

NOT RELIEVED DESPITE THE RELIEF

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In fact, such instances were so common last week that it compelled Border Guard Bangladesh officials to make frequent announcements, urging the relief trucks to park in empty fields instead of blocking the road.

Providing relief in such an arbitrary manner not only makes it difficult for those who are not strong enough to run behind the trucks, but also makes it impossible to differentiate between the Rohingyas who arrived recently and the refugees who have been living in these camps for years. It is obvious that the newly arrived Rohingyas need more help than the others. In addition, the older Rohingyas have an advantage in the sense that they know the roads better and as a result, they are aware of the places which are likely to receive the most amount of relief.

A BGB official from Thaing Khali camp, recently made on a school's football field, explains the problem.

"They [Rohingyas] are throwing away the clothes and the mosquito nets they don't like. Now I have to make sure that these are either returned or dispatched. I asked a lot of donators to take these back, but even they have problems," he says.

"I think the way the people of Bangladesh have stood up for them is great. I don't think any other country would have done the same. But we need more co-ordination at this point, or else it will only create more chaos," he adds.

Mohammad Mainuddin, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Ukhia, admits that the distribution system needs improvement.

"We have a control room in the upazila and there is one in Teknaf as well. There are seven distribution points in Ukhia and five in Teknaf. The police,



15-year-old Nazimullah displays the marks that the Myanmar's Army left on him.



A BGB official oversees the distribution of relief at a camp

Mahbia Khatun, a septuagenarian from the Kutupalong camp, complains about the lack of relief. "I got some *muri*, but that was all. I can't run around behind trucks with men and children. I am really old. And even when they do provide relief within the camps, they distribute food in random tents," she says.

"Just yesterday, the tent opposite to mine got rice, but I did not. They went ahead because my tent is small and I was probably asleep," she adds.

Mahbia arrived in Bangladesh with three children and a niece. When I met her, her son was looking for a doctor to treat his mother's feet. "We had to walk atop a lot of stones and my feet bled a lot in the process. It's not just me. All my family members are sick and vomiting regularly. More than clothes, we need water at the moment," she adds.

And that's the other issue: the kind of relief that is being distributed. Most of the camps, and even the roads leading to the camps, are flooded with clothes that a large section of Rohingyas preferred not to take. This not only takes up unnecessary space at the camps, but also makes life difficult for the BGB officials, who are under pressure as it is, at the camps as they are forced to find a way to dispose of these clothes elsewhere.

DOS AND DON'TS OF PROVIDING RELIEF

- Do not send relief in big trucks.
- Do not send clothes. They are being rejected.
- Send warm clothes in winter.
- Do not randomly stop on the roads and provide relief there.
- Contact the control room and be aware of the government distribution routes.
- The camps are in need of water. Water should be of the highest priority.

the BGB, scouts and magistrates are all present to distribute the relief. We are trying to distribute the relief equally," he says.

"We are targeting the Rohingyas who have just arrived. But of course, it is not a crime if the earlier ones come too. But it will be a crime if Bangladeshis stand in lines for relief. Because this is such a huge project, some gaps will remain.

This is natural and will only be overcome gradually," adds Mainuddin.

He urges the volunteers who are bringing in relief to follow a few steps in order to help improve distribution.

"Firstly, if you're bringing relief, please bring them in small trucks. The big trucks block the roads and are hard to place. Secondly, we don't need any more clothes. We suggest volunteers give

clothes during the winter, when they will need it," he says.

"Thirdly, bring lots of water. That is the need of the hour. Please go to the distribution points to give the relief. Randomly providing relief on the roads only creates problems," he adds.

Furthermore he says that at this point in time, they need more volunteers. "Even if someone wants to keep their relief with us, we are not able to do so because we don't have enough volunteers for that process," says Mainuddin.

In situations like these, there are bound to be lapses in the system. The government has promised to fill the gaps, and going by the recent activities, they probably will.

Stories of RAB officials helping a Rohingya retrieve his cows after the latter was cheated in Ukhia and others about how the BGB treated the incoming refugees with plenty of respect were narrated by the Rohingyas themselves, suggesting that the situation is heading in the right direction.

