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Sanctions to stay until Rab is accountable, reformed

Says Peter Haas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas has said sanctions imposed on Rab and seven of its current and former officials for alleged human rights violations will remain in place until accountability is ensured and reforms are made.



"There is no change in our policy. The sanction is in place. It will remain in place until there is accountability and reform. We said this privately, we said this publicly," he said.

The envoy was speaking at a "Meet the Ambassador" event, jointly organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) and German think tank Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES), at a hotel in the capital yesterday.

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FEATHERS OF SILVER... The elegant Silver-breasted Broadbill is one among the many species of the bird seen across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Found in Bangladesh, India, China, Bhutan, and other South Asian countries, these gentle passerine birds live in subtropical and tropical moist lowland forests or montane forests. While its numbers have been declining due to hunting and deforestation, it is still not considered to be threatened with extinction. The birds, distinguished by their silky, smooth-feathered appearance, are fairly quiet. When they do call, they make a smooth "tee-lee" sound, which is just as pleasant to the ears as the birds are to the eyes.

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

3 'robbers killed in gunfight between gangs'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Law enforcers early yesterday recovered three bodies from Ghasiar Char area of Noakhali's Hatiya after what coast guards said was a "gunfight" between two groups of robbers.

Hatiya police identified the deceased as Shahraj, 35, a local; Kabir Hossain, 35, of Subarnachar; and Noor Nabi, 33, of Ramgati.

The bodies had gunshot wounds, police added. Bangladesh Coast Guard in a press release said armed gangs locally known as Khokon and Fokra groups engaged in a clash over establishing supremacy around 3:00am in Ghasiar Char area.

Tipped off, three teams of coast guards rushed there to catch the gang members, it added.

Sensing their presence, the robbers tried to flee by boat, but the coast guards managed to detain five members of Khokon group and recover three firearms, two bullets and several sharp weapons, it said, adding that the suspects and weapons were handed over to Hatiya Police Station.

Shahidul Islam, superintendent of police in Noakhali, said police also arrested a suspect at the spot where the bodies were found.

He claimed that the men found dead were gang members.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS Cooperation with UN led to reprisals

UN report says about Bangladesh, 41 other states

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in Bangladesh who cooperated with the UN on human rights issues have faced reprisals because of it, the UN said in a new report presented at the Human Rights Council in Geneva yesterday.

Bangladesh is one of the 42 countries where this trend was noticed in the past year, the report said.

"The reported reprisals may have a chilling effect and deter others from reporting on issues of public interest, including human rights, and from cooperating with the UN, its representatives, and mechanisms," said the report presented by Ilze Brands Kehris, assistant secretary-general for human rights.

"On December 30, 2021, the government announced that it was investigating 76 pending cases with the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID). However, between December 2021 and February 2022, authorities reportedly raided the homes of some victims' relatives and intimidated them," said the report.

"Mandate holders expressed concern that the reported intimidation may have been directed against relatives and human rights defenders for their cooperation with UN entities, including the WGEID," it said.

The report said the situation was such that on February 21, 2022, the group sent a letter to Bangladesh addressing allegations of intimidation and harassment of relatives of disappeared persons, human rights defenders and civil society organisations for their cooperation with the UN.

The letter was followed up by a public statement on March 14, 2022, in which they called on authorities to cease the reprisals, the report added.

The report also detailed the harassment of human rights defenders.

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Russia set to annex four Ukrainian regions today

Defying West, Putin to sign papers, may attend Red Square victory concert; fourth leak detected at Nord Stream pipelines

REUTERS, London

President Vladimir Putin will sign documents today proclaiming Russia's annexation of four Ukrainian regions, as Moscow rushes to lock in territorial claims that the Ukrainian army is threatening to reverse on the battlefield.

The move, one of the legal steps Russia says will lead to formal annexation of 15 percent of Ukraine's territory, confirms that Putin is doubling down on his war against Ukraine despite suffering a major military reversal this month.

The annexation, after what Kyiv and Western countries say were phoney referendums staged at gunpoint on Russian-held Ukrainian territory, has been rejected in the West as an illegal seizure of land captured in war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky summoned his security and defence chiefs for an emergency

meeting, and promised a robust response to a step he says has killed off chances of reviving peace talks.

