

Belgium Queen visits Rohingya camp in Cox’s Bazar



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

Queen of Belgium, Mathilde Marie Christine, visited the Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Ukhiya, Cox’s Bazar last morning.

She landed at Cox’s Bazar airport from Dhaka on a special flight around 10:15am yesterday.

The Queen is on a three-day visit to Bangladesh in her capacity as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) advocate.

After reaching the camp, Mathilde visited an education centre, primary health service centre, Rohingya women’s market, nursery and eco-shed built with Belgian funding, and talked with Rohingya women.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud accompanied the queen during the visit.

The Belgian queen’s visit to Bangladesh will help with the repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar, Hasan Mahmud said.

He added it will also be helpful to get a better response from the international community about the Bangladesh government’s care for the Rohingyas under the supervision of the United Nations.

Hasan said the only solution to the Rohingya crisis is their repatriation to their own country with dignity.

Madrasa boy dies by suicide Police believe he was sexually assaulted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 14-year-old madrasa student who police believed was a victim of sexual assault died by suicide at his home in Dhaka’s Kamrangirchar.

Police recovered the boy’s body around 10:00pm on Monday and sent it to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

There were signs on the body that indicated that the boy was sexually assaulted, Md Ashraful Haque, sub-inspector of Kamrangirchar Police Station, mentioned in the inquest report.

He died by hanging himself from the ceiling fan in his room, likely because he was unable to tell anyone about his situation, the report read.

In order to determine the actual cause of his death, an

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Ukrainian servicemen fire a BM-21 Grad multiple launch rocket system towards Russian positions on a frontline near the town of Marinka, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Donetsk region, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia suffers ‘deadliest day so far’ Ukraine says 1,030 Russians killed in 24 hrs as fighting intensifies in east

AGENCIES

Ukraine yesterday said the last 24 hours were the deadliest of the war so far for Russian troops, as Moscow pressed on with an intensifying winter assault in the east bringing tens of thousands of freshly mobilised troops to the battlefield.

The Ukrainian claim could not be independently verified and Russia denies its forces have suffered such losses and also claimed to have killed large numbers of Ukrainian troops in recent weeks.

Tallies of enemy casualties from either side have typically been seen as unreliable, and Kyiv offered few details of the latest battles.

But the assertion that the fighting was the deadliest so far fits descriptions from both sides of an escalating campaign of close contact trench warfare, which has left snow-

covered battlefields of eastern Ukraine littered with corpses.

The Ukrainian military increased its running tally of Russian military dead by 1,030 overnight to 133,190, and described the increase as the highest of the war so far. For its part, Russia said it had inflicted 6,500 Ukrainian casualties in the month of January.

The war is soon entering its second year at a pivotal juncture, with Moscow attempting to regain the initiative while Kyiv holds out for Western tanks to mount a counter-offensive later in 2023.

After Russia failed to capture the Ukrainian capital last year and lost ground in the second half of 2022, Moscow is now making full use of hundreds of thousands of troops it called up in its first mobilisation since World War Two.

Criticising govt can never be sedition: GM Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday said criticising the government can never be sedition.

“Our politics is for the people of the country. We raise our voices for them. Through criticism, we point out the government’s mistakes on behalf of the people. This can never be sedition,” he said.

Quader, also the deputy opposition leader in parliament, made the remarks at a meeting in the party chairman’s Banani office.

He said the government has divided the people of the country.

“The Pakistan government discriminated against us before independence. Unfortunately, this discrimination is still prevalent. This is what is contrary to the spirit of independence,” he said.

Bangladeshi team to join rescue efforts in Turkey

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is sending a joint support team led by the Armed Forces Division to Turkey to conduct search and rescue operations in the aftermath of Monday’s horrific earthquake.

A 12-member rescue team from the fire service has been prepared to go as part of the joint support team that is being dispatched on the instructions of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

In view of the terrible earthquake that occurred in Turkey on Monday, the prime minister has given instructions to send a combined aid team there.

This is the fire service department’s first overseas trip to conduct rescue operations in the international arena.

Mayor sued for cutting three children’s hair

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N’ganj

A municipality mayor of Narayanganj was sued for cutting the hair of three male children after publicly accusing them of theft.

One of the children’s guardians filed the case against Gopaldi Municipality Mayor Halim Sikder with Araihaazar Police Station, said Officer-in-Charge Azizul Haque.

In the case, three of the mayor’s associates – Faruque, Dipak and Utpal – were also made accused. Faruque and Dipak have already been arrested, said the OC.

The children, aged between 7 and 11, are the students of a local madrasa, said their guardians.

On February 6, Halim, also the joint secretary of Awami League’s Araihaazar upazila unit, cut the children’s hair after accusing them of stealing machine parts from his factory premises.

HSC results today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent exams will be published today.

To get results through SMS, a candidate will have to send an SMS to 16222 typing HSC, first three letters of respective board name, roll number and the year.

Alternatively, candidates can also get results from <http://www.educationboardresults.gov.bd>.

