

# 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 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 landslide victory of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the June 12 vote.

Intelligence Minister

## 32 killed

FROM PAGE 1

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 arrear wages, and get their payhiked. But the association could do little for them.

"Due to declining orders from international buyers I sold S Suhu 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 Suhu 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 Suhu 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 Suhu 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 Suhu 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 ends Jan. 27.

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. But the BNP does not have representation in the standing committee, 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.

Construction of Tipaimukh Dam on Borak River in India has become a burning issue in Bangladesh that triggered widespread protest, confusion and a game of blame in politics.

Apart from opposition parties and a section of experts, many ruling party lawmakers, and a number of ministers have already raised their voice against the dam.

The BGMEA leaders demanded a transparent probe into such incidents one after another in the last few years.

They met the labour minister and commerce minister yesterday and sought proper security for garment industry.

And they will seek to meet the prime minister today.

"The incidents (in Ashulia-Savar) in last three days occurred even in presence of law enforcers," BGMEA President Abdus Salam Mursedy said at a press briefing at BGMEA building in the capital.

He, however, said that three workers behaved badly with a production manager of S Suhu Sweater Unit (Pretty Group) on June 27.

He said there was an altercation between the three workers and the production manager over the workers' getting to work late. "The production manager did not allow the three to enter the factory that day and they were kept outside the gate," he said.

He said the three workers called others and tried to force their way into the factory and the management tried to obstruct them with the help of Ansar members.

At one stage, the workers entered the factory premises and snatched the weapons of Ansar members. "Other Ansar members opened fire on the workers to disperse them when Al-Amin, a worker, was seriously injured and he died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH)," Manjur said.

I do not believe that the latest labour unrest erupted due to the incident in former S Suhu Industrial Park Ltd., it is a deliberate attempt to destroy the readymade garment sector in Bangladesh," he said.

He said he would open the sweater factory on July 1, as this is the peak season for sweater production. The other units would be reopened in phases in the near future, he added.

Barrister Saifur Rashid stood for the petitioners.

## 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

## Ministers

FROM PAGE 16

He criticised Finance Minister AMA Muhiith 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, Suranjan 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 committee.

Referring to the seating arrangement row, for which the main opposition lawmakers are remaining absent in parliament, Suranjan 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-serve basis.

On the proposed budget, Suranjan 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, Suranjan said people do not want to compromise the national interest.

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.

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.

"Had the firefighters and

## 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 garment sector over the last few days.

The minister said that proper measures 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 around the clock.

He also hinted that outsiders might have been involved in violence at the RMG units and 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 giantkillers 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.

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

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, 2009, Second Test

The first Test will 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 (Warren Park, Basseterre, St Kitts).

The two 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 to 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.

## 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.

Matin, 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.