

Deadly unrest spreads in Tibetan areas of China

Police in China shot dead more protesters in Tibetan-inhabited areas as unrest spread, official media and an advocacy group said yesterday, amid signs of a physical and virtual lockdown on the region.

China's Sichuan province, which has big populations of ethnic Tibetans, many of whom complain of severe repression, has been rocked by violent clashes this week -- some of the worst since huge protests against Chinese rule in 2008.

The United States on Tuesday said it was "seriously concerned" by the situation, calling on Chinese security forces to "exercise restraint" and urging authorities to allow journalists and diplomats into flashpoint areas.

There were indications yesterday that the authorities were restricting movement and communications in the region as unrest spread.

Phone numbers that previously worked were suddenly unavailable and one local

reached by AFP said his town had been closed off by authorities.

The situation has prompted Lobsang Sangay, head of the India-based Tibetan government-in-exile, to call on the international community "to not remain passive" and "to intervene to prevent further bloodshed".

The unrest comes at a time of increasing tensions in Tibetan-inhabited areas, where at least 16 people have set themselves ablaze in less than a year -- including four this month alone -- over a lack of religious freedom.

In the latest bout of violence, police opened fire on a protest in Seda county on Tuesday, killing two protesters and injuring scores of others, according to the exiled Tibetan government and advocacy group Free Tibet.

The official Xinhua news agency, citing local authorities, said police had shot dead only one "rioter" and injured another, adding they had to use lethal force after a violent mob attacked them with knives, gasoline bottles and guns.

Illegal hill cutting

FROM PAGE 20
General Manager of KEPZ Engineer Md Shahjahan, advisor Engineer AAM Zia Hussain and senior officials were present.

Nasir said though they have secured necessary permission from the government as well as the Department of Environment (DoE) to prepare the project's land, a DoE team in a drive on January 22 directed them to stop cutting hills.

On enquiry from The Daily Star, he claimed that they maintained the hill height at 22-metre level after a technical body of the DoE had earlier allowed them to keep the height between 18 and 20 metres from mid sea level (MSL).

"The government permitted us to use 60 percent

land of the area and we've prepared only 40 percent for industries. It is a land of hillocks with an uneven undulation. If anyone wants to set up industry here, the land has to be prepared," he said and added that they have been preparing the land following the government direction.

KEPZ officials said it might be a communication gap among the offices within the DoE.

He said when the KEPZ will be operational it will be a workplace for around 3.50 lakh people which demands a strong and healthy environment. Considering this, about 16 lakh trees have been planted and 17 lakes dug in the project area.

They also urged the government that if decisions like this are imposed again

and again they would stop the development work which will not be a good example for the country's economy.

However, as The Daily Star reached DoE Director Munir Chowdhury over phone yesterday for his comments about the claims, he said his department did not give the KEPZ any permission to cut the hills.

"KEPZ authority has not yet submitted to us their land development plan," he added.

The DoE director spoke of indiscriminate hill cutting without even demarcating the land area of the project and said, "The DoE will take legal action after assessing the extent of environmental damages caused due to such hill cutting."

Govt will be ousted

FROM PAGE 1
"This autocratic government has to go," he said while addressing a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

Sammilito Peshajibi Parishad organised the meeting to mark January 25 as "Democracy Killing Day".

The fourth amendment of the constitution was passed in parliament on January 25 in 1975. According to BNP and its allies, freedom of press was restricted through this amendment.

Alleging that the government has imprisoned democracy, Alamgir said people have to force this government to quit in order to protect the country.

Calling on all to prepare for a mass uprising, he reiterated that his party does not believe in military intervention in politics.

"BNP believes in transfer of power in a democratic way," he said.

The army last Thursday said they have foiled an attempt to topple the government. Later, ruling party leaders alleged that BNP is plotting to oust the government in an undemocratic way.

Mirza Alamgir yesterday said AL talks about democracy but does not practice it.

"They want to gag the people's voice through repression in a fascist way. They're using courts to do this and have politicised the judiciary to establish a one party rule," he added.

Parishad convener Mahmudur Rahman - acting editor of Aman Desh - presided over the meeting. Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Prof Mahbubullah, Prof Khalilur Rahman and Ruhul Amin Gazi spoke, amongst others, at the discussion.

