



Robert Gibson, left, and Pankaj Saran, the outgoing high commissioners of the UK and India, call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office. During the meetings yesterday, Hasina hailed the "time-tested" friendships with the two countries and hoped to take the bilateral ties to greater heights.



PHOTO: PMO

Bangladesh won't let insurgents use its land: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reaffirmed that use of Bangladesh's soil by any insurgent group will not be allowed.

"We won't allow any sort of insurgency in Bangladesh... we want a peaceful atmosphere in this region," she told outgoing Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pankaj Saran when the envoy met her at her office.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said the premier stressed the need for unofficial engagements for strengthening cooperation among neighbouring countries alongside official visits.

Hasina said, "We'll work for people and we need more cooperation and support from our neighbours."

She recalled with deep gratitude the unequivocal support and assistance provided by Indian people and government during Bangladesh's Liberation War.

She said India didn't only extend support to Bangladesh, but also gave shelter and provided food to a huge number of people from Bangladesh.

The PM extended her sincere thanks to the Indian envoy for completing his tenure in Bangladesh successfully, and mentioned that the bilateral ties between the two countries reached a new height during his tenure in Dhaka.

"We've witnessed massive development cooperation in all sectors, including security, connectivity, power and energy, trade and commerce, cultural exchange and people-to-people contact," she told the outgoing Indian envoy.

GIBSON MEETS PM

Outgoing British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert W Gibson also met the PM at her office yesterday.

The PM told Gibson that her government attaches great importance to Dhaka-London ties as the United Kingdom is Bangladesh's time-tested friend.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Ihsanul Karim said the premier expressed gratitude to the UK, its people and political leaders for their support during Bangladesh's Liberation War.

She said Bangladesh and Britain have strong bonds of friendship and share common values of democracy and freedom.

She reiterated her government's policy of zero tolerance against terrorism.

The British envoy thanked the premier for extending support and cooperation during his tenure in Bangladesh.

Principal Secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad was present, among others.

UN weighs new measures to choke off IS finances

AFP, United Nations

The United States and Russia are drafting UN resolutions aimed at ramping up global efforts to choke off the Islamic State group's sources of financing, the envoys said Tuesday.

The proposed new Security Council measure would build on a resolution adopted in February that sought to cut off millions of dollars in earnings from IS smuggling of oil and antiquities.

US Ambassador Samantha Power told reporters that the draft resolution "will consolidate and streamline the council's recent efforts on ISIL financing" and introduce "new steps to make the sanctions more effective."

The measure could be adopted around December 17 during this month's US presidency of the Security Council.

Coolly planned, carried out

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GW Choudhury, Yahya's minister, has clearly explained in his book "The Last Days of United Pakistan" (UPL, 1993) that in the name of Operation Searchlight this genocide had begun on the night of March 25.

"The Pakistan Army's brutal actions, which began on the midnight of March 25, 1971, can never be condoned or justified in any way. The army's murderous campaign in which many thousands of innocent people including women, the old and sick, and even children, were brutally murdered ... constituted a measureless tragedy ... The results in human suffering were beyond description," says an excerpt from the book.

"The exact figures of death and destruction will probably never be known accurately ... but Mujib (Bangabandhu) was right when he said that few nations had had to make such colossal sacrifices in human life and suffering as the Bengalis ... Could there be any justification or rationale for the killing of thousands of innocent villagers ...? Villages were burnt wholesale as a part of what was termed by the military Governor Tikka Khan ... a policy of collective punitive measures," says another excerpt.

The beginning of the massacre that now Pakistan denies has been elaborated in another book by Brigadier General Siddiq Salik who was a major in 1971 and who worked closely with Niazi as the Pakistan army's public relations officer.

As tanks and armoured cars were getting ready to catch the sleeping Bangalis in Dhaka unawares, the Pakistani generals sat on sofas and easy chairs laid out on the lawn of Second Capital (now the MP Hostels of Sangsad Bhaban) and made arrangements for tea and coffee to last the night.

