



Swiss President Alain Berset meets Rohingya refugees at the Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Ukhia upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## Huge pressure on Bangladesh

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He appreciated the Bangladesh government for its massive efforts to welcome and host the communities from Myanmar, a press release of the Swiss embassy in Dhaka said yesterday.

He handed over the Swiss contributions, including hospital beds and medical equipment, to the hospital authorities.

The president, now on a four-day visit to Bangladesh, lauded the role of the doctors and the staff in providing medical treatment to the patients from

the host community as well as from the Rohingya arrivals.

The embassy in the statement said Switzerland welcomes the progress made between the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh in working towards a lasting solution of the refugee crisis and underlines the need for any return of Rohingyas to Myanmar to be voluntary, safe and dignified.

The Swiss Humanitarian Aid has channelled 8 million Swiss Francs (\$ 8.5 million) last year in emergency humanitarian assistance for the

Rohingya arrivals. Switzerland will remain engaged in the humanitarian efforts this year with an additional support of \$12 million. The support measures will also benefit the host community in Cox's Bazar, which have been affected by the refugee crisis, according to the press release.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent adds: President Alain Berset arrived at Cox's Bazar at 11:00am yesterday. He visited the Rohingya Unit, set up by IOM, at the sadar hospital and talked

to some patients there.

He then travelled to Ukhia and visited blocks D-4 and D-5 where the refugees were being provided with medical care and relief. He talked to officials engaged with the relief and medical operations as well as to the refugees.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor and high officials from the IOM, UNHCR and other organisations accompanied the Swiss president.

## Send envoy, military

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He also urged the United States to block financial transactions of Yameen's government.

Since Yameen took control of the overwhelmingly Muslim country of 400,000 people in 2013, his government has faced heavy criticism over the detention of opponents, political influence over the judiciary and the lack of freedom of speech.

Addressing the nation on state television, Yameen said he had acted to prevent a coup, and suggested that the judges had chosen to side with his opponents because they were being investigated for corruption.

"I declared the state of emergency because there was no way to hold these justices accountable. This is a coup," he said.

As part of the crackdown, police also detained Yameen's half-brother, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who had ruled the Maldives for 30 years until 2008 and now stands with the opposition.

Gayoom was detained at his residence along with his son-in-law. But Gayoom's son Faris, who was one of the imprisoned opposition leaders that the court ordered to be freed, was released on Tuesday, his lawyer told Reuters.

Other opponents of Yameen remained in prison.

Located near key shipping lanes, the Maldives have assumed greater importance after China began building political and economic ties as part of its so-called 'String Of Pearls' strategy to build a network of ports in the Indian Ocean region.

Having historically held more clout in the islands, India has sought to push back against China's growing influence there.

India, the United States and Britain have urged Yameen to honour the rule of law and free the detainees.

"President Yameen has systematically alienated his coalition, jailed or exiled every major opposition political figure, deprived elected members of parliament of their right to represent their voters in the legislature, revised

laws to erode human rights ... and weakened the institutions of government," the US State Department said in a statement.

Indian intervention in the Maldives would not be unprecedented, as New Delhi sent troops in 1988 to foil a coup, purportedly involving foreign mercenaries.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said it was an internal matter for the Maldives. "We believe that the Maldives government, political parties and people have the wisdom and ability to cope with the present situation themselves," Geng told a daily news briefing.

China has had good ties with Yameen's government and a free trade agreement between the two countries was signed in December, despite criticism from the opposition.

Any Indian involvement would risk raising tensions further in the overwhelmingly Muslim archipelago of 400,000 people and intensify the rivalry with China.

Aside from the intervention in 1988, India has generally tried to avoid meddling in the Maldives' internal affairs, although it has continued to provide military and economic assistance.

The tumult comes during the peak tourism season in Maldives, which earned \$2.7 billion in 2016 from holidaymakers visiting luxury hotels and dive resorts scattered round the myriad tiny islands and coral atolls.

China, the United States and India have already issued advisories against travelling to the tropical islands, though most tourists would only pass through rather than stay in Male, the densely populated capital where the political tensions are highest.

"It has affected business. We have advised our operators to not sell Maldives packages," said Raman Singh Taneja, Managing Director, Flexi Tours Pvt Ltd in New Delhi that sends tour packages. "It's like a coup there, worse than earlier."

