



Palstinians hold shoes and signs that read "leave" during a protest demanding Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to step down, in Gaza City, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ROHINGYA CRISIS IN MYANMAR

EU to propose action at UNHRC session

STAR REPORT

The European Union is likely to propose specific actions against Myanmar over the Rohingya crisis during the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

"The EU might seek steps against Myanmar top military officials for human rights violations in line with recommendations made by the UN Fact Finding Mission," said a Bangladeshi diplomat in Geneva where the session would begin today.

Last year, the European Council imposed sanctions on 14 Myanmar individuals for serious human rights violations in Myanmar. The sanctions consist of an asset freeze and a travel ban.

The council called for Myanmar to address the issues of accountability, access for the UN and humanitarian agencies to the states of Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan and to create conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return of the displaced persons to their places of origin.

A brutal military campaign in Rakhine state of Myanmar caused an exodus of some 750,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh since August 2017.

Meanwhile, a delegation of International Criminal Court is likely to come to Bangladesh in the first

week of March, said a diplomatic source.

The team will visit Rohingya camps and collect evidence of genocide that reportedly took place during the 2017 military crackdown in Rakhine.

AFP reports, the US, France, Britain and six other countries on the UN Security Council have called for a meeting on Myanmar that is expected to face opposition from China.

The meeting requested for this week would hear a report from UN envoy Christine Schraner Burgener who last month paid a 12-day visit to Myanmar to discuss the plight of Rohingya refugees.

Myanmar has agreed to take back some of the refugees in a deal reached with Bangladesh, but the UN insists that the safety of the Rohingyas be a condition for their return.

Schraner Burgener, a Swiss diplomat, has made four visits to Myanmar since her appointment in April but appears to have returned empty-handed each time.

Belgium, Germany, Poland, Kuwait, Peru and the Dominican Republic joined the three veto-holding powers to push the council to turn its attention to Myanmar.

EXODUS FROM LAST IS ENCLAVE Syrian force overwhelmed

AFP, Omar Oil Field

US-backed Syrian forces yesterday warned they were struggling to cope with an outpouring of foreigners from the Islamic State group's imploding "caliphate", urging governments to take responsibility for their citizens.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have evacuated nearly 5,000 men, women and children from the jihadist redoubt since Wednesday, moving closer to retaking the last sliver of territory under IS control.

"The numbers of foreign fighters and their relatives that we are holding is increasing drastically," Kurdish foreign affairs official Abdel Karim Omar told AFP.

"Our current infrastructure can't handle the mass influx," he said. Syria's Kurds have repeatedly called on foreign countries to repatriate their citizens, but most have been reluctant to allow battle-hardened jihadists and their relatives back home due to security concerns.

At the height of its rule, IS imposed its brutal interpretation of Islamic law across territory straddling Syria and Iraq that was roughly the size of the United Kingdom.

But more than four years after IS declared a cross-border "caliphate", the jihadists have lost all but a tiny patch of land in the village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

After years of fighting IS, Syria's Kurds say they hold hundreds of suspected IS fighters and their relatives.

"As thousands of foreigners flee Daesh's crumbling caliphate, the burden which is already too heavy for us to handle is getting even heavier," SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali said on Twitter late Saturday, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

"This will remain as the biggest challenge awaiting us unless governments take action and fulfil their responsibilities for their citizens," he said.

No evacuations were reported from the enclave on Saturday, but the two batches of people that left on Wednesday and Friday included Europeans, Iraqis and nationals of former Soviet countries, according to the SDF.

Around 46,000 people, including a large number of foreigners, have streamed out of IS's shrinking territory since early December, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor.

Teenager killed

FROM PAGE 16

SM Sahadat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Airport Police Station in Sylhet, said the boy, with one of his friends Rahi, was moving towards the Housing Estate road around 7:30pm when a group of teenagers attacked the two with sharp weapons.

With serious stab injuries, he was taken to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where the duty doctors declared him dead, the OC added.

Rafi was also injured during the attack, Sahadat said, adding that the body was kept at the hospital for an autopsy.

No case was filed in this connection.

BCL announces

FROM PAGE 16

vice-president, a general secretary and an assistant general secretary.

The nine secretary nominees are: Saad-Bin-Quader, liberation war affairs secretary; Arif Ibne Ali, science and technology affairs secretary; Lipi Akhter, common room and cafeteria affairs secretary; Shahria Tanjina Arni, international affairs secretary; Majhharul Kabir Shoyon, literature affairs secretary; Shakil Ahmmed Tanvir, sports secretary; Rakib Hawlader, secretary of students' transport affairs; and Ajijul Haque Sarker, social welfare secretary.

Soon after the announcement, a group of BCL leaders expressed their "resentment" over the nominations and vowed to announce a separate panel of the "deprived" leaders today.

"Many of those who are devoted to the party have been excluded from the panel. We will announce a separate panel through a press conference at the Madhur canteen around 11:00am," Aminul Islam Bulbul, former organising secretary of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque hall, told The Daily Star.

Some BCL men of Fazlul Haque hall

unit also demonstrated at the Curzon hall area, demanding a fresh panel and chanted slogans against nominees.

