

West backs off from sanctions call on Syria

AFP, Damascus

Western powers dropped calls for sanctions against Damascus at the UN Security Council in the face of veto threats from China and Russia, even as existing curbs began to impact Syria's economy.

A new draft resolution drawn up by Britain, France, Germany and Portugal, with US backing, a copy of which was obtained by AFP late Tuesday, threatens to adopt sanctions if the deadly crackdown by Syrian forces on anti-regime protesters does not end.

The formulation was aimed at overcoming opposition from Russia and China, who have threatened to veto any sanctions resolution brought to the council, which has so far only agreed one statement on the crackdown since mid-March.

The European Union has in the past week tightened the screws on President Bashar al-Assad's regime, banning new investments in Syria's oil sector at home and abroad, and prohibiting delivery of bank notes to the central bank.

The latest measures marked a seventh round of EU sanctions on Damascus for its refusal to halt a brutal crackdown on protest in which 2,700 people have already been killed according to the United Nations.

It has also listed 56 Syrians and 18 entities subject to travel bans and asset freezes.

Washington for its part has imposed three sets of punitive measures on Assad and top government officials while President Barack Obama has called on Assad to step down.

The measures are already having an effect, with the Damascus government surprising the world last Thursday by announcing the temporary suspension of imports of products that are subject to tariffs of more than five percent.

Gaddafi hiding near Algeria border: NTC

AGENCIES

Muammar Gaddafi is believed to be hiding near the western town of Ghadames near the Algerian border under the protection of Tuareg tribesmen, the Libyan official leading the hunt for the deposed leader said.

"One tribe, the Tuareg, is still supporting him and he is believed to be in the Ghadamis area in the south," Hisham Buhagiar, a senior military officer in Libya's new leadership, told Reuters by telephone late on Tuesday.

Buhagiar said Gaddafi was believed to have been in the southern town of Samnu a week ago before moving to Ghadames, which lies 550 km southwest of Tripoli.

He said Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam was in Bani Walid and another son, Mutassem, was in Sirte, the family's hometown.

Buhagiar said most tribes in the south were against Gaddafi except for the Tuareg, who still supported him.

Meanwhile, anti-Gaddafi forces took heavy losses and appealed for help from Nato as they pushed yesterday towards the ousted despot's compound in his birthplace Sirte, while also being beaten back in his

other remaining bastion, Bani Walid.

On the political front, a member of Libya's new ruling National Transitional Council (NTC) said formation of a transitional government, already delayed by disputes over power-sharing, had been postponed until they had won control of the entire country.

The losses were heavier in Sirte, where NTC fighters are battling their way to the heart of the sprawling Mediterranean city, site of a Gaddafi compound and bunkers.

Fighting which raged into the night on Tuesday cantered around the Mahari hotel in eastern Sirte where NTC combatants engaged loyalist troops in close quarter skirmishes, a commander said.

"More than 10 of our fighters have been killed today in face-to-face fighting near Mahari hotel," said the commander, who asked not to be named as the information was sensitive.

The NTC fighters and Gaddafi's diehards clashed "in street fights and shot at each other from close range with Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenades," the commander said.

Obama hails 'unshakeable' US-Israel ties

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama praised the "unshakeable" bonds between Israel and the United States Tuesday in remarks marking the start of the Jewish high holy days.

The major Jewish holidays afford "an opportunity to reaffirm our friendships, renew our commitments, and reflect on the values we cherish," said Obama.

"My administration is doing everything we can to promote prosperity here at home and security and peace throughout the world -- and that includes reaffirming our commitment to the State of Israel," the US leader said.

"While we cannot know all that the New Year will bring, we do know this: the United States will continue to stand with Israel, because the bond between our two nations is unshakeable," he added.

EU, US condemn new Israeli settlement plans

AFP, Jerusalem

Europe and the United States condemned Israeli plans announced Tuesday for another 1,100 homes in an east Jerusalem settlement, a move Palestinian leaders said snubbed a recent offer of talks.

