



A flaming tuk tuk lies in the street as Iraqi protesters clash with riot police following a demonstration in Al-Khilani Square in the capital Baghdad, yesterday.

PHOTO:  
AFP

## Indonesia cuts ties with WWF over ethics breach claims

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia said yesterday it has cut ties with the WWF as it accused the global conservation group of overstepping its mandate in the country and unfairly criticising efforts to extinguish out-of-control forest fires last year.

The Southeast Asian nation said it had sent a letter to the World Wildlife Fund's domestic office last week terminating a cooperation agreement that stretched back to 1998.

The agreement involved joint work in the area of wildlife conservation and forestry, it added.

An environment ministry spokesman said the WWF improperly extended its work across the archipelago into areas linked to climate change, waste management and environmental issues.

## 2 girls raped

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connection with the rape of a 14-year-old in Sreepur upazila.

Law enforcers were trying to nab Akhter Hossain, 35, the sole accused in the case, our Gazipur correspondent reported, quoting police.

Akhter took his neighbour's daughter to his house yesterday afternoon and raped her, said Md Asrafullah, sub-inspector of Sreepur Police Station.

Family members and other neighbours rushed to the spot after hearing the girl screaming, the SI said, adding that the perpetrator had left the scene before they arrived.

They found the girl bleeding and rushed her to Sreepur Upazila Health Complex where she is currently receiving treatment.

## 148 return

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after taking off from Libya's Misrata Airport the previous day, said an IOM Bangladesh press release.

An IOM official in Dhaka said the chartered flight also carried five dead bodies of Bangladeshi migrants.

Upon their arrival, IOM staff in Dhaka provided the returnees with food, health screenings, psychosocial support, and cash assistance for onward travel to their homes.

IOM facilitated the return through its Voluntary Humanitarian Return programme.

Eight of the returning Bangladeshis were physically ill and were provided healthcare support before being admitted to hospital for treatment, the release added.

Supported by the European Union Trust Fund, IOM Bangladesh will provide the migrants reintegration assistance to restore their lives in Bangladesh.

IOM Bangladesh Chief of Mission Giorgi Gigauri said, "As hostilities continue in Libya, we spare no effort in protecting and assisting the most vulnerable Bangladeshi migrants who find themselves stranded in the most precarious conditions."

"We also make sure that there is a support system available for them upon their return home to address the immediate humanitarian and long-term reintegration needs."

According to the IOM Bangladesh release, over 1,400 Bangladeshi migrants have returned through the VHR programme since 2015.

## Do more to tackle climate change

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should contribute the highest."

The Prime Minister said the government has formulated the Delta Plan 2100 to save Bangladesh from climate change effects and started implementing it.

She also said the development partners, who are rather giving too many conditions, should come forward to help in those areas where Bangladesh has started moving forward and advance the country properly.

The Prime Minister also urged the development partners to come forward in implementing various long-term plans of the government to ensure sustainable development of the country.

Hasina said the government is implementing various plans, including 5 and 10 years ones as well as other long-term plans since it came to power with Vision 2021 declared in 2008.

As a result, Bangladesh witnessed desired development for which it has been recognised as a developing

country, she said.

The Prime Minister pointed out the 20-year long perspective plan for the next 2021-2041 period and sought cooperation of the development partners to implement it.

She said appropriate planning and political decisions are key factors to achieve desired development of the country.

Hasina highlighted the success stories of her government in advancing the country for the over one decade, and said it is not a magic, rather the time based various plans and political decisions are the key factors in this regard.

Pointing out the tragic 15th August carnage, the Prime Minister said the continuation of democracy was obstructed after the brutal assassination of the Father of the Nation in 1975.

As a result, she said, Bangladesh could not advance towards desired development and prosperity. "No nation can achieve development without political commitment."

The Prime Minister also highlighted

her government's steps taken for the development of country's education, health, communications and other sectors.

Hasina said steps have been taken to strengthen river, road, rail and air communications further, while the rivers of the country are being dredged in phases to increase navigability.

Besides, the government has also been working to ensure all basics urban facilities in villages to improve the living standard of the commoners, she said.

The Prime Minister expressed her firm optimism that Bangladesh would be the most developed and prosperous country in South Asia.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Senior Vice President of JICA Dr Junichi Yamada, World Bank's Vice President for the South Asia Region Hartwig Schafer, Asian Development Bank Vice-President Shixin Chen, United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Bangladesh Mia Seppo, and ERD Secretary Monowar Ahmed also spoke at the programme.

## Trump plan faces dim prospects

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the plan which gives the green light to Netanyahu to annex much of the West Bank -- a path he has already indicated his cabinet will soon take.

"It is meant to help Prime Minister Netanyahu survive his current political and legal struggles as well as to shore up support for President Trump among pro-Israel voters in his re-election campaign," said Michele Dunne, a former State Department specialist on the Middle East now at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"There is no sign whatsoever that the plan will lead to negotiations," she said.

