

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE

Gambia to open its case before UN court in Dec

AFP, The Hague

Gambia will open its case against Myanmar before the UN's top court in December accusing the mainly Buddhist state of genocide against its Rohingya Muslims, the tribunal said Monday.

The small, majority-Muslim African country will ask the International Court of Justice to make an emergency injunction to protect the Rohingya, pending a decision on whether to deal with the wider case.

Gambia's case at the ICJ accuses Myanmar of breaching the 1948 UN Genocide Convention through a brutal military campaign targeting the Rohingya minority in Rakhine state.

The ICJ said in a statement that it "will hold public hearings in the case" from December 10 to 12. "The hearings will be devoted to the request for the indication of provisional measures submitted by the Republic of The Gambia," it added.

Gambia says it is filing the case on behalf of the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Some 740,000 Rohingya were forced to flee into sprawling camps in Bangladesh after a brutal 2017 military crackdown, in violence that United Nations investigators say amounts to genocide.

Gambia's lawyers said it wants the

ICJ to announce urgent emergency measures "to protect the Rohingya against further harm."

The case will be the first international legal attempt to bring Myanmar to justice over allegations of crimes against the Rohingya, and is a rare example of a country suing another over an issue to which it is not directly a party.

The ICJ was set up in 1946 after World War II to adjudicate in disputes between UN member states.

Separately the International Criminal Court -- another Hague-based court which was set up in 2002 to probe war crimes -- on Thursday authorised its chief prosecutor to launch a full investigation into the persecution of the Rohingya.

Rights groups meanwhile filed a separate lawsuit over the Rohingya in Argentina in which Myanmar's former democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi was personally named.

Myanmar has repeatedly defended the crackdown on the Rohingya as necessary to stamp out militants.

It has not reacted to the ICJ case, but said last week that the ICC investigation was "not in accordance with international law".

Myanmar is not a member of the ICC, but the court says it can be held responsible for crimes that affect neighbouring Bangladesh.

Swift govt actions check

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a planned way. And there is an evil attempt to spread rumours about the supply of salt," the statement read.

It noted that the industries ministry already assured people of enough salt stocks and freshly produced salt in the market in December.

There is no shortage of salt and no possibility of supply shortfall, the statement said.

Millers and leading salt companies also said there was no shortage of salt.

Bangladesh Small & Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) said that misleading information over salt stocks and price were being spread by an unscrupulous group.

Salt production in the country hit a record 18.24 lakh tonnes in 2018-19 fiscal year, the BSCIC said.

The Police Headquarters requested people to dial 999 or inform their local police stations if shop owners demanded exorbitant prices for salt.

Since Monday afternoon, rumours started making the rounds in social media that there would be a shortage of salt supply and the prices would go through the roof.

Panic buying started first in Sylhet with people thronging grocery shops. Motaleb Miah, a rickshaw-puller, was seen buying two kg of salt from a convenient store in Baluchar area of Sylhet Monday night.

"My neighbour told me that he saw on Facebook that salt prices will rise from Tuesday. We can do without onions but not without salt. So, I rushed to buy some salt and stock up," he said.

Shawkat Ali Chowdhury of Majortila in Sylhet, said, "I saw it on Facebook and then I sent my son to the store. The store owner charged Tk 60 for a kg bag of branded salt, which is usually Tk 35."

As the rumours kept spreading, the district administration's mobile courts raided key places. On Monday night, magistrates fined several traders in Gowainghat upazila, Sylhet city, and Barlekha upazila of Moulvibazar and Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj for stockpiling.

In Dhaka, people gathered at grocery shops and kitchen markets. Some bought four to five kg of salt even though they needed just a kg a month.

Many grocery shopkeepers told customers that they were out of salt even though they were not, claimed buyers.

Amena Khatun, of Gudaraghat in Mirpur, said she went to Mirpur Shah Ali City Corporation Market after hearing about the salt price hike from her neighbour.

"She told me that the price of salt would jump to Tk 200. Besides, salt will not be available from tomorrow [Wednesday] as there is a crisis. That's why I came," she said.

Amena bought five kgs. Usually, she buys two kg a month.

Abul Hossain, the owner of Mehedi

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Star LIVE



Store in the market, said he had two cartons of salt to sell over the entire week but it was all gone by yesterday afternoon.

The Daily Star correspondents found customers thronging kitchen markets in the city to buy salt.

It was the weekly holiday for Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the capital but hundreds went there to buy salt from small grocery shops since morning.

A kg was selling for as high as Tk 80.

