

Some Rohingyas have links to IS, Pakistan's ISI

Indian government tells Supreme Court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Indian government yesterday told the Supreme Court that it has intelligence inputs of links between some Rohingya Muslims and Pakistan's ISI and the terror group Islamic State, making them "a serious security threat to the country".

The government also said in an affidavit filed in the country's top court that militant elements among Rohingyas are active in Delhi, Hyderabad, Mewar and Jammu and added that it will place all intelligence inputs in a sealed envelope before the court on October 3 to prove its claim that Rohingyas are a security threat.

An estimated 40,000 Rohingyas are present across India, including in Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan states.

The government affidavit said there is an "organised network of outfits operating in Myanmar and also West Bengal and Tripura states of India to facilitate the influx of illegal Rohingyas," refugees into India.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, RASHED SHUMON, REUTERS

Clockwise from left, These children lost their parents in Myanmar and came to Bangladesh on their own. Their picture was taken at Kutupalong camp in Ukha yesterday. A father touches his baby born in the open in the same area on Sunday night. A Rohingya refugee boy carries his belongings as he walks to a makeshift camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday.



Buddhists

FROM PAGE 1
came at a press briefing yesterday by Bangladesh United Buddhist Forum at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the capital.

Flying paper lanterns is a tradition observed on the occasion of Prabara Purnima, the second largest religious festival of the Buddhists, throughout Bangladesh.

Ashim Ranjan Barua, president of Bangladesh Buddhist Federation, said, "We are not releasing paper lanterns in Prabara Purnima as a sign of protest against the horrific violence against Rohingyas [in Myanmar]."

Reading out a statement at the press briefing, Ashoke Barua, chief coordinator of the forum, said the Buddhists community of Bangladesh are in melancholy watching the misery of Rohingya refugees.

Against the backdrop of Rohingyas fleeing into the country to escape Myanmar Army's crackdown in the Rakhine state, Buddhists here decided to give money collected from the festival to the refugees, he said.

Ashoke called upon international Buddhist organisation World Fellowship of Buddhist and the United Nations along with world leaders to stop the violence by taking immediate steps.

Sanghanayaka Suddhananda Mahathara, president of Bangladesh Buddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, said, "Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, we all are peace loving people. We express our heartfelt sorrow for the Muslim [Rohingya] brothers and sisters who are the victims of the violence."

If necessary, they will meet Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi over the Rohingya issue, he added.

PR Barua, senior vice president of the Buddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, was also present at the briefing.

Earlier on September 8, expressing solidarity with the Rohingyas, around 100 people from the community, including monks, students and professionals, formed a human chain under the banner of Bangladesh United Buddhist Forum in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

The forum submitted a memorandum two days later to the Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka demanding that repression of the Rohingya be stopped in Myanmar.

Orphaned, in extreme shock

FROM PAGE 1
and instantly started throwing bombs at them. Their father, who had been crouching too, jumped to his feet and darted towards the mother and the baby lying on the ground and he, too, was attacked.

The sisters Shaokat Ara, 14, and Mizanur, 8, trembling with fear behind the sheaves waited till the mob left Mizzali Para, their village in Buthidaung township in Myanmar.

The sisters then started walking and after a three-day trek entered Bangladesh along with some of their neighbours through Rezu Aamtali border in Naikkyangchhari on August 29. They learnt that their parents and brother were killed from residents of their village, whom they

had met on the way.

"We could not take anything along. My mother cooked food but we did not get the chance to eat. The food was probably still warm when my mother was killed," Shaokat Ara told The Daily Star at Kutupalong camp in Ukha.

Numb with shock, Mizanur has hardly ever spoken since the incident.

Sabekunnahar, another teenager who was sitting beside Shaokat and Mizanur, wept silently as she listened to Shaokat's story.

"I can imagine the same fate befalling my parents. Some of our village neighbours said they were caught and killed," the 13-year-old said.

The girls are among the 1,250 children who were either orphaned or got

separated from their families while fleeing Myanmar, according to a recent Unicef release from Geneva. It estimated that nearly two lakh children entered Bangladesh in the last three weeks.

Besides food and shelter, the traumatised children need counselling more than anything else.

Aid agency Save the Children on Sunday expressed fear that the separated or unaccompanied children were in a vulnerable position and at risk of exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

Sabekunnahar and her little sister Daulat are from Fakira Bazar village in Myanmar. They were hiding in a jungle with their family members and neighbours when their village came under

siege about a week ago. They cannot precisely remember at which point and how they got separated from others.

"We heard from our neighbours, now in Bangladesh, that my parents, my elder sister and brother were caught by a Burmese mob and killed," Sabekunnahar said.

These four girls from two families had never met each other in their own country. It is their sudden loss that brought them together.

They are now staying with a Rohingya couple Hamid Hossain and Kulsuma Khatun, who came to Bangladesh from Buthidaung in 2012 and has been living in Kutupalong area.

When Hamid heard that people

from his village came to Rezu Aamtali border, he went there to look for familiar faces.

A day labourer, Hamid found the four orphan girls near the border and brought them to his makeshift house.

"I have two children but I brought these four as they did not have anywhere to go," Hamid said.

