

Persuade Myanmar to take back Rohingyas

PM urges China at meeting with envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday urged China to persuade Myanmar to take back their over one million Rohingya nationals from Bangladesh.

Hasina made the request when she had a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Zuo at her Sangsad Bhaban office, Ihsanul Karim, the PM's press secretary, told journalists after the meeting.

He said the PM once again expressed her firm stance over the Rohingya issue, saying that the displaced people have to go back to their homeland.

Zhang Zuo in response said China will play a constructive role in resolving the crisis.

Meanwhile, Beijing has invited the PM to pay an official visit to China from July 1-5, during which she will attend the annual meeting of the "New Champions", which is known as "Summer Davos" to be held in Dalian from July 1-3, upon the Chinese government's invitation.

It will be Hasina's first bilateral visit to Beijing, following her party's landslide victory in the December elections.

She will be meeting with President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang during the visit.

The press secretary said Hasina and Zhang also discussed her China visit at their meeting.

The PM said four instruments on bolstering bilateral cooperations between Bangladesh and China will be signed during her China visit.

Both the Hasina and the Chinese envoy expressed satisfaction over the existing bilateral relations between the two nations and hoped that the ties will be strengthened further in the future.

The Chinese envoy said the Dhaka-Beijing relations reached a new height after Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Bangladesh in 2016.

About the Dhaka-Beijing bilateral cooperation, Hasina spoke about China's support in the continuation of the construction work on Karnaphuli Tunnel.

Knowing that a book on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's visits to China will be published, Zhang Zuo said his country was interested in translating it into Chinese languages.

In this regard, the PM urged the envoy to provide photographs of Bangabandhu's China visit if they have any.

The PM's Principal Secretary Md Nojibur Rahman was present at the meeting.



Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Zuo calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhaban office in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: PID

STRANDED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

15 more Bangladeshi migrants return

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen more Bangladeshis of the 64 migrants, who were stranded in the Mediterranean Sea off the Tunisian coast of Zarzis for nearly three weeks, returned home yesterday afternoon.

"They came on a Qatar Airways flight in the afternoon and were provided with food...", said Abdul Kader, deputy assistant director of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, posted at the Probashi Kalyan Desk at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Of the 15, seven are from Brahmanbaria, five from Madaripur and one each from Gazipur, Sylhet and Moulvibazar, he said.

Seventeen others of the same group returned home from Tunisia on June 21, bringing the total number of returnees to 32.

The Bangladesh government, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), are working to repatriate them.

A foreign ministry official told The Daily Star that 24 more migrants are scheduled to fly home today.

On June 18, Bangladesh Ambassador to Libya Sheikh Sekander Ali had travelled to Tunisia and journeyed to the stranded migrant boat, which had seventy-five migrants, including the 64 Bangladeshis, to convince them to return home.

Earlier, the Bangladeshis stranded at sea refused to return home or even to Tunisia, but instead wanted to go to Europe.

Since the civil war began in Libya after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the North African country has become a major route of human trafficking or smuggling to Europe.

On May 9, a boat carrying around 65 migrants, including 40 Bangladeshis, capsized in the Mediterranean Sea near the coast of Tunisia.

According to the Bangladesh Embassy in Libya, some Bangladeshis and people of other nationalities were also rescued from boats in the sea on their way to Europe in recent weeks.

The embassy is processing their repatriation, said ASM Ashrafur Islam, labour counsellor of the Bangladesh Embassy in Libya.

Turkey court lifts house arrest on US consulate staffer

AFP, Istanbul

A Turkish court yesterday lifted the house arrest of a US consulate staffer charged with terrorism offences, just days before President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to meet US counterpart Donald Trump, an embassy official told AFP.

Mete Canturk is one of three consulate staffers arrested for links to a group accused of an attempted coup in 2016.

Canturk, a Turkish citizen, still faces trial and is barred from leaving the country, with his next hearing set for October 2.

US charge d'affaires Jeffrey Hovenier welcomed the decision to release him from house arrest.