In his book "Witness to Surrender" (UPL, 1997), Salik aptly writes: "The city wrapped in starlight, was in deep slumber. The night was as pleasant as a spring night in Dhaka could be. The setting was perfect for anything but a bloody holocaust."

According to the book, "Major General Farman Ali, with 57 Brigade under Brigadier Arbab, was responsible for operations in Dhacca city and its suburbs while Major General Khadim was to look after the rest of the province. In addition, Lieutenant General Tikka Khan and his staff were to spend the night at the Martial Law Headquarters in the Second Capital to watch the progress of action in and outside Dhacca."

At around 11:00pm, "the local commander [Dacca] asked permission to advance ... Everybody looked at his watch." The Operation Searchlight began "with great cunningness, surprise, deception and speed combined with shock action... The gates of hells had been cast open."

The action started with the arrest of Bangabandhu. The message came on

relations officer.

the wireless: "BIG BIRD IN THE CAGE -- OTHERS NOT IN THEIR NESTS -- OVER..."

And then the whole of Dhaka city was ravaged and burned. Salik writes: "... the city of Dhacca was in the throes of a civil war. I watched the harrowing sight from the verandah for four hours. The prominent feature of this gory night was the flames of shooting to the sky. At times, mournful clouds of smoke accompanied the blaze but soon they were overwhelmed by the flaming fire trying to lick at the stars. The light of the moon and the glow of the stars paled before this man-made furnace. The tallest columns of smoke and fire emerged from the university campus..."

An army captain reported on the wireless that he was facing resistance from Iqbal Hall and Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University. "A senior staff officer snatched the hand-set from me and shouted into the mouth piece: 'How long will you take to neutralize the target? -- Four hours! -- Nonsense -- What weapons have you got? -- Rocket launcher, recoilless rifles, mortars and -- O. K., use all of them and ensure complete capture of the area in two hours.'"

After day break, Bhutto left Dhaka for Karachi. He was satisfied that the Bangalis had been crushed. Salik writes: "Before boarding the plane, he made a general remark of appreciation for the Army action on

the previous night and said to his chief escort, Brigadier Arbab, 'Thank God, Pakistan has been saved.' He repeated this statement on his arrival at Karachi.

"When Bhutto was making this optimistic remark, I was surveying mass graves in the university area where I found three pits -- of five to fifteen metres diameter each. They were filled with fresh earth. But no officer was prepared to disclose the exact number of casualties."

But as Salik was visiting the university, more students were being mowed down on the campus on the morning of March 26. A professor of engineering videoed with a portable tape machine hidden on the roof of a building 300 yards from the place where the Pakistani soldiers herded students, teachers and employees of the university. The footage was kept hidden for nine months before it made its way to NBC News. Ron Nessen, reporter of NBC News, reported on this massacre at Dhaka University.

"From the university area, I drove on the principle roads of Dhacca city and saw odd corpses lying on the footpaths or near corner of a winding street," Salik mentions.

This was how the genocide in Dhaka city had begun. On the very first night, the Americans estimated that around four to six thousand civilians were killed in the capital. But this was only a small beginning of what Pakistan perpetrated and now denies.

Govt using Facebook

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feared reprisal, said, "These people are sharing posts for whom? Is it for terrorists or for the general people?"

"Don't the criminals and terrorists know how to log on to Facebook by proxy servers? It's just a farce," the user said.

Facebook use began in Bangladesh in mid 2006 but now it has 1.8 crore Bangladeshi users.

When the government suspended Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber, most users found the move ridiculous.

There were hundreds of free apps, some encrypted, for phones which allow users to bypass the block, not to mention Virtual Private Network (VPN) that were built-in in most modern computers and all smartphones.

Facebook had not only become a part of life but also the main hub for social and business relationships. The ban was hurting businesses badly.

