

As Ukraine inks EU deal, Moscow is not giving up

AFP, Moscow

The EU's move to sign accords with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia is a major setback for Russian President Vladimir Putin, but the tug-of-war over Moscow's ex-Soviet sphere of influence is far from over, say analysts.

The association agreements have been met with barely concealed hostility in Russia, which will use every opportunity to undermine the three countries' EU integration while ensuring its own trade ties with Europe remain unaffected, the analysts told AFP.

"Russia has many options to use the carrot and stick with these countries," said Maria Lipman of Carnegie Moscow Centre.

Moscow argues the agreements

threaten its domestic producers by allowing European goods to be re-exported from Ukraine through their less stringent customs channels.

The Kremlin wasted no time on Friday in warning that it could take retaliatory trade steps.

"It's possible that we have to take a series of measures to protect our economy," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in televised remarks.

Vasily Nebenzya, a deputy foreign minister, said that Russia may hike its customs tariffs for Ukraine.

That would be a major blow for Ukraine, which sends around a quarter of its exports to Russia, including from key industries based in the already turbulent east of the country.

The EU deal has been at the heart of Ukraine's crisis since last year, when former president Viktor Yanukovich backed out of it at the last minute and flew to Russia to firm up ties with the Kremlin instead.

Moscow hailed the decision, showing Ukraine with economic perks and welcoming it to join a customs union that would eventually develop into a comprehensive Eurasian Union of former Soviet republics designed to rival the European bloc.

But these steps triggered a revolution in Ukraine and the new government in Kiev has shattered Putin's union hopes, even if the crisis gave him the opportunity to seize control of the Crimean peninsula and ride a surge in popularity at home.

Kidnapped girl rescued in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Pirojpur police rescued a young woman, a master's student of Barisal Govt Brojo Mohan (BM) College, from her former husband's house last night, hours after she had been abducted in Barisal city.

Family sources said the victim, Ismat Jahon Swapna, a student of the accounting department in BM college, was going to her uncle's house in the city after appearing at her master's examination at the Govt Barisal College centre.

All of a sudden, some youths came to Kalibari intersection near the college in a private car around 2:10pm and abducted Swapna at gunpoint.

Shahjahan Khan, uncle of the victim, filed an abduction case with Barisal Kotwali Police Station in this connection.

In the case statement, he alleged that the kidnapers led by Swapna's former husband Asaduzzaman Prince abducted Swapna when she was coming to his house in BIP colony area of the city.

Prince is a former Chhatra League leader of Pirojpur Govt Suhrawardy College unit. He is the son of Asaduzzaman Manik of Palpara in Pirojpur district town.

Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Pirojpur Sadar Police Station, said acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted a drive in Prince's house around 9:30pm and rescued Swapna. Nobody was arrested in this connection.

In 2010, Swapna, daughter of Saiful Islam Shikder of Raghunathpur under Kauhali upazila of Pirojpur, and Prince got married. But Swapna divorced Prince three months ago.

Ramadan begins

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moon sighting for the month of Ramadan of 1435 Hijri.

Religious Affairs Minister and Chairman of the committee Motiur Rahman chaired the meeting at the Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office.

Religious Affairs Secretary Chowdhury M Babul Hasan, Director General of the Islamic Foundation Shamim Mohammad Afzal and Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Khatib Maulana M Salauddin were present, among others.

BSF again kills

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some cattle was returning to Bangladesh from India through the border around 5:00am.

They beat and tortured him to death and left the body in Chorermath area of Putkhali, the BGB official said, adding that the body bore several injury marks.

The BGB has sent a letter to the BSF, protesting the killing.

ACC, PIB award

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Announced last year, the award was given to the five journalists in five categories out of 100 candidates.

The Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) gave the award at the capital's Sonargaon Hotel. The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Dhaka University helped in the selection process.

Speaking on the occasion, noted journalist Monjurul Islam Bulbul, a member of the award jury, urged ACC Chairman Md Bodiuzzaman and Commissioner MD Nasiruddin, who were present at the ceremony, to follow up on the news reports, for which the award was given.

"Corruption can't be prevented just by awarding journalists who dig out scams, the ACC needs to investigate these incidents and punish the perpetrators," he said.

In the national daily category, Rozina Islam, senior reporter of the Bangla newspaper Prothom Alo, won the award for her report, published on April 6, disclosing the scam of tempering crests given to foreign friends.

Khurshid Mohal Shapla, sub-editor of Jessore's local newspaper Daily Grameer Kagoj, was awarded in the local daily category for a series of reports on corruption in Local Governance Support Project (LGSP-2) in April.

In the weekly magazine category, Sadiqur Rahman Mithun, staff writer for the weekend magazine Xtra of the English daily New Age, received the accolade for his feature under the headline "Tk 300cr Laundered by Cooperative", published on February 28 last year.

