

TACKLING HUNGER

Bangladesh better than India, Pakistan

Moves two notches up

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has maintained a steady progress in tackling hunger as the country has moved two notches up to 88th spot among 119 countries in the 2018 Global Hunger Index (GHI).

According to the report, Bangladesh is ahead of India and Pakistan as these two neighbouring countries have been ranked 103rd and 106th in the GHI, a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional, and national levels.

In 2017 GHI, Bangladesh was ranked 86th while the positions of India and Pakistan were 100 and 106, said a press release.

The 2018 GHI -- published jointly by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe -- scores are calculated each year to assess progress and setbacks in combating hunger. The 2018 edition has a special focus on the theme of forced migration and hunger.

The 2018 GHI indicates that the level of hunger and under nutrition worldwide falls into the serious category, at a value of 20.9, down from 29.2 in 2000.

Considered a lower-middle-income country, Bangladesh experienced rapid GDP growth. Country's poverty rate plunged from 34.8 percent to 14.8 percent.

Since 2016, the Bangladeshi economy has faced formidable challenges, including above-average flooding that has been detrimental to agriculture, increasing rice prices and the influx of Rohingyaas from Myanmar, of whom nearly 900,000 are now in Bangladesh.

Because of its dense population, low-lying coastal landmass, it is also considered one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change and rising sea levels.

Poverty has declined primarily in rural areas, especially for rural households involved mainly in industry or services rather than in agriculture.

Zimbabwe, Somalia, and Central African Republic have the highest rates of under-nourishment, ranging between 46.6 and 61.8 percent.

Stunting rates are highest in Timor-Leste, Eritrea, and Burundi, with at least half of the children suffering from stunting in each country.

The highest under-five mortality rates are in Somalia (13.3 percent), Chad (12.7 percent), and CAR (12.4 percent).

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our society at an alarming level despite the existence of tough laws against it in the country.

"Silly quarrels among couples is common everywhere, but women are still being faced with torture and even death for matters like dowry," he said, adding, "Love is above all in the conjugal life."

Shahidul wore a simple purple panjabi and a turban while Angura wore a red wedding sari. They even bought new clothes for their children to wear for the celebration.

At 4:00pm, they drove to Haragachh municipality area on Shahidul's easy-bike, as curious onlookers were not only amazed to see the couple, with their children, in wedding attires, but also followed them.

Moving from area to area with scores of people surrounding them, the couple spent five hours raising awareness amongst locals by telling them to avoid domestic violence.

"Fights are normal in every marriage, but if you can raise your tolerance and acceptance towards each other and learn to adjust and compromise for each other, it is easy to avoid violence," Shahidul told them.

"Our love is still same as it was on our first day together, because love is all you need in a marriage. Violence is never necessary," Angura chimed in.

Those who saw them and heard them were inspired by this unique act of love.

"It is a rare example of love," said Kamrul Islam Raza, a local politician.

Mostafa Kamal, a high school teacher, said, "Love really changes people and if it is present between two people, it really is possible to avoid any kind of violence. Every married couple should be like Shahidul and Angura."

After spending the day raising awareness, Shahidul stopped at a roadside tea-stall to have tea with his family, which was offered to them free of cost by the tea-seller Badsha Mia. After that, Shahidul made sure to buy an anniversary present -- a handbag -- for his wife.

This was their small endeavour to help people change their attitude towards their life partners, the couple said before they rode back to the very home that shelters a love so inspiring.

AL, BNP brace

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symbols of the parties leading the alliances.

Jamaat-e-Islami, a major component in the BNP-led 20-party alliance (now reduced to 18 after two partners left yesterday), cannot contest the polls as a political party as its registration was scrapped. The party, however, wants the BNP to set aside 60 seats for its leaders to run.

