Bangladesh static in Human Development Index

Bangladesh's position remains unchanged in the Human Development Index, **according to the 2015 Human Development Report** launched by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Bangladesh ranked 142 out of 188 countries in the index, while neighbouring India ranked at 130, Nepal at 145 and Pakistan at 147, the report, published today, said.

"Bangladesh has shown a positive trend in Human Development for the last couple of decades with an average annual increase of about 1.55 percent," a press release in this regard reads.

UNDP launched the report titled "Work for Human Development" at NEC Conference Room at the Planning Commission today.

According to the report, despite extremely rapid technological adoption in recent years, as of 2014, 2.5 billion people in Asia and the Pacific did not have access to the internet (1.4 billion people in South Asia), the press release reads.

Mentioning that youth unemployment in Asia ranges between 8.7 percent in Bangladesh and 28.7 percent in Iran, the Human Development Report 2015 observed that fostering education, skills and entrepreneurship can facilitate a necessary labour market transformation.

"In order to ensure that the work-force is capable of adapting to rapidly changing demands, the governments need to make strategic investments into education and health care," Haoliang Xu, assistant administrator and director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, told today's programme.

The index was created to emphasise that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.

It is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living.

Tough World Twenty20 draw excites Shahid Afridi

Shahid Afridi, Pakistan's T20 captain, on Thursday (December 17) said he hoped a tough World Twenty20 draw would motivate his team to win the title for the first time in seven years and beat arch-rival India along the way.

The 2009 champions are placed in Group 2 of the Super Ten round of the World T20 along with hosts India, Australia, New Zealand, and a yet to be decided qualifier.

The qualifier in this 'group of death' is most likely going to be Bangladesh, given that the Tigers emerge champions of Group A after three matches against Netherlands on March 9, Ireland on March 11 and Oman on March 13.

If Bangladesh qualify, they will face Pakistan in the Super 10 Group 1 match on March 15, 2016.

Tigers will next play on March 21 against Australia at Bangalore.

On March 23, Bangladesh's opponent will be hosts India at the same stadium.

On March 26, Bangladesh cricket team will face New Zealand at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata.

“We have a tough draw but I am hopeful that this challenge will pump-up my team to win the title and on the way beat India,” Afridi told AFP.

Pakistan lost to India in both the group round and final of the inaugural World Twenty20 in 2007

> *Nasir Hossain (R) celebrates with his teammates after the dismissal of the Zimbabwe cricketer Malcolm Waller during the second T20 cricket match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Photo: AFP*

and then in

two subsequent tournaments. They have also lost to India every time they have faced them in six World Cups. But Afridi said it was time for a change. “I don’t want to live in history. Whatever mistakes we usually make in the matches against India we have to overcome them.”

Pakistan’s recent form, however, does not augur well. Last month, they lost to England 3-0 in a Twenty20 series in the United Arab Emirates, slipping to sixth in the rankings.

“We made school boy errors and despite putting up good fights in all three matches we lost by narrow margins so we have to be on our toes and should not repeat those mistakes,” said Afridi, who is set to draw the curtain on his two-decade long career after the event.

Pakistan who have three Twenty20 matches on their tour of New Zealand next month before featuring in the six-nation **Asia Cup Twenty20 in Bangladesh** in February.

“We have enough matches before the World Twenty20 so we have to find a settled combination and I hope we do well in these matches and carry that form into the World Twenty20.”

The sixth edition of the World T20 is scheduled to be held between March 8 and April 3, 2016 across eight venues in India.

Pope Francis recognises second Mother Teresa 'miracle'

Pope Francis has recognised a second miracle attributed to Mother Teresa, clearing the way for the Roman Catholic nun to be made a saint next year.

The miracle involved the healing of a Brazilian man with several brain tumours in 2008, the Vatican said.

Mother Teresa died in 1997 and was beatified – the first step towards sainthood – in 2003.

She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the poor in the slums of the Indian city of Kolkata (Calcutta).

