

# Iran military for holding trial of opposition leaders

Hardliners slam UK over post-polls unrest

AFP, Tehran

A top official with Iran's Revolutionary Guards called on Sunday for the main opposition leaders to be put on trial for trying to orchestrate a "velvet coup" after the disputed presidential election.

Yadollah Javani said former president Mohammad Khatami and defeated challengers Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karubi should be prosecuted over the crisis that has gripped Iran since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election in June.

Javani, head of the Revolutionary Guards' political bureau, said a plot to topple the 30-year-old Islamic regime through a "velvet coup" has been exposed.

"The question is who were the main planners and agents of this coup. What is the role of Khatami, Mousavi and Karroubi in this coup?" he said in an article in Sobh-e Sadeq, the Guards' weekly journal.

"If they are the main agents, which is

the case, judiciary and security officials should go after them, arrest them, try them and punish them."

Mousavi and his supporters have refused to accept Ahmadinejad's landslide victory in the June 12 vote, saying it was the result of massive rigging, and setting off the worst crisis since the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets to protest at the vote and in the ensuing violence about 30 people were killed, hundreds wounded and several thousand initially arrested.

Iran has put on trial about 110 people over the unrest, including British and French embassy staff and a French woman lecturer, and accused foreign governments of plotting to destabilise the country.

Masoud Jazayeri, deputy chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, also said plotters should be dealt with and called for "more control" on foreign embassies to deter "colour coups".

"Iranian citizens... are waiting to see

how the agents of this recent plot will be confronted," the official IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

On Saturday, Hossein Rassam, political analyst at the British embassy in Tehran, appeared in the dock along with French lecturer Clotilde Reiss, and Franco-Iranian Nazak Afshar, who works for French embassy's cultural section.

The trial -- the latest crackdown by the authorities against the opposition -- provoked outrage in London and the European Union's Swedish presidency said it was an act against the entire 27-nation bloc.

Rassam was one of nine local British embassy employees detained in the aftermath of the election and has been charged with spying.

He told the revolutionary court in Tehran he had been instructed by his superiors to monitor the protests for the British government, according to local press reports. Foreign media were barred from covering the trial.



PHOTO: AFP

Nepalese men from the Tamang ethnic minority community play drums and mask dance in Kathmandu to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous People yesterday. Nepal is an ethnically diverse country and some of its minority groups complain they have long been underrepresented in government.

## Iran's police chief acknowledges prisoner abuse

AP, Tehran

Iran's police chief acknowledged yesterday that protesters detained in postelection unrest were abused in custody but said the deaths of prisoners were caused by illness, not torture.

Iran's opposition has seized on claims of abuse at Kahrizak detention centre, saying young people protesting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's June 12 re-election were tortured to death there.

More troubling for the government, however, is that some prominent figures in its own conservative support



PHOTO: AFP

People watch as rescue boats search the area where a small airplane and helicopter collided over the Hudson River on Saturday in Hoboken, New Jersey. According to reports, a small plane carrying three people, which took off from Teterboro Airport in New Jersey, collided with a helicopter owned by Liberty Tours that was carrying approximately six people.

## US plane, helicopter collide over Hudson: 9 killed

AP, Hoboken

As investigators try to piece together how a small plane and tourist helicopter came to enter each other's airspace over the Hudson River on a clear summer day, divers were to search for clues to the crash believed to have claimed nine lives.

Three bodies were recovered Saturday, hours after the midday collision sent hundreds who were out enjoying the weekend searching for cover from falling debris.

National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Debbie Hersman told a news conference that a helicopter pilot on the ground at the heliport for Liberty Tours, which operated the doomed sightseeing craft, saw the

plane approaching the helicopter and tried to alert the helicopter pilot.

"He radioed the accident helicopter and told him, 'One-lima-hotel. You have a fixed-wing behind you.' There was no response from the pilot," she said. Then, the pilot on the ground saw the plane's right wing strike the helicopter "and both aircraft descended into the Hudson River."

The two aircraft went down just south of the stretch of river where a US Airways jet landed safely seven months ago. But this time, there was no miracle.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the midair crash was "unrecoverable." The helicopter carried five Italians tourists and the plane had two

passengers, including a child.

The river's strong currents and poor visibility hampered divers' efforts to recover the bodies. Hersman said challenging river conditions also prevented investigators from marking the location of the plane.

"I think they are coming back with some promising returns and they will continue to look" Sunday, she said.

She said she did not know if there were black boxes or other recording devices on the two aircrafts. Aircraft of their size are not required to have such equipment.

"Even if we do not recover any recording device... the NTSB can still determine the cause of the accident," Hersman added.

## Britain warned by MPs on torture complicity

AFP, London

The British government was warned Sunday by a body of lawmakers that regularly using information gained through torture could be legally construed as complicity.

It was "imperative" that the government fulfilled its legal obligations to prevent torture and probe alleged incidents, the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) scrutiny body said in its annual human rights report.

The report comes as British intelligence agencies face allegations of involvement in the questioning of terror suspects in countries such as Pakistan, including supplying questions for interrogators.

