

Obama urges restraint as Sudan fears grow

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama on Monday urged South Sudan to show restraint after heavy border fighting with Sudan as officials voiced alarm over growing hunger, refugees and fears of all-out war.

As officials from Sudan and South Sudan held crisis talks in Ethiopia, Obama spoke by telephone to US-backed South Sudan's President Salva Kiir to voice concern over bloodshed at the border and within Sudan's Southern Kordofan state.

Green abroad

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The Department of Environment yesterday fined him Tk 39 lakh for emptying his factory's untreated waste into the Turag.

The DoE also directed him not to operate the factory until his effluent treatment plant (ETP) functioned fully.

Acting on a tip-off, a DoE team conducted a drive at the factory, Angel Composite and Knitting Industries, at 6:00am and found that the factory's ETP was switched off, which is a violation of law.

The team led by DoE Director Munir Chowdhury instantly collected samples of the water discharged from the factory and found its oxygen level to be zero.

Giasuddin later came to the DoE and claimed his factory had never switched off the ETP.

He also claimed that one of his sons was a member of the Greenpeace International, a global body that campaigns to protect and conserve the environment.

According to DoE, the factory dyes five tonnes of clothes every day and so far has discharged 1,25,000 cubic metres of waste water into the Turag.

Giasuddin could not be reached for his comments despite repeated attempts at his office phone number as well as a local and a Spanish cellphone numbers.

Army

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month and elections to the split DCC -- north and south -- will be held at the end of May, he added.

The EC at yesterday's meeting decided to appoint two of its officials as returning officers for each of the two corporations.

It sits today with senior officials of law enforcement agencies to discuss the law and order situation ahead of the polls.

"We want to take decisions regarding the law and order situation after discussions with all concerned. We will take measures to prevent muscle power from influencing the polls," said the polls chief.

Asked if the commission would take steps to prevent prospective mayoral candidates from engaging in advance electioneering, the CEC said the EC did not have the authority to take action against anyone campaigning in advance.

The government divided the DCC into two in November last year by amending the relevant law and made it mandatory for the polls to be held by the end of February this year. The previous EC, whose tenure expired early last month, had refused to do so citing time constraints.

Against this backdrop, the government amended the law again on February 28 and extended the time limit for holding the polls by another 90 days, which will expire on May 29.

Rab's claims

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activities he should have been tried in a court," she said.

Lokman Molla, brother of Nahid Molla - another victim - said his brother was a class four employee of Narsingdi municipality.

"My brother completed his SSC exams only few days ago. He has been implicated in this incident through a conspiracy," Lokman said.

Jharna Begum, elder sister of victim Masud Afrad, also claimed that her brother was innocent. She said her brother has been a truck driver by profession for the past ten years.

"At the time of the incident, he was loading his truck with earth in the area when Rab personnel gunned him down. He was not a mugger."

Rab officials said yesterday the shooting took place in a microbus after snatching Tk 40,000 from a businessman at Bridge No 5 on Narsingdi-Madanganj road, around 50km northeast of the capital.

Major Golam Sarwar, Company Commander of Rab-11, in a press briefing said his team led by Lt Col Abu Hena Md Mustafa approached the area after a tip-off from the mugged businessman. He said the alleged muggers opened fire on the Rab team prompting them to retaliate with gun shots.

The identity of the businessman was not released to the press on safety grounds.

Meanwhile police handed over the victims' bodies to their families yesterday after autopsy.

The six men were identified as Nahid, 18, son of Hossain Mollah of Bilashdi; Arif, 18, son of Abul Hasim Mia of Bholanagar; Masum Afrad, 30, son of Gias Uddin Afrad and a truck driver; Mosharraf driver, 35, son of Abdul Awal of Kurerpar village; Mobarak Hossain, 30, son of Kashem Ali and a signboard maker, and Jalal, 30, son of Akkas Ali from Noakanda upazila.

Nahid and Arif had appeared in the just concluded SSC examination.

Five other men, including two Rab personnel, were injured in the gunfight. They were taken to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital and later shifted to the 100-bed District Hospital.

Jamal Uddin, DAD of Rab-11, filed three separate cases with Narsingdi Sadar police station in this connection.

ASK CONCERNED
Human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) expressed deep concern yesterday over the killing of seven people in separate gunfights at different place of the country with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

ASK in a press release said six people were killed in a gunfight with Rab at about 2:45pm in Narsingdi while another person was killed under similar circumstances in city's Mirpur area.

