

Pak PM denies rift with army PM threatens over memogate row

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has dismissed rumours of a rift with the country's powerful army over a secret memo that sought US intervention to prevent a feared military coup.

Tensions between the army and government appeared to have soared in recent days as intelligence chiefs demanded an inquiry into the scandal that threatens to implicate President Asif Ali Zardari, who is abroad following an illness.

The demand came after the political opposition asked the Supreme Court to find out who was behind the memo that sought US help to prevent a coup and curb the power of the military after Osama bin Laden was killed in May.

But Gilani in a late Friday meeting at his residence with army chief Ashfaq Kayani "strongly rejected the notion", his office said in a statement.

Gilani "reiterated that the



Asif Ali Zardari



Ashfaq Kayani

Government of Pakistan and its institutions remained committed to their constitutional roles and obligations to a democratic and prosperous future for Pakistan," it said.

"The Prime Minister and army chief underscored the significance of national unity to address the challenges faced by the nation."

In separate responses submitted to the court late Thursday, the attorney general said the petition should be dropped, but Kayani said the memo impacted "national

security".

"Therefore, there may be a need to fully examine the facts and circumstances leading to the conception and issuance of the memo," the army chief said in his response, a

copy of which was obtained by AFP. The move is significant in a country where the military has staged four coups and remains the chief power broker. It may also increase uncertainty over how long Zardari remains in office.

The existence of the document came to light when American-Pakistani businessman Mansoor Ijaz wrote in the Financial Times that Zardari feared the military might overthrow his government.

Ijaz accused Husain Haqqani, the president's close aide and ambassador to Washington, of crafting the memo with Zardari's support.

Opposition leader Nawaz Sharif then filed a petition in the Supreme Court on December 1, demanding to know who was responsible for the document delivered to then US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, on May 10.

Former US general James Jones in a statement filed to the Supreme Court Saturday said he did not believe the memo he passed on to Mullen was authored by Haqqani.

"I do not recall whether Ijaz claimed that Ambassador Haqqani had anything to do with the creation of the memo. I have no reason to believe that Ambassador Haqqani had any role in the creation of the memo, nor that he had any prior knowledge of the memo."

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Awami League organised the programme at

Bangabandhu International Conference Centre which Deputy Leader in Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury chaired. On secret killing and disappearance, the prime minister said the parties in opposition are resorting to the criminal acts in a bid to protect the war criminals.

"This is the character of BNP and Jamaat," she said. Hasina said the government had completed the trial and executed the killers of Bangabandhu. The trial of war criminals will certainly be completed.

Pointing her finger at BNP, the prime minister said the leader of this party is now out to save the war criminals. Former President Ziaur Rahman had rehabilitated the war criminals in politics and "his wife is now patronising them". She accused Zia of freeing Razakar-Al Badrs

and rehabilitating the collaborators in politics. "What type of a freedom fighter was he?" she asked.

"Ziaur Rahman played with the voting rights of the people and ruled the country by martial law trampling and mutilating the constitution."

She said following the footprint of her husband, Khaleda Zia took "the side of the killers, rapists, arsonists and looters," and is trying to protect them by launching road march. "People expect nothing from such a character."

Referring to the trial of the war criminals, she said the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman began the trial of the war criminals in 1973, but Zia later stopped it. After assuming power in 1996, Hasina said, the Awami League government began the trial. "The trial of the war criminals must be complete on this oil."

She alleged that Khaleda had returned to power in 2001 after giving bond to sell gas to India.

In an oblique reference to Zia, Ershad and Khaleda's rule, Hasina said: "What did they give to the people while in power? Bangladesh was admonished by the international community for corruption, militancy and money laundering."

She renewed her allegation that the BNP chief and her sons had whitened black money by paying fines.

The meeting was also addressed by Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Railways Minister Suranjit Sengupta, Jagannath University Vice-Chancellor Mesbah Uddin, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif, Rowshan Jahan Sathi MP, acting Dhaka City AL president MA Aziz and its General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

Politics to get more troubled

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challenge as the High Court in its 1992 verdict asked the government to hold zila parishad elections.

"And if the appointed administrators stand in the polls, it would be the start of a bad practice."

The opposition might not accept if the government holds zila parishad polls with political leaders in the positions of administrators, he also said.

The existing confrontation among the political parties would be intensified centring the appointment, Akbar Ali Khan added.

The government on Thursday appointed district-level Awami League leaders as administrators of 61 zila parishads.

"The present government

has already spent three of its five-year tenure. That's why it has taken the initiative to appoint administrators to zila parishads to organise the ruling party at the district level," Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, president of civil society platform Shujan, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Instability had plagued the ruling Awami League due to conflict of interest among partymen, he added. This move would help the party overcome the crisis.

He also said due to successive government interventions, zila parishads had become centres of political activities.

All the governments since independence have moved for local government reforms which were mostly politically motivated. This is

why they failed to strengthen the local government bodies.