"We continue to see no evidence to support the charges brought against him and we reiterate our call for this process as well as other processes involving our unjustly detained staff to be resolve quickly, transparently and fairly," said Hovenier.

Tigers on 5-day

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Tamim Iqbal, batsman Mohammad Mithun and pacers Abu Jayed Rahi and Mustafizur Rahman will use the break to recharge their batteries and rejoin the team in Birmingham on June 29, with official practice to begin the following day.

Bangladesh have so far done what the fans would have hoped. Beating higher-ranked South Africa was a pleasant surprise to open their campaign, but they have so far avoided any banana peels and beaten pre-tournament lower-ranked teams West Indies -- who usurped Bangladesh's seventh position in the course of the event -- and Afghanistan. Rain had cost them the scalp of the other lower-ranked team in Sri Lanka, and that has proved costly as they would have had eight points instead of seven and so would not have needed to rely on other results to make the semifinals, provided that they manage to beat India and Pakistan to tie the bow on a fine first round.

With little cricket in the immediate offing, other results were what the team had their eyes on before boarding the bus towards Birmingham. Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza asked after the state of the match between England and Australia, which had just started a half-hour earlier. When he had heard that Australia were batting first, he looked disappointed. Bangladesh,

currently placed fifth in the race to the semifinals and with two tough matches against India and Pakistan left, will need England to keep losing in order to make the semifinals.

Yesterday, it could be said that the number of Australian fans in England grew by 15, at the least.

For those looking for omens, the last long break Bangladesh had -- after the Sri Lanka match was washed out in Bristol on June 11 -- resulted in a refreshed outfit that played perhaps their best match of the tournament during a seven-wicket win over West Indies in Taunton.

"We have a long break before our next match... the players deserve a break actually. It's a long tournament and players have been playing since the Ireland tri-series [which ran from May 5 to 17]," Bangladesh team manager Khaled Mahmud told reporters yesterday in Southampton. "There is a lot of mental pressure while playing cricket continuously for a long period of time. We want our players to spend some time away from cricket and relax. We have two big matches ahead. It will not be easy for our players and we want our players to be as free from worries as possible over the next few days. Hopefully this break will help them to refresh mentally. It will also help us recover from the niggles we have in our team."

Deadly desperation

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High recruitment cost, fraudulence in recruitment and low pays are some of the very common problems faced by the migrants, said Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, chair of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at Dhaka University.

"The financial condition of a large section of them does not improve at all through the migration cycle. Many are pushed into poverty," she told The Daily Star.

Tasneem Siddiqui said their study in 2017 found 19 percent overseas jobseekers are defrauded in Bangladesh and cannot go abroad despite paying money to the middlemen.

And 32 percent migrants face various forms of exploitation -- joblessness, irregular wages or non-payment of wages abroad. Many of them return home a few months after going abroad, she said.

RMMRU studies in 1999 found 14 percent migrant workers saw deterioration of their financial condition, 64 percent saw improvement, while the condition of 22 percent migrants remained similar.

Sadly, the proportion of migrants who saw their financial condition deteriorate was now higher than that in 1999, Taneem said.

She cited a RMMRU study that found annual per capita remittance from the Bangladeshi male migrants fell by 11 percent in 2017 compared to that in 2014.

The annual remittance from male

migrants, which was Tk 218,812 each in 2014, came down to Tk 193,885. If it is adjusted to inflation, the drops in remittance would be 26 percent, she said.

The remittance (which was \$15 billion in 2018) sent by about one crore migrants annually is visible, but a huge amount of money that's laundered out of Bangladesh every year never comes to public domain, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

MALPRACTICES AND CORRUPTION

A TIB study in 2016 found that more than \$2 billion was laundered out of Bangladesh to six major labour-recruiting countries -- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Singapore and Malaysia -- to illegally purchase work visas. The amount could be bigger if all the other labour destination countries are considered.

Malpractices and corruption in labour migration process both in Bangladesh and destination countries are costing the Bangladeshi migrant workers at least 3-4 times their peers in other South and Southeast Asian countries, said Iftekharuzzaman.