Facebook users and the entrepreneurs called on the government to improve its use of technology to fight crimes since criminals and terrorists could bypass the block and encrypt their communication on Facebook any way.

Mustafa Jabbar, former president of Bangladesh Computer Samity, said, "The home ministry might have reasons for blocking Facebook, but I don't find any rationale behind it." The ministries were making vague arguments to justify the Facebook ban, he

said.

Experts found no rationale behind the ban. They said the platform at best could be used for spreading propaganda.

A number of ministers and ruling party leaders, who are known as avid users of Facebook, have not used the site since the ban was imposed.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahrir Alam, and Prime Minister's Special Assistant Mahbul Hoque Shakil were among them.

However, many other government high-ups were not following their lead.

Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal Lotus updated his profile picture with a logo of Comilla Victorians, one of the teams of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), on November 29.

Gazipur lawmaker Zahid Ahsan Russel, a keen Facebook user, updated his Facebook status the following day about a views-exchange meeting.

Contacted, Zahid, also chief of parliamentary standing committee on youth and sports, said, "I don't know what to say. Actually, I do not have any answer. Perhaps it's because of my habit."

Ashrafal Alam Khokan, deputy press secretary at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), frequently updated his profile pictures in the last few days. His last update was on Tuesday.

Immediately after the election of

Dhaka Reporters' Unity, the official Facebook page of the Press Wing of the PMO congratulated the winners on Monday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board was not lagging behind either. It was issuing updates of the BPL matches and match fixtures on its Facebook page.

The VAT Intelligence, a government organisation, uploaded a picture on Sunday about its drive at a restaurant.

Two pictures of two different events were uploaded on the official Facebook page of Dhaka University. One of the pictures, uploaded on November 26, was about a report launching ceremony.

The ruling Awami League made several posts on its official Facebook page on November 20, two days after the ban was imposed. However, no posts had been made since then.

Pretty much all embassies and high commissions in Dhaka and almost all media outlets have also continued their use of Facebook through out the ban.

Mustafa Jabbar said the internet had become the "lifeline of modern life, businesses and offices." "I don't support restrictions on any technology that people use for their welfare."

"I don't think it is possible to capture criminals by blocking the social media. Moreover, I have no information that the government has been able to catch any criminal using this technology."

Jabbar said people use Facebook

not only for chatting and sharing things but also for news and information on jobs. Facebook has become a commerce platform in Bangladesh.

"Restriction on Facebook for the last two weeks has created a disturbance in the public sphere and is damaging the image of the government," he said.

Small entrepreneurs said the shutdown massively affected their business.

Around 7,500 active Facebook pages were doing business in the country and at least 600 web pages were doing online businesses, according to e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB).

Afsana Shorme, an entrepreneur, said the sale in her boutique business plummeted because of the block and she would have to close shop if the ban continued.

"I will not ask the government to lift the ban. I will just say that Facebook is not just a place for entertainment or means of communication for criminals. It is a place where many Bangladeshis found employment and many families found livelihood," she said.

Seeking anonymity, a student of Dhaka University who had been using Facebook for the last five years said the government move contradicts its vision to build "Digital Bangladesh".

Tarana Halim, state minister of posts and telecommunications division, could not be reached for comments last night despite repeated

HAZARI'S MP STATUS Another judge embarrassed to hear plea

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another High Court judge yesterday felt embarrassed to hear a petition that challenged the legality of ruling Awami League leader Nizam Uddin Hazari's holding the office of a lawmaker.

Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli, a junior judge of a division bench of the HC, expressed his embarrassment without mentioning any reason, petitioner's lawyer Manzill Murshid told The Daily Star.

The bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli would now send the petition to the chief justice.

The chief justice will then assign another HC bench for hearing and disposing of the petition, he added.

On November 12, Justice AKM Shahidul Huq, junior judge of another HC bench, felt embarrassed during the hearing of the same petition. He too did not mention any reason.

