

World powers count on unity to check Iran's N-ambitions

AFP, Washington/ Tehran

Six international powers are counting on unity to check Iran's nuclear ambitions, according to a European diplomat who expects China to drop its opposition to new sanctions for fear of isolation.

As Iran balks at a confidence-building proposal, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council -- the United States, Russia, China, France, and Britain -- plus Germany are increasingly weighing sanctions.

The negotiating group, known as the P5-plus-1, looks likely to head back to the United Nations.

"The unity of the P5-plus-1 is our major asset, our major aim," a high-ranking European diplomat said on the condition of anonymity.

"I'm not saying it's easy, but I'm confident we'll get to the Security Council," according to the diplomat who is close to the talks on Iran.

The P5-plus-1 has been reaching out to Iran in a bid to force the regime to halt its uranium enrichment.

But Iran has long equivocated in response to an offer from the Vienna-based UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ship abroad low-grade nuclear fuel so it can be further enriched and returned to refuel a Tehran medical

research reactor.

In Vienna, diplomats said Wednesday the Islamic Republic had effectively rejected the deal because it refused to accept some of the conditions called for by the West and insisted on a simultaneous exchange of fuel.

Western countries have ruled out such an exchange as unacceptable.

The proposal made by the IAEA last October, "which was supported by France, Russia and the United States, continues to be on the table," said IAEA spokeswoman, Gill Tudor.

The proposal is designed to buy breathing room as the big powers try to halt Iran's uranium enrichment -- which the West fears masks a drive to build a nuclear bomb.

Denying the charge, Iran says it seeks peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The diplomat said the Europeans have never really believed that Iran would accept the IAEA offer.

But Iran has not rejected a UN-brokered offer to exchange enriched nuclear fuel but it wants a staged swap rather than a wholesale handover of most of its stockpile, foreign ministry officials said in comments published yesterday.

"Iran did not reject the principle of the exchange (of nuclear fuel)," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki was quoted

as saying by the Mehr news agency.

However, they were convinced that this stage of dialogue was necessary to reinforce the threat of new sanctions, something Western powers increasingly support.

China, which has economic links with hardline Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, favors continued dialogue, but it also wants to avoid international isolation, the diplomat said.

"It's difficult when you share a statement... and when everybody agrees on that, to remain isolated. You just cannot stand this position for too long," the senior diplomat said.

Beijing is under all the more pressure, he added, as Russia is now on the same wavelength as the West.

"The Russians have changed their attitude... They are very helpful. They changed after the unveiling of the second site in Qom," the diplomat said.

The United States and other powers forced Iran to come clean in September on a second uranium enrichment site buried in a mountain near the holy city of Qom.

The tightening of ranks among the six powers has already produced results, the diplomat said, citing a unanimous vote by the negotiating group members for an IAEA resolution condemning Iran last November.



Haitian earthquake victims swarm around a relief truck to collect food in Leogon on Wednesday following a massive 7.0-magnitude quake that shattered the country.

500,000 living outdoors in Haiti

AFP, Geneva

At least half a million people are living outdoors in improvised camps in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, the International Organisation for Migration said Thursday.

A spokeswoman for the IOM, which had accounted for 370,000 people in improvised settlements on Wednesday, said the count of those who were homeless or staying outside their homes after last week's earthquake was climbing.

"So far some 447 improvised settlements comprising at least 500,000 people have been identified in this city alone, out of which 350 settlements have been assessed by IOM, the Haitian government and humanitarian partners," the agency said in a statement.

Most had cobbled together makeshift shelters from sheeting, blankets, cardboard or bits of debris, while some had received tents from Haitian authorities or the US forces, spokeswoman Jemini Pandya told AFP.

Rescuers refuse to give up hope

AFP, Port-au-Prince

Search teams in Haiti yesterday refused to abandon hope of finding more survivors of the massive 7.0-magnitude quake after two children were pulled alive from the rubble in 24 hours.

More than eight days after the devastating tremor, which killed at least 75,000 and left a million homeless, rescuers said they could not rule out the possibility of some victims still being alive under the debris.

And they said the powerful 6.1 aftershock that shook Haiti on Wednesday could have

dislodged masonry giving fresh opportunities to free any last remaining survivors.

"The aftershock could have made the structures subside, but it might have also freed people trapped between two pieces of concrete," said French firefighter Gilles Perroux.

Obama admits 'mistake' after shock election loss

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama admitted Wednesday he had neglected his direct connection to the American people, after a stunning Republican election win shifted the balance of power in Washington.

Obama's aides meanwhile insisted his historic health reform drive was not dead, after Massachusetts voters handed late liberal icon Edward Kennedy's former Senate seat to Republicans, in a stunning rebuke of Democrats.

There were also suggestions that Obama may be contemplating a stripped-down version of the mammoth health bill, to salvage his bid for a historic achievement that has defied a string of previous presidents.

