

Condition in Rakhine

FROM PAGE 16

"Communities also spoke of the cumulative effect of restrictions on movement, further shrinking their access to livelihood and basic services. While some self-restrict their movement for fear or perceived sense of insecurity or fear of neighbouring communities, others -- particularly [from] the Muslim communities -- are not allowed to move freely," the statement said.

"The communities we visited frequently spoke of challenges in getting to health services as well as restrictions on the Muslim population in accessing education," the UN assessment teams said.

The teams observed the serious effects on the communities, including on the local economy and diminishing livelihoods, which significantly increases the vulnerability of the communities remaining in Rakhine.

It added that fear and mistrust had an impact on access to education, healthcare and other basic services and also limited interactions between communities, hindering prospects for confidence-building and social cohesion.

Building confidence and improving conditions among remaining communities will be essential to bring people together, to alleviate poverty, and to address health and education disparities alongside making tangible progress to address root causes," the assessment report said.

"Mistrust, fear of neighbouring communities and a sense of insecurity are prevalent in many areas. Communities often live in isolation, lowering the prospects for contacts, mutual understanding and inter-communal cohesion. This is notable

for relations between the Muslim community and other communities."

The assessment teams also observed that some communities, particularly those living in close proximity to each other, have maintained or restarted interactions.

Encouragingly, most of those who spoke to the teams expressed hope for peace in Rakhine and a number of them indicated willingness to incrementally strengthen or restore relations.

Although the two lead UN agencies partly unveiled their firsthand accounts in the statement, they did not elaborate on the infrastructural arrangements made by the government in Maungdaw for the implementation of "model villages for returnees" or plans for a long-term solution for the returnees.

The UN officials stated that they noted the efforts of authorities to facilitate initial assessment although those were limited in scope and in the locations visited.

While they do not allow for broader conclusions, the field visits had given UNHCR and UNDP an initial understanding of the challenges facing those living there.

The UN was allowed for a limited assessment of three months after the UNHCR and UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Myanmar on June 6 to support the creation of conditions for the return of refugees from Bangladesh.

a Myanmar daily, The Irrawaddy, reported, quoting Maungdaw District administrative official U Ye Htoo, that work had begun on two projects: building modest houses for the refugees and a new model village plan.

The structures are being built in 19 locations and will house Rohingya and some non-Muslim groups. The government has 12 prioritised sites for new model villages with each one expected to include a market, school, public park and clinic.

As of Friday morning, the UNHCR and UNDP teams are starting the second phase of their assessments in the townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, based on the travel authorisations received in the past 24 hours, UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic said in Geneva.

"We also look to have more predictable and broader access and rapid expansion of assessments and discussions continue on the modalities of 'effective access' to all areas in Rakhine covered by the Memorandum of Understanding."

He said the crucial next steps would include follow-up visits to already assessed locations in order to continue engaging with communities and facilitate design and implementation of pre-identified community-based initiatives.

Nearly 750,000 Rohingyas refugees fled Rakhine to Bangladesh following a brutal military crackdown that began on August 25, 2017. They joined the other 300,000 Rohingyas who had earlier fled into Bangladesh.

Dhaka claims that over 1.1 million Rohingya Muslims now live in Bangladesh.

BNP looks to 'forgotten ones'

FROM PAGE 1

and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and some other senior leaders have been tasked with coordinating the process.

Insiders said party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman already asked senior leaders to implement the plan at the soonest possible time.

Party sources said a number of former leaders could be reintegrated by October 15-16. There are some 104 reformist leaders listed and 66 of them are already back into the fold.

"We have a plan to bring back the former leaders and there are some good prospective candidates among them for the upcoming general elections," Jamiuruddin Sircar, BNP standing committee member, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Those who want to be active again in the BNP are welcome, but no final decision has been made yet, he added.

For the first time since 1991, the BNP is neither in the government nor in the opposition now as it boycotted the general election on January 5, 2014. Some senior leaders said the party never had a hard time like this since the restoration of democracy in 1990.

The anti-government movement waged by the BNP-led 20-party alliance failed after the 2014 parliamentary polls. The party high-ups are now desperate to win the upcoming general elections.

