

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT

Pressure builds as probe hears new claims

AFP, Washington

Two top US diplomats delivered gripping testimony Wednesday about Donald Trump's efforts to get Ukraine to investigate his potential 2020 rival Joe Biden, as the impeachment inquiry into the president shifted into a new phase of high-stakes televised hearings.

Trump dismissed the probe in the Democratic-led House of Representatives as a "witch hunt" and said he was "too busy" to watch the first public hearings, during which he received staunch backing from Republican lawmakers.

William Taylor, the top US diplomat in Ukraine, began his testimony before the House Intelligence Committee with a new revelation about Trump's efforts to pressure Kiev -- the main issue of just the fourth impeachment process in US history.

Democrats accuse Trump of abusing his power by using US military assistance and a possible White House meeting to pressure President Volodymyr Zelensky into opening a probe into the Democrat Biden and his son Hunter, who served on the board of Ukrainian gas company Burisma.

The key evidence is the official White House transcript of a July 25 telephone call between Trump and Zelensky in which the US president asked his Ukrainian counterpart to investigate the Bidens.

Govt to see

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to fog. The driver could not see the signals due to fog and this caused the accident."

The premier said another train accident occurred in Ullapara of Sirajganj, but only a few people suffered minor injuries. "We usually see several similar incidents occur following an incident. We have to see why this happens."

She said the number of train accidents increases in the winter and the government was pondering about what could be done in this regard.

Hasina said she has already instructed the authorities concerned to repair all the old rail lines.

The premier thanked the lawmakers for keeping parliament vibrant. "No foul language was used in parliament. We have ensured a tolerant environment at the Jatiya Sangsad, which is good for democracy."

Turning to electricity coverage, she said a total of 234 upazilas have been brought under 100 percent electricity coverage and electricity production has reached 22,400 MW.

"We will ensure electricity for all upazilas within a year. We will arrange solar panels at places which are out of the coverage of the national grid."

Talking about the ongoing drive against drug and corruption, the PM said the drive would continue.

About the recent protests at several public universities, she said some teachers were using the students for

Taylor testified that he was told Trump cared more about the probe than he did about Ukraine.

The grey-haired former Army officer and veteran diplomat, who testified in a closed hearing last month, said he had since become aware of a telephone call between Trump and the US's EU ambassador Gordon Sondland, which a member of Taylor's staff overheard.

The staffer asked Sondland after the call what Trump thought about Ukraine and was told that "President Trump cared more about the investigations of Biden," Taylor said.

Freshman House Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an outspoken Trump critic, said the new Taylor comment added "a layer of proximity" for the president.

Rohingya

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Redwan Ahmed, conducted a drive near the Rohingya camp around 1:00am to recover firearms.

As police reached the area, Mahmudul's associates opened fire at them, triggering a "gunfight".

At one stage, Mahmudul was shot while others managed to flee. He died of his injuries while being taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

Three policemen were also injured in the "gunfight".

Four firearms, two magazines, 18 bullets and 13 cartridges were recovered from the spot.

their gains. "Such activities of the teachers were hampering the education of all students."

Earlier, Leader of the Opposition Raushan Ershad in her concluding speech at the session said the killing of Nusrat Jahan Rafi in Feni was a testimony to how much cruelty existed in the society now. The madrasa student was sexually harassed before being burnt to death, she added.

She suggested continuing the ongoing drive against bribery, casinos, drug and criminal activities.

"Such activities had been going on for a long time. Why didn't the police take action against illegal casino business and others earlier? Why didn't the home minister take any step?" Raushan questioned.

She criticised the metro rail project saying that the country lacked skilled manpower to run metro rail. "You cannot even run trains properly. Then how will you operate metro rail?"

The opposition leader also urged the International Cricket Council to reduce the two-year ban imposed on cricketer Shakib Al Hasan, saying that people wanted to see him on the field.

Raushan urged the government to step up the drive against food adulteration. "People have been taking adulterated food for years. We want safe food."

The fifth session of the current parliament had begun on November 7. Six bills were placed and three were passed by the House during the brief session.

Ban imposed on ranitidine

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(NDMA) -- in the ingredients, according to a mass announcement published on Wednesday.

Based on the result, the DGDA permanently postponed production, distribution, sale and export of ranitidine, said it's office.

"Postponing means no production, distribution and sale of ranitidine would be allowed from now on. Certification from standard labs would be required for further imports of such raw ingredients," Sabrina Alam, superintendent of drugs at the DGDA, told The Daily Star.

