

NANJING MASSACRE

State remembrance held for first time

It's undeniable, says Chinese president

AFP, Nanjing

President Xi Jinping said yesterday that no one can deny the Nanjing Massacre, as China for the first time held a national day of remembrance for the Japanese military rampage that Beijing says killed 300,000 people.

State media estimated 10,000 people attended a ceremony in Nanjing to mark the 77th anniversary of the massacre, including ageing survivors -- some in their 90s -- of the Japanese invasion of the eastern city on December 13, 1937.

The crowd sang a boisterous rendition of China's national anthem at the ceremony broadcast live on CCTV state television, followed by a moment of silence, as a siren symbolising grief blared and the Chinese flag flew at half-mast under clear skies.

"Anyone who tries to deny the massacre will not be allowed by history, the souls of the 300,000 deceased victims, 1.3 billion Chinese people and all people loving peace and justice in the world," Xi said in a speech at the ceremony, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency.

Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC and foreign minister Wang Yi were among Chinese dignitaries who attended.

Before the ceremony, CCTV showed black and white still and filmed images from the period, including scenes of Japanese soldiers occupying Nanjing and photos of dead Chinese, some in the streets and some along a river bank.

Xi also appeared to hold out an olive branch to Japan, emphasising the need for Chinese and Japanese to live in friendship, stressing that it was "militarists" who were responsible for the massacre.

"We should not bear hatred against an entire nation just because a small minority of militarists launched aggressive wars," Xi said, according to Xinhua.

"The responsibilities for war crimes lie with a few militarists, but not the people," he added, though also emphasised that "severe crimes committed by aggressors" cannot be forgotten.

Later 3,000 doves symbolising peace were released into the skies in memory of the victims, Xinhua said.

In February, China's National People's Congress, the country's Communist Party-controlled legislature, made the anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre an official day of remembrance -- along with September 3 to mark the country's victory against Japan in 1945 -- as tensions with Japan over a maritime territorial dispute and rows over history intensified.

Japan and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations in 1972. But ties have been strained by the row over uninhabited islands in the East China Sea and nationalist views and actions by Japanese politicians, including visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, which commemorates Japan's war dead including

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People living on the Shela river gathering oil in containers and buckets, near where Southern Star-7 went down on Tuesday, so that it could be sold. From bottom left ... a fishermen's net ruined by oil. Seeds of trees destroyed by the oil and people on a boat trying to scoop it up.

PHOTO: PINAKI ROY

I speak of clear facts

Mozena sees huge leap in bilateral ties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The relations between Bangladesh and the USA will reach a new height in the coming days to the mutual benefit of the two countries, outgoing US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena has said.

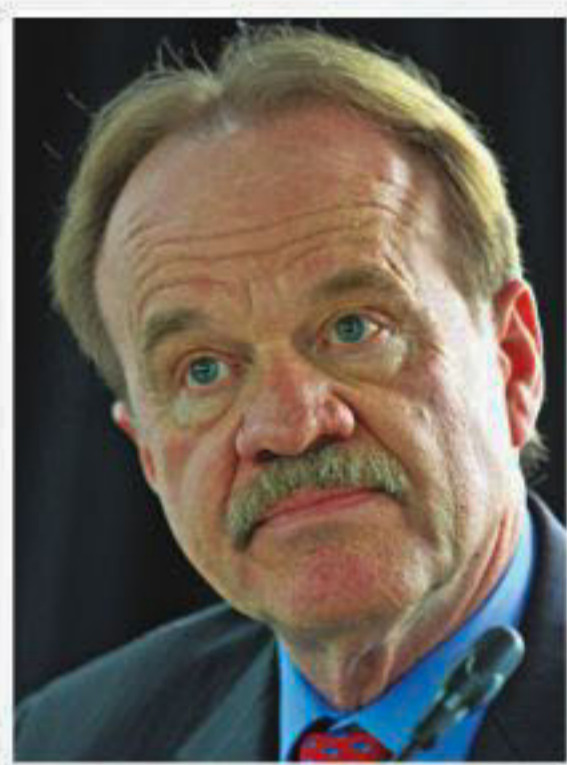
"I am pleased that America's partnership with Bangladesh is today broader, deeper, and stronger than ever. Literally the partnership goes from strength to strength with each passing day," he said.

Mozena spoke at a discussion titled "America-Bangladesh Relations: Economic and Social Perspective" organised by the Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshis in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh is a country of deep strategic importance to America, the diplomat said, adding the relations between the two nations will strengthen further.

"Some of you may be surprised by my words. Some of you may think that I am merely chanting diplomatic niceties. Not so. I speak of facts -- clear facts. Our partnership truly strengthens each day, to the benefit of the people of both countries," Mozena said.

"Perhaps, some of you are curious



about my assertion, given press reports that you might have seen recently," he added.

Mozena's comments came at a time when many people, including a BNP leader, said the relations between Bangladesh and the USA will be affected seriously by disparaging remarks of LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam on Mozena and Nisha Desai Biswal, US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs. Biswal has recently visited Bangladesh.