BNP-LED 20-PARTY ALLIANCE	
NAME OF THE PARTY	SEATS DEMANDED
BANGLADESH JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI	60
LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY	30
JATIYA PARTY (KAZI ZAFAR)	15
KHELAFAT MOJLISH	30
BANGLADESH KALYAN PARTY	12
BANGLADESH JATIYA PARTY	2
JAMIAT E ULAMA E ISLAM	6
LABOUR PARTY	6
JATIYA GANATANTRI PARTY	4
NPP	4
DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE	2
NAP (BHASANI)	2
SAMYABADI DAL	1

JP, which leads a 58-party alliance, is yet to decide whether it will contest the polls under the 58-party alliance banner or join the AL-led alliance.

If the BNP joins the polls, JP will join the AL-led alliance, a senior leader of the party said.

"Some of the alliance partners [the 58-party combine] have sought seats for their leaders," said Ruhul Amin Hawlader, secretary general of JP.

"We are yet to hold any discussion on seat sharing with partners of our alliance. If we join the AL-led alliance, the seat sharing will be different," he said, adding, "We will ask the Awami league to give us 100 seats for our leaders if we join them."

Other components of the AL-led alliance also expect a good number of seats for their leaders.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party of Bangladesh, said, "We

have preparations to contest the polls alone and from an alliance. If we contest alone, 36 candidates will run. We have also submitted the names of 15 candidates to the Awmai League. We hope that at least we will get 12 seats but the whole matter depends on negotiations."

Dilip Barua, general secretary of Samyabadi Dal, said they want to run in six constituencies. "I think we will get one seat from the Awami League. I want to contest from Chittagong-1."

Mohammed Arash Ali, president of Gonotantri Party, said they have

AL-LED 14-PARTY ALLIANCE	
NAME OF THE PARTY	SEATS DEMANDED
JATIYA SAMAJTANTRIK DAL (INU)	30
JATIYA SAMAJTANTRIK DAL (AMBIYA)	15
BANGLADESH WORKERS PARTY	15
NAP	20
BANGLADESH SAMJATANTRIK DAL	6
JATIYA PARTY (MONJU)	2
SAMYABADI DAL	6
GONO AZADI LEAGUE	10
BANGLADESH TARIKAT FEDERATION	10
COMMUNIST KENDRO	2
* JATIYA PARTY WILL DEMAND 100 SEATS IF IT JOINS THE ALLIANCE	

already received 25 applications from aspirants of his party. "We will make the list short and then submit it to the Awami League."

Bangladesh Tarikat Federation initially wanted to run in 30 constituencies. "But considering the reality, we hope that we will get at least 10 seats. But the final decision will be made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvandary, chairman of the party, said.

Partners of the BNP-led alliance are also preparing to run.

Khandakar Lutfor Rahman, general secretary of Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), said, "We have preparations to compete in 40 constituencies but we hope that we will get at least four seats set aside for us."

Al Amin Bhuiyan, office secretary of Bangladesh Kalyan Party, said they want at least 10 seats for their leaders.

Highlight migrant

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the king.

Shariful said although there were many economic and political issues, Bangladesh should raise the most important one, protection of migrants' rights, with Saudi Arabia.

According to Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), Saudi Arabia has recruited nearly 36 lakh Bangladeshis since 1976. It is now the largest overseas labour market for Bangladesh as around two million Bangladeshis are employed there. Last year, they sent home Tk 110,247 crore.

The incumbent Saudi government has restricted foreigners from working in 12 sectors. They cannot work in shops selling watches, optical materials, medical equipment, electrical and electronic products, car parts, building materials, carpets, and mobile phones.

Also, the Middle Eastern country early last year introduced a levy system under which a Saudi company needs to pay a monthly charge of \$80 to the government for hiring each foreign worker, according to Saudi media reports.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Riyadh Golam Moshir recently told this correspondent that some 80,000 Bangladeshis employed in mobile phone shops in Riyadh became jobless after the Saudi authorities restricted foreigners from working in such shops in September last year.

According to the Expatriates' Welfare Desk at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, nearly 15,000 Bangladeshi workers returned home from Saudi Arabia in the first eight months this year.

