

AIRSPACE VIOLATION Dhaka lodges protest with Myanmar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has strongly protested against the recent instances of violation of its air space by Myanmar helicopters. In a diplomatic note sent to the Embassy of Myanmar in Dhaka on September 1, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested against repeated intrusions of their helicopters on August 27-28 and September 1. This September 1 morning, Myanmar helicopters violated Bangladesh's air space near Ukhla on three occasions, says a foreign ministry statement. The ministry stressed that such instances of incursion into Bangladesh air space by Myanmar helicopters run contrary to good-neighbourly relations and could lead to unwarranted situations. The ministry further emphasised that while Bangladesh has been cooperating with Myanmar in the security of such instances of a minority of sovereignty might affect the existing understanding and cooperation between the two sides. Bangladesh demanded that Myanmar take immediate measures to prevent recurrences of such incursions in future.

ROHINGYA'S 'CENSORSHIP' BBC Burma pulls TV deal

ABC, Yangon

The BBC's Burmese language service yesterday said it was pulling a broadcasting deal with a popular Myanmar television channel citing "censorship" as the two partners clashed over coverage of such instances of a minority of sovereignty might affect the existing understanding and cooperation between the two sides. Bangladesh demanded that Myanmar take immediate measures to prevent recurrences of such incursions in future.

Since April 2014, BBC Burmese broadcast a daily news programme on Myanmar, but diplomats said the BBC's statement did not detail what the content was censored. But in a statement MNTV, a joint venture between private and state media, said it began pulling orders to comply with government orders over "restricted" words daily viewers. The BBC Burmese program sent news that included wordings that are restricted by the state government," the statement said.

A station official said the problematic words are "Rohingya". That's why we cannot broadcast their service," the employee said, asking not to be named. The Rohingya are a stateless Muslim minority in Myanmar's west-border state of Rakhine. They have faced persecution and have fled in droves in recent years. Most international media call them Rohingya because the community has long self-identified that way. Myanmar's government and most media here called them Bengalis, portraying them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh despite many living in their own generations.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chief Justice SK Sinha exchange greetings at the Gono Bhaban on Eid day.

CJ joins PM's reception

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Party Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam echoed Khasru's views and said the meeting had no "negative or positive impact on anything". Problems have surfaced due to the cabinet post-inauguration made by chief justice [in the verdict]. Our stance [on the issue] will be same as before. We will seek review of the judgment and demand that some of the observations made by the chief justice be expunged," he said.

The cabinet post-inauguration made by Chief Justice Sinha's general secretary, Abdur Rahman, also found nothing in the meeting. "This situation can't continue. We will discuss the issue and raise our position [on the issue] in the next parliament session."

Amendment in 2014, the 16th Amendment to the Constitution had restored parliament's powers to remove SC judges for misconduct or incapacity. Last year, the High Court declared the amendment illegal and the decision was upheld by the SC on July 15 this year. The court released the full verdict on Aug 1.

Since then, the ruling AL, including party president Sheikh Hasina, have been criticising and the BNP has been praising the verdict. Some of the AL leaders even demanded removal of the CJ.

World concerned, but result zero

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The brutal actions by the Rohingya meet the criteria of genocide as set by the UN in 1948, but the UN and world leaders still could not take any effective steps to stop the atrocities. After escalation of the violence, the UN chief, on August 29, expressed deep concern over reports that civilians have been killed during security operations in Myanmar's Rakhine state and appealed for aid Myanmar for thousands.

However, his call did not give the Rohingya hope as the UN is struggling like previous years to exert adequate pressure on the Myanmar government to stop brutalities on Rohingyas, termed by the UN as one of the most persecuted communities in the world. Amid growing concern over violence on the Rohingya, the UN Security Council on August 30 discussed the situation in Myanmar.

There was no formal statement from the 15-member council following the closed-door meeting but British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said there were calls from council members for de-escalation. Britain requested the meeting on Myanmar, but diplomats said China was resisting stronger involvement by the UN council in addressing the crisis, according to an AFP report.

It remains unclear whether further action was planned, but the issue is expected to be discussed during the annual gathering of world leaders at the General Assembly this month. The UN seems unable to take any strong action against Myanmar due to China's role. In March this year, China, backed by Russia, blocked a UN Security Council statement on Myanmar. The short draft press statement was to stress the importance of humanitarian access to all affected areas in Myanmar.

