



Rohingya crisis unprecedented

Providing humanitarian support to them a major challenge, PM tells JS; diplomatic move on for holding a special session of UNHCR



"The world community stands by Bangladesh for the generosity that we have shown to the displaced people."

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday in parliament said Bangladesh is faced with an unprecedented crisis over providing humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees and sending them back home.

"The Rohingya crisis has taken a serious turn due to the recent military operation and violence in Rakhine State of Myanmar. The present situation is very much worse compared to anytime in the past," she further said while responding to a question from treasury bench lawmaker Abdul Matin.

The prime minister, however, said she firmly believes that despite all odds, there would be a peaceful solution to the crisis with the assistance of international community.

Her comments came as more than 600,000 Rohingyas have crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh since late August, driven out by a brutal military crack-

down described by a top UN official as a textbook case of "ethnic cleansing".

Hasina said more than 10 lakh of the Myanmar nationals are now staying in Bangladesh; they include the four lakh who had entered the country earlier in various phases.

"And still Rohingyas are entering Bangladesh every day," she told parliament with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

She added, "The world community stands by Bangladesh for the generosity that we have shown to the displaced people."

The PM mentioned that Bangladesh has been making vigorous diplomatic efforts to have a special session of the UNHCR on Rohingya crisis and repatriate the refugees.

Dhaka is also maintaining bilateral communications with Naypyidaw, she said, adding, "Today's problem has its root in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Tillerson sees no 'ethnic cleansing'

Calls for credible probe of atrocities on Rohingyas

CNN ONLINE

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says more information is needed before Washington agrees with the United Nations that the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar constitutes ethnic cleansing.

In a joint press conference yesterday alongside Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Tillerson called for a full and independent investigation into the situation in Rakhine state.

"We are very concerned by reports of widespread atrocities committed by Myanmar security forces," Tillerson said.

"What we know occurred in Rakhine state ... has a number of characteristics of crimes against humanity," he added.

"Whether it meets all the criteria of ethnic cleansing we continue to determine ourselves."

More than 615,000 Rohingya refugees have fled the country since August 25, according to aid agencies, pouring into neighboring Bangladesh, which has struggled to deal with the influx.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Food assistance for poor declines

Stock not enough to help flood-hit people; 4.53 lakh tonnes distributed in July-Oct against 7.28 lakh tonnes during same period last year

REAZ AHMAD

This has been a bad crop year so far with back-to-back floods inflicting losses on the agrarian economy and seriously affecting livelihood in half the country.

More than eight million people in the north, northeast and central regions took the brunt of the floods -- first in the form of flashfloods in March and then rain-fed floods in August-September, according to government data.

The country's poor and the vulnerable ones must have been in need of aid more than they usually do.

But statistics show they got less.

As against 7.28 lakh tonnes of food distributed among the poor in July-October last year, the government could provide just 4.53 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period this year under the public food distribution system (PFDS).

And the food minister acknowledged that this has happened largely because of low food stock in public granaries during the two crucial flooding periods.

"Yes, we couldn't provide the hardcore poor with the subsidised rice [Tk 10 a kg] so far this year. We're now trying hard to build up stock [through rice imports]," Food Minister Qamrul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

The food ministry will hold an inter-ministerial meeting soon to take stock of the situation and finalise a plan to buy rice from



➤ Special allocations for Haor flood victims only

➤ 10 taka/kg rice sale for ultra poor yet to start

➤ Govt still building up food stock

➤ Rohingya situation puts further stress

Aman growers to raise the stock in public granaries.

In September-November last year, the country's five million ultra-poor families had received 30 kg of rice each a month under the Tk 10-a-kg rice programme. The government could not start the programme this year even after rescheduling it twice since September.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Temporary shelters at Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday. Inset, Fatema, a Rohingya woman, and her two children sit inside a mosquito net in Palong Khali refugee camp.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Shajahan Khan at it again

Visits central bank, meets CBA leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan yesterday claimed that he met the CBA leaders and activists of Bangladesh Bank at its headquarters in the capacity of a trade unionist, not as a minister.

As he arrived, the Collective Bargaining Agent leaders greeted the minister at the BB headquarters around 1:40pm, clapping and chanting political slogans.

Shajahan then went to the office of Abu Hena Mohd Razee Hassan, a deputy governor of BB, as Governor Fazle Kabir was abroad.

Soon, two other deputy governors rushed there to meet the minister. The CBA leaders were with Shajahan at the time.

Top bankers and BB executives feared that the management of the central bank might face pressure from the CBA for undue benefits, such as postings, promotions and loans, as they have shown that they have the capacity to bring in a powerful minister to their internal meeting.

On top of that, the meeting was at a place considered the custodian of the country's economy.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

No timeframe for appointing chief justice

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The constitution does not stipulate any timeframe for the president to appoint a new chief justice following the retirement or resignation of a chief justice, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

"The honourable president has time and he will do it."

"I cannot say when, where and how the chief justice will be appointed," the minister said while responding to journalists' queries at an anti-drug campaign programme of Prottoy Medical Clinic Ltd in the capital's Baridhara.

The law minister said Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, would carry out the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

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