



Angelina Jolie to visit refugee camps in Cox's Bazar tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Film star Angelina Jolie is scheduled to meet Rohingya women, who were victims of sexual violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State during a brutal military operation in August 2017, in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps tomorrow.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Abul Kalam, refugee rehabilitation and repatriation commissioner (RRRC), confirmed it.

Jolie, a special envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and co-founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, strongly raised voice against sexual violence of Rohingya Women and Children in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

On November 15, 2017, the Hollywood actress told a Bangladesh delegation in the Canadian city of Vancouver that she was planning to see the Rohingya victims of sexual violence.

The RRRC did not go into detail about her trip to Cox's Bazar.

Contacted, UNHCR officials in Dhaka also confirmed Jolie's visit, but declined to comment about her programme schedule in Bangladesh.

Over 800,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar since late August 2017, driven out by the military's actions that a UN Fact Finding Mission described as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Job creation

FROM PAGE 1

Yet, the number of jobs fell to 88 lakh from 95 lakh in 2013.

"While this raises the question whether the manufacturing sector is going through the phase of jobless growth, until now it has remained unresolved. More surveys and analyses will be needed to better appreciate the trends in employment and output growth in the sector," the report said.

The "a phase of jobless growth" comes at a time when the economy recorded more than seven percent annual growth, which was spurred mainly by the manufacturing sector.

The sector's share in total employment remained stagnant at 14.4 percent in the first two years of the plan, the report showed. Shamsul Alam, member of the General Economic Division of the Bangladesh Planning Commission, said although there had been strides in many areas, including GDP growth, the country was not generating enough employment.

He was presenting the highlights of the draft report of the SFYP (FY2016-FY2020) at a consultative meeting at the Planning Commission yesterday.

Shamsul said one percent growth generates 2.5 lakh jobs. "It appears that new jobs have not been created because of the use of modern machinery and technology."

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said adoption of labour displacing technology and increased labour productivity had affected creation of new jobs.

Now six persons are needed for the same task which required 10 in the past, he said and suggested diversification of economy and export basket.

The government targeted to generate a total of 1.29 crore employment in the SFY beginning from FY2016 to FY2020. Of them, it aimed at generating 1.09 crore jobs in the domestic market.

Despite low job creation in the domestic market, more employment opportunities were created in the overseas market.

The target for the number of migrant workers surpassed in the last two fiscal years, said the report.

Some 16 lakh migrant workers left the country in the first two years of the planned period against the target of sending eight lakh workers abroad.

The draft report said 80 percent of the target of sending 20 lakh migrant workers had been achieved in the first two years of the SFYP.

Planning Minister MA Mannan was present at the meeting, which was also attended by government officials.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits a display of safe food during the National Food Safety Day-2019 at the Krishibid Institution in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Hasina warns against food adulteration

FROM PAGE 1

She added that the people were being seriously affected by consuming poisonous food.

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzak and Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumdar were present at the function as special guests.

Food Secretary Shahabuddin Ahmed presided over the function, while Bangladesh Food Safety Authority Chairman Mohammad Mahfuzul Hoque delivered the welcome address.

Putting emphasis on creating mass awareness against food adulteration, the PM said nobody had any right to destroy people's lives by cheating them.

"Why will you sell adulterated food

items ... sell better products and if you want to make good profits, you can do this? What you do, do it in a better way."

Hasina said the people must be adequately aware of the sale of adulterated and rotten food at hotels, restaurants and shops.

"Citizens' awareness is very much necessary and if they are aware, nobody will be able to deceive them," she said, adding that the government would do whatever was necessary in this regard.

Highlighting her government's steps for ensuring food security, the PM said, "We're working to build a beggar-free Bangladesh and we're distributing food among the distressed free of cost as our goal is that nobody

would suffer for food."

In this connection, Hasina asked the food ministry to find out whether there were any people having no food in their houses. "Find out such people ... we will give as much amount of money required for it."

She said her government constituted the National Food Safety Authority to step up the anti-adulteration drive.

Referring to manpower shortage at the organisation, the PM said steps would be taken to solve the problem.

Calling upon the people to change their food habit, the PM said they would have to take a balanced diet to ensure their nutrition.

"It's not necessary to consume a

huge amount of rice ... you'll have to eat more vegetables side by side with fish and egg so that the meal is a balanced one," she said, adding that it would ensure their nutrition.

Hasina also urged the people to try to lead a healthy life by maintaining hygiene in their houses. "Whatever food you will take, will not work if you remain unhygienic."

The government has taken measures for preserving food alongside increasing production, Hasina said, adding that her government had given utmost importance to research to boost food production.

Earlier, the PM distributed prizes among the winners of an essay competition held on the occasion of the National Food Safety Day-2019.

No polls, no loans for river grabbers

FROM PAGE 1

Commission (NRPC) Act 2013 with provisions for punishment and fine for river grabbing.

The current NRPC Act does not have provisions for punishment.

The government must report to the court in six months on its action in this regard.

The HC also declared the NRPC as the legal guardian of all rivers and act like their "parents".

