

Islamabad Saarc summit

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The attack left 18 Indian troops dead. For Bangladesh, the reason is Pakistan's repeated interference in its internal affairs.

"We have formally communicated with the Nepal government and told it that we would not be able to attend the Saarc summit," a top official of the Bangladesh foreign ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about the reason, the official said Dhaka in a formal letter has informed the Saarc chair that Islamabad made "uncalled for reactions after the execution of war criminals in Bangladesh that amount to direct interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country, which is totally unacceptable."

Diplomatic tensions between Bangladesh and Pakistan have long been escalating, with each government summoning the other's envoy to lodge strong protests over the execution of war criminals, mostly Jamaat leaders for their crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971. Diplomatic sources said there was an early indication that uncertainty could loom over the summit following the recent escalation of diplomatic tension and developments in the South Asian region.

There were media reports that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not travel to Pakistan to attend the summit.

Highly-placed sources said India was first to convey the message to

Nepal. In response to a query, the Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India yesterday said the country has informed the Saarc chair that increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in the region and growing interference in the internal affairs of member states by one country have created an environment that is not conducive to the successful holding of the summit.

India remains steadfast in its commitment to regional cooperation, connectivity and contacts but believes that these can only go forward in an atmosphere free of terror, according to a MEA statement.

It also said: "In the prevailing circumstances, the Government of India is unable to participate in the proposed summit in Islamabad. We also understand that some other Saarc member states have also conveyed their reservations about attending the Islamabad summit."

Our New Delhi correspondent reports: Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar summoned Pakistan's High Commissioner to India Abdul Basit earlier yesterday and gave him "proof" that the terrorists who attacked the army base camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir came from Pakistan.

The Indian government said two men arrested with the help of villagers have said they belong to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and served as "guides" to help the four terrorists cross over the border.

One of the terrorists who were shot

dead has been identified as a resident of Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Jaishankar also told the Pakistani high commissioner that a third Pakistani arrested recently has revealed that he was trained by terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba for several weeks.

Pakistan has rejected the allegations of its involvement in the Uri strike.

In January, an air force base in Pathankot in Punjab state of India near border with Pakistan was attacked by Pakistani terrorists in which seven Indian military personnel were killed.

Pakistan had formally extended the invitation to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the Saarc summit.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the member states of the organisation.

PAKISTAN TERMS INDIA'S DECISION 'UNFORTUNATE'
The Pakistan foreign office yesterday reacted to the India's decision about skipping the summit, calling it 'unfortunate'.

Mohammed Nafees Zakaria, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, tweeted that India had not officially notified them about its decision yet.

He, however, said: "...it is India which has violated the international law and UN charter by interfering in the internal matters of a sovereign state, Pakistan."

AK-22, rifle recovered

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supremacy there.

The groups used locally-made firearms and sharp weapons, but the recovery of the AK-22 rifle is an indication of militant's involvement, said Rab.

The arms might belong to militants as AK-22 appears to be their favourite, said Lt Col Miftah Uddin Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab-7.

Militants in guise of low-income people might have kept the weapons there, he said, adding that the culprits

fled sensing law enforcers' presence.

The Rab, however, detained two people for interrogation, said Miftah, but did not disclose their identities.

"We are yet to confirm who brought the weapons to the slum. We are investigating."

Militants used AK-22 rifles during the Holey Artisan attack in Gulshan on July 1.

Miftah said last year Rab recovered nine more AK-22 rifles, eight from the dens of militant outfit Shahid Hamja

Brigade and one from pirates in Sandwip, Chittagong.

The firearm was also recovered from the militant dens in Dhaka's Kalyanpur and Narayanganj.

Bastuhara Slum houses about 300 shanties. Locals, however, believe the recovered weapons belong to drug peddlers, who sell yaba tablets, phensidyl and cannabis.

A slum dweller said they cannot protest against the criminals for fear of life.

