

PM hosts tea party for diplomats

Representatives of international organisations also attended it

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hosted a tea party at the Gono Bhaban in honour of foreign diplomats, heads of different missions and representatives of international organisations.

She hosted the party at the South Lawn of her official residence.

The PM arrived at the venue at 4:10pm, exchanged pleasantries with the envoys of 48 countries as well as the heads of missions and representatives of international organisations in Bangladesh and enquired about their wellbeing.

The diplomats earlier greeted Hasina presenting her bouquets separately.

Ambassadors, high commissioners and charge d' affaires of different countries, including the USA, the UK, Canada, China, Russia, Japan, India, Saudi Arabia, Germany, the UAE, Sweden, Italy and Vatican City, joined the tea party.

The heads of different foreign missions and international bodies like the United Nations, IMF, World Bank,

UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, WFP, ILO, IOM, Unicef also attended the event.

Senior Awami League leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and SA Malek, AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, PM's advisers HT Imam, Moshir Rahman, Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique and Salman F Rahman were present, among others.

PM's daughter Saima Wazed Hossain, Principal Secretary Md Nojibur Rahman, Military Secretary Maj Gen Mia Mohammad Zainul Abedin, Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim and PMO Secretary Sajjadul Hassan were also in attendance.

The lawn of the Gono Bhaban was decorated with kure ghar, mat, mora and earthen pots and patriotic songs were played on the occasion.

The guests were entertained with traditional foods and cakes of Bangladesh, including chatpati, fuchka, muri, moa, naru, kadma, murali and bhapa, chitai, patisapta and puli pitha, zilapi, kebab and nan ruti.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanges greetings with foreign diplomats and representatives of international organisations during a tea party at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

UNB, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by members of the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) in Ranishankail upazila's Jagodal area on Monday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Babu, 18, son of Ekramul Haque, a resident of Haripur upazila's Maradhar village in the district.

Locals said members of the BSF in Kokradah camp opened fire on a group of Bangladeshi nationals around 4:00pm while they were returning to Bangladesh near border pillar number 374, leaving Babu dead on the spot. Babu had crossed the border without valid documents, they added.

Lt Col Tuhin Mohammad Masud, commander of BGB Thakurgaon-50 Battalion, said they were informed of the firing. "We called a flag meeting with the BSF on Tuesday," he said.

On January 18, Jahangir Alam Raju, 21, son of Badsha Mia, a resident of Shahanabad village of the same upazila, was shot dead by the BSF inside Indian territory along Dharmagarh border.

Jahangir died on the spot while some others managed to flee.

On January 22, Jenarul, son of Tofail, from Taldangi village in the upazila, was shot dead by the BSF.

Although all the killings occurred on Indian soil and the victims were there illegally, it is doubtful that they posed any threat to the BSF jawans, who must perceive a threat to their own security before engaging their firearms in such situations.

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Two killed

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On information, a team of law enforcers rushed to the spot. Sensing the presence of police, the drug traders fled the scene, he added.

The police recovered the bullet-hit bodies of Rubel and Rafique from there, the inspector said.

The bodies were sent to Cox's Bazar General Hospital for autopsy and the police were investigating the incident. Two LGs and six bullets were also recovered from the spot, the law enforcers said.

Meantime, the Indian police recovered the body of 40-year-old Omedul Islam from Krishnaganj border area under Nadia district of West Bengal yesterday morning.

Omedul, son of Abdul Malek of Nastipur in Damurhuda upazila in Chuadanga, used to smuggle drugs and sell it to local buyers, said Sukumar Biswas, OC of Damurhuda police station.

He was accused in four drugs related cases filed with the same police station, the OC added.

His rivals might have killed him, he said, adding, they were investigating the matter.

Nur Mohammad, Omedul's cousin, said he remained missing since Sunday evening after going out of home on receiving a phone call.

Lt Col Imam Hasan, director of Bangladesh Border Guard-6 in Chuadanga who visited the spot, confirmed the matter.

He said the BGB had sent a letter to its counterpart BSF asking for a flag meeting for returning the body. The meeting was scheduled to be held last evening, he informed.

