



Newly arrived Rohingya refugees make tents with plastic sheets beside a road at Tiyngkhali of Cox's Bazar as they were unable to enter overcrowded refugee camps. A Rohingya man arrives at Kutupalong in Cox's Bazar from Myanmar with one child on his back, another on his chest and a small sack of grains in his hand, top right. Rohingya refugee Nur reaches Kutupalong, carrying his child in an improvised hammock on one end of a stick and a sack of belongings on the other.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Hungry faces everywhere

FROM PAGE 1

"There were tortures everywhere. The houses were burned and people killed. Having no other way, I ran with other villagers," she said. "I left behind my husband, who was working in the town. I have no idea of his fate. After four days of walk through the jungles and rough hills, and finally the boat journey through the Naf river, she crossed the Whykong border to enter Teknaf on September 3.

Forced to leave her homeland in Myanmar and no one to welcome her in Bangladesh, the penniless woman was crying for help by a roadside in Balukhali in Ukhia. A kind Samaritan came up to her. Upon hearing her story, he took her to his house and gave her food and shelter for the night.

The next morning, he gave her Tk 50 so she could travel to Tiyngkhali, where new arrivals have set up makeshift camps with plastic and bamboo. Accordingly, she travelled to the camp and got a space.

"But, I don't have any money to buy bamboo or plastic to set up a tent," she said.

IN DIRE NEED OF FOOD

Shafiq is one of the thousands of Rohingyas who fled the violence after Myanmar security forces began a crackdown on Rohingya Muslims following an attack by Rohingya rebels on August 25.

In the 11 days since, some 1.23 lakh Rohingyas have arrived in Bangladesh, the UNHCR said in a statement yesterday.

This is in addition to an estimated 5 lakh registered Rohingyas in Bangladesh, which is already hosting for years. Another 32,000 are in two registered camps.

Rights bodies reported village after village were burned down and Rohingya men, women and children killed since violence broke out on August 25, forcing them to cross the border to Bangladesh.

But as they reached Bangladesh, they found the situation not so welcoming.

Many are sleeping in the open and are in dire need of food and water after walking for days to reach safety, AFP said yesterday, quoting a report by UN's main coordinator in Bangladesh.

While travelling through Balukhali, Kutupalang and Tiyngkhali of Ukhia in Cox's Bazar yesterday, these correspondents saw thousands of Rohingyas, mostly sickly women and children, sitting or standing in small groups beside the roads. Some were levelling land to set up makeshift camps with the authorities not yet deciding where to give shelter to the

new arrivals or how to feed them.

Sanwara Begum, 35, and three of her sons are one such family found by the road in Kutupalang, begging for help. The woman, abandoned by her husband a few years ago at Doubtful village in Maungdaw, saw her house burning last week and fled to Bangladesh.

She crossed Ghumblundhong border in Naikhangchhari and took shelter in Kutupalang and Tiyngkhali of Ukhia. A kind Samaritan came up to her. Upon hearing her story, he took her to his house and gave her food and shelter for the night.

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The IOM has yet to decide on a concrete plan to provide food, treatment and shelter for the new arrivals, he told The Daily Star.

They mostly face cold, cough, measles, fever, skin disease and diarrhoea, she added.

Despite a huge refugee crisis since August 25, authorities have not yet begun any relief operations for the new arrivals. Local communities or some NGOs are providing some food in a scattered way.

Yesterday's food distribution in the minivan near Tiyngkhali Rohingya camp in Ukhia was an initiative by some locals.

SITUATION 'VERY SHAKY'

Ukhia Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Main Uddin termed the situation of the newly arrived Rohingyas very shaky.

The government has yet to decide on a concrete plan to provide food, treatment and shelter for the new arrivals, he told The Daily Star.

The World Food Programme (WFP) and UN Refugee Agency handed over some food - flattened rice, molasses, high protein biscuits and dry cake - to the Cox's Bazar district administration for the Rohingyas.

"From tomorrow [today], we will distribute the food among the Rohingyas under the supervision of the local administration," said Main Uddin.

He, however, said the food they received was inadequate.

Contacted, Cox's Bazar DC Ali Hossain said, "The government was considering humanitarian assistance for the new arrivals but there hasn't been a final decision yet."

Meanwhile, a high official of the Refugee Repatriation and Rehabilitation Committee (RRRC) in Cox's Bazar said their local Rohingya took shelter in the registered camps at Kutupalong of Ukhia and Nayapara in Teknaf. These two camps used to house only 32,000 Rohingyas. But now many more than double have taken shelter there.

"These two camps are now over-loaded," he told The Daily Star.

