

# HRW calls for speedy justice to Nepal's conflict-era victims

THE HINDU ONLINE

Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday called upon the Nepal Government to honour its promises on providing justice to conflict-era victims, ending impunity and delivering a new Constitution. "It is deeply disappointing that Nepal remains stuck in the same place it has been for years in spite of the grand promises made after the end of the civil war," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. The Nepal government made virtually no discernable progress in any of these areas, the rights body said in its World Report 2015 released on Thursday. The report reminded the government of its promise on forming the Commission on Investigation of Disappeared Persons, and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to investigate serious rights violations and abuses committed during Nepal's decade-long civil war from 1996 to 2006, by the end of 2014. The commissions are yet to be formed.

# Dhaka to seek

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from India, was eyeing Myanmar as the country had taken up a 15-year massive plan to generate electricity. Tawfiq said Myanmar had plans to set up 41 power plants from 2016-17 fiscal year and increase its production from 4,581MW to over 29,000MW by 2031. There would be 20 new hydropower plants with a combined production capacity of 6,270MW, he said. Shwe Taung Development Co Ltd has shown interest in setting up a 500MW hydroelectric power plant in the Rakhine state and export electricity to Bangladesh. Alongside Tawfiq, an additional secretary from the energy ministry, a director general of the foreign ministry and two directors from Petrobangla and the Power Division would visit Myanmar's capital Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon to discuss the matters with Myanmar officials.

# Govt tough

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"I'm urging law enforcement agencies to take stern legal actions against them. At the same time, I'm requesting the people of the country to cooperate with those agencies in this regard," he added. Mentioning that people are worried over terrorism and militancy in the changing world, Hamid said, "this clique, impediment to peace and prosperity is not limited to any specific area of a country." "But it's a matter of hope that Bangladesh Police is playing an important role in curbing militancy. Their role has been praised both in national and international arenas," he said. The president also asked the police officials to keep vigil so that no one can raise question over their responsibility and duty. State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan, Home Ministry Senior Secretary Mozammel Haque Khan and Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque were, among other, present at the programme.

# Govt failed

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government must ensure that justice is not dealt out selectively, depending on family or political connections," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. In the Bangladesh chapter of the report, the HRW said supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami threw petrol bombs to enforce strikes and economic blockades. Before and after the election, attackers also vandalised homes and shops owned by members of Bangladesh's Hindu and Christian community. "Child marriage persists as a serious problem. Conditions for the Rohingya refugee population from Burma remained critical with the government making dire threats about forcibly returning them," said the rights group. The report also criticised government's move to introduce a new media policy that "imposed unacceptable limits on free expression and speech". Although the government had amended its labour laws after the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza, workers continued to report intimidation and violence when attempting to form or join unions, HRW said. The HRW also praised the government and the international community for their "will to improve the terrible conditions of the workers in Bangladesh's garment industry".

# Have we reached

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New research finds that the supply of 21 staples, such as eggs, meat, vegetables and soybeans is already beginning to run out of momentum, while the global population continues to soar. Peak chicken was in 2006, while milk and wheat both peaked in 2004 and rice peaked way back in 1988, according to new research from Yale University, Michigan State University and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Germany. What makes the report particularly alarming is that so many crucial sources of food have peaked in a relatively short period of history, the researchers said. "People often talk of substitution. If we run out of one substance we just substitute another. But if multiple resources are running out, we've got a problem. Mankind needs to accept that renewable raw materials are reaching their yield limits worldwide," said Jianguo "Jack" Liu, of Michigan State University. "This is a strong reason for integration ... rather than searching for a one-for-one substitution to offset shortages," he added. Peak production refers to the point at which the growth in a crop, animal or other food source begins to slow down, rather than the point at which production actually declines. However, it is regarded as a key signal that the momentum is being lost and it is typically only a matter of time before production plateaus and, in some cases, begins to fall - although it is unclear how long the process could take. "Just nine or 10 plants species feed the world. But we found there's a peak for all these resources. Even renewable resources won't last forever," said Ralf Seppelt, of the Helmholtz Centre. The research, published in the journal Ecology and Society, finds that 16 of the 21 foods examined reached peak production between 1988 and 2008. This synchronisation of peak years is all the more worrying because it suggests the whole food system is becoming overwhelmed, making it