It may be when Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's ruling party chief, met Chinese President Xi Jinping, she was assured that China would continue helping Myanmar achieve inter-

national peace process. Earlier, on January 12, 2007, the Security Council also failed to adopt a draft resolution on the situation in Myanmar due to vetoes by China and Russia. In that draft resolution, the UN would have called on Myanmar's government to cease military attacks against civilians in ethnic minority regions and begin a substantive political dialogue that would lead to a genuine democratic transition.

Persecuted for decades, the Rohingyas have been facing intensified brutalities since 2012. Over the last five years, UN, the global body, and other international organisations have kept voicing concern over human rights violations against the Rohingya and urging the Myanmar government to take effective measures to end the persecution. But the situation has continued to slide. Take some examples of the UN's responses in the past.

The deadly clashes between the Buddhists and the Rohingyas in June 2012 left around 100 dead and displaced around one lakh people. After the violence, the then Myanmar president announced that the Rohingya posed a threat to national security and that they should be settled in any third country that is "willing to take them."

On August 6, 2012, UN secretary general's Special Advisor for Myanmar Vijay Nambiar and UNHCR chief Navi Pillay called for an impartial investigation into the deadly violence. On September 25, 2012, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar released a report on the human rights situation, saying the country continued to grapple with serious human rights challenges.

Four days later, UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon met Myanmar President Thein Sein and discussed the human rights situation. The Myanmar president committed to address the root causes of the violence. But he forgot his commitment as fresh violence erupted next month

in Rakhine state, home of the Rohingyas. In such a situation, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar on October 25, expressed his concern over continuing violence in Rakhine and called upon the Myanmar government to prevent further violence and to resolve longstanding concerns including the "endemic discrimination against the Rohingya community."

Five days later UN experts on Myanmar minority issues and internally displaced persons released a statement expressing deep concern over continuing inter-communal violence in Rakhine state and reminded the Myanmar government of its obligation to protect those affected by the violence, particularly the Rohingyas Muslims.

As the situation remained unchanged, the UN General Assembly on December 24, 2012 adopted a resolution expressing concern about the situation of the Rohingyas and called upon the Myanmar government to address discrimination, human rights violations and violence affecting various ethnic minorities.

Again, nothing changed. The UN Secretary General on August 13, 2013 released his annual report to the UN General Assembly on the human rights situation in Myanmar, raising concern over human rights violation against the Rohingyas and the plight of the wider Muslim community. He called upon the government to address the issue of Rohingyas citizenship and hold accountable those who were disseminating hate literature and killing innocent people.

The UN General Assembly's Third Committee passed a resolution on November 21, 2014, expressing serious concern about the situation of the Rohingyas and urged the Myanmar government to end discrimination against the Rohingyas. The UN General Assembly on December 29 adopted the November 21 third committee resolution. The UN also kept expressing concern throughout 2015 and 2016. Apart from the global body, the

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, European Union, UN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, UN Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch kept voicing their concerns and urged the Myanmar government to stop persecuting the Rohingyas. Amid global concerns, another special report on violence against the Rohingyas took place from October last year.

A month later, the OHCHR, the UN rights agency, in a statement said Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingyas could be tantamount to crimes against humanity in a report in June last year, it also voiced the same concern. A UN report in February this year said the military crackdown on the Rohingyas had led to gang rape, the killing of hundreds of civilians and the forced displacement of as many as 90,000 people.

An Amnesty International report released in December last year said Myanmar's security forces were indiscriminately killing, raping and burning down houses in a campaign of violence against the Rohingyas. "The deplorable actions of the military could be part of a widespread and systematic attack on a civilian population and may amount to crimes against humanity," the AI report said.

New York based Human Rights Watch in a report said the security operations led to numerous reports of serious abuses by government security forces against Rohingyas villagers, including summary killings, rape and other sexual violence, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests, and arson. There was a strong call for proper investigation into the incidents of killing, raping and arson to punish perpetrators.

In face of growing pressure, the Myanmar government formed an inquiry commission to investigate the deadly violence. The commission consisting of the government's own men has come up with bizarre findings. It claimed the commission found the allegations of killing, raping and

human rights violations against the Rohingyas groundless. The investigation commission found there was no possible evidence indicating any crime against humanity or any act of ethnic cleansing in support of allegations by the United Nations office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Myanmar. The UNICEF President Li Myint Swe in a press statement in July this year. The vice-president, who chaired the commission, said the accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing were part of a smear campaign by "external forces."

