REPATRIATION OF ROHINGYAS India backs Myanmar, Bangladesh deal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday expressed its support for the bilateral agreements signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazar and hoped that both countries would continue to work for their voluntary and speedy return.

Without mentioning Rohingya, a joint statement issued after Myanmar President U Win Myint's talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi here said, "India also expressed its support for the bilateral agreements signed between Myanmar and Bangladesh for the repatriation of the displaced persons from Rakhine state.

India also "hoped that Myanmar and Bangladesh would continue to work together for voluntary, sustainable and speedy repatriation of displaced people currently in the Cox Bazar area of Bangladesh to Myanmar in accordance with their bilateral agreements," according to the statement.

"The Myanmar side thanked India for its understanding of the complexity of the issue and for all its support extended to Myanmar." it said.

recent steps taken by the government present.

of Myanmar to address the challenges in northern Rakhine." Win Myint is now on a state visit to

India from February 26 to 29. During the visit, India and Myanmar inked nine agreements out of which four related to water, power supply and construction of roads and schools in Rakhine state from where thousands of Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh.

India has already supplied prefabricated houses for sheltering Rohingyas in Rakhine in the event of repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh. The repatriation has failed to take off so far.

Five separate MoUs were also signed for cooperation for prevention of human trafficking, rescue, recovery, repatriation and re-Integration of trafficking victims, Indian grant implementation assistance for of Quick Impact Projects (QIP), combating timber trafficking and conservation of tigers and other wildlife and cooperation in the field of petroleum products and in the field of communication.

Earlier, Win Myint was accorded a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi where President India reaffirmed its support "for the Ram Nath Kovind and Modi were



Bengal Foundation Chair Abul Khair, fifth from right, rings the bell standing next to renowned artist Rafigun Nabi, fourth from right, while inaugurating the Third International Art Festival 2020 in Nilphamari yesterday. Chief Guest at the programme State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and former cultural affairs minister Asaduzzaman Noor were present on stage during the inaugural ceremony. PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Electricity gets costlier

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conference at his office in the capital. He added that the hike would barely affect the general public.

When reporters asked him about the rationale for the decision, he said, "We are satisfied with our decision." For the same level of usage, those

who used to pay Tk 215-219 a month will now have to pay Tk 220-224, and those who used to pay Tk 759 will pay Tk 803, he said.

For irrigation, farmers spending Tk 3,260 will now pay Tk 3,448. Small entrepreneurs will pay Tk 17,360 instead of Tk 16,550. Medium entrepreneurs will pay Tk 3,44,000 instead of Tk 3,26,000 a month.

Prices of up to 75 units of electricity went up by Tk 15; 150 units by Tk 48; 250 units by Tk 90; 450 units by Tk 196; and 1,000 units by Tk 604, Jalil said.

A public hearing on the proposals for the hike was held by BERC on November 28 last year, when Bangladesh Power Development Board proposed increasing bulk electricity tariff by 23.27 percent.

Dhaka Power Distribution West Zone Company, Power Distribution Company Ltd, and Northern Electricity Supply Company also submitted proposals to increase prices that day. The companies said the costs of operation, hiring employees,

modern technology and equipment had increased.

in the private power companies."

Ghulam Rahman, president Consumers Association of of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star: "During the hearing, we said the move

According to Trading Corporation

People living in rural areas are hit the hardest due to the spiralling prices of was not acceptable at all. It is illogical, goods and services other than food. unjust and likely to breed corruption

Since 2010, household electricity price has been hiked seven times and bulk nine times.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in

a recent report said there was a 6.30

percent non-food inflation in January,

the highest since December 2015.

Residential Unit	Existing Price (Tk per unit)	Hiked Price
0-50	3.50	3.75
0-75	4.00	4.19
76-200	5.45	5.72
201-300	5.70	6.00
301-400	6.02	6.34
401-600	9.30	9.94
600+	10.70	11.46
Irrigation Unit	4.00	4.16

of Bangladesh, prices of rice, pulse, oil, spices, sugar and many other daily essentials have increased this year. Onion prices rose by 277 percent compared to last year.

"Gas price was hiked a few months ago, and now electricity will be costlier. But my salary remains the same. I do not know how to adjust my expenses," Sultan Ahmed, a private employee, told the correspondents.

Economist Ahsan H Mansur said, "It will create a difficult situation in the industrial sector as production costs will increase. The competitiveness of the readymade garment sector may diminish.

The supposed aim of price hike is to reduce the subsidy, but the cost of power generation would have come down if the government increased efficiency, he added.

