

Stay alert

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the country through the awakening of self-confidence among the womenfolk alongside changing social attitude, thanks to steps taken by the government.

“Bangladesh has also set an example in the world in terms of women development like it has become a role model in economic advancement.”

She said the government was working to further develop the country to materialise the dreams of Begum Rokeya, pioneer of emancipation of women.

Emphasising the need for paying special attention to keep women and children protected, Hasina said her government enacted many laws and framed policies, rules and regulations and it was working to implement those. Besides, rules on child marriage have been formulated to protect girls.

She expressed satisfaction that social awareness has been created against child marriage because of her government’s steps and as a result, the rate of child marriage declined significantly.

The PM said inflicting torture on women and girls is a mental disease which has spread across the world.

Referring to the dreams of Begum Rokeya, she said the great woman wanted to see women stand on their own feet by attaining proper education.

The premier said Bangladesh has now reached such a position where women have stepped to a dignified position and they are working in higher capacities in the administration, judiciary, and armed forces.

“Besides, leader of the House, the Speaker and leader of the opposition in parliament are all females in Bangladesh, which is an example in the world.”

Hasina said the Awami League-led government for the first time posted female officers as secretary, judge, district deputy commissioner, superintendent of police and officer-in-charge of police station.

State Minister for Children and Women Affairs Begum Fazilatunnesa Indira and Secretary Kamrun Nahar also spoke at the programme, organised by the children and women affairs ministry.

Earlier, the PM distributed Begum Rokeya Padak 2019 among the winners. This year, Begum Selina Khalek, Prof Shamsun Nahar, Papri Basu, Begum Akhtar Jahan, and Dr Noorunnahar Fyzennessa (posthumously) have won the award.

Sadya Afireen Mallick, daughter of Dr Noorunnahar, received the award on behalf of her late mother.

Selina Khalek spoke at the programme on behalf of the award recipients.

On this day

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Chalna ports become immobile due to the air attacks. A few ships, carrying Pakistan troops, are caught. One of those ships was trying to escape with a neutral state’s flag hoisted. It was heading for Singapore.

Pakistan’s permanent representative to the UN Aga Shahi tells the Secretary General U’Thant to ask India to withdraw its soldiers. China’s Temporary Foreign Minister Chipu Fei says that India’s activities proved their expansionist and imperialist form.

The allied force gains success in the northern parts of Bangladesh. They detach Dinaipur, Rangpur and Syedpur from each other. Rangpur and Dinaipur are freed. Pakistan army leaves Jamalpur garrison and advance towards Dhaka. They face the allied force near Dhaka when a bloody combat breaks out. Pakistan sustains around 1,500 casualties. The rest of the troops surrender.

Al-Badr assassins abduct Sirajuddin Hossain, executive editor of the daily Ittefaq, and Syed Nazmul Haque, chief reporter of PPI, from their homes.

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi says that India neither accepts nor denies the UN’s urge and is considering the proposal. The situation would have been better when Bangladesh would have its own government and the 10 million Bangladeshi refugees in India would be able to go back home.

Russia banned

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It was not clear how that might work in practice. FIFA, soccer’s world governing body, said it was in contact with WADA to clarify the extent of the decision.

The ban also means that Russian sportsmen and sportswomen will not be able to perform at the Olympics in Tokyo next year under their own flag and national anthem.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has come under attack for not taking a harder line on Russian doping, said it fully backed the ruling by the Swiss-based WADA.

“The representatives of the Olympic Movement today supported this unanimous decision in the WADA Executive Committee, which is in line with the statement made by the IOC Executive Board last week and endorsed by the Olympic Summit,” the IOC said.

If RUSADA appeals WADA’s punishment, the case will be referred to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Moment of truth

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where she was greeted by the ambassador to the Netherlands and then headed to The Hague, where the World Court is located.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands and Canada in a statement yesterday said The Gambia rightfully brought the case of Rohingyas to the ICJ.

They called upon all the state parties to the Genocide Convention to support The Gambia.

A 12-member Bangladesh delegation led by foreign secretary Shahidul Haque will be present as observers at the peace palace where the hearing is taking place.

A team of Rohingya representatives from Cox’s bazar and some civil society members from Dhaka are also attending the hearing.

Several demonstrations are planned in coming days in the Dutch city by Rohingya survivor groups, as well as by government supporters.

GENERALS IN THE DOCK?
The International Criminal Court (ICC), also in The Hague, investigates war crimes but is focused on individual, not state, responsibility.

Myanmar has not signed up to the ICC, but last year the court launched preliminary investigations on the basis that Bangladesh -- where the Rohingya are refugees -- is a member.

On November 14, judges backed a request for a full probe into allegations of crimes against humanity over the crackdown. This could ultimately lead to arrest warrants being issued for Myanmar’s generals.