Yet Bangladeshi migrants are often comparatively ill-paid than workers from other countries.

"As a result, it takes them at least several years of hard work to recover the high investment they make, in most cases by selling property or by borrowing at high interest," he told The Daily Star.

"While migrant remittance is

the second largest source of foreign exchange for the economy, the economic condition of workers themselves and their families transforms in real terms only to a limited level at best."

Tasneem Siddiqui said the authorities seem nonchalant in addressing those malpractices faced by the sector.

"If our government doesn't take strong actions against the illegal activities by the recruitment agents and brokers at home and abroad, the situation is bound to further worsen," he added.

Bangladeshis comprise a notable portion of the migrants taking risky sea journeys. Apart from Libya, another route of human trafficking or smuggling to Europe is through Iran. Within Asia, two prominent routes to Malaysia are Indonesia and Thailand.

Shah Alam, deputy inspector general at the CID, who dealt a number of human trafficking cases of Iran, said there are hundreds of incidents where criminal gangs lured Bangladeshi workers in the countries like UAE, Oman, Qatar, Iraq and Bahrain promising safe journey to Europe.

However, they took them to Iran, held them hostage, tortured and then collected ransom before putting them on boats.

In 2013, some 2000 Bangladeshis became victims of trafficking and each of them on average had to pay Tk 7 lakh to the trafficking gangs, he said.

Detergent, antibiotics in milk

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these brands are household names and they boast of their "superior quality" in advertisements.

The study began in May last year and the samples were collected from Shahbagh, Chankharpool and Palashi in the capital.

Prof ABM Faroque, director of Biomedical Research Centre, unveiled the findings at a press conference at the DU yesterday.

"Antibiotics for humans and animals are completely different. We need to stop using human antibiotics on animals," he said.

He warned of fatal consequences if this continued.

"We will not survive; we will die soon if the antibiotics are used randomly. To save human lives, please stop using antibiotics on animals that are meant for humans," he said.

Earlier in February, BSTI's own survey found lead and pesticides in milk marketed by top brands. It also found that the majority of raw and packaged milk do not meet the quality control authority's safety standards.

Consumption of detergents, lead and pesticides can damage lungs, kidneys and liver.

Interestingly, however, the Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute (BSTI) yesterday submitted a report to the High Court saying its test did not detect any hazardous substance in pasteurised milk of 14 brands, including some top ones.

The BSTI conducted the test in line

with an HC order on May 21 last year. The court will hear the matter on a later date, said BSTI lawyer Sarkar MR Hasan, who submitted the report.

However, it was not clear what parameters were used in the BSTI test.

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT?

Researchers tested eight samples of ghee, sold in tin cans, and all of them were found adulterated and way below the BSTI standards.

According to the standard set by the BSTI, ghee can contain highest 0.5 percent moisture content. The study found it to be 0.75 to 1.17 percent in the samples.

Also, all the samples contain 35.12-50.03 percent iodine when the permissible limit is 26 to 35 percent. The test also found sesame oil in the samples, which is completely prohibited.

All the 11 samples of fruit drinks contain artificial sweetener sodium cyclamate, which is prohibited because of its health risk, including cancer. It is currently banned in the US.

"Artificial sweeteners like cyclamate is carcinogenic, meaning it has the potential to cause kidney and liver stones and even cancer. It may also cause problems in the cardiovascular system, decrease in mental health and gastrointestinal disorders or adverse reactions," said Prof Faroque.

Chilli powder can have highest 1.25 percent acid insoluble ash, according to the BSTI. But the eight samples tested by the DU researchers contain 1.31 to 1.49 percent. Also,

two samples have moisture content beyond permissible limit.

The DU researcher also found textile colour in all the six samples of turmeric powder, while their moisture content is much higher than the BSTI limit.

The textile dyes found in turmeric powder is basically carcinogen, a substance that can cause cancer, Prof Faroque told The Daily Star.

