Adrift in The Bay 280 Rohingyas rescued, taken to Bhashan Char

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

About 280 Rohingyas, who had been adrift in the Bay of Bengal for weeks, were rescued by Bangladesh Navy on Thursday and taken to Bhashan Char -- an island in Noakhali -- yesterday.

Mahbubul Alam Talukder, Refugee, **Relief and Repatriation Commissioner** of Bangladesh, confirmed it to The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, several international organisations, including the UN and EU, and rights bodies pointed out that two boats carrying about 500 Rohingyas were refused by Malaysia and Thailand in mid-April and had been floating in the sea since then.

The organisations called on Bangladesh and other countries in the region to shelter the stranded Rohingyas.

Bangladesh, in response, said she couldn't accommodate any more Rohingyas as she was already facing huge pressures to manage the 1.1 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar.

Nevertheless, Bangladesh, which have sheltered some 750,000 Rohingyas since Myanmar began a military crackdown on them in August 2017, has finally rescued a portion of the stranded Rohingyas.

The rest are believed to have been still floating adrift.

"It is a very tiny boat compared to its 280 passengers. They are starving. The navy has given them food, water and first aid," a Bangladesh Navy official told AFP after the rescue.

The boat was found around 40km south of the Saint Martin's Island, he said.

Much of the Western world is still

grappling with the lethal pathogen

three months on and debating when

to bring their economies out of the

In the meantime, millions are losing

jobs. For instance, US unemployment

hit a post-war high of 14.7 percent in

April as 20.5 million lost jobs during

unemployment rate is not so bad, its

economies are heading towards their

Europe's economy will shrink 7.4

percent this year, according to the

European Commission's projections.

To put this figure in perspective, the

27-nation bloc's economy had been

predicted to grow 1.2 percent this

year. In 2009, at the back of the global

financial crisis, it shrank 4.5 percent.

And in the EU, where the

the course of the month.

worst recession ever.

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induced coma.

Authorities say they are likely to have come from Myanmar's Rakhine state rather than camps in southeastern Bangladesh, as they did not have identity cards issued by the UN refugee agency UNHCR, AFP reports.

On May 3, Bangladesh Navy sheltered at least 29 Rohingyas in Bhasan Char.

These Rohingyas swam to the shore in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf and were handed over to Bangladesh Navy by the locals.

Earlier on April 16, some 400 Rohingyas were rescued by Bangladesh authorities. They were, however, quarantined in the Rohingya camp healthcare facilities.

On May 4, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said no more Rohingya would be sheltered in Cox's Bazar camps as they don't want to "pollute" the camps, for there are risks of Coronavirus infection.

"If any new Rohingya is to be sheltered, we will take them to Bhashan Char," he told The Daily Star. Bangladesh Navy has built a housing facility of 120 cluster villages on the 40sqkm island in Bhashan Char under a Tk 2,312 crore project for accommodating one lakh of the nearly 1 million Rohingyas living in

the cramped camps in Cox's Bazar. However, the authorities had been considering shelving the relocation plan after the UN and other aid agencies opposed the plan saying there were risks of flood and cyclones and also that it did not have facilities for accommodating the aid agency

officials.

Workers unloading packed clothes from a rickshaw van in the capital's Banga Bazar yesterday. Traders at the popular clothing market have started stocking products as they prepare to open their shops tomorrow, about one and a half months after those were shut to slow the spread of Covid-19. The government recently decided to allow the traders to operate their business on a limited scale ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Charges appear to be puzzling

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The FIR provides the links of 10 social media posts in total, as evidence. It mentioned a post from the

Facebook page stating that it was spreading rumours. The post, uploaded on April 27, read: "So, when and where will the Iftar Mahfil of Mujib Borsho be held?

This correspondent asked an administrator of the page what the post meant. "It is just mocking the fact that they can't organise iftar parties due to the coronavirus and that it must be painful for some of the party activists," said the admin, requesting anonymity for fear of reprisal.

The post drew 50 laugh reacts from its audience and two comments, both of which made it look like a joke as it was intended to be. The post was not shared by any social media user.

The FIR mentioned three posts uploaded from Kishore's Facebook profile "Ami Kishore", as evidence of drawing anti-government cartoons of different ruling party leaders to spread rumours and create confusion".

The first post contains two cartoons drawn by Ahmed Kishore. The cartoons are from a series "Life in the time of Corona", where Kishore satirised the government's tackling of the coronavirus situation.

The first cartoon is about the coronavirus testing kit developed by Gonoshasthaya Kendra. It shows the organisation's founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury as a freedom fighter and parliamentarian Salman F Rahman riding a coronvavirus-shaped satellite. The caption reads, "Gono-Zafar, we have already overcome even the coronavirus of the sky, and you are

as evidence was not even from this targeting the unspecified "You". The profile. It was posted by a blogger who was not named in the case and Kishore seemingly had no interaction with him.

