

Bangladesh third largest contributor to UN peacekeeping

India largest, Pakistan second

DATELEADS, New Delhi

Bangladesh is the third largest contributor of army personnel in UN peacekeeping missions, while India ranks first followed by Pakistan in Asia.

A total of 6,772 Bangladeshis have served in 58 peacekeeping missions across 40 countries since 1988.

The peacekeeping army is dominated by the South Asian troops which have traditionally been the top providers.

In Asia, it is India that contributes the most number of troops with 7,471 personnel stationed worldwide. India has participated in the most peacekeeping missions than any other country.

Pakistan is the second highest contributor in Asia with 7,161 troops in the UN missions. It was the first country to respond to crisis in Somalia and sent 500 troops to Somalia in 1992.

Nepal has contributed to 11 peacekeeping missions most of which are in Africa.

The United Nations does not have an army but it has peacekeepers for sustaining peace in conflict ridden areas. If the peacekeeping force was ranked against the national militaries

it would be the 44th largest army in the world.

There are a total of over 100,000 UN peacekeeping personal - consisting of 91,132 troops, 13,563 police and 1,811 military experts from 123 countries.

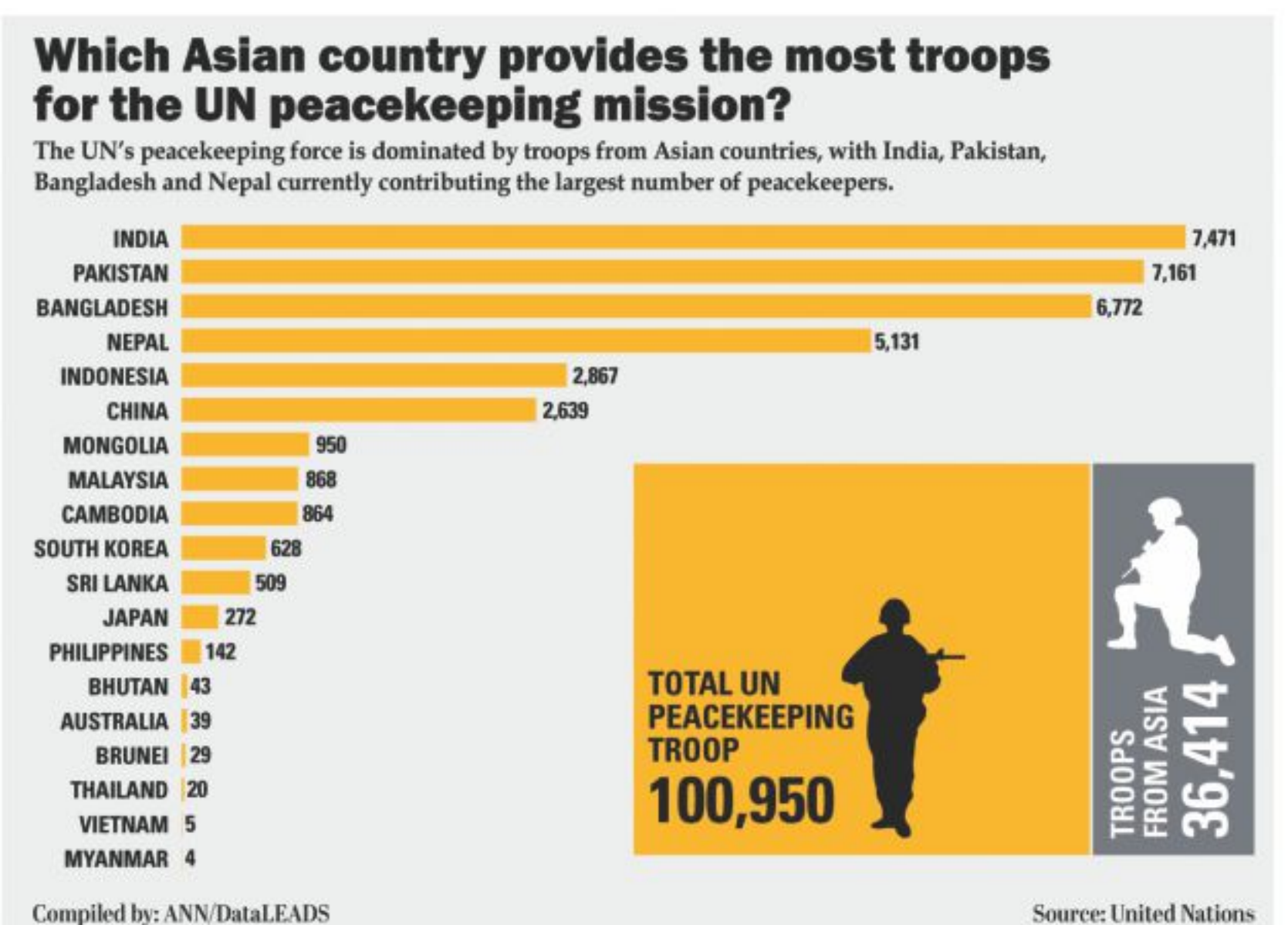
Indonesia first contributed troops in the 1950s and after a sustained absence has been once again actively contributing to the UN peace keeping missions.

