

Condition of Myanmar Rohingya camps 'dire'

AFP, Yangon

The UN's humanitarian chief has described conditions for thousands of displaced Muslim Rohingya in western Myanmar as "dire" and said both Muslim and Buddhist communities are living in fear.

Valerie Amos, who toured violence-racked Rakhine state on Wednesday, said in a statement released overnight that she was "very concerned" by the situation there, with many people in overcrowded, unsanitary camps.

The United Nations said more than 115,000 people remain displaced by the two rounds of communal violence that erupted in Rakhine in June and October. Scores died in the conflict and whole villages, mainly those of Rohingya Muslims, were forced to flee their homes.

"I was very concerned by some of what I



Valerie Amos

saw today," said Amos, the UN's under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

"Tensions between the communities are still running very high," Amos said.

Amos, who travelled in the state as part of a wider visit to Myanmar, said that in one area, Myebon, thousands were packed into "overcrowded, substandard shelter with poor sanitation".

"They don't have jobs, children are not in school and they can't leave the camp because their movement is restricted. The situation is dire," she said.

Decades-old animosity between Buddhists and Rohingyas exploded in June after the apparent rape and murder of an ethnic Rakhine woman sparked a series of revenge attacks.

Foil Jamaat attacks with courage

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emphasis on upholding human rights.

Referring to various government programmes for restoring law and order, Hasina said her government has contained militancy with iron hand in the last four years.

Initiatives have been taken to form the National Bureau of Counterterrorism, she said, and hoped that this specialised unit of police would play an effective role in combating militancy and terrorism.

The premier said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government and the subsequent caretaker government had pushed the country towards anarchy and destruction.

After the 2001 elections, Hasina said, the four-party alliance government

had created a dreadful situation across the country by unleashing terrorist activities, and the human rights of people were violated during their tenure.

"The people did not forget Bangla Bhai, the August 21 grenade attack on Awami League rally and the synchronised bomb blasts across the country," she added.

The premier said her government has been working to build Bangladesh a middle-income country by 2021, and "to achieve the goal, police force has an important role".

She mentioned that immediately after independence, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had formed a modern police force to ensure security of people's life and property.

The rank badge for the

Inspector General of Police (IGP), which was introduced by Bangabandhu, has been reinstated after 28 years, she told her audience.

Hasina also mentioned various programmes implemented by her government for the development of police forces.

The programmes include creating 32,000 new posts, raising grants for injured police members from Tk 50,000 to Tk 1 lakh and Tk five lakh from Tk three lakh for the family of each police member who dies on duty.

The premier said the government has formed two security and protection battalions, while approval was given for the formation of Police Bureau of Investigation.

Processes are underway to form tourist police,

BABRI MOSQUE DEMOLITION Issue rocks Indian House 20 yrs on

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The demolition of Babri Masjid cast its shadow on the Lok Sabha yesterday, the lower House of Indian Parliament, on the 20th anniversary of the incident, with supporters and opponents of the Ayodhya movement paralysing the proceedings for the entire day.

Waving of a black flag by BSP member Shafiqur Rahman Burq to protest the demolition when the House assembled for the day drew a sharp reaction from BJP and Shiv Sena lawmakers.

The action of the BSP member led to two adjournments and then the House was adjourned for the day.

Indian security forces yesterday flooded the northern town of Ayodhya where the mosque was demolished.

More than 2,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in clashes in New Delhi, Mumbai and other cities after the Babri mosque in Ayodhya was torn down on December 6, 1992 by protesters seeking to build a Hindu temple on the site.

Opposing sides still wrangle over control of the tightly-guarded spot, with the Supreme Court last year suspending a ruling that divided it into three sections -- one for Hindus, one for Muslims and one for a local Hindu trust.

Suicide blast wounds Afghan intel chief

REUTERS, Kabul

A suicide bombing attack in Kabul wounded Afghanistan's spy chief yesterday, a television station said.

Asadullah Khalid was wounded when the bomber struck at a guest house in the capital, Tolo television reported.

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) said in a statement that Khalid survived a "terrorist attack".