But the process is lengthy, requiring participation from Bangladesh and -- somewhat implausibly -- Myanmar to hand over suspects.

Another option could be for the ICC to create an ad hoc or mixed tribunal similar to ones created for Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Lebanon and Cambodia. But again this would, in theory, require cooperation from Myanmar authorities.

Besides, on November 13, a case was filed by rights groups in Argentina against members of the Myanmar military and, notably, Suu Kyi.

Under a legal principle called “universal jurisdiction”, the premise is that some crimes are so horrific they are not specific to one nation and can be brought to trial anywhere.

MEMORY OF RWANADA

The UN’s top court was set up after World War II to rule on disagreements between member states. It normally deals with issues of international law such as border disputes, but can also rule on alleged breaches of UN conventions.

Gambia, a tiny, mainly-Muslim state, filed a complaint on behalf of the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) accusing Myanmar of breaching the 1948 UN Genocide Convention.

Leading the charge is Gambian justice minister Abubacar Tambadou, a former genocide prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

The first hearings will be today and tomorrow, when the court is expected

to order interim measures to prevent any further genocide or destruction of evidence. The case will likely take years.

A ruling against Myanmar could mean an order to remedy the genocide and to offer reparations to the Rohingya.

But it would be largely symbolic and difficult to enforce.

The genocide case brought against at the ICJ -- the first of its kind initiated since the 1990s -- may not have happened at all but for a scheduling conflict.

‘GENOCIDE WRITTEN’
In May last year, Gambia’s foreign minister pulled out at the last minute from the annual conference of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Bangladesh, sending Tambadou instead.

For Tambadou what he saw and heard in Bangladesh jogged some painful memories.

He joined an OIC delegation visiting overcrowded refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, where some of the hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas who had fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar since August 2017 recounted how, they said, security forces had burnt Rohingya children alive, raped women and killed men.

“I saw genocide written all over these stories,” Tambadou said in an interview in Gambia’s capital, Banjul.

Tambadou introduced a resolution to create an OIC committee to examine alleged abuses against the Rohingya, and this year convinced the 57-member organisation to back a formal case against Myanmar - thrusting his tiny West African homeland into the centre of one of the most high profile international legal cases in a generation.

When arguments are presented in The Hague next week, Gambia’s legal team will face off against a Myanmar delegation led by Suu Kyi.

Tambadou will ask the judges to immediately order Myanmar to cease violence against Rohingya civilians and preserve evidence that could eventually form the basis of a finding that Myanmar committed genocide. Myanmar has vowed to contest the case.

Authorities in Myanmar reacted swiftly to Gambia’s submissions, which cite UN investigators’ findings that Myanmar’s military acted with “genocidal intent”.

The country has long denied accusations it committed ethnic cleansing or genocide. It insists its own investigative committees are adequate to look into alleged atrocities -- even though critics dismiss the panels as toothless and biased.

The country also refuses to recognise the authority of the ICC, reiterating that the investigation is “not in accordance with international law”.

‘USE OUR VOICE’
Gambia’s role in the case would have been unthinkable until three years ago.

For 22 years, former President

Yahya Jammeh’s security forces had killed and tortured scores of real or perceived political opponents, according to evidence presented to an ongoing truth commission.

But a 2016 election unexpectedly ended in defeat for Jammeh, who fled into exile. Opposition leader Adama Barrow took power promising to restore human rights and stem corruption.

“Twenty-two years of a brutal dictatorship has taught us how to use our voice,” said Tambadou, seated behind a desk stacked with legal texts, his shirtsleeves rolled up as he sweated through a power cut.

“We know too well how it feels like to be unable to tell your story to the world, to be unable to share your pain in the hope that someone out there will hear and help.”

The son of a businessman from Banjul, the 46-year-old Tambadou studied law in Britain before returning to Gambia in the late 1990s to practice.

In April 2000, security forces killed 14 student protesters, an event Tambadou credits with pushing him toward human rights work.

Friends tried to steer him away from the kind of work that could have landed him in one of Jammeh’s notorious jails or worse, but Tambadou was committed, said Emmanuel Joof, who co-founded a coalition of human rights defenders with him in 2000.

In 2003, he left Gambia to join the United Nations’ Tanzania-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), where he successfully prosecuted some of the genocide’s most notorious figures, including former army chief Augustin Bizimungu, who was sentenced in 2011 to 30 years in prison.

As justice minister since 2017, his decisions have occasionally put him at odds with former colleagues, such as when he ordered members of a Jammeh-era hit squad released from prison on technical grounds.

“Sometimes we don’t agree with him,” said Joof, who is now chairman of the independent National Human Rights Commission. “But the fact that it’s (a) person who is passionate about these issues gives someone like me great comfort.”

