

GALWAN VALLEY Modi, Xi agree on ‘expeditious de-escalation’

NDTV ONLINE

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to work for “expeditious de-escalation” along the entire Line of Actual Control (LAC), where tensions have been high since the violent face-off in June 2020 in eastern Ladakh’s Galwan Valley.

The two leaders, who met on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in South Africa, agreed to direct officials in their countries for expeditious disengagement along the LAC.

“It was a conversation with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit. Prime Minister had interaction with other BRICS leaders. In the conversation with President Xi Jinping, the Prime Minister highlighted India’s concerns over unresolved issues along the LAC and other areas along the India-China border,” Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra told reporters yesterday.

Kwatra said PM Modi underlined that the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in border areas, and respecting the LAC are essential for the normalisation of India-China relationship.

“In this regard, the two leaders agreed to direct their relevant officials to intensify efforts at expeditious disengagement and de-escalation,” the foreign secretary said.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi and the Chinese president shook hands and greeted each other ahead of the BRICS leaders’ briefing. Both the leaders were shown interacting briefly on the stage.

This was the first interaction between the two leaders after the meeting at G20 dinner in Bali last November. The prime minister had shook hands with Jinping who smiled at him. PM Modi and Jinping had spoken to each other for few minutes then.

The Line of Actual Control has been disputed by India and China since the 1950s. They went to war over it in 1962.

Correction

In a report published on August 24 in The Daily Star under the headline “S Alam’s Businesses Abroad: SC halts probe till January 8”, the names of two High Court judges were mentioned in a wrong order. Instead of “[...] a High Court bench of Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu and Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder[...]”, it should have been “a High Court bench of Justice Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu” since Justice Talukder is senior to Justice Lizu. The error has been fixed in the online version.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and heads of states and governments pose for photos at the BRICS summit in South Africa yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

ROHINGYA CAMP

Gonoshasthaya Kendra there to help from the start

Six years on, their healthcare and support for refugees have expanded

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

While Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury’s Gonoshasthaya Kendra has continuously caught the eye of the public during any crisis in the country, some of it’s remarkable works have been going on for year without much publicity.

Over the past six years, GK, also a first responder of the Rohingya crisis, has expanded their healthcare, mental healthcare, and nutrition support for the refugees from Myanmar.

At the beginning of the Rohingya influx in August 2017, GK responded immediately by setting up temporary tents at Teknaf’s Shahporir Dwip with 10 staffers, including three doctors.

There, they provided primary medical services to the incoming refugees.

GK has since then expanded their medical facilities and have been serving around 25,000-30,000 refugees a month.

Even after around one lakh refugees were relocated to Bhasan Char, an island in Noakhali, Gonoshasthaya Kendra was one of the first humanitarian organisations to move there with all their facilities.

Remembering the beginning of



the Rohingya crisis, Shandhaya Roy, trustee board member of GK, said, “We were informed about the influx by our healthcare facilities that were previously established in Cox’s Bazar.

“After going to Teknaf and witnessing the miserable situation of the refugees, we immediately deployed a medical team with 10 staffers, including three doctors, to provide emergency medical services by using our emergency funds.”

Sandhaya, also director of GK’s Cox’s Bazar programme, added that Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury then made his way to Teknaf the very next day.

“He visited the camps where the refugees were being sheltered.”

She added that he then spoke to different stakeholders and agencies, and initiated an organised healthcare service for the refugees.

Currently, GK is delivering services in 11 camps in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char through 17 facilities, said Md Atiqur Rahman, coordinator of GK in Cox’s Bazar Rohingya project.

With the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, GK runs 24/7-services in five Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), and two Inpatient Departments (IPD) in two Registered Camps, and the Ukhiya Specialised Hospital, for refugees and also people of the host community, he said.

It has three Health Posts (HPs), specialised physiotherapy centre at Shamlapur near Camp 23, and one outdoor patient consultation point at the transit centre in Camp 7, Atiqur added.

“GK has also been providing Integrated Nutrition Services, including stabilisation centres, through four facilities in three camps. Meanwhile, a 10-bed Mental Health IPD at Nayapara camp, for both refugees and people of the host community, has been operational.”

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Trapped in a geopolitical bind

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“Our only demand is the repatriation of the Rohingyas to their homes, not to stay in the camps,” he recently told The Daily Star.

Commenting on the issue, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, “We have allowed the Rohingyas to stay on our land, we’re working round the clock to manage them, which is very costly. Now, if the international community cuts the funding for them and expects that we channel a portion of our development fund for them, it is too much for us.”

HOW IT GOT COMPLICATED

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal on November 23, 2017, three months after around 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in Myanmar’s Rakhine State and entered Bangladesh, joining 300,000 others who had fled earlier waves of violence since the 1970s.

Dhaka and Naypyidaw have since held series of meetings. In 2018, China, which opposed internationalising the issue, took a trilateral initiative. Two repatriation attempts, one in 2018 and the other in 2019, fell flat as Myanmar met none of the demands made by the Rohingya – guarantee of safety, citizenship, and ethnicity recognition.

