

Major developing nations lukewarm on G8 climate goals

AFP, Heiligendamm

The leaders of five major developing nations on Thursday signalled they would not bow to pressure from the Group of Eight to commit to binding targets in the fight against global warming.

Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa insisted ahead of talks with G8 leaders on Friday that their "different capacities and interests" must be considered when tackling climate change.

The leaders of the G8 on Thursday agreed to seek "substantial" cuts in global emissions and "seriously consider" the target of cutting climate-changing gases by at least half by 2050.

"We commit to achieving these goals and invite the major emerging economies to join us in this endeavour," the most industrialised countries said in declaration issued at their summit in Heiligendamm in northeastern Germany.

After a meeting in Berlin to agree their position, the so-called Plus Five group of emerging nations said

they needed help from more developed nations in combating the pollution caused by their rapidly expanding economies.

"Regarding matters that will be discussed in Heiligendamm with the G8 countries, the leaders were pleased to note opportunities for joint collaboration in the fields of cross-border investment, research and innovation, climate change, energy and development," a statement from the leaders said.

"The consensus view was that all of these challenges must be addressed from a multi-lateral regional and bilateral perspective taking into consideration the interests and capacities of different states."

India said it would not waver in its refusal to accept mandatory restrictions on its output of greenhouse gases.

"India's position on climate change has not changed," Indian foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Samra told AFP.

Both India and China, which have a combined population of 2.4

billion and rising pollution levels, reject restrictions on emissions because for fear that it would slow their economic growth and affect efforts to fight poverty.

An advisor to South African President Thabo Mbeki said African nations "by and large agreed" with the position that the industrialised world must take the lead in slashing emissions.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva criticised the G8 agreement in Heiligendamm for setting a too-distant goal on capping emissions.

"What is happening with this long deadline is that nobody will do anything until the last minute... We will arrive in 2049 without having done anything," he said.

"It is necessary to have a shorter horizon."

The stance of the Plus Five nations poses another challenge for German Chancellor Angela Merkel after her tenacious battle to secure a G8 accord on climate change in the face of strong reservations from the United States.

Merkel has made clear that developing nations must shoulder more responsibility in any agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol on curbing greenhouse gases, the UN-backed framework which expires in 2012.

She has warned that any major initiative to stop the planet overheating is doomed to fail unless they sign up.

India and China are part of the Kyoto Protocol but as developing nations do not have to make emissions cuts, a condition which only applies to industrialised countries that have signed it and ratified it.

Yet their rapidly expanding economies are creating increasing amounts of greenhouse gases.

Environmental experts say China is set to overtake the United States as the world's top carbon polluter within several years.

US President George W. Bush on Thursday also insisted that China and India must be tied into any deal to cut emissions because of their strong economic growth.



A painting exhibition titled 'Gogon' by repatriated artist Ali Akber began at Galleri Kaya in the city yesterday. The exhibition will remain open from 11:00am to 8:00pm daily up to June 15.

Rita, Mita not meeting anyone

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), where she was working in the department of histopathology.

A few of her colleagues went to her house to know her present condition, but they could not enter the house since the two sisters are neither allowing anyone to enter their house nor are they talking to anyone, said Rita's colleagues apprehending a relapse of her mental illness.

Prof Mohammad Kamal, acting chief of the department of histopathology at BSMMU, admitted that Rita has been absent from work without any notice for more than a month.

"We have informed the authorities. According to the university rules, a show cause notice is supposed to be sent to the absentee after seven days of absence for unapproved leaves and after three months administrative steps is supposed to be taken against the absentee," Prof Kamal told The Daily Star.

Neighbours of the sisters said they did not see the two coming out of their house in the last two months, whereas they used to talk to people frequently before and sometimes even used to sit in their furniture shop, Woodland Doors and Furniture, that they opened about eight months ago.

The neighbours said Rita and Mita's eldest sister Kamrun Nahar Hena along with her husband have been trying to take possession of the house, where the two sisters live.

