

No place for the cohorts of 1971 defeated forces

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hinted that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia would have to face trial one day for "patronising" war criminals, including the executed ones.

"It hurts us that the cohorts of anti-liberation forces still dream of Pakistan despite living in Bangladesh. They couldn't yet forget their 'Pyare Pakistan' [Beloved Pakistan]," she said.

"There'll be no existence of the cohorts of the defeated forces in Bangladesh," she warned.

The PM alleged that BNP founder Ziaur Rahman had first patronized the war criminals and rehabilitated them in state power.

According to Hasina, Khaleda then followed "the path of her husband" after assuming power.

The BNP chief handed over the national flag stained with the blood of millions of martyrs to the war criminals by making them ministers, she further alleged.

Hasina, also the chief of Awami League, was addressing a discussion marking the 45th Victory Day at Krishibid Institution auditorium in the capital.



Ten Indian war heroes, who together with Bangladeshi freedom fighters fought against the Pakistan army during the Liberation War, pose for a photograph at a restaurant in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh 121st best country for business

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has ranked a low 121st out of 144 nations -- behind India, Bhutan, Pakistan and Nepal -- on Forbes' annual list of the best countries for business in 2015.

With a GDP of \$187 billion and per capita GDP \$3,400, Bangladesh falls behind Sri Lanka (91) and India (97), Bhutan (101), Pakistan (103) and Nepal (118) in the region.

The countries which have been placed on the very bottom of the Forbes' list are marked by high levels of corruption and little freedom.

Denmark topped the list on the Best Countries of Business in 2015 list while the US has dropped four spots to number 22, continuing a six-year descent since 2009 when it had ranked second overall.

The United Kingdom and Japan both moved up three spots to number 10 and 23. Germany improved two places to stand at 18 and China rose from 97th to 94th spot.

Of the other countries, New Zealand has been ranked 2nd on the list followed by Norway (3), Ireland (4), Sweden (5), Finland (6), Canada (7), Singapore (8), Netherlands (9), Hong Kong (11) and Switzerland (12).

They're making mark

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December 18, to disseminate information on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants.

When mass migration, heightened by the conflict in Syria and economic crisis, has become a political hot potato, the ILO said its calculations showed migrant workers make up almost three quarters -- 72.7 percent -- of a global migrant population which it puts at 206.6 million people of workage.

Manuela Tomei, Director of the ILO's Conditions of Work and Equality Department, said she believed the data, which relates to 2013, would allow for "better informed debates" about migrants in general and their contribution to the societies they join.

"These are people who make important contributions to the labour market and the economy of countries of destinations," Tomei asserted.

"We believe the most important contribution is that very often the

debates surrounding migration are inflamed debates and are characterised by a mismatch between perceptions and realities.

"So we believe and we hope that these estimates may indeed help in terms of providing further insights and greater clarity to this debate," said Tomei.

For ILO statistical director Rafael Diez de Medina, "this report sets a new standard in the quest to have sound global figures to guide policy makers" and said the issue would over the coming years be at the forefront of the development agenda, reports AFP.

The ILO estimates the total global migrant population at 232 million people but its figures do not show what proportion have migrated illegally or at least not through an established, legal process.

However, Tomei referred to previous ILO findings estimating "irregular migrants" at "between 10 and 15

percent of the total" -- including people without proper paperwork or those who living in a country after overstaying a visa.

The ILO said its findings suggested migrants generally do not compete for employment with native populations with "the vast majority" of them based in the services sectors, followed by industry.

Tomei stated that the study of date from 176 countries showed most people migrate to better themselves and the ILO's methodology would "add significantly to our knowledge base on migration and provide a strong foundation for the development of effective migration policies."

But the ILO warned there was a need to monitor domestic work, describing a sector which typically sees a strong concentration of migrant women as requiring regulation owing to "relatively low visibility" prone to "multiple forms of discrimination."

Efforts to deal with migrant crisis

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and impunity," he warned.

Meanwhile, Germany and seven other EU nations are meeting Turkey to discuss ways of settling thousands of Syrian refugees ahead of the final EU summit of 2015.

Leaders attending will discuss a proposal to resettle Syrians straight from camps in Turkey. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the driving force behind the plans, faces resistance from other EU states.

Yesterday's full EU summit in Brussels is set to focus heavily on the migrant crisis, which has divided members.

Record numbers of people have arrived in Europe this year, prompting some states to build fences and introduce border controls in defiance of the EU's border-free Schengen area.

The resettlement proposal would see EU countries accept Syrian refugees directly from Turkey under a voluntary scheme.

It is hoped the plan will stop people

making the dangerous sea journey to Greece and will be more palatable for EU members than obligatory quotas.

Turkey and eight EU nations - including Germany, Sweden and Greece - are holding a special meeting to discuss the migration crisis before the full summit.

EU Parliament President Martin Schulz said yesterday's so-called "mini-summit" was "not a split but a consequence of lack of solidarity".

European leaders are struggling to maintain unity after a tumultuous year of negotiations, reports the BBC's Chris Morris in Brussels.