Khalid is a well-connected ethnic Pashtun and the influential former governor of the southern province of Kandahar, from where the Taliban draw most support.

IMPEACHMENT HEARING Lankan chief justice walks out of trial

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake walked out of her impeachment hearing before lawmakers Thursday after complaining she was not being given a fair trial, legal and parliamentary sources said.

The move to impeach Bandaranayake, the country's first female chief justice, came after she scuppered a bill that would have given more powers to President Mahinda Rajapakse's younger brother Basil, who is economic development minister.

She will not attend future hearings, sources said.

There was no formal reaction from the government, but a ruling party law maker who declined to be named said they will proceed with the inquiry with or without the 54-year-old chief justice attending the hearing.

The impeachment bid has led to a head-on collision between the judiciary and the legislature controlled by President Rajapakse who has consolidated his power after crushing Tamil Tiger rebels in a military offensive in May 2009.



Shirani Bandaranayake

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Deadly clashes erupt in Cairo

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Other armoured units were sent to guard the headquarters of state television, an important symbol of government power. The severity of the clashes — and their potential political impact — became apparent when three senior advisers to Mubarak's successor, Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first freely elected president, resigned during the clashes Wednesday, blaming him for the bloodshed.

Morsi's prime minister implored both sides to pull back in order to make room for "dialogue."

The scale of the fighting, in the affluent Heliopolis neighbourhood just outside Morsi's office in the presidential palace, raised the first doubts about Morsi's effort to hold a referendum on Dec 15 on a draft constitution approved by his Islamist allies over the objections of his secular opposition and the Coptic Christian Church.

Hundreds of Islamist supporters of Morsi spent the night outside the palace, and yesterday some awoke with head bandages covering their wounds. Many said they were members of the Muslim Brotherhood from other provinces and they vowed to stay in Cairo until the draft constitution was approved.

In a token of the deep suspicions since Egypt's revolution, some maintained that Morsi could not rely on the police force to defend him and his palace because its leaders were holdovers from the old government trying to position themselves to be on the winning side of the political battle.

In the early afternoon, the hundreds of Islamists supporting Morsi abruptly abandoned their encampment outside the presidential palace, possibly signalling a tactical shift by the president, who said through state media that he would address the nation later yesterday.

State media also reported that in midafternoon, the presidential guard, which reports directly to the president, would clear the streets around the palace. Overnight, periodic gunshots could be heard at the front lines of the fight, and secular protesters displayed birdshot wounds and pellets. But it could not be determined whether the riot police or Islamists or the opposition had fired the guns.

Many in both camps brandished makeshift clubs, and on the secular side a few carried knives.

Thousands joined the battle on each side. The riot police initially tried to fight off or break up the crowds with tear gas, but by mid-evening on Wednesday, the security forces had all but withdrawn. They continued to try to separate the two sides across one boulevard but stayed out of the battle that raged on all around.

In a city square on the Islamist side of the battle lines, a loudspeaker on the top of a moving car blared out exhortations that the fight was about more than politics or Morsi.

Protesters reportedly set fire to Muslim Brotherhood political offices in the cities of Suez and Ismailia.

Even after two years of periodic battles between protesters and the police, Egyptians said they were shocked and alarmed by the spectacle of fellow citizens drawing blood over matters of ideology or political power.

"It is Egyptian fighting Egyptian," said Mohamed Abu Shukka, 23, who was blocked from entering his apartment building and shaking his head.

Distrust and animosity between Islamists and their secular opponents have mired the outcome of Egypt's promised transition to a constitutional democracy. Some opponents, Morsi's advisers say, would sacrifice democracy to stop the Islamists from winning elections.

The clashes followed two weeks of sporadic violence around the country since Morsi, a former leader of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, seized temporary powers beyond the review of any court, removing the last check on his authority until ratification of the new constitution.

Morsi has said he needed the expanded powers to block a conspiracy by corrupt business men, Mubarak-appointed judges and opposition leaders to thwart Egypt's transition to a constitutional democracy. Some opponents, Morsi's advisers say, would sacrifice democracy to stop the Islamists from winning elections.

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