

US to help probe recent killings

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States yesterday reiterated its offer to support Bangladesh in helping investigate the recent killings, particularly foreigners, through sharing information.

The offer was made by visiting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs William E Todd when he met Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at his secretariat office.

"They [US] want to help us by giving information and other things," the minister told reporters at the secretariat after the meeting. US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat also attended the meeting.

Todd along with the director for Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan Affairs in the Bureau of South Asian Affairs at the Department of State arrived in Dhaka on a sudden visit on Wednesday.

In response to a query, Asaduzzaman said they [Todd and Bernicat] came here to convey condolence over the recent killings, including that of policemen, in the country.

He also said the US delegation expressed satisfaction and thanked the

government for tightening security measures in the country recently.

When asked about the issuance of security alert by various countries, the home boss said they issue security alert for their citizens living in almost every country of the world which is usual. "They issue it for the security of their citizens. This is not something additional".

"We talked about a wide range of bilateral programmes between the two nations," Todd told reporters when he was asked about the issues discussed in the meeting.

He said they also discussed broadening cooperation between the two countries in countering violent extremism.

There was no prior announcement of the US delegation's visit to Dhaka, and the US embassy kept mum about the purpose of the visit.

Diplomatic sources said the two-member US delegation would leave Dhaka for Sri Lanka today and was expected to come back on November 8 to hold meetings with top government officials, who were currently on a visit to the Netherlands with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.



Members of Mro National Party (MNP) lining up at Kuruk Patajiri in Alikadam upazila of Bandarban yesterday to surrender their arms to Bangladesh Army and return to normal life.

PHOTO: STAR

Stop use of nat'l anthem as ringtone

SC asks mobile phone operators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court verdict that had directed mobile phone operators to stop using the national anthem as ringtones or welcome tunes on mobile phones.

The Appellate Division of the SC also directed private mobile phone operator Aktel, now Robi, to donate Tk 30 lakh to National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital at Mohakhali in Dhaka immediately for using the national anthem commercially, violating the law.

A four-member apex court bench headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha came up with the order after hearing an appeal filed by Robi against the HC verdict.

Following a writ petition filed by SC lawyer Kalipada Mridha in 2006, the HC on August 5, 2010, declared using the national anthem for mobile phone ringtones and welcome tunes illegal, and directed Banglalink, Grameenphone and Aktel to donate Tk 50 lakh each to three charity organisations for using the national anthem as a business tool.

However, the SC reduced the amount to Tk 30 lakh.

Yesterday's SC order came five months after it had given a similar order for Banglalink and Grameenphone following their separate appeals against the HC verdict, writ petitioner's counsel Masud Ahmed Sayeed told The Daily Star.

He, however, could not say whether Banglalink and Grameenphone had donated Tk 30 lakh each to any charity organisation.

Banglalink and Grameenphone were ordered to donate Tk 30 lakh to Liver Foundation and National Institute of Kidney Research respectively, Masud added.

Cops exposed to risks for lack

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checkpoint in the capital's Gabtoli.

Security expert Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain said faulty training, lack of supervision and seriousness in duty bred unprofessionalism among police constables. For this, he blamed politically motivated recruitments and corruption in the force.

There over 1,00,000 constables in the police force now, according to sources in the Police Headquarters.

Asked why the constables did not open fire on the attackers, Habibur Rahman, superintendent of police in Dhaka, said the sudden attack might have caught them by surprise, and that they did not get time to fire shots.

A top police official, requesting anonymity in line with protocol, said the new phenomena of unexpected attacks might have left them bewildered. "They should remain alert."

According to Mohsinul Kadir, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station, a sub-inspector of the overnight team was supposed to be at the checkpoint opposite Nandan Park until another officer took over.

But no sub-inspectors were on the spot, leaving the five constables without an officer to command.

Police officials claimed that the SI for the day-shift duty was on his way while the other one had left the checkpoint early.

One SI has been suspended over negligence in duty.

