

British PM to visit Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan has announced that British Prime Minister David Cameron would today make his first visit to the nuclear-armed South Asian country since taking office nearly a year ago.

Cameron's visit comes nine months after he sailed into a diplomatic row with Pakistan over remarks he made in the country's arch rival India last July that elements in the Muslim majority country were promoting the "export of terror".

Cameron is to arrive in Islamabad for a one-day visit at the invitation of PM Yousuf Raza Gilani, the Pakistani foreign minister said.

"Pakistan attaches considerable importance to the British prime minister's visit and to the close cooperative relationship with the United Kingdom," it said in a statement.



PHOTO: AFP

Anti-regime protesters shout slogans calling for the ouster of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh during a demonstration in central Sanaa yesterday, as security forces shot dead 17 fellow demonstrators and wounded scores more on the second day of lethal clashes in Taiz, south of the capital, medics said.

US now seeks removal of Yemeni president

Says NY Times report

REUTERS, Washington

The United States has concluded Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh will not likely enact reforms demanded by opposition protesters and must be eased out of office, The New York Times reported Sunday, citing US and Yemeni officials.

The United States has talked openly of its concern about who might succeed Saleh, whom it views as an ally who has helped to contain al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a Yemen-based wing of the militant group.

Saleh, in power for 32 years, has said he was prepared to leave eventually but that an abrupt exit would cause chaos.

About 82 people have been killed in anti-government rallies in the Arabian Peninsula state.

President Barack Obama's administration had supported Saleh but began to shift position on the Yemeni leader in the past week, the New York Times said.

American officials have told allies and

some reporters that they now view Saleh's hold on office as untenable and they believe he should leave, the newspaper reported.

A Yemeni official was cited as saying negotiations with Saleh on the terms of his possible departure began a little over a week ago, after gunmen linked to the government killed more than 50 protesters at an rally on March 18.

"The Americans have been pushing for transfer of power since the beginning" of the negotiations which were still in progress, the official told the newspaper.

Under an opposition plan, the army and security forces would be restructured by a vice president acting as temporary president, the opposition coalition said Saturday.

Talks have been off and on over the past two weeks, sometimes in the presence of the U.S. ambassador.

Sources say Saleh wants to ensure he and his family do not face prosecution over corruption claims that the opposition has talked about.

SC hearing on appeals

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date of the hearing.

Nobel laureate Dr Yunus and nine board members of the microfinance bank filed two separate leave-to-appeal petitions on Sunday challenging the HC verdict as they recently got the certified copy of the judgment.

The apex court on March 29 adjourned the hearing on two petitions till yesterday as the lawyers for the petitioners sought time for filing the leave-to-appeal petitions.

Dr Yunus and nine board members of the microfinance bank on March 9 filed two separate petitions with the apex court, seeking a stay on the operation of the verdict and the Bangladesh Bank order.

They filed the stay petitions after the HC on March 8 rejected two writ petitions challenging Yunus' removal.

Yunus was unceremoniously relieved of his duties on March 2 through a BB letter sent to Grameen Bank Chairman Khondoker Muzammel Huq.

The central bank said Yunus failed to seek its approval when he was reappointed as the managing director in 2000, violating one of the statutes of the partly state-owned Grameen Bank.

Dr Kamal Hossain, barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud and barrister Sara Hossain appeared for Dr Yunus while Attorney General Mahbub Alam stood for the government.

US pressured Gulf states over Iran: Ahmadinejad

AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday the United States and its allies pressured Gulf Arab states to accuse Tehran of interfering in the region and demanded Saudi forces leave Bahrain.

"This statement was issued under pressure from America and its allies. It does not bear any legal value," Ahmadinejad told reporters at a Tehran news conference, after the GCC said Sunday it was worried about "Iranian meddling."

The Iranian president also said that Saudi-led forces brought into Bahrain amid protests by the Shiite majority in the kingdom should leave.

"Take them out. The people have demands so listen to them," the hardliner said.

The Gulf Arab states on Sunday accused the Islamic republic of interfering in Bahrain and Kuwait.

Foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in a statement issued after a meeting in Riyadh, said they were "deeply worried about continuing Iranian meddling."

Ahmadinejad said the Gulf Arab monarchies must "not fall into the trap of the Americans," and should boost their ties with Tehran instead.

"We have extended the hand of friendship... do not fall into the American trap, all should be alert," Ahmadinejad said in the press conference broadcast live on state television.

Pointing the finger at Tehran's regional archfoe, Israel, he said: "Their (the West's) intention in interfering in the region is to save the Zionist regime."

The GCC -- grouping Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates -- accused Shiite Iran of plotting against the security of its Sunni monarchies and of fanning confessional discord.

AL stalwarts, allies

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Hossain from the censure of the lawmakers. And that is when the issue was put to rest.

The same month, former AL general secretary Abdul Jalil said the government had failed to arrest the price hike of essentials and improve law and order. He also spoke of inadequacy of the government efforts to solve the electricity and gas crises.

In private, some top AL leaders are even more scathing about the government's performance, party insiders say.

Many ministers, on the other hand, view these criticisms as "venting of frustration for not being in the cabinet".

Not everyone agrees.

"We are just warning the government that we won't do well in the next election if we fail to address the power and gas crises, contain price hike and improve law and order," JP Chairman HM Ershad told The Daily Star.

