

Abbas rules out compromise on Israeli settlements

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas rejected an Israeli suggestion on Friday that a compromise on settlement building may be possible ahead of a scheduled moratorium ending that threatens to derail Middle East peace talks.

Two days before the conclusion of the 10-month partial moratorium on settlement construction in the occupied West Bank, Israel indicated it was willing to cut a deal acceptable to the United States and the Palestinians, who both want an extension of the restrictions.

"Israel is prepared to reach a compromise acceptable to all parties," a senior government official said when asked about US President Barack Obama's call for the moratorium to be extended.

But he also stressed that "there cannot be zero construction" in West Bank settlements.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was "making intensive efforts to reach such a compromise before the expiration of the moratorium on September 26," added the official, asking not to be identified.

Israel was previously adamant that the restrictions would not be renewed, even though Abbas had already threatened to walk out of the US-brokered peace talks over the issue.

And Abbas on Friday rejected any compromise that does not guarantee a "complete halt" to settlement activity, his adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP.

"A total freeze must be maintained on settlement activity in the Palestinian territories, including in Jerusalem. We reject any partial solution," he said.

"Partial solutions do not create a suitable climate for the pursuit of negotiations," Abu Rudeina said of the direct talks with Israel that resumed at the beginning of September after a 20-month break.

Arab League chief Amr Mussa, in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, told reporters Israel must show a readiness to extend the freeze if the peace talks are to continue.

Israel must show it is "stopping building settlements," he insisted, adding that "continuing or prolonging or extending the moratorium is a must and is a symbolic message that the Israeli policy is serious about this."

Obama on Thursday firmly restated his conviction the moratorium should be extended.

Abbas welcomed Obama's remarks, "especially his call for a halt of the settlement activities and for the creation of a Palestinian state."

But he also reiterated his

threat to quit the talks if new construction curbs were not imposed.

"At the end of the freeze period on the 26th of this month, if the response about the freeze of settlement is not positive, we will halt negotiations," Abbas said in New York on Thursday.

Israeli settlers accused Obama of caving in to Abbas's threat.

"If President Obama wants to be perceived as an honest broker in this process, he should make clear to Mr Abbas and his colleagues that threats, blackmail and preconditions are not acceptable," the Yeshiva Council, which represents the settlers, said.

Washington also said on Thursday it was proposing "ideas" to Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in a bid to break the stalemate.

The previous round of direct negotiations collapsed when Israel launched a devastating military offensive on the Hamas-run Gaza Strip in December 2008.

Abbas and Netanyahu did not appear to have made any progress towards narrowing their differences during talks last week in Egypt and in Jerusalem attended by Clinton.

US officials have suggested a three-month extension to the moratorium, during which time the two sides could agree on borders, which could neutralise the settlements dispute, a senior Palestinian official said.

The Palestinians and US negotiators want a complete halt to settlements while Israel is insisting on continuing to build in major blocs it hopes to keep in any final peace accord.

Abbas told AFP this week he was "not opposed to a settlement freeze for a month or two."

The international community considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including annexed east Jerusalem, to be illegal.

The settlements issue has long been among the thorniest in the peace process.

Some 500,000 Israelis live in more than 120 Jewish settlements across the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories expected to form the bulk of a future Palestinian state.

Bus crushes

FROM PAGE 1 forbade him to attend the coaching classes but he was so dedicated that he never missed any classes.

Shaidul Islam, the victim's uncle said, Arifur came out of the house at 7:00am for his college after which he attended his coaching classes at Farmgate.

Police said they held the killer bus, which the agitators damaged badly after the incident, but its driver managed to escape.

The elements also forced many passengers of trains running on Chittagong-Nazirhat and Chittagong-Dohazari lines to get down and killed them.

Pakistani army officials tortured and killed women brought to the hilltop torture cell from different areas of the city, said Saleh Uddin. He claimed to have seen skeletons of many of the victims, their clothes and vanity bags near the torture cell after the Liberation War.

Recruitment

FROM PAGE 1 party," admitted examination committee member and the chairman of the ear, nose and throat (ENT) department Abu Shafi Ahmed Amin who was present at the academic council meeting.