Truck driver sent to jail on rape charge A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A Noakhali court yesterday sent a truck driver to jail in a case filed for raping an eighth grader in Noakhali's Companiganj upazila.

Police arrested Noor Alam Sajib, 20, of Charkakra village of the same upazila, on Wednesday night after the rape case was filed with Companiganj Police Station.

According to the case statement, Sajib entered the victim's house and raped her when she was alone at

home in the evening. Arifur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Companiganj Police Station, said medical tests of the girl were conducted at Noakhali General Hospital.

Noakhali Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal recorded her statements.

12 eminent citizens FROM PAGE 1

violence that have so far ensued, they said if the ongoing situation could not be controlled, it might create instability in the region.

Terming India as a friendly neighbour and proven ally for being the biggest help during Bangladesh's Liberation War, they said the ongoing violence in India might be detrimental to the peace, democracy, development and communal harmony in this region.

"We call upon the Indian government and citizens to take prompt measures to protect the heritage of communal harmony and democratic ideologies in India.

"We also call upon the people in Bangladesh who believe in the spirit of our independence to uphold the country's communal harmony.

"We believe that by raising awareness among people in favour of communal harmony, we will prevail against all violence and fanaticism," the eminent personalities added.

The signatories of the joint statement are: Prof Anisuzzaman, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Hasan Azizul Haque, Anupam Sen, Syed Hasan Imam, Sarwar Ali, Ramendu Majumder, Mofidul Haque, Ziauddin Tariq Ali, Mamunur Rashid, Nasiruddin Yousuff and Golam Kuddus.

N Korea extends school breaks over virus fears AFP, Seoul

North Korea has postponed the new school term to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, reports said yesterday, the latest measure as the illequipped country ramps up efforts to prevent a devastating outbreak.

Pyongyang has not reported a single case of the virus now known as COVID-19, which originated in the

Turned down, yet again

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relevant rules and provisions of the Jail Code, the court said, adding that it will be the same for Khaleda too.

Earlier, Khaleda's bail petition was rejected twice by the Supreme Court's HC division and once by the Appellate Division.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Obaidul Hasan and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq passed the order after examining the BSMMU report on the treatment of Khaleda and hearing arguments from the defence and state counsels.

Khaleda's lawyer Zainul Abedin told The Daily Star that the decision of appealing against the order would be taken after discussions with the senior BNP leaders.

Reading out from the report, Justice Obaidul Hasan said Khaleda had been suffering from diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cough variant asthma, back pain, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Her diabetes, hypertension and asthma are now under control and the medical board is providing treatment for the other diseases except for arthritis as she did not give her consent for "advance treatment", the judge said citing the report.

The medical board needs to carry out the tests of Hepatitis B and C Huq yesterday said Khaleda's refusal Serology, Quantiferon Gold plus, to allow BSMMU doctors to provide Dorsolumbar Spine, Upper Gi Endoscopy, FNAC of the Nodule beneath the skin of her leg and Tumor briefing at his residence in the Marcus and PET-CT for the advance capital's Gulshan area.

treatment of arthritis, the report said. But the BNP chief has not agreed to go through these tests, it added.

During the hearing, Zainul submitted some papers downloaded from the internet containing expert opinions on the side effects and health risks of the "advance treatment".

Citing the papers, he told the court that the health risks include heart attack, stomach problem, stroke and cancer.

The lawyer said, "We don't know why Begum Khaleda Zia has not given consent to advance treatment as we are not allowed to meet her.

"If she is granted bail and sent abroad for treatment she will come back to the country after treatment," the lawyer said.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed told the court that every citizen has the right to get treatment and therefore, Khaleda might be granted bail so that she can get the proper treatment abroad.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam and Anti-Corruption Commission's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan vehemently opposed the bail petition of Khaleda, saying the bail petition was filed on the same ground which the court had refused earlier.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Anisul her treatment was unusual. He made the comment at a press Uneasy calm in New Delhi after clashes

FROM PAGE 1 Four days after clashes that began in Bachelet said the new law adopted last prompting a social media storm. northeast Delhi over the amended December is of "great concern" and citizenship law and spiralled into she was worried by reports of police said the transfer was routine and had bloodshed, arson and looting, there were scattered incidents of vehicles and shops being set on fire in Maujpur, Bhajanpura and other areas.

UN human rights chief Michelle another state court in a late-night order,

Don't let mosquitoes

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take measures to control mosquitoes from now. You'll have to pay attention to this. Or else, mosquitoes will eat up your votes. You'll surely see it. You'll have to keep in mind that though the mosquito is small, it's very powerful," she said.

