

'Miss World Bangladesh' stripped of her crown

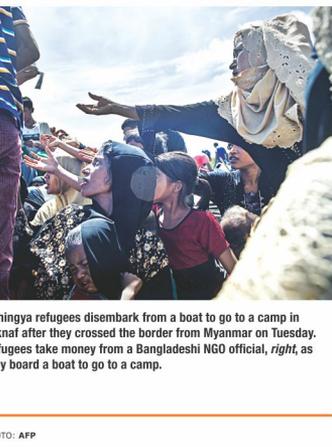
Following widespread criticism, Jannatul Nayeem Arif was stripped of the title of 'Miss World Bangladesh 2017' as she had "had information relating to her marital status".

The announcement was made at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday, five days after the 27-year-old contestant was controversially crowned in the competition's final round at the same venue.

Now Jessia Islam, the first runner-up, will represent the country in the 67th Miss World contest, to be held in London in November at Savoy. Chair and the judges and the beauty pageant's organiser, Antar Showbiz, at the conference.

"They said they took the decision to rescind Jannatul's title as she had information relating to her marital status."

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Rohingya refugees disembark from a boat to go to a camp in Teknaf after they crossed the border from Myanmar, Tuesday. Refugees take money from a Bangladeshi NGO official, right, as they board a boat to go to a camp.

PHOTO: AFP

Nobel Prize

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for the development of pharmaceuticals," it added.

The ultra-sensitive imaging method allows scientists to freeze and studied in their natural form, without the need for dyes.

It has laid bare never-before-seen details of the tiny protein machines that cells use.

"When researchers began to suspect that the Zika virus was causing the epidemic of brain-damaged newborns in Brazil, they turned to cryo-EM (electron microscopy) to visualise the virus," he said.

Frank (77-year-old), German-born biochemistry professor at Columbia University in New York, was woken from his sleep when the committee announced the prize in Stockholm, six hours ahead.

"There are so many other discoveries every day. I was in a way speechless," he said. "It's wonderful news."

In the first half of the 20th century, scientists used X-rays, DNA and RNA -- were terra incognita on the map of biochemistry.

Because the powerful electron beam destroys biological material, electron microscopists were long thought to be unable to see the real thing.

TEA PARTY TO CELEBRATE

But 72-year-old Henderson, from the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, used an electron microscope in 1990 to generate a three-dimensional image of a protein at atomic resolution, a groundbreaking discovery which proved the technology's potential.

Frank made it widely usable between 1970 and 1990, developing a method to transform the electron microscope's fuzzy two-dimensional images into sharp, 3-D composites.

Dubochet, until an honorary professor of biophysics at the University of Lausanne, was the first to do it.

Now 75, he discovered in the 1980s how to cool water so quickly that it solidifies in liquid form around a biological sample, allowing the molecules to retain their natural shape and structure.

The electron microscope's every nut and bolt has been optimised since these discoveries.

"The required atomic resolution was reached in 2013, and researchers "can now routinely produce three-dimensional structures of biomolecules," according to the Nobel committee.

The trio will share the prize money of 9 million Swedish kronor (around \$1.1 million or 943,100 euros).

"Normally what I'd do if I were in Cambridge, we will have a party around tea-time in the lab but I expect we will have it tomorrow in London," said Henderson.

BEAUTIFUL PICTURES

The prize announcement was praised by the scientific community and observers around the world.

"By solving more and more structural biology questions, we can answer biological questions, such as how drugs get into cells, that were simply unanswerable a few years ago," Jim Smith, science director at the London-based Biomedical Research Charitable Foundation, said in a statement.

Daniel Davis, immunology professor at the University of Manchester, said details of crucial molecules and proteins that make the human immune system function, can now be seen like never before.

"It has been used in visualising the way in which antibodies can work to stop viruses being dangerous, leading to one example," he said.

John Hardy, neuroscience professor at University College London, said Dubochet, Frank and Henderson's technique has transformed the field of structural biology.

It has been used, for example, to compile a detailed identikit of an enzyme implicated in Alzheimer's.

"Knowing this structure opens up the possibility of rational drug design in the future," he said.

"As a biologist, I can say that the pictures are beautiful."

Ensure voluntary return of Rohingya

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safe return of Rohingya to their homes, this must be a voluntary process and not lead to a hasty and reckless effort to push people back against their will. No one should be forced back to a situation where they will continue to face serious human rights violations and systemic discrimination and segregation," said Audrey Gaughan, Amnesty International's Director of Global Issues.

"The Myanmar military's horrific campaign against the Rohingya in Rakhine State amounts to crimes against humanity. The very first condition that must be met before any repatriation plan becomes reality is unconditional end to the violence. But this is not enough -- the Myanmar government must also end the entrenched discrimination that has trapped Rohingya in a cycle of deprivation and abuse for decades."

Gaughan also called for international and UN oversight of the repatriation process and commended Bangladesh's "exceptional generosity" in opening its borders and hosting hundreds of thousands fleeing in desperation over the past month.

"The international community

must step up to help Dhaka deal with the current crisis and its aftermath."

