

EU extends Myanmar arms embargo

Prepares individual sanctions; UN chief taps Swiss ambassador to Germany as Myanmar envoy

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Union yesterday extended its arms embargo against Myanmar, following human rights violations in the country, and was preparing sanctions against individual army officials.

The embargo includes arms, other equipment that could be used for repression, the provision of military training and products used to monitor communications, the Council of the European Union said.

The Council added it had agreed on a framework for personal sanctions against officials of the Myanmar Armed Forces and the border guard police, should human rights violations in the country continue.

These personal sanctions could include travel bans and asset freezes, the Council said.

The EU accuses Myanmar of "serious and systemic" human rights violations in a military operation in the country's northwest last year that sent nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims

fleeing to neighbouring Bangladesh.

The move follows similar measures by the United States and Canada.

Two Reuters journalists were jailed while reporting the army crackdown on the Rohingya and remain in prison in Yangon, where they face up to 14 years in jail for violating Myanmar's Official Secrets Act.

Senior UN officials, Western nations and press freedom advocates have called for the reporters' release.

UN SPECIAL ENVOY

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has tapped Switzerland's Ambassador to Germany, Christine Schraner Burgener, to be his special envoy on Myanmar, UN sources said on Wednesday.

Myanmar has faced international criticism over military crackdown on Rohingya Muslims. The United Nations, United States, Britain and others have described the operation as ethnic cleansing, which Myanmar has denied.

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This picture taken from Maungdaw in Myanmar's Rakhine state on Wednesday shows Rohingya refugees at a temporary settlement set up in a "no man's land" border zone between Bangladesh and Myanmar. A United Nations Security Council delegation which wants to see first-hand the impact of the Rohingya refugee crisis is set to visit the two countries.

PHOTO: AFP

Global concern high, aid low

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She expects donors, who look at different needs and discuss among themselves before deciding on providing aid, will come up with assistance in the current phase.

"But I have no guarantee that this will actually happen," said Christa, reflecting a bleak prospect of funding from the international community for the refugees' humanitarian needs.

"Beyond December, it may be very difficult to raise so much money from the international community. Because of the many other crises in the world the funding is also limited. We still have the Middle East, Syria, we have Yemen," said Christa.

The slow funding response is not only seen during the current phase. For

the first phase from September last year to February this year, the appeal was \$434 million, but the donor countries contributed around \$400 million.

The WFP required \$88.55 million in the first six months, but it received \$77.23 million, prompting it to borrow grains initially from the Bangladesh government.

Such a funding scenario poses serious risks to Bangladesh that is bearing the huge brunt since the influx of around 700,000 Rohingya refugees who fled atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine state and joined nearly 400,000 others, who had fled earlier waves of persecution.

The forest in large areas of Ukhia and Teknaf have already been cleared, hills are being levelled for building

refugee shelters, while the underground water level is depleting continuously, exacerbating health and environmental risks, said local officials.

Locals in Cox's Bazar are also facing the challenge of rising prices of essentials because of the huge Rohingya population.

With the monsoon season approaching, authorities in Cox's Bazar are working to strengthen the refugee shelters to protect them from any major disasters, including heavy rain, landslides, and cyclones.

While there is an increasing need for money, the UN says the situation in Rakhine is not conducive yet for the safe and sustainable return of the Rohingyas.

Rohingyas, whose houses were

burnt and looted, relatives killed and women relatives raped, said they were fearful of returning unless they were guaranteed citizenship and other basic rights that they were deprived of in Myanmar.

Christa Rader said repatriation of the Rohingyas would happen, but it would take time. In the mean time, the community has to sustain; they need food, healthcare, education and housing.

"In this period of 10 months, we need mid-term options because it is unrealistic for us to assume that over a million people would go back within the 10 months. May be some will go back," she told The Daily Star.

As medium term options, Christa suggested that the Rohingyas should be engaged in income-generating activi-

ties, and Bangladesh's private sector or even the government could come forward to support the cause.

She talked about her expectations of the donor countries and also raised their issues.

"For example, many donors ask how much are you providing in terms of cash for work. Don't only give us bills how you feed them. Give us what kind of employment are you generating for the people so that they can earn at least partially," Christa said.

Shah Kamal, secretary of the disaster management and relief ministry, said there has not been any discussion on creating jobs for the Rohingyas.

"Our main target is to repatriate the Rohingyas. However, if there is any proposal of creating jobs for them, we

will study its feasibility and act accordingly," he said.

Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said despite its limited resources, Bangladesh has been doing enough for the Rohingyas, and the global leadership must ensure that funding is enough for the refugees.

"It is unfair to pass on the burden to Bangladeshi citizens."

At the same time, the international community must hold Myanmar accountable for its atrocities, Farah told this correspondent.

