

IMF to provide \$300m in extra funding to help fight Ebola

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The G20 has welcomed a commitment from the IMF to provide \$300m (£190m) in extra funding to help fight Ebola in the three worst-affected west African countries.

The IMF money for Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia will come through "a combination of concessional loans, debt relief, and grants", according to a statement issued by the world leaders' summit, being held in Brisbane.

The G20 also claimed to be "committed to do what is necessary to ensure the international effort can extinguish the outbreak", while pointedly urging "governments that have yet to do so to join in providing financial contributions, appropriately qualified and trained medical teams and personnel, medical and protective equipment, and medicines and treatments".

The US had been pressing the IMF to offer \$100m in debt relief to the three countries.

The British prime minister, David Cameron, has joined the US in pushing to put Ebola on the agenda of a summit that Australia had been trying to focus rigidly on economic growth and jobs.

The IMF has already agreed to provide \$130m of emergency financial assistance, including \$48.3m to Liberia, \$41.4m to Guinea and \$39.8m to Sierra Leone. It is also empowered to offer debt relief in such emergencies if required.

The IMF had previously estimated the epidemic would be brought under control by the first quarter of 2015, but now believed this was likely to be the second half of the year, increasing the cost to the countries affected. It has forecasted that growth estimates for the three countries is likely to be downgraded.

The US Treasury secretary, Jack Lew, welcomed the IMF's announcement of extra cash: "The IMF's expanded support, including debt relief, for Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone will free-up critical resources in these countries for both immediate economic needs and longer-term recovery efforts."

More than 5,000 people have died from Ebola, according to the World Health Organisation, and although the daily number of new cases is declining, the virus is still appearing in new areas in the region.

Separately, Cameron has been pressing G20 members that have given little to help to the crisis either in straight donations or gifts in kind to



Protestors carry clocks to show time is running out during an Ebola protest event in Brisbane yesterday. Several protests have been organised in connection with the G20 summit.

rethink their priorities.

The possibility of a future pandemic relief fund, which has been proposed by the World Bank, may also be mentioned in the final G20 communiqué. Such a fund would be designed to ensure that a response to a future health crisis is not as slow as the response to Ebola.

The World Bank Group president, Jim Yong Kim, said in a briefing in Brisbane

the initial response had been late, adding: "Ebola is not a disease where you can leave a few cases and then say you have done enough. You have really got to get every country to zero."

Setting out his idea of a pandemic fund he said: "We have funds to protect from other downside risks to the global economy. Pandemics, epidemics, are in fact very real downside risks to the global economy. They are also

human tragedies and they are public health emergencies".

Kim said his proposal for a fund would make possible a global public health corps ready to respond at a moment's notice, "a fund that would disburse millions and then also many billions of dollars if necessary". He added that the proposed fund would also act as a very advanced market signal to vaccine- and drug-makers.

At Gitmo, force-feeding shrouded in secrecy



Protestors wearing orange prisoners' jumpsuits call for the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility during a global day of action in front of the White House in Washington recently.

AFP, Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba.

Behind the barbed wire of Guantanamo Bay prison, hunger-striking inmates are routinely force-fed, a practice defended by officials as necessary medical treatment but labelled by critics as torture.

But, for all the debate surrounding the practice, information about it is scarce, and force-feeding remains shrouded in secrecy.

"We don't talk about this," said Rear Admiral Kyle Cozad, commander of Joint Task Force-Guantanamo, arguing the silence is designed to prevent inmates scoring misleading propaganda points.

"Detainees manipulate the media, on a routine basis, and I say that with confidence and conviction," Cozad added, speaking to a small group of journalists at the naval base in Cuba last month.

Among the prison's 148 detainees, it is unclear exactly how many have staged hunger strikes or how many have been force-fed.

The US military detention center has not released any information about the force-feeding of inmates since October 2013, and prison authorities recently banned filming the act.

Previously, the graphic recordings of the force feedings and cell removals of hunger strikers were the only record of those events.

