

Rohingya issue

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reports RFA, a non-profit corporation that broadcasts news and information in nine Asian languages.

Asean Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan has taken "a personal interest" in the Rohingyas and had spoken directly to Bangladeshi and Myanmarese representatives during a meeting of the grouping's foreign ministers in Phnom Penh this week, according to the Asean website.

Both Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and her Myanmarese counterpart Wunna Maung Lwin agreed to cooperate and keep Asean informed on the status of the ethnic group following deadly ethnic violence between Rohingyas and Rakhines in western Myanmar in June, reports RFA.

"We will keep our eyes and ears on the plight of these unfortunate people," Surin said on completion of the Asean meeting and talks between Asean ministers and their foreign counterparts.

He said he appreciated the concern of the Asean people for the "sufferings" of the Rohingyas, who number around 8,00,000 in Myanmar and are considered to be some of the world's most persecuted minorities.

Aside from Myanmar, Rohingyas also live as migrant workers in many of the other Asean states -- Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Myanmarese President Thein Sein had requested the United Nations refugee agency this week to place Rohingyas in refugee camps or send them out of the country. His request was immediately refused by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Many of Myanmarese Rohingyas have lived in the country for generations, but Thein Sein said the ethnic minority is made up of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and that "we cannot accept them here."

Bangladesh, where an estimated 3,00,000 Rohingyas live, has turned back boatloads of the oppressed group arriving on its shores since the outbreak of the unrest.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who was also in Phnom Penh this week attending the Asean meeting, met with Thein Sein in Siem Reap ahead of a US-Asean business forum and raised the issue of the Rohingyas with the Myanmar leader, officials said.

A senior State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity,

Waters

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Under Secretary General Shashi Tharoor.

In his latest book, Tharoor, a former junior foreign minister of India who quit the ministry in April, 2010, argued that "we must all help persuade the West Bengal leadership that these waters are not ours to give but a shared natural resource (as we accepted in the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan), which we should use responsibly and equitably".

The book "Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century", which was launched by Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari here on Wednesday said West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's objections to signing of the Teesta water-sharing treaty between India and Bangladesh in September last year "was widely seen as a setback for a relationship that was once again beginning to blossom after a long freeze."

Mamata had pulled out of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's entourage to Dhaka.

Tharoor wrote that cooperation on sharing of Teesta waters is indispensable for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to be able to claim that Bangladesh had "gained from her friendship with India".

ity, said that Hillary stressed Washington's willingness "to be supportive of help with internally displaced people (IDP)," referring to the Muslim ethnic group.

The official said Thein Sein had not responded directly, other than to say that the general situation with regard to the Rohingyas had been "very dangerous for the country" and that Burma "needed continued help and support with IDPs."

"They talked about the situation... He talked about how difficult it had been. She offered that if more support was needed with IDPs that we could be supportive," the official said.

UN REQUEST

Violence between Rohingyas and Rakhines flared in June, leaving some 78 people dead and 90,000 displaced and living in camps, according to government statistics.

The clashes were sparked after a Rakhine woman was allegedly raped and killed by three Rohingya men in late May.

On June 3, a group of Rakhine vigilantes attacked and killed 10 Rohingyas on a bus they believed were responsible for the woman's death. On June 8, thousands of Rohingyas rioted in Maungdaw, destroying Rakhine property, burning homes, and causing an unknown number of deaths. In the aftermath, Rohingyas carried out similar attacks on Rakhines elsewhere around the state.

Asean foreign ministers had earlier tasked the Asean secretariat to monitor the situation of the Rohingyas and keep them updated after thousands were turned away from countries where they sought asylum.

According to the UNHCR, around one million Rohingyas are now thought to live outside Myanmar, but they have not been welcomed by a third country.

Tragedy

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The Uzbeks are part of an uneasy coalition of minority tribes that fight the Taliban in their area.

The attack, among the most lethal in recent months, raises the risk of greater insecurity in the relatively peaceful province, analysts said.

At least 23 people were killed and 60 others wounded, said a statement from President Hamid Karzai condemning the attack.

"The enemies of Afghanistan once again targeted mujahideen figures who strive for national unity," Karzai said.

The wounded were in critical condition and the death toll could rise, said regional police spokesman Lal Mohammad Ahmadzai.

Samangani had told guards at the party not to inconvenience guests with security searches, said provincial police chief Khalil Andarabi.