They can also download individual result sheets by entering roll and registration numbers.

Educational institutions can also download their results from <https://dhakaeducationboard.gov.bd/> by putting in the EIN number of the institution.

Three dead as another migrant boat sinks off Greece

AFP, Athens

Three migrants died and more than 20 were feared missing after a second boat sank off the coast of Greece in just days, the coastguard said yesterday.

The two women and one man who drowned are believed to have been part of a group of 41 people whose dinghy sank after hitting a reef near the island of Lesbos, a coastguard spokeswoman told AFP.

Sixteen people have been rescued so far amid an ongoing search by land, sea and air that’s being hampered by strong winds, she added.

On Sunday, four children and a woman died when a boat carrying another group from neighbouring Turkey sank off the Greek island of Leros.

The coastguard managed to rescue 41 people, including six children and two adults.

The number of migrants requiring rescue has risen in recent weeks as more people attempt to reach Greece from Turkish shores on shoddy and overcrowded vessels despite the rough winter seas.

In December, a two-month-old baby died in a shipwreck off Lesbos.

Some 2,246 people fleeing wars and poverty are known to have lost their lives in the eastern Mediterranean since 2014, according to statistics from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 1 was completely destroyed. “His condition is critical,” he added.

Golam Rasul, younger brother of Rinku, a student of the geography department at Kahramanmaraş Sütçüimam University, said, “We couldn’t contact him yet. We have heard that he talked to others in Turkey. We are eagerly waiting to talk to him.”

There are reportedly five Bangladeshi students, including Rinku, in Kahramanmaraş province in Turkey. Mohammed Nore-Alam, consul general of Bangladesh Consulate General in Istanbul, informed this newspaper earlier on Monday that all of them except Rinku were safe.

He added that another Bangladeshi student, who was with Rinku in the building, could come out but Rinku couldn’t.

According to the consul general, all the Bangladeshis in the Gaziantep province, which is near Kahramanmaraş, are also safe.

Race against time to save survivors

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The 7.8-magnitude quake struck Monday as people slept, flattening thousands of structures, trapping an unknown number of people and potentially impacting millions.

Whole rows of buildings collapsed, leaving some of the heaviest devastations near the quake’s epicentre between the Turkish cities of Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş.

The destruction led to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declaring a three-month state of emergency in 10 southeastern provinces. The government planned to open up hotels in the tourism hub of Antalya, to the west, to temporarily house people impacted by the quakes, said Erdogan, who faces a national election in three months’ time.

Dozens of nations like the United States, China and the Gulf States have pledged to help, and search teams as well as relief supplies have begun to arrive by air.

Yet people in some of the hardest-hit areas said they felt like they had been left to fend for themselves.

“I can’t get my brother back from the ruins. I can’t get my nephew back. Look around here. There is no state official here, for God’s sake,” said Ali Sagiroglu in the Turkish city of Kahramanmaraş.

“For two days we haven’t seen the state around here... Children are freezing from the cold,” he added.

Hasina given

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AL candidates will submit their candidacy on February 12, the last day for submission of nomination papers for the presidential post.

The name of the party’s candidate will not be revealed before this, meeting sources said.

While many names surfaced in the media over who could be AL’s presidential candidate, three names have been most discussed – Mashiur Rahman, an advisory council member of the party, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

The tenure of President Abdul Hamid, the longest-serving president of the country, will expire on April 23, and according to the constitution, there is no scope for his re-election.

A winter storm has compounded the misery by rendering many roads – some of them damaged by the quake – almost impassable, resulting in traffic jams that stretch for kilometres in some regions.

The cold rain and snow are a risk both for people forced from their homes – who took refuge in mosques, schools or even bus shelters – and survivors buried under debris.

“It is now a race against time,” said World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

“We have activated the WHO network of emergency medical teams to provide essential health care for the injured and most vulnerable,” he added.

The death toll in Turkey rose to 5,434, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said, adding that 31,777 people were injured. In Syria, the toll was at least 1,832, according to the government.

There are fears that the toll will rise inexorably, with WHO officials estimating up to 20,000 may have died.

WHO warned that up to 23 million people could be affected by the massive earthquake and urged nations to rush help to the disaster zone. Earlier, the governments in Turkey and Syria said that more than 25,000 people were injured.

In Geneva, Unicef spokesperson James Elder said: “The earthquakes ... may have killed thousands of

children.”

Scores of schools, hospitals and other medical and educational facilities had been damaged or destroyed, he said.

Much of the quake-hit area of northern Syria has already been decimated by years of war and aerial bombardment by Syrian and Russian forces that destroyed homes, hospitals and clinics.

Residents in the quake-devastated town of Jandairis in northern Syria used their bare hands and pickaxes to find survivors, as that was all they had to get the job done.

“My whole family is under there – my sons, my daughter, my son-in-law... There’s no one else to get them out,” said Ali Battal, his face streaked with blood and head swathed in a wool shawl against the bitter cold.

“I hear their voices. I know they’re alive but there’s no one to rescue them,” adds the man in his 60s.