The evidence presented against writer Mushtaq Ahmed also includes links of two posts. In the first post, he shared a news article uploaded by a prominent Bangla daily on an interview of the health minister where he said that if a garment worker got affected by coronavirus, the factory would be kept closed for a few days.

Mushtaq shared it with a comment saying only saints would not feel angry reading such a news report.

The second link shows he uploaded a post saying coronavirus is not a venereal disease and therefore should not cause any deterioration in social respect. He said a lawmaker has been tested positive, but since the name is not being disclosed, how will general public have the courage to speak up if they get affected? He also added a news link from a newspaper as reference.

In addition to the links provided in the FIR, it also generically stated that Mushtaq Ahmed posted "antigovernment" posts from his Facebook profile.

But most of what he posted from his profile was re-shares of different news links and posts of others, as it appeared from a preliminary glance at the profile.

The administrator of the "I am does not specify the content of the Bangladeshi" page defended their communication. peers saying, "We grew up believing our great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh accused in the same case. If there is any Mujibur Rahman was always vocal specific allegation against someone, against oppression. We exercised the the case should be filed separately. same. We stand for what is right and deny all wrongdoings. We expressed said Jyotirmoy. our concern through cartoons and different countries, have different added some humour to some of our posts. But it seems this has become opinions and Facebook posts. In terms

Infections

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number of Covid-19 positive cases in the first two months in the US, the worst hit country, was 15,219 with about 99.9 percent people being infected in the second month.

In Italy, the number of infected people was 92,472 in the first two months and 98.78 percent cases were recorded in the second month.

The cases in Spain and the UK were similar. Of the total infected in the first two months in Spain, about 99.95 percent Covid-19 positive cases were recorded in the second month.

In the UK, the number of people infected with novel coronavirus in the first two months was 25,154. Over 99 percent of them were infected in the second month.

However, the situation in the US and the UK deteriorated in the third month

During an online press briefing on the country's Covid-19 situation, Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services, said 191 patients recovered across the country in the last 24 hours. Now, the recovery number stands

at 2,101, she said. Among the seven deceased, five were male and two female. They were

aged between 51 and 90, she said. Despite the rising number of infections and deaths, the government earlier this month declared reopening of the economy, including opening of shopping malls and stores across the country, tomorrow, with the condition of maintaining safety guidelines.

Local stores continue to open, including tea stalls, since the day the directive was issued on May 4.

A number of people flocked to mosques yesterday to offer their Juma prayers after four weeks as restrictions on going to mosques were lifted with some conditions.

Talking to this correspondent, Shahabuddin Ahmed, an official of a non-banking financial institution, said, "We don't know when the [coronavirus] spread will stop? But one thing is clear, it's not going to be over soon.

Eskayef

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post received around 366 "reactions"

three comments, and the news link

The third linked included in the

FIR shows he shared without any

comment a link of a news item on

leaked UN papers claiming many

Bangladeshis may die contracting

prosecuted but Khalil was for sharing

Court lawyer Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua

said, "Criticism of government is not

sedition. A citizen has every right to

say or write anything critical about the

government and it's logical too. But

in our country, we have messed up

between the government and the state.

with the mandate of the people,

citizens have the right to criticise and

make the government accountable,'

He also said the Digital Security

While blogger Asif Mohiuddin,

Act is itself draconian as it contradicts

with people's fundamental right to

journalist Shahed Alam, activist of civic

political organisation Rashtrochinta

Didarul Bhuiyan and Dhaka Stock

Exchange Director Minhaj Mannan

Emon were also charged for "anti-

government" communication with

the ones mentioned above, the FIR

"It is a legal error to put all the

Now for one, other 10 may suffer,

"They live in different places,

of common intention, it is not like

that they all came up with the same

Talking to The Daily Star from

Germany, Asif Mohiuddin, said,

"Democracy has no meaning without

freedom of speech. The future

generations of this country will have

for expressing their thoughts be

decried the case in a statement

government to recognise that freedom

of speech is key in the battle against

Covid-19. The government should

stop harassing journalists, activists,

doctors, and nurses for voicing

the alarm in the first place," said Brad

Adams, Asia director at Human Rights

Ramna Police Station on May 6. Four

The case was filed by Rab-3 with

He demanded that those arrested

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch

"It is vital for the Bangladesh

to suffer the consequences of this."

released

Watch.

released yesterday.

post on the same topic," he added.

"When a government is formed

Neither of the organisations was

Speaking on the issue, Supreme

was re-shared 42 times.

the links on Facebook

coronavirus.

