

Clinton vetting retired US Navy Admiral Stavridis for VP

REUTERS, Washington

Democratic US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign is vetting retired Navy Admiral James Stavridis as a potential vice presidential running mate, a source with knowledge of the process told Reuters on Tuesday.

Stavridis is dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University near Boston and a former supreme allied commander of Nato.

"Admiral Stavridis is one of the finest military officers of his generation," Michele Flournoy, a former under secretary at the U.S. Department of Defense, told Reuters in a statement.

"He is a person of great ability and integrity, and an exceptional leader. He has the talents, experience, judgment and temperament to serve the American people at the highest levels of our government."

The Clinton campaign declined to comment on the vetting of Stavridis. Stavridis likewise declined to comment on the process.

Flournoy, who formed a think tank after leaving the Defense Department and is advising the Clinton campaign on foreign policy, also did not comment on the vetting process.

Flournoy is thought to be a probable Clinton pick for defense secretary if the presumptive Democratic nominee wins the White House on Nov. 8.

Stavridis and Clinton worked closely together when he was at NATO and she led the U.S. State Department during Democratic President Barack Obama's first term.

Introducing Clinton at a 2013 awards dinner, Stavridis said, "She does the work of two, of 20, of 200 with her energy, with her enthusiasm and with her boundless determination to improve our world," and praised her use of "smart power."

I do love Larry!

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"I can't take Larry with me, he belongs to the house and the staff love him very much, as do I, Cameron said."

The Cabinet Office said yesterday that Larry will continue his work with the new prime minister.

A spokeswoman said: 'It's a civil servants' cat and does not belong to the Camerons - he will be staying.'

Larry, who was re-homed from Battersea Dogs and Cats Home in 2011, was said to have a 'strong predatory drive' that suggested he would be well-suited to the task of rat catching.

Cameron welcomed the cat's arrival at the time, and said he would make a 'great addition' to the Number 10 team.

Larry was the first cat to hold the appointment since stalwart ratter Humphrey was retired in 1997.

Humphrey was so popular that when Tony Blair moved in, officials were forced to organise a photocall to disprove rumours he had been put down by his wife Cherie.

Humphrey was succeeded for a short period by Sybil, the pet of then chancellor Alistair Darling, in 2007 - but the renowned mouser failed to settle and returned to Scotland.

Businesses

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the night of July 1, killing two police officers and 20 hostages, mostly foreigners. Six terrorists were killed in the rescue operation.

In another terrorist attack, which happened six days after the Gulshan attack, four people -- two policemen, a woman and a suspected assailant -- died in the attack near Sholokia Eidgah where hundreds of thousands had gathered for Eid congregation on July 7.

The FBCCI statement said the business community whole-heartedly supported the prime minister's brave and tough measures aimed at tackling militancy and terrorism.

The private sector also urged the government to pay special heed to the issue so that such incidents do not repeat in the future, the statement said.

Incumbent and former top leaders of the FBCCI, and presidents of the Exporters Association of Bangladesh, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the Bangladesh Textiles Mills Association, the Bangladesh Insurance Association, the Bangladesh Association of Banks, and the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries signed the statement.

Brutality beyond

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the citizen -- the attackers bombed and killed two police officers who tried to end the siege soon after it began around 8:40pm on July 1.

The 11-hour hostage situation ended when army commandos stormed the café in the high-security diplomatic zone around 8:00am on July 2. In the operation, codenamed Thunderbolt, five militants and a chef of the café were killed.

Law enforcers said the chef was a suspect, because he "helped" the terrorists. His family denies this.

Another café employee, detained by cops as a suspect, died of injuries in a hospital.

It was the deadliest terrorist attack and the first hostage situation in the country. Terror group Islamic State took credit for the attack, but the government denies it, saying home-grown JMB was to blame.

The attack came after three years of targeted killings of writers, bloggers, publishers, university teachers, secular and LGBT activists and members of minority communities, including Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and Shias.

IS and Ansar Al Islam, which claims to be the local chapter of the al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), claimed credit for many of the past attacks, in which about 50 people were mostly hacked to death. But the government consistently dismissed the claims and blamed opposition parties such as BNP and Jamaat as well as homegrown militants.

Talking to The Daily Star, doctors said they collected samples necessary to determine if the women were raped before being murdered.

AUTOPSY FINDINGS
According to the doctor, 18 of the 20 victims were stabbed to death.

Two others -- a Bangladeshi and a Japanese -- were killed with blows to their heads with heavy objects.

