



Rohingya refugees react as police and officials attempt to control a surging crowd as they wait to be called to receive food aid of rice, water, and cooking oil in a relief centre at the Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Pope sidesteps Rohingya crisis

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and a respect for human rights", he said in a broadly-framed speech that also called for "respect for each ethnic group and its identity".

The word "Rohingya", an incendiary term in a mainly Buddhist country where the Muslim minority are denied citizenship and branded illegal "Bengali" immigrants, was entirely absent from his speech.

Francis has repeatedly defended the group, some 620,000 of whom have fled from Myanmar's Rakhine state to Bangladesh since August.

Rights groups had urged him to tackle Myanmar about its treatment of the minority during his four-day visit, but the local Catholic Church had cautioned him against straying into the Rohingya issue.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, has been ostracised by global rights community that once adored her but is now outraged at her tepid response to the plight of the Rohingya.

She spoke of the challenges her country faces as it creeps out of the shadow of five decades of military rule, but also did not reference the Rohingya.

The government aimed to build the nation by "protecting rights, fostering tolerance, ensuring security for all", she said in a short speech, that gave a nod to global concern over the "situation in the Rakhine."

The pope's peace mission is studded with pitfalls in Myanmar, where a monk-led Buddhist nationalist move-

ment has fostered widespread loathing for the Rohingya.

In recognition of those tensions his public speech was "very carefully worded", Myanmar-based political analyst Richard Horsey told AFP, speculating "he is likely to have been more forthright in private meetings with Myanmar's leaders."

But the pontiff's words were of little comfort to Rohingya stuck in dire conditions in Bangladesh.

"We are very much disappointed that he did not mention the Rohingya crisis," said Rohingya activist Mohammad Zubair from Kutupalong refugee camp, speaking of a religious leader who previously "even held prayers for the Rohingya".

POPE, THE LADY AND A GENERAL

Late on Monday the 80-year-old pontiff received a "courtesy visit" from Myanmar's powerful army chief -- whose troops, according to the UN and US, have waged a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya in Rakhine.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has firmly denied allegations of widespread brutality by his forces, despite the flight of hundreds of thousands who have recounted widespread cases of rape, murder and arson.

His office said the general told the pope there was "no discrimination" in Myanmar, and he praised his military for maintaining "the peace and stability of the country".

The Lady, as she is fondly known in

Myanmar, finally came to power after elections in 2015 but has fallen from grace internationally for not doing more to stand up to the army in defence of the Rohingya -- whose name she will not publicly utter.

Rights groups have clamoured for Suu Kyi to be stripped of her peace prize. Oxford, the English city she once called home, on Monday removed her Freedom of the City award for "inaction" in the face of oppression of the Rohingya.

Just days before the papal visit, Myanmar and Bangladesh signed a deal to start repatriating Rohingya refugees within two months.

But details of the agreement -- including the use of temporary shelters for returnees, many of whose homes have been burned to the ground -- raise questions for Rohingya fearful of returning without guarantees of basic rights.

So far, the pontiff has received a warm welcome in Myanmar, whose Catholic community numbers just over one percent of the country's 51 million people.

But some 200,000 Catholics are pouring into the commercial capital Yangon from all corners of the country ahead of a huge, open-air mass in Yangon this morning.

Francis will travel on to Bangladesh on Thursday.

Why extra fees

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The bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Ullah came up with the rule rejecting a writ petition filed over the issue, Assistant Attorney General Titus Hillol Rema told The Daily Star.

He said the HC rejected the writ petition that challenged the legality of charging extra fees by Gazipur School and College as the same court in 2015 had issued a similar suo moto rule which was still pending with the court.

The HC, however, issued yesterday's suo moto rule taking the issue into notice, Titus added.

Lawyer Zahir Uddin Limon, who moved the writ petition filed by Jamal Uddin Khan, guardian of a student of the school, told this newspaper that the school charged between Tk 2,550 and Tk 2,890 from each SSC examinee. **'ANOTHER WAY OF EXTORTION'**

The signing up procedure for the examinees candidates of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination 2018, to be held in February, ended on November 19.