The votes "are worthless and do not change reality. The territorial integrity of Ukraine will be restored. And our reaction to recognition of the results by Russia will be very harsh," Zelensky said in a statement.

Washington and the European Union are set to impose additional sanctions on Russia over the annexation plan, and even some of Russia's close traditional allies, such as Serbia and Kazakhstan, say they will not recognise the move.

Putin's annexation ceremony will be held in one of the Kremlin's grandest halls with the pro-Russian figures Moscow considers to be leaders of the four Ukrainian regions - Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk. Russia says the referendums were genuine and showed public support for the move.

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PM to visit Japan, likely in November



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit Japan as the two countries celebrate the 50 years of diplomatic relationship this year.

"The prime minister is very likely to go there at the end of November. The date and details are yet to be finalised," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

Japan, a major development partner of Bangladesh, is constructing some of the country's major infrastructures, including metro rail and the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

A part of the metro rail is likely to be opened in December, and Hasina may invite her Japanese

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Fish fossils offer clues to human evolution

AFP, Beijing

Fish fossils dating back 440 million years are helping to "fill some of the key gaps" on how humans evolved from fish, researchers said on Wednesday.

Two fossil deposits of ancient fish in Guizhou, southern China, and Chongqing in the southwest were discovered by scientists during a field study in 2019.

The fossils "help to trace many human body structures back to ancient fishes, some 440 million years ago, and fill some key gaps in the evolution of 'from fish to human,'" researchers from the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology (IVPP) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences said.

Their findings, which they said "provide further iron evidence to the evolutionary path", were published in four papers in the journal Nature on Wednesday.

The Chongqing fossil deposit includes a fish - known as acanthodians - with bony armour around its fins and is considered the ancestor of creatures with jaws and a backbone, including humans.

Scientists in 2013 said they had found a 419-million-year-old fish fossil in China that

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Not abducted, she went into hiding

Says PBI about Rahima

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Rahima Begum was not abducted; she willingly went into hiding, said Police Bureau of Investigation yesterday.

Rahima was presumed to be missing and dead by her daughter Moriom Mannan, but she was found alive by law enforcers on September 24.

The PBI also said it found inconsistencies in the statement Rahima gave in court after being found.

Syed Mushfiqur Rahman, superintendent of police of Khulna PBI, said, "After verification of her court statement under section 22, we found that her claim to have been abducted was false."

Preliminary investigation suggested she may have left to frame her neighbours with whom her family has had a long dispute over land, he added.

If the case filed over her disappearance is proved false, then action will have to be taken against the plaintiff, according to the law, the SP said.

He added that those arrested in connection with the case, if found innocent, can also take legal action.

According to the investigation so far, Rahima went to the house of Quddus Molla at Saidpur village in Faridpur's Boalmari to get an ID card and birth registration, so she can work discreetly in Bandarban.

She also stayed at one Moni Begum's house in Bandarban's Islampur village while she was reportedly missing.

Rahima had told Moni that her permanent address was in Khulna.

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French Road in Naya Bazar area of the capital has been dug up entirely to install large sewerage pipes. Dhaka South City Corporation started the project around six months ago, apparently without considering how the work would affect locals. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CODE OF CONDUCT HC judge accused of violating it

Pro-BNP faction of SCBA writes to CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-BNP leaders of the Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday wrote to the chief justice, alleging that Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar, a judge of the High Court Division, violated the code of conduct by taking part in a "political views-exchange meeting" in Gaibandha.

SCBA Treasurer Mohammad Kamal Hossain, its Senior Assistant Secretary Mahfuz Bin Yusuf, Assistant Secretary Mahbubur Rahman Khan, and executive members Golam Akhter Zakir, Monjurul Alam Sujan and Kamrul Islam submitted the letter to the office of personal secretary of Chief Justice Hasan Fozz Siddique.

In the letter, they said it was learnt from social and print media and also video clips that Justice Khurshid was present at "a views exchange meeting for an Awami League-nominated

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