

ROHINGYAS

Still trickling in, as fear runs high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With no food, money and in constant fear in Rakhine State, Rohingyas are still trickling into Bangladesh.

Some of the over 4,000 who had arrived this month said they were so scared seeing their neighbours' home burn that they locked themselves in their homes.

Others said they had no money to buy food or could not go to the market to buy them due to security concerns.

"They are coming basically to save their lives," Vivian Tan, communication officer of UN refugee agency UNHCR, told The Daily Star in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Some of the Rohingyas who had arrived between November 2 and November 5 told her that they had to move from one place to another for safety before coming to Bangladesh.

"They came out of desperation," Tan added.

Over 4,000 Rohingya refugees entered Bangladesh in that period, bringing the total number to 609,000 since August 25, said the Inter Sector Coordination Group, a coordinating body of the UN agencies and NGOs working in the refugee camps in Cox's

Bazar.

Myanmar security forces began a crackdown on August 25 in response to Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army's (ARSA) attacks on police posts and an army base in northern Rakhine State.

Rights group said Myanmar security forces in collaboration with local Buddhist Rakhine people burnt down nearly 300 Rohingya villages. Hundreds of Rohingyas men were killed and women raped, said rights groups, terming it genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

Amid mounting global outcry, Myanmar de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi in an address on September 19 said since September 5, there had been "no armed clashes and there have been no clearance operations".

World Food Programme (WFP), whose operations were suspended in Rakhine for more than two months, was allowed access on October 27.

However, it was not known if the WFP had begun its food distribution at the ground level yet, said Tan.

"Some new arrivals said their food ran out and were hardly eating anything at home," she said.

International Organisation for

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Two Rohingya children fetch water from a tube-well at Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Secrets of global elite

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The leak -- rivalling the Panama Papers in size and scope -- was obtained by German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung and shared with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and a network of more than 380 journalists in 67 countries.

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has business ties to a shipping firm linked to Vladimir Putin's inner circle, according to the leak that also revealed Queen Elizabeth II's investments in tax havens.

Besides, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's top fundraiser and senior advisor Stephen Bronfman, heir to the Seagram fortune, moved some \$60 million to offshore tax havens with ex-senator Leo Kolber.

There is no suggestion that Ross, Bronfman or the queen's private estate acted illegally.

But Ross's ties to Russian entities raise questions over potential conflicts of interest, and whether they undermine Washington's sanctions on Moscow.

The commerce secretary insisted that "there is no impropriety".

In an interview with the BBC yesterday, Ross defended personal business links to Russia revealed by the Paradise Papers. In a separate interview

with Bloomberg, Ross indicated he could end the links but not because of any wrongdoing.

The revelations about Bronfman could spell trouble for Trudeau, who was elected two years ago riding on the coattails of promises to reduce economic inequality and tax avoidance.

Canada's tax agency began poring over the papers leaked from Appleby for any evidence of Canadians having used tax havens to evade paying taxes in this country.

The names of roughly 3,300 Canadian companies, trusts, foundations and individuals appear in the Paradise Papers.

In the case of Queen Elizabeth's private estate, critics may question whether it is appropriate for the British head of state to invest in offshore tax havens.

The Queen's financial advisers have been criticised for bringing the "monarchy into disrepute" after it was revealed she had £10m invested in an offshore tax haven.

The Duchy of Lancaster -- which provides the Queen with a private income -- holds funds in the Cayman Islands and Bermuda.

This money is divested into accounts which are sheltered from the UK tax, which then makes invest-

ment decisions on their behalf.

The Duchy made a small investment in the controversial rent-to-buy furniture firm BrightHouse, which was ordered to pay back £14.8m to its customers last week after the Financial Conduct Authority said it had not acted as a "responsible leader".

The Duchy said its holdings in BrightHouse now equate to just over £3,000 and did not control how the fund made decisions about what to invest in.

Asked whether the monarch should say sorry over her investments, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said anyone putting money offshore to avoid tax should do so and also "recognise what it does to our society".

Rex Tillerson, the US secretary of state, is named in the files as a director of an offshore firm used in a multibillion-dollar oil and gas venture in the Middle East that became embroiled in controversy.

Tillerson was a director of Marib Upstream Services Company, incorporated in Bermuda in 1997. The company was tied to ExxonMobil, the American oil and gas corporation that Tillerson later led as chief executive.

Other names that surfaced in the Paradise Papers include former PMs of Pakistan and Japan, president of

Colombia, ex-deputy minister for defence of Saudi Arabia, the Queen of Jordan and Brazilian politicians.

Celebrity icons like Madonna, Bono and Amitabh Bachchan have also been named in the documents.

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION Russian politicians played down the leak, saying the deals mentioned were legal and not politically motivated.

Ross, a billionaire investor, holds a 31 percent stake in Navigator Holdings through a complex web of offshore investments detailed in the documents.

The 79-year-old reduced his stake when he took public office, according to public filings.

Navigator Holdings runs a lucrative partnership with Russian energy giant Sibur, which is partially owned by Putin's son-in-law Kirill Shamalov and Gennady Timchenko, the Russian president's friend and business partner who is subject to US sanctions.

