

ATROCITIES AGAINST ROHINGYAS

US to hold Myanmar accountable

UNB, Dhaka

The US has reiterated that it will stand strong on resolving the Rohingya issue, and also holding the perpetrators in Myanmar accountable for committing the crimes of atrocities against Rohingyas.

US Vice President Mike Pence conveyed the US position expressing concern over the violation of basic rights of the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

Pence delivered the keynote speech at the second ministerial meeting on advancing religious freedom hosted by the US Department of State on Thursday, according to a media release issued yesterday.

He expressed happiness with the progress that has been achieved since the last ministerial meeting in 2018.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen attended the meeting.

Delegates from 106 countries with about 40 foreign ministers took part in the meeting at the invitation of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Pompeo reinforced that ensuring religious freedom for all remains the top foreign policy priority of the US.

He thanked all the governments for their participation and called for collective efforts to ensure the freedom of thoughts, freedom of conscience and religion as reflected in the US constitution.

Momen highlighted the commitment of the Bangladesh government to ensure basic rights of its people.

He mentioned that inspired by the call of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh has been

relentlessly working to maintain the religious rights of all communities.

Momen said under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has upheld religious pluralism and rights of minorities.

He elaborated how the government of Hasina maintained a "zero tolerance" approach to any form of violence and discrimination, under any pretext, against religious minorities, and successfully prevented the rise of extremist contents in Bangladesh.

This has resulted in the unprecedented socio-economic growth of its economy, he added.

Besides non-communalism and peaceful coexistence, Hasina also promotes a national slogan, "Religion is personal, festivals are for all", to encourage religious tolerance and create a sense of accommodation among all communities.

Momen thanked the US government and the international community to extend support to host 1.1 million Rohingyas in Bangladesh.

He called on the international community to increase pressure on Myanmar to take back those people.

He called for the media to play a constructive and responsible role in promoting religious freedom, thereby supporting peace and stability.

The foreign minister reiterated that violence and wars emanated from a mindset of hatred and ignorance.

On the sidelines of the conference, Momen met his counterparts of Iraq, Bahrain, Malta and Hungary.

He also suggested hosting a similar ministerial meeting at regional level in Bangladesh soon.

Beijing, Canberra trade barbs over detained Australian citizen

AFP, Beijing

China and Australia yesterday clashed over the detention of an Australian-Chinese writer who is held in Beijing on national security grounds -- the latest source of tension between the two countries.

Canberra said it was "deeply disappointed" with the criminal detention of Australian author and democracy advocate Yang Jun, who was detained in January after making a rare return to China from the United States.

Beijing hit back and said it "deplores" the remarks made by Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, who had also demanded Yang's release if he was held for his political views.

"China... urges the Australian side not to interfere in China's lawful handling of the case in any way and stop issuing irresponsible remarks," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a press briefing in Beijing.

The detention of the Australian writer, who goes by the pen name Yang Hengjun, has strained relations between the two governments, with Canberra voicing its concern over the lack of transparency around Yang's case.

Yesterday, Payne said in a strongly worded statement that the government had raised Yang's case repeatedly with Beijing and written twice to Foreign Minister Wang Yi requesting a "fair and transparent" resolution, as well as access for Yang to his lawyer.

"This has not occurred," she said.

"The government has expressed concern about Dr Yang's welfare and the conditions under which he is held," she added.

Payne also said she had still not received clarification as to why Yang was being held, though Australia received confirmation yesterday that the writer had been transferred to criminal detention, apparently on national security grounds.

Producers in a fix

FROM PAGE 1

Union Ltd, known as Milkvita.

This is the first time the local dairy sector faces a major setback, which could hamper the steady growth of dairy farming in Bangladesh, a milk-deficient country.

It imports more than 125,000 tonnes of milk powder annually to meet household and industrial demand.

The Department of Livestock Services said the total milk production rose by 6 percent year-on-year to 99.23 lakh tonnes in fiscal 2018-19 from 94 lakh tonnes a year ago.

