

ASIAN NATIONS

# PM for more connectivity

BSS, Phnom Penh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for increasing connectivity and cooperation among the Asian nations in the interest of the people of the region.

She expressed the view when former Cambodian prime minister and President of Funcinpec, a Cambodian royal party, Norodom Ranariddh called on her in Phnom Penh.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, PM's Additional Press Secretary M Nazrul Islam said the two leaders discussed the issues of boosting regional connectivity and people-to-people contact among the Asian countries.

Hasina said Bangladesh could work as a bridge between East and West. "That's why we've taken an initiative to build a new international airport near Dhaka."

She said the Cox's Bazar Airport would be turned into an international one to increase connectivity between Bangladesh and Southeast Asian nations.

Norodom Ranariddh, also the half brother of the incumbent Cambodian King, expressed gratitude to the PM for naming a road in Dhaka after late king Norodom Sihanouk.

The PM thanked the Cambodian government and the people for naming a road in Phnom Penh after

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina and Ranariddh, a former president of the National Assembly of Cambodia, recalled their previous meetings held on different occasions.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon were present, among others.

### PM RETURNS HOME

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home yesterday afternoon after concluding her three-day official visit to Cambodia.

A VIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the PM and members of her entourage touched down at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 4:35pm.

During the PM's visit to the Southeast Asian country, Bangladesh and Cambodia signed an agreement and nine memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to boost trade and investment relations, and step up cooperation in the fields of tourism, agriculture, civil aviation, ICT and technical education.

Officials said Hasina's visit to Cambodia helped booting cooperation between Bangladesh and Cambodia in the interest of the people of the two countries as well as of the region.



BNP men scale an iron fence to escape police batons in the city's High Court area yesterday. At least 25 people were injured in the clashes and around 70 vehicles were vandalised. Top right, a burning police motorbike in Bangabazar area. Two men peer through the smashed rear window of a car, bottom right, in the secretariat area.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## BNP men, police clash in city

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Tailbacks stretched to Shahbagh, Gulistan, Chankharpool and Banglamotor areas as many people were seen getting off public transport and walking to their destinations.

Witnesses said several hundred BNP men gathered in Doyel Chatter area to bring out a procession to march towards Bakshibazar.

The opposition men got involved in a

heated exchange with law enforcers. As they tried to break through a barbed-wire barricade, law enforcers charged batons and fired teargas shells to disperse them.

At one stage, the BNP men in two groups ran towards Zero Point in Gulistan and Bangabazar. They vandalised vehicles parked on Abdul Gani Road near the secretariat and Shikha Bhaban.

Law enforcers said some BNP men

torched a motorbike of a police sergeant in Bangabazar area.

Harun Ali, who works as a driver at the power, energy and mineral resources ministry, said, "I was in the driving seat of my car. Suddenly, I saw several hundred men running on Abdul Gani Road. They threw brickbats at parked vehicles and also hit those with sticks."

Amir Hossain, another driver of a ministry, said, "I parked my car near the

Shikha Bhaban. They [vandals] broke the windshields of the car hitting with sticks. Chased by police, they damaged almost all the vehicles parked along the roads."

Maruf Hossain Sardar, deputy commissioner (Ramna division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said police fired around eight teargas shells to disperse BNP men and detained about 25 people for interrogation.

## Fatal mistake

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

She just wanted to drink a glass of water to quench her thirst. Instead, the newly appointed assistant of a gold shop mistakenly gave her acid instead of water.

After drinking from the glass, the young girl died on the spot.

The child was two and a half years old JoythiMarma, who had gone to Jagonathjewellery shop in Ujani para area of Bandarban district town with her mother SumithaMarma on Monday evening.

Joythi was her only child.

Locals caught the assistant of the shop Saimon Tripura, 19, while the owner of the shop, Raton Dhor, fled from the scene said Golam Sarwar, officer-in-charge of Bandarban police station.

Saimon had just joined as an assistant on Monday police said.

## Sophia

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various questions. The session will be attended by more than two and a half thousand people.

The Digital World authorities had opened a pre-registration for the session and they received a huge response, said Syed Gousul Alam Shaon, managing director of Grey, the advertising agency that brought Sophia here.

Shaon said the robot arrived in Dhaka early yesterday and was shifted to a city hotel.

