



Nobel Peace Laureate from Northern Ireland Mairead Maguire talking to a Rohingya refugee during her visit to Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhia on Sunday. Right, an official briefing the three female Nobel Peace laureates -- Iran's Shirin Ebadi (left), Mairead Maguire and Yemen's Tawakkol Karman -- as they visit the Thyangkhal camp yesterday.



PHOTO:
AFP/COLLECTED

Wake up

FROM PAGE 1
Mairead Maguire -- demanded those responsible for the atrocities in Rakhine should be hauled to the International Criminal Court.

"We appeal to Aung San Suu Kyi, our sister laureate. Think of your children being pulled off your arms, because you are a mother, and massacred and villages burnt," said Maguire, who is from Northern Ireland.

"Don't deny the Rohingya people their right to life," she said in an emotion-choked voice after listening to the Rohingya women at Thyangkhal refugee camp in Ukhia of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

A violent military crackdown launched last August sent 700,000 Rohingyas fleeing to Bangladesh, sparking an unprecedented humanitarian emergency in the border district where the refugees are now sheltered in teeming, squalid camps.

Accounts of mass killing, rape, looting, burning of villages and shooting of civilians kept coming with the refugees over the months, while global condemnation poured in for the army campaign which the UN termed a "textbook case of ethnic cleansing".

Yemen's Tawakkol Karman said it is time Aung San Suu Kyi woke up, or she

will be one of the perpetrators of the crime.

"If she could not stop all this crime, she has to resign now. It is very important," she said, adding Suu Kyi otherwise could be prosecuted at the International Criminal Court.

"We, women Nobel laureates, call for those criminals prosecuted at the ICC ... so we don't expect our sister Aung San Suu Kyi to be one of them in the future. If she will continue her silence, she will be one of them."

The Nobel laureates came to Bangladesh on Saturday and began a visit to the Rohingya camps to assess the allegations of violence against Rohingya women and the overall refugee situation.

The Nobel Women's Initiative, a platform of six female peace laureates established in 2006, is organising the visit in partnership with Naripokkho. On Sunday, they visited the refugee camps in Kutupalong and Balukhali.

They held a meeting with Refugee, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Abul Kalam in Cox's Bazar yesterday morning and visited the refugee camps in Thyangkhal.

The three laureates, who all through their lives have fought for human rights and democracy, expressed their anger

at the inaction of world leaders over the Myanmar crisis.

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"CLEARLY GENOCIDE"

"Every single woman we met said they were raped, they lost families. One woman's baby was taken off and butchered by the Myanmar soldiers. This is clearly clearly clearly genocide that is going on by the Burmese government and military against the Rohingya people," added Maguire.

Termining it an orchestrated attempt to remove the Rohingyas out of Myanmar and out of history, she said the Nobel laureates reject the genocide policy of Myanmar.

"We reject this genocide policy of the Burmese government. They will be taken to the ICC and those who are committing genocide will be held responsible."

"As a human family, we cannot allow genocide of a whole people. The world must act," said Maguire, who spent her life in bearing witness to oppression and standing in solidarity with people living in conflicts.

"We have, as a human family, to remove impunity because a people and military think they can kill and slaughter little children because this is a slaughtering way of allegiance in a massive massive scale. Where is our world going?"

She further said, "The international

community has to say enough is enough and we all have to raise our voices and not remain any more silent."

Yemen's Tawakkol Karman said the Rohingyas are really facing genocide, a massacre, but the international community has "disappeared".

"It is shame for all of us, for the international community that they are silent in front of the genocide," she said, calling for the perpetrators of the crimes to be held accountable and tried at the international court.

The first Arab woman to win Nobel Peace Prize, Karman said the sufferings of the Rohingyas have been going on for decades under the eyes of the world.

"Now we are seeing an ethnic cleansing. That's shameful with the world, shameful that these women have been raped and their children slaughtered. The worst crime is that they have been displaced from their homes, their country."

"Now this is a real real appeal to the international community, the UN and the Security Council to wake up. It is the time now to wake up."

Later, Karman told the Thomson Reuters Foundation she had spoken to 15 women who said their husbands and some of their children had been

killed, and they had been raped repeatedly by soldiers.

"You can't imagine what we heard today," said Karman, who won Nobel Peace in 2011 for her nonviolent struggle for the safety of women rights and peace-building in Yemen.

Iran's Shirin Ebadi said that as members of international community it is their utmost demand Myanmar military be taken to the International Court of Justice.

"We are all paving the way for that," said Ebadi, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for promoting human rights, in particular the rights of the women, children and political prisoners.

Meanwhile, she said, Rohingya refugees are still coming into Bangladesh that must stop because it is not good for the minority group and it also creates intense pressure on the people of Bangladesh.

The Nobel laureates expressed gratitude to Bangladesh government and people for their generosity in hosting the refugees, and urged the UN and international community to ensure the Rohingyas have basic needs and services.

"We are with you, with Bangladeshi people," said Karman.

