

US military action against Iran far off

Says Romney
AFP, Cuyahoga Falls

White House hopeful Mitt Romney said Tuesday that any US military intervention to stop Iran's nuclear program was still on the distant horizon, tempering his rhetoric a day after a major foreign policy speech.

But the Republican presidential nominee did make clear that he supported the same "red line" that Israel's prime minister has called for -- preventing Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capacity.

"My own test is that Iran should not have the capability of producing a nuclear weapon. I think that's the same test that Benjamin Netanyahu would also apply," Romney told CNN from Ohio, where he is campaigning in the midst of a rise in the polls following his strong debate performance against President Barack Obama last week.

"Let's also recognize that we have a long way to go before military action may be necessary," Romney said. "And hopefully it's never necessary."

"Hopefully, through extremely tight sanctions, as well as diplomatic action, we can prevent Iran from taking a course which would lead to them crossing that line."

Obama has consistently drawn the line on not allowing Iran to acquire a nuclear bomb, a distinct difference from Netanyahu's line on achieving weapon "capacity."

The West and Israel accuse Iran of seeking to develop atomic weapons under cover of a civilian program, a charge which Tehran denies.

Writ filed

FROM PAGE 20
reporters that the ACC would not reinvestigate Suranjit's alleged involvement in the scandal based on the interview.

When told that Azam's statement had revealed Suranjit's involvement in the scandal, the ACC chairman said, "If that was the case, all issues could be handled according to what a driver or chaprashi [orderly] said."

Suranjit's ex-assistant personal secretary Omar Faruk Talukder's driver Azam in the interview said the bribe money, stashed in the microbus he had pulled over at Pilkhana, was being taken to Suranjit's house.

On the night of April 9, Azam drove Faruk's microbus into the Pilkhana headquarters of Border Guard Bangladesh and guarded that there was illegal money in the vehicle, taken from railway jobseekers.

In the petition, Saiful stated that Ghulam Rahman's comment about Azam had showed that he [Ghulam] was not impartial.

According to the Evidence Act, 1872, anyone having information about an offence can testify before a court, the petitioner said.

Petitioner's lawyer Md Kamal Hossain said the hearing might be held today.

SURANJIT PRESS BRIEFING
Suranjit Sengupta alleged that driver Azam had been instructed what to say and how to point the finger at him in the interview.

"The driver showed up after six months, changing his stance. He is now talking like a politician. The interview is politically motivated," Suranjit, also a member of Awami League advisory council, said this at a press briefing in the parliament.

Five days after the interview, Suranjit formally spoke about the issue and termed the interview a blueprint to mar his 55-year political career.

He said the media was crossing the limit.

Following the scandal, he resigned as the railways minister. But Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina kept him a minister without portfolio.

WB panel to assess

FROM PAGE 1
Canadian firm and some private individuals.

Later, the WB decided to revive its \$1.2 billion loan on September 21 after the government agreed on its terms and conditions that include sending all public officials allegedly involved in the corruption scheme on leave until the completion of the probe.

The WB on October 5 announced the appointment of the three-member panel headed by Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

The other two members are Timothy Tong, former commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China; and Richard Alderman, former director of the UK Serious Fraud Office.

Meanwhile, the ACC is making preparations for holding meetings with the WB's external panel, an official said yesterday.

"We have discussed the issue with the ACC director general yesterday," said a member of the ACC team investigating the alleged corruption in the Padma

bridge project. The ACC formed the team with four deputy directors in the first week of September.

The official said the ACC would "clarify its position" to the WB panel on the basis of its findings so far.

The investigator also said the Canadian authority did not cooperate with the commission in the probe.

The ACC is investigating allegations that Canadian firm SNC-Lavalin had offered huge bribes to at least six influential Bangladeshi officials, including two former government ministers, to obtain the consultant's job in the Padma bridge project.

