



Palestinian protesters push a metal container into position during clashes with Israeli security forces in Ramallah in the Israeli occupied West Bank yesterday, as protests continue in the region amid anger over the US president's recognition of Jerusalem as its capital.

PHOTO:
AFP

A symphonic

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Philharmonic Orchestra from Kazakhstan took the stage next, marking the first-time Western Classical music being played at the festival. They began with a short composition by a noted Kazakh composer, and then performed famous Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake", one of the most popular ballet compositions in the world. The strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion sections created a marvellous symphonic soundscape by the waving of the wand by its artistic director, Berik Batyrkhan.

Subramaniam then came back on stage with his ensemble to perform with the Orchestra, creating a unique bridge between the East and West with a riveting composition titled "Shanti Priya".

A formal inauguration ceremony followed, with Finance Minister AMA Muhith as chief guest. Other speakers at the ceremony were Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Chairman of Dhaka Abahani Salman F Rahman, Brac Bank MD Selim RF Hussain, Square Group MD Anjan Chowdhury and Bengal Foundation Chairman Abul Khair.

In his address, Abul Khair thanked the finance minister, cultural affairs minister and Salman F Rahman for their support and assistance in making the festival possible this year. "We wanted to break the tradition of dedicating the festival to only those who have left us, and that is why we dedicate this year's festival to Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman. I would like to announce that whether I am here or not, if Bengal Foundation organises this festival in the next three years, we will dedicate it to AMA Muhith, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, and Sanjida Khatun respectively," he said.

In his address, AMA Muhith said, "This year, the festival was in doubt at one point due to a venue crisis. I want to allot an open space inside the metropolitan area so that festivals and events like this can be held at a reasonable cost. I hope I will get the support of everyone concerned regarding it." He also expressed hope that a Bangladeshi symphonic orchestra can be established soon, that can represent Bangladesh.

The night's next performer was Rajrupa Chowdhury, who performed Raga Anil Madhyam, a raga created by her guru Pt Sanjoy Banerjee, on the sarod. With khyal vocals by Vidushi Padma Talwalkar, sitar by Firoz Khan, khyal vocals by Supriya Das (of Bengal Parampara Sangeetaly), and a flute-sitar jugalbandi by Rakesh Chaurasia and Purbayan Chatterjee yet to follow, a large audience settled in at the new venue, enjoying the cool December air while socialising.

Blogger

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had arrested Limon in March, said Shahid Ullah, officer-in-charge of Amtali Police Station. Limon is now in prison.

He added that they submitted a charge sheet in the case against the two in August.

Bijoy Bosak, superintendent of Barguna police, told The Daily Star that they earlier sought help from the Special Branch of police to arrest Noor.

Tarique assured

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The court also asked the defence lawyers to get ready for placing their closing arguments after completion of the arguments of the prosecution.

Meanwhile, the chief prosecutor told reporters that he would wrap up his closing arguments today, over two months after he started.

During the hearing yesterday, Rezaur said a meeting was held at the Hawa Bhaban in the capital's Banani in presence of Tarique, the elder son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, where he assured the Huji men of all assistance for carrying out the attack.

The Hawa Bhaban, then political office of the BNP chairperson, was widely considered as the alternative centre of power during the tenure (2001-2006) of the BNP-Jamaat government.

Another meeting was held at the Dhanmondi home of accused Abdus Salam Pintu, also a former deputy minister, before the attack, the prosecutor told the court.

The aim of the attack was to kill then AL chief Sheikh Hasina and her party men to eliminate its leadership.

After the attack, Tajuddin was provided with a fake passport with the name "Badal", Rezaur said.

Khaleda's nephew and private secretary Saiful Islam Duke, his brother-in-law and then DGFI official Lt Col Saiful Islam Joarder along with another DGFI official Maj Gen ATM Amin had helped Tajuddin flee the country on October 10, 2006, he added.

BACKGROUND Twenty-four leaders and activists of the AL and its associate bodies were killed and over 300 others suffered splinter injuries in the August 21 attack. Among the dead was Ivy Rahman, then Mohila AL president and also the wife of late president Zillur Rahman.

