

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

India for systematic verification process

China for solution through bilateral negotiations

UNB, Dhaka

India has said Bangladesh and Myanmar should implement a systematic process of verification to facilitate the repatriation of Rohingyas.

It said the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should help Myanmar carry out its responsibilities towards its own people.

India gave the opinion in its explanation prior to the vote on a resolution at the 27th special session of the UNHRC in Geneva on Tuesday. The resolution dealt with the human rights situation of the Rohingya Muslim population and other minorities in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The resolution was passed by 33 votes. Nine countries, including India, refrained from voting while China, Burundi and the Philippines voted against the resolution.

India said the UN body should encourage the two countries to work together to restore normalcy in Rakhine.

It also requested the UN high commissioner for human rights to track the

progress concerning the human rights of Rohingya people, and to provide oral updates to the UNHRC for a period of three years.

The resolution strongly condemned the alleged systematic and gross violations of human rights and abuses committed in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine, notably against people belonging to the Rohingya Muslim community and other minorities.

According to UN office, Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh took the floor to introduce the text of the resolution.

CHINA FOR FACILITATING REPATRIATION

China has said the international community should encourage Bangladesh and Myanmar to work together to facilitate the repatriation of refugees.

Explaining its stance prior to the vote, China said it fully understood the challenges faced by Bangladesh, and bilateral negotiations between Bangladesh and Myanmar were the only solution to the crisis.

The signing of a repatriation instrument between the two countries was

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Centre for Policy Dialogue Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan addresses Citizen's Conference on Sustainable Development Goals at Krishibid Institute in the capital yesterday. From left, CPD Distinguished Fellow Prof Mustafizur Rahman, eminent educationist Rasheda K Choudhury, Narayanganj City Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy, CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya, UNDP Bangladesh Acting Country Director Kyoko Yokosuka and Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman were also present.

UN officials for ensuring safety in Myanmar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations has warned against repatriation of the Rohingyas to their homeland without ensuring safety in Myanmar.

"People should go back, people or refugees should go back to their homes when they feel it is safe and nobody should be forced to move," said Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric during a press briefing in New York on Tuesday.

Stéphane said this in response to a question on the situation deemed by UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who warned against premature repatriation of Rohingyas in a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Tuesday. "I think the Secretary General has been upfront and extremely vocal about the sufferings of the Rohingyas, the sufferings they underwent while living in Myanmar and their plight, their current plight now."

"I think everyone in the UN system agrees on the fact that no-one should be repatriated against their will, that refugees should go home to their place where they came from and in an atmosphere that is free and that respects their rights," said the

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End disparities

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deprivation, life cycle status, physical and mental disabilities, gender and transgender disparities, civil identity and lack of rule of law," the declaration said.

Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman of Dhaka University at the opening ceremony of the conference said, "We demand equal opportunities for all, ensuring justice and good governance so that people here can exercise all their rights. We have to ensure dignity for all..."

Anisuzzaman, citing advancement in science and technology, said the success stories of human endeavour outshine fairy tales. "However, the failures were not small. Many people still do not get safe drinking water. Many do not get minimum medical care. A large number of people live under the open sky."

"At the same time, wealth is concentrated in a small number of people. This cannot be accepted as development of mankind," he said, stressing on balanced distribution of wealth and income.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan said the government should take the citizen's initiative positively and consider them as partners. The government should also allocate resources for achieving the goals.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of the Citizens Platform for SDGs,

Bangladesh, said many consider economic growth as development. But just growth does not mean development. It is important to see who is getting the benefits of the economic growth.

"There has been unprecedented rise in the inequality of income and wealth. This will affect growth and create social unrest and affect socio-political and economic stability."

"The growing inequality will undermine the achievements of the nation," he said, adding, "Development has to be viewed from the perspective of the people falling behind."

He said people's participation was necessary to attain SDGs. The government alone could not attain the target. "That's why we are holding the conference," he said.

"The civil society always had a big role in the democratic movement for progressive transformation of the nation. They work closely with and parallel to political parties," he said, adding, "But we feel sorry when top policymakers say that they are unaware of what we do."

He demanded the government form a trust fund for NGOs to work for attaining the SDGs and a policy to ensure accountability and transparency.

Rasheda K Choudhury, a core group member of Citizen's Platform, stressed on ensuring accountability of all, including the government, NGOs and others.

She said 2.17 crore children were

studying at primary level and one out of five would drop out before completing that level. This is a big number, she said, adding that progress should not be measured based on average.

"Discrimination is going on in education," said Rasheda.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said, "Dreams and aspirations of the Liberation War will be materialised if we implement the SDGs."

"We have to bring people falling behind to the mainstream of development," said Mustafiz, another core group member of the platform.

He said the platform would monitor and measure whether SDGs were implemented. "We will carry out our responsibilities," he said.

Asif Ibrahim, former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stressed the need for ensuring transparency and accountability.