BNP leaders said they are currently focused on organisational unity and making the party strong like it was during the 1991 general elections. The reinstatement plan is part of this effort.

"There are some 50 leaders who will soon rejoin the party and will be active in politics soon. Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir is contacting them upon instruction of acting chairman Tarique Rahman," a senior leader, wishing anonymity, told The Daily Star.

Insiders said the party high-ups are likely to re-accommodate expelled leaders Mafidul Hasan Tripty, Shahidul Haq Jamal, former lawmakers Najir Hossain, GM Siraj, SA Sultan Titu, Nurul Islam Moni and Akhtaruzzaman, among others.

Former student leaders Sanaul Huq Niru, MA Hannan, Kamrul Hasan Minto and Ershadullah are likely to come back, they added.

However, The Daily Star could not contact them.

Months after the political change-over of January 11, 2007, popularly called 1/11, a good number of BNP leaders sided with the then BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan centring on a 15-point proposal to reform the party.

The leaders became known as "reformists".

Later, a new BNP central committee was formed under the leadership of M Saifur Rahman and Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, but excluding party chief Khaleda Zia, who was kept under arrest by the then caretaker administration.

Interestingly, Khaleda is behind bars also when efforts are on to bring back the reformists now.

Some district-level leaders expressed solidarity with the committee of Saifur and Hafizuddin. However, most of the reformists became inactive in politics after the 2008 national elections when BNP became the opposition.

Of the reformist leaders, Hafizuddin, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Asadul Habib Dulu, Nasirul Haq Sabu and some others have already become active in BNP.

India denying Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

He said a 1919 act and a 1935 act recognised the right of the states and provinces in British India to trans-state rivers. A commission was formed during the British rule to solve the water-sharing dispute between Punjab and Sindh. But they could not resolve the dispute in years and the partition of the subcontinent happened.

Mashiur said India has recently abolished the provision for forming separate commission for solving water-sharing issues and set up one commission. India picked provisions of the 1935 act and it provided more rights to the federative states.

"If India accepts the right to water as a universal human right then you have a different perspective in law and politics."

And if that happens there would be negotiations and renegotiations on how the water would be shared among the states in which the rivers flow, he said.

He said Pakistan and part of Northern India were irrigated by water

from Indus basin and most of the canals were in Indian territories. But the two countries had the Indus basin water sharing agreement in 1950 when tension between the two countries were at the peak.

This agreement restored the pre-1947 rights to water, he commented.

Mashiur said Bangladesh and India shared 54 rivers and two – the Ganges and the Brahmaputra – are major rivers. Bangladesh has water sharing agreement with only one – the Ganges.

The adviser also criticised India for not allowing Bangladesh build a barrage to preserve water and use the water when needed. "... the issue has been pending for quite some time," he said.

He said India recognises the right of lower riparian's within India, but beyond India they ignore the fact that other lower riparian states could have claim.

A commission set up to resolve disputes between states that share the Godagari and the Kaberi rivers gave a decision that if the upper riparian

states affected the lives of the lower riparian people, the upper riparian states need to repair and restore the normal flow of water.

"That, in principle, recognises the right of people along the banks to the river water on which their lives depend. If India accepts it as universal right, that should extend beyond the boundary of the nation," said Mashiur.

He also talked about engagement of Bhutan and Nepal to boost cooperation in the management of shared rivers.

Mashiur said Nepal, Bhutan, and North East India have huge potential to generate hydropower. Bangladesh is importing electricity from India and has plans to import more.

"As hydropower is cheaper and clean, Bangladesh signed agreements with Bhutan and Nepal for investment there. India is also a party but it hasn't signed the memorandum for implementation of this project," he lamented.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 2

Malaysia, Nepal and Myanmar have made internet available to 25 million, 18 million and 16 million people respectively by 2017.

By the end of last year 8 million people in Cambodia had access to internet followed by Sri Lanka and Singapore with internet availability to 6 million and 4 million people respectively.

Laos and Mongolia have provided internet availability to 2 million people. The smaller countries like Brunei and Bhutan have made internet available to more than 400 thousand and 300 thousand people.

Even with these impressive numbers, level of connectivity still has to improve considerably especially in South Asia. There are many challenges in terms of infrastructure, affordable devices, data plans and digital literacy that need to be overcome.

