

Turkish first lady visits Rohingya refugees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Turkish First Lady Emine Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu yesterday visited a registered Rohingya refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila to learn about the extent of persecution inflicted on the Rohingyas.

Arriving in Cox's Bazar on a flight, they went to the Kutupalang camp at around 1:35pm and spoke to some Rohingya men and women. There, they heard their stories of persecution by Myanmar troops.

They also spoke to a bullet-hit Rohingya youth, who fled to Bangladesh a few days after violence flared up in Rakhine state on August 25.

During their one-and-a-half hour stay at the camp, they held a meeting with Foreign Minister Mahmud Ali State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam and the deputy commissioner and superintendent of Cox's Bazar police about the overall crisis.

Bangladeshi officials briefed them about the gravity of the crisis and how the country was trying to cope with giving shelter, food and healthcare to the huge influx of Rohingyas.

Some 13,000 Rohingyas used to stay in Kutupalang camp. After the fresh exodus, now more than 50,000 Rohingyas have taken shelter there.

Talking to a group of journalists at the camp, the first lady affirmed that the government of Turkey would stand beside the Rohingyas.

She said Turkey will do everything possible to help Rohingyas.

"Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan will take up the issue at the UN General Assembly in a bid to bring an immediate resolution to the Rohingya crisis," she said, replying to a query by a reporter.

They flew back to Dhaka in the afternoon.

Earlier, special aircraft carrying Turkey's first Lady Emine Erdogan and her entourage landed at Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam

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A section of the over 10,000 Rohingyas, top, who have gathered at Bagghuna of Jamtali in Cox's Bazar. A teenage girl, Taslima, middle left, suffers from a tragedy no parent should witness. She breaks down in tears every time she thinks about the seven-year-old son she left behind. Her husband too was lost in the chaos and now she clings onto her two-year-old son, the only family member she now has. Zahed Alam, middle left, is tied to a tree by his wife. His eyes stare into the abyss. Zahed witnessed the brutal murder of both his parents when riots broke out on October 16. Since then, his mental state has deteriorated and this is the only way his wife can ensure his safety. Bottom, Turkish president's wife Emine Erdogan and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu giving an aid box to a Rohingya woman as they visit the Kutupalang refugee camp in Cox's Bazar.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, AFP

Little souls in distress

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Since then, she has been spending the day on roadshows with her four children, keeping her ten teen daughters at some locals' homes for their safety. At night, the family reunites and sleeps wherever they can find shelter.

Zaheda's daughter Ismat Ara, 10, said a passerby gave her a toast and a banana in the morning.

It was around lunchtime when The Daily Star talked to her and she didn't know if she would get to eat anything for lunch. "If I get something, I will eat. Or else I won't."

"Providing support to Rohingya refugees say children are at greater risks on many counts.

"There are children who are severely malnourished. Often, they are found scarce. Unless they are given special care, these children may face a dangerous situation," said Mohammad Mahadi, coordinator of Action Against Hunger in Cox's Bazar.

"These Rohingya children need to be identified and settled if they are to be provided with better services and protection. It will take some time."

The UNICEF is scaling up its efforts to support these children, he added.

Rohingya Refugee Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam said the Bangladeshi government was aware of the need of the children, but the sudden and massive influx was beyond its imagination.

"We neither have the manpower nor the infrastructure to support so many people. Still we are trying to help them on humanitarian grounds. We need some time to ensure better protection for them," he told The Daily Star.

Anthony Lake of the UNICEF in his statement stressed the need for urgent help and protection of children both in the Rakhine state and those who have fled to Bangladesh due to violence in Myanmar.

"The UNICEF in Bangladesh also made a similar call.

Various UN agencies in Cox's Bazar are providing emergency shelter, food, clean water, and nutritional support. To enhance access to clean water and sanitation facilities, agencies are quickly installing new tube wells and latrines, it said in a press release.

In response to the health need of the new arrivals, mobile medical teams are providing emergency health services, and health facilities are working to scale up services to meet increased needs due to the recent influx.

Child-friendly spaces have also been established to provide vulnerable children with appropriate psychosocial support, it added.

Ging UN officials, Al-Jazeera reported that as many as 300,000 Rohingya Muslims could flee the violence in northwestern Myanmar to neighbouring Bangladesh.