A federal judge has ordered the redacted release of the videotapes, but granted a request by President Barack Obama's administration for a month-long pause on releasing them.

The government is expected to appeal the release order.

Last year, Guantanamo prisoners staged the largest protest in the

prison's history -- involving two thirds of all detainees at its peak and spanning six months.

Prisoners say they are being held in legal limbo.

Up to 46 of the hunger strikers, according to official figures, were fed by force using so-called "enteral feedings" through a tube inserted through the nose and directly into the stomach.

TORTURE OR MEDICAL NECESSITY?

Rights groups decry the practice as torture, and have demanded more transparency from prison officials about force feeding.

Cozad said the decision to tube-feed prisoners -- even against their will -- is based on medical assessments, to prevent them from dying of lack of nutrition, and continues only until the inmate is considered healthy again.

"It's a matter of medical concern and that's the only reason we would enteral-feed one of the detainees," said Cozad.

"When they begin to eat or they become nutritionally stable, then we make the determination to take them off of that list."

According to the command in charge of Guantanamo, prisoners who are involved in "non-religious fasting" are removed from their cells in a so-called "forced cell extraction" by guards and strapped to a restraint chair to be force-fed.

A feeding tube is inserted into a prisoner's stomach through his nose and he is fed a nutritional supplement for 20 minutes. Hunger-strikers are sometimes administered painkillers.

'NO MORAL OR ETHICAL ISSUES'

Cozad decides after consulting with his medical staff whether to feed a prisoner by force.

Lawmaker assaulted by ruling party men

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A Feni lawmaker was assaulted allegedly by a group of local ruling party men yesterday.

Haji Rahim Ullah, an independent lawmaker of Feni-3, said some Chhatra League and Jubo League activists, two front organisations of the ruling Awami League, swooped on his supporters at the Circuit House when he went to meet Communications Minister Obaidul Quader in the evening.

"At one stage, they assaulted me and beat up my supporters," Rahim Ullah said.

Later, he informed the minister of the incident and left the place under police protection.

Earlier, several homemade bombs were blasted when the lawmaker went to visit Dagonbhuiyan Upazila Health Complex in the afternoon, witnesses said.

Following the blasts, he changed the decision and went to visit a dilapidated road in Shafipur village under Shindurpur union which was being scheduled previously.

On the occasion of his visit, a group of local AL men erected several arches to welcome Rahim Ullah and arranged a view exchange meeting at Sharifpur Government Primary School playground.

Meanwhile, another group of the AL, who were not invited at the programme, set fire on the arches protesting the visit and also blasted several crude bombs.

A tense situation prevailed in the area after the explosion and the lawmaker left the place. He also cancelled other programmes at the same area fearing insecurity.

Didarul Kabir, chairman of Dagonbhuiyan upazila and convener of district Jubo League, however, said, he did not know about the assault on the lawmaker.

One rally

FROM PAGE 1

Even the motorcade of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, chief guest at the rally, had to move very slowly through the Karwan Bazar area on her way back to Gono Bhaban from the meeting venue. The Jubo League is the youth front of the ruling Awami League.

At around 5:15pm, traffic was snarled up on the roads stretching from Hotel Radisson to the Prime Minister's Office at Tejgaon. Movement of traffic on the Tejgaon and Mohakhali flyovers came to a halt for about an hour.

Talking to The Daily Star, 10th grader Nima of Motijheel Ideal School and College said she took a bus from Motijheel at 3:00pm and reached Farmgate at 4:50pm.

"Police stopped our bus at several intersections, but allowed those carrying Jubo League men to pass through," she mentioned.

Visiting different areas near the Suhrawardy Udyan, this correspondent saw commuters walking along footpaths to reach their destinations as they failed to board any bus.

Vehicles that brought Jubo League activists to the venue were parked on the roads near the Shahbagh intersection, occupying nearly half of the roads' width.

Traffic police sources said they had to halt traffic at the Sonargaon intersection around 2:00pm for over an hour as no vehicle from Karwan Bazar could cross the roundabout towards Bangla Motor due to a huge tailback.

