



Rohingyas inside an unregistered refugee camp in Kutupalong area of Ukhia in Cox's Bazar. The photos were taken recently.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Abused there, beggars here

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now living in misery in four ghettos in Ukhia and Teknaf.

Bangladesh that is playing host, officially and unofficially, to thousands of Rohingyas, is alarmed by the recent influx.

Officially, they are "infiltrators" and law does not allow them to be in the streets and beg alms. Humanity is altogether another thing.

"Benevolent people come by cars and microbuses, stop by, and give us money and winter clothes," said Samuda Khatun, a Rohingya woman aged 52 standing near the highway.

Moulvi Bakhtiar Ahmed, a member of Kutupalong Union Parishad, told

The Daily Star that people travelling to Teknaf and St Martin's tend to provide the distressed Rohingyas with whatever supports they could as an act of compassion.

Areas by the sides of Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway, including Kutupalong, T&T College Gate, New Forest Office, Balukhali, Thaingkhali, Dondomia, Leda and Jadimura, bear testimony of the desperation of these Rohingya people.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Md Ali Hossain explained that charities, individuals or institutions, cannot offer any help to the Rohingyas in the slums without permission from the administration.

Official figures show over 65,000 Rohingya Muslims entered Bangladesh amid rights violations and violence in Myanmar following the killing of some law enforcers at the hands of till to be identified miscreants. The fresh inflow came on top of nearly half a million Rohingyas who have been living mostly without "refugee" status for over a decade.

MIDDLEMEN ACTIVE
While officially Bangladesh pushed back a handful of Rohingyas, humanity played a big part allowing, one way or the other, thousands of them since October.

But taking advantage of the situation, a syndicate of middlemen made

some quick bucks by letting Rohingyas cross into Bangladesh, already a densely populated country. Bangladesh's population density is 1,015 per sqkm, which is three and seven times that in India and China.

Recently, the issue prompted the Prime Minister's Office to ask the home ministry to take stern action against some 168 middlemen. Otherwise, the PMO cautioned, the situation might be "dreadful."

A report by an intelligence agency recommended that apart from alerting the Coast Guard along with the BGB to stop this inflow, the government should figure out the actual number of Rohingyas who entered the country

and bring them all in a single place so that they can be sent back, said sources at the PMO.

On average, over 1,000 Rohingyas have been entering Bangladesh every day since a crackdown in the north of Rakhine state late last year. The previous rate of Rohingya influx was 50 a day, according to the report.

Bangladesh shares with Myanmar a 272km border that falls in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar. Of this, a 52km stretch is by the Naf river. Some areas are so remote and impassable that BGB men cannot patrol there.

There is no barbed-wire fence along the border on the Naf river that divides the two countries, making it easy for

the Rohingya people to cross into Bangladesh illegally.

According to the report, 154 of the 168 middlemen are from Cox's Bazar and the rest from Bandarban. With the help of fishermen and boatmen, they bring in the desperate Rohingya people in return for money.

Relatives of many Rohingyas live in Bangladesh and they too help their relatives in Myanmar to come here.

The middlemen used night time to dodge the BGB patrol and charged up to Tk 5,000 from each to be sheltered.

(Partha Pratim Bhattacharjee and Mohammad Al-Masum Molla in Dhaka and Mohammad Ali Jimnat in Cox's Bazar contributed to this report.)

Myanmar risks credibility by denying abuse

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Myanmar government led by Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi would "appear less and less credible" if it continues being defensive in response to allegations of persistently reported serious human rights violations, reported the Bangkok Post on Saturday from Yangon quoting Kyodo News.

Lee landed in Myanmar on Jan 8 to assess the recent developments in the human rights situation in the country, especially in conflict-riddled Rakhine State.

Human rights abuses by security forces were reported there as the military conducts "clearance operations" following coordinated attacks by hundreds of Muslims in the area on border guard outposts that left nine police officers dead.

It was the fifth visit by the 60-year-old South Korean university professor since she became "special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar" in 2014.

"I encourage the (Myanmar)

Government to appeal to all communities in the country to be more open and understanding of each other, to respect each other instead of scapegoating others for the sake of advancing their own self-interests," Myanmar's media outlet Mizzima.com quoted Lee as saying in her statement.

"It would be particularly important for the security forces to always act within the parameters of the rule of law and in compliance with human rights. It would be crucial for the Government to combat the apparent climate of impunity that seem to have emboldened certain extreme elements by taking the law into their own hands and meting out their own justice. There must be accountability and justice must be done and seen to be done to reassure the ordinary people that no one is above the law," reads her statement shared by Mizzima.

Lee toured Maungdaw in northern Rakhine state for four days, visiting the villages and sites of attacks

and human rights abuses and meeting representatives of the Muslim community who calls themselves Rohingyas as well as government officials and senior police officials to gather facts for her report, to be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2017.

