

Malaysia clashes stoke fear of Myanmar spillover

AFP, Selayang

Myanmar migrant Yaza Min came to Malaysia several years ago seeking a better life but instead has hidden for more than three weeks in a temple, fearing for his safety as Muslim-Buddhist violence back home spilled over.

Secretarian bloodshed between majority Buddhists and minority Muslims erupted in Myanmar a year ago, leaving about 200 people dead, up to 140,000 homeless, and raising fears of wider instability in the region as refugees flee the country.

Recent incidents in nearby Malaysia and Indonesia are feeding those concerns.

At least four Myanmar Buddhists were killed in Malaysia in suspected revenge killings by Muslims that began on May 30 in an area on the outskirts of the capital Kuala Lumpur where many Myanmar migrants have settled.

In one attack, Yaza Min, a Buddhist, was hit with a steel pipe when he and several fellow workers at a vast vegetable market were targeted in a sudden assault by eight men also armed with machetes.

"I will go back (to Myanmar). I'm very afraid," he said, cowering in a Buddhist temple where he and dozens of others have sought refuge.

In April, eight Buddhist fishermen from Myanmar were beaten to death in an Indonesian detention centre by Rohingyas -- a Muslim group that claims heavy persecution in Myanmar -- over two alleged rapes blamed on Buddhists.

The violence back in Myanmar has sent fresh waves of Rohingyas fleeing on rickety boats in a perilous journey to neighbouring countries like Muslim-majority Malaysia.

Many fear staying in Myanmar due to a strident anti-Muslim movement that has included a campaign headed by Buddhist monks to shun shops owned by Muslims.

In October, Surin Pitsuwan, then secretary general of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), warned the situation could, in turn, radicalise Rohingyas -- who the United Nations calls one of the world's most persecuted minorities, and "destabilise" the region.

Following the Malaysia violence, Asian Buddhist and Muslim leaders met in Thailand in mid-June to address the "potential spread of hatred across the region".

There are also another 95,000 Myanmar refugees and asylum-seekers in the country, the UN refugee agency says.

Myanmar and Malaysia -- which welcomes the low-wage labour -- generally look the other way on the issue, but the disturbing recent events have forced them to act.

Whitening

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suffered a debacle last year.

According to the new provision, people with undisclosed money can invest in the housing sector by paying taxes between Tk 750 and Tk 7,000 for per square metre of floor space, subject to the location.

If anyone buys more than one flat or a plot of land, he or she has to pay additional taxes.

Meanwhile, the government may reduce the proposed import duty on newsprint.

In the proposed budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year, the government proposed to hike import duty on newsprint from 3 percent to 25 percent.

The import duty on zinc plates, used in printing industry, may remain unchanged at 3 percent.

With this, the total tax incident on the newspaper industry may come down to 31 percent from that of the proposed 61 percent.

Social businesses thriving

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people in a pre-recorded video displayed at the event.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Yunus said the idea of social business is spreading across the world in a serious way, opening many frontiers. The European Union has also made a policy on the social business. Africa is also coming up. Brazil is opening its doors for the social business.

He trashed away ideas that only people with enough money could set up social business. "Not only the major corporations and foundations, but also people with a very small amount of money can launch social businesses and become successful and thus solve a social cause."

The Grameen Bank founder said people working on spreading the idea are being invited to solve social problems even in developed world.

He said his vision is to see one percent of the total investment of a country is made in the social businesses within the next five years. "We have to show the success stories at the ground level. It will change the people's mind."

"One example can change people's mind. So, we are holding the Social Business Day."

About the future of social business, the banker to the poor said, "We have just started the social business. It will bring a paradigm shift in the world business."

US Ambassador Dan Mozena said Prof Yunus had not only given a model but also an opportunity to the poor people to invest and lift themselves out of poverty and also to become contributing members of the society.

"In the past, those things were termed radical," he said, adding that the microcredit and social business ideas were helping Bangladesh to grow rather than remaining vulnerable.

The diplomat said Grameen Bank had changed many lives in the US also.

"It's a beautiful situation in the USA," he said, adding that Prof Yunus has helped people take their dreams to a new height.

Mozena said the successful models of microcredit and social business have proved critics wrong; the banker to the poor is now termed the "dreamer and builder of new life".

Malaysian Crown Prince Yam Tengku said the social businesses had become a mainstream business model

rather than an alternative form of business.