2 Bangladesh-born Germans held

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Initially, customs and the Rapid Action Battalion through SMSs said they seized nine pistols, but later customs said those were pistol-like objects.

Four of them are of WALTHER brand; German-made while five others of Turkey-made ZORAKI brand.

Customs officials found them while scanning a carton carried by Monir Ben Ali who flew to Dhaka around 8:40am in an Emirates flight from Munich via Dubai. A co-passenger Anis Talukder was also detained as a suspect, customs officials said.

Monir said those are gas signal pistols that create noise and generate smoke. No bullet can be fired by the pistols usually used in films, he added.

Seizing the objects, the Rab and customs officials informed newsmen through SMSs of a media briefing at the airport at 4:00pm but later cancelled it.

The detainees will be in their custody until they get expert opinions regarding the "pistol-like objects", said SM Sohel Rahman, joint commis-

sioner of customs.

If ballistic tests by experts of the Criminal Investigation Department find them as firearms, a case will be lodged against them, and if those are toy pistols, they will be released on payment of customs duty, he told The Daily Star.

For toys, customs duty is around 150 percent while for firearms imported by civilians, necessary papers should be produced with 300 percent duty, Sohel said replying to a query.

Monir, from Sreenagar upazila in Munshiganj, said he owns three restaurants in Munich of Germany while Anis, from Jainshah village of Munshiganj, said he owns a departmental store in that country.

Both claimed to have been living in Germany for around 30 years and that they know each other.

Monir told this correspondent at the airport that the proprietor of Emran Arms and Co, a firearms shop at Baitul Mokarram in the capital, had visited Germany last year to attend a fair there when he got introduced with

him.

The proprietor asked him to buy the gas pistols as those have demand in the film industry. He said each of the pistols cost him only 120 Euros (about Tk 10,500), but the arms shop owner assured him of paying Tk 50,000 for each of them.

Asked if Monir could show any document against his claim, the customs joint commissioner said he had declared those to the airlines as per the law and the airlines informed the airport customs accordingly.

Earlier around 2:40pm, Sohel on phone said that since the two tried to get the items cleared showing them as toy pistols, they called the Rab for expert opinions.

"Experts from the Rab scrutinised them and said the items are genuine firearms," he said.

Contacted, a staff of Emran Arms and Co wishing anonymity said the shop sells only firearms directly imported from abroad.

He refused to give any contact number of the shop owner.

Hannan Shah passes away

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he prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family members.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir also expressed deep condolences over the death of their party colleague.

The BNP announced a four-day mourning programme till September 30 and directed party men to fly party flag at half-mast atop the party offices across the country.

Hannan was vocal in 2007 after the 1/11 political changeover by taking a strong position in favour of Khaleda to prevent the party's split by a group of reformist leaders. He also criticised several decisions of the then caretaker government.

He recently lambasted the BNP high-ups over forming the fresh executive

committee and said many loyal and dedicated leaders did not get position as the top leaders did not talk with senior leaders like him.

On September 6, Hannan Shah complained of chest pain at his Mohakhali DOHS residence and was taken to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka. After that he was flown to Singapore on September 11 for better treatment, Rezaul added.

He said his father's body was scheduled to arrive in the country by 6:00pm today.

His first namaj-e-janaza was held in Singapore. The second one will be held in the city's Mohakhali DOHS mosque around 10:00am tomorrow, the third one at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad around 11:30am and the fourth one in front of party's central office after Zohr prayers, said a press release.

Hannan Shah's body will be taken to

Gazipur on Friday. Three more namaj-e-janazas would be held there before his burial at the family graveyard in Kapasia.

He was born in Kapasia's Ghagtia in 1941. His father Fakir Abdul Mannan was a minister of the Pakistan government in 1965-68.

Hannan Shah was commissioned in the Bangladesh Army in 1962 and retired in 1981 as a brigadier general, said Reza.

He joined BNP in 1983 and was made Dhaka city unit's joint convener. He was inducted into the cabinet when BNP came to power in 1991 as the jute minister. He was made a party standing committee member in its fifth council in 2009 and in its sixth council this year as well.

