

# Netanyahu disappointed by Modi's Jerusalem rejection

AFP, New Delhi

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday he was "disappointed" by India's refusal to back recognition of Jerusalem as his country's capital but would not let it spoil his landmark visit to the Asian giant.

Netanyahu also vowed that Israel would "catch up" with the killers of a Jewish couple murdered in 2008 attacks in Mumbai whose son is accompanying him on a six-day trip to India.

The Israeli leader arrived Sunday at the head of the biggest business delegation he has taken on a foreign visit.

Netanyahu told the India Today media group, in an interview released yesterday, that he has a "special relationship" with his counterpart Narendra Modi.

But the run-up was clouded by India joining more than 100 countries at the United Nations in voting last month to condemn Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

"Naturally I am disappointed but I think this visit is a testament to the fact that our relationship is moving forward on so many fronts," Netanyahu said in the interview.

# Shabaab forcing civilians to hand over Somali children

AFP, Nairobi

Somalia's al-Qaeda linked Shabaab insurgents are increasingly threatening civilians to force them to hand over young children for "indoctrination and military training", Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday.

The rights watchdog said an aggressive campaign to recruit children had begun in mid-2017, with the jihadists taking reprisals against communities who refuse to cooperate.

Hundreds of children have fled their homes to avoid this fate, often alone, it said in a statement.

"Al-Shabaab's ruthless recruitment campaign is taking rural children from their parents so they can serve this militant armed group," said Laetitia Bader, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch.

The practice was revealed to be taking place in three districts largely under Shabaab control, in the southern Bay region.

According to HRW, Al-Shabaab has opened large Islamic religious schools since 2015 in areas under their control, bringing in younger children and pressuring teachers to teach the Shabaab curriculum in schools and avoid "foreign teachings".

Village elders near Baidoa in southwestern Somalia told HRW that in September, Shabaab militants ordered them to hand over dozens of children between the ages of nine and 15.

# Ride-sharing

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motorcycles and ambulances.

According to the guidelines, the fare of the ride-sharing vehicles cannot exceed the fare mentioned in the Taxicab Service Guideline-2010.

Any company which seeks the BRTA permission must have at least 100 vehicles in its fleet for operating in Dhaka, 50 for Chittagong and 20 for other cities, the guidelines mentioned.

The cabinet secretary added that there are 11 conditions in the guidelines.

The guidelines came at a time when around a dozen app-based transport service providers, including Uber, Pathao, Cholo, AmarBike, Ezzyr and TaxiWala, are already in service in the capital.

When the app-based service providers started the journey in 2016, the BRTA termed it illegal.

Later, Uber and other such service providers had urged the government to formulate a guideline. The BRTA then prepared a draft guideline which was sent to the cabinet through the road transport and bridges ministry for approval.

As per the guidelines, a company will have to pay Tk 1 lakh and submit other relevant documents, including trade licence, to the BRTA to get "enlistment certificate".

On the other hand, a driver will have to pay Tk 1,000 and a biker Tk 500 as yearly enlistment fee, and they have to renew the "enlistment certificates" every three years, the guidelines mentioned.

The apps used by the service providers must have facilities so that both passengers and drivers can contact the police control room in case of emergency, the guidelines mentioned.

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# BCL foils demo

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The incident happened around 1:00pm when some 100 students began a sit-in outside the VC office on the campus.

About half an hour later, around 300 BCL activists, led by its central unit President Saifur Rahman Sohag, General Secretary SM Jakir Hossain, DU unit President Abid Al Hasan and General Secretary Motahar Hossain Prince, went to them and urged them to pick a five-member delegation to meet the VC.

The protesters, however, rejected the call and demanded that the VC come to them instead, and announce that the authorities will meet the demand, said witnesses.

The BCL leaders became furious at this and instructed other leaders and activists to gather near the demonstrators. Soon, all the BCL activists, including some females, appeared there. They started to hurl abuses at the female protesters and asked them to leave. At this, most of the female protesters left.

Female Chhatra League activists, led by Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall unit President Benjeer Hossain Nishi, Ruqiyah Hall unit President BM Lipi Akter, Kuwait Moitri Hall unit President BM Farida Parvin, General Secretary Srabony Shaila, Sufia Kamal Hall General Secretary Sharjia Shampa, started to assault the girls who did not leave.

Another group of BCL activists, led by Bangabandhu Hall unit General Secretary Al Amin Rahman, harassed two journalists and snatched away their mobile phones as they tried to take footage of the incident, said the witness.

