

Netanyahu sacks defence minister

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday dismissed Defence Minister Yoav Gallant a day after he broke ranks and urged the government to halt a highly-contested plan to overhaul the judicial system.

Gallant's dismissal will likely fuel mass protests against the plan that have already rocked the nation for months. It came as Netanyahu was poised to ratify legislation that would tighten political control over judicial appointments.

That bill, and others that would limit Supreme Court powers to rule against government policy, have triggered warnings at home and abroad over Israel's democratic health.

Gallant on Saturday became the most senior member of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party to say he would not support the judicial overhaul, saying protests that have included growing numbers of military reservists were also affecting regular forces and undermining national security.

"At this time, for the sake of our country, I am willing to take any risk and pay any price," Gallant said in his televised address.

The response came last night. "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided this [Sunday] evening to dismiss Defence Minister Yoav Gallant," Netanyahu's office said. It did not name a replacement or give any other details.

Shortly after his dismissal, Gallant, 64, wrote on Twitter: "The state of Israel's security has always been and will always be my life's mission."

Netanyahu, who is on trial on graft charges that he denies, says the judicial overhaul will balance out the branches of government.

Critics, who range from business leaders to former military officers as well as opposition parties, say the overhaul will weaken Israel's democracy, hurt the economy and hand uncontrolled powers to the government of the day.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Bananas grown in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenaidah are known for their taste. The banana bunches kept near the local rail station will be shipped to different districts on freight trains and trucks. Each bunch sells for Tk 300-800, depending on the size and quality.

Risks to financial stability increased

Warns IMF chief, stresses 'the need for vigilance' following recent turmoil in banking sector

AFP, Beijing

International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva warned yesterday that risks to financial stability had increased and stressed "the need for vigilance" following the recent turmoil in the banking sector.

Speaking at a forum in Beijing, the IMF managing director said she expected 2023 "to be another challenging year", with global growth slowing to below 3.0 percent due the war in Ukraine, monetary tightening and "scarring" from the pandemic.

"Uncertainties are exceptionally high," with the outlook for the global economy likely to remain weak over the medium term, she told the China Development Forum.

"It is also clear that risks to financial stability have increased," she added.

"At a time of higher debt levels, the rapid transition from a prolonged period of low interest rates to much higher rates – necessary to fight inflation – inevitably generates stresses and vulnerabilities, as evidenced by recent developments in the

banking sector in some advanced economies."

Her comments came after the financial sector was shaken by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and the enforced takeover of Swiss bank Credit Suisse by rival UBS, leading to fears of contagion.

Bank shares tumbled on Friday as fears about the health of the financial sector resurfaced, with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz forced to give reassurances about Deutsche Bank after the long-troubled lender became a focus of investor concerns.

Georgieva said policymakers had acted decisively in response to financial stability risks.

"These actions have eased market stress to some extent, but uncertainty is high which underscores the need for vigilance," she said.

The IMF chief, however, pointed to China's rebound as a bright spot for the world economy.

The IMF forecasts China's economy to grow 5.2 percent this year, driven by a rebound in private consumption as the country reopens after its pandemic isolation.



Woman dies in Rab custody

FROM PAGE 1

From there, she was transferred to the intensive care unit, because her condition continued to deteriorate. We did a CT scan and found multiple intracranial bleeds in her head," he said.

Her health deteriorated too fast for the doctors to revive her, he said, adding that they found an external bruise on her head.

Enamul Haque, the local government director of the Rajshahi divisional commissioner's office, sued Sultana in the case filed under the Digital Security Act with Rajpara Police Station in Rajshahi city, said Officer-in-Charge (investigation) Ruhul Amin.

Interestingly, the case was recorded at 5:10pm on Thursday, more than 31 hours after she had been picked up by Rab and when she was unresponsive in a hospital bed.

Enamul said he had been receiving complaints from people who were defrauded through his Facebook account which was hacked in 2017. This continued when he was serving in Natore, Chapainawabganj, and Rajshahi.

He said he filed general diaries with police stations in Natore and Chapainawabganj.

Enamul joined the Rajshahi divisional office and sought the help

of Rab in November last year after receiving similar complaints, the director said.

He said he filed the case taking help from the Rab investigation.

Rab officials concerned did not pick up phone calls despite repeated attempts by this correspondent.

However, Bangla daily Prothom Alo quoted Rab-5 Company Commander Major Nazmus Sakib as saying, "Rab received a complaint of financial fraud against Sultana. There were allegations of unusual transactions in her bank account. Rab found the allegations to be authentic after scrutinising her bank statement."

One little town showed how to fight back

FROM PAGE 1

"We thought the Bengali forces were about the size of one of our companies. We didn't know everybody was against us," he told TIME Correspondent Dan Coggins in a report titled "Battle of Kushtia" published on April 19, 1971.

About 150 to 200 Pakistani army men of the Baloch Regiment, led by Major Shohab, took control of Kushtia on the night of March 25, when they launched a barbaric crackdown on the freedom-loving Bangladeshis and began carrying out genocide across the country.

They disarmed some Bangalee policemen at the police lines and then occupied key points, including government offices and institutions.