Ranitidine, produced by almost every pharmaceutical company in the country, has annual sales of Tk 250 crore, officials said. It is popular for reducing the production of stomach acid in patients

with conditions such as heartburn and stomach ulcers.

Experts say patients can consult doctors who would prescribe alternatives to ranitidine.

On September 13, both the US Food and Drug Administration and the European Medicines Agency published their decisions to review the presence of NDMA in medicines, including ranitidine, BBC reports.

NDMA is classified as a probable human carcinogen (a substance that could cause cancer) on the basis of animal studies.

On September 19, the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines suspended the certificate of suitability for Saraka Laboratories Ltd.

At the same time, Canada and France announced recalls of ranitidine products.

a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) in 2017 seeking necessary order.

A Bela press release said that the industries ministry, DoE and other relevant agencies have submitted separate reports to the HC, allowing import, beaching and breaking of the MT Producer.

Janata Steel Corporation's lawyer Ahsanul Karim told The Daily Star that MT Producer could be scrapped without breaking any rule and the HC directives.

Following the same writ petition, another HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim on August 29, 2017, halted scrapping of the MT Producer after a radioactive material was found on it.

Bela submitted the writ petition as supplementary to a pending writ petition, saying that the representatives from the DoE, BAEC, BAERA, and the Marine Port Initiative of Bangladesh Customs have examined 11 points of the MT Producer and prepared a report on their findings.

The report mentioned that Gamma Radiation Dose Rate at one of the 11 points is harmful to public health, Bela said in the supplementary petition.

Advocate Sayeed Ahmed Kabir also appeared for the writ petitioner.

141 top taxpayers honoured

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Shahnaz Rahman, a director of Transcom Group and chairperson of Reliance Insurance Limited, was recognised as the highest taxpayer among women in Dhaka city.

Md Kamrul Hassan, executive director for finance at Transcom Group, received the award on behalf of Shahnaz Rahman and Transcraft Ltd.

Of the 141 awardees, 74 are individuals, 57 companies, and 10 organisations.

Speaking at the ceremony, the finance minister said: "You [top taxpayers] are good people. The economy has advanced because of your contribution."

He said there were four crore people in the country who fall

under the middle-income category, but many of them did not pay their taxes for various reasons, including a lack of courtesy from taxmen and encouragement from tax lawyers, and a lack of willingness to pay taxes.

Kamal said the NBR would take action if any taxpayer was harassed and dishonoured at the tax office.

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry, said "Among those getting recognised, all are not our supporters. I see there are some...who fall into the category of our critics."

Md Mashiur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, lauded the top taxpayers and said the recognition inspired people to do good.

NBR Chairman Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said, "We are present here today to honour those who do the job of blood circulation for the development of the country. This is a matter of great pride."

Other top taxpayers in the journalist category include MA Malek, editor of the Dainik Azadi in Chattogram, Shykh Seraj, director and head of news of Channel i, and Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, editor-in-chief and CEO of Ekushey Television.

Both editors of The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo, and the owning firms, started receiving the honour in their respective categories in 2015-16, when the NBR expanded the list of the awardees to include various

professions and areas.

Previously, it handed out tax cards in only two categories -- individuals and companies -- with 10 tax cards for each group.

The tax collector began recognising the top taxpayers with cards and crests in 2010-11 to improve tax compliance, and reduce tax evasion and avoidance in a country where just 1.33 percent of the population submitted income tax returns in the last fiscal year.

At the event, the NBR also honoured the highest and longest time taxpayers in Dhaka city and districts under the Dhaka division.

This year, the NBR named 374 highest taxpayers from districts and city corporations, and recognised 147 longest time taxpayers for 2018-19.

Expel all 25

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the tests only if the third one is fulfilled at least a week prior to the tests," said Aniruddha Ganguli, a batch-15 student of Computer Science and Engineering department.

He said the protesters placed the demands in writing during a meeting with the Buet vice-chancellor and the directorate of Students' Welfare on November 2.

Although the authorities assured the students of probing the earlier incidents of ragging and taking actions, no tangible development was seen since the meeting, he added.

The protesters alleged that the university authorities lack the goodwill and did not take enough measures, despite being given enough time to restore congenial atmosphere for education.

Prof Mizanur Rahman, the Buet directorate of Students' Welfare, said a committee was supposed to be formed regarding ragging and organisation-based politics, but they were yet to receive any information on this.

Asked about the expulsion of the accused, he said the Board of Residence and Discipline would

decide following recommendations of the university probe body and the university ordinance.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday fixed November 18 whether to accept the charge sheet pressed against 25 Buet students, mostly Buet Chhatra League unit men, in the Abrar murder case.