He said poverty had largely been eradicated in Malaysia, but some issues in the country were needed to be worked on.

"We need social business not only to solve those social problems in this country, but also to make the world a better place for everybody."

In a plenary session, Emmanuel Faber, CEO of France-based Danone, said social business is a highly innovative idea and powerful answer to social problems.

"Social business is a radical innovation and it brings in a completely new solution to businesses. It is not just a simple change in the conventional business."

He said more than a dozen French companies, with combined annual revenue of \$200 billion, have set up social businesses in the country.

Emmanuel Faber also said the theory had opened a new horizon of business and opportunities for entrepreneurs around the world.

Binod Chaudhary, chairman of Chaudhary Group, Nepal, and also the first billionaire in the country, said billions of dollars are spent every year around the world to lift people out of poverty. But their fates have not changed much.

"The world will have to follow the philosophy of Prof Yunus to eradicate poverty. This is the way to go," he said.

"I truly believe that if we can give the social business a momentum, we will be able to solve some of our pressing challenges -- in my country and around the world."

Chaudhary also said the society's youth would have to be made the driver of the change.

At a discussion on microfinance and social business, Larry Reed, director of Microcredit Summit Campaign, said entrepreneurs of the social business would have to ensure that their services and products really solve a social problem.

He said a social accounting tool could also be put in place so clients are served as intended, so social businesses do not face the same bad reputation as microcredit did in India, putting the whole industry around the world under tremendous pressure.

"Mission drift could happen if there is dividend for social businesses. Or, people could start working only for increasing their salaries, rather than increasing social benefits for the intended beneficiaries. This will be the major challenge for social businesses."

Daniel B Zoltani, Asia Pacific regional director for the Whole Planet Foundation, said social performance, instead of economic performance, would have to be given priority in case of social businesses.

He is opposed to any regulation for social business at this stage of the growth of the concept.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, said students were increasingly interested about the social business.

She also said sometimes profit-maximisation should not be a target for a business.

"Doing businesses for others could not only solve problems of some people, but also give peace to the entrepreneurs," she said during the panel discussion on "Social Business: Entrepreneurs and Investors".

UN Youth Champion Monique Coleman said social business was the new way to reach out to the people in need, as charity model was most of the time not sustainable and exhausting.

"This is a way to find a measurable and sustainable impact of the solutions intended to help people," she said.

The Hollywood actress also said the younger generation was imbedded with the ideas of social business.

"So, we will have to raise awareness and convince younger generation."

Also during the event, social business projects in Bangladesh displayed their products and services. A photo exhibition was also organised.

During the day, a web portal, socialbusinesspedia.com, was launched. It will have all the real-time information about global social business activities.

Apart from local participants, about 160 participants from 30 countries attended the annual event.

According to Prof Yunus, social business is a cause-driven business where the investors or owners can gradually recoup the money invested, but cannot take any dividend beyond that point.

Purpose of the investment is purely to achieve one or more social objectives through the operation of the company; no personal gain is desired by the investors.

AL responds

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religious scholars [alems and ulemas].

The highlights include establishment of the Islamic Foundation, approval of Arabic University, formation of welfare trust for imams and muezzins, and Qawmi madrasa education commission, digitisation of the holy Quran and the decision to appoint a religion teacher in every primary school.

Alleging that AL chief Sheikh Hasina and its leaders and activists patronise atheists, BNP and Hefajat are exploiting religious sentiments to secure votes in favour of BNP-backed mayoral candidate MA Mannan.

They used similar tactics against ruling party-backed mayoral candidates ahead of the Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet city corporation elections on June 15.

All the AL favourites in the four cities were defeated to their rival mayoral aspirants supported by the BNP-led alliance.

AL lawmaker AKM Mozammel Haque, chief election coordinator for AL-backed candidate Ajmat Ullah Khan, yesterday said the campaign had been launched in the wake of use of religion card by the rival camp.

"Our alems and ulemas are clarifying the propagandas to the voters," he told The Daily Star, adding that the Ulema League, a pro-AL organisation, had been engaged to counter the smear campaign.

He also said that they had a few Hefajat men working for their camp.

CAMPAIGNING
Rain in the morning hours made electioneering in Gazipur quite hard yesterday.

However, the mayoral and councillor candidates braved the rain and began campaigning in the afternoon.