Around the same time, some BCL men dragged Moshirul Rahman Sadik,

one of the coordinators of the movement, inside the VC office and took his mobile and wallet. They then picked up Sadik. He, however, returned later at night.

Afterwards, the BCL men left the scene. The demonstrators left around 4:30pm.

The entire incident was recorded in cameras of students and journalists. The Daily Star has copies of them.

Contacted, BCL President Sohag denied assaulting or threatening any demonstrator. He claimed they were there "just to resolve the issue".

Asked why such a large number of BCL leaders and activists went there to "resolve" that issue, he said, "They might have gone for academic purposes".

VC Prof Akhteruzzaman said the demand by the demonstrators was "illogical".

On February 17 last year, the government affiliated Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College with Dhaka University.

## Inmates abseil

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"It appears guards on the watch towers were sleeping when the three escaped. Three wardens have been suspended," he said.

A hunt is underway for the fugitives.

In 2016 eight suspected members of a banned Islamist group escaped from a jail in Bhopal in central India after slitting the throat of a prison guard.

# BNP picks Tabith Awal

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nomination forms from the AL and five from the BNP to get the party ticket for the February 26 by-polls.

The AL is likely to pick former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association Atiqul Islam as its candidate, party sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Tabith thanked the 20-party alliance leaders for keeping trust in him.

"It's a primary victory of the young generation. I will try my best to deliver the best."

He said he would soon submit to the Election Commission the nomination form and would finalise the election manifesto.

Asked by a party central committee member about the candidate, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting of AL central working committee on January 6 said she had already given the go-ahead to one who started campaigning, added the sources.

Hasina, also the AL chief, didn't mention the name. However, Atiqul has started campaigning, saying he has got the nod from the AL high-ups.

Earlier, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi had said the party's nomination board would pick its candidate after interviewing the five mayor hopefuls at the party chief's

Gulshan office.

Headed by Chairperson Khaleda Zia, the BNP nomination board is comprised of the party standing committee members, the Dhaka North city unit president and general secretary.

On Sunday, Tabith, BNP Special Secretary Asaduzzaman Ripon, Assistant Publication Affairs Secretary Shakil Wahed, Dhaka North city unit President MA Quayum, and ex-MP Maj (retd) Akhteruzzaman collected nomination papers for contesting the by-polls.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance has already decided to jointly nominate a mayoral candidate. On the other side, a meeting of the 14-party alliance partners decided to support the AL candidate.

The post of the DNCC mayor fell vacant after Annisul Huq had passed away on November 30 last year. The Local Government Division declared the post vacant on December 1.

Tabith ran against AL-backed Annisul in the previous election after the AL-led government had split the Dhaka city corporation into two in November 2011.

The BNP-backed mayor candidate boycotted the April 28, 2015 polls on the voting day, alleging widespread rigging.

## AL allies

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in a good state and the government has weaknesses in dealing with it.

They stressed the need for taking effective initiatives to bring discipline to the sector, and urged the government to take immediate measures to check the increasing prices of goods.

The leaders expressed the frustration at a time when corruption, irregularities and mismanagement have become a regular phenomenon in the banking sector amid an embarrassing lack of proper.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, also the social welfare minister; Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua, also a former industries minister; Jatiya Party Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam and Communist Kendro leader Wazedul Islam Khan spoke at the meeting, said its sources.

The meeting also talked about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's address to the nation on January 12, on completion of the fourth year of the tenure of the government, and the mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation by-polls.

Menon told the meeting that his party supported the PM's speech but suggested the government not to have any self-satisfaction. He also criticised the government for its weakness in dealing with the banking sector.

He said the government also has showed weaknesses in controlling the prices of daily essentials. He said the government should take the issues seriously.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam said the government "failed" to check the soaring prices of goods, including rice and onion. He also said the matter might have a negative impact on the next national polls, said meeting insiders.

Echoing the views of Menon, Dilip Barua said the condition of the banking sector was not "good enough". He urged the government to bring discipline to the sector.

Taking to The Daily Star after the meeting, Barua said they alerted the government about the banking sector and the price hike issues.

Some leaders also warned the government about the BNP's street agitation in coming days, targeting the next parliamentary polls. They also suggested that the ruling party should remain watchful about it. They said the AL should make preparations to face the opposition's movement with an iron hand, said sources.