ASK opined that every person has the right to get justice under our existing judiciary system. They called for judicial investigation of the shootings and taking of necessary steps to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

Clashes in west Libya kill four

AFP, Tripoli

Heavy fighting between gunmen in western Libya yesterday killed four people and left several more wounded, a local official told AFP.

"At least four people were killed today but that number could rise," said Othman Ben Sassi, a member of the ruling National Transitional Council, and a native of Zwarah, 100 kilometres (60 miles) west of Tripoli, near Tunisia.

He added that the exact number of casualties remained unknown.

"The situation is critical in Zwarah. It is being hit by rockets fired from the (nearby) towns of Regdalin and Jamil," he said.

Tensions have simmered in and around Zwarah since the collapse of slain leader Moammar Kadhafi's regime last October. Residents there were accused of supporting the dictator during the 2011 conflict.

Libyan Interior Minister Fawzi Abdelali told journalists on Tuesday that efforts were underway to put an end to the fighting.

"The interior ministry has sent a force of 200 men towards the region," he said, urging both sides to act with restraint.

These clashes come soon after tribal fighting in the southern city of Sabha, which left more than 147 dead and 395 wounded in a week, before the government imposed a ceasefire.

The interim government has struggled to impose its authority on dozens of brigades comprising of former rebels who fought against Kadhafi's forces and who now have become a law unto themselves.

Tribesmen, militias and residents of several regions have shown little hesitation in using force to settle disputes.

Investigators

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Masudur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of DMP (Media and Community Service), earlier in the afternoon said the Saudi team would assist the DB officials investigating the murder of Khalaf Al Ali.

The 45-year-old embassy official was shot dead some 30 yards off his house in the city's Gulshan early on March 6. Investigators are yet to announce any progress in the murder probe or arrest anybody.

"The team will hold meetings with officials of home and foreign ministries, police and intelligence agencies about the investigation," Masud Rahman said. "The Saudi team will stay here for three to four days."

Yesterday, the Arab News quoted Alauddin Alaskari, deputy foreign minister for protocol affairs of the Saudi Arabia, as saying the objective of the team was to identify the culprits and bring them to book.

The English-language daily also reported without any attribution that there was apprehension of beginning of a real crisis centring two million Bangladeshi workers in the kingdom, if the Bangladesh government fails to identify the culprits within the shortest span of time.

Even after a month of the murder of Khalaf Al-Ali, the government miserably failed to make any headway in the case, the Saudi newspaper wrote.

"The police in that country has nothing to offer...who were the killers? What was the motive behind the killing? The police has simply no answers," the Arab News report quoted a Saudi official as saying.

Police in Bangladesh should intensify efforts to capture the men behind the heinous crime, said the official who was not named.

The Saudi ambassador to Dhaka, Abdullah Al Bussaairy, who was in Riyadh recently, also expressed his deep sorrow over the murder of his staffer and voiced concerns over the investigation, it reported.

Dhaka spells success

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section, participants had to spell words such as "Ostrobogulous" and "Grandiloquence". However, spellers were so impressive that the organisers, champs21.com, were forced to choose 90 participants for the oral section instead of the planned 70.

After a gruelling first round, 30 students remained in the second round of the oral section having to spell words such as "Poinsettia" and "Sepulchral". The words continued to get more difficult as only 13 spellers qualified for the TV round. This led to a tiebreaker among the remaining 17 spellers for the last five spots in the TV round.

Finally after two days, 36 winners from Dhaka will join the other 37 contestants from

the other divisions in the TV round. That makes a total of 73 spellers participating in the TV round, which starts from April 5.

In a span of over two months, the competition has come to its peak with 73 best spellers from the nearly one lakh students from all over the country that participated in the Internet round.

Majed Abdur Rahman, a class IX physics teacher of Scholastica School, had interesting opinions about the divisional round competition.

"It is a very good initiative by The Daily Star but I think there should be more consistency with the words. Some spellers got really tough words while others got relatively easy ones in the same round," he said.

"But in the end I think there are some very good spellers who made it through to the TV round and that is the main goal here," he added.

Majed also welcomed the idea of a TV crew present at all times during the competition and echoed Champs21.com CEO Russell T. Ahmed's sentiment that "It will help build some leadership qualities in the participants along with spelling. If you're a good speller but end up getting stage fright and make a silly mistake, then you've choked."

After all is said and done, the viewers will not be disappointed with the quality of the spellers and they make for a fascinating show that will be aired on Channel I every Wednesday and Thursday at 7:50pm.