extremely difficult to resurrect the fortunes of any one foodstuff, let alone all of them, the report suggested. The simultaneous peaking of the world's basic foodstuffs is largely down to the competing demands of a mushrooming population, which is putting ever-greater strain on the land for housing, agriculture, business and infrastructure. At the same time, producing more of any one staple requires the use of extra land and water, which increases their scarcity and makes it harder to increase food production in the future. Finally, increases in production tend to push up pollution, which exacerbates shortages of resources and slows the growth in output. The simultaneous peaking of crops and livestock comes against a backdrop of a growing population, which is expected to reach nine billion by 2050, requiring the world to produce twice as much food by then as it does now, according to a separate study by the California Academy of Sciences. The problems caused by the growing population have been compounded by the growth of wealthy middle-class populations in countries such as China and India which are demanding a meatier diet. This is problematic because meat and dairy use up a lot more resources than if a comparable level of nutrition were provided by crops, grown direct for human consumption. "That trajectory [of needing to double food production] is not a given but more of a warning. It means we have to change how we eat and use food," said Jonathan Foley, the director of the California Academy of Sciences. While the peak production study suggests a doubling of food output could well be impossible, Dr Foley points out that, since 30 to 40 per cent of the food grown globally for human consumption never gets eaten, eliminating waste would go a long way to feeding the growing population. Among the basic foodstuffs examined, only the relatively undeveloped farmed fish - or aquaculture - industry has yet to reach peak production.

# Invitation to PM unlikely

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"But so far I know the qulkhani has been deferred for a couple of days," the leader said without elaborating. Contacted, Khaleda Zia's special assistant Shimul Biswas said the date will be informed to the media once it will be finalised. A BNP insider close to Khaleda said she has been irked by the PM's "aggressive statements and filing of fresh cases against her". "It's almost certain that neither madam [Khaleda] nor the BNP will invite the prime minister to Koko's qulkhani." The BNP insider added the way

Sheikh Hasina spoke about the BNP chief in the last two days had frustrated the senior party leaders who on January 25 decided to request Khaleda to invite Hasina to Koko's qulkhani. A number of senior BNP leaders in a close-door meeting that day agreed that the party lost some political ground after Hasina went to visit Khaleda but had to return from the locked gate. The government, on the other hand, gained some mileage. A BNP leader, who was present at the meeting, said they had decided to ask Khaleda to invite the PM to the qulkhani and even drafted an invitation letter.

# 9 injured

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treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Assistant Sub-Inspector Sentu Das of DMCH Police Camp told The Daily Star. Suspected blockaders hurled at least six crude bombs in front of Gate-2 of New Market around 5:45pm, leaving eight people injured, victims told reporters at the hospital. Around the same time, three crude bombs went off in front of Gate-4 of New Market, leaving a man injured. Contacted, New Market police said they were yet to arrest anyone in this connection. Meanwhile, a total of five vehicles were torched across the country yesterday, according to Fire Service and Civil Defence. Of the vehicles, three were set ablaze in Dhaka, one in Comilla and one in Kishoreganj. Alleged blockaders set fire to a double-decker BRTC bus, which is used to carry Dhaka University students, in front of Curzon Hall around 3:00pm yesterday. A portion of the bus was burnt, an official of the fire service told The Daily Star. None was reported to be hurt in the incident. In Jessore, suspected blockaders torched a packed bus at Kismat Noapara in Sadar upazila early yesterday. None was injured. One person was arrested in

this connection, police said. A mason was burnt on Wednesday night as alleged blockaders hurled a petrol bomb at a CNG-run three-wheeler in Kalipal area on Feni-Sonagazi road, police said. Injured Nawshad, 40, was first taken to Feni Sadar Hospital, and later sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. In Satkhira, police detained 38 people, including 13 BNP-Jamaat men. Barisal police arrested Habibur Rahman, president of Barisal City Islami Chhatra Shibir, from the city for his alleged involvement in subversive activities during the blockade. At least 35 people were killed and around a thousand were injured since the BNP-led alliance announced the blockade on January 5. Of the dead, 23 had no link with politics. According to the fire service, at least 360 vehicles were torched during this period. However, the number of vehicles torched is believed to be much higher. Meanwhile, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the BNP, has called a daylong hartal in Sylhet city and district for Sunday, protesting the "baseless cases" filed against Khaleda Zia and the countrywide arrest and killing of its leaders and activists.

# Canada spy agency runs global Internet watch

Snowden files show  
REUTERS, Ottawa  
Canada's electronic spy agency has been intercepting and analyzing data on up to 15 million file downloads daily as part of a global surveillance program, according to a report published on Wednesday. Critics said the revelations, made in 2012 documents obtained by former US spy agency contractor Edward Snowden and leaked to journalists, showed much more oversight was needed over Canada's Communications Security Establishment (CSE).

The documents are the first indication from the Snowden files showing Canada had its own globe-spanning Internet surveillance in a bid to counter extremists. The covert dragnet, nicknamed Levitation, has covered allied countries and trading partners such as the United States, Britain, Brazil, Germany, Spain and Portugal, the report by CBC News and news website The Intercept said. The Intercept, which includes journalist Glenn Greenwald, obtained the documents from Snowden.