In 1992, in an observation on Kudrat-e-Elahi and others vs Bangladesh case, Justice Mustafa Kamal said no other constitutions in the world have such definitive provisions on local government.

Article 59 in the constitution of Bangladesh says, "Local government in every administrative unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies composed of persons elected in accordance with law."

Justice Kamal, who later became chief justice, also said local government is part of the constitutional system; it is not a mere adornment. So, article 59 cannot be left to lie dead.

EC gives up on state-funding

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Ruling Awami League, however, joined the talks on August 7, but also kept from giving any view on the reform proposal. The AL delegation had told the EC that the party would give its opinion later. After repeated reminders, the party did not send its opinion to the EC.

The other political parties also did not speak strongly in favour of the state funding system, as, what they claimed, it would benefit the major political parties more.

"So, we have decided not to go for the proposal and keep from forwarding it to the government," said Election Commissioner Sohul Hussein citing the political parties' lukewarm response to the fundingscheme.

Talking to The Daily Star last week, he said the EC would now send other proposals for electoral reforms to the government by the end of December to have them made into law.

The other proposals include empowering the EC to annul poll results if a candidate is found guilty of concealing or giving false information in the affidavit, introduction of electronic voting machines, reducing punishment for electoral offences so that executive magistrates can try the offenders, cancellation of a political party's registration for violation of electoral laws and a new law on redrawing the boundaries of constituencies, said an EC official.

According to the draft Electoral Campaign Expenditure (public fund)

ACT, 2011, a registered political party that had secured at least five percent of the total votes cast in the constituencies where it had candidates in the previous general elections would be entitled to funds for the next polls. In this case, a political party may get a maximum of Tk 25 lakh for each constituency it fielded candidates to.

An independent candidate who won the previous election would also get the state fund in the following polls, as per the draft.

In defence of the law, the EC said it was necessary to create opportunities for all, rich or poor, to contest the polls and stop use of black money in it.

The draft law had imposed some conditions for obtaining and using the fund. The political parties needed to send the EC lists of their candidates who would receive the state fund in the polls. No party can use the money for any other purpose.

Besides, on completion of the polls, the parties and candidates were required to submit statements on expenditure to the EC. The office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) would audit the accounts and statements submitted by the parties after the election.

The proposed legislation had also allowed individuals and organisations to file complaints with the EC if any political party or candidate misused the public fund. It also intended to encourage electoral debates by empowering the EC to organise meetings where all the candidates of a constituency would gather and talk to voters.

If any candidate or party after taking fund refused to attend such programmes, they would be considered ineligible for the fund and needed to reimburse it. Similar condition was binding, if a party or candidate boycotted the election, said the draft law.

In the name of family honour

AFP, Kabul

She was jailed for adultery after being raped, then pardoned and set free. But now her brothers are threatening to kill her and with nowhere else to go, Gulnaz is resigned to marrying her attacker.

Gulnaz, who does not know her exact age but is 20 or 21, spoke in a quiet voice with her blue burqa over her face. Her daughter, her rapist, the floor at her feet. "I have him, I father for I need somebody to take care of my daughter and give us a home," she told AFP.

"I don't have any other place to live. My brothers have vowed to kill me and my attacker and my daughter."

Gulnaz was freed from prison on Tuesday, two years after she was jailed for a so-called moral crime -- being raped by her cousin's husband.

President Hamid Karzai pardoned her on December 1 following an international outcry.

Campaigners describe such persecution, all too common in Afghanistan, as a "remnant of the Taliban era" highlighting the poor state of women's rights, 10 years after the US-led invasion sought to put the country on a democratic path.



Gulnaz with her son

Selfless love

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special Friday. It was Friday December 16, 2011. They knew very well how special this Friday was. They knew it was the 40th anniversary of their country's liberation.

The cold could do little, not even dampen their spirits.

The children assembled and took part in a rally and performed various displays at the playground of Mustafa Aziz Art School, 13km away from Magura town.

Even though the day was very special, the day's events were not wholly new to the children. They observe national occasions like Pahela Baishakh (Bangla New Year), Independence Day, and International Mother Language Day in similar fashion.

Named after noted sketch artist Mustafa Aziz, the school stands out from others across the country in many ways. Every Friday, around 200 children from different primary and secondary schools of nearby villages through the school and hone their skills in painting, music and dance for free.

Thrilling stories of sacrifice in the Liberation War are narrated and the gravity of national occasions is conveyed to the students in weekly classes between 8:00am and 11:30am.

It is a Friday school with a difference. It highlights our culture, values, and humanity. The students chant slogans like "Durnitee korbo

na, durnitee soibo na" (We won't indulge in corruption, nor will we tolerate corruption).

Freedom fighter Abdul Aziz founded the school in 1985. The money coming from his own pocket. "... I run the school cutting corners of my family expenditures," Aziz said. The teachers are unpaid volunteers.