The Chhatra Dal activists marched from the Madhur Canteen around 12:00pm and staged a sit-in before the VC office to press home their demand for deferring the polls by three months.

General Secretary of the pro-BNP student body Akramul Hasan alleged that the university authorities were not responding to their logical demand and were holding the polls to ensure the victory of a specific student body.

The JCD leaders later met the VC Prof Akhtaruzzaman and placed their demand before him.

INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION

Several indigenous students yesterday demanded their representation in the Ducsu at a press conference at the Madhur Canteen.

Their other demands include reserving five percent education quota for indigenous students in the university and providing scholarship to the students in need.

The first Ducsu election in 28 years is scheduled to be held on March 11 with polling centres set up at the dormitories.

HC yet to release

FROM PAGE 16

punishment by a lower court for their involvement in the massacre during the BDR mutiny.

A total of 74, including 57 army officials, were killed during the mutiny that took place at Pilkhana headquarters on February 25-26, 2009.

The HC may take at least three more months for releasing the full text of its verdict in the biggest ever criminal case in the country's history in terms of number of accused and convicts, deputy attorney general KM Zahid Sarwar Kazal told The Daily Star on Friday.

He said Justice Md Shawkat Hossain, presiding judge of the three-member special HC bench, had written the 11,412-page judgment of the case and put his signature on every page of the verdict.

Justice Shawkat has also sent the verdict to his two other colleagues of the bench -- Justice Md Abu Zafar Siddique and Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder -- for their opinions.

After completing their parts, the two justices will return it to Justice Shawkat, DAG Kazal added.

He also said after receiving the full text of the HC verdict, the government [on behalf of the state] will move appeals before the Appellate Division against the HC verdict that sentenced the convicts to life imprisonment and

Complaints

FROM PAGE 16

Of the accused, six are members of Betna camp and another is a company commander of 50, BGB battalion.

Nurul Islam, lawyer of the three plaintiffs, said the complaints were lodged with Haripur Judicial Magistrate Farhana Khan who took the charges into cognisance and scheduled the hearing on March 6.

Contacted, Lt Colonel Tuhin said, "BGB was deployed there to execute law and order. An investigation is going on into the matter."

"Everyone has their right to express their opinion. I have nothing to say on that," he added.

On February 14, BGB filed two cases against some 275 villagers of Baharampur, including two dead in this connection.

jail term for different periods.

In the appeals, the government will pray to the apex court to sentence all the convicts to death, he said.

The accused who were acquitted by the HC in the case cannot get released from jail as they did not get the full text of the verdict and the case filed against them under the Explosive Substances Act is pending with a Dhaka court, he added.

Advocate Aminul Islam, a defence lawyer, said the convicted accused would move appeals before the Appellate Division against the HC verdict on them.

But, they have not been able to file the appeals as they are yet to receive the full text of the HC verdict, he said.

The defence lawyer said the trial court has so far recorded statements from around 100 witnesses out of total around 1,300 in the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act.

Finishing the trial proceedings of the case may take one more year, he added.

Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 2

which are causing large scale displacement of the people within the periphery and beyond the borders of countries.

The rate of people's displacement owing to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation is increasing every day, they added.

Speaking at the concluding session, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam

mentioned various short and long terms adaptation measures and said the government of Bangladesh mobilised fund from its own resources to counter and adapt with the impacts of climate change which had been acclaimed by the global community.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Mohammad Enamur Rahman, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman, UN Resident Coordinator Mia Seppo, France Ambassador in Dhaka Marie-Annick Bourdin, Bangladesh Ambassador in Geneva Shameem Ahsan, climate experts Atiq Rahman and Saleemul Haque, UNHCR Country Representative Steven Carls, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Trump ex-aide Manafort broke law 'repeatedly' Says Mueller's office

AFP, Washington

Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office said in a sentencing memo released Saturday that President Donald Trump's former campaign director Paul Manafort was a "bold" criminal who "repeatedly and brazenly" broke the law.

Manafort, 69, who pleaded guilty to two conspiracy charges, faces sentencing on March 13. The memo addressed to the judge in charge of his case did not recommend a specific sentence -- but outlined the gravity of his crimes.

It said he violated the law for years and his sentence "must take into account the gravity of this conduct," to deter both Manafort and anyone who would commit similar crimes.

Manafort is one of six former Trump associates and senior aides who have been charged by Mueller's team, which is believed to be nearing the end of its investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and possible collusion with the Trump campaign.

"Manafort committed an array of felonies for over a decade, up through the fall of 2018," the memo said, naming crimes including tax fraud, money laundering, obstruction of justice, bank fraud and violating a law related to lobbying.

"His criminal actions were bold," it continued, pointing out that they continued after he was charged, including attempting to tamper with witnesses, and lying to the FBI, government agencies and even his own lawyer.

Mueller's office last week said it agreed with a Justice Department calculation that Manafort should face up to 24 years in prison, after he was found to have violated a plea deal which agreed to a maximum sentence of 10 years.

Earlier this month, District Judge Amy Berman Jackson agreed with prosecutors that Manafort had "intentionally" lied to investigators about his contacts with a suspected Russian operative, Konstantin Kilimnik, in 2016 and 2017 -- despite having pledged to cooperate as part of his September plea agreement.

