

## US State Dept targeting India: BJP

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has accused the State Department and "deep state" elements in the US of trying to destabilise India in conjunction with a group of investigative journalists and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi.

The accusation comes as a surprise as New Delhi and Washington have forged a strong relationship in the last two decades and both have vowed to further strengthen ties despite some differences and irritants.

Gandhi's Congress party used the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)'s articles that "singularly focused" on the Adani Group and its alleged closeness to the government to undermine Modi, the ruling party said on Thursday.

Group chair Gautam Adani and seven others were indicted last month in the US for being part of a \$265 billion scheme to bribe Indian officials - allegations the group has termed "baseless".

OCCRP's articles have also accused state-sponsored hackers in India of

**US 'deep state' elements, media group, George Soros, Rahul Gandhi working together: BJP**

using Israeli-made Pegasus spyware to target government critics.

The government has previously denied both allegations.

The BJP has previously accused Gandhi, the OCCRP and 92-year-old billionaire financier philanthropist George Soros of attacking Modi.

On Thursday, it cited a French media report that said that OCCRP was funded by the US Agency for International Development and "other deep state figures" like Soros.

"The Deep State had a clear objective to destabilise India by targeting Prime Minister Modi," the BJP said in a series of messages on X.

"It has always been the US State Department behind this agenda... OCCRP has served as a media tool for carrying out a deep state agenda," it said. Sambit Patra, a BJP national spokesperson and lawmaker, repeated the accusations at an official media briefing by the party on Thursday.

"A French investigative media group...has revealed that... 50 percent of OCCRP's funding comes directly from the US State Department," Patra said.



Palestinians wait in a queue to receive food outside a distribution centre in Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip yesterday, amid the ongoing Israeli offensive in the enclave.

PHOTO: AFP

## Goal of offensive is to overthrow Assad

Says Syria rebel leader; thousands flee Homs as rebels advance further south; Jordan closes border crossing

AGENCIES

Rebel forces pressing a lightning offensive in Syria aim to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad's rule, their Islamist leader said in an interview published yesterday.

After wresting other key cities from government control, the Islamist-led rebels were at the gates of Syria's Homs, a war monitor said, though the defence ministry denied claims it had withdrawn its troops.

In little over a week, the offensive has seen Syria's second city Aleppo and strategically located Hama fall from Assad's control, for the first time since the civil war began in 2011.

Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, the leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) rebel alliance, said the goal of the offensive was to end Assad's rule, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, thousands of people fled Homs overnight and into yesterday morning, a war monitoring group and residents said, as rebel forces sought to push their lightning offensive against government forces further south.

The head of the Syrian faction leading the sweeping assault told CNN that his group - a former Al-Qaeda affiliate now known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - aimed to "build Syria" and bring Syrian refugees back home from Lebanon and Europe.

Iran will send missiles, drones and more advisers to Syria, a senior Iranian official said yesterday. Russia's embassy in Syria has urged Russian nationals to leave the country on commercial flights.

Jordan has closed its border crossing with Syria, the kingdom's interior minister said. Hezbollah sent a small number of "supervising forces" from Lebanon to Syria overnight to help prevent anti-government fighters from seizing the strategic city of Homs, two senior Lebanese security sources told Reuters.

In another alarming development for Assad, the head of the US-backed Syrian Kurdish force said the radical Islamic State group, which ran a reign of terror in large swathes of Iraq and Syria until it was defeated by a US-led coalition in 2017, had now taken control of some areas in eastern Syria.



## Bangladeshi

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As the alleged smugglers attacked the BSF troops, the Indian border guards first charged stun grenades and later fired three to four rounds of bullets, the press release said, citing the BSF sources.

A Bangladeshi was killed in the gunfire, and the BGB later learnt from locals that the deceased was Anwar.

The BGB also fired warning shots after hearing the sound of gunfire, the press release added.

The Bangladeshi border force strongly condemned the killing in a protest note handed to the BSF at a flag meeting, said Lt Col Sheikh Md Badruddoza, commander of Nilphamari 56 BGB Battalion.

Locals found the body at the Mominpara border around 7:30am and informed the BGB about the matter.

On information, police went to the spot and recovered the body, said SM Masud Pervez, officer-in-charge of Panchagarh Sadar Police Station.

A deep injury mark was found on the deceased's collarbone, the OC said.

OC Masud also said the body would be handed over to the family today after a post-mortem.

Anwar's brother Arif Hossain filed a murder case at the police station against unidentified individuals over the incident.

## Won't tolerate

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The Jamaat chief also touched on the issue of the Pilkhana killings, where 57 military personnel lost their lives.

