

## ROHINGYA RELOCATION UNHCR calls for continued talks with govt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UNHCR international protection chief has called for continued discussion to make sure that relocation of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char island will be completely voluntary.

"UN has had very constructive discussion with the government of Bangladesh on the issue of relocation and it's important for us to continue this discussion," Volker Turk, assistant high commissioner at the UN refugee agency, told a press briefing in the capital yesterday.

The government has planned to relocate up to 100,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char, which is part of a chain of islands in the Bay of Bengal. Amid international concern, the government has been saying that the relocation will be fully voluntary.

Wrapping up his five-day visit to Bangladesh, the UNHCR official also emphasised on creating the conditions in Rakhine State of Myanmar for safe, dignified and voluntary return of the Rohingyas to their place of origin.

The UN does not have access to Northern Rakhine at the moment but the officials were able to get access to 60 villages in 2018, Turk said,

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina consoles the family of university student Abrar Ahmed Chowdhury at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, three days after the student was killed in a road accident in the city.

PHOTO: PID

## Bus hits car of Menon

Driver, conductor  
detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon's SUV was hit by a bus of Balaka Paribahan in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday morning.

The MP told The Daily Star that it was a fender bender and no one was hurt.

Menon, who was going to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 7:00am, said his vehicle was dented and scratched.

"It seemed like the driver of the bus was in a rush... A serious crash could have taken place," the former minister said.

When police arrived, the driver and conductor of the bus could not immediately produce the licence and registration of the bus, Menon said.

ABM Jakir Hossain, additional deputy commissioner (traffic) of police, said police had earlier seized

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## No fitness docs, yet running

FROM PAGE 1

Under the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1983, vehicles must undergo mandatory fitness checks every year. But the 71,218 vehicles in question did not do so since January 2009.

Unfit vehicles are a key reason behind road accidents, a major issue in the country right now, especially since last year's massive student protests demanding safer roads.

Tens of thousands of students took to the streets in Dhaka and other cities following the death of two college students in a road accident in the capital on July 29.

Students also took to the streets last week following the death of a university student in capital's Bashundhara area.

At least 4,439 people were killed in 3,103 accidents last year, and faulty vehicles were one of the main reasons, according to Nirapad Sarak Chai, a road safety campaigner.

As of December last year, about 38 lakh vehicles are registered with the BRTA. Of them, 24.5 lakh are motorcy-

cles that do not require annual fitness certificates.

Of the rest, some 6.5 lakh vehicles obtain fitness certificates every year on average, a BRTA official said.

Last year, the BRTA revoked registrations of 56,410 vehicles, including 3,740 belonging to different ministries and government agencies, for not renewing their fitness certificates for more than a decade.

The process to file cases against these vehicle owners is underway, Sitangshu said.

Prof Moazzem Hossain, former director of Accident Research Institute (ARI) at Buet, said the operation of such a huge number of unfit vehicles indicates that the authority's enforcement system was non-functional.

"Unfit vehicles increase the risks of accidents and so these vehicles definitely make our roads riskier," he said.

The Daily Star spoke to three executive magistrates who regularly conduct drives against unfit and illegal vehicles. They said such vehicles usually operate in the suburbs of Dhaka.

All three spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorised to speak to the media.

"I led a mobile court drive last week in Jatrabari and found many vehicles that did not have their fitness certificates renewed in 10 years or more," said one of the magistrates on March 10.

Such vehicles are operating on the Chattogram Road-Gulistan and Tarabo-Bishwa Road without even the route permits, the official added.

"Around a year and half ago, when I conducted a mobile court drive in Savar, I found many vehicles that did not renew their fitness certificates in 10 years or more," another magistrate said.

"You would find such vehicles operate in different short routes like Savar- Manikganj, Manikganj-Paturia, Nabi Nagar-Chandra, with backing from local political leaders. The number of such vehicles increases before Eid," he added.

According to Sitangshu these people are "wilful defaulters". Under the law, owners must inform

the authorities if their vehicles have been discarded.

But no one does so, making it almost impossible for the BRTA to say if the vehicles are on the road, he said. "But we think many of them are."

Many of the vehicles whose registrations were cancelled last year had been registered 30 to 40 years ago. But the majority of the 70,000 vehicles in question had been registered less than 15 years ago, he said.

