

ROHINGYA RESETTLEMENT UN wants to negotiate with US, Canada

REUTERS, Cox's Bazar

The United Nations' refugee agency has asked Bangladesh to allow it to negotiate with the United States, Canada and some European countries to resettle around 1,000 Rohingya Muslims living in the South Asian nation, a senior official at the agency said.

Tens of thousands of Rohingya live in Bangladesh after fleeing Buddhist-majority Myanmar since the early 1990s, and their number has been swelled by an estimated 69,000 escaping an army crackdown in northern Rakhine State in recent months.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would push for resettlement of those most in need, despite growing resistance in some developed countries, particularly the United States under President Donald Trump, UNHCR's Bangladesh representative, Shinji Kubo, told Reuters yesterday.

"UNHCR will continue to work with the authorities concerned, including in the United States," Kubo said.

"Regardless of the change in government or government policies, I think UNHCR has a clear responsibility to pursue a protection-oriented resettlement programme."

Kubo said 1,000 Rohingya refugees had been identified as priorities for resettlement on medical grounds or because they have been separated from their family members living abroad.

"Resettlement will always be a challenging thing because only a small number of resettlement opportunities are being allocated by the international community at the moment," Kubo said in an interview. "But it's our job to try to consult with respective countries based on the protection and humanitarian needs of these individuals."

H T Imam, a political adviser to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said the resettlement proposal was "unrealistic" due to reluctance in the United States and Europe to take further Muslim refugees.

Reuters reported this month that officials at an Australian immigration centre in Papua New Guinea were increasing pressure on asylum seekers to return to their home countries voluntarily, including offering large sums of money, amid fears a deal for the United States to take refugees had fallen through.

Canada, Australia and the United States were the top providers of asylum to Rohingya Muslims who came to Bangladesh from Myanmar before Dhaka stopped the programme around 2012. A Bangladesh government official said it was feared the programme would encourage more people from Myanmar to use it as a transit country to seek asylum in the West.

Canada has said it would welcome those fleeing persecution, terror and war, after Trump put a four-month hold on allowing refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries into the United States, an order since suspended by a US district judge.

The UNHCR supports around 34,000 refugees living in two government-registered camps in the Bangladesh coastal district of Cox's Bazar, but a greater number of Rohingya live in makeshift settlements nearby, unregistered and officially ineligible to receive international aid.

China's 'last

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Zhongdong village is very cut off with the nearest town some three hours away.

However all of that is set to change with the local tourism authority finally opening a 15 million yuan (£1.7 million) cable car that will be free for the cave's residents.

It's claimed that the cave is China's last cave village.

The families' only access to the outside world is via a footpath winding through Guizhou province's mountain terrain.

However on May 1, their lives are about to change with free access to a cable car.

The new addition will be a relief for villagers who have to carry all food and other products that they are unable to grow themselves up the mountain.

Even large furniture items are carried the three-hour-long slog up with mountain. Despite the positive changes to their way of life, some residents are weary of the new cable car.

22-year-old Wang Xingguo feels that the cable car will not be convenient as they will not be allowed to bring poultry into the cabins.

He said: "They said they'd build us a road 15 years ago but then they discovered this was a place they could make money off and so chose not to build it."

However other villagers such as Wei Xiaohong hopes the new transportation will bring the young people back who originally left for larger cities to find work. The cave used to house a school which had 200 students from across the region. However it was closed by authorities some time ago.

Wei's 12-year-old son has to walk two hours to class.



Newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda, 3rd from right, and other election commissioners pay tributes to the Liberation War martyrs at the National Martyrs Memorial at Savar on the outskirts of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

EC to ensure participation

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commissioners sat with senior election officials for the first time at the EC secretariat in the capital, said sources who were at the meeting.

"The new CEC and other commissioners have given us a message that they will work for gaining trust of all stakeholders and political parties," said EC's Additional Secretary Moklesur Rahman.

A series of elections will be held in the coming weeks, including tomorrow's municipal election in the hill district Rangamati's Baghaichhari.

Moreover, by-elections for chairman and vice-chairman posts in 11 upazilas, by-polls in four municipalities and elections in three more upazilas are due on March 6.

"They [CEC and election commissioners] have asked us to be strict against any irregularities and violence in the forthcoming local polls," EC's Secretary Muhammad Abdullah told The Daily Star.

