



Pupils demonstrate with posters for climate protection in front of the city hall in Hamburg, northern Germany yesterday. They follow an appeal of Swedish pupil Greta Thunberg, who shot to fame after she began a one-child strike outside the Swedish parliament in summer 2018.

PHOTO: AFP

Climate change clouds Australia's Pacific charm offensive

AFP, Wellington

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Pacific charm offensive went off course yesterday when he was forced to defend Fiji's accusations of inaction over climate change.

As Morrison pushed Canberra's message of a new Pacific focus with increased security and enhanced trade opportunities, he was called out by Fiji Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, who turned the spotlight onto climate change.

Bainimarama said if Australia shifted away from its coal and mining industries it would help the survival of Pacific island countries threatened by rising sea levels.

"From where we are sitting, we cannot imagine how the interests of any single industry can be placed above the welfare of Pacific peoples and vulnerable people in the world over," Bainimarama said in a speech late Thursday.

"Rising seas threaten whole communities, forcing them to endure the trauma of relocating from land they've endured for generations.

"Fijian farmers are watching their crops perish in soil that has been spoiled by the heightened salinity that is associated with sea level rise."

Morrison, wrapping up a three-day visit to Fiji and Vanuatu, told reporters yesterday that Australia had commitments on emissions reductions in a "comprehensive response" to climate change, but he gave no specifics on clean energy plans.

"Well, we are already pursuing those policies in a way that I believe is consistent with what (Bainimarama) is expecting of Australia," the prime minister said.

Change BNP

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Mosharraf said, "The party must be reformed through a council. The leaders and activists who are devoted and tested must be at the party helm. We have to quit the party posts for the youth. Only then the BNP can turn around.

"We lost in 2008 after falling victim to a conspiracy. After the polls, we turned around through holding a council. Our leaders and activists across the country also turned around. That's why the government was afraid of holding fair polls on December 30."

The last council of the BNP was held in March 2016. The party faced a huge debacle in the recently concluded parliamentary election. Party leaders alleged that the election was heavily rigged.

Moudud said those who worked and were affected for the party at tough times should be brought to at the forefront of the party. If needed, those who became aged should give up the party posts. Reforms in the party should happen within a few months.

Vitamin A plus

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purchase. A local company got the work order for supplying the capsules, but an Indian company went to the High Court against it.

The court ordered in favour of the Indian company, said DGHS officials.

Syria regime forces shouldn't be allowed in Manbij: Turkey

AFP, Ankara

Turkey yesterday insisted Syrian regime forces should not be allowed in Manbij as US troops withdraw, as proposed by a US-backed Kurdish militia viewed as terrorists by Ankara.

The strategic northern city has been held by the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia since 2016 after they recaptured the territory from Islamic State jihadists.

But Ankara, who says the YPG is a "terrorist offshoot" of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), has repeatedly called for the militia to leave the city.

"The YPG's efforts to stick the regime in Manbij must absolutely not be allowed," Turkish Foreign Ministry Hami Aksoy said during a press conference in Ankara.

Backed by Washington, the militia has spearheaded the fight against IS but was taken aback when President Donald Trump made the shock

decision to pull out 2,000 American ground forces from Syria.

Four Americans, including two US soldiers, were killed this week in Manbij in a suicide attack claimed by IS.

Turkey has repeatedly threatened to attack the YPG and said it would set up a "security zone" in northern Syria following a suggestion by Trump.

Last month, the YPG called on the regime to "assert control" over areas the militia was to withdraw from, including Manbij, to stop a "Turkish invasion" and fiercely rejected a "security zone".

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Wednesday that the Syrian regime must take control of the country's north.

Turkey, which supports Syrian rebels and has called for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's ouster, has conducted two previous offensives in Syria against IS and the YPG in 2016 and 2018.

Myanmar army kills

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The recent surge of violence began after insurgents killed 13 police and wounded nine in attacks on four police posts on January 4, as Myanmar celebrated Independence Day, state media reported.

Yanghee Lee, UN special rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar, voiced alarm at the "escalating violence" in Rakhine and urged both sides to show restraint and protect civilians.

She condemned the January 4 attack by the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military's "disproportionate response", citing reports that heavy weapons, artillery, and helicopters had been used in civilian areas, leading to civilian casualties.

"I am also seriously concerned about the dangerous rhetoric being used by the government. The ethnic Rakhine population must not be demonized and targeted by the military on suspicion of association with the AA," Lee said in a statement.

There was no immediate response from the Myanmar authorities to her remarks.

Myanmar's civilian administration last week called on the military to "crush" the rebels, according to a government spokesman.

The military said yesterday Aung San Suu Kyi, who runs the country as state counsellor, personally ordered the crackdown, stating that the Arakan Army, which recruits from among the mainly Buddhist Rakhine ethnic group, should face the same treatment as Rohingya insurgents.

The military onslaught against the Rohingya in 2017, which the UN and Western nations have called ethnic cleansing, was preceded by attacks on security forces

by fighters calling themselves the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. The government denies the charge of ethnic cleansing.