In the television reporting and videographer category, Badruddoza Babu, deputy chief reporter, and Mehedi Hasan Sohag, senior videographer, of Maasranga Television, were awarded for reports on corruption in the climate change fund, aired on April 28 and 29 this year.

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu attended the ceremony as chief guest.

Plan to set up

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security during the holy month of Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr.

With Eid shopping spree just around the corner, he urged citizens to refrain from erratic parking that could clog up the city streets.

"Do not parallel park in two or three lines, occupying the entire street," Benazir said.

He also urged businessmen to notify police before carrying huge amounts of cash since muggers will be on the prowl to ambush them.

As transfer of cash increases during the holy month, mobile banking services can take the help of private secu-

city services to safeguard their agents against the heightened risk of mugging, the commissioner said.

Apart from uniformed police, plain-clothes police officers will also patrol the capital, he added.

They will increase patrols in sensitive areas, including shopping malls, banks, wholesale and retail markets, mosques, and bus and rail stations, where incidents of extortion, mugging and robbery increase during Ramadan.

Moreover, a large number of community police will be deployed in the city to ensure security, the DMP commissioner said.

Magnanimity made

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Shokshobha Committee jointly arranged the programme in the academy's Abdul Karim Shahityabisharad auditorium in the capital.

Prof Karim died on June 15 due to old-age complications.

"Prof Karim had the tendency of keeping himself quiet. The absence of egocentrism in him was something unachievable for others," said educationist Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui.

Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman said his generous and pragmatic attitude towards life made him popular among people from all walks of life.

"Even those whose political ideologies were different from Prof Karim's loved him because of his good virtues," he said.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon said he was firm in his vision towards socialism.

His life is a tale of a common man gradually turning into an extraordinary personality, said

Bangla Academy Director General Prof Shamsuzzaman Khan.

Prof Karim's daughter Afsana Karim said her father taught them how to survive life's ups and downs.

Cultural personality Kamal Lohani, educationists Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, Prof Muntassir Mamon, Prof MM Akash, politicians Mujahidul Islam Selim, Pankaj Bhattacharya, and Liberation War Museum Trustee Sarwar Ali also spoke.

Biharis give up on hope for justice

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He made the announcement at a final press conference on the street in front of the camp where they had been staging protests since June 14, the day nine people were burnt alive in an arson attack at the camp. Another person died after being hit by pellets fired by police.

The Biharis wrapped up their banners and posters inscribed with their demands.

"We have no more money. We are poor--we live hand to mouth, working as weavers or embroidery craftsmen. All these days we have been occupying the street with the hope for justice, leaving our lives aside. Now

we are tired, and penniless," said Shawkat.

In connection with the attack, only seven people, all Biharis, had been arrested. The seven, however, were released on bail on Tuesday. Six cases were filed by Pallabi police, all of which had been transferred to the Detective Branch for investigation.

Students of 2 depts boycott exams

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students of the marketing and management departments were scheduled to be held around 10:00am, said sources in the university.

Boycotting the examinations, the protesting students rushed to the offices of chairmen of the departments concerned, demanding that the authorities concerned defer the examination dates, as their preparation was hampered due to police harassment following filing of the case.

Prof Abdullah Al Masum, chairman of the management department, and Prof Wahidur Rahman, chairman of the marketing department, acknowledged it.

Meanwhile, students of the social-

ogy department also announced that they would boycott examinations demanding the same, said Tanvir Qaisar, secretary of BU Teachers' Association.

The university authorities will come to a solution soon regarding the demands of the students, he added.

On June 7, university estate officer Saiduzzaman filed a case with Kotwali Police Station accusing Aqib Javed Khan, Reza Sharif, Enamul Moni, Al-Mamun, students of the above mentioned departments, and 45-50 others unnamed of different departments for ransacking the registrar's office on the university's temporary campus in the city on June 5.

Vice-chancellor Prof Dr Harunor

Rashid Khan said the case was filed after a 7-member probe committee led by BU syndicate member Prof Md Hanif submitted the report on June 6.

However, MA Qaium, lecturer of the marketing department, blamed the VC for creating unstable situation on the campus by politicising the administration.

On June 5, students of different departments vandalised the registrar's office, as they claimed that some officials of the university administration in spite of supporting the students took side of the transport workers, who attacked the students on the campus following an altercation between a group of students and a bus assistant on May 29, said the sources.

Brazil stumble into last 8

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They were helpless, though, when Neymar whipped in a corner in the 18th minute, Thiago Silva headed it on and David Luiz, with what looked like some help from Chile's Jara, flicked it in for his first international goal in his 40th appearance.