After a two-year gap caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Dhaka and Naypyidaw met in January last year.

Earlier this year, China became very active, with Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs Deng Xijun visited Dhaka twice – first in April and then again on August 1 this year. Bangladesh’s Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen also visited China and met the Chinese and Myanmar officials in Kunming on April 18.

In May this year, a 17-member Myanmar delegation visited the Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar while a group of Rohingyas for the first time visited Rakhine to see the reality on the ground.

During his latest meeting in Dhaka, Deng Xijun, who met the Myanmar authorities several times in recent months, informed foreign ministry officials that Myanmar agreed to settle the Rohingyas in their original villages

– a demand that the Rohingyas have been making in response to Myanmar’s earlier plan of resettling them in camps or model villages.

China genuinely wants the Rohingya repatriation as part of its greater goal of regional stability and development,

KEY EVENTS

AUG 25, 2017

Rohingya influx begins

NOV 23, 2017

Bangladesh, Myanmar sign repatriation deal

NOV 15, 2018 AND AUG 22, 2019

Repatriation deal fails

NOV 11, 2019

Gambia files genocide case with the ICJ

JAN 23, 2020

ICJ issues order asking Myanmar to prevent acts of genocide

FEB 1, 2021

Myanmar junta takes control through a coup

MARCH 21, 2022

US declares Myanmar’s mass killing of the Rohingyas as genocide

JULY 22, 2022

ICJ delivers verdict it can go ahead with Gambia’s case

DEC 23, 2022

US president signs Burma Act

a Chinese diplomat in Dhaka told this correspondent, wishing not to be named.

When asked about the citizenship and ethnicity recognition of the Rohingyas, he said it was up to the Myanmar government to decide.

Rohingya activist Nay San Lwin,

coordinator of the Germany-based Free Rohingya Coalition, expressed his suspicion about the Myanmar junta’s efforts for repatriation.

The military, which brutally killed the Rohingyas and burnt them and their villages, is now in power, he said.

“I don’t think repatriation will happen as long as the military is in power,” he told The Daily Star on August 23.

What the military wants to do is to tackle the pressure coming from the western countries and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which ordered Myanmar to refrain from committing any genocidal acts against the Rohingyas.

“If the Myanmar junta was really sincere, it would amend the citizenship law and recognise our ethnic identity. That has not happened, however. This is enough to describe the character of the junta,” Nay San Lwin said.

The Gambia filed the genocide case with the ICJ in 2019.

North South University Prof SK Tawfique M Haque, who researches the Rohingya crisis, said China wants to build its image as a global peace negotiator by leading the Rohingya repatriation, after it brokered a peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran in March this year.

When it comes to ensuring the Rohingyas’ legitimate right to citizenship, Myanmar does not comply as it should, he said.

“Myanmar’s apparent willingness to accept the Rohingyas in limited numbers can be considered as a deception to improve its reputation at the ICJ,” said Prof Tawfique, director at NSU’s South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance.

On the other hand, the US, which declared the atrocities against the Rohingyas as acts of genocide, supports the ICJ case and unequivocally opposes the Myanmar junta, which took power by ousting Aung San Suu Kyi’s civilian government in 2021.

The US’s amended BURMA Act late last year has broadened the Biden Administration’s authority to impose sanctions against Myanmar and aid opposition parties and groups resisting the junta. The act also talks about

repatriation and protection of the Rohingyas and other ethnic minorities by eliminating structural barriers, he said.

“The US is likely to take serious measures against the junta next year,” the professor said, noting the Biden administration’s prioritises democracy and human rights.

Apart from being a signatory to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, Myanmar is also geopolitically important because it provides China access to Southeast Asia and the India Ocean region, Prof Tawfique said.

Foreign policy analysts said major global powers’ focus is on the Indo-Pacific. The US and its allies are active in reducing Chinese influence here and will continue to work to that end.

Russia, which is facing huge pressure mainly from the US-led Western allies, is meanwhile a major arms supplier to the Myanmar junta. Though Bangladesh and Russia have a strong relation, Russia, like China, vetoed on a resolution on the Rohingyas at the UN Security Council.

Jahangirnagar University’s Department of Government and Politics Prof Tarikul Islam said China and India, motivated by their geopolitical and economic stakes in Myanmar, sided with the junta on the Rohingya issue.

Myanmar’s strategic value to China includes access to the Indian Ocean. Further, China’s construction of the Kyauk Phyu port in Myanmar aims to diversify supply routes and reduce dependence on the Middle East, he pointed out.

On the other hand, Myanmar provides a port for Russian ships travelling to the Indian Ocean. Thus, Russia seeks to establish a visible presence in the Indian Ocean, Prof Tarikul said.

Wishing anonymity, a foreign diplomat said Bangladesh should have approached the UN for coordinating the whole repatriation issue, instead of taking a bilateral path.