AL senior leaders Tofail Ahmed and Mohammad Nasim, among others, campaigned for Ajmat Ullah in Joydevpur town, and in BRRI and Tongi bazar areas.

On the other hand, BNP senior leaders Moudud Ahmed and Abdullah Al Noman campaigned for Mannan in Gazipur town.

UK may back

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and the procedure could be offered within two years.

Experts say three-person IVF could eliminate debilitating and potentially fatal mitochondrial diseases that are passed on from mother to child.

Opponents say it is unethical and could set the UK on a "slippery slope".

They also argue that affected couples could adopt or use egg donors instead.

Mitochondria are the tiny, biological "power stations" that give the body energy. They are passed from a mother, through the egg, to her child.

Defective mitochondria affect one in every 6,500 babies. This can leave them starved of energy, resulting in muscle weakness, blindness, heart failure and death in the most extreme cases.

Research suggests that using mitochondria from a donor egg can prevent the diseases.

It is envisaged that up to 10 couples a year would benefit from the treatment.

However, it would result in babies having DNA from two parents and a tiny amount from a third donor as the mitochondria themselves have their own DNA.

Scientists have devised two techniques that allow them to take the genetic information from the mother and place it into the egg of a donor with healthy mitochondria.

Rivals on full throttle for win

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out in the elections to four city corporations on June 15, the Gazipur polls have turned out to be a battle of saving or losing party face.

The Awami League is desperate for a win here, with Ajmat Ullah Khan, to recover from the colossal defeat in the polls to Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet city corporations.

The party high-ups are very serious about this election.

They have assigned 57 lawmakers along with central leaders, many of whom are staying in Gazipur city, in as many wards of Gazipur to campaign for mayor aspirant Ajmat, Awami League legislators and local leaders told The Daily Star yesterday.

Incumbent and former leaders of Awami League wings Jubo League, Mahila League, Krishak League, Olama League, pro-ruling party student body Bangladesh Chhatra League, and cultural activists have been engaged in the task.

"We are intensifying the campaign. All our leaders and activists are now in the field in teams, led by the central leaders, covering their designated areas," said Amanat Hossain Khan, education affairs secretary of Gazipur district unit of Awami League.

Amanat said defeat of

pro-ruling party candidates in the other four city corporation elections had shocked them and that it gave a moral boost to the opposition camp.

Yesterday, a number of Chhatra League leaders and activists from Dhaka University and Eden College had gone to Gazipur on two buses to campaign for Ajmat. They were seen holding meetings at Gazipur and Tongi Awami League offices.

"We're coming here [Gazipur] on a regular basis and campaigning at different wards," said Jesmin Akhtar, president of Chhatra League Eden College unit.

Siddique Nazmul Alam, central general secretary of Chhatra League, said it had been working independently and they had formed 57 teams which were going to the wards and polling centres.

Riding on the momentum of victories of pro-opposition candidates in the four city corporation elections, the BNP wants to win in Gazipur as well to "prove" that the government has lost popularity.

It too seemed desperate to make sure pro-BNP candidate MA Mannan becomes the mayor.

Like the ruling party, the BNP has also formed 57 teams, led mostly by its central leaders and some lawmakers, and designated them wards to work on.

Most of the leaders are visiting Gazipur in turns and campaigning for Mannan.

Leaders of BNP's associate bodies -- Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, Chhatra Dal, Krishak Dal, Jasas, and Ulema Dal -- are also campaigning for Mannan.

What sets BNP's campaign apart from Awami League's is its monitoring of the campaign process.

From the BNP's Cherag Ali office at Tongi, the party leaders intensively monitor which central leaders from Dhaka are campaigning for their candidate.

They keep records which are sent to BNP chief Khaleda Zia, said a Jubo Dal leader wishing anonymity.

Apart from local unresolved issues and national issues, the momentum of the four city polls victories could result in the win of Mannan, BNP leaders believe.

"A surge has arrived and words like 'Awami League stronghold' will not work in this election," claimed Fazlul Haque Milon, president of Gazipur district BNP.

Mir Halimuzzaman Nani, president of Gazipur municipality BNP unit, said, "An anti-Awami League sentiment has developed among the people because of their misdeeds, widespread corruption, and torture and repression on Alems and Ulemas."

Garment makers shocked

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Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) in a statement also said the country's banking, shipping and transport sectors would also be badly affected as these were directly linked with the garment industry.

