

IPU members debate

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The draft resolution calls on parliaments to be aware of concerns of the international community over the cases of interference in the affairs of sovereign states under the pretext that human rights are being violated.

Parliamentarians from 40 countries had a debate yesterday on the draft resolution. Thirty-six countries supported the resolution while four countries rejected.

The debate will continue for two more days before making the final decision on Wednesday, said Faruk Khan, a member of Bangladesh delegation.

The world is facing trouble at present due to foreign interference in the affairs of states, said some MPs in the debate organised by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security of IPU at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre.

Referring to the current situation in Iraq and Syria, they blamed outside interference for the rise of ISIS, a global militant outfit.

Parliamentarians from Germany, India, France, Bahrain, Nepal, Iceland, China, Turkey and Ukraine were among the participants.

IPU underlines the essential role of

parliaments in preventing foreign interference that inevitably threatens states' sovereignty and independence.

It also urges parliaments to establish national legal bases and mechanisms to prevent such interference and to encourage non-governmental organisations and civil society to participate in the preventive efforts.

An Indian delegation said the issue was whether some countries should intervene in the internal affairs of other independent states, based on their own judgments, outside the mechanism setup by the United Nations, beyond the UN charter.

"This resolution provides us scope for intervention by the international communities where required in accordance with the UN charter. I believe no country can take law into its hand that is why we set up the UN."

The Indian lawmaker spoke of colonisation and its devastating impact on different countries.

"Iraq has not been put together after it was destroyed. Syria is almost entirely destroyed. And the resulting humanitarian crisis is something the entire international community is ignoring."

The influx of refugees has been stopped. The prevailing situation is

deemed as a humanitarian crisis, but no one wants to allow in refugees, he added.

A Chinese lawmaker said Iraq had been invaded on the pretext that it possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) but no such thing was found there.

Iraq is yet to come out of the crisis, he said, extending his support to the resolution.

Meanwhile, the assembly last night voted in favour of an emergency agenda, "The famine affecting the populations of Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and northern Kenya", for discussion.

The famine issue was raised by the United Kingdom, Belgium and Kenya, which had to get two third votes for inclusion in the agenda of the assembly, IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong announced after voting.

As many as 131 member countries of IPU, however, rejected two other emergency agendas raised separately by Palestine and Mexico.

The Palestine delegation raised the agenda, "The legalisation of settlements by the Israeli Regulation Law: a violation of international law" while Mexico raised "Tougher migration policies around the world and the risk of human rights violations."

Lokman disappeared again and again

FROM PAGE 1

Lokman, 40, grew up at Dinajpur's Danga village under Ghoraghat upazila. He studied at a local madrasa for a while, and then quit. He later took up farming and married Shirin Akhter of Kalapara under the same upazila in 2002.

"[In 2007] He suddenly disappeared with his wife and three daughters," said his father-in-law Abu Bakar Siddique.

Siddique identified Lokman, his wife and their daughters from a family photo that law enforcers claimed to have found in the hideout at Nasirpur after the operation codenamed "Operation Hit Back".

When Lokman went missing in 2007, Siddique kept looking for him everywhere and eventually tracked him down four months later. He was living with his wife and daughters in a rented house at South Dibipur village under the same upazila.

"I brought my daughter and granddaughters to my house and they lived with me until 2013," Siddique said.

Before the 2007 disappearance, Siddique sensed Lokman might be involved in militancy and often asked him to shun the wrong path in vain.

"Then some time in 2013, he came home and told me that he left the path. I believed him when he said he got a job at a garment factory in Dhaka. Shirin was not willing to go with him, but I convinced her. Now I know it was a big mistake," he said.

As neither Lokman nor Shirin contacted him, Siddique grew suspicious. He again started looking for his daughter at different places but could not find her.

Then about a year later, Shirin called him, saying that she suspected Lokman was involved in radical activities.

A desperate Siddique kept searching for Shirin. About three months ago, he got a call from someone telling him that his daughter was in Cox's Bazar. He took a trip there, but could not find Shirin.

Then in the early hours of March 30, when the police raid was on at Nasirpur, Siddique got a phone call.

Soon he realised it was his eldest granddaughter, Amina Begum, 12.

"She was crying and passed the phone to her mother [Shirin]," said the father, weeping.