“The Holy Father has authorised the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to proclaim the decree concerning the miracle attributed to the intercession of blessed Mother Teresa,” the

Vatican said on Friday.

She is expected to be canonised in Rome in September.

Sister Christie, a spokesperson for the Missionaries of Charity Mother Teresa founded in 1950, told the BBC that they were delighted by the news.

“Obviously all of us at the Missionaries of Charity are extremely happy. But we do not have any plans to celebrate this announcement as yet,” she said.

‘Saint of the gutter’

Beatification by the Catholic Church requires one miracle, while the process of becoming recognised as a saint requires proof of at least two miracles.

Mother Teresa was beatified in 2003 after Pope John Paul II accepted as authentic a miracle attributed to her.

He judged that the curing of an Indian woman suffering from an abdominal tumour was the result of the supernatural intervention of the late Mother Teresa – a claim challenged by Indian rationalists.

There are few details about the recovery of the Brazilian man, whose life the Vatican says was saved in the second miracle.

His identity has not been disclosed to maintain the discretion needed for the investigation, the Catholic New Agency has said.

It says he was unexpectedly cured from brain tumours in 2008 after his priest prayed for Mother Teresa’s intervention with God.

Born Agnes Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Macedonia, in 1910, she dedicated her life to caring for impoverished and sick people in Kolkata.

Known as the “saint of the gutter”, she earned worldwide acclaim for her efforts.

Her critics, however, accused her of peddling a hardline Catholicism, mixing with dictators and accepting funds from them for her charity.

Her supporters justified the funding, saying it did not matter where the money came from as long as it was used to help the poor.

‘JMB man admits’ shooting Italian pastor in Dinajpur

Suspected JMB man, arrested in Dinajpur temple attack case, admitted that he shot Italian pastor and doctor Piero Parolari, detectives claim.

Shariful Islam, 28, confessed his involvement in the gun attack before Dinajpur Chief Judicial Magistrate Court yesterday, Redwanur Rahim, officer-in-charge of Detective Branch of Police, told our Dinajpur correspondent.

Shariful was caught by locals soon after the gun attack on the International Society for

Krishna Consciousness (Iskcon) temple in Kaharol's Bahuchi village of the district on December 10. Two people were injured in the attack.

A few days later, Humayun Kabir, deputy inspector general of police (Rangpur Range, said that they found connection of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) with the killing of Japanese national Kunio Hoshi and five recent attacks in Rangpur and Dinajpur.

Italian pastor Piero Parolari, 57, was attacked by unidentified assailants in Dinajpur on November 18 when he was riding a bicycle towards Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

David Cameron accused of 'governing from the gloom' over bid to scrap Freedom of Information Act

David Cameron has been urged to scrap his review of the Freedom of Information Act and instead strengthen the legislation to give voters a greater insight into the Government's work.

Accusing the Prime Minister of wanting to "govern from the gloom," deputy Labour leader Tom Watson has described the review of the transparency legislation out of touch with the public's desire for more openness, a "waste of taxpayers' money" and "predestined" to recommend raising barriers to obtaining information.

He claimed Mr Cameron was trying to "reverse the transparency Labour introduced" and seeking to "turn off the lights, systematically making it harder for people to engage with policy making, retreating into a darker and more secretive place".

Labour would strengthen and extend the FOI Act, he said, which was brought in by Tony Blair but who later admitted the legislation was his biggest regret.

Mr Cameron was criticised for appointing a commission full of opponents of the Act to look into reforming the legislation, including former Home Secretary Jack Straw, a vocal critic of the law despite playing a role in introducing it.

Mr Watson's attack on the Government's review comes after the former head of the civil service Lord Kerslake dismissed claims that the FOI Act had a "chilling effect" on civil servants.

In a speech in central London, Mr Watson will accuse Mr Cameron of contradicting his pledge as opposition leader when he said "sunlight is the best disinfectant" and promised the Tories would "bring the operation of Government out into the open".