As the crowd became bigger, police first prevented retailers from selling more than a kg to a person but around 3:00pm police closed all shops.

Humanyun Alam, a distributor of a salt brand in Karwan Bazar wholesale market, said, "I had a stock of 1,000 cartons and all of them were sold yesterday."

He said they usually sell around 200-300 cartons a day.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi at a briefing said the monthly demand for salt was 1 lakh tonnes but the country had 6.5 lakh tonnes in stock.

Salt Mills Owners Association said a vested quarter spread the rumours to "destroy the industry" and to create an unstable situation.

Nurul Kabir, president of the association, told The Daily Star, "There is three months' stock of salt with us. Furthermore, new salt will come in 15 to 20 days. There is no salt crisis ...". Claiming that there were four lakh tonnes of salt in stock against a monthly demand of 1.50 lakh tonnes, he urged all traders not to increase the price.

At least 19 lakh tonnes would be produced between December and May, he added.

Syed Alamgir, managing director of ACI Consumer Brands, told The Daily Star, "We did not change the price of salt. We are supplying salt normally."

Asif Iqbal, deputy managing director FMCG of Meghna Group of Industries, which markets Fresh brand salt, said, "Based on our average sales, we have got adequate stocks to meet the demands of our customers for the next two months."

Our district correspondents reported that people thronged convenient stores from noon to buy salt.

Police and the local administrations used megaphones to ask locals not to pay heed to the rumour.

EU court puts legality of Polish court reform in doubt

AFP, Brussels

Europe's top court yesterday ruled that Polish judges must decide on the validity of a disciplinary chamber imposed on them by the government, in a possible setback for Warsaw's controversial judicial reforms.

As part of a disputed effort to assert greater political control, Poland's right-wing populist government has created a disciplinary panel for judges that opponents allege lacks independence.

The European Court of Justice stopped short of declaring the new body illegal, but asserted "the primacy of EU law" and said courts must not refer cases to the panel without ensuring it is "independent and impartial".

The Polish opposition will doubtless leap on the ruling to bolster their case that Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's government is attacking the independence of the judiciary.



Transport workers bring out a procession near Mohakhali Bus Terminal in the capital yesterday, protesting the enforcement of Road Transport Act. Inset, agitating workers block Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Maona of Gazipur's Sreepur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Businesses in for a blow

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Dhaka and at least 19 districts.

The central leaders of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, was present at the briefing. It was also attended by leaders of several unions affiliated with the federation.

After the press conference, a group of transport workers brought out a procession from Tejgaon Truck Terminal around 12:30pm and marched through the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Avenue to Mohakhali Bus Stand.

On the way back to the truck stand from Mohakhali, some of the transport workers showed sandals to the members of a BRTA mobile court conducting drives on the opposite side of Tejgaon Fire Station.

BGMEA WORRIED

Contacted, Rubana Huq, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said, "We are extremely worried [about the strike]. This is very bad news."

With the garment sector going through a difficult time, the strike will create serious problems for exporters as foreign buyers are unwilling to wait for even a day, she told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We don't want any unrest, any disruption... We want seamless process [for export]."

Both the government and the transport leaders should hold talks immediately to find a solution so that the country does not face damages, she stressed.

STRIKE IN 19 DISTRICTS

Yesterday, transport workers went on work stoppage in Mymensingh, Barishal, Pabna, Chapainawabganj, Pirojpur, Gazipur, Madaripur, Faridpur and Jhalakathi.

Earlier on Monday, the strike began in Khulna, Satkhira, Jhenidah, Narail, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Jashore, Rajshahi, Naogaon and Bhuapur upazila of Tangail.

In Pabna, only a few buses left for the capital but no other inter-district buses operated yesterday, causing sufferings to many.

Like every other day, Nurunnabi Khan went to the bus stand in the town to go to his workplace in Santhia upazila but found that no bus was leaving the station.

"I had to take a small vehicle to go to my office. It cost me much more," he said.

Road transport workers in Barishal stopped running buses from Nathullahad Bus Stand on 25 routes, including the Dhaka-Barishal route.

Operation of trucks also remained suspended, and transport workers allegedly barred battery-run three-wheelers from running in and around the bus terminal.

Besides, transport workers in Chapainawabganj halted bus service to Naogaon and also on inter-upazila routes. However, they ran buses on Chapainawabganj-Dhaka route. BRTC buses operated as usual.

In Khulna, strike continued for the second consecutive day, and the workers declared that they would carry on the work stoppage until amendments to the law are made.

However, after a meeting with the deputy commissioner of the district, Khulna Motor Workers' Union President Nurul Islam said they would operate buses today.

