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**WITH TODAY'S ISSUE**

**STAR WEEKEND**

**TAXPAYERS HONOURED**

The NBR hands tax cards and crests to 141 top taxpayers

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**GERRARD CALLS TIME**

The ex-Liverpool and England captain retires at 36

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## West voices growing concern

Myanmar wants 'ethnic cleansing'; Amnesty calls for aid groups' access to refugees

AGENCIES

Western nations are increasingly concerned at how Aung San Suu Kyi's government is dealing with violence in Myanmar's divided northwest, with the US envoy to the United Nations privately warning fellow diplomats the country could not handle the crisis on its own.

Samantha Power, Washington's ambassador to the UN, outlined the level of concern at a closed meeting of the United Nations Security Council, held at the United States' request at the body's headquarters in New York last Thursday, diplomats said.

"Initial enthusiasm of (the) international community to let Myanmar continue on this path of reform on its own seems to be dangerous at this stage,"

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Fearful that she and her family might be sent back, Rashida Begum reacts as she sits with her two kids at an unregistered Rohingya camp in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar yesterday. The Rohingya woman, her husband, and their two daughters have been staying there since they entered Bangladesh on Sunday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## GIRLS' AGE FOR MARRIAGE 18 years, with exceptions

Govt decision draws flak

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The cabinet yesterday okayed a draft law for preventing child marriage fixing 18 years as the minimum age for girls to get married but kept a provision for special circumstances under which girls below the age could tie the knot.

Women and rights bodies demanded cancellation of the provision terming it contrary to the very law that has been proposed.

According to the draft, men 21 and above could get married and if either the groom or the bride or both are below 21 and 18, it would be considered a child marriage and an offence.

The government had faced a wave of criticism when it, more than two years ago, planned to lower the minimum age for girls to get married to 16. It had wanted to have the provision in the law that would allow a 16-year-old girl to get married with her parents' consent or a court's consent obtained with justified grounds.

The government backtracked from that position but in the final draft left the scope for special cases.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki said the government would elaborate the grounds for special cases in a policy to be formulated in line

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| TIME PERIOD | MARRIAGE UNDER 15 | MARRIAGE DURING 15-18 | PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGES |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1996-2005   | 15.9%             | 46.4%                 | 62.3%                         |
| 2006-2015   | 5.4%              | 37.8%                 | 43.2%                         |

## Rohingyas sneak in with relatives' help

Dhaka wants international community to step in to resolve the crisis

PINAKI ROY with MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT, Cox's Bazar

All they wanted was to cross the Naf river and enter Bangladesh.

Pir Mohammed and his wife Rashida Begum had to leave behind their two sons and all the belongings in Myanmar.

The couple along with their two daughters aged five and three finally made it to Leda unregistered Rohingya camp in Teknaf on Monday.

"They [Myanmar army] detained our two sons on November 19. I don't know where they are now. So we decided to come here," said Mohammed, who is from Mungnipara in Myanmar's Maungdaw.

The Rohingya man paid brokers Tk

12,000 and crossed the river along with his wife and two daughters. They reached Shah Porir Dweep on Sunday, and arrived at Leda camp the following day.

"Many Rohingyas are coming to the camp and are staying with their relatives," said Dudu Mia, president of the camp's management committee.

He said law enforcers instructed them to prepare a list of newcomers.

The camp has seven blocks where around 2,500 Rohingya families live. The number of dwellers is now around 25,000, but it keeps increasing every day, he added.

Abul Kashem, who has been living there

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FOREIGN MINISTER'S BRIEFING -- PAGE 4

## NEWS ANALYSIS A genocide in progress

World yet to wake up, put Myanmar in the dock

INAM AHMED and SHAKHAWAT LITON

The two pictures will haunt our memories for long -- maybe forever.

In one picture, taken probably in the approaching evening, a whole village is burning in the background, flames leaping into the air. Rickety bamboo structures of houses crumbling, we are sure, with cracking sounds of bamboo poles bursting open.

In the foreground, some women and children are running. A few old men too. Behind them are coming some machete wielding men, their intention all clear. That was Myanmar, probably 2012.

Another picture appeared in this newspaper that was later picked by the international media. Here a hapless

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**TOP QUOTE**

"Now it's very difficult for the Bangladesh government to say the border is open because this would further encourage the government of Myanmar to continue the atrocities and push them out..."

JOHN MCKISSICK  
UNHCR OFFICIAL  
TOLD BBC

## Child marriage declines

Finds new research

REAZ AHMAD

Child marriage in Bangladesh has come down to around 43 per cent from 62.3 per cent in the last two decades, finds a new research by the Washington-based think tank International Food Policy Research Institute.

IFPRI, however, notes that there is no room for complacency as the rate of marriage between 15 and 18 (minimum marriage age for girls) is still high at nearly 38 per cent while the marriages of girls under 15 have declined remarkably.

The biggest decline in marriage from 1996-2005 to 2006-2015 happened in the cases of girls under 15 but in cases of girls getting married between 15 and 18, the decrease is not that great.

The IFPRI findings come at a time when the government endorsed a draft law yesterday prohibiting marriages of girls under 18 but keeping a provision of relaxing the age bar in "special cases". The move has caught flak from women and rights' bodies.

Talking to The Daily Star, Akhter Ahmed, IFPRI country

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