Munni Barua, an aid worker from Codec, which is facilitating child-friendly space for distressed children, said, "We are enlisting children and providing them with toys and other distractions near the camp area to relieve their trauma."

Unicef Communication Officer Faria Salim said they had already taken up programmes to identify and help the traumatised orphans.

Exodus exposes 'abject failure' of world leaders

FROM PAGE 1
weeks, almost 400,000 Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh. This is more than the total number of refugees who came to Europe by sea last year.

"Poor and low-income countries such as Bangladesh, Uganda and Lebanon are left struggling to deal with huge numbers of refugees, when rich countries who host far fewer should be stepping up to provide aid and resettlement places. Leaders of rich countries prefer to pretend the problem does not exist. What will it take for governments to wake up to the reality that their response to the global refugee crisis is totally broken?" questioned Salil Shetty.

Since the Leaders' Summit, many governments have not only failed to meaningfully address the growing refugee crisis, but have outdone each other in trying to dismantle refugee rights and have failed to respond to new crises around the world.

World leaders gathering in New York for this year's UN General Assembly are expected to discuss the spiraling situation in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

"Instead of attending summits to shake hands with each other and make promises they don't intend to keep, heads of state should show some leadership. That means delivering a comprehensive plan to protect civilians in conflict, ending crimes against humanity and implementing proper solutions for refugees such as the Rohingyas who are in a desperate situation.

"In case they have forgotten, this is what the United Nations is for," said Salil Shetty.

HRW FOR IMPOSING SANCTIONS

Human Rights Watch has called upon world leaders to impose targeted sanctions and a comprehensive arms embargo on the Myanmar military to stop ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) should urgently place a travel ban and asset freeze on those responsible for grave abuses and prohibit military cooperation and financial transactions with key military-owned enterprises of Myanmar, the rights group said on Sunday.

The UNSC, in its first statement on Myanmar in nine years, recently condemned the violence in Rakhine and called for immediate steps to end it. The UN called the violence a campaign of ethnic cleansing that has driven nearly 412,000 to flee to Bangladesh since the trouble started on August 25.

Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson was scheduled to host a closed meeting on the Rohingya crisis yesterday. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, now in New York, is expected to attend a meeting of the OIC's contact group on the Rohingyas today.

Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi is set to address the nation today on the Rakhine crisis. Though there is no hope for any positive steps from her regarding resolving the crisis, the international community will keep a close eye on her speech.

TALES OF HORROR

Thousands of Rohingya Muslims in violence-racked Rakhine were pleading with authorities for a safe passage from two remote villages that were cut off by hostile Buddhists and running short of

food, reported Reuters yesterday from Sittwe, Myanmar.

"We're terrified," Maung Maung, a Rohingya official at Ah Nauk Pyin village, told the news agency by phone. "We'll starve soon and they're threatening to burn down our houses."

Another Rohingya contacted by Reuters, who asked not to be named, said ethnic Rakhine Buddhists came to the same village and shouted, "Leave, or we will kill you all."

Ah Nauk Pyin sits on a mangrove-fringed peninsula in Rathedaung, one of three townships in Rakhine. The villagers said they have no boats.

Until three weeks ago, there were 21 Muslim villages in Rathedaung, along with three camps for Muslims displaced by previous bouts of religious violence. Sixteen of those villages and all three camps have since been emptied and in many cases burnt, forcing an estimated 28,000 Rohingyas to flee.

Rathedaung's five surviving Rohingya villages and their around 8,000 inhabitants are encircled by Rakhine Buddhists and acutely vulnerable, say human rights monitors.

Maung Maung, the Rohingya official, said the villagers were resigned to leaving but the authorities had not responded to their requests for security. At night, he said, villagers had heard distant gunfire.

HUNDREDS MORE ENTER BANGLADESH

Hundreds of refugees travelled by small boats to an island on the southernmost point of Bangladesh late on Sunday and on Monday, telling of persecution and destruction, reported Reuters from

Cox's Bazar.

"The army came and they burned our homes, they killed our people. There was a mob of Rakhine people too," said Usman Goni, 55, after he stepped off a boat with his seven children and wife, clutching two sticks tied in rope and a sack.

Aid groups were scrambling to control the spread of diseases among Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi border camps.

The Unicef and WHO were supporting the health ministry-led campaign targeting measles, rubella and polio to inoculate some 150,000 Rohingya children below the age of fifteen in 68 refugee settlements.

'EXPAND ARMS EMBARGOES'

The HRW said the governments concerned should not wait for UN Security Council action to address the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. They should expand existing arms embargoes to include all military sales, assistance, and cooperation.

According to the rights group, the EU and its member countries should expand or impose similar targeted economic and travel sanctions, and extend the existing EU arms embargo against Burma to include all forms of military assistance.

It said the UNSC should also demand that Myanmar allow humanitarian aid agencies to access people in need, permit entry to a UN fact-finding mission mandated to investigate violations in the country, and ensure the safe and voluntary return of those displaced.

SKOREA CALLS FOR INT'L HELP
South Korea yesterday sought assistance

from the international community to help Bangladesh address the Rohingya issue.

