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Give more space to civil society

US tells foreign ministry delegates; disapproves political violence

DIPLOMATIC CORESSPONDENT

Expressing concern, the United States has called upon the Bangladesh government to ensure more space and an environment for civil society groups to help them operate freely.

Stifling of dissent undermines Bangladesh's vibrant civil society and long-term stability, said US Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Desai Biswal, adding that it would be essential to maintain an environment and provide space where civil society can positively spark social change.

Biswal stated this early yesterday (BST) during a meeting in Washington DC with a Bangladesh delegation led by Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque.

According to meeting sources, the assistant secretary asserted that violence had no space in a democratic political process and that the US was disturbed by the use of violence, inflammatory rhetoric and intimidation and violence against minority communities by political parties.

The US was also concerned by recent reports of continuing extra judicial killings and disappearances allegedly caused by security forces, the sources added.

However, Biswal said although the January 5 election in Bangladesh had a low turnout, the US would continue to remain engaged with the government of Bangladesh in working towards a stable, prosperous and democratic country, according to a foreign ministry press release.

On the February 11 hearing at the US Senate, Biswal said she wanted to portray US-Bangladesh relations before the senate committee in a balanced manner within a broader context, said the press release.



The floor has been mopped and motifs are being painted at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday as preparations are on for the International Mother Language Day tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

Mridul was asked why he filed case Ctg goldsmith tells of his torture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Recently rescued goldsmith of Chittagong Mridul Kumar Chowdhury has said he was brutally beaten up and given electric shock by his kidnappers while being held hostage.

Mridul, who was rescued from Comilla early Monday six days after being picked up by a group of men identifying themselves as detective police and Rab personnel from in front of his residence at Hazari Lane in Chittagong, made these comments to journalists after recording a statement before a Chittagong magistrate yesterday.

Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate

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RAILWAY RECRUITMENT GRAFT Mridha, 2 other officials indicted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Chittagong court yesterday framed charges against three officials of Bangladesh Railway, including its east zone's suspended general manager Yusuf Ali Mridha, in a case linked with irregularities in recruitment.

Mridha and the two others -- east zone's suspended senior welfare officer Golam Kibria and suspended additional chief mechanical engineer Hafizur Rahman - had allegedly recruited ineligible candidates to assistant chemist posts for money. The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the corruption case with Kotwali Police Station in September 2012.

Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge SM Mojibur Rahman fixed March 3 for the trial to begin.

The court also issued arrest warrants for the accused as they were not present during the hearing on charge framing, public prosecutor Mahmudul Huq Mahmud said.



SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

Criminal killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

An alleged criminal was killed in a "shootout" between police and his cohorts in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur early yesterday.

The dead, Kiron Bepari, 27, was an accused in several cases including murder, said AKM Masud Khan, officer-in-charge of Shibchar Police Station.

Police started a drive in the area, following information that Kiron and his gang sent a letter and a piece of shroud to Bahalul Sardar of Pachchar village

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

DEADLY PROTESTS 26 killed in Kiev

REUTERS, Kiev

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich accused pro-European opposition leaders yesterday of trying to seize power by force after at least 26 people died in the worst violence since the former Soviet republic gained independence.

After a night of petrol bombs and gunfire on Independence Square, black smoke billowed from a burned out trade union building that protest organisers had used as a headquarters.

Security forces occupied about a third of the square - the part which lies closes to government offices and parliament - with protesters pouring in to reinforce their defences on the remainder of a plaza they have dubbed "Euro-Maidan".

In a statement posted online in the early hours, Yanukovich said he had refrained from using force since unrest began but was being pressed by "advisers" to take a harder line.

"Without any mandate from the people, illegally and in breach of the constitution of Ukraine, these politicians - if I may use that term - have resorted to pogroms, arson and murder to try to seize power," the president said.

The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you agree with BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir that the upcoming upazila election will not be fair under the current government?

Yes

69%

No

31%

TOTAL VOTES: 473

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's allegation that the government is resorting to lies over the "so-called" al-Qaeda message?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT

www.thedailystar.net

PRAYER TIMING

February 20

Fajr

5:20

5:55

Zahr

12:45

1:15

Asr

4:30

4:45

Maghrib

6:03

6:07

Esha

7:30

8:00



China's real life Atlantis

MAIL ONLINE

A maze of white temples, memorial arches, paved roads, and houses... hidden 130 feet underwater: this is China's real-life Atlantis.

The so-called Lion City, tucked in a lake between the Five Lion Mountain, was once Shi Cheng -- the centre of politics and economics in the eastern province of Zhejiang.

But in 1959, the Chinese government decided a new hydroelectric power station was required -- so built a man-made lake.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Tamil Nadu to free Rajiv Gandhi killers

BBC ONLINE

The government in India's Tamil Nadu state has decided to free seven people convicted of plotting the assassination of former PM Rajiv Gandhi.

The six men and a woman were members of the Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebel group.

The move came a day after the Supreme Court commuted the death sentences of three of the convicts, citing delays in deciding their mercy pleas.

Gandhi's murder in May 1991 was seen as retaliation for the sending of Indian peacekeepers to Sri Lanka in 1987.

The decision to free the prisoners was taken yesterday morning at a cabinet meeting chaired by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha.

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