Sharp rise rings alarm

FROM PAGE 1

Unit, in his Facebook page yesterday after being admitted with dengue fever.

With him, 49 new dengue patients were hospitalised yesterday, raising the tally of dengue patients to 6,694 this year. The number of patients exceeded the 6,000 mark only twice before in the last 18 years-- 6,232 in 2002 and 6,060 in 2016.

Alarmingly, according to the data of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), this is a record outbreak of dengue fever since January, with three more months of the year to go.

The number of deaths so far is 17.

The DGHS data also said that only 2,769 out of the 6,060 patients took treatment at hospitals last year.

Both Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) have been continuing their activities of mosquito control, but experts have stressed that the work needs speeding up.

"Apart from our regular mosquito control activities, we have been conducting awareness campaigns in different wards

for the last three months and now we are campaigning through loud speakers," said Emdadul Hoque, health officer of the DNCC.

He added that they have also engaged students and teachers of different schools in the awareness campaign.

Emdadul said they would resume drive to clean water bodies, beginning from next week, to destroy mosquito breeding grounds.

Since the first-detected cases of dengue in Bangladesh in 2000, around 49,000 people have suffered from the fever, with at least 316 reported deaths. Most of the patients were from Dhaka or its neighbouring districts and they took treatment in hospitals and clinics in the capital, according to DGHS.

Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus. Typically, symptoms begin three to fourteen days after infection from mosquito bites. This may include high fever, headache, vomiting, muscle and joint pains, and skin rash.

Why Shahidul

FROM PAGE 16

General Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star.

Shahidul, 63, who is now in Dhaka Central Jail, submitted the bail petition to the HC through his lawyers on September 18, saying that he is ill and he would not leave the country if he is granted bail.

In the petition, he also said section 57 of the ICT Act does not cover the allegations brought against him in the case.

On September 10, Shahidul's lawyers moved another petition before the HC for his bail in the case filed by police with Ramna Police Station on August 6.

After hearing the petition, the HC bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman the same day directed the lower court concerned to dispose of the appeal by September 11.

On September 11, a Dhaka court rejected his bail plea in the same case.

The renowned photographer was picked up by plainclothes men from his home in the capital's Dhanmondi on August 5.

Police filed the case against him and produced him before a Dhaka court the following day. He was then placed on a seven-day remand.

In court, Shahidul said he was tortured in custody. Police denied the allegation.

On completion of his seven-day remand, Shahidul was denied bail and sent to jail by a Dhaka court on August 13.

Many notable personalities, including Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and 11 other Nobel prize winners, have called for immediate release of Shahidul.

Barrister Sara Hossain, advocate Shahdeen Malik and barrister Jyotirmoy Barua appeared for Shahidul in the HC, while Attorney General Mahbubey Alam opposed the bail petition.

Book returned

FROM PAGE 16

he found the book and decided to return it. He said it was what his mother would have done, the library's assistant manager Jackie Morales said.

"He was surprised that (his mom) still had it in her possession. She was very responsible," she said.

The binding is loose on the book, a first edition, so the library said it has decommisioned it. But it's a book that Morales knows well.

"I was assigned the book in high school," she said. "My English teacher had each student in class memorize a different poem."

As for the late fee, Morales said the library never even considered it. "The account wouldn't even exist anymore," she said. "We purged our accounts in 1934."

The story has people aspiring to follow in the man's footsteps.

"I hope this encourages other people to return their items," Morales said. "It's never too late to return your library books."

Hindu temple

FROM PAGE 2

The matter had also been taken to court, he said.

President of the temple managing committee said he had filed a case in connection to the vandalism against Shahidul and 44 others, with Pirojpur Sadar Police Station.

SM Ziaul Haque, officer-in-charge of the police station, said a case was filed against 45 people, in which 10 people were named with Shahidul being the prime accused.

Police have already caught two suspects named Mohidul and Wahiduzzaman, he said, adding that they were trying to nab all the accused in the case.

After the incident, locals kept the Pirojpur-Gopalganj-Dhaka road in the area blocked for hours, demanding exemplary punishment of the culprits.

Being assured by police that appropriate punishment will be given in this regard, the locals later withdrew the blockade.