They responded sharply to the Israeli interior ministry's announcement that it had approved plans for the new housing units in Gilo, subject to a 60-day period for public objections.

"The administration and the United States government is deeply disappointed by that announcement," President Barack Obama's spokesman Jay Carney told reporters aboard Air Force One on a trip to California and Colorado.

He called on both sides to take steps to improve prospects of direct talks.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland described the Israeli settlement move as "counterproductive".

She added: "We have long urged both parties to avoid actions which could undermine trust."

European Union diplomacy chief Catherine Ashton also condemned the development.



PHOTO: AFP

Congress Party General Secretary and Trustee for Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Rahul Gandhi (CL) and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra (2R) meet physically disabled scooter recipients in New Delhi yesterday. Some 220 three-wheeler scooters were distributed to disabled people by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.

Drop name of Tarique

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stated that he doesn't know Tarique or other BNP leaders.

"Mufti Abdul Hannan's petition for withdrawing his earlier statement proves that Tarique had been implicated in the cases as part of a conspiracy to prevent him from running for the next general election," BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told a press conference at the party chairperson's Gulshan office in the capital yesterday.

Huji Chief Hannan submitted the petition on Tuesday for withdrawing the statement he gave on April 7. In the statement, he mentioned the involvement of Hawa Bhaban, some former BNP ministers and intelligence officials in the grenade attack.

Later, the investigation officer submitted a supple-

mentary charge sheet with the names of a few BNP leaders including Tarique Rahman, Lutfozzaman Babar, Abdus Salam Pintu and Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad.

Alamgir said the Huji leader in his latest statement said he was tortured into giving the April 7 statement.

The acting BNP secretary general said the government now has no moral or legal grounds to blame the BNP leaders for the incident.

"The party's image was tarnished by the advertisement in national dailies that asked Tarique and 11 others to appear before a court in connection with the grenade attack," he said.

The BNP leader said they will seek legal action over the matter.

Alamgir said Awami League did not cooperate with the previous BNP-led

government in the investigation into the incident. On assumption of power, the ruling AL has changed investigation officers in the cases several times.

"They finally appointed an investigation officer known to be loyal to Awami League. This officer implicated Tarique Rahman in the cases at the behest of the ruling party's top brass," he said.

Senior BNP leaders RA Gani, MK Anwar and Sadeque Hossain Khoka, among others, were present.

Twenty-four people were killed and nearly 200 others injured in a grenade attack on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004.

Police filed two cases -- one under the Explosive Substances Act and the other for murder -- in connection with the incident.

China warns US against 'interfering' over Tibet

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday warned the United States against interfering in its affairs after two Buddhist monks set themselves on fire and the US called for Beijing to respect the rights of Tibetans.

The US State Department said Tuesday it was "seriously concerned" by attempts by two monks at the Kirti monastery in southwest China's Sichuan province to burn themselves to death in an apparent call for religious freedom.

It urged Beijing to allow journalists and diplomats to observe the situation in Sichuan's Aba county, home to the Kirti monastery, which has seen a string of protests and self-immolations by monks.

"We oppose any country or any person using Tibet-related issues to interfere in China's internal affairs and impairing China's social stability and ethnic unity," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told journalists.

"The Chinese government protects the lawful rights and interests of ethnic minorities," he said, responding to a question on the State Department's call.

The two young monks reportedly cried out "long live the Dalai Lama" as they set themselves on fire, referring to the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader -- revered by many Tibetans but criticised by Beijing as a "splittist."

Many Tibetans in China are angry about perceived religious repression and also what they view as increasing domination by the country's majority Han ethnic group.

Tarique knew Nasir won't win Ctg polls

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over, but before the announcement of the final results.

Despite Tarique's prediction of the defeat, the then ruling BNP high-ups including Tarique stepped into the battle to ensure win of Nasiruddin, who was also the state minister for civil aviation and tourism.

