

# Yemen separatists surround two govt camps in south

AFP, Aden

Separatists surrounded two government military bases in Yemen’s south and demanded elements inside surrender, sources on both sides said yesterday, ten days after the secessionists seized defacto capital Aden.

The flare-up, in Abyan province, comes after the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) partially withdrew from key sites it occupied in Aden, and the Saudi-led military coalition -- which backs the government -- said Riyadh and Abu Dhabi had “succeeded in calming the situation”.

But on Tuesday fighters from the so-called Security Belt Forces surrounded a military camp in Zinjibar, the capital of Abyan, and another at Al-Kawd, according to government sources.

Yemeni Information Minister Moammer al-Eryani said the Zinjibar base had been surrounded, noting that it was a special forces camp.

“The Security Belt Forces... are demanding the (government) troops surrender or they will storm the camp,” he said, referring to a United Arab Emirates trained force that is aligned with the separatist STC.

STC spokesman Nizar Haitham confirmed to AFP that the two pro-government camps were surrounded by separatist troops.

The Security Belt Forces are “pursuing (agents) working to destabilise security and stability and hiding in the camps belonging to the legitimate government”, he told AFP.

The spike in tensions between the separatists and pro-government forces constrains their cooperation against a common foe -- the Iran-aligned Huthi rebels -- in a years-long war that has pushed the country to the brink of famine.

On August 10, the Security Belt Forces ousted loyalists of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi from what was the capital of the formerly independent south in clashes that left around 40 people dead.

They agreed to a withdrawal under pressure by Saudi Arabia and the UAE -- both key to the military coalition supporting the Yemeni government against the Huthis -- but retain control of key military sites.

Yemen’s Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad al-Hadhrami said the latest flare-up will undermine peace talks.

## UNHCR talks to Rohingyas

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many of the selected turned up for the engagement sessions conducted at make-shift tents close to the camp office.

Visiting the camp, many Rohingyas were found reading leaflets printed in Arakanese language, also known as Rakhine. The distribution of the leaflets started on Monday.

Detailing the content, Noor Bashar, a resident of the camp, said it said they would have to get the national verification card (NVC) first upon their return to Myanmar.

After that, they would be kept in Nakfura camp in Myanmar from where they would be shifted to another camp in the country for six months.

He, however, said that no Rohingya would be interested for voluntary return until they were given citizenship and the benefits the status would bring.

Badlul Islam, a Rohingya camp leader, said the leaflet mainly focused on providing NVC. “But the Rohingyas are still scared due to the bitter past when they were driven away in the name of being provided the NVC,” said Islam.

Mohammed Riaz, one of the session attendees, said the UNHCR officials told him nothing new, adding that he would not return to Myanmar if their four-point demand was not met.

The Rohingyas’ four-point demands are for holding accountable those who killed and tortured the Rohingyas and drove them out of their land; ensuring citizenship and security of the Rohingyas in Myanmar; giving back their land and properties; and protecting all fundamental rights of the Rohingyas in Myanmar’s Rakhine State.

Rashid Amin, who also attended the session, told the reporters that the whole exercise was “nothing but an eyewash”. He said the discussion of their voluntary return should have been done with Myanmar officials.

## In agony, they wait for justice

FROM PAGE 1

But AL leaders Suranjit Sengupta and Mohammad Hanif, who were injured in the attack, and Zillur Rahman, who lost his wife, were not fortunate enough to get justice in their lifetime.

A special court in Dhaka delivered the verdict on October 10 last year.

BNP’s acting chairman Tarique Rahman and 18 others were sentenced to life in prison while former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, and 18 others were given death penalty on charges of murder through criminal conspiracy.

All the 38 accused were also sentenced to life in prison for causing grievous injuries to the survivors.

With the code “Sheikh Hasina will be served a light breakfast”, some home-grown militants with the help of international militant groups launched the attack, said the court in its verdict.

“Specialised lethal weapon Arges grenades, which are used in wars, were blasted in front of the Awami League’s central office on 23 Bangabandhu Avenue in broad daylight with the help of the then state machinery,” said Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 Judge Shahed Nuruddin.

### PRESENT STATUS

The High Court is yet to start the hearing on the death references and appeals in connection with the cases due to non-preparation of paper books.

