deployed in and around the outer stadium to maintain law and order, said KMP Commissioner Khan saeed Hasan.

Nurul Islam and former secretary of Khulna city BNP Nazrul Islam Manju yesterday alleged that Lobi and Tayebur pressurised the authorities to impose Section 144. They made the allegation at a press conference at the local press club.

Member-Secretary of city BNP convening committee Shaharuzzaman Mortuza, loyal to Lobi-Tayebur faction, blamed Nurul Islam and Nazrul Islam for "conspiring" to foil their workers' meeting. "We represent BNP while supporters of Nurul and Nazrul are terrorists. Both are involved in political violence after losing their leadership," Mortuza said.

Nazrul Islam alleged that Lobi and Mortuza are godfathers of criminals. "We want to hold a workers' meeting of city BNP tomorrow (Saturday) at the outer stadium to form the party, who are backed by Lobi," he said.

Both Lobi and Tayebur declined to comment on the imposition of Section 144.

Police have been deployed at the party office at KD Ghose road.

## Two kids

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still asleep, said another patient from the same ward.

Mahfuza and her baby boy have been undergoing treatment at ward No. 15 for congenital abnormalities since February 13.

She told reporters that she and her husband were acquainted with the woman at the hospital only three days ago.

She found her children to be missing when she woke up at 11:00am, she added.

Mahfuza, however, could not recall the name of the woman suspected of abducting the boys.

Sources at the hospital said every year four to five children go missing from the DMCH. But the authorities have yet to take measures to this end.

## No EC meet yet

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prise at the silence. Referring to the previous EC practices, an official, seeking anonymity, said, "The commission would often sit to review the progress of the task."

The EC is now waiting for the outcome of the appeal it filed with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the High Court directives for revising the existing roll instead of preparing a fresh one. Due to the waiting, the commission has not been able to include in its revised schedule the dates for publication of the draft and the final voter lists, sources said.

In the Monday's circular, the EC Secretariat said, "Directions regarding the publication of the draft and the final rolls will be issued later as per the Election Commission's decision and the court's ruling."

The last meeting of the EC on preparation of a voter roll was held on August 6. The next day CEC Aziz decided to go for a fresh list, ignoring the opinions of election commissioners Munsef Ali and Mohammad Ali for revising the existing one.

On two writ petitions filed by some Awami League lawmakers, the High Court on January 4 gave a

ruling in favour of revising the existing voter list. It also asked the EC to hold a meeting immediately.

As Munsef Ali and Mohammad Ali were in favour of implementing the court directives, the CEC did convene the meeting but not before the appointment of two new election commissioners had been made on January 16.

The new commissioners sided with Aziz at the January 19 EC meeting, which decided to file the appeal against the High Court directives. But, at the meeting, the CEC did not allow Munsef Ali and Mohammad Ali to discuss the ongoing voter listing.

After the initial deadline for collecting and scrutinising information about the prospective voters had expired on January 31, the CEC forwarded a file seeking opinions of his colleagues about a time extension.

Although the HC in its directives discouraged taking decision through circulating files, the decision for deferring the deadline to February 20 was taken without holding any meeting.

Meanwhile numerous allegations of financial irregularities in voter listing have surfaced, but the EC is yet to take any step to look into those, sources said.

## 6 camel jockeys

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(Unicef) and the UAE government.

Most of the 164 repatriated children have been reunited with their families after the law enforcers identified their parents in line with the information provided by the children. But the six children who were two to six years old at the time they were trafficked cannot give clear pictures of their origins.

Monir, whose age is assumed to be 15, recalls his mother's name as Monwara and his house at "Kalibari of Rajarpur near Dhaka".

"I do not know what to do if my parents are not found. Only the aunts [BNWLA staff] know that," Monir, who used to be called Robin in Dubai, said with a blank look.

Another child Yusuf, 13, can recall that his house was somewhere in Dhaka and his father is Hashem, who used to work in a bank and her mother Rahima used to sew clothes at home.

He said his broker was Shah Alam who trafficked three other children with him to Dubai where he worked for eight years. "But my fake father Shah Alam used to take away all the money I would get, which was 500 dirham a month."

Yusuf is fully unaware of what to do in the future if his parents are not found. "What shall I do, uncle?" he asked this correspondent.