Shirin spoke with her parents for nearly half an hour when she repeatedly sought their forgiveness.

"I asked Shirin to return home or give me her address, but she couldn't give it. She said they had no scope to return. To convince her, I offered her 50 decimal of land. But she said she didn't know the address."

By the time the raid ended on Friday, Lokman, Shirin and their daughters were killed in what police said in suicide blasts.

Though police and doctors said four children were among the dead, Siddique said all the five kids have died.

Apart from Amina, the four others are Sumaia, 9, Fatema, 7, Moriam, 4, and Khadiza, aged just five months.

Contacted yesterday, one of Lokman's sisters (name withheld) said he did not maintain contacts with them since his disappearance in 2007.

His childhood friend Faruk Hossain said, "He was a religious-minded man and used to ask villagers to offer prayers regularly."

Although Lokman's link with militancy was known to the police, he remained out of the police dragnet.

His name came up in a bomb blast case first in 2003, when he was made a suspect in a case over an explosion at his Danga village. However, police could not immediately say if his involvement was ever found. The status of the case could not be known either.

He was also an accused in a case filed on October 25, 2008, with Shibganj Police Station of Chapainawabganj.

As per the case, Shibganj police arrested two JMB militants in October that year. During interrogation, the two said Lokman was their associate, police claimed.

The case is now under trial, said Chapainawabganj court inspector Anwar Hossain.

Several counterterrorism officials said Lokman was a mid-level recruiter of "Neo JMB". His main job was to collect suicide bombers.

They said Lokman completed his Alim from a madrasa during his one-and-half-years stay in Bandarban. He was an imam at a local mosque. Additionally, he used to work at a rubber forest.

AL secys

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conflict was one of the major reasons for the defeat.

Following some secretariat members' demands, AL's Chittagong divisional Organising Secretary Enamul Haque Shamim was given the responsibility by Quader to prepare a report on the causes for the defeat.

Sources said in the meeting, Shamim alleged that Mustafa misguided him during campaigns while party men royal to Bahar urged voters to cast their ballots for the sheaf of paddy, the BNP electoral symbol, a day before the election day.

The meeting also decided to serve show-cause notices on the party's rebel candidates who are contesting 70 union parishads polls, scheduled for April 16. The party would start sending the letters within a day or two.

The party has a single candidate in 24 union parishads while several party leaders are contesting 46 other UPs, said party insiders.

In the meeting at the party president's Dhanmondi office, Quader said those responsible for the defeat of party candidate in Comilla City Corporation polls must be punished.

Briefing reporters, the AL general secretary said he would place the meeting's recommendations before the meeting of AL Central Working Committee, the highest decision-making forum of the party, to be held on April 12.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would make the final decision on the basis of Shamim's report, he added.

ACC arrests

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Saiful Islam and deputy manager Akhtaruzzaman.

The misappropriation came to light when an audit team sought whereabouts of Tk 7,43,91,277, reads the statement.

The four claimed that the amount was present in the form of leftovers from production weighing around 11,016 metric tonnes, it says. The audit team found no physical presence of the leftovers, it adds.

The case was filed with Khalishpur Police Station on December 9, 2016. Jahangir has been suspended since then.

We stand

FROM PAGE 2

During the meeting, Speaker of Mali Moussa Timbine said Bangladesh could be a strategic partner with his country. He said Mali was particularly interested in textile and agriculture sector cooperation.

Dylan finally accepts

FROM PAGE 16

Stockholm to accept the gold medal and diploma awarded to him back in October.

They were handed to Dylan at a "private ceremony in Stockholm" attended by 12 academy members, Sara Danius, the academy's permanent secretary, said in a blog post.

"Spirits were high. Champagne was had," Danius confided.

"Quite a bit of time was spent looking closely at the gold medal, in particular the beautifully crafted back, an image of a young man sitting under a laurel tree who listens to the Muse," she added.

"Taken from Virgil's Aeneid, the inscription reads: 'Inventas vitam iuvat excoluisse per artes,' loosely translated as 'And they who bettered life on earth by their newly found mastery.'"

The first songwriter to receive the prestigious award, Dylan joins a celebrated group of laureates including

Thomas Mann, Samuel Beckett, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Doris Lessing.

