

ROHINGYA CRISIS

EU mulls sanctions on Myanmar

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Union is considering trade sanctions on Myanmar over the Rohingya crisis, potentially stripping the country of tariff-free access to the world's largest trading bloc, three EU officials said.

The sanctions, under discussion at the European Commission, would include Myanmar's lucrative textile industry and potentially put at risk thousands of jobs there but would not come into effect immediately, giving the EU leverage to stop what the West says is ethnic cleansing of Muslim Rohingya.

Even by triggering a six-month review process on whether to impose trade sanctions, which could be reversed if Myanmar met humanitarian and democratic targets, the bloc would mark a significant shift in policy.

The impetus for the move was a UN report in August, which accused Myanmar's military of carrying out killings of Rohingya with "genocidal intent". That, and the rare US step of putting sanctions on two entire military units, have put an onus on the European Union to act, officials said.

"We are concerned about the

impact on the population from our potential measures, but we cannot ignore a UN report describing the military campaign as genocide," said one EU official of the debate within the European Commission, the EU executive responsible for the bloc's trade policy.

Until now, the EU has imposed travel bans and asset freezes on several members of the Myanmar military, but has shied away from slapping sanctions on Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who the United Nations said should be prosecuted along with five others for genocide and crimes against humanity.

Myanmar has rejected the UN findings as "one-sided". It says military action which followed militant attacks on security forces in August last year was a legitimate counterinsurgency operation.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay did not answer telephone calls seeking comment on the possible EU move on Wednesday. He said last month he would no longer speak to the media over the phone, only at a biweekly conference.

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A truck loaded with logs of Sal trees on the premises of the forest department office in Tangail. Officials seized the truck in Karatia yesterday and arrested seven for illegally cutting down forest trees.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Fakhrul, 6 other BNP leaders get bail from HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven top BNP leaders, including its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, yesterday secured anticipatory bail from the High Court in a criminal case filed for allegedly "provoking people against the state".

The six others are Nazrul Islam Khan, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu and Amanullah Aman.

The HC bench of Justice Muhammad Abdul Hafiz and Justice Kashef Hussain granted them anticipatory bail until police would submit the probe report of the case to a lower court concerned.

The bench passed the order after hearing two separate bail petitions filed by the accused who appeared before the judges seeking bail.

Zainul Abedin, a lawyer for the accused, told The Daily Star that the HC granted bail to the BNP leaders on the ground that the allegations brought against them in the case was baseless and fabricated.

He said the case was filed with "a political motive to harass the BNP leaders", as "the government was scared" after it saw a huge presence of people at the September 30 BNP rally at Dhaka's Suhrawardy Udyan.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said his office will move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the HC's bail order for the BNP leaders if the government gives such instructions.

The case, filed with Hatirjheel Police Station on October 1, also named BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and 47 other party men as accused.

The case statement read that the leaders delivered "provocative and anti-government speeches" at the September 30 rally, and party supporters "committed offences while returning from the programme".

Moudud Ahmed, Khandker Mahbub Hossain, Zainul Abedin and AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon represented the accused at the hearing.

Support Dhaka on Rohingya crisis

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social media. There are over one million people in Bangladesh. They were people burnt, raped," he said.

Gueterres said "even if there was a provocation, the reaction of the armed forces was brutal." He emphasised on political reconciliation so that the Rohingyas could be repatriated to their country.

"What can India do? Support Bangladesh in helping these people because there is a huge humanitarian problem. Second, to put pressure on Myanmar, the military in Myanmar for reconciliation and create conditions for these people to go back. These people will not go back in present circumstances," he said.

During her visit to Myanmar in May this year, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had offered to help in safe, speedy and sustainable return of Rohingyas, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

India has also been helping Bangladesh in providing humanitarian assistance to Rohingyas.

SUU KYI'S CITIZENSHIP
Canada's Parliament formally stripped Aung San Suu Kyi of her honorary Canadian citizenship on Tuesday for complicity in the atrocities committed against Myanmar's Rohingya people.

The lower house had already approved a motion to the same effect last week.

The House of Commons granted the privilege to Suu Kyi in 2007, but her international reputation has since been tarnished by her refusal to call on the Myanmar army to put an end to the atrocities committed against the Rohingyas.

Canadian lawmakers described the violence against them as a "genocide" in a resolution passed in September.

The ethnic group are treated as foreigners in Myanmar, a country that is more than 90 percent Buddhist.

Canada has granted honorary citizenship only to five other personalities, including Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Malala Yousafzai.

ROHINGYAS IN INDIA
Indian police bused seven Rohingya Muslims to the border yesterday to be deported to neighbouring Myanmar for illegal entry, officials and activists said, the first such move against the community.

