

Rab admits, apologises

Its DG says the force ran secret detention centres, was involved in extrajudicial killings, abductions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab Director General AKM Shahidur Rahman has apologised to the families of the victims of enforced disappearances, murders, and abductions.

"We know there are quite a few allegations of enforced disappearance, murders and abductions against Rab. I apologise to the families of the victims..." he said at a views-exchange meeting with journalists.

He specifically mentioned the seven people murdered by Rab men in Narayanganj in 2014.

He also acknowledged that Rab had secret prisons, popularly known as Aynaghar, where abducted people were kept.

In its reaction to the Rab DG's comments, Mayer Daak, a platform of the families of enforced disappearance victims, said an apology was not enough.

"A proper and transparent legal proceeding is needed to ensure accountability of those behind the enforced disappearance and killing of our loved ones," reads the statement signed by Sanjida Islam Tulee, spokesperson of the platform.

At the views-exchange meeting at the Rab Media Centre in the capital, Shahidur said Rab made no physical changes to the secret detention facilities as per the instruction of the inquiry commission on enforced disappearances.



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ARAKAN ARMY IN CONTROL OF RAKHINE Govt mulling new Rohingya policy

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh is considering modifying its Rohingya policy after seven years of failed repatriation attempts and changed political realities in both countries.

Starting in November last year, Myanmar's ethnic rebel group Arakan Army (AA) has gained control of 11 of Rakhine's 17 townships in Rakhine, with the latest being Maundaw, a major township of the Rohingya.

With this, the AA now controls more than 80 percent of Rakhine and the 271km-long border with Bangladesh, making it the de facto authority of Rakhine.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's interim government, which has committed to protecting human rights and democracy, is taking a fresh look at the Rohingya and Myanmar crisis.

Bangladesh authorities are considering how semi-formal communication can be established with the AA, keeping in mind its role in Rohingya repatriation in the future. The Daily Star has learnt from foreign ministry officials involved with the deliberations.

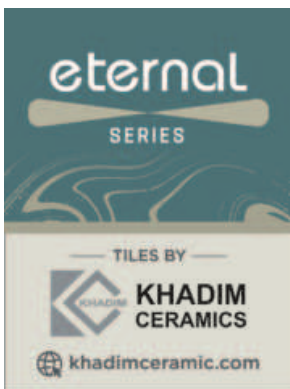
While trying these new approaches, Dhaka, however, will maintain a relationship with the Myanmar authorities and continue to seek support from India and China, the regional powers having major stakes in Myanmar, they said.

As a state, Bangladesh cannot maintain relations with a non-state actor AA, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain said at a recent event held at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Dhaka.

"However, there can be semi-formal relations. In the coming days, AA will be the biggest factor in Rakhine State. We cannot do anything bypassing them," he said.

Bangladesh cannot shy away from engaging with Myanmar because there are issues of yaba smuggling and human smuggling, said Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, director of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance.

"You cannot control the border alone. You will need to engage with



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RSF REPORT 2024 Bangladesh 3rd most dangerous country for journalists

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh is the third most dangerous country for journalists, according to the 2024 report of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published yesterday.

It said five journalists were killed while carrying out their work in Bangladesh.

According to RSF, fifty-four journalists were killed worldwide, a third of them by the Israeli army. Among the 18 journalists killed by the Israeli military this year - 16 were in Gaza and two in Lebanon.

The report said Asia was the second most dangerous region for journalists in the world mainly due to the large number of journalists killed in Pakistan (seven) and Bangladesh (five).

In July, protests triggered by the reinstatement of a controversial quota system for public jobs were violently repressed by the police, said RSF.

The report mentioned the name of a journalist for the Dhaka Times, Mehedi

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Israel continues pounding Syria

Ports, missile warehouses in Latakia, Tartous hit; over 1 lakh displaced in northeast

AGENCIES

Israel's Air Force yesterday continued to pound Syria, striking ports and missile warehouses in Latakia and Tartous provinces, as Israeli ground troops moved deeper into the Syrian Golan Heights, effectively expanding their occupation.

