

# UN Sanctions on Iran: Will they work?

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

**O**N December 23, the UN Security Council has unanimously adopted a resolution to restrict Iran's trade in sensitive nuclear materials and to freeze the assets of 22 Iranian officials and institutions linked to the country's most controversial programme.

The resolution demands Iran immediately suspend its enrichment programme and its reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel within 60 days or face additional penalties. It calls on Tehran to begin talks with the Security Council's permanent members and Germany to allay international suspicions that Iran may be pursuing nuclear weapons.

The Council's action culminated more than three years of diplomatic efforts by the US to have Iran sanctioned for expanding its enrichment of uranium leading to nuclear weapons.

Although the US wanted tougher measures, it was pleased with the resolution. US Undersecretary of State Burns called the vote "humiliating" for Iran.

#### Iran's reaction

The immediate reaction of Iran was defiance. President Ahmedinejad reportedly stated that the resolution "is a torn piece of paper" and Iran would immediately start its uranium enrichment programme. That means the resolution will have no impact on Iran.

Iran's Ambassador Zarif reportedly accused the Security Council and the US of a double standard by punishing Iran, while ignoring Israel's nuclear arsenal (Israel is believed to have 75 to 200 nuclear weapons, according to US-based Arms Control Association).

Iran further said the UN resolution was political and devised to save the image of the US, which supported it, and Great Britain, the country that drew up the text.

#### What is not within the UN

#### sanction?

Russia, a close commercial partner of Iran, stripped the resolution of some of its toughest measures, including a travel ban on officials linked to the nuclear programme.

Furthermore, there are qualifications, including exempting contracts made prior to the adoption of the resolution. This means that Iran's contract with Russia will not be within the ambit of the resolution.

The Iranian missile manufacturer, Aerospace Industries Organisation, was dropped from the freeze of its assets.

#### Chapter VII of the UN

One important fact is that the resolution against Iran was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter. Chapter VII deals with action with respect to threat to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. All member states are obliged to comply with a resolution of this Chapter.

Interestingly, it has been seen that no resolution has been or could be yet adopted against a big power by the UN under this Chapter, even if their actions constitute of breaches of peace. For example, the UN has considered US-led Iraq's war illegal but no action has been taken against the US because big powers including the US carry veto powers.

It demonstrates palpably that we live in an unequal world and might is right. How can the US allege breaches of peace against Iran when the US carried out an aggression against Iraq and secondly when Iran has the right to develop peaceful nuclear energy under the 1970 Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

How did US & EU manage to get 15-countries to vote for the resolution?

It was thought that either Russia or China might veto the resolution because of close ties with Iran. China gets its oil from Iran and Russia builds its nuclear reactor (worth \$800 million) but they went

along with the West.

The unanimity of 15 members of the Security Council means that besides the big five (US, UK, France, China and Russia), ten non-permanent members of the Council voted for the resolution.

The non-permanent members are Argentina, Congo, Denmark, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Slovakia, and Tanzania.

It is easy to see that these ten countries came under pressure of the US and the EU, including Germany, as they are aided and funded by the West.

It is speculated that China's economic ties with the US are so strong that China could not have a difference of opinion on the resolution. Furthermore, China is emerging as a global power and it wants to show that it is a responsible power that the West can do business with. China wants to continue its hyper-economic growth and its exports to the US, worth several hundred billion dollars, are important.

Russia also did not want to have a wedge with the West on the resolution. However, Russia watered down the resolution so that Iran might not have disastrous effect.

All the 15-countries of the Security Council had another concern after Saudi Arabia and Egypt recently announced they would launch their own nuclear energy programmes in response to Iran's peaceful nuclear enrichment programme. They think that nuclear proliferation will increase if these countries start their programme. The US particularly is concerned with the security of Israel if Saudi Arabia and Egypt acquire nuclear weapons. The dominance of Israel will disappear if Iran or any other nearby Islamic country acquires nuclear weapons.

Recently, it was found that Israel's army was not invincible with Hezbollah in war.

#### Will sanction work?

The sanction has been designed to prevent Iran from obtaining access

to sensitive nuclear equipment. It also seeks to prevent Iranian scientists from carrying out foreign studies that could advance their country's ability to develop nuclear weapons.

Many analysts believe that if Iran wants to have nuclear weapons, no country can stop it. Iran has seven neighbours, such as Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan. Besides, the Persian Gulf hugs its coast.

The nuclear weapon materials may be acquired if Iran wants them. North Korea is an example. Did sanctions work against North Korea? Rather, North Korea withdrew from the NPT to have a free hand in developing nuclear technology without UN inspectors.

