

Japan approves sanctions against Iran

AP, Tokyo

Japan approved fresh economic sanctions against Iran yesterday after the United Nations asked Tokyo to tighten restrictions against Tehran over its controversial nuclear enrichment program, an official said.

The measures approved by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Naoto Kan include an asset freeze on 88 entities, 15 banks and 24 individuals, trade ministry official Hideaki Fujisawa said.

The individuals are also banned from entering Japan, Fujisawa said.

The United Nations approved a fourth round of sanctions against Iran in early June over accusations that Tehran is seeking to develop atomic weapons. Iran denies its nuclear program is militaristic in nature and says it has a right to conduct uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes.

Along with the UN, the United States and European Union recently imposed separate penalties against Iran. Washington welcomed Japan's move yesterday, saying it would deepen Iran's isolation and recognizing that it was not without cost.

Japan's latest sanctions came after the United Nations asked Tokyo to take punitive measures against Iran, Fujisawa said.

Mid-East peace talks 'doomed'

Ahmadinejad says

AFP, Tehran

Hardline Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told a pro-Palestinian rally yesterday that failed Middle East peace talks are "doomed" to fail, as Islamist militants stopped one of his arch rivals from attending the annual march.

Calling Western-backed Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas a hostage of Israel, Ahmadinejad said the talks he began with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on Thursday lacked legitimacy as he had no right to make concessions in the name of the Palestinian people.

"What do they want to negotiate about? Who are they representing? What are they going to talk about?" he asked rhetorically about Abbas's negotiating team.

"Who gave them the right to sell a piece of Palestine land? The people of Palestine and the people of the region will not allow them to sell even an inch of Palestinian soil to the enemy. The negotiations are stillborn and doomed."

Iran implacably opposes the new talks and has given strong support to the Islamist movement Hamas, which carried out two attacks against Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank that killed four people and cast a pall over the talks relaunch.

"The fate of Palestine will be decided in Palestine and by the resistance of Palestinians and not in Washington, Paris or London," Ahmadinejad said.

Ever since the 1979 revolution, Iran has organised annual Palestinian solidarity marches across the country on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

This year's rallies came just a day after Abbas resumed direct talks with Israel, which he broke off in December 2008 when Israel launched a devastating offensive against the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Tens of thousands of Iranians poured on to

streets around the country shouting "Death to America! Death to Israel!"

Several demonstrators carried caricatures of US President Barack Obama, while others hoisted banners saying "Quds (Jerusalem) is Ours" and urging a boycott of firms doing business with Israel.

"Inshallah. One day we will pray in Quds," said state television's news anchor as he introduced coverage of the marches. The Al-Aqsa mosque compound in the city's annexed Arab eastern sector is Islam's third holiest site.

Ahmadinejad told the Tehran rally the people of the Middle East were capable of "removing" Israel even if their leaders chose not to, echoing his past predictions of the Jewish state's demise that outraged Western governments.

"If the leaders of the region do not have the guts, then the people of the region are capable of removing the Zionist regime from the world scene," he said.

The region's sole if undeclared nuclear power, Israel has never ruled out a military strike to prevent Iran acquiring an atomic weapons capability, an ambition Tehran strongly denies.

But Ahmadinejad dismissed any Israeli threat to Iran's nuclear programme which his government has continued despite four sets of UN sanctions.

"The Zionist regime is nothing and even its (Western) masters are too small to conduct any kind of aggression against Iran and the rights of the Iranian people," he said to chants of "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) from the crowd.

His view was echoed by General Hassan Firouzabadi, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, who said he "hoped that we do not have to target the nuclear facility" of Israel if Iran is attacked.

Meanwhile, Iranian hardliners surrounded the house of Ahmadinejad's arch-rival and opposition leader Mehdi Karubi's from early yesterday, Karubi's website sahamnews.org said.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad takes part in the Jerusalem Day march in Tehran yesterday, as the Islamic Republic marked the annual government-sponsored Palestinian solidarity day which last year saw opposition protests.