Rights groups sounded the alarm over worsening conditions in northeastern Syria, where fighting between Turkish-backed forces and Kurdish forces has displaced more than 100,000 people, reports Al Jazeera online.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor also reported Israeli strikes near Damascus yesterday.

Turkey-backed rebel forces are continuing their advance to "clear terrorism" in northern Syria, a Turkish defence ministry source said yesterday, referring to the forces' battle against a Kurdish militia in the region.

Turkey has been telling the United States repeatedly that "a terrorist organisation cannot be eliminated by using another terrorist organisation," the source also said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Jordan's King Abdullah yesterday as President Joe Biden's outgoing administration pushes for an "inclusive transition" in neighboring Syria following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad.

Blinken, who was due to head to Turkey later yesterday, is in the region to seek support for principles that Washington hopes will guide what happens next in Syria.

India does not endorse Hasina's criticism of the interim govt Indian foreign secy tells parliament body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said India does not endorse ousted Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina's criticism of the interim government, and it remains a pinprick in India-Bangladesh relations, The Hindu reported quoting sources.

Briefing the parliamentary standing committee on external affairs, led by Congress lawmaker Shashi Tharoor, Misri said India's relations with Bangladesh are not limited to a "single political party" or a government, and that India is focused on the "people of Bangladesh", the report said.

Misri said Hasina was using "private communication devices" to make her comments and that the government of India was not involved in providing her with any platform or facility that enables her to carry out her political activity from Indian soil. This was part of India's traditional practice of avoiding interference in third countries.

Misri's remarks acquire significance as Hasina has been making video messages criticising the interim government in Bangladesh led by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Misri informed the committee



Vikram Misri

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Accolade for stellar OTT performers

Outstanding artistes in digital sphere recognised at the Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2023

MD ABBAS and DOWEL BISWAS

The Bangabandhu International Conference Centre glittered last night as celebrities, influencers, and artistes gathered for the third edition of the coveted Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards.

The event was held to honour outstanding OTT and digital content created between January and December 2023.

The ceremony began at 6:40pm with a one-minute silence to pay tribute to the dead and the injured in the July uprising.

A thematic dance performance by Alif and Shahnaz Sumi then kickstarted the extravaganza.

In a welcome address, Ispahani Group Director Mirza Ahmed Ispahani extended special thanks to The Daily Star, Channel i, and TikTok for organising the event.

"There are 131 million internet users and 23 million active social media users in Bangladesh. In the past, people primarily consumed content on social media, but as times evolve, more people are now watching content on OTT platforms."

He congratulated the nominees and awardees, and hoped that this recognition would elevate the industry to new heights.



"In the past, people primarily consumed content on social media, but now more people are watching content on OTT platforms." Mirza Ahmed Ispahani, director Ispahani Group

our country, showcasing creativity. Through these creative efforts, a cultural renaissance is taking place, leading to a profound artistic revolution in our society."

Singer Elita Karim and Tashfee then graced the stage with songs that demanded singalongs.

A total of 29 on-screen and off-screen talents were awarded in four main categories: Individual Content, Music, Critics' Choice and Popular Choice.

In addition, a special accolade called the People's Choice award was also bestowed.

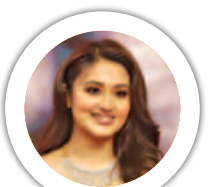
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Awardees and directors of Ispahani Group pose for a photo at the Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2023 held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



"This is the third award I received on this stage, and it means a lot to me. Every award is a recognition and a proof that I am doing something right in my career."

Tasnia Farin, joint winner of best actor (female)



"One of the directors here told me not to hope for an award and go home. Thank god I stayed. I am thankful to the Gut team."

Azmeri Haque Badhan, joint winner of best actor (female)



"The set design, the uniform and the overall environment of the team helped me a lot portray this character. I wish Ashlaque Nipun keeps making Mohanagar instalments and I keep playing OC Harun."

Mosharraf Karim, winner of best actor (male)

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