

REFUGEE CRISIS IN ASIA
UNHCR, NGOs
seek lasting
solutions

UNB, Dhaka

UNHCR, together with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society actors yesterday recommitted to enhanced collaboration to work towards sustainable solutions for the forcibly displaced and stateless in Asia and Pacific region.

In collaboration with the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, International Council of Voluntary Agencies and the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, UNHCR's two-day Regional NGO Consultations for 2023 ended yesterday in Bangkok.

The in-person and virtual event brought together over 180 participants, representing 161 organisations from 19 countries in Asia and the Pacific to discuss topics around the central theme of "Promoting Inclusion for Sustainable Solutions".

Currently, there are over 7 million refugees or asylum seekers and 5 million conflict-affected internally displaced people in the region, as recorded at the end of 2022.

Most of those displaced live in increasingly protracted situations in countries where they have found refuge.

"Inclusion is a complex subject, often misinterpreted, but when dissected, covers many of the key issues we collectively work on to find local solutions for refugees: education, livelihoods, skills and healthcare," said Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR Director for Asia and the Pacific.

The consultations provided an opportunity for humanitarian partners in Asia and the Pacific to discuss best practices and approaches on how including displaced populations and stateless people contributes to resilience and long-lasting solutions for the benefit of the whole society.

"Meaningful inclusion requires a shift in thinking that those forcibly displaced are not beneficiaries of support, but assets. They make important contributions to the communities that they are a part of and by extension require supportive policies and protections to really enable their inclusion," said Keya Saha Chaudhury, ICVA Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

Among the specific topics discussed

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MYMENSINGH CITY

No respite from
gridlocks for locals

Lack of roads, unregistered vehicles add to the menace

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Despite multiple promises from the city corporation authorities to improve the issue, residents of Mymensingh city continue to experience gridlock at crucial crossroads.

With no steps taken to this end, the traffic congestion continues to become unbearable, especially during busy hours, causing much hassle to commuters, said locals.

Unregistered battery-run auto-rickshaws plying the roads are the main reason behind severe gridlocks during office hours, besides slow construction works. Also, hundreds of trucks ply through the city during day time, violating their schedule.

Even on weekly holidays, locals experience severe gridlock at the city's Shambhuganj Bridge area and other important streets.

"It often takes several hours to commute through the five-kilometre road in the city during rush hours," said Md Shahjahan, a local trader.

Office goers and students are the worst sufferers of the situation, said Sharif Khan, a resident of Charpara area.

Over 20,000 battery-run auto-rickshaws and vans, mostly unregistered, ply the city streets. However, no proper action has been taken yet in this regard, alleged locals.

Mymensingh City Corporation sources said the number of licensed auto-rickshaws in the city is around



7,000. But the sources could not say the number of unregistered vehicles.

According to sources, after Mymensingh was upgraded to city corporation in 2018, the city's population doubled by 2021 but no steps were taken to widen the roads.

Confirming the matter, Mymensingh Traffic Inspector Syed Mahbubur Rahman said no major initiative to widen the roads has been taken in last 25 years. Meanwhile, the number of vehicles plying in the city has continued to increase.

With a shortage of traffic police personnel, it is very difficult to control vehicular movement at 18 points in the city, he said.

Meanwhile, footpaths across the city have been occupied by vendors and it adds to the traffic congestions, said Shibbir Ahmed Liton,

secretary of Poribesh Rakhha O Unnayan Andolon.

Various ongoing construction works are progressing slowly while keeping construction materials on busy roads in many cases, causing difficulty to movement of vehicles, he alleged.

The residents urged authorities concerned to show zero tolerance against all unregistered vehicles and to recover the occupied footpaths.

The issues have been discussed by joint initiatives of the administration, police and MCC authorities but no proper measures to combat the crisis could be taken yet, said Advocate Nazrul Islam Chhunu, convener of Jonouddyog, a citizens' platform.

He lauded the decision to shift Trishal Bus Stand from

city centre to curb traffic congestion and demanded removal of all illegal vehicle stands from the roads.

Contacted, Md Rafiqul Islam Miah, MCC's executive engineer, said two firms -- Masud Hightech Ltd and Faridpur Jannat Constructions -- are working on installing pipe drains and paving footpaths on the roads at present and the city corporation is monitoring the construction works regularly to make sure those are completed on time.