"Almost too late, the BNP belatedly recognised that the Chittagong race was attracting attention as a warm-up for the general election and a referendum on the BNP's and AL's respective popularity. Motivated into action, the PMO [Prime Minister's Office] has now put its prestige on the line," commented the then US ambassador Harry K Thomas in Dhaka in the cable.

"The last time BNP did that, we got the Dhaka 10 'Festival of Fraud.' At this point it seems hard to bet against the BNP candidate, especially if the race is close but at poll's close the race is neck and neck."

The cable said Nasiruddin, a former CCC mayor and

former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, was a strong supporter of the BNP's alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami.

Yet, his campaign was initially hindered by disinterest from key BNP leaders like Tarique Rahman, Khaleda Zia's elder son and heir apparent, and her parliamentary affairs adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, apparently because of local political rivalries.

"Rahman told us in February Nasiruddin could not win. Nasiruddin faced other handicaps: his formal nomination was late in coming; one faction of the IOJ [Islamic Oikya Jote], the extremist member of the ruling coalition, initially fielded its own candidate; and Nasiruddin is a lackluster campaigner," the cables said.

Ahead of the election, a flood of senior BNP and Jamaat leaders went to Chittagong to support Nasiruddin, the cable said, adding, at a huge rally on May 7, Tarique Rahman, the then

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, and fire-brand Jamaat MP Delwar Hossain Sayedee urged Chittagong's 1.1 million voters to support Nasiruddin.

"Tarique invoked the blood sacrifices of his family in his appeal for the BNP candidates for mayor and ward commissioners. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, addressing a rally in western Bangladesh, charged a particular party with conspiring to derail Bangladesh's progress under her administration. She urged Chittagonians to 'unite to foil the conspiracy as you did the last polls by voting for the BNP-led alliance.'"

The cable said the race was too close to call with confidence. While AL-backed incumbent Mohiuddin Chowdhury retained, by most non-BNP accounts, greater popularity, BNP challenger Mohammad Nasiruddin jumped back into the race in the final few days thanks to a late surge of campaigning by

senior party leaders.

Tarique Rahman gave an emotional appeal for support, citing the assassination of his father, President Zia, in Chittagong in 1981 as proof of his family's blood ties to Chittagong.

"The election may boil down to the impression that PM Khaleda Zia wants to win more than Sheikh Hasina," the cable said.

About Nasiruddin's rival, the cable said since 1994, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury has been mayor of the CCC.

Although the mayor's office is nominally non-party, Chowdhury was an AL Central Executive Committee member.

"He [Mohiuddin] has a long anti-US track record, and his incendiary anti-foreign investment/anti-US rhetoric in 2001 led the successful opposition to a proposal by a US firm, SSA, to build a modern container port in Chittagong.

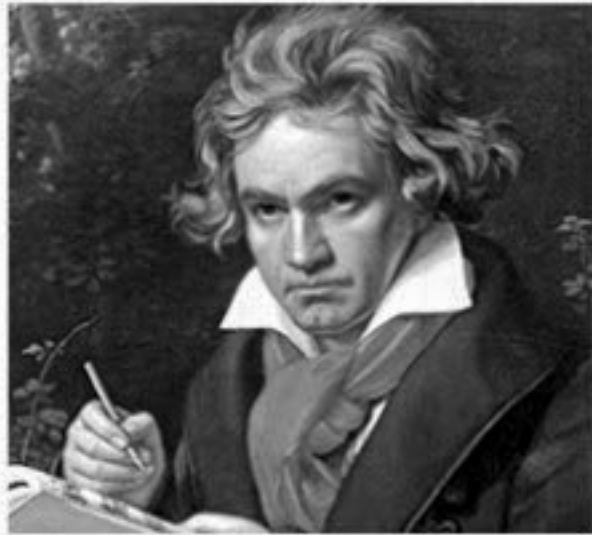
"Chowdhury also played to popular opposition to the war in Iraq, exceptionally high in

Chittagong because many entrepreneurial Chittagonians work in the Middle East, by vilifying US actions and raising money last summer for suspect Iraqi groups.

