



## US acting asst secy of state arrives today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A senior official of the US Department of State arrives in Dhaka this morning to discuss various issues of mutual interest with top government officials.

During her one and a half days' visit, Alice G Wells, acting assistant secretary of state for south and central Asian affairs, will meet the prime minister, foreign minister, PM's advisers and other high officials to discuss development cooperation, trade and investment, terrorism and extremism, energy and global issues, among others.

This will be the first visit of a US high official since President Donald Trump's inauguration.

Earlier, Lisa Curtis, deputy assistant to President Trump and senior director for south and central Asia at the White House, was scheduled to visit Bangladesh on July 30, but it was postponed at the last moment citing "bad weather" in Washington.

On arrival in Dhaka this morning, Wells will first hold her meeting with the foreign minister. They will discuss a wide range of bilateral issues during the meeting.

After the meeting, she will meet separately PM's International Affairs

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## FILLING STATION

### Four killed in roof collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Four workers were killed and six others injured as the roof of an under-construction filling station collapsed in Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj yesterday.

The dead are Nazmul Mia, 18, Mizan Mia, Abu Sayed, 40, and Dulal Mia, 50, said Ashuganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Amirul Qaiser.

Some ten labourers were working at Sayera Filling Station in Bahadurpur area beside the Dhaka-Sylhet highway. All of a sudden, the roof of the filling station came down and fell on the workers around 2:30pm, said witnesses and fire service officials.

Dulal died on the spot.

Locals rushed in and took the nine injured men to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital where doctors declared the three others dead, said the UNO.

All the deceased were from areas near the spot.

## EU team in Dhaka

It'll negotiate terms for sending back illegal Bangladeshi migrants

REZAUL KARIM

The European Union will begin talks with Dhaka today to negotiate a process to be followed to deport more than one lakh irregular Bangladeshi migrants living in 28 EU countries for years.

A high-powered EU delegation led by Paola Pampaloni, deputy managing director for the Asia and Pacific of EU Foreign Service, arrived in Dhaka to decide quick return of undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants living in EU member countries since 2008.

Bangladesh is one of the top 30 countries whose nationals have gone to different EU countries in large numbers through illegal channels and are now staying there without any document.

Of those illegal immigrants, more than one lakh are Bangladeshis, who were detained between 2008 and 2016, according to the statistics of Eurostat. They have been labelled as "economic migrants".

According to the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 5,650 Bangladeshis arrived in Italy from the beginning of this year until 22 May, accounting for 11 per cent of all arrivals of undocumented migrants to the country.

The EU has not yet given any list or specific number of irregular migrants.

The delegation comprising high officials from the EU Foreign Service

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**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT... Some Rohingyas, including a child, being pushed back at the border near Ghumdhum in Bandarban's Naikhyangchhari upazila. A 70-year-old Rohingya man, Aminullah, and his wife, Motinnesa, break down after being ordered to go back. A BGB man tries to help an emotionally overcome Rohingya woman. Another woman, Nur Begum, in tears at the checkpoint, and a Rohingya man walking back to Myanmar with his son on his back at the same border point. The photos were taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## In fear, in flight

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) tried to send them back yesterday, but they had to return as Myanmar troops allegedly opened fire.

"Most likely they [troops in Myanmar] set fire to our houses as we saw smoke billowing from the other side of the hillocks where our village is located," said Dil Mohammed, pointing towards Myanmar side.

Ruma Yasmin, 17, another refugee from Dekibunia, was at the temporary camp along with her mother, sister and two brothers.

She was seen trying to call somebody over her cell phone. Asked whom she was calling, Ruma said it's her brother Yahiya, left behind in their village.

After several attempts, she could reach him over phone and learnt that he was still safe and military personnel were patrolling the village. Both were using a Bangladeshi phone carrier.

According to locals, over one thousand people came to the Jolpaitoli point from those villages of Myanmar. Now only three hundred of them are at the makeshift camp as others managed to melt into Rohingya people living in different Bangladeshi villages.

The UN refugee agency said more than 3,000 had arrived in the past three days following the fresh outbreak of conflict between Rohingya militants and Myanmar troops in Rakhine State, bordering Bangladesh.

"UNHCR and other UN Agency teams in registered camps estimated that more than 3,000 'newly arrived' individuals were seen in and around the camp," said UNHCR spokesman Joseph Tripura, AFP wrote.

"Many of the new arrivals are women and children including some un-accompanied and/or separated children."