Compensation

FROM PAGE 16

There are many Shahinas and Halimas that have lost their dear ones, who had left their homes with the hope of having a better life but were killed in accidents there. They are not getting the compensation they were legally entitled to.

While these people continue to suffer, the government agencies concerned trade blame on each other over the delay in arranging the compensations for them.

According to the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB), around 3,000 Bangladeshis on an average die abroad each year and roughly one-third of them are killed in road, fire and workplace accidents.

Currently, over 6,000 cases are pending with different labour receiving countries. Many of the cases have been unresolved for 10 to 15 years.

Of these, more than 2,000 cases are in Saudi Arabia, over 1,000 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 600 plus in Malaysia and the rest in some other countries, according to the WEWB of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

The cases are filed by the Bangladesh missions on behalf of the victim families.

Quite often they don't get the required assistance from the families concerned and the WEWB, said AKM Mizanur Rahman, first secretary (labour) at the Bangladesh Embassy in the UAE.

"Upon the police and hospital reports on the unnatural death of any migrant, we usually ask the officials in

Bangladesh to send necessary documents demanding compensation. But we sometimes receive the documents late," he told The Daily Star.

"Then again, most of these cases were awaiting disposal at the courts of respective labour recruiting countries," Mizan added.

Countering these claims, the WEWB officials said it's the mission officials, not the board, that are responsible for the delay.

"The embassy officials sometimes don't respond to us on time," Ziauddin, director (administration) of the WEWB, said.

He also blamed the sluggish pace of the district manpower offices (DMOs) that are responsible for cooperating with the victim families and carrying out the required paperwork.

Besides, the government assistance for the families of the dead, be it accidental or under natural circumstances, is not coming easily either.

The migrants who go abroad by receiving clearance from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) are entitled to the financial assistance.

If a migrant dies abroad, his/her family gets Tk 3 lakh in financial assistance from the WEWB.

However, many of the victim families have alleged that they face a lot of hassles in getting the assistance.

Currently, over eight million Bangladeshis are working in various countries, according to the BMET.

Afghan-Pakistan leaders pledge to end turbulent ties

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan and Afghanistan pledged to begin a new era of economic cooperation yesterday, with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani saying three days of talks had ended 13 years of differences.

Ghani and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said collaboration on economic and energy issues would form the basis of better security in the troubled region as US-led NATO combat troops leave Afghanistan after more than a decade of fighting the Taliban.

The two countries have long endured testy relations, with former Afghan president Hamid Karzai regularly accusing Pakistan of supporting Taliban insurgents trying to overthrow his regime.

Pakistan has accused Kabul of not doing enough to shut down bases on its soil for militants attacking Pakistani targets.

The fact that Ghani chose to make Islamabad the destination for his first bilateral visit since taking power in September is seen as an important sign of wanting to improve ties.

The former World Bank economist arrived in Islamabad on Friday but aides had begun negotiations with Pakistani officials a day earlier.

'13 YEARS IN THREE DAYS'
After talks between Ghani and Sharif yesterday, the two sides' finance ministers signed a deal aimed at more than doubling trade between the two countries to \$5 billion by 2017, as well as simplifying customs protocols.

"I want to welcome the enormous steps that have been taken in the last three days to achieve progress on the economy," Ghani said at a joint news conference with Sharif afterwards.

Focus on economy

FROM PAGE 2

and increased flow of goods and services, including investment and financial services, between the two countries.

The summit decided to form alumni of the former high commissioners of Bangladesh and India in the two countries for regular interaction and sharing of experiences among themselves and with other stakeholders.

It recommended that this interaction should continue with regular biennial summits and proposed holding the next summit in India in 2016.

Six former Indian envoys in Dhaka -- Muchkund Dubey (Oct 1979 - Oct 1982), IS Chadha (Oct 1985 - Feb 1989), Deb Mukharji (March 1995 - July 2000), Veena Sikri (Dec 2003 - Nov 2006), Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty (January 2007 - Dec 2009) and Rajet Mitter (Dec 2009 - October 2011) -- attended the meeting.

