

UN cuts food aid for east Africa refugees

Prioritises crises in Syria, Yemen, Bangladesh

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Nairobi

Cuts in food rations for 1.5 million refugees in east Africa, due to funding shortages, could increase school dropouts, crime and malnutrition, a United Nations official said on Wednesday.

With humanitarian needs soaring around the world, donors are prioritizing crises in Syria, Yemen and Bangladesh, said Peter Smerdon, the World Food Programme (WFP)'s east Africa spokesman.

As a result, refugees in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Rwanda fleeing drought and conflict have had maize, beans and vegetable oil rations cut by almost a third over the last seven months, he said.

"In my 15 years at WFP, I have never seen this number of refugees, at this time of year, having cuts to their food rations," he said.

"Needs have gone through the roof for the whole of the humanitarian system, and donors really can't keep up with these increased needs. And the longer they continue, the more likely people will fall through the cracks."

The four east African nations provide sanctuary for millions fleeing drought in the Horn of Africa and protracted conflict in Somalia and South Sudan - the world's youngest nation - where civil war has created the continent's biggest refugee crisis.

WFP has only received about one-fifth

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100 more Rohingyas arrive in Bangladesh

REUTERS, Teknaf

More than 100 Rohingya Muslims have crossed into Bangladesh from Myanmar since Wednesday, with the latest refugees saying army operations are continuing in troubled Rakhine State, raising doubts about plans to send back 655,500 who had already fled.

Scores more were waiting to cross the Naf river that forms the border, even as Dhaka prepares to start repatriating next week some of the Rohingya who have escaped from what the Myanmar military calls counter-insurgency operations since late August.

Bangladesh and Myanmar said on Tuesday they had agreed to complete

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Traffic comes to a standstill at the capital's Nilkhet intersection yesterday morning as hundreds of students from the seven colleges affiliated with Dhaka University block the area, demanding publication of their second year final exam results. Bottom right, DU VC Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman assures them of publishing the results.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN/RASHED SHUMON

Four fined for arranging child marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A marriage registrar, the groom and guardians of both the bride and the groom were fined yesterday during the marriage ceremony of a 13-year-old girl in Nabinagar of Brahmanbaria yesterday.

They were detained on Wednesday.

The marriage registrar Mosarraf Hossain was fined Tk 10,000 and the groom Sadikur Rahman, 30, Tk 30,000. The groom's elder brother Kamruzzaman Babul, who acted as his guardian, was fined Tk 10,000 and the bride's father Ali Azam Tk 30,000.

The girl is a student of class-VIII in Nabinagar Ichhyamoyee Pilot Girls

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DB arrests 3 muggers who pose as cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives arrested three people at the capital on Wednesday for posing as police and stealing money.

They had allegedly snatched Tk 40 lakh from two garment factory officials in Uttara a month ago.

Jewell Rana, 26, was arrested at Badda along with The four lakh while Masud Rana, 32, and Antu Hawlader, 30, were arrested with Tk two lakh each at Jatrabari on

Wednesday, Abdul Baten, joint commissioner (detectives) of DMP, said.

The arrestees along with others snatched the money from the officials after they emerged from a bank

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It's all for money

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Hawker Narayan Chandra said the hawkers who sit around Zia Hall intersection, Shaheed Minar, in front of Khaja Market and on Bangabandhu Road have to pay from Tk 100 to Tk 300 per day.

Just paying the toll is not enough. He said the hawkers are forced to join rallies and processions of Shamim Osman in Narayanganj and Dhaka.

"You will see no hawkers or only a few hawkers on Narayanganj footpaths the day Shamim Osman holds a rally," Oli Ahmed, a hawker who sits on Bangabandhu Road, told The Daily Star.

A tea vendor on Bangabandhu Road said either a policeman or a lineman takes Tk 20 from him every day.

"The plainclothes policemen kicked me on several occasions when I failed to pay or haggled with them," he said, adding, "Even the homeless and beggars cannot escape the police and the linemen. I saw police take Tk 10 from them many times."

"If they fail to pay, they are slapped," he said, requesting not to be named and declining to name the police personnel and linemen fearing repercussions.

Asad Mia, convener of Hawkers Sangram Parishad, said there were around 4,500 small cots or tables on city footpaths and three quarters of them were on Bangabandhu Road.

Several hawkers claimed that for placing a two by three feet cot or table on the pavement, they have to pay Tk 5,000 to Tk 7,000 to local leaders close to Shamim Osman.

