

India must build defences so none dares cast 'evil eye': PM

AFP, Mumbai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said India must build up its military might to the point that no other country "dare cast an evil eye" on the South Asian nation.

Modi made the statement at a ceremony in Mumbai for the commissioning of the country's biggest locally built warship.

"Our aim is to achieve such prowess in our defence capabilities that no country dare cast an evil eye on India," Modi told naval officers and other dignitaries.

India, the second most populous nation in the world, is in the midst of a \$100-billion defence upgrade programme.

Modi's new government has raised the foreign investment cap on India's defence industries to speed up modernisation of the military.

India has fought three wars with nuclear-armed rival Pakistan, two of them over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir.

The country has also been seeking to shore up its defence capabilities to counter a military build-up by an increasingly assertive China.

Modi said India must stop relying so heavily on defence imports and focus instead on local research, design and manufacture.

India is the world's largest arms importer with the United States recently overtaking Russia as the biggest arms supplier, followed by France

and Israel.

"This warship has been built by India's engineers, technicians and defence experts," the premier, considered a hardline nationalist, said in Mumbai.

"It is the biggest example yet of what we can make in India," Modi said.

"It is the aim of this government to take India from its position of importing every little piece of military hardware to a position where we can export equipment."

Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in May after a landslide general election win.

The 6,800-tonne INS Kolkata is fitted with the most advanced weapons systems, sensors and communication technology.

Nigeria quits Youth Olympics over Ebola

AFP, Beijing

Nigeria has withdrawn from the Youth Olympics in the Chinese city of Nanjing, state media reported yesterday, as four African nations battle the worst outbreak of the Ebola virus in decades.

Nigeria's decision was confirmed by International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach in Nanjing, China's official Xinhua news agency said.

Janmashtami

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Organisations, including Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikkyo Parishad, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad and Dhaka Mahanagar Sarbojoneen Puja Committee, have also greeted the community's people.

Mahanagar Sarbojoneen Puja Committee, the Bangladesh chapter of International Society for Krishna Consciousness and Shree Shree Janmashtami Udjapan Parishad have announced programmes for two, three and four days respectively to celebrate the occasion.

The traditional Janmashtami procession will be brought out from the national Dhakeshwari Temple in the capital at 3:00pm and will end at Bahadur Shah Park in the old town after marching different streets.

Other programmes of the temple include recitation from the holy Geeta and Geeta-Jagna seeking divine blessings for peace and progress of the country in the morning and Krishna Puja at night.

Besides, a discussion will be held at Dhakeshwari Temple on life of Shree Krishna tomorrow (Monday).

Krishna is perceived by Hindus to be an avatar (incarnation) of god Vishnu. It is believed that all other deities are manifestations of him. Krishna is considered to be a warrior, hero, teacher and philosopher by Hindus.

IS insurgents

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The resident of a nearby village said an Islamic State fighter from the same area gave him details of the bloodshed.

"He told me that the Islamic State had spent five days trying to persuade villagers to convert to Islam and that a long lecture was delivered about the subject today," said the villager. "He then said the men were gathered and shot dead. The women and girls were probably taken to Tal Afar because that is where the foreign fighters are."

That account could not be independently confirmed.

Islamic State militants have killed at least 500 members of Iraq's Yazidi ethnic minority during their offensive in the north, Iraq's human rights minister told Reuters.

Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said the Sunni militants had also buried alive some of their victims, including women and children. Some 300 women were kidnapped as slaves, he added.

Meanwhile, Kurdish troops backed by US warplanes yesterday launched a bid to recapture Mosul dam, Iraq's largest, from jihadists, a senior Kurdish military official said.

"Kurdish peshmerga, with US air support, have seized control of the eastern side of the dam" complex, Major General Abdelrahman Korini told AFP.

"We killed several members of Daash. We are still advancing and in the coming hours should announce welcome news," he said, using the old Arabic acronym for the Islamic State jihadist group.

Witnesses said the air strikes started early in the morning and reported that fighting was ongoing in the afternoon.

Peshmerga forces lost control of the dam on August 7 as IS fighters were sweeping the region, conquering one village after another and seizing other key infrastructure such as oil wells.

The dam on the Tigris river, on the southern shores of Mosul lake about 50 kilometres north of the city, provides electricity to much of the region and is crucial to irrigation in vast farming areas in Nineveh province.

A 2007 letter to the premier, Nuri al-Maliki, sent by then US ambassador Ryan Crocker and the former commander of US forces in Iraq, David Petraeus, warned of the consequences of a disaster at the dam, which was assessed to have serious structural weaknesses.