The situation became normal after the general secretaries of SCP and BMA Dr Iqbal Arslan and Dr Sharfuddin along with Awami League Secretary for Health Affairs Badiuzzaman Dablu held a meeting with the candidates at the academic council room for half an hour.

Prof Shafi on the meeting held at Milton Hall said, "It could be held at the party office or BMA office. It was unwanted".

The VC also said, "If they had their meeting at the Milton Hall, then certainly they did wrong".

The secretaries of SCP and BMA who are also the employees of BSMMU could not be contacted through repeated attempts over the cell phone.

BSMMU authorities published an advertisement for the post of 70 medical officers for its 17 disciplines a few months back. A written examination was also held on July 16, which was cancelled by the VC on the same day following allegations of question leak and invaders helping candidates inside the exam hall.

"But our top priority is this structure," said the Bapex chief.

Another Bapex official said the state-owned company might not be able to begin drilling in April-May next year.

He said typically all works of Bapex suffer due to delay in land acquisition and building a drilling pad ahead of the schedule. "This is true for all of Bapex's schedules. Even our fast-track projects are suffering delays for this," he added.

Right now, Bapex is negotiating with some local landowners to procure land at the site. If Bapex fails to purchase this land, it would seek the

government's move for requisitioning of the land.

"The drilling site is very close to the main road. We will have to develop the site and a drilling pad, plus construct a small road infrastructure to begin the drilling," said the Bapex chief.

One of the basic impediments to drilling the well is a bridge on the wide river Panchanadi in Thakuragiona area. The bridge was constructed very poorly only a few years ago and already heavy vehicles take extra precautions while crossing it. Mobilising a drilling rig through this bridge would be highly risky, say officials.

Bapex chief said his team has determined an alternative route to mobilise the rig through Mohanganj. "But ultimately we will need this bridge to be workable," he added.

Right now Bapex is tightly scheduled to conduct a series of drilling of wells at different locations. In next month it will start drilling a well in Sundalpur followed by another in Srikail.

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"The DC is responsible for the face-off in Pabna by organising various programmes, especially the view exchange meeting with the media people and other professionals, said Taslim Hasan Suman, AL general secretary of the unit.

The DC and other senior officers of the administration have declined to comment on today's programme and the allegations against the administration.

Following the September 17 attack, two magistrates filed

Mirpur Road

FROM PAGE 16 died on Friday after he was hit by a speeding pick-up van on the road.

Following the death, about 150 students blocked the road for one and a half hours demanding a speed breaker in the area.

parliamentary body asked the law ministry to investigate the matter. The ministry on June 19 this year formed a three-member probe body headed by its Joint Secretary Maznul Ahsan.

Examining personal information including educational certificates of 190 officials, the probe body placed the voluminous report before the parliamentary body yesterday.

According to the probe report, ages of four sub-registrars were at best three years in 1971, 13 officials were between three and five years, 39 were between five and seven, 21 were between seven and eight, 18 were between eight and nine, 12 were between nine and 10, 20 were between 10 and 11, 11 were between 11 and 12, 12 were between 12 and 13, 13 were between 13 and 14, 11 were between 14 and 15, eight were between 15 and 16, five were between 16 and 17, and two were between 17 and 18 years in 1971.

The probe body interviewed the 189 officials.

"None of them could give satisfactory answer to the query as to where and under whose authority they worked as Mujibnagar government staff," the probe report said.

It said none of them was able to recall any incident during their service to the Mujibnagar government.

Citing an example, the probe report said Sabina Yasmin was physically challenged from birth. But she submitted a certificate that she served as an assistant to a nurse when she was six years and three months old in 1971.

"It is absolutely unbelievable and unrealistic," the probe report said.

He said some members of the parliamentary body recommended that the government should suspend them from the job and take account of their wealth.

There were outbursts from the members of the standing committee at the meeting. They said many wounded freedom fighters were loitering on the streets and begging and they did not get government jobs.

PROBE BODY FINDINGS

In the wake of allegations, the

2 more contract anthrax in Nilphamari

BSS, Nilphamari

Two cases of anthrax in human were detected in Jaldhaka upazila of the district yesterday.

They were identified as Samsuzzaman Likhon, 18, and Samaiya Jahana Esha, 4.