Police sources said during a six-month training, constables were provided with only 90 bullets of four different firearms -- Chinese rifle, shotgun, sub-machinegun and pistol -- for two days of shooting practice at different centres, including Bangladesh Police Academy, as Trainee Recruit Constable (TRC).

Besides, while on the job they are allowed to fire 40 bullets of Chinese rifle, shotgun and pistol at a daylong annual programme.

Politically motivated recruitment is another reason why there are so many incompetent constables, according to police sources.

Contacted, Deputy Inspector General Md Nuruzzaman (Dhaka range) of Bangladesh Police admitted that the training constables got was not sufficient.

However, according to the website of Bangladesh Police, while rendering services at different units, constables also undergo different service-oriented training for skill development and

professional growth.

Meanwhile, police remained tight-lipped about the attack and the condition of the three injured constables -- Pinaruzzaman, Mohammad Apel and Mohammad Imran.

They did not even disclose the nature of their injuries or how they suffered those.

Police also did not allow journalists to talk to them.

"The trio were not hacked but might have been injured in scuffles," said an official of industrial police, wishing not to be named.

He added Ashulia police took them under their supervision yesterday.

There are allegations that despite seeing their colleagues being attacked, the constables from Industrial Police-1 did not come forward to protect them. They rather fled the scene.

Left without any clue, police yesterday filed a case against some unknown people.

Describing the incident, Dipak Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Ashulia Police Station, said two to three men on a motorbike made a U-turn near the checkpoint opposite Nandan Park at Baroipara around 7:45am.

The bikers approached two of the five constables. "They talked to two policemen for a few seconds and suddenly started hacking them with sharp weapons."

Police were scrutinising footage collected from a roadside surveillance camera, reports our Savar correspondent.

The footage, collected from Walton Hi-Tech Industries Ltd some 200 yards from the crime scene, shows two men on a bike heading towards Kaliakoir at 7:53am.

They are in jeans and one in a white shirt and another in a black shirt, police said.

IS CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

Yet again, Islamic State (IS) claimed the responsibility for the attack, according to US-based SITE Intelligence Group.

"The Islamic State (IS) claimed an attack on a police checkpoint in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka," says a SITE post yesterday.

Earlier, the Middle East-based militant outfit claimed responsibilities for the killings of two foreigners in Dhaka and Rangpur and the blast at Hossaini Dalan at a Shia religious gathering in the capital.

Bangladesh government, however,

dismissed the claims, saying there was no organisational presence of the militant outfit in Bangladesh.

The Daily Star could not verify any of these claims independently.

Nuruzzaman, deputy inspector general (Dhaka range) of police, denied that there was any IS operation in Bangladesh.

Those who claimed the responsibility for the attack might have used fake identities, he said, adding that they were still working to verify the claim.

No place

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education, uphold the spirit of the Liberation War, expand the field of research and produce students who can compete internationally, he added.

Universities have responsibilities towards common people as well.

Some private universities have recently drawn criticism, he said, adding, "We have to keep in mind that educational institutions should never turn themselves into profit-making business entities. That is not expected."

Instead, these institutions should be centres of knowledge, Hamid said.

Nine-hundred and fifty-nine students were awarded degrees at the convocation. Of them, Mashiat Nawar Chowdhury and Faisal Bin Rashed were given gold medals for outstanding academic achievements.

Congratulating the graduates, the president urged them to apply their knowledge, talents and creativity towards greater welfare of the nation.

He underscored the need for increasing facilities in the country's private universities so that students belonging to poor families can take admission there.

Greeting the graduates, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG, chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Brac University, said a new horizon had opened up before students. He asked them to leave a mark of highest efficiency in whatever profession they choose.

Delivering a convocation speech, Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, advised the graduates to take inspiration from whatever good and creative in the world and from life.

Vice-Chancellor of Brac University Prof Syed Saad Andaleeb also spoke at the ceremony.

Middle-class expanding

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Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

Sen conducted the study styled 'size and growth of the middle class in Bangladesh: trends, profiles and drivers'.

