

Korean envoys fail to agree on nuke talks

AFP, Beijing

The chief nuclear envoys for North and South Korea said yesterday they had failed to reach agreement on reviving international nuclear disarmament talks at a meeting in Beijing.

The discussions between the South's Wi Sung-Lac and his North Korean counterpart Ri Yong-Ho were the second in two months designed to pave the way for full six-party negotiations on the North's nuclear programme to restart.

"We discussed how to achieve the right atmosphere to restart the talks," Ri told journalists after the meeting at a private members' club in the centre of the Chinese capital.

"Based on the results of today's talks, we would like to try to restart the six-party talks with no pre-conditions."

UN chief

FROM PAGE 1 negotiated settlement," Ban said.

Abbas has vowed to seek full Palestinian membership in the United Nations after his speech to the assembly on Friday. Israel strongly opposes the move and the United States, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has vowed to veto any application which the council must approve.

Israel and the United States insist that any Palestinian state must be brokered through direct Israeli-Palestinian talks.

Later, US President Barack Obama, in his address to the General Assembly, warned there is "no short cut" to Middle East peace.

"I am convinced that there is no short cut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the UN -- if it were that easy, it would have been accomplished by now," Obama said.

Obama spoke from the same podium where a year ago he called upon the world to unite and reject hatred to permit a new Palestinian state to be admitted to the United Nations within 12 months.

However, yesterday Obama did not propose any concrete suggestions to bring the parties together in talks frozen since Israel declined last year to extend a moratorium on settlement building.

His remarks brought immediate responses from Israelis and Palestinians.

Senior Palestinian officials accused Obama of being inconsistent and insisted that the only path to Middle East peace was an end to the Israeli occupation.

While Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed Obama's firm determination against Palestinian's statehood bid.

Meanwhile, French President Nicolas Sarkozy in his speech called on the United Nations to admit Palestine as a non-member state, but opposing a Palestinian bid for full membership.

Sarkozy also called for "one year to reach a definitive agreement" between Israel and the Palestinians, saying the usual US-led peace process should not bypass European, Arab or other countries as it failed to bring result.

Apart from the statehood bid standoff, the UN chief also urged the main contributors to the UN budget "to not flag in their generosity."

"Budgets are tight. Yet we also know that investing through the UN is smart policy. Burden sharing makes the load lighter. Scaling back is no answer," Ban said.

PM vows

FROM PAGE 1 companies to invest in gas and mineral resources sector in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has huge gas resources, but it is not known exactly how much gas resources are there in the country right now, she said, adding "There are some maritime boundary problems with Myanmar. Once the problem is solved, it would be possible to know the exact quantity of gas."

On the recent Dhaka visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Hasina said his visit was a great success.

She referred to the agreement, MoUs and protocols signed during Manmohan's visit, saying the other problems can be resolved through discussions.

Hasina hoped that Bangladesh's connectivity with Nepal and Bhutan will create a better favourable atmosphere for development in the South Asian region.

The premier also emphasised beefing up regional connectivity for mutual benefits of all the nations in the region.

She reiterated her government's plan to establish Bangladesh as the business hub of South Asia as the country's geographical position in this region is highly significant.

Hasina said the positive thing for the South Asia is that democracy is now in every country. "We all the South Asian nations should utilise the democratic

atmosphere through working together to eliminate poverty from the region," she said.

Asked about Bangladesh-Pakistan relations, the premier reiterated the country's foreign policy of "Friendship to All, Malice to None". Bangladesh and Pakistan are enjoying good relations, she said.

Replying to a question about what makes her worry most, Hasina said she always thinks how to ensure welfare of the mass people. "I am not worried for my own life or something else. My only worry is the people of our motherland. I want to free them from poverty. I want to provide them with quality education and health services."

The premier said the government is implementing various projects for infrastructure development and boosting power generation.

So far, she said, the present government has been able to add some 2,200 megawatt of power to the national grid while 38 more power plants are being constructed.

Asia Society President Vishakha Desai, Tami Overby, vice president, Asia US Chamber of Commerce, former World Bank president James Wolfensohn also spoke on the occasion.

