

## CONJOINED TWINS

## Tofa, Tohura discharged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Conjoined twins Tofa and Tohura, who were separated in a pioneering surgery in Bangladesh, were discharged from hospital yesterday through a grand ceremony.

Dressed in all pink, the girls were accorded a grand reception at Dhaka Medical College where Health Minister Mohammad Nasim handed the discharge certificates.

Paediatric surgeon and Associate Professor Shahnoor Islam said the twins were doing well, adding, "Delightful development was that Tofa had learned to sit upright."

The babies were born joined from the waist down. Separated when nearly 11 months, doctors said it would take time for them to learn to crawl and sit upright.

DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM

Nasiruddin said the surgery would be an example in the medical history of Bangladesh and the entire world.

Doctor Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin pulled reference to Tofa-Tohura's operation and said it had proved the great strides Bangladesh had made in the field of medical science.

Minister Nasim said it was a delightful occasion that Bangladesh could achieve such a medical feat and that he was happy for the family of the girls.

Raju Miah, a poor farmer hailing from Gaibandha and father of the twins, told The Daily Star that he had not lived a happier day in his life.

Tofa and Tohura will have to undergo two more surgeries to have a normal life -- one to fix their rectum linings and the other on their reproductive organs.

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Now-separated conjoined twins Tofa and Tohura in their parents' arms after they were released from Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## PM opens 2nd submarine cable link

UNB, Dhaka

The government commercially inaugurated the second submarine cable with 1500-gigabit per second (Gbps) bandwidth capacity.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally inaugurated the landing station at Kuakata in Patuakhali and SMW-5 consortium submarine cable system through a videoconference from the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

The SMW-5 comprises of a core cable section that will pass through Singapore, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Italy and France.

Besides, there are several branch cable sections connecting Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the UAE, Pakistan, Yemen, Oman and Turkey.

Inaugurating the submarine cable and its landing station, the PM said the internet speed would get a boost following the linking with the second submarine cable, while the people of the country's southern region would

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## Discussion

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parliament so that the House could hold an effective discussion on it.

"Like you I am also stunned. This parliament is sovereign. We can have a fruitful discussion on the issue [scrapping of the 16th amendment] and the House can adopt a resolution following lawmakers' discussion on it," Fazle Rabbi added.

He said the Speaker would fix a date and time in consultation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after getting formal proposal from the MPs on holding the discussions.

## Cambridge

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ending 800 years of handwritten exams.

Dr Sarah Pearsall, a lecturer at the university's history department, told The Telegraph: "As a faculty we have been concerned for years about the declining handwriting problem."

"There has definitely been a downward trend. It is difficult for both the students and the examiners as it is harder and harder to read these scripts."

When examiners could not read scripts, they had to be transcribed centrally, meaning a growing number of students had to return to university during the summer period to read their answers aloud to administrators, she said.

The university has launched a review on the issue as part of its "digital education strategy" after piloting a typed exam in the History and Classics departments earlier in the year.

## Dhaka wants the world by its side

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Bangladesh.

"This is creating a huge challenge for Bangladesh in terms of providing shelter as well as other humanitarian assistance to them," he said, calling for political support in ensuring "sustainable return" of all the Myanmar nationals to their homeland.

The minister later said the diplomats extended their all-out support and agreed to stand by Bangladesh.

Mahmood Ali held two back-to-back diplomatic briefings at the State Guesthouse Padma yesterday afternoon.

He highlighted that Bangladesh has always preferred bilateral solution to this longstanding problem.

Dhaka was successful in repatriating 236,599 Rohingyas to their homeland through a bilateral agreement in 1992, he said, noting that the agreement recognised Rohingyas as "members of Myanmar society".

The minister also highlighted Bangladesh's efforts to address the security concerns of Myanmar, particularly by proposing MoUs in 2014 on Border Liaison Office and Security Dialogue.

Bangladesh has proposed joint inspection, coordinated patrolling and "joint operation" along the border.

Unfortunately, Myanmar has not responded to these proposals. Instead, they have been running a

malicious propaganda terming the Rohingyas as "illegal migrants from Bangladesh" and the BGP post attackers as "Bengali terrorists".

Ambassadors, high commissioners and CDAs from diplomatic missions of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Norway, Netherlands, USA, UK, and EU and representatives from UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, IOM and ICRC were present at the first diplomatic briefing.

