

UN atomic agency okays drastic cut in aid to Iran

AFP, Vienna

The UN atomic watchdog unanimously approved yesterday a cut of almost half its aid programmes to Iran as part of UN sanctions over Iran's nuclear programme, an IAEA spokesman said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-national board of governors formalised cuts in technical aid that were started after a UN Security Council resolution adopted December 23.

"The reduction in aid was adopted by consensus," the spokesman said.

The Security Council resolution had imposed sanctions on Iran for continuing to enrich uranium and called for cuts in IAEA aid to Iran, which the United States accuses of seeking nuclear weapons.

Iranian ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh bitterly criticised the cuts in comments to the board, a diplomat said.

Soltanieh said Iran rejects the Security Council's interference in IAEA technical affairs.

Out of 55 national and regional projects that the IAEA has with Iran, 22, or 40 percent, have been either totally or partially frozen, according to IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei.

Tension is escalating over Iran's nuclear programme, particularly its production of enriched uranium — which can be nuclear reactor fuel but also in highly refined form the explosive core of atom bombs.

Iran says its programme is a peaceful effort to generate nuclear power.

The United States had called for a strict interpretation of the Security Council's resolution on Iran and cuts of

up to 50 percent of the aid programmes, according to a US briefing paper.

The Security Council resolution said states should stop aid to Iran which might help it "make nuclear reactor fuel" or develop "nuclear weapon delivery systems."

The resolution says "technical cooperation provided to Iran by the IAEA ... shall only be for food, agricultural, medical, safety or other humanitarian purposes."

A key role of the IAEA, besides its mission verifying compliance with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In November last year, the IAEA had already rejected Tehran's request for technical help in building a heavy-water reactor in Arak that the West fears could provide plutonium, also a possible nuclear weapons material.

Examples from the IAEA report show approval of a project to help Iran "prepare therapeutic sources ... and radiopharmaceuticals" for cancer treatment, "saying this was "entirely for medical purposes."

But the agency said no to a project "to strengthen ... capabilities ... for provision of safe and reliable nuclear power generation capacities," saying this was outside what is allowed in the UN resolution.

There was no question, however, of blocking IAEA aid to Iran's construction of its first nuclear reactor in Bushehr, a project for which Russia has a billion-dollar contract, as the UN resolution said this was untouchable.

The authorities expect to increase the amount of gas supply from Bibiyana Gas Field to the national grid to 600 mmcfd by the end of 2008.

Bibiyana Gas Field is considered as the country's second gas-rich field with a recoverable reserve of 2.4 trillion cubic feet. However, a Chevron official claims the probable reserve is 5.5 trillion cubic feet.

In late 2004, Chevron signed a gas purchase and sales agreement with Petrobangla to develop wells and produce gas from Bibiyana Gas Field.

The development cost for the project was estimated at about \$200 million. The project includes a gas plant and a natural gas pipeline to connect the gas field with the national grid and a condensate pipeline.

1 shot dead

FROM PAGE 20

They were returning to Isahaq's house on Sultanganj Road at Rayerbazar after drawing the money from Dhamondi branch of Islami Bank.

As the puller stopped the rickshaw, two muggers pressed two revolvers to Nurul's head while another one started scuffling with Isahaq for the bag containing the money, Nurul said.

"Failing to snatch the bag, a mugger shot my brother-in-law four times in the chest and finally took away the bag," Nurul told The Daily Star at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

After the armed hijackers left the scene leaving Isahaq in a pool of blood on the rickshaw, Nurul rushed him to DMCH where doctors declared him dead soon after arrival.

Family sources said Isahaq, marketing manager of a micro-credit lender at Paltan, withdrew the money from his personal account to buy savings bonds from post office.

Nurul filed a murder case with Dhamondi Police Station accusing four unidentified persons.

None could be arrested as of 7:15pm.

Bibiyana gas

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People happy

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Mohiuddin was behind all obstacles to smooth port operation and improvement of the situation at the port.

Dr Zafar Ali, who came to the CCC on a personal business, told The Daily Star that criminals, who bear the stamp of political parties or hold top posts in the government, made in another GD filed against him with Gulshan Police Station.

Although lawyer of Salim, also managing director of private satellite television Channel 1, moved a bail petition, the court rejected it and ordered sending him to Dhaka Central Jail placing him under a 30-day detention.

"Earlier, the government of Ersheed me but I was proved innocent. Hasina's (AL) government also arrested me and put me on a 30-day detention but the High Court declared the detention illegal and fined the government Tk 1 lakh," the former health minister told the court.

Alleging that the AL foiled the parliamentary election scheduled for January 22 and forced the declaration of state of emergency, the BNP leader claimed the allegations brought against him were false and aimed at harassing him. And he sought bail.

Hearing both the sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Shafiq Anwar placed him on a 30-day detention and ordered sending him to Dhaka Central Jail.

He was later taken to the jail in a microbus.

CTG MAYOR JAILED

Immediately after his arrest from his Chashma Hill residence in the port city at 11:00pm on Wednesday, the joint forces handed over AL leader and Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor Mohiuddin to Panchalishai police.

He was later put under the custody of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Patenga.

