

IRAN NUKE Move on to introduce revised resolution

REUTERS, AFP, United Nations

Britain and France were planning to introduce yesterday a revised UN Security Council draft resolution imposing sanctions on Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment and hope to put the measure to a vote in the next two weeks.

In an effort to get Russian support, the two nations, along with Germany and backed by the United States, circulated to the 15 council members on Friday a new draft that narrowed bans to the most dangerous bomb-building materials and technology.

However, the draft keeps a travel ban and asset freeze on individuals, groups and businesses involved in Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which Russia opposes.

Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, welcomed Monday an amended draft UN resolution targeting Iran's nuclear programme, saying it was now based on "Russia's proposals," the official RIA Novosti news agency reported.

"The draft resolution differs from the version worked out originally and contains changes based on Russia's proposals, which take into account the need to push Iran to sit at the negotiating table," Lavrov was quoted as saying.

But whether Russia, backed by China, who have veto power on the council, will accept the new text is unclear. At a meeting in Paris earlier this month, the six nations did not reach agreement, indicating further changes might be in the offing.

Still, one European envoy, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the intention was to have a unanimous vote soon. "But we will accept an abstention to avoid this dragging out into the New Year," the envoy said.

And State Department spokesman Sean McCormack noted last week that "if you do have a resolution that is enacted,

it will be binding on all states regardless of whether or not they abstained or voted for it."

In addition to a scheduled council meeting to discuss the text on Monday afternoon, Germany and the five permanent council members intend to have another meeting among themselves, following weeks of haggling over the draft.

The proposed sanctions are a reaction to Iran's failure to comply with an August 31 UN deadline to suspend uranium enrichment, which can produce fuel for nuclear power plants or for bombs. Iran has argued that it is pursuing nuclear power for peaceful purposes, while the West believes Tehran's nuclear work is a cover for bomb making.

The new resolution allows Russia to continue construction and supply fuel to an \$800 million light-water reactor it is building at Bushehr. The original draft was ambiguous on fuel supplies.

The text does not mention Bushehr by name but focuses sanctions on "enrichment-related, reprocessing or heavy water related activities, or to the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems."

It keeps a range of sanctions that would curb any technical assistance to Iran by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency and tell countries to prevent Iranian students from studying nuclear-related disciplines.

The sanctions would be lifted if Iran suspends enrichment and enters negotiations.

The draft threatens further measures if Iran does not comply but it is doubtful any will be imposed, considering the lengthy debate over an initial resolution.

As in the earlier draft, the resolution invokes Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which makes enforcement mandatory. But it points to Article 41, that pertains only to sanctions and not to any possible military enforcement.

Free country

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win the upcoming elections.

Speaking on the occasion, Sharif Khasruzzaman said he joined the BNP to support Khaleda Zia's effort to protect democracy and uphold the constitution.

BNP standing committee member KM Obaidur Rahman and Narail district BNP president and general secretary also spoke at the function.

6 advisers

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their resignations.

Fazlul Haque hinted that the general election is likely to be held on January 22 instead of January 23 as a religious festival is scheduled for the latter date.

He said the matter of deployment of the armed forces was discussed in detail in an advisory council meeting although it is not within the jurisdiction of the caretaker government.

The army had been deployed during the regimes of all previous caretaker governments, this year the deployment only came earlier, he added.

"The political crisis cannot be solved by staying outside the government. I think 99 percent of the problem was solved and only the matter of a person remains unresolved which can also be resolved through discussions by staying within the government," he added.

He requested his resigning colleagues to return to the cabinet. Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Adviser M Azizul Haque said the resignations are not going to jeopardise democracy.

"The electoral process is on. The election has been rescheduled, the voter list is being updated, the Election Commission is working, and the political parties are helping the commission in the preparation," he said.

Information Adviser Mahbubul Alam said he does not know how to resolve the crisis as he is not the head of the state. He said the resignations of his colleagues are their personal matters.

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Yasmeen Murshed said, "Insha Allah (may Allah be willing) the election will be held on time despite the resignations."

She said the deployment of the armed forces was a routine matter.

She also said three previous caretaker governments held credible elections and the current government also must hold such an election.

Bangladeshi group

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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said.

The "Durjoy Nari Shongo" (indomitable women's council) shared the UNDP's "Red Ribbon" 2006 award with four other groups in Ukraine, Thailand, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The Bangladeshi group distributes condoms, gives information about AIDS to sex workers and provides for the education of their children.