Train torched

FROM PAGE 20
On information, two fire fighting units from Mymensingh fire brigade at about 11:15pm rushed to the spot and put out the blaze.

Following the incident, train communication between Jaria, Bhairab, Kishoreganj, Mohanganj, Chittagong and Mymensingh was suspended for about two hours, said Aminul Islam, Shambhuganj Railway Station master.

According to the passengers, there were no railway guards or policemen in the train.

Quoting signalman Rukun Uddin, Aminul also said railway police and members of the Bangladesh Ansar, a paramilitary organisation, had not been on duty in the train.

Rukun Uddin went to the railway police outpost at Gouripur after the incident but found none.

Asked about the allegation, Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of the

Government Railway Police (GRP), Mymensingh circle, said they were investigating the matter.

Aminul said the train had been stopped at Gouripur outer signal as the signal system there was not functioning due to a power cut.

He said the signal system was connected to a special power unit to ensure 24-hour supply, but could not explain why it had been disconnected prior to the robbery.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Abdus Samad, also in-charge of Gouripur GRP, was closed to the railway headquarters in Chittagong for his negligence in duty, said Khokon Sarker, inspector of the railway police, Mymensingh circle.

Meanwhile, a five-member committee headed by Mujibur Rahman, assistant transportation officer in Dhaka, was formed yesterday to probe the incident and submit a report in three days.

Remove all illegal

FROM PAGE 1
The HC bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim also asked the Secretary to the Ministry of Environment to declare Gulshan Lake as an "environmentally critical area" and to submit a compliance report to it by February 28.

Secretaries to the ministries of land, environment, housing and public works and LGRD, deputy commissioner of Dhaka, managing directors of Dhaka Wasa and Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) will jointly execute the court's directives in association with Gulshan Society, an environmentalist organisation, the court's order said.

The court fixed April 7 for further order on this issue.

On Tuesday, the bench directed the Rajuk authorities to free the lake from grabbing in seven days, following which Chairman

of Rajuk Nurul Huda and Managing Director of BTCL Abu Sayed Khan appeared before the court.

During yesterday's hearing, Huda said the land of Gulshan Lake is under the jurisdiction of BTCL, while Sayed said his office controls only 80 acres of the land.

Earlier on January 17, following a report published in the daily Prothom Alo, the court directed Rajuk's chief and its authorised officer for Gulshan zone to appear before it to explain why they have not protected the land around the lake.

The court then issued a rule asking them to state the steps they have taken to prevent further grabbing of the lake and why they should not be directed to protect the lake.

According to the Bengali daily, a dam of over five bighas was created across Gulshan Lake, dividing it in the middle. Several tin-shed houses have also been erected along the dam, by claiming land ownership.

Half of JS bodies hibernating

FROM PAGE 1
social welfare, fisheries and livestock, youth and sports, commerce, labour and employment, agriculture, establishment, and industries were, among others, unable to abide by the rules of procedure relating to meetings.

The parliamentary bodies on certain ministries performed rather badly. Jute and textile had only 16 meetings, CHT affairs 19, health and family affairs 20 meetings, communications 25 and agriculture ministry had 26 meetings till December 2011.

A number of parliamentary bodies scored better. For example, the public accounts committee held 87 meetings, the public undertakings committee held 55 meetings, the parliamentary body on law ministry held 45 meetings, and the committee on LGRD ministry held 41 meetings.

Speaker Abdul Hamid did not take any steps to compel the committees that did not sit regularly to abide by the rules of procedure that

empower the speaker to take such a step.

And that is not all. Despite being the custodian of the House, the speaker did not take steps to defend the parliamentary committees when their authority was questioned and challenged by some individuals.

In early 2009 the parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings had asked the former Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) chief and the then two commissioners to appear before it as the committee was deliberating on the functions of the anti-graft body.

But all of them refused to appear before the committee and did not send to it any document sought by the parliamentary body.

Even the ACC secretary declined to respond to the parliamentary body's summons. Not only that, they also openly challenged the parliamentary committee's authority to summon them.

At a later stage, a former speaker, deputy speaker and chief whip of the eighth parliament also refused to appear before a parliamentary probe body investigating alleged irregularities in the parliament secretariat in between 2001 and 2008.