In another development, the UN committees for women's and children's rights yesterday called on Myanmar to immediately stop violence in Rakhine, citing human rights violations "being committed at the behest of the military and other security forces" might amount to crimes against humanity.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child urged Myanmar government to promptly and effectively investigate and vigorously prosecute acts of violence against women and children.

"We are particularly worried about the fate of Rohingya women and children subject to serious violations of their human rights, including killings, rape and forced displacement," independent experts of the committees said in a joint statement issued in Geneva.

They urged the Myanmar civil and military authorities to fully comply with their obligations under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to exercise due diligence and prevent, investigate, punish and ensure redress for acts of private individuals or militias under its jurisdiction that violate women's and children's rights.

The experts also called on the Myanmar government to grant access to and fully cooperate with the fact-finding mission established by the UN Human Rights Council, so it can conduct thorough and independent investigations.

The government should also grant access to and fully cooperate with humanitarian aid agencies, the statement added.

AID GROUPS SEEK \$434M

Humanitarian organisations helping Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh yesterday said they need \$434 million over the next six months to help up to 1.2 million people, mostly children, in dire need of life-saving assistance, reports Reuters.

An estimated 809,000 Rohingyas have entered Bangladesh fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar, more than half a million of whom have arrived since August 25.

"Unless we support the efforts of

the Bangladesh government to provide immediate aid to the half million people who have arrived over the past month, many of the most vulnerable -- women, children and the elderly -- will die," said William Lacy Swearing, director general of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which is coordinating the aid effort.

Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Robert Watkins in a statement said the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar was highly vulnerable, many having experienced severe trauma, and were living in extremely difficult conditions.

He said that the humanitarian agencies' plan for help over the next six months factors in the possibility of another 91,000 refugees arriving, as the influx continues.

"The plan targets 1.2 million people in need of Rohingya refugees, and 300,000 Bangladesh host communities over the next six months," Watkins added.

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS CONTINUE

Bangladesh has continued its diplomatic efforts to convince its friends to mount pressure on Myanmar to

ensure return of the Rohingyas.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque, now in New Delhi, will hold talks with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar at 6:00 pm today.

Diplomatic sources said Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will be visiting Bangladesh on October 22-23 to attend the long overdue Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart AH Mahmood Ali.

She will also hold talks with top government officials, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The minister might clarify India's latest stance on the Rohingya issue during her meetings with the government officials, the sources added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Jamshid Kuchkarov also has expressed their interest in visiting Bangladesh.

Stronger global solidarity needed

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\$44.8m until early this month.

Mark Lowcock said Bangladesh has been exceptionally generous and welcoming to the refugees, and hoped that everyone recognised the country as a role model in handling refugees despite not being rich.

They would present in the Friday's meeting the assessment of the situation in the Rohingya camps, the requirements and the measures Bangladesh has generously taken to help over 500,000 refugees.

"We will be saying that Bangladesh needs help [in handling the situation]," said the OCHA chief who is also the under-secretary-general for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the UN.

He elaborated the situation in the Rohingya camps, the possible ways of successful Rohingya repatriation, and raised questions over Myanmar's unwillingness to engage the UN in Rohingya repatriation process as proposed by a Myanmar delegation in Dhaka on October 2.

He said the UN agencies act in consistent with the international humanitarian law and maintain the principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality.

"When countries don't want UN agencies to come, I think you have to ask serious questions why that is," Mark Lowcock said.

SITUATION 'VERY DIFFICULT'

Sharing his experience in the Rohingya camps, the UN official said, "The situation is very difficult."

The trauma of the Rohingyas, who fled violence, arson, shootings, killings and rape in Rakhine, needs to be dealt with seriously. They need counselling and access to medical facilities, he said.

Mark Lowcock said the camps were very congested, and the major issues were road access, camp management and sanitation.

"One of the things we are worried about is the danger of disease outbreak. We need to reduce the risks by improving sanitation facilities fast."

He noted of UN and other agencies' relief operations that were in progress. The relief effort at this stage was not keeping up with the requirements, he said.

Mark Lowcock also said they have

incorporated in the response plan the support to the host communities and involvement of Bangladesh institutions and civil society in the relief operations.

For a safe and dignified return of the Rohingya refugees, the situation in Rakhine must improve, he said.

"That has to start with cessation of hostility and military activities in Rakhine. Second step is allowing full access of humanitarian agencies across Rakhine," he said.

"The onus is on the authorities in Myanmar... to put in place the arrangement... so that the people who fled feel that it is safe to return," he said.

"The UN remains ready for humanitarian assistance in Rakhine and help Myanmar implement the recommen-

dations of the Kofi Annan Commission in addressing the problems of the Rohingyas there, the UN official added.

There is widespread poverty and shortage of opportunities in Rakhine state, he said.

Mark Lowcock said when the Rohingya refugees were confident that they would not be terrorised, brutalised, killed, attacked and raped, they would go back.

Unless that situation was created, it was unlikely that the Rohingyas would return to Rakhine.

"We think that a significant number of people will come [to Bangladesh] and estimates may vary. Some say 200,000 more Rohingyas may come and some others say it may be 300,000."

