

# US can no longer dictate world policy: Ahmadinejad

AFP, Dushanbe

A US delegation walked out of a conference in Tajikistan Monday during a speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad lambasting US policy on Afghanistan as the source of all the nation's troubles.

Ahmadinejad, speaking at a regional conference on Afghanistan, called for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from the country and proposed that Nato use part of its military budget to help revive the Afghan economy.

"Nato and the United States should change their policy because the time when they dictate their conditions to the world has passed," Ahmadinejad said in a speech in Dushanbe, capital of the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan.

"It's better to respect nations than to scare them and colonize them. The time of imperialism has long gone. Those who do not learn from the mistakes of history will be punished."

The US delegation to the confer-



ence, headed by Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake, left the hall when Ahmadinejad began to speak and returned after the conclusion of his speech.

Encounters -- even at multinational regional conferences -- between the United States and Iran are extremely rare.

The two countries cut diplomatic relations in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and ties have remained severed ever since. Tensions

are rising again over Iran's nuclear programme and Washington has never ruled out military action.

Ahmadinejad, whose country shares a huge border with Afghanistan, said that US forces had gone into the country with the aim of encircling the whole strategic region from Russia to south Asia.

"They went into Afghanistan using the pretext of the fight against terror and now under the same slogan they are surrounding Russia, India and China," Ahmadinejad said.

Iran's president repeated his doubts on the September 11, 2001 terror attacks against the United States, which he described as "enigmatic". The attacks -- claimed by al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden -- prompted the United States to invade Taliban-led Afghanistan.

He called on foreign troops to leave Afghanistan "in the shortest time" and said there was "no doubt that the world needs a new order".

## Suu Kyi's health improving

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is recovering after she fell ill on the campaign trail, but must rest this week ahead of weekend by-elections, her party said yesterday.

The Nobel laureate, who is running for a seat in parliament for the first time in the Sunday polls, cut short a trip to the south and cancelled campaigning this week after she felt sick Saturday and was put on a drip.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) said in a statement that the pro-democracy icon had become tired after spending many hours under the sun in a small boat on the latest in a series of gruelling campaign tours.

"Although her health condition is improving, her family doctor advised that she needs to take a rest for four or five days," it said.

## Canada firm with ties to Gaddafi sacks chief

AFP, Montreal

The head of a Canadian engineering firm with dealings in Muammar Gaddafi's Libya and loosely linked to a failed plot to smuggle the ex-dictator's son into Mexico has quit, the company said yesterday.

SNC Lavalin chief executive, Pierre Duhaime, becomes the third executive to leave the company in recent months. No reason was given for his departure after 23 years with the company.

Quarterly profits fell 52 percent in the last quarter, the Montreal-based firm reported, and its share price dropped 30 percent over the last year.

Duhaime's resignation comes amid accusations he allowed \$56 million in payments to "presumed agents hired," including one in Tunisia, despite the chief financial officer's objections.

A review of the payments were also linked to two executives: Riadh Ben Aissa, executive vice-president of the firm's construction arm, and vice president in charge of finances Stephane Roy. Both were fired last month.

Media reports linked the pair to the arrest in Mexico of a Canadian woman in an elaborate plan to bring 38-year-old Saadi Gaddafi, the ex-dictator's son, into Mexico on false papers.

SNC Lavalin, which oversaw billions of dollars worth of projects in Libya including the construction of a prison, previously hired the accused conspirator, Cynthia Vanier, for "a fact-finding mission" in Libya in early summer 2011.



Pierre Duhaime

## Pakistan to charge Laden wives April 2

AFP, Islamabad

A Pakistani court will next week charge Osama bin Laden's widows and two of his grown-up daughters with illegal entry and residency, their lawyer told AFP yesterday.

"The court will frame charges against five family members on April 2" in connection with illegal entry and residency in Pakistan, Muhammad Aamir told AFP.

If the women are convicted, they are liable to be deported or imprisoned, Aamir added. Under Pakistani law, the maximum sentence is five years.

The court gave the women copies of the charges yesterday, the lawyer said.

Bin Laden's two Saudi and one Yemeni widows, together with their children, have been living under the protection of the authorities in Pakistan since the al-Qaeda chief was found and killed by US Navy SEALs.

