

## US urges social media platforms to block Iran officials

AFP, Washington

The US State Department on Saturday called on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to suspend the accounts of Iranian government leaders until Tehran re-establishes internet coverage throughout the riot-torn country.

The government imposed a near-total Internet blackout more than a week ago amid violent protests.

"It is a deeply hypocritical regime," Brian Hook, special US representative for Iran, said in an interview with Bloomberg posted on the official State Department Twitter account.

"It shuts down the internet while its government continues to use all of these social media accounts.

"So one of the things that we are calling on are social media companies like Facebook and Instagram and Twitter to shut down the accounts of Supreme Leader Khamenei, the Foreign Minister Zarif and President Rouhani until they restore the internet to their own people."

Demonstrations erupted in Iran on November 15, a few hours after the shock announcement of a decision to raise gasoline prices at the pump by up to 200 percent in the sanctions-hit country.

## Won't seek govt

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pictures of Khaleda and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

Speakers at the rally said the government snatched people's right to expression and that was the reason why BNP was not allowed to hold programmes on many occasions.

About Khaleda's imprisonment, Fakhrul said the government's political vengeance "unfairly and illegally" kept Khaleda behind the bars.

He called upon the mass people and said everybody should be united regardless of their differences to free Khaleda and restore democracy through a mass movement.

He also criticised government institutions for failing to reduce crime across the country.

"They [the government] made Road Safety Act but hundreds of people are getting killed and injured on the roads. Businesses and trades have collapsed as the share markets and banks are plundered," he said.

Independence of judiciary was curbed and press freedom was snatched, he added.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, standing committee member of BNP, said thousands of BNP leaders and activists, along with Khaleda, were imprisoned in false cases.

Prices of all essentials also shot up as a quarter is making quick buck inflicting sufferings of people, he said.

"The fascist and unelected prime minister rang bell in Kolkata for inaugurating a game but the bell of her fall in Bangladesh has already rung through overheated market," he said.

Moudud Ahmed, another standing committee member of the party, said an anarchic situation had been created in the country as the incumbent government had no accountability to people.

"We are facing social, political and economic degradation due to lack of values as the government doesn't value public opinion and stay busy in securing their own interests."

The former law minister also said it was regrettable that the judges in present could not work independently due to political influence from the government.

"That is why our chairperson Khaleda Zia has been staying in jail for such a long time," he added.

BNP standing committee members Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, among others, addressed the rally with Dhaka South city unit general secretary Kazi Abul Bashar in the chair.

## 44 students

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Authorities said over 100 children had gathered on the rooftop of the three-storey building to discuss Victory Day programme preparations with their teachers, when the middle portion of the roof suddenly collapsed.

On information, fire service officials rushed to the spot and rescued the victims. Locals also joined the rescue operation, said Md Shahid Ullah, principal of the madrasa's girl's section.

Speaking to journalists, Chandpur's Additional Deputy Commissioner (Education and ICT) Mohammad Shawkat Osman said the district administration had declared the building abandoned.

"Nevertheless, the madrasa authorities gathered the students there defying the declaration. We are investigating the incident," he added.

District Deputy Commissioner Md Mazedur Rahman Khan, District Superintendent of Police and other senior officials visited the spot.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hands over three German-made fire resistant jumbo cushions to fire service authorities to use those in rescue operations in fire incidents. The purchase of the fibreglass cushions, costing Tk 50 lakh each, was financed by the United Commercial Bank Limited.

## Stop your propaganda

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responsible for non-commencement of Rohingya repatriation.

Myanmar's claim of return of a handful of people, who are not verified, does not testify to any improvement of the ground reality in Rakhine, the ministry said.

While Myanmar claims that the situation in Rakhine is conducive enough for repatriation, it must allow the international community, including UN officials, international media, and representatives of the prospective returnees, to visit the places of return to assess the ground reality and help the returnees make an informed choice.

