City

Webinar on Rohingya Crisis

Repatriation the only solution

Academicians urge int'l community to mount pressure on Myanmar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saying that repatriation is the only solution to the Rohingya crisis, academicians in a webinar yesterday urged the international community to mount pressure on Myanmar so that it takes back its nationals stuck in Bangladesh.

They also accused the international community of having a double standard regarding the Rohingya issue.

The academicians were from different fields of studies, including international relations, geography, disaster management, social sciences, environmental sciences, and peace and

Department of Disaster Science and Management, University of Dhaka, and Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London (UCL), jointly organised the webinar, titled "Rohingyas in Bangladesh: Socio-Political and Environmental Perspectives".

Presenting a paper at the programme, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, of DU's international relations, asked if the international community could impose sanctions on Iran and North Korea, then why Myanmar would not be slapped with such sanctions.

"It is a double standard policy. It is not good for the international community. If you maintain a double role in the global world, people will not take you [the international community] seriously," he said.

Prof Imtiaz said the Rohingya diaspora should be engaged in the repatriation process and suggested that the diaspora choose several leaders, instead of one, to avoid being a "target".

"The Rohingya leadership should be a civil entity of a diverse group. There are windows of opportunities for the international community to put pressure on the Myanmar authorities to resolve the Rohingya crisis. And there is no other option than repatriation to resolve the crisis."

Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, of department of disaster science and management and also pro-vice chancellor (Academic) of Dhaka University, said following the Rohingya influx deforestation occurred that causes flash flood, land erosion and regular fire incidents in the camp areas.

Due to hill cutting, deforestation and unplanned settlements in the camps, protected vegetation after 2017, Prof

percent camp area would be susceptible

to experiencing landslides. He said the sooner the Rohingys

Bangladesh and Myanmar. Prof Kazi Matin Ahmed, of department of geology at Dhaka University, said groundwater is a vital resource for sustaining livelihood of the

protected from undesired impacts by

plans, he said. DU Prof Md Rafiqul Islam said mistrust and grievances of the local community over the Rohingya issue were increasing day by day.

undertaking appropriate management

"To resolve the crisis, there is no option other than repatriation of all Rohingya people to Myanmar."

Cox's Bazar camps.

The island is tectonically stable, he said, adding that from 2014 to 2020, the island was enlarged and approached to a rounded shape that seems more stable than the previous years.

"The accredited land is higher than the eroded land indicating the island is

Prof Sadeka Halim, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Dhaka University, osed a question: Is Bhasan Char really

"Bhasan Char is not the answer. We need to repatriate them [the Rohingyas]. We need to have a lot of dialogues with our counterparts in the Myanmar, including civil society, academicians and Rohingya diasporas, to mount pressure on the Myanmar government for the repatriation."

Taking part in the webinar as the chief guest, State Minister for the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Md Enamur Rahman said repatriation was the only measure required to protect both the host and the Rohingva

the camp area lost around 70 percent communities. It may be 'last chance' to find Covid origins: WHO

REUTERS, Geneva

The World Health Organization said on Wednesday its newly formed advisory group on dangerous pathogens may be "our last chance" to determine the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and urged China to provide data from early cases.

The first human cases of Covid-19 were reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. China has repeatedly dismissed theories that the virus leaked from one of its laboratories and has said no more visits are needed.

A WHO-led team spent four weeks in and around Wuhan earlier this year with Chinese scientists, and said in a joint report in March that the virus had probably been transmitted from bats to humans through another animal but further research was needed.

director-general Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said the investigation was hampered by a dearth of raw data pertaining to the first days of the outbreak and has called for lab audits.

The WHO on Wednesday named the 26 proposed members of its Scientific Advisory Group on the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO). They include Marion Koopmans, Thea Fischer, Hung Nguyen and Chinese animal health expert Yang Yungui, who took part in

the joint investigation in Wuhan. Maria van Kerkhove, WHO technical lead on Covid-19, voiced hope that there would be further WHO-led international missions to China which would engage the country's cooperation.

She told a news conference that "more than three dozen recommended studies" must still to be carried out to determine how the virus crossed from the animal species to humans.

Reported Chinese testing for antibodies in Wuhan residents in 2019 will be "absolutely critical" to understanding the virus's origins, van Kerkhove said.

