### Don't donate money to Myanmar police

HRW urges Japan citing atrocities against Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Watch has called for Japan to immediately cancel plans to donate money to the Myanmar police to purchase vehicles and communications equipment, saying that the force has a well-documented record of serious human rights violations, including those committed against the Rohingyas.

On July 2, 2020, Japan's foreign ministry announced a grant of 100 million yen (\$930,000), claiming that the donations would "strengthen the Myanmar police's ability to carry out public security measures," create "social stability" and contribute to "socio-

economic development".

"It's inexplicable that the Japanese government would try to curry favour with Myanmar's abusive security apparatus by providing financial assistance to the police," said Brad Adams, HRW Asia director, in a statement on Thursday.

"Instead of supporting Myanmar's police, Japan should be helping the victims of rights abuses and ethnic cleansing by working with other donor governments to hold the security forces accountable.'

Myanmar's police acted as a pillar of repression during Myanmar's 50 years of military rule, arbitrarily arresting dissidents and student activists, engaging in widespread torture, and creating a climate of fear in the country,

The police remain abusive and

military-drafted constitution maintains military control of the police, said the New York-based global rights watchdog.

In recent years, the police have engaged in joint operations with the military, carrying out atrocities, including crimes against humanity, against ethnic Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2012, 2016, and 2017. Police were involved in the massacres at Tula Toli and Gu Dar Pyin, where hundreds of Rohingyas were killed in 2017, it said.

Also, Myanmar police took part in widespread rape, including gang rape, of Rohingya women and girls, as well as killing children while their mothers were being attacked.

In Rakhine State, the Myanmar police operate the majority of checkpoints, which play a central role in the severe violation of Rohingya freedom of movement in the state, the rights body

Therefore, the HRW said, Japan should suspend all aid to the Myanmar police until systematic reforms are carried out and the police are put under civilian control. Japan should also halt aid to all military-controlled entities and ministries, including the home

The Japanese government should realise that giving shiny new equipment to Myanmar's police won't make them less abusive," Adams said.

"By conferring undeserved legitimacy on the Myanmar police, they The police remain abusive and unconstrained, in large part because the unconstrained, in large part because the their suffering is of little concern."

### BSMMU sues a supplier

registrar at the DU registrar office.

Contacted, Sheikh Muhammad Shamim, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Ramna zone), said, "We have started investigation into the case already and would take action against the responsible one shortly.

Police, however, did not arrest or detain anyone in connection with the case as of 10:00pm yesterday. WHAT DOES THE FIR READ?

According to the First Information Report (FIR), BSMMU authorities deiced to purchase safety gears for the frontline doctors of newly launched Covid-19 unit on May 27.

Receiving verbal instructions from BSMMU authorities, several companies provided masks samples. Those were later sent to Dysin International Ltd, a DGHS approved lab, for tests.

The lab report mentioned Aparajita International's samples to be the best.

Later, BSMMU authorities sought pricing of the masks from Aparajita International on June 23 and received the quotation on the next day.

he work order to provide 11,000 N95 masks in the name of Aparajita

The company then supplied around 3,460 N95 masks in four consignments. They first supplied 1,300 pieces on June 30, 460 pieces on July 02, 700 pieces on

July 02 and 1,000 pieces on July 13. SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE SERVED, RESPONSE NOT SATISFACTORY

BSMMU Proctor Prof Syed Mozaffar

Ahmed told The Daily Star that Aparijita International supplied first two consignments rightly but the third and fourth consignments had faulty masks.

This is why the authorities filed a forgery case against Aparijita International, he said.

Meanwhile, Brig Gen Dr Zulfiquer Ahmed Amin, director (hospital) of BSMMU, told The Daily Star that they first spotted spelling mistakes on the boxes supplied by Aparajita International.

"As the masks were imported from America, there was no chance of any spelling error on it," he said, adding a number of masks' ribbons also teared up while doctors tried to use those.

Noticing the problem, the authorities called the supplier, returned around 959 masks to them, and served them with a show-cause notice to explain why the faulty masks were supplied, he said.

Aparijita International did respond to show-cause notice after three days, he said, adding, "We found the response not satisfactory. Thus, we deiced to take legal actions and filed the case."

SYNDICATE, CONSPIRACY BEHIND THE CASE

Sharmin Jahan, proprietor of Aparajita International, told The Daily Star that she did not provide any fake mask to the hospital.

"We supplied the third and fourth consignments on July 2 and July 13 and an assistant director of the hospital received our products. If there was a problem, why the hospital authorities inform us after a week?" she asked.

Sharmin further said that she was not the manufacturer.

"I purchase the masks from another company and then sell those. The hospital authorities does not even make payments for the supplies."

Asked about her response to the On June 27, BSMMU approved show-cause notice, she said there was an assistant director of the hospital checked and received those.