And the rest of the demand is met through imports. From July to April of fiscal 2018-19, 123,710 tonnes of milk powder and dairy products were imported for Tk 2,250 crore, show data of Bangladesh Bank and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

A section of consumers has switched to imported powder milk, raising concern among sector operators that foreign milk may gradually capture the local market.

"The quality of imported powder milk should also be examined..." said the Milkvita MD.

Milkvita, a state-sponsored cooperative union, said it used to buy and sell every day more than 100,000 litres of pasteurised milk before the DU team's test results were published on June 25.

Since the results' publication, demand for pasteurised milk has been in decline, it claimed.

"We sold up to 185,000 litres of milk a day during the month of Ramadan. Now our daily sales have dropped to around 80,000 litres," Delwar pointed out.

"Panic has been created among people amid media reports on the quality of milk... We cannot buy milk in large quantities because the demand has fallen," he added.

Mohammad Anisur Rahman,

general secretary of National Dairy Development Forum, said, "We along with other processors buy milk from two lakh farmers.

"Consumers are slashing purchase of locally produced milk and switching to imported powder milk... The bulk of the producers are small-scale farmers and they have been affected the most."

A negative perception has been created among consumers about locally produced milk and dairy products following the publication of test results on milk, said Anisur, also director of Dairy and Food Project of BRAC Social Enterprises.

"We have not added lead to milk... Frankly speaking, we as processors are confused about who to approach and where to test our milk."

Sales of pasteurised milk processed by BRAC Dairy fell to 67,000 litres a day from 100,000 litres two weeks ago, said Anisur.

Mohammad Imran Hossain, president of Bangladesh Dairy Farmers Association, said the organisation advised its members to make ghee and dairy products instead of selling their produce at low prices.

"We urge the authorities and researchers to collect milk from us, test those and guide us. We want a solution."

"The source of the problem should be identified and the government should think seriously about the dairy sector so that it can flourish."

Eleash Mridha, managing director of PRAN Group, said the local dairy sector has made big strides in the last 20 years.

The government should engage a team of experts to identify the root cause of the problem. Farmers and collectors should be trained on hygiene, he mentioned.

The government should also monitor the quality of feed for the betterment of local dairy, added Eleash.



A packed human haulier going uphill on the Rangamati-Khagrachhari road damaged by the recent heavy showers. The photo was taken yesterday in Dharmaghar area.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

Tension rises as Iran seizes British oil tanker

FROM PAGE 1

British Royal Navy warship, according to Reuters.

"We are urgently seeking further information and assessing the situation following reports of an incident in the Gulf," a spokesman for Britain's Ministry of Defence said yesterday.

A person familiar with the matter said a meeting of the British government's emergency committee was being held.

Prime Minister Theresa May's office declined to comment.

Refinitiv data showed the Stena Impero was a British-flagged vessel owned by Stena Bulk. It showed the vessel's destination as the Saudi port of Jubail on the Gulf.

The map tracking the ship's course

showed it veering off course with a sharp turn north at about 1517 GMT on Friday and heading toward the Iranian coast.

In a statement, the ship's owner Stena Bulk and operator Northern Marine Management said that at approximately 4 pm BST (12 pm ET) the Stena Impero was "approached by unidentified small crafts and a helicopter during transit of the Strait of Hormuz while the vessel was in international waters," reports CNN.

There are 23 seafarers aboard the ship, they added, saying that they have currently been unable to make contact with the vessel, which is now heading north towards Iran.

A UK government official told CNN that the UK has convened a COBRA

meeting -- an emergency response committee that meets when there's a domestic or international crisis -- on the seized tanker.

The ship's seizure is yet another in an accelerating series of recent maritime episodes involving Iran.

On Thursday, the US Navy destroyed an Iranian drone using electronic jamming, a US defense official told CNN. The crew of the USS Boxer took defensive action against the Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle after it came close to the US naval ship, the official said.