The Canadian company's two former executives -- Ramesh Shah, 61, of Oakville, and Bangladesh born Mohammad Ismail, 48, of Mississauga -- were arrested in February and formally charged with corruption in the Padma bridge project in April, according to a report of the Canadian Press that quoted Lucy Shorey as a spokesperson for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Ramesh was a vice-president and Ismail was director of international projects at SNC-Lavalin in Toronto.

Gas rationing

FROM PAGE 1
But the business community in Chittagong is angered by the notice.

The restriction on the use of gas would severely affect businesses, they said. The order, if enforced for a longer period, might push many companies to the brink of bankruptcy, they warned.

"Chittagong businesspeople are facing discrimination," said Morshed Murad Ibrahim, president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The companies will suffer severe economic losses due to the supply shutdown, he said.

Echoing Morshed's view, M Firoze, head of marketing and product development at BSRM Group, said the re-rolling mills would suffer the most.

Production slowed at around 200 large and medium industrial units in Chittagong due to an already-existing shortage of gas, Firoze said.

Morshed said Chittagong used to get 220 million cubic feet (mmcf) of gas per day when the gas production was 1,750 mmcf.

Now, the production has gone up to 2,250 mmcf but the share of gas supplied to Chittagong has been reduced to around 180 mmcf, Morshed told The Daily Star by phone.

In order to save the industries from the damage, the CCCI president sought the prime minister's intervention

in resolving the issue.

The Chittagong business community on October 17 would hold a sit-in programme in front of Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company, demanding uninterrupted gas supply.

Firoze said it would be difficult for the companies to repay their loans in time if their business plans were affected by the move.

An official of Petrobangla, a government-owned oil and gas company, explained why the inconvenient move had been taken.

CUFL needs 50 mmcf of gas and there is already a heavy shortfall in gas supply in Chittagong. To meet CUFL's demand, the government thought out several options. Accordingly, it chose to shut down the gas-based government power plants in Chittagong and divert gas to CUFL, the official said.

In addition, the gas produced by Sangu field, which is directly purchased by the Power Development Board, is also diverted to CUFL.

It has created an additional power shortage.

But these steps were not enough to ensure a steady pressure of gas flow to CUFL. The government asked some major gas consumers in the private sector, such as captive power plants and steel re-rolling mills, to shut their operation at night.

The move is temporary, the official said.

Journo leaders

FROM PAGE 1
suspects in the Rab investigation into the brutal murder. He, however, did not mention the motive behind the crime.

Chaired by Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, president of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), the meeting hoped that the killers of the couple would be identified soon and the motive for the murder would be revealed, said a release of journalist unions.

Ruhul Amin Gazi, president of the other faction of the BFUJ, general secretaries of both the BFUJ factions Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and Shwaket Mahmud, Jatiya Press Club president Kamal Uddin Sabuj and general secretary Syed Abdul Ahmad were present in the meeting, among others.

Sagar, news editor at the private TV station Maasranga, and his wife Runi, senior reporter at another TV channel ATN Bangla, were killed in the small hours of February 11 at their rented apartment in the capital's West Rajabazar.

TWO 'ACCUSED' REMANDED
Metropolitan Magistrate Keshab Roy Chowdhury granted remand for two accused -- Tanvir Rahman and Palash Rudra Pual -- in the double murder.

Tanvir is an official at an English medium school in the city, while Palash was a security guard at the journalist couple's residence, said Rab sources.

Md Zafar Ullah, senior ASP in the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), produced the two before the court seeking a 10-day demand for each.

Meanwhile, Tanvir's family said Tanvir had been missing from October 1, after he left home that day. They did not find any trace of him despite contacting the Rab and police repeatedly.

On October 9, they came to know from the home minister's press conference that Tanvir had been arrested on charge of involvement in the journalist couple murder, added the family members.

Five more suspects -- Mintu alias Bargira Mintu, Kamrul Hassan Arun, Md Bakul Miah, Rafiqul Islam and Abu Sayeed -- have been shown arrested in the Sagar-Runi murder case.

The Rab appealed to the court for placing each of them on 10-day remand.

