

Europeans ponder Iran sanctions

AP, Paris

Britain and France are leading a push for new EU sanctions to punish Iran over its nuclear programme. But while European nations increasingly fear a war in their backyard, the continent is divided over how to deal with the crisis.

The United States raised the stakes this week with new sanctions targeting the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which Washington accuses of supporting terrorism by backing Shia militants in Iraq. The announcement raised the question of whether the European Union would follow suit.

France, long viewed as too busy making money in Iran to punish it over its nuclear programme, is now seeking to hurt Tehran economically. Britain also sees tougher sanctions as essential.

But few other European nations are clamouring to support stepped-up EU sanctions. The divisions mirror those that split the continent over Iraq, though the fault lines have shifted.

"It's not unthinkable that (Europe) could reach symbolic sanctions, but it will be complicated to get much further. There's just too much division," said Philippe Moreau-Defarges of the French Institute for International Relations. "France is pretty isolated, aside from Britain."

Since the United States first

slapped sanctions on Iran in 1979, European companies have continued to rake in profits from business in Iran, from the oil sector to banking deals.

While corporate rivals in Asia or elsewhere could fill a void left by the possible loss of European companies in Iran, EU expertise in the financial or industrial sectors would be missed, analysts said. Iran already faces limited EU sanctions and visa bans.

Concerns have been rising in some European corners that the United States or Israel might attack to prevent Iran from developing atomic bombs. But few EU members agree on what measures to take to make sure war does not breakout.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is designed strictly to produce electricity and has repeatedly defied UN demands that it suspend uranium enrichment, a possible pathway to atomic weapons.

EU foreign ministers in mid-October failed to agree on new sanctions sought by French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner. He sent a letter to European counterparts Oct. 2 urging them to examine new EU sanctions, mainly on Iran's financial sector, to complement efforts toward a third set of UN Security Council sanctions.

But Germany and Italy, Iran's biggest EU trading partner want to

give diplomacy and current sanctions more time, looking for unity through the United Nations.

"These are countries that are discreet in their international relations and have economic ties to Iran," in industries like metals, chemicals and oil, said Francois Gere, an Iran specialist and head of the French Institute of Strategic Analysis.

After meeting Wednesday with Iranian officials, Italian Premier Romano Prodi praised the efforts of EU and Iranian negotiators and said dialogue was "the only instrument" to reach a solution.

The new dynamic of European ties with the United States is central to the equation.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has sought to rekindle ties with the US that soured during the Iraq war. Britain has been a stalwart US friend. Several EU newcomers from eastern Europe tend to favor tougher sanctions, mostly because of their pro-US affinities, analysts said.

Sarkozy said in August he wanted to avoid "a catastrophic alternative: an Iranian bomb, or the bombing of Iran" if diplomacy fails. The mere suggestion from France of military action against Iran sent shockwaves through diplomatic circles. But Sarkozy's comments appear designed to rally the international community around the idea of a forceful strategy on Iran that stops short of war.

Benazir prays at father's grave

AP, Garhi Khuda Baksh

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited her ancestral village Saturday to pay respects at her father's tomb, her first trip outside Pakistan's biggest city since an assassination attempt against her killed 143 people nine days ago.

