

Amal Clooney to fight for Rohingyas at UN court

AFP, Colombo

The luxury tourist destination of the Maldives has hired prominent human rights lawyer Amal Clooney to represent it at the UN's highest court in seeking justice for Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya Muslims.



With the fall of strongman president Abdulla Yameen in 2018, Nasheed as well as several other dissidents in the Sunni Muslim nation of 340,000 have been cleared of any wrongdoing. Nasheed is currently the atoll nation's speaker in the national legislature.

The Maldivian government yesterday said it will formally join the mainly Muslim African state of The Gambia in challenging Myanmar's 2017 military crackdown that sent around 740,000 Rohingya fleeing into neighbouring Bangladesh.

In a unanimous ruling last month, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Buddhist-majority Myanmar to implement emergency measures to prevent the genocide of Rohingya -- pending a full case that could take years.

Clooney successfully represented former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed and secured a UN decision that his 2015 jailing for 13 years was illegal.

The government said it welcomed the ICJ's decision to order provisional measures to secure the rights of victims in Myanmar and prevent the destruction of evidence in the ongoing case.

"Accountability for genocide in Myanmar is long overdue and I look forward to working on this important effort to seek judicial remedies for Rohingya survivors," Clooney was quoted as saying by the Maldivian government.

Thousands are suspected to have been killed in the Rohingya crackdown and refugees brought widespread reports of rape and arson by Myanmar's military and local Buddhist militias.

UGC now opts

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"Since five universities informed they would not adopt the centralised admission tests, we have decided to introduce a system of clusters for enrolling students, like the agricultural universities did last year," Prof Kazi Shahidullah told reporters after the meeting.

It would be difficult to hold a centralised entrance test without the logistical support of the five universities, he said, adding, "We may face challenges in making seating arrangements for such a large number of admission seekers, and that's why we agreed to the cluster system."

Last year, seven public agricultural universities introduced a cluster system, an idea first mooted by the education ministry in 2010. Authorities at several top universities have since been opposing the idea.

In this system, universities with similar characteristics will belong to a cluster. Students seeking admission to any of the universities in that cluster will have to sit for just one test.

The initiative was aimed at relieving admission seekers from travelling to different universities spending time and money. At present, only medical colleges hold uniform entrance tests.

After yesterday's meeting, UGC Chairman Prof Shahidullah told reporters that there would be four clusters, including one for seven agricultural universities. Eleven science and technology universities would form another cluster. The two other clusters would be for the three engineering universities, excluding Buet, and nine general universities, he added.

However, three specialised universities and Textile University will later decide which cluster they would join.

The UGC chief said several technical committees would be formed under the leadership of UGC member Prof Dil Afroza Begum in the second week of next month. The committees would work out the procedures and modalities involving

exam centres, question papers, and admission tests.

At the general university cluster, three entry tests would be required to enrol students in science, humanities and business studies, Prof Kazi Shahidullah said.

The other three clusters will hold one single test each, he said.

"Our main aim is to reduce the hassles of admission seekers. We will try our best to bring down the number of exams. It used to take four to five days for a university to complete its admission tests [under the existing system]."

Thirty-nine public universities enrol around 65,000 students every year through separate admission tests. Last year, some 9.88 lakh students passed the HSC and its equivalent exams under the 10 education boards.

Asked whether efforts would be made to bring the five universities under the new system, the UGC chairman said, "We would welcome them if they approach us."

About the fears of possible question paper leaks, Prof Shahidullah said, "I took six such [admission] tests when I was a dean at Dhaka University. As the VC of National University, I took exams simultaneously across the country. There was no question leak during those exams. It does not mean that questions won't be leaked. But we will take all the [preventive] measures required," he added.

The idea of a cluster has long been discussed by academics and officials as admission seekers and their parents go through a lot of hassles every admission season.

Chancellor Abdul Hamid on several occasions asked the VCs of public universities to introduce a system to reduce the hassles.

However, the system could not be introduced due to the opposition of several top public universities.

Officials said one of the reasons behind their opposition was that the implementation of such a system would cut the income of the universities and teachers from the sale of admission forms, invigilation and evaluation of answer scripts.



Violence over India's controversial citizenship law dominates headlines of major Indian dailies yesterday, overshadowing US President Donald Trump's visit.

Death toll rises to 27

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raze parts of a northeastern district of the Indian capital.

The clashes, which also left almost 200 injured, were triggered by protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act seen by many critics as anti-Muslim and part of Modi's Hindu nationalist agenda.

They exploded into brutal violence on Monday and Tuesday, with residents forced to flee their homes after seeing dwellings destroyed, shops and schools set ablaze.

Meanwhile, expressing serious concerns, the Delhi High Court yesterday passed a series of orders with regards to the violence and said it will not allow the situation to deteriorate any further, reported Indian media.

The court also expressed "anguish" over Delhi Police's failure to register FIRs against alleged hate speeches by three BJP leaders in connection with the CAA-related violence and asked the police commissioner to take a "conscious decision" on it by today.