"We are in close contact with the UN secretary-general and the UN Security Council. We are getting very positive responses from all and expecting to mount pressure on Myanmar towards a lasting solution to the Rohingya issue, putting an immediate halt to violence in Rakhine and taking back all Myanmar nationals from Bangladesh," added the diplomat.

About the multi-dimensional diplomatic efforts, a diplomatic source told this correspondent that the foreign ministry was currently playing four specific diplomatic cards. They are direct contact with Myanmar and continuing talks to resolve the issue bilaterally; diplomatic initiatives with important Asian countries like India and China to get their support and cooperation; making multilateral diplomatic efforts with UN, EIU, OIC and ASEAN; and Effective steps to regularly feed the international media with correct information on incidents.

Foreign ministry sources said Bangladesh previously barred international media and some other foreign organisations from visiting Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar, but now it has withdrawn the restriction and allowing media and others to be there.

Dhaka has welcomed another EIU fact-finding mission which is expected to visit Cox's Bazar soon.

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alongside David Warner, the 30-year-old has been terrific throughout the series, taking an astonishing 22 wickets in two Tests, the best haul by an Australian bowler in a two-match series, surpassing spin legends Shane Warne and Stuart MacGill.

The Tigers batsmen fell like a house of cards on a four-day pitch which has started to produce huge turn. Soumya Sarkar was the first one to depart in five to pacer Pat Cummins when he edged a simple catch to first slip and continued his awful run in the series.

After brief resistance from Imrul Kayes and Tamim Iqbal, Lyon started the carnage when he had a charging Tamim stumped for 12. It was a game Tamim would definitely want to forget.

The pressure was mounting on Imrul to score but he too failed as the home side went on to lose the next three wickets in the span of 11 runs. Imrul tried to check his punch at a loosey Lyon delivery that held on to a surface and undid the left-hander who only managed to give a simple catch to cover, scoring 15.

Shakib Al Hasan was the third Lyon victim when he followed a sharp turner but only managed to edge it to second slip for two.

Bangladesh tried to shuffle the batting order to unsettle Lyon with a left and right hand combination, promoting Nasir Hossain to number four, but he too perished for the series with just five to his name, this time to Steve O'Keefe.

The home side were in danger of an innings defeat by then, reeling at 43 for five, but Sabbar Rahman and skipper Moshfiqui Rahim ruled the innings as they did in the first innings when the Tigers lost their first five wickets for 117 runs. The pair managed to survive the initial damage and defend their lead with Bangladesh on 83 for five. They added 54 runs for the sixth wicket before Sabbar was stumped for the second time in the game coming down the track scoring 24.

The afternoon session promised revival with a Moshfiqui-Mominal Haque 32-run sixth-wicket stand and then a Mominal-Mehedi Hasan 20-run partnership for the seventh wicket. But the Australians were always on the ball as they continued to snuff out any hint of Bangladeshi resistance.

It was Mominnul's dismissal 15 minutes before the break that raised the possibility of the visitors wrapping up the match inside the fourth day with Bangladesh taking tea at 154 for five. It was a cruel twist of fate as the five-wicket haul with Mominnul's wicket. Number 10 Tajul Islam could not last very long after the interval, as he was the ninth wicket to fall after the addition of just two more runs when he never struck in his third innings.

Set 86 to win, centurion of the first innings Warner was out for eight, caught at deep mid-wicket while pulling a bouncer from left-arm paceman Mustafizur Rahman. But the visitors who never struck in their third innings, Peter Handscomb, who hit an unbeaten 16, finished the chase.

Aussie skipper Smith (16) and Matt Renshaw (22) were the other casualties in that small chase against a Bangladesh team that included Maxwell and Peter Handscomb, who hit an unbeaten 16, finished the chase.

That was probably the only positive thing for the home side in a match where they suffered a top-order collapse, not once but twice, and succumbed to that familiar second-innings hara-kiri syndrome.

Caught

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South Korea back on track following months of tension over the deployment of a US anti-missile system in the region. Chinese President Xi Jinping called South Korean leader Moon Jae-in to congratulate him on mostly after his election victory in early May.

China is playing a key role in negotiation between the Myanmarese rebels and the government. Chinese military hardware is the mainstay of Myanmar's military might.

Myanmar, which is in a solid position both militarily and politically, is now ranked 31 in world military firepower according to Global Firepower that uses CIA data.

China is also the focal point of building a deep-sea port in Rakhine, the current Rohingya hotspot, which will give it access to the eastern side of the Indian Ocean. There lies a common interest as many of India's insurgents in the north-east region hold up in Myanmar.

