

Recognise 1971 genocide

Dhaka calls upon int’l community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The global community should recognise the genocide committed by the Pakistan occupation army in Bangladesh during the 1971 Liberation War, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

Conclusive research by internationally-recognised genocide experts indicate that the nature, scale and organisation of Pakistani military operations demonstrate careful planning and intentionally designed strategies to destroy a substantial part of the Bangalee ethnic and national group, he said.

Momen’s comment, which was made in a pre-recorded video message, came in a webinar titled “1952-1971 Bangladesh Genocide: A Tale of Gross Human Rights Violation”, organised by the Conflict and Resilience Research Institute Canada on Friday to mark the National Genocide Day.

The genocide is yet to be recognised by the global community, he said, adding that Bangladesh has not received any formal apology from the perpetrators.

“This day comes with a mixed feeling for us,” said Planning Minister MA Mannan.

“We remember the supreme sacrifice of our early martyrs who were brutally killed by the Pakistani army on this night in 1971. We are also proud of the fact that how Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman valiantly declared independence later in the early hours of March 26 and got arrested by the occupation army,” he added.

Cindy Lamoureux, an MLA from Canada’s Manitoba province, called for ways to educate people and properly recognise the history and genocide of Bangladesh.

One of the ways to do that is through exhibits in galleries like the human rights museum.

“Oftentimes an exhibit in the museum will create dialogue and a

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Local residents Lyubov Ostranitsa, 76, and Svetlana Mechetnaya, 60, sit on a bench in a destroyed courtyard in the besieged southern port city of Mariupol, Ukraine. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia signals less ambitious goals

Says war focus may be on eastern Ukraine; Kremlin hints at nuclear ‘readiness’ as heavy fighting rages across the country

AGENCIES

US President Joe Biden met top Ukrainian ministers in an emphatic show of support yesterday, as Russia signalled it may scale down its war aims after failing to break Kyiv’s resistance in a month of fighting and deadly attacks on civilians.

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov made a rare trip out of Ukraine to meet with the US leader, in a possible sign of growing confidence in their fightback against Russian forces.

The talks discussed Washington’s “unwavering commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters.

Biden, who later met Polish President Andrzej Duda, also stressed the “sacred commitment” to Nato’s collective defence, in a clear reassurance to Ukraine’s neighbours rattled by the conflict.

The US president has been leading efforts among Western allies to press Vladimir Putin to end his invasion of Ukraine, branding the Russian president a “war criminal” over the assaults on civilians.

Putin had sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, vowing to destroy the country’s military and topple pro-Western President Volodymyr Zelensky.

But his army has made little progress on capturing key cities, and its attacks on civilians have become more deadly.

In a surprise statement, Sergei Rudskoi, a senior Russian general, suggested the time had come for a considerably reduced “main goal” of controlling Donbas, an eastern region already partly held by Russian proxies.

“I ask you to increase the output of energy to ensure that everyone in Russia understands that no one can use energy as a weapon to blackmail the world.”

The apparent scaling down of ambitions came as a Western official reported that a seventh Russian general, Lieutenant General Yakov Rezanstev, had died in Ukraine and that a colonel had been “deliberately” killed by his own demoralised men.

Complicating Moscow’s challenges, invading troops were facing a counteroffensive in Kherson, the only major Ukrainian city under Russian control.

In a video address on Friday night, the Ukrainian president said his country’s forces had “dealt powerful blows” to

Russian troops, adding that their success in repelling attacks was leading the Russian leadership “to a simple and logical idea: talk is necessary.” He reiterated Ukraine’s terms, including sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Zelensky pressed on with his relentless diplomatic efforts to rally world leaders to his side, this time taking his message to the Doha Forum meeting in Qatar’s capital.

He accused Russia of fuelling a dangerous arms race by “bragging” about its nuclear stocks, and urged Qatar to help by preventing Moscow from deploying energy as a weapon.

“I ask you to increase the output of energy to ensure that everyone in Russia understands that no one can use energy as a weapon to blackmail the world,” Zelensky said.

Earlier, Dmitry Medvedev, a former Russian president who is deputy chairman of the country’s security council, said Moscow could strike against an enemy that only used conventional weapons while Putin’s defence minister claimed nuclear “readiness” was a priority.