Many of the injured became crippled for life. Sheikh Hasina, then opposition leader, narrowly escaped the attack with ear injuries.

A case was filed with Motijheel Police Station the following day. But the CID submitted two charge sheets, one for killing and injuring people and another for supplying and using grenades. The second charge sheet was filed

under the Explosive Substances Act.

During the BNP-Jamaat rule until October 2006, the investigators were out to misdirect the probe to protect the real culprits, according to the prosecution.

The CID failed to submit the charge sheets in the cases although then government leaders had claimed several times that the probe was about to be completed and everything would be revealed.

During the tenure of the last caretaker government, charge sheets in the August 21 attack cases were filed against 22 people, including Abdus Salam Pintu and 21 Huji men, including Mufit Hannan.

However, the investigators could not identify the mastermind and the sources of the grenades used in the attack, prosecution said.

A further probe into the cases was launched in 2009 to find out the source of the grenades.

A supplementary charge sheet was submitted against 30 accused, including Tarique, former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and former Jamaat secretary general Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, in July 2011.

In March 2012, the tribunal indicted 52 accused, including Tarique, on murder charges while 41 accused were indicted in the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act.

The 11 other accused in the murder case were not implicated in the explosive case. They include three former IGP, three ex-CID officials, two former senior police officials, Khaleda's nephew Duke, and two former army officers ATM Amin and Saiful Islam Joarder.

Jamaat leader Mojaheed has already been executed for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War while Mufti Hannan and another Huji man were executed in the case filed over the grenade attack on former British high commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury in Sylhet.

Their names were dropped from the cases.

Of the 49, eight accused, including three former IGPs, are now on bail while 18 including Tarique are absconding.

Twenty-three, including Lutfozzaman Babar and Abdus Salam Pintu, are now behind bars.

Rocketman roams streets

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North Korean dictator, it turns out, has a doppelganger.

He was soon surrounded by Friday night revelers holding up their smartphones and giggling in disbelief. Several rubbed his belly as they posed for their friends.

His real name is Kim Minyong.

While it's hard to imagine anybody dressing up as Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin for entertainment, Kim Jong Un is apparently fair game in South Korea, despite his long record of human rights abuses and his country's threats to turn Seoul into "a sea of fire." A few years ago he executed his uncle.

"I make people smile," his impersonator said. "Seeing me, taking a photo with me, it brightens people's days."

The real Kim is a global pariah whose saber-rattling would be laughable if he weren't already conducting nuclear tests.

The impersonator Kim was serving in the South Korean military when the dictator took power in 2011. Other soldiers quickly noticed the strong resemblance. Bullying ensued.

"They'd tell me, 'It's because of you that we're here!'" Kim recalled.

The threat from North Korea is the main reason that all able-bodied men in South Korea are required to serve in

the military for two years.

When Kim Minyong's service was up, he returned to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to complete a business degree he had started there. Even the American students noted the uncanny resemblance.

He wasn't exactly flattered, but looking like the dictator had one advantage: Everybody seemed to love it.

He decided to embrace the role of the villain, ordering a black suit online from China, cutting his hair like the North Korean leader's and dressing the part to attend campus sporting events and parties. He was constantly stopped and asked to pose for photos.

"I was more popular than the football and basketball stars," he said.

After graduating, he returned to South Korea late last year and opened his own business, an after-school academy that teaches English. The industry is highly competitive, and 25-year-old Kim is trying to leverage his looks to his advantage.

Outside the subway stop, he glowered for each photo, then bade each of his fans farewell with a stately handshake. He never spoke a word.

"I can't believe how much he looks like him. It's freaky," said Kim Joo-hee, a 22-year-old college student waiting her turn for a photo.

Intention

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around 4:00pm. She remained seated inside the courtroom surrounded by pro-BNP lawyers, party colleagues and aides.

On July 3, 2008, the ACC filed the graft case with Ramna Police Station accusing Khaleda, her eldest son Tarique Rahman and four others of misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore that came as grants from a foreign bank for the orphans.

