

20 foreigners, two police officers killed in Bangladesh's worst hostage crisis

DHAKA (Xinhua) -- Nine Italians, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, a Bangladeshi-born US citizen and an Indian female were killed in an attack on a Spanish restaurant in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka.

An official at the Bangladesh Army's Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) confirmed the nationalities of the victims to Xinhua on Saturday.

He said nine Italians, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, an Indian and a Bangladeshi-born US citizen were among the 20 people hacked to death by the terrorists who burst into the restaurant on Friday night.

The official who preferred to be unnamed said the victims include 10 males and 10 females.

Seven gunmen armed with blades, guns and bombs also murdered two Bangladesh police officers in the attack.

Gunmen killed the victims soon after they stormed the Spanish restaurant - the Holy Artisan Bakery in Dhaka's diplomatic enclave Gulshan - in Bangladesh's worst hostage crisis, a spokesman of the Bangladesh Army said in a media briefing on operation "Thunderbolt" that ended the 13-hour hostage crisis on Saturday.

According to the Italian Foreign Ministry, the Italian victims are Adele Puglisi, Marco Tondat, Claudia Maria D'antona, Nadia Benedetti, Vincenzo D'allesandro, Maria Rivoli, Cristian

Rossi, Claudio Cappelli and Simona Monti.

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said an Indian female student was among the victims.

"Tarishi was 19 years old. She passed out from American School Dhaka. Presently, she was a student at Berkeley," she said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, the US State Department said a US citizen was among those killed in the attack.

"We can confirm that a US citizen was also among those senselessly murdered in this attack," the department said in a statement.

Director of Military Operations Brigadier General Naim Ashfaq Chowdhury told a press briefing that six attackers were killed during the armed raid on Saturday morning that ended the 13-hour siege.

"We've managed to capture one attacker alive," he said.

Some 13 hostages, including one Japanese and two Sri Lankans, were rescued.

Around five hours into the attack, according to a jihadist threat monitoring portal SITE Intelligence Group, IS claimed responsibility for the attack.

The authenticity of the IS claim has not been confirmed by the Bangladesh police.

At least 40 people, including senior police officials, were injured in the incident.



Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong (front right) shakes hands with Ms Sarah Gordon Gibson (front, left).

WFP extends support for mother and child health

Phetphoxay Sengpasouth

The World Food Programme (WFP) has forecasted a budget of over US\$8.5 million in assistance for the 2016-17 fiscal year to improve the health of mothers and children in Laos.

A signing ceremony for the funding was attended by the Country Director and Representative of the World Food Programme in Laos, Ms Sarah Gordon Gibson, Minister of Health Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong, and other

health officials.

This support forms part of the 12-month project "Mother and Child Health and Nutrition Programme", which is focused on improving health and nutrition in the three target provinces of Oudomxay, Luang Namtha and Xekong.

Currently the programme reaches 33,000 people with ready-to-use food, rice assistance, and education on good nutrition for healthy growth. Of those assisted, 16,000 are children aged

6-23 months while 17,000 are pregnant or lactating women.

Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong said at the signing ceremony last week that the programme will also cover nutritional deficiency in children under two years of age in the 16 districts of the three provinces.

The programme's goals align with the government's National Nutrition Policies and National Nutrition Strategy (2016-2025) and the Plan of Action (2016-2020),

whose target is to achieve "a prosperous country, with a healthy population, free from food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty".

"With the current situation of the country, where resources are still limited but there's a willingness to achieve defined sustainable development goals, the continued support from the UN's World Food Programme is very valuable," he said.

In line with this, the efforts to meet the SDGs especially

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Korean govt provides grant for Road No. 8 upgrade

Times Reporters

The government of the Republic of Korea has agreed to provide a grant of US\$3.5 million (more than 28 billion kip) to upgrade National Road No. 8 in central Laos.

The grant agreement's Record of Discussion (RoD) on a detailed feasibility study for the upgrade of National Road No. 8 was signed on Friday by the Resident Representative of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

Laos office, Mr Kim Hahn-joo, and the Director General of the Department of Roads under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Mr Pheng Duangneun.

According to the KOICA Laos office, from 2016 to

2018 the project will improve road transport infrastructure to accelerate Asean economic integration by enhancing road connectivity between Laos and its neighbours.

The project will involve

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Governance workshop mulls sustainable development goals



Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Dr Khammoune Viphongxay (centre) addresses the meeting on Friday.

Times Reporters

Members of the Governance Sector Working Group (GSWG) gathered in Vientiane on Friday to share information on the country's Sustainable Development Goals and discuss the roles and duties of the People's Provincial Assemblies (PPAs).

The governance workshop was chaired by Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Dr Khammoune Viphongxay, Deputy Minister of Justice Prof. Ket Kiettisak, and UNDP representative Mr Charles Chauvel.

Deputy Director General of the Planning Department under the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ms Phonevanh Outhavong, explained the 17 Sustainable Development Goals required for most countries and noted that Laos had one additional goal, to reduce the

impact of UXO.

Other goals include continued political stability, graduation from Least Development Country status by 2020 through inclusive and sustainable growth, maximising effective management, utilisation of natural resources, and participation in regional and international integration with ownership.