The Taliban, which has been behind a series of suicide attacks this year, denied responsibility. The group often distances itself from attacks with high civilian death tolls.

"We don't have a hand in this," spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said. "Ahmad Khan (Samangani) was a former commander of the mujahideen, he was notorious and many people could have had problems with him."

Samangani, an ethnic Uzbek, fought against the Soviets in the 1980s, and against the Taliban during their 1996-2001 rule. He may have had enemies other than the Taliban, said Kabul-based political analyst Waheed Mujhda.

Afghanistan is experiencing some of the worst violence since the Taliban government was toppled by US-led Afghan forces more than a decade ago.

In a separate incident yesterday, a police official was gunned down in the southern city of Kandahar, the governor's spokesman said.

On Friday, a car bomb killed a leading female politician, Hanifa Safi. No one has claimed responsibility.

CNG auto-rickshaw strike called off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Drivers of CNG-run auto-rickshaws last night called off their indefinite strike following assurance from the communications minister to meet their demands.

"We have withdrawn the strike as the minister has assured us over the phone that he will hold a meeting with us and find out a suitable solution to our problems," Zakir Hossain, general secretary of Dhaka Zilla Auto-rickshaw Sramik Union, told The Daily Star.

Minister Obaidul Quader said he would take necessary measures to release the workers, who were detained by law enforcers during strike hours, added Zakir.

Two associations of the drivers enforced the strike in the capital on Wednesday to press home their 10-point demand including stopping collection of higher daily deposits by the auto-rickshaw owners; cancellation of route permit system for auto-rickshaws; and provision of necessary parking spaces.

Beast of a father

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under Katiadi upazila of Kishoreganj on April 23 this year.

Police said they cracked the case two and a half months after the murder. Quoting witnesses, they said the father, Shamsuddin alias "Khasta Dakat", strangled his youngest daughter Mohana Akhter with the help of elder daughter Babita Akhter and three others.

They dumped the body near pond.

On Thursday, police arrested Shamsuddin and Babita while they were fleeing a relative's house. A judicial magistrate's court sent the father and daughter to prison.

On April 24, the day after the killing, Shamsuddin lodged a murder case against Abdul Motaleb alias "Kajol Master" and his five family members.

While investigating, Katiadi police found the case statement riddled with inconsistencies. At one stage, they quizzed the victim's mother Helena Akhter and got some vital information.

Helena told police she saw one Nazrul Islam Khan and some others talking to her husband in whispers and moving suspiciously in their house on the fateful night.

Following up the leads, police arrested Nazrul Islam who later confessed his involvement in the murder.

In his statement, Nazrul said they killed the victim to grab the properties of Kajol Master.

Sub-Inspector Rakibul Islam of the police station has filed a murder case accusing Shamsuddin, his daughter and three others.

Get int'l survey

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environment, human habitation and economy.

Addressing a human chain programme in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital's Topkhana, they also called on the Indian government to cancel its plan for building the dam before conducting the survey.

The speakers said if the dam is built without any concern for the fate of around 80 lakh haor residents, they might have no choice but to beg for their livelihoods.

The Indian government has decided to construct the dam on the Barak river at Tipaimukh of Manipur state.

The haor residents also urged the Bangladesh government to take effective measures for collecting signatures of some other countries to ratify international river convention, which is imperative to ensure due rights over the common rivers.

They said although the government had formed a haor development board more than 30 years ago, successive governments did nothing to activate it.

Organised under the banner of "Residents of Haor Areas", the programme was addressed by green activist Habib Raja, among others.

Mazharul Islam

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Mazharul Islam's style and influence dominated Bangladesh's architectural scene in the 1960s and 1970s, along with those of major US architects, such as Louis I. Kahn, known for his contributions to the making of what was then known as the Second Capital of Pakistan in Dhaka. Islam worked closely with Kahn, who was his teacher, from 1965 until Kahn's death in 1973.

Islam's major works include Jahangirnagar University, Chittagong University, Central Public Library, Charukala Institute, Azimpur Estate, Joypurhat Housing, Rangamati township and a number of Polytechnic Institutes. He designed the master plan of Dhaka City and also created the logo for the government of Bangladesh.