"After our discreet appeal to AL president Hasina, Chowdhury was told to clear with her any anti-USG statements, which effectively ended his USG bashing," the cable said.

Thomas in the cable said populist and charismatic with strong ties to labour and other civil groups, Chowdhury was widely seen as the front-runner, with some estimates giving him 60 percent of the vote.

Thomas sent the cable to Washington before the election result was announced. His prediction proved right with the emphatic win for Mohiuddin over Nasiruddin leading both the then ruling BNP and the opposition AL to rethink their political future ahead of the ninth parliamentary polls which was originally due in early 2007.



Beethoven's 'lost' work to be aired

BBC ONLINE

A "lost" Beethoven movement is to be performed for the first time in more than 200 years, after being pieced together from early drafts.

Beethoven wrote the slow movement for his string quartet Opus 18 Number Two in 1799 before discarding it and composing another version a year later.

The original has not survived, but has now been reconstructed by Prof Barry Cooper of Manchester University.

He has reassembled the surviving sketches, filling in any gaps himself.

Prof Cooper, one of the world's leading experts on the composer, said preliminary sketches from Beethoven's notebooks had survived for all 74 bars of the movement.

But half of the bars were written for just one instrument, meaning Prof Cooper has completed the missing instrument parts himself.

"You've got a pretty good idea of what the music is like," he told BBC News.

"The movement will certainly be strikingly similar to what Beethoven wrote. Obviously it can't possibly be exactly the same."

The original movement was delivered to Beethoven's patron Prince Franz Joseph Maximilian von Lobkowitz in 1799 before being replaced with a revised version.

The full manuscript of the original composition has not been seen since. But Beethoven wrote to a friend in 1801, telling him that he had not mastered the composition of quartets at the time that he wrote the original.

"He was a perfectionist," Prof Cooper said. "He felt that when he wrote this early movement, he didn't actually know how to write quartets. Any other composer would have been delighted to have written this lovely movement."

NEWS IN brief

Canada has best reputation in the world: Study

AFP, Ottawa

Canada has the best reputation in the world, says a study measuring public perceptions of 50 countries around the world, released on Tuesday.

Results from 42,000 respondents worldwide ranked Sweden next, followed by Australia, Switzerland and New Zealand, the reputation management firm said. Pakistan, Iran and Iraq were ranked lowest in the 50-country study, while the United States and China were ranked in the middle and lower tiers.

The countries scored high for their steady democracies, high economic output per capita, focus on active lifestyles, well developed political systems and perceived neutrality to international

Egypt ex-minister gets 7 years

AFP, Cairo

A Cairo court yesterday sentenced the former information minister to seven years behind bars and the former head of state TV to five years on corruption charges.

Judge Abdallah Abul Hashem ordered ex-information minister Anas al-Fikki jailed for seven years "for squandering public money."

Chaos broke out in the court when the verdict for Sheikh was read, with his supporters lunging past security towards the judge as others threw bottles at him. Judge Abul Hashem had to be whisked away by security.

Kosovo-Serbia talks called off

AFP, Brussels

EU-sponsored talks between Belgrade and Pristina were called off yesterday due to fresh violence on the disputed Serbia-Kosovo border, the EU diplomat brokering the dialogue said.

"The dialogue did not take place because the Serb delegation was not ready to proceed with discussions today," said Robert Cooper.

The Serbian delegation wanted to raise the issue of unrest on the northern Kosovo border, which the previous day left four Nato troops and six Serb protesters wounded, an EU diplomat told AFP on condi-

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Education USA



Education USA from the US Embassy Dhaka is visiting Independent University Bangladesh, Chittagong to conduct a two-days-program on US Higher Education at the American Corner Chittagong on 28th (for undergraduate program) and 29th (for Graduate/Masters/Ph.D program) of September 2011. This program is open to all and totally free of cost for anyone interested to attend this seminar.

Program Timing: - 3:00pm- 4:00pm Wednesday & Thursday, 28th & 29th September 2011.

Program Venue: - American Corner, IUB-Chittagong, 12 Jamal Khan Road, Chittagong.