



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 a 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.

"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.

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.

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 Hasnara 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 Nayeem, 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 Pagent.

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.

## Natore priest

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Father Walter is also the headteacher of Saint Louis High School in the upazila. He is the son of Sylvester Rozario of Bonpara municipality area. He is also a neighbour of slain Christian Trader Sunil Gomez.

Porimal Rozario, brother of the missing priest, said another priest of the church, Father Subrata Purification, informed him of his brother's disappearance.

Father Subrata filed a general diary (GD) in this regard with the local police station yesterday afternoon.

When contacted, Biplob Bijoy Talukder, superintendent of police in Natore, said they learnt about his disappearance yesterday afternoon and they were working on gathering information.

## 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 expenditures."

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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Bangladesh from Myanmar to escape persecution since the Myanmar military launched a brutal crackdown in Rakhine State on August 25.

Bangladesh had seen influx of Rohingyas from Myanmar also in 1978, 1991 and 2016. More than one million Rohingyas are now staying in Bangladesh.

The project includes construction of roads, water supply and drainage systems, power sub-stations, warehouses, helipads, mobile phone towers, radar stations, navy offices and quarters.

Before the project's approval, the navy had conducted a feasibility study, which found that 4.5 lakh people can live in the uninhabited 13,000-acre island.

Seeking anonymity, a planning ministry official, who attended the meeting, said some of the Ecne members said that words like "Rohingya" or

"Myanmar citizens" should not be used in the name of the project as such wording may hinder the repatriation process.

Thinking that Bangladesh has already taken steps to rehabilitate the Rohingyas, Myanmar may not take back its nationals, the official said, quoting the Ecne members.

But the PM suggested mentioning the words "Myanmar citizens" in the project, saying this would be helpful in utilising foreign assistance.

According to the project proposal, the number of locals in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf and Ukhiap upazilas is around seven lakh.

It has become increasingly difficult to ensure housing facilities for more than 10 lakh Rohingyas now living in camps in Cox's Bazar. Hills and forestlands are being damaged every day in the country's biggest tourist zone, it added.

## Locals take it

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Talking to this correspondent, many of them complained about suffering from skin diseases because of the filthy water.

"I have rashes over my body as I need to wade through the water every day. My doctor advised me to avoid it but I can't. I have no other option."

Mizanur Rahman, another resident of the area, said, "We were sick and tired of facing this problem for such a long time. That's why we decided to take it upon ourselves to solve the problem."

He said a group of locals first tried to pump out the water some 15 days ago but that did not work out as expected as the surface drains were heavily clogged.

"Then we started cleaning the drains extensively on November 18 and we are getting good results now. We engaged 20 youths in the cleaning job," he said.

Recently, Mizanur said, they employed 12 day labourers to speed up the process.

Since the cleaning began, he claimed, many portions of the road, which used to remain under almost knee-deep water, have dried up.

Mohammad Alam, another resident of the area and also the general secretary of Ward 53 Awami League, said, "We have set up two eight-inch pumps at Chabbish Foot Khal to remove water from the road. The water is now flowing down to the [Titas] canal," he said.

Although the locals complained to the city corporation authorities about the matter on a number of occasions,

its officials expressed helplessness citing a lack of logistics and manpower to handle the issue, he said.

Abdur Rahman, garbage management officer (zone-5) of the DSCC, however, said they also began cleaning the surface drains 15 days ago.

"It is a severe problem and if we really want to solve it, we need to clean the Titas canal first as it is the only place for the stagnant water to go," he said, adding that the Bangladesh Water Development Board should take initiatives to clean the waterbody which is blocked at different points.

Councillor of Ward 53 Md Nur Hossain said labours hired by the city corporation were working to clean the sewers using DSCC equipment.

He said DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon has also given 20 pumps to remove the stagnant water from the area.

Hossain alleged that some people were trying to do politics over the matter ahead of the next parliamentary polls.

He claimed to have taken initiatives several times before and sending letters to the authorities concerned to solve the waterlogging issue.

A Tk 558 crore project of the Water Development Board has already been approved by the Ecne and work of the project to solve the waterlogging problem of the DND area would start next month. Bangladesh Army would implement the project, he said.

The people in the DND area have been facing the problem for the last 45 years, he said expressing hope that the project would solve the problem for good.

## Participatory polls

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"Now the only path of rigging which still exist is muscle power."

"And from this consideration, it is the opposition parties who can resist that muscle power through participation in the election."

In an oblique reference to the BNP, he said they do not need to shout for electoral reforms because "it's already done". "So now come and take part in the election."

The finance minister advised the Bangladesh envoys attending the conference to tell the foreign governments and their people how the Bangladesh government has closed the paths of election rigging.

Muhith in his 28-minute speech described the economic development in the country and the steps taken to remove poverty, increase productivity, trade and investment.

He said due to the pragmatic efforts, more than nine crore people have been brought out of poverty in the last eight years. "But still we have three crore people under the poverty line and we

## Cop held

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(prosecution) of CMP, said Chittagong Additional Metropolitan Magistrate Shahadat Hossain Bhuiyan sent the two arrestees to jail after they were produced before it in a Yaba peddling case filed with Karnaphuli Police Station.

Law enforcers said a team of DB police picked up the duo when they were entering Chittagong city with the pills.

Rezaul Masud, additional superintendent (sadar) of Chittagong police, said, "Anwar was transferred to Naval Police around 15 to 20 days ago."

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