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MOMENT OF TRUTH in The Hague

AGENCIES

A watershed legal battle will take place at the UN's highest court today to hold Myanmar accountable over the alleged genocide against its Rohingya minorities. Myanmar leader and Nobel Peace prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who arrived in the Netherlands on Sunday, will defend her country's record during three days of hearings initiated after a lawsuit was filed with the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

West African nation Gambia last month launched the case with the top UN court while rights groups filed a separate lawsuit in Argentina.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) also approved an investigation into the 2017 military crackdown that forced some 740,000 Rohingyas to flee into Bangladesh.

UN investigators last year branded the bloody expulsion a genocide, and called for the prosecution of top generals -- including the powerful army chief. They also accused one-time democracy icon Suu Kyi and her government of complicity in the atrocities.

Suu Kyi's office posted a picture of her arrival at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport

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HOW IT GOT THERE



ARMY OPERATIONS

- On Aug 25, 2017, Rohingya militants attack police posts; a dozen officers killed
- Army operations begin in Rohingya villages
- UN says at least 1,000 died in the first two weeks of crackdown

REFUGEE EXODUS

By Sept 5, 2017, more than **120,000** Rohingyas cross into Bangladesh, fleeing mass-killings, gang-rapes and arson



POSSIBLE 'GENOCIDE'

- Bangladesh, Myanmar on Nov 23 agree to start repatriation
- UN rights chief on Dec 5 warns of possible "elements of genocide", calls for int'l probe



PROBE ANNOUNCED

- On Sept 18, 2018, ICC announces preliminary probe into crimes against Rohingyas
- In November, attempt to repatriate **2,260** Rohingyas fails; they refuse to leave without guarantees of citizenship, safety



LAWSUIT AT ICJ

- On Aug 22 this year, another attempt to send back Rohingyas falls flat
- On Nov 11, Gambia files a lawsuit at ICJ, accusing Myanmar of genocide
- On Nov 14, ICC approves a full investigation into Rohingya persecution
- On Dec 8, Suu Kyi travels to The Hague to lead Myanmar's defence at ICJ



7,40,000 Rohingyas took shelter in Bangladesh since Aug 2017. They joined **2,00,000** others from previous waves of violence

The burden gets heavier

Rohingya crisis drags on as int'l community did little to put pressure on Myanmar; Bangladesh facing increasing challenges, security risk

PORIMOL PALMA

By stripping the Rohingyas of citizenship in 1982 and sparking waves of violence since the 70s, Myanmar has created a crisis for which Bangladesh is having to deal with socio-economic burdens, security risks, and diplomatic challenges, analysts said.

Though the violence against the Rohingyas going on for around four decades, the international community did little to help address the problem, they said, adding that the burden on Bangladesh keeps increasing.

The situation is so grim that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the 74th UN General Assembly this year had to say that Bangladesh was bearing the burden of a crisis which was of Myanmar's own creation. "It's an issue solely between Myanmar and its own people, the Rohingyas. They themselves have to resolve it."

"Despite our efforts to contain it, the crisis is now becoming a regional threat. Besides, increasing congestion and environmental degradation is challenging health and security in the area.

International relations analysts, however, hope the genocide case at the International Court of Justice, where a three-day hearing starts today, will put real pressure on Myanmar so that it takes concrete steps to ensure Rohingya repatriation, their citizenship and safety in Rakhine.

Former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain said, "Rohingya crisis is affecting not only Bangladesh, but also regional cooperation. It needs to be solved at the soonest."

The waves of violence, including forced labour, rape, and religious persecution at the hands of the Burmese army in Rakhine state since the 70s, caused mass Rohingya exoduses -- major ones being in 1977-78 1991-92, 2012, 2016, and 2017.

Most of those who fled Myanmar in the 70s and early 90s were repatriated by 1997. But since then repatriation has been very thin. There was no return of the Rohingyas after 2005, government officials said.

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Ajoy Roy passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Ekushey Padak winner and retired Dhaka University physics teacher, Prof Ajoy Roy breathed his last at the intensive care unit of the capital's Birdem Hospital at 12:35pm yesterday.

He was 84 and had been suffering from old-age complications.

The renowned academician was the father of writer-blogger Avijit Roy, who was brutally stabbed to death on the Dhaka University campus on February 26, 2015. The attack was carried out

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INDIA'S CITIZENSHIP BILL

Lower House clears it after heated debate

Minorities, except Muslims, from other countries to get nationality; protests erupt in Assam, Kolkata

AGENCIES

The lower house of the Indian parliament last night passed a controversial bill which will grant citizenship to minorities, except Muslims, fleeing persecution in neighbouring countries.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill was cleared by the Lok Sabha after nearly 12 hours of heated discussions, with 311 voting in favour and 80 against.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed delight over the passage of the bill, saying the proposed law is in line with India's centuries old ethos of assimilation and belief in humanitarian values.

According to the bill, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who took refuge in India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution in those countries, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but be

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NARCOTICS CASE

Law enforcers press charges against Samrat

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday pressed charges against Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Samrat, a former Jubo League leader and an alleged kingpin of the illegal casino business, in a case filed under the Narcotics Control Act.

Samrat's alleged accomplice Enamul Haque Arman was also charged in the same case.

Sub-Inspector Abdul Halim, investigation officer

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UN RIGHTS COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Dhaka yet to make visible progress

Say human rights activists; law minister claims steady progress in implementation

ZYMA ISLAM

Every four years, the United Nation's Human Rights Council reviews Bangladesh's human rights situation as part of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

During the UPR process, member states of the Council take stock of how Bangladesh is performing, and accordingly give recommendations to the country, which can either be implemented or rejected.

Last year, Bangladesh was reviewed and it agreed to implement 178 of the suggestions to improve the human rights situation in the country. These included

ending underage marriage, strengthening the National Human Rights Commission, drafting an anti-discrimination law, investigating all cases of murder of journalists and of enforced disappearances.

Bangladesh agreed to five recommendations on child marriage, ranging from ending it completely to amending the Child Marriage Restraint Act to make sure the legal minimum age of marriage was 18 years.

There has, however, not been any perceivable implementation of many of these.

For instance, no amendment has been made to the child marriage act.

"There has been no progress in that regard," pointed out eminent human rights activist Sultana Kamal, referring to the fact that the law still has a provision that approves of marriage under the age of 18 years under "special circumstances."

The Council had earlier also

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Archers create history

Sweep all 10 gold medals

ATIQUE ANAM from Pokhara

Bangladesh's archers swept all 10 gold medals of the 13th South Asian Games, cruising to the title in the four events decided yesterday and in doing so, set a few individual and collective records in Pokhara.

Bangladesh had won all six team gold medals in recurve and compound archery on Sunday, and followed that up with four gold medals yesterday, thanks to gold from Ruman Sana in men's recurve individual, Ety Khatun in women's recurve individual, Sohel Rana in men's

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