The court fixed Sunday for hearing the remand prayer in presence of the accused.

Zafar, investigation officer (IO) of the case, in his forwarding report said the information obtained from the two suspects proved that they were involved in the crime. More information about the murder could be gathered if they were interrogated intensively.

So they need to be remanded to know more about the killing and whereabouts of the probable abducting suspects, added the IO.



Buddhist community leaders from Ramu, Ukhia and Potiya exchange views with Khaleda Zia and other BNP leaders at her Gulshan office last night.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Khaleda for neutral probe

FROM PAGE 1
neutral person and bring the real culprits under trial so that such incident does not repeat," she urged the government while talking to the Buddhist community leaders, who came to meet her at her Gulshan office from Ramu, Ukhia and Potiya upazilas last night.

She said if the government failed to do so, her party would take stern action if voted to power.

The former premier said, "None should comment before the investigation is

over. Photos of those who brought out procession after the attack were published. So any comment can hinder proper investigation."

Khaleda was hinting at the prime minister's recent statement where she blamed the local BNP lawmaker for instigating attackers.

Progya Bongsu Mohathero of Ramu Ramcoast Buddhist temple urged the BNP chief to visit the area. "This issue should not be considered from the political point of view. We

will have to face this situation together," he said.

The former premier said, "I could not visit the affected area due to my China visit. I will visit Ramu and other places after returning home."

Khaleda is scheduled to visit China on October 14.

Terming the Ramu violence unacceptable, she said, "Soon after hearing about the attack I condemned it through a statement. I have sent an investigation committee. The committee report will be made public soon. The report will

even be handed to international community."

She said it was suspicious that the police had remained silent during the attack. "The reason behind the silence must be revealed and the government has to take action against those who did not play their roles properly."

Party leaders Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Nazrul Islam Khan and Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Prof Sukomal Barua of Dhaka University, among others, were present at the meeting.

Key 'instigator'

FROM PAGE 1
showed and distributed among people a number of images derogatory to Islam.

They also supplied soft copies of the picture to some local journalists, which soon got spread in and around Ramu within a few hours, Faruk had said.

This paper on October 4 published a report headlined "It all started from a tiny phone repair shop" based on Faruk's account.

However, Moktadir's mother Sajeda Begum Shimul said on Sunday that her son came across the photo when he went to the shop for having a mobile phone fixed.

This correspondent wanted from her Moktadir's contact address and phone number, but she refused to give either. She also would not show any photo of her son, saying there was none.

Plainclothes law enforcers picked up Moktadir from the institute's hostel at Nasirabad in the port city late on Tuesday night, said the principal and the superintendent of the Polytechnic institute.

The law enforcers came within half an hour of Moktadir's arrival in the hostel from outside, said Imam Hossain, the hostel superintendent.

Moktadir, a sixth semester diploma student of computer engineering, left the hostel for Feni on Friday and returned on Tuesday night, added Imam.

According to his mother, Moktadir went to his home in Ramu from Chittagong on September 25, as he had a few days' vacation between his examinations.

Soon after Moktadir returned home from Faruk's shop, which is close to his home, around 8:30pm on September 29, some police personnel came and asked him to go to the police station, said Sajeda.

She added she went to the Ramu Police Station around 3:00pm on September 30 as her son was yet to return home till then. Policed then released Moktadir, saying that he would not face any problem.

Moktadir passed SSC in 2009 from Ramu Khizari Model High School. Sajeda said her son was a bright student and was good at technical work, including mobile servicing.

Meanwhile, Nazibul Islam, the former officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station, has already been closed to Chittagong Deputy Inspector General of Police's office in Ramu after his withdrawal from Ramu over his mysterious inaction in containing the mayhem.

Brood-hilsas

FROM PAGE 1
Asked whether the time span of hilsa spawning was changing, he said he had not noticed any such change yet.

However, some researchers say that they had noticed such a trend.

Dewan Ali Ahsan, the chairman of the fisheries department of Dhaka University, said he had noticed some behavioural change in recent years as most of the hilsa were not laying eggs during the traditional peak season.