Narayanganj City Jubo League President Shahadat Hossain Bhuiyan Shajnu and Convener of Narayanganj City Chhatra League Habibur Rahman Riad, who are close to Shamim Osman, dealt with the hawkers, they claimed.

They mentioned a few other names of similar post holders in AL and Chhatra League but this paper could not get in touch with those leaders.

Refuting the allegations, Shahadat Hossain told The Daily Star that he had heard that some AL leaders took money from hawkers. "Several times I have pressed hawkers to know the names but they told me that no Awami League leaders took money from them."

Habibur Rahman Riad said they had asked the administration and the city corporation to take actions if anyone took money from the hawkers in the name of Chhatra League.

Several witnesses of Tuesday's mayhem claimed that these AL, AL-affiliate and Chhatra League men were in the front line during the attack on NCC Mayor Ivy. The Daily Star could not verify their claims.

Chashara Police Camp In-charge Gazi Mizanur Rahman said, "Hawkers' trade on footpaths had been stopped several weeks ago. So, the allegations of taking money against police personnel are not right."

Asked whether the policemen collected toll before, he said he had no idea about the matter.

Acting officer-in-charge Abdur Razzaq of Narayanganj Sadar Police Station told The Daily Star that the allegation against police was nothing but exaggeration.

Asked to elaborate what he meant by exaggeration, Razzaq said after he took charge as the OC, he did not get any complaint that policemen collected tolls from hawkers.

He, however, said his predecessor was closed to the police lines as he had not taken proper steps to evict hawkers.

"We have taken a hard line against hawkers after sir [his predecessor] was closed," Razzaq added.

On January 15, Shamim Osman at

a rally of hawkers at Chashara said he had ordered, not requested, that hawkers would sit on footpaths from 5:00pm from January 16, if the city corporation did not take any measures for their rehabilitation.

Mayor Ivy had said that she would not allow hawkers to occupy footpaths causing city dwellers to suffer. She also said she would make alternative arrangements for the hawkers at the hawkers' markets.

Many city dwellers hailed the city corporation's move to free the footpaths from illegal occupation. They told The Daily Star yesterday that despite repeated attempts over the last one year, the authorities failed to evict the hawkers due to local influential Awami League leaders and a section of police officials who take money from them.

On Tuesday, NCC Mayor Ivy and around 50 others were injured as supporters of local AL lawmaker Shamim Osman attacked Ivy and her followers, leading to a clash on Bangabandhu Road.

No case was filed over the clash as of last night and police could not arrest Jubo League leader Niazul Islam, who was seen brandishing a firearm during the clash, even though he himself filed a general diary with Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station in connection with attempt on his life and attempted snatching of his arms.

HOME BOSS

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said action would be taken against those who had brandished firearms during Tuesday's clash.

"I give you assurance that no one will be spared. Those who have broken laws, will face the music," the home minister told journalists in Tejgaon.

"We are doing what is required. We

have footages. We are looking into those who brandished firearms and took the law into their own hands," Asaduzzaman said, adding that they were enquiring into the "unfortunate incident".

The home minister said he personally talked to Shamim Osman and Selina Hayat Ivy after the incident on Tuesday and told them that the prime minister did not like what had happened.

"I told them if you don't stop, we have to take action," he added.

IVY HOSPITALISED

Ivy was admitted to LabAid Hospital in Dhaka after her blood pressure dropped yesterday afternoon. She is in the Coronary Care Unit of the hospital.

Ivy became sick when she was at the city corporation office around 4:00pm, reports our Narayanganj correspondent.

She had trouble breathing and had cardiac complications, said Narayanganj General Hospital Medical Officer Asaduzzaman.

Abul Hossain, Ivy's personal secretary, said Ivy visited the injured of Tuesday's clash at Narayanganj General Hospital after lunch yesterday.

She became sick around 20 minutes after she had returned to her office.

A doctor of LabAid said, "She will be kept under observation for the next 24 hours. Her condition is stable now."

Lawmaker Shamim Osman neither received phone calls nor texts of this paper.

Some hawkers yesterday opened up shops at Chashara on Bangabandhu Road defying the local administration. Police evicted the hawkers a few hours after they had sat there.

Trump reveals

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"2017 was a year which saw the truth -- objective, empirical, evidence-based truth -- more battered and abused than any time in the history of our country, at the hands of the biggest figure in our government," Flake charged.

Of the "awards" Flake had said "it beggars belief that an American president would engage in such a spectacle yet here we are," -- and urged his fellow lawmakers to take a stand in support of the press.