Three years later, the anti-graft body filed the Zia Charitable Trust graft case with Tejgaon police, accusing four people including Khaleda of abusing power to raise funds for the trust from unknown sources.

After the end of the hearing yesterday, defence lawyers Abdur Rezak Khan and Moudud Ahmed told reporters that the corruption case was politically motivated.

"There is no merit in the graft charge filed against the BNP chairperson and the prosecution have failed to prove it," said Moudud, also a former law minister.

"We hope she [Khaleda] would get acquittal in the case," Moudud, a standing committee member of the BNP, said.

Ex-BCL man

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made the arrest.

He was later taken to Bhedarganj Police Station.

Arif was the general secretary of Narayanpur union BCL under Bhedarganj upazila in the district. On November 11, one of the six women filed a case with Bhedarganj Police under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act. He was expelled from Chhatra League, the pro-ruling Awami League student body, on the same day.

Police said Arif allegedly raped the six women and captured the incidents on hidden cameras. Later, he circulated the videos among some locals.

Unable to deal with the social stigma, two of women stopped going to college, one left home, and the in-laws of another asked her to leave their house.

Projects

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Kishoreganj are in haor areas which have been badly hit by floods. Around 3,000km roads will be repaired in the region.

Yesterday, the Ecneac also approved two projects for providing uninterrupted power to Mirsarai Economic Zone in Chittagong.

The 150-megawatt dual-fuel power plant, to be completed by 2019, will be set up at Mirsarai, spending Tk 1,063 crore.

A Tk 324 crore project has been okayed for building power transmission lines for supplying electricity to the economic zone.

Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza) has already acquired 16,000 acres for the Mirsarai Economic Zone. Acquisition of additional 7,000 acres is underway for the 30,000-acre zone.

According to the Beza, development work of the zone is going on with Chinese financing.

In another development, the Ecneac yesterday approved Tk 1,799 crore for the purchase of railway engines and carriages.

South Korea will finance Tk 1,414 crore for the project. Under the project, 20 diesel engines and 150 carriages will be bought.

Yesterday, the Ecneac approved 16 projects in total.

Australia, Timor to sign deal after sea border row

AFP, The Hague

Australia and East Timor will sign a new treaty next year setting maritime boundaries in an effort to settle lingering disputes over lucrative oil and gas fields in the East Timor Sea.

The accord "addresses the legal status of the Greater Sunrise gas field... a pathway to the development of the resource, and the sharing of the resulting revenue," the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration said on Tuesday.

"The two governments agreed that they will proceed with signature in early March 2018," the PCA said in a statement.

East Timor in 2016 dragged Australia before the PCA -- the world's oldest arbitration tribunal -- to help end the dispute that has soured relations between the two countries.

East Timor, which gained independence from Indonesian occupation in 2002, is impoverished and depends heavily on oil and gas exports.

In 2006, it signed the Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea (CMATS) treaty with Australia, which also covers the vast Greater Sunrise gas field between the two nations, worth billions of dollars.

But East Timor wanted that treaty

torn up after accusing Australia of spying to gain commercial advantage during the negotiations.

Dili officially dropped a separate spying case against Canberra before the UN's highest International Court of Justice in June 2015 after Australia returned sensitive documents.

In January, the two neighbours announced that the CMATS treaty would be terminated and a new pact negotiated through the PCA.

They agreed on a new draft treaty in October, after months of behind-closed-doors talks.

"In broad terms, the draft treaty delimits the maritime boundary between Timor-Leste and Australia in the Timor Sea and establishes a Special Regime for the area comprising the Greater Sunrise gas field," the PCA said.

"The draft treaty also establishes revenue sharing arrangements where the shares of upstream revenue allocated to each of the Parties will differ depending on downstream benefits associated with the different development concepts for the Greater Sunrise gas field," it said.

The precise details of the treaty are expected to be made public once Australia and East Timor have finished "consulting with private actors potentially affected by the new boundary."

TIB criticises

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have the courage to tell them not to receive any bribe. It would have been a meaningless remark. But now we have made tremendous efforts and brought many changes here."

