

UN TOP COURT
Myanmar hits
out at Rohingya
genocide case

AFP, The Hague

Myanmar yesterday hit out at a genocide case brought against it by The Gambia for alleged persecution of Rohingya Muslims, urging the UN's highest court to drop the claim on legal grounds.

Banjul dragged Myanmar before the International Court of Justice in 2019, accusing the predominantly Buddhist country of genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority after a bloody 2017 military crackdown.

When the case opened in December 2019 Aung San Suu Kyi personally represented Myanmar at the Hague-based ICJ, but she was ousted as the Asian country's civilian leader in a military coup last year.

"Myanmar is... not seeking to impede the judicial process of the court," its agent Ko Ko Hlaing told the judges in the imposing courtroom at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

"On the contrary it is seeking to answer the proper administration of justice," Myanmar's international cooperation minister said. Both Hlaing, who was in court and Myanmar's attorney general Thida Oo, who was attending virtually, have been hit with US sanctions over the coup.

Christopher Staker, another lawyer for Myanmar, said the ICJ did not have the jurisdiction because it was not a case brought by two states, as required by the ICJ's statutes. "The court lacks jurisdiction and... the application is inadmissible because the real applicant in these proceedings is the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation," Staker said.



Demonstrators gather at the White House to protest against the rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine in Washington, DC on Sunday. Attendees called for US President Joe Biden to take a stronger stance on deterring Russia from invading Ukraine and demanded the end of Russia's occupation of Crimea. PHOTO: AFP

Pak clamps
down on
fake news

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's government has introduced a new cybercrime law that could see social media users jailed for up to five years for posting "fake news" about the military, judiciary or public officials.

Critics say the legislation is the latest example of creeping restrictions on freedom of expression in the nation, already ranked among the world's most dangerous for media workers.

It was approved by Prime Minister Imran Khan's cabinet and swiftly adopted into law by President Arif Alvi over the weekend, an official in the presidential office said yesterday.

UKRAINE INVASION THREAT
Russia plans to target
dissidents, US tells UN

AFP, Washington

The United States has warned the United Nations it has information that Russia has lists of Ukrainians "to be killed or sent to camps" in the event of an invasion, according to a letter sent to the UN rights chief and obtained by AFP Sunday.

The letter, which came as Washington warned of an imminent invasion by Russian troops massed near the Ukrainian border, said the United States is "deeply concerned" and warns of a potential "human rights catastrophe."

The United States has "credible information that indicates Russian forces are creating lists of identified Ukrainians to be killed or sent to camps following a military occupation," the letter said.

"We also have credible information that



Russian forces will likely use lethal measures to disperse peaceful protests or otherwise counter peaceful exercises of perceived resistance from civilian populations," said the message, addressed to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

The note, signed by Bathsheba Nell Crocker, US ambassador to the UN in Geneva, warns a Russian invasion of Ukraine could bring with it abuses such as kidnappings or torture, and could target political dissidents and religious and ethnic minorities, among others.

Russia has placed more than 150,000 troops near Ukraine's borders in recent weeks, the United States and Western allies have estimated.

Moscow denies it plans to attack its neighbour, but is seeking a guarantee that Ukraine will never join Nato and that the Western alliance will remove forces from Eastern Europe, demands the West has refused.

INDIA HIJAB ROW
Amit Shah
prefers school
uniforms

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's home minister said he favoured students wearing uniforms in school rather than any religious attire, but that his position might change once a court decides on the merits of a ban on the hijab in schools in the state of Karnataka. The ban imposed by Karnataka on February 5 has sparked protests by Muslim students and parents, and counter-protests by Hindu students, forcing authorities to close schools there earlier this month.

Home Minister Amit Shah told Network18 that he would accept any court verdict on the matter. "It is my personal belief that people of all religions should accept the school's dress code," Shah said.

Taliban aiming
to create
'grand army'

AFP, Kabul

The Taliban are creating a "grand army" for Afghanistan that will include officers and troops who served the old regime, the official tasked with overseeing the military's transformation said yesterday. Latifullah Hakimi, head of the Taliban's Ranks Clearance Commission, also told a news conference they had repaired half the 81 helicopters and planes supposedly rendered unserviceable by US-led forces during last year's chaotic withdrawal. He said Taliban forces took control of more than 300,000 light arms, 26,000 heavy weapons and around 61,000 military vehicles during their lightning takeover of the country.