"Still, I said sorry as a part of well gesture. That does not mean I accepted my fault," she said.

Mentioning about a large syndicate in the hospital, she alleged that she was becoming a victim to a conspiracy.

"If the hospital authority did not like me, they could blacklist me. But they filed a case. My lawyer would also take necessary steps and take further actions regarding the false complaint against me," she added.

Meanwhile, Enamuzzaman, registrar of DU, told The Daily Star that they knew Sharmin as a university employee and she was on study leave for a PhD

"Recently, she communicated with us and submitted an application for her rejoining," he said.

Asked about the company and the case, Enamuzzaman said that Sharmin did not inform the university about any

"We would definitely look into the issue and take steps," he added.

#### Five 'narcos' killed

Rab claims to have recovered two pistols, nine bullets, 3,090 pieces of yaba pills and one motorcycle from the spot. In Cox's Bazar, two men were killed

in a "gunfight" with police in Ukhiya The dead are Bakhtiar Ahmed, 55, a member of Rajapalong Union Parishad,

and Md Taher, 27, of Kutupalng Rohingya camp's E-block, said police. Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station, said they arrested the duo during a raid

against drug traders in Hnila area on

Thursday. During quizzing, the arrestees admitted to hiding yaba pills in Wabrang bridge area.

Then police, along with the arrestees, conducted another raid to recover the drugs. Sensing police presence, their cohorts opened fire targeting them around 3:00am. The "gunfight" ensued as police retaliated, the OC claimed.

At one stage, the drug traders fled the scene leaving behind bullet-hit Bakhtiar and Taher. The duo were rushed to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex and then to Cox's Bazar Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared them dead, said police.

Police claimed to have recovered five locally-made guns, 17 rounds of

cartridges and 20,000 pieces of yaba pills from the spot, the OC added.

However, family members and neighbours of Bakhtiar Ahmed claimed that police picked up Bakhtiar on Wednesday from his home at Kutupalong. They have not heard any news from him since then.

Meanwhile in Feni, another alleged drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" between two groups of criminals.

The dead is Nazrul Islam Nakul, 32, of Shuvopur union in Chhagalnaiya

According to police, they rushed to Taher member road in the upazila on information that two groups of criminals were engaged in a gunfight".

The law enforcers found Nakul's body when they reached the area. He was then rushed to Feni Sadar Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, police said.

Police also claimed to have recovered two locally made machetes, 20 bottles of phensedyl, 200 pieces of yaba pills and a rifle from the spot.

Mezbah Uddin, office-in-charge of Chhagalnaiva Police Station, said there were nine drug related cases filed again

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify any of the claims.



A trash collector puts medical waste into a polythene bag while another looks on at a garbage dumping spot along Green Road in the capital yesterday. Such handling of medical waste poses a serious health risk. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

#### China orders US

technology to the novel coronavirus, China's territorial claims in the South China

Sea and its clampdown on Hong Kong. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China informed the US Embassy in China of its decision to withdraw its consent for the establishment and operation of the US Consulate General in Chengdu," China's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said some Chengdu consulate personnel were "conducting activities not in line with their identities" and had interfered in China's affairs and harmed China's security interests, but

he did not say how. Senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi, who is also foreign minister, blamed Washington for the deterioration in ties.

The current difficult situation in Sino-US relations is entirely caused by the United States, and its goal is trying to interrupt China's development," Wang said in a video conversation with his German counterpart.
US President Donald Trump's

administration said the closing of the consulate was aimed at protecting American intellectual property and personal information.

#### Apology is a must to heal wounds The article went on to say that a relations. That could be the factor why

the Pakistan side appeared to be eager to improve relations with Bangladesh.

Against this backdrop, questions have been raised about whether Bangladesh is in fact improving its relationship with Pakistan. If the answer is yes, the question becomes how that will unfold, given the brutal legacy of Pakistan's gruesome killing of some 30 lakh Bangladeshis and rape of hundreds of thousands of women during the Liberation War in 1971, memories of which are still fresh in the popular mind.

Some Indian media outlets have looked on the meeting between Momen and Imran Siddiqui suspiciously, especially as it took place at a time when India-China relations are at their worst after 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a clash between Indian and Chinese forces at Galwan Valley in mid-June.

India's Telegraph newspaper in an article titled "Delhi Distracted, Pakistan at Play" on July 12 wrote that the meeting comes at a time when India is fire-fighting on multiple fronts with China, and smaller neighbours like Nepal and Sri Lanka. Over the past few months, Delhi has been watching Dhaka and Beijing warm up to each other, the article said.

Quoting a source in Delhi, it added: "And now, Pakistan is trying to be diplomatically more active in Bangladesh... Things seem to be changing very fast."

pro-Pakistani lobby remains active in Bangladesh and tries to influence Bangladesh's foreign policy, prioritising Pakistan and not India, which stood by Bangladesh during the Liberation War.