Climatic conditions are changing. There are also the issues of over-fishing and pollution in the rivers and in the Bay, he said.

"All the species try their best to cope with the situation," he said. The hilsa might be trying to cope with the situation and not laying eggs during the traditional peak season," said Ahsan.

But the matter is subject to detailed research before comments on it can be made with certainty, he added.

The government imposes the ban as per the traditional knowledge of fishermen every year.

The five breeding grounds -- Kalirchar of Sandwip, Dhalerchar and Moulavichar of Hatia, Monpura and Charfatia in Bhola cover 7,000 square kilometres in seven coastal districts.

According to a survey data of the BFRJ for 2007-2010, the production of hilsa fry increased by 11, 77, 35 and 67 percent owing to the ban.

Fisheries officials say this year they conducted a total 1,020 mobile courts and 4,402 surprise drives across the country.

During the drives, they recovered 61.16 tonnes of hilsa and 117.3 lakh meters of fishing nets worth Tk 34.25 crore, said an official.

Moreover, the government also lodged 559 cases against people who violated the law during the embargo. 850 people were imprisoned under different terms and fined Tk 13.23 lakh.

Besides the punitive measures, the government also provides 30 kilograms of rice to 287,824 jatka (less than nine inches) fishermen in 85 upazilas in 15 districts during the ban.

But as the government did

not give any compensation for these 11 days, the fishermen went desperate in catching hilsa during this season.

"The government did not pay any compensation for the fishermen who are involved in catching hilsa. How will they survive?" asked Ahsan, the chairman of the fisheries department.

Now there are five lakh fishermen directly involved in catching hilsa, said the BFRJ officials.

Phani Bhushan Malo, general secretary of Bangladesh Fishermen's Association, said, "Compared to previous years, it seems that this year the number of brood-hilsa was more even after the peak spawning period," he said.

Things are changing, he added.

The hilsa production at present contributes one percent to the GDP and meets 10 to 12 percent of the country's total fish demands.

In 2010-11, Bangladesh earned Tk 353 crore by exporting 8539 tonnes of hilsa fish.

Strengthen D-8

FROM PAGE 1
member states can be strengthened in this regard, she added.

"The D-8 can establish formal engagement with the ASEAN and other regional and international organisations that can promote the interests of the D-8 members," Hasina observed.

Eight Muslim majority countries -- Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey -- stretching from Southeast Asia to Africa believing in some shared values founded the Developing 8, popularly known as D-8, through Istanbul Declaration 15 year ago.

The objectives of the D-8 primarily are to improve member states' position in the global economy, diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations, enhance participation in decision making at international level, and improve standards of living.

The D-8 members represent around 13 percent of global and around 60 percent of the world Muslim population. Several of its members are identified as Next Eleven emerging countries with an average per capita income of \$2,750.

In the Istanbul Declaration of 1997, the member states also formed 12 working groups on the selected industrial sector for mutual cooperation.

These sectors include automotive, cement, steel, electronics and IT, petrochemicals and fertilisers, energy and environmental conservation, food industries, textiles and garments, standardisation, technology cooperation, small and medium

enterprise (SME) and machinery.

The prime minister stressed the need for strengthening economic cooperation among the member states through removing all trade barriers.

She called upon the member states to reach a rational decision soon to ensure full operation of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to enhance inter-state trade.

According to experts, although intra-trade among the D-8 countries is not satisfactory, it has tremendous potential.

Bangladesh exported goods worth around \$821.05 million to other D-8 members in fiscal 2011-12, down by 20.6 percent from the previous fiscal year's \$1,034.54 million, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

Turkey is the most promising market among the D-8 nations for RMG export from Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's RMG export to Turkey in fiscal 2011-12 stood at \$355.93 million, a 31.3 percent decline from the previous fiscal's \$518.32 million, according to EPB data.

Turkey's introduction of high duty on apparel import last year is cited as the reason for the decline.