Jyotirmoy said.

freedom of expression.

months have made it possible to produce the drug within such a short time span. From Eskayef we are fully committed to make sure that our remdesivir is available for the patients in Bangladesh first. We are ensuring availability of sufficient raw materials by having agreement with API supplier," she said.

Remdesivir so far has been proven to be the most effective in the treatment of Covid-19. Experiments carried out by Gilead have indicated improvement in the conditions of the patients who have been treated with this drug.

The dosage depends on the condition of the patient. Severely affected patients may need to be treated with the drug for five to 10

work orders and more than 50 percent upcoming work orders have been scrapped entirely, he said.

What's worse is some buyers are seeking unreasonable amounts of discounts. "They are offering us very low prices," Azad added.

One buyer of Desh Garments, often considered to be the architect of Bangladesh's export-oriented garment industry, asked for a 47 percent discount.

"This is impossible for any supplier," said Vidiya Amrit Khan, deputy managing director of Desh Garments, which saw order cancellations from accessible luxury brands like Kenneth Cole, Tommy In its latest outlook for the world Hilfiger, Calvin Klein and high-street

A good quantity of

Exports crash orders to be shipped in November or

December, said AK Azad, managing director of Ha-Meem Group. More than 10 percent confirmed

economy, the International Monetary brands like Nautica.

Fund said it expects global GDP will contract 3 percent in 2020, a far worse recession than the one that followed the global financial crisis of 2008, and there is a chance of the recession extending into 2021.

It's a grim outlook, which means Bangladesh's export prospects in the near future could not be bleaker.

April's export data reveals only a part of the picture, Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), told The Daily Star.

"The magnitude of the devastation is way higher. The situation is horrific."

At the time of filing this report, about 1,150 export-oriented garment factories lost orders worth about \$3.18 billion, she said.

One such company that has been hit with a flurry of cancellations or request for delayed shipment is Ha-Meem Group, which counts JC Penney, Gap, Kohl's, PVH, Kontoor, Next, Abercrombie & Fitch, Garage and American Eagle as its buyers.

And almost all of them cancelled orders or asked for the existing

DGHS gives

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There are some common directives for all the stakeholders, including setting up of thermal scanners to check the temperature and keeping disinfectants at the entrances of every establishment.

Wearing a mask is compulsory for everyone working in a factory, the guidelines suggest, adding that objects that are frequently touched and placed that are frequently visited should be disinfected multiple times a day.

Every establishment must have separate waste disposal areas and they must monitor the employees' health regularly.

For restaurants, thermal scanners should be installed at the entrances and record of employees' health status should be maintained.

Dining tables should be disinfected every time after use.

For saloons, aprons, scissors and other equipment should be disinfected after serving each customer. Chairs at salons will have to be set up 1.5 meters apart.

Rail stations must have disinfectants and proper waste disposal systems.

was cancelled mainly by the American buyers, although the European buyers have reconfirmed their orders, she added.

"Now, the buyers are trying to work out their future business situation and giving us the assurance that they will reinstate the held and cancelled orders once they can reopen their stores," said Bakhtiar U Ahmed, chief operation officer of Fakir Apparels.

The company saw order cancellations from household highstreet names like C&A, Esprit, Primark, Hummel, Marc o'Polo and s.Oliver. In terms of value, more than \$25 million orders have been cancelled or

held by buyers, Ahmed said. Zaber and Zubair Fabrics, one of

the largest garment exporters, did not see any cancellations of ongoing work orders, but a lot of upcoming work orders have been forfeited, said Anol Rayhan, its brand manager.

The cancellations are from brands such as from Zara Home, Ikea and Williams-Sonoma.

"We are worried about our upcoming orders," he added.

Passenger with a higher-thannormal body temperature would be placed at the isolation centres set up in stations, each train will have a separate carriage so that passengers with novel coronavirus symptoms can temporarily be placed there.

Buses will have to be disinfected after each trip. Buses will keep some empty seats during the trips. Launches will also have similar arrangements.

Aeroplanes will have miniquarantine facilities onboard. Planes will keep some seats empty too like buses.

The terminal building will have a quarantine facility. Each passenger will have to go through a temperature checkup before flying, and upon landing.

Workers with flu, fever, sore throat, cough or runny nose symptoms will not be allowed into factories. They will be sent back to home, with medicine, and remain under observation for at least three days, the guidelines said.

For government offices, office hour should be reduced and work from home should be encouraged.

still sitting around with the one on the ground."

The second photo shows writer Zafar Iqbal attempting to remember who missing photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol is. The cartoon appears to be a satirical comment on the media and society's short-term focus on specific issues of human rights olations.

Kajol would be found later, only to be sent to jail.

The post got 527 "reactions", 26 comments and was shared 457 times, at the time this report was filed. Most of this interaction, however, happened after Kishore was arrested, when his cartoons went viral on social media."

The third link included in the FIR shows Kishore shared a post of another person, claiming that VIPs were getting a separate Covid-19 hospital, but Kishore did not add any comment himself. The post received a paltry 21 "reactions".

This information had already been published by many reputed news organisations, following which the government addressed the public and said this was not true. However, to date, none of the publications carrying the report was charged under the DSA, but Kishore, who shared the news, was.

hard for the regime to accept. posts Swedish-Three bv Bangladeshi journalist Tasneem Khalil are mentioned in the FIR as "spreading rumours and falsehoods about law enforcement agencies" in addition to the charges mentioned above. The Rab found he communicated with the others through WhatsApp and Messenger applications.

The first post, posted on the historic Mujibnagar Day on April 17, points out the executive roles of Tajuddin Ahmed and Syed Nazrul Islam in the Liberation War, and that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was forced to give leadership from inside a prison, having been deprived of being on the ground. It got a thousand likes, and three comments and was shared 18 times

In the second post, he too shared a concern and instead address the news link carrying the news that VIPs urgent need for aid, transparency, would get special coronavirus hospitals and resources that have them raising if infected. The link was shared with a caption stating "Will your parents get space in these hospitals? I know mine won't. And yet you are responsible for this ugly system". He did not specify who he was addressing to. of the accused -- Kishore, Mushtaq, The fourth link included in the FIR The caption also included a profanity Minhaj and Didar -- are in jail.

DEADLY GAS LEAK Indian police file complaint against LG Chem

Indian police have filed a complaint against an LG Chem subsidiary over a toxic gas leak at its chemical plant in the south of the country that killed 11 people and sickened almost a thousand more.

Authorities doubled the evacuation area around the factory in Andhra Pradesh to a 5 kilometre (3 mile) radius yesterday, a day after the gas first began leaking. Around 800 people were hospitalised.

A copy of the police complaint filed against the management of LG Chem's subsidiary LG Polymers, viewed Reuters, cited several counts of negligence and culpable homicide.

The report, which precedes a full

police investigation and potential charges, refers to negligent handling of poisonous substances and causing hurt and endangering public life due to negligence. Culpable homicide is classifed as not amounting to murder.

An LG Chem spokesman in Seoul declined to comment on the police report.

There was confusion about whether yesterday's expanded evacuation orders were sparked by a renewed leak, as reported by at least one local fire official, or by the fear that rising temperatures at the plant could lead to another leak.

LG Chem said yesterday there was no second leak at the plant, which makes polystyrene products used in manufacturing electric fan blades, cups

and cutlery and containers for cosmetic products.

"LG Chem has asked the police to evacuate residents as a precautionary measure as there are concerns that tank temperatures would rise," South Korea's biggest petrochemical maker said in a statement. "We are taking necessary measures, including putting water into the tank.'

N. Surendra Anand, a fire officer in Visakhapatnam district, had earlier told Reuters that more people were being evacuated because of renewed emissions from the plant: "the situation is tense." Residents said police began moving them out of their homes and into waiting buses from around midnight.

days.

Gilead has the patent for the drug but in accordance to international trade laws, countries like Bangladesh, recognised by the UN as lesser developed countries, are not restricted by the patent. As a result, these countries can produce the drug at a reasonable cost. The drug, however, will not be released in the open market for the time being. It will be provided to government-approved hospitals.

In a discussion at the White House, Anthony Fauci, the top US immunologist and director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAD), said that it was evident that remdesivir had a positive influence on the speedy recovery from coronavirus. He said as there was clear evidence that this drug was effective, there was a moral obligation to inform the public about this.

Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Eskavef a part of Transcom Ltd headed Bangladesh's renowned bv businessman Latifur Rahman, has been manufacturing quality drugs for the past 30 years. Eskayef exports its medicines to 30 countries in four continents -- Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa.

Floods kill 65 in Rwanda as heavy rains pound E Africa AFP, Kigali

Floods have left 65 dead in Rwanda and heavy rains swept away scores of houses, several bridges and farms, the government said Thursday, as similar scenes played out across East Africa.

In Kenya, floods and landslides have killed nearly 200 people in the past month, while Uganda's Lake Victoria has overflown, submerging houses, a hospital and bridges and displacing thousands.

rains that poured "Heavy Wednesday night caused a number of disasters," Rwanda's ministry of emergency management said in a statement on Thursday.

"Up until midnight, 65 death cases had been registered due to floods. The rains also led to damage of infrastructure like roads, 91 houses, 5 bridges and several farms were swept away by the floors," said the statement.