

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Myanmar continues to act with impunity

Int'l communities' inertia to blame, says UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rohingya

DIPLomatic CORRESPONDENT

Inertia at the international level has removed pressure on Myanmar and its allies and enabled impunity despite the country's military being accused of crimes against humanity and genocide, said UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on the rights of the Rohingya in a report published on Tuesday.

"Despite the widespread recognition that crimes, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity and genocide, were committed, the Myanmar military are yet to experience meaningful consequences either criminally or politically," it said. Myanmar is not only unable and unwilling to investigate and prosecute international crimes, the international community are enabling them to continue to act with impunity. Members of the UN Security Council are blocking routes to international justice and enabling barriers, the report said.

The report titled A New Shape of Catastrophe was published two years after the Myanmar military crackdown in Rakhine that caused an influx of over 743,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), chaired by Anne Main MP and co-chaired by Rushanara Ali MP, has called for the UK, as penholder on Myanmar at the Security Council, to lead on a Chapter VII UN Security Council resolution, setting out current conditions and the need for referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Referring Myanmar's case to the ICC is the only way that the entirety of crimes that have been committed would come under ICC jurisdiction, the report said.

While the ICC has commenced a pre-examination of crimes related to deportation of the Rohingya now in Bangladesh, this work would be limited in scope and likely fail to address the full range of violations and atrocities, AAPG report observed.

The report said raising the situation at the Security Council could help to change Myanmar government's political calculations as well as isolate and raise the political cost on China, Russia, and other countries that would prefer the status quo of Council inaction on the situation.

"The UK government should impose and expand targeted sanctions on military leaders, including Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, and key military-owned enterprises, and impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar."

PM blames Myanmar

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Fleeing military atrocities, including killings, rapes, tortures and burning of houses in the Rakhine State, more than 743,000 Rohingyas took shelter in Bangladesh since August 25, 2017. They joined the 300,000 others who had arrived earlier.

The second repatriation attempt failed last month.

Hasina said Bangladesh has continued its diplomatic efforts with the international community, including the UN, for the repatriation. Besides, European Union, Australia and United Kingdom have imposed sanctions on Myanmar military officials.

"We have requested friendly states like China, India and Japan for playing the necessary role in resolving the Rohingya crisis. We hope Myanmar will create a conducive situation in Rakhine and start taking back the Rohingyas soon," she said.

The prime minister then reiterated that Bangladesh gave shelter to the forcibly displaced Myanmar citizens on humanitarian grounds.

She added her five-point proposal at the 72nd UNGA session in 2017 was well accepted by the world leaders. The proposals included Myanmar must unconditionally stop the violence and the practice of ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State immediately and forever, and the Secretary General of the United Nations should immediately send a Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar.

All civilians irrespective of religion and ethnicity must be protected in Myanmar. For that "safe zones" could be created inside Myanmar under UN supervision, according to the proposals. 'AL DOES NOT BELIEVE IN VENGEANCE'

Answering a query from BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana, the PM said had the AL believed in the politics of vengeance, there would have been no existence of the BNP in the country. "Awami League doesn't believe in the politics of vengeance. If we did so, there would have been no existence of the BNP," she said.

While asking the question during yesterday's question-answer session in the House, Rumeen said, "The prime minister's instructions have become necessary for every case from [probing] murders of people to killing mosquitoes."

In reply, Hasina lambasted Rumeen for comparing the deaths of people with the killing of mosquitoes. She termed the question unexpected, unparliamentary and absurd.

"The UK government should influence the Security Council to impose such sanctions," it said.

"Without justice, recognition of their rights and citizenship, the Rohingya population will remain in limbo refugees in Bangladesh and across the region," said Rushanara Ali in a statement.

ENTIRE ROHINGYA VILLAGES DEMOLISHED IN MYANMAR

In a recent visit, BBC Southeast Asia Correspondent Jonathan Head saw four locations in Rakhine where secure facilities have been built on what satellite images show were once Rohingya settlements.

One of the locations include Hla Poe Kaung transit camp, which Myanmar government says can house 25,000 returnees. The camp was built on the site of two Rohingya villages, Haw Ri Tu Lar and Thar Zay Kone, demolished after the 2017 violence, reported BBC on Tuesday.

Another Rohingya village called Myar Zin was bulldozed to clear land for this camp. Speaking off-camera, officials there confirmed to BBC of the demolition.

