



Syrian men carrying babies make their way through the rubble of destroyed buildings following a reported air strike on the rebel-held Salihin neighbourhood of the northern city of Aleppo, on September 11, 2016.

PHOTO: AFP

# Stories that drove the news

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services through sieges - as a method of war. More than 4.5 million people have fled Syria since the start of the conflict, most of them women and children. Neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have struggled to cope with one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history. About 10 percent of Syrian refugees have sought safety in Europe, sowing political divisions as countries argue over sharing the burden. A further 6.5 million people are internally displaced inside Syria, 1.2 million were driven from their homes in 2015 alone. The UN Security Council has called for the implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communique, which envisages a transitional governing body with full executive powers "formed on the basis of mutual consent". What began as another Arab Spring uprising against an autocratic ruler has mushroomed into a brutal proxy war that has drawn in regional and world powers. The US and Russia led efforts to get representatives of the government and the opposition to attend "proximity talks" in Geneva in January 2016 to discuss a Security Council-endorsed road map for peace, including a ceasefire and a transitional period ending



The Narayanganj City Corporation polls raised hopes for a peaceful political environment.

with elections. Iran and Russia have propped up the Alawite-led government of President Assad and gradually increased their support. Tehran is believed to be spending billions of dollars a year to bolster Assad, providing

military advisers and subsidised weapons, as well as lines of credit and oil transfers. Russia has meanwhile launched an air campaign against Assad's opponents. The Sunni-dominated opposition has attracted varying degrees of support from

its international backers - Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, along with the US, UK and France. In mid December, an evacuation operation, brokered by Russia and Turkey, of the last opposition-held areas of the Syrian city of Aleppo, was suspended only a day after it had started, amid recriminations from the government forces and the opposition.

## THE BATTLE OF NARAYANGANJ

The Narayanganj City Corporation polls attracted a lot of attention in what was seen as a popularity test of the two major political parties of the country. The manner in which the candidates - Awami League's Selina Hayat Ivy and BNP's Sakhawat Hossain Khan - conducted their campaigns, free from mudslinging, raised hopes among the city dwellers and the country at large for a civilised political environment. Tight security measures were put in place by the administration to ensure a peaceful atmosphere for the polls. Voting at Narayanganj was held peacefully without any untoward incident. AL candidate Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy won by a landslide.

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