

NAM MINISTERIAL MEET BEGINS

Sanctions, UN reform top summit agenda

AFP, Tehran

Condemnation of "unilateral" actions -- particularly sanctions on Iran and other nations -- and a demand for greater say in UN decision-making dominated talks in Tehran yesterday preparing for a Non-Aligned summit later this week.

Foreign ministers from Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) states were holding two days of discussions to prepare the ground for the summit, which will gather dozens of heads of state and government on Thursday and Friday.

Other issues to be covered included a call for the creation of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, and an appeal for nuclear disarmament, particularly in the Middle East, as a path to world peace, according to draft documents before the ministers.

Combating terrorism, and upholding human rights and development were also included.

A working document made available on Iran's official NAM website said one of the general principles being upheld was strengthening solidarity with NAM members "living under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation, and with those experiencing external threats of use of force, acts of aggression or unilateral coercive measures."

Elsewhere, it detailed those themes, for instance calling on members to refuse to follow "unilateral economic sanctions" on NAM states.

More than 50 foreign ministers were involved in the discussions, according to Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast. They were building on work done in the two preceding days by lower-ranking officials and experts.

"Today we are at a time in which, without exaggeration, international relations are quite sensitive," Egypt's deputy foreign minister, Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, said as he opened the ministerial meeting before officially handing over the rotating NAM presidency to Iran.

"The meeting is providing a more advanced look at (global) developments by reinforcing cooperation among developing countries and international organisations," he said.

Iran is portraying this week's summit as a blow to US-led efforts to isolate it internationally.

It is expected to brandish any summit agreements slamming sanctions or affirming a right to nuclear energy as validation of its position in its worsening stand-off with Washington over its atomic activities.



Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) states and their delegations attend a meeting in Tehran yesterday ahead of a summit, which will gather dozens of heads of state. Condemnation of "unilateral" actions -- particularly sanctions on Iran and other nations -- and a demand for greater say in UN decision-making dominated talks in Tehran ahead of the Non-Aligned summit later this week.

PHOTO: AFP

Iran N-conflict may fuel regional instability

Fears Pakistan

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said that growing confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme threatens further instability in the broader region.

"In our view, dialogue and diplomacy should be the only instruments to resolve outstanding issues," she said while addressing a debate on 'Lasting Peace through Global Governance' yesterday in Tehran ahead of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.

"We believe that peaceful resolution of this issue is still possible on the basis of reciprocal confidence building measures."

Khar said Pakistan believes that founding principles of NAM, including peaceful co-existence sovereignty, territorial integrity of all states and non-interference in internal



Hina Rabbani Khar

just solution of the issue on the basis of the "Palestinian people's right to self-determination".

Moreover, she also called for an immediate end to ongoing bloodshed by all sides in Syria in the interest of regional peace and stability.

Hina also called for collective efforts in order to address issues of energy crisis, water shortage and environmental degradation.

affairs of other countries, provide firm basis for enduring peace and stability in the world.

"In our region Afghanistan will need support of NAM fraternity as it moves towards transition phase in the year 2014," she said.

Calling for peace, security and prosperity in the Palestine region, she urged a

Moreover, she also called for an immediate end to ongoing bloodshed by all sides in Syria in the interest of regional peace and stability.

Hina also called for collective efforts in order to address issues of energy crisis, water shortage and environmental degradation.

INDIA PARLIAMENT DEADLOCK

Sonia slams BJP

AFP, New Delhi

Sonia Gandhi, the president of India's ruling Congress party, yesterday upped the stakes in a six-day parliamentary stand-off that has paralysed government plans to revive the slowing economy.

Sonia, the grand matriarch of Indian politics, attacked the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for holding noisy protests every day in parliament that have forced business to be abandoned.

The BJP is demanding that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh resign over allegations that his government missed out on billions of dollars of revenue by giving away coal rights.

"We are ready to face the challenges before us," Gandhi, wife of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, told a Congress party meeting. "Let us stand up and fight, fight with a sense of purpose and fight aggressively."