Seven victims had eight bullets in their bodies, Sohel said, adding that

the terrorists stabbed some of the bullet-hit persons indiscriminately to confirm their deaths.

The investigators of the Counter Terrorism unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police wrote to the DMC authorities to collect various samples from the bodies of the attackers to see if they were on drugs.

The bodies of the six are still at the CMH.

And those of the 20 hostages were handed over to their families and representatives.

India to move

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the rules, we will protest it in accordance with the international law."

Talking to our New Delhi correspondent yesterday, a joint secretary (border management) at the Indian home ministry said there was no problem in building fence near the zero line as long as it is in Indian territory.

He said no international law on boundary bars a country from building infrastructure 150 yards from the zero line.

Asked if this issue was discussed with Bangladesh at any home secretary-level meeting or by the Joint Boundary Working Group, he said the matter was not discussed recently, but it was taken up at the last JBWG meeting in 2015.

The meeting at the Indian home ministry reviewed the situation in the border areas in the light of "the recent incidents" in Bangladesh and heightened threat perception of infiltration.

It also discussed issues related to cross-border terrorism, charge sheet and conviction in border crimes, problems of forged identity cards, cattle smuggling and fencing of border.

Chaired by Secretary (border management) Susheel Kumar, the meeting was attended by senior officials of Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi was also present.

Govt to scrap allocation

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Meanwhile, Masood Sayeede, son of another convicted war criminal Delawar Hossain Sayeede, said his father got the allotment of a Rajuk plot in the Purbachal project when Sayeede was a lawmaker during 2001-2006.

He claimed that Sayeede, also a Nayeb-e-Ameer of Jamaat, paid Tk 1.5 or 2 lakh for the plot at that time.

"Now, we have no idea about the plot's condition. We don't even know its location or whether its allotment has been cancelled," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about the government move, veteran war crimes trial campaigner Shahriar Kabir said, "It is better late than never."

He, however, said it was not enough.

"All the moveable and non-moveable properties of war criminals must be confiscated, and the assets should be given to the 1971 victims as compensation," said Shahriar, who is also the acting president of Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee.

Tureen Afroz, a prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal, welcomed the government move.

She, however, said all the books and CDs having statements and sermons of convicted war criminals must be banned too.

India offers

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The decision was taken in a meeting of the cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an official statement said.

The facilities will be offered to the people from minority communities of Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan, namely Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians staying on LTV in India.

"The move is aimed at easing out the difficulties being faced by them," the statement said.

The facilities to be offered are: opening of bank account, permission for purchase of property for self-occupation and suitable accommodation for carrying out self-employment, permission to take self-employment, issue of driving licence, permanent account number card used for filing income tax returns and conducting high-end financial transactions and Aadhar card, an identity card which can be used for multiple purposes.

Besides, free movement of the refugees within a state/federally-administered territories where they are staying, transfer of LTV papers from one state to another, waiver of penalty on non-extension of short term visa/LTV on time and permission to apply for LTV from the place of present residence when the applicants have moved to the place without permission will be granted.

In order to facilitate such persons to acquire citizenship by amending Citizenship Rules, 2009, the provisions will help in the following ways: the district collector/district magistrate would be empowered to authorise an officer not below the rank of sub-divisional magistrate for administering the oath of allegiance to the applicant.

The powers would be delegated to the collectors of 16 districts in seven states -- Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh -- for two years for registration as citizens of India.

The registration fees for the citizenship of India would be reduced to Rs 100 from the existing range of Rs 3,000-15,000.

The Indian government has taken a number of steps during the last two years to facilitate the stay of persons belonging to minority communities of the three countries.

Narendra Modi, during the campaigning for general elections in 2014, had made a distinction between Hindu and Muslim refugees from Bangladesh, arguing that the former should be accommodated.

"We have a responsibility towards Hindus who are harassed and suffer in other countries. India is the only place for them. We will have to accommodate them here," Modi had said.

Solar plane lands in Egypt on penultimate leg of world tour

REUTERS, Cairo

An airplane powered by energy from the sun arrived yesterday in Egypt, the penultimate stop on the first fuel-free flight around the globe.

Solar Impulse 2, a spindly single-seat plane, flew over the Pyramids to make a smooth landing at Cairo airport at about 7:10 a.m. (0510 GMT) ending a flight leg that lasted 48 hours and 50 minutes.

The plane, which began its journey in Abu Dhabi in March 2015 and is due to end it there, has been piloted in turns by Swiss aviators Andre Borschberg and Bertrand Piccard in a campaign to build support for clean energy technologies.

