

4 ambassadors visit Rohingyas in Bhasan Char

UNB, Chattogram

Ambassadors of Japan, China, France and Indonesia visited Rohingyas living in Bhasan Char yesterday.

Japanese Ambassador Iwama Kiminori, Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen, French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy and Indonesian Ambassador Heru Hartanto Subolo reached Bhasan Char on a helicopter around 10:30am.

They were accompanied by UN Resident Coordinator Gwyn Lewis, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Representative Johannes Van Der Klaauw and World Food Programme Officer-in-Charge Simone Lawson Parchment.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Bhasan Char Police Station, said the delegation, including the ambassadors of four countries, monitored the overall situation from 11:00am to 3:00pm.

They also talked to Rohingyas about their facilities, living standards and other issues, added the OC.

They left Bhasan Char for Dhaka around 3:30pm, said the OC.

Bulgaria finds 18 migrants dead in truck

AFP, Sofia

Eighteen migrants have been found dead in an abandoned truck, the interior ministry said yesterday, as the Balkan nation struggles with an increase in illicit border crossings.

The vehicle “was illegally transporting around 40 migrants hidden under some wood”, the ministry said. “Eighteen of them have died.”

After locals alerted the police, the truck was located near the village of Lokorsko, 20 kilometres (12 miles) northeast of Bulgaria’s capital Sofia.

Some of the migrants still alive in the truck were taken to the hospital.

A search was underway for human traffickers believed to have driven the truck and fled, authorities said.

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Syrian residents of Hatay city wait to cross the Turkish-Syrian border after they were affected by the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck the region nearly two weeks ago, at Cilvegozu border gate yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE

Aid focus turns to homeless, destitute

UN launches \$1b aid appeal; death toll surpasses 43,000

AGENCIES

International aid agencies are stepping up efforts to help millions of homeless people, many sleeping in tents, mosques, schools or cars, 11 days after a massive earthquake hit Turkey and Syria killing more than 43,000.

Two people were reported to have been pulled alive from the rubble in Turkey on Thursday, but such rescues have become increasingly rare, leaving anger to smoulder as hope dies.

A 17-year-old girl was extracted from the ruins of a collapsed apartment bloc in Turkey’s southeastern Kahramanmaraş province, broadcaster TRT Haber reported, 248 hours since the 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck in the dead of night on February 6.

About 10 hours later, Neslihan Kilic was rescued.

“We had prepared her grave and we asked the rescue workers to stop digging as we feared they would damage the remaining corpses under the rubble. Moments later, her voice was heard from under the ruins of the building,” Kilic’s brother-in-law told broadcaster CNN Turk.

Kilic’s husband and two children are still missing.

The quake killed at least 38,044 people in southern Turkey, officials said yesterday, while authorities in neighbouring Syria have reported 5,800 deaths – a figure that has changed little in days.

The United Nations on Thursday appealed for more than \$1 billion in funds for the Turkish relief operation, just two days after launching a \$400 million appeal for Syrians, reports Reuters.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, speaking on Thursday in his first televised comments since the quake hit, said the

response to the disaster required more resources than the government had available.

Neither Turkey nor Syria have said how many people are still missing.

UN aid chief Martin Griffiths, who visited Turkey last week, said the people had “experienced unspeakable heartache”, adding: “We must stand with them in their darkest hour and ensure they receive the support they need.”

For families still waiting to retrieve relatives, there is growing anger over what they see as corrupt building practices and deeply flawed urban development that resulted in thousands of homes and businesses disintegrating.

“I have two children. No others. They are both under this rubble,” said Sevil Karaabduloglu, as excavators tore down what remained of a high-end block of flats in the southern Turkish city of Antakya,

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Focus to shift from lowest offer in tender

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reform priority and the government has committed to adopting the policy paper and an associated action plan by September as part of the conditions agreed upon for the \$4.7 billion loan programme.

The policy would be piloted in the procurement of: paper and paper products; office supplies; computer and other electronic equipment and supplies; office and other furniture or related wooden appliances; vehicles and other transportation equipment; food services and catering; hotel materials like towels and bed covers; and official paper-made publications.

As part of the policy, the procurement agencies must go for competitive bidding and take a flexible approach if small and medium enterprises (SMEs), including women-owned enterprises (WOEs), are participating in the bidding.

To attract more SMEs and WOE, the procurement agencies can minimise the complexity of tender documentation, divide contracts into

smaller lots, limit the number of lots that will be awarded to one bidder and allow more time for submission of expression of interest and tenders.

The contract subject matter should clearly indicate that a sustainable product or service will be purchased, and the accepted price point can be 10 percent more than non-sustainable products.

The products and services must be certified by the BSTI or ISO that they are sustainable.

The procurement process must consider the whole-life costs covering: manufacture, delivery and installation; operating costs including energy, water usage and maintenance; end of life costs including decommissioning and disposal.

Bids that have met the minimum general criteria, financial criteria and qualification and expertise criteria should be evaluated against a specific set of award criteria for sustainability – social criteria, economic criteria and environmental criteria – using the rating system developed by the

competent authority from time to time.

All sustainability criteria that will be used, including the rating system given to each criterion, should be clearly indicated in the call for tenders.