EU prepares new sanctions on Myanmar

FROM PAGE 1
responsible for serious and systematic human rights violations without delay".

The measures would be the EU's toughest yet to try to hold the Myanmar military accountable for the abuses, likely joining US and Canadian sanctions already in place.

Foreign ministers also want to strengthen the bloc's 1990s-era arms embargo on the Southeast Asian country that remains in place, although they did not give details.

Reuters investigations have highlighted the killing of Rohingya Muslim men who were buried in a mass grave in Rakhine state after being hacked to death or shot by ethnic Rakhine Buddhist neighbours and soldiers.

No names of generals to be targeted

for sanctions have been yet discussed, two diplomats said, but the United States said in December it was sanctioning Major General Maung Maung Soe, who is accused of a crackdown on the Rohingya minority in Rakhine.

One EU diplomat said the EU's list was likely to include more than just one senior military officer.

The EU's decision to consider sanctions reflects resistance to such measures in the UN Security Council, where veto-wielding powers Russia and China said this month they believe the situation in Rakhine was stable and under control.

The United States, as well as United Nations, have described the military crackdown in Myanmar as "ethnic cleansing". More than 680,000 people, mostly Rohingyas, have fled Rakhine

for shelter over the border in Bangladesh, the EU said.

Myanmar has denied most allegations of abuses and asked for more evidence of abuses, while denying independent journalists, human rights monitors and UN-appointed investigators access to the conflict zone.

DEMOLITION OF EVIDENCE
Myanmar has bulldozed the remains of Rohingya Muslim villages to make way for refugee resettlement, not to destroy evidence of atrocities, an official leading reconstruction efforts in the troubled northern state of Rakhine said yesterday.

Last week, New York-based Human Rights Watch said it had analysed satellite imagery showing Myanmar had flattened at least 55 villages in Rakhine, including two that appeared

to be intact before heavy machinery arrived.

The group said the demolitions could have erased evidence of atrocities by security forces in what the United Nations and the United States have called an ethnic cleansing campaign against the stateless Rohingya minority.

A military crackdown prompted by Rohingya insurgents' attacks on 30 police posts and an army base on August 25 drove 688,000 people from their villages and across the border into Bangladesh, many of them recounting killings, rape and arson by Myanmar soldiers and police.

Myanmar has denied most allegations and asked for more evidence of abuses, while denying independent journalists, human rights monitors and UN-appointed investigators

access to the conflict zone.

De facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi in October set up the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) to lead the domestic response.

Veteran economist Aung Tun The, who is the chairman of the body, said villages were being bulldozed to make it easier for the government to resettle refugees as near as possible to their former homes.

"There's no desire to get rid of the so-called evidence," he told reporters yesterday, responding to the allegations of demolition of evidence.

"What we have intended (is) to ensure that the buildings for the people that return can be easily built," he added.

Aung Tun The also said Myanmar

would do its best to make sure repatriation under an agreement signed with Bangladesh in November would be "fair, dignified and safe".

In a speech to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres restated his call for Myanmar to "ensure unfettered humanitarian access in Rakhine State".

The United Nations suspended activities in northern Rakhine and evacuated non-critical staff after the government suggested it had supported Rohingya insurgents last year. The UN refugee agency has been excluded from the repatriation process.

"The Rohingya community desperately needs immediate, life-saving assistance, long-term solutions and justice," Guterres said yesterday.

AL INFIGHTING 20 injured in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 20 people and six policemen were injured in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar during a clash between two factions of the Awami League early yesterday.

Witnesses said the rival factions attacked each other around 2:00am near Kulaura CNG Filling Station following an altercation over a badminton game around 1:00am.

The clash between Sramik League activists, led by its upazila unit joint convener Shiper Uddin Ahmed, and Swechhasebak League members, led by its upazila unit general secretary Mahbubur Rahman Manna, forced police to rushed to the scene and fire rubber bullets.

Officer-in-Charge Shamim Musa of Kulaura Police Station said sub-inspectors Jahirul Islam, Harun Al Rashid, Masud Alam, and constables Nasir Uddin, Afsar Ahmad and Nasir Uddin were injured.

Chhatra League upazila unit general secretary Abu Sayham Rumel and Kulaura Govt College Chhatra League general secretary Zakaria Al Jebur were among the wounded.

The injured have been admitted to Kulaura Health Complex, said Jakir Uddin, its resident medical officer.

Cash incentive rules abused

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In fiscal year 2016-17, the government gave Tk 4,395 crore in such incentives. It was Tk 3,500 crore and Tk 4,000 crore in the two previous fiscal years.

There is no data on how much of the cash incentive is withdrawn breaching rules every year, but BB officials said it could be between 10 and 15 percent of the total sum.

Under the rules, the exporters' banks pay the cash incentive to their clients. Later, the BB reimburses the banks on behalf of the government.

In case of the eight companies, the BB has already reimbursed Mercantile and Jamuna, a BB source told The Daily Star last night.