PM's son Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, FBCCI President AK Azad Chowdhury, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, among others, attended the luncheon.

Metro rail

FROM PAGE 1 steering committee however termed the objection unfounded.

Jica committed to providing a soft loan of 1.7 billion dollars at 0.01 percent interest rate for the project. It intended to start the feasibility study by December and hold financial negotiations early next year.

The route realignment along Sangsad Avenue has to be approved by the cabinet the same way it endorsed the original alignment, said Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain on Tuesday.

The government has to seek consent of the finance and planning ministries, the parliament secretariat, and environmentalists to go for the Khamarbari alternative before conveying the final decision officially to Jica, he said.

"Above all, we have to get it endorsed by the prime minister," the minister added.

The government's aim is to start the project work

within its tenure, he said.

Already agreed upon alterations to the alignment include relocation of the metro rail's depot from Pallabi to Uttara, a five-kilometre extension of length between Pallabi and Uttara Third Phase, and a route change from Dhaka University to Bangladesh Bank.

Bangladesh Army objected to the depot in Pallabi and suggested its relocation towards Uttara.

"Changes to the alignment and length have caused the increase in cost of the project," said Abul Hossain.

"The route along Bijoy Sarani is the best option, as it will not require land acquisition or building demolition," said the Jica official.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Board, owning agency of the project, itself has to arrange for the social and environmental assessment of the proposed Khamarbari route, as Jica's two and a half years contract with its consultant ended in August.

Vehicle fumes raise

FROM PAGE 1 Prof Jeremy Pearson, associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation (BHF), which co-funded the study, said "This large-scale study shows conclusively that your risk of having a heart attack goes up temporarily, for around six hours, after breathing in higher levels of vehicle exhaust."

"We know that pollution can have a major effect on your heart health, possibly because it can 'thicken' the blood to make it more likely to clot, putting you at higher risk of a heart attack."

"Our advice to patients remains the same -- if you have been diagnosed with heart disease, try to avoid spending long periods outside in areas where there are likely to be high traffic pollution levels, such as on or near busy roads," Prof Pearson said.

The research looked at the medical records of almost 80,000 heart attack patients in England and Wales, cross-referencing these details with air pollution data.

This enabled the investigators to plot hourly levels of air pollution (PM10, ozone, CO, NO2, and SO2) against onset of heart attack symptoms and see if there was any link.

Higher levels of air pollution did appear to be linked with onset of a heart attack lasting for six hours after exposure. After this time frame, risk went back down again.

Krishnan Bhaskaran from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who led the research, said the findings suggested that pollution was not a major contributing factor to heart attacks.

For example, being exposed to a spell of medium-level rather than low-level pollution would raise heart attack risk by 5%, by his calculations.

"If anything, it looks like it brings heart attack forward by a few hours. These are cardiac events that probably would have happened anyway."

But Bhaskaran said the findings should not detract from the fact that chronic exposure to air pollution was hazardous to health.

Prof Pearson from the BHF agrees: "Unhealthy diets and smoking etc are much bigger heart attack risk factors, but car fumes are the cream on the cake that can tip you over."

Train fare

FROM PAGE 20 fare to reduce subsidy on the sector.

"We'll make the final decision in consultation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when she returns from the USA," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star last night.

He said the BR will be able to provide better service after the hike.

The government has recently increased bus fare by 5 paisa per km while CNG-run auto-rickshaw fare by 14 paisa.

In 1992, when the train fare was last increased, diesel sold at Tk 13 per litre. It is now Tk 51 a litre.

"We've no other option but to increase fare in the face of gradual rise in fuel prices," the minister added.

At present, the railway charges 24 paisa per km from passengers.

The previous BNP-Jamaat government rejected BR's proposal to hike train fare. The military-backed caretaker government in 2008 also refrained from increasing the fare considering its possible impact on inflation.

Railway officials said successive governments hesitated about increasing the fare, fearing decline in popularity.

DB appeals

FROM PAGE 20 Hossain, Babu and Zafar -- will have to face trial.

