

CHOLERA VACCINATION IN ROHINGYA CAMPS

WHO begins week-long second phase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A massive cholera vaccination campaign began yesterday to protect nearly one million Rohingyas and host communities in Cox's Bazar to prevent any potential outbreak during the monsoon.

This is a second cholera vaccination campaign being held for the Rohingya refugees and host communities. Earlier 900,000 doses of oral cholera vaccine were administered to the vulnerable population in two phases in October-November last year, says a press release of World Health Organisation.

"Considering the water and sanitation conditions in the overcrowded camps and the increased risk of disease outbreaks in the monsoon season, the health sector is taking all possible measures to prevent cholera and other water and vector borne diseases," says Dr Barden Jung Rana, WHO representative in Bangladesh.

As many as 245 mobile vaccination

teams have been deployed to vaccinate all people over the age of one year in refugee camps and host communities in Ukhia and Teknaf during nearly week-long campaign.

The health and family welfare ministry is leading the effort with support of WHO, Unicef, icddr, b and other partners.

"We have managed to prevent the cholera outbreak since the first campaign in October last year, but flood water, heavy storms and landslides in the monsoon season could damage water and sanitation facilities in the camps, increasing the risk again of an outbreak of this dangerous disease," says Edouard Beigbeder, Unicef representative in Bangladesh.

"We have to take all initiatives to address the risk, including preventive measures through vaccination."

The oral cholera vaccines have been made available through the Inter-Agency Coordinating Group with

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



OCV is administered to a boy in Jamtoli, Ukhia, during the second cholera vaccination campaign for the Rohingya refugees that began yesterday.

PHOTO: WHO

The man behind GCC polls stay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was quite a surprise for everyone when TV channels yesterday broke the news that Gazipur city polls had been stayed for three months.



Azharul Islam

The High Court stay order came at a time when Awami League and BNP leaders as well as the mayoral and councillor candidates of Khulna and Gazipur city corporation polls were busy campaigning.

After the HC delivered the order, all started looking for who was the writ petitioner. The man suddenly took the spotlight.

The petitioner is a ruling AL leader and also a union parishad chairman.

The Daily Star talked to ABM

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

3-month stay on Gazipur city polls

FROM PAGE 1

notice and an opportunity of being heard."

The article was included in the 15th constitutional amendment in 2011 on EC's request.

The stay order comes more than a month after the EC announced the election schedule on March 31.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Zafar Ahmed passed the order in response to a petition by a Savar upazila Awami League leader yesterday. In the petition, the AL leader challenged the inclusion of some areas of Shimulia Union Parishad of Savar in the Gazipur City Corporation.

The court ordered the EC and the government to explain why inclusion of six mouzas of Shimulia union in the Gazipur City Corporation and the election schedule should not be declared illegal.

On January 17, the same HC bench stayed the Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral by-polls, scheduled for February 26, for six months. The election schedule was announced after the sudden death of Mayor

Annisul Huq.

Like in some past cases, including the DNCC one, the EC could not contest yesterday's writ as it did not have any information about the petition beforehand.

After the stay order on the DNCC polls, the Commission moved the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, which ordered the HC on February 25 to expedite the hearing and disposal of the rules. The rules are now pending before the HC.

The HC order staying the DNCC polls triggered a blame game between the Awami League and the BNP.

The BNP held the AL and the EC responsible for the situation while the ruling party claimed that the BNP was "guilty of the same crime".

This time too, the BNP is blaming the government. Its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir alleged that the ruling party hatched a conspiracy to stop the election sensing its defeat.

The party would appeal against the HC order, he said.

AL Presidium Member Faruk Khan said their campaign was in full swing and

that they had no knowledge about the writ.

Replying to BNP's allegation, he said the AL or the government had nothing to do with the court order.

In the last city polls in Gazipur in 2013 election, BNP-backed candidate MA Mannan defeated his AL counterpart Azmat Ullah Khan by around 1.5 lakh votes.

YESTERDAY'S WRIT

In his petition, Shimulia union Chairman ABM Azharul Islam argued that the LGRD ministry issued a gazette notification on March 4 including the six mouzas of the union in the Gazipur city without informing the Dhaka district administration.

Barrister BM Elias Kachi and Syed Rezaur Rahman appeared for the petitioner.

The petitioner gave a copy of the petition to Tawhidul Islam, who represented the EC in the past. The court also informed him about the petition.

The EC secretary confirmed to The Daily Star that they did not authorise Tawhidul to stand for the EC in this case.

Nonetheless, Tawhidul vehemently

opposed the writ, which he argued was not maintainable.

The LGRD ministry issued a gazette notification on January 16, 2013, declaring the GCC, including the six mouzas of Shimulia union, he said.

