



A Rohingya boy walks uphill carrying water from a tube-well at Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

ROHINGYA ISSUE FM briefs envoys of Myanmar's neighbours

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday met with envoys of the four countries sharing borders with Myanmar to discuss the ongoing Rohingya crisis.

The meeting comes right before the foreign ministers of China, Japan, Germany and Sweden arrive in Dhaka on November 18 for two days' talks with high government officials about a peaceful solution to the Rohingya situation.

The ministers will then travel to Myanmar's capital Nay Pyi Taw to attend the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting scheduled for Nov 20-21.

Foreign minister AH Mahmood Ali met with the High Commissioner of India, the Ambassadors of China and Thailand in Dhaka, and the New Delhi based Ambassador of LDC PDR at the state guesthouse Padma Yatri morning.

According to a MOFA press statement, foreign minister Ali discussed the ongoing situation of Rohingya refugees who have fled their homeland and taken shelter in Bangladesh with the envoys. He exchanged views with them and updated them on Bangladesh's efforts and engagement with international community in resolving the crisis.

He also discussed with the envoys about the Presidential Statement of the UN Security Council issued on Nov 6, and sought cooperation and support of their countries for a sustainable solution of the ongoing crisis.

The foreign minister touched upon the status of ongoing bilateral discussions with Myanmar on repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas. He further informed the envoys that

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Myanmar hits back at UN statement

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Dhaka official said it was Myanmar who was not ready.

The crisis has showered global censure on Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate once fêted around the globe for her years-long struggle against the former junta.

While she lacks control over the military and security policy, the leader has been blasted for not using her moral authority to defend the Rohingyas against an increasingly vocal strain of Islamophobia espoused by the Buddhist public.

Diplomats said the UN Security Council statement, which fell short of a full resolution, was watered down to secure backing from Beijing.

Rights groups have accused the UN body of dragging its feet over the Rohingya crisis and called for sanctions against those involved in the atrocities.

The US, which is dispatching Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to Myanmar on November 15, has said it is seeking a diplomatic solution to the crisis but has not ruled out sanctions.

Earlier this month US lawmakers introduced a bill that would curtail assistance or cooperation with Myanmar's military and require the White House to identify senior military officials who would have US visa bans imposed or reimposed against them.

REFUGEES YEARN TO RETURN: SIMON HENSHAW
A top US diplomat who recently visited Bangladesh has said he saw "evidence of atrocities" committed against the Rohingya Muslim minority, our diplomatic correspondent reports.

"What we saw in the camps was shocking. The scale of the refugee crisis is immense," said Simon Henshaw, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Henshaw led a 5-member delegation to Myanmar and Bangladesh during Oct 29 to Nov 4 to see firsthand

what is happening in regard to the humanitarian situation and the impact of US assistance.

"The conditions are tough. People are suffering. Many refugees told us, through tears, accounts of seeing their villages burned, their relatives killed in front of them," he told reporters during a special briefing in State Department in Washington last Tuesday.

Henshaw said despite the trauma, many expressed a strong desire to return to their homes in Myanmar, provided their safety, security, and rights could be guaranteed.

The Acting Assistant Secretary said he saw evidence of atrocities during the visit to the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

"I'm not an expert. What I saw was shocking. I saw evidence of atrocities," he said when asked if the atrocities rose up to the level of ethnic cleansing.

Henshaw further said that was not his job to make that determination. "That's not my call to make. The department will review my reports and others, and will make a determination."

He highly appreciated the generosity and commitment of the government and people of Bangladesh for extending support to the refugees.

"However, more is needed. The US remains committed to addressing the needs of those impacted by the crisis and calls on others, including in the region, to join us in our response," he said.

When asked whether the US delegation granted full access in Myanmar during their visit (on Oct 29-31), Henshaw said "full access has not been granted to press and international NGOs in northern Rakhine State. We urged the government to do so."

On another question about guarantees of repatriation, he said the Myanmar government "appears to be committed" to start a repatriation, "but it's very important to us that that

programme not only creates safe conditions so that refugees will want to return voluntarily, but also ensure that refugees go back to their villages and land, that their houses be restored in the areas where the villages were burned, and that political reconciliation take place," Henshaw said.

State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert, who accompanied the Simon Lee delegation during the visit, applauded the government of Bangladesh for taking "an extraordinary step to open its heart and doors" for their neighbours in distress.

The US delegation included Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Vajda of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; and Office Director Patricia Mahoney of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

ROHINGYAS RESORT TO MAKESHIFT RAFTS
Dozens of Rohingya refugees floated into Bangladesh on Wednesday on a raft fashioned from plastic jerrycans, as the persecuted Muslim minority continue to flee violence in Myanmar in droves, officials told AFP.

The AFP reported that Bangladesh border guards spotted the makeshift raft overloaded with more than 50 passengers as it drifted toward the coastal village of Shah Porir Dwp village.

