

Don't bring back

FROM PAGE 16

don't recommend [bringing the 172 Bangladeshi students back]. That's my advice," he said at the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (DCAB) Talk at National Press Club yesterday.

He cited examples of how people got infected outside China and would not advise repatriation of the Bangladeshi students now as apart from the risk to Bangladesh, they would also endanger themselves during travel.

On February 1, Bangladesh repatriated 312 Bangladeshis from Wuhan, the epicenter of coronavirus in China, by a Bangladesh Biman flight. They were quarantined for 14 days and released on Sunday.

India, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Oman, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and the UK have imposed restrictions on pilots and crew members of the flights that brought the 312 Bangladeshi students from Wuhan.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said the government was exploring options to bring back Bangladeshis from Hubei province but noted that it depended on China's permission.

Bangladesh has asked China to pave the way for the Bangladeshis to return.

Asked about it, Jiming said permission of the Chinese government is not a problem, but there are some technical difficulties.

Bangladesh Islam refused to transport the students back to Bangladesh from Hubei because they would then have to stop operations in certain countries that have imposed restrictions on the crews who brought the students back from Wuhan.

"We are also trying to offer some other alternatives – commercial flights and so on. We are working on it. We are in touch with Bangladesh embassy in Beijing," Jiming said.

He appreciated Bangladesh for being responsible for its citizens and the way 312 Bangladeshi students were quarantined for 14 days in Dhaka.

Jiming suggested that the Bangladeshis coming from China now should also be quarantined as Chinese people who are coming from China to Bangladesh are isolated for 14 days.

"Put them in quarantine for 14 days. Each day 30 to 50 Bangladeshi people are coming from China to Bangladesh. Though they are checked at the airports, there is a risk that they carry the virus. So, they should be quarantined," he said.

He also suggested that Bangladesh enhances its ability to diagnose the virus.

New Virus Scanners from South Korea to be piloted in Bangladesh Airports

Cabinet secretary Khandakar Anowarul Islam yesterday said all the [three international] airports will be equipped with newly modified "virus scanners" as part of a test run by a South Korean company.

"It is further modified [compared to thermal scanner]. Any virus [in the passengers' body] could be detected. This machine will be installed in line with the existing [thermal] scanners," the secretary said in a briefing yesterday.

"A [South] Korean company has invented this technology; it is more secure. They are providing it to us as a test case. It would be very good if it is a success," he added.

Major search

FROM PAGE 16

science." SETI scientists plan to develop a system that will "piggyback" on the Very Large Array (VLA) telescope based in Mexico and provide data to their technosignature search system.

Dr Beasley added: "As the VLA conducts its usual scientific observations, this new system will allow for an additional and important use for the data we're already collecting."

Life forms, whether intelligent or not, can produce detectable indicators such as large amounts of oxygen, smaller amounts of methane, and a variety of other chemicals, the experts said.

So in addition, scientists are also developing computer models to simulate extraterrestrial environments that can help support future searches for habitable planets and life beyond the solar system.

Victoria Meadows, principal investigator for Nasa's Virtual Planetary Laboratory at the University of Washington, which studies to detect exoplanetary habitability, said: "Upcoming telescopes in space and on the ground will have the capability to observe the atmospheres of Earth-sized planets orbiting nearby cool stars, so it's important to understand how best to recognise signs of habitability and life on these planets.

"These computer models will help us determine whether an observed planet is more or less likely to support life."

Meanwhile, SETI's Breakthrough Listen Initiative, which launched in 2015 to "listen" for signals of alien life, has released nearly two petabytes of data from the most comprehensive survey yet of radio emissions from the plane of the Milky Way galaxy and the region around its central black hole.