Besides, around 1,500 female workers came back home till now this year following alleged exploitation by their employers. The abuses include physical and sexual exploitation, long working hours and non-payment.

Some male returnee migrants recently alleged that the Saudi authorities deported them despite the fact they had iqamas (residence permits).

Ambassador Golam Moshir said it was illegal for a worker having a valid iqama to work for a company which did not hire him.

"The law is now being enforced in the Kingdom strongly," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star on Monday, Golam Moshir said the PM would request the Saudi authorities to recruit Bangladeshi workers for their new mega projects.

Analysts say although new recruitment is important, Bangladesh must ensure that those who are already in Saudi Arabia have jobs.

"We have reports that a good number of Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia are jobless," said Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies.

He said the reports on abuse of female Bangladeshi migrants were also disturbing.

"Our prime minister can raise the issue with the Saudi authorities so that the female migrants can work there with dignity," Shameem told The Daily Star.

Abdul Alim, a recruiting agent in Dhaka, said some recruiters in connivance with a section of Saudi employers send workers for jobs that are non-existent. After reaching Saudi Arabia, they have to find their jobs and pay to the "sponsors" who facilitated the visas.

"This malpractice should be stopped," he said.

Alim suggested opening of a desk at the Saudi labour ministry to enable the recruiting agents to report on abuses of female migrants.

If actions were taken against abusers, the number of abuses would come down drastically, he said.

Three of a family

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The eight were sitting on the tiles of the truck. Three died on the spot and five others were wounded as they were trapped under tiles, he said.

On information, police, and fire service and civil defence members rescued the injured and rushed them to Kumudini Hospital, he said.

The driver and the helper of the truck managed to flee the spot after the accident, he added.

Police suspect that the truck driver fell asleep during the driving, said Sub-Inspector Faisal Ahmed of Mirzapur Police Station.

Khaleda's graft

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concluding all the legal procedures, the court is fixing October 29 for declaring the judgment," the court said in its order.

The court, however, extended Khaleda's bail in the case till October 29.

"Khaleda's counsel repeatedly wasted time of the court by filing time pleas. They don't take part in any kind of legal proceedings, but plead for bail whenever the bail period is over," said Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Mosharraf Hossain Kajal.

On October 14, the High Court rejected a review petition filed by Khaleda, upholding a lower court order that had said it would continue the case trial in her absence.

The lower court on September 20 passed the order, saying that it would hear the case in Khaleda's absence as she was "unwilling" to appear before the makeshift court inside Old Dhaka Central Jail.

The ACC lodged the Zia Charitable Trust graft case against Khaleda and three others with Tejgaon Police Station in August 2011. According to the case statement, the former prime minister and three others abused their power and raised funds for the trust from unknown sources.

Three others are: Abul Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to prime minister Khaleda, Ziaul Islam Munna, assistant private secretary (APS) to Harris, and Monirul Islam Khan, APS to former Dhaka City mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

The court framed charges against Khaleda and the others in the case on March 19, 2014.

Khaleda, who has been in jail since her conviction in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case on February 8, refused to appear before the court during the trial in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case on "security reasons". Later, the government shifted the court to jail premises to ensure her safety.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the date for delivering the verdict in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case against Khaleda and others was fixed "illegally at the behest of the government", adds UNB.

"The date for the verdict was announced absolutely on the government's instructions. They've been trying from the very beginning to convict our leader [Khaleda] without any trial," he said.

Fakhrul made the remarks while talking to reporters after the first meeting of the Jatiya Oikyafront at Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President ASM Abdur Rob's Uttara house.

He said the trial process in the case was not completed as the accused could not give self-defence statements and lawyers could not end their arguments. "We think it's contrary to justice. We protest it."

Genocide

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While Facebook took down the official accounts of senior Myanmar military leaders in August, the breadth and details of the propaganda campaign -- which was hidden behind fake names and sham accounts -- went undetected.