In the first year, many committees appeared keen on digging out irregularities and anomalies in the ministries as those incidents had taken place during the term of the BNP-led alliance

government.

But later they either fell almost silent or showed a declining interest in the task of inquiring into the work of the ministries.

Amid limitations, including lack of authority and logistic support, some parliamentary bodies tried to perform their oversight functions and made recommendations to the ministries on improving conditions within their purview.

But the ministries did not pay heed to the recommendations made by the parliamentary committees.

The chiefs of some parliamentary bodies on several occasions alleged that the ministries had declined to provide the required documents on time to the committees, thus impeding their oversight functions.

At a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 15, 2010, the parliamentary bodies' chiefs alleged that many ministries were not sincere about implementing their recommendations to improve governance. Hasina, also leader of the House, assured them of an enquiry into the allegations.

But the following year, her cabinet took a strong stance against empowering the parliamentary bodies through rejecting a proposal for the enactment of a law to this effect.

In line with the recommendations made by the chiefs of the parliamentary

IMF warns of recession

FROM PAGE 20
to be taken urgently."

The IMF called for swift action from the 17-nation euro zone, which it said would likely see its economy contract this year by 0.5 percent.

"The most immediate policy challenge is to restore confidence and put an end to the crisis in the euro area by supporting growth while sustaining adjustment, containing deleveraging, and providing more liquidity and monetary accommodation," it said in its latest World Economic Outlook report.

Blanchard and other top IMF officials emphasized repeatedly that Europe needs to bolster its rescue funds to win market confidence and lower yields on sovereign bonds so that countries like Italy and Spain can borrow at affordable rates.

Talks between private

bond holders and the Greek government have foundered, raising the risk Athens could face a messy default that would touch off a deeper crisis.

IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde warned on Monday that a failure to erect a larger wall against financial contagion could lead to a "1930s moment."

Jose Vinals, director of the IMF's Monetary and Capital Markets Department, said it was important to both increase the size of the Europe's current 500 billion euro rescue fund and its flexibility.

In addition to helping countries it should be able to take direct stakes in troubled banks "to break the link between national sovereign risk and national banks," he said.

The IMF maintained its

1.8 percent growth forecast for the United States in 2012, but said a pick up in spending could be offset if the turmoil in Europe grew.

It also cut its projection for Japan to 1.7 percent from September's 2.3 percent and urged Tokyo to be more ambitious in reducing its debt and implementing a consumer tax.

Economic activity in advanced economies would expand by 1.5 percent on average in 2012 and 2013, too sluggish to make a major dent in high unemployment rates, the Fund said.

Emerging nations are also feeling the pinch.

The IMF projected growth in emerging economies to slow to 5.4 percent this year, down from 6.2 percent last year and well below the 6.1 percent forecast in September, and it

called on them to focus policies on lifting growth.

It cut China's growth figure to 8.2 percent for 2012, down from 9.0 percent. Chinese growth should rebound to 8.8 percent in 2013, it added.

For fast-growing emerging Asia as a whole, the IMF reduced its growth outlook for 2012 to 7.3 percent from 8 percent.

Elsewhere, the IMF said growth in the Middle East and North Africa should accelerate, driven mainly by a recovery in Libya after a nine-month civil war ended with the capture and killing of leader Muammar Gaddafi in October.

Global oil prices are likely to ease slightly in 2012 despite slowing world growth, the IMF said, adding that its baseline oil price projection was broadly

unchanged since September when it forecast \$100 a barrel.

Non-oil commodity prices are set to fall by 14 percent this year, the IMF said, adding that risks to prices are to the downside for most commodities.

In Africa, the effects of the global slowdown is likely to be limited to South Africa, with the region as a whole expanding by around 5.5 percent this year, second fastest after Asia.

The largest impact of the slowdown would likely be felt in central and eastern Europe, which has strong trade links with the eurozone economies, the IMF said. It revised down its estimate for the region to 1.1 percent in 2012 from a previous forecast of 2.7 percent. Growth should edged up to 2.4 percent next year, the IMF added.