Parliamentary by-polls in Gaibandha-1 constituency will be held on March 22. The by-election in Sunamganj-2 constituency that fell vacant after the death of Awami League leader Suranjit Sengupta and Comilla City Corporation elections will take place soon too.

More importantly, the incumbent

commission will oversee the 2019 national elections.

It took the local polls seriously, which was reflected when an election commissioner promptly left Dhaka for Rangamati to monitor the overall election atmosphere in Baghaichhari municipality, Abdullah said last evening.

Earlier, talking to The Daily Star, experts and officials concerned expressed their view that this job is a litmus test for the new EC that would like to win public trust through holding free and fair polls.

The new CEC and four other commissioners yesterday began their day by placing wreaths at the National Mausoleum in Savar.

"Our tasks are really challenging. We will work with sincerity and continue our efforts to perform duties successfully," Huda told journalists there.

President Abdul Hamid on February 6 appointed the CEC and election commissioners -- Mahub Talukder, Md Rafiqul Islam, Begum Kabita Khanam and Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury -- for the next five years. They were sworn in on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, sources at the Bangabhaban and the EC secretariat said they may hold a courtesy call on President Hamid on February 19 or 20.

WB has to win back trust

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as chief guest the inauguration of a training programme for the district and sessions judges at the capital's Judicial Administration Training Institute.

Nobody wants the repetition of what the WB did to Bangladesh, he said, adding that the bank should apologise to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the people of the country for its action.

In 2011, main financier World Bank raised an allegation of "corruption conspiracy" in the Padma bridge project and eventually withdrew from it. Later, Canadian police sued some top officials of SNC-Lavalin, a Canadian construction firm.

Last Friday, a Canadian court, however, dismissed the case.

Replying to a query, the minister said the agreement between Bangladesh and World Bank did not mention that legal

action could be taken, in case the loan was cancelled.

He declined to comment on a recent High Court rule on the formation of an enquiry commission to identify the people who made up "false stories" about the corruption conspiracy involving the project.

On February 15, the HC issued a suomoto ruling, asking the government to explain in two weeks why it should not be directed to form an enquiry commission to identify the "culprits who made up the false stories".

In the rule, the court also asked the authorities to explain why they should not be ordered to bring those behind such stories to justice.

Law Secretary ASSM Zahirul Haque and JATI's Director General Justice Khondker Musa Khaled also spoke to the inaugural function.

IS suicide bombing

FROM PAGE 1
doctor Sikandar Maindro said an emergency had been declared in Karachi hospitals.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif swiftly issued a statement saying an attack on Sufis was considered a "direct threat".

Military chief General Qamer Javed Bajwa warned: "Each drop of (the) nation's blood shall be avenged, and avenged immediately. No more restraint for anyone."

Pakistan has seen a dramatic improvement in security in the past two years, but a series of attacks this week -- most claimed by the Pakistani Taliban -- has shaken the growing sense of optimism.

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, said it had carried out a suicide bombing in Lahore which killed 13 people and wounded dozens more Monday, days after the group had vowed to launch a fresh offensive.

Four suicide bombers struck north-west Pakistan on Wednesday, killing six people and unnerving civilians further.

"The past few days have been hard, and my heart is with the victims. But we can't let these events divide us, or scare us," Sharif said in his statement.

"We have faced tougher circumstances, and still persevered."

The attacks underscored Pakistan's struggle to stamp out extremism, which was stepped up after the country's deadliest ever attack, a Pakistani Taliban assault on a school in Peshawar in 2014 which left more than 150 people dead -- mostly children.

The army intensified a long-awaited

operation in the semi-autonomous tribal areas, where militants had previously operated with impunity, and the government launched a vaunted National Action Plan against extremism.

Emboldened Pakistanis are once again attending public gatherings and the growing confidence is palpable after more than a decade of militant attacks.

But critics have repeatedly warned that the crackdown does not address the root causes of extremism, and groups like the Pakistani Taliban -- and, increasingly, Islamic State -- can still carry out spectacular assaults.

Rohingyas

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Saiful, also the chief of the relief distribution coordination committee, said the relief aid would be given out to 15,000 Rohingya families from four places. Of them, 5,000 Rohingya families are in Teknaf and the rest are in Ukhia.

