



Visiting Indian Defence Minister Manohar Gopalkrishna Prabhu Parrikar calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO:
PID

India proposes

FROM PAGE 1

one of the three aircraft that formed part of "Kilo flight", which was raised at Dimapur in 1971 with support of the Indian Air Force.

It was the first fighting formation of the nascent Bangladesh Air Force during the Liberation War.

The minister highlighted the role of the valiant Bangladeshi pilots who carried out multiple missions against all odds from these aircraft and accounted for destruction of a large number of enemy assets during the war.

The airframe, meant for display at the Liberation War Museum in Agargaon, was flown to Dhaka two days earlier.

Reiterating her government's "zero tolerance policy" against terrorism and militancy, Hasina said no one would be allowed to use Bangladesh's soil for carrying out terrorist activities against any country, UNB reports.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said the premier recalled with

gratitude the contributions of the Indian armed forces to Bangladesh's Liberation War.

Hasina said during her upcoming visit to India she would honour those valiant Indian armed forces personnel who embraced martyrdom in the 1971 war.

The Indian minister said it was his country's moral responsibility to extend help to Bangladesh during the war as a friendly country.

Earlier in the day during a banquet speech with the defence officials in Dhaka, Parrikar said, "Both our nations face similar challenges of terrorism. It is a malady which affects my country as much as yours. It is highly contagious and respects no political or geographical boundaries. Countries sponsoring or encouraging terrorism have always suffered in the long run. Their own moral fibre and social fabric has been destroyed and the terrorism that they assiduously cultivated to harm others has always come home to roost."

"We are proud that we have had

the privilege of fighting shoulder to shoulder with you and having spilled blood together to help you attain victory and independence. We are Blood Brothers and our bonds hence go well beyond the ordinary."

The Indian minister lauded Bangladesh for its policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism and for implementing it in letter and spirit.

The response of the armed forces and the intelligence and other security agencies during the Holey Artisan incident and its immediate aftermath is highly praiseworthy, the Indian High Commission press release said.

During his two-day visit, the Indian defence minister called on the president and the security adviser to the prime minister.

The chiefs of the Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force, Director General Coast Guard, and the Principal Staff Officer to the Armed Forces Division had also called on the minister.

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The newly-arrived Rohingyas were making temporary huts in Teknaf's Leda and Ukhya's Kutupalang camps, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

Meanwhile, more than 200 Rohingyas entered Teknaf through six border points - two in Hnila and four in Whykang unions - yesterday morning.

Of them, 15 families comprising nearly 100 people, including women and children, took shelter at the Kutupalang camp, said Abu Siddique,

A village of alpona

FROM PAGE 1

turmeric and vermillion, she said.

But now chemical colours are so available in local markets that her daughters and granddaughters use them to decorate the house.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw all houses of Hindu families in the village have *alpona* drawn on their walls.

Nearly one-third of the villagers are Hindus, and the others appreciate the artwork done by them.

Housewives Bandona Barman and Nayanmoni Barman said they usually decorate their houses with *alpona* during religious festivals like Durga puja, Swaraswati puja, Laxmi puja and Kali puja, and other festivals like Nabanna Utsab, Pahela Baishakh and wedding ceremony.

"I have been seeing this [alpona] since my childhood.... Our women

and girls are keeping alive the traditional art," said Rabindranath Barman, a farmer.

Many visitors from different areas in the district and neighbouring districts come to the village to see the folk art.

Rima said she learnt the art from her grandmother.

Airin Akhtar, an employee of a non-government organisation in neighbouring Kajol Keshar village, often visits "Alpona Gram" only to see the decorative work.

"The art is dominant in all homes [of Hindus] irrespective of they be rich or poor, she said, adding that the legacy is passed on from one generation to another.

The village is famous for its traditional *alpona* and communal harmony, said Nitai Chandra Barman, former chairman of Nejampur union parishad.

Row over Uber Quader for practical solution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would reach a "rational" and "practical" solution with Uber, a smart phone-based on-demand transport service, over the latter's service in Bangladesh, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"Discussions are on between BRTA [Bangladesh Road Transport Authority] and Uber. They have already held a meeting. I think the issue will be resolved," he said while addressing a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club.

Nirapad Sarak Chai, an organisation campaigning for road safety, organised the programme to mark its 24th founding anniversary.

"I told the BRTA to not reject the Uber service. But the service should be brought under a legal system. It will be welcomed if it can help ease the public transport crisis in the capital," the minister said.

"It will not be wise to discourage Uber. We are talking about digital Bangladesh. It will be contradictory if we discourage a new digital initiative."

Uber was gaining popularity among the commuters of the capital after its official launching on November 22. It is an online platform that connects people to facilitate transportation through a mobile application.

Two days after the launch of the service, BRTA declared Uber illegal, saying the company did not take permission from the government for running the service in the country.

However, Minister Obaidul Quader on November 26 welcomed the service said said Uber needs to follow legal framework and systematic procedures to run the service.

On November 29, a delegation of Uber met the BRTA chairman and told him that they would submit a detailed plan of action on their service within three weeks.

"Further decision will be made after scrutinising Uber's proposals," BRTA Chairman Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star on that day.

