

It can destabilise entire South Asia

Presence of so many Rohingyas is a security issue, says foreign secretary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh yesterday said presence of nearly one million Rohingya refugees in its territory has the potential to destabilise South Asia and favoured implementation of the Kofi Annan report in its entirety without any precondition to solve the crisis.

Addressing a media conference after wrapping up his two-day visit to India, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque, who met his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval yesterday, said the presence of so many Rohingyas was a "huge burden" on the country's small economy as well as a security issue.

"It has the potential to destabilise not only Bangladesh but the entire region. It has ingredients to becoming a security threat," he asserted.

Asked if Bangladesh shared India's concerns over the possibility of Rohingyas turning into a security threat, Haque said, "We also believe that the Rohingya issue has the potential to destabilise the region. We are

speaking in the same language on this."

On how supportive India has been to Bangladesh on the Rohingya issue, he added, "The people of Bangladesh are very appreciative of India's role in coping with the situation. In terms of sending relief materials, India tops the list. The people of Bangladesh and the government of Bangladesh are happy about India's role."

He further said India has always stood by Bangladesh on the Rohingya issue "and I have no doubt about India's support to Bangladesh to help stabilise the situation."

Haque said ever since the present phase of Rohingya crisis erupted, he had met the Indian foreign secretary in Colombo and New York before yesterday's meeting in New Delhi.

"The impression I got is that India will always stand by Bangladesh, especially in times of difficulty," he remarked.

Asked about India's decision to deport an estimated 40,000 Rohingyas, Haque said, "I will not comment on

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A team of the fisheries department and the river police seizes hilsa and gillnet from a fishing boat in the Padma in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila. The team seized 250 kg hilsa and one lakh metre gillnet and fined 11 fishermen Tk 2,000 each. There is a 22-day ban on netting, transporting, selling and hoarding of hilsa. Bottom left, fishermen catching hilsa in the Jamuna near Aricha Ghat in Manikganj's Shibalay upazila. The photos were taken yesterday.

Crackdown

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Republican committee chairman. Senior UN officials have used similar language.

Murphy said that in addition to the half-million who have fled to Bangladesh, an estimated 2,00,000 people have been internally displaced in Myanmar's strife-hit Rakhine State. Despite government assurances that security operations halted a month ago, vigilantes are still reportedly committing arson attacks on Rohingya homes and blocking humanitarian assistance, he said.

"Burma's nascent democracy is at a turning point and a heavy-handed response invites international terrorists and challenges for other neighbours," Murphy said, referring to the alternative name for Myanmar, where long-standing sectarian tensions between majority Buddhists and the Rohingyas have spiralled as the country has opened up.

He said the US has discussed the situation with other countries in Southeast Asia -- where the Philippines, and Muslim-majority nations like Malaysia and Indonesia, have grappled with terrorist attacks and extremist violence.

Rep Eliot Engel, the committee's top-ranking Democrat, said the US should consider sanctions on Myanmar's military leadership and businesses that were lifted by the Obama administration to reward Myanmar's shift to democracy after

five decades of direct military rule. A weak civilian government took power last year.

Murphy said the administration is "exploring all options available to us to effect change." The US already has substantial restrictions on the military and only very rarely grants US visas to members of the military and their families, he said.

He said the Min Aung Hlaing, the commander-in-chief of Myanmar's armed forces, "has enormous responsibility to stop the violence" and address security threats in a "proper manner."

But he added that there are other contributors to the violence, including Rohingya militants and vigilantes -- a reference to Buddhist thugs who have also attacked Rohingyas.

Engel said satellite imagery and witness accounts indicate that Myanmar's military and security forces "have been carrying out an intentional, systematic policy to drive Rohingyas from their homes in Burma and to burn their villages to the ground."

He said hundreds of Rohingyas have been treated for gunshot wounds inflicted by security forces as they fled.

While Murphy steered clear of describing that as "ethnic cleansing," he pointed to comments by US Cabinet members, such as UN ambassador Nikki Haley who last week described it as a "brutal, sustained campaign to cleanse the country of an ethnic minority".

Rohingya crisis

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The PM was exchanging views with Awami League leaders based in the UK and other European countries on Thursday, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told reporters after the meeting.

Hasina said discussions with Myanmar have already begun to resolve the crisis with the recent visit of Kyaw Tint Swe, minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar, to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh sheltered the Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds as the country's people always believed in humanity, she said.

"Human beings are for human beings... we can't throw them [Myanmar citizens] into the Bay of Bengal. If we can feed 16 crore people, we will also be able to feed an additional five to seven lakh in their bad times."

"If necessary, we'll take one meal a day and share another with these distressed people... we're not that rich, but our heart is big enough and we stand for mankind," Hasina told the meeting.

According to the PM, the Rohingyas will be relocated to an island called "Bhasan Char" from Cox's Bazar.

Turning to the Padma Bridge project, she expressed happiness over the instal-

lation of the bridge's first span. "We have proved we can."

She said ill-effects were made by vested quarters to tarnish her and her family's image by making false allegations of corruption. "But the allegations were proved to be false in the Canadian Federal Court."

