

No tit-for-tat

FROM PAGE 16
Obama's moves have put him at odds with his successor, who has expressed his admiration for Putin and desire to improve ties with Russia.

Moscow has repeatedly denied the hacking allegations and Trump too has questioned whether Russia really tipped the electoral scale, painting Obama's accusations as a thinly veiled effort by a Democratic president to cover up for his party's loss.

Trump said that while he believes the US should "move on to bigger and better things," he would meet intelligence leaders next week for a briefing on the situation.

Obama -- who has also clashed with Trump over his Israel policy in recent days -- has pointedly stated that "all Americans should be alarmed by Russia's actions."

UNPRECEDENTED

It remains to be seen whether Trump would move to roll back the sanctions against Moscow, with many leading Republican lawmakers publicly warning him to stay tough on Putin.

Obama also linked the fresh sanctions to harassment of US diplomats in Moscow, which Washington described as "unprecedented" in the post-Cold War era.

US officials played down the impact that sanctions against the GRU and the FSB could have on intelligence-sharing on issues like counterterrorism, saying cooperation was already limited.

Both agencies will face sanctions, along with GRU agency chief Igor Korobov and three of his deputies.

In addition, the US Treasury hit two individuals, Evgeniy Bogachev and Aleksey Belan, with sanctions for "involvement in malicious cyber-enabled activities."

The sanctions freeze any assets they may have in the United States and blocks US companies from doing business with them.

The US government is also declassifying technical information on Russian cyber activity to help companies defend against future attacks.

"The United States and friends and allies around the world must work together to oppose Russia's efforts to undermine established international norms of behaviour and interfere with democratic governance," Obama said.

Ban

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But Robin Ahsan, owner of the publishing house, came to know the decision on Monday when his manager went to the academy to collect a form to apply for a stall in the book fair, scheduled to start on February 1.

As the news spread, several writers, rights and cultural activists took to the social media to protest the ban. On Tuesday, they held a demonstration in front of the academy, urging the government to suspend the director general of the academy for "making the illegal decision".

They also vowed to continue the protest until the academy revoked its decision.

On Wednesday, Robin Ahsan submitted an application to the academy seeking review of the decision.

Contacted, the publisher yesterday welcomed the new decision of the academy.

"The executive body [of the academy] has taken the right decision now. Its conditions have to be followed by all the participants in the fair," he said.

He, however, said he was yet to get any formal notice from the academy in this regard.

WHY IT WAS BANNED?

During this year's book fair, the academy shut down Ba-Dwip Prakashan's stall for selling a book that "hurts religious sentiments". Later, law enforcers arrested three people, including the editor of the "controversial book".

According to Bangla Academy officials, Shrabon Prokashani had "taken a stance" that could have allowed the book concerned to be sold inside the academy's fair. Hence, the authorities barred the publishing house in the fair for the next two years.

However, Robin denied the allegation saying he did not take any stance regarding selling of the book in the fair, but he along with others had protested the way of the arrest of a few publishers.

12-yr-old

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Asked about the wedding, her father Mahbubar Hossen admitted his preparation for her marriage. The UNO also raided the house of the bridegroom and detained his father, who also admitted everything.

The UNO fined both of them Tk 1,000 each and took a written statement from them that they would never arrange Mahbuba's marriage before she was 18. He also directed her parents to take care of her studies.

Fire-ravaged Korail

FROM PAGE 1
engaging labourers in the construction.

The fire gutted some 526 shanties and about 2,000 people homeless.

Rashid Mollah is one such victim. He had six shanties which were burnt in the fire. The 55-year-old man lived in one and rented out the rest to tenants to earn a living.

He is now happy as he would be able to build new ones. "If they [DNCC and Brac] did not help, I wouldn't have been able to build my house," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, local Ward Councillor Mofizur Rahman said a total of 526 houses were being built and the whole process was being supervised by the 80 house owners.

DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq and Brac were providing colourful tins, bamboo and wood for new houses, he added.

According to a Brac news portal "response brac.net", the construction work is expected to end by mid-January.

In the second week of December, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided Tk 13,000 to around 500 affected families, said the ward councillor.