As per the education boards, students of science group need to pay Tk 1,785 while the fee for humanities and business studies groups is Tk 1,695. Irregular students and those who had failed in one or two subjects need to pay Tk 100 more.

But in reality, many educational institutions charge several times that.

A number of parents, of children

studying in Dhaka and outside the capital, alleged that they paid five to six times the actual fees and that the managing committees of the schools were behind this.

The government's instruction, warning, action and even the High Court's order could not stop these schools from extorting money from the students, they said.

"It's another way of extortion," said Mohammad Sharif, whose son is to take the SSC from a private school in Mirpur-10.

The schools, especially the non-government ones, create various excuses, including session, development, coaching, sports, and other charge to collect the money.

This practice puts many parents in financial difficulty.

Ruhul Amin, a peon of a private firm in his 50's, was dumbfounded when he learnt that he would have to pay Tk 8,000 for each of his two daughters who are to take part in the SSC exams from Capital Model School in Pallabi.

The school also charged an additional Tk 3,300 as coaching fees, and monthly tuition fees until February 2018, he said.

"When I wanted to know from the school headmaster why he was taking so much more than the board-set fees, he asked me not to create any trouble and that I could take my children to other institutions if I wanted to.

Later, the ministry took some punitive actions, including dissolving managing committees of schools, but students were still being charged extra for SSC tests, parents said.

"We're helpless. I had to give in, fearing my children's tests and preparations could be jeopardised," said Ruhul.

Abu Saleh Musa, headmaster of the school, told The Daily Star that the Tk 8,000 included five months' tuition fees (Tk 2,000 in total) and that they were not taking more than the board-set fees.

The headmaster said his students would sit for the SSC exams from another school because when the students got registered in class-IX, his school had not been approved by the board. That school is charging a little high for each student, Musa claimed.

The High Court in November 2014 issued a suo moto rule asking the government to explain why charging SSC candidates extra fees should not be declared illegal.

In January 2015, the court ordered the government to make the schools of Dhaka give back the additional money taken from the SSC examinees.

On February 3, 2016, the education ministry asked the educational institutions to return the money within seven days.

On February 29 last year, the ministry served show-cause notices on 1,209 institutions for not responding to its order.

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Diabetes, obesity behind 800,000 cancers worldwide: study

AFP, Paris

Nearly six percent of new cancers diagnosed worldwide in 2012 -- some 800,000 cases -- were caused by diabetes and excess weight, according to a study published yesterday.

Among the 12 types of cancer examined, the percentage of cases chalked up to these factors was as high as a third, researchers reported in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology, a leading medical journal.

Cancers stemming from diabetes and obesity combined was almost twice as common among women than

men, they found.

And of the two cancer-causing agents, being overweight or obese -- above 25 on the body-mass index, or BMI -- was responsible for twice as many cancers as diabetes.

The conditions, in reality, are often found together, as obesity is itself a leading risk factor for diabetes.

"While obesity has been associated with cancer for some time, the link between diabetes and cancer has only been established quite recently," said lead author Jonathan Pearson-Stuttard, a clinical research fellow at Imperial College London's Faculty of

Medicine.

"Our study shows that diabetes -- either on its own or combined with being overweight -- is responsible for hundreds of thousands of cancer cases each year across the world."

A surge in both conditions over the last four decades has made the tally significantly worse, the study showed.

The global increase in diabetes between 1980 and 2002 accounted for a quarter of the 800,000 cases, while the obesity epidemic over the same period resulted in an additional 30 percent of cases.

PM to open

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Energy Agency to set up the nuclear power plant. After reviewing Bangladesh's initiative, the agency has expressed its highest satisfaction," Science and Technology Minister Yafesh Osman told The Daily Star yesterday.

The main construction work would begin giving highest priority to the safety and security measures, the minister added.

The initiative for building the nuclear power plant was taken in 1961. The incumbent government is implementing the project as one of its first-track schemes.

Preparations for the inauguration programme have already been completed, said Dilip Kumar Shah, chairman of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission.

He said they were hopeful of completing the main construction work within the scheduled time so that the country can get another 2,400 MW electricity by 2025.