The house on 7.5 kathas of land in the capital's Mirpur area is known as the 'ghost house' among the neighbours, who said a sense of tremendous insecurity sparking from their eldest sister's and her husband's manoeuvrings to capture the house might have led the two sisters to live such an extremely secluded life.

An employee of the furniture shop said in the last two months Rita and Mita did not even collect any money from the shop and did not come out of their home at all. The employees of the shop have also been told not to allow any patient of Dr Rita to go to the house, where she used to see them as part of her private practice before relapsing into her illness.

Executive Director of BSEHR Advocate Elina Khan said her organisation observed the two

sisters for six months after their rehabilitation, but as their psychiatrist said they were quite all right and the two sisters also said they did not need any further help, BSEHR stopped monitoring them.

"A team from BSEHR was sent to their house on Wednesday and Thursday. But they were neither allowed to enter the house nor did the sisters talked to them although they recognised the members of the team," said Elina adding that it seems that the sisters' mental conditions have worsened much.

Although Rita started to live a normal life following rehabilitation, Mita continued to be depressed as she could not find a job, said Dr Mohit Kamal, the psychiatrist who was treating the two sisters.

Mita's continued depression might have contributed to Rita's relapse into the illness, said Elina adding that BSEHR tried to keep the two sisters apart from one another but could not do that in the face of

strong protest from both sisters.

The two sisters made the headlines in July 2005 as they had totally isolated themselves from the world confining themselves in total seclusion, being engrossed in religious practices and supernatural beliefs in their inherited parental house at Block-9, Section-6, of Mirpur since 1996.

In July last year, a team from BSEHR with cooperation from Pallabi police managed to convince the sisters to let them enter the house and to take the two to a clinic for treatment.

Since then, the sisters were undergoing treatment under Dr Mohit Kamal of Prottoy Medical Clinic in Banani of the capital.

Dr Kamal said they had been suffering from a serious mental illness called schizophrenia. He also said mental breakdown, suspicion, sense of insecurity and various social pressures might have caused the sisters to develop the mental disorder.

"Schizophrenia is a chronic relapsing mental disorder. Most probably they stopped taking medicine giving the disorder a chance to relapse," Dr Mohit Kamal told The Daily Star adding that the two sisters used to go to his clinic from time to time even after being rehabilitated, a practice they suddenly stopped about five to six months ago.

Rita had obtained her MBBS degree from Sir Salimullah Medical College in 1988 and joined government service in 1991 from which she resigned in 1996. After rehabilitation she joined the department of pathology at BSMMU as a Medical Officer.

Mita, who had graduated from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) in 1992, served at Sylhet Gas Field in 1994, worked for a gas infrastructure development project in 1996, and served at Buet's petroleum engineering department in 1997.

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Investigation officer (IO) produced Babar before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, with a prayer for five days' fresh remand to quiz him about the source of an illegal firearm that was recovered from his possession during his arrest.

Defence lawyers submitted a petition seeking cancellation of the remand prayer. They argued Babar need not be remanded again, as the firearms and ammunition have already been seized from his possession.

After hearing the arguments, Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon granted a three-day remand for Babar.

The former state minister was earlier remanded for eight days--four days under Emergency Power Rules and four days in the arms case. He was arrested in the third round of government crackdown on high profile graft suspects on May 28.

During his arrest, the joint forces recovered four firearms--a shotgun,

a rifle, a pistol, a Brazil-made revolver--two magazines, and 297 bullets from his (Babar) Gulshan residence. He, however, could not show any document for the revolver he was possessing.

During interrogation by the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI), Babar has already divulged stunning information about corruption by different BNP leaders and ministers including himself and Tarique Rahman. Babar said that with the consent of immediate past premier Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique, he reached a Tk 100 crore deal not to implicate Bashundhara group Chairman's son Safait Sobhan in the murder case of Bashundhara telecommunications director Humayun Kabir Sabbir who was killed on July 4 last year.

