

AL govt proved its capacity

PM says on country's development

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday in parliament said the Awami League-led government proved its capacity in developing the country.

"If the government desires to develop the country, it can do so. And we have proved it through various tests," Hasina said while speaking on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech.

She also said her party do politics for the betterment of the country and its people.

"We are a heroic nation," she said, adding that the country will not remain stuck with the status of a middle-income country as her government is working to turn it into a developed one by 2041.

Highlighting the AL-led government's various development activities, the PM, however, said Bangladesh does lack investment.

Criticising the post 75-governments, she said, "No government made any move to resolve the land dispute with India. But we solved



the land dispute. We have set an example."

After her speech, the House, with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair, unanimously passed the thanksgiving motion by voice votes.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said Bangabandhu gave independence but did not get time to achieve economic freedom.

"But her daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is taking the country to the zenith of success. She has been working to free the nation from hunger and poverty," he said.

On the country's success stories, he said Bangladesh would earn five billion dollars from the IT sector in future.

Chief whip ASM Feroz said that some ruling party activists had been involved in misdeeds to tarnish the image of the party.

"I request the administration to take action against those who [are] found involved in misdeeds," he said.

He also urged the government to take measures to address the question paper leaks.



Thick dust hangs over Rahattarpool area in Chittagong city as the authorities have dug up the road stretching from Bahaddarhat to Notun Bridge to carry out development works. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Vietnam's president due in city Sunday

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is all set to welcome Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang who is to arrive on a three-day state visit on Sunday with an aim to intensify trade and investment promotion, and create favourable conditions for businesses between the two countries.



During the visit, another important focus of Dhaka will be to get Vietnam backing in solving the Rohingya crisis.

The target is to achieve the goal of \$1 billion in two-way trade, said a high official at the foreign ministry, adding that the bilateral trade volume

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UN wants to see fair election everywhere

Myanmar urged to ensure unfettered humanitarian access to Rakhine

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations has reiterated its position saying that it wants to see free, fair and open elections everywhere, including in Bangladesh.

"And, as a matter of principle, we would like to see free and fair and open elections everywhere they are... they are held," said Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN secretary-general, while replying to a query of reporters on Bangladesh at the UN headquarters on Monday.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on the Myanmar government to ensure unfettered humanitarian access to Rakhine State, said Dujarric, adding that Guterres also appealed to the international

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Facebook removes page of 'Buddhist Bin Laden'

AFP, Yangon

Facebook has removed the page of a Myanmar monk once dubbed the "Buddhist Bin Laden" for his incendiary posts about Muslims, the company confirmed, as it faces pressure to clamp down on hate speech.

Wirathu, a prominent face of Myanmar's Buddhist ultra-nationalist movement, had amassed hundreds of thousands of followers on the network, using it as a platform to attack Muslims, singling out the stateless Rohingya minority.

Nearly 700,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh since last August following a military crackdown in Rakhine state that has been likened to ethnic cleansing by the US and the UN, but which has been applauded by Myanmar nationalists online.

A Facebook spokesperson told AFP late Monday that Wirathu's page had been removed.

"Our Community Standards prohibit organisations and people

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We'll fight for you

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The Rohingyas from the no-man's land replied in unison: "I am a Rohingya".

"The Nobel laureates were able to communicate very powerful messages to the Rohingya women," said Veronica, who accompanied the trio to Chundhum yesterday morning.

Myanmar military and locals have been accused of carrying out massacres against Rohingyas, raping Rohingya women and children, and looting and burning down their villages. Several rights bodies term the incident 'genocide' and 'crimes against humanity'.

On completion of six months of the Rohingya crisis, three Nobel Peace Prize winners -- Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, Mairead Maguire of Northern Ireland and Shirin Ebadi of Iran -- came to Bangladesh to highlight the crisis and raise their voice for the Rohingya, one of the most persecuted minorities of the world.

Nobel Women's Initiative, a platform of six female Nobel Peace Prize winners, in partnership with Bangladeshi NGO, Naripokkho, organised the visit that began on Sunday.

On Sunday and Monday, the trio visited Rohingya camps in Kutupalong, Balukhali and Thyangkhal. On the last day of the camp visit yesterday, Tawakkol Karman and Mairead Maguire listened to the Rohingya women and children of the no-man's land from around 10:00am.

As the news of their arrival spread, over a hundred of Rohingya female and children refugees crossed a small creek into Bangladesh territory in Konapara village, reports our correspondent from Cox's Bazar.

Encircling the laureates, they shared the stories of atrocities they faced before fleeing to the no-man's land.

Thirteen-year old Ayesha, who along with her five siblings fled her village of Kachubunia in Rakhine, alleged that Myanmar soldiers killed her mother in front of her and then picked up her father six months back. Her father has been missing since then.

Another woman Hosne Ara, 35, said Myanmar security forces killed her husband and snatched her two-year-old son and then threw the baby into a fire. She then fled her home and took shelter in no-man's land.