India plans to train Myanmar army in special operations, read as anti-insurgency warfare against Rohingyas. There lies a common interest as many of India's insurgents in the north-east region hold up in Myanmar.

India is also building a port in Rakhine State. It is also building a road from the New to Sittoung of Myanmar. It is eyeing more infrastructure projects in Myanmar as a first step to grow influence in Southeast Asia and counterbalance China.

It is understandable that India will back Myanmar on the Rohingya issue as well.

So when the two Asian giants -- China and India -- have a stake than the Rohingya miseries, Myanmar can remain unscathed in the face of any international move like that initiated by the UN secretary general who has written to the Security Council to take steps on the Rohingya issue.

Russia remains with Myanmar as well. And so China backed by Russia blocked a UN Security Council draft resolution on the Rohingyas. At a closed-door meeting at the UN Security Council last week, China, often seen as an effective engagement of the UN in Myanmar.

So far now, the Rohingyas are left in the lurch, under the open sky, in the muddy camps of Bangladesh.

Lyon raids Tigers' den

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up the match inside the fourth day with Bangladesh taking tea at 154 for five. It was a cruel twist of fate as the five-wicket haul with Mominnul's wicket. Number 10 Tajul Islam could not last very long after the interval, as he was the ninth wicket to fall after the addition of just two more runs when he never struck in his third innings.

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ACC

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sub-inspector, four assistant sub-inspectors and 15 constables.

It was said the ACC would be strengthened by further recruitment could not escape.

Replying to questions of journalists, he said the armed police would not take part in the investigations of the cases. They would only accompany ACC officers in their drive to provide them with security.

An ACC team conducted a drive yesterday with five policemen at Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's Mirpur office on information that the vehicle-106 of officers were taking bribes.

They could not arrest anyone, however, as the brokers fled the scene.

Assuming office as the ACC's chairman, Iqbal Mahmood held series of briefings with top-level stakeholders to formulate a five-year strategy when the anti-graft body sought formation of an armed unit.

Dhaka for int'l safe zone in Myanmar

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"We have requested China not to block any UN move on the Rohingya crisis. We are now witnessing a softened stance by China," said a highly placed source, adding that the government was also having discussions with Russia frequently.

According to diplomatic sources, Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque on Tuesday called Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Ma Mingxiang to his office. The two discussed wide range of issues on the Rohingya situation.

Shahidul sought Chinese support to use its good office to influence Myanmar to end cruelty against Rohingyas and maintain neutrality at the United Nations.

During the meeting, China was reminded of its good relations with Bangladesh. The foreign secretary expected that Beijing would look into Bangladesh's problems and stand up for causes at the UN.

Though there was no instant response from China, diplomatic sources said the country didn't raise any objection to discussing the Rohingya issue at the UN Security Council on August 30.

Asked whether China would unite negotiations between Bangladesh and Myanmar, a diplomat at the Chinese embassy in Dhaka said they would not make any comment on the issue at this moment.

Chinese Special Envoy Sun

Guoxiang during her visit to Dhaka in April had offered Bangladesh to help ease the diplomatic row between Bangladesh and Myanmar over the Rohingya crisis, but no such move was made till now.

Talking to The Daily Star, a diplomatic source in New Delhi said the Bangladesh foreign secretary had a conversation with Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyan Jaishankar before Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Myanmar this week.

Jaishankar informed Shahidul Haque that he would convey Bangladesh's message to the PM who was fully aware of the Rohingya situation.

Referring to EU Parliament's recent resolution and statements on the Rohingya issue and recent visits by the UN Human Rights Commission and EU fact-finding missions to Rohingyas camps and undocumented Myanmar nationals, foreign ministry officials said the international community was fully aware of the Rohingya situation as Dhaka had launched all-out diplomatic efforts about two years ago.

Ging another example of diplomatic efforts, a senior diplomat at the Bangladesh mission in New York said the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a rare letter to the UN Security Council on Tuesday expressed concern that the violence in Rakhine could spiral into a "humanitarian catastrophe".

He warned that there was a risk of

ethnic cleansing in Myanmar which could destabilise the region.

"We are in close contact with the UN secretary-general and the UN Security Council. We are getting very positive responses from all and expecting to mount pressure on Myanmar towards a lasting solution to the Rohingya issue, putting an immediate halt to violence in Rakhine and taking back all Myanmar nationals from Bangladesh," added the diplomat.

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