Poor infrastructure, graft key obstacle

Bangladesh ranks 121st in Economic Freedom Index 2019

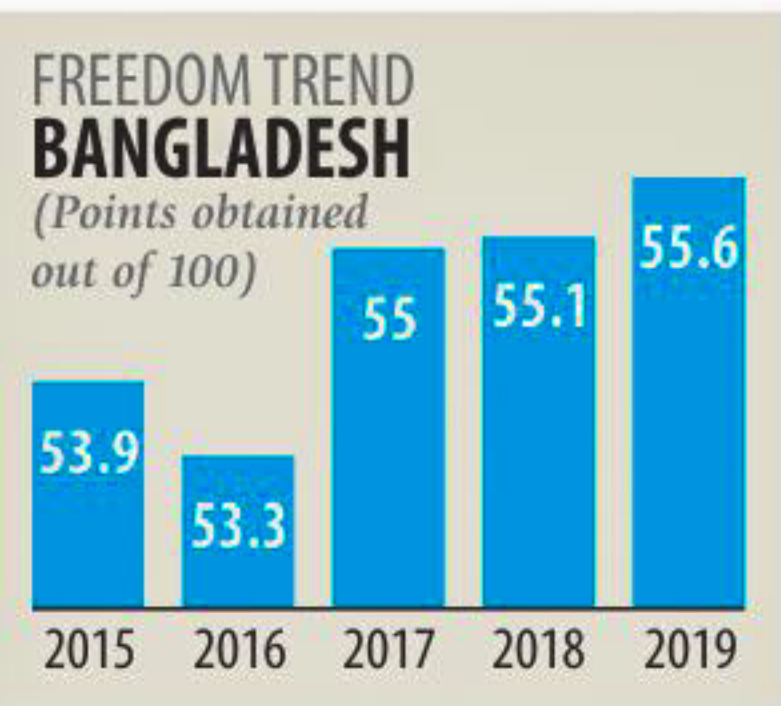
MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA and WASIM BIN HABIB

Poor infrastructure, endemic corruption, insufficient power supply, and slow implementation of economic reforms were found to be impediments to Bangladesh's economic growth, said a new global report.

Despite some progress in streamlining business regulations, entrepreneurial activity is hampered by an uncertain regulatory environment and the absence of effective long-term institutional support for private-sector development, said the Economic Freedom Index-2019 released by the US-based Heritage Foundation.

"The fragile rule of law continues to undermine economic development. Corruption and weak enforcement of property rights force workers and small businesses into the informal economy," said the report released on January 25.

The index ranked 186 countries and categorised them under five groups --



free, mostly free, moderately free, mostly unfree and repressed.

Bangladesh falls in the "mostly unfree" category.

The country moved up seven notches to 121st from 128th position in the index with an economic freedom score of 55.6 points.

Last year, Bangladesh's position was 128th as it scored 55.1 points.

Its overall score of Bangladesh had increased by 0.5 point, with improvements in the scores for property rights

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China decries sacking

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but were afraid to point them out," it said.

"As a Chinese folk saying goes, 'You cannot live the life of a whore and expect a monument to your chastity'," the Global Times wrote, accusing Ottawa of double standards.

Meng was arrested in December at the behest of the United States, where she is wanted for alleged violations of Iranian sanctions. US authorities plan to formally file for her extradition by a January 30 deadline.

Beijing has reacted furiously to Meng's detention. In apparent retaliation, two Canadian citizens have been detained on national security grounds and another was sentenced to death for drug trafficking.

McCallum, a former senior cabinet minister, said in front of Chinese-language media in Ontario last week that he believed the US extradition request was seriously

flawed, comments which he later walked back.

But on Friday, he told the Star Vancouver newspaper that it would be "great for Canada" if the US dropped its extradition request, prompting Trudeau to demand McCallum's resignation.

Ottawa has repeatedly stressed the case is not politically motivated and the justice system is fair but Chinese media has cast Meng's arrest as part of an assault on the country's high-tech industry.

In the past year, a number of Western countries close to the US have barred Huawei products in their telecommunications infrastructure citing security concerns.

The China Daily observed: "McCallum was merely stating the truth when he observed that Meng (Wanzhou) has a strong case against extradition, which he rightly said was politically motivated."

Graft danger to good governance

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view in awarding punishment to an accused, against whom the charge has been proved, considering his/her social and/or political position."

Khaleda, a former prime minister, landed in jail after the Special Court-5 in Dhaka on February 8 last year sentenced her to five years' imprisonment, considering her age and social status. She is now 74.

"Taking the above facts into account we consider it appropriate that justice would be met if the maximum sentence prescribed in section 409 of the Penal Code is awarded to Begum Zia so that the persons enjoying the highest position in any organ or any public office of the State thinks twice to go ahead with such criminal design in coming days," the HC said.

The lower court awarded five other accused in the case, including her son Tarique Rahman, who is now BNP's acting chairman, 10 years' imprisonment for misappropriating over Tk 2.1

crore that had come from a foreign bank in grants for orphans.

The other convicted accused are Kazi Salimul Haque, an ex-BNP lawmaker from Magura; Sharfuddin Ahmed, a businessman; Mominur Rahman, a cousin of Tarique; and Kamal Uddin Siddique, former principal secretary.