The writ petitioner submitted an application to the ministry against the inclusion. But as the ministry did not resolve the issue, the petitioner moved the HC, which ordered the ministry to settle the matter, he added.

In line with the HC directive, the ministry on March 4 this year issued another gazette notification, declaring GCC comprising 192 mouzas, including the six mouzas of Shimulia union, Tawhidul told the court.

"So this writ petition challenging the notification is not acceptable," he argued.

The court heard both the sides for about 30 minutes, before passing the stay order.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam later told reporters that the government would decide on its next move after receiving the full text of the HC order.

The CEC also said they would take necessary measures after examining the stay order.

7-year-old raped in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police arrested a man yesterday morning for allegedly raping a seven-year-old girl at Sundorpur village in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj.

Arrestee Shaidul Ali, 34, is the son of one Johor Ali of Sundorpur Koroitla village in the upazila.

The victim's father said neighbour Shaidul called his seven-year-old daughter to his house on Saturday afternoon alluring her with a mango.

On hearing her daughter's screams, his wife rushed to the spot and rescued her. However, Shaidul managed to flee the scene.

The girl was admitted to Chunarughat Health Complex from where she was referred to Habiganj Sadar Hospital when her condition deteriorated, police said.

On Saturday night, the victim's father filed a case against Shaidul in connection with the incident, said KM Azmiruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Chunarughat Police Station.

Police arrested Shaidul at his house

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Ground still not ready to serve clients

FROM PAGE 16

A "test fire" of Falcon 9, the rocket that would carry the Bangabandhu-1 to orbit, was done on Friday evening.

Yesterday, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discuss the issue.

"We have apprised the prime minister on the project. She said there was nothing to be worried about," the minister told The Daily Star.

As the government had no update on the probable launching date of the satellite, a big part of the 42-member govern-

ment delegation once again postponed their flying schedule to the USA yesterday, said project officials.

A few days ago, Project Director Md Mesbazzaman first raised the lack of connectivity issue in a roundtable in presence of the telecom minister and BTRC Chairman Shahjahan Mahmood.

Project officials said they picked Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL) for the job as it is a government organisation. The officials have now decided that they will

enter an agreement with Summit Communication Limited to have the two ground stations linked. The deal is likely to be signed soon.

The officials are also holding talks with some other private firms to set up fibre optic connectivity between the two ground stations.

Sources at Summit Communications said if given the job, the company would be able to connect the ground stations within a couple of weeks.

Mustafa Jabbar said they were aware of the situation. "If the BTCL fails, we have

alternative options for fibre optic connectivity.... Everything is in our control so far."

He said they were in a situation of enjoying the historic launch of the satellite and the ground station issue was a very minor one. "We will have time to resolve the issue after the launch of the satellite."

According to project officials, the satellite will take seven days to reach orbit on 119.1 east. After going through testing for few more days, the satellite will be linked to its two ground stations.

Mesbazzaman said connectivity of the ground stations needs to be ensured even during the testing period for different purposes.

Another project official said Thales Alenia Space, the French manufacturer of the satellite, now working at the ground stations, was also frustrated with the connectivity issue.

If the BTRC fails to provide proper assistance to Thales, the latter can penalise the project's implementing body. The Thales has already informed the project office about it.

Khulna in four hours promised

FROM PAGE 1

with China Exim Bank at Beijing on April 27. China Railway Group Ltd is the contractor firm.

Amjad said the project would be the biggest and "most complex" projects of BR.

The 23km elevated tracks would begin in Gandaria and go over the Buriganga, Dhaleswari-1 and Dhaleswari-2 rivers. There would be an elevated railway station in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital.

As many as 66 long bridges and 244 small bridges would also be built on the route - from Dhaka to Jessore. The length of the bridges would be seven to eight kilometres.

The railways minister said the lines from Mawa in Munshiganj to Bhanga in Faridpur would be ready for use the day vehicles would be crossing the Padma Bridge.

Padma Bridge Project is scheduled to end by December but project officials say vehicles would not be able to use it before the second half of next year.

DG Amjad said the rail link project would establish direct communication between Dhaka and Mongla Port. On the other hand, the government has a plan to introduce a trans-national rail line from Dhaka to Kolkata through Jessore, Benapole and India's Petrapole in future.

He said the project would boost the economic activities and industrialisation in the country's south-western region.

He also said 100 passenger carriages would be purchased to be run on the route.

Bangladesh Army is acting as the supervision consultant of the project requiring acquisition of around 1,800



acres of land in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Shariatpur, Madaripur, Faridpur, Narail, Gopalganj and Jessore.

