

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

# Malaysia to work with Bangladesh

*Its foreign minister promises to help ensure accountability for persecutions in Rakhine*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia said it would work together with Bangladesh to ensure quick repatriation of the Rohingya as well as accountability for the persecutions committed against the Muslim minority group in Myanmar.

Malaysia's Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah, who held a meeting with Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at the state guest house, Padma, yesterday evening made the assurance.

"He [Saifuddin] said Malaysia would work together with us in repatriation of the Rohingyas and on the question of accountability," Momen told reporters after the meeting.

The Malaysian minister arrived in Bangladesh on a three-day visit. He visited the Rohingya camps in Kutupalong and a Malaysian-run field hospital for the refugees there.

Saifuddin told reporters that Malaysia would ask Asean Coordination Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) to prepare a comprehensive report on the preparedness of the Myanmar government for the repatriation of the Rohingyas by the end of this year.

A recent report of AHA was seriously criticised as it had no input from the refugees and had almost entirely disregarded the Myanmar government's atrocities that led to mass displacement of the Rohingyas. It did not even use the term "Rohingya", denying the group's self-identity.

said Malaysia too was critical of the report and that it would ask AHA to prepare another report incorporating opinions of the Rohingyas.

"We both agreed that the repatriation of the Rohingya should occur as soon as possible," he said.

Malaysia, as a member of Asean, would convince Myanmar in this regard and facilitate the repatriation.

"We are trying our level best to convince Asean and Myanmar," Saifuddin said.

About one million Rohingyas, including the 741,000 who fled military atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine State to Bangladesh since August, 2017, live in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, putting huge economic and environmental pressure on Bangladesh.

Saifuddin said, "They [the Rohingyas] want to go back to Myanmar, but they want it to be safe and dignified."

The two ministers talked about reopening the Malaysian labour market for Bangladeshis. The market has been suspended since last September following allegations of monopoly and charging high recruitment fees by a syndicate of 10 Bangladeshi recruiting agencies and their lobbyists in Kuala Lumpur.

"We are working to improve the recruitment plan and salaries," Saifuddin said, thanking the Bangladeshi workers for their hard work in the Southeast Asian country, home to some eight lakh Bangladeshis. Minister Momen said Malaysia was preparing a comprehensive plan for labour recruitment from Bangladesh.

"We hope it will be open by August," he said without elaborating. He said the Malaysian prime minister might visit Bangladesh

towards the end of the year or early next year.

The ministers also talked about a possible free-trade agreement between Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Bangladesh and Malaysia had substantial trade and investment ties with the 2018 two-way trade valued at \$2.37 billion, an increase of 35.4 percent from \$1.75 billion in 2017, according to Malaysian foreign ministry.

## US calls on Germany to send ground troops to Syria

AFP, Berlin

The United States yesterday called for Germany to send ground troops to northern Syria, pushing Berlin to ramp up its military involvement in the fight against the Islamic State group as Washington looks to withdraw from the region.

"We want ground troops from Germany to partly replace our soldiers" in the area as part of the anti-IS coalition, US special representative on Syria James Jeffrey told German media including the Die Welt newspaper.

Jeffrey, who was visiting Berlin for Syria talks, added that he expects an answer this month.

Last year US President Donald Trump declared victory against IS and ordered the withdrawal of all 2,000 American troops from Syria.

But a small number have remained in northeastern Syria, an area not controlled by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and Washington is pushing for increased military support from other members of the international coalition against IS.

"We are looking for volunteers who want to take part here and among other coalition partners," Jeffrey said.

Washington has two goals in the region: to support the US-backed Kurdish forces that expelled IS from northern Syria as they are increasingly threatened by Turkey, and to prevent a potential IS resurgence in the war-torn country.

The US is hoping Europe will help, pressuring Britain, France and now Germany, which has so far deployed surveillance aircraft and other non-combat military support in Syria.

However Germany's history makes military spending controversial, so the prospect of sending ground troops may provoke division in Chancellor Angela Merkel's fragile coalition government.

The Social Democrats -- the junior partner of Merkel's governing coalition -- are likely to oppose any suggestion of sending soldiers to Syria.

The US request comes after Trump has repeatedly urged Berlin to increase its defence spending, last month calling Germany "delinquent" over its contributions to Nato's budget.

Syria's war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it started in 2011 with a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests.

## Media

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to another supplementary question from Jatiya Party MP Pir Fazlur Rahman from Sunamganj-4 as to whether the Digital Security Act was creating any obstacles to free and fair journalism.

The government will take necessary measures following discussions with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the information ministry if journalists point out any specific sections of the law that obstructs publication of news, he said.