A student of biochemistry and molecular biology, Kadar was picked up by Khilgaon police from capital's Segunbagicha on his way to dormitory around 1:30am on July 16. Though he showed his identity card, police detained him and tortured him in custody. Helal Uddin, officer-in-charge of the station, also chopped the calf muscle of his left leg with a cleaver.

After the arrest, police filed three cases against him -- one for robbery, one for carjacking and the other for possessing sharp weapons.

Investigation of the robbery and carjacking cases is going on. Now on bail, Kadar appeared before a court in connection with the two cases yesterday.

The carjacking case, in which he was implicated, was filed on July 14 with Mohammadpur Police Station.

Kadar was shown arrested in the case on July 19.

Following news reports revealing the facts, the High Court on July 28 issued a suo moto rule upon the government, ordering suspension of Helal Uddin and other policemen.

OC Helal Uddin, Sub-inspector Alam Badsha, and Assistant Sub-inspector Shahidur Rahman were closed on July 29.

A departmental probe also found that police did torture Kadar, falsely charging him with robbery and carjacking.

"We've found him innocent, and his statement on his arrest and torture last month was right," a member of the police investigation team told The Daily Star in August.

Lately, Kadar has identified Helal Uddin before a probe committee to be his torturer.

Clarification

FROM PAGE 1 not mandatory," the chairman said.

Hossain said he only mentioned that to meet the emergency situation due to an increase in the prices of petroleum products internationally, the government in its best judgment and public interest took a decision to increase the price of the petroleum products.

In fixing the tariff BERC follows a lengthy procedure, taking into consideration all stakeholders' interests/rights, he said.

In view of the emergency situation, BERC also acted in state interest to increase the price of CNG, a substitute for the petroleum products, said the statement, signed by the BERC chairman.

Hartal now for 11 hours

FROM PAGE 1 Kabir Rizvi.

On the record, party leaders only said it was a BNP high-up decision to have the 11-hour hartal instead of 12 hours.

However, sources said the BNP high-ups decided to reduce the hartal hours following a request from the organiser of a cultural programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre this evening. Besides, a reception programme at the Saudi Arabia Embassy this evening was another reason.

The BNP yesterday staged demonstrations and brought out procession in the city to drum up support for the hartal. It also said the government will be responsible for any untoward incidents if it obstructed the hartal from being observed.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Shahara Khatun yesterday said they would go tough against unruly picketers during today's hartal. Police officials said they have taken "adequate" measures to maintain peace.

At a protest rally in front of BNP central office in Naya Paltan, senior party leaders bitterly criticised the government yesterday for increasing fuel prices and asked the government

to step down and hold fresh elections under a non-party caretaker government.

"The government has made public life miserable. So, there is no alternative but to go for movement. The government has to bear all responsibilities if it creates any obstruction during the hartal," said Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir addressing the rally.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Nazrul Islam Khan also addressed the rally with DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka in the chair.

After the rally they brought out a procession which just went to Kakrail intersection and back.

Weirdly, opposition activists then started vandalising the very microbus and truck used as a stage for the rally. They even burnt a tyre on the street but police were quick to get everything under control again.

Late in the night, a bus was torched in Mirpur-13 in the capital. Locals, however, doused the flames before the fire brigade could get to the scene.

POLICE READY FOR HARTAL

Home Minister Shahara Khatun yesterday said the government will use mobile courts to check anarchy on the streets before and during the hartal today. She

also said the government will go tough on unruly pickets.

She made the comments before reporters at her Secretariat office.

Rab and DMP officials said around 11,000 additional policemen and 3,000 Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel with 12 mobile courts have been deployed in the capital to deal with pickets. BNP and its allies decided to picket at about 35 spots in the capital.

Security men with a number of water cannons and armed personnel carriers (APC) will remain vigilant across the capital.

"Law enforcers will put in their highest efforts to prevent any kind of anarchy on the streets as well to keep law and order under control," Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Police Masudur Rahman of DMP told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, police arrested 61 people at different places in the capital between Tuesday night and early hours of yesterday. Twenty-five were arrested in Chittagong, 41 in Khulna, 14 in Chapainawabganj, four in Pabna, sources said, adding that they were shown arrested in cases filed in connection with Monday's violence.