The second briefing was attended by heads of diplomatic missions of Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

He said the diplomats praised the government of Bangladesh for hosting the Rohingyas for years and giving shelter to the Myanmar nationals who are fleeing violence in Rakhine State.

They also stressed that civilians should be protected and called for immediate end of disproportionate use of force during the military operation in Rakhine.

Emerging from the briefing, CDA of US Embassy Joel Reifman said the United States wants implementation of the recommendations of Kofi Annan Commission as he thinks the problems in Rakhine can be resolved through implementation of the report.

Ambassador of the Holy See (Vati-

can) Archbishop George Kocherry mentioned the foreign minister in his briefing claimed that more than 3,000 Rohingyas were killed in the recent crackdown in Rakhine.

The global community is ready to help Bangladesh, he added.

Briefing journalists, the foreign minister said the international community has mounted pressure on Myanmar against "genocide" in Rakhine and it stands beside Bangladesh to help face the humanitarian crisis.

He said Dhaka has stepped up hectic diplomatic efforts to get international support for peaceful solution of the Rohingya crisis. It has already succeeded in mobilising opinion against Myanmar's act of genocide, he noted.

Replying to question whether Bangladesh is negotiating with India and China to drum up support in its favour, Mahmood Ali said India has issued a statement which he read out at the media briefing.

About China, he said "China is different ... but we are talking with China ... we are working on it."

The minister also gave a background briefing on Rohingya history.

About providing shelter to three lakh newly arrived Rohingyas, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam told the press that a forest land has been demarcated at Ukhiya by the local administration.

The 2,000-acre land will be

handed over to UN agencies for using it as a temporary camp for the Rohingyas, he added.

## US APPLAUDS BANGLADESH'S ROLE

Meanwhile, the US in its formal press statement yesterday expressed concern at the influx of Rohingya in Bangladesh following allegations of serious human rights abuses in Rakhine, including violent attacks and mass burnings of villages.

"We continue to coordinate closely with our partners, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration to provide emergency assistance to these individuals," US State Department's Spokesperson Heather Nauert said in a statement.

"We applaud the government of Bangladesh's generosity in responding to this humanitarian crisis and appreciate their continued efforts to ensure assistance reaches the affected population," said the Spokesperson.

In another important move, the OIC in a special meeting in Astana over Rohingya Muslims crisis, yesterday condemned Myanmar for "systematic brutal acts" against the Rohingyas and asked it to accept UN monitors to carry out a thorough and independent investigation of all established violations of international human rights and bring those respon-

sible to justice.

Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid is attending the two-day OIC meeting.

**GERMAN MINISTER CONCERNED**  
Federal Foreign Minister of Germany Sigmar Gabriel's in a statement yesterday said he is deeply concerned about the renewed fighting in the state of Rakhine, which has been triggered by attacks on military and police stations and which have once again triggered a large flow of refugees to Bangladesh.

"The focus now needs to be on the suffering of the affected people. That is why the Myanmar government must allow aid and humanitarian organisations unlimited access to the affected areas," he said.

He said Germany supports the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission under the leadership of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as a good starting point and urged Aung San Suu Kyi and the Myanmar government to implement the recommendations "directly and comprehensively."

"We expressly welcome the generous reception and care of the refugees in Bangladesh," he said.

Earlier, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore in a statement on Saturday urged all parties to the violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state to avoid aggravating the conflict, as it offered to work with Asean in rendering humanitarian aid to the victims.

## Diseases stalk new camps

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"The baby gets little breastfeeding, I don't get to eat myself. Where would the boy get milk from?... Can you help me find a doctor?" she pleaded to these correspondents.

Her concern is shared by many mothers with infants and young children who now live in makeshift camps by the roads along Kutupalang, Balukhali, Balurdhali and Tyinkhali in Ukhiya.

The registered and unregistered camps that had nearly 2 lakh Rohingyas before August 26, when the first batches of the new arrivals started coming in, are now overflowing with refugees.

New camps mushroomed along the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Highway and beyond as some 3 lakh Rohingyas arrived in Naikkhangchhari, Teknaf and Ukhiya till yesterday after Myanmar's security forces began a crackdown in response to attacks by Rohingya insurgents on Myanmar police and army camps on August 25.