"Along with Sophia, its manufacturer David Hanson also arrived. He will present a key note at a session of the event focusing on robotics and artificial intelligence," said Shaon.

The humanoid robot was created using state of the art innovations in artificial intelligence, visual data processing and facial recognition. It was activated on April 19, 2015.

A Hong Kong-based company, Hanson Robotics, developed the robot and it has been designed to respond to questions, and has been interviewed by media from across the world.

Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd is sponsoring the robot's visit to Dhaka. The humanoid robot can chat, smile and even tell jokes, according to different global media reports.

While it has some impressive capabilities, it does not yet have consciousness, but its manufacturer say they expect fully sentient machines to emerge within a few years.

Sophia's Dhaka visit has created huge enthusiasm among the youths, said the organisers.

"We are entering a global trend. Bringing the robot here will make the expo a success," Shaon said.

Earlier, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, said Sophia's Dhaka visit could be historic and youths who are interested in robotics and artificial intelligence would feel motivated.

After signing the deal with Hanson Robotics, Sophia also delivered a video message and expressed her gratitude to Bangladesh.

The robot uses voice recognition technology from Alphabet Inc. (parent company of Google) and is designed to get smarter over time. Sophia's intelligence software was designed by SingularityNET.

Saudi Arabia gave Sophia citizenship earlier this year, making her the first robot ever to receive the status from any country.

## UN cannot rule out genocide

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Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said Myanmar's security forces may be guilty of genocide against the Rohingyas.

And more of the persecuted group are fleeing despite a deal between Myanmar and Bangladesh to send them home, he added.

The UN defines genocide as acts meant to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part. Such a designation is rare under international law, but has been used in contexts including Bosnia, Sudan and an Islamic State campaign against the Yazidi communities in Iraq and Syria.

Zeid, who earlier had described the military campaign against Rohingyas as a "textbook case of ethnic cleansing", said none of the 626,000 Rohingyas who have fled violence to Bangladesh since August should be repatriated to Myanmar unless there was robust monitoring on the ground.

He described reports of "acts of appalling barbarity committed against the Rohingyas, including deliberately burning people to death inside their homes, murders of children and adults; indiscriminate shooting of fleeing civilians; widespread rapes of women and girls, and the burning and destruction of houses, schools, markets and mosques".

"Can anyone rule out that elements of genocide may be present?" he told the 47-member state forum.

Zeid urged the rights council to ask the UN General Assembly to launch a new "impartial and independent mechanism", complementary to the work of a fact-finding mission already dispatched by his office, to "assist individual criminal investigations of those

responsible".

His office had sent three teams to Bangladesh this year to monitor the situation and interview refugees. Witnesses reported acts of appalling barbarity committed against the Rohingyas, including deliberately burning people to death inside their homes; murders of children and adults; indiscriminate shooting of fleeing civilians; widespread rapes of women and girls; and the burning and destruction of houses, schools, markets and mosques.

The UN rights chief called upon the special session "to take the appropriate action to stop this madness now" and asked: "How much do people have to endure before their suffering is acknowledged and their identity and rights are recognised, by their government and by the world?"

An army-led crackdown has forced some 626,000 people to flee from northern Rakhine State and across the border into squalid camps in Bangladesh in recent months, leaving hundreds of villages burned to the ground.

### 'COMPARABLE TO RWANDA'

The council rarely holds special sessions, which can only be convened at the request of at least a third of its 47 member states, or 16 countries.

Yesterday's session was held at the request of Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, with the support of 33 council members and more than 40 observer states.

Shahriar Alam, Bangladesh's state minister for foreign affairs, warned that the massive exodus over such a short period was "comparable only with the exodus following the 1994 Rwanda genocide".

He told the session that his country was hosting nearly one million "Myanmar nationals" following summary executions and rapes "as a weapon of persecution".

These crimes had been "perpetrated by Myanmar security forces and extremist Buddhist vigilantes", he said, calling for an end to what he called "xenophobic rhetoric including from higher echelons of the government and the military".

On the sidelines of the UN rights body's meeting, Shahriar met Lord Ahmad, British prime minister's special representative on preventing sexual violence in conflict.

"The UK reiterated its support to Bangladesh over Rohingya issue," he said after the meeting.

They discussed the implementation of recently signed document between Bangladesh and Myanmar on return of Rohingyas to their homeland.