The WHO, in an editorial in Science, said that detailed investigations of the earliest known and suspected cases in China prior to December 2019 were still needed, including analyses of stored blood samples from 2019 in Wuhan and retrospective searches of hospital and mortality data for earlier cases.

Labs in the area where the first reports of human infections emerged in Wuhan must be a focus, as ruling out an accident requires sufficient evidence, it said.

Mike Ryan, WHO's top emergency expert, said the new panel may be the last chance to establish the origin of SARS-CoV-2, "a virus that has stopped our whole world".

The WHO was seeking to "take a step back, create an environment where we can again look at the scientific issues" he said. "This is our best chance, and it may be our last chance to understand the origins of this virus.'

Chen Xu, China's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told a separate news conference the conclusions of the joint study were "quite clear", adding that as international teams had been sent to China twice already, "it is time to send teams to other places.'

On course to firing

Energy Agency (IAEA) to send the fuel

to the Bangladesh territory.

Upon its arrival in Bangladesh, the fuel would be taken to the base station in Pabna with the highest security protocol, he said.

He hopes that fuel for the plant could be brought within the middle of 2023 and then a trial run of the plant would start.

constructing infrastructure following the guidelines of the IAEA and they have expressed satisfaction over the works so far.

Asked about the risk of radiation, Akbar said the construction of the nuclear project is designed in such a way that the amount of radiation emitted from the plant during its normal operation would be so insignificant that it will never rise above the level set for a person who will work on the site.

Apart from the active and passive safety systems, there are five layers of

safety in the design documentation of the Rooppur Power Plant.

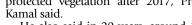
It is guaranteed by the design as well confirmed by the vendor country that the radiation limit beyond the 300 metres of our reactor building will never exceed above the internationally acceptable level in any condition,

either in normal operation or in an

emergency. The limit of radiation within the 300-metre periphery -- which would include those operating and maintaining the plant -- would be different from that for the general public beyond the periphery.

"There is no risk of radiation after the 300 metres of this nuclear power plant or even for anyone who will work on the site.

The Rooppur power plant project is being implemented by Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission with technical and financial support from



He also said in 20 years, around 10

are repatriated the better for both

host communities as well as providing humanitarian services to the displaced There are potential risks to groundwater resources in Ukhia-Teknaf area associated with the Rohingya influx. The resources need to be

Zillur Rahman, professor of department of disaster science and management, talked about the Bhasan Char where the government is targeting to relocate one lakh Rohingyas from the

becoming more stable," Prof Zillur said.

the answer to the Rohingya problem?

hampering the journey of the nation's uplift and creating a problem in the She said those who can't earn people's confidence and trust and have no ideology can carry out such

As a Hindu community leader

do so [engaging in communal

Cumilla "very unfortunate", Hasina

said, "This is an era of technology

and those involved in the incident

will definitely be found out using

of caste, creed and religion in

Bangladesh celebrate all festivals

together. "Religion is for individuals

and festival is for all and we enjoy

But there are a few cliques who are

"Some people are religiously

out to destroy the spirit by carrying

out some communal incidents, she

blind and they always want to create

communal conflicts. Such people

belong not only to the Muslim

community, but also to all other

religions. In that case, if we all work

Hasina said the Cumilla incident

occurred at a time when the country

was progressing towards development

at full speed and it was aimed at

together, they can't do any harm."

people irrespective

Terming vandalising of temples in

incidents] in future.

technology.

added.

She said

every festival together."

people were planning to attack them during immersion of the idols of Goddess Durga tomorrow, the PM said they are aware of it and measures have already been taken to this end. She called upon the Hindu

on expansion of Nalka Bridge has narrowed the highway in the area, causing excruciating jam.

Culprits to be hunted down

Vehicles stuck in a long tailback in Nalka bridge area on the western side of the Bangabandhu Bridge in Sirajganj yesterday. Work

regarding the information that some aware and careful about communal

community leaders, particularly those of the Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Committee, to formulate a policy to determine how many Puja mandaps will be set up across the country to celebrate Durga Puja keeping in mind the constraint of security personnel to ensure safety and security of the mandaps.

urged the Hindus Hasina community people not to consider themselves as minority people and perform their religious rituals with the same rights enjoyed by followers of other religions as they are born and brought up in the country and fought shoulder to shoulder to liberate it during the Liberation War.