"A catastrophic failure of Mosul dam would result in flooding along the Tigris river all the way to Baghdad," the letter read.

"Assuming a worst case scenario, an instantaneous failure of Mosul dam filled to its maximum operating level could result in a flood wave 20 metres deep at the city of Mosul," it said.

The Islamic State has already resorted to the weaponisation of dams, as was the case earlier this year when it flooded large areas around the city of Fallujah, west of Baghdad.

However Mosul is the main stronghold of the Iraqi part of the Islamic State's self-proclaimed "caliphate", and the dam would be an important part of its own economy and state-building efforts.

PM blasts Zia's 'role'

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behind the killing [of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman]," she said at a programme marking National Mourning Day at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

Sheikh Hasina said Pakistan had tried several times to kill the Father of the Nation but failed due to international pressure. "But it is unfortunate that some of the very people of Bangladesh, for whom Bangabandhu sacrificed his whole life, killed him."

Terming August 15 a day of stigma for the Bengali nation, she said the main purpose of the heinous killings was to destroy the spirit of independence and make Bangladesh a province of Pakistan again.

Speaking at the programme, AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam criticised those who accused the government of not being sincere enough in trying to bring back the killers of Bangabandhu.

"Actually, due to legal complications in different countries, they could not be brought back," said Syed Ashraf, who is also local government and rural development minister. He criticised the US for not handing over a condemned killer of Bangabandhu currently staying there.

On the party's internal issues, he blasted AL men for their involvement in extortion, tender manipulation and other unlawful activities.

"Not everything the newspapers are writing about your extortion is false. I will urge party men not to engage in such activities that damage the party's image," he said at the programme organised by the AL and chaired by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, presidium member of the party.

The AL spokesperson also criticised the use of banners and festoons on different occasions for self-promotion by party men.

"These kinds of activities will weaken organisational strength as well as the hands of Sheikh Hasina," he said, asking AL leaders and activists to refrain from doing so in future.

However, there was nothing to be worried about when the AL had pragmatic leadership spearheaded by Sheikh Hasina and thousands of devoted activists, he added.

Fundamentalist forces that Syria, Iraq and Libya are troubled with are active in Bangladesh as well and waiting for a chance to destroy the existence of Bangladesh, said Syed Ashraf.

AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Sahara Khatun, Asaduzzaman Noor, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, MA Aziz, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Asim Kumal Ukil, Samyabadi Dal leader Dilip Barua and DU Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique also spoke at the programme.

Two lakh people

NILPHAMARI

Around 5,000 people at 15 shoals of the Teesta in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas have been marooned since the river began swelling Friday afternoon due to heavy rain.

The rainwater receded slightly yesterday afternoon but the river was still flowing above the danger level, our Nilphamari correspondent reported quoting WDB officials as saying.

With the rise of Teesta water, its tributaries like Charalkata, Buri Teesta, Dewnai, Buri Khora, Jamuneswari and Panga have swelled, inundating vast areas of Amon and vegetable fields, local people said.

The heavy current of the river made several points of the embankment along the Teesta vulnerable.

Some 1,000 people of Kisamoter char in Dimla upazila took shelter at an elevated-area recently built to avoid floods while many in other shoals are living either on rooftops or on their wooden cots raised by bamboo poles or on rafts made of bamboos.

A WDB executive engineer, however, claimed that the situation was still under control.

SUNAMGANJ

Continuous onrush of floodwater for more than a week affected lives of as many as 10,000 people in Duarabazaar, Tahirpur, Jamalganj and Biswamvarpur upazilas, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Some 30 embankments in the upazilas were at risk and may collapse anytime, said Saud Ahmed, executive

engineer of WDB, Sunamganj.

Thirty dykes are also at risk due to the onrush of water, WDB officials said.

Crops on four thousand hectares of land have been flooded, local people said. At the time of their misery, the farmers are also forced to sell their domestic animals at low prices.

RANGPUR

At least 500 meters of embankment along the Teesta in Paikan-Hajipara and Saudpara villages under Gangachara upazila of Rangpur has been damaged, causing flash floods.

Flash floods caused sufferings to at least 25,000 people at 34 villages of Alambiditar, Laxmitari, Gajaghanta, Gangachara, Nohali, Kolkond and Mornea unions of the upazila, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

"We are facing acute shortage of food and drinking water," said Kalim Uddin, of Paikan-Hajipara village.

FENI

The flood situation in Fulgachi upazila of Feni was slightly improving but four other villages went under water yesterday.

Some 15 villages in the upazila had been submerged as the embankments along Muhuri and Kahua rivers developed cracks at three points on Thursday following heavy rains and the onrush of water.

