

Nam stumbles on nuke, Syria criticism

AFP, Tehran

A showpiece summit hosted by Iran stumbled as soon as it opened yesterday when the head of the UN pressed Tehran on its nuclear stand, and Egypt's new leader publicly sided with Syria's opposition.

The double challenge, before the leaders and delegates of the 120-member Non-Aligned Movement, upset Iran's plans to portray the two-day summit as a diplomatic triumph over Western efforts to isolate it.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei opened the event with a speech blasting the United States as a hegemonic meddler and Israel as a regime of "Zionist wolves."

UN chief Ban Ki-moon, who looked irritated at Khamenei's remarks.

Egypt's new President Mohamed Morsi -- making the first visit to Iran by an Egyptian head of state since the 1979 Islamic revolution -- in turn embarrassed his hosts by voicing support for the opposition in Syria, which is fighting the Damascus regime unwaveringly backed by Iran.

"The revolution in Egypt is the cornerstone for the Arab Spring, which started days after Tunisia and then it was followed by Libya and Yemen and now the revolution in Syria

against its oppressive regime," Morsi said.

That contradicted the line put out by Damascus and Tehran, which assert that the Syrian uprising is a "terrorist" plot masterminded by the United States and regional countries.

Morsi's address prompted a walkout by the Syrian government delegation and drew a sharp response from Syria's Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, who accused the Egyptian leader of inciting further bloodshed in Syria.

Iran's state media failed to mention the contentious parts of Ban and Morsi's speeches in their coverage of the summit.

Morsi reportedly had a short one-on-one with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad before leaving Tehran, in which they discussed Syria and possibility of reviving ties.

A total of 29 heads of state or government are attending the Tehran summit, including those of Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Sudan, Qatar and Zimbabwe. North Korea was represented by its ceremonial head of state, parliamentary president Kim Yong-Nam, rather than the country's leader Kim Jong-Un.



A general view of the opening session of the 120-member Non-Aligned Movement summit held in Tehran yesterday, inset, Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei addresses the two-day summit.



PHOTO: AFP

Indian diplomatic bag found in Alps after 46 years

AFP, Grenoble, France

A bag of Indian diplomatic mail is set to be delivered more than 46 years late after it was discovered on Mont Blanc in the French Alps, close

"Some tourists came and told us they had seen something shining on the Bossons glacier," so he and his neighbour decided to go have a look, Christmann told AFP on Wednesday. "We found pieces of the

some soaking wet mail and Indian newspapers," Christmann quipped.