The BB investigation found that a number of export bills of Kuliarchar Sea Foods were unpaid when it collected the incentive, which is against the rules.

As the proceeds did not come even nine months after the export, Mercantile wrote to the BB in November, seeking two years' extension for the export earnings to come.

The application was subsequently rejected, but Mercantile paid the incentive

to Kuliarchar anyway, the BB report said.

Teamex Jute Mills, a jute spinner, pocketed nearly Tk 10 crore in a similar way from Mercantile.

The bank also disbursed nearly Tk 41 lakh to Utah Knitting and Dyeing Company and Tk 24.60 lakh to Creative Woolwear, although each of them had overdue export bills.

In another instance, Mercantile disbursed Tk 10.44 crore to Ratul Fabrics and Ratul Knitwear, two companies of Ratul Group, violating central bank rules.

The two companies produced textile items by procuring chemicals from another local factory not owned by Ratul Group, the BB report said.

The bank should have deducted the cost of the procured items while calculating the incentive, it added.

Jamuna Bank disbursed Tk 2.68 crore to Tajbed Trading and Tk 64.74 lakh to Raj-Kamal Everest Corporation although the two companies brought their export earnings through exchange houses.

"Only inward remittance can be sent through exchange houses. Exporters must bring their money through the

banking channel," said the BB report, describing the transactions as suspicious and money laundering.

IFS (Pvt) Ltd, another client of Jamuna Bank, illegally received Tk 2.59 lakh by exporting textile products to Poland. Exporters cannot collect incentives against exports to a number of countries, including Poland.

Musa Meah, chairman of Kuliarchar, termed the central bank's allegation as "bogus".

"I have been enjoying cash incentives for long. I collected the money in line with the rules," he told The Daily Star over the phone last week.

Contacted, Mozammel Hoque, managing director of Teamex Jute Mills, first cited network problem and hung up the phone. Later, he did not pick up the call despite repeated attempts.

Ratul Group Managing Director Nazrul Islam could not be reached for comment. A man who identified himself as Mamun and an employee of the Group received the call instead.

He insisted they broke no rules. Mosharraf Hossain, general manager of the Utah Knitting, and Mostafa

Kamal, managing director of Raj-Kamal Everest, made similar claims.

"I have applied to Jamuna Bank and the central bank to review the allegation," Mostafa said.

On January 7, the BB asked the Mercantile Bank authorities to take punitive action against the officials involved in the irregularities by the first week of February.

The bank sought time till February 28 (tomorrow).

Mati Ul Hasan, additional managing director of the bank, said they already realised some export proceeds against which cash incentive was given.

"We will respond to the central bank letter by February 28. Also, we have taken steps so that such wrongdoings do not recur," he said, adding that they committed an "unintentional mistake".

Jamuna Bank managing Director Shafiqul Alam said his bank had already frozen export earnings of one of the three companies to recover the incentive.

The BB has asked Mercantile and Jamuna to deposit the fund in the government account.

10 killed in N'ganj as bus hits lorry

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Hena and Ramim were killed in the accident.

Mizanur was being treated at the DMCH.

Abul Kashem, another injured passenger, said he too boarded the bus near Kanchpur.

"The bus had hit a rickshaw in Sonakandi area. The driver had since been driving recklessly apparently to avoid trouble," he said, adding that the bus then hit the lorry in Tripurdi area.

Mollah Taslim Hossain, Narayanganj traffic police inspector (administration), said the bus was

carrying around 40 to 50 passengers.

"The front side of the bus was badly damaged after it hit the parked lorry. Two passengers died on the spot," he said.

The injured were rushed to Sonargaon upazila health complex where two others died, he added.

Doctors at DMCH declared six

others dead after they were taken there.

The dead included Mohammad Yeasin, 38, and Jiasmin, 32. The identities of the other deceased could not be confirmed till last night.

Traffic movement on the highway remained halted for about an hour after the accident.

4 'Bangladeshis' held in India over forgery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Police in western Indian state of Gujarat have arrested four suspected Bangladeshi nationals at the city of Vadodara for their alleged involvement in fraud involving foreign currency from Saudi Arabia, the US and Bangladesh.

According to Surat police, its Special Operations Group on Saturday arrested the four accused of duping unsuspecting citizens into believing that they were buying foreign currency of a higher value than the Indian rupee at a price cheaper than the market.

When the exchange was done, the victims found that the group had handed them a stash of blank paper.

The arrestees were identified as Mohammed Mosharraf Mutbar, Aslam Nooruddin Akon, Ronnie Shehbab Munshi and Noorjamaal Mohammad Mulla, all residents of Madaripur district in Bangladesh.

The accused have confessed to being a part of an organised syndicate of financial fraudsters from Bangladesh who are scattered across the major Indian cities to dupe citizens, said HM Vyas, police inspector of Vadodara SOG.

"The accused have told us that they arrived in India by bus with passports. They belong to a larger gang that is spread in cities like Delhi, Bengaluru, Surat, Kolkata and Vadodara. They carry a bundle of foreign currency and

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