"The Red Ribbon Award is a great opportunity to bring communities together that has fought this disease," a UNDP statement quoted its administrator Kemal Dervis as saying.

"Sometimes they work in extremely difficult situations, in contexts of war and extreme poverty, and yet they have found ways despite these obstacles to make things happen, to generate some real success on the ground," Dervis said.

Mainly Muslim Bangladesh has so far had 7,500 confirmed cases of AIDS/HIV. But health officials said the impoverished country of 140 million people remained at threat from the disease, especially with neighboring India recording the world's highest number of cases.

Armed forces

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headquarters at Science Laboratory, Airport, Uttara, Bashundhara Residential area, Postagola, Khilgaon, Wari, Mirpur Indoor Stadium, Mohammadpur Physical Centre, Cantonment police station area and Ramna, Azimpur and Paltan community centres.

Each battalion will cover two to three police station areas in the capital, sources said.

An army officer at Mirpur Indoor Stadium told this correspondent yesterday that they are yet to launch operation. "A lieutenant colonel is in command of our unit and a brigadier general is supervising some such units," he said.

The members of the naval forces took positions at 13 places in the coastal belts of Chittagong, Bholia, Noakhali and Bagerhat.

Air forces personnel were deployed at Zia International Airport, Shah Amanat International Airport at Sylhet and Jessore Airport.

News agency UNB quoted Director of Inter Services Public Relations Lt Col Anisur Rahman Chowdhury as saying over 16,000 army, 1,000 navy and 500 air force personnel have been deployed across the country.

According to the home ministry, police and Rapid Action Battalion yesterday recovered 21 illegal firearms and 33 bullets and arrested 11 during their countrywide operations in different parts of the country.

Donors shocked

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significant loss for the caretaker government and its important work," Ms Richardson said.

She said Canada has great respect and admiration for their efforts for resolving the political crisis and for their evident personal commitment to the responsibilities that they carried on behalf of the people of Bangladesh.

List righting limps

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He also said there had been widespread irregularities at Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University under supervision of Golam Kibria, an office secretary there.

The AL leaders and activists yesterday met Shahina Akhtar, assistant registration officer and headmistress of Gonobhaban Govt High School, and informed her of the irregularities done by field level election officials.

Leaders and activists of both AL and BNP pointed fingers at each other for including fake names on the voter list. BNP activists claimed that the AL men interfered the voter list correction process at the "Tinsah Colony".

At the Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University campus, a first year student of Northern College, Muhammad Suman, said the field level election officials insisted him on enlisting his name as a voter although he was not old enough to be a voter.

A resident of Agargaon, Hasina Islam, said the officials came and enlisted her husband and younger brother on the correction list, but the field level enumerator asked them to go to Gonobhaban Govt High School to register the other six members of her family who had been dropped out from the voter roll.

At Rishi Para, the dropped out voters from the minority were able to enlist their names with the field level election officials.

BNP men at Maniknagar (South) drove out a field level election official and a teacher at Maniknagar Model School, Nazreen Akhtar, from the area who went there to update the voter list.

The Daily Star correspondent was unable to reach the BNP leader of the area, ward 30 commissioner ADM Mostafa Kamal, on cell phone for his comment on the incident.

The Daily Star correspondent found at least three households at Chamelbagh in Shantinagar where the voters were provided acknowledgement receipts after they had filled out enrollment forms to be voters, but their names did not appear on the updated enumeration of voters in February.

Only one voter, who happened to be a sister of a local BNP leader, made it to the updated voter list in a residential block in Shantinagar that includes 36 apartments. Locals alleged that the list was "edited" at

the office of Khandakar Abdur Rab, commissioner of ward 36 who is also a member of Jamaat-e-Islami.

When asked about the discrepancies, assistant registration officer of the area, Principal Liaquat Ali of Rajarbagh Police Lines High School said "I take no responsibility for these actions, these were done by ground-level staff."

A ground-level officer in charge of the Chamelbagh area, Parimal Chandra Roy, however, justified the errors by saying, "Mistakes will always be found whenever any work is undertaken."

KHULNA

Khulna AL leaders and activists claimed BNP and Jamaat men are hampering the voter list correction process.

District Jamaat Secretary Waliullah at ward no. 22, a Jamaat activist Asma Jamila Shima at ward no. 26, BNP workers Sonia Akhtar and Shamsunnahar at ward nos. 25 and 16 are working as enumerators allegedly intervening the correction process, reported our Khulna correspondent.