US lauds Japan for new Iran sanctions

AFP, Washington

The United States praised Japan yesterday for imposing new sanctions on Iran that include an asset freeze and tighter restrictions on financial transactions, part of a global response to Tehran's contested nuclear program.

"The United States welcomes the announcement by Japan of new sanctions on Iran that implement UN Security Council 1929," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner said in a joint statement.

"They mark a significant step forward in the international community's efforts to combat proliferation and prevent Iran's development of nuclear weapons," they said.

"Japan joins other responsible nations that have also implemented such sanctions on Iran for its failure to meet its international obligations, including the European Union, Australia, Canada and Norway."

The steps come a month after Tokyo approved punitive measures in line with a June UN Security Council resolution which slapped a fourth set of sanctions on Iran over its refusal to halt uranium enrichment work.

Japan's new sanctions include a freeze on the assets of 88 companies, banks, state agencies and other entities and of 24 people linked to Iran's nuclear program, which many nations fear masks a drive for atomic weapons.

Fidel Castro makes first public speech in 4 years

Warns of nuclear war

REUTERS, Havana

Former Cuban leader Fidel Castro, wearing his green military cap and clothing like the commandant of old, yesterday made his first speech before the Cuban public since falling ill in 2006, warning of the threat of nuclear war.

He spoke from the same steps of the University of Havana where 60 years ago he stirred fellow students to political action in the beginnings of the revolution that eventually put him in power in 1959.

About 10,000 people, mostly students, filled the steps and nearby streets to listen to the man who

led Cuba for 49 years before the illness that forced him to resign the presidency and, Castro said in a recent newspaper interview, nearly killed him.

They shouted "Fidel, Fidel Fidel" and applauded at several points during his nationally televised address.

His speech was the latest in a string of appearances since the 84-year-old Castro reemerged in July from four years of seclusion.

His renewed public presence has raised questions about whether he could resume a larger role in running the country now officially led by his younger brother, President Raul Castro.



Fidel Castro gives a speech yesterday at Havana's University. Castro talked to the students about the possibility of a nuclear war.

Indonesian volcano spews new burst of ash

AP, Tanah Karo

An Indonesian volcano that was quiet for four centuries shot a new, powerful burst of hot ash more than 10,000 feet (three kilometers) in the air yesterday, sending frightened residents fleeing to safety for the second time this week.

The force of the eruption -- the strongest so far -- could be felt five miles (eight kilometers) away.

"This was a big one," said 37-year-old Anto Sembiring, still shaken after abandoning his coffee shop in the middle of the danger zone. "We all ran as fast as we could. Everyone was panicking."

The eruption of Mount Sinabung on Sunday and Monday -- which caught many scientists off guard -- forced more than 30,000 people living along its fertile slopes to evacuate to cramped emergency shelters in nearby towns.

Wearing surgical masks to protect themselves from the smoky air, many have complained about the steadily deteriorating conditions, from poor sanitation and short food supplies to having to sleep on hard, cold floors.

"It's especially bad for the kids," said Yacoubus Runtuwene, a World Vision relief worker. "We're staring to see a lot of respiratory problems, diarrhea and eye irritations."

Tired of waiting, thousands of people started returning to the mountainside earlier this week so they could clean up their soot-covered houses and salvage what they could from their vegetable farms and rice paddies.

But several hours before Friday's pre-dawn blast, a new alert was issued.

Some people trudged back down the slopes, carrying blankets, clothes and food. A handful of others insisted on staying, even after the new explosion, which caused the entire mountain to violently tremble for five minutes.

"We're not going anywhere," said Razia Barimbing, who was among 50 men refusing to budge, saying they had to protect abandoned villages a few miles (kilometers) from the crater's mouth against looters.

"It's so sad to see this," said the 35-year-old farmer, pointing to the white dust blanketing houses, gardens and even livestock. "We just want this to be over, so we can pull our lives back together, and get our children back in school."