Commuters suffer

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succession, but the picture is different today [yesterday]," said Suman, who was waiting for a bus for about 40 minutes.

Hanif Mia, another passenger, managed to get on a bus for Gazipur after waiting for about an hour at Satrasta.

As all modes of transport became scarce in the afternoon, many went to their destinations on foot.

Meanwhile, many bus services yesterday charged excessive fares. Passengers were seen haggling with bus conductors, as both local and counter bus services in the capital charged Tk 2-5 extra.

The government on Sunday raised the prices of petroleum products by Tk 5-8 per litre. The next day, price of CNG was hiked by Tk 5 per unit. Subsequently, the government increased bus fare by 5 paisa per km while CNG-run auto-rickshaw fare by 14 paisa per km.

Commuters expressed frustration over the transport fare hike for the second time in four months.

Visiting different bus stops, this correspondent found many counter-based buses, including state-run BRTC ones, were charging more than the ticket price.

"I've come here [Banglamotor] from cantonment at Tk 12 in a BRTC bus. The fare is Tk 10," said Joy, a student of a private university.

BRTC staff, however, said they were not charging extra.

"The fare from Shahbagh to Banani is Tk 10 as per the ticket. But they are charging Tk 14," said Helaluddin, a passenger of Gazipur Paribahan.

Asked, a Gazipur Paribahan staff said the tickets were printed before the fare hike.

Local buses were more desperate to charge extra.

"I paid Tk 8 to come to Gulshan-1 from Farmgate, while the normal fare is Tk

6," said Anwar, a passenger of a local bus service.

"They [policymakers] have amassed huge money, and they travel by private cars. That is why they do not realise our sufferings, and pay no heed to our problems," said Raihan, a garment worker.

Tanvir, another passenger waiting at Satrasta, said, "A tougher movement should be launched against the hike in transport fare."

Meanwhile, Passenger Welfare Association of Bangladesh yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club demanding cancellation of the government's decision to increase bus fare.

Khandaker Enyet Ullah, secretary general of Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Samity, said they will accept the government-fixed fares if the government meets some of their demands including withdrawal of 25 percent tax on tyres.

BDR carnage trial

FROM PAGE 20

Darbar Hall during BDR week and his agonising hours in captivity with his seven family members in Pikhana.

Nayek Subeder Fazlul Karim, habilder Anisuzzaman, nayek Wazed and soldier Motiur Rahman were among the jawans, who took Gazzali's body away.

Making his hour-long statement at a jam-packed makeshift courtroom at Bakshi Bazar, Lt Col Tasnim named 14 BDR personnel, most of whom joined a negotiation with the prime minister at that time. He also named sepoy Zillur's wife China Begum, from whom his mobile phone was recovered later.

"I entered the Darbar Hall five minutes before it started at 9:00am on the day," said Tasnim, now posted at Inter Selection Services Board (ISSB) in Dhaka Cantonment.

"The DG started addressing the meeting on time. Suddenly sepoy Moyeen with firearms appeared on the stage from the rear side of the hall. Other senior officers grabbed him and lay him on the floor as he fainted.

"I stepped forward and saw sepoy Kajol running away. Maj Khalid followed him [Kajol]," Lt Col Tasnim continued. "The situation inside the hall got messy in minutes."

At that time Col Anis announced that Darbar (meeting) will start again. Standing at gate-5, he with two other officers was asking

jawans to enter the Darbar Hall but no one paid heed to them, the witness said.

Lt Col Tasnim went on to say that he had noticed three to four jawans with firearms standing on the playground near the hall with 15-20 yards of gap between them.

"Suddenly one shouted out 'encircle them [officers] so none can go out'," Lt Col Tasnim said, adding he then saw a pick-up van coming towards the Darbar Hall.

He said he soon entered the Darbar Hall. "Inside, I could hear the sounds of firing on the playground. I told the DG 'Sir, we are surrounded' and the DG said, 'Commanders go and take care of your troops.'"

Following the DG's order, he headed towards signal sector and on the way he met Maj Mokbul and Maj Gazzali. They told him to put off his rank, but he did not.