In this connection, the premier recalled the memory of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, saying that he had turned Bangladesh into a secular country by incorporating the matter in the

"Bangabandhu wanted people of all faiths to practice their respective religions freely.

The PM said not only Bangladesh but Committee President Shailendra Nath sought the government's intervention also neighbouring India needs to be Majumder.

remembered with gratitude the help India provided during the 1971 Liberation War. 'So, my request is that they should

harmony. She said Bangladesh always

be a little more aware so that nothing is done there that affects our country, Describing Bangladesh as a country

of religious harmony, Hasina said people will perform their religious rituals with dignity and sincerity.

She renewed her determination to build Bangladesh as a peaceful country where there will be no room for militancy and terrorism.

Highlighting various measures taken by her government for theuplift of the Hindu community, the PM said her government was committed to ensuring welfare of all irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Hasina said the dignity of Bangladesh has been established in the global stage as it has turned into a developing nation. "We want the country to be a developed and prosperous one by 2041 with upholding the dignity.

Bangladesh Puja Údjapan Parishad President Milon Kanti Datta and the principal of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in Dhaka, Swami Purnatmananda Maharaj, spoke at the function, chaired by Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja

Hand hygiene for all a far-off goal

On the other hand, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report mentioned that sustainable handwashing education and practices in the community could reduce the number of people with diarrhoea by 23-40 percent, diarrhoeal illnesses in people with weakened immune systems by 58 percent, respiratory illnesses in the general population by 16-21 percent and absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illness in schoolchildren by 29-57 percent.

According to the 2018 National Hygiene Survey, prepared by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with Unicef and WaterAid Bangladesh, 60 percent of the respondents did not know that washing hands with water and soap is necessary before eating.

Md Monirul Alam, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) specialist of UNICEF, however, said that only awareness and education cannot ensure that people will wash their hands regularly. For this, handwashing

facilities are necessary.

"We must reinstall the facilities and hand over the maintenance responsibility to any agency or NGO. Besides, shopping malls should also maintain handwashing facilities on their own. "In terms of schools, there must be

group facilities for handwashing, so that they can wash hands in groups and between intervals. Two basins are not enough for 150 students to wash their hands." In terms of initiating a national

WaterAid campaign, Bangladesh Country Director Hasin Jahan informed The Daily Star that the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has launched a global campaign "Hand Hygiene For all" with the WASH as a stakeholder last year.

"Minister Muhammad Tajul Islam also announced a roadmap, in which by 2030 appropriate measures will be taken to ensure handwashing facilities for all... Besides, as part of the initiative, we have already worked on updating the national hygiene habit tends to fade away faster."

promotion strategy, and hopefully within the next three months, we will finalise it.

She also highlighted the importance of public facilities for continuing the handwashing practices, especially for people in rural areas and lowincome settlements -- as prices of handwashing equipment and soaps still remain unaffordable for many.

Shamima Akhter, head of corporate affairs at Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, however, said that during the entire pandemic period, they have ensured the widespread availability of their value pack products at every corner of the country and utilised national media presence to promote handwashing.

She, however, added, "We have seen that the government and developmental partners have reduced the handwashing communication in 2021, which made people reluctant to maintain their habit of washing their hands... Without constant encouragement and awareness, the

Jab campaign goes to brave little ones

College Hospital around noon.

Of those vaccinated yesterday, 50 students each were from Government School and SK Government Girls High School, and 10 each were from Jatir Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman High School of Sadar upazila and Garpara Zahid Maleque High School.

Mobassir Rahman Rafid, Afnan Azad, Israt Jahan Joynab and Tasmia Akter were among the first to receive the shots.

All of them were kept under close observation in the vaccination centre for an hour. No side effect was reported at that time.

"We returned to school after one and a half years. But there was a fear of getting Covid-19. We will stay relaxed now after receiving the vaccine," said Israt Jahan, a 10th-grader of SK Government Girls High School. According to health officials, all

these children will be kept under

observation for seven to 14 days. If

the trial run is successful, the child

vaccination campaign will be launched on a large scale in Dhaka soon.