"During negotiations at the president's house on January 9, state counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said AA were terrorists and instructed to crack down effectively," Tun Tun Nyi said.

"If not, others would point out that ARSA was cracked down on because it's from a different religion and AA was not because it is an ethnic group," he said.

A government spokesman did not answer calls seeking comment.

The conflict is the latest crisis facing Nobel laureate Suu Kyi's administration, which swept to power in 2015 promising to bring an end to the country's myriad civil wars.

The United Nations has called for "rapid and unimpeded" aid access to the conflict zone, after the state government last week banned non-governmental organisations and the UN from five townships affected by the fighting.

Bangladeshi

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400 yards inside India through the border.

Jahangir died on the spot after being shot while the others managed to escape, said Tuhin, adding that the BSF men took the body immediately after the killing.

The BSF said that they had recovered the body of a Bangladeshi national from inside their territory, when contacted, the CO said.

"We have already contacted the BSF officials and strongly protested the killing of a civilian," the BGB official said, adding that they had urged the BSF to return the body through a flag meeting.

Rohingyas

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in the detention centre, said they had organised the hunger strike via Whatsapp and other messaging apps.

"When we started the hunger strike, there were three hundred of us, and gradually more people began to join us," he told the MEE via voice notes.

"An old man, who took part in the hunger strike, has already been taken to the hospital," Zahid said.

"We don't know how many more days we can last. They are pressuring us to eat. Please pray for us."

Another detainee, Rafeed (not his real name) said Saudi authorities had promised to set them free if they withdrew their last hunger strike.

"But they didn't keep their promise," he added.

'POOR RECORDING' OF WITNESS STATEMENTS

Meanwhile, Nina Tavakoli, a barrister at Red Lion Chambers, who visited the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh at the end of 2017, warned on Wednesday that there was little coordination between actors documenting the crimes against the Rohingya.

"There is a risk of repeat interviewing. That's bad for witnesses... [with] survivor fatigue, people might stop talking," she said, reports Law Gazette, a British legal weekly magazine.

She said prosecutions for crimes committed during the forced displacement of 727,000 Rohingya from Rakhine State in Myanmar may fail because of a casual and uncoordinated approach of taking witness statements.

"Criminal lawyers are critical of [the approach] human rights actors," she said at a panel discussion on 'challenges to international accountability' organised by Red Lion Chambers and hosted by international firm Hogan Lovells.

For taking sensitive statements, including allegations of sexual assaults, "there is a lack of appropriate private space", she added.

21 killed

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Defense Minister Guillermo Botero said he had "full evidence" that Rojas Rodriguez, 56, has been a member of the ELN for more than 25 years. **'BRUTAL ACT OF TERRORISM'** Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno said one of the dead was an Ecuadoran cadet, while a second suffered light injuries.

"The brutal act of terrorism in Bogota took the life of a compatriot," Moreno said on Twitter.

"My sincerest thoughts go to the family, friends and companions of Erika Chico."

Meanwhile, Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela said that 45 Panamanian cadets were present during the attack, with two injured.

Fanny Contreras, the Colombian armed forces' health inspector, told local radio that the truck "entered (the school compound) suddenly, almost hitting the police, and then there was the explosion."

Carol Oviedo said her brother Jonathan, a cadet, told her on the phone he had been injured, before the connection was cut.

"In two years since he joined the police, he's never had to face a situation like this," she said.

Like other families, she was lingering in the vicinity of the academy hoping to hear some news.

United States assistant secretary of state in charge of Latin America, Kimberly Breier condemned the attack and said: "Our condolences and sympathies go to the victims and family members of those killed."

The US embassy in Bogota offered its "help in investigating this reprehensible attack."

Oikyafront can't sustain

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Hasina is expected to attend the rally titled "Bijoy Utsab" around 2:30pm.

"We didn't call the BNP to participate in the parliamentary election. We will not ask them to join the upazila parishad polls," the AL general secretary said.

He said this in reply to a question whether the ruling party would take any step to bring the BNP in the upcoming upazila election to be held in March.

If the BNP stresses the need for democracy, it will join the upazila polls like it took part in the parliamentary polls, Obaidul said.

He once again said the PM would hold a views-exchange meeting with political parties, but no dialogue would take place.

On January 12, Quader termed the opposition's demand for a dialogue "ridiculous" and said there was no need to hold talks. The following day, he said the PM would hold a dialogue with political parties after Hasina, at an AL Central Working Committee meeting, hinted at holding such talks.

He again changed his position on January 13 and said the PM would invite parties only to exchange post-election greetings with them, and would not hold any dialogue.

PM's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam on January 15, however, said the PM would invite all political parties for "talks".

GRAND RALLY

Quader said today's AL rally would be the "biggest one in recent memory". People from across the country would throng the rally venue.

From the rally, the PM will reiterate her government's firm stance against corruption, terrorism and drugs, Quader told reporters at the party president's Dhanmondi office earlier in the day.

She will also call upon the party men not to get involved in those types of activities and warn them against misusing power, he added.