Police produced him before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court around noon yesterday with a prayer for his detention on various charges including a wide range of corruption, nepotism, grabbing of public land and properties, and for his recent role in paralysing the premier seaport causing huge losses to the economy.

Over 100 lawyers led by Advocate Ibrahim Hossain Babul, former president of Chittagong District Bar Association and joint secretary of Chittagong city AL, moved a bail petition for him.

The counsels argued that there is no specific allegation against Mohiuddin and that he was arrested as part of a conspiracy to harass him. He was elected CCC mayor for three consecutive terms, they mentioned.

Hearing both the sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Moksedur Rahman rejected the bail prayer and ordered sending him to Chittagong Central Jail.

Statting that Mohiuddin could not be granted bail since he was arrested under Section 16 of the Emergency Power Ordinance 2007, the court ordered the jail authorities to grant him division in jail.

"I do politics for the people and I have no involvement in any anti-people activity," Mohiuddin told the waiting crowd while walking to a prison van.

"I've been arrested because I have always raised my voice against corruption and for the cause of the people," he said.

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In Netrakona, the joint forces yesterday arrested Alamgir Hosen Titu, cousin of former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar, and a UP chairman in Khalijuri upazila. He was held while returning home after submitting wealth statement at the district ACC office.

Meanwhile, the local administration yesterday sent to jail Babar's former assistant personal secretary Mirza Haider Ali and cousin Salahuddin Chowdhury, General Secretary of Netrakona upazila BNP Rafiqul Islam Jewel and moneylender Jewel a day after they were arrested while coming out of the ACC office.

During the five years of the immediate past BNP-Jamaat rule, many AL leaders, activists and workers were killed across the country and false cases were filed against the party men.

Alleging arrest and harassment of party leaders on the basis of those cases, they demanded that the government withdraw all 'false' cases filed against the AL leaders and workers.

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How could BNP

FROM PAGE 1

Often he would tease the elders for not really understanding the sentiments of the young. According to him, all that the younger generation wanted was wealth and power. Totally devoid of any principles or ideals, he would mock those of us who would talk about our Liberation War as mere looking into the past. On one occasion, at Prothom Alo's annual reception, he told me, "Having failed to develop the country your generation only talks about the Liberation War. Can history give us jobs for the young?" He would tease and say most young people today do not care about the past, about "your struggles, about Bhasha Andolon or Mukti Juddho." Today "we want to look at the future and not the past." When I protested saying where was the contradiction between being proud of our past, especially our struggles for freedom, and building the country for the future, he said, "Give power to the younger generation and we will show you how to build Bangladesh. Your generation has failed." It was quite curious how distant he was to the greatest achievement of our nation, our Liberation War, in which his father was a major actor.

The two above acts—one destroying the government and the other destroying the party—committed at the beginning of Khaleda Zia's second term sowed the seeds of corruption, abuse of power, politicisation of every branch of the administration, especially law enforcement agencies and the bureaucracy.

Leaders like Saifur Rahman, Khandaq Mosharraf, Mannan Bhuiyan, Boudhudd Ahmed, and others of the same seniority bear a lot of responsibility for the present condition of BNP. They allowed the rot to continue without any protest. They too were eager to either please the crown prince or to stay out of his wrath without taking any position that would save the party. They miserably failed to take any stand when the cabinet was infiltrated by Tarique or when Badruddoza was dismissed in such humiliating circumstances. Thus they were partners in the demise of BNP when the party transformed itself from a political party to a family property.

Let us all learn from what has happened to BNP. We cannot expect democratic governance from political parties that do not practise inner party democracy. In the future let us not accept any political party that does not permit democracy to flourish within its fold. This is a lesson that Awami League can only ignore at its own peril.

Today as layer after layer of corruption is being peeled off destroying the party's residual credibility (residual because by the time her regime ended Khaleda Zia greatly compromised the party's image by her tolerance of unbridled corruption), the former Prime Minister must take her due responsibility for having literally destroyed the party that propelled her to the highest elected office twice.

What an irony, instead of being humbled by the honour, respect and dignity that the poor and underprivileged people of this country so generously gave to her, Khaleda Zia became arrogant, high-strung, imperious, proud and pompous. Her attitude was that of an uncrowned queen who had deigned to rule us for which we must be only grateful and not demand the implementation of what she promised in elections.

In our view there are two specific points in her second term from when the rot can be said to have become uncontrollable. First was the expansion of number of ministers (including state and deputy) from 35-40 to nearly 60 during the first days of government formation in the second term. This single decision created the ground for crippling the government from functioning with any semblance of discipline, becoming an open field for illegal or extra legal decisions that would lead to ever expanding corruption. As it became clear that while all cabinet ministers were nominees of the party leadership, nearly all the state and deputy ministers were nominees of Tarique Rahman. Thus began his disruptive influence on the functioning of government, which soon led to the dismantling of all checks and balances within the administration. The multi-layered cabinet with dual loyalty was a recipe for disaster and that is precisely what happened—utter disaster.

Governance failed and politicisation of every aspect of the administration became the order of the day.

Commissioner Habibur Rahman told reporters he is not aware of this. "We will investigate the matter and action will be taken against the persons responsible."

Asked what is done to the old papers, the official said, "The old papers should be destroyed following a proper procedure."

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