

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Dhaka wants Delhi to play vital role

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh has made a strong pitch for India's intervention in persuading Myanmar to take back nearly one million Rohingya refugees and ensure their safe return.

Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India Syed Muazzam Ali said, "The core problem of the [Rohingya] issue is the refusal of Myanmar authorities to recognise them as their citizens although they have been living there for centuries as their citizens."
"We believe that continued and sustained international pressure on Myanmar would be catalyst for a long-term solution in this regard in order to ensure the rights of the Rohingyas so that they could return home and live there with peace and dignity," he said while addressing the Foreign Correspondents' Club on Monday night.

Ali further said, "We believe that India, as a regional power with common borders and good relations with both Bangladesh and Myanmar, can and should play a crucial role in persuading Myanmar for the early and secured return of the Rohingyas to their home."
He added Bangladesh appreciates



Rohingya refugees who crossed the border from Myanmar a day before, wait to receive permission from the Bangladesh security forces to continue their way to refugee camps, in Palang Khali under Ukhaia upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday. *Inset*, a Rohingya refugee woman carries her daughter searching for help.



Urgent need for fund, aid

FROM PAGE 1
Refugees have arrived in Bangladesh since violence erupted in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state on August 25. The United Nations Relief and Assistance Agency yesterday called on Bangladesh to speed up vetting of up to 15,000 Rohingya refugees "stranded" near the border after crossing into the country from Myanmar and move them inland to safer and better conditions, reports Reuters.

Reports of the fresh influx comes as latest satellite images of the HRWS show that at least 288 villages have been partially or fully destroyed by fire in Rakhine since August 25. At least 66 villages were burned after August 5, when security force operations supposedly ended.

The pledging conference would be held in Geneva on Monday to send a strong message to Rohingya refugees and their generous hosts in Bangladesh that the world is there for them in their greatest time of need," said a statement by the heads of three UN aid bodies -- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Philippine Grandi, UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and

Emergency Relief Coordinator (OCHA) Mark Lowcock and Director-General of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) William Lacy Swing.

The ministerial-level pledging conference will be co-hosted by the European Union and the government of Kuwait, and co-organised by the UNHCR, IOM and OCHA.

The four objectives of the conference is to mobilise urgent resources to provide life-saving humanitarian aid; demonstrate solidarity with Bangladesh; promote all international and humanitarian laws for the refugees; and to promote safe, voluntary and sustainable return of the refugees to the place of origin, the statement said.

"We call on the international community to intensify efforts to bring a peaceful solution to the plight of the Rohingyas, to end the desperate race to flee, to support host communities and ensure the conditions that will allow for refugees' eventual voluntary return in safety and dignity," it added.

The speed and the scale of the influx made it "the world's fastest growing refugee crisis and a major

humanitarian emergency," the joint statement noted. "The origins and, thus, the solutions to this crisis lie in Myanmar."

According to UN and government officials the flow is the largest refugee movement in the region in decades and brings the total number of Rohingya living in Cox's Bazar to over one million with the numbers still growing.

"We have been moved by the welcome and generosity shown by the local communities towards the refugees," the joint statement said, while noting their respective agencies have been working in overdrive with the Bangladesh government, local charities, volunteers and nongovernment organisations to provide assistance.

"The efforts must be scaled up and expanded to receive and protect refugees and ensure they are provided with basic shelter and acceptable living conditions," the statement said adding, "Every day more vulnerable people arrive with very little, if anything, and settle either in overcrowded existing camps or extremely congested makeshift sites."

"EVERY MINUTE COUNTS"
The UN refugee agency is concerned

about the humanitarian condition of thousands of new arrivals who are stranded near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

UNHCR Spokesperson Andrej Mahecic yesterday told reporters in Geneva that an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 Rohingya refugees have entered Bangladesh through the Anjuman Para border crossing point in Ukhaia since Sunday night.

As of yesterday morning, they were still squatting in the paddy fields of Anjuman Para village in Bangladesh.

They are waiting for permission from Bangladesh authorities to move away from the border, where the sound of gunfire continues to be heard every night from the Myanmar side.

The UNHCR has urged the Bangladesh authorities to urgently admit these refugees fleeing violence and increasingly-difficult conditions back home.

"Every minute counts given the fragile condition they're arriving in," Reuters quoted the spokesperson as saying.

The delay was due to screening by Bangladesh border guards, he said,

emphasising this was the right of any government.

He said the UNHCR and its partners, Bangladesh Red Crescent and Action against Hunger, are delivering food and water to the stranded refugees, among them children, women and the elderly who are dehydrated and hungry from the long journey.

"Many say they had initially chosen to remain in their homes in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state despite repeated threats to leave or be killed. They finally fled when their villages were set on fire," Andrej Mahecic said.

Releasing the latest satellite images, the Human Rights Watch yesterday said its analysis indicated that the burnings focused on Rohingya villages and many of those took place after Burmese officials claimed that their "clearance operations" had ceased.

The imagery pinpointed multiple areas where destroyed Rohingya villages sat adjacent to intact ethnic Rakhine villages.

"These latest satellite images show

Foreign minister to visit Myanmar November 19

Sushma FUE Oct 23;
Jashna DM Oct 18

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali will visit Myanmar next month to attend the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to be held in the country's capital.