A paper book contains all the details of a case, trial proceedings, statements, evidence, verdicts and other documents. It is necessary for the HC to hear and dispose of a death reference and an appeal.

Once the paper book is ready, an HC bench hears and disposes of its death reference and appeal.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), if a lower court awards death penalty, the verdict is

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said both Bangladesh and Myanmar were ready to resume the repatriation of Rohingyas to their homeland, but some Rohingya leaders and NGOs were discouraging the refugees from returning, reports UNB.

“We’ve heard some Rohingya leaders have emerged there. They don’t want the return of any Rohingya [to their homeland]. They’re trying to stop the returnees. Some INGOs [international non-governmental organisations] and NGOs are instigating them [Rohingyas],” he told a small group of reporters at his office in the afternoon.

He said Bangladesh wanted to see the refugees return to Rakhine State as soon as possible. The two countries would try to resume the repatriation in a small scale from tomorrow.

The much-awaited Rohingya repatriation is set to begin around 10 months after the first attempt failed as the refugees didn’t choose to go back.

Bangladesh authorities have set up two transit camps -- one on the banks of the Naf river near Keruntali of Nayapara in Teknaf and the other near Chumdhum border area of Naikkhanchhari in Bandarban.

The Rohingyas who agree to return will be first taken to the transit camp and then to Myanmar border, where the Myanmar authorities will receive them.

The first attempt of Rohingya repatriation was made on November 15, 2018, a year after Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a bilateral repatriation deal following the influx of nearly 750,000 Rohingya since a military crackdown by Myanmar began on August 25, 2017.

In June 2018, Myanmar signed a tripartite deal with the UNDP and UNHCR, allowing the agencies to undertake assessment work and propose and implement community-based projects to create conditions conducive to Rohingya repatriation.

examined by the HC for confirmation of the punishment.

The case documents and judgment, as the death reference, reach the HC from the lower court within seven days of the verdict.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star on August 6 that the HC is yet start the hearing on death reference and appeals of the grenade attack cases as the paper books are not ready.

“It cannot be specifically said now when the High Court can start the hearing on the death references and appeals of the August 21 grenade attack cases and when the hearing will be finished and they will be disposed of,” he said.

Mohammad Saifur Rahman, special officer of the HC, told this correspondent on August 7 that the official process of preparing the paper books has been started.

“But it cannot be said at this moment when the paper books will be prepared and when the High Court will start the hearing on their death references and appeals,” he added.

After the death reference reached the HC, the convicts, now in jail, filed separate appeals with the HC challenging the trial court verdict.

On January 13 last year, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman accepted the appeals for hearing.

The bench also stayed part of the trial court verdict that fined the convicts of the cases.

The bench passed the order as the appeals filed by the convicts were included in its cause list, the then Assistant Attorney General Md Yousuf Mahmud Morshed had told The Daily Star.

He had also said the HC will hold the hearing on the appeals after relevant procedures are completed.



Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## Let’s find a mutually acceptable formula

FROM PAGE 1

common rivers and a secretary-level meeting in early August decided to work on water-sharing and basin management of seven rivers -- the Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Feni, Gumti, Dharla, and the Dudhkumar.

They also decided to have a feasibility study on the proposed Ganges Barrage project, especially its impact on the environment and people’s livelihoods in both the countries.

Asked about concerns that some four million Bangla-speaking people are at the risk of losing Indian citizenship as they were left out of the National Register of Citizens in Assam, Jaishankar said, “This is an internal matter of India.”

However, Foreign Minister Momen later told reporters that India asked Bangladesh not to worry about the NRC issue.

“We said we are already in serious trouble with 1.1 million Rohingyas ... They [Jaishankar] said ‘you don’t worry at all about it,’” Momen told a smaller group of reporters at his ministry office.

The NRC is aimed at identifying illegal immigrants in Assam which shares a border with Bangladesh. Assam had an influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century. It is the only Indian state where people are being registered under the NRC.

When the draft NRC was published on July 30, 2018, there was a controversy over the exclusion of 40.7 lakh people.

This is Jaishankar’s maiden visit to Dhaka since his appointment as the minister of the BJP-led government in May.