Regarding job creation for Rohingyas, the development activist said it would be great to provide jobs to refugees, but one needs to keep in mind that there are thousands of jobless people in Bangladesh.

Yaba trader killed

Munshiganj cops claim of gunfight

STAR REPORT

An alleged yaba trader, who was wanted in at least 12 cases, including those of possessing arms and narcotics, and robbery, was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Munshiganj Sadar Upazila early yesterday.

The dead, Saiful Islam alias Baba Arif, 37, was a close associate of top-listed criminal Tofayel Ahmed Joseph and was involved in narcotics trade for a decade, according to police.

Arif is known as a notorious criminal in his native village at Panchashar Union Parishad in Munshiganj. He was involved in mugging, dacoity and narcotics trade, reports our Munshiganj correspondent quoting police.

Tofayel Joseph, one of the "top-listed criminals of the 1990s", is now in jail after the Supreme Court on December 9, 2015, commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment

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6-year-old raped in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A kindergarten student was allegedly raped by a rickshaw puller in Bogra's Shibganj upazila around 3:30pm on Wednesday.

The accused, Shanto, is the victim's next door neighbour, said one of the relatives of the victim.

"The child, aged 6, was playing in front of her house around 3:30pm on Wednesday. Shanto called her into his room by luring her in with food. When the child began screaming, she was rescued by other neighbours in a bloody condition," said Shuvon, one of her rescuers.

The girl was first taken to Gobindaganj Upazila Health Complex in Gaibandha, situated near the victim's house. Due to her critical condition she was later shifted to Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital around 10:30pm. She is currently undergoing treatment there.

Md Rejwanul Hasan, medical officer of the Gobindaganj Health Complex, said, "She was admitted here in a bad condition, with active bleeding and vaginal tear. After primary observation, we gave her primary treatment and then sent her to Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman

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Dolphins declining

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is carrying out the census with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The first dolphin survey in the Sundarbans was conducted by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in 2006. It found 225 gangetic dolphins, locally known as Sushuk, and 451 irrawaddy dolphins.

Of the 40 species of dolphins in the world, four are found in the Sundarbans area. Finless porpoise and the pink Indo-pacific humpback dolphins are occasionally seen here.

"This time we have seen one family of four pink dolphins and two finless porpoise. It is hard to determine their status as these two species are not found in the Sundarbans on a regular basis," said Monirul.

This is the first time a survey team has seen the pink dolphins in the Sundarbans area. They are one of the largest dolphins and found in the east coast of India, and through the Indo-Malay archipelago and east towards Australia where the water is very saline.

The pink dolphin was first sighted in the country in 2002.

Asked if the pink dolphins were living in the Sundarbans as the water salinity increased, Monirul said it could not be said without research.

"What we can say is that we have seen a family of four dolphins, may be for the first time a full family has been sighted in the Sundarbans," he said.

Dolphins are among the world's most endangered mammals as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red data book. Dolphin experts have been pushing the government to announce parts of the Sundarbans rivers as dolphin sanctuaries as the mangrove forest is the world's largest single habitat of freshwater cetaceans.

In 2012, the government declared, 10.7 square km area of the Pashur and Andharmanik rivers and their channels in Dhangmari, Chandpai and Dudhmukhi areas as "dolphin sanctuaries".

During dolphin census last week near the Dhangmari sanctuary, 15 to 20 dolphins, adults and juveniles, were spotted.

Modinul Ahsan, divisional forest officer Wild life Sundarbans and also the census project director, said it was necessary to

impose more restrictions to conserve the dolphins in the Sundarbans.

Even the sanctuary areas are not protected. In some areas, one side of a river is marked as protected while the other half is not. Fishermen fish in one side of the river there. This is not realistic, said Modinul.

Although dolphins are not usually captured with intent, every year dozens of dolphins get entangled in fishing nets and die. They are also threatened by pollution of water transports operating in the Sundarbans.

Poor flow of fresh water from upstream, blamed on the upper riparian country, is increasing salinity of river water, resulting in dolphins disappearing, experts said.

They said just a few years ago, dolphins could be sighted in all major rivers of the country. But now they can only be seen in some large rivers, like the Padma and the Karnaphuli.

Three decades ago, there were dolphins in the Buriganga near Dhaka, said Khasru Chowdhury, eminent Sundarbans expert who went to see the census being carried out.

Experts said over-fishing was a major

Tarique no longer citizen

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not want to remain a citizen of Bangladesh. Therefore, he denied Bangladeshi citizenship."

The government can bring Tarique back home under the mutual legal assistance law even if he has no Bangladeshi citizenship, he added.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam told journalists at his office that Tarique was not a Bangladeshi citizen as he has no passport.