She said the BJP's protests in both the upper and lower chamber were a form of "blackmail" and accused the opposition of having "scant respect" for democracy.

On Monday, Manmohan was howled down by opposition lawmakers as he tried to defend himself over a report by the official auditor that said mining rights were handed out in a process that "lacked transparency and objectivity".

"Our focus... must be to revive and sustain the momentum of high economic growth," Sonia told her party.

"Dialogue, debate and discussion is the only way forward... but the opposition has to come forth and show a sense of responsibility."

WB sits to fix

FROM PAGE 1

economic affairs adviser Mashur Rahman was not met, a finance ministry official said, seeking anonymity.

If Dhaka gets a positive signal from the meeting, the government will write a letter to the WB by August 31, he added.

On Monday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked Finance Minister AMA Muhith to discuss with the WB whether it will revive the loan without Mashur resigning. She gave the instruction following a cabinet meeting.

A finance ministry source said the minister has already conveyed this to the WB headquarters.

On the Padma bridge loan, Muhith told journalists yesterday at his secretariat office, "Don't be frustrated. We have time till August 31."

The loan effectuation date given by the project's co-financiers -- the ADB and Jica -- expires on August 31. The two donors extended the deadline four times.

The government is going to apply for further extension of the deadline, an official said yesterday.

And Director General of South Asia Department of the ADB Juan Miranda arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day visit. He will meet the finance minister tomorrow.

They will discuss the Padma bridge issue, he added.

Judge Zaheer

FROM PAGE 20

Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain yesterday afternoon proposed Justice Jahangir to replace judge Zaheer at the tribunal.

Supreme Court Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday that the chief justice proposed the name of Justice Jahangir after the ministry of law requested him for an HC judge for the tribunal.

Law ministry sources said the president would appoint the justice as a member of the tribunal after the ministry completes the relevant procedures.

Yesterday, Law Secretary ASSM Zahuril Haque told reporters at his office that judge Zaheer had submitted a letter to his office around 1:30pm seeking relief from work as he was seriously ill.

Judge Zaheer, a former district judge, was sick since his appointment as a member of the International Crimes Tribunal on March 25, 2010. His health deteriorated around two months ago, he said.

The law secretary said the judge could not sit somewhere for a long time and could not move well now-a-days. That was why he sought relief from the duty of

a tribunal judge.

He also said judge Zaheer resigned after meeting with Law Minister Shafique Ahmed at his Bangladesh Secretariat office.

State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam told The Daily Star that there was no pressure from the government on judge Zaheer Ahmed to resign.

Normal proceedings of the International Crimes Tribunal would not be hampered due to resignation of the judge, as a new judge would be appointed within a day or two.

During the Ramadan, judge Zaheer used to join court proceedings late after visiting hospital for his treatment.

Judge Zaheer was present in the first session of yesterday's court proceeding but he was absent after lunch.

The section 6(4) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, says, "If any member of a tribunal dies or, due to illness or any other reason, unable to continue to perform his functions, the government may, by notification in the official gazette, declare the office of such member to be vacant and appoint thereto another person qualified to hold the office."

665 BDR men

FROM PAGE 1

including 57 army officials were killed during the uprising of February 25-26, 2009.

Special Court-9 headed by Dhaka Sector Commander Col Md Aheya Azam Khan of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) tried the case. Other members of this court were Lt Col Md Shahadat Hossain and Maj Md Mahfuzur Rahman.

The court acquitted eight jawans as allegations against them were not proved.

Among the acquitted five had admitted their guilt, three had not.

Among those sentenced, 113 were jailed for seven years, one for six years and a half years, 32 for six years, 26 for five and a half years, 131 for five years, 124 for four and a half years, 73 for four years, 16 for three and a half years, 16 for three years, two for two and a half years and, 38 for two years, eight for one year and half years, 52 for one year, 15 for six months and 18 for four months each.

Each of the convicted was also fined Tk 100 by the court.

This figure includes 129 also accused in the BDR carnage case.

