



Iraqi forces vehicles are seen after they captured Rawa town, the last remaining town under Islamic State control. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Hanging by a thread

FROM PAGE 16

the same village, who has been in the profession for 14 years now, said the job of weaving is monotonous and laborious.

"Workers are able to make lungi in full swing for half a month. They need to rest during the other half."

"Three square meals are a far cry for us weavers, although showrooms in fancy malls sell these handmade lungi at very high prices as they are high in demand," said Bakir Uddin, a weaver, as he pulls the brake lever on the handloom to take a break. "What first started as a hobby, later became a passion for me. I just wish I was better compensated so that we could live a more dignified life."

The weavers' goods are transported by boat to Baburhat in Narsingdi; it is one of the biggest wholesale points of local fabrics in Bangladesh and just an hour's drive from the capital. Depending on

quality, a small lungi costs Tk 50-60 while a larger one Tk 110 at the wholesale market.

Although there is good demand, the looms suffer from lack of capital, rising prices of dye and yarn and low wages.

Ohid-Uz Zaman, a weaver at Rupasdi village, said, "The cost to make four lungi has increased by Tk 80 owing to the price hike of yarn, but the selling price did not increase accordingly."

On the other hand, a weaver can weave four lungis a day, for which he gets a mere Tk 120, he added.

Demanding government subsidies, the weavers said small to midsize handlooms will not sustain without proper financial support.

But to save this industry requires more. The government will have to curb the prices of raw materials for this sector and provide subsidies to import yarn.

Sanaullah Sunny, president of Salimabad Union Primary Weavers Association, said, "Most handloom owners of this area start business by taking out loans. A lion's share of the profit goes into the pockets of the lenders."

With a rising number of weavers leaving the profession, there is a dearth of skilled manpower, which affects productivity. The government should take an initiative to give training to increase productivity, said Firoz Mia, chairman of Rupasdi Union Council. "This is an industry that directly relies on the skills of the weavers, so proper training is necessary."

Siddiqur Rahman, president of Dariadault Weavers' Association, said the government can keep this heritage alive by making low-cost funds available for the sector. "Proper policy framework will ensure a bright future for the industry."

Michael Vatikiotis, Asia regional director of Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, said the "conflict between two religions" in Rakhine caused a rift across South East Asia.

"This is a major rift between two great religions in this part of the world," said Vatikiotis, also a former editor of the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Jeff Kingston, director of Asian Studies and professor of History at Temple University in Japan, said regional organisation ASEAN can play a more pro-active role to address the issue, but so far it has failed to make an impact due to seemingly disagreements among the member states.

Zafar Sobhan, editor of English daily Dhaka Tribune, moderated the discussion.

Int'l community

FROM PAGE 2

the moment, she said, adding that a UN Security Council resolution could be a decisive factor to resolve the crisis.

Terming the atrocities by Myanmar army genocide, Azeem Ibrahim, research professor of Strategic Studies Institute at US Army War College, said the army carried out an orchestrated and preplanned campaign to eliminate an entire ethnic group while a political appetite was seemingly absent to end the crisis.

"What we are all hoping for is that this ethnic cleansing will be completed as quickly as possible so that we can move from the domain of criminality on to the domain of humanitarian assistance."

He said Rohingyas living in different countries have to raise their voice against the atrocities committed against their community.

BBC South Asia Correspondent Justin Rowlatt, who has been covering the incident, said the movement of a huge number of Rohingyas with faces of fear was hard to imagine.

Despite a very welcoming response from the Bangladesh government, the Rohingyas had to fight for basic humanitarian needs from the very beginning, he told the programme.

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BPL matches

FROM PAGE 16

"We don't have any specific law about betting in our country but we do have our anti-corruption and security unit in the stadium during matches. We are however unable to take legal action against them."

This inability to take legal action was reflected in the words of Mirpur Thana's additional deputy commissioner Mollah Jashim Uddin, who told The Daily Star that he was unaware of any such developments.

There is precedent of betting coming to the fore in Bangladesh's cricket sphere. In the 2012 Asia Cup, two bookies were arrested at the venue during the Bangladesh Sri Lanka match. The BPL itself is no stranger to the racket as it was hit by a spot-fixing scandal in 2013 with a number of cricketers and officials, most notably Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Ashraful who is still serving the consequent ban, being found guilty.

"He certainly will not do it easily, but I think the people will show him that he's no longer wanted."

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson yesterday urged "a quick return to civilian rule" in Zimbabwe.

"At his age, everybody becomes very stubborn and he would be no exception," he told reporters in Johannesburg.

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