

Dialogue needed, not protest Says Saudi minister

REUTERS, Riyadh

Dialogue, not protest, is the best way to bring about change in Saudi Arabia, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said yesterday as the country braced for possible protests in the world's top oil exporter.

Inspired by unrest sweeping other Arab states, Shi'ite protesters have taken to the streets in small numbers in eastern Saudi Arabia this month, with further rallies called for Friday.

Faisal cautioned that demonstrations would not usher in reform to Saudi Arabia, a bastion of religious conservatism, and said its Muslim clerics had banned protests.

Major 7.3 quake jolts Japan

AFP, Tokyo

A major 7.3-magnitude offshore earthquake rattled Japan yesterday, swaying Tokyo buildings, triggering a small tsunami and reminding the nation of the ever-present threat of seismic disaster.

Police reported no casualties or property damage, and operators of nuclear power plants and Shinkansen bullet trains quickly gave the all-clear, while the wave hitting the Pacific coast measured just 60 centimetres.



US Marine Lance Corporal Shawnee Redbear of 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines Golf Company interacts with an Afghan toddler during a patrol in Basabud, Helmand Province yesterday. The US Marines deployed about 40 Female Marines in Helmand province and Nimruz for the Female Engagement Team (FET) programme to interact with Afghan civilians, specifically women and children.

PHOTO: AFP

Civilian deaths in Afghan war hit record high: UN

AFP, Kabul

The impact of the Afghanistan war on ordinary people was laid bare yesterday by UN figures showing a 15 percent increase in the number of civilians killed last year, the highest annual toll since 2001.

Insurgents were responsible for 75 percent of all civilian deaths, up 28 percent on 2009, the statistics said.

That compared to 16 percent for international and Afghan government forces, down 26 percent. Responsibility

for nine percent of deaths could not be attributed.

Civilian deaths caused by coalition forces is a highly sensitive issue in Afghanistan, and one that came under the spotlight again last week when nine young boys were mistakenly killed in an air strike in eastern Afghanistan.

President Hamid Karzai rejected a rare public apology over the incident from General David Petraeus, the US commander of troops in Afghanistan, and US Defence Secretary Robert Gates

followed it with his own apology during a visit to the country on Monday.

The civilian figures were released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

They indicate that the number of Afghan civilians killed in the war last year stood at nearly eight per day and is nearly four times higher than the 2010 death toll for international troops.

That stood at 711, according to independent website iCasualties.org.

India breaks up 'Free Tibet' demo

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police broke up a demonstration by about 100 Tibetan exiles outside the Chinese embassy in New Delhi yesterday on the eve of the anniversary of the Tibetan uprising in 1959.

Police bundled protesters wearing yellow "Free Tibet" t-shirts into buses in the diplomatic quarter of the Indian capital, an AFP reporter witnessed.

New Delhi is sensitive to anti-China demonstrations from the Tibetan community in exile, many of whom have lived in India since the country offered refuge to spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in 1959.

BNP goes for non-partisan

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the protest programmes in line with the party decision, said BNP insiders.

"The removal of Prof Yunus from Grameen Bank has enraged people. I think the party has made a timely decision," said Abu Bakar Siddique, president of Madaripur district BNP unit.

He said BNP activists will help non-partisan bodies to organise protest programmes and make those successful.

Nazrul Islam Rajan, joint convener of Barisal (South) district BNP unit, said party high-ups asked them to cooperate with local organisations, if those bodies want to organise any programme to protest Yunus' removal from Grameen.

Central BNP leaders contacted the president and general secretaries of party's

district units and conveyed the message to them in line with the directive of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, said party insiders.

According to the party direction, district leaders will contact non-political organisations in their areas to find a way to forge a movement against the government over the issue.

BNP leaders said Grameen Bank members have protested the government decision to remove Prof Yunus from Grameen and BNP has decided to lend support to them across the country.

Khaleda, also leader of the opposition in parliament, at a function on Tuesday termed Yunus' removal illegal and said the decision will be scrapped, if her party is voted to power in future.

Hillary backs Grameen

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expressed support for the independence of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh," Clinton spokesman Philip Crowley said on the microblogging website Twitter.

Hillary ended up making the telephone call Tuesday to Prof Yunus after he canceled a scheduled trip to Washington because of the legal challenge he filed in Bangladesh courts, Crowley said earlier, AFP reports.

However, the state department officials gave no details on what was said during the call, news agency AP said.

"We continue to follow developments closely and await clarification from the government of Bangladesh and Grameen Bank," Crowley told reporters at a briefing.

"We hope that a mutually satisfactory compromise can be achieved that will ensure Grameen Bank's autonomy and effectiveness."

QUESTION: Can I follow up on that real quick? Can you just explain the reason for her calls? Is it to show solidarity with him in the face of all this, or is there something else on the agenda?

CROWLEY: I mean, he's a Nobel Prize winner, Medal of Freedom winner, Congressional Gold Medal winner. His public service is widely recognised and respected, and civil society organisations such as the bank play an important role in Bangladesh's development and democracy. So it is both to show support for his ongoing efforts and the efforts of the Grameen Bank and also to express our concern about developments in Bangladesh.