The contracts must ensure compliance with all relevant existing public procurement legislation along with the social and environmental legislation to be mentioned, to the extent possible, in the procurement documents.

There would be performance monitoring for the duration of the contract to ensure compliance of suppliers with the specifications and contract terms.

Review meetings and periodic audits of suppliers throughout the life of the contract would be carried out to verify that the sustainability practices meet the agreed requirements.

Sustainability results should be reported openly and transparently in the procurement entities’ reports, such as the annual report.

To assist the implementation, the

public organisations will work with the suppliers and determine sustainable products and services that have a less adverse impact on human health and the environment.

A high-level steering committee headed by the planning minister will annually select a sustainable procurement “champion” from amongst the procuring organisations.

The committee will also review the policy every six months to adapt to the changing needs, circumstances and conditions.

The CPTU and IMED will provide secretariat services to the committee and lead the integration process, capacity development, amendment in the legal framework, and prepare procurement documents and make those readily available to the organisations.

By 2024, the Public Procurement Act 2006 and the Public Procurement Rules 2008 would be amended by incorporating the relevant sustainable public procurement provisions based on the lessons learned from the pilot.

Govt doesn’t care about invitation

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of the country’s people nor any foreign friends.

“Many foreign diplomats recently visited Bangladesh and exchanged views with the government. Despite repeated attempts, the BNP could not meet any diplomat and that’s why it is upset,” he added.

Quader further said BNP was unhappy because the AL government’s various development initiatives were making people happy.

“Even amid the ongoing global crisis, the country’s people are happy with Sheikh Hasina. They are happy because of the honesty of Sheikh Hasina and the development works by her government.”

The BNP is the “patron of spoiled politics”; the country’s democracy and people are not safe under its rule, he added.

Meanwhile, Jubo League Chairman Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash yesterday alleged that the

BNP wants to foil the next general election.

Speaking at a “peace rally” in front of the AL’s central office in Gulistan, he said the BNP men are brandishing firearms in show of strength. “BNP leaders should be sent to jail to maintain law and order in the country.”

“The BNP is trying to get sympathy from foreigners [diplomats]. But, no matter how many conspiracies are hatched, the anti-liberation forces will not be allowed to participate in politics in Bangladesh.”

The Jubo League’s Dhaka city (south) unit organised the rally.

The Dhaka city (north) unit of the organisation also held another rally at Farmgate. The BNP on the same day held a silent march programme in the capital.

Addressing the event, Jubo League leaders said they will organise programmes to be on the streets till December to “resist” the BNP.

British embassy guard faces jail for spying for Moscow

AFP, London

A former security guard at the UK’s Berlin embassy, who pleaded guilty to spying for Moscow, faces up to 14 years in prison when he was sentenced yesterday.

David Ballantyne Smith, 58, admitted to passing sensitive material to the Russian embassy in Germany and was then caught in a sting operation.

Judge Mark Wall said Thursday that he would sentence Smith on the basis that he had an “ongoing relationship” with Moscow and was “paid for his treachery”.

The sentencing hearing starts at 1000 GMT at the Old Bailey Court in central London.

The judge rejected Smith’s claims that he had passed information to Moscow only twice in order to cause “embarrassment” to the UK.

Smith “was motivated by his antipathy towards this country and intended to damage this country’s interests by acting as he did,” the judge added.

The military veteran, originally from Paisley in western Scotland, had worked at the Berlin embassy for five years.

Prosecutors said Smith first wrote to the Russian embassy in 2020, revealing details of British embassy staff and suggesting further contact.

UN plans to cut food aid due to fund shortfall

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economic downturn and crises across the globe.

The WFP appealed for \$125 million in urgent funding, warning of “immense and long-lasting” repercussions on food security and nutrition in camps rife with malnutrition, where more than a third of children are stunted and underweight.

“That the international donor community is now turning its back on half a million Rohingya children and their families really shows the limits of its commitment to some of the most vulnerable people in the world,” Onno Van Manen, Save the Children’s country director in Bangladesh, said in a statement.

Two UN special rapporteurs, Michael Fakhri and Thomas Andrews, warned of the “devastating consequence”

of the funding shortfall, saying it was “unconscionable” to cut rations just before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the UN human rights agency said in a statement.

Cuts could cause more Rohingyas to take desperate measures to seek work, said Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Bangladesh’s refugee relief and repatriation commissioner, who is based in Cox’s Bazar where the refugees live.

Rohingyas are barred from working to supplement their income, and fences have been constructed around the camps.

But an increasing number are fleeing for countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia via perilous and often fatal boat journeys, as violent crime adds to longstanding troubles like a lack of educational and work opportunities

and bleak prospects of returning to military-ruled Myanmar.

A boat carrying 69 Rohingyas landed in Indonesia’s Aceh province on Thursday, the UN refugee agency said.

“In few places I’ve worked have camp-based populations had the meagre options of the type that the Rohingya have today,” John Aylieff, WFP regional director for Asia and the Pacific, told Reuters.

“It’s unthinkable that that population, with all they’ve been through and with so few other possibilities and options, would on top of everything face a ration cut.”

Arif Ullah, an 18-year-old refugee living in the camps, said the existing food allowance was barely sufficient. “If it’s further trimmed, how will we survive?”