As if liberating Bangladesh was not enough big a duty to the nation, Aziz said, "After returning home from the Liberation War, I wanted to give something special to the nation. I dreamt of inculcating creativity among rural children so that they grow up with the real spirit of the Liberation War."

He even set up a Shaheed Minar (Martyrs Monument) at the school so that children understand how hard it was to obtain the right to speak the language they now speak.

Because the school is free and the teachers sincerely care for the students, it remains vibrant with enthusiastic children and even their guardians.

"The school has not only been nurturing the creative and cultural sides of our children, but also opened up the minds of the guardians," said Abu Zafar, parent of a student of the school.

Locals echoed Zafar saying that the school has created a cultural atmosphere in the area.

"We are proud of the school as it has been playing

an important role in making the students culturally aware as well as the locals," said Nabokumar Dutta of the village.

In 1971, Abdul Aziz was a student of class-XII. He took part in the Liberation War under Sector-8. He passed his Higher Secondary Certificate in 1972. Now he works as a painting teacher at Police Lines Registered Primary School.

Inheriting about 15 bighas of land from his father, Aziz runs the school with the earnings from the land and whatever he can manage. "Some of my friends and well-wishers also contribute to some extent," he added.

But it is not enough. According to the teachers and students, the school still lacks furniture, accommodation, and even light in the classrooms.

"I wrote to the local lawmaker for donation last year, but I'm yet to get any response," Aziz said.

The school started its journey in a rented house in Alamkhali of Magura, about 15km off Magura town. The school had to be moved to the tin-shed house on Aziz's own property in 2002 as Aziz could not pay the rent anymore.

Some six teachers from different professions give lessons to the students. "Inspired by the sacrifice of Aziz, we serve without salary," said Prem Kumar Pramanik, who teaches music.

Notice

NOTICE UNDER SECTION 289 (1) OF COMPANIES ACT 1994

RESOLUTION TO WIND UP VOLUNTARILY
In the matter of PEARL BUYING SERVICES (PVT) LTD.
(Under Members Voluntary winding up)

At an Extra - Ordinary General Meeting of the Shareholders of PEARL BUYING SERVICES (PVT) LTD. duly convened and held at Registered Office at House No.-80/A, Indira Road, Dhaka-1215 Bangladesh on the 17 day of December 2011, it has been resolved that Pearl Buying Services (PVT) Ltd. has been put into members' voluntary winding up as on 17 December 2011. Mr. Baizid Md Faiaz of JHK Windcel, Western Block, Level 4, KA 90 Pragoti Saroni (Bishwa Road), Dhaka- 1229, Bangladesh, has been appointed as the Liquidator of the Company.

All concerned are, therefore, requested to contact henceforth with the Liquidator in respect of any affairs of the Company.

Sd/-
(M.W. ISLAM)
CHAIRMAN
House No. 80/A, Indira Road, Dhaka- 1215

INVITATION of INTERNATIONAL TENDER FOR Engineering, Procurement, Construction & Commissioning of Omera LPG Import Terminal & Bottling Plants Project on Turn-Key Basis.

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from reputed EPCC (Engineering, Procurement, Construction & Commissioning) contractors for EPCC of Omera LPG import terminal & bottling plants project at company's own land at Mongla and satellite filling stations at Dhaka, Bogra & Chittagong respectively.

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| 01. Invitation for Tender Ref. & Date | : | OPL-LPG-11/01, 18/12/2011 |
| 02. Description of Works | : | Engineering, Procurement, Construction & Commissioning of LPG Plant on turn-key basis in the existing site of Omera Petroleum Limited. |
| 03. Budget and Source of Funds | : | Own source. |
| 04. Eligibility of Tenderer | : | The reputed EPCC should possess experience of minimum ten (10) years in the field of LPG. The prospective Tenderer will submit Completion Certificates of at least five (5) similar type of plants completed during the last five (5) years. |
| 05. Bid Security | : | USD 20,000 or its equivalent in Local Currency. |
| 06. Price of Tender Document | : | TK. 10,000 (Taka Ten Thousand Only) per set by pay order only payable to MJL Bangladesh Limited (non-refundable) |
| 07. Availability of Tender Document | : | From 18/12/2011 to 29/01/2012 during office hours. |
| 08. Location of Tender Selling & Submission | : | Mobil House, CWS (C) 9, Gulshan 1, Dhaka-1212. |
| 09. Site Visit | : | Optional (At the request of bidder at its own cost.) |
| 10. Pre-Bid Meeting | : | A Pre-Bid meeting will be held on January 05, 2012 at 11:00 AM. Only Representatives of the companies who have purchased tender documents will be allowed to participate in the pre-bid meeting. Venue of the meeting will be confirmed later. |
| 11. Closing Time & Date of Tender | : | 11:00 AM on 29/01/2012. |
| 10. Special Instruction | : | OPL reserves the right to accept or reject in part or whole of any or all Tenders. |

Note: Receiving of tender for any unavoidable reason or circumstance cannot be held on stipulated date, the same shall be held in the next working day at the same time.



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