# Thailand accuses US of meddling in its politics

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thailand accused the United States on Wednesday of meddling in its political affairs, saying many Thais had been hurt by remarks of a visiting US envoy who criticized actions by the ruling military junta. The long-time US ally expressed its displeasure about remarks on Monday by Assistant US Secretary of State for East Asia Daniel Russel by summoning the US charge d'affaires Patrick Murphy to the Foreign Ministry in Bangkok. A spokeswoman for the US State Department said Murphy reiterated the US call for more inclusive politics and an end to martial law. He also expressed the US hope "that we will continue to have an ongoing dialogue," the spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, told a regular news briefing.

# Khaleda

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Ahmed Jamadar of the Special Judge Court-3 of Dhaka fixed February 25 as the next date of hearing. In the petitions, the defence said they sought adjournment citing two separate writ petitions filed with the High Court. The defence, in the writ petitions, sought permission for transferring the graft cases from the court of Jamadar expressing no-confidence in him. As the hearing of the writ petitions is now pending with the HC, they prayed for adjournment of hearing of the graft cases, the defence added. The judge also granted two petitions filed for Khaleda's non-appearance before the court. Earlier on January 7 and 15, Khaleda was absent in the court on security grounds. The judge on January 15 fixed yesterday for hearing the two graft cases filed against Khaleda and eight others, and asked the BNP chief to appear before the court. On that day, Khaleda's lawyer AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon expressed no-confidence in Jamadar after the judge rejected four adjournment petitions filed by the defence. Jamadar was appointed as a new judge at the court on December 18 last year after the government had transferred Judge Bashudev Roy as a special judge in Patuakhali. Bashudev Roy had been holding trial of the cases since the charges were framed against Khaleda on March 19 last year. Meanwhile, Metropolitan Magistrate Tareq Mainul Islam Bhuiyan yesterday adjourned until February 26 the hearing on charge framing against Fakhru and 22 others in a case filed over vandalising and torching vehicles at the capital's Malibagh intersection on March 2, 2013.

# Setting food

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can conduct drives against the food contaminators, the minister added. The law has a provision of one to five years' jail term or Tk 4-20 lakh fine for violation of food safety standards. Now determining these standards will be a major test for the government, think food safety specialists. Professor Dr Nilufar Nahar of Chemistry Department at Dhaka University said the standards have to be in line with the Codex Alimentarius [Book of Food], a collection of internationally recognised standards, codes of practice and guidelines relating to foods, food production and food safety. For this, the SFA would need to go through extensive consultations with experts and have appropriate equipment, she said. An expert from the Institute of Public Health said different government institutions have different opinions on food standards. This hampered food safety efforts in the past and may do the same in future as well. This issue came to the fore last year when the government was conducting anti-adulteration drives using a formalin detection kit, which was later found unfit for the job. Also, there were no safety standards fixed by an appropriate authority. Requesting anonymity, the IPH expert said the SFA has to engage scientists in setting a set of food safety standards acceptable for all. Dr Md Khalequzzaman, assistant professor of public health and informatics at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, suggested the authorities work on raising public awareness on safe food and food preservation. "This is a crucial issue that often remains ignored. But we need to work on it now."

# Sujatha sacked

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appointment. The government's action sparked a sharp reaction from main opposition Congress while ruling Bharatiya Janata Party said the government was within its right to appoint officers. An official statement issued late on Wednesday night said the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had approved the "curtailment of the tenure" of Sujatha Singh as foreign secretary with immediate effect. The committee appointed Dr S Jaishankar as foreign secretary with the tenure of two years from the date of assumption of charge or until further orders, it said. The decision to remove Sujatha and appoint Jaishankar was taken at a meeting of the Appointments Committee presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Jaishankar's appointment as foreign secretary two days before his retirement from Indian Foreign Service (IFS) on January 31 and a day after US President Barack Obama left India at the end of a three-day visit. Jaishankar, who was earlier India's ambassador to China, is credited with the turnaround in India's relationship with the US in the last one year. He went to the US at a time when the Devyani Khobragade affair had impacted the Delhi-Washington ties in December 2013 when Congress was in power in India and Sujatha was foreign secretary.

With Modi at the helm, he successfully turned around the relationship -- first by organising Indian PM's US visit in September last year, and then implementing his idea of getting US President Barack Obama as the chief guest for the Republic Day celebrations. Jaishankar is one of the early negotiators of the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal in 2005. He is said to have gained the trust of Modi government due to his diplomatic skills and knowledge on the challenges confronting Indo-US relations in particular, and the world at large. Indian newspapers reported that External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj wanted Sujatha Singh to complete her tenure as foreign secretary but Modi was not in favour of it. Sujatha was not present when Jaishankar, son of Indian strategic affairs expert K Subramanyam, took charge at the South Block office. Congress questioned the timing of the government's decision to remove Sujatha as foreign secretary and wondered whether it was "retribution" for her stand on Devyani Khobragade. Defending the move to replace Sujatha, BJP ruled out any political motive and said the government had acted well within its rights. This is not the first time an Indian foreign secretary has been sacked. In 1987, AP Venkateshwaran was unceremoniously removed as foreign secretary by the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