The air was thick with the smell of sulfur and, despite a soft drizzle, heavy smoke limited visibility to just a few yards (meters). Some small domestic hopper flights had to be diverted, according to Bambang Ervan, the transportation ministry's spokesman. International air travel was unaffected.

Amazon at lowest level in over 40 years

APP, Lima

The Amazon, the world's biggest river, is at its lowest level in over 40 years near its source in northeastern Peru, causing havoc in a region where it is used as the only form of travel, authorities said.

According to officials in Loreto province, the Amazon on Tuesday in the northeast city of Iquitos fell to 105.97 meters (347.67 feet) above sea level, 50 cm (1.6 feet) lower than it was in 2005, so far the lowest level since.

Low levels have brought economic havoc in areas of Peru that depend on the Amazon for shipping, by denying boats a navigable river as well as usable ports and harbours.

At least six boats became stranded for lack of river flow over the last three weeks and several shipping companies have been forced to suspend service, said regional civil defense chief Roberto Falcon.

River trips between Iquitos and other Amazon towns that normally take around 12-15 days now last twice as long, officials said.

According to the national meteorological service, the level drop -- which is forecast to slide another 20 cm (0.6 feet) until mid-September -- has been caused by a lack of rain and high temperatures in the region.

The Amazon is the second-longest river in the world, after the Nile, but discharges far more water at its mouth than any other. It also drains more territory than any other, from Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela before running across Brazil and into the Atlantic.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha

Rajuk Bhaban, Dhaka www.rajukdhaka.gov.bd

Re-Invitation for Expressions of Interest (EOI) to Identify Risky Buildings in Dhaka City

Table with 13 rows and 2 columns: Item number and Description. Includes items like Ministry, Agency, Name of the procuring entity, etc.

Intending firms have to submit the following documents along with the EOI:

- Brochure summarizing their facilities, areas of the expertise, general information including legal documents; - Description of similar assignments;

- Experience in similar operating conditions; - Availability of appropriate experience and professional qualifications among applicant's staff and resources to carryout the said assignment.

- Administrative strength, logistics and financial capability. - Technical equipment such as reinforcement scanner, core cutter, hammers etc. and related NDT equipments.

- Encouraged. Engr. Khondker Salahuddin. Chief Engineer, RAJUK.

- 4th Floor, RAJUK Bhaban, Dilkusha, Dhaka-1000. Chief Engineer, 4th Floor, RAJUK Bhaban, Dilkusha, Dhaka-1000.

- 1. For identification of risky buildings, RAJUK divides Dhaka City in 5 groups/lots in an area demarcation. 5 (five) nos. of consultants will be selected and each no will have their own jurisdiction.

- 2. A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules, 2008 and Public Procurement Act-2006 issued by the GOB.

- 3. The short-list shall normally comprise of minimum 4 (four) to a maximum of 7 (seven) firms, who will subsequently be requested to submit detail Technical and Financial Proposals.

- 4. Consultants may associate with other consultants (not more than two) to enhance their qualifications.

- 5. Envelop containing Application/Proposal (EOI) along with relevant supporting documents to be marked "Expressions of Interest (EOI) to identify risky buildings in Dhaka City (Package # 01) Lot #..." are to be submitted in the Office of the Superintending Engineer (P&D), 4th Floor, RAJUK Bhaban, Dilkusha, Dhaka-1000.

- 6. Consultants (any of association) are requested not to submit Expression of Interest (EOI) more than 2 (two) lots.

NB. RAJUK authority reserves the right to accept or reject all EOI either partly or in full without assigning any reason thereof.

Engr. Khondker Salahuddin Chief Engineer Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha

Advertisement for 'ইনভেস্টমেন্ট কর্পোরেশন অব বাংলাদেশ' (Investment Corporation of Bangladesh) with details on share offerings and contact information.

Advertisement for 'Amazon at lowest level in over 40 years' with detailed text about the river's low water levels and impact on shipping.

Advertisement for 'Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha' regarding the re-invitation for EOI to identify risky buildings in Dhaka City.