Turkey and European leaders struck a controversial deal last month in which Ankara tries to prevent migrants leaving its borders in exchange for financial aid and political concessions.

But plans for resettlement will only move forward if Turkey takes decisive steps to cut off the illegal flow of people crossing the Aegean Sea, our corre-

spondent says.

The wider EU summit will discuss European Commission plans to create an EU coast guard, and other ways to strengthen external borders.

The fight against terrorism is also expected to dominate the summit after it emerged that at least two of the Paris attackers used the migrant route to travel to France.

Ahead of the summit, European Council President Donald Tusk said: "There is no good alternative to border protection."

"Europe cannot remain vulnerable when Schengen states are not able to effectively protect their borders."

However he has been keen to keep migration and terror as separate issues, writing in his summit invitation: "The protection of our external borders is not intended to scare off those who flee wars or persecution".

Many migrants are themselves fleeing violence in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, seeking to reach northern Europe.

Dons stay out of law's reach

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Talking to The Daily Star recently, Mirza Abdullah Baqui, special superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department of police, said, "We have been conducting raids regularly and trying to identify the masterminds. So far, we have not found involvement of any politician or people's representative in human trafficking."

He said this in response to a query on alleged involvement of local influential politicians in human trafficking, especially in Cox's Bazar. With easy access to the Bay of Bengal, the district is considered the hub of the crime in the country.

The CID official said they found that traffickers from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia were involved in human trafficking. They also quizzed the victims and collected information about local and international agents of trafficking networks.

"Many traffickers have gone into hiding, as we have intensified our drives against them."

Baqui claimed that human trafficking through the Bay of Bengal has stopped, as the destination countries have stepped up vigilance.

The Daily Star has talked to a number of trafficking victims rescued from Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar and Indonesia.

Some of them alleged that police

released many of the detained traffickers in exchange for bribes, while others said local traffickers threatened them with dire consequence if they sought legal action against them.

"Local political leaders are backing the traffickers. They asked me to withdraw the case against traffickers," Shariful Islam, a trafficking victim from Sirajganj Sadar, told this correspondent.

He along with 75 Bangladeshis was rescued by Thai police from a traffickers' camp in a dense jungle in Southern Thailand in June. He returned home in August with the assistance of Bangladesh government and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Shariful later filed a case against two local traffickers with Sadar Police Station, but law enforcers are yet to arrest them.

The victims said the traffickers promised them lucrative jobs abroad and tricked them into taking perilous journeys. They lost their money and had to endure unbearable sufferings.

"The traffickers, who tortured us day after day, are still at large," said another trafficking victim, Jahangir Hossain, from Narsingdi.

Asked, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the law enforcement agencies already identified some national and international agents of human trafficking networks.

"We are taking action against the traffickers identified by our law enforcers. The operation to curb human trafficking will continue," he said.

On the cases filed over human trafficking, Law Secretary ASSM Zahirul Haque said they had directed public prosecutors across the country to take steps to speed up trial of the cases.

Contacted, Supreme Court Registrar General Syed Aminul Islam said he didn't have any information on the cases, and that they usually do not monitor such cases.

According to UNHCR, around one lakh Bangladeshis and Rohingyas had been trafficked through the Cox's Bazar-Bay of Bengal route in the last one year.

Most of the Bangladeshis victims are from Cox's Bazar, Narsingdi and Sirajganj while the rest are from 52 other districts, says the IOM.

The victims had to pay traffickers a ransom of Tk 2 lakh to Tk 2.5 lakh each, it says.

IOM National Programme Officer Asif Munier said it appears that human trafficking through the Bay of Bengal has stopped for now, but the law enforcement agencies must remain alert.

"It is difficult for Bangladesh to prevent human trafficking alone, as there is no concrete mechanism to combat trafficking regionally," he told The Daily Star.

The mild cold being experienced largely in the southern part of the country has started to disrupt people's normal life.

Yesterday's lowest temperature in Lalmonirhat was recorded at 13.7 degrees Celsius, reports our correspondent, quoting the Rangpur met office.

A dense fog engulfed the entire district for hours as the sun was not seen.

Farmer Taher Ali, 48, of Khorarpul village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said many like him could not go to work for want of warm clothes, adding, this was hampering local agricultural production.

To fight the bitter cold, many destitute people made fire with nothing but straws and rubber tyres.

Quoting local met office, our Dinajpur correspondent reported

that yesterday's lowest temperature in the district was 9.6 degrees Celsius. Cold started to set in there after sunset on Wednesday.

Our Rangpur correspondent added that the lowest temperature there was 10 degrees Celsius yesterday.

It was just 8.4 degrees Celsius in Sreemangal of Moulvibazar, reported our local correspondent, quoting Harunur Rashid, an official at the met office there.

Meanwhile, distribution of warm clothes was suspended in many places of these districts, only increasing the woes of the affected ones.

Sources said many politicians were refraining from taking part in such distribution programmes in fear of violating the electoral code of conduct ahead of the December 30 municipal polls.