The AL, led by Hasina, formed the

As cruel

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Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said the victim was sent to One Stop Crisis Centre at Chittagong Medical College Hospital for medical examinations.

According to the case statement, the homeowner from Chattogram's Mirsarai upazila had been sexually assaulting the girl since she joined work.

He had threatened the victim of sacking her if she disclosed the incident to others.

The victim's uncle took her to his rented house in the city's Halishahar area on December 30 last year. The girl disclosed the whole incident to her father on January 16 when he went there, read the case statement.

CMP AC Ashikur said they were investigating the incident as a high priority and were trying to arrest the other accused.

According to a report of rights body, Ain o Salish Kendra, 732 women and children were raped from January 1 to December 31 last year. Of them, 203 women and children were gang-raped.

The report, released on January 10, also said 63 were killed after rape, while three were killed after attempted rape.

Kindle

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change this with Canute 360, their new 'Kindle for the blind' which it says is the world's first multi-line Braille e-reader, displaying nine lines of text at a time, or about a third of a page of regular print.

"This means you only have to press the forward button every 360 characters rather than every 20," said Stephanie Sergeant, whose company Vision Through Sound provides training for blind people and has been working with Bristol Braille.

"It refreshes a line at a time, starting at the top. So even though it takes a little while for all the lines to refresh, you can start reading almost as soon as you press the forward key."

Any text that has been translated into Braille format can be downloaded into the Canute, potentially putting an endless supply of reading material at the user's fingertips.

The proportion of blind people who can read Braille lettering, formed of one to six dots in a range of combinations, has fallen, partly due to advances in audio description technology.

But Bristol Braille says learning to read it can significantly boost literacy and numeracy rates among the blind.

The final prototype of Canute will enter mass production this year, priced similar to a high-end laptop.

"Innovations in the field of Braille technology make this a very exciting time for Braille readers," said Claire Maxwell, senior product developer for Braille at the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

government for a third consecutive term, as the AL-led grand alliance secured 288 out of the 299 seats in the national election. The AL itself bagged 257 seats. New lawmakers, except those elected with the BNP and the Oikyafront tickets, took oath on January 3 and the new cabinet was sworn in on January 7.

Shakib roars

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reaching the feat showed how important the knock was for him.

Dhaka were struggling on 37 for three inside five overs before Shakib steadied the ship for the table-toppers and ensured his side would avoid second successive defeat. Sylhet on the other hand are struggling after losing their fourth game in six matches.

Shakib along with Andre Russell added an unbeaten 51-run fifth wicket stand, with the West Indies' hard-hitter smashing four sixes and two fours to remain not out on 40 runs off just 21 balls.

In the day's second game, Comilla Victorians were set a challenging 182-run target by Khulna Titans. Tamim Iqbal and Anamul Haque strung together a 115-run opening partnership to hand the Victorians a strong start before the side eventually ran home with a three-wicket win.

Khulna opener Junaid Siddique provided the platform for the huge total, scoring 70 off just 41 balls. He smashed four sixes and as many fours. Al-Amin was the second highest scorer with 32 off just 19 balls but it was all for naught as Khulna were denied what could have been their second win in six games.

Pakistani all-rounder Shahid Afridi was the pick of the bowlers for Comilla as the leg-spinner bagged three wickets while country-man Wahab Riaz took two wickets.

Anger, chaos

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its operations manager to discuss the situation.

During the talks, the manager informed the ambassador that the Kuwait Government had earlier suspended the operation of their company and frozen their accounts. But the government recently withdrew the suspension and it would start operating in full-swing soon.

The operation manager said the management could not pay the workers for last three months due to frozen accounts.

The manager also wrote an undertaking to the embassy stating that the salaries and other dues would be paid on February 5 while the expired work permits would be renewed in 15 days.

The manager of the company was leaving the embassy but the agitating workers forced him to go back.

The embassy officials then told the workers about the settlement and undertaking but the workers forcibly entered the embassy in their dozens and attacked the officials.

Besides injuring Anisuzzaman and others, they damaged the computers and other expensive equipment, said the Ambassador.

He added that the officials then called the police. After police came and brought the situation under control and arrested several workers, the officials filed two cases, one for injuring the employees and another for vandalism.

Police told Kalam that they would take action after looking at security camera footage.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen urged all Bangladesh missions and expatriate Bangladeshis to avoid repetition of any such incident.

A foreign ministry press release issued yesterday said the government and the embassy in Kuwait were trying to get the arrested Bangladeshi workers released.

Russia rejects reports IS behind New Year's Eve blast

AFP, Moscow

Russian investigators said yesterday that a New Year's Eve blast that killed 39 people was likely the result of a gas explosion, dismissing reports that the Islamic State group was behind it.

The Investigate Committee said it was still investigating the explosion that ripped through an apartment block in the Urals city of Magnitogorsk, killing 39 people.

On New Year's Day, three more people died when a minibus exploded not far from the affected building in the city.

On Thursday, an article in the Islamic State's weekly Arabic-language newspaper al-Naba said the group was behind the blasts.

It said the Islamic State group did not claim responsibility earlier for "security reasons".