Asked about this, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said the media can write a lot of things, but questioned whether they were based on facts.

On the content of his meeting with the Pakistani envoy on July 1, he told The Daily Star that for nearly two years Pakistan did not have a high commissioner in Dhaka, and the new envoy, after presenting credentials in February, was just making a courtesy call.
"During the meeting, I told the

Pakistani envoy that you have not yet formally apologised for the genocide in 1971," the foreign minister said. Asked about Siddiqui's reply, Momen said, "He did not reply, but said he would relay this to his government.'

Ásked if Bangladesh wants to improve relations with Pakistan, he said Bangladesh believes in friendship with all. There are some levels of trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan, but some recent behaviour seriously irritated Bangladesh. For example, Pakistan parliament adopted resolutions against the war crimes trial of Bangladesh, which hanged some major criminals who committed crimes against humanity in 1971. That actually further soured Bangladesh-Pakistan Pakistan's application for appointing its envoy was not accepted for nearly two vears until November last vear. Now a new Pakistan

commissioner has been appointed,

the country is eager to heal wounded relations with Bangladesh. The question is if it is possible and how far. Prof İmtiaz Ahmed of international relations at Dhaka University said if Pakistan really wants to improve relations with Bangladesh, the first and foremost thing that it has to do is

to formally apologise to Bangladesh for the genocide committed by the Pakistani military in the 1971 Liberation War. Pakistan also has to commit that it will not repeat the mistakes it made by opposing the war crimes trial.

"The relationship with Pakistan cannot go forward without that," he told The Daily Star.

The general relationship, which includes cooperation in Saarc, can surely go on, Prof Imtiaz said. In recent times there seems to be a realisation within Pakistani society that Bangladesh is doing better on socio-economic fronts and Imran Khan himself appreciates that. Imran Khan is not a typical Muslim League type of leader and if his regime has a change in mindset, the bilateral relations between the two countries can also eventually see change, he added.

Asked if it is possible when India-Pakistan relations is at one of its lowest

ebbs, especially in relation to the Jammu & Kashmir issue and Pakistan's strong bond with China, Prof Imtiaz said that depends on India and Pakistan. India has problems with many of its neighbours -- Sri Lanka, Nepal. Even, people in Bangladesh are not happy over India's role in regard to Rohingya refugees' repatriation and the National Registrar of Citizenship. Therefore, India's relationship with other countries should not affect Bangladesh's relations with those countries, he added.

"India has strong ties with the US. does not mean it has no relations with Russia and China," Imtiaz Ahmed said.

Munshi Faiz Ahmad, former chairperson of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, also agreed. He said there is no hurry for Bangladesh to improve relations with Pakistan unless Pakistan apologises for what its military did in 1971.

However, Pakistan's eagerness for cooperation among Saarc countries is positive. This is something initiated by Bangladesh and it can help address many of the region's problems. But enmity between India and Pakistan has made it almost non-functional, he said.

Munshi Faiz said the pandemic is once again showing how regional cooperation is important. India is a rising global power and if it really wants to lead at the global stage, it needs to overcome narrow national interests and

# 6.53cr Bangladeshis need assistance: UN

And it would cost from \$199 billion per month to provide a time-bound, guaranteed basic income to the 2.7 billion people living below or just above the poverty line in 132 developing countries, said the paper.

It also said the measure is feasible and urgently needed, with the pandemic now spreading at a rate of more than 1.5 million new cases per week, particularly in developing countries, where seven out of 10 workers make a living through informal markets and cannot earn money if they are at home.

Speaking on the UNDP report, Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said there was little doubt that poverty in Bangladesh has increased significantly in the aftermath of the coronavirus outbreak.

The UNDP estimates 40 percent of the country's population need help and the estimation is pretty much in line with the perception surveys and simulations done by leading think tanks and researchers, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The recommendation to provide cash support to the poor amounting to Tk 2,100 per month is also in accordance with inflation rate, he said.

He, however, said it would be a huge challenge to arrange the funds if

the aid has to be provided for several to curb the spread of the virus. months, he added.

virus curve. For this, cash support of fell below the poverty line. people in home while the government the 20.5 percent of the population to disburse the funds only among should launch aggressive Covid-19 where transmission rate is high,"

The UNDP paper said the economic costs imposed by the pandemic are hard not only for the existing poor, but also for those who were at high risk of falling into poverty before the pandemic and who are likely to experience a limited incomegenerating capacity.

Many of the huge numbers of people not covered by social insurance programmes are informal workers, low-waged, women and young people, refugees and migrants, and people with disabilities -- and they are the ones hardest hit by this crisis, it said.