Local border guard commander S.M. Ariful Islam told AFP the 52 refugees tied plastic jerrycans together to float across the Nar River separating the two countries.

"A lot of them arrived today on rafts made from plastic jerrycans," local community policeman Abdul Jabbar told AFP on Tuesday.

Authorities have cracked down on boat arrivals in recent weeks as border guards alleged that drug traffickers were using the exodus to smuggle methamphetamine pills aboard the craft.

Dhaka Export Processing Zone and Chandra on the highway to the country's north.

It will be an extension of the 26-km Durgamdi Expressway, which will connect the airport to the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Shanir Akhra.

The Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology conducted pre-feasibility and detailed feasibility studies for the project in 2013 and 2016.

During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Dhaka last year, the Chinese government had signed a deal with Bangladesh to finance 27 projects, including the Airport-Ashulia elevated expressway.

Food supply

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The Daily Star at the UN office in the capital on November 7.

She sought more generosity from the international community for the Rohingyas who fled violence in Myanmar and are now in a vulnerable state.

Rader, however, says it is not feasible for the donors to continue funding the large number of Rohingyas for an extended period and suggested that some of them make their own living.

The male members of the community can be engaged in establishing the camps in Balukhali of Ukhia, where the Bangladesh government has allocated 5000 acres of land, she said.

Rader said they can also be trained and engaged in producing items needed by the community such as soaps, fuel and stoves.

They could also produce goods, including handicrafts, which can be sold in other parts of the country. However, the private sector needs to come forward if that is to happen, she said.

"I think this will be a win-win situation for Bangladesh and the refugees," the UN official said.

Asked if this would lead to competition in the labour market between the locals and the Rohingyas, especially given the high unemployment rate in Bangladesh, Rader said it was not unlikely.

"But, what to do? This is a dilemma. If some of the refugees are not allowed

to make their own living, they would starve... simply starve."

The WFP presently provides 50 kg of rice, nine kg of lentils and yellow split peas, and 4 litres of vegetable oil per month for over one lakh households each.

It also provides rice to Action Against Hunger, which in turn prepares hot meals for the new arrivals. New arrivals are also provided with fortified biscuits. The UN Food Agency further provides super cereal food for lactating under five, pregnant and children under mothers.

The total cost per month for food support is US\$12.83 million, WFP said.

Rader said as there is a shortage of funds, WFP would focus on the most vulnerable people - small children, nursing women and school-going children - by providing diversified food through electronic vouchers.

"This will be our focus; not trying to feed a million who could be partially brought into productive jobs," she said.

Mohammad Habibul Kabir Chowdhury, head of Rohingya cell at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, said that the government has put restrictions on recruitment of the Rohingyas by any Bangladeshi employer as many people in Cox's Bazar are already jobless.

"We have no plan to engage the Rohingyas in any jobs," he told this correspondent.

Be fair

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Nauert told reporters that Lebanon was a strong US partner. Hezbollah has influential ties across Lebanon. Hariri's coalition government, which took office last year, grouped nearly all Lebanon's main parties, including Hezbollah, Michaeloun, a Hezbollah ally, is president.

"The United States strongly supports the legitimate institutions in the Lebanese state," Nauert said. "We expect all members of the international community to respect both those institutions and the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon."

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia on Tuesday roundly rejected reports that a prominent prince had been killed in a sweeping anti-corruption purge of the kingdom's elite.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Fahd, a son of the late king Fahd, was rumoured to have been killed in custody or while resisting arrest amid the crackdown at the weekend.

The hashtag, "death of Prince Abdulaziz bin Fahd," has since featured on social media, fuelling fevered speculation online.

"There is no truth whatsoever to rumours circulating in media concerning Prince Abdulaziz bin Fahd," an information ministry spokesman said in a statement.

"Prince Abdulaziz is alive and well," he added.

The prince could not be independently reached for comment, reported AFP.

Human Rights Watch said yesterday Saudi Arabia's arrest of prominent royals and businessmen under the banner of anti-corruption could in fact be more a case of internal power politics.

"The middle-of-the-night simultaneous establishment of a new corporation body and mass arrests over corruption raise concerns that Saudi authorities detained people en masse and without outlining the basis of the detentions," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at the New York-based HRW.

The purge triggered uncertainty among businessmen that could lead to capital flight or default rejections, experts say, at a time when the kingdom is seeking to attract badly needed investments to offset a protracted oil slump.

The central bank stepped in this week to soothe those concerns, insisting that the targets were not individuals and not private corporations - not even those with ties to the arrested businessmen.

"Corporate businesses remain unaffected. It is business as usual for both banks and corporates," the central bank said.

ACC lacks neutrality

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that "the offences relating to the scam are very clear and not like those of 'thousand murders'."

