

Half of aid to Iran's N-projects stopped

AP, Vienna

The UN nuclear watchdog agency on Friday suspended nearly half of the technical aid it now provides Iran, in line with sanctions imposed on the country for its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment.

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency already suspended aid to Iran in five instances last month in line with Security Council sanctions calling for an end to assistance for programmes that could be misused to make atomic weapons.

Diplomats emphasized that the freeze was temporary and subject to review and approval by the 35-nation board of the IAEA next month.

On Friday, the agency fully or partially suspended another 18 projects that it deemed could be misused. Those too were subject to review and approval by the board.

Iran gets IAEA technical aid for 15 projects and 40 more that involve other countries. The suspensions were across the board but in the case of projects involving other countries affected only Iran.

A diplomat familiar with the issue said the United States along with key allies had been looking to have up to half of the projects involving only Iran cancelled, restricted or more closely monitored.

A US official said Washington's position on what projects should be affected was "very similar" to that of the European powers, Britain, France and Germany.

The officials all spoke on condition of anonymity in return for divulging confidential information.

Selection of 835 cops

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After noticing irregularities in the selection of the 835 SIs and sergeants, the police headquarters recently (during the caretaker government rule) formed a committee headed by a senior officer to probe the recruitment process.

The committee and an intelligence agency found that merit was the least consideration while political affiliations and bribery were the key criteria for the selection.

"Money played a big role," IGP Nur Mohammad told The Daily Star, talking about irregularities in the selection.

Besides, political influence was used and grace marks were given to bring in certain candidates, he said.

"In several cases, district quotas were not maintained and the number of recruits was much higher than the posts mentioned in the circulars. We take it as a big irregularity," said the IGP.

A senior police officer said many of the candidates gave bribes between Tk 3 lakh and 5 lakh to be chosen for the posts.

After the probe report unearthed the irregularities, the authorities had decided to cancel the selections and start the process anew.

Earlier in the second half of 2005, the police administration reduced the training period for the assistant superintendents of police (ASPs) to nine months from one year, for the SIs to six months from one year and for constables to four months from six by shortening the syllabus. They later cut down the field-level training for the ASPs as well to three months from six months.

The authorities had reduced the length of training for some 3,600 ASPs, SIs and constables allegedly to make sure they work on the field during the next general election.

In another instance, an advertisement was made for recruitment of 786 SIs but later 850 were recruited at the start of 2006.

About 90 percent of those

Acid victim

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Surgery Unit, told The Daily Star yesterday that Sabina was given the best treatment available at the hospital.

Daughter of Sirajuddin of Dighol Kolla under Karimganj upazila of Kishoreganj, Sabina Yasmin, 20, was married to Khairul Islam of Tumri Pitha of the same upazila on January 18.

Sabina's father Sirajuddin, "burdened" with five daughters and two sons, told this correspondent yesterday at Dhaka Medical College Morgue that he married off Sabina as he got a "good proposal". But he did not know that Khairul had illicit relation with a neighbouring lady, he said.

Only hours after the marriage, Sabina fell prey to the vengeance of some neighbouring people who had long dispute with her husband's family.

With 55 per cent of her body acrid-burnt, she was rushed to Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital in the early hours of January 19 and later shifted to DMCH.

Police could not arrest any of the four people accused in the case filed in connection with the incident.

Mobile court seals off lube warehouse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday closed down a lubricants warehouse at Rampura Hajipara in the capital after it found a showroom at Banglabazar marketing grease as engine oil.

Led by Magistrate Rokon-ud Doula, the court arrested Abu Saleh Mohammad Mohiuddin, owner of Mubarak Lubricants. It fined him Tk 2 lakh and sentenced him to eight months' jail.

While conducting a raid on three lubricant dealers in Tipu Sultan Road, the court found a number of containers of grease at the warehouse of Zakir and Brothers, from which the seals were erased to be sold as engine oil.

Following the information of the employees of the warehouse, the court then raided Mubarak Lubricants in Banglabazar, where they found same containers.

The court also raided the warehouse of the company at Hajipara in Rampura and found 50 drums containing grease, which were labelled with fake seals and stickers for selling as engine oil. The mobile court also recovered a number of blocks of different dies with "made in UK", "made in Korea", "made in Japan" cut into them. The court sealed off the warehouse.

Earlier the mobile court fined lubricant dealers Zakir and Brothers, Tareque and Brothers and Khan Traders of Tipu Sultan Road for operating without trade licenses, not taking permission from fire department to store flammable materials in the warehouses and not having fire fighting equipment in them.