"It is imperative that the UK

fulfils its legal obligations in respect of the prevention of torture, including any duty to act positively to prevent it, investigate allegations that it has taken place, and expose it," the report said.

"We further conclude that there is a risk that use of evidence which may have been obtained under torture on a regular basis, especially where it is not clear that protestations about mistreatment have elicited any change in behaviour by foreign intelligence services, could be construed as complicity in such behaviour."

The committee acknowledged that using intelligence supplied by other countries which could avert a devastating terror attack but which

may have been obtained through torture "raises profoundly difficult moral questions".

"The government had a duty to use information, whatever its source, if it believed it could save lives, it said.

"At the same time, we strongly recommend that the government should continue to exert as much persuasion and pressure as possible to try to ensure world-wide that torture is not employed as a method of interrogation."

The FAC also accused the Foreign Office of "pulling its punches" over the "massive scale" of human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia, a key ally in the fight against international terror.

## Israeli PM vows never to evict settlers

AFP, Jerusalem/Bethlehem

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged yesterday that he will never evict Jewish settlers from occupied Palestinian land as Israel did in 2005 in the Gaza Strip.

"The withdrawal from the Gaza Strip brought us neither peace nor security. The territory has become a base for the pro-Iranian Hamas movement and we will never make the same mistake again," Netanyahu said at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting.

"We will not evict any more people from their homes," he added in comments carried by public radio.

In September 2005, the government of prime minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally removed all Jewish settlements from Gaza, also emptying four remote northern West

Bank settlements, in a move aimed at ending Israel's costly 38-year military presence in the Gaza Strip.

Sharon vowed to follow up that withdrawal with further pullbacks from the West Bank but a massive stroke incapacitated him and his successor Ehud Olmert abandoned the policy in the wake of the June 2006 capture of an Israeli soldier by Gaza-based militants in a deadly cross-border raid.

When Sharon formed a new centrist party, dubbed Kadima, to advance his plans, Netanyahu refused to join him in breaking away from their right-wing Likud and remained at the helm of the rump party.

Kadima, now led by former foreign minister Tzipi Livni, has become the main opposition party.

## Traffic dept caught in poor logistics

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The office could not give the number of people held on charge of causing accidents and defying traffic rules.

Traffic police sources said compared to the capacity of the city streets far too many vehicles use them and recently a good number of public vehicles without route permits and fitness certificates aggravated congestion.

Lasim said over five lakh rickshaws are plying the city streets and slow-moving rickshaws and fast-moving vehicles fight for space making traffic congestions and frequent accidents unavoidable.

He said bus drivers become reckless to overtake other buses to pick up more passengers at intersections, which often causes accidents and congestion.

Lasim said traffic sergeant Baset was killed on the pavement of Mirpur Road at College Gate when he was checking the documents of a bus and another bus rear-ended it on May 19.

Traffic police sources said apart from private cars, motorbikes and microbuses, over 2,000 pickup vans and 6,000 buses ply the city streets.

Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Samity sources said a number of dishonest traffic policemen let buses without route permits and fitness certificates run by providing them with "case receipts" in exchange for bribes.

Traffic police sources said some unscrupulous officers misusing the provision of traffic laws, allow drivers of unfit and

un-roadworthy buses to run for a certain period of time. They seize the documents and give the drivers the case receipts, which allow the driver an interim period to settle the case in court.

They said buses that do not intend to get their papers up to date usually take advantage of this loophole.

Bus drivers said a driver has to pay Tk 300-500 per case receipt as bribe and Tk 500-700 for re-issuing the receipt.

Admitting that the practice goes on, Lasim said he had ordered the traffic police not to seize route permits when they confiscate documents and give case receipts.

He said in that way buses without route permits would not be on the streets.

Bus Owners' Association sources said city bus staff are paid on trip basis and in their desperation to get more trips with more passengers they violate traffic laws.

Hazi Mohammad Ali, owner of a bus that runs between Motijheel and Banani, told The Daily Star that for a roundtrip bus conductors and drivers get Tk 160 and they can make 4-5 roundtrips a day.

Asked about fitness of buses, sources in the Bus Owners' Association said prices of spare parts are very high and that is why "they only maintain bare essential parts".

On underage drivers, they said scarcity of expert drivers and comparatively cheap underage drivers are the causes behind employing them.

## Rodent horror looms large in hills

FROM PAGE 1

Experts said that after consuming the bamboo fruits rats reproduced at an accelerated rate -- some six to eight times in a year. The last time such a crisis occurred here was in 1958.

Two hill districts Rangamati and Bandarban were severely affected by the crisis and parts of Khagrachhari was also affected.

The government at the time distributed only 10 kg of rice per household through the union parishad, jhum cultivators said. This support was very inadequate they complained.

Jhum cultivators said the rat population is still high so they expect that their crops will be damaged to some extent again this year.

Sudarshan Chakma, a 45-year-old cultivator said, "Rats took over my land like a flood and ate up everything that I had. My family literally had nothing to eat for a few days."

Sudarshan, a resident of Uttar Rui Lui of Sajek union under Baghaichhari upazila in Rangamati, said he received only 10 kg of rice from the government as help.