Muslim protesters gather as a young Muslim couple (C) gets married during a protest against India's new citizenship law, in Chennai, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Massive help needed without delay

FROM PAGE 16

delivering arms to Pakistan while the Pakistan army was killing people in Bangladesh. How can a civilised government give help to such an army, he asks. The US government, which maintained representations in East Bengal, he adds, must have known about the Pakistan army's brutalities. Bangabandhu notes that the feelings of the Bangladesh people were conveyed to Senator Edward Kennedy when he visited the country.

During the interview, Bangabandhu also expresses his wish that Bangladesh would be admitted immediately to the United Nations.

He envisages that, in the long run, Bangladesh will be better off than Pakistan, which has now lost 75 million people as a market for its industries.

Bangabandhu emphasises, "I need massive help now without delay because the monsoon is coming in three or four months. I have to give

some shelter to my people." While being emphatic about this need, he makes it clear that Bangladesh will accept no help with political or other strings attached.

DRASTIC ACTION AGAINST FAKE MUKTI BAHINI

Bangabandhu warns that drastic action will be taken against anybody indulging in harassing citizens in the name of Mukti Bahini. Earlier, members of the Road Transport Workers' Union brought out a procession from Baitul Mukarram to protest against the hooliganism of the fake Mukti Bahini. The representatives of the Union later called on Bangabandhu.

AL WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING ENDS

The two-day meeting of the Bangladesh Awami League working committee, which concludes today, is learnt to have empowered Bangabandhu to set up an organising committee in place

of the existing working committee. The names of the office-bearers of the proposed committee are expected to be announced by Bangabandhu soon.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS' TREATMENT MUST BE PRIORITY

Priority must be given to the medical necessities of the freedom fighters who are now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College, says Minister for Health Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury. He adds that prompt decisions must be made at all levels of the Health Ministry to fulfill all the requirements towards the treatment of the freedom fighters, and if anyone fails to do that, he or she will be treated as criminals before the eyes of the public because the freedom fighters sacrificed their all for the liberation of Bangladesh and they are the national heroes.

SOURCES: February 19, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

India FM defends CAA in Brussels

FROM PAGE 16

players Japan, Vietnam and Singapore -- the pair have no formal agreement, and India approaches such agreements carefully.

"You don't necessarily need trade deals to do trade," Jaishankar told AFP, stressing that India's economy is driven by domestic demand.

"Trade deals are useful, I mean I'm not at all denying that, but I think they are not necessarily as compelling as sometimes all of us tend to tend to think."

European business wants to win more access to markets in a country with 1.4 billion people, and Jaishankar was clear that Delhi would like closer cooperation with Europe on security and strategic policy.

But some in Europe are worried about what they see as India's populist shift under Modi's right-wing government.

Lawmakers in the European Parliament have drafted a resolution condemning India's Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 as "discriminatory in nature and dangerously divisive."

But the non-binding resolution has yet to be passed and Jaishankar insisted the law had been misunderstood.

The CAA laws eases citizenship rules for religious minorities such as Hindus

and Christians from Muslim-majority Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Protests have erupted in India, and concerns have been raised abroad, led by those who fear the Hindu nationalist government is discriminating against Muslims and putting secularism in danger.

But Jaishankar said Delhi's critics have misunderstood the government's policy and been taken in by the politics of a "very passionate" democratic society.

He compared the CAA rules to immigration and refugee resettlement policies across Europe, pointing out that many EU countries also use national or cultural criteria.

"They created pathways to naturalisation to citizenship," he said, citing among others Germany's rule allowing ethnic Germans from eastern Europe to seek citizenship.

"Now, they did it with a context and they did it with a criteria. I mean, no European country said: 'Anybody anytime, anywhere in the world can come because they feel it's nice to live in Europe.'"

Without mentioning Pakistan by name, he said some of India's neighbours have Islam as a state religion, "and there are persecuted religious minorities who came to India because many of them find people

have the same faith."

He said India's new law would reduce statelessness, and pointed to the fierce debates that Europe has also had around immigrations and the "political changes" these have caused.