NETRAKONA

Minorities of Khuchirgong, Baranor and Samaj areas under Mohongonj upazila were shown 'dead' in the updated voter list. Besides, the correction work is yet to start in the rural areas of Barhatta upazila.

CHITTAGONG

The correction of voter list with the voter list of 2000 continued for the fourth consecutive day yesterday with most of the assistant officers yet to get the updated list.

Our Chittagong correspondent reported that the activists of 14-party combine manhandled two assistant officers at Postarpar area of North Pathantuli to carry the voter list of 2000.

They also took away the older voter list and demanded the updated one to exclude excess voters allegedly included during the immediate past government's tenure.

Zahir Uddin Chowdhury, an assistant registration officer of ward no. 23, however, claimed that assaulted assistant officers were carrying the updated list.

Sources said the enumerators were only seen excluding the names of migrated, dead or excess voters during the correction process, as the updated list is yet to reach the port city.

JP slates CA for failure to earn advisers' confidence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) leaders yesterday criticised the president and chief adviser to the caretaker government for his 'failure' to bring the advisers in confidence.

At a party presidium meeting presided over by Chairman HM Ershad at the party's Banani office, they asked the caretaker government to defer the election for another month.

The president has failed to create an environment for a team and the country has plunged into another crisis due to the resignation of four advisers, JP Presidium Member Kazi Zafar Ahmed told reporters after the meeting.

He urged the government to shift the polling day by fixing the date after 30 days, which is needed for 'resolving the uncertainty and updating the voter list'.

The presidium members yesterday gave their consent to Ershad's probable joining with Awami League-led 14-party combine but the JP chairman refrained from announcing it due to the repeated 'threat' from the BNP-led four-party alliance leaders, JP sources said.

Waterlogging

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non-deposition of sediment and in the course of time, a vast area of the region became permanently waterlogged.

Dr Ainun Nishat, country director of International Union of Nature Conservation (IUCN), said that free flow of the rivers needed to be ensured and the silt carried by the river waters should be allowed to be deposited in the low-lying wetlands through tidal river basin management.

He also emphasised the need for 'social engineering' — solving the problem through utilising the society and its expertise. Purely technical approach to this problem, that was followed by the Water Development Board (WDB) so far, will not bring any solution, he added.

There is no need of bringing in foreign experts to solve the problem, the IUCN country director further observed.

Hua Du, country director of Asian Development Bank (ADB) termed the issue as an important and urgent one and assured all out assistance in this regard. "Let us stay with you and help financially or whatever other means needed to resolve the problem," Du said.

When the representatives from the affected people criticised the ADB financed projects implemented by the WDB without taking local expertise into consideration, she assured them of highlighting local knowledge and involving people from the region in this regard in future.

"Several local chairmen and members of Pani (Water) Committee, representing the affected locals, narrated their sufferings and said that if proper actions are not taken immediately, there would be no existence of the waterlogging victims." "The situation is such that we no longer care about getting crops or our shelters, we are worried for our lives," local chairman Advocate Kamruzzaman said.

Almost all the local representatives alleged that the problem has been kept alive by the WDB officials for grabbing crores of taka from the project funds.

Director of Uttaran Dr Firoz Ahmed, country director of Oxfam Shahidul Islam, president of local water committee Shafi Ahmed, WDB representatives Ali Hashem and Nurul A also spoke in the roundtable moderated by Samakal Editor Abed Khan.

Hasina doubts

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She termed the president's deploying the army an act "to guard the looters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami".

"We want election but it must be a free and fair one," Hasina said, demanding that all names of eligible persons will have to be included in the voter roll currently under a process for correction.

Hasina said a tense situation is now prevailing in the country following the resignation of the four advisers to the caretaker government.

The AL chief was highly critical of the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government for its wide scale corruption, misuse and use of Islam for political gain, and its failure to check price hike of essentials.

She said the Jamaat-e-Islami has been misleading the people in the name of Islam for its mean political gain and has tarnished the image of the peaceful religion in the world.

IQJ Chairman Misbar Rahman Chowdhury expressed his party's solidarity with the AL and pledged to be in the streets to press home the demands for creating a congenial atmosphere for a fair poll.

He said if the BNP-Jamaat coalition assumes power again, they will not let the real Muslims and alems be alive.