At the pre-dawn of March 30, Bangladeshi forces, comprising the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), police officials and civilians, attacked the occupation army.

"As planned, we launched the sudden attack from three directions. The enemy's morale seemed to have been broken by the thunderous slogans being chanted by the people and the simultaneous firing," said Lt Col (ret) Abu Osman Chowdhury, who was a major and commander of the fourth wing of Chuadanga EPR and a frontline fighter.

In the book "Somukhjudho 1971: Muktijoddhader Kolome", he wrote that after hours of fierce battling, the Bangladeshi troops entered the police lines and wireless centres and began searching for enemies, who, without finding any alternative, threw down their weapons and fled towards the Kushtia Zilla School headquarters. Many of them were killed trying to flee.

Osman later became Sector 8 commander and remained so till August 1971.

US-based filmmaker Anindo Atik's documentary titled "The Battle of Kushtia" showed how by the evening of March 30, the Bangladeshi forces surrounded the Pakistani army at the school headquarters.

The battle continued till night, when the enemies contacted Jashore cantonment seeking additional troops,

The response they received was, "Reinforcement [is] not possible. Try to live on your own."

Rafiqul Alam Tuku, a freedom fighter who took part in the battle, said the enemy forces continued heavy shelling till the next morning, adding that the Bangladeshis fought back valiantly and could sense victory approaching.

After heavy fighting throughout March 31, the Pakistanis faced significant casualties, but about 40-45 of them, including most of their officers, were still alive.

Sensing defeat, they tried to escape that night. They got on two jeeps and a Dodge car, and left towards Jhenaidah at high speed.

But the Bangladeshes were right behind, Rafiqul added.

A group of freedom fighters had already destroyed the Shaikupa Bridge. They created a trap by covering the vacuum with a coarse mat made from bamboo remains and camouflaged the place to look like a bitumen sealed road. On each side of it, two groups of Bangladeshes waited for the fleeing Pakistanis.

As soon as the speeding vehicles fell into the trap, the freedom fighters launched their attack and killed Major Shohab and several others on the spot.

The remaining Pakistani soldiers, some of whom were injured, fled to nearby areas. However, they could not escape the wrath of the villagers in those places, said freedom fighter Musharof Hossain, adding that the Pakistanis ultimately surrendered to them.

By April 1, the Bangladeshi forces achieved victory and freed Kushtia from the grips of occupation. However, on April 17, the Pakistani army had managed to recapture the area.

While almost all Pakistani soldiers died in the battle, six Bangladeshes embraced martyrdom.

"It was an unprecedented win. It was a war between .303 rifles versus automatic weapons. It was only possible for the all-out support by the locals of Kushtia," Osman said in the documentary.

He said they had recovered weapons and ammunition that filled a three-tonne truck.

HOW PLANNING LED TO VICTORY
The preparations for the battle to free Kushtia started from March 26, said Mesbah Ul Haq.

Upon learning that a military crackdown was taking place in Dhaka, Mesbah's father Ashab Ul Haq, then a Chuadanga-1 member of Provincial Assembly (MPA), and Younus Ali, a Chuadanga-2 MPA, held a rally in the town that morning and called for resistance.

Osman fled from Kushtia town the same morning upon seeing Pakistan army men there. He reached the EPR office in Chuadanga in the afternoon and came to know that Bangladeshes had disarmed all Pakistani EPR members and took control of their weapons.

On March 27, Ashab and Osman chalked out the plan to free Kushtia. They named the area "South-Western Command".

The weapons confiscated from the EPR members were .303 rifles, .303 LMGs, which were used in World War II, and four rusted World War II time 3.5 rocket launchers, also from the time of WW II. Ammunition was absolutely insufficient.

"But I had hope because I knew the common people from all walks of life were with me," Osman wrote in his book.

Members of police, ansar and mujahid were inducted into the force after a day's training, while the people of Kushtia, with their indomitable will, joined in.

As thousands came forward, they had with them dry food, supply of rice and lentils from their own fields and whatever weapon they could find.

Several control rooms were established. Mega kitchens were set up to provide hot meals to the frontline fighters.

By March 28 noon, a group of Bangladeshes went to Jhenaidah and blocked the Jashore-Jhenaidah road to bar the enemies from supplying troops or arms to Kushtia from Jashore.

The initial plan was to launch the

"... She was taken into Rab custody in Mukti Mor area for interrogation. But soon after her arrest, she fell ill. She was rushed to Naogaon Sadar Hospital. After initial treatment, the doctors advised she be taken to Rajshahi. She died of a stroke at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Friday," he added.

He said Sultana's body was handed over to her relatives yesterday afternoon.

Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Naogaon Rafiqul Islam said, "Sultana has been working for a year in my office and I have not heard of any accusations of corruption against her."

Major Osman had bet on three factors; a surprise attack, depriving the enemy of any intelligence about them, and a siege laid by tens of thousands of volunteers armed with shotguns, machetes and bamboo sticks to deceive and overwhelm the enemy, wrote Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, the then sub-divisional officer of Kushtia's Meherpur, in his book "Chariot of Life: Liberation War, Politics and Sojourn in Jail".

