

RELOCATING REFUGEES TO ONE CAMP

Haphazard early settlements make the job hard

MOHAMMAD AL-JANNAT MOLLA and MOHAMMAD ALI MASUM from Cox's Bazar

Continued influx of Rohingyas, unplanned settlement of refugees and haphazard development activities by many organisations make it difficult for the authorities to relocate all the Rohingyas to Balukhali camp in Ukia.

"As a huge number of people suddenly entered the Rohingya camp, we didn't get the opportunity to put up a plan for them immediately," Mohammad Abul Kalam, relief and refugee repatriation commissioner (RRRC) of the relief and disaster management ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Some unplanned development

activities, including setting up of tube wells and latrines, by many local development organisations and individuals made it tough for the authorities to relocate the refugees, said the official of RRRRC who has been tasked with coordinating the relocation, relief and repatriation of the Rohingyas.

"An estimated 1.75 lakh people are yet to be relocated to Balukhali camp. Once all the refugees are moved, we will make the place liveable with our limited resources," he added.

MD Ali Hossain, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, echoed the views of the RRRRC. He said doing everything in a planned way for such a large number of

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A Rohingya girl does the dishes with muddy water flowing down a black plastic sheet in a Rohingya refugee camp in Balukhali of Cox's Bazar yesterday. Behind her is a toilet fence with black plastic sheets. Possible outbreak of water borne diseases at refugee camps has been a cause for concern.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

UN's Bosnia promise forgotten in Myanmar

FROM PAGE 1

limited by territories.

It said every state has a "capacity to influence effectively the action of persons likely to commit, or already committing genocide", even if outside its own borders, was under an obligation "to employ all means reasonably available to them, so as to prevent genocide so far as possible".

The world thought there would not be another Bosnia. The world thought there would not be another Srebrenica.

Myanmar was a rude awakening for the world.

And the world forgot their obligation as the Kofi Annan and the International Court of Justice had laid out. None of the nations that had any power to stop the Myanmar genocide raised a finger.

The UN under Antonio Guterres, a socialist, a committed reformer, the former prime minister of Portugal, was expected to change the UN from its bureaucratic straps that make it a talking platform. He was after all the prime

minister who resigned and went to the city slums to teach children math before being appointed the UN chief for the first time in the history through an open debate. He was a man to operate with "heart and reason".

But even he proved too helpless this time in Myanmar as all that the UN have done so far has been to issue a Security Council statement and to hold an open discussion to be snubbed by vetoes by China and Russia after the greatest modern time exodus after the persecution began.

Meantime, the streams of Rohingyas fleeing killings and rape continue.

This has exposed the inherent weakness of the UN system and the great need for reforms to prevent and intervene in future genocides.

The call for restraining the veto power in cases of genocide has been growing louder in recent years. In 2013, France, one of the five permanent members in the Security Council, presented a proposal to the General Assembly to limit the use of the veto power in cases of genocide.

Two years after France's initiative, 107 countries jointly placed a proposal in the General Assembly for enacting a code of conduct to limit the exercise of the veto power. France and UK supported this move.

This reform should immediately be carried out to have a strong UN to deliver on its core goal - prevention of genocide.

The genocide in Myanmar must be stopped forthwith and after Myanmar there must not be another one.

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'Systematic bid' to expel Rohingyas

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UN Human Rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who had described the operations in northern Rakhine state as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" among Rohingyas, immediately ended his "cries" operations.

By denying the Rohingyas their political, civil, economic and cultural rights, including the right to citizenship, he said Myanmar's actions appear to be "a cynical ploy to forcibly transfer large numbers of people without the possibility of return."

It also highlights a strategy to "instill deep and widespread fear and trauma - physical, emotional and psychological" among Rohingyas, the report said.

The report states the "clearance operations" started before August 25, and as early as the beginning of August.

The UN Human Rights Office is

gravelly concerned for the safety of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas who remain in northern Rakhine state amid reports the violence is still ongoing, and calls on authorities to immediately allow humanitarian and human rights actors' unfettered access to the areas, it said.

Eyewitnesses reported numerous killings, saying some victims were deliberately targeted and others were killed through explosions, fire and stray bullets, the report said.

A 12-year-old girl from Rathedaung township said, "They [Myanmar security forces and Rakhine Buddhist individuals] surrounded our house and started to shoot. It was a situation of panic - they shot my sister in front of me, she was only seven years old."

"She cried and told me to run. I tried to protect her and care for her, but we

had no medical assistance on the hillside and she was bleeding so much that after one day she died. I buried her myself."

The report states that in some cases, before and during the attacks, mobile phones were used to announce, "You do not belong here... go to Bangladesh. If you do not leave, we will torch your houses and kill you."