Thousands of them could not manage makeshift camps yet, and are living under the open sky. They wait on roadsides, even when it rains, hoping for communities or NGOs to give them food and clothes.

Last week, aid agencies and government officials estimated that nearly half of the new arrivals are children and adolescents, many of them needing immediate treatment.

While the previously built Rohingya camps have facilities for clean drinking

water and latrines, the new ones do not. In some cases, NGOs and communities are providing bottled water and food for them, but not sanitary toilets.

As a result, they are defecating in the open, facing risks of contracting diseases like diarrhoea.

Also, health workers are not sure if the food the locals are giving them is always fresh and risk-free.

Rehana Begum, 40, at Balukhali Paanbazar camp, said she and her three-year-old son had been suffering from diarrhoea for the last five days. Besides, she also got skin diseases.

"There is a pond nearby, but we are not allowed to bathe or wash clothes there. I am wearing the same clothes for over 10 days," she said.

Asked if they had access to sanitary latrine, Rehana said, "This is a real problem. We dug a hole for defecation, but it is already filled."

Beauty Barua, senior staff nurse at Balukhali Sub-Health Centre, said diarrhoea cases were growing. Many are also suffering from fever, cold, injuries and skin diseases.

"On September 5, we got only 26 patients. But now about 80 patients are coming every day, most of them children," she told The Daily Star.

Many are also visiting the health facility with injuries, weaknesses and malnutrition.

Tarik Sayed Harun, assistant director of COAST Trust which is providing

some primary healthcare and food to the Rohingyas, said the situation may turn "epidemic" if things did not improve.

"Many children with fever have started to contract pneumonia," he said.

Cox's Bazar Civil Surgeon Dr Abdus Salam said the number of patients rose significantly in the past few days.

"A community clinic in Balukhali is treating nearly 400 patients a day now," he said when these correspondents visited the clinic.

The pressure of patients in the health facilities in Ukhiya and Teknaf tripled last week, he added, though he did not give the total number.

These correspondents saw the clinic of Doctors Without Borders at Kutupalang crammed with patients, mostly mothers bringing their children. Some of the patients also sat outside, waiting to enter the clinic around 10:30am yesterday.

Abdus Salam said 20 mobile health teams were working in the camps to create health awareness, providing water purifying tablets for water fetched from open sources, but that was not enough.

"We could arrange water and sanitation in all the registered and previously unregistered Rohingya camps, but not in the new ones yet," he said.

It is not possible unless the Rohingyas can be settled in a specific camp and necessary facilities are set up for water and sanitation there, the civil surgeon

said. "The government has started working for that."

## ROHINGYAS AT CMCH

At least 15 Rohingyas, aged between 11 and 50, were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) yesterday with wounds, taking the total number of injured Rohingyas who came there to 84.

Of the total, two died of their wounds as of yesterday while eight were released after treatment, said Md Alauddin, assistant sub-inspector of CMCH police outpost.

Of the 15 admitted yesterday, 13 suffered bullet injuries and another was wounded in a road accident, he added.

**LANDMINE KILL THREE**  
A suspected landmine planted near the Bangladesh border has killed three Rohingya villagers fleeing violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state, a Bangladesh border official quoted a survivor as saying.

Border Guard Bangladesh Commander Lieutenant Col Manzurul Hasan Khan told AFP that troops had heard the blast Saturday night about 100 metres from the border.

"We learnt from the survivor that there were four of them. The survivor said the other three died on the spot in an explosion -- likely an anti-personnel mine," Khan told the AFP.

He said the border guards saw the survivor coming to the demarcation line with multiple injuries to his body and face.

nearly 400 militants so far, while some Rohingya refugees have complained they were forced to fight by Arsa.

The first Arsa attacks in October last year were less ambitious, but the subsequent military response by a security force notorious for its scorched-earth response to insurgency sent 90,000 Rohingyas fleeing across the border.

That means over a third of the estimated 1.1 million Rohingya in Rakhine state have fled in less than a year.

[From Reuters and AFP]

## Kidnap abroad

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Members of the criminal network here received money through mobile transactions from the victims' families on several occasions.

"If the families failed to send the ransom, they threatened to murder the victims and dumped the bodies [somewhere in Libya]," the police official said, adding that nearly 100 more such victims were still held hostage at different places in Libya.