He also admitted that he took Tk 20 crore of the agreed amount that the joint forces later recovered and deposited to the government exchequer. Babar also admitted that during the tenure of BNP-Jamaat alliance government 80 percent appointments in the police depart-

ment were made in exchange for money while the rest appointed in the department were party members.

LITU DETAINED

The same court sent Bengal Group Chairman Abul Khair Litu to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday on 30 days detention after he was produced before it on expiry of a three-day remand.

A Dhaka court placed the businessman on the three-day remand on June 4. He was placed before the court a day after he was arrested from Gulshan area.

CHARGESHEET AGAINST HUDA, SALAHUDDIN

Dhankhondi police yesterday pressed charges against former communications minister Nazmul Huda in the criminal case filed against him for using a fake registration number for his sport utility vehicle (SUV).

Sub-Inspector Kazi Amirul Islam, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka.

On February 25, police seized Huda's luxurious Cadillac Escalade bearing registration number Dhaka Metro Gha 11-9999 and filed a case against him with Dhanmondi Police Station on March 1.

Meanwhile, SI Mainul Islam of the same police station pressed charges against Salahuddin Ahmed and his son Imran Ahmed in a cheating case.

Mainul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court yesterday.

Saiful Islam, deputy director of Amin Mohammad Group, filed a fraud case with Dhanmondi Police Station against former BNP lawmaker from Demra Salahuddin Ahmed and his son Imran.

In the case, the complainant said Salahuddin and his son forced him to sign the ownership document of a flat on November 10, 2003 paying only Tk 5 lakh against the actual price of over Tk 35.66 lakh.



PHOTO: STAR

Hawkers sit idle wrapping up their goods with polythene at the weekly holiday market in front of Matsya Bhavan in the city yesterday due to intermittent rains.

Yunus criticises G8's Africa aid package

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powers said yesterday at their summit in Heiligendamm in northeastern Germany that they would give 60 billion dollars (45 billion euros) to fight AIDS, as well as malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases in Africa.

Activist groups expressed disappointment at the new package, saying it fell far short of what was needed to help some 40 million Africans suffering from HIV/AIDS.

UNB in Dhaka adds: The prime minister of Thuringen state of Germany has sought Yunus' advice on state policy concerning introduction of a welfare programme promoted by some leading economists.

During a meeting convened by Prime Minister Dieter Althaus on June 6, Prof Yunus discussed the proposed policy of guaranteed basic income for the state of Thuringen with Prof Gotz Werner of Karlsruhe University and Prof Suplicy of Sao Paulo University, Brazil.

Gotz and Suplicy, both proponents of guaranteed basic income, have been working with the government of Thuringen for adopting this

policy for the state, according to a delayed message received in Dhaka yesterday.

The founder of Grameen Bank argued that welfare systems are important for those in distress, but should be designed in a way that gives incentives for people to leave welfare.

He stated that traditional welfare kept people trapped, as if in a zoo. Yunus made it clear that he is against any kind of hand out programme, and advised that the issue for the state government should not be providing guaranteed basic income, rather it should be to consider a programme of guaranteed employment for the unemployed.

He proposed that the unemployed people should be given a choice between receiving guaranteed employment or micro-credit, or receiving both.

Later in the day, Prof Yunus was in University of Karlsruhe on invitation of the president of the university to give a public lecture on Grameen Bank and poverty.

He addressed an audience of 1,200 in the overflowing main audi-

torium of the Karlsruhe University, one of the top three educational institutions in Germany. Prof Yunus joined musicians Bono, Bob Geldof and German singer Herbert Gronemeyer.

The celebrities and activists participated in a press conference in which they called upon the G8 leaders to keep the promises that have been made by the industrialised nations to the poor countries.

At the press conference, Prof Yunus said the main message to the G8 leaders was to get the world back on track towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), making trade fair for developed countries, tackling climate change and eliminating nuclear weapons.

He emphasised that Bangladesh was on track on nearly all the MDGs, and that this showed that this was also possible for all poor countries, if G8 leaders made the right decisions.