The HC on June 8 last year issued a rule asking the government and the Election Commission to explain why Nizam's parliament seat should not be declared vacant.

The rule was issued following a writ petition filed by Shakhawat Hossain Bhuiyan, a Jubo League leader of Feni, claiming that Nizam, who was elected unopposed from Feni-2 constituency in last year's January 5 elections, had resorted to forgery to get out of jail early and run in the polls.

Quoting a newspaper report, Shakhawat in his petition said a Chittagong court had sentenced Nizam to 10 years' imprisonment in an arms case on August 16, 2000. He surrendered to the court on September 14, 2000, and was sent to Chittagong jail to serve his time.

But he was in jail for only five years and was released on December 1, 2005, through fraudulence, Shakhawat claimed.

He said Nizam was supposed to be in jail until September 13, 2010, and he, according to the law, was not supposed to be eligible to run in any parliamentary polls before September, 2015.

The petitioner said Nizam could not have been a candidate in the parliamentary election of January 5, adding that Nizam had provided false information to the EC about serving his jail term.

Qatar says Amnesty claims 'simply untrue'

AFP, Doha

Qatar yesterday dismissed claims it has done almost nothing to tackle migrant labour abuse since being awarded the 2022 World Cup exactly five years ago as "simply untrue".

In a vigorous defence of its treatment of foreign labourers, Doha said an Amnesty International report arguing Qatar should be "shamed" by its lack of reform was inaccurate, lacking context, and wrong.

The world in his hand

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"My manager told me the news before I got to the field. But I got the real feel when everyone started congratulating me on the field. And after that it felt really good," Mustafizur told reporters in Chittagong yesterday.

"I am the first player from the country to be included and it really made me feel happy," he added, as he became the second Bangladeshi on any ICC team of the year list; Shakib Al Hasan being the other, who made the Test team of the year in 2009.

"I am obviously happy. I am supposed to be. I have been given a place alongside the biggest players in the

world and that's good," he added.

According to Mustafizur, though, the achievement won't influence his bowling in any way.

"I always think of doing well. Whether it's before or after [any achievement], I want to do something good for my country," said the left-arm.

The ICC's ODI team has been selected based on players' performances from September 18, 2014 to September 13, 2015. The team also includes Tillakaratne Dilshan, Hashim Amla, Kumar Sangakkara, AB de Villiers, Steven Smith, Ross Taylor, Trent Boult, Mohammed Shami,

Mitchell Starc and Imran Tahir, with de Villiers as the skipper and Sangakkara as the wicketkeeper.

During this time period, Mustafizur played just six ODIs but managed to scalp 18 wickets while majority of the others in that eleven played a lot more matches. The likes of Tahir and Starc played 22 matches each. However, at 12.61, Mustafizur's bowling average was the best of the lot.

His performance against India -- a three-match series where he got 13 wickets -- was a key factor behind Bangladesh's dominance in the series. He added five more scalps in the series against South Africa.

The young pacer's achievement has earned him rich plaudits from all quarters, including his Bangladesh teammates. ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza described this feat as an achievement that 'every Bangladeshi' should be proud of.

"This is a big achievement for all of us. Hopefully he will continue because this is not the end. Hopefully, he will get a spot in the Test side in future as well. But at the moment, the way he has taken a position in such a big place, I think is something that we should all be proud of," said Mashrafe.

"The amount that he has achieved at such a young age... none of us

expected really from him. It's not just the fact that he has got a chance in the ICC ODI XI; it's the way he has been bowling. He has influenced the entire balance of the team for the better," concluded Mashrafe.

Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim said he feels 'privileged to have played alongside Mustafizur', while opener Tamim Iqbal said Mustafizur deserves every bit of recognition that he got.

"That's an absolutely amazing news. He deserves the place; there's no doubt about that, not even 0.1 per cent doubt. He deserves it 100 per cent. Hopefully next year there will be more of us in that list," said Tamim.