The three-day visit, that began on Monday, comes ahead of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s state visit to New Delhi in the first week of October.

Jaishankar handed Hasina Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s invitation for the visit when he met her at the Gono Bhaban later in the day, reports UNB.

Hasina thanked Modi for the

invitation.

PM’s Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting. He said Jaishankar laid emphasis on simplifying the process for people’s visits to the countries.

During the meeting with Hasina, Jaishankar expressed interest in enhancing cooperation in the energy sector, especially hydroelectricity project.

The hydroelectric project can be implemented effectively as the cost of this project is lower, Jaishankar told the PM.

During Jaishankar’s meeting with Momen, the two ministers discussed preparations for the PM’s visit to India. The countries are likely to sign a number of MoUs then.

Details were not disclosed but the ministers discussed border management, reducing untoward incidents at the border, trade and investment, power and energy, river water-sharing, connectivity, culture, and consular issues.

They reviewed progress of projects under the Indian Lines of Credit (LoC). Sources said Momen sought fast disbursement of funds.

The ministers also discussed the Rohingya crisis that has put immense strain on the economy, environment, and security of Bangladesh.

“We agreed that safe, speedy, and sustainable return of the displaced people from Myanmar is important in the national interest of all the three countries -- Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India,” said Jaishankar.

He also reaffirmed India’s readiness to provide more assistance to the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and improve socio-economic conditions in Rakhine State.

Jaishankar said Bangladesh and India are enjoying the best of relations. Over 100 agreements have been signed in the last 10 years and 68 of them were inked in the last three years. The decades-old land boundary and maritime issues have been resolved.

It’s now the golden age of India-

## A Close Shave

FROM PAGE 1

down by the truck on the fateful afternoon of August 21. But that’s exactly what the small table did.

The place at the heart of the capital turned out to be a scene of chaos, smokes, screams, and confusion, resembling a set for a war movie. Disjointed limbs and bloody bodies littered everywhere, with sobs of people and mayhem echoing the place.

The grisly grenade attack left 24 people, including Ivy Rahman, wife of late president Zillur Rahman, dead and more than 300 others injured.

Hasina, then Leader of the Opposition, narrowly escaped the attack, but suffered damage in her right ear. The attackers left the spot without a problem, reportedly with the help of the law enforcement agencies.

The BNP-led four-party coalition was in power. After the attack, Hasina held the government responsible, saying it was a government-sponsored attempt to kill her. She demanded an investigation involving the international community.

Moments before the attack, the scene at the AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue was different. The place was teeming with party leaders, activists, workers and supporters in the sultry and humid August afternoon.

Glistened with sweat, they were all listening to Hasina speaking from the truck, holding a microphone. Senior leaders and security personnel were also on the truck, which was used as a makeshift dais.

As Hasina was about to close her speech, an explosion occurred at 5:22pm, turning the venue into a ghastly scene of bloody carnage in seconds.

“There was a loud boom all of a sudden. We heard two more explosions in quick successions,” said AL leader Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, as he recounted the fateful evening and the events leading to and following the day to The Daily Star in 2016.

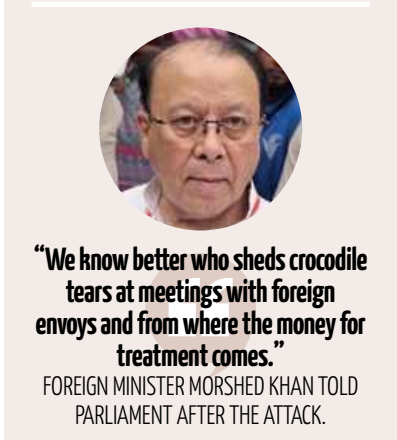
“Apa [Hasina] took two steps backward. We ducked her beneath the table as a cover,” he recalled.

Mohammad Hanif, late Dhaka mayor; Squadron Leader (ret’d) Abdullah Al Mamun, a member of Hasina’s personal security team; Nazib Ahmed, a cousin of Hasina; and Maya, the then general secretary of Dhaka City Unit AL created a human shield to save Hasina.

“It [creating the shield] was nobody’s decision in particular. We



“As investigations are on, I won’t name anyone. But I do know for sure that there was a plot, which is still being nursed. The attack was part of a conspiracy to tarnish my government’s image.”  
PM KHALEDA ZIA TOLD A PARTY MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2004.



