

Iran frees UK embassy staff, partial vote recount begins

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it has freed five local British embassy staff arrested on accusations of stoking post-election unrest, a move that further threatened tense ties with London and the West.

The announcement came as Iran's top election body began a partial recount of the fiercely-disputed presidential election, after opposition demonstrators defiantly faced off against riot police in Tehran.

"Out of nine people arrested, five have been released," foreign ministry spokesman Hassan Ghashghavi said at a press conference.

Iran has repeatedly accused the West particularly Britain and the United States of "meddling" in the violent aftermath of the election, which triggered the biggest crisis since the Islamic revolution 30 years ago.

But even as the international community voices continuing alarm over the situation in Iran, Ghashghavi said Tehran has no plans to close embassies or downgrade diplomatic ties with foreign nations.

Iran has accused the embassy staff of playing a "considerable role" in the unrest that rocked the country after the late victory of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the June 12 vote.

Intelligence Minister

32 killed

Overnight, 15 Afghan-bound Taliban fighters were killed in a gun battle with tribesmen in the region of Kurram, which is also part of Pakistan's tribal belt that falls outside direct government control, officials said.

The clash erupted when militants -- heading to the eastern Afghan province of Khost -- were crossing an area dominated by the Toori tribe of Shia Muslims late Sunday, local administration official Siddiq Ahmed told AFP.

"The gun battle left 15 militants and two Toori tribesmen dead," he said.

Security officials confirmed the casualties near the town of Parachinar, bordering Afghanistan, and said Tooris feared the Taliban had infiltrated the area.

Taliban hardliners, who are Sunnis, consider Shias non-Muslims and the area has been troubled by sectarian tensions.

RMG Workers

FROM PAGE 1
Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) over the last few months to have their jobs back, get their arrears wages, and get their pay hiked. But the association could do little for them.

"Due to declining orders from international buyers I sold S Sui Industrial Park [six garment production units] to Pretty Group in February and all of the units were closed in October last year," said Sirajul Islam, former managing director of S Sui Industrial Park.

Sirajul said he could not run all six of his units as the number of orders from the recession-hit international buyers was declining. He said the units had 1,700 workers when it was handed over to the new owner.

The closure of the units of S Sui Industrial Park Ltd was mainly responsible for the latest labour unrest in garment factories in Ashulia and Savar areas, a number of garment workers claimed.

Pretty Group in March started production only with the sweater-manufacturing unit and kept the five other units of the former S Sui Industrial Park closed. Around 1,000 out-of-work workers of the five units were mounting pressure on the new management to restart those units soon, said garment workers.

The workers of the closed units along with other ill-paid workers of some nearby factories, which are not doing so well, started a movement to reopen the units and raise salary of workers, they said.

Failing to get their jobs back, they started to unite and threaten to halt production in other factories unless the former S Sui units are reopened, a worker of Ha-Meem Group said requesting anonymity.

Honduras torn between ousted leader and his replacement

AP, Tegucigalpa

Honduras is now torn between two presidents: one legally recognised by world bodies after he was deposed and forced from the country by his own soldiers, and another supported by the Central American nation's congress, courts and military.

Presidents from around Latin America were gathering in Nicaragua for meetings Monday to resolve the first military overthrow of a Central American government in 16 years, and once again Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez took centre stage, casting the dispute as a rebellion by the region's poor.

"If the oligarchies break the rules of the game as they have done, the people have the right to resistance and combat, and we are with them," Chavez said in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua.

There is a deep rift between the outside world which is clamouring for the return of democratically elected, but largely unpopular and soon-to-leave-office President Manuel Zelaya and congressionally designated successor Roberto Micheletti.

Micheletti rejected any outside interference and declared a two-night curfew, while Chavez vowed that "we will overthrow [Micheletti]".

Zelaya was seized by soldiers and hustled aboard a plane to Costa Rica early Sunday, just hours before a rogue referendum Zelaya had called in defiance of the courts and Congress, and which his opponents said was an attempt to remain in power after his term ended Jan. 27.

The Honduran constitution limits presidents to a single 4-year term, and Zelaya's opponents feared he would use the referendum results to try to run again, just as Chavez reformed his country's constitution to be able to seek re-election repeatedly.

Micheletti said the army acted on orders from the courts, and the ouster was carried out "to defend respect for the law and the principles of democracy." But he threatened to jail Zelaya and put him on trial if he returned. Micheletti also hit back at Chavez, saying "nobody, not Barack Obama and much less Hugo Chavez, has any right to threaten this country."