While briefing reporters, 14-party spokesperson Mohammed Nasim said the meeting decided to extend all-out support to the mayoral aspirant, who will get the AL ticket for the DNCC by-polls scheduled for February 26.

The Awami League-led 14-party alliance will select a lone candidate in the mayoral by-polls and we all will work together for ensuring his victory," Nasim, also the health minister, said.

Responding to a query about the possibility of holding any talks with the BNP, he said, "There is no question of holding talks with them [BNP]."

The next general election will be held according to the constitution and the BNP will not go out of the constitution," Nasim said, adding that the Awami League-led alliance was prepared to face any plot, if hatched, ahead of the elections.

Terming the BNP's demand for dissolution of parliament before the national election unconstitutional, Nasim said the present government will be in power during the polls.

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# 14 'Bangladeshis'

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Additional Police Super of Purba Medinipur Indrajit Basu said the authorities concerned have been informed about the matter, but no response has been received as yet.

Shyamsunder Das, secretary of Digha Fishermen and Fish Traders Association said the repair work of the Bangladeshi trawler has been completed. Steps can be taken to send them back in their trawler, whenever it is legally permissible.

Meanwhile, Kazi Muntasir Murshed, assistant deputy high commissioner of Bangladesh in Guwahati, said 14 Bangladeshi citizens held in different jails in Indian state of Assam are being sent back to their country after completion of jail term.

As many as 111 "Bangladeshi" inmates in four prisons -- 51 in Goalpara prison, 34 in Shilchar prison, 23 in Tezpur prison, and three in Kokrajhar prison -- all on charges of infiltration, have completed their jail terms, but have remained there since their nationalities are yet to be verified.

So far the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Guwahati has confirmed the nationalities of 14 of them on the list, said Murshed.

He added that they are still working on confirming the nationalities of the others, and that if every thing goes well, 13 more Bangladeshi citizens will be able to return to Bangladesh by the end of this month.

## Bangladesh

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President Pranab's daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee also accompanied him.

Welcoming the veteran Indian leader, Hasina elaborated on the overall economic scenario of Bangladesh. She said the poverty level came down to 22 percent due to various pragmatic steps of her government.

She, however, said the economy incurred losses to some extent last year due to the floods in different parts of the country.

About the Rohingya issue, the PM said over one million Myanmar nationals, who fled to Bangladesh from Rakhine following a crackdown by government forces, have been given shelter in Cox's Bazar on humanitarian grounds.

PM's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman and Senior Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office Suraiya Begum were present.

Hasina later hosted a luncheon in honour of the former Indian president.

Pranab arrived in Dhaka on Sunday on a four-day private visit to Bangladesh.

## Fifth largest

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The company unearthed the D-colour stone at the Letseng mine in the landlocked southern African country and described the 910-carat find as of "exceptional quality".

"Since Gem Diamonds acquired Letseng in 2006, the mine has produced some of the world's most remarkable diamonds, including the 603 carat Lesotho Promise," Gem Diamonds chief executive Clifford Elphick said in a statement.

"However, this exceptional top quality diamond is the largest to be mined to date... This is a landmark discovery."

Ben Davis, a mining analyst at Liberum Capital, speculated in a research note to investors that the diamond could be worth as much as \$40 million (33 million euros).

Gem Diamonds shares in London were up 14 percent from the market open to £0.92 a piece.

## Recruitment

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questioned how the police would improve its efficiency if this continued.

The police on December 22 published a circular to recruit 8,500 male and 1,500 female constables. The recruitment process was scheduled to end on February 1.

Political leaders allegedly take hefty sums of money in bribes from aspiring candidates. In some cases, dishonest superintendents of police (SPs) also allegedly take bribes for recruiting constables, allowing inefficient people into the force.

The job of a constable could be secured for Tk 6-8 lakh and that of an SI for Tk 15-18 lakh, some newly recruited police officials, constables and family members told this correspondent recently.

"It is said that recruitment in the police's lower tiers is almost impossible without bribes. There is an understanding between politicians and police in this regard," said a mid-level AL leader, asking not to be named.

He, however, said not all recruitment was done taking bribes.

A private television channel recently aired investigative reports on how corruption was being committed in the recruitment of constables in different districts.

Meanwhile, the PHQ is planning to conduct the constable recruitment process centrally instead of by the SPs.

According to the plan, representatives from the Police Headquarters would visit districts for the recruitment, said a police official.