Upon visiting the spot, Mollah Azad Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Pirojpur, said they were investigating the incident.

UP chairman Shahidul, who lives in Dhaka, could not be contacted by this correspondent for a comment as his mobile phone remained switched off.

UP chairman Shahidul, who lives in Dhaka, could not be contacted by this correspondent for a comment as his mobile phone remained switched off.

20 killed

FROM PAGE 16

Twitter that a limo was involved and said it was sending investigators to the scene.

It was unclear how many of the fatalities were pedestrians or occupants of the vehicles but witnesses at the scene said several bodies could be seen on the ground outside the Apple Barrel, according to the Times Union.

The store, a popular stop for tourists viewing fall foliage in the area, posted a message on its Facebook page lamenting the "horrific accident."

It said it would be open for business on Sunday and "hope you will come and share your smiles, love, friendship and hugs with us."

Wanted reforms

FROM PAGE 16

"Indigenous communities and women are still backward. We think there should be a logical provision of quota system for the indigenous people, women and some underprivileged freedom fighters," said Nurul Huq Nur, another joint convener of the platform.

He also demanded bringing reformation to the quota system in all class of government services.

In the circular, it was mentioned that the quota system can be reinstated if necessary, Nur said, adding that it was "nothing but a farce".

The protesters demanding reinstatement of the 30 percent quota for freedom fighters' children and grandchildren continued their demonstrations in and outside the capital for the fourth straight day yesterday.

At Shahbagh, the protesters sat in the middle of the intersection and put barricades to the roads around 3:00pm like the previous days.

"We would continue with our blockade programme from 3:00pm to 10:00pm every day at Shahbagh and across the country until our demands are met," said Al Mamun, general secretary of Dhaka University unit Muktiyoddha Sangsad Santan Command.

They took the decision to start their blockade programme at 3:00pm to lessen the sufferings of patients who come to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Birdem hospitals for treatment, said AKM Jamal Uddin, spokesperson of the platform.

The protesters placed their six-point demands including reinstatement of the freedom fighters' 30 percent quota and constitutional recognition of them.

They also alleged that the decision of the government review committee is frustrating and similar to a defeat to the anti-liberation forces.

Traffic movement stopped in the adjacent roads and transport heading to Farmgate and Motijheel was seen taking the road near Hotel Intercontinental.

Students also blocked Dhaka-Aricha Highway yesterday demanding reinstatement of the freedom fighters' quota.

Around 20 members of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Santan Command of Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit blocked the highway for four hours.

They later withdrew the blockade at

4:00pm following a request of JU pro-VC (administration) Prof Amir Hussain.

As part of their countrywide protests, members of Chattogram unit Muktiyoddha Mancha blocked Chattogram-Khagrachhari Highway yesterday for half an hour.

The protesters were compelled to withdraw their blockade after 30 minutes due to intervention from police, said Md Tohid, inspector (media) of Hathazari police.

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PEOPLE STAGE DEMO

Physically challenged people also demonstrated in three places across the country including Shahbagh yesterday.

Under the banner "Bangladesh Pratibandhi Shikkharthi Oiky Parishad", they demonstrated a Shahbagh intersection protesting against abolishment of the quota system.

"We face too many hurdles to get higher education and jobs. Now it would be more difficult for us as the quota for us has been abolished. Injustice has been done to us," said Md Ali Hossain, one of the protesters.

They demanded reservation of five percent quota in class-I and class-II government jobs and 10 percent quota for class-III and class-IV jobs.

In Chattogram, around 50 physically challenged students of CU blocked Sholoshohor around 12:30pm, demanding reinstatement of the quota for them.

They blocked the road for one and a half hours until police intervention, said one of the protesters. Later, they cleared the road as police requested them to leave the road to lessen public sufferings.

Rajshahi University unit of Bangladesh Pratibandhi Shikkharthi Oiky Parishad also staged a sit-in before the university main gate around noon.

They also blocked the Dhaka-Rajshahi Highway, halting vehicular movement until around 2:00pm.

The physically challenged candidates had earlier enjoyed one percent quota.

On October 4, the government issued a circular abolishing the quota system for class-I and class-II jobs in the civil service.