Participants from Bangladesh were Faruq Ahmed Chowdhury, Sarooq Sobhan, Harun ur Rashid, Mostafa Faruque Mohammed, Humayun Kabir, Tariq Ahmed Karim, Hemayetuddin and Touhid Hossain.

Lalon-loving RU teacher killed

FROM PAGE 1

Lalon and used to invite Baul singers to his house every Monday. He belonged to a pro-Awami League teachers' panel, according to his colleagues.

Talking to The Daily Star, his son Soumin Shahrid Javin, a journalism student at Dhaka University, said: "My father did not have any enemies; he was a very good man. He was progressive-minded but religious fanatics on the campus and around the locality were always angry with him."

"Jamaat-Shibir men threatened him with dire consequences two or three years ago for his mystic ways of life," he added.

Golam Sarwar Sujon, the victim's colleague who used to attend the baul gatherings, said one big gathering was held at his house on Tuesday where baul singers from different parts of the country and India took part.

Sirajul Islam, another colleague of the victim, said Shafiu's belief in baul philosophy and the mystic way of seeking God might have angered some quarters.

He also said Shafiu had left his

campus residence about a year ago and started living alone at a rented house in Choddopai which is close by the RU campus.

Shafiu married thrice. His first wife had died long ago and his second wife divorced him while the third left him allegedly for his devotion to baulism, he added.

RU teachers and students burst into protests following the murder. Hundreds of students from sociology department barricaded the Rajshahi-Dhaka highway for half an hour since 6:00pm yesterday.

RU Teachers Association announced that they would boycott all classes and examinations today, demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

Shafiu's autopsy was performed at the RMCH morgue. His body was taken to the RU Central Mosque for namaz-e-janaza.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held after his only son Soumin Shahrid Javin reaches Rajshahi, said his colleagues, adding that his body would be sent to his village home in Bogra for burial.

'Phone call details may hold clues'

FROM PAGE 2

The OC said they would not arrest Tipu Sultan and his wife unless concrete evidence could be obtained in this connection.

"Our priority is to find out how Mahjabin died. If she was murdered, we will take action accordingly. If it is a suicide, then we will try to find out whether anyone forced her to do so," Siddique said.

Shahnur Sharif, the deceased's brother, alleged that his sister's in-laws were putting pressure against her taking the BCS test and preparing for the FCPS.

Mahjabin's in-laws wanted her to be a housewife, he added.

Humayun told police that his wife had committed suicide by hanging herself with a scarf from an iron bar in the bathroom.

Meanwhile, friends and colleagues of Mahjabin have created two groups on social media asking for justice to the deceased.

About 1,200 people have already joined the facebook page group "Justice for Shama" within 18 hours of its creation. Another group "Justice for Dr Shamarukh Mahjabin" has 617 members as of yesterday evening.

Homepages of both groups are filled with comments, demanding justice and members expressing their anxiety over whether a proper investigation will be held as her in-laws are politically influential.

Members of the group "Justice for Dr. Shamarukh Mahjabin" will hold a human-chain in front of Holy Family Hospital in Ramna at 12:00pm today, protesting the "murder of Shamarukh".

2 brothers abducted

FROM PAGE 16

involved in politics or criminal activities, their father claimed.

Quoting a witness, he said one of the kidnappers was in a jacket with the alphabets "DB" printed on its back. Some of them were in shirts and trousers, while a few were in lungi and t-shirts.

On Friday morning, Hakim went to the Detective Branch headquarters on Minto Road. Later, he went to the Rapid Action Battalion-4 office and Darussalam Police Station. But none could give him any clue about the whereabouts of his sons.

Talking to The Daily Star, Saiful Islam, additional secretary of DB (west), said, "We've heard about the complaint, but as far as I know, none of our teams are involved in the incident."

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station, said the victims' family has filed a general diary with the police station on Friday night.

Police were trying to trace the duo. Law enforcers did not find any case, GD or complaints against the brothers.