China's troop contribution has increased over the last many years and it is the 12th largest provider of troops in the world and sixth highest in Asia. Mongolia contributes 950 troops for UN peacekeeping mission.

Malaysia, South Korea and Cambodia individually contribute less than one thousand troops.

Japan's contribution to peacekeeping has diminished over a period of time. It contributes a handful of personnel for UN missions.

Compared to its neighbours Sri Lanka remains an outlier in terms of troop contribution to the UN. Bhutan, Australia, Brunei, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar together contribute just hundred and forty personnel to the peace keeping missions of the UN.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki, left, on stage with the Rokeya Padak, 2017, winners at Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday. Freedom Fighter and organiser Mazeda Shawkat Ali, journalist Mahfuza Khatun Baby Moudud (posthumously), Artiste Suraiya Rahman, writer Shobha Rani Tripura, and social worker Masuda Faruk Ratna won the award.

PHOTO: PMO

Defy all odds to fulfill your potential

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Hasina was addressing a programme marking the Begum Rokeya Day and distribution of Begum Rokeya Padak 2017 at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

The premier said building a society is not possible for men alone. "It's not possible to build a sustainable society keeping the women aside."

With half of its total population comprised of women, a society cannot go a long way without their contributions, she observed.

Recalling the great role played by women during the Liberation War, Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had taken massive steps for women's emancipation and their development alongside rehabilitating mothers and sisters who suffered brutalities at the hands of Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators.

Following in the footsteps of Bangabandhu, the PM said, her government paid special attention to the development of poor, marginalised and

underprivileged women of the society to expedite their empowerment.

She mentioned that Begum Rokeya had dreamt of a society where the women would be magistrates, judges and barristers. "Today, women are serving the country holding those posts."

Hasina said her government first appointed woman secretary, superintendent of police, officer-in-charge of police and justice, and they all were doing excellent job.

Bangladesh's prime minister, deputy leader of the parliament, opposition leader, Speaker and some ministers are women, which is a rare example in the world, she added.

To build leadership from the grass-roots level, Hasina said her government kept seats reserved for women at the union parishes.

The PM said Bangladesh has become a role model of development for the world due to massive women development, including adoption of women development policy, development and expansion of their workplaces, bringing the poor and distressed women

under the social safety network and their empowerment at all levels.

A female Bangladeshi contingent was excellently carrying out their responsibilities at a UN mission, she told the programme.

The premier recalled the contributions of her mother to the country at various turning points of the nation's history as she always supported Bangabandhu from behind the scene.

Hasina said her mother suggested Bangabandhu not to get released from jail on parole during the trial of Agartala conspiracy case. As a result, the Pakistani rulers were compelled to withdraw the case and release all the accused.

The PM said her mother had also asked Bangabandhu not to take advice from the top Awami League leaders about his historic March 7 speech. She said Bangabandhu should rather say what comes from his heart.

The speech is now part of the world documentary heritage as it has been recognised by the Unesco, she added.

The children and women affairs ministry organised the programme,

with State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki in the chair.

Freedom fighter and organiser Mazeda Shawkat Ali, also a recipient of the Rokeya Padak 2017, spoke on the occasion.

Four other winners of the prestigious award are journalist Mahfuza Khatun Baby Moudud (posthumous), artiste Suraiya Rahman, writer Shobha Rani Tripura, and social worker Masuda Faruk Ratna.

The premier handed over the prizes and certificates among the winners and their family members.

The government had introduced the award in 1995 after the name of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, a pioneer of women's rights movement in undivided Bengal.

A leading feminist writer and social worker during the early 20th century, Rokeya was mostly famous for her efforts for gender equality and female education.

Ruling quarter snatched people's democratic, human rights

Claims Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday alleged that the Awami League-led government has "indulged in a repressive and undemocratic rule".

"The country has turned into a killing field ... the ruling quarter has snatched people's human and democratic rights by holding a unilateral election on January 5, 2014," she observed.