"So, it is our expectation that the US government will reconsider its decision about Bangladesh as a least developed country," BGMEA President Atiqul Islam told journalists at the trade body's office in Dhaka.

"I will also urge that the US government would take initiatives to provide a commercially meaningful entry of goods originated from the least developed countries as per the declaration in the WTO summit in 2005," Islam added.

He said although Bangladesh's garment sector enjoyed duty-benefit to the US market, still the sector might be indirectly affected as the country's image would face crisis for the US move.

Bangladeshi garment exporters have to pay 15.3 percent duty to the US market, the country's single largest export destination. In 2012 Bangladesh paid \$746 million to the US customs for exporting nearly \$5 billion worth of garment products to that country.

Islam also said they were working with the government for adopting the ILO's widely recommended Better

Work Programme to improve the working condition in garment sector.

He added the BGMEA would start introducing the Better Work Programme in the garment sector as soon as the government amended the labour law in parliament.

The cabinet has already agreed in principle to amend the labour law of 2006.

Bangladesh could rarely enjoy the benefits from the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) in the US as the package does not include the garment sector. Currently, Bangladesh's 97 percent products go to the US market without any duty, but garment items are not included in those 97 percent.

Islam said the BGMEA had already held meetings with the envoys of the EU, the US and Canada to inform them the sector's latest activities and sought cooperation from them to keep the country's garment business smoothly running.

After the Rana Plaza disaster, the government, BGMEA and ILO signed a joint declaration on May 4 to ensure building safety and electrical safety in the garment sector, he added.

The BGMEA was waiting to join in the international retailers' initiative of Building and Fire Safety Accord to ensure safety, risk-free and more compliant garment factories, Islam noted.

He welcomed the government's move for formation of a new wage board to fix the minimum wage for the garment workers. In 2010, the wage was hiked by 80 percent for the garment workers, he said.

The BGMEA boss added child labour in garment sector was uprooted in collaboration with the ILO and the US Embassy in Dhaka in 1995. This time Bangladesh would also be able to improve the labour rights and working condition in the garment sector to retain the GSP facility to the US market, he said.

The US government suspended the GSP on June 27 for poor labour rights and working conditions in the factories.

Bangladesh met the USTR (United States Trade Representative), the chief trade negotiator for the US president, in Washington on March 28 after the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisation) together with some senators appealed for GSP cancellation to Bangladesh after the deadliest fire at Ashulia-based Tazreen Fashions, where 112 workers died last November.

Later, the Rana Plaza collapse at Savar where 1,132 workers died and hundred others suffered severe injuries on April 24 just intensified the claim of AFL-CIO's GSP cancellation.

Iran leak probe targets US general

BBC ONLINE

A retired high-ranking US general is under investigation for allegedly leaking classified information about a covert cyber attack on Iran's nuclear programme, US media report.

Retired Marine General James "Hoss" Cartwright has been informed by the Justice Department that he

is a target in their inquiry, NBC News reports.

Gen Cartwright was vice-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2007-11.

The Stuxnet virus temporarily disabled Iranian nuclear facilities in 2010.

The New York Times gave a detailed account last year about the virus, and how it temporarily took out nearly 1,000 centrifuges that Iran

was using to purify uranium.

The newspaper said the attack was part of a wider cyber operation called Olympic Games, that began under President George W Bush and accelerated under President Barack Obama.

The revelations prompted the US attorney to order an investigation into the leaks.

Not much brain needed to be a rock star, says Jagger

AFP, London

Mick Jagger yesterday admitted he has found his career in the Rolling Stones "intellectually undemanding" and sometimes wishes he had stuck to his original idea of becoming a teacher.

Jagger, who will front the Stones in their first ever appearance at Britain's Glastonbury festival today, said he had considered other career options such as being a journalist or a

dancer, although that would have involved "too many injuries".

The 69-year-old, who was still a student at the London School of Economics when the Stones were starting out, said in a BBC interview: "A schoolteacher would have been very gratifying, I'm sure."

"There are millions of things you would have loved to have done, a politician, a journalist... I thought of being a journalist once."

"All these things you

think of when you're a teenager, you can think, well, I would have liked to have done that but that's completely pointless," he added.

"But I don't feel frustrated for a lack of control at all and I'm very pleased with what I've done."

"Everyone wants to have done more things in their lives. It is a slightly intellectually undemanding thing to do, being a rock singer, but, you know, you make the best of it."