## Gilani wants N-tech to match India

THE TIMES OF INDIA ONLINE

Pakistan PM Yousaf Raza Gilani on Sunday said that his country needs civil nuclear technology to meet its energy requirements besides maintaining balance with India in the region.

"Pakistan needs civil nuclear technology and wants to obtain it. The technology is important for Pakistan to maintain balance with India and to promote regional stability," Gilani said before departing for Seoul to attend a 53-nation nuclear security summit. "If we don't have balance with India, there will be lack of stability in the area."

A Pakistani parliamentary committee on national security report had made a similar demand recently.

## Tibetan sets himself ablaze in New Delhi

AFP, New Delhi

A Tibetan exile set himself on fire and suffered extreme burns as he ran down a street in New Delhi yesterday to protest against an upcoming visit to India by Chinese President Hu Jintao.

The 27-year-old, identified by fellow protesters as Janphel Yeshe, carried out his attempted self-immolation in Jantar Mantar, a city centre venue for public rallies and demonstrations.

Yeshe, dressed in a cardigan and dark trousers, screamed as his body was covered in flames and he ran along the road with black smoke pouring from his hair, according to witnesses.

Fellow protester Tsewang Dolma told AFP by telephone that Yeshe, who fled his homeland in 2005, was burnt on almost all of his body.

"He is in a very bad condition and hospital doctors are saying he is 98 percent burned," Dolma said.

Sukhdev Singh Mann, a police officer who was at the scene of the protest, said medical staff were fighting to save Yeshe's life.

"We rushed him to the Ram Manohar Lohia hospital in a badly-injured condition," he said.

The protest was the second attempted self-immolation in Delhi, where thousands of Tibetan exiles live, after another man suffered minor burns in November when he tried to set himself on fire outside the Chinese embassy.

President Hu is due in the city this week to attend a summit on Thursday of the fast-developing BRIC nations -- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.



BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS

## India to probe army chief's claim

AFP, New Delhi

India's defence minister ordered federal investigators yesterday to probe revelations by the country's top military officer that he had been offered a \$2.8 million bribe to clear a procurement deal.

The disclosure, made in a newspaper interview by Army Chief General V K Singh, will further embarrass a government already tainted by a succession of high-profile corruption scandals.

Defence Minister A K Antony described the revelations as "serious" and his ministry spokesman said the Central Bureau of Investigations had been ordered to conduct a full investigation.

In the interview published yesterday, Singh told The Hindu newspaper that a lobbyist for an unnamed military equipment supplier had offered him the cash incentive to approve the purchase of 600 sub-standard vehicles.

"One of these men had the gumption to walk up to me and tell me that if I cleared the tranche, he would give me 140 million rupees. He was offering a bribe to me, to the army chief," Singh said.

"He told me that people had taken money before me and they will take money after me," Singh said, adding that he had informed Antony of the incident at the time.

It was not immediately clear when the bribe was offered, but some media reports suggested it was two years ago.

## Extortion rampant on city footpaths

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"I have already paid Tk 40 to two police patrol teams. Normally this figure goes up to Tk 100 to Tk 120 by evening," lemon juice vendor Awlad Hossain described toll collection by police at Farmgate.

Vendors are often seen bargaining with the police to fix the amount, which depends on their sale and politeness.

"If you are locked in an argument with them [police], you will have to pay double eventually. The policemen do not like haggling," said Abdul Alim, who sells T-shirts under a foot overbridge.

Policemen even beat up vendors for failing to pay them tolls. On March 20, two constables of Tejaogaon police -- Faye Ahmed and Abdul Aziz -- beat up hawker Arifur Islam, 22, and sent him to a hospital.

Arif, a chanchachur (snack-mix) seller, who earns around Tk 300 per day, had refused to pay toll.

The accused policemen were suspended, while an investigation is going on in this regard, said Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tejaogaon Police Station.

A number of hawkers say that only paying toll gives them the "right" to sit wherever they get free space. If the money is not paid, police evict them at once on charges of occupying footpaths, they add.

A number of privileged vendors can sit at the same place every day as the police have given them "permanent" permission for their "smart contributions", they said.

Tea stall owner Amzad Ali, who is running his business under the second foot overbridge for five years, said normally police do not harass him as he knows how to "manage" them.

Two kinds of vendors trade on footpaths in terms of their business size. The smallest vendors selling food items,

fish or vegetables cannot afford to "buy" a permanent place from the police.