During their two-hour stay in the no-man's land, the Nobel laureates became emotional. They cried and hugged the women, and assured them of raising their voice in the global arena for justice.

"We witnessed the manifestation of this crisis: stateless, disposable people deprived of rights at home, the crimes they suffered not recognised," tweeted Nobel Women's Initiative Director Liz Bernstein, who also accompanied the laureates.

She said they heard harrowing tales from women whose husbands were murdered, from women who were raped and whose houses burned, and also about the generosity of Bangladeshi villagers.

"The laureates shouted support and solidarity for Rohingya people and promised to pursue justice," Liz Bernstein said.

During their visits to the Rohingya camps on Sunday and Monday, the laureates vented anger at Aung San Suu Kyi, asking her to speak out and stop the "genocide" against the Rohingya.

"If she [Suu Kyi] could not stop all this crime, she has to resign now," Yemen's Tawakkol Karman told reporters on Monday.

Mairead Maguire demanded that the international community works effectively to stop the genocide and take Myanmar military to the International Criminal Court.

"As a human family, we cannot allow genocide of a whole people. The world must act," she said on Monday.

Shirin Ebadi said they were working to pave the way for taking Myanmar military to the ICC, and sought cooperation from Bangladesh.

The Nobel laureates, who returned to Dhaka yesterday, are scheduled to hold a press conference on the Rohingya crisis today and attend a discussion on their movements for peace and human rights in their native lands and beyond.

'The most prolific slaughterhouses'

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enough was done, early and collectively, to prevent the rising horrors," Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said on Monday.

Addressing the 37th session of UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, he said his office repeatedly brought to the attention of the global community the widespread violations of human rights.

He lamented, "Time and again, there has been minimal action. And given this is my last address as high commissioner at the opening of a March session, I wish to be blunt."

Zeid also mentioned the atrocities against Rohingyas in Rakhine State of Myanmar and questioned why hardly any action is being taken.

"When journalists are jailed in huge numbers in Turkey, and the Rohingyas are dehumanised, deprived and slaughtered in their homes -- with all these examples bedevilling us, why are we doing so little to stop them, even though we should know how dangerous all of this is?"

In the previous session, he lashed out at the treatment of Rohingyas, saying the situation in Myanmar seemed "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

A brutal military campaign has led to around 700,000 Myanmar nationals fleeing to Bangladesh since last August, as security forces and local militia reportedly burn villages and shoot civilians.

"I call on the government to end its current cruel military operation, with accountability for all violations that have occurred and to reverse the pattern of severe and widespread discrimination against the Rohingya population," Zeid, the UN high commissioner for human rights, told that 36th session, held in last September.

He also forcefully chastised the Security Council throughout the Syrian conflict for failing to refer the case to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

On Monday, he blasted veto-

wielding members for the council's intransigence on Syria and other conflicts, saying they bore "responsibility for the continuation of so much pain."

Zeid, however, hailed France and Britain for working towards reforming the ways vetoes are used, but insisted that "it is time, for the love of mercy, that China, Russia and the United States... end the pernicious use of the veto."

'OPPRESSION FASHIONABLE'

Zeid, who has said he will be stepping down at the end of his term later this year, also warned of a general deterioration in the respect for rights around the world.

"Today, oppression is fashionable again. The security state is back and fundamental freedoms are in retreat in every region of the world. Shame is also in retreat," he said.

He highlighted in particular "xenophobes and racists in Europe", who he said were "casting off any sense of embarrassment".

[With inputs from AFP]

BCL man admits involvement

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After selling gold, they took a rickshaw to go to Rajdhani Market, said Bidhan.

As the rickshaw reached near Kunja Babu lane in Sutrapur around noon, about 14 to 15 people intercepted the three-wheeler and took the duo to Kazi Abdur Rouf Road.

Threatening the traders with weapons, the criminals snatched the money and mobile phones from them.

The money was shared out between the members of the mugging gang, police quoted arrestees as saying.

Bidhan on the same day filed a robbery case with Sutrapur Police Station.

Police arrested six people, including Awlad and Sohag, in connection with the incident and recovered around Tk 3 lakh from them.

The four other arrestees are Abul Hasan Mithu, Tarikul Islam Tagar, Maksud and Robin. All of them are from Sutrapur, Lakshibazar and Bangshal areas of the capital.

During interrogation by police,

Sohag named several people, including Mithu, involved in the incident.

Mithu is a former organising secretary of the BCL's Bangshal unit, a local Chhatra League leader said wishing not to be named.

He said all the arrestees but Sohag are members of BCL.

Police later arrested Mithu and Robin and took the two on one-day remand each.

On February 23, law enforcers remanded Tarikul, Awlad and Maksud for two days each.

While investigating the case, police found some clues in the CCTV footage from the area.