## PM to visit Barisal tomorrow

To inaugurate 54 development projects

OUR CORRESPONDENTS, Barisal and Patuakhali

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate 54 development projects and lay foundation stones for 34 new ones in Barisal division during her visit on Thursday.

The projects to be inaugurated include a cantonment named after her, administration officials said.

The PM will also address a rally in Barisal as part of her campaign for national polls that started in Sylhet on January 30.

The cantonment on about 1,400 acres of land in Barisal and Patuakhali was approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) on November 14, 2017.

The Tk 1,699-cr project has been financed by the government.

The engineering college she will inaugurate in Barisal Sadar is the first of its kind in the region.

Three dorms and an academic building for Barisal University, a divisional passport office, a four-lane highway from Bhanga-Barisal-Patuakhali, two government schools,

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## Let there be light!

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Munnia Char's solar power plant, built with Tk 4.44 crore in support funding from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, began operations on 20 December 2017. An initiative of private company Vincen GTEch, the plant uses 960 solar panels to produce 249.6 kilowatts per hour.

Via a localised grid it is planned that a total of 1,200 households, 200 shops and other businesses, 2 schools, 20 irrigation pumps and several mills will be supplied with power, says the plant's manager, Israful Islam. In total, around 8,000 people will have direct access to 24-hour electricity.

Over 100 households, 60 shops, two schools, a husking mill and four irrigation pumps are already connected. "The remaining connections should be in place within three months," Israful says.

"Solar power will boost the agro-based economy of the shoal and improve local socio-economic conditions," says the power company's chairman Mostafa Al Mahmud. "An average household using three lights, two fans and a television can expect to pay around Tk 360 per month."

The current payment system consists of pre-paid digital meters, he says.

## Whole bank was in it

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If the loan application is for more than Tk 1 crore, the proposal must be placed before the board of directors by the MD.

The Janata board gave the go-ahead to all the loan applications of AnonTex Group.

Abul Barkat, a professor of economics at the Dhaka University, served as the chairman of the Janata board from 2009 to 2014.

SM Aminur Rahman was the MD of the state-owned bank between January 2008 and July 2014; he previously served in the same position from September 2004 to December 2006.

"The board of directors and top management are responsible for disbursement of huge amounts of loans to AnonTex Group in gross violation of the credit rules and norms," said Shaikh Md Wahid-Uz-Zaman, who served as the chairman from December 2014 to December 2017.

He went on to state that disbursement of fresh loans to AnonTex stopped when he joined the bank.

In 2015, the business group restruc-

tured loans of Tk 1,095 crore under the central bank's special package for borrowers with loans of Tk 500 crore and above after furnishing down payment of just 1-2 percent instead of the usual 10-15 percent.

But it failed to make any instalment payment, leaving it in the default zone.

Contacted, Azad acknowledged that some of the loans to AnonTex were sanctioned during his tenure as the GM and deputy GM of the Janata Bhaban Corporate branch.

"Adequate collateral had been kept by the bank against the disbursed loan."

The bank rescheduled some defaulted loans of the group by taking prior approval from the BB, he said, adding that AnonTex's business is performing well.

"We have recently recovered Tk 350 crore from the group," he added.

But Wahid-Uz-Zaman disputed it.

"The group did not repay a single penny of instalment from its business earnings," said the immediate past Janata chairman, adding that AnonTex had adjusted some credit by taking

fresh loans from the bank.

Aminur, who was the MD when the majority of the loans were sanctioned, said he had placed the credit proposal before the board as per the recommendation of the branch.

He also said permission was taken from the central bank when loans were sanctioned to AnonTex exceeding the single borrower exposure limit.

A Bangladesh Bank document shows Janata was indeed given the go-ahead in September 2014 to sanction a loan to Galaxy Sweaters and Yarn Dyeing, a concern of AnonTex Group, exceeding the single borrower exposure limit.

But, the central bank tagged the condition that no further loans could be disbursed to the group before adjusting the single borrower limit.

Janata though continued to extend fresh loans until 2015 -- ignoring the central bank's instruction.

Echoing Azad, Aminur said: "AnonTex is capable of refunding the loans."

Asked why the group has become a

## Dhaka to be delinked

FROM PAGE 1

the largest private bus operators, said they would not operate any bus tomorrow, although they did not receive any such instructions.

The BNP instructed its leaders and activists to stage peaceful demonstrations in their areas, but a large number of them are expected to travel to the capital ahead of the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case verdict.

Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman,

sioner (Lalbagh division) of DMP, said vehicles entering the capital would have to go through security checks so that no one could enter the city with anything that caused destruction.

Residential hotels in the capital have been asked to collect National ID cards and detail information of boarders every day and submit those to detectives.

"We had given a similar instruction about one and a half years ago. Hoteliers are now following it and we have kept them under surveillance," said Ibrahim.

Over the last few days, law enforcers increased surveillance at Sadarghat Launch Terminal and Kamalapur Railway Station so that no one can carry illegal firearms or explosives. Similar measures have been taken at other important places, bus and launch terminals and rail stations, by setting up CCTV cameras. Additional security measures have been taken to thwart any attack at key point installations.

Yesterday, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary instructed all commissioners, range deputy inspector generals and unit chiefs to remain alert so they could prevent violence and subversive activities in their areas.

Earlier on Thursday, the police headquarters (PHQ) wrote to the district police superintendents and unit chiefs to bring under surveillance the opposition leaders and activists with previous records of involvement in subversive acts.

Md Moniruzzaman, additional deputy inspector general of intelli-



Sand-filled bags have been piled up at the entrance to Tanore Police Station in Rajshahi ahead of the delivery of the verdict in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia tomorrow. A top police official in the district said they took the measure to foil any possible attack on law enforcers over the judgment.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

gence and special affairs of the PHQ, said they instructed all police units to take stern actions if anyone tried to damage public properties and put people's lives at risk.

SM Jahangir Alam Sarker, police superintendent of Feni, Khaleda's hometown, said they were prepared to tackle any situation.

Khandaker Enayet Ullah, general secretary of the National Road Transport Owners Association, said 15,000-20,000 transport workers would remain standby at different city

defaulters, he said that it was not a matter of concern as a number of well-reputed companies are frequently slipping into the defaulting zone.

Barkat told The Daily Star on Monday that the group had set up industrial units following European standards and its loan repayment was "very good" during his stint as the Janata chairman.

Asked if he had paid a visit to AnonTex's factories, he replied in the negative.

"But top officials of Janata and a number of academicians and students of industrial economics at DU had visited the factories. All of them said the factories were of European standard," he added.

A Dhaka-based businessman named Md Yunus (Badal) is the managing director of AnonTex Group. He could not be reached for comments.

AnonTex was founded in 2004 and is a member of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

## PM to visit Italy

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(IFAD) on February 13-14 to discuss how investing in sustainable rural livelihoods is central to peace building, state-building and social stability around the world.

The theme of this year's event is "From fragility to long-term resilience: investing in sustainable rural economies."

The prime minister will then pay a bilateral visit to Vatican City where she will meet Pope Francis and other dignitaries.

Pope Francis visited Bangladesh on November 30-December 2 last year when he attended a variety of programmes after meetings with President Abdul Hamid and Hasina.

Apart from participating in the IFAD meeting in Rome, the PM will also hold bilateral meetings with the participating heads of state and leaders of host Italy.

According to officials, the Rohingya refugee issue may come out prominently in the upcoming IFAD meeting as the world is currently facing incidences of violent conflicts which are multiplying the number of internally displaced persons and refugees.

These realities are undermining the prospects for sustainable development and threatening the livelihoods of billions of rural people, they pointed out.

The Governing Council is IFAD's main decision-making body which makes decisions on issues such as approval of new memberships, appointment of IFAD's president, matters pertaining to the permanent seat of the fund, approval of the administrative budget and adoption of broad policies, criteria and regulations.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali will hold a press briefing on February 8 on the prime minister's official visits to Italy and the Holy See (Vatican City) and participation in the 41st Session of the IFAD Governing Council.

## Dhaka to set up

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government signed a deal with UNCHR and is taking support from the body.

"We are now matching our data with the UNHCR data and expecting to finalise lists of several families within the third week of this month. We are hopeful of handing over a complete list of a reasonable number of Rohingya families to Myanmar authorities for their verification," said an official who attended the meeting.

The official said Myanmar would get two months' time to verify the list.

Bangladesh would set up two camps, one for repatriation over land and another via river, the official said.

Sources said the return of Rohingyas was still a long way away as Bangladesh was yet to send the advance list of prospective returnees.

Myanmar would send a "complicated" form which would have to be filled by Bangladesh and sent back to Myanmar for final verification. The process would consume a lot of time, they said.