They carry goods and sit wherever they get free space, said Amzad. "As they do not have a fixed place, every team of patrol police collects Tk 10-15 from them," he added.

The traders who have makeshift wooden or iron boxes "rent" the same place every day giving money to the police once a day.

There is a third type of traders who can afford a chowki, a wooden dais or platform. They rent it from the "owners", who have "close relation" with the police and local goons, and have to pay toll as well.

"The police will not bother you. I will manage them. Just give me the daily rent and Tk 500 extra at month's end," said Anwar Mollah, who claimed to be the "owner" of seven makeshift chowkis in front of Tejaogaon College.

"If any of the policemen misses his share, he himself

turns up and collects toll. They force us in police vans if we refuse to pay the extra money," said Naimul Islam, a cookery vendor.

"If the detainees cannot pay the money, the police often take away their cellphones or wrist watches," he added.

The Tejaogaon OC said they evict the vendors almost every day but they come back again and again. Police do not allow hawkers on the VIP roads, but they spare some poor hawkers on the footpaths on humanitarian grounds, he added.

He denies the allegation of toll collection by policemen.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner of Tejaogaon Zone Imam Hossain said if any of the members of police is found involved in toll collection, action will be taken against them immediately.

"Name the policemen. I won't spare any of them," he added.

## Khaleda

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general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir claimed that law enforcers had cordoned off Khaleda's Gulshan residence from midnight to morning apparently to stop her from paying homage to Liberation War martyrs.

"The chairperson has been obstructed at many points on her way. Police parked buses and trucks in front of her residence to obstruct her and even stopped her protocol vehicle for a while," he alleged.

Terming the government as fascist, Alamgir said the undemocratic behaviour of the government has crossed the limit. "We strongly protest and condemn the act," he added.

On the other hand, police denied the allegation saying that as per the instructions from the Liberation War affairs minister, the leader of the opposition had been scheduled to leave for the

memorial at 6:00am but she started earlier.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner of Gulshan zone police Lutful Kabir said, "We did not obstruct her. We just gave her residence employees a reminder about the scheduled time. Despite that, she left the house ahead of time."

Asked about the allegation of police cordoning off her house, he said law enforcers took position there in the morning only to ensure security and traffic management in the area.

Khaleda reached the National Memorial at 6:40am after President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had paid their tribute to the martyrs.

She afterwards visited the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman, also the founder of BNP, and placed wreaths there with top party leaders including Mirza Alamgir.

## Water crisis

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Chittagong Wasa Managing Director (MD) AKM Fazlullah said there is no way to avoid the water crisis this summer. But in the future, implementation of two projects will improve the situation.

"It will take another three to four years to decrease the gap between supply and demand. The crisis will come under control with the completion of the Karnaphuli Water Supply Project in Pomra in 2014, and Chittagong Water Supply Improvement and Sanitation Project in Modunaghat area in 2015," he noted.

The two schemes will pump in an additional 226 million litres of water per day -- increasing daily water supply level to 426 million litres. The existing crisis will ease, but there will still be a good gap between demand and supply.

To deal with the crisis, the Wasa chief said he sent two proposals to the government for two more new water treatment plants, and both of those are likely to be approved.

"Since 1988, successive governments did not take any initiative to set up water supply projects. Chittagong Wasa has been running haphazardly for a long time. This pushed the agency into a deep crisis," the MD said.

To make the ongoing crisis worse, the existing deep tubewells that produce more than a half of the daily water supply are regularly under-performing due to various technical problems including power supply disruptions.

Little less than a half of the city's water is supplied from surface water by Mohora plant at Modunaghat.

Wasa Chief Engineer Abdul Karim Chowdhury told The Daily Star that this year they took preparations to overcome the technical problems related to deep tubewell operation. To ensure continuous power

supply to 55 deep tubewell stations, Wasa obtained exclusive power line from the Power Development Board. Besides, they are keeping alternate power generators as backup for 20 deep tubewells.

City dwellers meanwhile are utterly frustrated living without a basic amenity like water. "There are times when we did not get any water supply for up to 15 days," said Rita Chowdhury of Jaynagar in Chawkbazar area.

She said in normal times Wasa supplies water for three days in a week. "But during summer, they provide us with water once in 10 days. And this continues for at least four months beginning in April," she added.

