

REPORT ON ROHINGYA ATROCITIES

UN spl envoy starts 'final mission' today

To visit Thailand, Bangladesh to gather info

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, today begins her final mission, which will last till January 23.

Lee will visit Thailand and Bangladesh to speak to interlocutors and receive information about the situation in Myanmar from both sides of the border.

She has been denied her visit to Myanmar since December 2017.

"Myanmar's denial of access has not dissuaded me from doing everything I can to impartially report to the international community accurate, first-hand information that has been provided to me during my visits to the region," Lee said in a statement yesterday.

"My mission and the end of my tenure comes at a critical time for human rights in Myanmar and I will

continue to strive to do my utmost to improve the situation."

Lee has held the mandate of Special Rapporteur since 2014 and enjoyed biannual visits to Myanmar until she was denied entry since 2017.

She made critical comments on the atrocities carried out by the Myanmar military against the Rohingyas. Since August 2017, some 750,000 Rohingyas fled the Rakhine State and took shelter in Bangladesh.

UN termed it classic case of ethnic cleansing. Last December, The Gambia filed a case accusing Myanmar of genocide, with the International Court of Justice, the top UN court.

Lee will hold a press conference at 3:00pm on January 23 at the Le Meridien Hotel in the capital.

Following her mission, Lee will report to the Human Rights Council session in March.



The 21st span of the under-construction Padma Bridge is placed between the 32nd and 33rd pillars of the bridge at Jajira point of Shariatpur yesterday. With this, 3.15 km of the 6.15 km bridge has now become visible. PHOTO: STAR

Land acquisition could drive up cost

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told The Daily Star on Sunday.

Another official said the project costs will not increase for acquiring more land as the money would come from the existing allocation, but the costs might rise for some other reasons like extending stations size.

"The money could have been used for other purposes if we had not needed to buy the new land," the official said, wishing anonymity.

THE RAIL LINK PROJECT

The Ecnc in May 2016 approved the "Padma Bridge Rail Link Project" to connect the capital with Jashore with a 169km double-track rail line over the under-construction Padma Bridge.

But the loan agreement with China was delayed.

In April 2018, the Economic Relations Division inked a Tk 21,036 crore loan agreement with Exim Bank of China, and physical work of the project finally started in October 2018.

Now, it takes more than nine hours to travel the 412km from Dhaka to Khulna, but once the project is completed, the distance would be reduced to 213km and it would take four hours.

At least 23km of the rail line would be elevated. The total rail route would have 66 major and 244 minor bridges, a highway overpass and 40 underpasses,

29 level crossings, and 20 stations.

Apart from the new acquisition plan, the authorities have to acquire 1,786 acres of private land and around 340 acres of different government agencies, including the RHD and the BBA. They have so far acquired around 1,700 acres, a project official said.

WHY ADDITIONAL LAND?

Project Director Fakhruddin said they have to acquire around 100 acres of land for the first phase from Dhaka to Faridpur's Bhanga.

"We may not require to buy more land for other phases," he said.

A Bangladesh Railway official, wishing anonymity, said they acquired per acre of land for the project cost at an average of Tk 1.28 crore and that the costs of 100 acres would be around Tk 130 crore.

They would acquire land from Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Shariatpur, Madaripur, and Faridpur for the first phase.

The official added that they would have to acquire more land due to changes in the route alignment.

Asked about the prime minister's directives to set up the rail track with the option of the electric traction system so that electric trains could be used in future, the project director said they were now conducting a study on the proposal.

Usually, a government agency would acquire other government agency's land giving token money or without any cost.

In this case, the project authorities have to acquire land of different government agencies at full price.

"So, now we have to pay Tk 650 crore for government agencies' land acquisition," Fakhruddin said.

From now on, a government agency will have to pay the same amount to acquire land from another government agency or a private owner, said another railway official.

Exim Bank would provide Tk 21,036 crore as loan for the project, while the government will provide Tk 18,210 crore.

The government plans to open the 42km stretch of the rail line from Mawa to Bhanga over the Padma bridge by June 2021 when the long-cherished bridge is expected to be opened for vehicles.

The physical work of the rail route suffered a setback due to problems in the design of piles of viaducts on both sides of the bridge and a huge amount of allocated money for the project was refunded in the last fiscal year.

"Like many other mega projects, we faced hurdles at initial stages, but we have been able to overcome those and make a significant progress," he said.