Myanmar always alleges that the Rohingyas do not want to return due to intimidation and negative propaganda by ARSA elements and NGO staffers in the camps in Cox's Bazar. Such allegations are totally baseless and must have originated out of some ulterior motives, the ministry said.

There are no ARSA activities in the Rohingya camps, it said, adding, "Myanmar is carrying out such propaganda to avoid its responsibility and misguide the international community."

Myanmar has so far verified only 65 out of about 450 Hindus sheltered

in Bangladesh. Before alleging that Bangladesh did not send Hindus back to Rakhine, Myanmar should have completed verification of past residency of all these people.

"If Myanmar was really sincere about the repatriation, it must have by now arranged return of about 4,200 Rohingyas from the "no man's land" at Bangladesh-Myanmar border and resettled around 140,000 individuals from IDP [internally displaced person] camps in Rakhine to their respective places of origin," the ministry said.

It is an established fact that the Rohingya crisis resulted from systematic disenfranchisement and brutal persecution of this religious minority by the successive regimes in Myanmar, it said.

"Continuation of the same by the present government is the sole reason for the gravity of the crisis," the statement added.

"Bangladesh has no interest in delaying the repatriation. Sincerity of Bangladesh in facilitating earliest repatriation of Rohingyas as per bilateral instruments has been unquestionably established through its actions."

Myanmar must not expect Bangladesh to cooperate in repatriation in an uncertain environment in

Rakhine, Dhaka said, adding that despite disappointing experiences in the past and greater challenges ahead, Bangladesh primarily relied on bilateral engagements with Myanmar and concluded two instruments on return.

As per the deals, Myanmar is under obligation to bring back normalcy in Rakhine and create an environment conducive to the repatriation and addressing the root causes of the Rohingya crisis. Moreover, Myanmar is entirely responsible for encouraging the Rohingyas in their voluntary return.

"Unfortunately, Myanmar has utterly failed to demonstrate any political will to fulfil its obligations and is trying to shift the onus on Bangladesh," the statement said.

If Myanmar is really sincere about ensuring justice and ending the culture of impunity, it should extend full cooperation for ongoing international accountability initiatives.

The Bangladesh government has consistently been pursuing the policy of good neighbourhood to resolve the protracted crisis through dialogues, the statement added.

Therefore, unjustifiable accusations by Myanmar, which is solely held responsible for the crisis, are totally unacceptable, it added.

## Onion prices

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It appears that stock of onions at the farmers' ends is almost exhausted, Palash Biswas, of Shapla Banijjalaya at Shyambazar.

Even though winter vegetables started arriving in the markets, prices were too high to enable people in low and fixed incomes to buy a desired amount.

Except for old potato and papaya, no vegetable was found below Tk 40 either in weight or in piece, according to shoppers in markets such as Karwan Bazar, Mohammadpur Town Hall market, Kazipara and Korail Slum in Dhaka.

"How will we be able to buy the necessary foods with our fixed income if prices of essentials like rice and onions spike and vegetables remain overpriced," said Shabana Begum, a mother of four living in a shanty at Korail slum.

Her spouse is a private car driver, who earns Tk 13,000 a month and she works irregularly as house help.

She said she had to cut onion consumption and ration vegetable purchases to prepare meals for her six-member family.

Prices of edible oil, flour, garlic and lentil have also soared over the last two weeks, according to market prices data by Trading Corporation of Bangladesh

## 3 trampled

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Saturday morning. Officials of forest department along with locals tried to drive them off but did not succeed. They returned to the forest yesterday morning and trampled the three, police said.

Abu Naser Md Yeasin Neyaz, divisional forest officer (wildlife conservation) of Chattogram, said searching for food, the elephants came to a paddy field in the area.

As their habitat is being shrunk each year, they are getting desperate for food, he added.

## 32 more held

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"speaking Bengali".

Fearing further arrest in India, she intruded into Bangladesh, she said.