CPD Research Fellow Towfiqul Islam Khan, presenting the study "Quest for Inclusive Transformation of Bangladesh Who Not To Be Left Behind", said disparities between rural and urban areas are continuing while income and wealth inequalities are on the rise.

The study finds that 97 percent of the population are subjected to one of the two vulnerabilities.

"We are the citizens of Bangladesh. And we have equal rights to participate

in development," said Towfiq.

Kyoko Yokosuka, acting country director of UNDP Bangladesh, said rising inequality undermines prosperity.

She said Bangladesh has made commendable progress in poverty. Yet, the number of poor still remains large, she added.

Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government and a core group member of Citizen's Platform for SDGs Bangladesh, said the SDGs have created the opportunity for individuals and communities falling behind to raise their voices.

Selina Hayat Ivy, mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation, said the nation could not progress without participation of the civil society.

Later, at a session on good governance, speakers said there was lack of good governance and accountability in the country and targets mentioned in the SDG would not be achieved without ensuring good governance.

"Due to the lack of political commitment, good governance is very vulnerable in the country," Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujon) Secretary Bodiul Alam Majumder said.

Hasibur Rahman Mukur, executive director of Management and Resources Development Initiative, highlighted the importance of the Right to Information Act and said the act could help control corruption in many cases.

BANANI MURDER

Expatriate ex-JCD man behind it, say police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday claimed that a former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader living in Sweden hired people to kill man-power businessman Siddik Hossen Munshi in his Banani office on November 14.

Six killers planned it seven days before the murder after the Chhatra Dal leader communicated with gang leader Helal Uddin, said Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit, while briefing journalists.

Police arrested Helal, 38, who stands accused in at least two murder cases, at the capital's Gulshan on Tuesday night.

At the briefing in DMP media centre, Monirul declined to name the Chhatra Dal leader, but said he was wanted in a number of arson cases filed between 2013 and 2015.

The murder was not over illegal toll collection. The motive is still unclear as it was a "contract killing". Police will further interrogate Helal to know about the motive, Monirul added.

As part of the plan, four of the killers, as seen in CCTV footage, entered the office of Munshi Overseas

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Shital Pati

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weaving got the recognition in 2008 and 2013, according to the Unesco.

This year, 35 nominations have been submitted for getting inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the Shital Pati is one of them.

Shital Pati is the traditional art of making a handcrafted mat by weaving together strips of a green cane known as "Murta".

The mat is used by people all over Bangladesh as a sitting mat, bedspread or prayer mat.

The main bearers and practitioners are weavers living mostly in the low-lying villages in the greater Sylhet region, but there are also pockets of Shital Pati weavers in other areas of the country.

Both men and women participate in collecting and processing Murta, with women being more involved in the weaving process.

The craft is a major source of livelihood and a strong marker of identity; primarily a family-based craft, it helps to reinforce family bonding and create a harmonious social atmosphere. Mastery of the technique commands social prestige, and the practice empowers underprivileged communities, including women, according to the Unesco.

The government promotes awareness of the element through local and national craft fairs, and Shital Pati communities are increasingly being organised into cooperatives to ensure the efficient safeguarding and transmission of the craft and guarantee its profitability.

Safeguarding efforts involve the direct participation of the communities concerned and the practice is primarily transmitted from generation to generation within the families of craftspeople.

Bacchu again denies his role

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the scams... he looked nervous during the interrogation," said an official of the ACC that grilled Bacchu for the second time in connection with 57 cases filed over the embezzlement of Tk 2,044 crore from the BASIC Bank.

"We will continue quizzing him and look into all possible aspects," said the official, seeking anonymity.

Around 9:30am yesterday, Bacchu appeared before the anti-graft watchdog. About 30 minutes later, two ACC officials began grilling him in 10 of the 57 cases.

As Bacchu "fell sick" around 2:00pm, ACC's medical officer attended him. About an hour later, he felt better and the officials resumed interrogation, ACC sources said.

When Bacchu came out of the interrogation cell around 5:00pm, journalists approached him. But he left the ACC premises without saying anything.

No ACC official briefed the media on yesterday's interrogation.

Earlier on Monday, the commission quizzed Bacchu for several hours. Later, he told journalists that the allegations against him were yet to be proved.

Yesterday, the ACC filed a case against

three persons, including a former BASIC Bank official, for allegedly misappropriating Tk 7.58 crore. With this, the number of loan scam cases filed by the ACC now stands at 57.

According to Bangladesh Bank findings, around Tk 4,500 crore had been siphoned out of BASIC Bank between 2009 and 2012 when Bacchu headed the bank's board of directors.

On July 14, 2014, the BB gave the ACC a report on the scam, detailing how money was embezzled from the bank through shell companies and dubious accounts.

The report said Bacchu illegally influenced all the activities of the state-owned lender, leaving the once-sound bank in a grave state.

The BB also narrated how the former chairman abused his power to play an active role in the loan scams.

However, Bacchu has not been made an accused in any of the 57 cases.

While hearing two loan scam cases on August 18, a Supreme Court bench expressed displeasure at the ACC for not naming Bacchu and the bank's ex-board members in the cases.