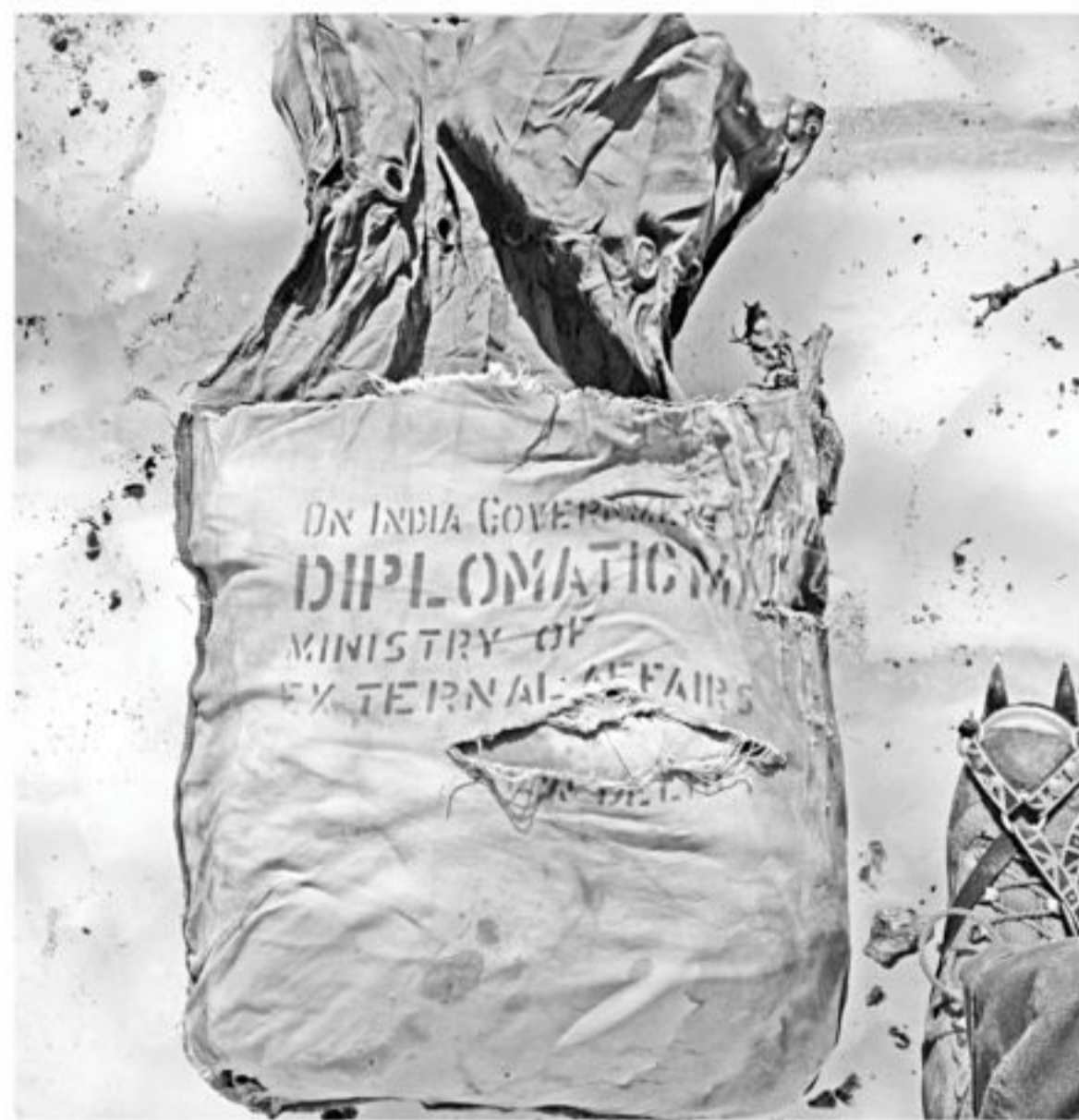
"It's not the sort of thing you find very often in the mountains -- the mail's going to arrive 46 years late."

The Kangchenjunga, a Boeing 707 flying from Mumbai (Bombay) to New York, crashed on the southwest face of Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain, on January 24, 1966 as it descended towards a scheduled stopover in Geneva, Switzerland. All 117 people on board died.

The diplomatic bag was handed over to police in the town of Chamonix at the base of the mountain. The Indian embassy in Paris said Wednesday it had not been informed of the discovery but that officials would be looking into it with a view to recovering the bag.

In September 2008, well-known climber Daniel Roche discovered Indian newspapers dated January 23, 1966 in the same area.

Roche also came across part of an engine from the Malabar Princess, another Air India plane which had crashed in a virtually identical location in 1950.



The bag contained mail from India's foreign ministry

to where an Air India plane crashed in January 1966.

The jute bag, stamped "Diplomatic mail" and "Ministry of External Affairs", was recovered by mountain rescue worker Arnaud Christmann and his neighbour Jules Berger on August 21.

cabin, a shoe, cables - it's a real dump up there!"

The two men also came across a plane wheel and, 20 metres further on, the diplomatic bag that was "sitting as if someone had just placed it there."

"We were hoping for diamonds or at least a few gold ingots. Instead we got

UN Security Council to meet on Syria

AFP, Damascus

The UN Security Council was to meet yesterday to tackle deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria, a day after President Bashar al-Assad rejected moves to create buffer zones in his country.

The meeting comes as violence whipped through eastern suburbs of Damascus, where activists said clashes broke out between the Syrian army and rebels before dawn following a bloody day in which 44 civilians were killed in the capital alone.