Besides, according to a Brac survey, earnings of 51 percent households in Bangladesh plunged to zero due to the coronavirus outbreak.

A massive 95 percent people suffered losses in income, it said, adding that around 62 percent of work opportunities after public holidays were declared in late March Due to the income shock

"What is needed therefore is a emanating from the pandemic, 77.2 national strategy on flattening the percent of the vulnerable non-poor Hasina inaugurated the fund this kind will keep a large number of 
This would imply that beyond 
But the government has managed

officially recognised as poor, there is testing and contact tracing in areas a group of "new poor" representing an additional 22.9 percent of the population that need to be brought within the discussion on poverty, it Recently, a survey of Bangladesh

Institute of Development Studies said about 13 percent people have become unemployed in the country due to the pandemic. To help people hit hard by the

pandemic, the government allocated Tk 1,250 crore for nearly 50 lakh families where the breadwinners lost their jobs because of the shutdown of the economy.

poor families is supposed to receive Γk 2,500 a month.

Rickshaw and cart pullers, labourers, construction workers, farmers, employees of shops, and people employed at small businesses, poultry labourers and transport workers are supposed to be the low-income wage earners lost their beneficiaries. They would get the cash support through mobile financial services.

In order to execute the task properly, another Tk 8 crore was released. Prime Minister Sheikh disbursement on May 14.

16.16 lakh families amid flaws and inconsistencies found in the list of beneficiaries.

Officials of the finance division said they were examining the list resent by the district administration and hoped that they would be able to provide the cash assistance to nearly 10 lakh families before the coming

Zahid Hussain said the Tk 2,500 cash transfer programme has suffered from serious management problems.

"It stumbled at the very start with a large number of fake beneficiaries included in the list. This has caused major implementation delays as Under the scheme, each of the well as abuse of scarce budgetary

resources," he said. "Design of any new cash support programme must start with a legitimate list of eligible beneficiaries identified by experts and institutions who deal with the poor and the vulnerable population. Electronic transfers directly to the targeted poor is possible if there is sufficient will to do so," added the renowned economist.

## Extra burden on parents, teachers

"The high cost of data plans, needed for online learning, is putting extra financial burden on the parents as well as on us," the teacher said, wishing anonymity.

Education of about four crore students in the country, from primary to university level, has been affected due to the pandemic as they cannot attend in-person classes since all the institutions were closed on March 17 to stem Covid-19.

Currently, many institutions are offering online classes, mostly through social media sites. Yet, online education remains

inaccessible to many, mainly in rural Besides the cost, the speed of mobile internet connection, while moderate in urban areas, is quite poor in most rural

are almost absent. CALL FOR AFFORDABLE INTERNET Public and private universities are calling for affordable mobile internet packages for their students.

On June 15, the Association of Private

Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) in a

locations, where broadband providers

Minister Mustafa Jabbar demanded special internet packages for private university students. Vice-chancellors of most public

universities made a similar request at

a meeting with the University Grants Commission on June 25. Five days later, the UGC, in a letter to the education ministry, urged the government to introduce free internet packages for university students to

enable them to attend online education. The regulatory body also sought grants or soft loans for students who need to buy smartphones to access online classes, according to UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah.

Copies of the letter were sent to the post and telecommunications division and ICT division. On July 6, Education Minister

Dipu Moni said, "Many educational affordable for insolvent students. institutions are conducting online academic activities due to the pandemic process," he said. but it has become difficult for many students to bear the internet expenses." "Negotiations are on with the mobile operators so that they consider

letter to Post and Telecommunications providing free internet services or lowcost internet packages to students," she said, while attending a webinar organised by the ruling Awami League.

> activities will continue alongside the regular ones during the postcoronavirus pandemic. Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star that they are discussing special internet

She also said online academic

packages for university students with telecom operators. "We hope that we will be able to give good news soon. Operators in principle have agreed to provide the

internet service to university students at

lower than the market price of internet [connection]," he said earlier this week. The minister cited an agreement which Shahjalal University of Science and Technology signed with a telecom operator to make internet connection

"Other universities can replicate the

SUST VC Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed said according to the agreement, the telecom operator is providing 15 GB of data for Tk 250 and 30 GB for Tk 450 to

insolvent students. The university will be paying on behalf of the students and around 30 to 50 percent students from each department will be able to enjoy this

benefit starting late July, he said. The agreement will continue for three months for the time being, he

But getting affordable internet through mobile data plans for school and college students remains difficult.

The post and telecommunications minister pointed out that in Bangladesh a person has to be above 18 to own a sim card.

Thus, a comprehensive and coordinated step from all will be required in their case, he said. Secondary and Higher Education

Division Secretary Mahbub Hossain said they are working on ways to reduce the financial burden of online classes on students and parents. However, he refused to make any

further comments regarding the matter. All educational institutions will remain closed till August 6, until further