During yesterday's discussion, Moazzem Hossain, director of Accident Research Institute (ARI), said

SEE PAGE 17 COL 4

Rohingyas to be sent back

FROM PAGE 1

He said the government was providing humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas who already entered the country crossing the border illegally.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Coast Guard were patrolling round the clock to check the influx of Rohingyas, Asaduzzaman added.

Hundreds of Rohingyas, a Muslim minority in Myanmar's Rakhine state, have sneaked into Bangladesh through several border points, including the Naf river, since the Myanmar army started crackdown on them in October.

The United Nations on Wednesday said at least 10,000 Rohingyas had entered Bangladesh in recent weeks after fleeing violence in Myanmar.

However, locals and the president of Cox's Bazar civil society claimed that at least 30,000 Rohingyas crossed into Bangladesh in the last one month.

The newly-arrived Rohingyas were making temporary huts in Teknaf's Leda and Ukhya's Kutupalang camps, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

Meanwhile, more than 200 Rohingyas entered Teknaf through six border points - two in Hnila and four in Whykang unions - yesterday morning.

Of them, 15 families comprising nearly 100 people, including women and children, took shelter at the Kutupalang camp, said Abu Siddique,

president of Kutupalang Rohingya camp management committee.

He said about 11,000 Rohingyas had taken shelter in that camp alone since the violence started in Myanmar in October.

Dudu Mia, president of Leda Rohingya camp management committee, said at least 60 people took refuge in the camp yesterday.

Humayra Begum, a Rohingya woman, said she arrived in the Kutupalang camp from Myanmar's Khiyari Para village early yesterday morning. Then a broker helped her reach the camp and find a shelter there.

The 30-year-old woman gave birth to a son just seven days ago. She along with her three sons entered Bangladesh, leaving behind her husband in Myanmar.

Lt Col Abujar Al Jahid, commanding officer of 2 BGB Battalion in Teknaf, said they prevented 11 boats, carrying 10 to 15 Myanmar people each, from entering the Bangladesh territory through the Naf river between Wednesday night and yesterday morning.

Lt Col Imran Ullah Sarkar, commanding officer of 34 BGB Battalion in Cox's Bazar, said they stopped 19 Rohingyas from crossing into Bangladesh through Ukhya and Ghumduhm border point in Bandarban yesterday.

He added that 453 Rohingyas had been sent back to Myanmar in the last one month.

Only 26 of 72 clauses implemented

FROM PAGE 1

This is not expected at all, Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) President Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, said in an interview with The Daily Star on the eve of the 19th anniversary of signing of the accord in 1997.

It has not been implemented for lack of interest of the government, he said.

If the government doesn't implement the accord immediately, it would have to take the responsibility for any "untoward situation" in the CHT region, he said.

Asked what he meant by "untoward situation", Santu Larma said, "It could be anything." It is something we don't expect to happen. "We don't want to call hartial to demand implementation of this accord unless the government compels us to do that."

The situation in the CHT hasn't got better. The living standards of the indigenous people have not improved. Forces outside the civil administration still control everything in the CHT, he said.

Though the government says 48 of the 72 clauses in the accord were already implemented, Santu Larma claimed that only 26 clauses have been implemented so far.

"It is not just a mere claim. We have published reports, mentioning which clauses of the accord were implemented and which were not. The entire world knows that."

Some of the clauses of the accord

were implemented and laws were passed or amended in accordance with that. But the government has not made any rules for those laws, meaning that those cannot be brought into force, he said.

Besides, many laws need to be amended in line with the CHT accord, he mentioned.

"The present government is so powerful. It can change the constitution if it wants. Making and amending necessary laws in accordance with the accord is not a big deal for this government."

On the CHT Peace Accord Implementation and Monitoring Committee formed by the government, Santu Larma said the committee is not functional at all. It has no office, no fund, no staff and no work.

"If this committee [headed by Deputy Leader of Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury] is made functional, it could give a transparent report on the accord's implementation. This would help expedite the implementation process."

Asked about the major problem in the CHT at this moment, he said if the land issue is settled, many problems in the hill region would be resolved. But even then there would be other issues to address.

He said some major issues yet to be settled in line with the accord are withdrawal of temporary military camps, relocation of Bangla-speaking people and their proper rehabilitation outside the CHT, formation of local police force, and amendments to the 1861 Police Act and the Forest Act 1927.

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He said the government was supposed to have discussions with the regional council before making any decision on issues regarding the CHT.

"But I was in the dark when the government created a new upazila named Guimara [in Khagrachhari]. Many things like this are happening."

"In most of the cases, the government doesn't hold discussions with the regional council before making any decision. But it is mandatory as per the peace accord," he added.

Expressing his frustration, Santu Larma said the indigenous people are becoming outnumbered day by day in the CHT region, as they wait for the implementation of the peace accord.

The government had brought around five lakh Bangla-speaking people to the CHT and got them settled there. Now their number has risen to around seven lakh, he said.

In 13 of the 26 upazilas in the CHT, the Bangla-speaking people are now in the majority. But their number was very low in the 70s when the process of bringing settlers began, he noted.

These Bangla-speaking people are poor. Most of them don't have any livelihood, and they survive on ration provided by the government. These people deserve proper rehabilitation outside the CHT in line with the peace accord, noted Santu Larma, former guerrilla leader who once fought for "regional autonomy" of the CHT.

He became chairman of the CHT regional council formed after the signing of the peace accord on December 2, 1997.

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