The ASEAN Foreign Minister Meeting will be held in Nay Pyi Taw on November 20-21 where the Rohingya issue will come up for discussion, a diplomatic source told UNB.

The Foreign Minister is likely to leave for Bishkek on November 19.

The ASEM is an intergovernmental forum for dialogue and cooperation which fosters political dialogue, reinforces economic cooperation and promotes collaboration in other areas of mutual interest.

The European Union on Monday said they intend to seize the opportunity at the meeting to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Myanmar government and will also continue to liaise with all Asian partners on current issues.

The EU also encouraged its partners in ASEAN and the region to engage in this process.

Meanwhile, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Kono is likely to arrive here on a two-day visit on November 18.

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fact that internally, there was a belief that the decision made to stop feeding some of the [internally displaced people] was actually causing people serious harm, in terms of food security, hunger and even starvation."

The WFP country office had also been prioritising its relationship with the government about humanitarian needs in an attempt to attract millions in donor funding by showing it had government-approved access to work in other parts of the country, the source told The Guardian.

"It's a funny thing in the UN. It's all about how much money you can raise," the source said.

But the access came at the expense of Myanmar's most hated minority, the Rohingyas, a toxic topic to raise with the government, leading to it being sidelined.

According to the findings of the report, one-third of all homes in Maungdaw were experiencing extreme food deprivation and called for further humanitarian assistance for more than 225,000 people.

And alarmingly, the assessment pointed to widespread accounts of security forces preventing Rohingyas from reaching markets and their crops.

"Restriction of movement was one of the main constraints for the population for accessing food," it said. "Residents still do not have full access to the forest, agricultural land and fishing grounds due to continuous military presence."

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that (1.7 percent a year) in the preceding five years.

Experts have stressed the need for accelerating farm sector growth that has been somewhat stagnant.

They also pointed out that the government must take measures to create jobs to take the benefits of the growth to all segments of the population.

Finance Adviser Azizul Islam, former member director to a caretaker government, thinks that the level of inequality is not that high.

He however noted that unlike the growth in the farm sector, that in manufacturing and service sectors cannot often equally distribute the benefits to all.

Azizul explained that the growth in the manufacturing sector is more capital-intensive, technology-driven and labour-displacing. The service sector growth also benefits the skilled and IT-savvy people more than the others.

He suggested expanding the social safety net programmes for the benefit of the poor.

Rich become richer, poor get poorer

result, the incomes of the poor, who have only their labour to live on, grew far slower than income growth of non-poor, leading to increase in income inequality."

He also identified the decline in remittance as another reason. "This could have slowed employment and wage growth in the rural non-poor sector, which uses a lot of farm

sector growth and paying the "pure tenants" (the landless people) to more skilled areas of production, while investing more in farm research and development so that more crops are grown on less land.

Expansion of safety net programmes is not good enough. The beneficiaries of the safety net programmes have to be chosen care-

percentage of safety net beneficiaries to 28.7 percent from 24.6 percent in 2010.

It also showed how some of the livelihood indicators got positive push with more people getting access to pure drinking water, sanitary latrines and pukka houses.

In the last six years, households with electricity increased to 75.9

UPDATED POVERTY RATES AT DISTRICT LEVEL



LOWER POVERTY RATES 2016

UPPER POVERTY RATES 2016

workers."

Dr Akhter Ahmed, who leads the operation of Washington-based think tank International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Bangladesh, said the 2016 HIES reflected that "the growth that we achieved was not pro-poor enough."

fully, he mentioned.

Besides, the state has to invest in human capital development and put emphasis on the quality of education rather than quantity, said Akhter.

Among other things, the HIES 2016 report reflected that household income, on average, has now risen to Tk 15,945 a month from Tk 11,479 in 2010. There has been an increase in

percent from 55.3 percent, while mobile phone users rose to 92.5 percent from 63.7 percent.

UN shelved

FROM PAGE 1
The revelation adds to a series of reports of crises that the UN did not push the Myanmar government hard enough to ensure the rights of 1.1 million Rohingyas in that country or to sound the alarm at their spiralling oppression.

The issue exploded on August 25 when Rohingyas insurgents attacked Myanmar security forces who then responded with a severely counteroffensive that eventually sent nearly 600,000 Rohingyas fleeing into Bangladesh. Many of the refugees alleged mass killings and rapes.

The UN resident coordinator in Myanmar, Renata Ues Dessallat was recalled to the UN headquarters at the end of October amid allegations that she had suppressed another report and attempted to shut down public advocacy on sufferings of Rohingyas.

In response to The Guardian's query, the WFP said the report had been withdrawn from the website "following a request by the government to conduct a joint review."

In an emailed statement, it said, "WFP stands by its original assessment, which was conducted in close consultation with local authorities in Rakhine State.... However WFP recognises that in a dynamic and evolving situation, it is important to coordinate closely with all partners, including the government."

The August violence, however, halted the joint review, it added.

A consultant who had worked with the UN, including the WFP, in Myanmar, said the agency's in-country team were already extremely nervous about the report getting too much attention.

The assessment indicated that controversial cuts of WFP food aid for internally displaced Rohingyas over the previous two years had left people in dire need, the consultant said.