South Korean Ambassador in Dhaka Ahn Seong-doo made the call when he met Bangladesh Health and Family Welfare Minister Mohammed Nasim at the latter's secretariat office, said a health ministry press release.

"The Myanmar army is killing innocent people irrespective of their caste and creed in the name of cleansing the Rohingyas. This is unexpected," he told Nasim.

The diplomat appreciated Bangladesh's generosity in providing shelter and humanitarian assistance to the Myanmar refugees.

TOUGHER INT'L RESPONSE SOUGHT

An emergency foreign ministers meeting yesterday at the United Nations General Assembly came under intense pressure to produce a far tougher international response to the military-led purges of Myanmar's Rohingya population, reports The National.

Boris Johnson, the British foreign secretary, convened the closed-door summit of leading nations and regional parties at the UN after rising criticism that the Security Council was not addressing the crisis. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation has separately scheduled a contact group summit on the Rohingya today.

The British-organised meeting was attended by a representative from Myanmar and by foreign ministers from "a range of countries with a strong interest in seeing an end to the violence there", a spokesman said.

Family says it was murder

FROM PAGE 1
The case statement also named Kanchopara Union Parishad Chairman Saidur Rahman Mollah, and locals Shahidul Islam, Zahrool Islam, Abdul Mazid, Abdus Sattar, Razzak Hossain, Rafiqul Islam and Selim Uddin.

The cognisance court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Abdul Malek accepted the case in the evening and fixed September 21 for passing order on it, said Abdus Subhan, the court's bench assistant (peshkar).

Majharul, who lived on farming and never stood accused in any criminal case, died hours after Rab members arrested him on the evening of September 8.

Some plainclothes officials led by the Rab company commander started beating up Majharul after detaining him near his house, claimed Swapna in her case.

Minutes later, they took him inside the house and hit him with sticks and rods locking him in the bedroom. The plainclothes men, some of them wear-

ing lungi and t-shirts and some with long hairs, also dragged him through the village roads and beat him openly terrorising the areas, she said.

"Those people identified themselves as Rab members but acted like animals," Swapna told The Daily Star.

Majharul was screaming and claiming his innocence while the Rab personnel were beating him to know the whereabouts of some firearms, she alleged.

"They did not listen to us for a moment," said Majharul's elder brother Azaharul Islam, a project officer of Brac. "It was like they had come to kill him."

Before leaving the house, the Rab official threatened to kill Swapna and her five-year son in "crossfire" if they utter a word about the incident, she alleged in the case.

They took away a "nearly dead" Majharul and asked the family members to look for him at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The family learnt about his death at



Majharul's wife Swapna with their five-year-old son Mustakim Islam.

the hospital the next morning and found his body at the morgue around 7:30am.

Contacted last night for comments, Company Commander Sayeed Abdullah said he can't talk as he was on an operation. He advised this correspondent to talk to Rajshahi Rab director.

Lt Col Mahbubul Alam, director of Rajshahi zone Rab, rejected the allega-

tions and claimed that Majharul, an "arms dealer", was detained in a sting operation and he died of "heart attack".

The official said Majharul was held when he came to "sell three firearms to a man planted by Rab" near his house. He "fell sick and lost consciousness" while being taken to Rajshahi city.

The elite force rushed him to the RMCH where doctors declared him dead around 4:30am (on September 9), said Mahbubul.

Rab members found eight bullets in his possession, the director said, adding, "It is our bad luck that he died; otherwise, we would have seized those firearms."

The family members alleged that the accused locals and some employees of Rural Electrification Board (REB) and a construction firm also have involvement in the murder.

They said Majharul's death had links to his protest against tree felling for installation of power lines by REB and a clash between two groups of villagers on August 18.

The contractor who got the job cut 200 bamboos and 100 trees, in most cases without the consent of owners, and set up electricity poles, allegedly violating the approved design.

The work stalled when Majharul protested felling of trees belonging to his family and some villagers went against him, leading to the feud, they said.

"Majharul was not against the power line installation; we just wanted to save our trees. The dispute was finally settled. But through the protest, Majharul started to emerge as a leader in the village," said Azaharul.

Contacted, Milon Kumar Kundu, deputy general manager of REB in Naogaon, said the issues were resolved through a meeting on August 20 in presence of police.

The feuding groups were fined -- Majharul's group Tk 18,000 and his rivals Tk 15,000 -- as some equipment of the contractor was damaged during the August 18 fight, he said, denying involvement of any REB staff in the

murder.

Days before his death, Majharul and his brother had received threats over phone. "Let the Eid [September 2] pass. Something terrible will happen to your family," Azahar quoted a caller as saying.

A school dropout in class-IX, Majharul went to Malaysia getting an electrician's job in 2005. On return, he married Swapna in January 2011.

Majharul's is one of the well-off families in the village. He was planning to start a business of rods and cement.

"There might have been some flaws in his character like we all have. But he was not a person who should have been arrested and tortured," said a villager.

A post-mortem was conducted at the RMCH but its findings could not be known.

An inquest carried out in presence of Executive Magistrate Rahima Sultana found injury marks on the body. The Daily Star obtained a copy of its report.