Microsoft CEO 'sad' over CAA

Wants Bangladeshi immigrant to launch unicorn in India

STAR REPORT

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has expressed his disappointment with India's new Citizenship Amendment Act and expressed his desire that Bangladeshi immigrants would help create the next unicorn in India or become the CEO of Infosys.



Satya Nadella

Nadella made the remarks while speaking to editors at a Microsoft event in Manhattan where he was asked about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) which grants citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

"I think what is happening is sad ... It's just bad ... I would love to see a Bangladeshi immigrant who comes to India and creates the next unicorn in India or becomes the next CEO of Infosys [top IT company of India]," Nadella was quoted as saying by Ben Smith, the Editor-in-Chief of New York-based BuzzFeed News, on Monday.

"I'm shaped by my Indian heritage, growing up in a multicultural India and my immigrant experience in the United States. My hope is for an India where an immigrant can aspire to found a prosperous start-up or lead a multinational corporation benefitting Indian society and the economy at large."

Nadella grew up in Hyderabad - India's technology hub - but is now an

American citizen.

Historian Ramchandra Guha, who has opposed the Indian government's move saying that it was against the country's constitution, welcomed Nadella's statement and asked Indian IT leaders to have similar courage, reports Economic Times.

"I am glad Satya Nadella has said what he has. I wish that one of our own IT czars had the courage and wisdom to say this first. Or to say it even now," wrote Guha on the microblogging platform Twitter.

People across India have protested this move saying that the CAA discriminates Muslims and violates the Indian constitution.

Former Infosys board member T V Mohandas Pai, who supports the government, said that Nadella was confused and has been misled by Indian leftist academics in the US.

"Yes, he is very confused in his statement. Must be the Indian leftist academics in the US who have confused him by misinformation. @satyanadella PI study the CAA before you comment! We respect you as @Microsoft CEO and you must not make comments to malign India!," Pai wrote on Twitter.

The CAA passed by Indian parliament on December 11 went into force on January 10.

Kill rapists in 'crossfire'

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mere life terms will never be able to control the growing number of rape incidents. "A provision for death penalty should be incorporated in the law."

Pointing to Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, he asked, "You are allowing 'crossfire' as part of a fight against drugs. Then why aren't you doing the same in case of rape?"

Joining the discussion, another JP MP Kazi Firoz Rashid said rape incidents have reached epidemic proportions in recent times.

Referring to the rape of a Dhaka University student and a garment worker in Dhamrai, he said, "When you will go to court to try the rapist, you won't find any witness. Therefore, you will have to go for 'encounters' to free the society from this menace."

Pointing to rights activists campaigning against extra-judicial killings, Firoz said, "You would understand the pain only if you or your mother or sister become a victim."

Citing the gang rape on a bus in Tangail, he said further incidents of rape would not have occurred, had those rapists been killed "in crossfire".

The JP MP also said killing 10 to 12 rapists "in crossfire" would surely bring down rape incidents. "The only remedy

is killing rapists 'in crossfire' after their confession."

Bangladesh Tarikat Federation MP Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvandy supported Chunnun and others, and said, "I can say that you will go to heaven if you kill rapists in 'crossfire'."

About the MPs' call, TIB Executive Director Iftekhazuzaman said, "It is appalling to say the least, except the only silver lining that they distinctly acknowledge from the floor of the parliament that extrajudicial killings are taking place in the country."

"The appalling part of it is that they are not only recognizing that such killings have the blessing of the lawmakers but that they are also proposing to promote it further."

"From the point of view of human rights, rule of law and justice, there can be hardly any worse news. Everyone wants the rapists to be brought to justice through exemplary punishment."

"However, one wonders how the lawmakers could forget that no one can be punished without proper trial in the due process. The most likely outcome is miscarried justice and further institutionalisation of a trigger-happy culture among the law enforcers. The statements should be expunged."

DU to expel 67 students

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and ex-assistant secretary of the BCL central committee; Abdullah Al Mamun, student of applied chemistry and chemical engineering and also leader of the BCL's Amar Ekushey Hall unit; and Navid Anjum Tonoy, student of geography and environment.

They were arrested hours before the university's "Gha" unit admission test on October 20, 2017. Later, a case was filed with Shahbagh Police Station in this connection.

The Criminal Investigation Department of police probed the case and pressed charges on June 23 last year against 125 people, including Rana, Mamun, Tonoy and the 63 students who now face expulsion.

The CID arrested 47 of the 125 accused, including the alleged mastermind Alip Kumar Biswas, a suspended assistant director of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan

(BKSP), at different times. The 78 other accused are absconding.

