

# Talks under way on Iran sanctions, says Obama

Tehran rejects UN-brokered nuke fuel deal

AP, Seoul

President Barack Obama said yesterday the United States has begun talking with allies about fresh punishment against Iran for defying efforts to halt its nuclear weapons pursuits.

Obama's tough talk came as Iran indicated it would not ship its low-enriched uranium to Russia for processing, the centrepiece of deal aimed at a peaceful resolution to Iran's contested nuclear programme.

"They have been unable to get to 'yes', and so as a consequence, we have begun discussions with our international partners about the importance of having

consequences," Obama said in a brief news conference with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak.

Obama said a new package of punitive steps will likely be developed "over the next several weeks." He did not get more specific about the nature of any new sanctions, which would require commitments of international support that are hardly clear yet.

Standing side by side, Obama and Lee signalled impatience over another nuclear threat, North Korea. They both declared fresh, united steps in getting that nation to give up its own nuclear weapons.

Lee and Obama rallied behind the South Korean's idea for a one-time "grand bar-

gain" with North Korea of aid and concessions in exchange for de-nuclearisation, rather than the stalled step-by-step process. And Obama said his envoy would travel to North Korea early next month for the first bilateral talks with the communist government since he took office.

The South Korea stop was the final dash of diplomacy for Obama on a weeklong Asia trip, and although he and Lee trumpeted the strength of their nations' alliance, a stalled trade deal continues to vex them.

The ambitious South Korean-US pact has bogged down over US lawmakers' worries it could hurt the struggling American auto industry.

Depression can be as deadly as smoking

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, London

Beware, depression can be as deadly as smoking.

This finding is based on a unique link between a survey of over 60,000 people and a comprehensive mortality database.

Researchers from University of Bergen (Norway) and Institute of Psychiatry (IoP) at King's College in London have found that mortality risk increased almost equally among depressed people and smokers.

Robert Stewart, who led the research team at IoP, said that "more attention should be paid to this link (depression) because the association persisted after adjusting for many other factors."

# Karzai seeks unity, vows to fight corruption

Afghan president takes oath for second term

AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Hamid Karzai was sworn in for a second term yesterday, vowing to combat corruption and reaching out to his political rivals under Western pressure to restore legitimacy.

Karzai took the oath of office as the US-led war stretches into a ninth year, leaving record numbers of soldiers and civilians dead and with Taliban control extending deeper into the country after an election mired in fraud.

In a wide-ranging speech,

Karzai promised action on a raft of problems that have caused consternation among his Western backers, weary of pouring military and financial aid into Afghanistan with little in return.

He pledged action on corruption, drugs, security and unemployment, and said he would call a "loya jirga" -- a meeting of political, tribal and community leaders from across the country's complex social make-up -- to bring peace.

"We will call Afghanistan's traditional loya jirga and make every

possible effort to ensure peace in our country," he said, calling on Taliban "not directly linked to international terrorism to return to their homeland".

To many Afghans, Karzai's presidency lacks legitimacy, his government lacks authority and the way in which he took the presidency lacks credibility.

Addressing endemic official graft in a speech delivered before an audience of visiting foreign ministers, including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he said: "Corruption is a dangerous problem."

# Matter to end in less than 2 months

FROM PAGE 1

now in the condemned cell of Dhaka central jail are Lt Col (sacked) Syed Farooq ur Rahman, Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Lt Col (ret'd) Muiyuddin Ahmed, Lt Col (ret'd) AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, and Maj (ret'd) Bazul Huda.

They will file petitions with the Supreme Court to review its verdict that yesterday confirmed their death sentence, their lawyers said.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam said the apex court verdict in Bangabandhu assassination case will be executed by the end of December or early in January.

Talking to reporters at his Secretariat office after announcement of the verdict, the state minister said the verdict would be carried out after completion of entire legal process.

There is a scope for the convicts

to seek for a review of the Appellate Division's verdict within 30 days, he said, adding that if the convicts do not appeal for the review, they can have seven days' time for seeking mercy from the president after the expiry of the 30 days.

He said the government is trying to hunt down the absconding convicts in different countries with the help of Interpol.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, and the Chief State Counsel in this case advocate Anisul Huq yesterday told the reporters that the convicts now can appeal to the Supreme Court to review its verdict, and then can seek presidential mercy to save their necks from execution.

These matters can be settled within two months, they said.

The attorney general told The Daily Star that as per the rules, the capital punishment of the convicts will be executed after 21

days or before 28 days of receiving the certified copy of the judgment by the jail authorities.

The convicts have to file review petitions with the Supreme Court within seven days of getting copy of the verdict, he said adding that the review petition can be disposed of in a day or two, he said.

Mahbubey Alam said the review petitions are dismissed in most of the cases.

The convicts can submit mercy petitions to the president within seven days after dismissal of the review petitions and the mercy depends on the president.

Anisul Huq at a press briefing said the High Court verdict confirming the death penalty to seven absconding convicts in this case will remain valid following the Supreme Court verdict.

If the absconding convicts surrender before the court or are arrested, they can file petitions

with the Supreme Court for condoning their delay in filing leave-to-appeal petitions against the High Court verdict, he added.

They have to mention specific reasons for delay in filing the leave-to-appeal petitions, he said, adding that if the Supreme Court rejects their petitions for condoning delay, there would not be any bar to execute them.

Lawyers for the convicts--advocate Khan Saifur Rahman and barrister Abdullah-al Mamun told The Daily Star that the Supreme Court as per its rules will halt the operation of the verdict until hearing of the review petitions.

If the president pardons the convicts, they will not be executed, he said, adding that if the president rejected the petitions, the death sentences will be executed after 21 or before 28 days.