"As Prime Minister he is methodically closing all the doors and the shutters, drawing the blinds and the curtains, retreating to the shadows at the back of the national farmhouse," Mr Watson said.

"He wants to govern from the gloom in the old fashioned way, without the inconvenience of scrutiny, abandoning any hope of decency or trust."

Mr Watson cited NHS England's announcement that weekly bulletins on the health service's performance over the winter will no longer include figures on four-hour waits in A&E departments, the number of ambulances queuing outside hospitals or operations cancelled at the last minute.

“His response to the crisis in our health service has been to introduce an NHS news blackout,” Mr Watson said.

“He thinks we won’t like what they’re doing, so they’re going to stop telling us about it.”

Isis: Former German militant claims group is planning co-ordinated terror attacks in Europe

A German jihadist who fled Isis after witnessing beheadings and executions in Syria has claimed the group is trying to plan a Europe-wide terror attack.

The 27-year-old former militant, named as Harry S, said he and other foreign fighters had been asked if they would “bring jihad to their homeland”.

“They want something that happens everywhere at the same time,” he said.



Harry S witnessed Isis massacres after the group seized Palmyra in May

Harry S was speaking to *Der Spiegel* from prison, where he is still being questioned by police and the intelligence services after being arrested at Bremen airport on his return in July.

He claimed he fled Isis because he could not stand its brutality after three months with the group in Syria and is now telling German authorities all he knows.

The former extremist appeared in a propaganda video filmed shortly after Isis seized the city of Palmyra in May.

Wearing camouflage, he carried the flag of the so-called Islamic State across the screen before German-speaking militants called on supporters across the world to kill “infidels” before shooting two prisoners dead.

“All you need is to take a big knife, and go down to the streets and slaughter every infidel you encounter,” they urged.

The video, entitled “The lions of the Caliphate: A message signed in blood to Angela Merkel” featured notorious Austrian Islamist Mohamed Mahmoud, who founded a banned Salafist group called Millatu Ibrahim.

Since travelling to join Isis in Syria, Harry S said he had been leading mass executions and holding weekly ideological training sessions in Raqqa.

Reports that Mahmoud and former Berlin rapper Denis Cuspert (aka Deso Dogg), who went under the name Abu Talha al-Almani, have been killed in air strikes have not been confirmed by the German government.

Harry S said he met both men for the first time in Syria, having apparently been radicalised after meeting German Islamist René Marc Sepac in prison as he served a two-year sentence for robbery.

After attempting to join Isis in 2014, when he was arrested and returned to Bremen by Turkish authorities, he had his passport confiscated and was ordered to check in at a police station twice a week, *Der Spiegel* reported.

But in the spring of his year he managed to travel under someone else’s passport to Syria, where he says he was trained to become part of a special unit intended to carry out urban combat missions before detonating suicide bombs. But he fled before being sent into battle.

Harry S stands accused of membership of a terror group and faces a lengthy prison sentence if convicted.

His lawyer, Udo Würtz, said his client did not directly take part in any atrocities, calling him a “lackey who allowed himself to be misled by the propaganda of Isis and who misled himself”.

Germany’s domestic intelligence agency believes more than 700 Germans have joined Isis in Iraq and Syria.

Nepal passes bill on quake rebuilding

Nepal’s parliament yesterday passed a long-delayed law to pave the way for rebuilding after April’s massive earthquake, ending months of bickering that paralysed reconstruction despite donor pledges of billions in aid.

“I announce that the bill related to reconstruction of earthquake-affected infrastructure… has been passed unanimously,” Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar said in parliament.

The government vowed in June to set up a National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to oversee rebuilding and ensure that all aid went to victims, as part of its bid to attract funding from sceptical foreign donors.

But political wrangling between the ruling CPN-UML party and the opposition Nepali Congress over the leadership of the new body prevented the bill conferring legal status on the NRA from

being passed.

The final vote paving the way for the NRA, which will process all aid funds, followed weeks of closed-door negotiations.