Meanwhile, Bangladesh yesterday lodged a strong protest for terming Myanmar's own insurgents as "Bengali terrorists" and asked the neighbouring

country to refrain from using such "unacceptable" words.

The foreign ministry called Aung Myint, chargé d'affaires at Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka yesterday, second time since Saturday.

Bangladesh also proposed a joint operation by the security forces of the two countries against Myanmar's terrorists, militants, extremists or any other anti-state forces on the border.

Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury, director general (Southeast Asia wing) at the ministry, called the chargé d'affaires at his office and conveyed these two specific message.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a senior ministry official told The Daily Star that the government made the specific proposal regarding the joint operation to assist Myanmar.

Following its "zero tolerance" policy on violent extremism and terrorism of any form, Bangladesh also assured Myanmar of its continued cooperation in dealing with these challenges.

After the latest flare-up of violence, the Myanmar army in its statements used the state's description for Rohingya militants, mentioning them as "Bengali terrorists".

In one such statement, Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, said, "The military and police members are fighting back together against extremist Bengali terrorists."

The Rohingyas are denied citizenship and are seen by many in Myanmar as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, despite claiming roots in the region that go back centuries, with communities marginalised and occasionally subjected to communal violence.

As militants besieged border posts in northern Rakhine State early Friday, the army also said, "In the early morning at 1:00am, the extremist Bengali insurgents started their attack on the police post ... with the man-made

bombs and small weapons."

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a group previously known as Harakah al-Yaqin, claimed responsibility for the offensive, and warned of more.

In an exclusive interview with Asia Times, a representative of the group, who identified himself simply as Abdullah, said its August 25 attacks were staged in "self-defence" and would continue until Rohingya rights are restored.

He insisted that the military crackdown had gathered pace following the reinforcement of security forces by an estimated 400 troops of the crack 33rd Light Infantry Division on August 10-11, the newspaper reports.

It had left them "no choice other than to strike back in defence of civilian communities" facing what he described as further killings and abuses by security forces.

**INFLEXION**

Unconfirmed sources claim that over a thousand Rohingyas belonging to 261 families entered Bangladesh through Ghumdhum, Tombru, Jolpaitoli, Reju Aamtali, Baishpari and Kolabagan points of Naikhyangchhari border just in the last two days.

And a few thousand thronged no man's land trying to cross the border.

"So far we have made a list of 261 families among whom we distributed dry food," said an official working with the World Food Programme, wishing anonymity.

Refugees are also entering through some other points, including Unichiaprang, Lambabil and Ulubunia in Teknaf, Anzuman Para and Rahmaterbil in Ukhaia of Cox's Bazar.

Sources also say BGB gathered around five hundred Rohingyas in No 1 Sluice Gate area of Unichiaprang yesterday.

Another 75 along with two brokers were detained while trying to

enter Kutupalong camp for registered refugees on Sunday night.

Besides, BGB has pushed back a total of 475 Rohingya people to Myanmar, said SM Arifur Islam, director of BGB Battalion-2 in Teknaf.

"After providing them with food and water, we have sent back the Rohingyas to their country as they were trying to enter Bangladesh territory illegally."

Bangladesh's foreign ministry had earlier said that thousands of "unarmed Myanmar nationals" had assembled near the border to enter the country.

The ministry summoned the Myanmar's charge d' affairs also on Saturday and expressed "serious concern" over the recent happenings, including the fresh entry of Myanmar nationals into Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, BGB Director General of BGB Maj Gen Abul Hossain said combined initiatives were taken to prevent Rohingyas from entering Bangladesh.

"We have deployed forces at critical points through which people are able to enter the country's territory... But we would not be able to deploy our personnel at all the border points," he told reporters following a programme at the BGB headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.

He said BGB members have been kind to the refugees.

About the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, the BGB boss said, "We have seen flickering flames on the other side [of the border], heard sounds of firing..."

Asked about holding talks with Myanmar's Border Guard Police (BGP), he said they discussed the situation with the BGP on Sunday.

Rohingyas have been fleeing Myanmar to Bangladesh since early 1990s and around 4,00,000 of them now live in this country.

Around 33,000 registered refugees

live in two camps of Cox's Bazar and the rest in different areas of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

**11 MORE ADMITTED TO CMCH**  
Eleven Rohingyas -- nine bullet-hit and two with burn injuries -- were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) since early hours till afternoon yesterday.

Myanmar troops shot them while they were fleeing towards Bangladesh border, said police, quoting the injured.