Mazharul Islam received his Bachelor of Science from Calcutta University in 1942, Bachelor of Engineering from Calcutta in 1946, Bachelor of Architecture from University of Oregon, USA, in 1952, post Graduate Certificate in Tropical Architecture from A.A. School of Architecture in London in 1957. In 1961 he

4 arrested for fish van hijack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Four people were arrested on Friday night in the district's Sreenagar upazila for alleged involvement in hijacking a fish-laden van and killing an employee of a fish-trading agency early Thursday at the capital's Mohakkhal.

The four are Badal, 30, of Barisal, Badsha, 30, of Jhalakathi, Kamal Hossain, 40, of Munshiganj, and Manik Miah, 22, of Kushtia. While making the arrests, police recovered a motorcycle and Tk 50,000 from their possession.

Sheikh Waziar Rahman, officer-in-charge of Hasara highway police outpost, said the arrestees had admitted their involvement in the hijack and the murder.

They were arrested when they went to a depot at Hasara to collect the payment for the fish they had sold.

The hijack took place when the truck was on its way to Abdullahpur from the capital's Karwan Bazar with fish worth Tk 3 lakh.

Yusuf, the driver, and Hafiz, an employee of Dui Bandhu Fish Enterprise, were thrown off the van. Later, Hafiz died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Buet in crisis

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group to which he belongs, does not support suspending academic activities in the name of agitation, he added.

"We are neither in favour of the VC nor against him. We are here to speak publicly on moral grounds because we want to see a congenial atmosphere at Buet," said Prof Munaz, himself a two-time general secretary of the teachers association.

Meanwhile, the agitating teachers, students and employees continued their sit-in for the fourth day yesterday, demanding the removal of VC Prof SM Nazrul Islam and Pro-VC Prof Habibur Rahman.

They marched across the campus in a silent procession starting from the Buet Council Building at 11:00am. They went to the Central Shaheed Minar and vowed to continue their movement until the demands were met.

A section of Buet staff also brought out a procession in the morning under the banner of Buet Employees Association.

Students launched a website to draw the attention of former Buet students living abroad and a mass signature campaign to strengthen their movement.

Prof SM Nazrul Islam still could not sit with the agitating teachers, although Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a Gono Bhaban meeting on Thursday asked him to reach a settlement through talks.

Contacted, Prof Nazrul told The Daily Star he had proposed that the agitating teachers and others sit

received his post-graduation in Architecture from Yale University, USA.

He was senior architect of the government of East Pakistan in 1958-64.

'DISAPPEARANCES' UN experts review 13 cases

STAR REPORT

The independent human rights experts of the United Nations have examined 13 reported cases of enforced disappearance under its urgent action procedure, as well as information on more than 200 cases in 33 countries, including in Bangladesh.

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances during its 97th session, that took place in Geneva from July 9 to 13, also reviewed the newly-submitted cases and the previously accepted ones, said a UN News Agency report yesterday.

Five experts of the group studied cases, including those demanding urgent action, concerning Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Georgia, Kenya, Kuwait, Laos, Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Pakistan, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

The meeting also discussed responses from various governments to prompt intervention letters, urgent appeals and general allegations. The panel also met with non-governmental organisations and family members of disappeared individuals.

The experts held meetings with representatives of the governments of Algeria, Japan and the Republic of Korea to exchange views on individual cases and on the issue of enforced disappearance in general.

The five independent experts are Chair-Rapporteur Olivier de Frouville (France), and members Ariel Dulitzky (Argentina), Jasminka Dzumhur (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Osman El-Hajjé (Lebanon), and Jeremy Sarkin (South Africa).

The Working Group was established by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1980 to assist families in determining the fate and whereabouts of their disappeared relatives.

together to arrive at a solution to the crisis. He said the university authorities would also hold discussions with the chancellor soon to bring about an end to the crisis.

The Buet Teachers Association, which is spearheading the demonstrations, said it had rejected a letter sent from the VC proposing discussions.

"There is no scope now to sit with those against whom we are agitating," Prof Ashraf Islam, general secretary of the teachers association, told The Daily Star last evening.

About the new forum's terming the movement illogical, he said those who had benefited from the irregularities of the VC and pro-VC were making such statements.

Since April 7, the association has been staging protests demanding the resignation of the two top administration bosses. It has levelled 16 allegations against them, among which are the appointment of the pro-VC and a deputy registrar on "political consideration".

The agitating teachers returned to the classrooms on May 5 on the prime minister's assurance of resolving the problems.