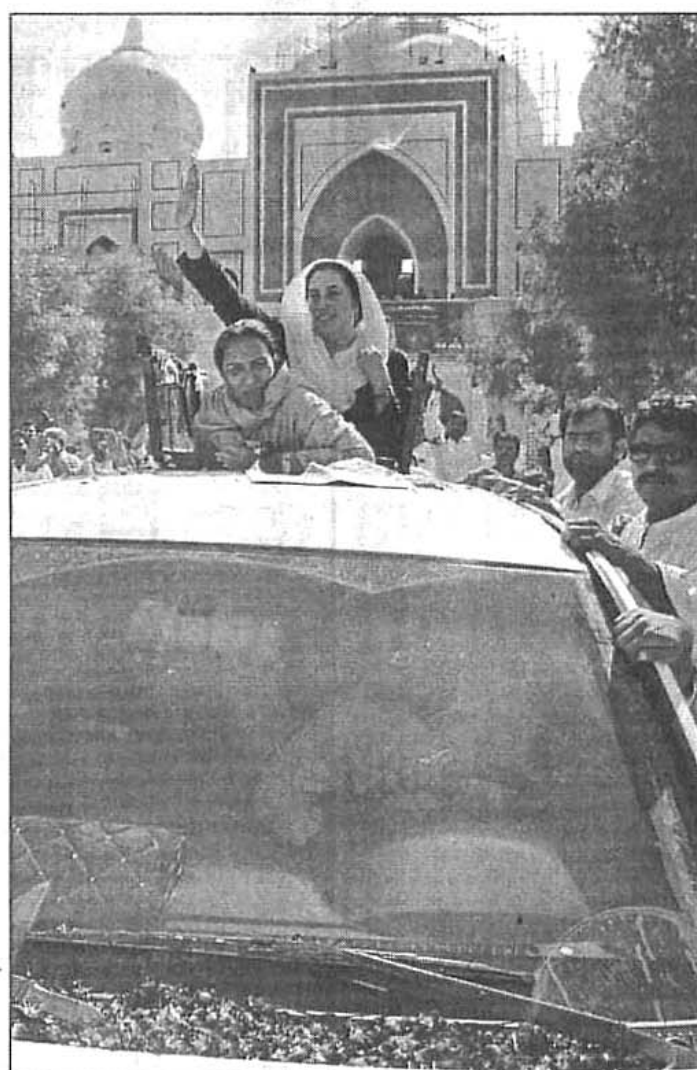
Hundreds of supporters ran toward Benazir Bhutto's convoy, kicking up clouds of dust, as she arrived in the village of Garhi Khuda Baksh after a 60-mile road trip from the airport at the southern city of Sukkur, where she flew to from Karachi.

Armed private security guards in the village surrounded the white-domed marble mausoleum, cordoning off the area and forbidding entry even to police.

After waving to bystanders from her SUV's sunroof with black metal sheets on either side of her, Benazir Bhutto stepped down from the vehicle that was flanked by paramilitary troops in white pick-ups with machine guns mounted on top. Other security guards clung to the sides of the SUV.

She stepped directly inside the mausoleum to pay her respects to her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's first popularly elected leader, who was hanged three decades ago. She said prayers and sprinkled flower petals on his tomb and that of other ancestors interred there.

About 2,000 supporters waving the red, green and black flags of her Pakistan People's Party waited outside.



Former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto (C) waves to supporters outside her family mausoleum during her visit to the village of Garhi Khuda Baksh yesterday. Benazir Bhutto arrived in her ancestral village Saturday amid tight security in her first public trip in Pakistan since suicide bombers shattered her homecoming parade.

Iran 'feels safe' from US attack

AP, Tehran

Iran's leadership boasts it is safe from US military action, saying Washington knows an attack would find no world support and send oil prices skyrocketing.

That confidence is buoying the government in its standoff with the West, despite news sanctions.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, on Friday dismissed the US announcement a day earlier of new sanctions, saying "Washington will isolate itself" with the measures.

"They have imposed sanctions on us for 28 years. The new sanctions are just in the same direction," Jalili said as he returned from talks with European officials in Germany and Italy, according to the state news agency IRNA.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is taking a hard line in the confrontation with the West over its nuclear programme, apparently confident Washington's main pressure tools — sanctions and the threat of military action — are ineffective.

It could be a risky bet. Ahmadinejad's main vulnerability is domestic: rising criticism from a public angry over the country's poor economy and from politicians disillusioned by what they call his mismanagement. Even some conservatives have expressed fears Ahmadinejad is pushing Iran into future trouble over the nuclear issue.

Further sanctions, even unilateral ones from the US, could hurt the economy more by further isolating it from international finance

and Iranians were already expressing worries over the new measures.

Ahmadinejad, who faces elections in 2009, knows "jobless and poor people will not vote for him if his policies bring them more difficulties," said Ahmad Bakhsheh, a political science professor at Tehran's Azad University.

But he believes "unilateral economic sanctions by Washington are not strong enough (to hurt Iran) due to Iran's widespread economic relations with the world."