QUESTION: Sorry. Just one more on that. What specifically...she's expressing concern about this letter; you're troubled by it. What troubles you?

CROWLEY: Well, there's an ongoing court case regarding his dismissal from Grameen Bank, and we are

the Secretary this afternoon. However, he decided to cancel his trip because of the legal challenge he filed in the Bangladesh courts regarding his position at the Grameen Bank. We are troubled by the letter that the Bangladesh Bank sent to the Grameen Bank concerning Dr Yunus' status as managing director of the Grameen Bank. We continue to follow developments closely and await clarification from the government of Bangladesh and Grameen Bank. We hope that a mutually satisfactory compromise can be achieved that will ensure Grameen Bank's autonomy and effectiveness.

QUESTION: What is troubling about the letter?

CROWLEY: It regards Dr Yunus' status as managing director of the Grameen Bank.

QUESTION: PJ [Philip J], when Mr Muhammad Yunus applied for a visa, how much in advance did you know about this? Or did the Bangladesh government advise you about this--his visitor case?

CROWLEY: I don't know, Goyal, how to answer that question. He was due to be here at the State Department this afternoon for a meeting with the secretary of state. He chose to stay not because of a visa issue with us, but because of the ongoing legal case that he is involved in.

QUESTION: Did the secretary call or try to reach anybody in Bangladesh?

CROWLEY: She has talked to the prime minister about this case in the...in recent weeks.

QUESTION: Just a follow-up on this. Isn't this--your concern about the issue--will be considered something interfering with the internal affairs of Bangladesh?

CROWLEY: Well, it's really about the future and the autonomy and effectiveness of the bank.

[The Daily Star ran a report yesterday headlined: "Justice is delivered" where a source claimed that Foreign Minister Dipu Moni had talked to Hillary Clinton. However, upon further investigation The Daily Star found out it was not the case.]

Full SC bench to decide Yunus fate

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on grounds that he was past 60-year retirement age.

The chamber judge briefly heard arguments from both sides and sent the appeal to the full bench of the Supreme Court for a full-fledged hearing on March 15.

Also yesterday, nine members of the board of directors of Grameen Bank filed a similar petition with the apex court. The hearing on this one will also be held in the full bench on March 15.

Last week, Bangladesh Bank sent a letter to Grameen Bank removing Dr Yunus as its managing director saying that the 70-year-old micro-credit pioneer was holding the post ille-

gally. Yunus challenged the order in the High Court. The High Court rejected Yunus' petition and upheld Bangladesh Bank's order.

Meanwhile, prosecution and defence lawyers differed on whether Yunus can continue as Grameen MD until the Supreme Court's full-bench hearing on March 15.

Yunus' counsel barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud told reporters that whether Yunus can function as MD of Grameen Bank is sub judice. "It will be decent for the government or Bangladesh Bank not to take any action in this respect until March 15," he said.

Replying to a question on whether it will be a con-

tempt of court if Dr Yunus holds the office till March 15, Rakanuddin said he did not think so. He said Bangladesh Bank's letter did not say that his dismissal would be executed immediately.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam disagreed with Rakanuddin. He told reporters that the HC verdict is still in force since the chamber judge did not stay its operation.

"If Dr Muhammad Yunus continues as managing director of Grameen Bank now, that will be against the High Court verdict and will be similar to contempt of court," he said.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday talked to reporters

about the procedures of appointing Grameen Bank MD.

He said a search committee has to be formed to suggest names. Grameen board of directors will then appoint the MD on the basis of the committee's suggestion.

In their appeals yesterday, Dr Muhammad Yunus and nine members of board of directors said the HC verdict was "entirely perverse" since it was passed without issuing any rule.

It was in total departure from all ordinary norms of practice, and giving a disingenuous impression of hearing the parties, while amounting to a total denial of justice, the petitioners

said. They said they are aggrieved by the "wholly perverse judgment" and intended to file a regular leave-to-appeal petition against the verdict.

Arguing for the appeals yesterday Rakanuddin told the chamber judge that the dispute over the age limit of Prof Yunus was settled at a joint meeting of Bangladesh Bank and Grameen Bank in 1999, court sources said.

The central bank did not raise any objection in this regard till March 2, when the removal letter was issued, he reportedly said.

The attorney general vehemently opposed the appeals, saying that the HC has given the verdict after examining the relevant laws and hearing arguments from the counsels, said sources close to the court.

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3. **Project Officer - SC (SB3)**
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5. **Project Assistant - SC (SB2)**

For details of the Terms of Reference and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Applications should be received no later than 17:00 pm, 26 March 2011. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

The duration of the Service Contract is one year initially, subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds

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Submission of Application: Application should be marked 'Confidential' and the position applied for (i.e. Driver - SEMB) should be clearly written on the A4 Size envelope. Application including curriculum vitae and a recent passport-size photograph should be sent to the HR Specialist, UNDP-Dhaka, GPO Box: 224, Dhaka-1000, or deposited at the Deposit Box at the IDB Bhaban (Ground Floor), Begum Rokeya Sharani, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207 by 26 March 2011.