Bangladesh meets its total annual raw cotton demand of 3.7 million bales solely through import, according to Bangladesh Textile Mills Association. In this regard Bangladesh can procure raw cotton from the D-8 countries such as Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt.

The premier suggested that some member states

open their market for the labour forces of other members which can equally benefit both recipient and contributing countries.

She added the member states need to pay more attention to promote the culture of tolerance, justice, equity and cooperation premised on the glorious values of Islam.

"We have to decide on not to promote any kind of extremism. We need to be more careful towards good governance, accountability and representative government," she said, adding that by practicing these values and principles, the D-8 could draw greater attention of the international community.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua said collective efforts on diversification of mutual trade relations, enhanced participation in decision-making at the international and regional level, and providing better standards of living to the common people are the main thrust of D-8.

He said the collective economy of D-8 members is integrating rapidly with the global economy. Volumes of export and import, which constitute a significant percent of the world trade, have been on the rise.

The GDP growth rate has centred at more than 6 percent on an average among the member states. Value addition of industry to GDP on an average is 38 percent, said Barua.

The second D-8 industries ministers' meeting was held in Istanbul, Turkey on October 4-6 last year, while the first round of the event was held in Iran in 2010.

Pak SC okays

FROM PAGE 1
Since December 2009, the Supreme Court has insisted that the government re-open multi-million-dollar graft cases against Asif Ali Zardari in Switzerland that were frozen when he became head of state in 2008.

Earlier this year it convicted and dismissed prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani for refusing to ask Switzerland to re-open the cases, but the government appeared to back down last month by agreeing to write to the Swiss.

After weeks of wrangling over the wording, the Supreme Court yesterday approved a third draft of a letter to the Swiss authorities and asked for an update on the situation in four weeks.

"We found that the proposed communication conforms to the judgement of this court and it also expresses concern of the prime minister of Pakistan," judge Asif Saeed Khosa said, ordering another hearing on November 14.

The government has long argued that it could not ask the Swiss to reopen the cases as the president has immunity from prosecution as head of state.

The full letter was not released, but portions read out in court asked the Swiss to disregard a 2008 communication the former attorney general sent to close proceedings against Zardari.

The letter also said it was sent "without prejudice" to any legal defence available to Zardari under Pakistan's constitution and international law -- an allusion to his immunity as head of state.

The allegations against Zardari date back to the 1990s, when he and his late wife, former premier Benazir Bhutto, are suspected of using Swiss banks to launder \$12 million in alleged kickbacks.

Law minister Farooq Naek welcomed the ruling, telling the court: "It is a victory of justice."

"No case has ever been proved against President Asif Ali Zardari, neither in Pakistan nor abroad," he said.

Critics have argued the Supreme Court's dogged pursuit of the Swiss cases amounted to a political crusade against the coalition government headed by the Pakistan People's Party.

After Gilani's removal as PM there were fears his successor Raja Pervez Ashraf could suffer the same fate and the government could fall before completing its five-year term in March.

ACC asks

FROM PAGE 20
Hall-Mark alone took Tk 2,686 crore.

ACC would not go for legal action to realise money, said Foyzur. It was the bank that had to lodge a case in this regard, he added.

Sonali Bank could file the case with the civil court or Artha Rin Adalat (the court that handles cases filed against loan defaulters for realising money), Foyzur said.

The anti-graft body has so far filed 11 cases against 27 officials of Hall-Mark and Sonali Bank on charges of criminal offence.

"It never files cases for recovering money," the ACC official said.

Asked why the commission was not confiscating properties of the Hall-Mark officials, he said it was beyond ACC's jurisdiction, adding only courts could give such orders.

Notices will be served by the ACC on another 13 people, including 10 Sonali Bank board of directors, asking them to submit their wealth statements.

On the ACC's recent activities, its secretary told reporters that the commission accepted 92 from 1,017 complaints for investigation in September. It also gave permission for filing 68 cases against 97 people, including 52 government staff, one public representative and 17 businessmen.