In such a dire situation, how does she cope with the need for water for drinking, cooking and washing? "We have to use the same water twice a day for washing things, being fully aware how unhygienic this can be," Rita said.

"For drinking and cooking, we have to buy bottled water." She said they informed Wasa several times about the problem, but did not get any satisfactory answer from them. She also complained about the paid water truck service, saying the service is too hard to get.

Bukghona area resident Imtiaz Uddin Chowdhury said though their area is very close to the Wasa head office, they also face water crisis. He said some residents of that area, who are economically better off, set up deep tubewells at their houses. But people who have been using the supply lines of Wasa have been suffering from water crisis during summer. As they do not get the supply water, they have to go to other people's houses that have deep tubewells to get water, Imtiaz added.

It is not only a crisis in Chawkbazar and Bukghona areas, but also a problem all over the city.

## Foreign friends get honours for war role today

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the worst ever genocide in the world history and contributed to the eventual emergence of sovereign Bangladesh through a nine-month war.

The cabinet had earlier approved a list of 132 individuals and organisations, but the government finally invited 110 friends. Of them, 76 friends or their representatives have already arrived in Dhaka to receive the awards.

Twenty-one friends of Bangladesh will receive the awards themselves and representatives of 55, who have either expired or are too old to travel to Dhaka, will take it on behalf of them.

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will present the

awards at a state ceremony at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 10:00am. The programme will continue till 1:00pm.

The awards will be given in two categories considering importance of the roles of the foreign friends. The categories are "Friends of Liberation War Honour" and "Bangladesh Liberation War Honour".

The awardees each will receive a gold-plated silver metallic plaque in which replica of the national mausoleum has been engraved and a citation on silk cloth, sources in the foreign ministry said.

This will be the second phase of awarding foreign nationals and organisations after conferring "Bangladesh Freedom Honour", posthu-

mously on former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi on July 25 last year.

Sonia Gandhi, chief of India's Congress party, received the award on behalf of her late mother-in-law at a function at Bangabhaban in the capital.

The recipients are from Argentina, Australia, Bhutan, Canada, Cuba, Denmark, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Nepal, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the USA, Vietnam, and former Yugoslavia.

The prominent individuals include: late Field Marshal SAM Manekshaw, Lt Gen (ret'd) Jack Frederick Ralph Jacob, Moharani Bibhu Kumari Devi of Tripura and Chief Minister of Tripura Manik Sarkar, late Sree Jyoti

Basu, late Rawshan Ara Begum Sangma (mother of Mukul Sangma, chief minister of Meghalaya), Pundit Ravi Shankar, Bharat Ratna, Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, late Sachindra Lal Singh, late Siddhartha Shankar Ray, late Sursamrat Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, late Justice Syed Sadat Abul Masud and late Debdulal Bandyopadhyaya from India.

Late Prof Vladimir Stanis and late Rear Admiral Sergey Pavlovich Zuenko and his team are from Russia.

Richard K Taylor, Anna Braun Taylor, Lear Levin, late Archer K Blood and Father Richard William Timm, late Dr Joseph Garst, late Prof Edward C Dimock Jr, David Weisbrod and William B Saxbe are from the USA.

Simon Dring, late Peter Shore, Michael Barnes, Julian Francis and Biman Mullick are from the UK.

Prof Tsuyoshi Nara, Takashi Hayakawa and Takamasa Suzuki are from Japan.

Marshal Josip Broz Tito is from former Yugoslavia, Father Mario Veronice from Italy, Dr Kirsten Westergaard from Denmark, Barbara Dasgupta and Sunil Dasgupta from Germany, late Sean MacBride and Nora Shariff from Ireland and late Prof Gunnar Myrdal is from Sweden.

Prominent institutions and organisations including the Mitra Bahini, Red Cross, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), BBC, Akashbani (All India Radio),

Kolkata Bishwabiddaloy Shahayak Shamiti and Oxfam will receive the awards for their contributions during the Liberation War.

Meanwhile, the honourees yesterday paid tribute to the Liberation War martyrs at the National Mausoleum. Foreign Minister Dipu Moni hosted lunch in honour of the honourees and later they attended the Independence Day reception at Bangabhaban hosted by President Zillur Rahman.

After the award giving ceremony, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will host a dinner in honour of the awardees which will be followed by a cultural show at the Ball Room of Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon.