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13 ASIAN COUNTRIES Bangladesh's NHRC 2nd worst

Finds Asian NGO Network

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRCB) scored second-lowest among all the national human rights protection institutions in South Asia, according to an index.

The evaluation, prepared by the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI), was released yesterday.

The countries included in this year's report are the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

Among them, India scored the lowest.

Some of the categories the national human rights institutions of the different countries were evaluated on included their independence, their budget and operational autonomy, their powers and mandate, and how well they investigate, monitor, and protect stakeholders.

"Bangladesh and India are struggling to fulfil their mandate of holding their respective governments accountable when it comes to the protection of human rights," said the report.

"There is a lack of transparency in the members' selection process, a lack of complete freedom in financial matters, and a limited mandate in matters of investigating allegations against law enforcement agencies and security officials," it stated.

"Bangladesh and India are struggling to fulfil their mandate of holding their respective governments accountable when it comes to the protection of human rights," said the report.

It said the NHRC is legally independent but is directly dependent on the government and other agencies for its budget.

"According to Section 17(2) of the NHRC Act, the Commission has the right to investigate any matter at any time when the government fails to respond to its request for a report. However, the Commission continues to disregard exercising its existing mandate to the fullest extent," it stated.

The report pointed out that while the NHRC can only seek reports from the government regarding abuses perpetrated by law enforcement, it can also legally investigate if the government fails to report back, but the institution has never done this.

"As per Section 18(2) of the NHRC Act, government authorities are required to respond to the queries and recommendations that the NHRCB makes. However, in reality, the government and the authorities do not abide by this and often ignore the NHRCB's requests.

For example, for months, Cox's Bazar district administration has been delaying sending in a report to the NHRCB on the killing of the Teknaf Municipality Councillor, Ekramul Haque, in an alleged gunfight with the Rab in April 2018, according to the report.

"After 13 years, the Commission sent a draft proposal to the Law Ministry in February 2021 seeking an amendment to the NHRC Act, 2009, which proposes excluding the police from the definition of 'disciplinary force'. The Law Ministry scheduled a meeting to discuss the NHRC Act amendment but is yet to make a decision," pointed out the report.

"The NHRCB has the authority to proceed to the court to get redress for the infringements of human rights on behalf of victims," it said. "However, there is no record of lodging any case or petition filed by the NHRCB during this reporting period."



Smoke emitting from a brick kiln, belonging to ABC Bricks, in Bandarban Sadar. Just in front, a signboard reads: "This brick kiln has been declared closed as per a High Court directive." Such blatant disregard for regulations by kiln owners ultimately worsens the country's air.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

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We'll keep engaging with nations if they interfere

Says foreign secy Masud in New Delhi

STAR REPORT

If any country crosses the line and interferes into Bangladesh's domestic affairs, Dhaka will try to remain engaged with them, said Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen in New Delhi.

"...We will try to make them understand that we are committed and they have no reason to doubt our intentions," he said in an interview with WION on the sidelines of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi.

He was asked on the US position on Bangladesh's elections.

"Well, each country, you know, has their right or prerogative, and they are all our development partners. But we will try to remain engaged with them," Masud said in the interview published yesterday.

"...As per our institution, as our people's wish, elections will be held.

4 more bridges planned over Buriganga

Low-height, short-length may affect waterbodies, say environmentalists

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is planning to build four more bridges over the Buriganga with an aim to ease traffic congestion at the southern exit-entry points of the capital.

Three of the bridges will be built right next to the existing three over the river, while the other will be built near Narayanganj's Fatullah.

The move was initiated as gridlocks at the entry-exit points of the capital's south had worsened due to additional traffic since the Padma Bridge opened last year.

However, environmentalists have said low-height and short-length bridges over rivers around Dhaka are killing the water bodies and this new move can deteriorate the situation unless proper social and environmental assessments are done before executing the projects.