Workshop participants also discussed the role, status, rights and duties of the PPAs, which are multi-ethnic legislative decision-making organisations. Topics included the approval of organisational structure, election policy and the PPAs' relationship with the National Assembly.

Dr Khammoune said governance has an important role to play in socio-economic development and the reduction of poverty. The government wanted

to emphasise strengthening state management and improving governance for its credibility to the people of Laos and internationally.

He also called on development partners' organisations to continue to support the National Governance and Public Administrator Reform Programme (National GPAR Programme) and especially its newest programme, Governance for Equitable Development, set to take place from 2017-2020.

The GSWG is an important forum for actors in the field of development to come together and share dialogue on governance.

Attendees at the workshop included representatives from government departments, international organisations, development organisations and other members of civil society.

Laos, Malaysia to strengthen diplomatic relations

Times Reporters

Malaysia has reaffirmed its strong commitment to supporting and working with Laos towards the enhancement of cooperation and partnership as the two countries journey together towards a more prosperous Asean community.

Malaysia and Laos will continue to exchange information regarding security cooperation. Malaysia has agreed to provide scholarships and financing support for the development of Lao personnel.

This was part of the main statement delivered recently by the Malaysian Embassy in Vientiane to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations (July 1, 1966).

The two countries will also promote cultural and tourism exchange, and further facilitate transportation, especially the opening of direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Luang Prabang.

In the span of 50 years, relations between the two countries continue to enjoy steady progress with the

substantive growth of economic cooperation and people-to-people ties benefitting from the concerted efforts and exchange of high level visits by both sides.

The government of Malaysia through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme and Malaysian Defence Cooperation Programme has successfully provided human resource capacity building to more than 2,000 officials of the government of Laos in various fields, including expertise sharing on Malaysia's experience during its recent Asean Chairmanship.

Relations between the two countries received a boost with the introduction of direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Vientiane by AirAsia in 2007, which increased tourism exchanges and improved trade relations.

AirAsia will begin direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to Luang Prabang on August 26, enhancing connectivity between the two countries.

Trade volume between Laos and Malaysia in the past year reached US\$26.1 million, which was an 8 percent increase on the previous year.

Malaysians have invested in 89 Lao projects valued at US\$995.1 million, ranking the country ninth among foreign investors in Laos.

The investment projects involve the industrial, mining and energy sectors. They are also keen to invest in special and specific economic zones.

Malaysia was pleased with the cooperation on Laos-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore electro power trade, with Malaysia supporting the signing of a four-party Memorandum of Understanding.

The two sides agreed to hold the fourth Laos-Malaysia Joint Committee meeting in Vientiane later this year.

The most notable development in relations between the two countries in 2016 is the elevation of defence cooperation with the establishment of Defence Attachés in the offices of the respective country capitals.

During Laos' chairmanship of Asean in 2016, many high ranking government officials and ministers are visiting Laos to attend Asean related meetings and conferences.

Technical college asks Germany to fund second campus



Students learn vocational skills at the Lao-German Technical College. (File photo)

Times Reporters

The establishment of a second Lao-German Technical College campus in Vientiane will be discussed in October after Germany received a request for financial assistance from the college.

College Director Mr Somlith Virivong told *Vientiane Times* on Friday the meeting will discuss the possibility of Germany's financial support.

"We may receive assistance from Germany to build a second school in Xaysettha district," he said.

With student demand high, a second facility is being proposed in Xiengda village, near the train station, to accommodate 400 to 450 students.

The college is asking for 2.7 million euro (almost 23.5 billion kip) from Germany to fund construction of the

second school.

The capacity of the existing Lao-German Technical College in Sisattanak district on Thadeua Road is 1,200 students per academic year.

The most popular subjects at the college are automotive mechanics and electrical engineering.

This year about 1,000 students applied for the automotive mechanics course but the school could only accept 500.

More than 50 percent of students receive scholarships from the government and about 10 percent receive them from international organisations or foreign companies.

Mr Somlith said every student was guaranteed employment after graduating.

Vocational education is becoming increasingly important in Laos due to strong economic growth in recent years, resulting

in a higher demand for skilled workers.

The Labour Management Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was unable to provide figures on the number of workers without adequate job skills but it is recognised that there is a great need in this sector.

Strengthening vocational education will help to support sustainable development of the economy, reduce poverty, and support the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

Mr Somlith said Germany would provide two English teachers as knowledge of the language would assist graduates if they found work overseas.

Meanwhile, the Vietnam News reported that most of its students were now better trained but still lacked important skills such as communication, computer skills and foreign languages.

WFP extends support for mother... FROM PAGE 1

"to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" as well as establishing effective overall mechanisms through policy, strategies, programmes and intervention, are top priorities, he added.

The World Food Programme started its Laos Country Programme in 2012 and has contributed significantly to the National Nutrition Strategy, the Plan of Action, and other National Socio-Economic Development programmes.

The WFP has also been supporting nutritional training through capacity building of both government and non-government organisation staff, and teaching communities about the causes of malnutrition and the importance of a well-balanced diet and how to maximise nutritional intake using local food.

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