

Distrust fuels anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar

AFP, Sittoue

An eruption in religious tensions in Myanmar has exposed the deep divisions between the majority Buddhists and the country's Muslims, considered foreigners despite a decades-long presence.

The violence threatens to overshadow reconciliation efforts in the country formerly known as Burma, where there has been a series of dramatic political reforms since almost half a century of military rule ended last year.

The trigger for the latest surge in sectarian tensions was the rape and murder of a woman in western Rakhine state, which borders Bangladesh, for which three Muslim men have been detained, according to state media.

On Sunday a mob of hundreds of people attacked a bus, believing the perpetrators were on board, and beat



Myanmar Muslims protesting recent sectarian attacks in Yangon on June 5, 2012. PHOTO: AFP

10 Muslims to death.

"These innocent people have been killed like animals," said Abu Tahay, of the National Democratic Party for Development, which represents the country's much-persecuted stateless Muslim Rohingya community.

"If the police cannot control the situation, maybe the (unrest) is going to spread," he said, adding that the biggest fear was for Rakhine state,

where there is a large Muslim minority population including the Rohingya.

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday urged the nation's Buddhist population to show "sympathy" with minorities.

Speaking to the media in Yangon, Suu Kyi expressed concern at the handling of the situation by local Rakhine authorities, in particular their failure to dampen anti-Muslim sentiment after the woman was attacked.

In Myanmar's main city Yangon, dozens of Muslims protested on Tuesday calling for justice.

Muslims entered Myanmar en masse for the first time as indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent during British colonial rule, which ended in 1948.

But despite their long history, they have never fully been integrated into the country.

Twin blasts kill 23 in Afghanistan

AFP, Kandahar

A twin suicide bombing attack killed 23 people yesterday in a car park crammed with vehicles supplying a major Nato base in Afghanistan's southern province of Kandahar, police said.

A suicide bomber on a motorcycle struck first and as a crowd gathered to help the victims a second bomber walked into their midst and set off explosives strapped to his body, provincial police chief General Abdul Raziq told AFP.

The attack happened in a parking lot holding dozens of trucks supplying the Nato-run Kandahar Air Base and a makeshift bazaar.

Twenty-three people, all civilians, were killed and 50 others wounded, Raziq said, describing most of the victims as drivers, their assistants and workers.

ALLEGED RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Rajapaksa forced to annul C'wealth speech

GUARDIAN ONLINE

The president of Sri Lanka has been forced to cancel a keynote speech in the City of London after concerns about the threat of large demonstrations by Tamil rights groups.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has been accused of presiding over human rights abuses after allegations of war crimes by Sri Lankan armed forces, will still attend a lunch for the Queen, hosted by the Commonwealth secretary general at Marlborough House on Pall Mall.

Rajapaksa was set to give the keynote speech at a special diamond jubilee meeting of the Commonwealth Economic Forum yesterday morning, but the event's organisers, the Commonwealth Business Council, stated on its website: "After careful consideration, the morning sessions of the forum ... will not take place." Tickets to the event cost £795 plus VAT.

A spokesman for Scotland Yard said it had



Mahinda Rajapaksa

agreed to guarantee the president's security but the CBC had "decided it was not in their interest to stage the event" because of the extent of the policing required and the likely disruption to the City of London.

Fred Carver, the campaign director of the Sri Lanka Campaign, welcomed the news, calling it a "testament

to the campaign. But as Rajapaksa was still set to have lunch with the Queen, protests are expected outside the Hilton hotel on Park Lane where the president is staying.

The protests come after a Sri Lankan man, who was left scarred and suicidal after two weeks of torture, accused the British government of forcibly deporting asylum seekers who are then tortured in Sri Lanka.

Last week, the UK government forcibly deported several other Sri Lankans, ignoring pleas from human rights organisations to halt flights in the face of mounting evidence that UK and European returnees have been tortured.

Israel scraps settler legalisation bill

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli MPs yesterday voted down the preliminary reading of a draft bill that would have retroactively legalised settler homes built on private Palestinian land.

The 22-69 vote effectively thwarted an attempt to circumvent a Supreme Court ruling ordering the removal of five buildings from a settlement outpost known as the Ulpana neighbourhood by July 1.

The planned demolition, which would affect 142 people, has sparked fury among settlers and their supporters in parliament.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who strongly opposed the bill on the grounds that it would create an international backlash, had reportedly threatened to sack any cabinet minister or deputy who backed the proposed legislation.

Meanwhile, rights group Amnesty International yesterday urged Israel to free all Palestinians held without charges under so-called "administrative detention" orders or give them a swift and fair trial.

"Release all administrative detainees unless they are promptly charged with internationally recognisable criminal offences and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards," it said in a new report.

IOCs for now, Bapex

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had taken steps to strengthen Bapex and make it self-sufficient.

The premier said an inter-ministerial meeting held on April 3, 2012 decided that the foreign ministry would take measures to demarcate the maritime boundary according to the recent verdict delivered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).