After returning from the tour, Lee met privately with Suu Kyi in the capital Nay Pyi Daw on Wednesday to discuss the security situation in northern Rakhine, which has been under lockdown since the October attacks.

Widespread reports of security forces committing atrocities against Rohingya Muslims have emerged as the military conducts operations in the area following the attacks, raiding Muslim villages to search for the culprits and recover lost arms, reports Bangkok Post.

But the government has been persistently denying virtually all the reports as fabricated news, while preventing the media and international observers from accessing the area.

Lee said the government's current

response to all of these problems seems to be to defend, dismiss and deny, which is not only counterproductive but also drains away optimism in the country.

"But I do believe it is not too late to reverse this trend, and during my visit, I also met many people who are doing their best in very difficult situations. I met groups working tirelessly to bring communities together," Lee added.

Reading her statement to the media on Friday, Lee condemned the deadly Oct 9 attacks on the border guard posts, but said the persistent ill-treatment of the population in the area should be considered.

"I must remind again that these attacks took place in the context of decades of systematic and institutionalised discrimination against the Rohingya population," she said.

Lee said that the government should ensure justice, accountability and the rule of law, to improve the situation in Rakhine state.

Lee said she found during her visit

that the optimism of the people in Myanmar was fading slowly, a year after the historic landslide election win by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy that has since formed the current government.

"It pains me to see when talking to the ordinary people during this visit their feelings of optimism and hope slowly fading just after one year when the whole country was elated with the outcome of the last general elections," she said.

The envoy, however, expressed optimism, saying government officials are committed to improve the situation.

"From my meetings and conversations with the state counsellor and various officials, I can see their genuine commitment and dedication in improving the lives of all in Myanmar," she said.

"Somehow, this commitment has yet to translate into real actions that are felt on the ground," she added.

While Rakhine State has long

been affected by conflicts between ethnic Buddhists and the growing population of minority Muslims there, the latest round of violence in October further escalated the existing tension between the two sides.

The military "clearance operations" caused tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. Nearly 100 people, including 17 security officers, have been killed since the Oct 9 attacks.

During her trip, Lee also visited the country's northern Kachin State and met with villagers at camps displaced by the ongoing civil war between the military and ethnic Kachin rebels.

Lee said the conditions in Kachin and the northern borders were also deteriorating, saying the situation is now "worse than any point in the past three years".

"The situation is now such that even in Myitkyina, the capital of the state and home to over 300,000 people, residents are afraid and now stay home after dark," she said.

Terrorism can have serious psychological consequences

Says ex-minister Ruhul

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's national security is facing a serious threat from terrorism, which is truly an intimidating problem in today's world, said former health minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque yesterday.

"Terrorism has become a threat to life, economy and political and religious pluralism in Bangladesh. Political violence, assassinations of religious persons and bombings in public places of festivity have stunned the country," he said while addressing a seminar at Bijoy Auditorium of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) in Mirpur Cantonment.

BUP organised the seminar on "trauma caused by terrorism" at the initiative of the Medical Studies, and Security and Strategic Studies faculties, said an ISPR release.

Ruhul said terrorism can have a particularly devastating impact on psychological functioning. "It carries with it a potentially greater impact than other disasters on distress responses, behavioural change, and psychiatric illness by virtue of the unique characteristics of terrorism," he said.

He said the terror attack and the threat of a terror event may result in more severe psychological consequences than other types of traumatic events like natural disasters.

The former health minister said the country has witnessed a sharp rise in terrorism since the mid-nineties.

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Rain washes out third day

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game for the day. Weather permitting the game will resume at 10.30am today, half an hour ahead of the scheduled start of play, with New Zealand at 260 for seven chasing Bangladesh's first innings total of 289.

"We still have two more days and I think there is a chance for us to get a positive result. We can't do anything about rain; what we want to do is be focused in the next two days," said debutant wicketkeeper Nurul Hasan while talking to reporters after play was called off.

The day was even more frustrating for the Tigers because they had to stay at the ground for seven hours. The lucky ones were of course the Black Caps who did not even bother to turn up to the venue. Bangladesh arrived at the venue at 9am after that

unpleasant experience on the third day of the opening Test at Wellington, when they stayed at the hotel a bit longer due to drizzle thinking that there would be a delayed start. But by the time they turned up to the Basin Reserve, a venue with first-class drainage facility, they were almost running behind schedule to get ready for the game.

But if that was a scary experience, yesterday's one was very boring for the players since they were not allowed to leave the ground until that final decision from the umpires -- a standard procedure that ICC match referee Javagal Srinath religiously followed.

Since it rained quite heavily for most part of seven hours the players whiled away their time sitting in the dressing room, having fun among themselves.

Muslims pray for peace

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Thousands of people also joined the prayer from the rooftops and terraces of nearby houses, roads and open fields. Many of them called their acquaintances from the venue over cellphones so that they could hear the prayer and many attended the munajat through the electronic media.