Information received also indicated that the Myanmar security forces targeted teachers, the cultural and religious leadership, and other people of influence of the Rohingya community in an effort to diminish Rohingya history, culture and knowledge, the UN said.

EU TO CUT TIES WITH MILITARY LEADERS

The EU is to halt ties with senior Myanmar military leaders to protect the "disproportionate use of force" against

the Rohingya minority, according to an agreement seen by the AFP yesterday.

The bloc also warns it could consider sanctions if there was no improvement in the crisis.

The agreement approved by EU ambassadors and set to be signed off at a meeting of foreign ministers on Monday, said the rapid flight of so many people "strongly indicates a deliberate attempt to expel a minority".

"In the light of the disproportionate use of force carried out by the security forces, the EU and its member states will suspend invitations to the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar/Burma armed forces and senior military officers and review all practical defence cooperation," the agreement says, calling on all sides to end violence immediately.

The EU currently bans the export of arms and equipment that can be used

for "internal repression", but said it "may consider additional measures" if the situation did not improve.

UN SPOKESPERSON'S BRIEFING

Stéphane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN secretary general, during a regular press briefing on Tuesday, said the Rohingya exodus was continuing and that the actual situation of the conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine state could not be known due to restrictions on access.

Responding to a question, he said, "You know, part of the issue that we have is the lack of access for humanitarian workers in northern Rakhine state and the lack of access for human rights colleagues. So, we don't have, at this point, first-hand information on the actual situation of conflict, of fighting."

GOVT, UNICEF TO MAKE TOILETS

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and Unicef have signed a

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Dhaka asks Islamabad to join int'l effort

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has asked Islamabad to join the international community to impress upon Myanmar to ensure a speedy repatriation of all their forcibly displaced nationals back to their homes in Myanmar.

The call was made when the Bangladesh Foreign Minister in Islamabad Tariq Abbas paid a courtesy call on new Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The Pakistan prime minister lauded the role played by Bangladesh in the face of the challenges posed by the influx of more than half a million additional forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals in Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Abbasi viewed that Myanmar should shoulder its responsibilities for protection of all its nationals, particularly the minorities, said a press release of Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad.

The Bangladesh envoy thanked the Pakistan prime minister for expression of solidarity with Bangladesh in tackling the humanitarian crisis.

Welcoming the high commissioner, Abbasi recalled the visit of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Lahore in 1974 for taking part in the second OIC Summit, immediately after the beginning of Bangladesh-Pakistan diplomatic relations.

He made a reference to the strained relations between the two countries, Abbasi called for strengthening the bilateral relations by "removing there must not be another one."

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CJ 'gets nod to leave for Australia'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid yesterday consented to Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha's leaving for Australia on leave, after Law Minister Anisul Huq and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed the relevant file.

Deputy Law Secretary Mahbubur Rahman Sarker told The Daily Star last night.

The law ministry will issue a gazette notification in this regard today, he added.

CJ Sinha is currently on a one-month leave since October 3 "on health grounds".

The SC authorities on Tuesday sent a letter to the president through the law ministry informing him that Justice Sinha would go to Australia to see his daughter and receive treatment.

According to the letter signed by Md Zakir Hossain, registrar of the Appellate Division, the CJ may leave on Friday on any next date and stay in Australia till November 10, a top official at the court told The Daily Star.

The official said that whenever the chief justice went on leave or abroad, the SC justices have sought to bring to his notice that he could assign another judge of the apex court to discharge the CJ's duties.

Meanwhile, Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, now filling in for the chief justice, has sought to bring some changes in the Supreme Court administration, said the law minister yesterday after a meeting with Justice Wahhab at the latter's SC office.

Anisul Huq said that the members of the Appellate Division for discussing disciplinary rules for lower court judges, and expressed hope that the issue would be resolved before its next hearing.

On October 8, the SC extended time until November 5 for issuing a gazette notification on the disciplinary rules for lower court judges.

The apex court adjourned until today the hearing on Masdar Hossain case, also known as separation of judiciary case. The issuance of

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The six girls, back row, who played significant roles in preventing child marriages. Oscar, Adult Survivors Foundation and the Australian High Commission yesterday awarded them on the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child 2017 at the KIB Auditorium yesterday.

PHOTO: APSP

The gritty girls

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The audience lauded Shabana for her courageous move at the programme organised to mark the International Day of the Girl Child 2017, where five other girls were honoured with "Voice for Change Award" for beating the odds in their lives.

"I know if I continue my studies, I will become independent," said Shabana, now studying in class ten in Kholeya Khatri Khaal School and College in Gangachar.

Working with The Hunger Project, Bangladesh, the girl rushes to places in her locality to stop and prevent child marriages.

Brac, Adult Survivors Foundation (ASF) and the Australian High Commission organised the programme titled "Voice for Change Awards: Vision for 2030".