“We know better who sheds crocodile tears at meetings with foreign envoys and from where the money for treatment comes.”  
FOREIGN MINISTER MORSHED KHAN TOLD PARLIAMENT AFTER THE ATTACK.



just followed our instinct to save Apa. So that the bullets hit us, not her,” said Maya.

Echoing him, Nazib Ahmed said the human shield had been in place for three-four minutes.

“When it appeared that she [Hasina] was the target, we encircled her. Nobody gave any instructions about this to anyone. What we had in our mind was to save her at the cost of our lives,” said Nazib, a cousin of Hasina.

Hasina was praying herself and asked them all to do the same, he recalled.

## Sri Lanka rejects international criticism of new army chief

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday rejected as “unwarranted and unacceptable” mounting international criticism of the appointment of a general accused of war crimes as the island nation’s army chief.

The foreign ministry called the appointment of Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva as commander of the Sri Lankan army a “sovereign decision” by President Maithripala Sirisena.

“Foreign entities trying to influence the decisions and internal administrative processes of public service promotions in Sri Lanka is unwarranted and unacceptable,” the ministry said in a statement.

Colombo added that the international condemnations were “based on allegations”.

“Articulating a position of concern... is regrettable and contrary to the principles of natural justice,” the ministry added.

The statement came amid a chorus of opposition to Silva, who has been accused by the United Nations of committing war crimes during the final stages of Sri Lanka’s separatist conflict.

## Pollution

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How Japan’s financing of highly polluting overseas coal plants endangers public health”, also stated that Japanese-financed coal power plants are likely to emit up to 13 times more nitrogen oxides (NOx), 33 times more sulfur dioxide (SO2) and 40 times more dust than those plants built in Japan.

Most of those power plants located in South and Southeast Asian countries were financed by Japanese public finance agencies JBIC, JICA and NEXI. They have invested a total of \$16.7 billion from January 2013 to May 2019 in coal plants of which Indonesia is the major recipient, 42 percent, Vietnam 20 percent and Bangladesh 18 percent.

Japan has developed technology to reduce emissions and is using that in their own coal-fired plants, but they are financing for inferior technologies in other countries, the report said, adding that the Japanese government was “exporting air pollution overseas”.

Japan has a stricter guideline than WHO set recommendations for air pollution for their own country. But those power plants Japan is financing would breach WHO set guideline for air pollution, the report mentioned.

According to World Health Organisation, air pollution increases the risk of diseases such as stroke, lung cancer, heart and respiratory illness in adults, as well as respiratory infections in children.

“It’s unfortunate to see the gap between Japan’s promises of exporting quality infrastructure and the reality of low-quality coal technology exports. Japan should honour its trading partners and citizens of those countries by promoting energy technologies that stop hurting people’s health and the environment,” said Senior Energy Campaigner Hanna Hakko at Greenpeace Japan.

Japan is currently the only G7 country still actively building new coal power plants at home and abroad, and is the second largest public investor in overseas coal projects among the G20 countries.

“If it’s not good enough for Japan, it’s not good enough for Indonesia. Governments in the host countries of Japan’s coal projects must protect their citizens by setting stronger emission standards,” Tata Mustasya, Greenpeace Southeast Asia’s regional climate and energy campaign coordinator, said in the report.

Greenpeace demands that both Japan and countries receiving Japanese coal financing immediately shift away from coal and toward clean renewable energy sources, the report added.

## Don’t block

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highways are often built obstructing the natural flow of water. If roads are needed in such areas, more culverts should be built there, but engineers give this little consideration, they said.

More than 1,000km of roads under the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) were damaged by flood this year. Two floods in 2017 had damaged 5,015km of roads.

Mannan said the PM asked the authorities to construct required number of culverts to ensure free flow of water. She also directed them to construct elevated roads in haor areas so that water can flow under those.

Hasina asked them to plant trees along roads and embankments and include the expenditure of tree plantation in project costs.

She directed the authorities to install all electricity lines underground. The planning minister said works for taking all electricity lines underground have already started and those will be completed in phases.

The Ecnc yesterday approved 12 projects involving Tk 3,470 crore.