

Iran nuclear talks resume in Vienna

Tehran says talks should focus on lifting sanctions, return of US

AFP, Tehran

Iran said nuclear talks that are set to resume yesterday in Vienna should focus on lifting sanctions on the Islamic republic and "guarantees" the US will return to the fold.

Negotiations to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal resumed in late November, after a five-month hiatus.

The talks seek to bring back the United States, after it withdrew from the accord in 2018 under president Donald Trump and began imposing sanctions on Iran.

Iran has reported progress in the talks, but European diplomats have warned they are "rapidly reaching the end of the road".

The talks are expected to get underway in the Austrian capital at 6:00 pm (1700 GMT), according to a source close to the negotiations.

Ahead of the resumption, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the agenda yesterday should be "the issue of guarantees and verification" on the lifting of US sanctions if it returns to the accord.

"The most important thing for us is to reach a point where we can verify that Iranian oil will be sold easily and without any limits, that the money for this oil will be transferred in foreign currency to Iranian bank accounts, and that we will be able to benefit from all the revenues," he said, quoted by state news agency IRNA.

The opening of the eighth round of the talks involves delegations from Iran and the other countries that remain party to the landmark accord -- Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

West fears Iran is trying to make nuclear weapon. On Saturday, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran director Mohammad Eslami said Tehran has no plans to enrich uranium beyond 60 percent, even if the Vienna talks fail.



People pour milk in to seas as they perform rituals during a ceremony for the victims of the 2004 tsunami at Pattinapakkam Beach in Chennai, India, yesterday. The natural disaster killed 220,000 people throughout the region.

PHOTO: AFP

Iran, Hezbollah aid Yemen rebel strikes

Says Saudi-led coalition

AFP, Riyadh

The Saudi-led coalition yesterday accused Iran and Hezbollah of helping Yemen's Huthi rebels to launch missiles and drones at the kingdom, where two people were killed.

The latest Saudi accusation came as the coalition intensified airstrikes against the Iran-backed Huthis in retaliation for deadly attacks on the kingdom.

Coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki told a news conference the Huthis were "militarising" Sanaa airport and using it as a "main centre for launching ballistic missiles and drones" towards the kingdom.

Malki showed reporters a video clip which he said depicted "the headquarters of Iranian and Hezbollah experts at the airport" where, he alleged, "Hezbollah is training the Huthis to booby-trap and use drones".

Travel chaos mounts

Scrapped flights, resurgent Covid deliver gut punch to holiday season

AGENCIES

Holiday travel headaches and safety worries swelled yesterday with thousands of flights cancelled and Omicron cases soaring, as people wrap up Christmas celebrations bruised by a resurgent Covid-19 pandemic.

About 8,300 flights were grounded and tens of thousands more delayed on the weekend -- one of the year's busiest travel periods -- with multiple airlines saying that Omicron spikes caused staffing shortages.

Effects rippled worldwide and the hurt has bled into the work week, with more than 2,000 flights cancelled Monday and over 700 more on Tuesday, according to flight tracker FlightAware.

The highly transmissible Omicron strain has sent new cases skyrocketing across the globe, with countries reviving lockdowns and cruise ships returning to port with infected passengers.

Yesterday, France's President Emmanuel Macron will meet officials to discuss new measures to combat Omicron after infections hit record-high figures for three consecutive days.

French officials have warned that hospitals again risk being overwhelmed after a record 100,000 cases were

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- New York sees increase in hospitalized children
- China's Xi'an imposes 'strictest' controls
- France weighs new Covid restrictions
- Israeli hospital starts 4th jab trial

reported Saturday, the highest daily level in France since the pandemic began nearly two years ago.

Desperate to keep a lid on outbreaks before February's Beijing Winter Olympics, China has stuck to a "zero-Covid" strategy, involving tight border restrictions, lengthy quarantines and targeted lockdowns. But there have been sporadic flare-ups.

In Xi'an, where 13 million residents are confined to their homes, China on Monday tightened Covid controls to the "strictest" level, banning residents from driving in an effort to control the country's worst outbreak in 21 months.

Two other Chinese cities also reported a case linked to Xi'an, as authorities urged migrant workers not

to travel home in the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday.

Governments worldwide are scrambling to boost testing and vaccinations.

In the United States, top pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci on Sunday warned of a Covid "testing problem" and vowed to make more tests available next month, as the virus overwhelms the nation.