Another arrestee Alamgir Khan, 35, said he had been living in Bengaluru along with his family. He along with his wife and sister work as housekeepers in the city.

"Police in India first raided our house, detained us and then handed us over to BSF [Border Security Force] members. In the end, BSF pushed us inside Bangladesh through the border at midnight," he added.

## Bacteria become more resistant

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Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at Gonoshasthya Medical College Hospital, said the study indicates that the overall situation is alarming.

He pointed out that some bacteria have become resistant even to several reserve group drugs, considered "the last resort" in treating patients with various infectious diseases.

For instance, one such drug, cefipime, has been found up to 89 percent ineffective against different bacteria, including E coli (55%), Klebsiella pneumoniae (61%), and Acinetobacter complex (89%), the study shows.

According to the WHO, antibiotics are classified into three groups -- "access group" used for a wide range of primary level infection, "watch group" used against higher resistance bacteria, and "reserve group" only to be used when all alternatives fail.

Besides, some watch group drugs, including imipenem, has been found 10 to 76 percent ineffective in killing several bacteria, including proteus spp (31%) and Acinetobacter complex (76%).

The IEDCR team also studied the

trend of antibiotics use. It analysed 7,486 samples and found ceftriaxone to be the most commonly used drug, which was administered to 2,749 patients.

Mahbubur, former head of lab services unit at the icddr, b, said, "Once we used to advise patients to stay at hospitals until they were fully cured. Now, we don't do so because of the risk of transmission of drug-resistant



bacteria at hospitals.

"The key to stay safe is maintaining good nutrition and washing hands regularly, especially while handling patients," he told The Daily Star.

Termining indiscriminate use of antibiotics the main reason behind the grim situation, he said, "In effect, there is no guideline on the use of antibiotics in the country. Doctors, drug producers, pharmacists and general people -- all are responsible

for this."

Speaking at the programme, Mohammed Ismail Ramzy, technical officer of essential drugs and medicine at the WHO, said, "Antibiotic resistance is a global problem..."

The study will help policy makers take the right decisions, he added.

Michael S Friedman, country director of the US-CDC, suggested three protective measures -- vaccination, WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene], and food safety to fight antibiotic resistance.

Awami League lawmaker Abdul Aziz, member of the parliamentary standing committee on health ministry, said, "Indiscriminate use of antibiotics is the problem. Doctors should consider the financial ability of the patient's family while prescribing costly drugs."

Prof Dr Sanya Tahmina, director (disease control) at the Directorate General of Health Services, emphasised a strong role of the media in making people aware of the indiscriminate use of antibiotics.

Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the IEDCR, presided over the programme.

## Protests drive record turnout

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The vote is the closest Hong Kongers get to direct representation.

VOTING FOR CHOICE

The territory's top-level legislature is elected by a mix of popular vote and seats reserved for industry groups stacked with China loyalists, which ensures Beijing's control of the city of around 7.5 million.

The pro-democracy camp is calling yesterday's vote a referendum on Chief Executive Carrie Lam and the pro-Beijing government, who have resisted the movement's demands.

"We are voting to give our judgement on what has happened... we're also voting to make a choice for what is yet to come," said Jimmy Sham, a pro-democracy candidate and a prominent figure in the largely leaderless protest movement.

But the polls are not entirely symbolic: some candidates for next year's legislative elections will be drawn from district councillors, and the bodies also will contribute 117 members to the 1,200-strong Beijing-controlled electoral college that chooses the chief executive.

Protests have been muted in recent days after pro-democracy figures urged citizens to cease disruptions to avoid giving the government an excuse to delay or suspend the polls.

No major disturbances were reported.

"I'm pleased to say that... we should have a relatively peaceful and calm environment to conduct these elections successfully," Lam said after voting in her constituency on Hong Kong island.

The political unrest kicked into high gear with giant rallies in June against a bill backed by Lam that would allow extraditions to China's opaque justice system.

The bill was eventually withdrawn as public pressure grew, but the anger that it unleashed sparked wider calls for democracy.