On Wednesday, they again started demonstrating and 25 heads of faculties, departments and institutes resigned en masse as the VC and pro-VC refused to quit. The university declared a 44-day vacation from the same day.

The movement gained momentum with the joining

Niazi planned rape

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because it was a hot potato in the times it was actually written, reports Pakistan based The Express Tribune on July 8.

Page 98 of the book reads, "[Enter] Commander East Pakistan General Niazi, wearing a pistol holster on his web belt. Niazi became abusive and started raving. Breaking into Urdu, he said: *Main iss haramzadi qaum ki nasal badal doon ga. Yeh mujhe kiya samajhtey hain.* He threatened that he would let his soldiers loose on the womenfolk. There was pin drop silence at these remarks. The next morning, we were given the sad news. A Bengali officer Major Mushtaq went into a bathroom at the Command Headquarters and shot himself in the head."

General Tikka Khan disagreed with Raja that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman be secretly dispatched to West Pakistan. He wanted to "publicly try Sheikh Mujib in Dhaka and hang him", it also said.

The Express Tribune report opens with, "Pakistan's name has been blackened by just one man: General AAK 'Tiger' Niazi."

It adds, "Niazi surrendered to Indian General JFR Jacob in 1971. Niazi handed over his personal pistol at the famous Race Course ceremony. Jacob examined the weapon: the lanyard was greasy and frayed, and the pistol was full of muck as if it hadn't been cleaned in a long while." (Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation; by Lt Gen JFR Jacob; Manohar Publishers 1997).

General Ayub Khan, whose decade of rule caused the jurisprudence of separatism to evolve, gets the treatment he deserved through the testimony of another not-too-civilised general named Gul Hassan.

"Gul Hassan openly criticised Field Marshal Ayub Khan's sons who, according to him, were letting their father down by amassing wealth by unfair means. Gul Hassan blurted out that 'I have told the old cock that this time we will impose Martial Law and take control ourselves but not protect Ayub and his henchmen'. The reference [old cock] was to General Yahya Khan, commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army" (Page 8).

The only leadership criterion was brutality riding on low IQ. The exception was

General Yaqub Khan, the commander who insisted that General Yahya not postpone the session of the National Assembly elected after the 1970 election.

The author writes: "All of a sudden, General Yaqub Khan was bundled off as a student on the Imperial Defence College course. This clumsy and unceremonious action was obviously taken to get him out of the way" (Page 7).

Major General Rahim Khan was the other officer Pakistan can't be proud of. "Rahim started to criticise the senior commanders in Dhaka, especially me, although I happened to be a friend of his. He was of the opinion that the Bengalis were timid people and should have been subdued long ago. The reader can judge for himself the ignorance and lack of understanding of the East Pakistan situation among the hawks in the armed forces" (Page 97).

Rahim ran away from East Pakistan when things became too hot.

Niazi also asked Raja for phone numbers of his Bangalee girlfriends: 'Abhi tau mujhe Bengali girlfriends kay phone number day do'

No plea to SC

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"I will suggest the government scrap this provision, if possible," he said, adding, "As far as I know, other countries, where war crimes trials were conducted, did not give this scope to war criminals. I do not understand why our government has given this opportunity."

The International Crimes Tribunal Act allows war crimes convicts to appeal to the Supreme Court Appellate Division against their sentences.

Khandaker, also the planning minister, was presiding over a roundtable styled "Trial of war criminals-advancement and problems" organised by the Sector Commanders Forum, Liberation War-71, at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

About the pace of the ongoing trials, he said, "If the government cannot complete war crimes trial before its tenure end, and the government fail to get into power the next time...it would be disastrous for the nation."

He said foreign lobbyists appointed by war criminals were conducting propaganda against the war-crimes trial across the world. "We should launch a campaign against this propaganda through our high commissions," he said.

Addressing the function as a special guest, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman urged the government to identify and remove Jamaat-Shibir men infiltrating into the administration, so that the war crimes trial does not have to face any hurdles.

Referring to the incident of war crimes suspect Abul Kalam Azad, widely known as

Bachchu Razakar, fleeing, Prof Mizanur said, "I want to ask the home minister why she is spending time, money and manpower behind innocent Limon? When you were busy with Limon, Bachchu Razakar fled, but your law enforcers could not arrest him."

Limon was maimed in Rab firing.

"What was your [home minister's] force doing? Why don't you take actions against them? Why don't you identify those who helped Bachchu Razakar flee?" Prof Mizanur said.