The TIB yesterday said, "At the programme broadcast live in social media, he [the minister] at one point of his speech commented that apart from government officials, he and his cabinet colleagues are corrupt."

"Such a comment of the education minister is a matter of concern for the nation. At the same time, it only reflected his confusion and frustration," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB.

He said the ill-attempt that the minister made to term all the government officials and ministers corrupt was unrealistic and unacceptable.

"The minister labelling himself and all his cabinet colleagues as thieves created confusion in people's mind about the government," Iftekharuzzaman said.

A day after his speech, the education ministry explained its position over a report carried out by some newspapers and online portals on the bribe issue, saying that the reports gave scope for some misunderstandings.

The reports were presented considering the old information and evaluation related to the DIA as the latest position, said the ministry in its official handout.

"It's [report] unfortunate, confusing and opposite of the education minister's basic speech and goes against the current policy of the education ministry."

Speaking at the function, the minister referred to a situation of eight years back

DEADLY MALL BLAZE

Duterte vows to get to truth

AFP, Davao, Philippines

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte vowed Tuesday to get to the truth about a blaze in his home city that killed 37 call centre workers.

He said he made the promise during a meeting on Monday night with the families of those killed in a shopping mall fire in the southern city of Davao.

"I assured them... that the truth will -- let the truth come out," Duterte said. "That is what they are asking for. Just the truth of what happened."

The justice and labour departments have ordered separate investigations into Saturday's blaze.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre has said his office would investigate the fire with a view to bringing criminal charges.

The fire broke out in the four-storey NCCC Mall shortly before it opened to shoppers. But it killed 37 people working in a 24-hour call centre for US-based market research firm SSI on the top floor.

At a Davao hospital Tuesday families of the dead waited in a silence broken only by occasional sobs as government workers tried to identify the charred remains before releasing them to relatives.

Social welfare officers said that so far, five bodies had been turned over.

Rhen Muyco recalled the last message his 25-year-old daughter Renzi Nova sent the family as the fire raged Saturday.

and described the scenario of corruption and irregularities among the DIA officials at that time, said the ministry.

The minister said the situation has changed significantly due to the introduction of a digital monitoring system, it added.

Nahid will hold a press briefing at his ministry today to give his statement on the issue.

India hits back

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destroyed two Pakistani posts in Rawalakot sector.

"They were manned by the troops of Baluch Regiment. At least three Pakistani soldiers were neutralised and five others were injured, some of them critically," the source said.

"The raid was to send a message that the Indian Army will retaliate swiftly and strongly to rogue actions," another source said.

This exchange of attacks takes place in the backdrop of a major diplomatic row between the two countries over former Indian Navy officer Kulbhushan Jadhav, who has been sentenced to death by Pakistan for alleged espionage.

The border raid took place hours after Jadhav's wife and mother were allowed to meet with him in Islamabad.

On Tuesday, India accused Pakistan of violating mutual understandings of Jadhav's meeting with his family, saying the Indian national appeared coerced and under considerable stress during the tightly controlled interaction.

Avanti and Chetankul Jadhav met external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj and foreign secretary S Jaishankar on Tuesday but the details of their interaction were not made public.

4 'Ansar Al Islam

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Bhoruapara village for holding a secret meeting. The others managed to flee, said the Rab official.

Rab claimed to have seized seven jihadi books from the detainees.

Militants are active in Bhoruapara and its neighbouring Jamira and Mahendra areas, the Rab official said, adding that law enforcers arrested many militants from those villages earlier.

India kills

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At least six protesters were injured, a police officer said.

Kashmir was divided between India and Pakistan at the end of British colonial rule over the subcontinent in 1947. Both claim the entire Muslim-majority territory in full.

Since 1989 rebel groups including JeM have been fighting Indian troops and police deployed in the Himalayan territory. They seek its merger with Pakistan or its independence.

The fighting has left tens of thousands, mostly civilians, dead.

Violence had steadily decreased during the last decade but this year some 350 deaths have been reported following the Indian army's anti-militant offensive dubbed "Operation All-Out".

Officials and rights groups say 210 suspected rebels, mostly locals, 57 civilians and 82 troops or police have been killed this year.