"They are dodging taxes and creating safety concerns," he added.

The law does not say how long a vehicle can operate, said a BRTA official.

"We have nothing to do if someone can maintain their vehicle beyond 20 years if they are fit for the road," he said.

Mahbub-E-Rabbani, director (road safety) of the BRTA, said they could do little apart from conducting mobile court drives against such vehicles.

A court could fine highest Tk 2,000 for this offence, an executive magistrate said.

## 3 killed in 'shootouts'

Two of them drug  
peddlers, one murder  
accused, say police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two alleged drug peddlers and a murder case accused were killed in "gunfights" with police in Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The victims are Nur Mohammad, 40, of Nazir Para in Teknaf upazila, Nurul Amin, 35, of Jaliapara in the same upazila, and Korban Ali of Sadar upazila.

Acting on information, police first arrested Nur from Zero Point area of Teknaf town around 7:00pm on Thursday and detained Nurul from the same area after gleaning information from Nur, said Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station.

The two were interrogated at the police station. Based on their information, police along with them were going to Rajarchhara area to recover firearms and yaba pills around 3:00am yesterday, said the OC.

Sensing law enforcers' presence, some drug peddlers opened fire to snatch the arrestees, forcing them to fire back in self-defence, the police official added.

During the "gunfight", Nur and Nurul were hit by bullets when they were trying to flee from police custody, he said.

The injured were taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex where

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## 91 arrested in anti-drug raid

FROM PAGE 1

Lt Col Ashique Billah, commanding officer of Rab-2, said they first picked up more than 100 people from the spot.

"After scrutiny, we detained 91 people. Six of them are women," he said, adding that a case would be filed with Mohammadpur Police Station in this regard.

Asked about claims of detention of a number of innocent people, the Rab official said those who were found to have no links with drug trade were released after scrutiny.

In May last year, a massive anti-narcotics drive was carried out at the camp and 153 people were detained. However, locals alleged that the real drug dealers had fled the camp after being tipped off about the raid.

The Geneva Camp, also known as Bihari camp, is home to more than 40,000 Urdu-speaking people. Each of the Urdu-speaking families has eight to 10 members on average, and around 90 people share a toilet, according to camp dwellers.

Narcotics trade in the densely populated camp has been going on for decades. Even a year ago, drug peddlers of different ages were seen selling yaba openly at the camp.

But the picture changed recently after law enforcers launched anti-narcotics operations in May last year.

**QUESTIONS OVER ARREST**  
As the drive ended around 10:30am, a number of camp dwellers said Rab had picked up their family members who were never involved in narcotics trade.

Mohammad Jamal, 30, who works



Rab members walk with sniffer dogs at Geneva Camp in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday morning during a raid against drug peddlers. About 100 suspects were detained.

PHOTO: STAR

at Aftab Salon in Adabor area, was picked up when he was about to enter a restaurant in the camp to have breakfast, said his family members.

Mohammad Aftab, the owner of the salon, said Jamal has been working there for a decade, and he never saw Jamal take drugs.

"I never heard of his involvement in narcotics trade," Aftab mentioned.

Jamal's sister Farida Begum said her family members requested Rab mem-

bers to release her brother but they refused.

"He [Jamal] has a wife and a son. How will they survive now?" Farida asked.

The camp leaders were reluctant to talk about the drive. Some of them told this correspondent that they were in fear of both the drug dealers and law enforcers.

Seeking anonymity, one of the camp dwellers said, "The drug lords

don't live in this camp. They do business here through their hired men.

"Whenever the law enforcers conduct a drive in this camp, they picked up many innocent people. Only a handful of peddlers are arrested."

According to police and narcotics control officials, in recent times, the camp's name has appeared on several intelligence reports of law enforcement agencies and the Department of Narcotics Control.

## Quader 'out of danger'

UNB, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader is now out of danger after his successful bypass surgery, doctors said yesterday.

"He will be shifted to a cabin in three to four days," said Prof Dr Abu Nasar Rizvi of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

The IOBP machine has been removed and other parameters are in good condition, the doctor said.

Quader underwent a bypass surgery on Wednesday at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

The minister was admitted to BSMMU on March 3 following breathing complications and tests revealed three blockages in his coronary artery.