Maj Gen Abu Sayeed Md Masud, chief coordination officer CSC/PBRILP, said they have completed acquisition of about 80 percent of the land. They are ready to hand the land over to the contractor firm soon.

He said the owners of the land were being rehabilitated.

During Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's China visit in 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed for financing the project by China. During Chinese President's visit to Bangladesh in 2016, the country committed loans for 27 projects, including this rail link.

ERD Additional Secretary Zahidul Haque said among the 27 projects Padma Rail link is the most significant in terms of loan amount and contribution to the economy.

He said during the Chinese presi-

dent's visit, a commitment was made to give loans for the 27 projects under government-to-government arrangements. The loans amount to \$22 billion.

He said so far loan agreements of about \$ 4 billion for five projects have been signed which is around 20 percent of the total amount. He hoped that in the next three years, agreements for \$13 billion to \$14 billion will be signed.

He also said the loan agreement for Padma rail link project would become effective in a couple of days. The first disbursement would start by mid-June. The minister also said apart from the Padma rail link, other large projects would be implemented in the railway sector.

He said a bullet train from Dhaka to Chittagong via Comilla and Laksham would be introduced, making it possible to complete the journey in only two hours. Work on the feasibility study and detailed design was underway.

Blatant violation of int'l law

FROM PAGE 1

Addressing a joint press conference, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali said the delegates pledged complete solidarity with "Bangladesh in the face of the huge Rohingya influx with its humanitarian and security consequences for the country and with the Rohingyas, victims of state backed violence in Myanmar."

He also thanked the OIC member states for their humanitarian aid to the Rohingya camps and called for more assistance to help Bangladesh cope with the situation.

The minister added that with almost 600 delegates, the OIC meet was one of the largest in history.

OIC Secretary General Yousef A Othaimen told the joint press conference that the ad-hoc committee would mobilise international support and ensure accountability for the human rights violation against the Rohingyas.

"This is important not only for Muslims but also for the world because this is not a religious conflict, this is a humanitarian, human rights issue. This is something everybody on the planet must be concerned about," he said.

The 45th CFM adopted more than 120 resolutions on issues regarding political, economic, social and cultural aspects of OIC member states.

Four of those resolutions, put forward by Bangladesh, are about regional integration through enhanced connectivity, cooperation in the media for sharing best practices on SDG implementation, comprehensive OIC reforms (jointly with Turkey) and establishing a special chair at Dhaka University.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said there were countries where Muslims were not the majority. But the number of Muslims in those countries was more than the size of entire populations of many OIC member states. The Muslims in those countries should not be deprived of the OIC benefits.

"OIC means an organisation of Islamic cooperation, not countries," he said.

Bangladesh proposed a reform to the OIC that would enable all Muslims across the world to benefit from the OIC. Only Muslim-majority countries are OIC members currently.

The Dhaka Declaration also underlined the importance of the OIC-UN cooperation in terms of achieving the shared interests and common goals.

The Bangladesh foreign minister chaired a special session where he appraised the OIC members about the agreement signed by Bangladesh and Myanmar for repatriation of the Rohingyas.

"Where do they go to? When they go back to their villages, they have to have their houses. So this is where it has got stuck," he said.

OIC Secretary General Yousef A Othaimen said the Rohingyas must go back to Myanmar and get citizenship and called upon Myanmar to act accordingly. For now, he said OIC office on humanitarian assistance should be supportive to Bangladesh.

M Rashid Khalikov, assistant secretary general of UN for Humanitarian Partnership with the Middle East and Central Africa, said underfunding for the Rohingya crisis

was a serious problem. He said UN appealed for \$951 million for humanitarian assistance until December, but only a small part of it was confirmed.

He proposed an OIC solidarity conference to fully fund the joint response plan, while continuing international pressure on multi platforms for a durable solution to the Rohingya crisis.

OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission Chairperson Dr Rashid Al Balushi urged Myanmar to end all discriminatory policies against Rohingyas, give them full citizenship and provide the international agencies with full access to Rakhine State.

Delegates from Uganda, Malaysia and Turkey called for the OIC to embark on an international effort to address the root causes of the Rohingya refugee crisis and ensure accountability of those responsible for the atrocities against the Rohingyas.

Sudanese delegation proposed that OIC created a fund for the Rohingyas orphans who lost their parents during the military crackdown in Rakhine.

Canadian Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Myanmar Bob Rae said Canada was committed to holding accountable the perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

"It is challenging, requires gathering of evidence, greater coordination and sustained effort at the Security Council and the General Assembly of the UN," he said, adding that there was moral and political obligations on the part of every nation to join Bangladesh in sharing the burden of the Rohingya crisis.