SHERPUR

Meanwhile, low-lying 10 villages in Jhinaigati upazila of Sherpur were flooded yesterday, leaving several hundred people marooned.

Tension boils over Ukraine

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The latest spike in tensions came after Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko claimed his troops had blown up part of a small Russian military convoy that British media spotted breaching the porous frontier on Thursday.

Russia dismissed the claims as "fantasies", its latest denial of persistent allegations from the West that it is arming the rebels.

Amid the international slanging match, some 280 trucks packed with what Russia claims is humanitarian aid waited for a third day some 30 kilometres from a rebel-held border post as Moscow and Kiev haggled over letting it across.

The West and Kiev fear the convoy could be a "Trojan horse" to bolster the flagging pro-Kremlin rebellion in eastern Ukraine or provide Moscow with an excuse to send in the 20,000 troops that Nato says it has amassed on the border.

However, the US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel said he had been "guaranteed" by his Russian counterpart that no Russian military personnel were involved in a humanitarian convoy that approached Ukraine's eastern border.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu assured Hagel the convoy "was not to be used as a pretext to further intervene in Ukraine," a spokesman said.

Russia's foreign ministry has repeatedly demanded in recent days that Kiev cease fire in order for the aid to reach residents of blighted cities in the east who have been stuck for days without water or power.

AFP correspondents at the border heard blasts from the Ukrainian side and saw Moscow's military hardware rumble along Russian territory close to the frontier.

Ukraine says it has sent scores of border officials to the Russian side to scour aid cargo but insists they are waiting for permission from the Red Cross to start work.

While Russia has denied all claims it is funnelling weapons to the rebels, a

Hospital won't release body

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clearing her father's body, they were handed the Tk 31 lakh bill.

"We wanted to submit a written statement requesting the authority to receive the full payment later but they insisted on paying all dues first," she said.

Aslam was a stock trader by profession. It is way beyond his family's capacity to pay such a large amount of money within such a short while. They had already paid Tk 12 lakh and also spent about Tk 2.5 lakh more to purchase blood during different phases of this treatment.

An official at the hospital's accounts section said the patient's family had been informed about the high expenditure of all the procedures involved with this kind of treatment and they

had agreed to bear all the expenses back then.

"We did think of alternative ways to treat him. But his condition fluctuated drastically and at one point his health deteriorated so much that it became impossible to move him," explained Sadia.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station, said he sent a team of police to help resolve the matter after he was requested by the deceased's family.

With the involvement of police and journalists, a negotiation meeting was arranged between Aslam's family members and the hospital management yesterday evening.

At the meeting, the family offered to pay Tk 1.50 lakh now and the rest at a

later date. Refusing this offer, the hospital management made a counter-offer with a slight discount.

"We've had a discussion with the patient's family. We made it clear we cannot release the body unless we receive the payment," said Sabbir Ahmed, duty manager of the hospital.

Sadia said the hospital authority came up with a slight discount and demanded Tk 15 lakh for the body to be released.

"We are literally incapable of paying such an enormous bill on short notice. We do not want the hospital to count loss for our sake either. We just want them to consider our offer of realising their dues in several phases. We'll definitely go all out to do everything that we can to manage the money," said Sadia.

Secy to be made OSD

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regarded as a punishment posting.

Siddiqui, who was supposed to go on a one-year leave preparatory to retirement (LPR) from October 30, used the freedom fighters' certificate attained through forged documents last year to have his service tenure extended. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is currently investigating the allegation.

In November 2012, the government extended the retirement age of freedom fighters from 59 years to 60.

The ACC is also looking into the same allegation against Khandakar Shawkat Hossain, expatriates' welfare and overseas employment secretary; Niaz Uddin Mia, health secretary; AKM Amir Hossain, Public Service

Commission secretary; Molla Waheeduzzaman, privatisation commission chairman; and Md Abul Kashem Talukder, former joint secretary of liberation war affairs ministry (nowan OSD).

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque told The Daily Star on Thursday said that his ministry would take action against them once it got the ACC probe reports.

The ministry has so far revoked freedom fighters' certificates of 182 public servants for obtaining those through forgery, and is investigating another 5,000 people, including 300 government employees on the same charge.

Siddiqui was also accused by a

government probe body of involvement in purchasing subpar crests awarded to foreign individuals and organisations for their contribution to the country's liberation. The same body also held former state minister for liberation war affairs AB Tajul Islam responsible for the scam that robbed the government of around Tk 7.04 crore.

The committee was formed following media reports referring to a test carried out by Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute in 2012 that found only 2.363 grams of gold and 466.237 grams of brass in a shield. Each of those crests was supposed to contain 22.5 grams of gold and 339 grams of silver.