The UNHCR and the RRRC have begun making a list of the newly arrived Rohingyas in the registered camps.

On the other hand, the IOM is preparing a list of Rohingyas who took shelter in the unregistered camps - one in Kutupalang, one in Balukhali and one in Tiyngkhali of Ukhia, and Roikhang and Leda camps in Teknaf, the RRRC official said.

"There is an urgent need for additional emergency shelters and land as more people arrive. Coordination is crucial with the authorities to ensure that life-saving assistance reaches those who need it most," the UNHCR said in the statement.

Modi to hold talks with Suu Kyi today

His visit comes amid persecution of Rohingyas

AGENCIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Myanmar President U Tin Kyaw yesterday and will hold official talks with Aung San Suu Kyi today.

India will announce big increases in security and development assistance to Myanmar, when Modi engages the leadership in NayPyiDaw on Wednesday, as India struggles to play catch-up with a huge Chinese presence in the country, reports Times of India.

Two issues will influence India's activities in Myanmar -- the Rohingya crisis and Chinese dominance in Myanmar, which is most evident in the Kyaukphyu port and gas pipeline running through Myanmar to Kunming. But Myanmar has invited India to play a balancing role and New Delhi now appears to be in a better place to do so.

The migration of Rohingya, a minority Muslim community settled in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, who

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Yunus seeks

FROM PAGE 1

Arahan region of Myanmar. It needs your immediate intervention."

He said, according to different organisations, recent military offensive by the Myanmar army in Rakhine state had led to the killing of hundreds of Rohingya people.

"Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. Villages have been burned, women raped, many civilians arbitrarily arrested, and children killed."

"Crucially, humanitarian aid organisations have been almost completely denied access, creating an appalling humanitarian crisis in an area already extremely poor."

According to local administration sources, around 120,000 people have fled to Bangladesh in the last twelve days, said Prof Yunus.

"Human misery created by such massive displacement of men, women and children under the threat of death is getting worse every day."

The founder of Grameen Bank, along with several Nobel laureates and eminent global citizens, denounced the previous spate of violence late last year and wrote to the Security Council to intervene.

"Despite initiatives taken by you, the situation has not improved. This time, I urge you to take decisive actions to stop the violence against innocent civilians and bring permanent peace in Rakhine," he said.

"I call on the UNSC to intervene immediately by using all available means. I request you to take immediate action for cessation of indiscriminate military attack on innocent civilians that is forcing them to leave their home and flee country to turn into stateless people."

The peace laureate also urged the UNSC to persuade Myanmar government to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission, which the Myanmar government established in 2016 under pressure of international community.

The commission, which was chaired by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, was mostly comprised of Myanmar citizens.

It recommended providing citizenship to the Rohingyas, allowing them freedom of movement, rights and equality before the law, ensuring communal representation, lack of which affects Muslims disproportionately, and facilitating UN assistance in ensuring safety and security of returning people.

Prof Yunus said decades of persecution appeared to be breeding radicalisation which the Rakhine Advisory Commission, rightly apprehended.

"The fear became real through the attack on Myanmar security forces by the militants. Unless constructive effort to build lasting peace is taken, the situation in Rakhine which in turn may pose serious security threat to the neighbouring countries," he said.

Prof Yunus said a bold change in approach was needed by the UN and the international community if there is to be an end to the cycle of violence against the Rohingyas.

The government of Myanmar needs to be told that international support and finance is conditional on a major change in policy towards the Rohingya. Propaganda and incitement of hatred and all violence, particularly state violence against Rohingyas must stop, discriminatory laws and policies must go, and the recommendations of Kofi Annan's commission must be implemented immediately."

The world is waiting to see that the UNSC has played its role to bring end to a humanitarian crisis and build peace in the region."

Mount pressure on Myanmar

FROM PAGE 1

"Hosting a huge number of Myanmar nationals is a big burden for Bangladesh. We've given shelter to them only on a humanitarian ground," she said.

The Prime Minister made the call when newly appointed Indonesian Ambassador to Bangladesh Rina Priyntasari Soemarno met her at her office.

After the meeting, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Isranul Karim briefed reporters.

Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh has given shelter to the Myanmar refugees on humanitarian grounds and refugees are a huge number of Myanmar refugees

in Bangladesh is a big burden for the country.

The Indonesian envoy highly appreciated the Bangladesh government for giving shelter to the large number of Myanmar nationals on humanitarian ground. "Bangladesh is taking the right steps in this regard," she commented.

Reiterating her government's strong stance against terrorism, Sheikh Hasina said the policy of the present government is very clear and Dhaka will not allow anybody to use Bangladesh to carry out terrorist acts against any neighbouring country.

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