Turkey is in one of the world’s most active earthquake zones.

The country’s last 7.8-magnitude tremor was in 1939, when 33,000 died in the eastern Erzincan province. The Turkish region of Duzce suffered a 7.4-magnitude earthquake in 1999, when more than 17,000 people died.

Experts have long warned a large quake could devastate Istanbul, a megalopolis of 16 million people filled with rickety homes.

next parliamentary election will have to woo new voters in their constituencies, while some other would lose voters in their strongholds.

According to the EC’s work plan for the 12th parliamentary polls, likely to be held in January next year, it has targeted to prepare a new policy to demarcate constituencies by reviewing the previous policy by January this year and complete the delimitation by June.

KM Nurul Huda-lead commission brought changes to boundaries of 25 constituencies ahead of the 11th parliamentary polls in December 2018. Another commission, headed by Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, redrew the boundaries of 87 constituencies in 2013 before the 10th parliamentary elections.

ATM Shamsul Huda led commission brought massive changes to 133 constituencies before the ninth parliamentary polls in 2008.

Teen spends 8 months

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Poritosh told this correspondent in the court premises.

This teenager – who has not yet been convicted and was still undergoing trial – was handed down this inhumane punishment, reserved for the hardest of criminals, just for a Facebook comment that he allegedly made.

However, till now no evidence has been found that Poritosh had made any such derogatory post as his phone was broken beyond repair and the Criminal Investigation Department of police was unable to conduct forensic tests on it.

Solitary confinement that lasts longer than 15 consecutive days is recognised by the United Nations as “torture”.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, eminent human rights lawyer, said, “Solitary confinement is only for the most hardened criminals, who can harm or kill other inmates. If the jail authorities kept him there for his ‘safety’, then they failed in their duty to keep him safe.”

Poritosh further told this paper that during his time in the cell he felt suicidal, wanting to end it all.

“But then I would think of my parents, and that I am their only son. That would make me choose to keep living.”

His father, a poor fish-seller at Pirganj upazila, had educated Poritosh in hopes that he would be their future.

Poritosh’s lawyer Advocate Shamim al Mamun told the court on Sunday, “The prison authorities had restricted access to Poritosh to an extent that even I was not able to talk to him until he was finally released on bail.”

Poritosh was denied bail a total of three times by the Rangpur Cyber Tribunal. He was finally released on bail on May 9, 2022, after a High Court order was issued in this regard.

But on February 5, sessions judge of the tribunal Dr Abdul Mojid sent him to jail again to await a verdict.

At the moment, Poritosh is the only person in jail over the Pirganj violence.

“A total of 74 people were arrested for the arson and communal violence, while another 72 are on the run. Those arrested are all out on bail at the moment,” said Mahbub Rahman, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Pirganj Police Station.

Also out on bail are the village mosque’s moazzem Rabiul Islam, who made the calls for people to gather; Saikat Mandal, the mastermind of the attack; and Ujjal Hasan, who had first taken a screenshot of Poritosh’s social media activity and spread it.

Even while they were in jail, they did not have to undergo solitary confinement.

Meanwhile, Poritosh was accused of “hurting religious sentiments, creating communal enmity, ruining religious

harmony” and thrown into a cell that was locked at all times.

According to the data computed by this newspaper in February last year, 60 percent of all those prosecuted for “hurting religious sentiments” under the DSA belong to Hindu community – meaning they are targeted more by this law than members of the religious majority.

The Daily Star found this statistic by analysing the details of the 90 people who were booked under this law between 2020 and 2021.

The case data was provided by DSA Tracker, a project of Centre for Governance Studies.

Two hours after Sunday’s hearing, the judge announced the verdict while Poritosh waited at the docket, crying silently.

As his mother saw her only son being dragged away, she began howling in despair.

“I brought my son to the court only for the hearing. Why is he being sent to jail again?” she wailed.

Barrister Barua questioned the judge’s decision to send Poritosh to jail again using a conviction warrant.

“The judge had not written an order; the conviction had not been given. Then how was he arrested on a conviction warrant?”

Cheaper

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It will allow Covid-19 testing service faultlessly and at a cheaper rate, he said.

Each kit will cost Tk 250.

The invention also means the country would be saving up on scarce foreign currency reserves: the kits currently being used in the country’s 57 government-own and 105 private-own RT-PCR Covid-19 testing laboratories are imported from China, South Korea and the US.

The import price of each kit ranges from Tk 120 to Tk 1,000, according to DGDA officials.

Considering this, a huge amount of foreign currency was spent to import the kits during the pandemic, when more than 1.34 crore samples were tested using the RT-PCR method.

“We hope it will be possible to supply this kit countrywide. As a result, importing kits by spending dollars will no longer be needed,” Ahmed said.

The country is much dependent on imports for medical devices and the pandemic has exposed the downside of such dependency, said Nasrin Sultana, a professor of health economics at DU.

“The invention of the BCSIR kit is definitely good news for the country,” she told The Daily Star.