Being in government, his party cannot evade its responsibilities, he added.

On another occasion of late, Ershad said JP would rethink its staying in the grand alliance if its leaders and workers are not given "due importance".

The senior AL leaders critical of the administration say their comments are "constructive and meant to correct the government," which is into its third year now.

"Whatever I say is for the benefit of the government and the party. I don't utter anything that may harm the organisation and the government," said AL presidium member Obaidul Quader.

He, however, noted that being in the presidium he cannot talk freely or attack the government verbally.

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, AL joint general secretary, is against slamming the government in public. "Our leaders could speak in party forums or in parliament. They could point out the mistakes and suggest ways to correct them."

For Hanif, slating the government openly is like playing into the opposition's hands and thus politically immature.

Many AL leaders say they cannot speak their mind in party forums either.

Jalil, also a member of AL advisory council, recently told the BBC Bangla Service that the council met thrice in the last two years, but nothing fruitful came out.

On criticising the government in public, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said: "We are only saying what people want to say and nothing else."

The grand alliance leaders are bringing up the government's mistakes, because they think this is going to be a challenging year, added Menon.

HSC exams

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43,068 more than last year's.

Some 4,24,823 male and 3,54,618 female students of 7,288 educational institutions are appearing for the exams under 10 education boards.

The exams will also be held in five overseas centres in Jeddah, Riyadh, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Tripoli for a total of 191 candidates.

Ahead of the examination, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) imposed restriction on access within 200 yards of the examination centres to ensure peaceful atmosphere. The restrictions will remain effective on the examination days, said a DMP release.

Bangla First Paper will be on the first day, today, followed by Bangla Second Paper on April 7. The written examinations will end on May 31.

Around 6,29,619 lakh students will take the exam under eight general education boards while 76,957 will take Alim exam under Madrasa Board and 68,961 will take BM exam under Technical Board.

The highest number of examinees, 2,09,117, will appear under the Dhaka board.

Earlier on Sunday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said necessary steps have been taken to conduct the exams in a secure and peaceful atmosphere.

The minister is likely to visit Dhaka College in the capital today.

Aila-hit people staring at sky

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The family of 35-year-old Sabitri is one of the 8,321 households still living on the embankment in Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat, according to ECHO partners' assessment as of March this year. As many as 40,385 out of 63,000 badly affected households have already returned to their places.

BWDB officials claim all of the Aila affected 49 polders have already been repaired except the one in South Betkashi.

"We hope to repair the last one in April," claimed Giasuddin Ahmad, director of the project for rehabilitation of the BWDB structure

damaged by Aila. However, Betkashi people doubt the statement as the monsoon is approaching.

Hundreds of men, women and children who have returned home are now passing their days in hunger and want of drinking water.

Ecological balance and sources of drinking water of the areas have been destroyed by continuous intrusion of saline water.

More than a year after the Aila damaged 1,700 kilometres of the protection embankment, BWDB started repairing it for the first time in October last year.

Yet only repair is too inadequate for the poorly main-

tained 50-year-old embankment as very often it would be found narrowed down to less than three feet wide and seven feet high. In places parts of the slope of the embankment were even found washed away.

As the correspondent travelled at least 12 villages along the BWDB embankment in Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat, people were found living in constant fear that another cyclone would destroy the entire embankment.

"Unless redesigned, the 50-year-old embankment might not withstand another natural disaster," said BWDB official Giasuddin Ahmad.

He suggested the height of the coastal belt embankment be increased by at least one metre. And the slope of about 1,000km of the embankment must be protected with blocks along the big rivers.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on water resources ministry on April 3 formed a three-member committee headed by Awami League lawmaker Abdur Rahman to investigate progress of the damaged embankment reconstruction. The move came in the wake of widespread allegations that the embankment was repaired with sub-standard materials and without proper bidding procedure.

SOUTH BETKASHI AND THE EMBANKMENT

Locals in Betkashi allege the breach on the embankment was only 10-foot wide just after the cyclone.

But it widened faster and became 60 metre wide by the time the government took its first repairing step.

The work began in October 2010 with an estimated budget of Tk 2.06 lakh and continued till February this year but failed to seal the crack.

The second phase of repairing with Tk 4.92-crore budget began in March, but even then the crack became 130 metre wide.

The affected people looked frustrated as they showed this correspondent the poor condition of the embankment.

In Southkhali of Bagerhat Dulal Howlader lamented that the embankment, which was their protection from the mighty Bareshwar River, would not even withstand even a cyclone of second cautionary signal.

The immediate past chairman of South Betkashi union Shamsur Rahman said "Neglect has caused the damage the cyclone itself could not unleash."

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Vacancy Announcement

Issued on: 5 April 2011

Deadline for Application: 25 April 2011

The FAO Representation in Bangladesh is inviting applications of qualified candidates to the following vacant position in Dhaka under the project GCP/BGD/038/EC "Improving Food Safety, Quality, Hygiene and Food Control in Bangladesh". Incumbents will be recruited as a National Project Personnel:

• Computer Manager

(UN Salary scale and benefits for similar position apply).

Interested qualified candidates will find the post descriptions, the link to the Personal History Form (PH-Form) and the information on how to apply in the following web link: www.bdjobs.com. Hard copies of the completed PH-Form must reach the FAO Representation in Bangladesh, House # 37, Road#8, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205 in a sealed envelope by close of business on 25 April 2011.

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