Many countries see the double standard of US policy from another angle. While the US delivers nuclear fuel and other materials to India that is not a party to the 1970 NPT (Non-nuclear Proliferation Treaty), it imposes sanctions on Iran, a member of NPT.

The sanctions may act as counter-productive, rather dangerous. Iran may withdraw from the NPT and will have unfettered facility to develop nuclear weapons without UN arm inspectors.

#### Reasons for developing nuclear programme

The NPT allows Iran to produce nuclear energy as long as it does not manufacture weapons. Although the US argues that Iran has vast reserves of oil and gas, it does not need to have nuclear energy.

The US study report (DS/26th December) came to the view that Iran would soon face its own energy crunch owing to failing infrastructure and lack of investments from the US.

Professor Roger Stern, at John Hopkins University, states that rapid population growth means that demand will rise all the time. Subsidies for petrol for Iranian consumers cannot continue

indefinitely. Iran currently imports oil products like gasoline to cope with domestic demand. Therefore, there is a case of developing nuclear energy by Iran.

Acquisition of nuclear weapons is a necessary deterrent to attacks from big powers. The US attacked Iraq because it had no nuclear weapons but it does not launch an armed attack on North Korea because it possesses nuclear weapons.

#### Conclusion

The Middle East has been suffering from insecurity and instability because of botched policies of big powers in the past and present. Their policies are discriminatory and does not create stable situation.

The West's blunder was to assist Israel in developing nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Such action has injected threat of security and volatility in the region. A country decides to develop nuclear weapons within the regional context. If a country in the region possesses nuclear weapons, other countries may not sit idle.

Iran probably feels the same way. If the West proposes nuclear free zone of the Middle East, Iran might not be interested in developing nuclear weapons.

Acquisition of nuclear weapons is deemed to be a power projection in the region. Iran is a regional power in the Middle East. Iraq and the Shiites from Lebanon to Afghanistan look up to Iran for assistance. The US gave Iraq to Iran by its flawed policy.

What are the concerns of Iran? Unless the concerns are objectively and passionately discussed in a dialogue, the sanctions would be of no avail. The bottom line is threat does not work but dialogue works. Iran is a big and richly endowed country and threat will be of no use.

The author is Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.



## SNIPPETS

### Indo-Nepal boundary pact soon

**KATHMANDU:** Disputes over encroachment, a long-standing thorn in India-Nepal ties, are likely to be over next year when the two neighbours plan to ink a new boundary. A series of Indo-Nepal treaties - starting from the Sugauli Treaty in 1816 - that tried to delineate the nearly 1,800km open boundary between India and Nepal on the east, south and west, have been countermanded by encroachments, claims and counter-claims. A major cause for the disputes is that the two countries share a nearly 595-km border demarcated by about 60 rivers. With the rivers changing their course with time, the border underwent changes too but these were not implemented officially. Now however, almost 98% of the work is complete on drawing up the new border and the remaining work is expected to be completed by June 2007. To resolve the disputes, which erupted as recently as this month, on the eve of Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Kathmandu, a joint technical committee was set up to conduct a new survey. After holding its 28th meeting in Kathmandu last week, the team, led on the Indian side by Major General M Gopal Rao, surveyor general of India, and on the Nepal side by Toya Nath Baral, director-general of the survey department, said 98% of the work was complete with the rest expected to be over by June. Besides the home, foreign affairs and defence ministries, the border talks include officials from the neighbouring Indian states, like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. One of the most contentious border issues is Kalapani near the western border. Many in Nepal feel India has encroached upon the area, measuring about 62km, since 1962 and kept a military contingent there to keep an eye on China. There are also allegations that India built bunkers and other permanent structures on Nepali territory. However, India says the Indo-Tibetan Border Police personnel are deployed on the Indian side of the border.