As Ayub's father Taslim Pramanik and Rubel's brother Rabbani were telling the stories of the torture of their loved ones seen in video footage by abductors with faces covered, the environment at the press conference room turned heavy. They at one stage broke down in tears.

"They suspended my son from a ceiling fan, beat him mercilessly with a stick and asked for money through video in IMO messaging app. How could I bear this as a father," Taslim said.

Taslim already gave Tk 5 lakh in several transactions.

"I had to sell my last piece of land to arrange the money. Lately, I had to beg to arrange Tk 20,000 more.

"They even shouted at me and told me to sell my kidney to arrange the money," Ayub's father said.

Rubel's brother Rabbani said his family had already paid Tk 5.20 lakh.

But the culprits have not released anyone of the hostages. Instead, they are demanding more.

Soon after the press briefing ended, Taslim talked to the abductors in Libya over the phone when they demanded Tk 5 lakh more for Ayub's release. The 52-year-old passed out at that.

Among the arrestees, three were agents of bKash, a mobile money company.

The victim's relatives had to send money to the gang's kingpin Bakir's wife Naznin Begum and his local associates through bKash, which was later distributed through at least 20 channels inside the country.

Tipped off, a team of the PBI conducted a raid in Bhairab of Kishoreganj on Thursday, and arrested bKash agent Kamal. Later, they arrested Naznin at her father's home in Bhairab. She had

withdrawn Tk 20,000 that Ayub's father sent.

"Naznin withdrew Tk 10 lakh in the last week of July as instructed by her husband Bakir," PBI official Azad said.

On Friday, police conducted raids in Raipur of Narsingdi, and arrested Abu Kashem, and Mamun Mia, both are bKash agents, and ransom seekers Baby Akhter and Nurul Haque who had withdrawn Tk 1.20 lakh and Tk 1.10 lakh.

Baby's husband Zakir Hossain, and Nurul's younger brother Kabir Hossain alias Humayun Kabir, both are expats in Libya, asked them to withdraw the money. Sub-inspector Monirul Islam, of PBI, on Saturday filed a case with Agargaon Police Station accusing them of their links to the kidnapping network and demanding ransom.

About the bKash agents, Azad said police had primarily found their involvement in unusual transactions.

However, Shamsuddin Haider Dalim, head of corporate communications and public relation of bKash, told The Daily Star that the company had zero tolerance to such fraudulence and that the arrested agents were not its employees.

The PBI, meanwhile, has requested the authorities concerned in Libya to initiate a process to rescue the victims and apprehend the other culprits, its Special Superintendent Azad said at the press conference.

## Lukewarm

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the new outfit, but with a white apron on top.

Forty-three-year-old Jahanara Khatun, a nurse at NICVD, said, "I have been in this profession for 18 years. My white sari was a symbol of my service. Although I am wearing the new uniform now, I am not comfortable in it."

Nazma Khatun, general secretary of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital unit of BNA, said only about 25 of the hospital's 800 nurses had been wearing the new uniform.

Most nurses at the hospital do not like olive green. They want it to be white, which, to them, represents serenity, she added.

## Myanmar rebuffs Arsa truce

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Rakhine, declaring simply that it did not negotiate with terrorists.

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (Arsa) declared a month-long unilateral ceasefire, starting yesterday.

The impact of Arsa's move is unclear, but it does not appear to have been able to put up significant resistance against the military force unleashed in Rakhine state, where thousands of homes have been burned down and dozens of villages destroyed.

Arsa's declaration drew no formal response from the military or the government of Myanmar. However, the spokesman for Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, said on Twitter: "We have no policy to negotiate with terrorists."

Myanmar says its security forces are carrying out clearance operations to defend against Arsa, which the government has declared a terrorist organisation.

'CEASEFIRE UNTIL OCT 9'

"The Arakan Rohingya Salvation

Army (Arsa) hereby declares a temporary cessation of offensive military operations," the group said in a statement on its Twitter account.

It urged "all humanitarian actors" to resume aid delivery to "all victims of humanitarian crisis irrespective of ethnic or religious background" during the one-month ceasefire until October 9.

Arsa called on Myanmar to "reciprocate this humanitarian pause" in fighting.

The Myanmar army says it has killed