He demanded a fair investigation into the killings, pointing out that "no trial has yet been held" for those responsible. He called for a thorough investigation into the incident.

Jamaat leader Abu Taher Mohammad Masum, Assistant Secretary General Abul Hasanat Mohammad Abdul Halim, and Central Executive Committee members Mohammad Abdur Rob and Mohammad Mobarak Hossain were also present at the event chaired by Kazi Din Mohammad, ameer of Cumilla City Jamaat.

## BTRC recalls bandwidth

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states of Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

At present, the states, popularly known as the Seven Sisters of India, are connected to Singapore through submarine cables in Chennai using the neighbouring country's domestic fibre optic network.

The landing station in Chennai is about 5,500 kilometres away from the northeastern part - a considerable distance that compromises the internet speed.

Due to the mountainous nature of the region, the maintenance of fibre optic networks and the installation of new networks are relatively difficult.

"The guidelines do not permit such 'transit' arrangements," Md Emdad ul Bari, chairman of BTRC, told The Daily Star on Thursday.

Subsequently, the internet regulator wrote to the telecom ministry last week to recall its earlier application.

The transit arrangement will also strengthen India's position as a dominant internet hub and weaken Bangladesh's potential to become a regional hub, according to a BTRC document.

It would also hinder the potential for Bangladesh to become a Point of Presence (PoP) for content delivery network (CDN) providers such as Meta, Google, Akamai and Amazon.

A PoP is a physical location, facility or data centre that acts as an interconnection point for various networks. It facilitates the exchange of data traffic between different network providers, internet service providers and CDNs. In short, it is a central hub where data highways from different regions converge.

Currently, CDNs such as Meta, Google, Akamai and Amazon have their PoPs in Indian cities such as Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. Through transit connectivity provided by Summit and Fiber@Home, the Indian telecom operators would easily be able to offer internet

services to the Seven Sisters.

Besides, the arrangement would obstruct Bangladesh's ability to provide internet services to parts of Myanmar and northwestern China through its own infrastructure.

Approximately 60 percent of the international bandwidth in Bangladesh is supplied by the seven ITCs like Summit Communications and Fiber@Home, while the remaining 40 percent is provided by Bangladesh Submarine Cables (BSC).

Despite BSC's bandwidth capacity of 7,217 Gbps, only 2,343 Gbps is currently being utilised.

Granting such connections to ITC operators despite BSC's adequate capacity and redundant cables would further increase ITC operators' bandwidth usage, undermining efforts to utilise BSC's unused bandwidth effectively.

"This arrangement would not harm Bangladesh," said Sumon Ahmed Sabir, chief technology officer at Fiber@Home, while acknowledging that the Seven Sisters region would undoubtedly benefit more.

Bangladesh, however, would also gain by earning foreign currency, while BSC, ITC and Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN) operators would share in the profits, he added.

Summit Communications did not respond to The Daily Star's request for comment.

"Ultimately, the bandwidth from India will end up in India, reducing Bangladesh to merely a transit point," said Aminul Hakim, president of the Bangladesh Internet Governance Forum.

At first glance, it may seem that Bangladesh would earn foreign currency from this arrangement.

However, since the two local ITC providers facilitating the transit already import bandwidth from Indian companies, there is a significant likelihood of service exchange, depriving the government of revenue, Hakim added.

## Billionaires' wealth more than doubles in 10 yrs: UBS

AFP, Zurich

Billionaires have seen their combined wealth shoot up 121 percent over the past decade to \$14 trillion, Swiss bank UBS said Thursday.

Switzerland's biggest bank said the number of dollar billionaires increased from 1,757 to 2,682 over past 10 years.

The 10th edition of UBS's annual Billionaire Ambitions report found that billionaires have comfortably outperformed global equity markets over the past decade. The report documents "the growth and investment of great wealth, as well as how it's being preserved for future generations and used to have a positive effect on society", said Benjamin Cavalli, head of strategic clients at UBS global wealth management.

## South Korea's Yoon must be suspended

Says ruling party leader; opposition submits motion to impeach him

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's ruling party leader said President Yoon Suk Yeol needs to be removed from power for trying to impose martial law, as the government denied reports yesterday it was preparing to issue another martial law declaration.

Yoon shocked the nation - and his own ruling People Power Party - on Tuesday, when he gave the military sweeping emergency powers in order to root out what he called "anti-state forces" and overcome obstructionist political opponents.

He rescinded the declaration about six hours later after parliament, including some members of his party, voted to oppose the decree.

The main opposition Democratic Party has submitted a motion to impeach Yoon and scheduled a vote in parliament for this evening.