The PM said this at the oath-taking ceremony of the newly-elected mayors and councillors of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) at the Shapla Hall of the PMO.

She sought cooperation from the newly-elected representatives to properly implement ongoing mega development projects in Dhaka on time.

Noting that her government has been carrying out massive development works across the country, including in Dhaka city, the PM said she does not want any corruption and irregularity to take place in these projects.

"If such things happen, I'll not spare anyone, no matter whoever he or she is. I'll not make any compromise with anyone," she warned.

The PM administered the oath to DNCC and DSCC mayors-elect Atiqul Islam and Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh respectively at the function.

The Local Government, Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives Minister Md Tazul Islam administered the oath of office to the councillors elected from both general wards and reserved seats.

However, the newly-elected mayors and councillors will have to wait until mid-May to take over charge as the fiveyear tenure of the incumbent public representatives of DNCC will expire on May 13 and that of DSCC on May 17.

Elections to the DNCC and DSCC were held on February 1, where Awami League candidates Atiqul and Taposh won the mayoral posts.

Alongside the two elected mayors, 100 councillors - 75 from general wards and 25 women from reserved seats - were elected to the DSCC and 72 councillors - 54 from general wards and 18 women from reserved seats - to the DNCC.

A gazette notification was issued on February 4. There is a legal obligation on March 17.

for any mayor or councillor of the city corporation to take oath within one month of the gazette being published.

The PM said the government undertook massive development in the last 10 years -- including expansion of roads, addressing the water-logging problem, and recovering fields and ponds from grabbers.

"We've done many works. You'll have to carry on the development works maintaining this continuity," she said.

The PM said the government is taking measures to monitor intensively whether development projects are implemented properly.

She called upon the newly-elected representatives to ensure facilities and privileges for all citizens in their localities, irrespective of their political affiliation.

"When you're elected, you're for all. Keeping this in mind, you'll have to work for overall development," she said. The PM suggested the elected representatives work in their respective areas to gain public trust and confidence.

She also said the government is taking proper measures to keep Bangladesh free from coronavirus.

Noting that coronavirus is not yet present in Bangladesh, she said a dedicated hospital has been kept ready if the virus enters the country. Besides, training is being given to physicians and nurses in this regard, she added.

The PM also said ongoing drives against militancy, terrorism, drugs, and corruption, will continue.

Putting emphasis on planned urbanisation, she said the government will not allow indiscriminate construction of buildings and industries in order to protect crop lands. For those wanting to set up industries, there are plots in the 100 economic zones, the PM added.

The PM invited the newly-elected mayors and councillors, party leaders, and members of parliament to attend the inaugural ceremony of the birth centenary celebrations of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Parade Ground

Thousands of riot police and paramilitaries patrolled the affected northeast fringes of the Indian capital of 20 million people, preventing any major eruptions however.

The violence began over a disputed new citizenship law on Sunday but led to widespread clashes between Muslims and Hindus on Monday in which hundreds were injured. Many suffered gunshot wounds, while arson, looting and stone-throwing has also taken place.

Eleven more fatalities have been recorded at three hospitals, The Hindu reported citing senior officials.

While 34 deaths were recorded at the GTB Hospital in Dilshad Garden, three have been recorded at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital and one death has been recorded at Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital.

At the heart of the unrest is a citizenship law which makes it easier for non-Muslims from some neighbouring Muslim-dominated countries to gain Indian citizenship. Critics say the law is biased against Muslims and undermines India's secular constitution.

inaction in the face of assaults against Muslims by other groups.

"I appeal to all political leaders to prevent violence," Bachelet said in a speech to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also condemned the violence and alleged discrimination against Muslims.

On Wednesday the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which advises Washington but does not set policy, voiced "grave concern" about the violence.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has denied having any prejudice against India's 180 million Muslims, saying that law is required to help persecuted minorities.

New Delhi has been the epicentre for protests against the new law, with students and large sections of the Muslim community leading the protests.

On Wednesday a Delhi High Court judge, Justice S. Muralidhar, sharply criticised the police and called on them to investigate BJP politicians for inciting violence.

Muralidhar was transferred to

DCCs napping as mosquitoes buzz

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Tapon said they use mosquito coils and other repellents, but to no avail.

"Several waterbodies in Dogair are virtually breeding grounds of mosquitoes, but the authorities concerned do not take any steps to clean those," he added.

Shariful Islam, who lives in the area, said he had not noticed any antimosquito drive after the polls.

Asked, immediate-past councillor of Ward-68 Md Nooruddin Miah said they lacked manpower and logistics support to carry out adequate drives. "We have only three people in our ward for fogging and spraying on a regular basis. We need at least 15 people to cover the area."