Soon after the tribunal issued arrest warrant against Bachchu Razakar, he slipped out into India through Dinajpur border on April 2, as per a Rapid Action Battalion statement on April 9.

Prof Mizanur also observed that unlike the defence, the prosecution and the investigation team assigned to deal with the war-crimes cases appear before the tribunal with inadequate preparation and homework done.

"If we do not have preparation, will the trial be done through political loud talk? Will the trial be fair? Will people across the world believe us for our words?" he said.

He said the tribunals were showing a lot of generosity towards the suspects and emphasised the need for enacting the victim-witness protection act immediately.

Ghulam Arief Tipoo, chief prosecutor of the prosecution team at the tribunal, said trial of at least three or four war criminals would be done by this year.

Sector Commanders

Forum Acting Secretary General Harun Habib, Chief Investigator of war crimes investigation agency Mohammad Abdul Hannan Khan, Communist Party of Bangladesh Presidium Member Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) President Manzill Morshed, Liberation War Museum Trustee Sarwar Ali also spoke

Difficult

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of various development agencies in the project," he said yesterday while distributing money at a programme in Sylhet Sadar Upazila.

The function was organised by the Social Development Foundation (SDF) where Muhith distributed Tk 13 crore among 15,000 vulnerable people from 60 villages of the upazila.

The minister reiterated that there had been no corruption in the Padma bridge project. "The World Bank has cancelled the loan agreement just out of apprehension of corruption."

About public response to the prime minister's plan to build the bridge with own funds, Muhith said this overwhelming response would encourage the government to go ahead with its plan.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced that the construction of Padma bridge will begin this very fiscal as she outlined in Parliament the strategy to execute the project with own funds. Hasina said the work would begin this year with funds from the Tk 550-billion Annual Development Programme (ADP).

Dhaka in a quagmire

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reach Karwan Bazar. He had started his journey from his home in Narayanganj in driving rain in the morning.

"Nobody really knows when the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover will be completed, but until then every rainy day will be like this," he said, sitting in a bus that was struggling to move out of the thick mud on the battered road.

The roads from Uttara to Banani bore a similarity. They all had numerous potholes due to relocation and repair works by Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd and Power Grid Company of Bangladesh.

Repair works are already underway on roads from Gabtoli, Mirpur, Shyamoli, Pallabi, Darussalam and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to Dhanmondi, Panthapath, Chankharpool, Gulistan, Bangabhaban, Jurain, Syedabad, Kamalapur, Tibet intersection in Tejgaon Industrial Area to the National Shooting Federation, Uttara and Gulshan.

Most of these roads have been narrowed down. When there is rainfall, the dug-up areas go out of the full view of

the drivers, resulting in breakdowns or even accidents.

Rajib Hasan usually travels in the afternoon to reach his Karwan Bazar office from Mohammadpur. But since Panthapath has almost been cut into two, his 20-minute ride now takes more than an hour.

"The roads near Russell Square are being dug up for so long. We really don't know when they will be brought back to their earlier condition," said Rajib.

Reazar Rahman also took the same route yesterday to go from Dhanmondi to Moghbazar, and it took more than 30 minutes just to cross Square Hospital, a condition prevalent in the past few months.

"On Mirpur road, cars are parked on both sides, leaving a narrow lane for other vehicles to pass. Development work is on in all the streets, and it is creating traffic jam all over the city," he said.

Road digging by these agencies has made driving and movement of people very unsafe in this rainy season. For those like Samiur Rahman, who walks from his Moghbazar home to

Malibagh intersection every day to find a bus, it was almost impossible for him to walk as the road had remained waterlogged since early morning. But that was not the end of his ordeal.

"I had to wait for another 45 minutes in the rain before I got a bus to go to Bashundhara Residential Area. It took me another hour and a half to reach there," he said.

And for those who had to take Rokeya Sarani at any time of the day encountered tailbacks due to a programme of the ruling party's youth wing. Apart from haphazard parking, too many people were in the middle of the street.

"I was stuck in front of the Bangabandhu Convention Centre for almost half an hour in the morning before the buses started to move," said Swapan, who works at a store at Mirpur-10. "It wasn't anything important but I saw many young men blocking the road."

With so many things happening in the capital, a more coordinated approach is necessary to ease public sufferings. Instead, bad conditions have gone on for much too long. Quite predict-