Just outside the main town, Maungdaw, was Myo Thu Gyi, which once had a population of more than 8,000 Rohingyas. In September 2017, BBC filmed Myo Thu Gyi where many of the houses had been burned, but larger buildings were still intact. But now, there is a large government and police complex.

About three quarters of the population was Muslims in Inn Din, a village notorious for a massacre of 10 captured Muslim men in September 2017. The rest were Buddhists. Today, no trace of the Muslim quarter remains, reported BBC.

The houses, where Muslims used to live, were replaced by barbed-wire fences enclosing an extensive new Border Guard Police barracks. The Rakhine Buddhist residents told BBC they would never accept Muslims living next to them again.

BTRC stops

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Besides, BTRC also asked the operators not to sell new SIM cards to Rohingya refugees.

Zakir Hossain Khan, senior assistant director of BTRC, said they circulated the notice following the government's request.

Earlier, BTRC directed the mobile network operators to make sure that Myanmar did not receive any signal from operators in Bangladesh.

TEESTA ISSUE

Replying to another query, Hasina said she expected to get positive response over various disputed issues, including Teesta water-sharing, before her visit to India early next month.

"We're optimistic that all disputed issues between the countries will be resolved soon," she told parliament responding to the question from Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque.

The PM is scheduled to visit India on October 3-6 to attend India Economic Summit of the World Economic Forum with the theme "Innovating for India; Strengthening South Asia, Impacting the World" to be held in New Delhi on October 3-4. Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi are scheduled to have a bilateral meeting on October 5.

The PM yesterday said Bangladesh and India have already signed agreements on security, trade, power, energy, inter-communication, development assistance, environment, education, infrastructure development, culture and health.

About Teesta water-sharing, she said her government's diplomatic efforts were on for the agreement signing. The matter is being placed at the highest political levels of the two countries, she said.

"It hasn't been signed yet due to internal Indian politics," she said.

Replying to a question from JP lawmaker Rustam Ali Faraji, Hasina said Bangladesh has already taken initiatives for manufacturing a kit needed to detect dengue fever at the early stage. "We have started importing the raw materials since August 6," she said.

She added that her government has taken proper steps to check dengue and that an investigation was underway to find out those responsible for buying ineffective mosquito repellents.

'CHINA TO PLAY ACTIVE ROLE' Meanwhile, newly-appointed Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming yesterday said China will play an active role in the repatriation of displaced Rohingyas from Bangladesh.

He made the comment when he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban office.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

"China will play a constructive and active role in the repatriation of Rohingyas," the press secretary quoted the Chinese envoy as saying at the meeting.

"Describing the China-Bangladesh relations as a strategic one, Li Jiming said China was working on the Rohingya issue."



Students stick to a wall to avoid stepping on sewage on the street in front of their school in Isdair area of Narayanganj. Due to poor drainage in the area, even the school yard, inset, is flooded with smelly water. The photos were taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Dengue claims

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She was moved to DMCH around 4:00pm yesterday, where she died.

In Barishal, a 14-year-old boy breathed his last at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Asit Bhushan Das, a physician of the hospital, said Farhad Hossain Jihad, son of Babul Ahmed Hawlader of Char Lakshampur village in Muladi upazila, died around 1:20pm.

Farhad, a seventh grader, was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday night, he said.

In Mymensingh, a woman died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) on Tuesday morning. The victim, Fatema Akter, 50, was the wife of Nazmul Haque of Kishoreganj's Hossainpur upazila.

On September 3, Fatema was moved to MMCH from Kishoreganj General Hospital. She had been at the ICU since September 7 as her condition deteriorated, said AB Md Shamsuzzaman, MMCH assistant director.

In Khulna, another woman breathed her last at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) on Tuesday night.

Rahima Begum, 45, was the wife of Abdur Rahim Sheikh of Ataroi village in Satkhira's Tala upazila.

Rahima was hospitalised on Sunday and died around 11:30pm on Tuesday.

Partha Protim Debnath, assistant registrar of KMCH medicine department, told The Daily Star that Rahima died from dengue shock syndrome.

In Faridpur, Dofader Siddique Matubbar, 55, died from the disease at Faridpur Medical College Hospital (FMCH) early Tuesday.

Siddique, of Shrikishnagar village in Madaripur's Rajoir upazila, was a member of village police.