Then the campaign will be expanded to 20 other districts under which around 30 lakh schoolchildren will get the Pfizer jabs, they added. Speaking at the event, Zahid Maleque said the government will

vaccinate 30 lakh schoolchildren initially. "There are over a crore [school] children in the country. We will vaccinate every one of them gradually,"

he said. "We have 60 lakh Pfizer doses currently. He added that around half of the population will get vaccines by

So far around 5 crore, or 21 percent of the total population, have received the first dose of Covid-19

About the novel coronavirus transmission, the minister said, "The Covid-19 situation is under control now. The positivity rate is 2.4percent now with a lower death rate. Despite this, we have to follow the health

Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), among others, were present at the event.

7 DIE, 466 GET COVID

Seven more people died from Covid-19 in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said a DGHS press release.

With this, the total number of Covid deaths in the country now stands at 27,737 and the death rate is 1.77 percent. At least 466 new infections were

recorded during the period, taking the number of people infected to 15,64,485, added the release. The positivity rate was 2.16 percent

against 21,568 samples tested across the country in the 24 hours. At least 695 Covid patients

recovered during the period. The number of recoveries rose to 15,26,368 and the recovery rate was 97.56 percent.

Among the seven deceased, three were men and four women.

Work on Bridge

20km tailback on Sirajganj highway

РНОТО

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The expansion work of Nalka Bridge, on the western end of the Bangabandhu Bridge, has caused a long tailback since Wednesday.

20 kilometres on both sides of the bridge that is situated on the Karatoa in Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila. At worst, the stretch goes up to

The tailback extended for around

40 kilometres at nights, reported our correspondent. Rafiqul Islam, traffic inspector in Sirajganj, said a large number of vehicles remained stranded on both

sides of the bridge.

The vehicles on the route were plying using a single lane due to the ongoing construction work. As a result, vehicles on one side of the bridge remain stranded, he added.

Additional policemen were deployed on the highway to ease the movement of the vehicles and control the heavy traffic, he further said.

Meanwhile, because of the long

tailback, vehicles were taking turns to sub-roads, eventually causing traffic jams across the district. The jam at the Nalka Bridge impacted traffic pressure on Bonpara,

Bogura and Nagarbari highways, reported our correspondent. drivers alleged that they had to remain stuck in the jam for over five hours to

cross the 20-kilometre stretch. Thousands of vehicles from 16 northern districts and five to six southern districts use Bangabandhu Bridge regularly and those would face difficulties plying on the highway due to the tailback, said the police official.

AL tickets

FROM PAGE 1

In a statement yesterday, the central committee of AL said Mohammad Wasim, instead of Atikur, will run for chairman in Haripur union while Putul Rani Biswas, not Hashem, will vie for

the post in Nasirnagar sadar union. Asked, AL Office Secretary Barrister Biplob Barua said the décision to nominate the two accused was made as they hid the information on their nomination forms. After AL President Sheikh Hasina learnt that they were facing charges of carrying out communal attacks, she took the decision to scrap their nomination on Wednesday night.

The attacks on Hindu villagers' houses shocked the nation in 2016. Police pressed charges against the suspects in December 2017, said sources at Brahmanbaria Chief Judicial Magistrate Court.

Police arrested Atikur on January 5, 2017, in the capital's Bhatara area. The local government ministry suspended him from his post of UP chairman on January 23, 2017. The suspension was withdrawn later and he walked out of jail on bail on November 6, 2017.

On October 29, 2016, a group of villagers assaulted a Hindu man in Nasirnagar, saying he had hurt their religious sentiment with a Facebook post, and handed him to police.

The next day, 15 temples and more than 100 houses of Hindu villagers were vandalised. Valuables were looted and many of the houses were set on fire. Further attacks took place in the following weeks.

Criminal Investigation The Department later found out that the Hindu man who was assaulted and arrested over the Facebook post, did not make the post. Someone else gained access to his Facebook ID and made the

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad yesterday announced a sit-in programme at all puja mandaps today for three hours from 11:00am, protesting the attacks on Wednesday.

A statement from the parishad also said one of its teams visited the mandaps in Cumilla which were attcked.