Chief Pentagon Spokesperson Jonathan Hoffman said then that the USS Boxer had been in international waters where it was "conducting a planned inbound transit of the Strait

of Hormuz."

US President Donald Trump said the Iranian drone was "threatening the safety of the ship and the ship's crew" and was "immediately destroyed."

However, Iranian officials say none of their drones have been downed.

In another incident last week, armed Iranian boats tried unsuccessfully to impede the passage of a British oil tanker in the Persian Gulf, according to two US officials with direct knowledge of the incident.

And in June, tensions between the US and Iran escalated into a military standoff after an American drone was shot down by Iran over the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most vital shipping routes.

Minni gives statement

FROM PAGE 1

tortured my daughter to confess her involvement in the murder."

He also alleged that a group of locally influential people involved in the murder were influencing the case to save real culprits.

Humayun denied the allegations and said they placed Aysha before the court as she willingly agreed to give her statement before the court.

"There is no pressure on us to mislead the investigation," he added.

On Wednesday, the same court placed Aysha on a five-day remand in police custody.

RISHAN FARAZI REMANDED

Also yesterday the same court placed Rishan Farazi, another key accused in the case, on a five-day remand.

Police had appealed for a seven-day remand.

Rishan had been on the run since the murder on June 26. Police arrested him in Barguna town on Thursday, Humayun added.

Rishan Farazi and his brother Rifat Farazi, also in remand, were mentioned in the first information report of the murder case.

Including the two, police have now arrested 15 people over the murder.

RABBI AKAND'S STATEMENT RECORDED

Another FIR named suspect, Rabbi Akand, gave statement before the same court on Thursday night.

After recording his statement, the court sent him to jail, said Humayun.

Including Rabbi and Aysha, 13 accused gave their statements to the court, the IO added.

On June 26, Rifat Sharif, a 25-year-old internet service provider, was hacked by a group of young men in broad daylight.

In a footage of the incident that went viral on social media, the victim's wife Aysha was seen screaming and trying to save her husband from the assailants in vain.

The victim's father filed a case with Barguna Sadar Police Station accusing 12 people on the same day.

The prime accused in the case, Sabbir Hossain Nayan alias Nayan Bond, was killed in a "gunfight" with police on July 2.

Three child marriages stopped in Akhaura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

The local administration stopped three schoolgirls from being forced into marriages in Akhaura upazila of Brahmanbaria yesterday.

The girls were aged between 13 and 15, but the grooms were all adult.

Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Akhaura AKM Shariful Haque conducted the mobile courts on behalf of the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and stopped the marriages.

The officer also took bonds from both sides. Parents promised that they would not marry off their daughters until they are 18, and their sons would not take any underage wives.

Shariful Haque said he conducted the drives upon information from VDP members.

He first went to Boro Bazar of Akhaura municipal area where a ninth grader, aged 15, was about to get married. From there he visited Kholapara Munshibari and Moniondo villages where the girls were class VII students and 13-14 years old.

The village defence party (VDP) members are trained to contact the respective UNO whenever a child marriage is about to take place, the officer said.

He also said, "I instructed the ward councillor and commissioners to keep a watch so that the girls cannot be married off secretly."

TIB worried

FROM PAGE 1

news] before issuing statements," it said.

The TIB statement, quoting media reports, said, "The decision by the ACC chair announced in the wake of the DCs' national conference that DCs have been authorised to oversee the ACC's local level work will create complex overlaps in discharge of entrusted duties by the two authorities."

"If such a decision has indeed been taken, it will create a paralysing impact on the ACC's work," he said.

Such a short-sighted, undesirable and self-defeating step will invalidate the legally endowed authority and independence of the ACC, the statement read.

In an ideal world, some degree of collaboration between administration and an anti-corruption body is quite desirable.

"However, if the authority of overseeing the work of the ACC is bestowed upon DCs, it will drastically restrict [the anti-graft body's] scope and capacity... The ACC will lose its power and operational flexibility."