An estimated 40,000 Rohingya, a stateless Muslim minority, live in India after having fled persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar over the years. The seven men being sent back had been held in prison since 2012 for illegal entry into the country, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government has described illegal Rohingya immigrants as posing a national security threat, and asked state governments last year to identify and deport them.

Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, additional director general of police in the north-eastern state of Assam, said that the seven men would be handed over to Myanmar authorities at the border today.

"This is a routine procedure, we deport all illegal foreigners," Mahanta said.

But a UN human rights official said the forcible return of the Rohingya violates international law.

"The Indian Government has an international legal obligation to fully acknowledge the institutionalised discrimination, persecution, hate and gross human rights violations these people have faced in their country of origin and provide them the necessary protection," UN Special Rapporteur on racism, Tendayi Achiume, said in a statement.

More than 700,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh after an army crackdown in Myanmar a year ago.

Truck with plundered trees seized in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Foresters yesterday seized a truck loaded with 150 Sal trees in Karatia area of Tangail and arrested seven in this connection.

The arrestees are Ripon Haji, 50, of Dhandhanian village, Abdul Hamid, 50, of Betua village, Julhas Khan, 45, Md Siraj, 28, and Shafiqul Islam, 25, of Kachua village in Sakhipur upazila, Dipok Das, 30, of Fulki village in Basail upazila of Tangail, and Ohidul Islam, 38, of Anayetnagar village under Fatullah upazila in Narayanganj.

Acting on a tip off, the forest officials seized the truck loaded with the Sal logs at Faria Cinema in Karatia in the early hours yesterday, said Harun-or-Rashid Khan, divisional forest

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Briton, 2 Americans win Nobel Chemistry Prize

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proteins now used in a range of fields, in what is known as directed evolution.

"They have applied the principles of Darwin in test tubes. They have used the molecular understanding we have of the evolutionary process and recreated the process in their labs," the head of the Academy's Nobel Chemistry committee, Claes Gustafsson, told reporters.

"They have been able to make evolution many 1000s of times faster and redirect it to create new proteins."

'ENGINEERING METHOD'
Arnold, 62, who has survived breast cancer and is a single mother to three sons, is a professor of chemical engineering at the California Institute of Technology.

Her method of rewriting DNA to mimic evolution has helped solve problems such as replacing toxic chemicals like fossil fuels.

As a result, renewable resources like sugar cane are being converted into biofuels. More environmentally friendly chemical substances are being developed, improving everyday products such as laundry and dishwashing detergents to enhance their performance in cold temperatures.



Gregory Winter



Frances Arnold



George Smith

"The most beautiful, complex, and functional objects on the planet have been made by evolution. We can now use evolution to make things that no human knows how to design," Arnold said in 2016.

"Evolution is the most powerful engineering method in the world, and we should make use of it to find new biological solutions to problems," she said.

"Instead of pumping oil out of the ground for making gasoline, now we can use sunlight stored in plants."

'ENORMOUS IMPACT'
Meanwhile, Smith, of the University of Missouri, and Winter, a 67-year-old genetic engineer at the MRC

Laboratory of Molecular Biology at Cambridge, developed an "elegant method" known as phage display, where a bacteriophage -- a virus that infects bacteria -- can be used to evolve new proteins, the jury said.

Pharmaceuticals for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and inflammatory bowel diseases have resulted from their research, as well as antibodies that can neutralise toxins, counteract autoimmune diseases and in some cases cure metastatic cancer.

"The discoveries by George Smith and Greg Winter are having an enormous impact, particularly on medicine with antibody drugs that have fewer side effects and are more efficient," Goran Hansson, the head of the Royal Swedish

Academy of Sciences, told reporters.

Alan Boyd, president of Britain's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine, hailed the award.

"The use of antibodies has resulted in a paradigm shift in the way that we now treat so many diseases which has brought significant benefits to patients across the world and will continue to do so for years to come," he said.

Alfred Nobel, who created the prizes in his will, was himself a chemist, and devised his famed awards in part to atone for inventing dynamite.

Arnold, Smith and Winter will receive their prize from Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of Nobel's 1896 death.

The 2018 Nobel season continues tomorrow with the announcement of the peace prize, and wraps up on Monday with the economics prize.

For the first time since 1949, the Swedish Academy has postponed the announcement of the 2018 Nobel Literature Prize until next year, amid a #MeToo scandal and bitter internal dispute that has prevented it from functioning properly.

An airplane

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new full-size prototype capsule puts it ahead in the game.

The sleek capsule was unveiled in Puerto de Santa Maria, Spain, near where it was constructed at the aerospace facilities of Airtificial, a partner of HyperloopTT.

Billed as "an airplane without wings," the aim of Hyperloop is to permanently disrupt how we travel long distances. Several Hyperloop routes are currently in development in countries such as China, UAE, Spain and France.

This new Hyperloop capsule, named "Quintero One," is made out of dual-layer smart composite material designed to be extra resilient.