Zakir Brothers was fined with Tk 1 lakh or one year imprisonment for the above offences in addition with storing fake engine oil made up from grease.

Tareque and Brothers and Khan Traders were fined with Tk 50,000 or 5 months imprisonment each. Both of them were also fined Tk 10,000 each for violating weight and measure rules and not mentioning the weight on the containers.

Hasina

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Hasina told the members of the House of Lords that the steps taken by the caretaker government has proved that their demands for electoral reforms were right. She said under this government, the obstacles to reforming the institutions are being removed.

Emerging from the hour-long meeting, Paowla Uddin said Bangladeshi nationals, now living in UK, support the present caretaker government and they think a free, fair and credible election will be held under this caretaker administration.

About the timeframe of holding the election, she said politicians and government of this country will settle it.

AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah, former ambassador Mohammad Ziauddin and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury were present at the meeting.

He viewed that government and private sector will have to work jointly to accelerate the wheels of economy through resolving problems in order

Massive hunt

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who went into hiding shortly after declaration of the state of emergency.

A senior official of the Khulna Metropolitan Police acknowledged that they kept the forces on alert to arrest him.

Joy Construction, owned by Aurora, dropped three tenders for reconstruction works of Betgram-Tala, Paikgacha-Koira and Khulna-Terokhoda roads at an estimated cost of Tk 20 crore.

Maniruddin

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last night that he was waiting to meet the chief adviser (CA) or his representative, but now he has decided to resign and would like to meet the CA or his representative in the future.

"I did not want to meet them to remain in my post in the Anti-Corruption Commission. I just wanted to discuss some issues with them," said Maniruddin.

He said he would resign in accordance with Section 10 (1) of the ACC Act, which states that an ACC commissioner can resign after giving the president one month's written notice.

Asked whether he would continue his work in the ACC during the month-long notice period, Maniruddin said, "I will tender my resignation in accordance with the ACC Act and it is up to the president to take a decision on the matter."

On Thursday, some former officials of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) put a lock on Maniruddin's office door and made accusations of irregularities and corruption against the ACC commissioner.

The current ACC head office at the Bureau of Statistics building at Agargaon in the capital will be shifted to former Bac offices at Segunbagicha.

Corrupt political leaders

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Some of these arrested politicians served as ministers and became known for being involved in corruption while a few were known as godfathers of criminals. One of the arrestees is a militant kingpin.

A few arrested AL politicians are the accused in graft cases which were never pursued.

The arrested politicians are Tariqul Islam, barrister Nazmul Huda, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mosaddak Ali Falu, Amanullah Aman, AKM Mosharraf Hossain, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Mufti Shahidul Islam, Manjurul Ahsan Munshi, Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, Naser Rahman, Salman F Rahman, Jahangir Sattar Tinku, Ali Asgar Lobi, Salauddin Ahmed and Lotus Kamal.

"We are at the ground level. We are collecting evidence," said a source close to one of these teams, adding, "After primary inquiry, we will analyse all primary evidence. Then we will go for filing First Information Report (FIR)."

Following the FIRs, officials concerned will launch investigations against the accused. "If solid evidence can be gathered, we will file charge sheets against them," he added.

Meanwhile, the government intends to amend the existing Anti-Corruption Commission Act by that time to make it most effective. This amendment will restrict the time frame for investigation and framing charges to 45 days.

The caretaker government also intends to amend necessary laws to restrict the period of trial of graft cases to 90 days for speedy disposal of cases.

The whole process from primary enquiry to completion of trial may take at least five months, the source pointed out.

"The government is definitely aware of the fact that these cases might stumble at the level of higher court after the verdict of the trial courts," he noted but refrained from saying anything

a BNP lawmaker from Bhola and he reportedly made phenomenal wealth in the last five years.

Mamun reportedly worked for Tarique and exerted influence in all sectors. Businessmen had unofficially complained that no work at the national level could be done in the country without giving "commission" to Hawa Bhaban.

"We are at the ground level. We are collecting evidence," said a source close to one of these teams, adding, "After primary inquiry, we will analyse all primary evidence. Then we will go for filing First Information Report (FIR)."

These teams are also gathering the profiles of various companies and organisations owned by the bigwigs with the help of the Registration of Joint Stock Companies.

Many bigwigs reaped undue benefits from companies they did not own or entered into any partnership with. The groups are also trying to detect these connections, the source added.

Since taking over power the caretaker government has received innumerable complaints of corruption against these people.