Suzanne Maloney, an expert on Iran at the Washington-based Brookings Institution, said that while sanctions have put pressure on the regime, oil prices have dampened their effect.

"Yes, life becomes more expensive, but right now they have a fairly considerable cushion," she said, adding that sanctions might force the government to become more fiscally responsible.

"A flush Iran has been an irresponsible Iran. Most of their economic problems have been caused by having too much cash on their hands," she said. In the face of new sanctions, "it's not unthinkable that they'll take more responsible measures at home that will cut some of the internal pressure."

Recent US statements have deepened Iranians' fears of attack. Last week, President Bush warned that a nuclear Iran could lead to "World War III," and Vice President Dick Cheney vowed Sunday that the US and other nations will not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon. Iran denies it is seeking nuclear weapons, saying its programme aims only to produce electricity.

US to order diplomats to serve in Iraq

AP, Washington

In the largest call-up of US diplomats since the Vietnam War, the State Department is planning to order some of its personnel to serve at the American Embassy in Iraq because of a lack of volunteers.

Those designated "prime candidates" from 200 to 300 diplomats will be notified Monday that they have been selected for one-year postings to fill the 40 to 50 vacancies expected next year.

They will have 10 days to accept or reject the position. If not enough say yes, some will be ordered to go to Iraq and face dismissal if they refuse, Harry Thomas, director general of the Foreign Service, said Friday.

"Starting Nov. 12, our assignments panel will assign people to Iraq," Thomas told reporters in a conference call. "Under our system,

we have all taken an oath to serve our country, we have all signed (up for) worldwide availability.

"If someone decides ... they do not want to go, we will then consider appropriate action," he said. "We have many options, including dismissal from the Foreign Service."

Only those with compelling reasons, such as a medical condition or extreme personal hardship, will be exempt from disciplinary action, Thomas said. He said the process of deciding who will go to Iraq should be complete by Thanksgiving.

Diplomats who are forced into service in Iraq will receive the same extra hardship pay, vacation time and choice of future assignments as those who have volunteered since Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this past summer ordered Baghdad positions to be filled before all others around the world.

Rice looks to history for ME peace effort

AP, Washington

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is looking to the past for lessons on how to make next month's Mideast peace conference a success.

As she prepares to host the international meeting in Annapolis, Md., Rice has delved into the history of US attempts to mediate peace in the region, plunging into the diplomatic annals and seeking out the major players responsible for both successes and failures.

"She's trying to draw on the historical record and the experiences of others to see what she can glean and how that may be applicable to the current day," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Friday, ahead of Rice's Nov. 4-6 trip to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, her second in three weeks to organise the Annapolis gathering.

Most recently, she met this week with Jimmy Carter, sitting down in her office on Wednesday for a talk with the former president who brokered the 1978 Camp David peace accord between Israel and

Egypt, the first between the Jewish state and an Arab nation. Carter has been a vocal critic of the Bush administration's Middle East policies and wrote a recent book, "Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid," that some believe is anti-Israeli. McCormack said the differences in approach were not a subject of her conversation.

Rice has also spoken by phone with former President Clinton about his work on the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace deal. She discussed with both Clinton and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright the unsuccessful 2000 attempt in Shepherdstown, W Virginia, to mediate an Israeli-Syrian agreement and their bid later that year at Camp David to forge an Israeli-Palestinian pact.

Others she has reached out to include former secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and James Baker, and to one-time US peace negotiators like Dennis Ross, who played a key role in the Clinton administration and the administration of former President George HW Bush.

Bomber kills 5 at US base in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at the entrance to a US base in eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, killing four Afghan soldiers and one Afghan civilian, a US official said.

Initial reports indicated the bomber walked up to the first security gate outside of Forward Operating Base Bermel in Paktika province, said Maj. Christine Nelson-Chung, a US spokeswoman. She said four Afghan soldiers and one civilian were wounded.

No Americans were wounded in the attack, she said. It wasn't immediately clear if the bomber had been trying to gain entry to the base, which is near the border with Pakistan.