Hospital sources said Siddique was taken to the local upazila health complex with fever on Friday. As his condition deteriorated on Monday, he was referred to FMCH where he breathed his last around 1:00am on Tuesday.

FMCH Director Kamda Prasad Saha confirmed the death.

In Jashore, two women died from the disease in Manirampur upazila yesterday, reports UNB.

Jahida Begum, 44, and Jahanara Begum, 35, were hospitalised with fever on Monday.

Arif Ahmed, medical officer of Jashore General Hospital, said they asked Jahida's relatives to shift her to Dhaka as her condition worsened. But she could not be moved because of her critical condition. She died around 6:25am.

Abdur Rahim, supervisor of the hospital, said Jahanara breathed her last around 4:00am.

Meanwhile, Local Government Division Minister Tazul Islam yesterday told parliament that Tk 21.50 crore was allocated for 12 city corporations to control mosquito.

He said the government set aside Tk 450 crore for the "City Corporation Development" programme.

Of the amount, Tk 21.50 crore was given for controlling mosquito, the minister said while replying to a query from Awami League lawmaker M Abdul Latif.

He added that Tk 7.50 crore was allocated each for Dhaka south and north city corporations, Tk 1 crore each for Chattogram, Narayanganj, and Gazipur city corporations, and Tk 50 lakh each for Barishal, Cumilla, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet city corporations.

Our correspondents in Barishal, Mymensingh, Khulna, and Faridpur contributed to this report.

Height of brutality

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amputated hand. "Where is it? Bring it to me, I'll fix it," said the little girl, leaving his father in tears.

Distraught, Numan wonders how he would take his daughter out on his motorbike like he used to do every day.

"How will I take her on my motorbike?" he asked as his voice cracked.

Numan, an executive member of Mymensingh district Swetchasebak League, further said some villagers of Khodaboxpur gave Tk 1.8 lakh to a local Jubo League leader and his men for 30 electricity connections a year ago. But they failed to arrange power connections from local Palli Bidyut office.

"Later, the villagers made efforts to get electricity connections, and I helped them in this regard. This was my fault," Numan told this newspaper yesterday.

Palli Bidyut officials, along with local policemen, went to the village on September 2 morning to give electricity connections, he said.

"When they were working, those who took money from the villagers tried to stop them. Police then chased them away. They [those who took money] thought I was behind it [arranging power connections]," Numan said quoting villagers.

Around 5:30pm, a group of armed men, led allegedly by Rezaul Karim Sumon, president of Jubo League Joshora union unit, attacked him when he was returning home from Bhaluka upazila by his motorbike.

"I was first hit by stones. When I fell to the ground, they attacked me with machetes, pipes and iron rods."

Numan said among the attackers, he could identify Sumon, Rakib, Akib, Wahid, Faisal, Mahfuz, Olad, Mustakin and Sarwar Jahan Dhanu.

"I could hear them scream 'kill him, kill him' ... Sumon, Mahfuz and Olad started hacking my left hand with machetes. Then I lost consciousness."

Numan was first taken to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex. As his condition worsened that night, he was brought to NITOR in the capital.

Hours later, Numan's left hand was amputated. The doctors were struggling to stop bleeding. He needed five bags of blood, said his family members.

Numan's wife Mahmuda filed a case with Gafargaon police station on September 2 against 15-16 people, including Sumon. Nine of the accused were named and the rest unnamed.

"They carried out the attack to kill

him," said Mahmuda.

She said it was beyond her imagination that she would have to see her husband in such a state.

Expressing unhappiness over police's role, she alleged that the accused were roaming free in the area but law enforcers were not arresting them.

"Police arrested only one of the accused, but he too was released on bail," she said.

Sub-inspector Ahsan Habib, also investigation officer of the case, said they arrested Sarwar, president of Jubo League Ward-3 unit in Joshora union, for his alleged involvement in the attack on September 2. But he was freed on bail.

Of the accused, Wahid and Akib were arrested for drug peddling in August this year and a Mymensingh court sent them to jail. They were later released on bail, added the official at Gafargaon police station.

Asked about the family's allegation of police negligence, Monirul Islam, inspector (investigation) at the same police station, said the claim was not true, and police were carrying out drives to arrest the attackers.

Aminul Islam, a resident of Khodaboxpur village, said he along with several others had given money to a local Jubo League leader to get electricity connection a year ago but didn't get it.