About the recent flood in the country, Hasina said the deluge caused massive damage to crops. Despite having an adequate stock of food, the government was importing rice so that people don't suffer, she added.

She mentioned the destruction and mindless atrocities perpetrated by the "BNP-Jamaat clique" in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

She urged the expatriate leaders of AL and its associated bodies to work together for ensuring the party's victory in the next general election.

She also called upon them to further brighten the country's image abroad through their work.

AL Office Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap, UK AL President Sultan Mahmud Sharif, Vice President Jalaluddin Ahmed, General Secretary Syed Sajedur Rahman and Joint Secretary Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury were present, among others.

Sushma Swaraj

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Sushma was scheduled to visit Bangladesh in the first half of September, but it was postponed.

This will be her second visit to Bangladesh. She first visited the country on June 25-27 in 2014 as the external affairs minister after the BJP came to power that year.

Diplomatic sources said the JCC meeting would review the implementation and progress of decisions made during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in April this year and her

Indian counterpart Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in June 2015.

The issue of Rohingya will come up prominently in the JCC meeting, they added.

Sushma earlier expressed India's full support to Bangladesh's stance on the Rohingya issue as international concern began to grow over the fate of the refugees.

The third JCC meeting was held in New Delhi on September 20 in 2014 when Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali led a 26-member delegation.

ICAN wins Nobel Peace Prize

FROM PAGE 1

Iran's nuclear abilities. And the US president last month alarmed delegates at the UN General Assembly by warning he may be forced to "totally destroy" North Korea because of its atomic weapons programme.

"We live in a world where the risk of nuclear weapons being used is greater than it has been for a long time," said Norwegian Nobel Committee President Berit Reiss-Andersen in announcing the prize in Oslo.

"Some states are modernising their nuclear arsenals, and there is a real danger that more countries will try to procure nuclear weapons, as exemplified by North Korea."

But she stressed that the committee's decision wasn't aimed at any particular world leader, adding: "We're not kicking anyone's leg with this prize."

Founded in Vienna in 2007, ICAN (the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) comprises more than 400 NGOs and has mobilised supporters and celebrities alike in its cause.

It was a key player in the adoption of a historic nuclear weapons ban treaty, signed at the UN by 122 countries in July.

However, the accord was largely symbolic as none of the nine known world nuclear powers put their names down. It still needs to be ratified before entering into force.

The US, Russia, Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea are all thought to possess weapons of mass destruction.

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, ICAN's head Beatrice Fihn said Trump's movements over North Korea and Iran showed the clear danger posed by nuclear arms.

"The election of President Donald Trump has made a lot of people feel very uncomfortable with the fact that he alone can authorise the use of nuclear weapons," she said, adding that the US leader has a track record of "not listening to expertise."

GREAT GLOBAL TENSION

Although global atomic weapons stockpiles have plummeted -- from around 64,000 warheads in 1986 at the height of the Cold War to more than 9,000 in 2017 according to the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (BAS) -- the number of nuclear-armed nations has grown. Yesterday's award -- the climax to a week of prize-giving honouring global luminaries in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine and literature -- comes as a global nuclear deal with Iran is under increasing pressure from Trump.

Ageing survivors of the atomic bombing of the two Japanese cities have long spearheaded an anti-nuclear campaign.

On August 6 in 1945, the US dropped an atomic bomb on the southern Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing 140,000 people, according to estimates.

Three days later, a second bomb devastated Nagasaki, killing an estimated 74,000 people.

SHARED COMMITMENT

The United Nations praised the Nobel

Peace Prize awarded to ICAN as good news in a world where the elimination of nuclear weapons is needed more than ever.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was among the first to congratulate the ICAN for its win. "Now more than ever we need a world without nuclear weapons," he said on Twitter.

A UN spokeswoman in Geneva, Alessandra Vellucci, said the award is "a good omen" for the eventual ratification of a treaty banning nuclear weapons, the UN said.

EU Foreign Affairs chief Federica Mogherini also congratulated ICAN, tweeting: "We share a strong commitment to achieving the objective of a world free from nuclear weapons."

But Russia, which according to BAS has the world's largest atomic stockpile, said there was no alternative to "nuclear parity" to guarantee world peace.

"Russia is a responsible member of the nuclear club," a spokesman for President Vladimir Putin told reporters in Moscow.

The Nobel committee has rewarded anti-nuclear weapons drives on several previous occasions. Over 300 people and organisations were thought to have been nominated for this year's Peace Prize, including the UN's refugee agency UNHCR, Syria's White Helmets rescue service and Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege.

The Peace Prize, which comes with a gold medal and a cheque for nine million Swedish kronor (943,000 euros, \$1.1 million), will be presented in Oslo on December 10, the anniversary of the death of its founder, Swedish philanthropist and dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel.

MOMENT IS NOW
The time to ban nuclear weapons "is now", nuclear disarmament group ICAN said yesterday, after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, add AFP and Reuters.

"This is a time of great global tension, when fiery rhetoric could all too easily lead us, inexorably, to unspeakable horror", the Geneva-based organisation said in a statement.