The meeting took place at a secret location ahead of Dylan's first concert in Stockholm, the first stop on a long-planned European tour for his latest album of cover songs, "Triple Date".

Dylan had not been expected to deliver his traditional Nobel lecture at the meeting -- the only requirement to receive the eight million kronor (837,000 euros, \$891,000) that comes with the prize.

He has until June 10 to provide his lecture, which could be anything from a short speech to a performance, a video broadcast or even a song. Failing that, he risks losing the prize money.

"The Academy has reason to believe that a taped version will be sent at a later point," Danius said on Wednesday.

Jharkhand.

It will also include \$500 million for a new railway line from Bogra to Sirajganj, \$157 million for a solar power project and US \$550 million for special economic zones, including at Bangladesh's Mirsarai and Payra.

There is likely to be several MoUs relating to hydro projects in Bhutan, shipbuilding and upgradation of border posts, according to sources in New Delhi.

Stolen infant

FROM PAGE 1

the baby at the hospital conference room from police officers in the afternoon.

Police rescued the four-day-old baby from one Ful Miah's house at Majhbari area of Bogra. Sensing police presence everyone in the house had fled, leaving the baby on a bed, said Bogra police.

Police suspect that the baby was stolen by a resident of Baropur in Bogra town, Ratna, 35. She sold the baby to a childless couple Ful Miah and Laboni, said Sonaton Chakroborty, addition police superintendent of Bogra.

Police were conducting raids to arrest the trio, he added.

A TIP-OFF DID IT

After stealing the baby from the hospital, Ratna sold the baby to Laboni, who took the baby to her parent's home in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj district.

She then bought some baby products from Dhekuria Bazar. A man, who knew that Laboni was childless and that a baby got stolen from a Bogra hospital, saw her buy the products at the shop.

The man, whom police did not name, then called a staff of Bogra hospital and described what he saw.

The hospital authorities then informed the police, who interrogated the shop keeper and found out that Laboni had taken the baby back to her husband's house at Majhbari.

A police team led by Sub-Inspector Khokan Kundu of Dhunat Police Station then raided Ful Miah's house and found the baby yesterday.

The baby's grandmother, Rehena Begum, earlier said a woman in hijab started a conversation with the child's mother Hosne Ara Friday night at the gynaecology ward of the hospital. She told Hosne Ara that she was with another patient in the ward.

When Rehena went upstairs to take the baby into the sun light around 10:00am on Saturday, the woman in the veil went up with her and they chatted there for a little while.

Rehena wanted more clothes for the baby and needed to go downstairs for those. The woman offered to hold the baby during that time.

When Rehena returned with the clothes about five minutes later, there was no woman there.

DB probing

FROM PAGE 16

Rashidul Islam yesterday visited Islami Bank Medial College where the Maldivian girl studied and talked to some of the teachers and students.

"I am looking into the reasons that led Raudha to kill herself," the inspector told The Daily Star on the college premises.

He also stressed that police inquest found she killed herself by hanging and an autopsy conducted by a three-member medical board also found the same.

However, Raudha's family members told the commissioner that they rejected the autopsy findings and that they believed she was murdered.

Raudha, a second-year student of Islami Bank Medial College, was found dead in her room at the women's dormitory of the college in Nawdapara area of Rajshahi city on March 29.

An unnatural death case was filed with Shah Makhdu Police Station.

WHAT BROUGHT RAUDHA TO RAJSHAH

Her mother Aminath Muharrimath informed that Raudha was pursuing her medical degree on a student scholarship given by the Department of Higher Education in the Maldives.

She had to choose among three countries to be eligible for the scholarship -- Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Raudha thought medical education in Bangladesh was better than that of the two other countries and came here, added the bereaved woman.

"She was a topper in academic results. Since her childhood she used to get above 90 percent marks in all subjects," Raudha's father Mohamed Athif told this correspondent while visiting Islami Bank Medial College campus yesterday.

The grieving father also said his daughter dreamt of visiting her aunt in Australia after her exams in May.

"She was brilliant and had many dreams. Why would she commit suicide?" her father said.

Flynn failed to disclose income linked to Russia

REUTERS, Washington

Michael Flynn, President Donald Trump's former national security adviser, failed to disclose payments from a Russian television network and a second firm linked to Russia in a February financial disclosure form, according to documents released by the White House on Saturday.