According to the circular, recruitment in grade-9 (class-I) and grade-10 to 13 (class-II) at all government departments, autonomous or semi-autonomous institutions, and various corporations will be based solely on merit.

Indian EC makes strong case

FROM PAGE 2

negative sides of paper ballots.

"The EVMs and VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Trail) being used in the Election Commission of India are manufactured only at the two premium public sector undertakings -- Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) -- under the technical expertise of an independent Technical Expert Committee and supervision of the Election Commission, making them absolutely tamper proof," the commission said.

EVM and VVPAT inventory "is securely managed through a robust tracking system to track all operations on machine movement, first-level checks, randomisation and poll-day defects", it added.

The Indian EC said it was making all the arrangements to ensure EVM and VVPAT allocation well in time for the assembly elections across the five states.

It said mandatory training to district officers was also being ensured to meet the requirement to use VVPATs across approximately 10.6 lakh polling stations for the upcoming national election in 2019.

The poll body said it has been consistently reviewing the status of production and supply of EVMs and VVPATs with the ECIL and the BEL.

Around 22.3 lakh ballot units, 16.3 lakh Control Units and nearly 17.3 lakh VVPATs will be used for the elections in

2019, it added.

Till date, EVMs have been used in India in 113 elections to state assemblies and three parliamentary polls since 2000.

"Addition of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) to the EVM has helped strengthen the voters' trust and transparency of the voting process," the Commission said.

A VVPAT is an independent printer system attached with the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) that allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended. VVPAT slips will be visible to the voter for seven seconds behind the transparent screen of VVPAT, before falling into the sealed compartment at the base of the machine.

The Commission said the specially-designed thermal paper to be used in the VVPAT is capable of retaining the printout for more than five years so that it is available for manual verification by the Court if required in the event of a dispute for cross checking the counting of votes cast.

So far, VVPATs have been used in 933 state assembly constituencies and 18 parliamentary constituencies, the EC said.

The Commission on Saturday announced the schedule of assembly elections in five states -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram.

No change in Khaleda's treatment

FROM PAGE 16

jail on February 8 in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. She landed in prison the same day.

Meanwhile, member of the medical board Prof Sajal Krishna Banerjee of cardiology was replaced by Associate Prof Tanjima Parvin of the same department.

"Dr Sajal Krishna Banerjee is now out of Dhaka. Besides, a female doctor would be helpful for her [Khaleda] treatment," said Prof Abdul Jalil Chowdhury, of internal medicine of BSMMU, who is heading the five-member medical board.

On Thursday, the High Court asked the authorities to set up a five-member medical board with Prof Abdul Jalil and Associate Prof Badrunnesa Ahmed, a physiatrist of BSMMU.

The board cannot have any current or former members and supporters of Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad, a pro-Awami League doctors' organisation, or from Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), a pro-BNP physicians' platform, the court also ruled.

Apart from Prof Abdul Jalil and Associate Prof Badrunnesa, other members of the medical board are Prof Sajal Krishna Banerjee of cardiology, Prof Nokul Kumar Dutta, of orthopedic surgery, and Syed Atiqul Haq, of rheumatology. Of them, Prof Sajal was replaced yesterday.

In a reaction on Saturday, DAB expressed dissatisfaction with the medical board, saying that three doctors of the team were from Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad.

Yesterday, a four-member delegation of pro-BNP lawyers, led by barrister Moudud Ahmed, went to the BSMMU to talk to the hospital director about Khaleda's treatment.

Quoting the HC order, Moudud said Khaleda could choose any physician for her treatment, and the board should not keep any doctors from Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad.

"We notice that the court directive is not reflected in this regard. Now, we will wait and see if she [Khaleda] is satisfied with the doctors," he said.

Replying to a query, Moudud said they did not go to the hospital to meet Khaleda and they were there to talk to the hospital director about her treatment.

In April, Khaleda was taken to the BSMMU for checkups. The BNP had been demanding her treatment at a specialised hospital. They even named United Hospital as a preference.

Khaleda, 73, has been suffering from problems in the knees and other ailments for long, according to government doctors who treated her since she landed in jail on February 8. Her personal doctors who met her in jail said she suffered a "mild stroke" on June 5.