Detectives of Dhaka Metropolitan Police pressed the charges on Wednesday.

Police arrested 21 accused so far.

The investigation officer of the case appealed to the court to issue

arrest warrants against the rest four -- Morsheduzzaman Jishan, Ehtashamul Rabbi Tanim, Morshed Amartya Islam, and Mustafa Rafid.

Eight of the accused made confessional statements before magistrates narrating the horrifying tortures on Abrar.

Abrar Fahad, a second-year students of Electrical and Electronic Engineering department, was beaten to death by a group of BCL men at the university's Sher-e-Bangla Hall between the night of October 6 and early hours of October 7.

Train derails in Sirajganj, catches fire

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Railway authorities, however, denied the allegation and said they would make comment on the issue only after conducting probes. Three probe committees were formed to investigate the accident.

Abdulla Al Mamun, divisional transportation officer of Bangladesh Railway's Paksey division, said, "Signals were completely fine and the accident did not happen due to wrong signals. There might be some other reason behind the train derailment."

Rail connection from Dhaka to northern districts and Dhaka to southern districts were interrupted for an indefinite period as the rail line was massively damaged due to the accident, he added.

"A rescue engine arrived around 5:00pm from Ishwardi and started working. We are trying to reestablish rail connection within the shortest possible time," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, some of the passengers of the train shared their experiences.

Raihan Hossain, a passenger of the train, told The Daily Star that air-conditioned compartments of the train were filled with smoke as soon as the fire broke out.

"We were having suffocation. Some locals broke glasses of our compartment and rescued many," he said, adding, "People started running here and there after they were out of the train."

Another passenger of the train Liton Hossain said, "It was a horrific experience."

Most of the passengers who were unharmed headed towards their destinations on buses and other vehicles, he added.

ANOTHER TRAIN NARROWLY ESCAPES ACCIDENT

Meanwhile, Chattola Express narrowly escaped an accident on Murapara-Kaliajuri rail lines in Cumilla yesterday, reports our correspondent in the district.

Around 5:30pm, a sand-laden truck turned turtle on a rail track. Three youths -- Kamrul Hasan, Rasedul Hasan and Ripon -- were crossing the spot then. Seeing the train coming towards the flipped truck, they signaled the train to stop, said Shah Imran, a witness of the incident.

The driver of Chattola Express seeing the signal deployed the emergency brakes and stopped the train in time.

Rail communication resumed after

the truck was removed about an hour and a half later.

NO INFRASTRUCTURE TO INSTALL ANTI-COLLISION DEVICES

Meanwhile, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan said the existing railway infrastructure did not allow installation of anti-collision devices to avert accidents.

He, however, said they took initiative to introduce the technology in new trains.

"Existing signal system, locomotives, and carriage are not fit for using this technology. But we are trying to introduce the technology," he said while replying to a query at the Rail Bhavan yesterday.

The issue of automatic anti-collision device came to the forefront after Turna Nishita ignored a red light and rammed Udayan Express in Kasba of Brahmanbaria on November 12. The incident left 16 people dead.

The devices have been introduced in India.

The minister said they would get all three probe reports on the accident next week and implement recommendations made in the reports to prevent accidents.

When asked whether the driver was over worked, the minister said, "It is not true. He got enough rest."

Tigers staring down the barrel

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brave decision from the team think-tank to bat first, a decision that 'surprised' the India camp as well. The pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav and Mohammad Shami swung the ball both ways and at pace throughout the day and their immaculate line and length tested the batsmen's patience. The late swing undid even set batsmen and Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque, with 37, and Mushfiqur Rahim with team high score of 43, were the bright flashes of a dim display as Bangladesh fell to a lowly first innings score of 150. Ishant, Umesh and Shami bagged seven wickets between them.

Mominul was of the opinion that the wicket -- a sporting track -- was not

unplayable and that if it was, he and Mushfiqur would not have built a 68-run partnership. "Because we fell for a small total, I feel that my decision [to bat first] was wrong. At times, your decision can be right; it can be wrong too. If you finish the innings nicely, this thought wouldn't have come. Mushfiqur and I adapted well and built a partnership. We struggled after the sudden collapse," he said.

India dropped five catches but Bangladesh could not cash in. Mushfiqur, dropped thrice, could not reach fifty due to relentless pressure from India's bowlers. While India looked prepared, Bangladesh's preparation was brought into question.