Misbar, who had earlier been a part of the BNP-led four-party alliance, criticised it for corruption and looting public money through syndication.

President dates

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an aspiring BNP candidate in the next election, made the Election Commission (EC) make a hurried announcement of an election schedule, addressed the nation without consulting the advisers, and transferred some high level officials.

In one of the most striking move by the president and chief adviser other than calling out the army unilaterally, Iajuddin promoted his erstwhile press secretary Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury to the post of adviser to the president, which carries the status of a state minister, after allegations had been brought by all electoral political parties excepting BNP-led four-party alliance that Mokhles had been leaking confidential details of the advisory council meetings to the immediate past ruling alliance.

The advisers expressed their ignorance openly about the CA's decision making process. In absence of any advisory committee the advisers initially could not discuss resuffling of the administration, and law and order situation in detail as the CA himself is in charge of the two vital ministries — establishment and home affairs.

Later, two advisory committees on administrative affairs, and on law and order were formed but the CA made himself the chief of both the committees although advisers other than the CA usually lead them.

Interestingly, senior leaders of BNP have been blasting some of the advisers, especially the resigning four, for their conversations with the media, but never did they utter a single word criticising the activities of the CA.

CHRONOLOGY OF CONTROVERSIES

Iajuddin assumed the office of CA on October 29, jumping several constitutional alternatives on the appointment. Assuming the office, the CA in his address to the nation urged the major political parties to propose names of persons who could be considered for appointments as advisers, triggering a controversy whether the CA can seek names from the parties.

On November 9 at a meeting with the secretaries, Iajuddin reminded everyone that the present form of the government has become a 'presidential form of government' sparking another controversy.

In a sudden unilateral move, keeping the advisers in the dark, the president and CA on November 12 decided to deploy the armed forces across the country in aid of the civil administration but had to retract the decision on November 13 in the face of strong objections from the advisers.

After holding a meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, the president and CA on November 18 suddenly proposed to the leaders of the two major political alliances appointments of two new election commissioners while the advisers, who had been searching for ways to make the EC credible, had no clue of such a proposal coming.

On the night of November 22, Iajuddin addressed the nation without consulting the advisers although he had assured them of doing so.

Seething with frustration over the way the CA had been taking his decisions unilaterally and treating the advisers with a distant interest, five of them refrained from attending their offices on November 23.

On November 24 at a meeting of the council of advisers, the CA regretted his ways and assured the advisers that from that point on he

would take every step consulting the advisers.

But on November 23, Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman in a surprise move convened a meeting of the EC and authorised himself as the acting CEC in absence of Aziz solely based on his consultation with Bangabhaban while the advisers were kept in the dark again.

Iajuddin made the EC announce an election schedule hurriedly on November 27, again keeping his advisers in the dark. On that day, the president also appointed two election commissioners — Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury and Saiful Alam, without consulting the advisers who had been negotiating with rival political alliances to find a solution to the electoral crisis. Modabbir had been aspiring earlier to be a BNP candidate in the next election.

The CA initially agreed with the package proposal that included sending of two election commissioners, SM Zakaria and Modabbir, on leaves of absence like CEC MA Aziz. But he on last Wednesday at a meeting of the council of advisers suddenly appeared opposed the idea of sending Zakaria on a leave.

On November 9, the CA yet again unilaterally decided to deploy the armed forces across the country without paying heed to the advisers' repeated request not to do that.

On the night of November 10, he addressed the nation keeping his advisers in the dark yet again. In his address, he distorted some facts including the issue of Election Commissioner Zakaria and deployment of the armed forces.

On Zakaria issue, the CA said Awami League demanded his resignation although the issue was settled. On the deployment of the armed forces, he claimed that he had discussed the issue with the advisers. But the advisers said the president only informed them about his decision.

About Election Commissioner Modabbir, the president in his address said he initiated steps to send Modabbir on a leave of absence. But Modabbir yesterday expressed astonishment and said he is not at all aware of it.

Acting CEC

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He affirmed that the voter list will soon be rid of errors.

Meanwhile, two controversial election commissioners — SM Zakaria and Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury — held a meeting at the office of the former yesterday afternoon.

Earlier, ex-lawmaker from Jamaat-e-Islami Delowar Hossain Saidee met Zakaria.

About the ongoing task of correcting the updated voter list, the acting CEC claimed owners of the multi-story buildings are not co-operating in this regard.