Afghanistan's armed forces disintegrated last summer in the face of a Taliban onslaught ahead of the August 31 US-led force withdrawal -- often abandoning their bases and leaving behind all their weapons and vehicles. The Taliban have promised a general amnesty for everyone linked to the old regime.



Dhaka, Delhi

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commerce, customs and home affairs in March and April. Then, there will be the Joint Consultative Commission meeting in Delhi.

"These are all parts of preparations for the prime minister's visit to Delhi," said a foreign ministry official, adding that this visit could be in September or October.

During his visit to Bangladesh in March last year, Indian PM Narendra Modi invited Hasina to visit India this year.

High nitrate

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animals being infected with pneumonia, which resulted in their deaths.

"We had suggested to supplmature grass to the animals after drying it for a day, and there has been no report of any problem since January 29," said Noor Ali.

He also informed that 25 zebras were brought to the park in 2013 and after breeding, the number increased to 50 until 2017. But 32 zebras died since then, including the 11 in January this year.

The probe report also made some recommendations to the ministry.

Stating the park is running with inadequate number of staffers, the report recommended that number of staff be increased. It also recommended installation of CCTV cameras, and that the chief conservator of forest be informed instantly if there is any problem.

Unsustainable projects

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countries in the Indian Ocean region, including Bangladesh, are becoming economically better off. Therefore, peoples' aspirations for opportunities and infrastructure development are going up.

However, he said, those countries, say for example Bangladesh, neither have money nor technology. Though the countries like Japan and India are helping with infrastructure development and Lines of Credit, alternatively China comes up with "basket of money and aggressive proposals, affordable proposals".

"And then we have a problem. What to do?" he said, adding that Bangladesh needs more funding from the development partners but the funding from the

development partners like the World Bank, IMF and ADB is declining. Also, they come with lots of strings attached.

He then said Bangladesh is trying to get funds from others, as development process is ongoing and then asked, "Now, is there any way out?"

In response, Jaishankar said, "Look, international relationship is competitive. Every country will look for opportunities and see what it can do. But while doing so, it is in their own interest to be prudent about what they are getting into, to do the due diligence."

In an oblique reference to Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port developed with Chinese funding, he said there are examples including in South Asia where countries became saddled with large debts and projects

became commercially unsustainable.

Jaishankar said, "There are projects saddled with large debts, we have seen projects which are commercially unsustainable, airports where aircraft doesn't come, harbours where ship doesn't come."

"So, I think people would be justified enough, asking themselves -- what am I getting into. And, it is obviously in the interest of the country concerned, but also in the interest of the international community because bad, unsustainable projects don't end there."

"Then comes debt ... and debt becomes equity and that becomes something else. So, there are real concerns there, so I think it is important for all of us to make informed decisions, but of course, very competitive decisions."

Massive

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obvious to anyone who ran their names through a search engine.

The new disclosures are bound to intensify legal and political scrutiny of the Swiss banking industry and, in particular, Credit Suisse.

"I believe that Swiss banking secrecy laws are immoral. The pretext of protecting financial privacy is merely a fig leaf covering the shameful role of Swiss banks as collaborators of tax evaders," the whistleblower said in a statement.

Credit Suisse denies any wrongdoing in its business practices.

Many of the accounts in the leak date back decades to a time when laws, practices and expectations of financial institutions were very different from where they are now, the bank said in a statement.

Bangla

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will have to attend online or TV classes, officials said.

"Covid-19 safety protocols will be followed strictly and all the schools have almost completed their preparation in this regard," said Prof Nehal Ahmed, director general of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

He said there are 1.28 crore students from grades six to 12 and about 1.27 crore already have received the first vaccine dose, while 80 percent of them received the second. "We hope that rest will get their second dose within a week."

In-person classes at primary schools will resume on March 2.

Human brain

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The task apparently involved distinct processes, like mental speed, decision caution and the time involved in actually pressing a button.

Using mathematical models, the researchers of the German university were able to estimate the speed

at which participants completed each part of the process.

They found that while the average time to complete the overall task got worse after the age of 20, the mental speed of processing information did not start to slow until 60, the BBC report adds.

The findings of the study suggest that people under 18 were least cautious and were most willing to forgo accuracy for speed.

Caution around decisions increased between ages 18 and 65.

Older people took longer to press the relevant button.



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