Dr Mizanur Rahman of Jaldhaka Upazila Hospital told the journalists that the two patients are being given treatment and are now under observation.

The hospital sources said a three-member medical team has been formed to identify anthrax patients.

Mir Kashem

FROM PAGE 16 journalist Arun Das Gupta and advocate Nurun Nabi Chowdhury.

Her husband told her that Mir Kashem and Abul Kalam were kinsmen of the group that tortured them, Nurjahan said.

Later briefing journalists here, the investigation team said legal steps will be taken against those involved in crimes against humanity in Chittagong region in 1971.

Tribunal Prosecutor Zead Al Malum said, "We have got information that Fazlul Quader Chowdhury's family, his son Salahuddin Quader, Jamaat leader Mir Kashem and many others were involved in criminal activities like mass killings, rape, loot, arson and torture during the Liberation War."

Golam Arif Tipoo said they will submit their findings to the tribunal for taking action as per law.

The tribunal is working impartially to bring to book the elements who escaped punishment for unleashing barbarism.

Prosecutor Mokhesur Rahman said those who were involved in crimes against humanity have become more powerful now, and are making it difficult to get information against them. He urged all to cooperate with the tribunal in this regard.

Earlier, when the probe team members visited Pahartali mass killing ground, Prof Gazi Salehuddin of Chittagong University told them that Pakistani army and its collaborators used to take the freedom-loving people to this spot and kill them. His father was among those killed there.

He also said the occupation army killed several hundred people of the adjoining railway colonies and many others on November 10 in 1971.

On the following day, the army personnel and members of AL, Bdr, AL Shams and Shanti Committee called hundreds of residents of Wireless Colony, Master Lane, Shaheed Lane, Punjabi Lane, Firoj Shah Colony and Saraipara out of their houses and took them to the mass killing spot on the plea of identifying the dead bodies, he said.

The army personnel then shot them dead. Many of the dead bodies were dumped under the ground and many more were burnt spraying gunpowder and petrol, said locals.

The elements also forced many passengers of trains running on Chittagong-Nazirhat and Chittagong-Dohazari lines to get down and killed them.

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Fresh tension

FROM PAGE 16 town, Superintendent of Police Jamil Ahmed of Pabna said, "We're watching the situation. We'll take necessary measures accordingly."

More than 100 Jubo League and Bangladesh Chhatra League activists on September 17 attacked two examination centres during a recruitment test of class-III government employees, as the DC refused to entertain various demands of the ALMP.

The attackers assaulted a number of government officers including two additional deputy commissioners and a female magistrate and vandalised a number of officers' vehicles.

The district administration held a meeting with local professionals and politicians on Thursday to discuss the unprecedented attack, and sought justice.

Meanwhile, the Jubo League and Chhatra League activists accused of attacking the officials might surrender before Pabna magistrate's court today.

"I've asked them to appear before the court tomorrow [today] morning, as I want the culprits to get punished," Prince told The Daily Star at his town home yesterday.

The first-time lawmaker of Pabna-5 constituency, however, is critical of the DC.

"The DC is tarnishing the image of the party [AL] capitalising on the incident. He is violating the code of conduct of service rule," a seemingly irritated Prince said, adding, he explained the matter to the AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam, and urged him to take action against the DC.

He said the ongoing crisis will not be resolved as long as the DC remains posted in Pabna.

AL Vice-president Abdus Samad Raton and other leaders of the municipality unit present at yesterday's meeting condemned the attack on officials and also the subsequent role of the DC.

They criticised the district administration for implicating many Jubo League and Chhatra League leaders and workers in what they called were false cases.

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He said some members of the parliamentary body recommended that the government should suspend them from the job and take account of their wealth.

There were outbursts from the members of the standing committee at the meeting. They said many wounded freedom fighters were loitering on the streets and begging and they did not get government jobs.

PROBE BODY FINDINGS

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two separate cases with Pabna Sadar Police Station accusing more than 100 people including 31 Jubo League and Chhatra League leaders and workers. Police have so far arrested six people while the main accused persons are still at large.

"Drives are on to nab the culprits. We're raiding the houses of the culprits, but they are absconding," Md Ruhul Islam, assistant superintendent of police of Pabna sadar circle, said.