He was elected MP twice from the Gazipur-4 constituency.

attention in the nets as the team management desperately wants him to hit form.

The extra effort in fielding was something that Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe put emphasis on while attending a pre-match briefing yesterday.

"We can accept rustiness in batting or bowling since we are playing after almost one year. But we cannot accept any excuse regarding fielding which has nothing to do with a long gap," said the inspirational Bangladesh captain with most ODI wins under his leadership.

Asked if there is any plan to change the formation of the team, he said: "We are yet to discuss anything about the team for the second game. At the moment we more focused on the

mistakes we made in the first game."

Although Mashrafe refused to speak about the team, it is likely that Bangladesh might field the same eleven that played in the first game. If it is the case then a Bangladesh debut for young batsman Mosaddek Hossain, who hit a fine 74 in the lone practice game at Fatullah, would be delayed.

However, with the team management led by Hatuhursingha remaining flexible to selection issue till the last moment, one cannot rule out a change in the line-up.

A change or not, rain or no rain, it's for sure that Bangladesh will come out harder in their already fortified fort today.

BTRC blocks Istitution blog

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The telecom regulator has blocked Istitution, a popular Bangla blog in Bangladesh, at a law enforcement agency's request.

On Sunday, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) directed the International Internet Gateway operators and other relevant operators to block Istitution immediately until further notice.

Top BTRC officials have confirmed the matter but declined to make official comments on it.

"In many cases, we also get requests from intelligence agencies [to block various sites] and we have nothing to say about it," said one of the officials.

"We don't block anything on our own. Sometimes, the BTRC works on requests from different agencies working to maintain law and order," he added.

The BTRC officials said Istitution was blocked just in Bangladesh and it could still be viewed from abroad.

In the last few months, the government has blocked different blogs, messaging services and Facebook pages, saying those promote atheism and criticise Islam.

The BTRC was directed to block 35 news sites in the first week of last month.

The government had also blocked Facebook and WhatsApp, Viber and other similar apps for 22 days after the Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for war criminals Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed in November last year.

In 2012, YouTube was blocked for a year in Bangladesh.

World's first baby

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John Zhang, a doctor from the New Hope Fertility Center in New York City to have a baby that would be genetically related to them but would not carry the inherited disease.

The United States has not approved any three-parent method for fertility purposes, so Zhang went to Mexico where he was quoted by New Scientist as saying "there are no rules."

One method that has been approved in the United Kingdom, called pronuclear transfer, was deemed unacceptable to the couple because it would involve the destruction of two embryos, said the report.

Since the mother carried the genes for the disease in her mitochondria, or DNA that is passed down from the maternal side, Zhang used her nuclear DNA and combined it with mitochondria from an egg donor, in a technique known as spindle nuclear transfer.

Key accused

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having a meeting with Puja Udjapan Parishad over security of the upcoming Durga Puja yesterday.

Six suspected operatives of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh have been arrested in India.

Three of them are Bangladeshi nationals. They are Faruk, Mohammad Rubel alias Rafique and Zabirul Islam alias Zahid, Joint Commissioner (detective) of Kolkata police Vishal Garg told reporters at the Kolkata police headquarters on Monday.

"We have learned that they have been arrested. If so, it is big news for us," Kamal said, adding, officially they were not yet informed about it.

Responding to a query, the home minister said, "We have an extradition treaty with India. So, we can bring not only Faruk but also any other wanted criminals."

According to police, Faruk used to lead a JMB faction and allegedly masterminded the Trishal prison van ambush.

The JMB men snatched away three top JMB leaders, killing a policeman in the ambush on February 23, 2014. Later on, one of them was killed in "crossfire".

Faruk was arrested in the city's Mirpur-1 area on July 10, 2007 after a brief firefight with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). He secured bail in 2012 and took nearly two years to prepare for the Trishal attack, investigators said.