The main four accused, including Kumar, are now on bail.

Police tracked down the gang members following a series of arrests since October 2017 when investigators raided two dormitories hours before the "Gha" unit admission test.

In its investigation, the CID found that the questions were leaked mainly in two ways: from a printing press on Indira Road in the capital the night before the exams and through digital devices minutes before the tests started.

Admission seekers were given the answers via tiny ear-pieces a few minutes into the exams.

The investigators said the gang struck deals with government job aspirants and public university admission seekers in exchange for hefty sums and helped many cheat their ways into universities and government offices.

That '48 hours' never ended

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Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012 at their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar. The couple's five-year-old child Mahir Sarowar Megh was at home at the time.

After investigation by Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and the Detective Branch, the Rab started probing the murder on April 18, 2012.

Seven officers have investigated it so far.

The current investigation officer, Rab's Additional Superintendent Khondker Shafiqul Alam could not give any specific date of submitting the probe report.

Even the High Court last month expressed disappointment as there is no significant progress in the murder probe.

The court said the success of Rab, as an elite and all-rounder technology equipped force, in combating terrorism, drugs, illegal arms and food adulteration will be faded to some extent if it cannot find out and arrest the offenders behind the killing of Sagar-Runi.

At the hearing, Khondker Shafiqul Alam told the court that the results of DNA test are yet to come from the FBI laboratory in the US.

The High Court ordered the investigation officer to submit a report by March 4 this year on the latest position of its investigation.

Besides, a Dhaka court dealing with the case asked the Rab to submit the probe report by February 10.

Contacted yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said law enforcers are keen to solve every case, but some might be pending for further investigation.

"I cannot comment without knowing the details of these cases. For Sagar-Runi killing case, the High Court issued instructions and the Rab is following that. These cases might be still pending for the lack of proof and witnesses," he said.

The minister also said there is no political pressure on the law enforcement agencies to investigate these cases.

TAQI MURDER

No charge sheet has been filed even six years into the murder of Narayanganj teen Tanwir Muhammad Taqi.

"Investigation is going on" is

what officials keep saying when journalists contact them.

A student of ABC International School, Taqi, 17, went missing after leaving his Shaista Khan Road home for Sudhijon Pathagar, a local library, around 4:00pm on March 6, 2013.

His A-level results were out the next day and he emerged as the highest scorer in the world in physics obtaining 297 out of 300 marks.

His body was found floating on the Shitalakhya river on March 8.

A draft of the investigation report was leaked before the first anniversary of the killing on March 6, 2014. Different newspapers ran stories based on the draft with quotes from top-ranking Rab officials about involvement of 11 people in the murder.

Col Ziaul Ahsan, the then additional director general of Rab, told the media at the time that they found evidence of Ajmeri Osman and his 10 associates in the brutal murder.

He also said the charge sheet would be submitted any day.

That day never came. Prosecution lawyer Pradip Ghosh Babu told The Daily Star recently that they wrote to the court so that it orders the investigation officer to submit report as soon as possible. No report has come yet.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Taqi's father Rafiq Rabbi, who had been to countless demonstrations and public events to talk about his grievances, said it is not failure of the investigators but the political influence that has stalled the probe.

"The law enforcement agencies already unearthed who were the killers ... they prepared the charge sheet within a year...When we saw the accused were family members of an influential political leader in Narayanganj, the investigation came to a halt," Rabbi added.

TONU MURDER

Theatre activist Tonu was killed after being raped inside the Cumilla Cantonment on March 20 in 2016. No one has been arrested yet.

"It seems the murder is deliberately being covered up," said Tonu's mother Anwara Begum.

"It has been nearly two years since the investigation officer spoke to me. I have tried to contact him several times over the phone, but he didn't answer," she alleged.

The incident led to outrage across the country. Numerous rallies and

protests were staged demanding punishment of the killers.

Two autopsies at the Cumilla Medical College could not determine the cause of her death though her father Yaar Hossain, who first spotted the body in a bush, saw that the back of his daughter's head was smashed and there were injury marks on her nose.

The police inquest report did not cite any sign of injury. The report said most of her long hair was cut and her mouth and eyes were closed.

Investigators have so far taken 23 dates from the trial court

They claimed to have interrogated more than 200 people, including some army men, but to no avail. No arrest was made either.