Ex-DGFI chief Rumi

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other top officials met Pares Barua, leader of the United Liberation Front of Asom, an Indian separatist group, before the 2004 arms smuggling, defence lawyers said.

Rumi rejected the allegation before the Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1.

Kamrul Islam Sajjad and Mohammad Ahasan were arguing on behalf of the then director of DGFI Counter Intelligence Bureau Big Gen Rezzakul Haider Chowdhury, an accused in the cases.

A huge consignment of arms and ammunition was seized on April 2, 2004 at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Ltd. Following the incident, two cases were filed - one for smuggling firearms and the other under the arms

act. Ex-DGFI director general Rumi is a prosecution witness in both the cases.

The defence asked Rumi whether he had implicated their client in the cases because he had a grudge against Rezzakul.

They added that once in Rumi's absence Rezzakul submitted a probe report to the higher authority on a graft allegation against former army chiefs Gen Hasan Mashud and Gen Moin U Ahmed, one of Rumi's batch mates.

Rumi told the court that his statements had nothing to do with personal feelings.

As the sixth prosecution witness, he submitted his deposition on March 15.

According to the deposition, former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and some top intelligence

officials including Rezzakul might have links to the arms smuggling.

Babar and 10 others detained in the cases were produced before the court during yesterday's proceedings. Judge SM Mojibur Rahman around 5:00pm adjourned the court until this morning.

MLM

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people lower down in the organisation.

Destiny Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd, a unit of Destiny Ltd, hit the media spotlight recently for running what Bangladesh Bank said was illegal banking.

The Daily Star has put together several Web reports to make sense of how MLM works.

Azad escapes arrest

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investigation in connection with crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

The three-judge tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir issued the warrant to ensure a "proper and effective investigation" into Azad's alleged crimes in 1971. The tribunal went through the progress report on the investigation against him before issuing the arrest warrant.

The prosecution on March 25 sought an arrest warrant against Azad.

The court in the order yesterday said the investigation officer had collected significant evidence to implicate the accused, who allegedly took part in crimes against humanity.

"It also appeared that the investigation would be concluded within two or three months. It was also noted that a witness had filed a general diary with a police station in connection with receiving threats as he had given a statement to the IO (investigation officer) of the case," the order stated.

The tribunal in its order said there was "reasonable apprehension" that the ongoing investigation against Azad was likely to be obstructed if he remained at large. "Therefore, the petition of the prosecution seeking the arrest of the accused is allowed."

The court directed the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner to arrest Azad and produce him before the court within 24 hours of his arrest. It directed the prosecution to provide the accused with a copy of the allegations brought against him.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Sanaul Huq, senior member of the investigation agency probing the war crimes, said the investigation into Azad's activities was now in its final stage and could be completed within two or three months.

"After his arrest [Azad], we will seek the tribunal's permission to place him at a safe house to interrogate him, and we will crosscheck the information that has already been collected," said Sanaul Huq.

Azad, who used to host religious shows on TV, was an Islamic Chhatra Sangha leader in 1971. The Sangha was the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami at the time. It was renamed Islami

Chhatra Shibir in 1977.

When arrested, Azad will be the ninth person to be taken into custody in connection with crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971. Six Jamaat-e-Islami leaders, including its former and incumbent chief and two BNP leaders, are facing similar charges at another tribunal.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AZAD

The prosecution claimed that the investigation revealed Azad, locally known as "Bachchu Razakar", was personally involved in the killings of several people as well as looting, rape, arson and had helped the Pakistani army kill numerous people in Faridpur district during the Liberation War.

Several witnesses had received threats from associates of Azad, an expelled member of the Jamaat-e-Islami, the prosecution claimed.

Quoting the progress report of the investigation agency, prosecution sources said even before the Pakistani government formally formed the Razakar [collaborator] force, Abul Kalam Azad formed a "Swechhasebi Razakar Bahini" (volunteering collaboration force), which included himself, his father-in-law and brother-in-law and some locals of Faridpur, to assist the Pakistani occupation forces against the pro-liberation forces in 1971.

Days after the Pakistani forces occupied Faridpur on April 21, 1971, Azad along with his associates took combat training from the Pakistani forces and received firearms.

He then set up a Razakar training camp at the house of Hira Lal Mukter by occupying the house. He also set up a torture camp at Faridpur's Chawkbazar area, where unarmed civilians were the victims.

On May 10, 1971, Azad, his associates and Pakistani soldiers killed six people in Faridpur's Sarupdia Baradia village, including one Gopal Biswas. They looted Hashamdia village, killed nine residents and set fire to 50 houses.

