

Trump, Duterte bond at Asia summit

FROM PAGE 16
(Islamic State), illegal drugs, and trade," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders. "Human rights briefly came up in the context of the Philippines' fight against illegal drugs."

Duterte's spokesman, Harry Roque, told news conference the Philippine president had explained his antidrug policy at length to Trump, who "seemed to be appreciative of his efforts."

"There was no mention of human rights, no mention of extralegal killings," he said.

A joint statement released later by the White House listed human rights as the third of 14 topics discussed.

"The two sides underscored that human rights and the dignity of human life are essential, and agreed to continue mainstreaming the human rights agenda in their national programs to promote the welfare of all all sectors, including the most vulnerable groups," the statement said.

They discussed the Philippine campaign against crime, including illegal drugs, it said, and "committed to share best practices in the areas of prevention; enforcement, including capacity-building and transparency in investigations; and rehabilitation."

More than 3,900 people have been killed in a war on drugs that Duterte declared when he took office last year. His government says the police act in self-defense, but critics say executions are taking place with no accountability.

"We are your ally. We are an important ally," Duterte told Trump at the beginning of their talks, according to reporters allowed in to the meeting room.

Trump replied: "We've had a great relationship. This has been very suc-



cessful. And the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) conference has been handled beautifully by the president in the Philippines."

Duterte, who has been called the "Trump of the East" for his brash style and provocative language, said last week he would tell the US president to "lay off" if he were to raise accusations of rights violations.

In May, Trump was criticised for praising Duterte during a phone call for the "great job" he was doing to counter illegal narcotics.

The United States and the Philippines, a former US colony, have been strategic allies since World War II. But their relations have been strained by anti-US outbursts from Duterte and his enthusiasm for better ties with Russia and China.

However, Duterte clearly appears to be getting on better with Trump than he did with the American president's predecessor, Barack Obama.

Trump and Duterte seem to have warmed to each other after meeting for

the first time on Saturday at an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group meeting in Vietnam.

On Sunday, Duterte crooned hit Filipino love song "Ikaw" (You) at a gala dinner for summit leaders in Manila, saying it was on "the orders" of Trump.

One of the song's verses, translated from Filipino, begins: "You are the light in my world, a half of this heart of mine".

"Ladies and gentlemen, I sang uninvited, upon the orders of the commander in chief of the United States," Duterte said later, according to the ABS-CBN news channel.

Roque described the relationship between Trump and Duterte as "warm, friendly and candid."

"It's very apparent that both of them have a person who they consider as not a best friend," he added.

"They have similar feelings towards former US President Barack Obama."

Duterte's anger was unleashed last year when Obama raised concern about possible human rights abuses in the war on drugs.

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Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said such situation might arise for two specific reasons.

First, those who are involved in dealing with the Chinese company are indifferent to the tax payer's money and second, there is corruption and certain people are receiving perks, he said.

He urged the government to investigate the matter thoroughly.

WASTCL was given the job in April 2013 to restart the CCC.

The CCC authorities warned the company of taking legal steps in May and demanded compensation of Tk 82 crore.

Interestingly, the authorities did not take any steps against the company due to what some officials on condition of anonymity said the company's "understanding" with the top officials of the BCIC and the industries ministry.

Rules bent to favour errant contractor

FROM PAGE 16

by the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), violating rules and its contract, according to documents The Daily Star obtained.

The company was supposed to get the chemical factory in Sitakunda going again by June 2014 and the government has been losing Tk 5.65 crore a month since then.

The BCIC recently amended its contract with the company to release 75 percent of its security deposit worth around Tk 8.62 crore. The WASTCL had stopped working in May to press the government to release the money.

Upon directives from the BCIC and the ministry of industries, the CCC, a subsidiary of the BCIC, directed National Bank Ltd (NBL) to release 75 percent of the Chinese company's bank guarantee, according to documents obtained by this paper.

Md Khairul Kabir Menon, deputy secretary (BCIC) of the industries

ministry who signed the BCIC proposal to amend the contract with the Chinese company, told The Daily Star recently that it was the BCIC that had made the decision to amend its contract with WASTCL.

"We have only done formalities," he said.

Lutfor Rahman, director (planning and development) of the BCIC who is in charge of the CCC project, said they have given permission to release the bank guarantee upon approval from higher authorities.

Official sources said the BCIC ignored its audit department's opinion in releasing the bank guarantee. The audit department had said the money could not be released as per the law, they said.