The Roads and Highways Department, which is currently conducting studies for two bridges, however, said they will build

The move was initiated as gridlocks at the entry-exit points of the capital's south had worsened due to additional traffic since the Padma Bridge opened last year.

the bridges with "longer spans" considering the river's navigability.

The three existing bridges over the Buriganga are at Postogola, Babubazar area and Basila respectively. They connect the main part of the capital with the growing townships at the other end of the river and also the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway.

Shishir Kanti Routh, additional

chief engineer (bridge management wing) of the RHD, said the country will not get the full benefit from the Padma Bridge unless the capital's exit-entry points are congestion-free.

"The three existing bridges cannot deal with the growing traffic and so, new ones need to be built", he told this correspondent recently.

He added that Dhaka city is expanding on the southern side of the Buriganga, and more bridges are required for better communication for the people on both sides.

"The government has a plan to build three circular roads around the capital and the new bridges are required for better integration among the upcoming projects."

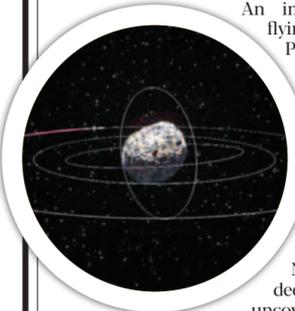
Moreover, Pangaon Inland Container Terminal in Keraniganj will be connected with the capital with one of the four new bridges, he said.

However, speaking to The

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Nasa receives laser-beamed message from 10 million miles away

CNN ONLINE



An innovative experiment flying aboard Nasa's Psyche mission just hit its first major milestone by successfully carrying out the most distant demonstration of laser communications. The tech demo could one day help Nasa missions probe deeper into space and uncover more discoveries about the origin of the universe.

Launched in mid October, Psyche is currently en route to catch humanity's first glimpse of a metal asteroid between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. The spacecraft will spend the next six years traveling about 2.2 billion miles (3.6 billion kilometers) to reach its namesake, located in the outer part of the main asteroid belt.

Along for the ride is the Deep Space Optical Communications technology demonstration, or DSOC, which is carrying out a mission of its own during the first two years of the journey.

'INTERFERENCE' US takes dig at Russian statement

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US State Department has responded to Russia's accusation of interfering in Bangladesh's internal affairs, saying it was a "deliberate mischaracterisation of US foreign policy and Ambassador Peter Haas's meetings".

On November 22, Russian foreign ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova in her weekly briefing said information had come to light regarding a meeting between US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas and a high-ranking representative of the local opposition at the end of October.

"The United States does not support any political party in Bangladesh. Nor does the United States favour one political party over another," the US embassy in Dhaka communicated the State

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Bangladeshi and Indian experts jointly repairing a diesel pipeline, installed under the India-Bangladesh Friendship initiative in Dinajpur's Chirirbandar upazila, after unknown miscreants drilled a hole in it early yesterday to steal fuel.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

GAZA TRUCE Delayed hostage release to go ahead: Hamas

AFP

Hamas confirmed yesterday that the second release under a truce agreement of Israeli hostages captured in the October 7 attacks will go ahead after a delay.

Hamas had "responded positively" to Egyptian and Qatari mediators to ensure the continuation of the truce agreement, it said in a statement, after they relayed a promise by Israel to "uphold all the conditions of the accord".

Hamas had earlier delayed the release of the group, accusing Israel of breaching the terms of the agreement regarding the delivery of humanitarian aid to the north of the Gaza Strip, and the selection of Palestinian prisoners for release. The Islamist movement wanted the selection to be based on time spent in detention.

It also accused Israeli troops of firing on people trying to cross from the southern part of the Gaza Strip to the north, which Israeli forces have forbidden.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said in a situation report early Saturday that in "several reported incidents" on Friday, "Israeli forces opened fire and threw teargas canisters at people heading northwards; at least one person was reportedly killed, and dozens injured".

The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza said seven people had been wounded in similar incidents on Saturday.

Israeli officials denied any breach of the terms of the pause.