"The spectre of nuclear conflict looms large once more. If ever there were a moment for nations to declare their unequivocal opposition to nuclear weapons, that moment is now."

The ICAN said the Nobel award was a "tribute" to the two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which were attacked by American atomic bombs at the end of World War II.

As nuclear-fuelled tensions intensify between the US and its rivals in North Korea and Iran, ICAN also

Australia amnesty nets 50,000 guns

AFP, Sydney

More than 50,000 guns were handed in under Australia's first national firearms amnesty since a mass shooting 20 years ago, officials said yesterday.

The three-month operation ended last weekend, just before retired accountant Stephen Paddock massacred 58 people in Las Vegas in an act that propelled gun control back into the global spotlight.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said there had been "an overwhelming response" to the amnesty.

"Australia has some of the strongest gun laws in the world but illicit firearms remain a threat to community safety," he said.

"As a result of this successful amnesty, there are now 50,000 fewer firearms on the streets."

Ahead of the amnesty, the government estimated there were up to 260,000 illicit weapons in the community.

The amnesty allowed people to hand in unregistered or unwanted firearms with no questions asked. Outside this, they face fines of up to Aus\$280,000 (US\$212,000) or 14 years in jail for illegal gun possession.

The firearms surrendered ranged from historic pre-1900 weapons and guns from both world wars to modern semi-automatics, a homemade machine-gun and even a rocket launcher.

blasted some nations, saying: "The belief of some governments that nuclear weapons are a legitimate and essential source of security is not only misguided, but also dangerous, for it incites proliferation and undermines disarmament."

It also said, "We applaud those nations that have already signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we urge all others to follow their lead. It offers a pathway forward at a time of alarming crisis. Disarmament is not a pipe dream, but an urgent humanitarian necessity."

"We most humbly thank the Norwegian Nobel Committee. This award shines a needed light on the path the ban treaty provides towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Before it is too late, we must take that path."

The statement further reads: "It is a great honour to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 in recognition of our role in achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

"This historic agreement, adopted on July 7 with the backing of 122 nations, offers a powerful, much-needed alternative to a world in which threats of mass destruction are allowed to prevail and, indeed, are escalating."

"The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is a coalition of non-governmental organisations in one hundred countries."

"This prize is a tribute to the tireless efforts of many millions of campaigners and concerned citizens worldwide who, ever since the dawn of the atomic age, have loudly protested nuclear weapons, insisting that they can serve no legitimate purpose and must be forever banished from the face of our earth."

"It is a tribute also to the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- the hibakusha -- and victims of nuclear test explosions around the world, whose searing testimonies and unstinting advocacy were instrumental in securing this landmark agreement."

"The treaty categorically outlaws the worst weapons of mass destruction and establishes a clear pathway to their total elimination. It is a response to the ever-deepening concern of the international community that any use of nuclear weapons would inflict catastrophic, widespread and long-lasting harm on people and our living planet."

Tigers fail to learn

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batsmen on exactly how to bat first in a Test match and put the opposition under scoreboard pressure. The Tigers came into the Test with four changes; only Mustafizur Rahman survived among the four specialist bowlers from Potchefstroom. Yet, somehow, Mushfiqur had the confidence in the new-look attack to risk the same punishment all over again, on a pitch that although containing more bounce and pace, also held good value for shots as the ball came onto the bat more than it did in Potchefstroom.

While they failed to learn the wider lesson from the first Test, they showed a startling inability to learn from their mistakes while on the field. Only Mustafizur, whose six pre-lunch overs went for just 13 runs, seemed aware of the way to bowl on a good wicket against good batsmen. Subhasish and Rubel over-pitched regularly and were

punished in the first session, but they would not adjust their length and neither would Mushfiqur adjust his field until after lunch, by which time the South Africans had put on 126 without loss.

After lunch, there was a new ploy as the quick bowlers tried bouncers and on a bouncy wicket, that produced better results. The field also reflected the strategy, with two men out on the boundary for the hook and either a squarish leg gully or a short leg employed for the pacers.

Mustafizur seemed to be the most obvious pupil as his consistent around-the-wicket bouncers to Elgar frustrated the batsman, but Mustafizur's reward was denied when keeper Liton Das dropped a high chance off a gloved hook when Elgar was on 110 in the 50th over. Subhasish soon benefitted from Mustafizur's toil

as another top edge was beautifully taken by Mustafizur himself to send back Elgar in the 54th over.

The short bowling worked wonders for Rubel as well as, in the 59th over during the evening session, a series of bouncers pinned Markram back and then a swinging yorker cannoned off his pads into the stumps. A rare good ball from Subhasish then accounted for Temba Bavuma, who edged a delivery that was nipping away to bring the score to 288 for three.

That was the end of the joy for Bangladesh as Amla and Du Plessis put on 140 runs for the unbroken fourth wicket in just 28.4 overs as Bangladesh overdid the short bowling. But that readjustment, fans will hope, will come this morning after they have had the time to digest some lessons in the dressing room.

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