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However, I asked the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry to include names of BNP lawmakers if they want. But they did not propose any name for inclusion in the parliamentary team that would visit the Tipaimukh Dam site," she said.

Referring to Khaleda's letter, Hasina said the opposition leader sent a letter to her. But she did not read the letter. "I will let everybody know the message the letter carries," she said.

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Ha-Meem factories

FROM PAGE 1
Police fired teargas to stop those on the rampage, but to little avail. The demonstrators ran riot for three hours at a stretch, leaving the area strewn with glasses and furniture shattered to pieces.

Locals said police and the Rapid Action Battalion did not do much to quell the violence.

Firefighters reached the scene after around two and a half hours. By that time, the factories and warehouses were completely gutted, they added.

Zahidul, a worker of the Ha-Meem Group, told The Daily Star, "We tried to protect the factories, but failed. During the attack, they looted our office buildings."

Fire service sources said 16 units from Savar, EPZ, Tongi and headquarters worked for hours to douse the flames.

MM Islam, executive director-2 of Ha-Meem Group, told The Daily Star that they had lost a sweater factory, three garment factories, two washing factories, two fabric storehouses and four vehicles in the arson attack.

Columns of thick black smoke could be seen from a distance, he continued.

Over 8,000 machines, a huge quantity of readymade garments, fabrics and other valuables were reduced to ashes. He however could not give an estimate of the damage.

Islam said, "The raiders got furious as our 14,000 workers did not join the demonstrations."

He alleged the attack was part of a conspiracy against their group.

"Had the firefighters and

police reached timely, they could have saved the factories that produce around 1,00,000 pieces of garment a day," observed the official.

Dhaka District Superintendent of Police Iqbal Bahar described the violence for three days in a row as subversive acts.

He admitted they had failed to sense that things could spiral out of control.

"An additional 400 policemen stood guard in front of the major factories. We tried our best to disperse the crowd, but they were too many and too fierce."

He, however, claimed they have identified the masterminds behind the attacks.

"We had a successful meeting with all concerned on Sunday night. We thought there was little possibility of a further clash. But some people from outside incited the workers to fresh violence."

Around 400 factories were kept shut yesterday following clashes on the previous two days.

Several hundred workers of the closed factories tried to enter the Export Processing Zone at around 8:00am, but police and security guards foiled their attempt, witnesses said.

They gathered in front of Fantasy Kingdom at around 9:30am and held a rally led by labour leader Montu Ghosh.

They attacked at least 50 factories on both sides of the Ashulia-Bypile road while marching towards Ha-Meem Group complex.

Monwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station, said none was arrested and no case filed as of filing this report at 1:00am.

Scope now

FROM PAGE 1
The source of the money would have to be disclosed, he said, adding that the scope for whitening money would remain valid from July, 2009, to June, 2010; for investment in new industries and infrastructures as well as in the share market.

If the declarations made while taking this advantage are proved false later on, the scope for whitening money would be cancelled.

If investment is made in the share market, it cannot be withdrawn in two years, Muhith said.

A person would also be able to buy a flat with whitened money during this period but he or she would not be able to buy another flat with whitened money in his or her lifetime, the ministers said.

Earlier, in the proposed budget for 2009-10, the government allowed legalising of black money for the next three years with 10 percent tax on the disclosed amount, sparking huge criticism across the country.

The government also decided to reduce to three percent the proposed customs duty on the import of newsprint.

He also announced tax cut on motor vehicles, cellphones, kitchen utensils, medicines and bidi. However, he proposed more tax on cigarettes.

Meanwhile, Muhith also announced that tax on cellphone handsets would be reduced to 12 percent from the proposed 25 percent in the budget. He also proposed waiver of five percent regulatory duty on mobile sets.

Value Added Tax (VAT) on herbal and unani medicines and manpower recruitment agencies would also be withdrawn, the ministers said.

In case of individual category taxpayers, the amount of tax rebate has been increased to Tk 10 lakh from the proposed Tk 5 lakh.

To encourage people to use computers more, investment for purchasing a laptop under Tk 1 lakh and a desktop computer under Tk 50,000 would be tax-free. In the import of computer and its accessories, the duty and advance income tax has been completely withdrawn.

For cars with engines between 1,000cc and 1500cc, 45 percent supplementary duty was proposed but now it has been brought down to 30 percent.