### SL heads for more bloodshed in New Year

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka enters 2007 amid fears of more fighting after a year that began with hopes of peace which degenerated into suspicion, blood and tears. After a violent start to 2006, the Sri Lankan government and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) opened talks in Switzerland in February in hopes of salvaging their ceasefire and saving a Norwegian-backed peace bid. The February peace parleys ended with more hopes that the two warring parties would hold their fire. A second meet in Oslo to discuss peace was scuttled by the Tigers who protested against the "low-level" representation by Colombo. Another round was eventually held in Switzerland in October amid international pressure on both parties to save their fragile peace initiative, but that too ended in failure and led to more bloodshed. According to the Defence Ministry's latest figures, 954 security personnel and 620 civilians were killed in the past year. The Ministry claimed that 2,097 Tigers were killed in the same period. Sri Lanka's army chief Sarath Fonseka said the military will take action soon to clear the island's restive eastern province of LTTE resistance. "We will clear the Vakarai area in Batticaloa because this is a population centre they are using now," Fonseka said, accusing the rebels of using some 35,000 civilians there as human shields. Fonseka estimated the rebel strength in the area at about 700 combatants and placed the military strength there at about 8,000, and said an operation could begin anytime soon. Defence writer Namal Perera said heavy fighting could be expected

in the New Year in the absence of any peace moves as both parties try to establish their military strength through battlefield gains. The LTTE suffered a string of setbacks during the year. For the first time since the February 2002 truce went into effect, the Tigers conceded territory to advancing troops in the island's east. The Tigers also tried, but failed to capture the northern peninsula of Jaffna in August. A counter military offensive in the peninsula a month later saw the military suffer a bloody nose. Western diplomats here believe that both sides must realise the war is un-winnable before they enter negotiations again. The peace process itself suffered a blow when the LTTE's chief negotiator Anton Balasingham died of cancer on December 14. Balasingham, who was based in London, was seen as a moderate and the rebels have not yet replaced him. A string of LTTE suicide bombings in Colombo has seen unprecedented security arrangements in the capital and the re-imposition of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism laws to curtail the liberties of the people. Tourism has taken a direct hit following the escalation of fighting while foreign investment is also suffering. However, the government also saw the country record a 7.4 percent growth of GDP this year, the best in 28 years, thanks to the expansion in services such as mobile telephony. However, international lenders have warned that a failure to show progress in the peace process or curtail the bloodshed would see a reversal of the growth momentum in the new year at a time when Sri Lanka's neighbours are zooming ahead.

### India watchful on UN sanctions on Iran

**NEW DELHI:** As Iran vowed to press ahead with uranium enrichment despite UN economic sanctions, Ministry of External Affairs has come up with a statement on the issue in New Delhi. The UNSC on Saturday unanimously decided to impose sanctions against Iran in response to its uranium-enrichment activities, which Tehran says are for peaceful purposes but which other countries contend are driven by military ambitions. India on Sunday said it was studying the implications of the UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions against Iran and asserted that all possible efforts should be made to address the issue through peaceful dialogue and negotiations. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should play a central role in resolving the outstanding issues said the External Affairs Ministry in a statement. Tehran had undertaken certain obligations that its nuclear programme was exclusively for peaceful purposes, said the statement, maintaining that Iran had the right to pursue its nuclear programme for peaceful civilian use. "We have noted the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution and are studying its implications. We continue to feel that all possible efforts should be made to address the Iranian nuclear issue by peaceful means through dialogue and negotiation and that the IAEA should play a central role in resolving outstanding issues," External Affairs Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said as quoted by UNI. The issue threatens to snowball as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, while rejecting the sanctions, said on Sunday that world powers would soon regret imposing them (sanctions). Terming the UN sanctions resolution as 'a piece of torn paper,' he asserted it would not scare the Iranians into stopping nuclear work. The adoption of the sanctions resolution came after successive reports by the IAEA indicating its inability to certify that Iran's motives were entirely peaceful.

Source: Internet

## Bad politics affects our security

### SHAMSHER CHOWDHURY

**T**ODAY Bangladesh stands at a critical juncture of its existence. Sad though, it has been a long story of collective failures. Many at the drop of a hat would like to put the blame on the shoulders of some autocratic ruler and the army. There is certainly some truth in that view but not the whole truth. If one were to be truthful one is likely to differ with that view. The major burden of the failures that has led the country to this state lies on the shoulders of our politicians, the bureaucrats, the civil society and the intellectuals.

Lack of wisdom and vision on the part of the politicians led them to poor practices both in the spheres of political and administrative management. This is true also about the in-house party and organizational management. Admittedly, the politicians were indeed able to steer the nation to freedom through an armed struggle and unprecedented sacrifices on their part, yet they themselves were disorganized and disillusioned, for had it not been so they would not have engaged themselves in all kinds of intra-party fighting, power struggle, greed and corruption. The events during the period 1972 through 1975 bear testimony to that fact. As a matter of fact the legacy continues even to this day. Despite some years of interference by the army much of the blame lies on the shoulders of our politicians. The brutal assassinations of two of our Presidents were indeed the workings of some disgruntled elements of the Army, yet the fact remains that this too, to a large extent, was triggered by critical failures on the part of our politicians.