The Trump administration spent three years working on the 80-page plan. The Palestinian leadership has boycotted Trump's efforts, considering him biased after major steps such as recognizing disputed Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Contrary to some expectations, the plan does speak of a Palestinian state and a Palestinian capital around Jerusalem.

But the capital would be in eastern areas such as the adjacent Palestinian village of Abu Dis, with Israel exerting sovereignty throughout the holy city.

The plan, spearheaded by Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner, freezes Israeli settlements for four years in areas eyed for a Palestinian state and would connect the West Bank and Gaza through a corridor with high-speed transportation, one of a slew of economic development promises.

"At a tactical level there are some good ideas, but without the promise of statehood for the Palestinians, they are

meaningless," Cook said.

Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy welcomed what he called a dose of "realism" in the long intractable conflict.

"It is realistic for the Jordan River to be Israel's security barrier. It is realistic for hundreds of thousands of Israelis in West Bank not to be forced to relocate," he said.

"But they took those and other principles and stretched them beyond all recognition. Israeli security control of Jordan Valley became full sovereignty; not uprooting hundreds of thousands of settlers became not uprooting even one settler."

Dunne said the fundamental headline of the plan is that it sets Israel's eastern border all the way alongside Jordan.

"All the rest is details. Whatever the plan gives to Palestinians is provisional, conditional and long-term -- in other words, probably will not happen," she said.

The White House "vision" said that Israel would not implement it until it approves of the rulers of Gaza, the densely populated coastal strip led by the Islamist militant movement Hamas.

"Unless and until Hamas is removed or disarms/renounces violence/recognizes Israel as a nation-state of the Jewish people, the Palestinians get zero from the plan. Hamas has veto power," tweeted Henry Rome, an analyst at the Eurasia Group risk consultancy.

For some observers, the fundamental goal of the Trump plan is to change in the long-term the parameters of a settlement to be more favorable to

Israel.

Israeli annexation in the West Bank would present a fait accompli to the Palestinians in the guise of a peace plan.

"However weak the Palestinian people or leadership is, they always have the ability to say no, as they will do now," Dunne said.

"The real question is where this will push the Palestinian movement. Whether intended or not, this plan seems likely to hasten the day when it changes from a struggle for an independent state to a South Africa-like struggle for rights," she said.

Despite the Palestinian rejection, the Trump plan enjoyed an upbeat reception from several US allies in the Arab world, which have found common cause with Trump and Netanyahu in their opposition to Iran.

The ambassadors of Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates -- none of which recognize Israel -- attended the announcement by Trump and Netanyahu.

Egypt, the first Arab state to make peace with Israel, encouraged the Palestinians to "undertake a careful and thorough examination" of the proposal.

"Palestinians will be tempted to reject plan outright but should resist temptation and agree to direct negotiations where they can advocate as they want," tweeted Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

"Total rejection could undermine what modest hopes for two-state outcome exist and pave way to annexations."

## Nasa to add 'hotel' capsule to ISS

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gradually transferred to its new private segment, allowing for it to continue without interruption when the ISS is retired.

At that point it will be able to detach and serve as a self-contained space station. At that point, Nasa will no longer have to pay for the cost of running the ISS or launching a replacement, Axiom suggested.

In 2018, Axiom commissioned designer Philippe Starck to create interiors for the habitation module of a possible space station. He described the result as a "comfortable

and friendly egg".

"Starck's vision was to create a nest, a comfortable and friendly egg, which would feature materials and colours stemmed from a foetal universe," a press release at the time said.

"The walls are sprinkled with hundreds of nano-Leds with changing colours as a continuation to the view on the universe through the large windows.

"Just as all the shades of lights and colours of day and night, the egg will also live to the mood and biorhythm of its osmotic inhabitant."

### DALAI LAMA SUCCESSION

## US House votes to warn China

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives on Tuesday voted to authorise sanctions against Chinese officials who interfere in the process of determining the Dalai Lama's successor, raising pressure as the Tibetan spiritual leader approaches 85.

Under the legislation, Washington would freeze any US assets and ban travel to the United States of Chinese officials found to be involved in "identifying or installing" a government-approved Dalai Lama.

A total of 392 lawmakers voted for the bill with 22, all of them Republicans plus one conservative independent, opposed.

The act still needs approval from the Senate, where Republican Marco Rubio has promised to lead efforts, before heading to President Donald Trump for his signature.

The law would also prohibit China from opening any further consulates in the United States until Washington can open a mission in Lhasa, the Himalayan territory's tightly restricted capital.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a longtime advocate for Tibet, said that the bill aims to encourage Beijing to resume dialogue with envoys of the Dalai Lama that broke off a decade ago.

"We are supporting the Tibetan people's right to religious freedom and genuine autonomy by formally

establishing a US policy that the Tibetan Buddhist community has the exclusive right to choose its religious leaders, including the 15th Dalai Lama," Pelosi said.

It is the latest human rights bill passed in the US Congress, including an act in support of Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters that angered China.

The 14th Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, has won a global following through his good-humored discourses on peace and compassion, helping fuel interest in his push for greater Tibetan autonomy.