"Proposals for widening the city roads have been sent to the ministries concerned recently but are yet to be approved. The city authorities are conducting mobile courts to contain the menace of unregistered vehicles plying the roads," said Md Aminul Islam, assistant secretary at MCC.

A leader of all
Say speakers on MN
Larma at memorial event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

MN Larma was not only a leader of the indigenous people, but also a leader of the working class and the oppressed, said speakers at a programme.

The event was organised to mark the 84th birth anniversary of Manabendra Narayan Larma.

Born on September 15, 1939 at Maorum (Mahapuram) village in Rangamati, MN Larma formed that Parbatya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) in 1972. He would go onto become an MP in 1973, before he was killed by a group in 1983.

Prof Zobaida Nasreen, Anthropology department, Dhaka University said, "As a teacher, MN Larma successfully planted the seeds of a movement among the Jumma people to fight the historical injustice they have faced due to their lack of constitutional recognition."

"He knew the indigenous people could not truly be emancipated without constitutional recognition," she said.

Journalist Nazrul Kabir urged the youth to carry on their movement with the spirit of MN Larma.

"In his short life, Larma was able to become an illustrious political leader. Through his work and ideology, he became an undisputed leader for not only the indigenous people, but also for

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16 Jamaat-Shibir
activists held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police detained 16 Jamaat and Shibir leaders and activists in Dinajpur's Birampur upazila yesterday, charging them with disruptive and unlawful activities.

The incident occurred when they brought out a procession following Friday prayers at the Pura Para Jame Mosque in Birampur town.

According to police, after concluding prayers, a group of 80-100 Jamaat Shibir leaders and activists attempted to organise a procession on the Dinajpur-Gobindaganj regional highway.

Upon receiving the information, local police arrived at the scene and arrested 16 individuals regarding the incident.

Subrata Sarkar, Officer in Charge of Birampur police station, said proceedings are underway to file a case against them. The arrested individuals will be produced before a Dinajpur court today for further legal proceedings.

Cholera vaccination
to begin in Ctg
from Sept 17

UNB, Dhaka

The oral cholera vaccination (OCV) programme will begin for residents of ward 38 and 39 (Bandarita and South Halishahar) of the Chattogram City Corporation tomorrow.

The campaign will be led by the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), with support from the World Health Organization, icddr, the Civil Surgeon Office of Chattogram, and the CCC.

The two-dose Evuichol-Plus Cholera vaccine, produced by EuBiologics Co Ltd in South Korea, will be given to individuals over one year of age, according to a press release.

Everyone except for pregnant women and those who have received another vaccine in the past 14 days, is eligible for this vaccine.

Cholera is a diarrhoeal disease and a food- and water-borne illness. Outbreaks have ranged from the Ganges delta to Europe and America. Inadequate access to safe water and sanitation systems are key contributors to these outbreaks. The disease causes rapid dehydration and can lead to death if not treated promptly. Every year, approximately 1.3 to 4 million people worldwide contract cholera, with over 100,000 infections occurring in

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COASTAL FLOOD
Riverbed deposit
worse than sea
level rise

Says Swedish environmentalist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Riverbed sedimentation caused by building unplanned embankments poses greater threats of coastal flooding than the predicted sea level rise in the future, said Camelia Dewan, a Bangladeshi-origin Swedish environmental anthropologist.

She was discussing her book "Misreading the Bengal Delta: Climate Change, Development and Livelihoods in Coastal Bangladesh" at an event organised by University Press Limited (UPL) at its office in Dhaka's Farmgate area yesterday.

The event was moderated by Mahrukh Mohiuddin, managing director of UPL.

She stated that building unplanned embankments began in the Indian subcontinent during the British era.

"Wherever the British Raj

built embankments, it killed rivers and increased siltation, which also led to the outbreak of malaria due to waterlogging. They built these embankments ignoring their negative impacts on the environment," she said.

Camelia said that Bangladesh has been deprived of the benefits of monsoon due to construction of flood protection embankments.

"In a natural environment without any artificial infrastructure, the rainwater in monsoon merges with the river water to deposit silt water on floodplains. The silt raises the land level and processes organic decomposition which makes the deltaic land fertile," she said.

Referring to siltation as beneficial to the Aman rice production, the author said it is a problematic idea that all floods must be prevented, and

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