In a financial disclosure form signed by Flynn on March 31, the former White House official listed speaking engagements to Russian entities, including the Kremlin-funded RT TV and Volga-Dnepr Airlines.

Women rebuilt Rwanda

FROM PAGE 16

Once the genocide was over, the Rwandan population was left with 70 percent women and 30 percent men.

"The leaders believed that if they empower women, they can contribute to enhancing good governance, economy and social welfare."

Rwanda adopted a new constitution after 1999 upholding social justice, equal rights of all Rwandans, and ensuring at least 30 percent position for women in parliament, in government, in local government and in political parties, she said.

"Following the constitutional provisions, the government immediately set up different institutions and ministries including ministry of gender and family promotion, national women council, women parliamentarian forum to empower women," observed Gakuba.

Besides, according to the law, every political party is obliged to prepare a list of its prospectus candidates with men and women one after another before any election, she said.

"You cannot put women at the bottom of the list. Therefore, when you gain in the election, you don't have only men, but also women as well," she added.

The rest is now history.

Currently, in the lower chamber of parliament, 49 of 80 MPs are women, which is 61.3 percent. They hold 10 out of 26 seats in the upper chamber, Senate.

The Speaker and deputy speaker of the lower chamber are women. The two deputy presidents of the upper chamber of parliament are also women, said Gakuba.

In the cabinet, the ministers for foreign affairs, health, agriculture, labour, and family, the deputy governor of the national bank, the ombudsman, the deputy chief justice -- all are women. In the Supreme Court, seven out of 14 justices are women. Forty percent mayors and deputy mayors in the local governments are also women, she added.

She said before the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda used to have a very few number of women in political position.

Asked how males reacted to the move to empower women, she said at the beginning, men were wondering if women got more position in politics, male domination would be curtailed.

"But males found that if women are in a good position they work both for their families and nation. And males understood that there is a profit if women are given space everywhere. They also understood in-together men

and women would succeed more. And now males don't have any complaint."

The ideology of the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Party turned Rwanda into a country of good governance that worked effectively, she said, adding, the ruling party had refused to rule the country only by its party people. It included all political parties who did not commit genocide. The ruling party also had taken a policy of unity and reconciliation, she added.

In the views of Gakuba, providing education for all, fight against early marriages for the girls, and also promotion of health services were vital to ensure women empowerment.

"Laws protecting the women rights are also important for women empowerment. Earlier, the Rwandan women didn't have the right to inherit property -- neither in her parents' families nor in her new families after marriage.

But now Rwanda's girls have the right to inherit property, she observed.

"Earlier, within the family registration of property was made after the names of male or husband. Now in Rwanda the law has guaranteed women to get fifty percent share of the family property."

She said media enjoys full freedom in Rwanda at present. Before 1994, the country had only one national radio and television station. "But after 23 years we have many private radio and TV channels."

She further said people from across the country can interact with the president freely through live media programmes. Every year the president organises a dialogue with more than 50,000 people from all walks of life to get their views.

She added people also can question, give new suggestions or advice to the president through the social media including Facebook and Twitter. They can also send SMS to the president and there are designated ministers to reply those SMS, she noted.

"This is how Rwanda has transformed into a brighter nation ending up its dark history."

Now, Rwanda is lauded as a world leader in women's political participation. International accolades abound.

In 2007, the president of Rwanda was presented with the African Gender Award. In 2013, the country won the international 'Women in Parliament' award for its work promoting women's political empowerment.

Rwanda is now one of the fastest growing economies in the Central Africa

Rescuers race

FROM PAGE 16

The president met with rescuers and survivors in Mocoa on Saturday, and declared a public health and safety emergency to speed up rescue and aid operations.

NATION IN MOURNING
"Dear God, I don't want to even remember that," said street vendor Marta Ceballos, who survived the mudslide.

"To see how some people screamed, and others cried, ran, tried to flee in cars, on motorcycles, and how they were trapped in the mud. It's all too, too difficult," she told AFP.

Ceballos said that she lost all of her material possessions. "The only things I fortunately did not lose were my husband, my daughters and my nephews," she said.

Putumayo Governor Sorrel Aroca called the event "an unprecedented tragedy" for the area.