The proposal to increase duty on transports, including motorcycles, used by the masses has been withdrawn.

Hybrid vehicles up to 2,000cc would attract duty free but those above 2,000cc would have to pay tax. Earlier, all hybrid vehicles were proposed to be duty free.

Duty on the import of powdered milk and solar panels has been withdrawn.

A 12-23 percent tax hike was proposed on cigarettes and five percent tax has been added on top oil.

Ministers

FROM PAGE 16

He criticised Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and other senior ministers for being absent during the budget discussion.

The finance minister, however, came in within a few minutes.

Coming down heavily on the main opposition lawmakers for not joining House proceedings, Suranjit said they should resign if they do not want to perform their constitutional duties. He also proposed enacting a law, if required, to make sure that opposition lawmakers are present in the House.

The AL presidium member also suggested that a re-call system be introduced which would empower voters of a constituency to call a lawmaker back if he or she fails to meet their expectations.

He suggested that the provision of quorum system in parliament be abolished since he believes the main work of the House goes on in the committees.

Referring to the seating arrangement row, for which the main opposition lawmakers are remaining absent in parliament, Suranjit proposed scrapping the existing system of allocating seats for lawmakers. Except two seats, all seats in the House might be kept open for all lawmakers, he said adding that one could get a seat on first-come first-get basis.

On the proposed budget, Suranjit said it is not a traditional budget. "How will the budget be implemented with existing bureaucracy," he questioned.

He also spoke for changes in political culture to move the country ahead.

On the Tipaimukh dam issue, Suranjit said people do not want to compromise the national interest.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1

"In the interest of the nation we [BNP] have agreed to your proposal for sending a separate delegation including water experts to visit the Tipaimukh dam site although an all-party delegation including experts would have expressed national unity," Khaleda wrote to Hasina.

"We, as the opposition, cannot send a delegation to another country. So, we are seeking your help for sending the team and obtaining related information and documents from India on Tipaimukh dam," said BNP chairperson in her letter.

Referring to Foreign Minister Dipu Moni's statement on receiving information from India regarding Tipaimukh dam, the leader of the opposition drew prime minister's attention urging her to give necessary direction for providing the information to the BNP delegation so that it could make preparation.

"Tipaimukh dam is a national crisis. That is why it should be solved through national consensus. Hence we took stance in favour of the nation's interest and think that our role will strengthen the government during talks with India," said the letter.

Earlier on June 21, opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farouque proposed to include five water experts Dr Aunur Nishat, former water secretary Asafuddoula, Dr Torofder, MA Rob and Dr Asif Nazrul -- in the all-party parliamentary team.

He said if neutral water experts were not included, BNP would not join the all-party parliamentary team to visit Tipaimukh dam location.

However, the BNP chairperson dropped Aunur Nishat, Torofder and Asif Nazrul from the latest list of experts.

Khoka urged the government to bring DCC under the secretariat of prime minister to speed up its activities.

He also requested the government to bring WASA under DCC and ensure its representation during taking new plan by Rajuk for constructing road, drains, sewerage lines and graveyards.

Underscored the need for saving rivers around the city, the mayor demanded to form a river authority for saving them from land grabbers and keeping their normal navigability unhindered.

About the new infrastructures, he said an initiative has been taken to implement Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover project, which was cancelled during the tenure of immediate past caretaker government.

He also requested the government to introduce more than one post of deputy mayor and increase the number of wards to 150 from 90.

Govt warns

FROM PAGE 1

The meeting was called after directions from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the wake of a series of violence in the garments sector over the last few days.

Commerce minister Faruk Khan, State Minister Monnojan Sufian, Home Minister Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Annisul Huq, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Abdus Salam Murshed, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) President Fazul Haque and senior police and Rab officials were present at the meeting.

Briefing newsmen, Mosharraf said the government is gravely concerned about the violent incidents in the country's premier earning sector, and has taken the issue very seriously.

"The present situation

will be handled strictly to protect life and property -- as directed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina so that no further unrest erupts in the RMG sector," he said.

The minister said that proper measurers will be taken to identify those directly or indirectly involved with the incidents and would be brought to justice.

Mosharraf expressed his deep sympathy for the family members of the two persons who lost their lives during the violence. He said a special unit of law enforcement agencies would soon be put to work to oversee security of the industry sector round the clock.

He also hinted that outsiders might have been involved in violence at the RMG units but refrained from making any further comment about this.

The minister said the crisis management cell of the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment would soon visit the spot and investigate the incident.