With the small red patches of Chile fans in the Mineirao stadium swallowed up by a vast sea of yellow shirts, five-times champions Brazil kept pouring forward and Neymar should have done better when he raced clear only to drive a low shot wide.

Chile, however, levelled 14 minutes later, after making the most of a throw-in mixup between Hulk and Marcelo,

to send Alexis into the box and the forward drilling in to stun the crowd into temporary silence.

Neymar, deciding to take matters into his own hands, went agonisingly close with a header that scraped past the post and controlled a superb deep cross-field ball to set up Fred, who fired high.

Dani Alves tested Claudio Bravo with a thundering long-range effort but the Chile keeper did well to tip it over the bar.

Brazil, who had won nine of their previous 10 meetings with Chile,

though they had scored again early in the second half when Hulk controlled a deep cross to drill in but referee

Howard Webb booked the winger for handball.

At the other end Cesar pulled off a sensational save to deny Charles Aranguiz from point-blank range in a pulsating game where players of both teams resembled tightrope walkers with no safety with one wrong pass proving costly.

Chile, running on empty in extra time, almost snatched a dramatic last-minute winner when Mauricio Pinilla rattled the crossbar with a tremendous shot.

But keeper Cesar saved spot-kicks by Pinilla and Alexis before Jara failed to convert and the stadium erupted in celebration.

Bring back stolen money

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governments of host countries to cooperate in sending the stolen money back and strengthening their legal and financial structures to stop hosting corrupt money.

Referring to recent disclosures by credible sources like the Swiss banking authority and UNDP, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman in a statement said illegal flight of capital has reached alarming levels, costing as high as 30 percent of the GDP.

More importantly, rate of illegal outflow of capital from Bangladesh has allegedly become higher than that of any other country, which is a matter of deep disappointment and embarrassment, he added.

"Time to arrest this ominous trend is now. We're encouraged by the prime minister's announcement on June 27 that her government will bring the money back. Given the necessary political will, it is in fact in the capacity of the government and its relevant agencies to repatriate stolen assets and prevent any further outflow by ensuring exemplary punishment to those found guilty of this crime," said the statement.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman requested the government to immediately arrange mutual legal assistance with the Swiss and other governments of host countries of corrupt money so that stolen assets can be brought back.

As a state party to the UN Convention against Corruption

(UNCAC), Bangladesh can secure legal and technical cooperation and support from other state parties of the convention. The recent repatriation of corrupt money from Singapore is an example.

The statement read, "We call upon the Bangladesh Bank, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Board of Revenue and the attorney general's office to launch a coordinated effort to take advantage of the opportunity created by

Bangladesh's membership of UNCAC and Egmont Group."

The TIB official said the primary responsibility for such international corruption does lie in the systemic weaknesses and governance deficit in Bangladesh.

700 workers go on strike

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The migrants have sought help from the Bangladesh Embassy in Baghdad to arrange their repatriation home. They have already contacted the ambassador to take necessary measures to that end.

"Some of our people have contacted our ambassador. He discussed the issue with our company management. He advised us to be patient saying he would try his best to solve our problems," Abu informed.

The Bangladeshis were concerned as some local Iraqi employees at the company had warned them to leave the country soon on security ground, he added.

The Bangladesh mission has meanwhile claimed some workers with an evil motive were trying to cash in on the issue, according to Khondaker Showkat Hossain, secretary to the expatriates welfare and overseas employment ministry.

The secretary told The Daily Star

that the embassy and the company were dealing with the matter.

Around 4,000 Bangladeshis work at the factory located at south Baghdad. The same company has already accepted resignation of 27 Bangladeshis out of more than 100, who have decided to resign on 'security ground' due to Iraq's severe internal conflicts.

The 27 migrants are scheduled to reach Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport tomorrow morning.

10:45am, 20 people were injured when supporters of AL-backed candidate Rafiqul Islam clashed with BNP-blessed mayoral candidate Majibur Rahman Bhuiyan and his men at Hatabo Government Primary School polling centre.

The clash erupted when AL men tried to occupy the centre and BNP men obstructed them.

Chase and counter-chase took place. Both groups also fired bullets and hurled hand-made crude bombs during the clash.

Later, police dispersed them by firing blank shots.

Officer-in-Charge of Ruppangj Police Station Md Asaduzzaman confirmed the death and clashes.

Man shot dead

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A clash between supporters of the BNP-backed candidate and the AL men continued for around 45 minutes before police and members of Border Guard Bangladesh rushed to the spot and contained the situation.

In another incident around

Cheers for black money

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system. It can be mentioned that money obtained through terrorism and corruption cannot be shown to get the privilege," Muhith told parliament defending the move.