Reports of World Food Programme (WFP) says that majority of the affected households in the area are dependent on jhum cultivation of paddy, sesame, cucumber, cotton, ginger, gourd and maize and 80 to 90 percent of the crops were damaged in 2007.

Nagojiya Chakma, 60,

another cultivator from Orachhari village under Belaichhari upazila in Rangamati told this correspondent rats had already started attacking his paddy crop.

"I used to sow 40 kg of paddy seeds and harvest around 1,600 kg of paddy. In 2007, I was able to harvest only 450 kg of paddy. This year I have sown only 20 kg of paddy seed due to lack of seeds," he said.

Chikanya Tripura, 35, said he used to sow 30 kg of seeds and harvest around 700 kg of paddy. This year he has used as seed only half of that.

In 2007, the WFP provided emergency assistance to around 26,000 households between May to September 2008. Four rounds of food distribution took place consisting of 50 kg rice, four litres of vegetable oil and two kg salt to each household.

The WFP has started a Rodent Crisis Recovery Programme (RCRP) to lift the affected people of the area. Covering around 7,850 households from Jurachhari, Belaichhari and Baghaichhari in Rangamati and Ruma, Thanchi and Alikadam in Bandarban. Under this scheme, WFP will be providing cash for work, cash for training and motivate the locals to mandatory savings.

The European Commission for Humanitarian Aid (Echo) is also handing out a financial

aid of US\$ 2.6 million for the project to be implemented from April 2009 to January 2010.

One of the beneficiaries of the WFP's RCRP Shanti Jibon Chakma told The Daily Star that the WFP's project is giving them some respite from the crisis but they need further assistance to strengthen the food security in the region.

Project Coordinator of RCRP Tania Cass told The Daily Star, "The crisis is still continuing but people are slowly recovering in some areas in the hill districts."

"The jhum cultivators used to retain some seeds from a portion of their harvest for the next year's cultivation. When the rodent crisis wiped out their storage, they not only faced starvation but also had no means to cultivate their lands the following season," she said.

When contacted Additional Secretary of the Agriculture Ministry Anwar Faruque told The Daily Star he was not aware of any such seed crisis in the area.

He said, "They (the cultivators) should let the ministry know at once about their crisis through the local representatives and the agriculture office."

"The government will surely provide them with the required seeds if they approach the ministry, and given that the government has that specific variety of seeds in its storage."



PHOTO: AP

A giant column of dark smoke rises more than 20,000 feet into the air, after the second atomic bomb ever used in warfare explodes over the Japanese port and town of Nagasaki, in this Aug 9, 1945 file photo. Dropped by the US Army Air Forces B-29 plane 'Bockscar', the bomb killed more than 70,000 people instantly, with ten thousands dying later from effects of the radioactive fallout. This photo was snapped 3 minutes after the atom bomb struck Nagasaki.

## Nagasaki mayor calls for global N-arms ban

AP, Tokyo

The mayor of Nagasaki called for a global ban on nuclear arms at a ceremony marking the 64th anniversary of the devastating US attack on the Japanese city that killed about 74,000 people.

In a speech given just after 11:02 a.m. the time when a plutonium American bomb flattened Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945 Mayor Tomihisa Taue said some progress had been made toward eliminating nuclear weaponry but more needed to be done.

He cited a speech by President Barack Obama in April calling on the world to rid itself of atomic weapons, but also noted a nuclear test blast by North Korea in May.

## Another army camp

FROM PAGE 1

providing security services to 10 areas including Dighinala upazila since 1988.

Dighinala Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Moniruzzaman Miah confirmed the demolition work of the camp that started this morning.

"I think the law and order will not worsen after the pull-out and civil administration along with police is always ready to check any situation," he said.

The government on July 29 announced it would dismantle one brigade of troops and 35 temporary security camps from CHT areas by September. The pullout started on Friday with a camp in Manikchhari under Laxmichhari army zone in Khagrachhari.

And the next day, two more camps under Laxmichhari army zone in Khagrachhari -- one at Magaichhari and the other at Dashbill -- were withdrawn.

PETITION AGAINST

PULLOUT Meanwhile, a Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a petition with the High Court (HC), seeking injunction to restrain the government from withdrawing the army and their camps from hill districts.

Advocate Tajul Islam filed the supplementary petition

with a pending writ petition that he had filed back in 2007 challenging the legality of signing the CHT Peace Accord with the erstwhile "Shanti Bahini" in 1997.

The petition stated that if the army camps are withdrawn from CHT districts, the Border Security Forces (BSF) of India and Myanmar's terrorist groups will intrude into the territory of Bangladesh and the country's border will be insecure.

After holding a brief hearing, a HC bench of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury fixed August 16 for further hearing on the petition.

Barrister Abdur Razzaq argued for the petitioner, while Attorney General Mahbubey Alam stood on the government side.

Responding to the writ petition filed by Tajul Islam, the HC on August 27, 2007, issued a rule upon the government to explain why the CHT Peace Accord signed with the "Shanti Bahini" in 1997 should not be declared unlawful.

The writ petition said the peace treaty questioned the integrity and sovereignty of the state and it is also tantamount to a breach of the constitution.