Solar Impulse flies without a drop of fuel, its four engines powered solely by energy collected from more than 17,000 solar cells in its wings. Surplus power is stored in batteries during the day to keep the plane aloft on long-distance flights.

20-party

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responsibilities for many of them although the government blames homegrown militants.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said details of the initiative will be announced after Khaleda's meeting with intellectuals, professionals and senior journalists at her Gulshan office this evening.

A day after the Holey Artisan siege, Khaleda at a press conference called upon all to unite against terrorism without further delay.

Last night's meeting of the opposition alliance was part of her initiative in this regard, according to alliance sources.

Abdul Halim, member of Jamaat's central working council, represented his party in the meeting.

Meeting sources said Halim was silent most of the time.

At one point, Khaleda asked him: "Why aren't you clarifying before the nation that you [Jamaat] had waged a movement with the Awami League against the BNP government of 1991-96."

But Halim did not reply to the question, according to a source who asked not to be named.

Several components of the alliance have objections about Jamaat's inclusion in the anti-militancy campaign, but no one raised the issue at the meeting, said an alliance leader.

Inside the BNP itself, there are opposing views. Some think the move may fall flat if Jamaat is invited in the convention.

During the 1971 Liberation War, Jamaat opposed the birth of Bangladesh. There are allegations that the party sponsors various militant outfits, something it denies.

"Madam's [Khaleda's] call for a national unity to tackle militancy is a timely initiative praised by different quarters. But I am not sure how far she can go with this great plan if Jamaat is involved," a BNP standing committee member told The Daily Star.

After the meeting, the chief of one component told Halim that the unity Khaleda was trying to forge might not be successful because people like Dr Kamal Hossain and ASM Abdur Rob might boycott the convention if Jamaat was invited.

In reply, Halim said these people did not matter in the election.

To this, Khaleda said these people have good reputation, according to meeting sources.

Buddhist monk

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the attack was carried out over a land dispute.

The alleged attacker had been claiming that the land on which the monastery was standing belonged to his family, according to the principal.

However, locals said the land had been sold a few years ago, he added.

Mong Tha Sin, president of the managing committee of Woi Ma Tara Buddha Bihar, said there had been a longstanding dispute between the victim and the alleged attacker over the matter.

He said Upendita had been living at the monastery for the last 20 years.

The forefathers of the alleged attackers were landlords and used to own the land, he added.

OC Bakhtiar said they were trying to arrest the alleged attacker. They also asked the Border Guard Bangladesh to remain alert so that the suspect could not flee to Myanmar through the border, he added.

The injured monk had wounds on his head, shoulder and other parts of the body.

He was first taken to the Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital and was later referred to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital, said a doctor at the Cox's Bazar hospital.

The monk lost a good amount of blood in the attack, added the doctor.

A case was being filed, said police sources.

Indonesia hopes fishermen can net its S China Sea claims

REUTERS, Jakarta

Indonesia wants to send hundreds of fishermen to the Natuna Islands to assert its sovereignty over nearby areas of the South China Sea to which China says it also has claims.

President Joko Widodo has launched an unprecedented campaign to bolster fishing, oil exploration and defence facilities around the island chain after a series of face-offs between the Indonesian navy and Chinese fishing boats.

"We are aware that if we don't do this there could be many claims that disrupt the integrity of Indonesian territory," Chief Maritime Minister Rizal Ramli told reporters yesterday.

The announcement of the plan came a day after the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague rejected China's historic claims to almost all of the South China Sea and said it had breached the Philippines' sovereign rights by endangering its ships and fishing and oil projects.

Indonesia is not part of the broader dispute over claims in the South China Sea and it has remained neutral following the ruling, calling for peace and stability.

But Indonesia objects to China's inclusion of waters around Natuna being included within its "nine-dash line", a demarcation on China's maps to show its claims.

Ramli said he would seek cabinet approval this month for the relocation of fishermen from the crowded

island of Java to Natuna.

Under the plan, the government would move about 400 wooden boats of 30 tonnes or more to Natuna by the end of October. Fishermen who go could get subsidised housing, while the island's ports, power supply and internet will be upgraded.

The programme is expected to boost fishing in Natuna waters from 9.3 percent of sustainable catchment levels to 40 percent in less than a year.

"We will build cold storage there. We hope this will become the biggest fish market in Southeast Asia," Ramli said.

Ramli, who also oversees energy as part of his portfolio, said he also would review oil and gas concessions in Natuna and revoke permits from companies that are not developing their blocks.

ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, and PTT Exploration and Production are among foreign oil companies with stakes in Natuna, which holds one of the world's largest untapped gas reserves.