He said the provision for unquestioned acceptance of investments in flats by paying a certain amount of tax is part of efforts to simplify the tax payment system.

But his explanation that money obtained through terrorism and corruption cannot be shown to get the privilege contradicts the allowing of "unquestioned" acceptance of investments in real estate.

Muhith's latest stance goes against his own views that he shared at a post-budget briefing on June 6.

At the briefing, he said real estate is the biggest source of investments of black money because of difference between the registered price of land and its real price.

"This is how the major portion of black money is generated," said Muhith. "We have to think how we can stop the generation of black money. But we have not progressed much on the issue."

At several discussions over the last one month, Muhith repeatedly spoke of scrapping the provision for whitening black money in fiscal 2014-15.

The scope is given almost every year in the face of pressure from vested groups though it never brought the government any substantial revenue.

The National Board of Revenue received only Tk 26 crore between July last year and April this year by offering the facility in real estate.

Between fiscal 1971-72 and 2012-13, about Tk 13,808 crore was whitened. During the period, the NBR

received taxes of Tk 1,455 crore, which is less than 1 percent of the revenue collection target for fiscal 2014-15.

"It appears that the finance minister has backtracked under pressure from a vested interest group," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute (PRI), opposing the scope in real estate sector.

"Ultimately, corrupt public servants and corrupt politicians will take the benefit. And the offer is given almost every year to allow them to legalise money on the excuse of sluggish business in the sector."

The privilege creates scope for accumulation of black money. "The source of black money is corruption. But instead of addressing the source of corruption properly, we are making arrangements so that black money can become white," Ahsan said.

The amnesty pushes up land and apartment prices. "As a result, owning a home goes beyond the purchasing capacity of common people. It does not help ensure social balance," he said.

Zaid Bakht, research director at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said the amnesty doesn't bring any good to the economy; it only benefits black money holders.

He said undeclared or black money remains in the economy even if there is no scope for legalising it. The money is kept in banks and invested in real estate under fake names.

"But the opportunity to legalise money benefits corrupt people. It is against economic justice," said Zaid.

It wouldn't be possible to identify whether the money is earned through illegal means or crimes, as there is no scope in the tax law for questioning the source of the investment, he said.

The challenges before justice

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president John F Kennedy, who was assassinated in November 1963, and the late Senator Edward M Kennedy, Kerry Kennedy was addressing the opening ceremony of the 5th Social Business Day at Radisson Hotel in Dhaka.

In her speech, she talked about women's struggle in Bangladesh against dowry, dowry-related violence and acid attacks, their inadequate access to healthcare and education and child marriages.

She also highlighted the January 5 parliamentary election and the role of the Election Commission.

"The challenge to a democracy is when elections are anything but free and fair, where the Election Commission has become a wholly-owned subsidiary of the ruling party, where polling officers are barred from access to the polls, and where so many people have lost faith in the process that they refuse to even vote."

Ms Kennedy touched upon the issue of adequately compensating the victims of the Rana Plaza building collapse and said the international brands should fully contribute to the relief fund set up after the collapse.

They need to create economic incentives for all the estimated 6,000 factories to rehab so that they are safe, clean, ventilated and well-inspected, she added.

"The international community which has benefited for years from the back breaking labour of the people of Bangladesh must do its part to fund the infrastructure necessary to make decent working conditions a reality."

The rights activist urged the government to develop a vigorous, well-trained and corruption-free inspection force and regulatory policies and enforcements mechanisms.

cial industrial police force, deployed in the factory areas, must act for the benefit of the workers, and not only act to protect the factory owners."

"Their constant acts of violence on protesting workers are a violation of the rights to association, freedom of expression and the right to hold peaceful processions and assemblies."

She termed the proposed law on non-governmental organisations as repressive, saying it would be used to gag critics by threatening to withhold their status.

Ms Kennedy also expressed concerns about journalists being imprisoned, newspapers barred, television networks closed and controversial amendments to the constitutions.

"Those who are seen as a threat to the status quo can expect a deliberate and sustained smear campaign, including false accusations rising to the level of wholesale character assassination, with no evidence and no hope for accountability, followed by manipulations of law and practice in order to strip the victim of position so the power hungry and greedy can grab control."

On being in Dhaka, she said it was a lifelong dream come true. "I remember as a ten-year-old hearing about the genocide in Bangladesh committed by Pakistani troops..."

"I was so proud of my uncle, Edward Kennedy, for his insistence on US support of the people here."

In February 1972, Edward Kennedy was among the first international visitors to Dhaka, opening the door for official US recognition of Bangladesh in April, Kennedy noted.

She recalled her uncle saying at that time: "Freedom is yours and the future belongs to the people of a new Bengali nation. For generations to come, the story of Bangladesh will be a lesson to the world."