Besides, other NGOs had provided primary supports like food, utensils and blankets.

Rashid Mollah said the new houses were being built as per a DNCC plan. The alleys inside the slum were being widened so that people could move easily if any such incident occurs again.

The alleys were only three-metre wide, but now they were being expanded to six metres. Besides, new lanes were being made, he added.

Like Rashid, all affected house owners are now busy making their houses.

Meanwhile, many tenants did not leave the slum fearing losing a place to live.

Take Amena Begum. Though her rented shanty was burnt, she did not leave the place. Her eight-year-old daughter Munni, who studies at an NGO-run school, stayed there and took preparations for her final examinations.

Amena did not move to another place as she feared that moving somewhere else might cost the shelter.

She is happy as she hopes to enter the newly-built house soon.

Maulana Abdus Sobhan, president of Korail Slum Development Association, said they demanded that the tenants be allowed to live in the houses for 15 months without rent.

However, the Brac portal said, "Upon further negotiations, the local councillor has agreed to waive house rent for approximately six months."

While many Korail victims expressed satisfaction over the DNCC's assistance, some house owners, whose houses are on the lake, are facing hardship in affording the labour cost for setting up base pillars in the water for the houses.

"I need to pay Tk 800 a day to a labour. How can I meet this expense alone?" said Jahangir Hossain, a house owner.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq said he visited the slum soon after the fire was doused and formed a coordination committee, which has been overseeing all the issues including construction of the houses.

He said apart from DNCC, Brac, EXIM Bank and other national and international NGOs and organisations also provided financial assistance to the victims.

2,415 will be taken back

FROM PAGE 16

Myanmar has for decades said Rohingyas are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and it has declined to grant them citizenship.

Bangladesh says the Rohingyas are Myanmar citizens and it has refused to grant refugee status to those who have fled there, many from communal violence and Myanmar army crackdowns over the past decades.

"There are only 2,415 Myanmar citizens, according to our data," Kyaw Zaya, director general of Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told Reuters, referring to the number of Myanmar citizens in Bangladesh.

"We always stand with our number," he said, adding he had "no idea" about the Bangladesh figure of 300,000.

He said the Myanmar government had a plan to take back the 2,415 in 2017.

Security has deteriorated sharply in Myanmar's northwestern Rakhine State, home to many Rohingyas, since attacks on security posts near the border with Bangladesh on October 9 in

which nine police officers were killed.

The government of predominantly Buddhist Myanmar has blamed militants with links to Islamists overseas for the attacks and poured troops into the region.

Rights groups and residents say widespread abuses have occurred during the Myanmar military operation over the weeks since then.

Myanmar has denied the accusations, saying many of the reports of abuses are fabricated, and it insists the strife in Rakhine State is an internal matter.

While Bangladesh says 50,000 people have fled there since October, the United Nations says the number is 34,000.

The violence in Rakhine State has become the biggest challenge facing Suu Kyi's government and has sparked international criticism that the Nobel Peace Prize winner has done too little to help the Muslim minority.

Adding to the tension, this week Bangladesh's border force accused the Myanmar navy of opening fire on a fishing boat in the Bay of Bengal.

confirmed how the accident happened. But some locals said the boat turned over after some passengers rushed to get down.

Some passengers, including two children, swam to the shore. The others, however, remained missing.

Later, locals along with firefighters mounted a search and recovered the four bodies.

The name of the missing boy is Himesh, 17, said the OC while talking to this correspondent around 1:00am today.

Akhtaruzzaman, deputy assistant director of the fire service and civil defence, said six of their divers were conducting a search in the river.

New books

FROM PAGE 1

The books will be distributed among 4.26 crore students of primary and secondary schools, ebtedai and dakhil madrasas, and technical institutions.

"Following various initiatives, parents are now more aware of the importance of education than before," Nahid said, referring to the rise in enrolment and fall in school dropout.

As in the past, the first day of the New Year would be celebrated as the "Textbook Festival Day" across the country, he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the festival by handing over books to students at the Gono Bhaban at 10:00am today.

The education ministry will launch the festival at Azimpur Government Girls School and College at 9:30am tomorrow. The primary and mass education ministry will also hold a separate programme at Dhaka University central playground at 10:00am.