"After sometime I reached JCO [junior commanding officer] mess near signal sector and found that six-seven jawans were beating Maj Gazzali," Lt Col Tasnim said in tears. "I hid behind a building. Moments later, I heard two-three gunshots and someone groaning with pain. And then Gazzali's body was being taken away."

"Soon a sepoy spotted me outside the JCO mess and pointed a SMG [sub-machine gun] to my head. The sepoy called others saying 'another one is found.'"

ing and from there Lance Nayek Rezaul and three to four others took him to Tattu Show line where he was held captive until his release at 5:00pm the following day, Lt Col Tasnim said.

He also said during his captivity he talked to some officers over mobile phone. They informed him that 14 members including deputy assistant directors (DAD) Towhid, Habib, Nasir, Jalil and Rahim went to the Prime Minister's Office to talk to Sheikh Hasina. But they did not disclose anything about the killings.

Later, he [Tasnim] came to know that habilder Rafiq, sepoy Moniruzzaman, Selim Reza and Selim were also in the meeting.

After Lt Col Tasnim completed his statement, DAD Towhidul Islam's counsel cross-examined him for a few minutes and then the court was adjourned until September 29.

At the beginning of the day's proceedings, second prosecution witness Inspector Kamal Uddin gave his statement and was cross-examined by the defence lawyers. He was the officer-in-charge of Newmarket Police Station where the case was shifted to from Lalbagh Police Station.

Defence lawyers had pleaded to the court not to record statements of Lt Col Tasnim saying he had been present in the courtroom during second witness's statement and cross-examination which was still fresh in his memory.

AL warns

FROM PAGE 1 will announce a set of anti-government agitation programmes from a rally scheduled to be held in the capital on September 27.

In response to the opposition's protest moves Awami Jubo League, a youth organisation associated with ruling AL, already announced month-long street programmes in the capital for a show of strength.

Addressing a party rally on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam directed his party activists to build resistance in wards and neighbourhoods "against the opposition's attempt to create anarchy in the name of hartal".

AL insiders said activists of the party and all its associated bodies will be on the streets from this morning in respective areas to resist "the opposition's anarchy during hartal", a move that raises the spectre of street confrontations.

"Confrontational politics will be encouraged if the opposition observes hartal and take up programmes aiming to topple the government through movements. Democracy and stability of the country will be affected badly," said AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader yesterday adding that hartals and movements have no value now as those have become meaningless to the people.

Talking to The Daily Star he said today's hartal will only increase public sufferings, as hartal creates fear among the public. The opposition could mobilise the public and carry out peaceful programmes like forming human chains and road marches to protest price hikes, he said.

The AL policymaker said there might be agitations against the government but toppling it through movements will not be possible, and surely it will complete its five-year tenure like in the past.

Sharif Nurul Ambia, general secretary of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, an ally of ruling AL, said the "irrational" hartal will help patronisation of militancy and criminal activities.

Jubo League's month-long anti-BNP programmes in 100 wards of the capital will start on September 24. It will also organise similar programmes in all district and upazila headquarters on September 25 and 26 respectively.

"Jubo League will be on the streets to resist hartal tomorrow," said Fazlul Haque Atique, office secretary of the organisation, yesterday.

Businesses

FROM PAGE 1 release said confrontational politics has become a threat to development. It urged all the parties to steer clear of political activities that are counter-productive.

The statement said the nation needs politicians to support the causes of the common people, pledge a nation free from poverty and create employment opportunities for all.

The business body advocated dialogues to avoid confrontations and urged the opposition party to withdraw the hartal.

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) said hartals would aggravate the sufferings of the common people, who have already been hit by fuel price hikes and inflation.

In its press release, DCCI said the economy is already in a bad shape because of a poor supply of gas and energy, high interest rate, inflation, infrastructure bottlenecks and a volatile share market, and in such conditions, a hartal would further deter economic growth.

DCCI believes that rapid industrialisation is essential to maintain the government's vision of 2021 economic goals. Here, the manufacturing sector will play a pivotal role in addressing the rising unemployment situation in the country, it said.