## Protests against cartoon on Church attacked in Rajbari

UNB, Dhaka

Muslim devotees yesterday staged demonstrations protesting the publication of cartoons on Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM).

After Juma prayers, more than 3,000 devotees gathered under the banner of some 10-12 parties, including Islami Shashantantra Andolan, Hizbut Tahrir and Jatiya Front, at the north gate of Baitul Mokkarram National Mosque and its adjoining areas.

They chanted slogans against the EU countries, including Denmark, France and New Zealand, for the publication of cartoons on Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) by some newspapers in those countries.

Later, they marched in separate processions in Paltan, Bijoy Nagar, Kakrail and Press Club areas, failing to go further due to the barricades put up by police at different exit points.

Later, the protesters held separate rallies. Speakers at a Hizbut Tahrir rally alleged that in the name of free press, the vested quarters in Europe and America waged a war against Islam.

In another brief rally, Jatiya Front leaders urged the government to enact a law in the current session of parliament to protect the honour of the Prophet

They also urged the Muslim Ummah to boycott the EU products protesting the publication of cartoons.

In Rajbari, the Muslim devotees damaged a church at College Para in the district town yesterday.

The devotees, under the banner of Imam Committee, brought out a procession and held a rally at Rajbari Zilla School ground after Juma prayers.

On way to the rally, some unidentified protestors broke open the door of the Baptist Church and damaged a wall clock and metal cross of Jesus.

Police have been deployed in the area after the incident.

The demonstrators took out the procession from the Zilla School ground and marched to the deputy commissioner's (DC) office, where they submitted a six-point memorandum to the Danish ambassador in Dhaka through the DC.

## Rafique-ul Huq

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Ltd or any of your brothers."

About his son Faheemul Huq's involvement as a retained lawyer of QC Container, Barrister Rafique-ul Huq said, "He tendered resignation on 1st September 2005 precisely because of internal disputes amongst your brothers vis-à-vis Beximco Group. In such a situation, he thought that it is not fair for him to continue as Legal Advisor of the Company, which appointment was, in fact, given at the instance of Mr Salauddin Quader Chowdhury."

## Salman Khan

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acquitted," he said.

For Khan, however, three other related cases of poaching deer in Jodhpur and possession of unlicensed firearms are pending.

One of those cases, in which a host of other Bollywood stars are also accused, is due to be heard on Monday.

Actresses Tabu and Neelam, who both use only one name, Sonali Bendre and leading actor Saif Ali Khan also face charges arising from incidents while they were filming "Hum Saath Saath Hain" (We are all together) in Jodhpur in 1998.

Khan is no stranger to controversy. He also faces charges of manslaughter after a road accident in 2002 left one person dead and four injured.

The actor has denied allegations that he was at the wheel, drunk and had no license when his car ran over people sleeping on a sidewalk in western Mumbai, home to the country's film industry.

Last year he was cleared of charges of underworld retribution against his former girlfriend, the actress Aishwarya Rai. He said that a secretly taped telephone conversation between the two, in which he reportedly made a threat, did not contain his voice.

Khan has often denied media reports that he assaulted Rai, a former Miss World.

Bollywood actor Vivek Oberoi has also accused Khan of making threatening calls to him and Rai. Rai was reported to be dating Oberoi after she split with Khan.

## Biman in bad shape

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Official sources hinted that yet another DC-10, which has been lying idle in the hanger for months due to unavailability of a spare engine, might be rolled into the dwindling Biman fleet again on Sunday by fitting in the engine of the other DC-10 that entered the hanger for D-check.

Hundreds of passengers suffer every day due to irregular flight schedules of Biman and in the worst cases, many of them have to wait overnight or for days together to get a seat on a flight. Biman pays fat bills for food and accommodations for the waiting passengers.

Official sources confirmed that more often than not Biman fails to operate its flights on schedule, particularly on international routes. Every day several flights are delayed by 6 to 24 hours forcing the financially weak national airlines to pay at least \$20 for each stranded passenger for food and lodging.

Biman's Acting Managing Director Mahmoodur Rahman recently admitted that there is a flight disarray, attributing it to shortage of aircraft and aging of the DC-10s.