"Recently, we made efforts on our own to get power connections, and Numan helped us."

Demanding immediate arrest of the attackers, Aminul said it was sad that Numan was attacked for helping them.

The Daily Star tried to reach Sumon on his mobile phone several times yesterday but found it switched off.

Talking to this newspaper, Tariqul Islam, chairman of Joshora union parishad, said Sumon was watching a football match on Dowlatpur High School ground when the incident took place.

"Sumon was not involved in the incident. He may have been implicated in the case out of rivalry in local politics," said Tariqul, member of Gafargaon upazila AL unit.

Asked why no organisational action was taken against the alleged attackers, Salahuddin Polish, convener of Gafargaon Jubo League, said the matter was still under police investigation.

He further said they were "observing" the developments.

[Our Mymensingh correspondent contributed to this report]

BCL president

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into the prime minister's official residence.

Temporary passes are valid for only a few hours.

Top Awami League and its associate bodies' leaders are given special passes as well as verbal consents to meet Hasina at the Gono Bhaban, the sources said.

When asked about their passes being suspended, the Chhatra League president and general secretary told The Daily Star that they did not know about the matter.

The passes were suspended three days after Hasina, during a meeting of AL leaders in the Gono Bhaban, expressed annoyance over the recent "controversial" activities of the Chhatra League leaders.

At the meeting, the AL leaders pointed out the various "controversial" activities of Shovon and Rabbani.

After being made president and general secretary on July 31 last year, Shovon-Rabbani declared Chhatra

League's 301-member central committee.

The committee had a few married people, non-students, extortionists, expelled Chhatra League men, drug dealers, and addicts, and former leaders and activists of Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir, according to insiders.

They said many dedicated Chhatra League leaders had also been left out.

Amid protests by a section of Chhatra League leaders, 19 committee members were dropped on May 29 but their names were not made public.

During the first half of their two-year tenure, the duo could form only two committees. They failed to form committees for Jagannath University and Eden Mohila College although the councils of these units were held two months ago.

On Tuesday, two vice-presidents of the organisation got involved in a scuffle over sitting inside Shovon's car near Madhur Canteen in Dhaka

RAPE CHARGES

Nine arrested in six districts

STAR REPORT

A Bogura court sent an arrestee to jail yesterday, a day after he was picked up by police from Dhunat upazila on charges of raping four schoolgirls.

Eight more people were held over rape allegations in five other districts on Monday and Tuesday.

The arrestee in Bogura is Joyal Abedin, 52, a rickshaw puller from Khaduli village in Dhunat upazila.

Quoting the victims' families, police said local children used to visit Joyal's home to collect olive from an olive tree there.

Joyal was alone at his home on Friday as his wife went to visit a relative while their three sons, all garment workers, had been at their workplaces in Dhaka.

Around noon, two third-graders went there to collect olives. Joyal enticed the girls to enter his room with the promise that they would be given more olives.

As the two stepped inside, Joyal locked the door from inside and violated them, Gaziur Rahman, additional superintendent of police

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CASE AGAINST SONAGAZI OC

Nusrat's mother, brother testify at a Dhaka court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday recorded statements of Nusrat Jahan Rafi's mother and brother in connection with a case filed against Moazzem Hossain, former officer-in-charge of Sonagazi Police Station.

Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge Ash Sams Joglul Hossain recorded the statements while hearing a case filed for recording and circulating footage of Nusrat.

A total of 16 people gave their statements so far in connection with the case.

Nusrat's mother Shirin Akter told the court that they went to Sonagazi Police Station on March 27 to file a case against Siraj Ud Doula, principal of Sonagazi Islami Senior Fazil Madrasa, for sexually harassing Nusrat.

She said, "OC Moazzem recorded Nusrat's statement in his room. I wanted to be with my daughter when

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University.

Shovon dragged a journalist inside his car when the latter was filming the scuffle and Shovon deleted the footage himself.

Rabbani, also the general secretary of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Dcusu), faced criticism for installing an Air Conditioner in his Ducusu building room.

Meanwhile, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself is looking into the matter involving the incumbent president and general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

"Any amendment or changes to Chhatra League will be handled by the prime minister herself," he told reporters at the Secretariat.

Asked about the upcoming council of Chhatra League, the minister said, "There has been no decision about it yet. It's an internal matter of the party."

He said the prime minister tasked four party leaders to deal with issues related to Chhatra League.