He thanked the people, civil society and Bangladesh government and Bangladeshi-American diaspora for making his tenure of more than three years in Bangladesh as the ambassador "so rich and rewarding".

"In just a week, the final curtain will come down on both my ambassadorship in Bangladesh and my 33-year foreign service career," the envoy said.

"My heart is heavy as I contemplate my imminent departure from wonderful Bangladesh. I hope that I can find some way to stay engaged by continuing to tell the story of this great nation."

Tedious, manual cleanup on

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officials from a joint meeting in Dhaka suggested not using any chemical for the oil spill clean-up.

Since the oil slick started on Tuesday morning when Southern Star-7 carrying 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil sank near Mongla, locals have collected only a few thousand litres so far.

"We have bought 9,400 litres of furnace oil from the local people. We are expecting some more," said Rafiqul Islam Badal, Padma Oil's agent who has been buying the furnace oil.

The authorities have asked the local people to collect the furnace oil and sell it to the Padma Oil Company agents. Locals have been advised to use fishing nets, sponges or any other manual means to collect the oil.

"It has no commercial value as it can't be used, but we are making the

offer to encourage people so that the cleaning up process speeds up," said Rafiqul Islam Babul of the Padma Oil Co.

Meanwhile, Indian authorities were on alert yesterday after the tanker sank and dumped thousands of litres of oil into rivers of the Sundarbans.

On the Indian side, Pradip Vyas, director of the Sundarbans Biosphere, said: "There are no reports till now that the oil spill has reached the Indian part of the Sundarbans."

But Indian "wildlife officials have been deployed along the Sundarbans area bordering Bangladesh to check if the spill is spreading" as a precaution, he told AFP.

In 2011, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority opened a commercial shipping route through the Shela river despite opposition from

environmentalists, an Indian wildlife official told AFP, on condition of anonymity.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, who visited the spot in the afternoon, said a decision on water vessel movement through the Shela river route will be taken at an inter-ministerial meeting today.

The shipping ministry on Wednesday banned plying of any vessel through the river following the oil tanker capsized.

BIODIVERSITY AT STAKE

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Kawsar Sheikh, fisherman, said he found some dead shrimps and dead fish in Badamtoli canal.

Shamsu Jamadar, another fisherman, said there used to be lots of dolphins surfacing in the Shela at the Joymunirgol point. But since the acci-

dent, he hasn't seen any.

BBC added that footage shows birds covered in black liquid in the forest.

"This catastrophe is unprecedented in the Sundarbans and we don't know how to tackle this," Amir Hosain, chief forest officer of the Sundarbans, told AFP news agency.

"We're worried about its long-term impact, because it happened in a fragile and sensitive mangrove ecosystem."

The Sundarbans, a Unesco world heritage site, is a vast river delta on the northern shore of the Bay of Bengal.

Its mangroves and rivers are home to a vast array of plant and animal life, much of it unique to the region.

The government declared areas in the southern Sundarbans to be a dolphin sanctuary in 2011, after research suggested some 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins lived in the area.

Water polluted; fish, crab gone

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have been selling around 30 drums of water, each containing 20 litres, in Jaymauni Dakkhin Para everyday," said Nazrul. He is selling each drum at Tk 20.

People in the area have been facing serious health hazards since an oil tanker sank in the river on Tuesday, polluting huge stretches of its water.

Marzina Begum, a housewife of Jaymuni Dakkhin Para, said: "We used to take bath, wash cloths and cook food with the river water. Now we're having

to buy water for cooking and drinking. But it has become very difficult for us to take bath and wash our cloths."

Khadiza, another woman from the same neighbourhood, said: "My son Mahfuz is suffering from diarrhoea since last night." She added that her neighbour's children were also suffering from diarrhoea which perhaps was an effect of the contaminated water.

Visiting several houses of two neighbourhoods where fishermen live in Jaymuni Dakkhin Para and Purba Para -- both of which stretch along the

bank of the river -- this correspondent came to know that minor children were suffering from diarrhoea and having itching sores on their body.

The oil spill has also begun to take a heavy toll on fish and crabs which, fishermen claim, have disappeared from the river.

Zakir Sheikh, a fisherman, said there was no fish in the river. Besides, his fishing net worth Tk five thousand has been damaged due to the furnace oil.

As a result, Abdul Salam and most

other fishermen are collecting furnace oil as an alternative means of livelihood.

When asked why they were collecting oil from the river instead of catching fish, Samartha Banu, who used to catch shrimp fry, said: "What would we eat if we did not collect oil?"

Two school going boys named Didar and Alam from Jaymunir Gol Purba Para said their limbs burnt and itched at night as they had been collecting oil in bare hands for the past few days.

Labour leader

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father-in-law, who, like the minister himself, is an influential leader of transport workers.

The minister's pressure was so intense that the department had to write to the ministry to withdraw Mirza Saifur's suspension on November 13, the day after the surveyor applied for it, added the sources.

The shipping ministry reinstated him by the end of November and posted him at the ship survey office of Dhaka river port, where he was posted when the Pinak tragedy happened.

