

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

FROM PAGE 1
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 Tumni Pitua 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 acid-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.

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 Aurango, 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, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Mosaddak Ali Falu, Amanullah Aman, AKM Mosharrar 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, Salahuddin Ahmed and Lotus Kamal.

A number of secondary level politicians and influential political activists were also arrested recently. They have already been sent to jail on detentions of 30 days. Law Adviser Mainul Hossain told reporters on Thursday that the process for filing cases against these arrested politicians will start before completion of the detention period.

The source said these teams are also enquiring about Giasuddin Al Mamun, Tarique Rahman's friend and business partner, although there has been no confirmation about his arrest. Mamun held no political post but his brother Hafiz Ibrahim was

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]."

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

further on the High Court.

Describing how these teams are working, the source said they are gathering asset information of the big fish. "In many cases, they kept their wealth in the name of their wives or other relatives. This is also being investigated," he said, adding that they are also gathering information on the bigwigs' bank account status and transaction records.

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 said.

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.

Correction

FROM PAGE 1
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.

BDR, BSF trade

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bullets at Kakkanga BDR camp at around 3:00am.

In retaliation, BDR fired 23 shots, the sources added.

After the incidents, the Indian border guards reinforced its strength at all border outposts and increased patrols, according to a report received from across the border.

When contacted, Lt Col Mohammad Asif Abdur Rouf, commanding officer (CO) of 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the border skirmishes. A tense situation is prevailing at the frontier villages.

Chittagong Port

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The chief adviser stressed the need for a quick solution to the various problems prevailing at different levels of the port.

"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.

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 758 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 produces 230 mmcf, while Moulvibazar 122 mmcf, Cairn's Sangu 90 mmcf, Niko's Feni 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.

He viewed that Saarc countries have to work together with mutual trust and confidence for a common future as he thought no nation

Bush says energy proposals will aid economy

AP, Washington

President Bush asked Congress to help solve "one of the great challenges facing our generation" by approving proposals he says will cut US gasoline consumption by up to 20 percent over 10 years.

"Every member of Congress who cares about strengthening our economy, protecting our national security and confronting climate change should support the energy initiatives I have set out," the president said Saturday in his weekly radio address. "We can leave behind a cleaner and better world for our children and grandchildren."

Bush's energy proposals, made in his State of the Union address last month, include ramping up the production of alternative fuels such as ethanol made from new, non-corn feedstocks. The president wants to require the use of 35 billion gallons a year of ethanol and other alternative fuels, such as soybean-based biodiesel, by 2017, a fivefold increase over current requirements. The ethanol would be in gasoline blends of 10 percent to 85 percent.

The call for sharp increases in ethanol use will get bipartisan support in Congress. But production of ethanol from corn is expected to fall far short of meeting such an increase. So Bush envisions a major speedup of research into production of "cellulosic" ethanol made from wood chips, switchgrass and other feedstocks.

Falu's factory

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workers said the officials did not visit the factory even after the company's Dhaka office had been informed that the law enforcers were taking away the CI sheets demolishing the houses.

Many local residents thronged the factory premises as they heard that the security personnel were taking away CI sheets from the former powerful BNP lawmaker's factory.

600 structures

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for constructing extra two floors without approval from Rajuk.

"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 Emdadud Dastagir, one of the magistrates that led the drive.

Putin attacks

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who died didn't get less but increased significantly."

The United States, he said, had gone "from one conflict to another without achieving a fully-fledged solution to any of them."

Putin also took aim at US plans to site a missile defence system close to Russia's border in Nato countries the Czech Republic and Poland, adding that any further enlargement of the alliance would be inappropriate.

"Why is it necessary to put military infrastructure on our border? It's hardly connected to today's global threats. What is the threat? Terrorism and fighting it," Putin said. Analysts say that Russia's relations with the United States have deteriorated significantly under Putin, who has tried to restore Russia's prestige since the economic collapse that followed the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse.

But his speech got a frosty reception from US delegates in a question and answer that followed his speech at this traditionally pro-Western forum.

US Democratic Congresswoman Jane Harmon charged that Russian experts had helped Iran develop an indigenous missile capability in the 1990s.

Putin denied that claim, saying Russia was "less involved than anyone" in such technology transfers.

could succeed on its own.

Mukherjee said the media of the region has responsibilities to create proper understanding among the countries and also stressed the need for free cross-border movement of media products.

Media Development Foundation, Chennai, and Indian External Affairs Ministry jointly organised the two-day conference attended by senior journalists from Saarc countries including Bangladesh's Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, Shyamal Dutta, editor of Bhorer Kagoi, and Saiful Bari, chief adviser of ATN Bangla.

Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon inaugurated the conference.

The conference adopted 'Delhi Declaration,' which denounced intimidation of and attacks on journalists by state agencies, extra-constitutional authorities, self-appointed custodians of religious tenets and political press gangs and criminals in collusion with law enforcement agencies.

It also urged the governments of Saarc countries to enable freer movement of journalists by issuing multiple entry long-term visas to all bona fide journalists and news media personnel.

Mukherjee would visit Bangladesh this month to extend invitation for attending the 14th Saarc summit and council of foreign ministers' meeting.

The next Saarc Editors' Conference will be held in Karachi in 2008.

Truckload of rotten eggs seized

START REPORT

Joint forces in separate drives all over the country yesterday seized 14,000 spoilt eggs and date expired commodities including medicines, pesticides and fertilisers.

In Tora area on Dhaka-Aricha highway, the forces seized 14,000 spoilt eggs from a truck, reports our Manikganj correspondent.

The law enforcers arrested four people -- suppliers Taiyab, Nurul Islam and Rakib, and general manager of Green Valley Agro Complex, Dr Mokaddes Ali.

The suppliers admitted that they collected the eggs from Green Valley Agro Complex for supplying those to Shaheen Bakery in Savar and Dhaka Bakery in Comilla.

They also admitted that they had been doing this business for a long time. They buy spoilt eggs from different hatcheries at 75 paisa apiece and sell those at Tk 1.5 or 2 per piece to different bakeries in Dhaka, Savar, Chittagong, Gazipur and Comilla.

NOAKHALI
The joint forces seized expired medicines worth around Tk 5 lakh raiding a pharmacy named Arafat Medical Hall at Choumohuni bazar in Choumohuni upazila, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, joint forces raided the pharmacy and seized six sacks and 50 cartons of date expired medicines.

Four employees of the pharmacy -- Bimal Chandra Sheel, 35, Shobhon Chakraborty, 32, Masud, 28, and Sajal Mojumder -- were arrested and handed over to police.

MEHERPUR
UNB reports, the army seized expired pesticides, 10 sacks of fertiliser and arrested a dealer from Sadar upazila.

Sources said the army team arrested dealer Giasuddin and recovered expired zinc fertiliser and pesticides of different brands worth Tk 4,000.

A case was filed and Giasuddin was handed over to police later.

He also rebuffed criticism of his country's human rights record by the head of the New York-based Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth.

Roth said the world was seeing an "increasingly uni-polar government in Russia, where competing centres of influence are being forced to toe the party line."

Putin responded that Russia was taking steps to stop foreign governments clandestinely using Russian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to influence Russian policy.

On the subject of numerous killings of Russian journalists during his presidency, Putin turned the question back to the United States, saying that it was in Iraq that most journalists were killed doing their job.

Putin's comments were likely to be countered by subsequent speakers at the Munich conference, whose traditional theme is the future of Nato.

Not least among these is to be US Defence Secretary Robert Gates, who was due to make his first major speech since taking office.

Also in the spotlight was Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, who was due to address the conference on Sunday.