On the same day, they looted some 80 shops in Mayendia Bazar where the collaborators hit one Haripada Saha and Putia

with bricks. Later, Azad shot them dead.

Later that month, Azad shot Madhab Biswas dead after he and his associates had abducted him from Purua Nampara village. Azad also killed another person named Gyanendra on the same day.

On May 27, Azad and his cohorts abducted Sudhangshu Mohon Roy and his son Manimoy Roy from their house at Kalaran village of Boalmari. Azad later killed Sudhangshu. Azad also abducted and killed Jiban Chakrabarti of Hiran Nagar village of Boalmari on May 1971, said the prosecution.

In June 1971, Azad along with some 25 collaborators attacked Fulbaria village of Nagarkanda and looted some 60 houses. Chitta Ranjan Das was detained from the village before Azad shot him dead. He shot Badal Devnath dead the same day and dumped both the bodies into a river.

Azad and his associates also raped two women of Natibadia village of Boalmari later that month, according to the investigation agency.

According to the prosecution, Azad was fluent in Urdu and managed to maintain a good relationship with the Pakistani occupation forces.

Moscow market fire kills 15 migrant workers

AFP, Moscow

Fifteen people died yesterday when a nighttime fire tore through a two-storey Moscow market warehouse in which migrant workers from a former soviet republic were camping out.

Unconfirmed news reports said the migrants were from the impoverished central Asian nation of Tajikistan. Numerous Moscow markets employ cheap labourers from the region without giving them proper housing or pay.

The blaze broke out early yesterday at the market on the southern outskirts of the city called Kachalovsky. Officials said it took two hours to put out.

3 siblings die in fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Three siblings died in a house fire in Narsingdi town Monday night.

Deceased Bithi, 5, Jannat, 3, and seven-month-old Lamia were the daughters of Abdus Sattar of Purba Basail area in the town.

The family has lost all their children.

Md Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Narsingdi Sadar Police Station, said the children were asleep and locked from outside when the fire broke around 11:30pm. Their mother Nurjahan Begum at that time was at her husband's grocery, about 150 feet from the house, to bring him his dinner, the OC added.

According to police and family sources, the fire had originated from a burning mosquito coil.

On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the flame.

Questions

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said, explaining why the insurance company's name had been posted on the company's website as a sister concern.

Over the past few days, various newspapers have published reports on numerous irregularities of Destiny-2000 following a Bangladesh Bank inquiry that found proof of illegal banking by Destiny Multipurpose Co-operative Society, a Destiny concern.

Illegal banking by the co-operative is creating disorder in the country's financial sector, said the BB probe report, which was sent to the finance ministry recently.

Rafiqul Amin said Destiny's 37 concerns included two multilevel marketing companies.

Of them, 20 have been set up in less than a year and 15 others in a little more than a year. The group started its business with Destiny-2000 Ltd, an MLM company, in 2000.

A number of its sister concerns, like Boishakhi Television, Destiny Hitachi Electric Industries and Configure Housing, were taken over from other companies.

Such a miracle -- becoming a mother company of 37 concerns from an MLM company -- happened despite the company's incurring losses till 2006.

"We were struggling till 2006, but we paid 700 percent dividend in 2007. It was possible when we started manufacturing our own products instead of sourcing those from others," said Amin, explaining how the magic worked out.

"The middlemen ate up huge amounts of money for supplying goods to us till 2006," he added.

Talking to this correspondent over the phone, he claimed himself to be an "honest citizen" and said he had obtained a PhD on MLM from the US.

He said 12 members, including himself, had started Destiny-2000, with each member putting in Tk 12 lakh.

Former army chief Harun-Ar-Rashid, who joined the company in 2007, paid nearly Tk 1 crore for buying shares of the company to become a director, Amin said.

The former army chief had to pay such a big amount as the share price of the company rose to Tk 700 from an initial Tk 100 each, he added.

Meanwhile, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday asked banks to send account and other transaction information on Destiny and its sister concerns to it within seven days.

The tax regulator also sought account details of all directors of Destiny-2000 Ltd and nine of its sister concerns, said an NBR official.

"We've asked banks to furnish information on all types of accounts of these firms and their directors to see if the company has evaded tax or flouted any rules," he said, requesting anonymity.

The move comes two days after the NBR called for the tax files of Destiny and its sister concerns from the field offices to be made available to it in order to look into possible tax dodging by the company.