The findings of the study were revealed yesterday at a programme chaired by BIDS Director General KAS Murshid at the institute's auditorium in Dhaka.

In 1992, only 9 percent of the national population belonged to the middle-class category. The amount increased to 20 percent in 2010.

The growth of middle-class has been driven by human capital accumulation and property price appreciation, Sen said.

Human capital accumulation means more people now possess post-secondary or higher levels of education.

Access to post-secondary education, especially English education, salaried jobs in the private sector, digital divide, access to financial saving and credit instruments, access to international migration and initial land or flat ownership appear to be separating the middle-class from the poor, he said.

According to his findings, 48.4 percent of the middle-class population is employed in the private sector and 20.4 percent in the public sector.

About 67 percent of the middle-class population chooses Bangla as their medium for education, while 23.5 percent opts for English. "We need to lay special emphasis on English and make it a second language after Bangla," Sen said.

Some 96 percent of the middle-class people have bank accounts, while 24.3 percent have fixed deposits, 16.8 percent savings certificates, 12.3 percent institutional credits and 19.3 percent investments in the capital market.

Of the middle-class population, 61.3 percent has internet connection at home, 49 percent owns land in urban areas, 33 percent owns flat and 31 percent has earnings in the form of house or flat rent.

Describing the middle-class as a good component for inclusive growth, he said the countries with higher middle-class density are able to reduce poverty faster than those with lower density.

Addressing the event, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said the middle-class will be the driving force behind economic development.

By strengthening the middle-class, a sustainable development will be possible, he said.

Kamal urged the BIDS to widen its research areas to marginalised people.

About 2 crore people live in the haor areas and sustainable development is not possible by keeping them out of the economic purview.

"We need to take up area wise projects to bring the marginalised people to the main economic domain," he said, adding that the project will not be applicable for the hill tracts.

He also stressed on the importance of increasing the revenue collections for implementing such projects. By doing some reforms, an additional Tk 80,000 to Tk 100,000 crore can be collected, Kamal said.

The minister also said all updated data up to 2015 will be available by June next year.

Presenting the findings of a study styled 'employment and labour market: structural change and real wage growth', BIDS Research Director Rushidan Islam Rahman said assessment of Bangladesh's labour market showed some significant improvements in terms of employment growth and performance.

Although the underemployment rate increased from 16.6 percent in 1996 to 24.5 percent in 2006, it gradually declined to 17.8 percent in 2013.

The decline of underemployment rate despite the high rate of growth of labour force reflects an increase in

labour demand. This has resulted in the growth of real wage, she said.

The real wage has risen in both agriculture and non-farm sectors, although the changes have not been uniform over the two decades.

Referring to the total unemployment rate that declined to 4.3 percent in 2013 from 4.5 percent in 2010, she said additional domestic employment generation was only 1.3 million during the 2010-13 period.

During this period, 0.5 million workers were absorbed annually through overseas employment, which shows high dependence on foreign employment with associated uncertainty and other repercussions, she said.

Another aspect of the performance of the labour market where improvements are required is the predominance of informal employment: 80 percent of all employment was of the informal sort.

Despite the observed shortcomings in the quality of employment, progress towards higher employment growth especially women, can help both economic growth and social change in future, she added.

Presenting another research styled 'capital flows to LDCs: lessons for Bangladesh', BIDS Senior Research Fellow Monzur Hossain said the behaviour of foreign direct investment inflows to least-developed countries has changed in the 2000s.

The FDI inflows are not directed towards countries having natural resources in this decade; rather, they were diverted to the LDCs having higher trade openness, human capital and financial depth, he said.

Maintaining macroeconomic stability, developing the financial sector and liberalising the trade regime could be important policy options for LDCs like Bangladesh to receive more external capital to finance development.

Internal harmonisation of policies would provide leverage to LDCs to bargain under the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPA) for receiving more external financing for development, he said.