Indonesia's foreign minister, Retno Marsudi, said no one wanted conflict in the South China Sea and she called on all parties to avoid raising tension.

"We are sure that if all sides respect international law, then it will be easier to achieve regional and global peace and stability," she told reporters.

American retailers

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in September 2014.

Now, engineers of the agency have been inspecting the progress of remediation of the corrective action plans laid out by them during the preliminary inspection.

The US State Department on Monday warned Americans to consider carefully whether they need to travel to Bangladesh.

"The advice from most embassies is to keep as low a profile as possible," according to Reuters as the former US ambassador to Bangladesh was saying.

Moriarty said many major brands were holding off on sending foreign staff to the country, although most had Bangladeshi or South Asian staff leading their operations in the country.

"I do have confidence that the people who are committing these attacks are a very small minority with very small support," he said.

Moriarty said the Alliance -- set to run until 2018 -- was ahead of schedule in improving safety at some 700 factories its members work with in Bangladesh, calling the safety drive a "moral imperative", Reuters said.

As of yesterday, 28 member factories have completed their Corrective Action

Plans, which is 17 percent higher than the last updates by the agency.

In all factories, more than one-third of the issues most critical to life safety have already been addressed two years ahead of the deadline.

The Alliance members so far suspended business relations with 83 factories for their failure to make adequate remediation progress.

"Make no mistake -- our work is achieving the big-picture goal of driving consolidation of the RMG industry in Bangladesh into safer factories," he said.

The Alliance members trained 1.2 million workers in fire safety. "We are now in the process of re-training our entire workforce and we've provided this refresher to some 600,000 workers to date," Moriarty said.

Moreover, the Alliance provided training to more than 22,000 security guards in the member factories.

"We have also provided financial compensation to nearly 7,000 workers displaced by remediation, fulfilling 100 percent requests from factory owners, and helping workers provide for themselves and their families despite the temporary closure of their factories."

Trapped in abusive

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working in Oman, according to Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

Oman is now the largest destination for Bangladeshi male and the third largest destination for female jobseekers, according to statistics of BMET.

Talking about the HRW report, Zahed Ahmed, counsellor (labour) at the Bangladesh Embassy in Muscat said there are some incidents of abuses -- workload, passport confiscation, irregular salary payment and beating.

"Like other Middle Eastern countries, domestic workers including Bangladeshis are also facing abuses in Oman. As the domestic maids are being hired individually or privately here, it is difficult to assess all the employers," he told The Daily Star from Oman over the phone yesterday.

The counsellor stressed the need for bringing in reforms in the recruitment of domestic maids and ensuring proper training for interested domestic workers so that they could know about the culture and tradition of Oman.

According to the report, most of the workers interviewed by HRW said their employers confiscated their passports, did not pay them their full salaries, forced them to work excessively long hours without breaks or days off, or denied them adequate food and living conditions.

In one documented case, Bangladeshi Asma K said she went to the UAE to work there, but her recruitment agent "sold" her to a man who confiscated her passport and took her to Oman.

He forced her to work 21 hours a day for a family of 15 with no rest or day off, deprived her of food, verbally abused and sexually harassed her, and paid her nothing, she told HRW.

She said her employer made her work from 4:30am until 1:00am without rest. "For the entire day they wouldn't let me

sit. I used to be exhausted ... He wouldn't give me food. When I said I want to leave, he said, 'I bought you for 1,560 rials (US\$4,052) from Dubai. Give it back to me and then you can go.'"

Some said their employers physically abused them; a few described sexual abuse.

The situation is so dire that some countries, such as Indonesia, have banned their nationals from migrating to Oman and other countries with comparable track records.

The report said Oman's restrictive kafala system, also used in neighbouring Gulf countries, ties migrant domestic workers' visas to their employers.

HRW urged the Omani authorities to provide the domestic workers with labour law protections equal to those enjoyed by other workers, and investigate all situations of possible trafficking, forced labour, and slavery.

The organisation, however, claimed that the Omani government did not respond to its requests for information on law reforms or other measures to protect domestic workers' rights.

Court to decide

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In all the cases, Khaleda Zia has been shown as the mastermind. Moreover, police showed her and twenty others fugitives in the charge sheets as they did not secure bail.

The case's investigation officer also appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against them.

The names of twenty, including Khaleda, are common in both the charge sheets.

The accused include BNP leaders Amanullah Aman, Habib-Un-Nabi Khan Sohel, Sultan Salauddin Tuku, Khaleda's Special Assistant Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas and her Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan.