

Palestinians

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Abbas will make the case for Palestine to become a "non-member UN observer state" and set out possible conditions for talks with Israel in a key speech to the 193-member assembly.

The Palestinian president sat and listened to Ban's warning at a special UN committee meeting on the decades-old conflict ahead of his speech.

The UN secretary general said only "direct negotiations" between the Palestinians and Israelis could lead to a permanent settlement.

And he urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders "to breathe new life into the peace process which is now on life support" because of the deadlock in the peace process between the rivals.

Talks between the two have been suspended since September, 2010 with the Palestinians blaming Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

"What is needed now is political will and courage. Leaders must show a historic sense of responsibility and vision. Israelis and Palestinians must break out of the zero-sum mentality," Ban said.

The landmark General Assembly meeting will be held on the 65th anniversary of a UN resolution on the division of the Palestinian territories into a two-state solution that Ban said "remains tragically unfulfilled".

The Palestinians are assured of the simple majority required for the resolution, despite an aggressive campaign against the measure by the United States and Israel.

Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Malki said the Palestinian leadership was "proud of the just support for the cause of Palestine emanating from all corners of the globe."

"We appeal to you to stand firm for peace, for the rule of law and for right over might," Malki told ministers and ambassadors at the UN committee.

"Despite diminishing hopes and the decline of the situation on the ground due to Israeli violations we remain committed to the two state solution and our hand remains extended in peace," he added.

The Palestinians say 132 countries recognize their state bilaterally, but the number of countries that will back them in the vote

remains uncertain.

Europe is divided, with a majority of the 27-nation European Union, including France, expected to back the Palestinians.

But Germany said it would abstain and Britain was expected to follow because of doubts over the timing of the vote.

The recent Israeli military onslaught against rocket attacks from Gaza could increase support for the Palestinians, diplomats said.

But several European countries, including some backing the bid, believe the Palestinians should have waited until after US President Barack Obama installed his new administration and Israel held elections, diplomats said.

The United States, a staunch ally of Israel, has warned that the vote will do nothing to improve the prospects for new peace talks aimed at ending the decades-long conflict.

"We have made very clear to the Palestinian leadership that we oppose Palestinian efforts to upgrade their status at the UN outside of the framework" of talks with Israel, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Wednesday.

Israeli leader Netanyahu said Thursday that the UN decision "won't change anything on the ground."

"It won't promote the creation of a Palestinian state, it will distance it," he added.

Success will give the Palestinians access to UN agencies and treaties and potentially allow them to apply to join the International Criminal Court -- a prospect that worries Israel.

Palestinian envoys have said Abbas will not rush to join the court but could use it if Israel does not change its policies on settlements and other matters.

The United States blocked a Palestinian application for full membership of the United Nations that Abbas made in September 2011.

The Palestinian Authority and UN agencies that admit the Palestinians could lose hundreds of millions of dollars in financing because of the vote. US law prohibits funding for any international body recognizing a Palestinian state.

Washington has warned Abbas he risks losing around \$200 million in aid, which is blocked in the US Congress.

The last call

FROM PAGE 1

villagers whose sons and daughters had been working with the garment factory.

"I checked every toilet until I found him [Polash] on the third floor," she said with tears rolling down her cheeks.

"He had that black shirt wrapped around his waist," Moyna said before she lapsed into silence.

Moyna does not know what is awaiting her in the days to come. The next hurdle for the remaining four members of the family, who were all dependent on Palash, is to search a means of living.

The case of her neighbouring family is no less painful.

Its four members -- Nazrul Islam, his wife Amena Khatun, son Nayan Mian and daughter-in-law Monira Begum -- could not be identified among the 111 who perished in the fire.

"What will happen to me now," said a helpless Chobera Begum, Nazrul's mother, as all the earning members of the family had died.

Earlier on Monday, the bodies of the identified victims were sent to Latibpur village in Mithapukur upazila and buried. In the entire upazila, a total of 37, including 24 women, died in the inferno.

Meanwhile, Farid Ahmed, deputy commissioner of Rangpur, has allocated Tk 25,000 for each of the families who lost their children and Tk 15,000 for the people who were injured in the country's worst garment factory fire.

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chairing the meeting.

"No criticism, speak of self-realisation. Talk about our own problems," Shafiu added.

Thus cautioned, Ahmed then said the media people should have proper knowledge on garment business to be able to write good reports on the sector.

Contacted, The New Age editor said he would not make any comment before the news is published.

But Asif Nazrul, who teaches law, described Ahmed's remarks as "scarecrow".

He said that over the past few years the nation had been noticing two things -- whenever an accident happens, garment owners conceal the truth and speak of conspiracy.

Moreover, the owners never take the responsibility, he added.

She also rejected the opposition's demand for restoration of the caretaker government system and cited some remarks the BNP chief had made earlier "against the system".

Hasina claimed that all the elections during the present government were held "free and fair". "The Election Commission will conduct the next parliamentary polls," she added.

During her speech, the premier narrated her government's various development activities, and anticipated that all those activities would be stopped "if the BNP-led alliance comes to power".

The 15th session of the parliament, which began on November 14 amid boycott by the BNP-led opposition MPs, was prorogued last night after 10 sitting days.

During his media bashing, Mahtabuddin Ahmed is one of those who launched a scathing attack on the media, saying the media was "inciting" the nation through spreading propaganda about Saturday's blaze.

He also expressed his interest in hiring at a high salary The New Age Editor Nurul Kabir and Dhaka University Prof Asif Nazrul, who spoke strongly against a section of apparel business men in a recent television talkshow.

If Nurul and Asif are not interested in the garment job, Ahmed added, his group would give his company shares to them to make them owners so that they can have practical experience in garment business.

"If necessary I am ready to award them 25 percent share of my company for running garment business," he said, bitterly criticising the talk show.

During his media bashing, Mahtab was once stopped by BGMEA president Shafiu Islam Mohiuddin, who was

an accused, who include five current lawmakers, could in theory face the death penalty for their roles in the rally. At their height they drew around 100,000 people, mostly supporters of ousted ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

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