“Even now, it is not impossible. Dhaka should engage all the major global stakeholders including the UN, the US, China, and India in the repatriation effort.”

BRICS admits 6 countries to bloc

FROM PAGE 1

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed hailed what he called “a great moment” for his country, the second-most populous in Africa.

In Iran, senior presidential advisor Mohammad Jamshidi described the move as a “historic development and a strategic success” for Tehran’s foreign policy.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva left the door open to the possibility of admitting other new members in future.

“We have consensus on the first phase of this expansion process and other phases will follow,” Ramaphosa said at a media briefing.

Addressing the summit, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that “today’s global governance structures reflect yesterday’s world” and that for multilateral institutions to be universal they needed to reform.

“They were largely created in the aftermath of World War II when many African countries were still ruled by colonial powers and were not even at the table,” Guterres said.

Bribe incidence

FROM PAGE 1

India got \$3.67 billion, which is the highest in the Asia and the Pacific region.

In terms of aid disbursements too, Bangladesh came in second behind India in the region.

Some \$2.43 billion was disbursed in 2021, behind India’s \$3.68 billion.

The comparison on financial inclusion was also based on 2021 data.

In 2021, 52.8 percent of the population above the age of 15 was under the formal financial umbrella in Bangladesh, which is the second-lowest in South Asia.

In South Asia, Pakistan had the lowest percentage of people with a

“This is particularly true of the Security Council of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions,” he said, referring to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Calls to enlarge the BRICS had dominated the agenda at its three-day summit in Johannesburg and exposed divisions among the bloc over how quickly new members should be admitted, and how many.

But the group, which makes decisions by consensus, had agreed on the criteria for admission, said Ramaphosa, paving the way for the bloc to expand even further.

Nearly two dozen countries had formally applied to join and about the same number have expressed interest from across the “Global South”, a broad term referring to non-Western nations.

Some 50 other heads of state and government attended the summit, underscoring what BRICS leaders say is the attractiveness of its message and growing relevance on the world stage.

US officials have played down the likelihood of BRICS emerging as a geopolitical rival, describing the bloc as a highly diverse collection of countries containing both friends and rivals.

formal account: 21 percent.

Sri Lanka came on top in South Asia, with 89.3 percent of its adults above the age of 15 who report having an account of their own or held with someone else at a bank or another type of financial institution or have personally used a mobile money service.

In terms of ATMs per 100,000 adult population, Bangladesh is lagging in South Asia, coming in second to last.

In 2021, Bangladesh had 11.4 ATMs for every 100,000 adults and Pakistan had 11.1 ATMs.

Bhutan came on top in South Asia, with 45.2 ATMs for every 100,000 adults.

Man sentenced to death for rape, murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A Munshiganj court yesterday sentenced a man to death for raping and killing a tenth-grade schoolgirl in the district’s Sreenagar upazila in 2018.

The convict, Md Khokon, 35, of Pawsar village in Sirajdikhan upazila, is a tailor by profession.

District and Sessions Judge Begum Faizunnechha of Munshiganj Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal delivered the verdict around 12:30pm.

Public Prosecutor Lablu Molla said Khokon was sentenced to death for the murder under Section 302 of the Penal Code.

He was also sentenced to seven years imprisonment under Section 201 and fined Tk 10,000 for raping the victim and dumping the body after the murder.

According to the case statement, the body of Laila Akhtar Limu, a tenth-grade student of Baraikhali High School, was recovered from the Ichhamati river near Baraikhali market on August 28, 2018.

Man jailed for life for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing his wife in 2000.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Shahabuddin passed the verdict in the presence of the convict, said Salauddin Sweet, additional public prosecutor.

The convict, Rashedul Islam, 45, used to live with his wife, Chameli Akter, 24, in Noapara area of Rupganj upazila.

He strangled his wife to death over marital disputes on August 2, 2000.

Subsequently, a murder case was filed against him with Rupganj police Station.

Police filed the chargesheet in court on November 28 of the following year, according to case documents.

The trial of the case took so long because the accused had been absconding for seven years after the incident.

The court also fined Rashedul Tk 50,000, in default of which he has to spend an additional year in jail.

MoFA official lands in jail for abusing wife

UNB, Madaripur

A Madaripur court yesterday sent an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to jail after his wife filed a case accusing him of demanding dowry, hiding his alleged first marriage and torturing her.

Madaripur Chief Judicial Magistrate Mamunur Rashid passed the order after the accused Md Abdul Wadud Akanda, 37, counsellor (political) at Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, appeared before the court to answer the accusations following a summons.

The court denied him bail and sent him to jail after a long hearing on the accusations, said Madaripur Bar Association Secretary Adv Golam Kibria.

According to the plaintiff Zareen Rafa Nilanti, 26, she and Akanda got married on April 17, 2019, and they have a daughter. But she later came to know that her husband hid his first marriage.

On October 7, 2022, sitting at the house of one of plaintiff’s relatives, the accused demanded Tk 40 lakh and a 5 katha plot in dowry from Zareen, according to the case.