There are "hundreds of families we have not yet found and whole neighborhoods have disappeared," he told W Radio.

Carlos Ivan Marquez, director of the National Disaster Risk Management Unit, told AFP the mudslides were caused by the rise of the Mocoa River and tributaries.

Some 130 millimeters (5 inches) of rain fell Friday night, Santos said. "That

means 30 percent of monthly rainfall fell last night, which precipitated a sudden rise of several rivers," he said.

"Our prayers are with the victims and those affected," he added.

RESCUE EFFORTS
One thousand emergency personnel, including soldiers and local police, were deployed to help the rescue effort. Mocoa was left without power or running water, and there were reports of people looting stores searching for bottled water.

"There are lots of people in the streets, lots of people displaced and many houses have collapsed," retired Mocoa resident Hernando Rodriguez, 69, said by telephone.

"People do not know what to do... there were no preparations" for such a disaster, he said.

Several deadly landslides have struck Colombia in recent months. A landslide in November killed nine people in the rural southwestern town of El Tambo, officials said at the time.

Climate change can play a big role in the scale of natural disasters, such as this one, a senior UN official said.

"Climate change is generating dynamics and we see the tremendous results in terms of intensity, frequency and magnitude of these natural effects, as we have just seen in Mocoa," said Martin Santiago, UN chief for Colombia.

Bags promise banana boost

FROM PAGE 16

Apart from being a pesticide trader, Sujammel is also an orchardist, with mango and banana groves set across two acres in his home village of Birostholi. Committed to the idea of safe fruit, when Sujammel met Sorof last December it was a meeting of like minds.

"I warned him," Sorof recalls, "Once this method is established nobody would buy his pesticides."

"I know the negative impact of pesticides on human health," Sujammel says, "I chose to grow safe bananas anyway." His bananas were first covered with bags on 24 December 2016. Results have exceeded expectations.

For farmers the fruit bagging system incurs an additional cost of Tk 27,000 per acre, with each bag costing up to Tk 40. But there are savings on pesticides and the safe fruit which offers a spot-free natural colour and sweet taste is attractive to consumers. Safe bananas can be sold at higher prices.

"It's a wonder to see my uncle's orchard," says Momin. "The fluorescent yellow bags hanging in rows really distinguish it from neighbouring plantations. The colour of the ripe bananas is really impressive."

Fetching up to Tk 70 per kg, a higher

market price than for other bananas, Sujammel's first harvest from February 2017 netted him a profit of Tk 3 lakh from his two-acre orchard. Next season, with the new system fully implemented, he anticipates an equal profit per acre.

Meanwhile at Moheshpur village in Chapainawabganj sadar upazila, another banana grower Mohammad Rafez Mir, 25, has also been trialling fruit bags.

"I stopped spraying chemicals after introducing the bags this year," he says. Rafez has 2,000 banana trees on 1.66 acres. "The bags cost money but they can be reused three times, fruit quality is improved and they also protect the fruit from birds and bats."

Rafez has benefited from higher "safe banana" prices. "I earned an additional Tk 5,000 selling bananas over the last six weeks. I expect additional sales income of up to Tk 20,000 this season."

But the bags offer an even greater benefit to growers: the opportunity for export. "We are talking with a buyer from Malaysia," says Sorof. "If all goes well, Sujammel's bananas are destined for export this season."

"Exporting bananas was beyond my dreams," says Sujammel. "Whether that eventuates this year or not, I am so happy that I grew export-quality bananas."

Thirty deals with India 'finalised'

FROM PAGE 1

More deals might be signed and water sharing and Ganges barrage issues will come up prominently when Hasina holds talks with her counterpart Narendra Modi on April 8, they said.

A huge welcome awaits Hasina, said official sources, adding, "There is a lot of expectation on both sides."

Sources in New Delhi say Bangladesh will likely be offered a third credit line, this time at least US \$3.5 billion, for infrastructure projects ranging from

nuclear and liquefied gas power plants to ports, railways and the establishment of special economic zones.

A high government official in Dhaka says it might be as much as \$5 billion.

The credit line includes \$940 million for developing a component of the Rooppur nuclear power plant, \$350 million for a multi-purpose terminal at Payra port and \$177 million for a power transmission line between Bogra and India's