

In terms of picturesque views, there are few areas in the camps which can produce a better sight than the one seen from the top of Camp No 3. It's a place that provides a bird's-eye view of the entire site.

You get to see little children playing volleyball on a rare, unoccupied, stretch of land. Then there are the newly built bamboo bridges and the sharp steps carved out of the hills, replacing what used to be dangerous, muddy pathways. Combine the above with a clear blue sky, and it all feels surreal.

Located at the same place, is the camp-in-charge's (CIC) office, which unlike the view, doesn't always produce breath-taking moments. Spending a few hours here will allow one to encounter the wide array of issues—ranging from rape and sexual harassment to illegal renting businesses in the camps—which the CIC has to deal with on a daily basis.

Dildar Begum* waits at a room attached to the CIC's office, with a baby on her lap. Her face is covered—a common sight in the camps where a majority of the women are covered from head to toe. However, when you talk to the aid workers present in the room, you realise that Dildar has more than one reason to cover her face.

On the evening of August 14, while her husband was away looking for

with another issue. This time, it's about two men who beat each other up because of a girl. "This man went outside his designated camp area and got involved in a fight with another man who wanted to marry the same girl as he did," explains a CIC official. Without thinking twice, he instructs the men to do a thousand sit-ups each as punishment and leaves them with a warning.

Up next, the CIC has a more unique problem to deal with.

Claiming to be a local, a Rohingya woman, who has been living in the camps for more than a year and arrived as a result of one of the previous attacks in Myanmar, allowed a man and his family to stay over at her place soon after the exodus began last August. The man agreed to pay a monthly rent. However, a month later, the man realised that the woman was lying. She herself was a Rohingya and they did not have any right to collect rent from the camps. As a result, he stopped paying.

The woman alleges that the man is trying to have a relationship with her niece despite being married and that's why she wants him out of the house. The officials, however, had investigated the problem beforehand and didn't find any conclusive evidence regarding the woman's allegations. As a result, at the end of the 20-minute discussion, the CIC office warned



ILLUSTRATION: AABIR KHALID

work, a number of men barged into her house and raped her. "They held my neck with two hands, pushed me to the ground and raped me," she says, almost in tears. When she started shouting, one of the men bit her on her neck. She screamed again and the men hurt her even more.

By then, a number of people had gathered and caught the perpetrators. Dildar assumed that the men would be punished. However, in an surprising turn of events, the *majhi*—the leader of that particular block—along with two other elders, decided to strike a deal that would protect the rapists.

She was told that she would be paid Tk 2,000 for her injuries and, in return, she was asked not to complain regarding the matter. With no one around to support her, she was forced to accept the deal and even sign a document. Once her husband returned home, however, the couple decided to go to the CIC's office and complain the next day.

"While telling me her story, she held my leg and started crying. She was begging for justice," says an official working at the CIC's office. A search party had been sent the day before, and the police had been called. While the *majhi* had been detained, the perpetrators were missing. Shamimul Huq Pavel, the CIC of five out of the 32 camps, however, assures Dildar that it would only be a matter of time before the rapists are caught.

"There are several issues which we deal with on a daily basis. However, these are the kind of problems, which need to be addressed more seriously. If we don't catch the perpetrators, they will have the guts to commit these crimes again. Paying Tk 2,000 is not going to save them," says Pavel.

Barely two minutes after talking to Dildar, the CIC's office has to deal

the woman and told her that she would be asked to leave the house if she prolonged the issue.

Several of these kinds of problems had to be dealt with throughout the day and there was barely any time for a break. This happens in spite of the fact that there are one-stop centres at the camps responsible for solving most of the issues with the help of the locals and it's only the selected few which reach the CIC's office.

Pavel explains that one can't put all the blame on the Rohingya for the issues that they come up with. "In a community of one million people there is bound many problems. No matter how well we are feeding them, the brutal truth is that life in a refugee camp is not a life at all. They don't know what they will do in the future. They are feeling insecure and they are traumatised," says Pavel.

"We also don't interfere too much. We respect their customs and norms. We may not like many of their ways but who are we to judge them," he adds.

Having dealt with many such problems on a regular basis for the last one year, the CIC believes that at the moment, more than anything, the Rohingya need self-belief.

"They don't need just food or street lights. Give them hope and make them believe in humanity once again. They need to know that they can rise again from the ashes. Give them pride and they will fight back. If they continuously live in refugee camps and depend on us, then that can prove to be their biggest harm," reckons Pavel.

*The name of the victim has been changed.



Rohingya teenagers hang out a tea stall after lunch

PHOTO: ANEEK MUSTAFA ANWAR

A GENERATION IN DANGER

While steps have been taken to provide early grade education to children in the camps, adolescents above the age of 15 are yet to receive proper support and are in increasing danger of knocking at the wrong doors.

NAIMUL KARIM

It's past noon at the Kutupalong Refugee Camp in Ukhia, Bangladesh, and 18-year-old Rahim* is enjoying a post-lunch smoke at a tea stall located near the camp's bazaar. Surrounded by other youngsters of the same age, he whiles away his time listening to songs on mobile phone speakers and drinking sweetened milk tea.

"What else can we do?" Rahim asks with a wry smile. "There are no schools for us in the camp and it's difficult to get work. This is how we spend most of our time," he says.

According to the UNHCR, 55 percent of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are below the age of 18, a demographic that compelled the Bangladesh government to especially focus on the education sector. Some 1,400 learning centers were built at the Rohingya camps in across 6,000 acres in Ukhia, in which 1,40,000 children from the camps were enrolled by the authorities. Most

of them are below the age of 14. While an accepted curriculum is yet to be formed, they are given early grade lessons on the Burmese language, Mathematics and English.

However, This shift, positive as it is, overlooks the education requirements of the adolescents and the youth: most of the girls and boys above the