Taliban insurgents have set off more than 100 suicide blasts this year, a record pace, and violence in 2007 has been the deadliest since the 2001 US-led invasion. More than 5,200 people have died because of the insurgency this year, according to an Associated Press count based on figures from Afghan and Western officials.



Indian Kashmiri Muslims throw stones towards Indian police officers during a demonstration in Srinagar yesterday. A separatist-sponsored strike shut most of the shops, businesses and offices in Kashmir's main city on the 60th anniversary of Indian troops' deployment in the region.



Turkish soldiers patrol the area near the Turkey-Iraq border, in the province of Sirnak, southeast Turkey yesterday. Turkish media said Saturday that the government's rejection of Iraqi proposals to curb Kurdish militants had brought closer Turkish military strikes on Kurdish rebel bases in northern Iraq.

FLATS FOR SALE IN UTTARA

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SECTOR 10

The Nobility
SECTOR 10

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SECTOR 07

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SECTOR 04

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SECTOR 05

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Fresh Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) ACID SURVIVORS FOUNDATION (ASF)	
1. Agency	Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF)
2. Name of Procuring Entity	ASF Trustee Board
3. Procuring Entity Code	N/A
4. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
5. Expression of Interest for Selection of	Consulting Firm (National/International) on Lump-sum basis
6. EOI Ref. No.	ASF/2007/01
7. Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	October 28, 2007
KEY INFORMATION	
8. Procurement Sub-Method	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
FUNDING INFORMATION	
9. Budget and Source of funds	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the People's Republic of Bangladesh
10. Development Partner (if applicable)	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the People's Republic of Bangladesh
PARTICULAR INFORMATION	
11. Project/Programme Code (if applicable)	Not Applicable
12. Project/Programme Name (if applicable)	Feasibility study for Acid Survivors Foundation Complex (ASFC)
13. EOI Closing Date and time	Within 14 (Fourteen) days from the publishing date of the EOI
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT	
14. Brief Description of the Assignment	Consulting services according to TOR and Project Concept paper for the work specified in the first phase of the proposed work. Both the documents are available at the following website: www.acidsurvivors.org
15. Experience, Resources & Delivery Capacity Required	Details of Experience, Resource and Delivery Capacity are furnished in the TOR. Interested firm(s) may obtain Terms of Reference (TOR) & further information from the office of the Procuring Entity ASF's official website: www.acidsurvivors.org . Interested consultant firms are invited to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services. Experience of similar assignment for last ten years is requested to be submitted. Brochures will also include the registration number, list of available appropriate professionals showing qualification and experience with signed Curriculum Vitae (CV), summarizing their facilities and areas of expertise with administrative strength & financial capability. The financial capability will be shown as Financial Turn Over supported by a registered Audit Firm for the last three years. The EOI's would be reviewed on the basis of those described above to prepare short list.
16. Other Details (if applicable)	The firm(s) may form Joint Venture, Consortium or Association (JVCA) to enhance their qualifications, but should mention whether the association is in the form of a "Joint-Venture" or "Sub-Consultancy". In the case of joint venture, all firms/entities shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire consultant's obligations under the contract. But in case of sub-consultancy the lead firm shall sign the contract and shall be liable for the entire consultant's obligation under the contract. The Consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures of the ASF Procurement Policy. The Proposals in three sets (One Original+ Two Duplicate) shall be submitted in sealed envelope, delivered to the address of the undersigned shown above within 14 (fourteen) days from the publishing date of the EOI during office hour and clearly marked "Request for Expression of Interest" for Acid Survivors Foundation Complex (ASFC). The firm(s) who already submitted proposals earlier need to submit proposals again. The participating firms must confirm their mode of association clarifying the positions with signed stamped MOU within the closing date.
17. Association with foreign firms is	Encouraged
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS	
18. Contact person of the Official Inviting EOI	Executive Director, Acid Survivors Foundation
19. Address of the Official Inviting EOI	Acid Survivors Foundation House#12, Road#22, Block-K, Banani, Dhaka
20. Contact Details of the Official Inviting EOI	Telephone# 9891314, 9880142, 01711620923 Fax- 9888439, Email: monira@acidsurvivors.org
The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or rejects all EOI's	