A spokesman for the ruling party told AFP the government would work fast to set up the new state body to avoid further delays in rebuilding.

The 7.8-magnitude quake killed almost 8,900 people and destroyed more than half a million homes. Thousands of victims still live in tents eight months later due to the government's failure to spend a $4.1 billion reconstruction fund.

Quake victims have so far received just $150 in compensation per household, while the government has promised an additional $2,000 once the NRA is set up and able to disburse funds.

Shibir flexes its muscles in Chittagong of Bangladesh

Activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir chased away Bangladesh Chhatra League men who were placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar of Chittagong College on the Victory Day yesterday.

Later, the two groups fought pitched battles near the college main gate, prompting police to fire shots in the air to disperse them.

The BCL men then returned to the campus and besieged the principal to her office for nearly half an hour, alleging that she was patronising Shibir.

The incidents left at least three youths – two BCL and a Shibir man – injured. Over 60 Shibir activists were detained by the law enforcers.

Later, the college authorities asked the students to vacate their dormitories.

Shibir is the pro-Jamaat-e-Islami student body. Jamaat opposed the birth of Bangladesh during the 1971 Liberation War. BCL is the pro-Awami League student body.

Chittagong City BCL General Secretary Nurul Azim Rony said yesterday's clash ensued around 11:00am after Shibir men hurled brick chunks at some 30 to 40 BCL activists at the Shaheed Minar on the campus.

Organising Secretary Hasmot Ali Rasel of the BCL unit, who was present at the scene, alleged that the Shibir men locked the college main gate after driving them out of campus.

"The Shibir activists had also fired shots at us," he said, adding that more brick chunks were thrown at them when they took position in front of the gate.

Witnesses said more activists joined the Chhatra League group there and they retaliated with brick chunks.

On information, members of nearby Chawkbazar Police Station stepped in and fired shots in the air to disperse both the groups, said Aziz Uddin, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Around 1:00pm, witnesses said, the BCL men went inside the campus through another gate and

vandalised windows of some college buildings. There, they caught and beat up a Shibir activist.

However, police rescued him and took him into their custody.

The pro-ruling party activists then confined Principal Prof Jesmin Akther to her office for nearly half and hour, saying she was patronising Shibir – an allegation rejected by the teacher.

After being driven out of campus, the BCL men also blocked the nearby college road from around four hours, demanding that the college be freed from Shibir.

According to BCL leader Nurul Azim Rony, Chhatra League resumed politics in Chittagong College forming a convening committee in 2009 and by a full committee in 2012.

Kawsar Uddin, vice-president of Chittagong College BCL, said they went to the Shaheed Minar for the first time in three decades to place wreaths under the banner of their organisation.

Sources said Chittagong College and Mohsin College are known to be Shibir strongholds.

Shahadat Hossain, president of Chittagong College Shibir, could not be reached despite repeated attempts.

Additional law enforcers were deployed on campus.

DORMS CLOSED

In the evening, the authorities of Chittagong College closed the four dorms until further notice.

Principal Jesmin Akther said male students were asked to vacate their halls within 8:00pm yesterday and female students by 10:00am today.

She also said they decided to form a five-member committee to investigate yesterday's incident.

Chhatra League men of the college attacked Mohsin College with brick chunks yesterday evening and damaged several windows of the buildings. This forced the Mohsin College authorities to close two of its dorms where around 170 students stayed.

Venue allotment for World T20 raises eyebrows

The Indian cricket board's (BCCI) decision to award almost half of the ICC World T20 matches next year to only two venues -Dharamshala and Nagpur -has raised eyebrows. These two venues -which will together host 17 out of 35 games in the tournament -belong to state associations from where the board secretary and president belong.

Bangladesh cricket team will play their three qualifying matches at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium at Dharamsala. Tigers start their journey on March 9, 2016 at the picturesque Dharamsala against Netherlands. On March 11, Ireland will be Bangladesh's next opponent. The third match of the qualifying round for Bangladesh will see Oman take the field on March 13.