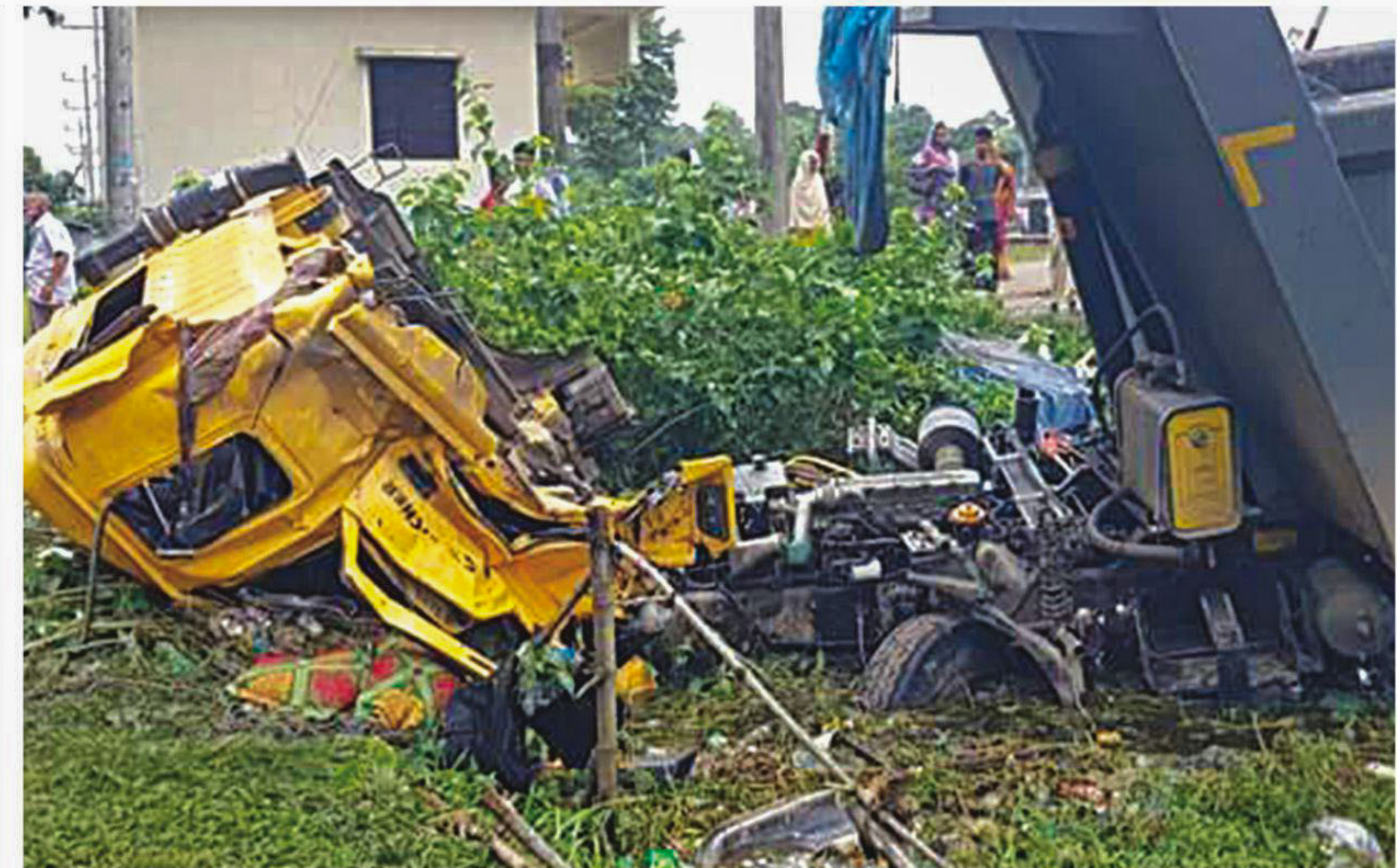
Answering to another query, the state minister informed the House that in some cases, some online news portals were involved in publishing fake news. The government had taken all measures to bring all online news portals under registration to stop fake and confusing news.

## BSF shoots

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for autopsy, he said.

About the incident, Commander of Burimari BGB camp Subedar Nayek Mizanur Rahman said, "What the cattle traders did was illegal. But BSF could arrest them instead of opening fire. We have sent a protest letter to them in this regard."



The wreckage of a truck hit by a train early yesterday. The accident killed two people and injured two others. The sand-laden vehicle was crossing Dakkhin Khan Level Crossing in Gazipur around 4:00am when it was hit.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## N'ganj rape suspect remanded

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after police sought a 10-day remand for two cases filed against him.