# ISIS hostage swap

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Jordan said it was still waiting for evidence that the airman is alive and well. "At this point we want to emphasize that we have asked for proof of life from Daesh (ISIS) and we have not received anything yet," Jordanian government spokesman Mohammad al-Momani said. "Rishawi is still in Jordan and the exchange will happen once we receive the proof of life that we asked for," he told reporters. He made no mention of Goto. Jordan has said its priority is to see the airman return home safely. Amman has offered to free the Iraqi woman, who was convicted for her part in triple-hotel bombings in the Jordanian capital in 2005 that killed 60 people, if ISIS releases their airman. While ISIS threatened Kassasbeh's life, it was not clear from its latest message if the jihadist group was ready to free the pilot as part of an exchange. At the Turkish border post of Akcakale, which faces the ISIS-held Syrian town of Tel Abyad, dozens of journalists including some Japanese were waiting for a possible swap. "Until now we have not received any indication that (Kassasbeh) is still alive," the pilot's father Safi Kassasbeh told AFP. "The government has not told us anything about negotiations and I do not think they are taking the situation seriously. There is nothing we can do. We can only wait for the mercy of God and then Daesh (ISIS)," he said. Kassasbeh was captured on December 24 after his F-16 jet crashed while on a mission against the jihadists over northern Syria.

Jordan is under heavy pressure at home and from Japan -- a major aid donor -- to save Kassasbeh as well as Goto. Safi has begged the government to save his son "at any price". Japan, which plays no military part in the fight against jihadists, was thrust onto the front line last week when a video appeared in which Goto and Haruna Yukawa, a self-described contractor, were seen kneeling in the desert. A masked knife-wielding militant said Tokyo had 72 hours to pay a \$200 million ransom if it wanted to spare their lives. When that deadline expired, new pictures appeared to show Yukawa had been beheaded, and a voice identifying itself as Goto demanded the release of Rishawi. Japan has appealed for Amman's help, aware that Jordan holds the key to Goto's safety, but also knowing that intense domestic pressure means the Jordanians must prioritise Kassasbeh. Jordanians have taken to social media to offer messages of support for the pilot, with some writing that his life was "more important" than that of the "terrorist" Rishawi. After conflicting reports on Wednesday about the status of the possible swap, Jordan arrested two managers of a website for spreading rumours that Rishawi had already been released. The Japanese public has rallied around Goto, a respected war reporter and humanitarian. Though they largely support Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's handling of the crisis, that may change if the journalist does not come home alive.

# Biranganas to be included

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more facilities to Biranganas and their children than that of a freedom fighter considering their sacrifice and contribution to the country's Liberation War. He said the Liberation War Ministry had been working to figure out the numbers of Biranganas. Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq told the House the government had already taken all steps to recognise the women as freedom fighters. The House also rejected through voice votes 10 lawmakers' proposal to rename Birangana as Birkonya. Mozammel told the House that Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had given the name "Birangana", so it would not be wise to change the name. The International Crimes Tribunals in December last year said the state should recognise, honour, compensate and rehabilitate the Biranganas who had sacrificed their supreme self-worth

for the cause of the country's independence. The tribunal also said the government should incorporate the stories of sacrifices and torments of the Biranganas into textbooks so the new generations can learn the real history of the 1971 war. According to historical documents, over 2 lakh women and girls were raped by Pakistani occupation army and its local collaborators during the war. After the independence, Bangabandhu had declared the rape victims as Biranganas and taken measures to compensate and rehabilitate them and it continued till 1975, said the tribunal. "Surprisingly, it discontinued after his assassination in 1975 and the process of rehabilitation, both socially and politically, of the collaborators of the Pakistani junta started in the country by military rulers," added the tribunal.

# More than 50 feared dead

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"It sank four hours later. The captain failed to steer the boat straight, losing control at one point," he recalled. Golap Miah, 25, of Narshingdi's Raipura upazila was also pulled out of the water with Ismail and others. He reported having seen fellow passengers afloat around the spot where the accident happened. Ruhul Amin, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazaar, said the boat had sunk for carrying people many times more than its capacity. Thirty two of the rescued passengers

were handed over to Kutubdia Police. Of them, five were being treated at the upazila health complex. Mohammad Alamgir, 30, from Jessore's Bagharpara was among the five admitted for treatment to the health complex. "We were kept at a hotel called Golden Inn until we boarded the trawler," said Alamgir. Of the rescued, the biggest group of 14 came from Jessore and others, in groups ranging from two to seven came from Narayanganj, Bogra, Cox's Bazaar, Narsingdi, Madaripur and Naogaon.