Chinese state media also ground into gear for election day, trotting out editorials urging Hong Kong residents "to vote to end violence" -- which Beijing blames on rioting youths.

In a tweet the state-run Global Times posted a bizarre rap video splicing shots of violent clashes and

positive interactions between Hong Kong residents and the police, opining "Go tell 'em / people want a peaceful place."

Analysts expect pro-democracy candidates to see gains in the district councils but still fall short of a majority of slots.

Campaigning has been marred by acrimony, with one pro-democracy candidate having his ear bitten off in an attack, while 17 other candidates of all stripes have been arrested over protest-related activities.

## Man held

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Saturday, the youth from a hostel nearby had allegedly attempted to rape her.

The child's mother rushed there hearing her daughter's scream and rescued her, said the OC, adding that the youth fled the scene then.

Following a case filed by the child's mother, police arrested Sharifuzzaman in the area after midnight, he said. "The child was sent to Sathkira Sadar Hospital for a medical test."

## 'Son of Concorde'

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month, with the new X-59 expected to half that as it reaches speeds of up to Mach 1.45.

A spot in one of the plane's 40 seats is also understood to be cheaper than Concorde, which were £5,774 - now worth about £10,000.

But Lockheed Martin, which normally produces military aircraft, is facing stiff opposition.

Denver's Boom Super-sonic has received 76 orders from groups including Richard Branson's Virgin and Japan Airlines.

It is also believed to be faster, reaching Mach 2.2 and topping Concorde's Mach 2.04.

Boom wants to cut times from London to New York to three hours, 15 minutes, but will only be able to fly at speed over the sea.

Peter Iosifidis, Low Boom Flight Demonstrator program manager at Lockheed Martin Skunk Works, told the Sunday Express: "Though a technological marvel, Concorde was a business failure. Commercial success wasn't the first priority, and that's why not many were built."

He added: "Other producers are not addressing the noise issue. Flying

a supersonic jet only over water is restrictive, the only benefit being the faster speeds.

"If you're only flying fast from London to New York can you sell enough tickets to enough passengers to make it successful? And with our technology just around the corner, their shelf life is limited too."

The X-59 will conduct its first flight in 2021.

It will be used to collect community response data on the acceptability of the quiet sonic boom generated by the aircraft, helping NASA establish an acceptable commercial supersonic noise standard to overturn current regulations banning supersonic travel over land.

Last November NASA began tests to see how Texas residents reacted to noise from experimental aircraft.

The space agency launched a research project as they continued to experiment for its next airliner dubbed the "Son of Concorde".

The aim of the testing was to see if residents living near the Texas Gulf Coast heard noise from the jets, travelling faster than the speed of sound, without making the explosive noise of a sonic boom.

## Australia intel chair urges asylum for Chinese defector

AFP, Sydney

A Chinese spy who shared information documenting Beijing's political interference operations abroad should be granted asylum after defecting to Australia, the country's parliamentary intelligence chief said yesterday.

Wang "William" Liqiang reportedly gave Australia's counter-espionage agency the identities of China's senior military intelligence officers in Hong Kong and provided details of how they funded and conducted operations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia.

Wang said he was personally involved in infiltration and disruption operations in all three territories.

Government politician Andrew Hastie said yesterday that Wang -- who

is reportedly living in Sydney with his wife and infant son on a tourist visa -- should be allowed to stay.

"I'm of the view that anyone who's willing to assist us in defending our sovereignty deserves our protection," Mr Hastie told Australia's Nine network newspapers, which first reported Wang's claims.

Hastie, a vocal critic of Beijing, was banned from entering China last week along with another politician.

He has previously said Australia's sovereignty and freedoms could be threatened by Beijing.

Australia's Department of Home Affairs, which deals with immigration matters, would not comment on Wang's case.

Wang has told Nine's 60 Minutes programme that he will be executed if he returns to China.