The ACC should consult relevant experts to determine relationship of the commission with administration at both national and local levels in a bid to carry out its jobs independently, confidently and flexibly without conflict of interest, it suggested.

Dengue taking its toll on kids

FROM PAGE 1

Experts said the number of dengue patients in the city was on the rise due to various reasons, including a lack of awareness about the disease and its prevention.

The common symptoms include high fever, vomiting and abdominal pain. Child patients show the same signs as the adults, they said.

Data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) show that some 5,546 people had been infected with the virus between January 1 and July 18.

Five of them died.

The DGHS has detailed information about 2,176 of the 5,546. Of them, 645 are children up to 11 years old, 857 adult men and 674 women, said Aysha Akhther, assistant director of the directorate's control room.

Doctors and hospital officials, however, said the actual numbers would be higher as many dengue cases go unreported. Besides, a large number of those patients are children, they added.

Asked about the issue, Prof Abdul Aziz, a former director of Shishu Hospital, urged all to stay alert.

"Every family needs to be extremely careful as Aedes mosquitoes breed in clean water. Mosquito sprays have to be applied on a regular basis," he said, stressing on the need for taking child

patients to hospitals immediately as their immune systems are not that strong.

He also suggested giving them adequate liquid food.

Kinkar Ghosh, an epidemiologist at the public hospital, said 168 dengue patients had been admitted there since March and two of them died.

The DGHS, however, does not have any data on the two, according to its officials.

Kinkar said the pattern of dengue this year has been a little different from that in the past. He said the patients were becoming critical just after the first day of fever.

Earlier, doctors used to advise patients to come to hospitals three days after catching the flu.

This year, they have also found new symptoms and effects, including loose motion, pneumonia and renal failure, said Kinkar.

The serotype of the virus has apparently changed, he said, adding that they were yet to find why.

On Wednesday, the High Court said the dengue situation in the capital was nothing short of an epidemic and slammed the two city corporations in Dhaka for their failure to combat the mosquito menace.

A number of city dwellers also complained that they did not see any

steps from the two city corporations in this regard.

"In recent times, I did not find any activity of the city corporation. Neither did I hear any sound of a fogging machine," said Nishad Sabera, a resident of Maghbar.

Her daughter, Audrija Shampri Joyeta, 14, has been undergoing treatment at the Holy Family Hospital since July 13.

"My daughter could not take a test due to dengue fever," she added.

Contacted, Chief Health Officer of Dhaka North City Corporation Mominur Rahman Mamun said they were planning to create some groups, which would encourage people to destroy Aedes larvae.

The groups would also supply medical kits to all the healthcare centres in DNCC areas to diagnose dengue fever quickly. "The move will help ensure treatment immediately," he said. Dhaka South City Corporation Chief Health Officer Brig Gen Md Sharif Ahmed said they were emphasising on building awareness on dengue through campaigns involving educational institutions, NGOs and mosques.

He said they would soon form 57 committees in 57 wards of the city so that mosquito breeding grounds were destroyed.

Boeing sees billions more in MAX costs as grounding drags on

AFP, New York

Boeing announced Thursday some \$6.6 billion in additional costs because of the 737 MAX crisis, further pressuring profitability as the global grounding of the plane following two deadly crashes drags on.

Boeing said that second-quarter earnings would be hit by \$4.9 billion in one-time after-tax costs to compensate airlines for disruptions and plane delivery delays due to the

MAX grounding.

Profits will also be weighed down by another \$1.7 billion in costs due to the 737 MAX's lower production rate, the company said in a statement after the stock market closed.

The MAX has been grounded since mid-March following two crashes that killed 346 people, dual disasters that have tarnished Boeing's reputation and sparked numerous lawsuits from the families of victims.

There is still no firm timetable to bring the planes back into service.

"We remain focused on safely returning the 737 MAX to service," said Boeing chief executive Dennis Muilenburg. "This is a defining moment for Boeing."

"The MAX grounding presents significant headwinds and the financial impact recognized this quarter reflects the current challenges and helps to address future financial risks."