Mushtaq's much ado about tupi

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photographs of Moshtaque's headgear, declaring it as the national cap, along with the cabinet's prescription about the national dress.

There was no other important discussion in that cabinet meeting even though the situation in the country was volatile and tense. Uncertainty reigned supreme following the brutal assassination of President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members and the overthrow of his government by some disgruntled army officers on August 15, 1975.

The cabinet led by Moshtaque, who was commerce minister in Bangabandhu's government and made president by the masterminds of the August 15 bloody changeover, found nothing unusual in the situation.

The Moshtaque cabinet earlier at an evaluation meeting on August 16 found the country's overall situation satisfactory. The state run and controlled media publicised the cabinet's evaluation.

In such a state of satisfaction, the

cabinet on August 21 discussed Moshtaque's headgear. And then the meeting was over.

The story went on.

A few days after the August 21 cabinet meeting, then Finance Minister AR Mallick received a file from the Bangabhaban. He went through the file and found a proposal that said black velvet cloth was imported from Malaysia or elsewhere. The national cap might be made with this cloth.

The then secretary to the president had sent the file to the finance minister with a proposal to exempt tax on import of the cloth. For this, the finance minister's approval was required.

Mallick, however, disagreed with the proposal as the import was made without any tender. Besides, the price of the cloth was high. The finance minister sent back the file without giving his consent.

A few moments later, two people came to meet Mallick at his office. They informed the finance minister that they had imported the cloth on the

orders of President Moshtaque. The president had ordered the import without any delay. They failed to convince the finance minister.

Within moments, his phone rang. Mallick picked up the phone and found the caller from the Bangabhaban. The caller asked the finance minister to exempt duty on the imported cloth.

"The President can exempt the duty. Being the finance minister, I will not do it. If the president thinks, he can make it free. He has got the right," the finance minister argued.

The conversation was over. The finance minister was no more communicated about the matter. He was not to know whether or not tax on the import of the cloth was exempted.

[The report was prepared on the basis of the news reports on the cabinet meeting published in state-run newspapers on August 22, 1975, and the books "My Life's Story and Liberation Struggle of Bangladesh" by Dr AR Mallick and "Five Years in Bangabhaban by Mahbub Talukder.]

BNP brings out black flag

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street programme by the opposition combine since the January 5 national election, urged world leaders to take immediate measures to stop the killing of innocent Palestinians.

In Dhaka, thousands of leaders and activists of the BNP and its allies took part in the procession from the BNP's Nayapaltan headquarters around 3:40pm. A good number of processionists were from the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Different roads connected with Nayapaltan and Malibagh saw tallparades for several hours because of the programme.

Amid tight security and vigilance by law enforcement agencies, the opposition activists, wearing black badges, ended the march at Malibagh intersection peacefully.

Several hundred police personnel were deployed at different points on the procession route. Armoured personnel carriers, water cannons and prison vans were there.

Meanwhile, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night said the govern-

ment move to restore parliament's authority to impeach judges is aimed to control the judiciary.

She said this while exchanging greetings with the Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Kalyan Front, a pro-BNP organisation, at her Gulshan office.

Lambasting the national broadcast policy, the BNP chief said, "It might happen that our programmes will not be allowed to be broadcast [on television] after some days."

She alleged the Awami League is undermining its leader [Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] by indulging in widespread extortion from businesses in the name of observing August 15 (national mourning day).

Earlier in the day, top leaders of the 20-party coalition took part in the procession to protest the Israeli offensive against Gaza.

On Friday, Dhaka Metropolitan Police gave permission to the BNP-led alliance to carry out its programme. They, however, set conditions that anti-government provocative words must not be used, sticks must not be carried, and the procession must end before sunset, according to BNP sources.

After the January 5 election, boycotted by the BNP-led alliance and most other political parties, the DMP on several occasions denied the BNP permission to hold rallies or processions in the city.

Before yesterday's procession, Mirza Abbas, the new convener of Dhaka city BNP, delivered a brief speech from a makeshift dais on an open truck. He instructed party leaders and activists not to raise anti-government slogans in the procession as the programme was meant to protest the Israeli offensive.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhruul Islam Alamgir said their demonstration was to let the world community know the people of Bangladesh were with the oppressed Palestinians.

More than 1,900 Palestinians, mostly civilians, have died since the fighting began in Gaza on July 8. Sixty-four Israeli soldiers have been killed in the violence and three civilians in Israel have also died.

Israel and the Palestinians began a fresh five-day ceasefire in Gaza on August 14.