With the eleven, the total number of injured Rohingyas admitted to CMCH stands at 17. Mohammad Musa, 23, who suffered bullet injuries while fleeing alleged police action, died at the hospital on Saturday morning.

## African, EU leaders meet for migration summit

AFP, Paris

Leaders from seven African and European countries meet in Paris yesterday for a mini-summit to discuss how to ease the EU's migrant crisis.

French President Emmanuel Macron has invited his counterparts from Niger and Chad as well as the head of the Libyan unity government Fayez al-Sarraj, whose countries lie on the main transit route for migrants heading to Europe.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Spanish and Italian prime ministers Mariano Rajoy and Paolo Gentiloni, and Europe's top diplomat, Federica Mogherini, will join the talks.

European nations are keen to offer development aid and funding to their African partners in return for help in stemming the flow of economic migrants and asylum seekers.

## They will shoot

FROM PAGE 1

The group crossed the border on Sunday fleeing police attacks and has been going from one camp to another on foot since. Requesting not to be named, they said their worst fear now is to be pushed back.

"We watched the BGB men on the border very carefully for hours. We came across when BGB presence was thin," the man said, and the group resumed its journey on foot again.

In two official camps in Ukhaia and Kutupalang, there are some 32,000

registered Rohingyas. Besides, two unregistered camps in the areas were set up to cope with a similar exodus of Rohingyas late last year when Myanmar military launched a crackdown on them.

Nearly 87,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh at the time. Both the unregistered camps are already crammed.

Travelling towards Jolpaitoli border area in Bandarban's Ghumdhum, this staff photographer saw many such groups of Rohingyas on foot,

mostly women in veils and children.

Their dishevelled faces and scared looks told that they were Rohingyas.

About a dozen BGB men were in Jolpaitoli, some four kilometres off Kutupalang camp. The crowd of Rohingyas could be close to a couple of thousands. They were pleading with the BGB men not to push them back to Myanmar. The BGB men, in response, said they did not have a choice and it was their official instruction to push them back.

"BGB men are turning them back,"

a rickshaw-puller said, but it couldn't be verified.

Abu Bakar Siddiqui, who was a union parishad chairman in Myanmar, said, "We fled fearing for life. We want to die here in Bangladesh, but not be killed like animals in Myanmar."

An elderly man was wailing loudly. Kala Mia, 60, who crossed the border with his daughter and three grandchildren, pleaded, "Please don't send us back to Myanmar. Let us be here in the open. They will shoot us if we go

back."

Noor Begum, 35, said her 12-year-old son was killed by Myanmar police and she managed to flee with a two-year-old son a couple of days ago. Beside her was a couple -- Aminullah, 82 and Motinnesa, 70 -- lying on the ground -- seemingly unable to walk.

On the way back to Ukhaia, another group of Rohingyas was seen. As this correspondent bought some dry food for them, they began to compete each other to get a hold of something.

## Pope pulls for Rohingyas

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ambassador to Bangladesh, at a press conference at Ramna Cathedral in the capital.

The Pope had on multiple occasions slammed the persecution of Rohingyas in Buddhist majority Myanmar.

"Pope is following the situation of Rohingyas in Myanmar. He expressed concern over the issue," Kocherry said.

On Sunday, the spiritual head of the

world's 128 crore Catholics said, "Sad news has reached us of the persecution of our Rohingya brothers and sisters."

"I would like to express my full closeness to them -- and let all of us ask the Lord to save them, and to raise up men and women of good will to help them, who shall give them their full rights."

At yesterday's press conference, Cardinal Patrick D' Rozario said the

Pope is always compassionate about homeless people. "We all have a moral duty to help them."

Meanwhile, the foreign ministry in a press release said the Pope is visiting Bangladesh at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"During the visit, Pope Francis is expected to meet President Md Abdul Hamid, the premier and Christian communities in Bangladesh," it added.

Francis will be the third Pope visiting Bangladesh. The first visit was by Pope Paul VI in November 1970. The next one was by Pope John Paul II in November 1986.

Cardinal Patrick D' Rozario observed that Bangladesh has made good socio-economic progress and has a unique tradition of harmony among different communities.

"The Pope will highlight these

values, our achievements and our expectations to the world," said Cardinal Patrick, who was appointed as the first ever cardinal from Bangladesh in November last year.

"The visit will help further improve our inherent harmonious living and peace."

A website, www.popebd.info, on the papal visit themed "Harmony and Peace" was launched at the press conference.