The Security Council meeting called by France is aimed at "appealing to world conscience and for mobilisation" in the face of the Syrian humanitarian drama, a diplomat said in New York.

Turkey has floated the idea of creating buffer zones within Syria to receive those displaced by the conflict so they do not flood across the borders into neighbouring countries.

Meanwhile, the rebel of Free Syrian Army yesterday said it shot down a regime warplane in the northwest province of Idlib, as a watchdog reported a fresh eruption of violence across eastern suburbs of Damascus.

REPUBLICAN CONVENTION Ryan promises US turnaround

AFP, Tampa, Florida

Paul Ryan energized Mitt Romney's White House bid Wednesday with a scathing take-down of Barack Obama's economic record as he accepted the vice presidential nomination at the Republican convention.

Adding youthful vim and policy vigor to the Romney ticket, the 42-year-old rising star from small-town Wisconsin received a standing ovation for his impassioned pitch to American voters 10 weeks from election day.

"I accept the duty to help lead our nation out of a jobs crisis and back to prosperity. And I know we can do this," Ryan said, exhibiting little sign of nerves during his 35-minute speech, by far the biggest of his political life.



Republican VP nominee Paul Ryan with his wife Janna Ryan

Ryan accused Obama of saddling the US economy with four years of failed big government policies and held up Romney, a 65-year-old former Massachusetts governor, as the man to turn things around with his business acumen.

"After four years of getting the run-around, America needs a turnaround, and the man for the job is Governor Mitt Romney," he said.

Romney will formally take up the nomination with his all-important acceptance speech to the convention in Tampa, Florida on Thursday, the climax of three days of rousing addresses by party grandees and rising stars.

MPs meddling

FROM PAGE 20 upazila parishes keep them financially dependent on the funding sources controlled by the UNOs.

Although the law has empowered the upazila parishes to generate revenue on their own, the UNOs control their funding, it added.

"Devolution is currently incomplete in Bangladesh; it is perhaps more of a de-concentration," said Salma A Shafi, an architect and planner.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Mahfuz said even though the legislation allows public participation in planning and budgeting, the scope is very limited and there is no guideline for this.

For development planning, accepting the opinion and suggestion of the local people is fully "optional," but accepting suggestions from the local MP is "mandatory," he added.

He rued the fact that people's participation in preparing budget for upazila parishes has no real significance and is merely a formality.

Chairmen, vice-chairmen and members of upazila and union parishes from across the country joined the programme.

Speaking at the event, they blasted the legislators and UNOs for interfering with their activities.

NEWS IN brief

9 killed in India choppers collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

All the nine Indian Air Force personnel, five of them officers, were killed yesterday when two military helicopters collided in mid-air in the western state of Gujarat.

The Russian-made choppers were on a training sortie and the crash occurred about five minutes after they took off at 12 noon from an air base near Jamnagar city.

The rotors of the two copters collided and while one chopper went down the tail portion of the other broke and it went into a spin before crashing. One of the helicopters also caught fire after hitting a high-tension power cable.

China coalmine blast kills 19

AFP, Beijing

A gas explosion at a coalmine in southwest China has killed 19 miners and trapped 28 underground, authorities yesterday said, in the latest disaster to hit the country's troubled mining industry.

Around 150 miners were working underground at the Xiaojiaowan mine in the city of Panzhihua in Sichuan province when the blast occurred on Wednesday afternoon, city authorities said in an online statement. Rescue workers pulled 104 people out of the mine by morning and they were rushed to local hospitals.

Isaac soaks saturated US Gulf Coast

AFP, New Orleans

Tropical Storm Isaac dumped more rain onto an already saturated Gulf Coast yesterday as residents sought safety from flooding and officials warned of tornadoes and life-threatening storm surges.

The National Hurricane Center said the slow-moving mass of fierce weather, which was downgraded from a hurricane to a tropical storm Wednesday, would weaken and move north but continue to produce heavy rain for two days.

At 12:00 GMT, Isaac was located about 125 miles northwest of New Orleans, where officials on Wednesday ordered the evacuation of some 3,000 people in coastal Plaquemines Parish, the area hard-

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