The US imposed sanctions on Russian entities and individuals over the annexation of Crimea and the crisis in Ukraine.

Ross's private equity firm has been the biggest shareholder in Navigator, and although his personal share of the firm's stake was reduced when he took

office in February, the commerce chief's investment is still valued at \$2 million to \$10 million, according to official filings.

The New York Times reported that Ross's stake in Navigator has been held by companies in the Cayman Islands. His wealth, estimated to exceed \$2 billion, is said to be tied to similar arrangements in various tax havens like the Cayman Islands.

THE INDIANS

Among the 180 countries represented in the data, India ranks 19th in terms of the number of names.

In all, there are 714 Indians in the tally. Interestingly, it's an Indian company, Sun Group, founded by Nand Lal Khemka, that figures as Appleby's second-largest client internationally, with as many as 118 different offshore entities.

Among Appleby's Indian clients are several prominent corporates and companies which subsequently came under the scrutiny of investigating agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Records have mentions like Sun-TV-Aircel-Maxis case; Essar-Loop 2G case; SNC-Lavalin in which Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was named, then cleared; the Rajasthan

ambulance scam which has recently been routed to the CBI and which names a company called Ziquista Healthcare; and fresh financial links in a CBI case against YSR Congress Chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha's name cropped up in the papers, leading Congress to mount a fierce attack against the Narendra Modi government.

India formed a panel of government officials to investigate cases that figure in the Paradise Papers. Officials from government bodies and the central bank will carry out and monitor the probe, the finance ministry said.

'NO WRONGDOING' Appleby did not reply to a detailed list of questions sent by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists but released an online statement stating it had investigated the questions.

"We believe they are unfounded and based on a lack of understanding of the legitimate and lawful structures used in the offshore sector," the statement said. "There is no evidence of any wrongdoing."

[From CBC News, BBC, The Guardian, Independent, Indian Express and AFP]

OBSERVING 7TH NOV BNP now to hold rally on Nov 11

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP has deferred tomorrow's rally at Suhrawardy Udyan to November 11 due to the ongoing 63rd CPA conference.

On November 7, 1975, Ziaur Rahman, then chief of army staff, was freed from captivity in Dhaka cantonment, paving the way for Zia to come to power.

The BNP has chalked out a 10-day programme to observe the day with various programmes.

The party also has a plan to hold a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on Saturday to mark the day.

BNP chairperson Khaleida Zia and secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alam in separate messages greeted the country's people on the occasion.

While the BNP and its alliances celebrate November 7 as the National Revolution and Solidarity Day, the ruling Awami League and its front organisations consider it as the day of "killing of freedom fighters".

2017 set to be hottest non-El Nino year: UN

AFP, Bonn

2017 is on track to be the hottest year on record except for two warmed by El Nino phenomena, the UN's World Meteorological Organization said yesterday.

Even if the cyclical weather events -- which bump up global temperatures every three to seven years -- are included, this year will still be one of the three warmest ever, the WMO said as it issued its annual State of the Global Climate report at talks in Bonn.

Relief, but not much 8 took part in Avijit murder

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from the east [those coming from the New Eskaton side]," he said.

When vehicles from the flyover join the traffic on New Eskaton Road, they get stuck in tailback.

On his way back, Sagor had a faster trip around 4:40pm. Traffic was light at New Eskaton entry point where the car climbed up the flyover. He said he saw vehicles starting to line up on the flyover at the exit point.

A walk around Banglamotor, New Eskaton and Moghbazar areas on Thursday evening allowed this correspondent to see how the situation was like there in peak hours.

It was around 7:00pm. The evening rush was at its peak with cars and buses standing still on the flyover. Rickshaws, vans and jaywalkers clogged the entry and exit points of the flyover, making the situation worse.

Referring to situations like that, transport specialist Shamsul Hoque said flyovers should be built, keeping in mind that they bring relief to commuters during peak hours, but that is far from the reality seen in this case.

Shamsul, who worked as a consultant for constructing the 8.7-kilometre Moghbazar flyover built at a cost of Tk 1,219 crore, said the flyover was aimed at facilitating smooth travel of vehicles across intersections, but the advantage vehicles get by avoiding two-three intersections means nothing when they get stuck at the exits.

"The end result is zero."

According to a recent analysis by the World Bank, road surface in the capital increased by only five percent, while the population by 50 percent between 1995 and 2005. As the traffic intensity has gone up by 134 percent, average traffic speed has dropped in the last 10 years from 21 km/hour to 7 km/hour, only slightly above the average walking speed.

This is the backdrop to the government taking up projects like flyover construction.

But in a city like Dhaka, flyovers are not a sustainable solution, said Shamsul, a professor of Bangladesh

University of Engineering and Technology.

"It is rather an irreversible damage narrowing the prospect of Mass Rapid Transport [MRT] system inside the city."