"On completion of the demarcation job, the government will prepare block maps and arrange a bidding round for production-sharing contracts," the prime minister said in reply to lawmakers' queries.

She, however, said 10 percent carried-interest in every offshore block had been preserved for Bapex. "We hope it will be possible

to explore oil and gas in the sea through Bapex in the near future," the PM said.

Having won the legal battle with Myanmar over the maritime boundary issue, said Hasina, her government planned to take coordinated measures to collect sea resources and to ensure their better use.

The government had taken steps to teach maritime science at the universities of Dhaka and Chittagong to create skilled manpower, she said, adding that it was working to set up a national maritime research institute soon.

Hasina said her government had also taken steps to purchase a specialised fishing ship through the fisheries and livestock ministry.

"The maritime cell under the foreign ministry has

been strengthened and a separate national unit will be set up under the foreign ministry to coordinate all maritime-related activities," she added.

People will be benefited by the maritime boundary verdict once the government's plans are implemented, the PM asserted.

She also informed lawmakers about the government's measures to ensure farmers fair prices for rice and paddy, to strengthen democracy and to establish a balanced society.

The premier also spoke on different other issues, including a plan to turn the Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust into a profitable venture, launching further activities for the welfare of the people with disability and ensuring food security.

ACT ON MLM COMPANIES ON CARD

Sheikh Hasina also mentioned that in order to control the activities of the multi-level marketing companies, a draft 'Direct Sale Act-2012' bill had been sent to the Secretaries Committee.

The bill will be placed in parliament for passage after getting approval of the Secretaries Committee and the cabinet.

She also informed the House that her government had taken steps to ensure "fair competition in business and marketing".

"A bill styled as 'Competition Act-2012' has been placed in parliament and all anti-competition activities in business will be prevented once the bill is passed by parliament," the prime minister affirmed.

BNP's soft stance frustrates Jamaat

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harta, but Khaleda Zia, chairperson of the main opposition BNP, decided not to go any drastic agitation right now.

BNP insiders said Khaleda was not interested to go for tougher movement before Ramadan, which would start from the third week of July.

They said despite pressure from the allies, BNP was

not likely to declare tougher movement from its June 11 rally. Opposition policymakers, however, want to show their political strength by ensuring huge gathering of supporters in the rally.

Jamaat and a few other alliance leaders had expressed dissatisfaction over BNP's go-soft strategy in an alliance meeting held at Khaleda's Gulshan office

after a daylong hartal on May 17. The previous day, BNP acting secretary general and 32 other opposition leaders had been sent to jail in an arson case.

Khaleda had told the meeting that they should not misuse their strength by declaring non-stop hartals before the June rally, but the argument did not make Jamaat men happy, said a senior BNP leader present in

the meeting.

Shafiqul Islam Masud, a member of Jamaat's highest policymaking body, Central Majlis-e-Surah, has recently said, "There is no resentment between us. But it is true that the grassroots-level workers and supporters expected something more against the government after Ilias Ali had gone missing and the imprisonment of top opposition leaders."

He said a true leadership needed to consider many things before announcing agitation programmes, but at the same time the government might increase the degree of repression if they [opposition] failed to mount pressure immediately through a tougher movement.

"We have conveyed the expectation of field-level workers in the meeting," Masud continued, "BNP should overcome the hesitation about the so-called war crimes trial as it is nothing but a conspiracy to weaken the opposition."

Asked about Jamaat's resentment, BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said the two parties had their own strategies.

"BNP needs to consider many things before making any decision and that is why, all its decision cannot make everybody happy," he said.

For the last couple of months, Khaleda Zia has been silent about the top Jamaat leaders who are facing war crimes trial. She did not even make any mention about them in the March 12 rally, added the BNP leaders.

The last time Khaleda categorically demanded release of the top Jamaat leaders was at a rally in Chapainawabganj last October.

A BNP vice-chairman, however, pointed out that Jamaat men were not found in the streets for the last few months, during different programmes, although they had been always mounting pressure in alliance meetings for declaring tougher programmes.

A number of Jamaat workers, who were present in a protest rally in front of BNP office recently, told The Daily Star, "Why was BNP silent when our top leaders were arrested in 2010? Had they been vocal then, the government could not have sent its acting secretary general to jail now."

Asked about the crisis between BNP and Jamaat, Tariqul Islam, another member of BNP standing committee, said their chairperson always took decisions in consultation with all.

"We are passing through a bad patch; it's not the time to wrangle. Everyone now needs to work united to live through the government repression," he said.



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All interested firms may collect the bidding Documents (RFQ) from the below e-mail address: parvin.akther@undp.org by a formal request to UNDP that will register bidders into participants list, so any correspondence, questions regarding the bidding documents and respective answers can be sent to all bidders.

Bid must be dropped to the Procurement Cluster of UNDP, IDB Bhaban (12th Floor), Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka before 16.30 hrs on 21 June 2012.



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