# Rule of law prevails

FROM PAGE 16

Dhaka University student Ahsanul Islam Chanchal said, "This justice has long been a demand of mass people, especially the new generation."

Sohrab Hossain, a rickshaw puller in the city, said, "The trial of criminals should have been held much earlier. I feel really happy that it has been done in the end."

Abu Sayeed, manager of a store in Bashundhara City, said, "The trial began 10 years ago. The procrastination in delivering justice gave us a feeling that there is no rule of law in this country. But now we are satisfied that justice has been served finally, though delayed."

Another Dhaka University student Tania Hossain said, "The verdict will be considered as a historic achievement of the government. I welcome the verdict."

Tanshen Hossain, a bank employee, welcomed the judgement and urged the government to start trial of war criminals and jail killings.

An orthopaedics specialist Dr SM Idris while shopping at Bashundhara City said, "Punishment should be meted out as soon as possible to rid the nation of anxiety."

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in general was tense in the capital yesterday with the people taking extra precautions fearing untoward incidents. Many of them stayed indoors and the streets remained comparatively free

from traffic gridlock.

Many buses and minibuses did not ply till afternoon. Crowds were thin in the markets.

Akram Hossain, a salesman in Farmview Super Market in Farmgate said, "Awami League came to power once before. Why did they take so long for the trial? Now they should hold trials of other political killings including the assassination of Ziaur Rahman."

Mohammad Suman, an hotelier, expressed his concern that something ominous might happen before the execution is carried out.

"Six accused are absconding. Who knows how many years it would take to bring them back. Let's see the execution of the criminals first and then I will comment over it," he said.

Abul Hossain, a vendor on Dhaka University campus, said, "I am happy that murderers of Bangabandhu, who earned us independence, will be hanged."

Abdul Mannan, an auto-rickshaw puller in the city, said, "It is of course a good news. General people would like to see each of the criminals executed."

Speculating sabotage security was beefed up across the country yesterday. About 12,000 additional policemen were deployed in the country with many guarding strategic points and buildings.

The day, however, ended without any unwanted incidents, much to the relief of general people.

# Govt focuses

FROM PAGE 1

their help in bringing back the absconding killers," Home Minister Sahara Khatun told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted, she said they will take all measures to bring them (killers) back, and they are hopeful of success in doing this.

Asked whether they have spotted where the killers are absconding, the home minister said they frequently move from one country to another, and that is the only problem in locating them.

The home minister had earlier made a global appeal to help track down the fugitive killers of Bangabandhu. The appeal was made at the 78th annual general meeting of Interpol in Singapore last month.

Meanwhile, six of the 12 convicted killers of Bangabandhu have been holed up in Libya, US, Canada, Pakistan and Kenya, one died in Zimbabwe, and five are behind bars at home.

Sources in the administration and intelligence agencies said some of the condemned killers on the run travel to different countries for business purposes.

The six hiding abroad are Lt Col (sacked) Khandaker Abdul Rashid, Lt Col (relieved) Shariful Haque Dalim, Lt Col (ret'd) Nur Chowdhury, Lt Col (ret'd) AM Rashid Chowdhury, Capt Abdul Mazed and Risalder Moslehuddin Khan.

Sources say Rashid, one of the key plotters of the massacre

of Bangabandhu and most of his family members, has settled in Benghazi of Libya, where he has construction business. He often visits Pakistan and Singapore.

Dalim lives in Pakistan, and frequently travels to Libya and Kenyan capital Nairobi where he has businesses.

According to intelligence sources, Nur Chowdhury and Rashid Chowdhury are in Canada and the US. But other sources said Nur is living in Libya, and seeking asylum in Canada. And Rashid is trying for asylum in the US.

Abdul Mazed is hiding in Benghazi, while Moslehuddin might be in the Libyan city, or somewhere in Bangladesh.

Another convict, Lt Col Aziz Pasha, died in Zimbabwe on June 2, 2001.

Awami League, after coming to power in 1996 initiated moves to sign extradition treaties with different countries to bring back the condemned convicts.

The five on the death row--now in jail -- are Lt Col Syed Farooq Rahman, Lt Col Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Lt Col Mohiuddin Ahmed, Maj Muiyuddin Ahmed and Maj Bazul Huda.

Of them, Lt Col Mohiuddin was deported to Bangladesh from Los Angeles on June 17, 2007, after a US court rejected his appeal for forswearing.

Huda was extradited from Bangkok on the day the trial court pronounced its verdict in the case in 1998.

# Hasina gets Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

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Memorial Trust said. The announcement was made yesterday on the birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi who was assassinated on Oct 31, 1984 by her bodyguard.

The award, which carries a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh and a citation, would be presented to her at a function to be held at a later date.

Hasina, who will undertake an official visit to India next month, has been chosen for her "outstanding contribution to the promotion of democracy

and pluralism, her determined drive to alleviate poverty and secure social and economic justice for her people through inclusive and sustainable development and her consistent commitment to peace", it said.

After her re-election in December last year, Hasina embarked on her "Vision 2021", aimed at transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021, by eliminating poverty and inequality, the Trust said.

As the prime minister of Bangladesh from 1996 to 2001,

she had launched a number of programmes to meet the basic needs of the poor and vulnerable sections of the population, through projects covering employment-generation, housing, health and food security, it said.

Hasina "promoted peace by resolving a long standing insurgency (problem) in Bangladesh by concluding the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. Her global commitment to peace was manifested by her initiative that resulted in the adoption of the first-ever

Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on the Culture and Peace", the Trust said.

The assassination of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other members of her family in 1975 transformed her life and, indeed, "the political landscape of Bangladesh", it said.

"A number of attempts on her life and subsequent imprisonment only strengthened her resolve to restore democracy, peace and political stability in her country," it added.

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