Tambadou said that after several years in which Myanmar had refused to engage with international organisations over its handling of the Rohingya crisis, he was pleased his initiative had elicited such a strong response.

“I am glad that very senior members of the government will be at the court,” he said.

“It shows the seriousness ... with which they are taking this case.”

Minor girl

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Belal Hossain, sub-inspector of Sadar Police Station, said police had visited the girl at the hospital and asked her father to file a case.

The father said he would do so once his daughter gets better.

BIWTA starts drive

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allegedly built and managed by Bera Municipality Mayor Abdul Baten, also the president of Bera Awami League.

The mobile court also seized nine vessels berthed at the port and detained nine staffers of the vessels. All of them were fined Tk 30,000 each, in default of which they will have to serve three months in prison.

Businessmen and porters staged a demonstration protesting the drive that started around 9:00am.

Habibur said the Baghabari port, an authorised port managed by the BIWTA and only 10km away from the port in question, had been incurring a huge loss as most of the goods-laden vessels landed at the illegal river port to avert the fees.

No one has the right to run a river port illegally without BIWTA’s permission, said Habibur, also the executive magistrate of the mobile court.

“The drive will continue until all the

structures, including the warehouses, in the port area are demolished,” he added.

Meanwhile, businessmen in the port area expressed indignation at the sudden drive. They demanded seven days to have their goods shifted from the warehouses, but were granted only two days.

“More than a hundred businessmen had been running wholesale businesses in the port by employing some 10,000 labourers. The sudden drive destroyed the income sources of all,” said Abdul Halim, a trader at the port.

BIWTA Chairman Commodore Mahabubul Alam visited the spot during the drive.

During the visit, the chairman said the illegal port was being run in violation of the Ports Act, 1908.

The Daily Star published a report titled “Mayor running illegal ‘river port’” on November 5. Following that, the cabinet division ordered the BIWTA to take necessary action.

Univs turned

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to take classes of regular courses, but were very serious about evening and diploma courses, and classes at private universities.

“It is because they get cash benefits from the private universities. But remember, the [public] universities are run with taxpayers’ money. So, you have to be accountable to the people.”

The chancellor said it was the responsibility of vice-chancellors and other teachers to ensure proper use of university funds.

“But the activities of some VCs and teachers make it seem like they have forgotten what the main work of the university is. The work is not just to impart knowledge, but to apply the acquired knowledge,” the president added.

Terming research a very important and fundamental task of higher educational institutions, Hamid said there was a lot of criticism about the quality of research. It has to be taken into consideration whether a research has been conducted for promotion or as a basic research work, he said.

Hamid said many departments have more professors than teachers in other posts. “After having administrative posts, many teachers forget their identity as teachers.”

The president also criticised some university authorities for a number

of recent incidents. He said the image of the universities and the reputation of students were tarnished by some inhuman and undesirable incidents.

“These unexpected incidents could have been prevented in many cases if the authorities took the right steps in time. The university authorities concerned cannot totally avoid the responsibilities.”

Hamid hoped the authorities would take proper steps in this regard.

The 52nd convocation of Dhaka University was held on the campus with the participation of 20,796 graduates.

Nobel laureate Dr Takaaki Kajita, special university professor and also the director of the Institute for Cosmic Ray Research at Tokyo University, addressed the programme as the convocation speaker.

Sincerely thanking the Nobel laureate for his gracious presence at the convocation, the president said his presence provided a fresh impetus to the graduates and the DU as well.

Ninety-eight students received gold medals from the president while PhD and MPhil degrees were conferred upon 57 and 14 students respectively.

Seven DU-affiliated colleges also joined the convocation ceremony from two venues -- Dhaka College and Eden Mohila College -- through videoconferencing.

Buy a phone

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the announcement sales has increased to 10 handsets or more per day during the last two days,” he added.

Customers have the option of choosing between small and big onions while availing the offer, the 35-year-old said.

Traders have blamed rising price of the vegetable on unseasonal rain.

Memes and humorous comments over the rising cost of onions have taken over social media.

Over the weekend a couple in Tamil Nadu’s Cuddalore received a ‘bouquet’ of onions as a gift on their wedding. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister E Palaniswami said the prices will return to normal levels in two weeks.

Uncertainty grips

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around Tk 50,000-60,000, said sources at different airlines.

Additional Secretary of Expatriates’ Welfare Ministry Dr Ahmed Munirur Saleheen said they were looking for how they can assist the migrant workers to ease the process of their return.

Speaking to The Daily Star over phone yesterday, Saleheen said the ministry has already discussed the issue of high airfare with the ministry concerned and requested them to reduce the price of tickets.

According to a top official of the expatriates’ welfare ministry, some 33,000 undocumented Bangladeshi migrant workers have returned under the B4G programme from Malaysia as of yesterday.

Around 28,000 more were expected to take the benefit of the amnesty, he said, wishing anonymity.