On May 18, 2016, the CID revealed that the girl was indeed raped before being murdered. Following DNA tests, they also found spermatozoa of three males on Tonu's clothes.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Criminal Investigation Department ASP Jalal Uddin Ahmed said that they were waiting for the DNA profiling.

Asked why is the delay, the CID official said, "We sent the samples to the forensic DNA lab in Dhaka ... it is the lab which kept us waiting. We can't even question them."

Tonu's mother said the stress of their daughter's murder has taken a toll on Tonu's father, Yaar Hossain. He is not physically well.

"Our hope for getting justice is dimming as time passes," she said.

MITU MURDER

Nearly three and a half years down the line after the murder of former SP Babul Akter's wife Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, police could not yet complete the investigation.

Mitu, the wife of former superintendent of police (SP) Babul Akter, was murdered in broad day light in Chittagong city on June 05, 2016.

Kamrul Islam Musa alias Musa Sikdar, who was an informer of Babul, led the mission to stab and shoot her dead, according to police.

A year ago, police said they were at the final stage of submitting the report, but there is no update yet.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Md Kamruzzaman of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, who is investigating the case, told The Daily Star yesterday that he cannot give any specific date for the probe report submission.

"Investigation is going on," the IO said without going into details.

Betar, All India Radio to air joint programmes

Agreement signed in Delhi for film on Bangabandhu

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Deepening engagement in information and cultural exchange, Bangladesh and India yesterday jointly launched radio programmes to be aired by Bangladesh Betar and All India Radio.

The two countries also inked an agreement on co-production of a feature film on Bangabandhu to be directed by India's renowned Shyam Benegal.

The launch of the radio programmes and the signing of the agreement came at a meeting of visiting Bangladesh Information Minister Hasan Mahmud and his Indian counterpart Prakash Javadekar at the Hotel Shangri La in New Delhi.

Bangladesh's acting high commissioner Rokebul Hoque and Joint Secretary of India's External Affairs Ministry Vikram Doraiswamy were also present in the meeting.

The All India Radio will broadcast Betar programmes for two hours in the morning and two and a half hours in the evening, and people in Kolkata and Agartala can listen to them, said a Bangladesh official statement.

With Tuesday's launch, content from All India Radio's Maitree Bangla service has started airing in Dhaka and reciprocally content from Bangladesh Betar has begun airing on All India Radio in Kolkata and Agartala.

The biopic of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be released during his birth centenary celebrations. The "Mujib Borsho" will be celebrated from March 17 this year to March 17, 2021, to mark his birth centenary.

Hasan Mahmud said relationships between the two neighbouring countries reached new heights under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

He added that the new agreement and cooperation in the year of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu is a "milestone" in bilateral relations.

Javadekar said India looked forward to engaging further with Bangladesh TV (BTV) and Betar in co-production of content and would extend all possible cooperation in setting up the Bangabandhu Film City in Bangladesh.

He said the feature film on Bangabandhu, to be directed by Benegal, would be completed on time and released as part of centenary celebrations of Bangabandhu.

Javadekar added that the Indian government had already released funds for the film and would give more if necessary.

Hasan said more joint production projects should be taken up between Bangladesh and India.

Doariswamy said India and Bangladesh would celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations during the year-long birth centenary celebrations of Bangabandhu, and finishing touches were being given to make a film and a special programme to mark the occasion. A formal announcement on this would be made soon, he added.

The meeting of the two information ministers also decided to go for more joint production of films.

China says Taiwan separatists will 'stink for eternity'

AFP, Beijing

Taiwan separatists are doomed to "stink for eternity", China's top diplomat warned after the island's President Tsai Ing-wen won a landslide re-election victory in a stinging rebuke to Beijing.

Tsai, who has drawn the ire of Beijing for refusing to acknowledge that Taiwan is part of "one China", secured a record-breaking win in Saturday's vote.

But Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi dismissed her victory and warned supporters of Taiwan independence during a week-long tour through Africa.

"Splitting the country is doomed to leave a name that will stink for eternity," Wang said in a statement on Monday.

The "one-China principle" is a "universal consensus" held by the international community, he said, and one that will "not be affected in the slightest by a local election in Taiwan."

Chattogram

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Platoon in the eliminator on Monday. On the other hand, Rajshahi will look to bounce back from their 27-run loss against finalists Khulna.

Heavy fog

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A mild cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions and the regions of Jashore and Kushtia and it may continue at some places.

Yesterday, the country's highest temperature, 26.8 degrees Celsius, was recorded in Teknaf and the lowest, 7.2 degrees Celsius, in Tetulia.