

# 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 challenges 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.

## 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 Yedioth Acharonot newspaper as saying that parliament's inauguration is "the sounding of the gong" marking the first steps towards a "Hamas-line" 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

action. Rice's 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.

"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 their 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 are really 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 manoeuvres 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.

## 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

FROM PAGE 16  
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 pressured Section 144.

They made the allegation at a press conference at the local press club.

Member-Secretary of city BNP convening committee Shabazzaman 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.

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 scraping.

## Plan to buy SS Norway abandoned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

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

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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.

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.

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