The campaign, described to NYT by five people who asked for anonymity because they feared for their safety, included hundreds of military personnel who created troll accounts and news and celebrity pages on Facebook and then flooded them with incendiary comments and posts timed for peak viewership.

It said military's systematic campaign stretched back half a decade which indicates the recent bouts of violence in Rakhine aren't isolated events.

Working in shifts out of bases clustered in foothills near the capital, Naypyidaw, officers were also tasked with collecting intelligence on popular accounts and criticising posts unfavorable to the military. So secretive were the operations that all but top leaders had to check their phones at the door, the NYT report said quoting the people.

Facebook confirmed many of the details about the shadowy, military-driven campaign. The company's head of cybersecurity policy, Nathaniel Gleicher, said it had found "clear and deliberate attempts to covertly spread propaganda that were directly linked to the Myanmar military."

Human rights groups blame the anti-Rohingya propaganda for inciting murders, rapes and the largest forced human migration in recent history.

More than 720,000 of Myanmar's stateless Muslim minority fled a brutal military crackdown in August last year, taking shelter in crowded camps in Bangladesh.

CEC finds polls

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Bhaban in Agargaon yesterday, Huda said based on information collected from field-level EC officials, he was satisfied with the election atmosphere.

Replying to a query, he said even if there was any disagreement among the election commissioners, it would not impact the polls.

Asked about the note of dissent submitted to the commission by Mahbub, he said, "I don't want to talk about the incident that happened yesterday. It has been published in newspapers and there is nothing more to talk about."

Asked about bringing changes to the electoral code of conduct, the CEC said there would be some changes and the EC would sit in a meeting to discuss the issue.

Huda made the comments after a view-exchange meeting on election preparations with regional and district election officials. All the 10 regional and 64 district election officials, as well as senior officials from the Election Commission Secretariat, attended the daylong meeting at the Nirbachan Bhaban.

Apart from Huda, the four other election commissioners -- Mahbub, Rafiqul Islam, Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury and Kabita Khanam -- also spoke at the meeting.

The commission instructed the regional and district election officials not to pick any polling official, including a presiding officer, on political considerations.

It also asked its top level field officials to carry out election duty neutrally and without being influenced by any quarters, one of the meeting participants told The Daily Star, wishing not to be named.

This is the first time the EC held such a meeting with its top level field officials. It came around two and a half months before the parliamentary polls.

At the meeting, 10 regional and 20 district election officials placed various demands before the EC for holding the polls in a more efficient way.

One of the demands was to appoint the regional and district election officials as returning officers along with the deputy commissioners. They said they were the ones who "knew election activities better".

They also suggested that the EC make better arrangements so that voting secrecy remains intact while casting votes.

During parliamentary election, the deputy commissioner of a district is appointed as the returning officer (RO) to conduct the polls in the district. For Dhaka and Chattogram metropolitan areas, divisional commissioners are appointed as the ROs.

According to the Representation of the People Order, 1972, returning officers have the jurisdiction to prepare a panel of election officials, comprising a presiding officer, assistant presiding officers and polling officers, for each polling centre.

Each polling centre will have one presiding officer. Besides, there will be an assistant presiding officer and two polling officials at each polling booth, according to the RPO.

A fair election largely depends on the role of the polling officials.

According to EC Secretary Helaluddin Ahmed, there would be around 40,200 polling centres, including around 2,61,200 polling booths, in the upcoming election.

The polling centres would require over 7.5 lakh polling officials, said sources at the EC Secretariat.

According to the RPO, the RO under no circumstances would appoint members of any political party as a polling official.

Anyone who did a job or is now doing a job under a candidate in a constituency also can't be a polling official in that particular constituency, according to the RPO.

Besides, any "controversial" officials or staffers or teachers would also not be eligible to be appointed as polling official.

The RPO also said the RO would recruit polling officials from government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, and non-government organisations in his other area.

Speaking at yesterday's programme, commissioner Mahbub Talukdar said, "You [field level election officials] are the heart of the election field. The entire nation and the world are looking up to you. Holding a free and fair election is your sacred duty."