Beijing, while officially atheist, has signaled that it could try to stage-manage his succession -- a ritualistic search in which monks look for clues in a young boy -- with the presumed goal of grooming a pliant Dalai Lama.

While brushing aside any worries about his health, the Dalai Lama has said he is open to breaking tradition by choosing a successor before he dies, including potentially a girl, or even declaring the institution finished with him.

In 1995, Beijing selected its own Panchen Lama -- another influential Tibetan Buddhist position -- and detained a six-year-old identified for the role, whom rights groups described as the world's youngest political prisoner.

## Almost nothing moves

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links with influential groups and served their needs.

Rajuk also turned into a profit-making body, he said.

"In doing so, one of its core mandates, the regulatory role, has been overlooked," he said, adding that such profit-seeking role of Rajuk contradicted its regulatory role.

He suggested that Rajuk be relieved from its regulatory role, and an independent body be formed to monitor Rajuk's activities.

The research was mainly based on interviews of different stakeholders, including service-seekers, related government officials, and experts.

It also relied on secondary data sources such as related laws and research reports.

In 2017-18 fiscal year, Rajuk issued 6,011 land use clearances and approved designs of 6,698 buildings, the TIB report mentioned.

The number was 3,632 and 3,837 respectively in 2014-15 fiscal year.

The report also mentioned that two members of the parliamentary standing committee on the housing and public works ministry are owners of construction firms. It created a "conflict of interest".

There is a scope for making complaints against dishonest Rajuk employees. But it is alleged that proper action against them is not taken, it said.

Within the Rajuk, Tk 2 lakh to 2.5 lakh is needed in bribes for a transfer and up to Tk 1 crore for a promotion, the TIB study found.

There is also an allegation of using political influence in transfers or promotions.

For land use clearance and building approval, bribes are taken through a tripartite "agreement" involving Rajuk officials, brokers, and service-seekers, it added.

The "agreed" amount is set based on various issues, like the size of land, location and use of land, type of service-seeker, and number of land owners, said the report.

Although there is a deadline for issuing land use clearances or building approvals, such timeframe is not always maintained.

In some cases, it even takes two to three years for getting such services,

the report added.

In case of Rajuk's own housing projects, money had been taken illegally at different stages, during plot distribution, plot handover, and handover of flats' keys, from the plot owners, said the report.

The amount at such stages ranged from Tk 5,000 to Tk 1 lakh.

About the Detailed Area Plan (DAP), the TIB report said there were allegations of direct and indirect influence of real estate companies in the reviews of the DAP.

In its 14-point recommendation, TIB called upon the authorities to preserve documents digitally and formulate a detailed guideline for online application process regarding land use clearances and building approvals.

## UNSC debates new violence in Yemen

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council convened Tuesday to discuss the crisis in Yemen, amid growing concern over the deteriorating situation and calls for the parties to re-engage in the political process, diplomats said.

The meeting was held behind closed doors, at Britain's request.

Special envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths, briefing the council via videoconference, "reiterated the importance of stopping the ongoing military escalation before it is too late," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said later.

"He warned that recent developments jeopardize the progress the parties had made on de-escalation and confidence building," the spokesman added.

The UN welcomed the Huthis' release earlier in the day in Sanaa of 64 children captured during military operations.

One diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the council would be issuing a statement urging the belligerents to return to the table and expressing its concern over the situation facing civilians. The UN has called it "the world's worst humanitarian crisis."

## File pleadings

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its military or any of its forces stop any physical and mental harms on Rohingya.

The ICJ also ordered Myanmar not to destroy the evidence of crimes committed against the Rohingyas during a military campaign since August 2017, when some 750,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh.

Some 300,000 Rohingyas fled earlier waves of persecution since the 70s in Rakine State where they have been denied citizenship and basic rights like higher education and healthcare. There are restrictions on their freedom of movement.

A UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission said the crackdown in 2017 by the Myanmar military had genocidal intent, while the UN described it as "a classic example of ethnic cleansing." Myanmar said there were war crimes during the crackdown, but not genocide.

The Gambia, on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, filed a case with the World Court in November last year, accusing Myanmar of genocide. In response, the ICJ held hearings from December

10-12.

Explaining the ICJ statement, Prof Mizanur Rahman, expert on international law, said the case filed by The Gambia in November was meant to seek provisional measures.

"The Gambia will now have to file the Memorial with the evidence supporting the allegations of genocide. Initially, The Gambia filed case based on the UN Fact-Finding reports and evidence collected by other human rights bodies," he told The Daily Star.

Now, The Gambia will have to collect more evidence of genocide. Bangladesh should help the country in this regard, he said.

After Gambia's filing of the pleadings, the ICJ will send its copy to Myanmar which will then file its arguments, Prof Mizanur said.

"The ICJ will then hold hearings and it may take a few years for the court to deliver its judgement," he added.

Nay San Lwin, co-founder of Free Rohingya Coalition, told The Daily Star from Germany yesterday: "There should be strong actions against Myanmar so it takes measures to protect the Rohingyas."