

Priyanka visits Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bollywood star Priyanka Chopra, upon her visit to the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, said that through the smiles of the Rohingya children, she has seen vacancy in the eyes. The children, she said, are at the forefront of this humanitarian crisis.

"This is an entire generation of children that have no future in sight. Through their smiles I could see the vacancy in their eyes," said the former Miss World and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in her Instagram and Facebook pages following a visit yesterday afternoon.

Priyanka arrived in Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning after attending the Royal wedding in England. She flew to Cox's Bazar by a US-Bangla flight at 12:40pm and then traveled to Ukhiya by road and checked in at the Royal Tulip hotel.

Clad in a white T-shirt, black jeans, and a scarf around her head, she went to visit the Shamlapur Rohingya camp under Baharchhara union in Teknaf at around 3:00pm, where she spent around an hour with the children and

visited a UNICEF-run clinic.

"Priyanka asked the children how they are, what they do, if they were vaccinated and if they wanted to return to Myanmar," reports our correspondent from Cox's Bazar.

Priyanka then got into the car shortly after 4:00pm to return to the hotel.

"I'm in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, today for a field visit with UNICEF, visiting one of the largest refugee camps in the world," she wrote on her Instagram post.

The 35-year old Indian actor said that in the second half of 2017, the world saw horrific images of the ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, which drove nearly 700,000 Rohingyas across the border into Bangladesh.

"60 per cent are children! Many months later, they are still highly vulnerable, living in overcrowded camps with no idea when or where they will ever belong...even worse, when they will get their next meal.

"AND...as they finally start to settle and feel a sense of safety, monsoon season

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PHOTO: MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM NOLLA

Maj Sultana Dil Afsana, medical officer of Bangladesh Army, examines a child at a temporary medical camp in Terekeka State of South Sudan yesterday.

Helping S Sudan move forward

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great journey and Bangladesh has become one of the most trusted friends of South Sudan."

But earning the trust of the South Sudanese was not easy. Bangladeshi peacekeepers had to participate in various social activities to engage the locals enough to win over hearts.

As part of this process, they set up medical clinics, hygiene camps, and distributed educational material and sporting equipment.

The Nyori County of Terekeka State in South Sudan had a similar programme, where people queued for hygiene kits being distributed by Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

"They have been helping the local community look forward," Sastin

Swaka Bambu, head teacher of Keji Juba Primary School, said about the Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

The teacher was grateful that the peacekeepers had constructed a five-kilometre long road connected with the highway for free.

Head of the community at Nyori, Federic Jube Tongon, said, "Bangladeshi peacekeepers have done an excellent job. We want their support and we would like them to continue their mission in our area."

Joseph Pitia Morbe, commissioner of Nyori County, said the locals love the Bangladeshi peacekeepers. He said he hoped that they would build more roads and ensure safe drinking water.

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad

Tariqul Alam, Contingent Commander of Bangladesh Engineer-1 said, "The locals had been requesting us for a long time to construct a road. We finally built one, as a gesture to win over their hearts."

He also said they regularly operated medical clinics in the remote areas, where healthcare was a luxury.

At a local school where a temporary clinic was set up, hundreds of people lined up for their medical check-up and free medicine.

Major Sultana Dil Afsana, medical officer of Bangladesh army, said most of the women and children were suffering from malnutrition and skin diseases.

"Food scarcity and lack of hygiene are the major causes for their suffer-

ings. The South Sudanese eagerly wait for us to provide free medicine," she said.

Recently, and with the football World Cup coming up, Bangladeshi peacekeepers are taking into consideration the infectious passion for football that South Sudanese have, and distributing jerseys to the young boys.

"South Sudanese love football. We have prepared four football grounds for them and we regularly provide them with jerseys and equipment," Tariqul added.

Two groups of Bangladeshi journalists are visiting some African countries to commemorate Bangladesh's 30 years in UN peace-keeping missions.

DMP draws up list of 100 top narcotics dealers in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has prepared a list of around 100 top drug dealers of the city to bring them to book as part of the on-going special anti-narcotics drive.

Deputy Commissioners (DC) of eight crime divisions of the city have already been instructed to take stern legal action against the drug dealers.

Asaduzzaman Mia, DMP commissioner, issued the directive during a meeting with the DCs and DMP high-ups on Sunday, a source at the meeting said.

The intelligence unit and the eight crime divisions prepared the list and handed it over to the DMP commissioner, another official preferring anonymity, said.

The list comprised of mainly yaba dealers. Those who were accused in four or more drug cases were also included in the list, the official added.

Replying to a query, Asaduzzaman said small-scale yaba distributors who had several cases against them were not included in the list.

Bangladesh Police started the 10-day countrywide special crackdown on narcotics from May 18. Rapid Action Battalion started a similar drive across the country from May 4. Twenty-two suspected drug peddlers have been killed in "shootouts" or internal clashes since the drive began.