IGP FOR LEGAL ACTION Inspector General of Police (IGP) Hassan Mahmood Khandker yesterday said legal actions will be taken against the attackers.

"I hope, legal action will be taken against the miscreants involved in the offence," he said, adding, actions will also be taken against law enforcers if found guilty of neglecting their duty.

Ibrahim murder

FROM PAGE 16 Khandker Abdul Halim, assistant superintendent of police at CID and investigation officer of the case, told The Daily Star last night.

Earlier on Thursday, CID arrested Mazharul Islam Mithu, another aide to Shaon, and took him on a three-day remand the following day.

Sources said Delwar and Shimul were arrested on information obtained from Mithu.

Ibrahim, 38, was killed by a shot from Shaon's pistol in the lawmaker's car parked in front of the MP Hostel at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex on August 13.

Driver Kamal Hossain alias Kala filed an unnatural death case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.

Five days later, Ibrahim's brother Masum filed a murder case with a Dhaka court, accusing 16 persons including Shaon, Delwar, Kala, Mithu, Mizan, Jibon, Riton and Alam.

Quader rallies

FROM PAGE 16 people, he asserted.

However, the role of some journalists since the 1/11 has also been quite shocking, said the ruling party lawmaker while exchanging views with journalists at Hilltop Circuit House in Cox's Bazar in the morning.

Some journalists even took part in television talk shows which is harmful for democracy, he added. The former state minister said the MPs are elected by the people and if they do anything unjust, they will pay in the next election. Publishing news which undermines parliamentarians indiscriminately is not right.

In Bangladesh, lawmakers have never rendered parliament dysfunctional to press home their demands for higher salaries and allowances.

Quader said, "I am not too worried about 1/11..."

Fake Mujibnagar

FROM PAGE 1 The parliamentary body also asked the law ministry to come up with the particulars of all officials who joined government jobs from 1972 to date as staff of the Mujibnagar government.

"We are astonished at the information about the age of 190 sub-registrars. Some of them were suckling babies in 1971. How could they be the staff of the Mujibnagar government?" Abdul Matin Khasru, a member of the parliamentary body, told The Daily Star after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

He said the committee received allegations from different sources that a good number of those who joined government jobs in high-ranking posts like sub-registrar, custom officer and income tax officer since 1972, claiming to be Mujibnagar government's staffs, illegally made incredible moveable and unmoveable properties.

"We will decide the next course of action after receiving information on other officials who got government jobs through fake educational certificates and age certificates," Khasru, also former law minister, said.

He said some members of the parliamentary body recommended that the government should suspend them from the job and take account of their wealth.

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PROBE BODY FINDINGS

In the wake of allegations, the

Journalist stabbed in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

An assailant stabbed Rangpur correspondent of The Daily Jugantor at Jahaj Company intersection in the town yesterday evening, leaving him critically injured.

Victim Mahabubur Rahman Habu was rushed to Good Health Clinic. Doctors at the clinic said he needed 32 stitches in his back.

Habu came under attack when he was going to his office in the area from the local Press Club around 8:00pm.

An unidentified youth swooped on the journalist and started stabbing with a sharp weapon while his three to four cohorts stood nearby.

Hearing his scream, locals thronged the spot while the attacker and his accomplices escaped the scene, added Habu.

Officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station Haider Ali said they were trying to identify and arrest the attacker.

Habu said that few days ago he reported an incident about tender manipulation of Roads and Highways Department, involving some local ruling party activists.

Robber

FROM PAGE 16 villagers caught hold of one of the bandits and beat him mercilessly, leaving him spot dead.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Comilla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The OC said Matin was wanted in a number of criminal cases including robbery and murder.

PM tells UN

FROM PAGE 1 League were mercilessly killed by systematic terrorist acts of the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami alliance government.

She recalled the August 21 dastardly grenade attack directed against her at a public rally, killing 24 innocent people, including Ivy Rahman, the wife of present President of Bangladesh.

"Being victims of repeated terrorist acts, myself and my family know this menace well," Hasina said, adding, "Clearly, our rejection of terrorism is total as is our determination to eliminate it in all its forms."

The premier said in unequivocal term that terrorism will not be allowed in the soil of Bangladesh. "That's why we are a party to all terrorism-related UN conventions and accord them our full support."