One of the victims' parent filed a case against him under the Women and Children Repression Prevision Act and Rab filed the other under the Digital Security Act.

He was placed on remand after a hearing of the case filed under the Digital Security Act.

The accused admitted his involvement in the crime in primary interrogation, said Aslam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Fatullah Model Police Station.

In defence, the accused said, "I was not like this. I committed the crime as I was possessed by the devil. I seek punishment for myself."

According to the case statements, Al Amin summoned his female students at his home and raped them at different times. He told the victims that he would publicly post doctored images of them if they told anyone about the incidents.

### SUSPECTS ARRESTED

Police yesterday arrested another madrasa teacher in Patuakhali on

charge of raping a fourth-grader in the district.

The accused is Mohammad Farazi, 40. He was arrested from Haridebpur dockyard while trying to go to Dhaka from Galachipa.

Akhter Morshed, officer-in-charge of Galachipa Police Station, said the victim's father filed a case against Farazi with the police station on Saturday.

Police will interrogate the accused in custody and take legal actions, he added.

On June 26, Farazi allegedly took the girl to his home and raped her. Later, the victim shared the incident with her father. The father filed a case after 10 days since the rape has happened.

In Mymensingh's Bhaluka upazila, police yesterday arrested a madrasa teacher allegedly for sexually harassing a minor girl.

The accused, Shariful Islam, 24, of Barachhala Hafizia Madrasa, allegedly tried to rape two minor girls at a local mosque where the duo went to attend coaching class. Fleeing the scene, the girls returned home and shared the

incident with their families. Later, locals and family members of the victims rushed to the spot, detained the accused and handed him over to police, said Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bhaluka Police Station.

One of the victims' mother filed a case against Shariful in this connection, he added.

Police in Natore yesterday arrested a primary school teacher over allegation of sexually harassing a fifth-grader in the district's Lalpur upazila.

The arrestee is Abdul Halim Dulal, 55, assistant teacher at Kunjpukur Government Primary School.

According to police, Dulal was harassing the victim inside a classroom. Hearing the girl scream, students and other teachers of the school rushed to the spot and caught the accused read handed.

On information, police rushed to the spot and took the accused into custody. He was sent to jail after he was placed before a court, police said.

Our Narayanganj, Patuakhali, Mymensingh and Natore correspondents contributed to the report

## Man beaten to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 28-year-old was allegedly beaten to death by a group of youths in Joranganj of Mirsarai upazila in Chattogram yesterday.

The group of youths picked up Mir Hossain in China Bari area when he was on his way to his Ali Nagar village home yesterday morning, said Inspector (Investigation) of Joranganj Police Station Mozammel Hossain.

They beat him up with iron rods and sticks. Mir died of his injuries at Chattogram Medical College Hospital in the evening.

Victim's father filled a case accusing five people in connection with the murder, Mozammel added.

## Australian Aboriginal site gains World Heritage recognition

AFP, Sydney

An Aboriginal settlement older than the pyramids that provides evidence that indigenous Australians developed sophisticated aquaculture thousands of years ago has been granted World Heritage status, the UN has announced.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in southeast Australia was created by the Gunditjmara nation some 6,600 years ago and includes remnants of elaborate stone channels and pools built to harvest eels from a lake and wetland swamp areas.

The site also holds evidence of stone dwellings that counter the myth that Aboriginal peoples were simply nomadic hunter-gatherers with no established settlements or sophisticated means of food production.

Unesco's World Heritage committee, in announcing the addition of Budj Bim to its global listing on Saturday, said the site showed the Gunditjmara had developed "one of the largest and oldest aquaculture networks in the world." The system of stone channels, dams and pools were used to contain floodwaters and create basins to trap, store and harvest eels that provided the population with "an economic and social base for six millennia", it said.

Budj Bim, in Victoria state, is the first site in Australia to receive World Heritage status solely for its Aboriginal cultural importance.

Nineteen other World Heritage sites in the country include the Great Barrier Reef, Kakadu National Park, the Sydney Opera house and fossil sites in the states of Queensland and South Australia.

The Gunditjmara people had lobbied for nearly 20 years for UN recognition of Budj Bim, and tribal elder Denise Lovett welcomed the listing as "a very special day for our community".

"This landscape, which we have cared for over thousands of years, is so important to Gunditjmara People," she told national broadcaster SBS.

"The decision also recognises Budj Bim's significance to all of humanity. We are so proud to now be able to share our achievements and story with the world." Archaeological evidence shows that Aboriginal peoples have lived in Australia for more than 60,000 years, making it one of the oldest continuous cultures in the world.