The landmark verdict comes when river grabbing by influential groups seems unstoppable. Often, grabbers return to steal river land soon after being evicted.

The HC delivered the judgment in response to a petition by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh. In its petition, the organisation cited a report published in The Daily Star on November 6, 2016, headlined "Time to Declare Turag Dead".

The court yesterday thanked this paper for its reporting on how grabbers were killing the Turag and other rivers, and how the authorities were failing to save them.

"The Turag is a living entity," the court said, and asked the authorities to remove all structures from it in 30 days.

NO POLLS, NO LOANS
A large number of rivers in Bangladesh are in dire straits. Exact data is not available, but environmentalists and journalists working on the issue say most of the around 450 rivers in the country face serious threats because of ruthless grabbing and pollution.

To save them, the HC said, the state

- Hold an hour-long class every two months at all govt and pvt educational institutions on the importance of rivers and the impact of pollution
- Hold an hour-long meeting every two months with factory officials and workers to discuss river pollution and its impact
- Remove all structures from the Turag in 30 days
- Handover a copy of the HC verdict to the PM

must act as the trustee of all rivers, hills, sea beaches, forests, canals and beels and other waterbodies while the NRPC will remain bound to protect them.

The court also asked the authorities to scrap the lease between the Gazipur district administration and Ha-Meem Group, which set up a washing plant on Turag land. The group is owned by top businessman AKAzad.

"If any person, whose name is included in the list of river land grabbing, he or she will be disqualified from contesting the union parishad, upazila, pourasava, city corporation and Jatiya Sangsad elections," the court said, asking the Election Commission to take steps in this regard.

The Bangladesh Bank have been ordered to make sure no river grabbers get bank loans.

The bench of Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Ashraful Kamal asked the education ministry to take steps for holding an hour-long class every two months at all public and private academic institutions, including school, madrasa, college and university, to build awareness among students about the importance of rivers.

The industries ministry has been ordered to take measures for arranging an hour-long meeting every two months with factory workers across the country, also to create awareness.

Advocate Manzill Murshid appeared for the petitioner.

The court started delivering the verdict on January 30. On the second day of the verdict on January 31, the court said that playing a game of blind man's buff (kanamachhi) over protection of rivers must stop.

The writ petition was filed on November 7, 2016.

Two days later, an HC bench directed the government to stop earth-filling, encroachment and construction along the Turag.

It also issued a rule upon the authorities to explain why their inaction in this regard should not be declared illegal.

In line with the court order, the chief judicial magistrate of Gazipur submitted a report before the HC in October 2017. The report said 30 structures were set up illegally along the river banks in Gazipur.

The judicial investigation also identified 36 individuals and organisations

who grabbed Turag land, and submitted the list to the HC. The grabbers are Annon Tex, Dr Faras Uddin University, Cordod Land Developer and Captain Zakir Hossain, Prottyasha Housing, Gazipur City Corporation, Truck-Covered van Drivers' Union, Central Medical College, Md Jahangir Zipper Factory, Zarina Textile, Sajid Washing of Ha-Meem Group, Biswa Ijtema, Shilpa Shamparkita Shikshayan, Tongi New Market (Masjid Market), Anwar Group, The Merchant Limited and Packaging Factory, Textile owner Iman Ali, Ripon Commissioner, Zaber and Zubair factories of Noman Group, Paradise Washing, Autul Purification, Yunus Member, Fazlu Miah, Shah Alam and Cong, Moslem Sarkar, Riaz Uddin, Abdul Hai, Lutfu Begum, Dolly Begum, Mintu D'Costa and others.

Later on December 13 that year, the HC directed the authorities to demolish the structures immediately. A 2009 landmark HC judgment had detailed measures on how to recover the ailing rivers from land grabbers and save them from pollution.

At the time, the court ordered the administration to demarcate the boundary of five dying Dhaka rivers -- the Buriganga, Balu, Turag, Shitalakkhya and Dhaleshwari.

This apparently turned out to be the "death warrant" for the rivers.

Demarcation pillars were set up along the river banks during the lean flow of dry season waterline, excluding some 2,500 acres of foreshores and wetlands of the five rivers.

Is it another Joj Mia case?

FROM PAGE 1

At the gate of Kashimpur Central Jail-2 in Gazipur, Jaha Alam told reporters that he wanted the ACC officials responsible for his imprisonment to be punished.

Senior Jail Superintendent Subrata Kumar Bala said he was released around 12:55am.

At yesterday's hearing, the court said, "We do not support keeping an innocent person behind bars even for a minute."

On January 28, the HC bench in a sue moto move summoned the director general of ACC and three other officials, including representatives of home and law ministries, to explain why Jaha Alam, instead of the actual accused, was in jail for the last three years.

The HC initiative came after the

daily Prothom Alo published a report on Jaha Alam's plight.

In 2012, the ACC filed 33 cases against a number of individuals for misappropriation of about Tk 18.5 crore from the Sonali Bank. In 26 of the cases, Abu Salek, a businessman, was accused, ACC officials said.