Dedicated lanes for buses in the MRT system, which has remained at the planning stage for nearly a decade now, could have ensured uninterrupted traffic movement inside the capital. The construction of flyovers could have also been aligned with the MRT plan to bring a permanent solution to the traffic problem.

But now pillars of the flyover are where the road space should have been dedicated to the MRT, Shamsul added, expressing fear that whatever little relief the flyovers were bringing to city commuters would go away fast with the space created overhead becoming exhausted just like the road space under.

Following the inauguration of the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover, there have been complaints of sufferings from local people, who drive out the gates of their premises and go straight to their destinations via Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

"Unable to make a U-turn due to tailbacks, I have to make a 3km detour to go towards Farmgate where I work," said Etrat Shahriar, who lives in New Eskaton.

Paintings

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Sandra, who was already well practised in a circus trick involving a shaving brush, was given a paintbrush and she quickly adapted her skills to the canvas.

Richter said that unlike many elephants in Thailand that are thought to be forced to paint, Sandra does it by herself when she is in the mood.

"I only help her with changing the brushes and putting them into paints but she does the rest by herself more or less. I praise her by saying 'oh this is really good, or not so good'," Richter said. "We have been together for 40 years so this is a family connection."

Sandra arrived as a baby elephant at the circus where Richter grew up, as a seventh generation member of an acrobat family.

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day. Bonya was critically injured in the attack.

He came to Bangladesh with his wife as his two books were published during that year's book fair.

Sakib followed the secular writer at the fair venue on February 26, 2015.

On information from Sakib, the operation wing members hacked Avijit to death, Mohibul Islam, deputy commissioner of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, told The Daily Star.

Law enforcers earlier arrested eight suspects, but failed to detain any of those who directly took part in the killing mission.

Avijit's father Prof Ajoy Roy, who filed a case against unidentified assailants with Shahbagh Police Station, expressed disappointment at the progress of investigation as police were yet to submit a charge sheet in the case.

The trial of the case is not begin-

ning as either the investigators lack the skill or they do not want that to happen, he alleged while talking to this correspondent yesterday.

He also demanded the arrest of those directly involved in hacking Avijit to death.

Sakib, who completed BBA from Government Titumir College, joined the outfit in 2014 and met Major Zia several times at different hideouts, said CTTC official Mohibul.

CTTC officials claimed that Sakib was one of the six suspects police identified after analysing the CCTV footage captured in and around the fair venue.

Sakib was seen following Avijit in one of the seven video clips posted on Dhaka Metropolitan Police's official Facebook page on August 21 last year, they said.

The CCTV footage, however, is too blurry to identify anyone.

Earlier, police from that clip identified one as Sharif alias Saleh alias Arif

alias Hadi as a suspect.

He was later killed in a "gunfight" with law enforcers in the city's Khilgaon on June 19 last year.

Sharif topped a list of six members of banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) on whom police declared a bounty on May 19 last year.

Seven of the eight arrestees in the case -- Shafiqul Rahman Farabi, Sadekur Rahman Mithu, Alimul Mallik, Towhidur Rahman, Julhaj Biswas, Sabez Ali and Jafran -- are now behind bars.

Another suspect Abul Bashar, brother of ABT's spiritual leader Jashim Uddin Rahmani, died in jail custody while undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police collected 11 kinds of evidence from the killing spot and sent those to the DNA lab of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. However, the DNA profiles did not match with those of the arrestees.

First Bangla animated film

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next year and the full-length version in 2019-2020, Reza told The Daily Star in an online conversation yesterday.

"One of the stories from the feature is based on the real life experience of my father. So, obviously, it is personal for me. And I sincerely hope that we can do justice to the men and women who sacrificed their lives and everything for our beloved country. For a flower, for a face, for a flag!" he wrote on Facebook.

The film's production designer Shariful Islam and Reza have worked together on many projects. Shariful was the art director of Bangla film Bhuban Majhi (2017) that was directed by Fakhrul Arefeen Khan.

"The scripts for the short-film and the trailers are done. The story for the

feature is also shaping up nicely. We have officially started its art work as well," Reza said.

"This is of course depending on funding and budget ... As animated films can get quite expensive, we feel like that is the way we can actually produce the film in world standards."

Reza hopes to work in collaboration with experts from other countries to produce the film.

"Baby steps at a time. But I will make sure the baby steps are significant. I'm not going to compromise on this film," he said.

Reza is currently working as an assistant production manager for the film Hotel Transylvania 3.

He also worked as a visual effects coordinator on the film Captain America: Civil War (2016) and Batman

vs Superman: Dawn of Justice (2016).

Reza, the only child of Mohammad Rezaul Karim, a former state minister, and Suraya Karim Munny, a lawyer, completed his BSc in mechanical engineering from Buet and BFA in Film Production from the University of British Columbia.

Before moving to North America, he was a familiar face in the Bangladeshi entertainment industry. He acted in various telefilms and comedy series. He was a model as well. He worked with legendary Humayun Ahmed and youth icon Mostofa Sarwar Farooki.

Behind the camera, Reza worked as the head writer for advertising firm Grey World Wide. He also wrote telefilms and series for several local television networks in Bangladesh.