But since the arrival of European colonists in the late 18th century, the indigenous population saw most of its land taken for farming or livestock grazing.

## Why House was bypassed

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Hasanul Haq Inu, AL lawmaker Moyeen Uddin Khan Badal, Workers Party lawmakers Fazle Hossain Badsha, Mustafa Lutfullah, and Lutfun Nesa Khan also support his notice.

JSD lawmaker Shirin Akhter while raising a supplementary question criticised the government for increasing the price.

Opposition Jatiya Party MP Fakhrul Imam questioned whether it was legal to hike the price without parliament's approval.

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque defended the government move.

He said people would be affected by the price hike of gas in the short term but everyone would benefit in the long run as it would have positive impact on the economy.

The minister made the statement while responding to Shirin's question. He was responding instead of State

Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid, who was absent yesterday.

"The price of gas has been increased several times. There were reactions against these moves. I am admitting that the common people will be affected slightly due to the price hike of gas," he said.

Razzaque said gas, coal or diesel is needed for producing power and the government has to subsidise this sector.

He said for ensuring the uninterrupted power and gas supply, the prices might have to be increased but its positive effects, like setting up of more industries, factories, and mills, have to be taken into account.

The minister said if the government always subsidised the sector, then development in other sectors might be affected.

"The government hiked the gas price considering all the aspects. By this some people will be affected

directly, but indirectly everyone will be benefited. The positive effect will be on the economy," he said.

He mentioned that the government was importing LNG and that 500 million cubic feet of LNG had already been imported. Private organisation Summit Power was importing another 500 million cubic feet, he said.

Responding to JP MP Fakhrul's question on whether it was legal to increase the price without parliament's approval, the minister said he did not know anything about the matter.

"The MP will get his answer if he notified parliament," he added.

The gas price for consumers was raised by an average 32.8 percent with effect from July 1.

As per the new prices, households with a single burner stove would have to pay Tk 925 a month instead of Tk 750 while the double-burner users would have to pay Tk 975 instead of Tk 800.

## Viking boat

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"It is a small group of people who were buried in this way. You can suspect that they were distinguished people in the society of the time since burial ships in general are very rare," archaeologist Anton Seiler said in a news release.

In this sort of burial, the person was placed along with his or her riches in a boat that was then put into the ground.

The archaeologists also found a sword, an ornate comb, a spear and part of a shield in the intact boat. The identity of the man remains unknown.

The other of the two boats did not hold up as well. It was probably damaged during work on the land in the 16th century.

The group began excavation on this site last fall but was forced to take a break in the winter due to cold weather. They restarted the process

in June and are working to move the artifacts to a facility for further investigation.

It's been 50 years since the last burial ship was found in Sweden, according to Seiler.

"It is extremely exciting for us since boat burials are so rarely excavated," he said. "We can now use modern science and methods that will generate new results, hypotheses and answers."

## Taliban car bomb kills 14

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over talks intended to open the way for full peace negotiations in the future.

"It is unfathomable to endanger children in this way and I strongly condemn this attack," US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, said in a tweet.

Health officials in Ghazni said 13 adults, including eight NDS members, and a child were killed. At least 60 children who were attending classes in a private school situated near the blast site were among the 180 people wounded.

Doors and windows of the school were destroyed in the powerful explosion, the children suffered multiple injuries caused by flying shards of glass and broken pieces of wood.

"The casualty figures may rise as

this is not the last report of those injured in the powerful blast," said Zaher Shah Nekmal, a health director in Ghazni province.

The blast in a crowded area of Ghazni city was the latest in a wave of near-daily attacks by the Taliban, who now hold sway over about half of Afghanistan and continue to intensify attacks on Afghan forces despite increased US efforts towards a peace agreement to end the 18-year war.

The Taliban, who have repeatedly refused to negotiate with the Western-backed government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, agreed to join the intra-Afghan summit on the condition that those there would attend in a personal capacity.

About 60 high-profile Afghan figures and activists were in Doha to meet the Taliban officials during the two-day

conference, a meeting arranged by German and Qatari officials with the support of US negotiators.

Ghani condemned the Taliban bombing in Ghazni yesterday, and questioned their real intent as they hold talks in Qatar.

"They stain their hands with the blood of innocent people in Afghanistan every day. They should know that it is not possible to gain privileges in peace talks by targeting civilians, especially children," he said in a statement.

The intra-Afghan talks follow the start of a seventh round of peace talks between US and Taliban negotiators in Doha last week, which Khalilzad described on Twitter on Saturday as the most productive session to date. The US-Taliban talks were put on hold while the intra-Afghan dialogue takes place.