Nine killed in a single day

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Police and Rab, however, claim that all the 22 had involvement in drug trade and some of them were named in drug cases filed with various police stations. They also say narcotics and weapons were recovered during the raids.

All the incidents took place at dead of night and none of the deceased was big fish. Those known in their areas as yaba godfathers remained untouched, reported our correspondents from different districts.

Addressing a programme in the capital, noted rights activist Sultana Kamal demanded a fair investigation into each of the killings and said, "We need to know whether firearms have been misused.

"There are laws in the country to try criminals ... However notorious the criminals are, the state will formulate some rules and justice has to be done as per those rules."

Talking to The Daily Star, former inspector general of police Muhammad Nurul Huda said killing drug peddlers in the name of "shoot-out" can partly solve the drug problem.

"It [shootout] can't be the only strategy. Law enforcers have to take other measures including intelligence gathering, filing of cases, arrest of patrons and detection of sources [of the drugs]," he added.

"The drug traders have firearms. They are dangerous people and they have to be arrested. Some of them may get killed during face-off with law enforcers but the raid has to be continued. But if those killed turned out to be innocent, that's a different issue."

The main goal has to be bringing drug traders to book, he added.

Jyotirmoy Barua, Supreme Court lawyer working on human rights, said, "Law enforcers are carrying out execu-

tions themselves and it seems they don't have any faith in the existing judiciary.

"It's not acceptable at all."

Apart from international covenants, the constitution of the country does not permit any extra-judicial killing, said Jyotirmoy.

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) expressed deep concerns over the death of a number of people in "shootouts" involving police and Rab.

"We welcome the strict stance of the government against serious maladies like narcotics, but a very careful watch has to be kept so that existing laws and principles of human rights are not violated during the actions. We want the law enforcement agencies be given directives accordingly," it said in a press statement.

ASK believes a person should be given punishment following proper legal procedures no matter what his or her crime is. Otherwise, the society will deviate from the rule of law and there will be anarchy.

It added, "Local and international human rights organisations have long been expressing concerns over such [extrajudicial] killings."

Another rights activist, Nur Khan Liton, said question is being raised among the public whether the killings of petty drug peddlers in the name of "gunfights" are in fact saving big fishes because vital information is getting lost with their death.

He also said drug problems cannot be contained by such drives. He referred to instances of Thailand where spread of yaba could not be controlled even after killings of yaba traders.

In 2003, Thai government declared a war on drug as yaba was having a devastating impact on the society. Some 3,000 suspected drug peddlers were killed in three months and the jails

were overflowing with mass arrests. The invasion of yaba stopped for a short time and then it came back with the same force.

Nur Khan also said during any drive, an important duty of law enforcers is to ensure security of life and property. But people are being killed in "crossfire" one after another.

Even it is not known whether they are really criminals, he said, adding that in the election year this would create a fear among people and hamper activities to hold free and fair polls.

On May 4, Rab started its own anti-narcotics operations while the Police Headquarters recently instructed all police units across the country to conduct a special 10-day drive from the first day of Ramadan, officials said.

Rab yesterday arrested 44 persons for alleged involvement in drug trade. Its mobile courts jailed 75 people to different terms and fined 15 others.

During their drives, the elite force seized over 52,000 pieces of yaba, 218 bottles of Phensedyl. Details of arrest and seizure made by police could not be known immediately.

THE 'SHOOTOUTS'

The "gunfights" that led to death of nine people yesterday took place in Jessore, Rajshahi, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Narsingdi, Gazipur and Tangail.

Three alleged drug traders were killed in two "internal feuds" in Jessore Sadar upazila's Shekhathi and Kholadanga, according to police. Their family members, however, alleged plainclothes men picked them up from their respective houses early Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Sirajul Islam and Muttajul Morol of Sharsha and Shafiqul Islam Shafi of Chowgachha.

Sirajul's son Ripon Hossain said his father was a farmer by profession and

was picked up by six to seven plainclothes men, who identified themselves as police, from their houses.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mottajul's elder brother Sohrab Hossain and Shafi's brother Shukur Ali gave similar accounts.

The man who was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab in Puthia of Rajshahi was identified as Liakat Ali Mondol, 45, son of freedom fighter Zakkar Ali Mondol, of Namaigram village in the upazila.

The incident took place early yesterday after a Rab team went to a mango orchard at Jamira village for an anti-drug drive, says a Rab press release.

Liakat was accused in 11 cases of drug peddling, smuggling and extortion by kidnapping, it added.

Rab members claimed to have seized 823 pieces of yaba, a pistol, with two bullets from the spot.

Liakat's daughter Sharmin Akhter Hashi said his father had been missing since Sunday afternoon when two persons, Feroz and Momin, who identified themselves as Rab members, took him away from home.

Liakat's wife Neher Banu said he was earlier engaged in drug trade but quit it early this year and started raising cattle. She filed a general diary with Puthia Police Station stating that he went missing, she said.