On the other hand, beginning early 90s the country has had a conducive political environment wherein democratic practices in governance of the country could have flourished but for a kind of arrogant and decadent "mindset" of the politicians and the political leaderships of the two major parties. It may be relevant to mention here of some specific issues which set the stage for undemocratic practices: the creation of BAKSAL and the Rakhi Bahini way back in 1974/75, the coming of the infamous Janat Mancha, the induction of a retired General as the chief of the army, the militant marches into the compound of the country's highest seat of the judiciary with sticks and lathis etc. All these indeed heralded the beginning of systematic destruction of some of

the vital institutions of the state.

Essentially, there were only two democratically elected governments led by the two major parties. Both the governments, sadly though, did very little to institutionalise democracy and democratic practices. As a matter of fact, if anything, they have worked against the spirit of democracy and often worked at cross-purposes.

The day the Janat Mancha was created at the instigation and active support of one of the major political parties, it was the beginning of the destruction of the institution of bureaucracy.

On the other hand, the recruitment of an officer on LPR to

Parliament ineffective.

The civil bureaucracy too failed to deliver. During the pre-independence days of the then East Pakistan, the civil bureaucracy used to act and operate as second fiddle to the Central government located nearly two thousands of miles away. The Central government handed down all major directives and decisions to the provincial government. With the emergence of independent Bangladesh the bureaucracy was suddenly entrusted with the huge task of managing the civil administration of a war ravaged country. On the other hand, the politicians at the helm of affairs also failed to

League. Many of them began to

view themselves as powerful instruments of political authority. This is evident by the presence of many senior ex-bureaucrats in both the major political parties. Thus, the institution of bureaucracy has also been turned into an inefficient and ineffective instrument of administration of the government.

Now come to the intellectuals and the civil society. Most of them lean towards either of the two major parties. They act and perform at the behest of one party or the other. They have lost their sense of propriety, dignity and honour, traditional to any intellectual community. They have

Instead of acting as agents of peace and conflict resolution they are simply adding more fuel to the fire and "play it safe."

This is what we are, people at the helm of affairs and of consequence. Unless we urgently bring about a drastic change in our mindset and its workings, we are surely heading for disaster.

This piece will remain incomplete without a few words about the recent developments in the political arena. Whatever has happened during the past two months is not only shameful, but has also caused irreparable damage to both the economy and the good name of the country. The rising violence on the streets, the closure of ports, bringing the movement of traffic to a complete halt and taking people hostage by so called Aborodh by shutting off of all kinds of movement of the traffic between cities including movement of the trains, can be described as senseless acts engineered and spearheaded by our politicians and the political parties. Whatever might have been the compulsions it must be said, "two wrongs do not make one right."

The unprecedented violence far from establishing the people's rights has created the dangerous legacy of settling all issues, political or otherwise on the streets with the help of guns and sticks. The trends from now on will slowly and surely creep into all spheres of the society -- yet another straw on the camel's back." Our politicians and the political parties should have known better. Besides, I do not believe that even on immediate terms the kind of violent and rowdy protest marches that we have witnessed have been able to restore any lost rights of the people one way or the other. The way things have developed, I am of the conviction that whoever takes the reign of the Government in the future it is more than likely that the legacy of militancy and retaliatory politics in the country will continue, with the politicians and the political parties working as mere instruments of fear, hatred, exploitation and intimidation for the innocent masses.

It is bad politics to leave the people out of the political parties' equation. Once they are left out they suffer, and when people's interests are overlooked the consequences are bound to tell on our security.

The author is a freelancer.



head the Army, in complete violation of the laid down rules of procedures of the Armed Forces, raised many questions and disillusionment in the minds of the members of the armed forces and the public at large.

Clearly, both the parties are also equally guilty of vandalizing the institution of judiciary through both direct and indirect intimidations during their respective periods of governance. As far as I can see, the legacy continues. If anything the situation has turned for the worse. The judiciary is ever more threatened by the growing vandalism by the institution of bureaucracy by launching the so-called "Janat Mancha" with the explicit support and encouragement of the Awami

League. Many of them began to view themselves as powerful instruments of political authority. This is evident by the presence of many senior ex-bureaucrats in both the major political parties. Thus, the institution of bureaucracy has also been turned into an inefficient and ineffective instrument of administration of the government.

Through their collective foolish acts the two major parties also succeeded in rendering the consequences to the nation.