Still, cases have soared. New York's health department said Covid pediatric hospitalizations have risen four-fold over the past two weeks as Omicron took hold.

In Florida, health officials said new Covid cases spiked to 125,201 for the week ending December 23, four times its previous week's total.

In Israel, a hospital launched a clinical trial yesterday on the impact of a fourth shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, as the health ministry weighs a national fourth jab rollout.

The study being conducted by Sheba Medical Centre involves 150 volunteers from the hospital's staff, who are at least four months removed from their third vaccine shot and have signs of waning antibodies.

ESCALATING VIOLENCE IN MYANMAR

'Horrorified' UN calls for new year truce

AFP, Yangon

The new United Nations special envoy to Myanmar yesterday said she was "deeply concerned" by escalating violence in the country and called for a new year ceasefire between the military and its opponents.

Nationwide protests against the February coup have been met with a bloody crackdown, with more than 1,300 people killed and over 11,000 arrested, according to a local monitoring group.

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis led by the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have made little headway so far, with the generals refusing to engage with opponents.

Special envoy Noeleen Heyzer "is deeply concerned by the continued escalation of violence in Kayah State and other parts of Myanmar", she said in her first statement since taking on the role.

She also called for "all parties to... allow humanitarian assistance to be provided to those in need, including those forced to flee the violence", and for all sides to come to a new year ceasefire.

On Sunday, a UN official said he was "horrorified" by credible reports that at least 35 civilians were killed and their bodies burned in an attack on Christmas Eve in eastern Myanmar, and demanded the government launch an investigation.

Two workers for non-profit group Save the Children remain missing -- their vehicle was among several that were attacked and burned in the incident in Kayah state. There have also been fresh clashes in recent days between ethnic rebels and the military in Kayah state -- also known as Karen state -- sending thousands fleeing into neighbouring Thailand.

A junta spokesman told AFP last week that the military had carried out air strikes against Karen National Union fighters and members of local "People's Defence Force" groups that have sprung up to fight back against the putsch.

MORE NEWS

Sri Lanka shuts three foreign missions as dollar crisis worsens

Sri Lanka yesterday announced the closure of three overseas diplomatic missions in a bid to save foreign currency reserves, as the country's central bank slapped tighter controls on dollars needed to finance essential imports. The Sri Lankan High Commission (embassy) in Nigeria and consulates in Germany and Cyprus will be closed from January in the restructuring, the foreign ministry said. The island's tourism-dependent economy was hammered by the pandemic and the government in March last year imposed a broad import ban to shore up forex reserves, triggering shortages of essential goods such as fuel and sugar. The closure of the three missions came on the same day the Central Bank of Sri Lanka tightened restrictions on foreign currency remittances received by locals. It ordered all commercial banks to hand over a quarter of their dollar earnings to the government, up from 10 percent.

Weather disasters cost \$20b more than last year: NGO

The ten most expensive weather disasters this year caused more than \$170 billion (150 billion euros) in damage, \$20 billion more than in 2020, a British aid group said yesterday. Each year, UK charity Christian Aid calculates the cost of weather incidents like flooding, fires and heat waves according to insurance claims and reports the results. In 2020, it found the world's ten costliest weather disasters caused \$150 billion in damage, making this year's total an increase of 13 percent. The most expensive disaster in 2021 was hurricane Ida, which lashed the eastern United States and caused around \$65 billion in damages. Spectacular and deadly flooding in Germany and Belgium in July was next on the list at \$43 billion in losses. A cold snap and winter storm in Texas that took out the vast state's power grid cost \$23 billion, followed by flooding in China's Henan province in July that cost an estimated \$17.6 billion. Other disasters costing several billion dollars include flooding in Canada, a late spring freeze in France that damaged vineyards, and a cyclone in India and Bangladesh in May.

Philippines typhoon toll hits 388

The death toll from one of the most destructive typhoons to hit the Philippines in recent years rose to 388 yesterday, the government said, as disease outbreaks threatened some of the stricken areas. Typhoon Rai struck the south and centre of the Asian nation on December 16 and 17, toppling power lines and trees and unleashing deadly floods that also left hundreds of thousands homeless. The civil defence office in Manila said 60 people still remain missing and hundreds injured. The archipelago gets hit by an average of 20 cyclones each year.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Raped for not paying toll

FROM PAGE 1

After the couple refused to give them the money, Ashiq and his associates abducted the woman from Laboni Beach on a three-wheeler in front of her husband and child on the evening of December 22, he said.