The main feature of this year's celebration is that the government, for the first time, will distribute pre-primary textbooks in five ethnic languages to children from ethnic minorities free of cost.

Besides, the NCTB will distribute around 9,000 braille books to visually impaired students, said officials.

As part of efforts to end persisting textbook crisis, the government in 2009 decided to give textbooks to students of primary and secondary schools free of cost.

The government started distributing textbooks in 2010, and gave students 225.43 crore books in the last eight years.

"We have sent almost all copies of textbooks to the upazilas. We hope there will be no problem with their distribution," Mia Inamul

Haque Siddiki, member (textbook) of the NCTB, told this correspondent.

NCTB sources, however, said around five percent of the pre-primary and primary textbooks are yet to be sent to some upazilas.

Pre-primary and primary textbooks are printed by international bidders and secondary books by local publishers.

Wishing anonymity, an official of the NCTB said around 30 lakh copies of pre-primary textbooks, printed in China, remained stuck at Chittagong port for more than a week due to customs complications.

The books were sent to the destinations on Thursday, added the official.

Inamul said trucks carrying some 1.82 crore copies of textbooks, printed in India, were stuck in a long queue at Petrapole port. They entered Bangladesh yesterday.

BOOKS IN 5 ETHNIC LANGUAGES

For the first time, the government will distribute around 52,000 copies of pre-primary textbooks in five ethnic languages to more than 24,600 children from ethnic minorities free of cost.

The books have been printed in Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Sadri and Garo languages, and a major portion of those has already been sent to the upazilas, said NCTB.

Besides, the NCTB will provide 25,000 materials to facilitate teaching in these languages.

In 2012, the government made a plan to publish textbooks for children from ethnic minorities. But the NCTB couldn't publish those for lack of funds and other problems.

Tiger, panda numbers rise in 'landmark' yr for conservation

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

It has been a year of political shocks and celebrity deaths but conservationists say 2016 has seen some "landmark" environmental successes.

Some of the world's most charismatic species have seen an upturn in their fortunes, with tiger numbers increasing for the first time since efforts to conserve them began and giant pandas moved off the "endangered" list, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said.

Nepal has achieved two years in a row with no rhino poaching, while trade in the world's most trafficked mammal, the pangolin or scaly anteater, has been made illegal by countries meeting to discuss international wildlife trade.

This year saw the UK commit an extra £13 million to tackling the illegal wildlife trade and, elsewhere in the environmental arena, ratify the Paris Agreement, the world's first comprehensive deal by countries to tackle climate change.

In August, Scotland produced enough renewable energy on one day to power the entire country, with wind turbines generating 106% of Scottish demand for electricity.

In other parts of the world, Belize suspended seismic surveying for offshore oil exploration along the longest barrier reef in the northern hemisphere, the world's largest marine protected area in Antarctica got the go-ahead and Spanish national park Donana was saved from destructive dredging.

Glyn Davies, acting chief executive of WWF-UK, said: "The world faces a challenge in keeping its beautiful places and special species."

Mulayam expels

FROM PAGE 2

The official Samajwadi Party list of candidates has in it several persons close to Shivpal and whose candidacy has been fiercely opposed by Akhilesh Yadav.

The schedule of elections to UP's 403-strong legislature are expected to be announced by the Election Commission next week.

Four die

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General Cable

FROM PAGE 2

Department has encouraged companies to disclose bribery allegations by offering lighter penalties if they fully cooperate.

General Cable "voluntarily self-disclosed this misconduct to the government, fully cooperated and remediated," said Assistant Attorney General Leslie Caldwell.

"This resolution demonstrates the very real upside to coming in and cooperating with federal prosecutors and investigators."

Seven Biman

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Niron Chandra Bishwas, Lutfar Rahman and Zakir Hossain.

A CTTC team had arrested them from different areas in the capital on December 21.

On December 20, Director (engineering and management) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines MM Asaduzzaman filed a case against nine officials of the national flag carrier with Airport Police Station under the Special Powers Act.

The following day, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police headquarters issued an order to transfer the case to the CTTC unit.

The Biman flight carrying the PM had to