"Textile dyes can cause asthma or lung inflammation in children. You will see many children suffering from asthma these days, but they are now not supposed to suffer from that disease at this early age," he said.

As for palm oil, the national limit for saponification value is 190-209, but the 10 samples tested had 220.05 to 286. The samples also failed to pass the BSTI standards in three other parameters. They have higher peroxide value, insoluble impurities and moisture content.

All the eight mustard oil samples have twice or thrice the moisture content allowed by the BSTI (0.25 percent). Also, three samples have higher saponification value, four have higher per-oxide and four have higher relative density.

Test results show all the eight samples of soybean oil contain more metal content than permitted. All the samples have copper between 0.13 to 0.53 ppm (parts per million) while six have 1.5 ppm iron. The maximum permissible limit of both the metals is 0.1 percent.

Suspended at last

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A departmental case will be filed against Mizan, and the home ministry will form a committee to investigate the incident of the top cop's marrying a woman forcibly and torturing her, said a home ministry top official.

The suspension came weeks after Mizan again came to limelight following his admission that he bribed an Anti-Corruption Commission top official, who was investigating his alleged illegal wealth.

Following his claim, the anti-graft watchdog suspended its director Khandaker Enamul Basir for leaking information and breaching service rules.

Recently, the Police Headquarters formed a three-member committee to investigate the incident.

Last year, the PHQ launched a probe against Mizan after allegations surfaced that Mizan, while serving as an additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, married a woman forcibly and tortured her.

At that time, a female news presenter of a private TV channel also alleged that Mizan had forced her into a car at gunpoint on December 12, 2017, adding that Mizan used to "disturb" her.

The PHQ probe found that the police officer misused his power to make personal gains, an act which "tarnished the image of the police department as well as the government". The PHQ forwarded the probe report to the home ministry several months back for the next course of action.

Amnesty raises fresh fears of executions in Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Amnesty International yesterday raised fresh concerns that Sri Lanka may soon end a 42-year moratorium on capital punishment and hang 13 men convicted of drug offences.

The London-based rights group said it was "alarmed" over media reports of preparations to resume hangings although the country still does not have a qualified hangman.

Australia

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37th over and effectively ended the contest. Starc ended the match when he dismissed Adil Rashid.

Earlier Finch, dropped on 15, and fellow opener David Warner (53) came through some testing early overs to share a stand of 123 as too many of England's pacemen, with the exception of Chris Woakes, dropped short.

The skipper's exit sparked a late flurry of wickets but Australia had enough runs on the board.

23 accused

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had legally obtained a permission for a 15-storey building, they made the FR Tower a 23-storey building with time. As a result, the casualties peaked.

The ACC sued 20 and five people respectively in two cases filed over illegal extension of FR Tower from 16th to 18th and 19th to 23rd floors. Two of the accused were charged in both the cases.

Some of the accused in the case are SMHI Faruque, owner of the land on which FR Tower is built; Liakat Ali Khan Mukul, chairman of Rupayan Housing Estate Ltd, the housing company that extended the building illegally; Tasvirul Islam, one of the owners of FR Tower; Muhammd Shawkat Ali, member of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR); Syed Nazmul Huda, sub-divisional engineer of Public Works Department (PWD); and Shamsur Rahman, executive engineer of PWD.

According to the ACC, Faruque took the land on lease in 1989 from Dhaka Improvement Trust. He applied to Rajuk for getting permission to construct a 15-storey building on the land in 1990 and got approval in the same year.

Later in 1996, a permission was illegally approved to extend the 15-storey building and make it an 18-storey one. The building was then extended to 23rd floor without any clearance from Rajuk.

Besides, several corrupt government officials, who were then posted in Rajuk and other government offices, also helped the building owners to build and sell the illegal floors, the ACC alleged.

But no action was taken until yesterday. In the wake of the allegations, Mizan was withdrawn from the DMP in January last year and attached to the PHQ.

Earlier, Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general (media) at the PHQ, said police investigated the allegations properly and sent the probe report to the home ministry long ago. It is the ministry's jurisdiction to take punitive action against Mizan, he said.