The HC, which delivered its verdict on October 30 last year, upheld the 10 years' jail sentence of Salimul and Sharfuddin. Tarique and two others are on the run.

'KHALEDA ABUSED THE CHAIR OF THE PREMIER'

In its 175-page verdict, the bench said, "Begum Zia had entrustment and dominion over the PM's Orphanage Fund, a public fund, and a huge amount of money of the said fund was disposed of, used and misappropriated dishonestly by Begum Zia with the active aid of other convicts."

"In the instant case Begum Zia is the principal offender and other convicts actively aided and facilitated to com-

mit such offence."

The court said it was the obligation of Khaleda to secure due and proper use of the fund obtained for the welfare of orphans.

"But in exercise of the highest office of the government, she rather allowed her sons, relative and party men in misdealing the fund with fraudulent intention by creating fake trust."

"She being at the helm of power at the relevant time rather abused the chair of the premier of a country. It was a ruthless blow to the sanctity of state machineries as well."

It derogated the image of the country to the global community, HC said. "Abusing the highest chair of the government, Begum Zia was not expected to remain mute for years together in securing due and proper use of the fund over which she had entrustment."

It also said, "Deliberate and culpable inaction on her part appeared as the key part of the criminal design which

cedure as there was ample opportunity to do so.

Talking to The Daily Star, US-Bangla Airlines CEO Imran Asif said the investigation report was "inadequate" as the ATC's negligence had been underplayed.

Earlier in the day, the Nepali investigators in the final report on the Himalayan nation's worst aviation disaster in 26 years said the captain was under stress and "emotionally disturbed" because he felt that a female colleague who was not on board the fatal flight had questioned his reputation as a good instructor, Reuters reported.

"The pilot thought he could manoeuvre the aircraft and land. But he could not," panel official Buddhisingar Lamichhane, told Reuters.

"This, together with the failure on part of both the crew members to follow the standard operating procedure at the critical stage of the flight, contributed to the loss of situational awareness," read the report.

This lack of awareness meant the crew did not realise the deviation of the aircraft from its intended path, which in turn meant they could not see the runway, it added.

Having missed the runway, the plane flew very low in the north of the runway at an incorrect position near hilly and mountainous terrain, it said.

"Finally, when the crew sighted the runway, they were very low and too close to [it] and not properly aligned," added the report, saying the captain should have halted the landing and initiated a go-around.

The plane skidded off the runway on to surrounding grass, quickly catching fire. Both pilots were among those killed. The accident left 29 Bangladeshis, including the cockpit crew, 22 Nepalese and one Chinese dead.

Capt Abid was released in 1993 from the Bangladeshi Air Force because he suffered from depression but was later declared fit to fly commercial planes, the report said citing recent medical reports mentioning no symptoms.

Citing the cockpit voice recorder and accounts of passengers, the report said the captain was smoking in the cockpit during the flight and "engaged in unnecessary, unprofessional and lengthy conversation even in the critical phase," violating the norms of maintaining a sterile cockpit.

His first officer had 390 hours of flying experience and no experience in landing at Kathmandu as a crew member.

The disparity in experience and added authority of the captain probably deterred the first officer from being more assertive during significant phases such as the final approach and landing, the report said.

Landing at Kathmandu airport, surrounded by hills, is considered difficult, the report said. In 1992, all 167 on board a Pakistan International Airlines plane were killed when it slammed into a hill trying to land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report recommended that the airlines give emphasis on proper crew resource management and set up a mechanism to monitor and assess the mental status of the crew regarding professional development, financial, personal, and psychological issues.

Pilot's mental health became the spotlight after a Germanwings first officer deliberately flew a jet into a mountain in 2015.

Last year, the European Commission adopted new rules that make it mandatory for airlines to do a psychological assessment before hiring pilots.

The probe commission in its recommendations to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said CAAN should strengthen the capacity of the ATCs, by developing the appropriate training programmes so that they become more assertive when handling the air traffic and issuing clearances to such traffic especially in the event of abnormal or emergency situations.

The ATC should be more vigilant and shall visually look out for the aircraft, when the weather permits, after the landing clearance has been issued, it said.

In the nine-point recommendation to the US-Bangla Airlines, the commission suggested that the carrier should establish and implement a policy to de-roster any crew member found to be stressed, fatigued or emotionally disturbed.

To CAAB, the commission recommended that it makes thorough periodic physical and psychological assessment of permanently grounded pilots before renewing their licences. A system should be adopted to monitor the medical condition closely in all subsequent medical examinations as well, it said.