The newspapers have also published a large number of reports highlighting corruption of these people and the investigators are taking these allegations and press reports into cognisance, the source said.

In addition, the teams themselves are digging out hidden facts.

The government also plans to launch a media campaign urging the people to provide the authorities concerned information related to corruption in confidence. This campaign will be launched after the ACC is reformed.

Fakhruddin

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for Juma prayers on Fridays.

They put forward a number of other major proposals during discussion with the CA. The proposals include privatisation of Chittagong Newmooring Container Terminal, improvement of Chittagong port service, establishment of small power plants and long-term loan with low interest rate.

They also proposed for framing coal policy, transfer of insurance companies under the finance ministry from the commerce ministry, one-stop service in the Board of Investment (BoI), reforms in jute sector and expansion of small and medium enterprises.

The CA told them that joint forces would exchange views with different trade and business chambers as they had with Chittagong chamber in the port city.

"The government is aware so that no innocent person is harassed during operation of by joint forces, he told the business leaders.

Responding to the propositions, the CA said he will examine and consider their proposals, according to an official.

The chief adviser unveiled his government's plan for reducing power crisis primarily on short-term basis and sought cooperation of the business community in this regard.

He emphasised maintaining balance in distribution of electricity between urban and rural areas.

The CA informed the executive body of the FBCCI that steps would be taken soon to further improve the operations of Chittagong port. He cited the meeting of the council of advisers on the affairs of the seaport earlier in the day.

He viewed that government and private sector will have to work jointly to accelerate the wheels of economy through self-regulation can cooperate in checking corruption.

The FBCCI leaders assured their all-out support to the caretaker government and appreciated the government's performance, including drives against corruption and adulterated and rotten goods, as well as separation of the judiciary from the executive.

They also suggested that arrested corrupt people be brought to justice under the law of the land.

Correction

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appointed during the BNP-Jamaat regime. He said the BNP government had appointed some of the High Court judges on political considerations instead of merit, capability and integrity. Such judges should be removed like commissioners of the Election Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), he suggested while addressing a discussion on Friday.

Bush says energy proposals will aid economy

Following the FIRs, officials concerned will launch investigations against the accused. "If solid evidence can be gathered, we will file charge sheets against them," he added.

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"Normal flow of trade should go on to help run day-to-day economic activities of the country, he emphasised in spelling out the directives.

Members of the council of advisers were present at the meeting that lasted for about one and a half hours at the chief adviser's office.

"We could not demolish the other floor [12th] as patients were in there. The owner promised us that he would demolish that floor after moving the patients onto other floors," said ASM Emdadul Dastagir, one of the magistrates that led the drive.

Gas exploration

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production, it said the country's present proven reserve is 8.39 tcf as 6.8 tcf was extracted in the last 50 years from the original reserve of 15.19 tcf from 22 gas fields.

The country presently produces 1,533 million cubic feet (mmcf) gas a day from its 22 gas fields against a demand for 1,739 mmcf, making a shortfall of 206 mmcf.

Of the production, power plants consume 535 mmcf against its demand for 700 mmcf, fertiliser factories consume 270 mmcf against a demand for 289 mmcf and other domestic, commercial and industrial consumers use 728 mmcf against a demand for 750 mmcf.

The report said three international oil companies (IOCs) have been operating in 10 gas blocks out of total 23 under eight production sharing contracts (PSC).

Apart from this, the state-owned Bapex is producing gas from one field together with a foreign company under a joint-operation agreement.

Bapex is also engaged in gas exploration activities in two blocks.

The IOCs are producing a total of 504 mmcf gas from fields, which accounts for 38 percent of the country's production.

Of these, Chevron's Jalalabad provides 230 mmcf, while Moulvibazar 112 mmcf, Cairn's Sangu 90 mmcf, Niko's Fen 12 mmcf and Tallow's Bangura field 60 mmcf.

14th Saarc Summit

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take initiatives in accelerating economic and political cooperation among the Saarc countries, he said at the concluding session of the two-day Saarc Editors' Conference.

Mukherjee also reaffirmed India's commitment towards development of political ties among the member countries through shared sphere of mutual development and cooperation.

"Our vision of Saarc region is one of regionalism," the Indian minister said, adding, "India's support towards entries of China and Japan as Saarc observers underlines our commitment to open regionalism in the subcontinent."

He said India signed a friendship deal with Bhutan revising the 1949 agreement between the two countries allowing the landlocked Himalayan kingdom more independence to conduct foreign and defence policies.

"This reflects that India wants to extend cooperation to all countries on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect," Mukherjee added.