Nagpur, the home association of BCCI president Shashank Manohar, is set to host nine games while Dharamshala -home to board secretary Anurag Thakur-run Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association -will stage eight.

Five other venues will host the other half of the tournament.Chandigarh, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore and Delhi -all traditional Test venues -will host a total of 18 matches, including the final at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

There are 20 international cricket stadiums in the country , of which 15 are certified Test venues now. However, the BCCI decided to shortlist and finalize only these seven venues to host the World T20 matches, to be held from March 9 to April 3.

The biggest surprise is that the marquee game of the tournament -India versus Pakistan -has been awarded to Dharamshala, which has a capacity of only 23,000. Some other venues across India which were ignored boasts capacities ranging from 30,000 to 55,000.

"It is not even in rotation that Dharamshala has been awarded the game," a senior board functionary said, adding: "If you had a choice between 23,000 people watching India play Pakistan and 40,000 or 50,000 people watching, which option would you choose?" Clearly, outside of Maharashtra, where Pakistan are not welcome to play, there are several venues that could have been considered for this big-ticket game.

G Gangaraju, the BCCI vice-president from South Zone and also the chairman of the board's tour programme and fixtures committee, was not forthcoming on the reasons behind allotting 17 matches to Nagpur and Dharamshala and shortlisting only five other venues. "I'll have to look into it and get back to you. I'm in Parliament right now," Gangaraju said.

Only a month ago, BCCI had added six new venues to its list of certified Test centres. Of those six, only Dharamshala has been awarded eight World T20 games while the remaining five -Pune, Rajkot, Indore, Ranchi and Visakhapatnam -have been ignored altogether.

Some other traditional centres like Chennai -the power centre of the previous regime in the BCCI -have also been snubbed. Chennai will host only four women's World T20 games instead of the expected big-draw men's matches.

Officials from the grounds and pitches committee were also contacted to ascertain if there were particular reasons why so many possible venues were ignored. "Not that I know of," a senior committee member said. Two state association presidents also pleaded ignorance on why their venues, recently upgraded to Test centres, were not considered.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will pay the BCCI Rs 55.2 cr to host the entire men's World T20, which works out to Rs 1.6 cr per match for 35 matches.

It is understood that the BCCI will pay the hosting association the gate money for each game, which sources say is between to Rs 2-3 cr per match depending on capacity and ticket sales.

Even for a venue with minimum seating capacity, hosting eight matches would mean earning a little more than Rs 8 cr from the board.

Surprisingly , there is nobody in the BCCI who is willing to explain the reasons behind the venue allotments.

Lionel Messi out of Club World Cup clash with Guangzhou Evergrande

Lionel Messi will miss Barcelona's Club World Cup semifinal with Guangzhou Evergrande due to renal colic, the club has announced.

Barca will face Luiz Felipe Scolari's Asian champions at the International Stadium Yokohama on Thursday as they look to book their place in the final on Sunday.

However, they are expected to be without Neymar as he builds up his fitness following a groin injury and Messi has now been ruled out.

A statement on the club's official website read: "Leo Messi will not be playing in today's Club World Cup semifinal against Guangzhou Evergrande.

"The Argentinian striker is suffering from renal colic, a type of abdominal pain commonly caused by kidney stones, and will be absent for the 11:30 a.m. CET kick-off against the Asian champions.

"His future availability will depend on the outcome of further medical tests."

European champions Barcelona won the Club World Cup in 2009 and 2011 and are aiming to become the first club to win the competition three times.

They will face South American champions River Plate in the final after the Argentine side beat Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1-0 in their semifinal.

The losers of Thursday's game will face Sanfrecce in the third-place playoff.

Lionel Messi (C) vies with Las Palmas' goalkeeper Javi Varas and defender Pedro Bigas Rigo (R) prior to getting injured during the Spanish league football match. Photo: AFP