Nazmul Hossain, sub-inspector of Sutrapur Police Station and also the investigation officer of the case, said the criminals in two groups took position in Tanti Bazar and Sutrapur areas on February 19.

As the traders reached near Sutrapur, the goons beat them up and took away the money and mobile phones from them.

Nazmul said they identified the criminals after analysing the CCTV footage.

Talking to The Daily Star, Bidhan said he recently started the business after working at a jeweller's shop for years.

"I never thought that I could be robbed in broad day light. I had borrowed money to do the business. How will I repay my loans?" he said.

Sohag's mother Nasima Begum said police picked up her son on the night of the incident.

Sohag had been behind bars for three months last year in a murder case. Later he walked out of jail on bail, she told this correspondent yesterday.

Locals said Sohag used to visit the Ward-42 Jubo League office at the DIT Market in Laxmi Bazar.

Visiting the office yesterday, this correspondent found its main entrance padlocked. Shakil, a caretaker of the office, said Sohag along with his friends used to visit the office.

UN failure makes reform call louder

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said: "I remind all parties of their absolute obligation and international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure at all times."

But how exactly do the international community, to be specific the P5, has so far reacted to such times of need? Most of the times, they vetoed any move to pass resolutions that they thought would harm their interest at the cost of human rights and human lives.

In the Cold War era and in later years, the USSR/Russia had cast 132 vetoes mainly to block entry of any country into the UN that it thought would undermine its position. The US just lagged behind with 83 vetoes, mostly to block moves against Israeli atrocities on the Palestinians.

Another P5 member the UK used veto power 32 times beginning with the Suez Canal crisis and carrying it on when it went to war with Argentina over the Falkland Island in 1982.

France cast 18 vetoes. China used

the power 11 times -- the first one was to block Mongolia's admission to the UN.

These powerful countries hold this veto power so close to their chest to derail any move that goes against their interest that the US and the UK would probably not have accepted the creation of the UN without this privilege.

The 1945 San Francisco conference is a case in point when a number of small and medium states opposed the provision of veto power as it "violated the notion of sovereign equality". They were roughly snubbed by the P5 who made it clear that their participation in the UN was contingent to veto power.

And so from then on, the veto left the UN system ineffective when it concerned foreign policy and other interest of the P5 no matter if this meant permitting mass killings and genocide.

Another mentionable case is Myanmar. In 2007, China and Russia cast a double veto on a draft resolution calling on Myanmar to cease military attacks on Rohingyas and other ethnic

minority people. The duo again vetoed another Security Council move on Myanmar in 2009. And finally in March 2017, China and Russia together blocked a UNSC press statement to condemn the genocide on the Rohingyas. In September, they blocked a discussion in the UNSC on the Rohingyas' plight.

Under such circumstances, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Raad Al Hussein has lamented, "When journalists are jailed in huge numbers in Turkey, and the Rohingya are dehumanised, deprived and slaughtered in their homes -- with all these examples bedevilling us, why are we doing so little to stop them, even though we should know how dangerous all of this is?"

In the face of such fecklessness by the UN ranging from genocide of Rwanda to Bosnia to Congo to Sudan to Ukraine to other corners of the world, a major discourse has surfaced about reforming the UN to stop the veto power of the P5.

Canada launched the International Commission on Intervention and States Sovereignty in 2000 giving birth

to the concept of "responsibility to protect" that argues P5 members should agree not to use veto to obstruct military intervention to save human lives. The concept was endorsed by UN members at the World Summit in 2005.

In support of the move, five small countries known as S5 -- Singapore, Costa Rica, Jordan, Switzerland and Liechtenstein -- proposed reforms to refrain the P5 from using veto to block Security Council actions aimed at preventing and ending genocide or crimes against humanity. Its proposals were tabled at the General Assembly in 2012 but were literally killed.

Right now two proposals, one by France and Mexico and supported by 99 states and the other by Liechtenstein backed by 27 small countries has been adopted by 112 states.

Then French president Francois Hollande in his UN General Assembly address in 2015 categorically pledged "France would never use its power of veto where there have been mass atrocities". The UK has endorsed this view.

The Accountability, Coherence and

Transparency (ACT) group formed by 24 small and medium states have laid down a code of conduct for the Security Council regarding genocide and atrocities.

Meantime, a 2008 move by the Holocaust Museum, American Academy of Diplomacy and the US Institute of Peace have recommended that the P-5 should agree that unless three permanent members were to agree to veto a given resolution, all five would abstain or support it.

But the US, China and Russia refrain from participating in such reform moves, making any such reforms still a far cry nevertheless a growing demand. The system is unjust and skewed as even if the whole world agrees to an action that would be skirted if any of the P5 members feel otherwise.

And so very justifiably former UN chief Ban Ki-moon in his last General Assembly debate in 2016 bemoaned: "Is it fair for any one country to wield such disproportionate power and hold the world hostage on so many important issues?"

The question remains valid today.