The former prime minister urged the people to unite to get rid of the situation and restore democracy.

In a press statement, Khaleda made the appeal on the eve of World Human Rights Day to be observed globally today.

Claiming that Bangladesh is passing through a tough time, Khaleda said the ruling quarter has been snatching people's fundamental rights by "reckless torture and repression".

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GD filed against Mahmudur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A general diary has been filed in Manikganj mentioning that Amar Desh acting editor Mahmudur Rahman made "derogatory comments on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina".

Nizam Hossain, personal assistant of former Awami League lawmaker ABM Anwarul Haque, filed the GD with Daulatpur Police Station Friday night.

Officer-in-Charge Rakibuzzaman of the police station said they recorded the GD and sent it to the police headquarters for its approval to turn it into a case under the Information and Communication Technology Act.

"The GD will be treated as case after getting the headquarters' approval," he said.

According to police sources, Nizam alleged that Mahmudur, at a programme in Dhaka on December 1,

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Crimes grow in state's silence

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The NHRC is yet to find an answer for the relatives of victims of 154 incidents of enforced disappearance, custodial torture and death, extrajudicial killing and other rights violation from 2012 till last year. It did not get investigation reports on those incidents even after writing as many letters.

Amid such poor response from the state and negligence in finding the perpetrators, the nation is observing International Human Rights Day today.

The day means nothing to Baishakhi Afreen, wife of Rahmatullah Sentu, a victim of enforced disappearance.

"What is the value of the day to the families of the victims? My three minor children could not see their father for more than three years after law enforcers took him away right before my eyes," said Afreen.

Sentu, a transport owner, has been missing since he was picked up in Old Dhaka on April 9, 2014.

Since August 22 this year, at least 12 persons, including former ambassador to Vietnam Maroof Zaman, North South University teacher Mubashar Hasan and journalist Utpal Das, became victims of enforced disappearance or abduction.

Three of them returned while three others have been found arrested by police.

The NHRC writes to the home ministry and the Police Headquarters seeking explanations when allegations of any rights violation by the law enforcers is reported or raised.

According to an NHRC document, the commission is waiting for the probe reports on 154 incidents, which include 32 custodial tortures or deaths, 25 enforced disappearances and 12 extrajudicial killings and some harassments of civilians by law enforcers.

Of the 154 letters dispatched asking for probe reports, four were sent in 2012, 10 in 2013, 51 in 2014, 73 in 2015 and 16 in 2016.

"Whenever we ask for any probe report, police say it's still under investigation. Six months to one year go by, but the report never comes," NHRC Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque said at a programme on Tuesday.

Talking to The Daily Star on Thursday, he said the commission has got replies to some of their letters while many are still pending.

Most of the probe reports the police so far sent to the NHRC found no

involvement of law enforcers in the incidents, he added. In some cases the commission was informed of action taken after investigation.

Speaking on the issue, former NHRC chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman said the state should show respect for human rights -- not in only words but also through actions.

"When National Human Rights Commission wants explanation for any incident [of rights violation], prompt action should be taken."

He also said, "If the commission is made toothless, the whole society and the country have to pay for it. Human rights situation deteriorates in that case."

Rights activist Nur Khan Liton said the state or police respond only to insignificant queries, not to the serious allegations that the NHRC asks about following complaints of victims' families and fact-finding reports of other human rights organisations.

"When the state does not respond to the National Human Rights Commission, it can be easily assumed what happens to the common people," he said.

"For this," he observed, "killings in the name of crossfire, incidents of enforced disappearance and misuse of section 57 are on the rise while the space for freedom of speech is shrinking."

He added that the state's silence on these incidents encourages others criminals.

Asked about the NHRC letters, Saheli Ferdous, assistant inspector general of police (media and public relations) at the Police Headquarters, said steps will be taken gradually.

According to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), as many as 519 people have reportedly become victims of enforced disappearance between 2010 and July 2017 in the country and 329 of them were still missing.

Hands of Rab, police and an intelligence agency behind such incidents were invariably alleged by families of victims. Their allegations either drew denial or were lost in silence.

In 13 years since 2004, more than 1,900 people have become victims of extrajudicial killings involving police, Rab and joint forces. At least 350 met such deaths alone in 2005, according to the ASK.

Nearly 800 have died in the custody of law enforcement agencies, which are bound by the law to protect the detainees.