The five other girls honoured are Lilita Khatun, from Jessore; Amina Khatoon Nila, from Khulna; Shamima Akhter, from Naogaon; Mukta Akhter Mou, from Dhaka; and Tuli Debnath, from Mymensingh.

Lilima, Amina and Shamima are acid survivors working with the ASF

in their districts and in Dhaka. Mukta works for Brac and Tuli for Ghos Foring, a group of seven adolescent girls working against child marriages.

Tuli Debnath said she had been fighting against child marriages with the belief that a child should be born to a mother, not to another child.

"In our community, we have stopped 11 child marriages" and saved two children from child labour, she said.

Mukta Akhter Mou, a student of class ten in Teigoan Adarsha School and College in Dhaka, said she had been raised by her maternal uncle since she did not have her mother and father.

Her uncle and his wife had wanted to marry her off when she was quite young, but she resisted the attempt with the help of her teacher and a local student watch group.

"I want to continue my education. Please pray for me," she said.

Speaking at the programme, popular singer Momtaz Begum, a member of the present parliament, said, a girl should fight for her own rights and be independent and ambitious.

Renowned psychologist Mehtab Khanam said a girl should learn to say no in a polite and firm way, whereas a boy should learn to accept no for an answer for any romantic relation. She stressed the importance of changing people's mindset and social attitude towards girls.

Sally Anne Vincent, acting high commissioner of the Australian High Commission to Bangladesh, said South Asia has the highest rate of child marriage in the world, with 46 percent of the girls being married off by 18.

Very few countries have adopted strategies to prevent child marriages. "Child marriage forces a girl to leave her school, which is an obstacle in the development of the society," she said.

Anna Minz, director of gender justice and diversity programme of Brac, called for a movement against the culture of existing lawlessness in bringing sexual offenders to book.

Sheepa Hasha, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, said clothe does not provoke rape, citing rape instances of 10-month-old girl child and 70-year-old woman.

Pope Francis

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The Pope will be in Myanmar from November 27-30 and Bangladesh from November 30 to December 2, said Archbishop George Kochery, Vatican ambassador to Bangladesh, at a press conference at Ramna Cathedral in the capital on August 28.

The announcement came barely a day after the Pope voiced concern over the persecution of Rohingyas in Myanmar.

President Abdul Hamid will receive Pope Francis upon his arrival, and Bangladesh will show the highest respect to him during his visit.

Pope Francis is scheduled to reach Yangon, Myanmar, in the afternoon of November 27. He will wrap up his Myanmar tour on November 30 and fly to Bangladesh in the afternoon.

After a welcome ceremony at Hazrat

Shajial International Airport, Pope Francis will pay homage to Bangladesh's martyrs and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

He will then make a courtesy visit to the president and address the diplomatic corps.

On December 1, the Pope will celebrate a public mass, meet Sheikh Hasina, the country's bishops and representatives of various religions and Christian churches.

On the last day, he will visit a home run by the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, address priests, religious seminarians and novices.

Pope flying back to Rome in the evening, he will meet a group of young people.

Earlier in 1986, Pope John Paul II visited Bangladesh, according to the foreign ministry.

New rice yields

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gave it the nod today [Wednesday], Bribi Director General Md Shahjahan Kabir told The Daily Star last night.

He said the new grain had high elongation traits. After cooking, the rice elongates up to 1.6 times. Other high yielding varieties have 1.2 to 1.3 times elongation rate. The new variety also has export potential as the clean rice is long and slender, he said.

The new variety comes at a time when two of the country's most common rice varieties - BRRI dhan28 and BRRI dhan29 - released back in 1994, are losing potential due to ageing.

The prospect of higher rice yield through the release of the new variety also comes against the backdrop of diminishing returns from the country's rice fields.

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) report says Bangladesh's rice production growth slowed down to just 0.7 percent in five years (2012-16) whereas the growth was as high as 4.8 percent in the preceding five years (2007-11).

Abdus Salam, the country head of the Washington-based food research think tank IFPRI, said, "Rice produc-

tion more than tripled since the country's liberation [in 1971], but the agricultural growth is slowing down."

He observed that the most popular rice varieties in Bangladesh are old and they require better replacements so that farmers can reap more yield from less land and go for agricultural diversity by growing other high value crops.

Akhter put emphasis on the agricultural extension service's role in demonstrating and popularising the new potential rice varieties among the farmers. As a third of Bangladesh's total farm households are of pure tenants - who work in lands owned by others - it's very crucial for the state to take extension services to them, he added.

With BRRI dhan81, the number of Bribi-developed rice varieties now stands at 86. Among them, six are hybrids while the rest are high yielding inbred varieties (HYVs).

Bribi-developed rice varieties cover more than 80 percent of the total rice area of the country. These varieties account for more than 91 percent of the country's total 35 million tonnes of rice production.