He is also the prime accused in the 2007 murder case of madrasa teacher Rafiqul Islam of Mymensingh.

On the Durga Puja, the home boss said adequate security measures have been taken to ensure that people of the Hindu community in the country could celebrate their largest festival without any hassle.

He said four Ansar members would be deployed alongside policemen in every puja mandap across the country in a bid to avoid any untoward incident.

Besides, members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) would patrol alongside police forces in the districts adjacent to the border, he added.

37,000 die

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The UN agency previously warned that tiny particulates from cars, power plants and other sources were killing 3 million people worldwide each year, added the report.

For the first time, the WHO has broken down the figure to a country-by-country level. It said most of the air pollution comes from cars, coal-fired plants and waste burning, but not all of it is created by humans. Dust storms in places close to deserts also contribute to dirty air.

Most of the total deaths worldwide - two out of three -- occur in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific regions, which include China, Vietnam, Japan, Australia, South Korea and small Pacific island states.

Sixteen scientists from eight international institutions worked with WHO on the analysis, which gathered data from 3,000 locations, using pollution monitors on the ground, modelling and satellite readings.

Galvin Shaddick, who led the international team that put together the data, said: "The real driver of ill health is ultra-fine particles, 2.5s -- they have the ability to permeate the membrane of the lungs and enter our blood system."

Poonam said introduction of clean and sustainable energy policies and efficient cooking technologies are a key part of the actions needed to clean up household air pollution caused by the burning of solid fuel such as wood for cooking purposes.

Addressing outdoor air pollution requires a focus on the sources of pollution through a whole-of-government approach. Solutions go beyond simply controlling emissions and should include choices that actively promote health, she observed.

Further efforts and investments should be made to encourage as many cities and countries in the region to closely monitor

air quality, Poonam noted.

Maria Neria, director at the WHO's public health and the environment department, told The Guardian that Canada and Scandinavian countries deserved praise for curbing air pollution.

"France is taking a lot of action, Paris is taking aggressive measures: aggressive in the good sense. [It] maybe unpopular because it's for the health of people but they are putting some restrictions on individuals. We all need to understand this is a matter of public health," she said.

Slum girl dies

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[under Department of Social Services for vagrants tumbled down on the tin shed at around 2:30am, he added.

Several families had been living next to the abandoned structure by building makeshift houses and they did not vacate the piece of land although they were warned of the imminent danger numerous times, the OC said, quoting shelter authorities.

Ismail, brother of the deceased, told The Daily Star that they built the tin shed on their own next to the vagrant shelter and had been living there for years.

A staff member of the shelter told this correspondent that the building was declared abandoned several years ago and the demolition work would commence after the completion of formalities.

The occupants of the shanties were given warnings several times, but they did not evacuate the area, he added.

This correspondent, during a visit to the spot, noticed a number of large cracks on the abandoned building and saw residents of a few other shanties moving out with their belongings.

MP hit him

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Information and Communication Technology Act for threatening Awami League MP Anupam Shahjahan, appeared before the HC following its suo moto rule.

However, according to the UNO's lawyer, the boy was sentenced on charges of carrying marijuana.

Tangail's Sakhipur UNO Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, also an executive magistrate, and Sakhipur Police Station's OC Mohammad Maksudul Alam also appeared before the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das as per its September 20 order.

After hearing arguments, the HC bench fixed October 18 for passing order on this issue.

Following a report published in The Daily Star under the headline "Boy jailed for FB comment about MP", the HC on September 20 issued the suo moto rule and asked the UNO and the OC to appear before it yesterday and explain why a schoolboy was sentenced to two years in jail under the ICT act over alleged threats made to a lawmaker via Facebook.

The HC also granted Sabbir, a student of Protima Bonki Public High School, bail and asked him to appear before it yesterday with relevant documents to ascertain his age.