During the relief distribution programme, ADC Saiful Islam, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society General Secretary BMM Mazharul Hoque, its director Nazmul Azam Khan and Ukhia Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Mainuddin were present.

Talking to journalists, Malaysian lawmaker Rahim said Bangladesh has shown great sympathy to the helpless Rohingyas by sheltering them. He said the Malaysian government would send more relief items to Bangladesh.

IS car bomb

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Security sources said the vehicle which blew up was parked in a crowded street full of garages and used car dealers, in Hayy al-Shurta in the southwest of the city.

The death toll could climb further as many of the wounded are in critical condition, a doctor said.

The bombing is the second to hit car markets this week, suggesting the group has found it easier to leave vehicles laden with explosives in places where hundreds of other vehicles are parked.

A suicide bomber detonated a pick-up truck on Wednesday in the Sadr City suburb in the east of the capital, killing at least 15 people. That explosion took place in a street full of used car dealers.

US-backed Iraqi forces have dislodged Islamic State from most of the cities it captured in 2014 and 2015. The militants also control parts of Syria.

Iraqi government forces last month captured eastern Mosul and are now preparing an offensive on the western side that remains under the militants' control. The city is divided in two halves by the Tigris river.

Drone

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science and technology ministry. The work began immediately after the ministry approved it in the 2015-16 fiscal year. Later, Mahmud took permission from the civil aviation ministry for flying the drone.

The brainchild of Mahmud can fly up to 300 metres and around 38 kilometres an hour with three litres of pesticide. Once fully charged, it can stay in the air for 25 minutes.

"Our agriculture sector will benefit immensely if we use the drone commercially," he said.

Asked, Prof Shamim said, "It might be a little difficult for a non-technical person to use the drone. Once we get the clearance, we have a plan to hand over the drone to the Department of Agricultural Extension at first. Farmers will use the device on the instructions of the local agriculture officers."

"If the process is monitored properly, it is possible to prevent the over-use of pesticides in the field," he said, expressing hope that they would get full government support in this regard.

In 2015, agriculturalists used drones to monitor farmlands in the southern districts of Barisal and Patuakhali for the first time in Bangladesh.

Equipped with a set of cameras, the radio-controlled unmanned aerial vehicles rapidly assessed the condition of crops on a large scale without going through the tedious and time-consuming manual sampling.

Skipping

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Sultanpur village in Fatepur union of the sadar upazila.

Arabic teacher Mizanur Rahman called her in, put her left hand on a table and hit it with a duster as a punishment, Fahima said.

Mizanur went on to even warn the girl's family not to complain anywhere in this connection.

The mobile phone of the teacher was found switched off.

Maulana Mainuddin, principal of the madrasa, said the authority served a show-cause notice to the teacher. If the allegation against him is proved, action will be taken.

No complaint has yet been made by the girl's family, said Illias Hossain, officer-in-charge of Jessore Kotwali Police Station. If any complaint is made, legal action will be taken against the teacher, he added.

False and baseless

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Prof Yunus about the Padma Bridge, tax evasion and illegal money transfer abroad.

In the last several days, the statement said, there have been strong accusations made against Prof Yunus by the top lawmakers of the country, including the prime minister, her son and the ICT adviser to the PM as well as a number of ministers and lawmakers through posts on Facebook, on the floor of parliament, at press conference as well as in policy meetings, where he has been accused in harsh language and terms of being behind creating false allegations of corruption in the Padma Bridge project and the suspension of funds for the Padma Bridge.

"We condemn the false and baseless accusation against Professor Yunus."

On the contrary, it said, Prof Yunus made repeated statements beginning as early as in 2011 that he supports the Padma Bridge project, stating that it is the dream of millions of people of Bangladesh, and would never stand in the way of its realisation.

"He [Yunus] has repeated this on

Dhaka

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of the total global attributable deaths, shows the report.

"We are seeing increasing air pollution problems worldwide, and this new report and website details why that air pollution is a major contributor to early death," said Dan Greenbaum, president of the HEI, which prepared the report in cooperation with the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, and the University of British Columbia.

The study finds that increasing exposure and a growing and ageing population mean India now rivals China in having the highest air pollution health burdens in the world, with both countries facing some 1.1 million early deaths from air pollution in 2015.