"I think our preparation was good,

those who are playing. You might say that we haven't played bowlers like this before," Mominul said.

Blame will be apportioned on the team management after Bangladesh picked two pacers on a pace-friendly track. "We don't have enough four-day bowlers in our stock. It is difficult. Bangladesh always concentrates more on batting, that's why we played two fast bowlers. We wanted to play an extra batsman," Mominul said on the team's thought process.

With unbeaten Indian batsmen Cheteshwar Pujara (43) and Mayank Agarwal (37) batting comfortably, Mominul admitted that his team was up against it. "In reality, we have fallen behind a lot. It's very difficult after you scored 150. No matter how positive

you are, it's difficult."

India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said that a few Bangladesh batsmen had done well during the morning session. I thought some of their batsmen batted beautifully in the morning, it's never easy to come and play on a wicket that's got a bit of life. It was damp. And I thought Mominul Haque and some of the other batters batted beautifully.

"You need to also understand that our team has got a lot of experienced Test cricketers... we average almost 40-50 Test matches. A lot of players on the other side are inexperienced. Bangladesh played some good cricket in the morning and eventually they lost out to some persistent bowling from our side," Ashwin reiterated.

workers returned home from Saudi Arabia on separate Saudi Airlines flights on Wednesday and yesterday, said the Brac Migration Programme.

A Saudi Airlines flight carrying 86 migrant workers landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 11:20pm on Wednesday, said Shariful Hasan, programme head of Brac Migration Programme.

Another 129 migrant workers landed at the airport at 1:15am yesterday, he said.

With them, some 6,223 Bangladeshi migrant workers have been deported by Saudi Arabia since October, according to the Brac Migration Programme.

Deportees were illegals

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allowed such violations of the law in the past, but they had become quite strict over the past one or two years, Golam said, adding, now the embassy had little to do to prevent the deportations.

Golam also said the mission had written to authorities in Bangladesh on several occasions -- the latest correspondence coming some two weeks ago -- that they should not send workers unless their documents were attested by the embassy.

Usually, the embassy crosschecks a company's profile in Saudi Arabia if it sends requirement of over 25 workers at a time, he said.

The ambassador said the ministry should blacklist those recruiting agencies responsible for sending workers in such a way.

On the plight of female migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, Golam said it was unfortunate that "some had faced abuse".

He, however, claimed the number of such female workers was few. About 96 percent female workers had been working in the Gulf country without facing any such incident.

The embassy and its two labour wings in Riyadh and Jeddah are very much alert to the situation of migrant workers there, he said.

Expatriates Welfare Minister Imran

Ahmad on Tuesday told the Jatiya Sangsad that they had recently invited the charge d' affaires of the Saudi embassy and discussed issues regarding female migrant workers with him.

He said a joint technical group of Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia would discuss the issues at a meeting on November 26 in the Middle Eastern country.

The minister said no female worker would be sent there without at least a month's training. "I hope this problem will be resolved to a large extent," he said.

215 MIGRANT WORKERS RETURNED

Some 215 Bangladeshi migrant

Songs of the soul return

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Bigger rounds of applause were reserved for the night's ultimate performer the Punjabi pop sensation Daler Mehndi, who took off the musical flight and hyped tens of thousands in the audience with his unique styled rhythm and melodies.

Daler Mehndi, accompanied by several instrumentalists, performed super hits like "Ho Jayegi Balle Balle", "Kudiyan Shehar Diyan", "Dardi Rab Rab Kardi", "Na Na Na Na Re" and more. The Indian singer, songwriter, author and record producer also performed Bolo Ta Ra Ra Ra, O Mera Babu Chhal Chhabina, Koi Ladki Hain among others, which are

popular among audiences around the region. He chose to finish off his portion of the Folk Fest with the famous "Damadam Mast Kalandar", leaving the audience in a magical trance as they ended the first night of DIFF 2019.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen attended the opening ceremony as chief guest, while Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud inaugurated the festival. Chairman of Sun Foundation Anjan Chowdhury and Dhaka Bank Founder Chairman Abdul Hai Sarker delivered welcome addresses.

In his speech, Anjan Chowdhury

thanked all those concerned for successfully organising the festival.

"Folk music is a fabulous expression of our life's love, laughter and pathos," Abdul Momen said in his speech, adding, "We feel the power of folk music in our souls. I thank the organisers for arranging festival like this as it evokes the music of our roots."

The Dhaka International Folk Festival, presented by Meril, powered by Dhaka Bank and organised by Sun Communications, continues today and tomorrow, featuring an array of performers from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Mali and Russia.