Sepoy Selim Reza - one of the prime accused in the BDR mutiny case and much talked about for leading and masterminding the Pilkhana uprising and carnage - was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

The judge began the verdict delivery around 10:00am, ending at 2:00pm with a ten-minute break in between.

He described the happenings during the mutiny when on Feb 25 of 2009 around 2500 BDR members including all officers of Pilkhana Headquarters, JCO's, jawans, and all sector commanders gathered at former BDR director general Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed's Darbar.

The 44 Rifle Battalion had been deployed to guard Darbar Hall, the DG's residence, Gate no 05, the central armoury and Dhaka sector magazine at BDR headquarters on the day, he said.

The commotion erupted inside the Darbar hall after sepoy Mayeen of 13 Rifle

Battalion and Kajol of 44 Rifle Battalion entered the hall with arms. Sepoy Mayeen was carrying a rifle of 44 Battalion. He remains absconding, the court was told.

The Battalion's army officials could not control their subordinates as the jawans had preplanned the mutiny.

"BGB authority has decided to abolish the 44 Rifle Battalion. A date for this will be declared later," the judge told the court.

The trial started on April 26 in 2010. Charges were framed against 675 - two of whom have since died.

The charges include leaving Darbar Hall in defiance of orders of the then director general Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, collection of firearms and ammunition from the armouries and not taking effective measures to thwart the mutiny and taking part in the mutiny with firearms.

Investigation officers identified the offenders by the use of video footages and images. They also checked calls made on the jawans cell phones at the time.

Dhaka, Delhi finalise

FROM PAGE 20

Bangladesh will examine the DPR and carry out a joint study of the possible impacts of the proposed project on the relevant areas in Bangladesh, said a press statement issued by Mir Sajjad Hossain, member of the Joint River Commission who headed the Bangladesh delegation.

India also assured Bangladesh to provide additional and supplementary data and information if required for the study. In the ToR, it was also agreed that the subgroup may undertake field visits to facilitate the study, the statement added.

Based on the study, the

subgroup will recommend measures to their respective governments.

This was the first meeting of the joint subgroup which will study and amend, if required, the study before vetting it. The next meeting of the subgroup will be held in Dhaka on mutually agreed dates, the statement said.

The study is likely to examine the location of the dam and its impact on catchment areas, flora and fauna, biodiversity and ecology on the Bangladeshi side, sources said.

The meeting of the subgroup was convened in line with the desire of Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina to conduct a joint study to assess the possible impacts in Bangladesh due to proposed Tipaimukh project and earlier decisions of the JRC meetings, said the statement.

The Tipaimukh project has given rise to widespread concerns in Bangladesh over its impact on the availability of water in the Surma, Kushiara and Meghna rivers and the irrigation and environment of the lower riparian country.

Though no impact assessment was conducted yet, India on the other hand, has repeatedly assured that the highest level that it would

Myanmar takes 2,000 exiles off blacklist

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar has removed about 2,000 exiles from an immigration blacklist drawn up by the former junta to allow them to return home as part of political reforms, the authorities yesterday said.

"The people taken off the blacklist are civil servants who fled Myanmar a long time ago," an information ministry official told AFP.

"More than 6,000 former civil servants from government ministries were blacklisted. Some 2,000 were taken off today," he said. "They can come back to the country freely. The authorities will decide later whether to remove the others."

Several million people fled the country to escape the corrupted economy and political repression under army rule which ended last year, leaving a shortage of professionals to help manage economic and political change.

18-party

FROM PAGE 20

As part of the demonstration programme, opposition leaders will hold mass rallies from September 7 to 30, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhruddin Alamgir declared at a press briefing at the party's central office at Nayapalton in the capital yesterday. Leaders of the BNP and its allies were present.

Explaining why the party had backtracked on its decision to go for harsher agitation programmes, Fakhruddin said it wanted to involve the common people on its agenda first.

"A movement cannot be waged in one night. It has to be done step by step and we are on the right track," he said, adding the government would be forced to fulfill the demands of the alliance.