Modi's government also raised eyebrows in Brussels when it stripped Indian Kashmir of its partial autonomy and imposed a security crackdown in its only Muslim-majority region.

Indian invited international ambassadors to tour the region last week and Jaishankar was keen to stress that, alongside the political dispute, the government is investing there.

"Kashmir in its social economic outlook was less and less aligned with the rest of India because the rest of India is moving in a very progressive direction," he said.

Jaishankar reeled off a list of projects in Kashmir, including the electrification of 330,000 homes and increasing pension and benefits coverage from 62 to 80 percent of the population.

Seven medical colleges are "in the pipeline" and three frozen hydroelectric projects have been unfrozen.

"It's our case that Jammu and Kashmir is moving in the right direction but we also have been honest enough in saying that, well, there are there are challenges still ahead," he said.

Picked up

FROM PAGE 1

At his office, Sajjadur wrote on his diary the date when the cheques would be encashed. Mehedy was asked to put his signature along with date below. Sajjadur's brother-in-law Masud Hossain alias Shubhro wrote the amount of money.

Bangla daily Prothom Alo published a report on the incident on Monday.

Yesterday, The Daily Star talked to the victim.

On February 12, Mehedy wrote to the inspector general of police and the DMP commissioner regarding the matter.

DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam yesterday told The Daily Star that his department had enquired about the allegations.

"The allegations don't seem to be true. But we will investigate further," he added.

Mehedy is an importer of different products. He lent Tk 50 lakh from DC Sajjadur in 2018. He was supposed to give Tk 2.5 lakh, the profit from his Tk 50-lakh investment, to the officer every month.

Mehedy gave the officer a cheque of Tk 50 lakh and the officer's brother-in-law Shubhro received the profit from him every month.

After Mehedy started incurring losses, he stopped giving the money. When the cheque of Tk 50 lakh was submitted to the bank, it was dishonoured. The DC's brother-in-law Shubhro then filed a case against Mehedy, who is on bail in the case.

Then last month, he was picked up from home and forced to sign the two cheques. When those two cheques were dishonoured, a legal notice was sent to Mehedy by Shubhro and his relative Hadiuzzaman.

OFFICERS WHO PICKED HIM UP

Mehedy was picked up by Raju Ahmed, assistant sub-inspector of Hazaribagh Police Station and Zillur Rahman, sub-inspector of Dhanmondi Police Station.

Raju had worked with the Ramna DC previously when his was posted in Sathkhira and Narayanganj.

Refuting the allegations, ASI Raju told The Daily Star that he was not involved and he didn't go to Mehedy's flat on January 22.

Asked whether he was at Dhanmondi Police Station that night, he said, "I cannot remember."

Most of Mehedy's allegations are false, he claimed.

Contacted, SI Zillur said he fell sick yesterday and was in no position to talk. He told Prothom Alo that he and Raju were together that night.

Zillur said they went to Mehedy's flat after a general diary was lodged by Hadiuzzaman, a relative of the Ramna DC.

Give us clear

FROM PAGE 16

These games depend on luck or chance and not on competence, and therefore are banned by the law, the HC observed.

The HC also ordered law enforcers to immediately seize any kind of equipment used for gambling and take action against those who gamble or organise gambling.

The HC on December 5, 2016, directed the government to immediately stop gambling at all 13 clubs.

The clubs are Dhaka Club Ltd,

He added that they went there to settle the dispute and his higher authorities were aware of it.

Zillur did not say an officer from Hazaribagh Police Station accompanied him.

SOURCE OF THE MONEY?

Mehedy said Sajjadur gave him Tk 50 lakh. "I took money from the DC to invest in my business. I gave him part of the profit."

DC Sajjadur didn't answer his phone despite repeated attempts yesterday.

He was quoted by Prothom Alo as saying that he did not give the money and that it was his brother-in-law who did.

"When a man does not get his money back, he comes to us. My brother-in-law also came," Sajjadur told Prothom Alo.