Brazil roar back

FROM PAGE 16

Bradley's giant killers began in an attacking frame of mind with Fulham's Dempsey making the first attempt on goal with a long distance strike that fizzed wide after just two minutes.

Brazil started feeding the ball to Maicon on the right and he lofted several crosses into the box that put the US under pressure before Real Madrid's new signing Kaka glanced a header wide.

Dunga said before the match he wanted an early goal but it was the US who stunned Brazil after 10 minutes.

West Ham's Jonathan Spector fed Dempsey with a defence-splitting through ball and the number eight cleverly put his shot under the diving Julio Cesar.

Brazil immediately charged back with Robinho attempting to angle a side-footed shot past Everton stopper Tim Howard but the United States kept up the pressure and Dempsey went close once again.

It was two to end stuff and Felipe Melo forced a fine save from Howard who was called into action again soon after to deny Maicon before the US pounced again with a lightning quick counter-attack.

The dangerous Landon Donovan picked the ball up in his own half and found the sprinting Davies on the left.

It was two against two and the US came off better with Davies returning the ball to Donovan who crashed the ball into the net after 27 minutes.

Brazil looked hard for a way back but Howard was a rock in goal and they went to the break needing something special.

Fabiano provided it seconds after the restart when he caught the US napping, turning well from 17 yards to beat Howard and get his team back in the match.

Maicon had two good

opportunities to draw them level as Brazil pressed with searching passes into the US penalty area, while Kaka saw his header come agonisingly close when Howard pushed the ball onto the crossbar.

The US had lost composure and it was a desperate rearguard action with Howard forced into action time and again and the equaliser was inevitable.

Kaka crossed from the left and Robinho's shot hit the bar with Fabiano meeting therebound.

Brazil were on a mission and it was no surprise when Lucio bagged the winner to break American hearts.

Tigers

FROM PAGE 16

The Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados, will be the first Test to take place at the Arnos Vale Ground, Kingstown, St Vincent on July 9-13 while the second and final Test is scheduled for July 17-21 at the National Cricket Stadium, St George's, Grenada.

The three ODIs are scheduled for July 26 (Windsor Park, Roseau, Dominica), July 28 (Windsor Park, Roseau, Dominica) and July 31 (Warner Park, Basseterre, St Kitts).

The tour will end with the lone T20 match on August 2 at Warner Park, Basseterre, St Kitts.

After completion of the Caribbean trip, Bangladesh will fly for Zimbabwe to involve in a five-match series against the home side.

The one-day squad for West Indies and a five-match one-day series in Zimbabwe will be announced later.

SQUAD
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (captain), Shakib Al Hasan (vice-captain), Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddiqui, Mohammad Ashraful, Rokibul Hassan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mehrez Hossain, Shahadat Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Mahbubul Alam, Imrul Kayes, Mahmudullah Riyad, Enamul Haque and Sahagir Hossain.

Matin forced

FROM PAGE 1

assistant secretary of shipping ministry and Omar Farukh, assistant traffic control officer of Chittagong port made the allegations.

Shah Alam said the officials told the sub-committee that the then adviser Matin had put pressure on them to award the contract for container handling to Ishak Brothers, and increase the age limit of shipping pilots.

He also said Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Reazuddin Ahmed had allegedly sent port officials to Dhaka by air asking them to go to the Secretariat for completing the tender procedure on the same day.

The parliamentary body was told by Masud Elahi that the then adviser had unilaterally increased the age limit of shipping pilots to 60 from 57, ignoring government service rules.

Masud, who had handled this issue at that time in the shipping ministry, sought pardon saying they had no alternative but to do the job under pressure from the adviser.

"The officials who flew to Dhaka from Chittagong were not entitled to enjoy this

facility. But they were given the facility for completing the tender procedure hurriedly," Shah Alam said.

He mentioned that the tender procedure was completed on January 5 as the Awami League-led government assumed office on January 6.

The House body chief quoted Sharif Mohammad Masum, who had drafted the tender documents, as saying, "We were unable to leave office until we completed the task. We faced tremendous pressure from the high-ups."

Shah Alam said the CPA chairman was asked about his alleged involvement in the irregularities. "But he (chairman) could not give any satisfactory explanation. He just told the sub-committee that he would submit necessary documents to it."

The House body asked the shipping ministry to collect from the port authorities documents relating to the matter.

The sub-committee was formed by the parliamentary standing committee to probe the allegations against Matin. He denied the allegations.