The Daily Star tried to talk to BCIC Chairman Shah Md Aminul Haq, who had initiated the contract amendment, but could not reach him. The Daily Star repeatedly called him and sent several

text messages for comments and an appointment but he did not respond.

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Deadly quake kills over 400

FROM PAGE 1
second night as authorities scrambled to provide them with aid.

Some had spent Sunday night outdoors after fleeing their homes in the mountainous cross-border region, huddling around fires at dawn as the authorities sent in help.

"People's immediate needs are firstly tents, water and food," said the head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, Maj Gen Mohammad Ali Jafari.

"Newly constructed buildings... held up well, but the old houses built with earth were totally destroyed," he told state television during a visit to the affected region.

Hundreds of ambulances and dozens of army helicopters reportedly joined the rescue effort after Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered the government and armed forces to mobilise "all their means".

Like other foreign media organisations, AFP had not received authorisation to visit the scene of the disaster yesterday.

Officials said they were setting up relief camps for the displaced.

Iran's emergency services chief Pir Hosseini Koolivand said landslides had cut off roads to affected villages, impeding the access of rescue workers.

But by late afternoon, officials said all the roads in Kermanshah province had been re-opened, although the worst-affected town of Sar-e Pol-e Zahab remained without electricity, said state television.

The official IRNA news agency said 30 Red Crescent teams had been sent to the quake zone.

After initially pinning the quake's epicentre inside Iraq, the USGS then placed it across the border in Iran on Monday morning.

Iran's Sar-e Pol-e Zahab, home to some 85,000 people close to the border, was the worst hit with at least 236 dead.

At dawn, buildings in the town stood disfigured, their former facades now rubble on crumpled vehicles.

In an open space away from wrecked housing blocks, men and women, some wrapped in blankets, huddled around a campfire.

Iranian media reported that a woman and her baby were pulled alive

from the rubble.

The towns of Eslamabad and Qasr-e Shirin were also affected, while the tremor shook several western Iranian cities including Tabriz.

Some 259,000 people live in the region, according to the most recent census.

State television showed tents, blankets and food being distributed in areas struck by the tremor.

In neighbouring Dala-ho-o County, several villages were totally destroyed, an official told Tasnim agency.

In Iraq, the health ministry said the quake had killed seven people in the northern province of Sulaimaniyah and one in Diyala province to its south.

More than 500 people were injured in both provinces and the nearby province of Kirkuk.

Footage posted on Twitter showed panicked people fleeing a building in Sulaimaniyah as windows shattered at the moment the quake struck. Images from the nearby town of Darbandikan showed walls and concrete structures that had collapsed.

Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Syria offered their condolences, while Pope Francis called the quake a "tragedy" and expressed his "prayerful solidarity" with victims.

The quake struck along a 1,500-kilometre fault line between the Arabian and Eurasian tectonic plates, which extends through western Iran and northeastern Iraq.

The area sees frequent seismic activity.

In 1990, a 7.4-magnitude quake in northern Iran killed 40,000 people, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless, reducing dozens of towns and nearly 2,000 villages to rubble in just seconds.

Thirteen years later, a catastrophic

quake flattened swathes of the ancient

city of Bam,

killing at least 31,000.

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The law enforcers also

detained two people, Rana

Bhuiyan, 27, of Narsingdi

and Kamruzzaman Babu,

30, of Bogra, in this connection,

he said, adding that

they are being interrogated

for further information.

They were taking those

four cubs to a house in the

bordering Sharsha upazila

in Jessor. The cubs were

kept inside a wooden box

in the vehicle.

Bangladesh Road

Transport Authority

(BRTA) Jessor office

sources said they primarily

came to know that the

vehicle is owned by one

Md Khwaja Moinuddin, an

official of M/S. Star Gold

International in Banani.

After seeing the photo-

graphs, Dr Reza Khan, head

of Dubai zoo, also con-

firmed that two of those

four cubs were lions and the

others were leopards.

Definitely those were

smuggled into our country.

There is no such cub in

[our zoos]," Dr Reza Khan

said.

"Right at this moment, we may

[have not] taken a decision but the

decision will come in the course of

time. Because time will say which

decision is necessary," he said.

Queried whether BNP's demands

had played a role in that, he said

they did not think so as their demand

was giving magistracy power to the

army and not army deployment in

itself.

About Electronic Voting Machines

or EVMs, the election commissioner

said the old ones have been out of