Meanwhile, 300 students of Rooppur High School organised a flash mob on the school ground, around one kilometre off the project site, yesterday. Students in red and green dresses made a sign reading "I Love Rooppur", to mark the inauguration of the main construction work.

The students joined the programme to create awareness among the local people about the nuclear power plant, said Farhad Kamal, officer at the public relations department at the Russian company Rosatom's Dhaka office.

Bangladeshi

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arrested as of last night, according to a report of KWCH 12, a TV station in Kansas.

Hasan's father Mujibur Rahman is an engineer and his mother Hasanara Begum a banker. He was the elder one of their two children.

Mujibur told our Gazipur correspondent yesterday that his son's dream was to become a pilot.

Hasan's mother Hasanara Begum said she talked to her son on Thursday night for the last time. She heard the news of his death on Monday from his friend Nayem, who lives in Kansas.

Hasan passed SSC from Uttara High School and HSC from Dhaka Science College. He went to the US in June, 2011, and got admitted to the Wichita State University.

Wichita police said a resident had called them around 11:45am on Sunday to report that an unfamiliar vehicle had been parked near a block of East Agent.

When police arrived at the scene, they found Hasan's body in the trunk. He was shot, says a news report on the website of ABC-affiliated TV station KAKE.

Earlier, Hasan had been reported missing late Saturday night.

Lt Todd Ojile of Wichita police said Hasan had delivered pizzas in two blocks of North Williamsburg, and did not return to work. His co-workers later contacted police.

Law enforcers went to the location of the last delivery and "found property belonging to Pizza Hut in the yard". They searched the area, but were unable to find anyone who had seen Hasan or anything suspicious, mentions the KAKE news report.

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Donkeys jailed

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These donkeys had destroyed some very expensive plants which our senior officer had arranged for planting inside jail and despite warnings the owner let loose his animals here so we detained the donkeys, jail head constable RK Mishra told news agency ANI.

The Uttar Pradesh police clarified yesterday that it had no role to play in the detention; prison officials were responsible.

"We made all the arrangements for them inside. They were fed two times a day," said a jail official.

The owner of the donkeys apparently made many requests to prison authorities to let go the donkeys but to no avail.

A local politician submitted the bail amount for the offenders after which the offenders were allowed to walk out.

A concerned owner waited as the donkeys walked out.

"I came here to get my donkeys released. Eight of them were locked up for four days," owner Kamlesh said.

Army may not

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definition of law enforcement agency, Kabita Khanam said, "Nothing has been finalised yet. We are just preparing the draft. We have to review all the aspects of the RPO. We have time in hand till February. So it doesn't mean that we are ruling it out. We will place our draft proposals before the commission to make the final decision."

According to the draft report, the EC will form committee(s) for each constituency to monitor the election expenses of candidates.

"Every candidate shall submit weekly expenses report to the committee. The committee shall submit a weekly report to the Election Commission, including their findings," the draft reads.

It also says the commission shall set up committee(s) for each constituency to carry out an audit on the election expenses.

"After submission of a return on the election expenses by the candidate's chief election agent, the committee will verify the expenditures and bill vouchers. The committee in a prescribed form will submit the verification report to the returning officer within 15 days after receiving the return on election expenses."

The draft report also proposed that the EC may appoint its own observer, from its own or government officials,

for each constituency to know about the irregularities, law and order, any failure or negligence of law enforcement agencies and polling personnel and any failure, negligence, biasness or discriminatory attitude of the returning and assistant returning officers.

It said the commission may set up a "complaint redress centre" to resolve complaints promptly.

The EC committee also recommended introducing an online system for submitting nomination papers.

An independent candidate should submit a list of signatures of 1,000 voters of his constituency instead of signatures of one percent voters, the committee proposed.

Paying heed to most of the political parties' demand, the committee recommended raising the security deposit of a candidate from Tk 20,000 to Tk 50,000.

According to the draft, if two or more candidates bag the same number of votes, the commission shall direct the returning officer to conduct a re-election among them. Presently, a lottery is held among the candidates to pick the winner.

The committee further recommended that an early voting system might be introduced for the polling personnel and law enforcers who carry out duties during elections.

Govt okays Tk 2,312cr

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