Also in Kushtia, no buses left the stations due to the ongoing transport strike.

Balaka Kundu, 54, wanted to catch a bus for Rajshahi to visit her ailing daughter but failed to get any.

"I am now looking for a vehicle to go to Rajshahi. I don't have enough money to rent a private car," she said.

Two Dhaka-bound buses of Deluxe Paribahan, crammed with passengers from Chuadanga, were stopped by transport workers in Jhenidah. The protesters forced the vehicles to turn

back.

Transport workers also blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh road in Gazipur's Sreepur area for two hours, causing many students seeking admission to Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University to suffer in gridlock.

In Satkhira, bus services remained suspended amid the transport strike, which rolled into the second day in the district.

Transport workers in Mymensingh started a strike yesterday.

Asked about the strike called by the local transport unions, Osman Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, said, "We don't have control everywhere. Even regional leaders of the federation can't calm agitating workers."

SITUATION IN CAPITAL

Fewer buses plied the city streets as transport workers abstained from work following drives by BRTA mobile courts.

Mahbubur Rahman, organising secretary of Dhaka Road Transport Owners Association, said it happened because of a rumour that mobile courts were fining vehicles Tk 25,000 each for plying city roads without valid documents.

A large number of vehicles without fitness certificates and also drivers without licences did not bring out their vehicles to avoid paying hefty fines, he told this newspaper.

But the situation started getting normal around noon, he claimed.

Meanwhile, seven BRTA mobile courts in the capital filed 79 cases against different vehicles yesterday. The courts also fined violators of traffic rules a total of Tk 1.19 lakh and seized papers of three vehicles.

Man injured

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Shaheen on the scene, Shafiqul said.

The family members chased the attackers, but could not catch them, he said.

Rafiqul was taken to Satkhira Sadar Hospital and later shifted to KMCH.

Contacted, Hafiz Ullah, a doctor of Satkhira Sadar Hospital, said the victim was in critical condition as 60 percent of his body was burnt.

This correspondent could not reach Babu Gazi, despite several attempts, as his mobile phone was switched off.

Contacted, Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station, said police had visited the spot and found evidence of an acid attack.

HC suggests

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DAG Bashar placed the report before the HC bench as per its earlier order.

Meanwhile yesterday, Shah Monjurul Hoque, the lawyer for the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (Bapi), told the HC that his client was also in favour of the drive against the adulterated medicines.

The bench asked Bapi to ensure that the names and expiry dates of medicines are written clearly in Bangla on the strips.

The bench fixed December 12 for further hearing on the issue.

Barrister Milon submitted the writ petition on June 17, citing from reports published in The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo on June 11.

According to the reports, the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection found expired medicines in 93 percent of the pharmacies in the capital where it conducted drives over six months.

The HC on June 18 directed the government to confiscate all expired medicines from pharmacies across the country and destroy those within a month.



PM returns home from the UAE

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home from Dubai last night, wrapping up her four-day visit to the United Arab Emirates, where she attended the Dubai Air Show-2019, among other programmes.

The PM paid the visit at the invitation of UAE Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE, and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

An Emirates flight carrying the prime minister and her entourage landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at 10:55pm.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, PM's Security Adviser Major General (ret'd) Tariq Ahmed Siddiq, Principal Secretary Md Nojibur Rahman, Chief Coordinator on the SDG Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Md Abul Kalam Azad, PMO Secretary Sajjadul Hassan, along with top civil and military officials, were there to receive the PM.

RANGAMATI KILLINGS

Cops yet to identify the 3 deceased

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The law enforcement agencies could not identify three people who were killed in a "gunfight" with police on Monday evening.

Police sent the bodies to Rangamati General Hospital yesterday morning where forensic experts finished conducting autopsies on the bodies by 1:30pm.

Sawkat Aktar, residential medical officer of the hospital, said, "The victims were shot in their heads while one of the victim's faces was badly damaged by bullets."

"The shooters shot them from a very close distance."

The doctor also said that the victims were aged between 25 and 30.

Although Rangamati district police claimed that the three were killed in a "gunfight", local sources said some members of Mogh Bahini abducted the trio from remote Noapara area of Rajbila union in Bandarban Sadar.

Uthan Marma, chairman of Gaidya Union Parishad, said, "The gunfight incident created a climate of fear and intimidation among the indigenous communities living in the area."

Male members of the communities in the area are now staying elsewhere, said locals and public representatives.

Alomgir Kabir, superintendent of Rangamati police, said the trio would be buried as unclaimed bodies.