"I submitted a request to the DSCC for 15 sprayers, 15 fogging and spray machines, five garbage trucks and 25 sweepers around six months ago, but I haven't received any response yet," he said.

Talking to this correspondent, people in Pallabi, Sutrapur, Mohammadpur, Mirbagh, Kamrangirchar, Manda, Sonir Akhra, Dhonia and several other areas shared similar experience.

Entomologist Dr Manzur Chowdhury, former president of Geological Society of Bangladesh, said the number of Culex mosquitoes, which spread diseases like filariasis and avian malaria, has gone "out of control" in Dhaka.

Lack of effective measures by the two city corporations and the absence of proper logistics are mainly to blame for the situation, he said, adding that covered manholes aggravate the problem.

Sprays cannot reach the stagnant water beneath the covered manholes, which then becomes ideal breeding grounds for Culex, he explained.

Dr Manzur said the Dhaka North Corporation (DNCC) had City taken initiatives to destroy mosquito hotspots, identified by entomologists last November at the beginning of "Culex Season".

But the activities to check the mosquitoes came to a halt during the mayoral and councillor elections in the two city corporations, he mentioned.

"I have not seen any fogging near my home on Banani Road-16 since then," he said.

been recommended by the Supreme Court collegium earlier this month.

Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad

Opposition Congress party leader Manish Tiwari said every lawyer and judge in India should strongly protest what he called a crude attempt to intimidate the judiciary.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said inflammatory speeches at the protests over the new citizenship law in the last few months and the tacit support of some opposition leaders was behind the violence.

"The investigation is on," he said. While there was no precise figure for the number of arrests, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta told the Delhi High Court that 48 FIRs were lodged in relation to the violence.

Delhi Police transferred the riots probe to the Crime Branch and formed two Special Investigation Teams.

The opposition Congress took the issue to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Accusing Home Minister Amit Shah of "abdication of duty", a Congress delegation led by party chief Sonia Gandhi urged President Ram Nath Kovind to call for his resignation and remind the Centre of its "raj dharma".

"If city corporations do not start taking effective measures now, the increasing trend in mosquito population density will continue until a nor'wester hits the capital. The storm naturally kills Culex mosquitoes and reduces their number," he added.

In a recent survey, the DGHS has found more than 200 mosquito larvae in samples of 500ml of water taken from most swamps, drains, and stagnant waterbodies in areas under the two city corporations.

Jahangirnagar University's entomologist Kabirul Bashar, along with a team of researchers, has been conducting similar surveys on the capital's waterbodies under a threeyear project.

He explained that until this year, the highest density of Culex mosquito larvae was found in January. It was 50 larvae in 500ml of water.

"This year, for the first time, we found about 150-200 larvae in 500ml of water in a survey conducted between February 11 and 18 in the two city corporation areas," he said.

"Rise in temperatures from mid-February is leading to increase in March," he added.

central Chinese city of Wuhan and has since spread around the world including South Korea.

The country, which is subject to multiple international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, has weak medical infrastructure and has cut itself off from the outside world, closing its borders as analysts say prevention is its only option.

"School breaks for students have been extended as a preventive measure against the infection," the Korean Central Broadcasting Station reported, according to Yonhap news agency.

The measure would apply daycares, kindergartens and to universities, it said, without specifying when schools would reopen.

The North has banned tourists, suspended international trains and flights and placed hundreds of foreigners in quarantine, under tight restrictions the Russian ambassador has described as "morally crushing".

Pyongyang planned to maintain the entry ban on foreigners until the virus can be properly diagnosed, treated and cured, a health official told the Choson Sinbo, a North Korean propaganda outlet based in Japan.

organic matter in waterbodies, which provides food and a conducive breeding environment to mosquitoes. Existing larvae will mature in the next 15 days. The situation will turn dire, unless larvicide is sprayed," he added. Contacted, Chief Health Officer Brig

Gen Sharif Ahmed of DSCC said they take measures round the year to check the population of Aedes mosquitoes, which spread dengue, chikungunya and other diseases. From November to March and April, they take steps to check Culex, he said.

On Monday, the DSCC issued a press release in which it announced a week-long crash programme, starting on Tuesday, to identify and destroy mosquito breeding grounds in the city.

Sharif said they were applying malaria Oil-B, apart from their regular pesticides, to get better result following the suggestions of entomologists.

Health Officer Dr Mohammad Emdadul Haque of the DNCC said they had already started a two-week crash programme against mosquitoes, which will end next Thursday. "We are hoping to check mosquitoes in