On November 24, the ACC summoned Bacchu and 10 ex-directors for interrogation for the first time, around

four years after one of the biggest loan scams in the country's banking sector came into the spotlight.

CASE FILED

The ACC filed a case against ex-deputy general manager and branch manager of BASIC Bank's Babubazar Branch Md Selim, chairman of Iqbal Food and Beverage Ltd Aatur Rahman and its managing director Saiful Islam for embezzling Tk 7.85 crore from the bank.

According to the case statement, Saiful opened an account with the bank on March 29, 2010, and applied for a loan at its Babubazar branch on April 15 the same year.

The loan proposal, signed by Selim, was sent to the bank's head office on May 11, 2010.

In its investigation, the ACC found that it is "nearly impossible" to evaluate a client in such a short period. The loan was sanctioned against properties which had already been either sold or mortgaged to a third party.

THREE GET BAIL

The High Court granted bail to three sacked officials of BASIC Bank in several loan scam cases filed by the ACC.

Ex-deputy managing director of the bank Fazlus Sobhan got bail in four

cases, ex-general manager of its internal credit division Md Selim in two cases, and manager of its Gulshan branch Shipar Ahmed in two cases.

The accused, who are in prison now, cannot be released as they are shown arrested in other loan scam cases, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told this newspaper.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Shahidul Karim granted them permanent bail after hearing separate petitions filed by the three accused.

During the hearing, the HC said it is apparent from the documents and evidence that a gang was involved in the BASIC Bank loan scams. And the bank's board cannot avoid its responsibility regarding the scams.

Khurshid said the HC granted bail to the three on the grounds that the ACC is making long delays in completing the investigation into the cases.

The commission will challenge the HC's bail orders at the Supreme Court, added the ACC lawyer.

Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud appeared for Fazlus Sobhan, Abdul Matin Khasru for Selim and Dr Shahdeen Malik for Shipar.

Who were the three persons?

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Landing at the airport from Belgium, Samiha repeatedly called her father but found his number switched off. Maroof, who retired as an additional secretary to the foreign ministry in September 2009, has been missing since.

A team from the Detective Branch of police, led by Assistant Commissioner Fazlur Rahman, collected the footage around noon yesterday. The law enforcers also talked to the family members of the former ambassador to Vietnam.

"We're analyzing the footage as part of our investigation to identify the people who entered the house..." DB Additional Deputy Commissioner Rajib Al Masud told The Daily Star last night.

A police official, who examined the footage, said three middle-aged men in caps entered the house and left with a CPU and some other things.

Samiha lodged a general diary with Dhanmondi police on Tuesday. Later that evening, Khilkhet police recovered Maroof's car abandoned near the 300-foot road in the area.

Sub-inspector Abu Zahed of Khilkhet police later filed another GD over the recovery of the vehicle. In the GD, the police official said they found the car doors left open wide.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Samiha, who had gone to Belgium to visit her sister, pleaded the government to bring her father back.

Rifat Zaman, the ex-diplomat's brother, yesterday said his brother had no political affiliation. He said Maroof used to get transferred to his preferred countries because of his ailing wife, who died in 2012.

The incident comes high on the heels of some high-profile disappearances, including that of North South University Assistant Prof Mubashar Hasan, in the last few months.

Dhaka University Chhatra Dal leader Mujahidur Rahman, who went missing after he left his home in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar on November 26, has not returned.

With Maroof and Mujahidur, 14 people including a journalist and a number of businessmen, went missing, in recent months. Four of them have returned.

UK foils

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Naa'imur Zakariyah Rahman is accused of planning an explosion outside May's Downing Street office then trying to enter the building with a suicide vest and a knife in a bid to kill her.

State prosecutor Mark Carroll said Rahman planned to detonate an improvised explosive device at the Downing Street gates, then, in the ensuing chaos, try to enter the building "with a view to trying to kill the prime minister".

He planned to use a suicide vest, pepper spray and a knife, Carroll told Westminster Magistrates Court in London.

Rahman had carried out hostile reconnaissance of the area as part of his preparation, it is alleged.

Rahman is charged with preparing terrorist acts and also with assisting another man, Mohammad Aqib Imran, to prepare separate terrorist acts.

He appeared in court along side Imran, 21, who is accused of trying to join the Islamic State jihadist terror group by trying to obtain a fake passport with a view to travelling to Libya.

Rahman spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth. He said he was of no fixed abode and said his nationality was "Bangladeshi British". Imran said he was "Pakistani British".

Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot remanded Rahman and Imran in custody to appear for a short hearing at England's Old Bailey central criminal court on December 20.

The court appearance came a day after Home Secretary Amber Rudd told parliament that 22 Islamist terror plots had been thwarted since the killing of a British soldier on a London street by two Islamist extremists in 2013.

No. 10 Downing Street is the official residence of British prime ministers. It is heavily guarded and there is a gate at the end of the street preventing members of the public from getting close to the house, reported Reuters.