Fearing another attempt to declare martial law, opposition lawmakers rotated through parliament's plenary session hall yesterday to block any such attempt, a Democratic Party official said.

## Indian foreign secy

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minorities in Bangladesh. Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal told the weekly media briefing in New Delhi that the Indian Foreign Secretary will travel to Bangladesh on December 9 for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) with his counterpart.

During his stay in Dhaka, Misri will hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Jasim Uddin besides having several other meetings that have been firmed up, Jaiswal said without divulging if India's top diplomat will call on Yunus.

Asked about the agenda of FOC, Jaiswal said in Dhaka the Indian Foreign Secretary would discuss all issues of mutual interest.

The MEA spokesperson did not specify any particular issue or issues.

When a reporter pointed out that former ISKCON member Chinmoy Krishna Das was not given bail and the previous court hearing was deferred by a month, Jaiswal reiterated that he would get a fair and transparent trial and his legal rights would be respected.

"We want to reiterate our



Vikram Misri

position that his [Das] legal rights will be respected and he will be allowed to exercise those rights and he will be given a fair and transparent trial."

The visit by the Indian foreign secretary was agreed on at a meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 23.

The Jaishankar-Hossain interaction was the first since Hasina stepped down in the face of widespread protests and the caretaker administration led by Yunus came to power on August 8.

## Ducsu election likely by next February

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challenges are."

Prof Sayema Haque Bidisha, DU pro-VC (admin), said that forming the committee, initiating discussions, and addressing administrative and logistical procedures naturally took them some time.

"Since this process has already begun, and they [committee] have also prepared their plan for consultations, we can hope that they will provide us with concrete recommendations within a reasonable time," she told this newspaper.

"Based on the recommendations, it will become easier for us to hold the election and carry out other related tasks. Accordingly, an approximate deadline for the polls has been set," she added.

With the university authorities preparing for the Ducsu polls, student organisations gave mixed reactions to the plans.

During a meeting on Wednesday, leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and 29 other student organisations demanded elections to Ducsu and student unions at other universities and colleges across the country by late January or early February.

## Resist communal forces in your country

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of attacks on minority communities happen repeatedly."

The signatories say that they never equate the Indian people with the Indian government.

"We know that the people of India are also fighting against 'Hindutva' forces and communalism. We [Bangladeshis] fought for a long time against the 'fascist' Awami League regime and brought it down."

When the Bangladeshi people fought against tyranny in July and August, the people of India took to the streets in solidarity. For a long time, people on both sides of the border stood in solidarity with each other.

When the AL was in power, homes of Hindu people were attacked, properties grabbed, temples desecrated, and people were injured and killed. But after

the ouster of AL on August 5, similar incidents took place.

"However, this time, many political parties, inspired by the mass uprising, protected Hindu homes and temples, setting new examples of communal harmony."

Many Indian media outlets have not been depicting the true picture of Bangladesh, says the statement.

Although the Indian government expressed regret over the incident of attack on the Bangladesh mission in Agartala, it had not taken any effective step to stop the falsehood.

The Indian government's role after the arrest of former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das was surprising. There were allegations against him within ISKCON, and the organisation expelled him.

"We support his right to a fair trial,

creating student-friendly atmosphere and building popularity among students through meaningful activities before the elections."

He added that after the mass uprising, student bodies have regained the freedom to engage in normal political activities and are now working to rebuild their image and change negative perceptions of student politics after years of dominance by BCL.

Nasir added that the student bodies should be given more time to change the negative perceptions about students' politics.

This interim government has banned the BCL, the pro-Awami League student body, amid demands from the student movement against discrimination.

Gonatantrik Chhatra Jote, an alliance of seven left-leaning student organisations, said the Ducsu charter should be amended before holding the elections.

"The charter mandates supreme power to the university VC, who can make any decision at will, which is an undemocratic practice. This must be changed before the polls," said Rafikuzzaman Farid, coordinator of the Jote.

DU VC is the ex officio president of Ducsu.

which is a right for everyone. However, it is astonishing how swiftly the Indian Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement in his favour."

On the day he appeared in court, a chaotic situation ensued, leading to the murder of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif. Thanks to the collective efforts of the people of this country, no major unpleasant incident occurred in the wake of that event.

Signatories to the statement include Prof Anu Muhammad, Prof Salimullah Khan, Prof Sayeed Ferdous, Prof Swadhin Sen, Prof Gitirara Nasreen, Prof Kamrul Hasan Mamun, Prof Tuhin Wadud, Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua, writer and journalist Altaf Parvez, writer Rahnuma Ahmed, musician Shayan, central member of Jatiya Nagorik Committee Pritom Das, and Associate Professor Samina Luthfa.