"Nevertheless, the pipeline has been built up with undistributed aid in many LDCs including Bangladesh due to poor project implementation capacity that led to delays and cost escalation."

Subsequently, the issue needs to be addressed with utmost importance for receiving more external development assistance, Hossain added.

writers, publishers and any other people in Bangladesh who are being threatened with violence. The State must not allow extremist groups to take matters into their own hands."

In the latest attacks last Saturday, publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan was hacked to death in his office in Dhaka and, in a separate incident, three people at another publishing house in the city were reported wounded.

Dipan had published the work of a prominent blogger, Avjit Roy, who himself was hacked to death in February this year. Three other bloggers have been murdered this year, all of whom had written about sensitive social, political and religious issues.

Many others have received threats on social media and there are hit-lists published on Facebook targeting the writers. Some of those threatened have gone into hiding or fled the country.

"I urge political and religious leaders to consistently and unequivocally condemn this spate of vicious killings and threats against writers and publishers and anyone else who may be targeted by these takfiri groups," the High Commissioner said.

Zeid stressed that the State must ensure that journalists, civil society actors and human rights defenders are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and opinion without fear for their safety.

"When people have been explicitly threatened with violence or murder, it is the duty of the State to provide them with effective protection," the High Commissioner said.

Dutch help assured for Delta Plan

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Sheikh Hasina and her Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte at the latter's official residence on Wednesday.

As Rutte expressed interest in Bangladesh deep-sea port projects, Hasina assured the Dutch side of her government's due consideration of the proposition.

A joint statement issued after the talks said the two premiers discussed bilateral and global issues of mutual interest, including trade and investment, private sector development, agriculture, port development and rule of law.

The two prime ministers have agreed to work together to make densely populated delta areas across the world safer and economically more viable in the framework of the Delta Coalition," the statement said.

The two leaders said both Bangladesh and the Netherlands are countries of deltaic nature and there exists immense scope for cooperation between the two countries in the areas of delta management and water resources management.

Hasina lauded the expertise of the

Netherlands in delta management and thanked the Dutch PM for its support in the development of Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.

The two sides expressed satisfaction at the ministerial level visits in recent times and agreed to maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges and consultations.

The two premiers noted with satisfaction the holding of first-ever bilateral consultations between the foreign ministries of Bangladesh and the Netherlands which was held on September 10 in The Hague.

Hasina apprised her Dutch counterpart of various measures taken and incentives offered by her government to promote foreign direct investment in Bangladesh. She invited Dutch investors to invest in pharmaceuticals, leather, agro-processing, light engineering, jute, shipbuilding, power and energy, infrastructure, IT and tourism sectors.

The Netherlands appreciated Bangladesh government's strong commitment towards building a sustainable RMG sector.

Rutte praised Bangladesh as a top

troop and police contributing-country to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), and thanked Bangladesh for the support for the non-permanent seat for the Netherlands in the UN Security Council for 2017-18.

He praised Bangladesh for attaining MDGs and hoped that the country would be a leader in the developing world in implementing the SDGs as well.

He congratulated Bangladesh on being elected as the chair of Global Fund for Migration and Development for 2016.

Hasina and Rutte agreed that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing mankind.

She extended an invitation to Rutte to pay a visit to Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, State Minister for Water Resources Md Nazrul Islam and PM's Principal Secretary Md Abul Kalam Azad were present, among others.

FOUR INSTRUMENTS INKED
Bangladesh and the Netherlands on Wednesday signed four instruments,

aiming to boost bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the fields of education and diplomacy.

The instruments are: Memorandum of Understanding on Foreign Office Consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, Letter of Intent between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh on Training Cooperation for Junior Diplomats from Bangladesh, Memorandum of Agreement between Saxion University of Applied Sciences, School of Creative Technology and BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology and Bilateral Cooperation Agreement/ Memorandum of Understanding between the Saxion University of Applied Sciences and BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology.

The secretaries and officials concerned signed the instruments in presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte at the latter's official residence.