The state minister also met Zeid and appreciated the latter's speech saying the UN rights chief lauded efforts taken by the Hasina government.

### CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Prosecutions for the violence and rapes against Rohingyas by security forces and civilians "appear extremely rare", Zeid said.

Marzuki Darusman, head of an independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, said by video from Malaysia: "We will go where the evidence leads us."

His team has interviewed Rohingya refugees, including children in the Bangladeshi port city of Cox's Bazar, who recounted "acts of extreme brutality" and "displayed signs of severe trauma".

## US Supreme Court

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Somalia, Syria and Yemen seeking to enter the United States. The Republican president has said the travel ban is needed to protect the United States from terrorism by Islamic militants.

In a statement, Attorney General Jeff Sessions called the Supreme Court's action "a substantial victory for the safety and security of the American people." Sessions said the Trump administration was heightened that a clear majority of the justices "allowed the president's lawful proclamation protecting our country's national security to go into full effect."

The ban was challenged in separate lawsuits by the state of Hawaii and the American Civil Liberties Union. Both sets of challengers said the latest ban, like the earlier ones, discriminates against Muslims in violation of the US Constitution and is not permissible under immigration laws.

Trump had promised as a candidate to impose "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." Last week he shared on Twitter anti-Muslim videos posted by a far-right British party leader.

"President Trump's anti-Muslim prejudice is no secret - he has repeatedly confirmed it, including just last week on Twitter," ACLU lawyer Omar Jadwat said.

"It's unfortunate that the full ban can move forward for now, but this order does not address the merits of our claims. We continue to stand for freedom, equality and for those who are unfairly being separated from their

loved ones," Jadwat added.

Lower courts had previously limited the scope of the ban to people without either certain family connections to the United States or formal relationships with US-based entities such as universities and resettlement agencies.

Trump's ban also covers people from North Korea and certain government officials from Venezuela, but the lower courts had already allowed those provisions to go into effect.

The top court said in two similar one-page orders that lower court rulings that partly blocked the latest ban should be put on hold while federal appeals courts in San Francisco and Richmond, Virginia weigh the cases. Both courts are due to hear arguments in those cases this week.

The Supreme Court said the ban will remain in effect regardless of what the appeals courts rule, at least until the justices ultimately decide whether to take up the issue on the merits, which they are highly likely to do. The court's order said the appeals courts should decide the cases "with appropriate dispatch."

"We agree a speedy resolution is needed for the sake of our universities, our businesses and most of all, for people marginalized by this unlawful order," Hawaii Attorney General Douglas Chin said.

Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor said they would have denied the administration's request.

### STRONG SIGNAL

Monday's action sent a strong signal that the court is likely to uphold the

ban on the merits when the case likely returns to the justices in the coming months.

There are some exceptions to the ban. Certain people from each targeted country can still apply for a visa for tourism, business or education purposes, and any applicant can ask for an individual waiver.

The San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals will hear arguments on the merits of Hawaii's challenge today in Seattle. The 4th US Circuit Court of Appeals will argue on the merits of case spearheaded by the ACLU on Friday in Richmond.

Trump issued his first travel ban targeting several Muslim-majority countries in January, then issued a revised one in March after the first was blocked by federal courts. The second one expired in September after a long court fight and was replaced with the present version.

The Trump administration said the president put the latest restrictions in place after a worldwide review of the ability of each country in the world to issue reliable passports and share data with the United States.

The administration argues that a president has broad authority to decide who can come into the United States, but detractors say the expanded ban violates a law forbidding the government from discriminating based on nationality when issuing immigrant visas.

The administration has said the ban is not discriminatory and pointed out that many Muslim-majority countries are unaffected by it.

Myanmar has not granted the investigators access to Rakhine, the northern state from which the Rohingyas have fled, Darusman said. "We maintain hope that it will be granted early in 2018."

Pramila Patten, special envoy of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, who interviewed survivors in Bangladesh in November, said: "I heard the most heart-breaking and horrific accounts of sexual atrocities reportedly committed in cold blood out of a lethal hatred of these people solely on the basis of their ethnicity and religion".

Crimes included "rape, gang rape by multiple soldiers, forced public nudity and humiliation, and sexual slavery in military captivity", Patten said.

Myanmar's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Htin Lynn, did not address those accusations, but insisted to the council that the humanitarian situation at its border with Bangladesh was of "paramount concern", and that Yangon was "making every effort to resolve the issue."