He launched a counter attack on the international community who voiced concerns about the Rohingyas saying that the foreign interference had worsened the situation and made its resolution more complicated. An even more disturbing development was a statement on August 27 in a Facebook post from the office of Suu Kyi that urged international aid workers of helping "terrorists," a word it used to refer to the Rohingyas. This statement came at time of increasing anti-Muslim sentiment being encouraged by hardline religious leaders in majority Buddhist Myanmar. Human rights groups reacted sharply to this statement saying Suu Kyi must stop "profoundly irresponsible" accusations which would jeopardise the lives of aid workers in the Rakhine state.

The findings by the government inquiry commission give a clear indication that Myanmar does not care about global opinions and no amount of outrage by the global community can force the regime to take measures to stop persecuting the Rohingyas. The facts presented above show how Myanmar has been persecuting the Rohingya with impunity for years. This time may not be any different from past for either the Rohingyas or the Myanmar government.

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Outrage over North Korea's H-bomb test

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"Only the strongest sanctions will enable us to resolve this problem through diplomatic means," Haley told an emergency council meeting called by the United States, Britain, France, Japan and South Korea. Declaring that "enough is enough," Haley said incremental sanctions imposed by the US and other nations had failed and called for North Korea leader Kim Jong-un of "begging for war."

Haley did not spell out what measures Washington was seeking, but diplomats said they could target oil supplies to North Korea—a potentially dealing a major blow to the economy. New sanctions could also seek to curb tourism to North Korea and ban North Korean laborers sent abroad, mostly to Russia and China, to earn hard currency for the regime, diplomats said. The draft text was expected to be presented to the 14 other council members on Tuesday as the United States sought to respond quickly to the test. Haley said the US was preparing another missile launch.

"We have continued to see signs of possibly more ballistic missile launches. We also forecast North Korea could fire an intercontinental ballistic missile," Jang Kyong-soo, acting deputy minister of national defense policy, told a parliament hearing on Monday. North Korea tested two ICBMs in July that could fly about 10,000 km (6,200 miles), putting many parts of the US mainland within range and prompting a new round of tough international sanctions. South Korea's air force and army conducted exercises involving long-range air-to-surface and ballistic missiles yesterday following the joint chiefs of staff said in a statement. In addition to the drill, South Korea will cooperate with the United States and seek to deploy "strategic assets like aircraft carriers and strategic bombers," Jang said. South Korea's defence ministry also said it would deploy the four remaining launchers of a new US missile defence system after the completion of an environmental assessment by the government. The rollout of the controversial Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system at a site south of the

South Korean capital, Seoul, is vehemently opposed by neighbouring China and Russia, had been delayed since. Furthermore, US President Donald Trump and South Korea's leader Moon Jae-in spoke on the phone Monday and agreed to remove limits on the payload of the South's missiles, Seoul's presidential office said. Seoul was previously restricted to a maximum warhead weight of 1100 pounds (500 kilograms) on its ballistic missiles, according to a bilateral agree-



ment with the United States signed in 2001. At the UN, China's ambassador Liu Jieyi warned that the crisis was worsening and emphasized the need for dialogue and a diplomatic solution. "China will never allow chaos and war on the (Korean) peninsula," he asserted. Liu urged the parties to agree to a Chinese-Russian plan calling for the North to freeze its missile and nuclear tests and the United States and South Korea to suspend joint military exer-

cises. Haley rejected the proposal as "insulting." Haley reiterated US threats to impose sanctions on countries that conduct trade with North Korea, saying these nations will be seen as "giving aid to their reckless and dangerous nuclear intentions."

That could have major reverberations. China is the largest trading partner of both the North and the United States. Asked about Trump's threat to punish countries that trade with North Korea, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China has dedicated itself to resolving the North Korea issue via talks, and China's efforts had been recognised. "What we absolutely cannot accept is that on the one hand [we are] making enormous efforts to peacefully resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, and on the other hand [our] interests are being sanctioned or harmed. This is both not objective and not fair," he told a regular briefing.

US President Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed yesterday to work with the United States to pursue stronger sanctions, Russia voiced scepticism. Russia said it would study the new US proposals for sanctions, but again stressed those measures alone would not resolve the crisis. Earlier, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told a BRICS summit in China that sanctions on North Korea had reached the limit of their impact. Any more would be aimed at breaking its economy, so a decision to impose further constraints would become dramatically harder. TOUGH TALK North Korea said it tested an advanced hydrogen bomb for a long-range missile on Sunday, prompting a warning of a "massive" military response from the United States if it or its allies were threatened. "We are not looking to the total annihilation of country, namely North Korea," US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said after meeting Trump and his national security team. "But as I said, we have many options to do so." "We have previously vowed to stop North Korea developing nuclear weapons and said we would unleash 'fire and fury' if it threatened US territory,