He was flown to Singapore the next day for treatment at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

## 3 shops gutted as 22-storey building catches fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three shops were gutted in a fire at the 22-storey building of Biswas Builders in the capital's New Market area last night.

The fire broke out around 10:50pm at the commercial-cum residential building. Firefighters were able to douse the fire around midnight, said Abdul Halim, deputy



assistant director of fire service and civil defence.

No casualty was reported as of 12:45am today, he said, adding that seven units of fire service rushed to the spot and were successful in dousing the flame.

Halim said hundreds of residents from the building went down after they saw smoke.

The origin of the fire could not be known immediately.

## BAGHAICHHARI KILLING NHRC team visits Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A two-member team of National Human Rights Commission yesterday visited Rangamati's Baghaichhari upazila where seven people, including two polling officials and four Ansar men, were killed in a shooting during the second phase of upazila polls five days ago.

Al Mahmud Faizul Kabir, director (crime and investigation) of the NHRC, who led the team, talked to the relatives of the victims and met local administration officials during the visit.

"Everybody is saying the attack occurred because of disputes over the polls as the targets of the attackers were ballot boxes, election materials, those involved in the election and their vehicles," Kabir told journalists.

He suspected that those who boycotted the polls might be involved in the attack.

The law enforcers could not ensure adequate security as they were not equipped with modern arms. It is imperative to better equip and modernise the local law enforcement agencies, he added.

Meanwhile, the army of Baghaichhari Zone yesterday recovered the rifle of Ansar member Mihir Datta, who was killed in the attack, said police.

MA Manzur, officer-in-charge of Baghaichhari Police Station, said the rifle was recovered in Dash Kilometre area of Marishsha-Dighinala road

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## Nur to take charge as Ducsu VP

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tomorrow's [today's] installation programme. Besides, we will continue our agitation to realise the students' logical demands, including re-election to the Ducsu and hall unions," said Nur.

The first executive meeting of newly elected student representatives of Dhaka University will be held today through which the student leaders will officially begin their duties.

Of the 25 posts of Ducsu, 23 were won by the members of the Chhatra League's panel.

He also said they were going to take charges showing respect to the voting rights of general students who had

voted for him despite many obstacles.

"Our demand for re-election will remain unchanged. We will take charge for addressing different irregularities of the university and to speed up the protest against the irregularities that took place during the Ducsu election," Nur added.

Asked whether the four other boycotting panels supported his decision, he said the other panel members thought that he should take the charge to continue the agitation for repolling.

Litan Nandi, who took part in the election from Pragatisheel Chhatra Oikya as the VP candidate, said the decisions of taking charge and

demanding re-election at the same time contradict each other.

"Nevertheless, the decision is up to him," Litan added.

Aroni Samonti Khan, leader of the independent panel, also echoed the same thought while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

Nur, who boycotted the March 11 polls, has been changing his decision in this regard since the polling day.

On the election day, Nur's panel Sadharan Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad boycotted the election and demanded re-election, raising allegations of irregularities.

The next day, the Ducsu VP-elect

changed his stance and demanded re-election to all posts, except for the VP and social services affairs secretary.

But a few hours later, after holding discussion with the other wings of protesting student, he demanded re-election to all posts.

The same afternoon, BCL President Rezwatul Haque Chowdhury Shovon, who was defeated in the race for VP post, congratulated Nur at TSC auditorium on campus, and Nur expressed solidarity with BCL to work together for ensuring rights of all students.

Hours later, he again said BCL men had carried out several attacks on him and he was not going to forget the scars

only because they greeted him.

On March 13, Nur went to meet the students of Ruqayyah Hall, who were observing a hunger strike in front of the hall gate demanding fresh polls to their hall union, and to take their opinion about whether he should take the charge. The agitating students then asked him to step aside.

Nur, along with all the elected representatives of the Ducsu and hall unions met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban on March 16, where he sought the PM's all-out cooperation for the proper functioning of the students' body.

The next day, he along with five

panels called a sit-in programme for March 18, demanding re-election to all posts of Ducsu and hall unions.

While speaking at yesterday's press conference, Nur also demanded students' union election in every universities and colleges across the country, saying the politics of muscle power have been established on the campuses in absence of students' union election.

"Students got enrolled into this university through their merit and their seats in the halls should be allotted on that basis. No students can be compelled to attend any political programme and no one can be allotted seats based on political consideration," he said.