Biman officials however could not explain why Biman is operating so many flights at the expense of taxpayers' money. Biman is still showing the luxury of operating the Dhaka-New York flight twice a week, incurring a loss of Tk 70 lakh each week.

Mahmoodur Rahman said the national airlines had put forward a

proposal to the government months ago for procuring 10 aircraft with no response yet. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on several occasions stressed bringing management discipline in overstaffed Biman.

DC-10s are now used 12 hours a day on an average and Airbus A310-300s about 11 hours. Such a high rate of utilisation is impeding proper maintenance, resulting in frequent technical faults, flight disruptions and schedule irregularities, sources pointed out.

## India fears for security if Iran row escalates

REUTERS, New Delhi

India is deeply concerned at the growing rhetoric and possibility of a confrontation over Iran's controversial nuclear programme, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday.

Iran was referred to the UN Security Council earlier this month by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in a bid to force the country to abandon its secretive nuclear plans.

The West says Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons, a claim denied by Tehran, and led by the US has warned Iran it could face sanctions if it fails to change course.

## boro cultivation

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after two units of Baghabari power plant had shut down.

AKM Fazul Haque, an affluent farmer of Kamdia in Govindaganj upazila of Gaibandha district, said he set up a deep tube-well in the beginning of the current boro season to water his 100 hectares of land. But he could not run it for more than two to three hours a day due to power shortage.

So, he said, to ensure irrigation he installed two diesel-run shallow pumps beside the deep tube-well, but he cannot run these too for the scarcity of diesel.

Many others, including Tajmul and Haidul of Ranibadi Chandpur village under Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj district, echoed Fazul, saying they too are feeling miserable for not being able to irrigate their crop lands for scarcity of diesel, even though they are ready to pay much higher a price.

Tajmul said the boro plants in his 5-bigha land are wilting for want of water.

During his visits, this correspondent saw long queues of farmers at filling stations, illustrating their desperate need of diesel.

DEALERS' SYNDICATE FEEDING ON FUEL CRISIS

A syndicate of dishonest dealers is making fast bucks cashing in on the diesel crisis. The dealers are getting delivery of diesel from Baghabari and Kazirhat depots and selling that at the same spots charging Tk 400 extra for every 200-litre barrel.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) officials said they heard that the syndicate members are buying diesel at Tk 5,140 a barrel and then selling it in the black market at Tk 6,400. But, the officials said, they could not take any action against the syndicate due to lack of evidence.

The BPC officials also admitted that no where in the northern region, excepting the depots and the filling stations, diesel is being sold at the normal price. In some places, the price per litre is still Tk 8 higher than the government-approved one.

According to them, the fuel crisis

## Biharis

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Secretary of the organisation Kayum Khan said they [stranded Pakistanis] should be declared citizens of Bangladesh and that is why the Youth Repatriation Committee supports being included in the voter roll.

Apparently, the division has resulted from different interoperations of the High Court's 2003 verdict outlining the rights and privileges of the community.

In 2003, 10 youth filed a writ petition with the High Court. In the petition, they said they were born and grew up in Bangladesh and had never been to Pakistan. Therefore, they should be given recognition as Bangladeshi citizen, they argued.

In its verdict, the court ordered the EC to include the petitioners in the voter list. One group said the court verdict applies to the 10 who had lodged the petition while the other group claims the verdict has in fact established the rights of all young stranded Pakistanis.

In spite of the High Court's direction to include only those who were born in Bangladesh, the EC-appointed enumerators have reportedly been indiscriminate in enrolling the members of the community.

Jawadul Haque, general secretary of Saidpur (municipality) Awami League, has alleged that the stranded Pakistanis are being illegally included in the list of eligible voters.

Riaz Akbar said including them into the voter list is nothing but an attempt to deprive them from being repatriated.

District Election Officer Faridul Islam told The Daily Star that in line with the High Court verdict they have been listing as prospective voters only those who were born in Bangladesh. He said he has not received any complaint regarding the inclusion.

in the northern region sprung up only 700 metric tons of fuels had been supplied a day against a demand for 2,200 metric tons.

When the government had failed to bridge the supply-demand gap even by rushing fuels from various areas of the country including Khulna, the Baghabari River Port had to be shut due to lack of navigability in the river channel, they said. Against this background, they apprehend a further worsening of the situation.