"They don't want to say whether anyone has left their buildings or died," he added.

ZAKARIA-SAIDEE MEETING
About his half-an-hour meeting with Zakaria, Delowar Hossain Saidee said, "We didn't discuss the current political situation. I just came to talk about some problems regarding election of my constituency."

When then asked if he was going on leave, a visibly stunned Modabbir said, "What leave, whose leave, and why?"

4 US troops killed

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minibus carrying five primary school teachers on their way to work and kidnapped them, said police at the joint coordination centre in Tikrit.

Once again, police could not comment on the motive, but predominantly Shia Dujail has come under increasing pressure from the overwhelmingly Sunni countryside since Saddam Hussein was convicted and sentenced to death for crimes against humanity against the people of Dujail in the early 1980s.

Further kidnappings took place in central Baghdad, when gunmen in four pickup trucks pulled up at the Istithmar (Investment) bank and seized four employees who were about to enter the bank with money.

In south Baghdad, four mortar rounds slammed into the often targeted Abu Chir neighbourhood, killing four people and wounding 11, a defence ministry official said.

A suicide bomber blew up his vehicle against an Iraqi police commando base in the southern Dura district, killing a policeman and wounding five others, a security official said.

Dura has long been gripped by sectarian and insurgent violence and over the past six months it has been subject to repeated raids and operations by US and Iraqi forces in an effort to pacify it.

In northwest Baghdad, another

fauliline in the capital's sectarian dirty war, a car bomb in a garage in the al-Iskan neighbourhood exploded as a police commando patrol passed.

The blast near the private al-Maamun university killed a bystander and wounded four others, including two police commandos.

Across town near central Baghdad's Mustansiriya university, another bomb went off killing a student and wounding eight others, according to a medic in the nearby al-Kindi hospital where they were treated.

He said that another civilian was shot dead by gunmen in the nearby Fadhel neighbourhood, a frequent site of clashes between Shia militias and Sunni insurgents.

One US soldier was killed early Sunday by a roadside bomb west of Baghdad, while three others were killed by another bomb that night in the northern part of the city.

Roadside bombs remain the main force of US troops and the latest casualties bring the number of US dead in December to 48 — which at the beginning of the year would have been the toll for an entire month.

Since March 2003, 2,931 US servicemen have died in Iraq, according to an AFP count compiled from Pentagon sources.

BNP hopes

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The advisers who quit Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed's cabinet are — Akbar Ali Khan, Hasan Mashud Chowdhury, CM Shafi Sami and Sultana Kamal.

In reply to a question on the resignation of these advisers, the BNP secretary general observed that to express agreement or disagreement in a decision-making process is a common affair in the democracy, "but finally a decision must be taken, there is no alternative at all."

Asked about the advisers' stance against the president's unilateral decision on army deployment across the country, he said that the president is empowered to take such steps and it is also his responsibility to ensure peace and security.

On the president's speech delivered on Sunday night, Bhuayan said that there is nothing to accept or reject about the president's speech as he can make a speech to the people at any time.

BNP Joint Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and

Jubo Dal President Barkat Ullah Bulu were present, among others, in the briefing.

The four advisers have been facing resentment from the BNP leaders during the last couple of weeks.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia severely criticised the advisers after all of them attended a meeting hosted by Akbar Ali Khan at a state guesthouse where the chief adviser were not present. The BNP chief also accused the advisers of breaching oaths for doing so.

Besides, the BNP secretary general formally demanded resignation of advisers CM Shafi Sami and Sultana Kamal after they called on Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence on the president's directive.

Akbar Ali Khan and Hasan Mashud Chowdhury have been criticised by other leaders of the party for their outspoken comments to the media. Even a BNP standing committee member reportedly threatened Akbar during a meeting with the president.

British envoy

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advisers, who are very well regarded for their integrity and professionalism, cannot be a good sign for the country.

Describing their resignation as "unexpected", Choudhury said the authorities should consider the reasons behind the departure of the four advisers and the caretaker government should find a way to restore people's confidence as quickly as possible.

He was addressing a discussion with woman journalists organised by Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication in association with the Canadian High Commission at Dhaka Club.

The British envoy was also critical of the president's deploying the army.

"It was unfortunate," he said, noting that while the president is the commander in chief of the army, he should have deployed the army to maintain law and order upon a consensus of all political parties.

He hoped that the deployment of the army would be temporary.