Sabbir told the HC, "I was home on September 16. At 9:00pm, someone called me from outside. I came out and saw a man in plainclothes and a policeman. They asked me to go to the police station. They took me to the office room of the OC. The OC showed me a mobile phone and asked me what I had written. I said I did not write that. He repeatedly questioned me about it and I replied I did not write that."

"Then I was taken to the MP's house. I saw that the MP was sitting on a sofa. I was produced before the MP. He [the lawmaker] asked me what I had written against him. Then he hit me twice. I didn't mind, thinking he might be angry. The MP asked the OC to take me to the police station.

"I was taken to the police station where the OC severely tortured me blindfolded and threatened me with crossfire. Fearing crossfire, I confessed I wrote that. The OC asked me not to write such things anymore. After three days, I was taken to the UNO's room. The UNO kicked on my chest, and I fell unconscious. Someone took me away. I was taken to the police station and the OC told me I was handed two years' imprisonment."

Sabbir burst into tears and told the court that he wanted justice.

The court asked him if anybody had taught him to say all these before it, and whether he had carried marijuana.

He replied that nobody had taught him, and that he does not smoke marijuana.

Justice Enayetur Rahim questioned how things would go if a public representative gets so sensitive.

"Our judgments are criticised on Facebook and YouTube, but we don't take those into cognisance," he said.

The HC asked advocate Khurshid Alam Khan, who placed The Daily Star report before the judges on September 20, to submit Sabbir's statement to the court through swearing an affidavit.

During yesterday's hearing, UNO Rafiqul's lawyer SM Rezaul Karim told the HC that there is no connection

between the general diary lodged in favour of the MP and the instant mobile court verdict.

Acting on a tip-off, the magistrate went to the place of occurrence and ordered police to arrest Sabbir after recovering marijuana from his possession, he said, adding that Sabbir pleaded guilty and then the magistrate convicted him.

If Sabbir was aggrieved at the process of trial court and its judgment, he could have filed an appeal with the appellate forum, but without opting for an appeal, he made up a story advocate Rezaul Karim said.

It is an alibi which cannot be accepted, he argued.

The counsel said the impression The Daily Star report gave was that the magistrate had acted beyond his lawful authority, as the ICT act is not within the mobile court's schedule.

Justice Enayetur Rahim asked the lawyer whether a mobile court carries any computer during its operation, as the order of conviction and sentence against Sabbir was composed by a police in a computer.

Rezaul Karim said mobile courts cannot carry any computer, but the order against Sabbir was composed in a computer so that the court cannot raise questions in this regard.

The court asked whether the mobile court can sentence Sabbir to two years' imprisonment for carrying only 100 grammes of marijuana, as the minimum punishment for carrying it is six months' jail and the highest punishment is three years' imprisonment.

The lawyer said the mobile court could sentence any accused to highest two years' imprisonment in such a case, no matter whatever is mentioned in the Narcotics Control Act 1990.

OC Maksudul's lawyer Nurul Islam Sujat told the HC that The Daily Star report was misleading and run intentionally to tarnish the image of the lawmaker.

The editor and reporter concerned should be ordered to appear before the court, he said.

The HC asked The Daily Star reporter to submit an affidavit on the authenticity of its report to it by October 18 and exempted the UNO and the OC from personal appearance before it.

On September 18, Bangla dailies Prothom Alo and Jugantor published reports saying Sabbir was detained for allegedly threatening MP Anupam Shahjahan. On September 19, The Daily Ittefaq published a report saying Sabbir was convicted by the mobile court for threatening the MP via Facebook.

Khurshid Alam told the HC that there were some anomalies in the statements of the mobile court verdict regarding the charge framing against Sabbir and the seizure list.

The seizure list of the case was made at 5:15pm on September 18, but the charge was framed and the mobile court verdict was delivered around 5:00pm the same day, he said, adding that the seizure list is supposed to be made before the charge framing and the delivery of the order.

Being driven by conscience, Khurshid said, he placed The Daily Star report before the HC on September 20 to examine whether the mobile court delivered the verdict in accordance with law, not to malign the lawmaker.