He also denied Zeid's claim that Yangon was doing little to rein in hate speech and incitement to violence against the minority, insisting "my government is doing everything possible to deter these individual acts."

The envoy said that his government was working with Bangladesh to ensure returns of the displaced in about two months and "there will be no camps".

On the resolution, he said his government "disassociated" itself from the text and denounced what he called "politicisation and partiality".

[Reuters, AFP, Ohchr.org and UNB]

## KILLING IN CTG Jubo Dal leader was beaten after being shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attackers mercilessly beat up and kicked Sadarghat thana Jubo Dal Joint Convener Harunur Rashid Chowdhury in the face after he was shot in Chittagong on Sunday, according to footage shown on TV channels yesterday.

The clip shows blood-stained Harun lying on the ground while a group of five to six youths beating him up with an iron rod and other objects and kicking him.

Harun was only moving his head during the assault. The attackers fled the scene after a cop arrived there.

CMP Assistant Commissioner Jahangir Alam told The Daily Star that police were discharging their duties at the tail of a procession, organised by local Awami League and Jubo League. "Hearing gun shots, police rushed to the spot and found the attackers fled the scene."

According to the post mortem report, three bullets pierced Harun's chest. There were also stab wounds on his neck, said police.

The Jubo Dal leader was shot dead by six to seven youths during the procession, organised by Sadarghat thana AL and Jubo League, to celebrate Unesco's recognition of the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Some business leaders said the killers plotted the murder to take revenge against Harun and establish supremacy in transport business as the Jubo Dal leader, also the owner of ST Transport, had taken a strong stance against extortion by Chhatra League men.

## Transfer of Tk 20cr

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firms owned by his younger brother Sheikh Shariar Panna.

The Gulshan branch of the bank gave loans to BS Trading through irregularities on various occasions. The loans amounted to Tk 40 crore till 2014. The client is now a defaulter with the bank.

Some Tk 1.05 crore was transferred to a bank account of BM Computers and Tk 1.65 crore to an account of Crown Properties from BS Trading's bank account.

Panna is the owner of both BM Computers and Crown Properties, which maintained their accounts with a multinational bank.

Back in 2010, BASIC Bank approved a loan of Tk 5.60 crore to BS Trading before the firm even opened its account with the bank.

The loan amount was raised to Tk 33 crore in 2012. The branch concerned, however, didn't show any reason for increasing the amount. It didn't even verify the ownership of the property that was mortgaged against the loan.

Besides, no credit risk grading was done before approving the loan though it was mandatory. No documents of the mortgaged land were collected.

The BFIU investigation also found that Tk 1.50 crore was transferred to the bank account of Crown Properties from Angel Agro Feed which took a loan of Tk 31.54 crore as working capital from BASIC Bank for poultry and fish trading.

Angel Agro Feed had opened an account with the bank in May 17, 2012, just two days after the firm got trade licence. BS Trading was its introducer.

Besides, Time Trade Impex, another business firm, transferred Tk 1 crore to Crown Properties' account after it got a loan of Tk 10.90 crore from BASIC Bank's Gulshan branch.

Crown Properties also received in its bank account Tk 8 crore through pay orders from Delta Systems Ltd, which had been given a loan of Tk 122.73 crore by the bank's Gulshan branch between 2012 and 2013 in breach of rules.

Moreover, Tk 8 crore was transferred to the account of Crown Properties in 2012 from a bank account of Life Style Fashion Maker which was given a loan of Tk 55.76 crore by the same branch in violation of the credit rules in 2011.

Crown Properties also received Tk 80 lakh in its bank account from an account of Dhrubo Traders, which was granted a loan of Tk 10.57 crore by BASIC Bank in 2012.

Despite repeated attempts, this newspaper could not reach Panna over his mobile phone yesterday.

In 2015, the ACC filed 56 cases over the embezzlement of Tk 2,036 crore from BASIC Bank. The probe into the misappropriation of the rest of the money is going on.

However, Bacchu was not made an accused in any of the cases.

On November 23 this year, the ACC summoned the former chairman and 10 former directors of the bank for interrogation.

While holding hearing on two loan scam cases earlier on August 18, a Supreme Court bench expressed displeasure at the ACC for not naming Bacchu and the bank's ex-board members in the cases.