Gaza protesters call on Palestinian leader to quit

AFP, Gaza City

Thousands of protesters in the Gaza Strip yesterday called on Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to resign after attempts to pressure his rival Hamas with financial cuts in the impoverished enclave.

"Leave!" yelled crowds made up mainly of supporters of Hamas and Mohammed Dahlan, an Abbas rival expelled from the president's Fatah party and who now lives in exile.

They called on the Palestinian Authority to pay the full salaries of public sector employees in Gaza, run by Islamist movement Hamas.

Abbas, 83, has over the course of recent months reduced salaries in the Gaza Strip.

Protesters demanded increased electricity supplies to the enclave, where residents receive power in around eight-hour intervals.

Development

FROM PAGE 16

Hasina said.

Terming Chattogram the hub of all commercial activities, Hasina said the government was doing whatever was needed for the development of this region.

She said the government has planned to construct a marine drive from Chattogram to Cox's Bazar. "This will be constructed from Mirsarai to Cox's Bazar and will be very beneficial."

Hasina further said the tunnel would not only ease communication but also boost trade and businesses along with industrialisation of this area.

About the government's plan for the balanced development of the country, she mentioned that the government was making efforts to develop the country from the grassroots level. "People living in rural areas will get facilities like the urban areas."

The PM also recalled the name of former Chattogram City mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury behind the construction of the tunnel, saying that he had waged a movement to construct it.

On the Padma Bridge, she said the World Bank, without having any concrete evidence, attached stigma on the government, her and her family members.

"I threw a challenge to the World Bank to prove their allegations, but they failed to give any substantial documents," she said.

Hasina added that there were editors and owners of two renowned newspapers and a man of Chattogram who won the Nobel Prize who carried out propaganda simultaneously in the (US) State Department, reports the BSS.

She said the Nobel laureate used to maintain contact with his friend Hillary Clinton through emails on this issue and eventually the World

Bank stopped funding in the Padma Bridge project.

"Then we started constructing the bridge with our own financing as a challenge," she said.

Hasina added that a case was later filed with the Canadian Federal Court, "but the World Bank could not prove anything".

"I don't want the Padma Bridge to be named after me, I don't need my name on any structure, I just want to work for the people of the country ...," she said.

Referring to her government's initiative of establishing economic zones in the country, Hasina said a special economic zone was also being set up in Chattogram, and the aim was to attract more foreign investments to industrialise the nation.

The tunnel is being built at the cost of Tk 9,880.40 crore to turn Chattogram into "One City, Two Towns". Of the project cost, Tk 3,967.21 crore will come from the government and the rest from the Chinese government.

China Communication and Construction Company has been constructing the 9.3km tunnel, about 3.4km of which would be under the river, said officials.

Centering this tunnel, a modern communication system will be developed connecting Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar, which will eventually be connected to the Asian Highway network.

Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping jointly laid its foundation stone on October 14, 2017.

The expressway's construction cost is estimated to be Tk 3,250 crore.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Bridges Division Senior Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Zuo also spoke on the occasion.

Decades to build

FROM PAGE 2

other small traders who had no link to any illegal activity, including storing chemicals, have no idea how they can survive after losing everything to the fire.

Mannan's wife and three children wholly depended on his income from the shop. The whole family now remains clueless on how to move forward.

"Doctors prescribed I needed a spinal cord operation. I don't have any money. How can I do that now?" he asks, dazed and confused.

"I want to recover my business. I want assistance to restart it," he added.

"The month is going to end but there is no guarantee whether I will get salary," said Tusher, worrying over how he would help run his family back in Noakhali.

Two siblings -- Rana, 35 and Raju, 28 -- were burnt to death when they were in their telecom shop -- Rana Telecom -- close to Churihat. Their shop too had turned into ashes.

Rahimullah, uncle of Raju, said Rana has a five-year old son and an elderly father living in Begumganj, Noakhali. They were totally dependent on the brothers' incomes.

"How would this family survive now? Everything is uncertain," Rahimullah said.

48 BODIES HANDED OVER

Meanwhile, a total of 48 dead bodies were handed over to their relatives until yesterday. Nineteen more unidentified dead bodies are now stored in hospital mortuaries, said Oliur Rahman, deputy director at the Dhaka Deputy Commission's office.

Until Saturday, there were 19 relatives who claimed 19 dead bodies. However, two more people claimed to have had their relatives missing.

"It is only through DNA tests that we can confirm their identity," Oliur told The Daily Star.

The CID has requested parents or children to provide DNA samples to identify the unknown bodies of those who lost their lives in the Chawkbazar blaze last Wednesday.

Rumana Akhter, special superintendent of the Forensic DNA Laboratory of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), said, "If parents or children of their dead relatives provide samples, it is easier and faster to conduct DNA profiling."

In most of the cases, siblings of the dead have provided samples, she said, adding that a team of the CID Forensic DNA Lab has a booth in front of the Dhaka Medical College morgue. From Monday, parents and children of the victims can go to the CID lab at Malibagh to provide samples, she said.