The capsule's aerodynamic exterior was created by design consultancy PriestmanGoode. The interior has yet to be completed.

At a length of 32 meters (105 feet), the capsule would form part of a longer train that could feasibly speed cross country in record time. A journey from Los Angeles to Las Vegas could take just 20 minutes.

Once the final touches are completed, the capsule will be tested on a Hyperloop test track.

So how close is this to becoming a viable transportation option? According to the HyperloopTT team, it's imminent, even though there are currently only test tracks in development.

"In 2019, this capsule will be fully optimized and ready for passengers," confirmed Bibop Gresta, chairman and co-founder of HyperloopTT, in a statement.

No false news, no worries

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to that of England, she said, adding that like in England, a provision of punishment needs to be incorporated into the new law over publishing false news and compensating the victims.

"Only those journalists who have piled up false news against us and are waiting for releasing those one after another after the announcement of the election schedule should be worried about the law," she said.

Hasina alleged that many newspapers had published false reports against her when she was in jail in 2007 and subsequently those news reports were proved false. She said those newspapers were not even ashamed of publishing the false news.

The PM said all the cases filed against her over purchasing MiG jet fighters, frigates and in connection with the Padma Bridge were proved baseless, but some newspapers very enthusiastically ran fabricated reports.

She said those newspapers didn't

take the politicians' mental pain and harassment into consideration. "Journalists are worried, but who will look into our worries?"

Responding to a question regarding a recent Facebook post of national cricketer Liton Das on the occasion of Durga Puja and its subsequent removal following harsh criticism by a section of people, the PM said the government took the initiative to enact the law to deal with such incidents.

"I don't know who wrote those and why, but Bangladesh believes in non-communal attitude and we [Awami League] do politics of non-communalism."

Hasina said those who were spreading communalism have no principle.

She urged all to be more cautious so that such incidents are prevented and requested journalists to play a more active role in this regard.

About the next national polls, the PM said there were conspiracies and there would be so in future, but she didn't care about it at all. She hoped all political parties would contest the next

parliamentary polls.

"So many political parties are there [in the country]. They will decide whether they will contest the polls or not. I hope all the parties will participate in the election."

The PM said the AL government has been in power for 10 years and has carried out many development activities.

"I want to remind the party leaders and activists that this doesn't mean the Awami League will return to power automatically through the next general election.... Bangladesh is not that type of place. Had Bangladesh been a more developed and civilised country, then this would have happened."

She said her party would remain in office if the people vote it to power again. "We depend on the people, not on any outside force, to remain in power."

NEW ALLIANCE

Asked about the "greater unity" of some political parties, Hasina said she was happy to see an alliance being formed. She expressed her readiness to extend any help that the alliance might

need.

The PM, however, said there were two alliances in Bangladesh -- the Awami League and the anti-Awami League. "The anti-Awami Leaguers will have to go to somewhere and they need a platform."

On the much-talked about Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), she said she saw no problem with the use of EVM.

"In fact I am in favour of the EVM. We've already modernised the election system. Now it is Digital Bangladesh. If people can make transactions through mobile phones, then what is the problem in casting votes using machines? There should be a system so that you can cast your vote with your mobile phone set. Then you will not need to go to the polling station."

ROHINGYA ISSUE

On the Rohingya issue, Hasina said the global community was putting pressure on Myanmar to take back Rohingyas.

She said Myanmar has already decided to take back some Rohingyas as per an agreement signed with

Bangladesh.

"Discussions are underway on the issue. Bangladesh has constructed houses and other infrastructure at Bhasanchar to ensure a better environment for them [Rohingyas]. I will visit Bhasanchar soon."

About her government's plan for the local community who has been affected by the Rohingya influx, the PM said the government was providing assistance to local residents in Cox's Bazar and the international agencies were also helping the local communities, she said.

PARTICIPATION IN UNGA

Hasina said her government had been able to brighten the country's image by playing a strong role in the 73rd UNGA in New York.

"I along with my entourage members attended various forums of the UN General Assembly from September 23 to September 28. We tried to project a positive Bangladesh before the global leadership."

On September 27, the PM addressed the UNGA session at the UN Headquarters.

She said she joined a number of high-level events on the Rohingya crisis, cyber security, peacekeeping, women empowerment, girl education, sustainable development in fourth industrial revolution, climate change and global drug problem.

She expressed optimism about bringing back Rashed Chowdhury, one of the convicted killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, from the USA.

"When I met US President Donald Trump in New York, I told him about the matter. He expressed interest and noted it down."

Referring to her meeting with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the PM said she sought extradition of Rashed Chowdhury and also handed over a letter to him to this end.

About another convict Nur Chowdhury, now in Canada, Hasina said there was a problem in the Canadian law. "However, a case is pending with the court... so, we hope we'll be able to bring him back too."

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim moderated the press conference.