Earlier, in an emergency midnight hearing Tuesday, the High Court had asked the police to ensure safe passage and emergency treatment for those injured in northeast Delhi violence since the last three days.

Earlier in the day, Delhi's chief minister, Arvind Kejriwal called for the army to be deployed and for a curfew to be imposed. He later visited the violence-hit areas.

Delhi Police spokesman Mandeep Singh Randhawa told reporters 106 people had been arrested and police were scouring CCTV footage to look

for the perpetrators of the violence.

UN chief Antonio Guterres also asked for calm, stressing that demonstrators should be allowed to demonstrate peacefully and security forces should show restraint. His spokesperson said the UN head is following the situation closely.

Sunil Kumar, the director of Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital where many of the wounded were taken, yesterday told AFP that around 60 injured people had gunshot injuries and that 16 new patients were admitted yesterday.

Twenty-two people died at GTB, while another two passed away at Lok Nayak Hospital yesterday, medical superintendent Kishore Singh told AFP. Three more were reported later in the night.

Senior Congress leader and former home minister P Chidambaram described the violence in Delhi as a colossal failure of Delhi Police.

And locals accused the police of doing nothing to help -- or worse.

"We tried to make many calls to the police ...But police did not help us at all. We tried to save the women at the protest site but instead policemen started beating us up," Naeem Malik, a local, said yesterday about the violence on Monday and Tuesday, showing wounds on his leg and hands.

Elsewhere a firetruck tried to put out blazes from the previous night, the air thick with smoke from still-smouldering cars, motorbikes, shops and homes.

"They say we are not Indians, but

we are Indians by blood," Farhat, 22, said in her father's shop as police looked on.

"There is no police in the streets at night, just during the day."

The area is home to mostly poorer economic migrants from elsewhere in India living in shanty neighbourhoods, and some fled yesterday fearing more clashes at the night.

The unrest comes amid growing concerns at home and abroad about India's direction and the future of its 200 million Muslims since Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP swept to a second term last year.

Since winning a second term, Modi's government has revoked the partial autonomy of Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, and said it wants to conduct a nationwide citizens' register to weed out "infiltrators".

Together with the citizenship law, which fast-tracks claims for persecuted non-Muslim religious immigrants, this has stoked fears that Modi's master plan is to remould India as a Hindu nation, something he denies.

The citizenship law has sparked months of nationwide protests as well as clashes that killed more than 25 people in December.

The latest flare-up in violence occurred as US President Donald Trump held talks with Modi in Delhi on Tuesday. The visit was not visibly interrupted.

Indian government sources have said the violence appears to have been "orchestrated", as it came at a time when Trump was visiting the country.

KHALEDA'S BAIL PRAYER BSMMU submits report to HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University yesterday submitted a report on the medical treatment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to the High Court as per its earlier order.

An official of the university brought the report to the court, Md Saifur Rahman, spokesperson for the Supreme Court, told The Daily Star.

But he could not say about the contents of the report.

On February 22, the HC bench of Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq sought information about the medical treatment of Khaleda, who is now in the prison cell of BSMMU.

During the hearing of the BNP chief's bail petition, the court ordered the BSMMU vice-chancellor to submit the report to it by 5:00pm yesterday through the SC registrar general's office.

The court asked the VC to mention in the report whether Khaleda consented to "advanced" treatment.

If she agreed, the VC will have to mention in the report whether the medical board concerned had started her treatment.

The VC will have to state in the report her latest health condition if the medical board has started her treatment, the HC bench said in the order.

The court also set today for hearing the bail petition in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

On August 8, 2011, the Anti-Corruption Commission lodged the case with Tejaogaon Police Station against four people, including Khaleda. They were accused of abusing power in raising funds for the trust from unknown sources.

A special court in Dhaka jailed Khaleda and three others for seven years in the case on October 29, 2018.

Khaleda landed in jail after being sentenced to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case by the same court on February 8, 2018.

On October 30, 2018, the HC enhanced her punishment to 10 years in the case after dismissing her appeal.

Thai student protesters test water as anti-govt anger simmers

AFP, Bangkok

Thai students held rare flashmob protests yesterday as anger at the dissolution of a stridently anti-military opposition party bubbles in a kingdom with a long history of raucous street politics.

Universities across the country have seen rallies since the Future Forward Party was dissolved last Friday over an alleged illegal loan by its billionaire founder.

The party won 6.3 million votes in elections last March, earning the loyalty of millennials with its radical agenda to expunge the powerful Thai army from politics.

India lifts ban


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Paswan in a tweet said the expected monthly harvest in March was over 40 lakh metric tonnes.

The decision would be effective once the Directorate General of Foreign Trade issues a notification in this regard.

The government banned onion exports in September last year in a move that came after onion prices had started skyrocketing due to an imbalance between the supply and demand.

Bangladesh imports onions from India and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed disappointment over India's decision to ban onion export which resulted in a spiralling price of the essential cooking ingredient in Bangladesh.



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