Ashiq later raped her in a hotel room, and demanded ransom from her husband, he said.

Commander Moin said that Ashiq was not an acquaintance of the woman. "They were introduced on the beach a day before the incident while she was collecting money from tourists."

Soon after the incident came to light, Ashiq went into hiding and stayed in different places of Cox's Bazar for two days. He then came to Dhaka and was arrested on his way to Patuakhali, said Moin. A team from Rab Headquarters, Rab-8 and -15, arrested Ashiqur in a joint drive in Madaripur on Sunday.

Ashiq's arrest brings the total number of arrests in the rape

case to five.

The others are: Riaz Uddin Choton, Rezaul Karim Sahabuddin, Mehedi Hasan and Mamunur Rashid. Two others listed in the first information report -- Israfil Huda Joy and Mehedi Hasan Babu -- are still at large.

Police are interrogating the four arrestees on remand.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, the victim's husband said he and his wife were forced to hide information in the last four days.

"I have all the evidence with me and I will hold a press briefing in Dhaka soon."

"I sought help by calling the national emergency number 999 at least thrice but did not get any assistance. I have the details of the call record... but the police are lying..."

The couple has been under surveillance by the tourist police in Cox's Bazar since the incident.

On December 23, Hasanuzzaman,

superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar, told The Daily Star that the victim or her husband had not called 999.

Commander Moin yesterday said Ashiq is known as a criminal in Cox's Bazar. He forcibly takes control of flats and rents them out in the Sugandha beach area.

According to the police database, around 17 cases were filed against Ashiq between 2011 and 2021. The cases include those filed over arms, narcotics, theft, mugging, women repression and attempted murder.

He was first arrested in 2014 with arms and was in jail for around two and a half years. Ashiq was arrested at least five times in the last 10 years, they said.

Bipul Chandra Dey, inspector of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station, said he was last arrested in a mugging case on November 7 this year and came out of jail on November 15.

[Our Cox's Bazar correspondent contributed to this report]

ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT IN OCCUPIED GOLAN

Israel approves plan to double settlers

AFP, Golan Heights

Israel's government has approved a \$317 million plan to double the Jewish settler population in the Golan Heights, 40 years after it annexed the territory captured from Syria.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's cabinet voted in favour of the plan that aims to build 7,300 settler homes in the region over a five-year period, during a meeting held at the Mevo Hama community in the Golan.

It calls for 1 billion Israeli shekels to be spent on housing, infrastructure and other projects with the goal of attracting roughly 23,000 new Jewish settlers to the area, seized during the 1967 Six Day War.

"Our goal today is to double the population of the Golan Heights," the right-wing Bennett said ahead of the meeting.

Around 25,000 Israeli settlers live in the Golan Heights, along with about 23,000 Druze, who remained on the land after Israel seized it.

Israel annexed the territory on December 14, 1981, in a move not recognised by most of the international community.

Former US president Donald Trump granted US recognition to Israeli sovereignty over the Golan in 2019. Shortly after Biden took office in January, his Secretary of State Antony Blinken suggested there were legal questions surrounding Trump's move.

Bennett claimed that after a decade of conflict in Syria, international calls to restore Syrian control of the Golan were muted.

এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড
(বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম কর্পোরেশন এর একটি অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান)
উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪

বিষয়ঃ বাক্স এলপিগ্যাস বিক্রির দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম কর্পোরেশন এর একটি অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড কর্তৃক সিলেট গ্যাস ফিল্ডস লিমিটেড এর আওতাধীন হবিগঞ্জ জেলার রশিদপুরস্থ কাটালাইটিক রিফর্মিং ইউনিটে (CRU) মজুতকৃত/উৎপাদিত এলপিগ্যাস আধারী ০১ (এক) বছরের জন্য সরাসরি বিক্রয়/সরবরাহের নিমিত্তে সরকার কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত বেসরকারি পন্থায় পরিচালিত এলপিগ্যাস বিক্রি/গ্যাস/স্যাটেলাইট এলপিগ্যাস প্রস্তুতি/আটোমাস সেশন পরিচালনাকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ভেলিভারী প্যাকেট	তফসিলের মূল্য (অফারপ্রমাণ্য)	জামানতের টাকা (ফেরতপ্রমাণ্য)	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
রশিদপুরস্থ কাটালাইটিক রিফর্মিং ইউনিট (CRU) থেকে বাক্স এলপিগ্যাস বিক্রি।	৫,০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার টাকা)	২০,০০,০০০/- (দশ লক্ষ টাকা)	২৫/০১/২০২২ ১৪০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত	২৫/০১/২০২২ ১৪০৫ ঘটিকায়