THE DISAPPEARED FIVE



EX-ENVOY MAROOF ZAMAN

Former Bangladesh ambassador to Vietnam Maroof Zaman went missing on December 4 after he left his Dhanmondi home in his private car to pick up his daughter from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. Later in the day, three well-dressed, tall men entered his home and took away his laptop, desktop and camera.

NSU TEACHER MUBASHAR HASAN



Mubashar Hasan, an assistant professor of North South University and also a researcher of political Islam, has been traceless since November 7. He came out of the university around 4:30pm that day. Police said he last talked to someone on his mobile phone at 6:41pm when he was near Lions Eye Hospital at Agargaon.



BNP LEADER ILIAS ALI

M Ilias Ali, former lawmaker and BNP organising secretary (Sylhet division), went missing along with his driver in the wee hours of April 18, 2012. Police recovered his abandoned car near his Banani home. Locals said they noticed all its doors were flung wide open. The BNP claims government agencies picked them up.

BNP LEADER CHOWDHURY ALAM



Six to seven people on two vehicles stopped the car carrying DCC councillor and BNP leader Chowdhury Alam on Indira Road in the capital and took him away in the car leaving the driver behind on June 25, 2010. He has been missing since then.



SAJEDUL ISLAM SUMAN

Sajedul Islam Suman, general secretary of BNP's Dhaka city ward-38 unit, and five others have remained missing since they were allegedly picked up by Rab from the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area on December 4, 2013. Rab denied the allegation.

Onions selling

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for Tk 80- Tk 90 per kg yesterday, up from Tk 75- Tk 85 a week ago, according to data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

"It appears that beggars will seek onions instead of taka the way prices are going up," said an annoyed Md Shihab Uddin, who works at a private firm.

He said he was buying fewer onions expecting a fall in price owing to the arrival of a fresh harvest.

Traders said consumers will have to wait for two to three weeks to see increased supply of the essential cooking ingredient and buy the vegetable at lower prices.

However, some traders warned that arrival of early varieties of onions may be delayed owing to bad weather and yesterday's rainfall.

Prices of imported onions increased following imposition of \$850 as Minimum Export Price for each tonne of onions by the Indian authority.

India reset the MEP after nearly two years to increase supply in its domestic market and curb price hike there.

"The market has become dependent on Indian onions as stock of locally grown bulbs has almost exhausted. Besides, we had onions imported from other countries," said Narayan Chandra Saha, a wholesaler at Shyambazar market in the capital.

Some 90 percent stock of local onion has already been used up, he said.

"Increased imports will help cool down the prices," said Mohammad Aminul Islam, another onion wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, a major kitchen market in Dhaka.

He said supply of locally grown onion declines fast in the major growing regions such as Pabna.

"Early harvested onions have started coming to the market. But the current rainfall will affect onion fields. A portion of the bulbs in the fields will be damaged if the rainfall continues for longer. The wet weather will affect harvest, supply and prices of onion," he said.

"Cultivation is good. But it may take a month for enough availability of onion in the market," he said.

Mohammad Mazed, secretary of Shyambazar Onion Samity, said a large amount of onions was damaged in the field due to the unseasonal rains in October. The recent rainfall is likely to affect crop too, he said.

He said prices of imported onions have dropped to Tk 63-64 per kilogram at wholesale at Shyambazar yesterday from Tk 67-68 couple of days ago.

"Supply has been short in India," he said.

On import from other countries, he said some importers incurred losses due to a price fall after importing onions from countries such as Pakistan, China and Egypt prior and after Eid-ul-Azha in September.

That is why imports of onions from other countries have dipped, he said, adding that prices are likely to remain high for the next three weeks. But prices may not go up too much, he said.

In the last fiscal year, 15 lakh tonnes of onions were exported.

The Department of Agricultural Extension has targeted to bring 2.15 lakh hectares of land for onion cultivation during the 2017-18 fiscal year, up from 2.13 lakh hectares the previous year.

Onion production rose seven percent to 18.66 lakh tonnes in the 2016-17 fiscal year, up from 17.35 lakh tonnes the previous year, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Refugees must not be sent

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ethnic cleansing and has possible elements of genocide -- charges Myanmar vehemently denies.

While the worst bouts of violence appear to have subsided in recent months, refugees are still crossing the border, UNHCR said on Friday, insisting that peace must be secured before any repatriation process begins.

The Rohingya face intense discrimination in mainly Buddhist Myanmar.

Myanmar does not recognise the minority as a genuine ethnicity and has systematically stripped the group of citizenship, while curtailing their movement and access to jobs and basic services.

Authorities have also severely curbed aid access to Rakhine since the violence erupted in late August, a blockade that has helped drive more refugees across the border.