

Bangladesh greets Sri Lanka for eradicating terrorism

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has congratulated the Sri Lankan leadership for eradicating the threat of terrorism and undertaking infrastructural projects for economic development in Sri Lanka.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque, who is on a three-day official visit to Colombo, told this when he called on Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the President's Office at Temple Trees in Colombo on Tuesday.

Shahidul reiterated Bangladesh's satisfaction at the progress made in resettlement, rehabilitation and reconciliation since the return of peace in the country, said a Foreign Ministry press release.

He thanked the president for his visionary leadership towards inclusive development and wished Sri Lanka's success in its efforts towards durable peace and reconciliation.

The Bangladesh foreign secretary briefed the president on the decisions taken at the Foreign Office Consultation Tuesday where it was decided to launch two Joint Working Groups on trade and shipping to realise the potentials for enhanced trade and connectivity between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the foreign secretary also paid a courtesy call on External Affairs Minister GL Peiris yesterday.

Road crashes kill two, injure five

METRO DESK

Two people were killed and five others injured in separate road accidents in the country on Tuesday and yesterday.

A Chuadanga correspondent reports, a youth was killed and his five family members were injured when a train hit the Karimon carrying them at Bondobil Rail Gate in Bondobil of Alamdanga upazila on Tuesday.

The deceased is Ripan, 25, of the upazila. The injured were rushed to Alamdanga health complex.

A Gopalganj correspondent adds, Chittaranjon Pandhe, 65, of Kotalipara upazila, died as a Nasimon hit him from behind in Parkhona of the upazila yesterday.



People donate blood for the Savar building collapse victims at a temporary collection centre set up by Gonojagoron Mancha in the capital's Shahbagh yesterday. *Inset*, other prospective donors wait patiently in a queue for their turn. PHOTO: COURTESY

People donate blood for Savar victims

GAZI TOWHID AHMED

People from all sections of society yesterday flocked to the blood donation centres around the capital and donated blood for the victims at Savar where a nine-story building collapsed around 8:45am, killing at least 139 persons and trapping nearly 1,600 in the ruins.

Social media users played a significant role in circulating the appeal for blood. Most of the Facebook users, including expatriate Bangladeshis, frequently updated their status, calling on people to donate blood for the survivors being treated in different hospitals.

Around 1,000 victims were rescued from under the rubble yesterday.

Blood was collected at Pangu Hospital, Dhaka University (TSC), Buet, Shahbagh Gonojagoron Mancha, Jahangirnagar University, and Enam Medical College and Hospital in Savar.

The Gonojagoron Mancha collected more than 1,000 bags of blood, and stopped collecting more after they were told that it was enough for the day, Maruf Rasul, a key organiser of the Manhca, told The Daily Star.

It became possible for them thanks to Facebook as the news for blood donation for victims was spread quickly among the online community, said Dr Uzzal, another organiser of the Gonojagoron Mancha.

Azharul Islam, a student of Dhaka University, made an appeal on his Facebook page. He said, "Social media is the best medium to spread my appeal for 500 bags of blood."

Zamil Hossain, a businessman and blood donor at the Gonojagoron Mancha, said, "I got the contact numbers on Facebook."

Mohammad Imran Rahman (Sonnet), resident diploma in orthopaedic at Pangu Hospital, whose phone number was shared on Facebook, said, "We got a huge response within a short span of time from the people thanks to social media."

"I have collected 50 bags of blood within two and a half hours," he said.

Meanwhile, the BNP and its front organisations opened a blood collection camp in front of the Nayapaltan office and donated 300 bags of blood for the Savar victims.

Bangladesh Chhatra League also sent 300 bags of blood to Enam Medical College and Hospital where hundreds of victims are being treated.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Rule of law must for adaptation

7th int'l confce on community-based adaptation told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rule of law must be brought in climate change adaptation and in compensation payment processes at international, national and local levels to empower and protect rights of every person vulnerable to climate change, said speakers at a conference session yesterday.

The compensation, allocated for adaptation, climate financing and capacity building, must be provided on equity basis and not merely targeting climate change mitigation, they said.

The session, "Human rights, equity and the legal aspects of climate change adaptation", was held on the last day of a four-day "Seventh International Conference on Community-based Adaptation (CBA)".

International Institute for Environment and Development and Bangladesh Centre

for Advanced Studies (BCAS) jointly organised the conference in the capital's Ruposhi Bangla hotel.