As he absorbed the stinging blow from voters, which sent shock waves through the Democratic Party in a key election year, Obama admitted that his need to tackle a flurry of crises had weakened his bond with US voters.

"If there's one thing that I regret this year is that we were so busy just getting stuff done and dealing with the immediate crises that were in front of us that I think we lost some of that sense of speaking directly to the American people," Obama told ABC News.

The president said that he had assumed that if he concentrated on making good policy decisions, voters would understand them, but instead they had become consumed by a "feeling of remoteness and detachment" from Washington.

"That I do think is a mistake of mine," Obama said, diagnosing a mood of anger and frustration in the United States over the grinding and lingering impact of the worst recession for decades.

BNP places charter to EC

FROM PAGE 1

As per the amended charter, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Sramik Dal will go by their constitutions.

They will however have ideological links with BNP, Nazrul said. The amended constitution has not retained the previous provision for giving recognition to foreign chapters of the party.

The party will however have no objection if expatriates support BNP individually or under any organisation, but that organisation will not get approval or recognition from the party, Nazrul mentioned.

The constitution provides that removal of the party chairperson will require support of three-fourth members of the national council.

It says party's parliamentary board will finalise candidates for the national election from a panel made by the grassroots.

The three-member BNP team led by Nazrul handed over the party constitution to Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda at his office. It included party joint secretaries general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and Barkat Ullah Bulu.

Talking to journalists later, Huda said they will now scrutinise the constitutions submitted to them.

Nazrul said more than 40 amendments to the party constitution made after 1993 national council were approved at the fifth council in December last year.

He said the new charter provides that all officials of the party including the chairperson would be elected. He hoped that they would be able to fulfil the EC's criteria to ensure 33 percent female representation in party committees at all levels.

The BNP leader said, "I think we fulfilled all the criteria of RPO so that we get permanent registration easily."

Parliament recently passed electoral laws providing that a political party will lose registration if it does not submit its amended constitution within the deadline.

If any party fails to submit its constitution by Jan 25, the Election Commission can cancel its registration, it says.

Mushfiq's maiden ton

FROM PAGE 1

wickets before lunch with the scoreboard reading 136 for five.

The Tigers paid the price for wrong shot selection on a very good batting track and were ultimately bowled out for 301 runs within the extended post-lunch session.

Paceman Ishant Sharma, who got extra bounce from the surface, provided the first breakthrough in the fourth over of the day, after play had started an hour later than scheduled, by removing former Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful by getting an edge to Rahul Dravid at second slip. Sharma then trapped Rokibul Hasan in front to cause a double blow for the home team.

It was frustrating for the crowd with the way their local hero Tamim Iqbal gave away his wicket to deepen the crisis. Part-time spinner Virender Sehwag made the breakthrough with just eight minutes left for lunch as the left-hander, who made 52 off 122 balls with six fours, unnecessarily went for slash against a slightly short delivery outside the off-stump.

In the second session, it was leg-spinner Amit Mishra, who picked up four wickets for 92 runs, to dash the hosts' hopes of staging a comeback but captain Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad, who played sensibly in the first innings to score 69 runs, were guilty of trying to play too many shots.

With the dismissal of Riyad, Bangladesh reached 170 for seven and a massive defeat was looming for the Tigers but resistance came from Mushfiq and Shahadat Hossain who shared 60 runs for the eighth wicket.

From that hopeless position, Mushfiq took it all on his shoulders and on way to achieving the individual milestone, the 21-year-old batsman executed shots all over the park and smashed 17 boundaries and one six over the midwicket against leg-spinner Mishra to make 101 runs in 114 balls before he was dismissed as last batsman trying to play another big shot but only reached the safe hands of substitute Pragyan Ojha at long-off.

Sharma troubled the Bangladesh batsmen most and finished with a figures of three for 48.

LUMIX

Panasonic ideas for life

FP8

Poised for perfection. Even in dim light.

LUMIX Wonder Offer

at Panasonic Pavilion 14 at Dhaka International Trade Fair

World's most stylish camera brand Panasonic Lumix, continues its digital photography revolution with the addition of its new micro four thirds digital camera with HD recording capability. With a class leading start up speed and iA mode also can give you the excuse for fun and beautiful photo moments. So showcase your style and artistic sense with Lumix. To get exciting discount and gifts, visit our Panasonic Pavilion no. 14 at the Dhaka International Trade fair.

Get up to 3000/- Discount* With Every Purchase of Lumix Digital Camera.

Get Hi-Fi System FREE* With GH1 Digital Camera.

Get DVD Player FREE* With G1 Digital Camera.

Get up to 5000/- Discount* With Every Purchase of Panasonic Camcorder.

*All offers are valid till stock lasts and applicable on purchase from Panasonic Pavilion no. 14 at Dhaka International Trade Fair.

Warranty

Customer Enquiry: 01714-163090, 01730-024379

ACI Consumer Electronics
245 Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka. Ph. 01713082765