One fatwa for anti-militancy

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Alem-ulema and top police officials who attended the meeting stressed the importance of co-operation between them to tackle militancy.

Yesterday's meeting was the second in two weeks, held amid growing concerns over security threats and probable rise in militancy in the country.

The participants said sermons at mosques across the country during Fridays' Juma prayers would be effective to curb militancy.

As part of a national campaign, teachers are supposed to brief students on the scourge of militancy on a regular basis and imams to deliver anti-militancy sermons before the Juma prayers at mosques.

Though they have significant roles to play in the government's fight against religious extremism, many of them are still unaware of the campaign launched under the Militancy Resistance and Prevention Committee in 2009.

The committee is comprised of officials of different ministries, intelligence agencies and government institu-

tions.

At yesterday's meeting, Fariduddin said some individuals had donated money to mosques and madrasas and become committee members of the religious institutions. Later they were found to be nurturing extremism.

"I even saw imams who could not speak with them, looking at their eyes," he said, urging police to gather information about those individuals.

He also requested all not to spread militancy at waz mahfils (gathering to hear Islamic sermons) through wrong interpretation of Islam.

The Jamaat-e-Islami is responsible for the rise in militancy in the country; its student wing Chhatra Shibir began instilling their ideologies in students at an early age, the Islamic scholar said.

Addressing the meeting, Inspector General of Police (IGP) AKM Shahidul Hoque said the fatwa was a "good decision" but how it would be implemented should be decided by the alem-ulema.

He urged them to assist police in fighting militancy.

"Militancy in our country is at the

eradicating stage now...We want to eradicate it right now with cooperation of all."

Allegations are there that the country's Qawmi madrasas are breeding grounds for militancy, which he does not agree to, the police chief said.

Most of the people arrested in connection with militancy were members of Jamaat, he said.

He, however, reiterated that actions would be taken as per law against those who write against religion.

Additional IGP Javed Patwary of the Special Branch said Islamic scholars' sermons would be more effective than police campaign in tackling militancy, as people would listen to them.

Monirul Islam, deputy commissioner (Detective Branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said most of the suspected militants nabbed by police were aged between 18 and 30.

It is not possible to contain militancy only through law enforcement, he said, adding discussions at mosques could help grow anti-militancy perceptions.

Those involved in militant activities

Mayhem on Mirpur Road

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the market but returned around 20 minutes later with a group of around 20 people, armed with machetes, sticks and firearms and attacked the shop, Habibur went on.

They attacked Sari Mela and beat Habibur Rahman and 14 others.

"They also looted and vandalised some 25-30 adjacent shops," claimed Mohammad Khorshed Alam, joint secretary of the traders' association in the market.

The panicked shopkeepers sought shelter from a group of 7-8 policemen posted outside the market. The cops called for reinforcement that came reportedly almost an hour later.

The traders alleged that police were hesitating in taking actions, prompting them to get organised to resist the "attackers".

As the traders started pelting brick chunks at the students, they retreated and took shelter inside the college campus on the other side of the road. They too began throwing brickbats at the traders.

Police officer Jashim said about 700 students and over 1,000 shop owners and hawkers were engaged in the violence.

Eight of the injured, including three students, took treatment at Dhaka

Medical College Hospital.

The Daily Star contacted the general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's Dhaka College chapter to know if his men were involved in the incident.

"The BCL had no part in it," claimed Sakib Hasan Swim before coming up with another version of how it all started.

"I have heard that the traders had confined a student of the college to the market following an altercation over the pricing of clothes."

They even assaulted a team of Dhaka College teachers who had gone there to free the student, he alleged.

However, Principal Prof Tuhin Afroza Alam of the college denied sending any teacher to the market.

"We are not yet sure what triggered the clash... But our students were obedient. They returned to the campus when we asked them," she told this paper.

The market's business leader Khorshed said their shops are monitored by CCTV cameras and they would give the footage to the police for identifying the attackers.

As of 12:45am today, police did not get the footage, said Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) Mahbubur Rahman of New Market Police Station.

No case was filed and no one was arrested, he added.

MPO-listed teachers may get pay rise from Feb

Says Muhith

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The MPO-listed teachers may get their enhanced salary from February next year, while the new pay scale for them will take retrospective effect from last July, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

Due to the failure of the education ministry officials, it would not be possible to introduce the pay rise for the MPO-listed teachers in January, he said at his secretariat office after the inauguration of online pay fixation.

On December 15, the government issued a gazette on the new pay scale.

According to the gazette, government staffs will get this month's salary in January as per the new pay scale. They will also be given arrears for five months from July this year in two installments.

However, the gazette did not mention anything about from when the MPO-listed teachers will get their raised salaries under the new pay scale.

Winter sets in, finally

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Though the season officially starts from November, people usually start feeling the cold not until the first week of December.

This year, the temperature was higher than the normal December temperature till the middle of this month.

In a 24-hour forecast valid till 6:00pm today, the met office yesterday said light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions. Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere.

Moderate to thick fog is likely occur at places over the river basins and light to moderate fog at places elsewhere during mid night till morning, added the forecast.