"Had Tarique Rahman stayed in Bangladesh, no controversy would have arisen over his citizenship. He is not in the country now and he has surrendered his Bangladeshi passport. So I think he is in no way a citizen of the country now."

The country's chief attorney said, "Let him [Tarique] produce the passport before media if he has any."

State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam recently sparked a debate about Tarique's citizenship. Speaking at a programme in London on April 21, he claimed that the BNP leader had "given up his nationality" by surrendering his passport.

Tarique served a legal notice on the junior minister and his party came up with an explanation that he surrendered the passport to the UK authorities to seek political asylum there.

DIP CHIEF HAS DIFFERENT VIEW
DIP DG Maj Gen Rezwan said citizenship is not related to passport.

"If I ask you does everyone in Bangladesh have passports? Does it mean that all of them have lost citizenship? The thing is not like that. Citizenship is a different matter," he said in response to a query from a journalist at his Agargaon office.

Rezwan said it will be a different thing if one declares that he has surrendered his citizenship; but it is not related to a passport.

Asked whether Tarique gave up his nationality, the DIP chief said he had no information in this regard.

"Tarique Rahman is currently living in the UK without any passport... So far I came to know he surrendered his passport in 2014."

Rezwan, however, said Tarique renewed his hand-written passport once while staying in the UK as it expired in 2010. The DIP didn't receive any application from him for a new passport, he added.

He said if Tarique wants to apply for a machine-readable passport, he will have to come to Bangladesh and have a national ID card.

Although Tarique does not have any

passport now, he can come to Bangladesh with a travel pass from the Bangladesh mission in the UK, the official added.

Referring to the Passport Act, Rezwan said Tarique would not get any passport now as someone who has been jailed for at least two years for moral turpitude has to wait for five years to get a passport.

The BNP leader, who became the party's acting chairman after his mother Khaleida Zia landed in jail on February 8 in a graft case, has been staying in London since 2007.

At home, he has been tried in absentia and jailed in two cases -- seven years in a money laundering case and 10 years in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

He stands accused in over a dozen cases, including the August 21 grenade attack case.

across the country, demanding reforms of the quota system.

The protesters blocked key points in the capital and also roads and highways elsewhere.

Amid the protest, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 11 announced that the quota system in public service recruitment would be abolished.

Cosby found guilty in sexual assault retrial

AFP, Norristown

Disgraced television icon Bill Cosby was convicted yesterday of sexual assault by a US jury -- losing a years-long legal battle that was made tougher at retrial as the first celebrity trial of the #MeToo era.

The frail and 80-year-old Cosby -- once beloved as "America's Dad" -- could now spend the rest of his life behind bars when he is sentenced for drugging and molesting Andrea Constand at his Philadelphia mansion in January 2004.

Constand was in the packed courtroom in Norristown, just outside Philadelphia, as the verdict was read out to stifled sobs in the gallery.

A criminal conviction and possible prison term is a devastating final chapter in the career of the once towering figure in late 20th century American popular culture, the first black actor to grace primetime US television, who hit the big time after growing up as the son of a maid.

The jury, which deliberated for more than 14 hours over two days, found him guilty on all three counts of aggravated indecent assault. Cosby's first trial ended in June last year with a hung jury.

The three counts constituted penetration without Constand's consent, which took place both while she was unconscious and after she had been drugged. Each count carries a maximum penalty of 10 years.

The pioneering African American actor and entertainer, adored by millions for his seminal role on "The Cosby Show," sat in silence as the jury foreperson read out the verdict.

But after the jury was led out, the Emmy winner -- dogged for years by allegations of similar assaults made by dozens of women -- erupted in an

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Bill Cosby

Publish gazette notification by this month

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country were facing different types of harassment.

They also threatened to go for a tougher movement if the harassment continued.

Besides, the leaders also demanded an apology from a Bangla daily for publishing "biased news" on the movement.

Rashed said the newspaper published

fake news on the protestors on April 20. If the newspaper did not withdraw it by yesterday afternoon, a legal action would be taken against them, he added.

Earlier, another newspaper published fake news and withdrew it later, said Rashed.

Nurul Haq Nur, Hasan Al Mamun and Faruk Hossain, among other leaders of

the quota reform movement, were present at the briefing.

On April 18, the demonstrators issued a seven-day ultimatum to the authorities concerned for withdrawing the cases.

On April 11, Shahbagh police filed four cases against a huge number of unknown people over vandalism, arson and obstruction of law enforcers in performing their

duties during demonstrations over the quota reform in Dhaka.

On that day, the DU authorities lodged a case with Shahbagh Police Station in connection with attacking the VC's residence.

Earlier this month, the country witnessed a widespread movement of students of public and private universities