In a bid to tackle the crisis, Biman Bangladesh Airlines will operate 16 additional flights only for migrant workers on the Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka route from December 12 to December 31. The national airliner recently made the decision as per instructions from the civil aviation ministry.

The additional flights would carry about 3,400 passengers from Kuala Lumpur.

Earlier on December 2, the expatriates’ welfare ministry requested the civil aviation ministry to operate additional flights on the route to bring home Bangladeshi workers from Malaysia.

A total of six airlines operate 58 flights a week on the Dhaka-Kuala Lumpur route. Of them, Biman and Malaysian Airlines operate 14 flights each, Malindo 13, US-Bangla and Air Asia seven each and Regent Airways three.

Altogether, the flights can carry around 9,000 passengers.

Private carrier US-Bangla Airlines will operate three additional flights on December 16, 18 and 20 on the route to meet the growing demand of passengers, said its General Manager

AN ICON OF GENOCIDE

Nur Alam, 65, whose son was shot dead by the army after the August 2017 crackdown, said, “Once Aung San Suu Kyi was an icon of peace and we had huge expectations that things would change when she came to power.

“We prayed for her, but she has now become an icon of genocide. Instead of protecting us, she has joined hands with the killers. Now she is going to defend the killers. We hate her. Shame on her.”

He went on, “She and the army and the killers of my son must all be

punished. I have longed for this day to come. I’ll have no regrets in life if I see they are punished.”

Rashid Ahmed, 35, who says 12 of his family members were killed by the Myanmar army, “Only justice can heal our wounds. I know I’ll never get them back, but they will rest in peace when their killers are punished.”

Momtaz Begum, 31, holding her three-year-old son in her lap, said in tears, “The army killed my husband. They raped me and torched my house, they stabbed my six-year-old daughter in the head.”

She further said, “I have learned that there will be a trial of Aung San Suu Kyi and the army. We demand the trial of Suu Kyi and the military. Why did they kill our innocent people, our kids? Why did they torture and rape our women? We demand justice.”

home ministry, but many documents went missing when Jamaat leaders and executed war criminals Motiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Hossain Mohammad Mojaheed were ministers during 2001-2006 period.

Liberation War researcher ASM Shamsul Arefin, who had published books carrying the names of 12,000 Razakars, said Pakistan had initially planned to recruit 50,000 Razakars and 12,000 to 15,000 Al-Badr and Al-Shams members.

He added that Pakistan had recruited about 35,000 Razakars, and there were no statistics on how many Al-Badr and Al-Shams members had been recruited.

Shamsul said he had published the names of Razakars based on salary sheet of Razakars recruited by police.

It will be tough to prepare lists of Al-Badr and Al-Shams members, but it is not impossible. The government should form a research team to find them, he added.

The minister and the secretary said they would not publish the names sent by the DCs now, as they would need to verify the authenticity of the names.

“We want to publish the names that do not create any debate,” Arifur said. Minister Mozammel said they would send another letter to the DCs, seeking the names of Razakars.

In January 1972, the then Bangladesh government had passed a law to try the collaborators and war criminals. After that, 37,000 were arrested and sent to jail. About 26,000 were freed following announcement of a general amnesty.

Around 11,000 were behind bars when the government of Justice Sayem and General Ziaur Rahman repealed the Collaborators Act on December 31, 1975. An appeal spree and release of war criminals en masse followed the scrapping of the law.

A top official of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs said there had been a list of Razakars with the

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December 10 to 12.

“We witnessed rape, torture and killings. We saw many killed before our eyes. All we could do was run while our homes burned. Now it is time for the global community to act and hold Myanmar accountable for the horrific crimes they committed. They must be held accountable for genocide against the Rohingya,” said Mohammed Zbayer, 19, who teaches at a learning centre in the camps.

“Suu Kyi spoke of rape being used by the army as a weapon before she came to power, but she is now the defender of the army. Shame!”

“We are eagerly waiting for the hearings ... but are not sure if we will be able to hear it at all because of the poor internet connectivity here.”

Razakars’ list

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The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs in May this year started the process of preparing the list of Razakars as per the recommendation of parliamentary standing committee on the ministry.

The ministry had sent letters to the home ministry and the DCs, seeking lists of Razakars, said Liberation War Affairs Secretary SM Arifur Rahman.

It sent the first letter to the DCs on May 21 and the second one on August 28.

It sought the names of Razakars who had drawn salaries from police stations, subdivisions, and the district administrations during the Liberation War.

DCs of Khagrachhari, Magura, Sherpur, Gaibandha, and Jashore informed the ministry that there were no such Razakars in their districts. The ministry got the lists of nine Razakars in Chandpur, 169 in Meherpur, 44 in Shariatpur, 50 in Narail, and 1 in Bagerhat.