Although Salek is from Singia village of Balia Union in Thakurgaon, in one of his bank accounts he mentioned the name of a village in Tangail's Nagarpur. Jaha Alam is also from a village in Nagarpur.

During investigation of the cases, the commission asked the bank officials to identify and trace Salek.

The officials informed the ACC that the address provided by Salek in

his bank documents was in Tangail's Nagarpur.

The commission then summoned "Salek" to its office where the bank officials, including the account's introducers, were present.

However, the man who appeared before the ACC claimed that the authorities concerned were mistaken and his name was Jaha Alam, not Abu Salek.

Later, the ACC pressed charges before a court identifying him as Abu Salek alias Jaha Alam. He was arrested on February 6, 2016 in Narsingdi. He had been languishing in jail until today.

During yesterday's hearing at the HC, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said, "Based on information from the Bangladesh Bank and Sonali Bank, we filed the FIR."

The court then made the reference to the infamous Joj Mia incident in which a man named Joj Mia was falsely implicated in a case filed in connection with the grenade attack on an Awami League rally on August 21, 2004.

"We cautioned you [ACC] earlier about graft cases relating to banks... We've seen that you serve notice to individuals even before beginning an enquiry. But it is found out later that there is no allegation against them whatsoever. Why do you serve the notice then? Why does a person who is not guilty have to be in jail for over two years? The ACC needs to be transparent," the court said.

ACC Director General Mostafizur Rahman and Deputy Director Abdullah Al Jahid were present at the hearing.

Integration

FROM PAGE 18

connect north Uttara to Motijheel via Rokeya Sarani, Farmgate and Dhaka University. The stretch between north Uttara and Agargaon (12km) has a deadline of December 2019.

Prof Shamsul Hoque, another expert, echoed Prof Moazzem and added that metro rail's success would depend on its coordination with Dhaka's existing transport services.

"Metro rail may stand as an isolated facility" unless transport facilities for people's access to and disperse from stations are ensured, he said.

The huge number of passengers offloaded at a time by the trains would spill over streets and pavements leading to further traffic deterioration, he said.

The experts said terminating the metro service temporarily at Agargaon would create an awful chaos there. Farmgate, one station away and a transport hub, is not prepared or improved for handling the increased number of metro passengers either. The junction itself is already awfully choked with perpetual traffic mess and space constraint, they said.

DMTCL Managing Director MAN Siddique said they would be able to open the metro rail service up to Motijheel by the end of 2020.

As to how traffic in Agargaon would work with metro service just a year away, Siddique said, "There is nothing like preparing Agargaon for metro service. We are preparing the entire metro line. Shuttle buses will remain lined-up on existing roads to transfer metro passengers to nearby Farmgate."

When asked how the buses would stop, offload and take passengers and turn around at congested Farmgate, he, without elaborating, said, "There is a traffic plan on it."

"When metro service will be in place, people will go for it automatically being demand-driven," he said.

"Access to metro stations will depend on how traffic police manage it. I don't know whether rickshaws will have access."

Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) would take care of metro rail's coordination with other modes, he said.

DTCA Executive Director Khandakar Rakibur Rahman said, "We have not been able to do justice to transport coordination in Dhaka city thanks to lack of manpower and the DTCA is nowhere near to what such an organisation around the world is like."

"We have just recruited 14 officials for the first time since the authority was formed and we will coordinate transport with the new recruits once they are trained," he said.

The government undertook the metro scheme in light of the recommendation made by Japan International Cooperation Agency following a 2010 survey and Strategic Transport Plan.

As of October this year, the 12km first-phase of the maiden metro rail up to Agargaon has made one-fourth progress with 300 metres viaducts visible in Diabari.

Sending army

FROM PAGE 18

declined to give a specific answer.

"But certainly it's something that's on the -- it's an option," he said.

Trump said Maduro requested a meeting months ago and he turned down the Venezuelan leader.

"I've turned it down because we're very far along in the process," he said in excerpts from a CBS "Face the Nation" interview. "So, I think the process is playing out - very, very big tremendous protests."

The United States recognized Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president on January 23, and is leading an international campaign to drive Maduro from office.

Guaido says the constitution entitles him to serve as interim head of state because Maduro's re-election last May was invalid, his strongest opponents having been barred from running.

Four major European nations -- Britain, France, Germany and Spain -- have said they will likewise recognize Guaido's opponent unless Maduro calls new presidential elections by yesterday midnight.

Trump has repeatedly warned "all options are on the table" in Venezuela, as his administration ramps up the pressure on Maduro through economic sanctions and appeals to the country's armed forces to switch allegiances.

Under Maduro's stewardship, oil-dependent Venezuela has lurched into an economic crisis that has left it suffering from hyperinflation and shortages of food and medicine.

Maduro refuses to let aid into Venezuela, claiming it would precede a US-led military intervention.

In the interview, Trump also acknowledged the possibility that IS and other terror groups could regain their strength in Syria and Afghanistan if he withdraws or reduces troops in those countries and noted that he would send US forces back if they did.

Trump announced in December that he was ordering staff to execute a "full" and "rapid" withdrawal of US troops from Syria.