"Hundreds of crore of taka have disappeared. Does the commission have no responsibility over the matter? ACC should have directed the IO [investigation officer] to arrest all the accused."

In reply, Khurshid said a total of 48 cases have been filed in connection with the scam and charge sheets in five cases are awaiting approval from the commission.

The ACC will finish the investigation in those cases soon, he said.

Responding to this reply, Justice Anwar said, "We will wait for completion of the investigation just the way we waited for Shuvo Muktir [suspectious release] of a cinema in our childhood."

The HC bench later granted bail to Selim in the three cases.

He, however, cannot walk out of jail as he is involved in other cases, Khurshid told The Daily Star.

The lawyer also said the ACC will move appeals before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, challenging the HC bail orders.

Advocate Shadheen Malik appeared for the accused.

filed around two dozen cases in September 2015 against over 20 bank officials and two dozen borrowing firms.

The financial scams posted huge amount of defaulted loans and eroded the capital base of the bank in the last several years.

According to data from the BB, the total amount of the scam was Tk 1,390 crore as of June this year from Tk 706 crore in December 2012.

Capital shortfall in the bank stood at Tk 2,210 crore at the end of June this year, indicating that the financial health of the organisation deteriorated significantly.

Finance Minister AMA Mubith several times in parliament expressed anger as he could not take steps against all involved in Sonali Bank and Basic Banks scams.

Scams took place in Sonali Bank and Basic Bank. I've taken some steps in this regard. A deputy director landed in jail... I tried to put one into jail but failed. I criticised for our own people's support to them. So I am angry," Mubith said in parliament on June 30, 2015.

On February 24, 2016, he told parliament that 27 bank officials, 56 organisations and eight survivor firms were involved in the BASIC Bank scam.

He said external audit firms appointed by Bangladesh Bank and BASIC Bank found involvement of Bacchu in granting irregular loans, recruitment and promotion of bank officials.

In September 2015, the anti-graft watchdog filed 18 cases against a number of bankers and borrowers linked with the scam.

But the then BASIC Bank chairman Bacchu, who is believed to be at the centre of the scandal, was not accused in any of the cases.

On July 26 this year, the High Court directed the ACC to probe the alleged involvement of Bacchu and its board members in the incident.

Last night, a source in the ACC claimed that a company and dubious accounts.

After primary investigation, the ACC

Import of sugar gets govt nod

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It received offers from two bidders. OF

Ind. Dhaka (with its principal bidder M/S Agropcorp International) became the winner.

The other firm, Dhaka-based Ria International Co (with its principal bidder ED&F Man Sugar Ltd of London), quoted a price of \$499.30 per tonne.

In July, the industries ministry had requested the National Board of Revenue to waive the duty and Value Added Tax on the import of 100,000 tonnes of sugar. The revenue authority waived the duty and VAT accordingly.

The cabinet purchase committee in

September had approved import of about 50,000 tonnes of sugar. The London-based ED&F Man Sugar Limited won the supply contract at \$470 per tonne.

Around 95 percent of the country's domestic demand for sugar is now met through imports due to scanty production of sugarcane. The country spends over Tk 5,000 crore a year to import sugar.

AIRPORT-ASHULIA EXPRESSWAY

The China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation will build a 24-kilometre elevated expressway from Dhaka airport to Ashulia at a cost of Tk 10,950 crore.

The cabinet committee on pur-

chase yesterday approved a proposal from the Bridges Division in this regard.

The expressway project will cost Tk 16,900 crore. China Exim Bank will provide 65 percent of the amount as soft loan while the Bangladesh government will fund the rest.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) gave the go-ahead to the project last month.

According to a document of the planning ministry, work on the project will begin this year and finish in June 2022.

The expressway will connect Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Abdullahpur, Islami-

Housewife raped, killed in Pabna

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In Jessore, a youth on Tuesday raped a girl of third grade at Boro Mandarata village in Sharshta upazila, writes our Benapole correspondent.

The law enforcers arrested alleged rapist Shukur Ali, 20, son of Ibrahim Ali of the same village, said OC Moshirur Rahman of Sharshta police.

The OC said the 10-year-old schoolgirl was returning home from a neighbour's house around 9:00pm when Shukur allegedly waylaid and raped her.

Hearing her screams, locals rushed to the spot, rescued the victim and sent her to Jessore Medical College Hospital. Her condition was stated to be critical, family sources

said.

In another drive, Wazipur police yesterday arrested a youth on charge of raping his 10-year-old cousin at Gabbari village under Barakota thana of Wazipur upazila.

OC Golam Sarwar of Wazipur police said they arrested Naim Shikder, 18, at his house for allegedly raping the girl.

Family members nursed the girl to Wazipur Upazila Health Complex where doctors referred her to Barisal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital. She was shifted to the hospital in a critical condition, the OC told reporters.

The victim's father filed a case with Wazipur police.