\$1.5bn for Rooppur nuke power plant

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An official who is present there has said the two sides discussed how the three LoCs could be implemented smoothly.

The Indian side made requests over several issues, including quick implementation of the bridge project over the Feni river which would help in transporting goods from Chittagong port to seven sister states in India, said the official.

The Indian side also proposed revival of the railway system that existed during the British period for increasing connectivity between the two countries.

New Delhi urged Dhaka to let it use Mongla port and allow more Indian private airlines to operate flights in Bangladesh.

India also proposed setting up an effluent treatment plant in Narayanganj's Pagla to help address the problem of river pollution.

After the bilateral meeting, the third loan agreement was signed by ERD Secretary Kazi Shofiqul Azam and Managing Director of India's Exim Bank David Rasquinha.

In a statement, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) said 17 development projects have been primarily identified for implementation under this credit line agreement.

The projects include Buriganga River Restoration (New Dhaleshwari-Pungli-Bangshi-Turag-Bishwari river system) with an estimated allocation of \$196 million and upgrading of 245km roads - Benapole-Jessore-Narail-Bhanga

(135km), Brahman-Baruerhat (35km) and Mainamati-Bangrabhanara-Sarail (75km) -- with an estimated allocation of \$225 million; and

At least three of the projects involve development of economic zones, a priority for Bangladesh which looks to ramp up private sector investment.

Some \$100 million will be allocated for building a dedicated economic zone spanning 1,005 acres in Mirsarai of Chittagong. Another \$100 million may be used for developing a special economic zone at Payra or Maheshkhali and \$300 million line project (\$177 million), and Gazipur 450MW combined cycle (gas/LNG based) power plant (\$402 million).

The first LoC of \$1 billion was signed on August 7, 2010 and the second LoC of \$2 billion in March last year.

Bangladesh's utilisation of the

Indian credit has been nothing more than a sorry state of affairs for the past seven years.

Bangladesh used to only \$576 million of the first LoC till last month from 2010. The implementation of the second LoC has not been too good. But initial teething troubles are now over. We believe that implementation of this agreement would be pretty fast. Let's hope that it will be fast."

Jaitley said most of the projects involve infrastructure development.

Referring to Muhiht's statement, the Indian minister pointed out that there was some delay in the past, as it took time to select the projects. But this time, 17 projects have been identified in advance.

"One of the reasons for delays for some of these projects in any country is also land acquisition. There are local issues which all governments face because they have to do it in a very factal manner."

Jaitley further said, "We do hope the earlier credit also gets executed expeditiously."

Muhiht said a golden period of friendship exists between the two countries.

"We are having very good relations with all our neighbours at this moment. To have good relations with other neighbours of Bangladesh, we need to use India to a degree," he added.

Marginal farmers

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The findings came from the Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) carried out by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The Washington-based global food policy think-tank surveyed 6,500 households across the seven administrative divisions twice -- first round in 2012 and the second in 2015 -- for the BIHS, which is the most comprehensive and nationally representative household survey ever conducted in Bangladesh.

Akhter Ahmed, lead author of the survey report, said providing the small and marginal farmers with adequate access to institutional credit and effective agricultural extension services is crucial for raising income and enhancing farm output in Bangladesh.

However, the survey found that the services to smallerholder farmers is very low in absolute terms and considerably less than the services provided to richer farmers," he told The Daily Star yesterday on the sidelines of an international workshop on eliminating hunger and malnutrition. The programme, organised by the IFPRI, was held in the city.

Akhter, who heads IFPRI country operation in Bangladesh, emphasised on addressing the complex procedures of public agricultural credit distribution.

While chairing a session in the workshop, former agricultural secretary Anwar Faruque also shed light on cumbersome and graft-ridden credit disbursement procedures in the formal farm loan system.

IFPRI Director General Shenggen Fan told the workshop that after several years

of progress the global hunger is on the rise again mainly because of conflicts, droughts and floods in different regions of the world.

He stressed accelerating growth in Bangladesh given the reality that the country still has got 30 percent of its child population vitamin-A deficient and 44 percent of its women anemic.

In his presentation at the workshop, Akhter showed how farm growth, in general, and rice production growth, in particular, has slowed down in recent years.

Growth in farm sector has come down to 2.4 percent in the last five years compared to 4.7 percent in the previous five years. And rice production growth dipped to just 0.7 percent in the past five years whereas, it was as high as 4.8 percent in the preceding five years.

Akhter as well as other panelists and discussants from the audience emphasised on investing more on farm research and ensuring just prices for the producers so that the farm growth gets accelerated.

Food Minister Muzamul Islam, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki, and additional secretary of the agriculture ministry Mokhammad Nazmul Islam, Executive Director of Gristi Goshorth Foundation Dr Wais Kabir and USAID Mission Director in Bangladesh Janina Jaruzelski, among others, also spoke in the workshop.

Janina Jaruzelski said just stunting rate has got something to do with the child marriage and early pregnancy in the country. She called for stopping such marriages in Bangladesh.