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He implemented annual vaccination schedules for communities and other simple steps, like adding vaccinators' phone numbers in the children's immunisation cards, which increased accountability and allowed parents an easy access to health workers.

"Dr Hossain's innovative approach to running an immunisation program led to rapid improvements in coverage rates in key dis-

tricts in Bangladesh," said Bill Gates in his annual letter.

"Tracking pregnant mothers, annual vaccination schedules and increased accountability may seem like small innovations, but they show how looking at old problems in new ways can make a profound difference," the letter read.

Hossain supervised routine programmes in Brahmanbaria and Habiganj districts, where immunisation rates had been low.

His achievements will be recognised with an award of US\$250,000, the majority of which will be donated to a charity of his choice.

Bangladeshi awarded

FROM PAGE 1
medical officer of Bangladesh, won the first ever Gates Vaccine Innovation Award for his remarkable approach to improving immunisation coverage.

Seattle-based The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recognised the Bangladeshi with the award, said a press release of the foundation on Tuesday.

Amjad Hossain's innovative approach to routine immunisation provided thousands of children with access to life-saving vaccines, the release said.

To help vaccinators reach

children, he instituted a new and improved process to facilitate registering, tracking and locating pregnant mothers, the press release added.

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Father does not believe it

FROM PAGE 1
individual is governed by his or her own conscience. Ishraq is now 60. He is doing what he thinks to be good," he observed.

Ishraq took up a rifle in hand during the Liberation War in 1971 and he never retreated from his belief his - power comes from the barrel of a gun, said the father.

Shahriar Kabir, executive president of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, said Ishraq was undoubtedly a freedom fighter. "But it's no big deal for a freedom fighter turning into a criminal. All killers of the Father of the Nation were freedom fighters," he pointed out.

Contacted over phone, Kabir, also a journalist and writer, said he knew Ishraq well. "He used to visit the

Weekly Bichitra office in Dhaka. I always avoided him as his movements were suspicious."

Rakib said Ishraq was termed beyadob (impudent) in Jahanara Imam's Ekattorer Dinguuli for his frequent smoking habit in front of her.

Born in Sorishahati of Naogaon town on December 18, 1951, Ishraq enrolled at Guru Training Institute, now Primary Teachers' Training Institute.

Later, he studied at Naogaon Government Krishna Das (KD) Boys High School for two years before enrolling at Faujdardhat Cadet College in class VII.

Talking of Ishraq's talent being his main enemy, Rakib said his son had stood second in the combined merit list of the HSC examinations held under Comilla Board in

1969.

After taking admission in economics at Dhaka University, he joined the Liberation War and fought under Sector 2.

Following his return from the war, Ishraq completed his master's degree and started supplying electronics appliances to different power plant projects, said his father.

Rakib and Ishraq often used to argue over their political opinions when they met each other. Ishraq had faith in pro-Peking leftist ideology. His father was pro-Moscow.

In his university days after the war, Ishraq got involved with the pro-China Biplobi Chhatra Moitree.

Ishraq was vice-president of the central command council of Bangladesh

Muktijoddha Sangsad, which was founded by the regime of former president Ziaur Rahman.

Ishraq was introduced to president Zia and with him visited Yugoslavia and other countries, said his father, who was elected chairman of Naogaon municipality in 1977.

Ishraq has visited many European countries, especially Germany, on business related trips.

Owing to his relations with former BNP state minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmood Tuku, Ishraq got an opportunity to supply appliances for Ashuganj Power Plant, said the father.

Ishraq is the eldest among three brothers and two sisters. His younger sister Fahmdia Jerin is the wife of a retired bank officer and Tanjila Shirin is a

teacher at a kindergarten school.

His brother Ishtiaq Ahmed is an architect while Itrat Ahmed is an expatriate living in Sweden. Rakib said that Ishtiaq and the two sisters live at Uttara in the capital.

Rakib now stays at his house with wife Umme Kulsum, a retired headmistress of Naogaon Government Girls High School and a handful of aides.

WEAPOLOGISE
In our January 21 issue, we ran a report on Ishraq where inadvertently we gave out some information about him that we later found had not been factual. Ishraq did not study at Rajshahi Cadet College but at Faujdardhat Cadet College. We sincerely apologise for the unintended error.

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