Anindo Atik said the victory in Kushtia was significant as it came at a time when most of the major cities, including Dhaka, was captured by the Pakistani forces.

Speaking to this newspaper, he said, "Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam told me the victory helped boost the morale of the public and even became a tool for them to negotiate with the Indian government."

Mesbah said the victory was a milestone in the history of the Liberation War. "It came within five days of the Pakistan army's crackdown. They got the message – Bangladesh is unbeatable. I am proud I was a part of that battle."

Man beaten to death
FROM PAGE 1

thief and they along with some ambulance drivers beat him to death," Masud alleged.

Abdul Hakim, public relations officer of the hospital, however, said they heard that a mob beat up Mamun as he was "stealing a bicycle" from the hospital premises.

Quoting witnesses, Sub-Inspector Masudur Rahim of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station said Mamun was beaten to death on suspicion that he was a thief.

Police said they are investigating the incident.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

BUILDINGS THAT NEED TO BE DEMOLISHED

- Academic bhaban of Demra's Haider Ali School and College
- Block A, block B and block D of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Rashtribhgyan Bhaban
- Economics department bhaban and Kola Bhaban of Jagannath University
- Three buildings of Mir Mosarraf Hossain Hall of Jahangirnagar University
- Dhaka Collegiate School's main building, Science Bhaban and Hall Bhaban
- Bhaban 1 and 2 of Kabi Nazrul Government College
- Teachers Auditorium Bhaban and Academic Bhaban of Badda Alatanunesa Higher Secondary School
- Academic Bhaban-1 of Savar's Bhakurta Government High School
- Narayanganj Sadar's Delpara Government High School's Bhaban 2 and 4
- Academic Bhaban 1, 2 and Administrative Bhaban of Narayanganj Government Girls High School
- Shadinota Bhaban of Donia University College
- Bhaban No 3 (Science Building) of Government Bangla College
- Administrative building of Government Kadam Rasul College in Naryanganj
- Hazi Ali Hossain High School in Mirpur
- Bhaban 1 and 2 of Government Kaliganj Shramik College in Gazipur
- AKM Fazul Haque Bhaban of Kaliganj RRR Pilot Government High School
- Bhaban 1 of Keranigonj Girls School and College
- Khilgaon Government High School
- School building of Sutrapur's Korattola CMS Memorial High School
- Pritilata Waddedar Bhaban of Narayanganj Government Womens College
- Jatrabari's Shahid Zia Girls School and College
- Administrative and classroom building of Shyamalpur High School
- Tejjago Model High School
- Solmaid Government Primary school in Badda
- Darul Islam Fazil Madrasa.

Rajuk evacuation

FROM PAGE 1

"How can a building that was constructed by the Public Works Department only 10 years ago be vulnerable?" said a high official of BSMMU on the condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with media.

He said that they had retrofitted one of the two other buildings constructed in the 1950s in 2005.

"None of the buildings is vulnerable," he said.

Delwar Hossain Mojumder, the chief engineer of the Education Engineering Department, said they have received a letter regarding the matter and that Rajuk incorrectly identified them as the authority for 30 of the school buildings.

The EED wrote to Rajuk saying that they only built two of the buildings and those have been handed over to the school authorities.

"Many of the buildings are not so vulnerable that immediate demolition is required. If an earthquake of magnitude 7 hits, then that is a different case."

Mojumder too spoke for relocation first.

"All the buildings are old and there is no doubt about it," said Adil Mohammad Khan, a faculty member of Jahangirnagar University's Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

There are two options here: either protect those by retrofitting or demolish those.

"Since demolition is a major decision, relevant authorities should do a second assessment before carrying out Rajuk's order."

If both assessments say the same

Two schoolchildren drown in Jamuna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two schoolchildren drowned in the Jamuna in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila yesterday.

Sujay Paul, 16, and Likhon Paul, 12, students of Govindasi High School, drowned while taking a bath in the river adjacent to their home, said their teacher Kalam Hossain.

Locals took them to Bhuapur Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead.

"They died before reaching the healthcare facility," said Sumaiya Jannat, medical officer of the health complex.

SAMRAT MURDER CASE

Accused placed on 2-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday granted a two-day remand for Seema Khatun, an accused in the murder of Samrat, chauffeur to an official of a contractor of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Pabna Judicial Magistrate Court granted the remand last evening, said Arbinda Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

Earlier in the morning, police produced her before the court with a five-day remand prayer, he added.

The victim's father Abu Bakkar filed a case with Ishwardi Police Station against Seema, her husband Momin and some three to four unnamed people yesterday.

India summons Canadian diplomat over Sikh protests

AFP, NEW DELHI

Indian authorities said yesterday they had summoned Canada's top diplomat in New Delhi after Sikh protesters gathered outside India's diplomatic mission in Canada.

According to Canadian media reports, hundreds of people gathered outside the Indian consulate in Vancouver on Saturday over India's hunt for fugitive Sikh separatist Amritpal Singh.

The Indian foreign ministry said it summoned Canada's high commissioner on Saturday "to convey our strong concern about the actions of separatist and extremist elements against our diplomatic Mission and Consulates in Canada this week".