Russia’s far bigger military continued to combat determined Ukrainian defenders who are using Western-supplied weapons – from near the capital Kyiv to Kharkiv, the Donbas region and the devastated southern port city of Mariupol.

Woman hacked to death in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Police recovered the body of a woman from Belemath in Jhenidah’s Gopalpur village yesterday morning.

The victim, Sonia Khatun, 21, was hacked to death by unidentified criminals sometime on Friday, said OC Sheikh Mohammad Sohel Rana of Jhenidah Sadar Police Station.

The body bore hacking marks. The victim was identified through finger prints, said police.

The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Three held over gang-rape of woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

Three accused in a gang rape case were arrested in Cox’s Bazar early yesterday.

A team of Rapid Action Battalion picked them up from Napitkhali area in Eidgaon upazila, said Lt Col Khairul Islam Sarkar, commander of Rab-15 in Cox’s Bazar.

The arrestees are: Firoz Ahmed, the main accused in the case, Mohammad Sharif alias Sharif Company and Nurul Islam.

According to the case statement, the accused abducted a woman from the district court premises and raped her in a nearby house on March 14.

Jubo League man stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A Jubo League activist died of stab wounds at a Jashore hospital early yesterday after being injured in an attack by unidentified criminals in the district town’s Old Kasba area.

The dead, Rumman Hossain, 30, was a resident of Talikhola Madrasa area of the town.

Another Jubo League activist Arif Hossain Shakil, 30, was wounded in the attack.

Police said Rumman was accused in several cases. According to locals, he was involved in sand trade.

The Jubo League man passed away at Jashore General Hospital around 1:00am. Arif was undergoing treatment at the hospital, said physicians.

Police suspected that Rumman was killed by his fellow party men.

Youth arrested over murder of schoolboy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The Rab arrested a youth in Kalihati upazila’s Elenga area on Friday night over the murder of a seventh grader.

The arrestee is Biplob Miah, 18, a brick kiln worker from Aag Baniara village in the same upazila.

Speaking at a press briefing at the Tangail camp of the Rab yesterday, Ershadur Rahman, commander of the Crime Prevention Company-3 of Rab-12, said the arrestee admitted he killed his friend Rahat Talukdar by slitting his throat with a sharp blade following a quarrel over playing “Ludu” in a local market. He fled after dumping the body in a nearby pond.

The victim’s body was recovered from a pond in Kagujipara village on March 23.

3 children

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The victim families said, on top of hill-cutting, the soil was already soft due to rainfall yesterday morning. **ILLEGAL HILL CUTTING** Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan, said as per the Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act 2010, hill cutting is a cognisable offence and no one, even the government, semi-government or autonomous organisations are allowed to cut or raze hills without prior permission from the authorities concerned.

“But unfortunately, ‘influential’ people have been defying the law and destroying most of the hills in the union to sell soil. These acts often result in such dire accidents.”

Locals also alleged that some people, in cooperation with a section of government officials, are involved in hill cutting.

“Many are exposed to landslides as homes and commercial establishments were constructed after cutting hills in unplanned ways...,” Kim said.

Though the district administration is conducting drives, stricter measures are needed to stop this menace, he added.

According to the environment law, cutting hills without approval is prohibited.

Mother killed

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with a locker inside also open. It appears that someone came to repair the AC and then killed the woman.”

Police are investigating whether there was any other motive, he said.

Germs winning over drugs

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threatening diseases. However, no credible study is done yet to bracket drugs that have turned ineffective.

Multiple studies, including the January-June 2021 surveillance study of the DMI, show there are at least a dozen of bacteria that pose the greatest threat to the human and animal health in the country.

There is no scientific data on deaths or sufferings due to antimicrobial resistance at the community level in the country. But the clinical data of DMI depicts a very worrying picture.

Researchers, between January and June last year, examined 1,250 bacteria that were collected from nearly 9,000 samples (blood, swab, sputum, stool, etc) of the patients at BSMMU and tested around 30 antibiotics against those.

Shockingly, not a single bacterium was found that was not resistant to at least one drug, said Prof Abu Saleh.

“The uncontrolled infection due to superbugs is a daily incident inside ICUs. Patients come here, get infected with new superbugs from other patients easily and eventually die,” he said.