This was done ignoring the department's plea that should Saifur be reinstated at all, he should be posted outside Dhaka because he was facing a number of legal and departmental actions.

In early October, the shipping department charged Saifur with negligence in duty which caused the deaths of more than 100 people.

A probe committee formed by the shipping ministry in its report on September 14 also held him directly responsible for the disaster.

The department suspended him a week later and also initiated moves

towards final departmental action against him.

Contacted, Shajahan Khan said he had instructed the shipping department to reinstate Mirza due to shortage of ship surveyors. Otherwise, water vessels would go unsafe without survey.

"There are only four surveyors to look after around 10,000 registered water vessels in the country and we cannot afford to keep one of them suspended," said Shajahan.

When pointed out that his ministry held Mirza liable for over 100 deaths, a departmental procedure was underway,

filing of a case with the marine court was pending and the Anti-Corruption Commission was probing his alleged corruption, the minister said, "It is the reality; the department needs to reinstate him under compulsion."

Asked if he was influenced by Mirza's father-in-law, the minister said, "It is a false allegation."

Mirza had issued temporary fitness certificates thrice to Pinak-6 in violation of law, ignoring several faults he himself identified in the vessel. The existing law allows temporary permit for a vessel once, and for 45 days.

Shipping department Director General Commodore M Zakiur Rahman Bhuiyan said, "It is not lawful to withdraw suspension of an employee when a departmental action is underway."

"So, we sought a decision from the ministry in this regard."

The ACC has meanwhile initiated a probe into anomalies in registration and survey of 56 water vessels done by Mirza Saifur between April last year and July this year.

The anomalies cost the government crores of taka in revenue, sources said.

Eight people, including Pinak-6 owner

Abu Bakkar Siddique Kalu, his son Omar Faruk Limon, previous owner Moniruzzaman Khokon, master's assistant Golam Nabi Biswas, greaser Sabdar Molla, terminal leaseholder Motaleb Howlader, Yakub Bepari and Abdul Hai Sikder have been sued with the marine court in connection with the capsizing.

Only Kalu and Limon are behind bars, while the other accused are at large. The court ordered their arrests on October 2.

A few hundred people have died in at least 64 launch accidents since Shahjahan Khan took office as shipping minister in 2009.

MP Bodi's nephew

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the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), he said.

He was produced before the Cox's Bazar Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court, which rejected his bail petition and sent him to jail.

A case was filed against him under the corresponding law, the OC said.

Abdur Rahman Bodi tops a list of 764 Yaba dealers prepared recently by the DNC. In the comments on the list, it is stated that there are a number of persons involved in the Yaba business under his shelter.

The list was drawn up on January 23 this year by the operation, traffic and intelligence wing of the DNC.

Troubled talks scrabble for exit strategy

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worldwide accord to roll back carbon pollution which is now on track to ravage Earth's climate system.

Meanwhile, the US yesterday warned that failure to compromise could doom a planned global pact and wreck the credibility of climate talks, which remained gridlocked in Lima.

"Failing to produce the decision before us will be seen as major breakdown and will deal a serious blow to... the hope of a Paris agreement," US envoy Todd Stern told fellow negotiators.

"The success of next year's COP in Paris is at stake, and I think the future of the UNFCCC as the body to address

climate change effectively at the international level is also at stake," Stern added.

Theoretically sealed in Paris in December 2015 and taking effect by 2020, the deal would for the first time bring all members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) into a single arena for cutting greenhouse gases.

Its objective would be to ratchet down annual gas emissions so that global warming, driving climate shift, would never exceed two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels.

But the talks in the Peruvian capital to pave the way to this historic agree-

ment have run into a familiar problem -- finger-pointing about which countries should do the heavy lifting.

The source of this lies in a principle of burden-sharing, enshrined in the UNFCCC's charter in 1992.

The greatest friction has been over what to include in the core of the pact: national pledges for curbing Earth-warming fossil fuel emissions.

Developing nations insist Western economies bear the bigger burden because they were the first to use polluting fossil fuels to power their way to prosperity.

Industrialised countries retort that rich and poor countries are now at historical parity in their respective

contributions to the carbon problem.

ANGER OVER COMPROMISE

Campaigners in Lima lashed the proposed compromise as wishy-washy.

"The latest text released during the night was left completely bare," lamented Mohamed Adow of Christian Aid.

If approved, it meant "almost no progress would be made at Lima and all the work punted down the road to be fought over next year in Paris."

"There would be essentially no outcome for people and the planet. It would be the weakest of weak political statements," said Asad Rehman of Friends of the Earth.

Poor countries and small island

states at risk of sea-level rise are concerned that the draft mentions no mechanism to help them foot the bill for damage induced by climate change.

Scientists say a temperature rise of 2 C would be roughly half of the warming that can be expected by 2100 on current emissions trends.

A 4 C world, they say, would be a grim place. It would be a planet gripped by drought, flood, storms and rising seas.

Emissions must be slashed by 40-70 percent by 2050 from 2010 levels and to near zero or below by 2100 for a good chance of reaching 2 C, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in a report issued this year.