The DC added that nothing illegal had been done.

"Besides, if you look at the complainant's record, you will know how bad a person he is."

The DC said that Mehedy was taken to his office. But he was not forced to do anything.

Asked about the allegations of harassment and forcing someone in custody to write a cheque, he said, "These allegations are false... I assisted in the settlement of the issue."

Mehedy said he would go to court for justice.

He added that he had given a total of TK 67 lakh in profit shares.

"They are using the Tk 50 lakh cheque to harass me. Now they forcibly took two cheques from me," he claimed.

DC Sajjadur Rahman told Prothom Alo, "He did not pay dividends on the money, nor did he return the original money."

Mehedy said he used to import different products via Five One BD, which is owned by the DC.

"I suffered a huge loss by importing powdered milk... that my capital was gone... They know the whole thing. But I am being harassed."

Experts said it was not legal to pick someone up from home and force them to sign cheques.

Talking to this newspaper, eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik said that it was a civil offense not to return the money. Failing to pay the money is a breach of conduct that should be resolved in a civil court.

"Police have nothing to do with the incident. People go to police in such cases," he said.

Such cases have been increasing in the last 5-7 years. That's why police are abusing their powers, he added.

"What the police officer did in this particular incident, was not right at all. First of all, he has his own involvement and then he has abused his power."

Won't allow road there

FROM PAGE 16

Fatikchari upazila. The Daily Star yesterday obtained a copy of the report.

The RHD had planned to make the road through the protected areas, but the proposal whipped up strong opposition among the divisional forest office (north) under Chattogram forest circle.

The RHD had also not taken clearance from the forest department for making the road.

Following the dispute between the two bodies, the committee -- led by Chandan Kumar Dey, additional secretary of the road transportation and bridge ministry -- was formed to assess the impact of the project.

In its final report, the committee came up with the alternative route considering the sensitivity of the biodiversity and wildlife resources of the forest.

After visiting the wildlife sanctuary and national park on 18 December 2019, the committee held a tripartite meeting where representatives of the RHD emphasised on the necessity of the road, insisting wildlife can be protected through erecting barriers, fencing and making corridors.

In the meeting, RHD representatives argued that the road would reduce the distance travelled by vehicles between Dhaka and Chattogram Hill Tracts by 70 kilometres and bring about socio-economic change for Mirsarai and Fatikchari upazilas.

The forest department said whenever a road is built through forest, logging, poaching and encroachment increase within the forest. It also highlighted the rich biodiversity that would be affected if the proposed road was built.

They said the two forests housed

189 rare species of trees, 119 species of shrubs and 170 species of herbs.

Besides, the forest was home to many reptiles and mammals, including the capped langur, monkeys, red junglefowl, oriental garden lizard, Tokay gecko, monitor lizard, wild boar, wild cat, python and deer.

Chandan Kumar Dey told The Daily Star that they did not want the road through the forest given its rich wildlife and biodiversity.

"Rather we recommended the existing Mirsarai-Narayanhat road connecting Mirsarai and Fatikchari upazila to be expanded by 18 feet so that more traffic can use the road," he said.

Meer Ahemed Tariqul Omar, deputy chief (roads transportation wing) under Physical Infrastructure of Planning Commission, during the meeting had also said that the road would endanger the biodiversity of the forests.

"The existing road can easily be expanded and improved. Besides, a four-foot wide trail can be made for the tourists so that they can relish the beauty of the forest on foot," he said in the meeting.

Earlier, the RHD issued a work order to its selected contractors to build a nine kilometre road through the protected areas after the Executive Committee for National Economic Council approved the project in May 2018.

The construction came to a halt after the forest department objected to it as no clearance was taken from them in line with a circular issued by the cabinet division in 2015. Earlier on November 10, 2018, The Daily Star published a report on the proposed road titled "Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary: Plan to build road without cleara