The surveillance study of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control (IEDCR), which was published in November last year, on the 10 bacteria collected from nine medical colleges across the country between 2017 and 2021 also backs up the BSMMU findings.

In both studies, it was found that five of the most critical medicines listed by the WHO are progressively becoming ineffective.

Sadly, a section of

doctors, pharmacies and patients are to blame for the failing of drugs.

Throughout the pandemic, doctors prescribed unnecessary antibiotics for Covid-19 patients in the hospitals in 83 percent of cases, according to a 2021 IEDCR study.

“The gross misuse was due to misconception by both the physicians and people. We will see its impact once the Covid-19 is over,” Prof Zakir Hossain Habib, the lead investigator and head of microbiology at the IEDCR, told The Daily Star.

As many as 60 percent of the patients take medicines without consulting doctors or take medicines on advices from informal providers like drug sellers and quacks; 25 percent of the patients suffer due to costly non-listed drugs prescribed by doctors, according to a

November report last year by the Health Economics Unit of the health ministry.

Sale of drugs without prescription is prohibited but not punishable under the Drug Policy of 2016, and it is helping the malpractice to go on.

This must stop now, insists Prof Saleh, adding that no physicians, outside hospitals, should be allowed to prescribe high-end antibiotics.

“There should be a separate list of antibiotics for the registered doctors, consultants and the doctors at the hospitals. Most probably, this is the only way we can save the remaining few drugs in our hands, until a new drug is there,” he said.

It takes years of painstaking research and billions of dollars in investment to invent an antibiotic, develop a drug and market it for people’s

with a stopover in their respective countries.

Biman MD told The Daily Star that they were trying to get the fifth freedom facilities from Canadian authorities.

The fifth freedom facility guarantees the right to fly between two foreign countries when the flight is originating or terminating in its home country.

This means airlines can fly between two foreign countries as long as it’s part of a larger route from or back to its home country.

“If we can avail this opportunity, this route will be economically viable,” he said.

ATM Nazrul said Biman

should conduct study on who would be their target class and fix the fares accordingly.

Biman MD said in the experimental flight they would assess all those issues and launch regular commercial flights on the basis of the assessment from June.

Previously, Biman had operated flights to Frankfurt, Hong Kong, Yangon, Japan, Delhi and different other destinations, but those routes were suspended later as they were incurring losses.

Biman flights to New York have remained suspended since July 2006 for similar reasons.

No one can play

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Gono Bhaban. The Cabinet Committee on Golden Jubilee of Independence organised the event as part of the closing ceremony of the celebrations to mark 50 years of independence.

Bangladesh is now advancing towards development and prosperity at an irresistible pace, Hasina said, while urging the new generation to keep up the pace.

She said the present government is forging ahead as per the constitution laid out by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman nine months after the independence.

The Awami League-led government has given plans for future generations such as the Delta Plan 2100 and the eighth five-year plan, the PM said.

“We have implemented the Vision 2021, we have entered the satellite era,

we are building a nuclear power plant, we are doing infrastructural development, we are creating employment opportunities, we are setting up hundred economic zones.”

The country needs to be advanced in all sectors, particularly education, knowledge, technology and science, Hasina said.

AKM Mozammel Haque, chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Golden Jubilee of Independence and also the Liberation War affairs minister, chaired the event, while Khaja Miah, secretary of the ministry, delivered the welcome address.

Tapan Kanti Ghosh, member secretary of the committee and also a senior secretary to the commerce ministry, spoke at the event.

At the onset of the ceremony, the theme song of the 50-year celebration of independence was played, while an audio-visual was screened.

Thousands flee after Philippine volcano erupts

AFP, Laurel

Thousands of people fled their homes near a Philippine volcano Saturday after an eruption sent ash and steam hundreds of metres into the sky.

Taal volcano, which sits in a picturesque lake south of Manila, exploded with a “short-lived” burst at 7:22 am (2322 GMT), the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said in a statement.

It warned further eruptions were possible, which it said could trigger dangerous, fast-moving volcanic flows of gas, ash and debris, as well as a tsunami.

Residents in five fishing and farming settlements around the lake were ordered to leave their homes, in the third mass evacuation in as many years around one of the country’s most active volcanoes.