- ১। বিস্তারিত নিয়ম ও শর্তাদি সম্বলিত দরপত্র সিডি/সিডি সর্বকর্মদিবেস নমদ মুদ্রা ক) এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড, উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪ এবং খ) এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড, কেল্লাশাটলা, সোলাপাঙ্গা, সিলেট থেকে ২৪/০১/২০২২ তারিখ বেলা ১৬০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত জমা করা যাবে।
- ২। দরপত্র খোলার দিন কোন দরপত্র বিক্রি করা হবে না।
- ৩। সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড, উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪ এর সংশ্লিষ্ট টেন্ডার বাক্সে উল্লিখিত তারিখ ও সময়ে দাখিল করা যাবে।
- ৪। দরপত্র দাতাদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) এলপিগ্যাস এর চট্টগ্রাম কার্যালয়ে যথাসময়ে দরপত্র খোলা হবে।
- ৫। অনিবার্য কারণে নির্ধারিত দিনে দরপত্র গ্রহণ সম্ভব না হলে পরবর্তী অফিস খোলার দিন উল্লিখিত স্থানে ও সময়ে দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে।
- ৬। দরপত্র তফসিল www.bpc.gov.bd এবং www.lplg.gov.bd থেকে ডাউনলোড করা যাবে, তবে ডাউনলোডকৃত তফসিলের মাধ্যমে দরপত্র দাখিল করার ক্ষেত্রে যথানিয়মে তফসিল ক্রম বানদ মূল রশিদ জমা দিতে হবে।
- ৭। এ বিষয়ে কোন তথ্যাদি জানতে সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্মকর্তা জনাব প্রকৌশলী তালুকদার গয়াসীউল্লাহ, উপ-ব্যবস্থাপক (অপারেশন), মোবাইল নম্বর ০১৭১৬১০৩০৪৯ এর সাথে যোগাযোগ করা যাবে।
- ৮। এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণে দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিলা অথবা সর্বক দরপত্র বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

তারিখঃ-২৪.০১.২০২২

SOURCE: REUTERS

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

DECEMBER 28

- 1612** - First observation of Neptune - Galileo observes and records a "fixed star" without realising it is a planet.
- 1836** - Spain recognizes the independence of Mexico.
- 2005** - The European Union launched its first Galileo navigation satellite, moving to challenge the United States' Global Positioning System (GPS).

SOURCE: REUTERS

Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Pvt.) Ltd.
(A Joint Venture Company of BPDB and NTPC Ltd.)
Borak Unique Heights (Level-17), 117, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Eskaton Garden, Dhaka-1000

Memo No.: BIFPCL/MSTPP/MANPOWER/VE/2021/837
Date: 28/12/2021

NOTICE INVITING APPLICATIONS (NIA) FOR SUPPLY OF VARIOUS TYPE MANPOWER THROUGH OUTSOURCING CONTRACT FOR 2X660 MW MAITREE SUPER THERMAL POWER PROJECT AT RAMPAL, BAGERHAT

Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Pvt.) Ltd. (BIFPCL) is constructing a coal based 2x660 MW Maitree Super Thermal Power Project at Rampal, Bagerhat district of Khulna division. BIFPCL is in the process of enlistment of vendors who can supply various type Manpower through outsourcing Contract for its project. The intent of this enlistment is to identify and enlist prospective vendors who meets envisaged Qualifying Requirement. For Qualifying Requirement, Enlistment document and other information, please visit our website at www.bifpcl.com or contact DGM (C&M), MSTPP, Rampal, Distt Bagerhat, Bangladesh, Email: jkbhaskar@bifpcl.com / wadud@bifpcl.com or Chief Procurement Officer, BIFPCL, Level-17, Borak Unique Heights, 117, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Eskaton Garden, Dhaka-1000, Tel. Nos. +88-0258314264, Email: cpo@bifpcl.com. Interested agencies may submit the Applications for Enlistment (Hard copy/through e-mail) on or before 16/01/2022 at aforesaid Rampal/Dhaka address

Md. Mofijul Islam, Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)