In Chuadanga, alleged drug trader Janab Ali, 32, was killed in a "gunfight" with police at Uthli village under Jibonnagar upazila, said Mahmud Rahman, officer-in-charge of Jibonnagar Police Station.

Janab was reportedly accused in at least 11 drug cases. Police claimed to have recovered a shotgun, 70 bottles of Phensedyl from the spot.

The man who was killed in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah in similar incident involving Rab was identified as Abdull Mondol, 42, son of Mohammad Ali

Mondol of Narendrapur village.

The elite force recovered a 9mm pistol, two bullets, 100 bottles of Phensedyl, 150 pieces of yaba from there, said Golam Morshed, a company commander of Rab-6.

Officials said the gunfight that left Sabdul dead ensued when a Rab team was signalled to stop a motorcycle on information that a consignment of drug would pass through the area around 1:30am.

Abdul Mannan, a neighbour, however, said some plainclothes men picked Sabdul around 5:00pm on Sunday when he and Sabdul were working in their crop fields.

According to some villagers, Sabdul was involved in drug trade for around 15 years. Recently, he had signed a bond promising Rab that he would leave the illicit business but still continued it.

In Narsingdi, alleged drug dealer Iman Ali, 34, was killed in "gunfight" with Rab in Palash upazila of the district.

Iman, an inhabitant of Nagarkandi village of Narsingdi Sadar upazila, is a top drug trader who was accused 11 cases for drug, murder and arms, said Jashim Uddin, a company commander of Rab-11.

The Rab official claimed Iman's mother Mamataz Begum alias Buri Mamataz is also involved in drug dealing.

In Gazipur, an alleged drug dealer, Rezaul Karim, was killed in "shootout" involving police in Tongi's Nimtoli, said Kamal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tongi Police Station. Rezaul is accused in at least 14 cases, mostly for drug.

In Tangail's Chatail, suspected drug dealer Kalam Azad was killed after being shot during a "gunfight" between his gang and Rab men, officials said.

[Our Jhenidah, Benapole, Gazipur, Brahmanbaria and Kushtia correspondent contributed to the story.]

Govt opts to use own resources

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The Chinese firm then allegedly offered a hefty bribe of \$70,000 to the then newly appointed secretary of the road transport Nazrul Islam to green-light the work at the inflated cost, sources said. Islam did not take the bribe and instead returned it through the Chinese embassy in Dhaka.

As per RTHD's proposal, the cost of the project which includes--elevating the highway into four lanes from Kanchpur in Dhaka to Sylhet including service lanes on both sides-- has been estimated at a lower Tk 11,412 crore.

A planning ministry official said the proposal would be placed before the project evaluation committee (PEC)

and once it was approved, it would be placed in the meeting of Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne).

As per the new plan, the project would be completed between April 2018 and December 2022. The 214 kilometres will have 321 culverts, 70 bridges, five railway overpasses, four flyovers, 10 underpasses, 42 foot-bridges, three truck stands and two rest houses, officials said.

The aim of the project was to expand regional transport network, including the Asian Highway Network, Bistec and Saarc corridors, to bring mobility in trade and industry, they said.

But as per the earlier plan, China

selected China Harbor Engineering Company Limited for the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway project and asked Bangladesh to sign a commercial contract with the company in 2016.

On October 9 of the same year, the government signed a primary deal with China Harbor and after which the negotiation process started for a commercial contract.

However, Finance Minister AMA Muhiith, at a programme in this January, said the company had been blacklisted as it had bribed a government official.

Muhiith had then said they would now implement the project with the government's own finances.

However, RTHD officials claimed

the government had to fund the project from its own resource as the negotiations with company had fallen through.

Belayet Hossain, additional secretary of RTHD, said their negotiation with the Chinese firm failed as they had quoted a high price.

An official of the division said the Chinese company first sought Tk 17,000 crore in construction cost. At one stage of the negotiations, they lowered the amount to Tk 10,000 crore but the ministry said they would not provide more than Tk 9,000 crore.

For this, the official said China Harbour gave the bribe money "as a gift" to the secretary of the ministry in

November last year.

Belayet on May 9 told The Daily Star, "We have already sent the proposal to the planning ministry for implementing the project with their own fund."

He, however, admitted that no formal letter had been sent to the ERD or the Chinese embassy in this regard. "They are aware of the matter," he claimed.

ERD officials, on the other hand, said if the project was implemented using RTHD's own resources and without settling the issue diplomatically, it would be a violation of the conditions of 2016's MoU.

According to the provision of the MoU, any question or dispute arising

from the interpretation and implementation of a project shall be resolved through friendly negotiations using diplomatic channels.

The officials also said it might also complicate the method of implementation of the other loan deals signed with Beijing under the MoU.

They, however, said if the matter could be solved through diplomatic channels, the unused funds could be diverted to other projects.

Sources at the planning ministry said although Muhiith said China Harbor was blacklisted, no such information was found in the debarment list of Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) of the ministry.