DISHONEST MEDIA

At loggerheads with much of the US news media since his election, Trump finally doled out his "Fake News Awards" after weeks of speculation, recognizing what he had called "the most corrupt & biased of the Mainstream Media."

Nobel-prize winning economist Paul Krugman, who writes a regular opinion column -- not news articles -- for The New York Times, nabbed the number one spot.

The administration said he merited the award for writing "on the day of President Trump's historic, landslide victory that the economy would never recover."

Following the former reality star's stunning rise to power, Krugman had written that Trump's inexperience on economic policy and unpredictability risked further damaging the weak global economy.

The list also pointed to an error from ABC's veteran reporter Brian Ross, who was suspended for four weeks without pay after he was forced to correct a bombshell report on ex-Trump aide Michael Flynn.

In follow-up tweets to his "Fake News" announcement, the commander-in-chief posted that "despite some very corrupt and dishonest media coverage, there are many great reporters I respect and lots of GOOD NEWS for the American people to be proud of!"

"Together there is nothing we can't overcome -- even a very biased media. WE ARE Making America Great Again!"

REFLEXIVE SLURS

Quoting figures from the International Federation of Journalists which reported the deaths of more than 80 journalists last year, Flake said Trump's "reflexive slurs" were an affront to their sacrifice.

From his longtime questioning of Barack Obama's birth certificate, to his dismissal of what US intelligence agrees was a Russian effort to sway the 2016 election as a "hoax," Flake accused Trump of weakening trust in American institutions -- while emboldening despots around the world.

Citing the examples of Syria's Bashar al-Assad, the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte or Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, who all employed the term "fake news" in recent months, he accused Trump of encouraging brutal and authoritarian regimes to persecute the press.

"This feedback loop is disgraceful, Mr President," Flake said. "Not only has the past year seen an American president borrow despotic language to refer to the free press, but it seems he has now in turn inspired dictators and authoritarians with his own language."

'Pleasure' trip or what?

FROM PAGE 1

Shipping Ministry, which oversees the port's operation, were included in the team, raising questions about conflict of interest.

Members of a parliamentary standing committee cannot go on any foreign trip whose expenses are borne by an organisation the House body oversees, according to parliamentary affairs experts.

The CPA is bearing the costs of the ongoing visit, and it has already released Tk 95 lakh for the purpose. The total expenses will be tallied after the delegation returns.

On January 30, Khaled will hand over the responsibility to the new CPA chairman and go back to the navy, sources said.

Earlier on January 2, the public administration ministry appointed CPA member (engineer) Commodore Zulfikar Aziz as the new chairman.

Despite repeated attempts, Khaled

could not be reached for comments.

Two of the delegation members opted out of the trip. They are Maj (retd) Rafiqul Islam, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Shipping Ministry, and Kallal Kumar Chakraborty, a deputy secretary.

Contacted, Rafiqul said he is in favour of visiting developed seaports to get firsthand experience of how those work.

"If we visit ports of world standards in Europe or even in Asia, we will be able to utilise the experience for developing our seaports."

Asked why he didn't join the trip, the AL lawmaker avoided giving a reply.

Sources close to Rafiqul, however, said that he considered the visit unnecessary, as the ports to be visited by the team are not that developed.

Talking to this correspondent, former member of the CPA Board Hadi Hossain Babul said Khaled's visit to the African ports would be of no use, rather it would be sightseeing, as he will soon hand over his responsibility to a new CPA chairman.

He also said only those directly involved in the port's operation should have been included in the team.

Hadi pointed out that private operators should be engaged in providing services, such as operating the terminals, for upgrading the port's capacity and efficiency.

"Southeast Asian and European ports are engaging globally renowned private operators on a large scale in such jobs. We should gather knowledge on those ports," Hadi said while

explaining why the visit to the two African ports would not be so fruitful.

The ex-CPA Board member, however, said the African ports also engage private operators but on a small scale.

In terms of annual handling of containers, Chittagong port secured the 71st position among the top 100 container ports in the world, according to the 2017 ranking of Lloyd's List, the world's oldest journal on port and shipping.

The Chittagong port handled around 25 lakh TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) containers last year.

The Port of Cape Town couldn't make it to the list while the Port of Tanger-Med, which handled 29 lakh TEU containers in 2016, ranked 51st.

The Port of Cape Town handled nine lakh TEU containers in fiscal 2013-2014. Chittagong port handled 17.31 lakh TEU containers in 2014.