Use of solid fuel, coal-fired power plants, and open burning of agricultural and other waste are among the most important contributors to outdoor air pollution.

Among the 10 most populous countries and also those in the European Union, Bangladesh and India now have the highest exposures to PM2.5, having experienced the steepest increase since 2010.

many occasions including as recently as January 28, 2017, when the honourable prime minister accused him on the floor of parliament.

"We reiterate this one more time."

In addition to the accusations of Padma Bridge, several newspapers reported quoting unnamed sources that the National Board of Revenue has imposed a fine on Tk 69 lakh on Professor Yunus, the statement read.

"This is also an untrue statement. Professor Yunus does not have any outstanding tax claim or fine pending payment. We have repeated on a number of occasions that Professor Yunus pays all of his taxes fully and on due time. All relevant information regarding his earnings and taxes are in the possession of the NBR."

"He has within his lawful rights contested certain tax claims made recently which he felt were unjustified in a court of law. The matter is still with the court, and he will comply with whatever decision the court takes."

The statement also protested another accusation regarding the transfer of money abroad by Grameen Trust.

Dhaira, the parasite shrub

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reddish look with the hanging Dhaira flowers. Could the mango flowers look thus, I wondered. The withered flowers would fall under the tree, which would provide playthings for us. I sort of rediscovered that flower of my childhood in the National Botanical Garden. They are thriving hale and hearty in a couple of tall trees in the National Botanical Garden and Ramna Park of Dhaka. Finding Dhaira takes a careful spotter as tall branches of grown up trees are where they grow and live. A casual look at the tree gives the impression that a tiny bush of live creepers have settled on the branches!

These are parasitic shrubs. They are (Dendrophthoe falcata) better known as manda or bandha. Full-grown mango trees are their favorite address. At times they are found in raintree, mahogany, rubberbat or jackfruit trees. Nawajesh Ahmed in his book Banglar Banophool reports seeing them in large numbers in the mango orchards in Chapainawabganj. Another variety is fairly available in the Himalayan belt. Their bright yellow flowers come into blossom at the very outset of winter. They remain largely

invisible for the rest of the year. The roots clutch the home branches. The thick leaves spread crosswise. The flowering season spans from December to April. The tubes of the tufted flowers are bright red with greenish mouths, four long roundish with delicate, about three cm tall, completely blooming petals are hairy and deep reddish in colour. They breed through birds. The seeds spread wherever the birds rub their beaks after having the fruits. At times the aggression of this plant may harm the host tree. The bark and leaves are of great medicinal value. There are 31 species of them in the world under this genus. They are found in the largest numbers in Australia, Africa and Asia. Seven species are found in greater India. They have basic similarities with a few species of ficus. Around seventy years ago an extensive research on the worth of Dhaira was conducted in a number of countries including India. The basic difference of Dhaira with other trees is that they depend on other trees for their growth and survival. In that sense, they are similar to orchid and ficus. Ficus, however, can grow without the help of other trees.

Myanmar ends

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The military and police have separately set up a team to investigate alleged crimes after Suu Kyi promised to probe UN allegations of atrocities against the Muslim minority.

More than 1,000 Rohingya Muslims may have been killed in the crackdown, two senior UN officials dealing with refugees fleeing the violence told Reuters last week.

A Myanmar presidential spokesman has said the latest reports from military commanders were that fewer than 100 people had been killed in the counterinsurgency operation.

Rohingya Muslims have faced discrimination in Buddhist-majority Myanmar for generations. They are regarded as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, entitled only to limited rights and some 1.1 million of them live in apartheid-like conditions in northwestern Myanmar.

"There can be no excuse for excessive force, for abuses of fundamental human rights and basic criminality. We have shown that we are ready to act where there is clear evidence of abuses," he told a group of diplomats and UN representatives in a meeting, according to the statement.

Two senior officials from Myanmar's President Office and the Ministry of Information confirmed that the army operation in northern Rakhine had ended but said the military force remained in the region to maintain "peace and security".

Air Force

FROM PAGE 20
Ostad Bazlur Rahman Badal (culture), Khalil Kazi OBE (social service), Shamsuzzaman Khan and late Prof Lalit Mohan Nath (research and training) and Prof Mohammad Asaduzzaman (public administration).