According to his announcement, the opposition will hold demonstrations on September 6, protesting education related issues; on September 9 protesting Padma bride issue; on September 16 to protest the skyrocketing

prices of essentials; on September 23 demanding the return of missing BNP leader M Ilias Ali and on September 30 demanding withdrawal of "spurious cases" against BNP leaders and their unconditional release.

The alliance will also observe different agitation programmes from September 7 to October 20 to garner support mainly for its demand for the caretaker government system. Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia will from September 20 to October 20 visit divisional and district headquarters to address public meetings and campaign for the caretaker system.

Earlier, at a rally on June 11 in Dhaka, Khaleda declared that she would announce harsher agitation programmes after Eid-ul-Fitr. But the standing committee Sunday night decided not to go for any tougher programme for now.

Fakhruddin said the party did not want to organise any programme that could cause public sufferings.

Muhith at odds

FROM PAGE 1

Furthermore, at the Economic Relations Division offices, Muhith told the journalists that the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has "failed" in its capacity as the banking industry's watchdog to prevent such loan scam from taking place.

But when The Daily Star contacted three former central bankers, BB officials and an economist, a different picture emerged.

As per sections 45 and 46 of Banking Companies Act 1991, the central bank is perfectly within its rights to recommend recast of a state bank's board for the sake of public interest and discipline in the banking sector.

BB officials said the Sonali Bank management was asked on several occasions to take drastic action against the officials involved in the scam -- but they fell to deaf ears.

Former BB governor Salehuddin Ahmed even wondered how the finance minister made such comment.

"If Bangladesh Bank does not have that authority, then

who does? It has every right to suggest reconstitution of the board -- and it has done the right thing," he said.

Ahmed said as per law the central bank is responsible for regulating and supervising the banking industry -- and that includes the state-run banks.

"All will point fingers at the Bangladesh Bank if the financial sector experiences a lapse of discipline," he said.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of BB, reiterated Ahmed's views.

"It would appear as negligence of duty if the Bangladesh Bank had not taken such step, and all would have blamed the central bank then."

"There is nothing wrong in making such request," said Mohammed Farashuddin, another former central bank governor.

He, however, was in agreement with Muhith regarding the central bank's failure in arresting the scam and even suggested that higher-ups of Sonali Bank might have been involved

with the swindle.

"It is unfortunate that agencies of government are dwelling on relatively trivial procedural matters rather than the substance of corruption," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute.

"We are not doing what we should be doing," Mansur, a former economist at International Monetary Fund, said.

He said there have been allegations of corruption in state-owned banks, and it is not totally unbecoming given the lack of professional people in the boards.

"The board is largely political. People there are mostly politically connected, and a politically appointed board mostly fail in its role to supervise."

Mansur said similar types of anomalies are most likely to be present in other public banks.

"The government should carry out audit in all state-owned banks by internationally competent firm to identify the damage that has been done by this kind of abusive lending," he said.

not do anything in the project which would go against Bangladesh's interests.

India also said the barrage at the project site would release more water to Bangladesh during dry season and control the same during monsoon to save the lower riparian country from floods.

India has also invited Bangladesh to buy a stake in the 1,500 megawatt Tipaimukh power project and get electricity.

During his visit to Dhaka in September last year, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assured Bangladesh that New Delhi will not do anything in con-

nection with the dam that will hurt the interests of the lower riparian country.

Besides Mir Sajjad Hossain, the 14-member Bangladesh delegation at the subgroup meeting included among others Mashfee Binte Shams, director general (South Asia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The 13-strong Indian team was led by Devendra Sharma, commissioner (Ganga), Ministry of Water Resources and member, JRC.

Both the sides expressed happiness at the convening of the first meeting of the subgroup and said this would contribute to further

strengthening of friendly bilateral relations adding a new dimension to it, a press statement of the foreign ministry, Bangladesh said.

A statement issued by India's Ministry of Water Resources said "both sides finalised the Terms of Reference under which study in Bangladesh territory to assess the impact of Tipaimukh project would be conducted".

During the meeting, India restated its offer to Bangladesh to take a stake in the Tipaimukh project and in this context handed over the DPR to the Bangladesh delegation, it said.