Vehicular movement towards the venue was suspended from early yesterday. Many devotees walked around three to 10km to reach the Ijtima ground. Many thousands stopped on the adjoining Dhaka-Mymensingh Tongi-Kaliganj and Abdullahpur-Ashulia roads and joined the munajat from there.

Next year the first phase of the Ijtima would start on January 12 and conclude on January 14 and the second

phase would be held on January 19-21.

This year the first phase was held on January 13-15.

Like the first phase devotees from different countries and a huge number of women took part in the Akheri Munajat.

Different kinds of makeshift business establishments were set up around the Ijtima ground like food, old papers and mats to seat, water for ablution, water pots, mobile charger and even space to seat to attend the Akheri Munajat.

Organised by Tabligh Jamaat, the first Ijtima was held in 1946 at the Kakrail Mosque near the Ramna Park in the capital. In 1966, the venue was shifted to Tongi due to an increased number of devotees.

PM blasts

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allegation of firing shots at the boy.

Explaining the October 2 incident, Hasina told the House, "The fact is they [criminals] were lying in ambush there to kill him [Liton]. Liton fired blanks to protect himself. Why would he open fire to kill the child? Sourav's father is an Awami League man. Liton had good relations with that family."

"This may be possible that Sourav got injured when the blank shots were fired. But there is a big confusion about it."

The PM said the media gave Liton a bad name centring the incident.

"I feel so bad that his [Liton] firearms were seized following the incident. He told several times that he himself took care of his own security wherever he went. He also said he might be killed," the premier said, adding that the firearms of his wife were also seized after the incident.

Police personnel, who were deployed at Liton's house to provide him with security, were withdrawn for the local elections, she said.

Hasina noted that Liton became an AL lawmaker in an area known as a stronghold of cadres of Jamaat-Shibir and the BNP.

Condemning the killing, she said Liton's killers must be given due punishment. "Such a brutal murder cannot be tolerated... we have taken a firm stance against terrorism and militancy. We must track down Liton's killers and hand down due punishment to them."

The premier also assured that her government would ensure security of all, including the lawmakers. "We will keep everyone safe. We must try our best to ensure it."

Earlier, several AL MPs and a Jatiya Party lawmaker took part in the discussion and castigated the media for what they said was yellow journalism over the incident involving Liton and the 10-year-old boy.

Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah

said, "Press became mad [centring the incident]. We lost to the media."

Describing the incident, he said, "Liton had actually never imagined that the blank shots he fired for self protection would hit Sourav."

"He and his wife failed to get back the firearms despite repeated attempts. He could have saved himself if he had got back the firearms."

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said that following the incident, a section of the media portrayed him as a bad person.

Chief Whip of Parliament ASM Feroz said the media labelled him as a criminal. AL MP Jahangir Kabir Nanok also came down hard on the media, and asked why it portrayed Liton as a criminal.

Jatiya Party MP Kazi Feroz Rashid said, "The way the media writes about us, it seems we have become a laughing-stock."

"Even if we bump against someone in a gathering, it becomes a news item."

AL MP Shamim Osman said, "He [Liton] actually died [not literally] the very day he came under attack of yellow journalism."

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed was the only exception who didn't blast the media.

"We just hope the media will write the truth," he said, adding that he didn't want to speak against the media on the matter.

Several other MPs blamed BNP-Jamaat cliques for Liton's murder and urged the authorities concerned to bring the perpetrators to book.

Others who spoke included Finance Minister AMA Muhith, AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak and AL MP Mir Shawkat Ali Badsha.

Following the discussion, the House unanimously adopted the obituary motion.

Suranjit's aide

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Dhaka Divisional Security Commandant Enamul Huq were in the vehicle which was reportedly going to Suranjit's Dhanmondi home.

BGB personnel arrested the three. Suranjit eventually had to resign following the scandal.

After hearing 20 prosecution witnesses, judge (in-charge) Md Ataur Rahman of the Special Judge Court-4 pronounced the judgment and cancelled Faruq's bail.

The court acquitted him of the charge for concealing wealth.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Assistant Director Rashedur Reza filed the case against Faruq with Ramna Model Police Station for his alleged involvement in acquiring wealth of Tk 32,50,000 through illegal means and concealing wealth of Tk 3,04,980 from the ACC.

After the investigation, the ACC pressed charges against Faruq on November 26, 2012. The court framed charges against him on May 16, 2013.

Dubai

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transfer money. First of all, none of the shops had money transfer as permitted activity in their licences and they didn't have the mandatory approvals from the UAE Central Bank," said Lootah.

Lootah added that such practices are harmful not only to the UAE economy and local businesses but also to people tricked by such offers.

"First of all, such illegal channels deny accurate information on the flow of cash [and thus harm the economy]. Secondly, they deprive authorised money exchanges and banks of their deserved share of business, and thirdly, customers depending on such illegal channels risk losing their hard-earned money," he added.