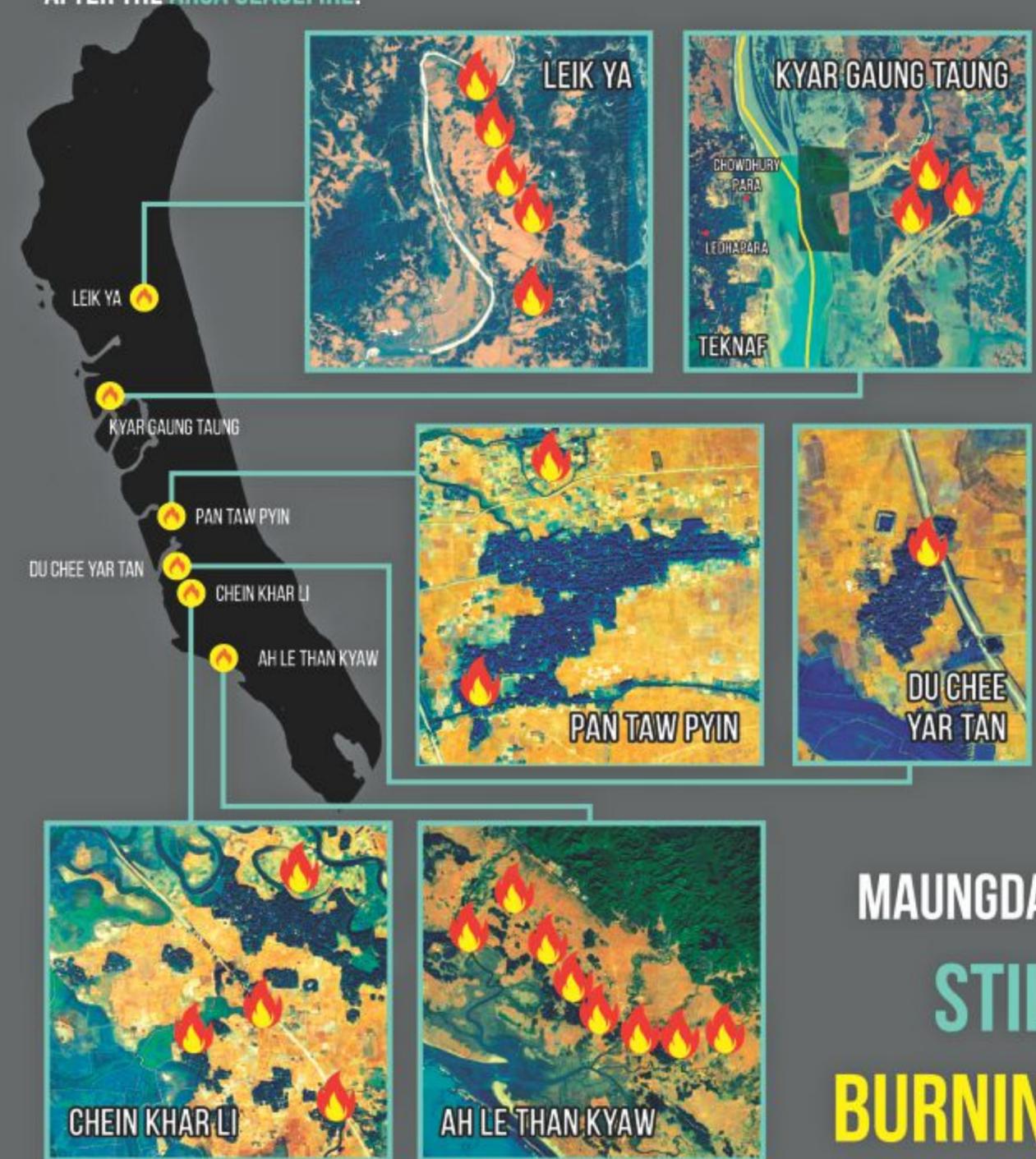
At the moment, it seems that the contributions from the public can be more effective if one follows the steps laid down by the government.

Follow Naimul Karim @naimonthefield

ROHINGYA CRISIS

INFOGRAPHIC

AN UNPRECEDENTED LEVEL OF VIOLENCE ERUPTED IN MAUNDAW ON SEPTEMBER 15. LAST TIME THERE WAS SO MUCH VIOLENCE WAS AUGUST 28. THE NUMBER OF AREAS SET ON FIRE ON THE 15TH RIVALS THE ARSON ATTACKS OF AUGUST. THIS COMES ONLY 5 DAYS AFTER THE ARSA CEASEFIRE.



MAUNDAW  
STILL  
BURNING

INFOGRAPHIC: AMIYA HALDER & ZYMA ISLAM