Commissioner Rafiqul called upon the field level election officials to make the voter list 100 percent flawless.

Saudis may admit

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opinion as soon as possible, because the investigation is looking into many things such as toxic materials and those materials being removed by painting them over," Erdogan told reporters.

Saudi Arabia has been under intense international pressure to explain Khashoggi's apparent death after he visited the consulate on October 2 to obtain papers that would have allowed him to marry his Turkish fiancée.

The affair has created a diplomatic rift between Saudi Arabia and the West and led to international firms pulling out of a high-profile summit in Riyadh. The CEOs of three top banks -- Standard Chartered, HSBC and Credit Suisse -- announced their withdrawal from the conference yesterday.

Khashoggi's family called for an independent, international commission to investigate the case.

FLURRY OF MEETINGS

Trump dispatched Pompeo to the region shortly after a phone call on Monday with King Salman. He was met at the airport in Riyadh yesterday by the Saudi foreign minister, and was undertaking a flurry of engagements with top officials throughout the day.

Pompeo's meeting with the King was relatively brief -- based on the arrival and departure times of his motorcade, CNN estimates the encounter can have lasted no more than 15 minutes. Pompeo met with the Crown Prince for about 35 to 40 minutes, and was due to meet him again for dinner later.

Turkish authorities have said privately that Khashoggi was killed at the consulate on October 2. Saudi Arabia has previously insisted he left the building the same afternoon, but have provided no evidence to support the claim. His fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, waited outside the consulate and says she did not see him re-emerge.

Cengiz tweeted a Quranic verse yesterday promising "eternal hellfire" for the killers of "deliberate believers."

Turkish investigators were set to carry out a search of the Saudi Consul General's residence in Istanbul yesterday, according to a Turkish diplomatic source. CCTV footage, which has served as a focal point in the investigations, showed vehicles moving from the consulate building to the nearby Consul General's residence on October 2.

Officials, including a forensics team, conducted an investigation of the consulate that lasted well into the evening on Monday. Earlier in the day, CNN reporters saw a cleaning crew enter the building.

United Nations human rights chief Michelle Bachelet called on Riyadh to lift immunity -- bestowed by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations -- on its diplomatic premises and officials over the case of the disap-

peared journalist.

"Under international law, both a forced disappearance and an extrajudicial killing are very serious crimes, and immunity should not be used to impede investigations into what happened and who is responsible," Bachelet said in a statement released yesterday.

"Two weeks is a very long time for the probable scene of a crime not to have been subjected to a full forensic investigation."

SAUDIS' SHIFTING STORY

Sources told CNN on Monday that the Saudis are preparing a report that will acknowledge that the death of Khashoggi, a former Saudi royal insider who became a critic of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was the result of an interrogation that went wrong. The sources said the interrogation was intended to lead to his enforced return to Saudi Arabia.

One source said the report will likely conclude that the operation was carried out without clearance and transparency and that those involved will be held responsible. A source acknowledged that the report was still being prepared and cautioned that things could change.

Legal notice

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At the programme, the Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council), a platform of editors, demanded that the proposed changes be made in the upcoming and last session of the current parliament, scheduled to begin on October 21.

Meanwhile, Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday also demanded bringing the amendments in the parliament session.

At a press conference at the SCBA auditorium, Zainul Abedin, president of the platform, offered legal assistance to the Parishad.

Amid widespread criticism, President Abdul Hamid signed the Digital Security Bill into law on October 8.

Termed draconian at home and abroad, the bill was passed in parliament on September 19, ignoring concerns of journalists and rights defenders and keeping a harsh provision that allows police officials to search or arrest anyone without a warrant.

Some of the sections in question deal with concerns like giving arbitrary power to law enforcement agencies to confiscate media content, vagueness in the definition of "Spirit of the Liberation War", shrinking scope for investigative journalism, and limiting scope to write against socio-religious harmful elements such as unlawful fatwa.