International human rights advocate and former Irish president Mary Robinson moderated the session.

The conference hosted a few parallel sessions centring population and climate change, ecosystem-based approach to adaptation and mainstreaming CBA into the local governments.

"The ecosystem-based approach is where the community protects the local ecosystem and gets paid for it," said BCAS Executive Director Atiq Rahman.

He stressed increasing the local governments' capacity to provide communities with adaptation knowledge as required.

The conference brought scientists, policymakers and practitioners to share knowledge on how Bangladesh faces extreme climatic events like cyclones.

Khapra Ward martyrs remembered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Leftist parties observed the historic Khapra Ward Day yesterday, marking the shooting dead of seven communist political prisoners inside Rajshahi Central Jail in 1950.

The Workers' Party of Bangladesh and the Communist Party of Bangladesh placed wreaths at the Shaheed Minar erected inside the prison in their memories, held a minute of silence, and vowed to build a non-communal, repression-free, and democratic Bangladesh.

The then British jailer had ordered prison officials to open fire on anti-British leftist leaders and activists fasting in protest of torture and substandard food. The shooting left seven protesters dead and 31 wounded.

On the occasion, a discussion was held at the capital's Mukti Bhaban where speakers said the Khapra incident was the first jail killing incident in the sub-continent.

Join April 27 rally against Hefajat's 'conspiracy'

Labour leaders urge garment workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour leaders yesterday urged garment workers to join a grand rally in the capital's Shapla Chattar on April 27 at 2:00pm to protest Hefajat-e Islam's "conspiracy to keep women shackled at home".

They also demanded an end to political instability, violence and frequent hartals which were causing irreparable damage to the garment industry and putting garment workers at risk of losing their jobs.

The leaders were addressing a press conference organised by "Garments Sramik Rokkha Andolon" in the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

The andolon Convener ZM Kamrul Alam

said Hefajat's repulsive attitude towards women was apparent from their demands regarding elimination of the women development and education policies, offensive comments on women and attacks on women journalists.

"We believe these are attacks on our constitution, basic human rights and lives and livelihoods," he argued.

Although women garment workers work long hours and are underpaid, the garment sector created jobs for them and helped empower them, he said.

The leaders said garment workers, along with the rest of the country, were also united in the demand for trial of war criminals and to stop communal violence and terrorism.

10-TRUCK ARMS HAUL CASES Babar shouts in court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar and pro-Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP lawyers yesterday clamoured for adjournment of the proceedings in the sensational 10-truck arms haul cases in absence of a section of defence lawyers amid hartal.

Shouts broke out in Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 shortly after it opened around 2:30pm and resumed recording of the deposition of the last and fifth investigation officer (IO), Additional Superintendent of Police Moniruzzaman Chowdhury.

Babar prayed to the judge not to record the IO's deposition as his lawyer could not arrive in Chittagong from Dhaka due to the countrywide hartal. The pro-Jamaat and BNP defence lawyers joined him and demanded adjournment of the proceedings for the day.

But, Public Prosecutor Advocate Kamal Uddin Ahmmed said there were no legal restrictions on recording the prosecution witness's statement in absence of defence lawyers.

After the IO started giving his statement, Babar termed the allegations against him "false" and claimed that he was accused in the arms haul cases, as he refused to give "false deposition", said sources present in the courtroom.

At one stage, Babar pointed at the prosecution and said, "Everything has an end and this is not the last government." He also shouted, "Wrath of Allah (gazab) will befall (you)".

After the 25-minute chaos came to an end, the IO could give his statement for about 20 minutes before the court was adjourned at 3:15pm.

Moniruzzaman said upon his appointment as IO, he first interrogated two detained accused, Hafizur Rahman and Deen Mohammad, in remand twice and both of them told him about the involvement of some NSI and DGFI personnel in the arms smuggling.

In his statement, Hafizur confessed to have connections with Indian separatist ULFA military wing commander Poresh Barua, a fugitive accused in the arms haul cases, said the IO, adding that Hafizur met Poresh several times and took financial support from him.

On information from some witnesses, he also arrested and interrogated NSI Field Officer Akbar Hossain who confessed to his involvement in the smuggling, the IO added.

Huge caches of smuggled arms and ammunition were seized at the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd jetty on April 2, 2004. An arms case and a smuggling case were filed with Karnaphuli Police Station following the incident.

The court will resume recording of the rest of Moniruzzaman's deposition from May 5, when the court will resume and continue proceedings for the next two days.

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