

India, China can help resolve Rohingya crisis

Says foreign minister

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said repatriation with civil rights and dignity is the eventual solution to the Rohingya crisis.

To accomplish this complicated task, more involvement from India alongside Chinese mediation is crucial, he added.

He was speaking at a seminar on the Rohingya crisis, organised by Overseas Correspondents Association of Bangladesh marking its 45th founding anniversary, at Jatiya Press Club.

"The regional powers like India and China are vital... if we can ensure their enhanced engagement, we believe the crisis could be resolved," he said.

The minister said creating livelihood facilities in Rohingya camps or relocating a small number to third countries could be counterproductive as it will instill a false hope among them, and won't solve the crisis.



HASAN MAHMUD

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Hasan said US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu, during his recent visit, gave some suggestions to handle the crisis. "But I don't want to disclose it right now," he said.

Myanmar authorities are willing to start the Rohingya repatriation process to minimise the global pressure being mounted on the country, said the minister.

He said Bangladesh has taken the path of diplomacy to put pressure on Myanmar to repatriate the Rohingyas, while Gambia filed a case with the International Criminal Court against Myanmar.

The Gambia has informed Bangladesh that the case is going in the right direction and a positive result will come soon to this end, he said.

"We hope the verdict will be delivered in favour of Bangladesh. Then, more global pressure will be put on Myanmar," he added.

He also said the funding for Rohingyas declined last year, and hoped it will increase this year.

Foreign relations experts and senior journalists who cover the crisis also spoke on the occasion.

JASHORE HIGHWAY HC issues status quo on cutting trees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a status quo on the cutting of trees on the roadsides in the proposed six-lane Jashore-Narail highway.

The court, however, said the status quo order will be cancelled after the tender for constructing the six-lane Jashore-Narail road project is floated.

The HC bench of Justice Md Khasruzzaman and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar passed the order following a petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) seeking necessary directives.

Petitioner's lawyer Manzill Murshid told the HC that the Jashore-Narail six-lane road development project has been taken up by the government.

But till now, no tender has been called for the construction of the road. Despite this, hundreds of trees are being cut on both sides of the road.

He said it is necessary to stop cutting the trees due to the extreme heat.

It is possible to work on a six-lane road even if trees are preserved and people will be benefited from it.

Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar opposed the petition saying that there is no law in the country which prohibits cutting of trees. If the cutting of trees in six-lane Jashore-Narail highway is stopped, the development work will be disrupted.

In response, Murshid told the court that according to media reports, Dhaka will be one of the top hot cities in 2030. So, unless measures are taken now to save the trees, it will not be possible to mitigate the sufferings of people, he said.

The blood river

53 years of Chuknagar genocide



In 2005, the government purchased 78 decimals of land, and in 2006, a 32-decimal portion of it was used to build the Chuknagar Shaheed Smritishoudho memorial to honour the victims.

PHOTO: STAR

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Ershad Ali clutched a sliver of hope as he searched for a familiar face among the dead at Chuknagar Bazar.

It was May 20. The year – 1971.

Ershad was searching for his father, Chikon Ali. Each bloated face he flipped over was a shard of shattered hope, a silent scream.

Suddenly, a whimper snagged his attention. There laid the body of a woman, her lifeless eyes staring blankly at the sky. Beside her was a little girl, not more than two.

With a heartbreaking innocence, she suckled on her dead mother's breast.

Ershad's heart clenched. He scooped up the child. Her warmth provided him with some comfort despite the chilling scenes around them. He named her Sundori, she was his ray of sunshine in a very gloomy time. With the help of his friend Mander Das, Ershad raised Sundori as his own.

He, however, could never find his father. As Chuknagar, now a small town, was located near a navigable river channel and was too remote to be occupied by the

Pakistan army, refugees considered it an ideal route for their journey to the Indian border.

Thousands of refugees started to gather at Chuknagar at the beginning of May 1971. On the 18th and 19th of May, thousands from Bagerhat, Rampal, Morelganj, Sharankhola, Mongla, Dakope, Batiaghata, Chalna and even many people from as far as Faridpur and Barishal started to come to Chuknagar.

They used to rest at Chuknagar after crossing the Bhadra before continuing their journey to the Indian border.

At that time, Golam Hossain, a Muslim League leader, was the chairman of the Atolia union council. When Golam (now deceased) learnt about the massive gathering of refugees at Chuknagar, he informed the Pakistan army stationed in Satkhira district.

They sent a platoon of soldiers on May 20 to conduct a raid at Chuknagar.

The horror started around 11:00am. A truck and a jeep, full of Pakistani soldiers, reached the Jhautala area of Malotia intersection in Chuknagar under Khulna's Dumuria upazila.

A farmer was working in his jute field nearby. Before he could understand anything, the Pakistan army fired at him, killing him on the spot. As the occupation troops approached the village, they found a demolished culvert, which connects two parts of the village.

From that point, the platoon got divided into three raiding parties – one of which entered Chuknagar Bazar, another went towards Malopara-Raypara area along the Bhadra river, and the remaining group strode towards Patkhola Beel.

A huge number of refugees took shelter at that time at Patkhola Beel. As one of the marauding groups found the refugees gathered there, they started firing indiscriminately, said SK Quamaruzzaman Tuku, commander of Mujib Bahini in greater Khulna region.

Another group coming from Malopara-Raypara area soon joined the army.

People started running frantically for life, but most of them were gunned down. The entire marsh turned into a sea of bodies, he added.

Meanwhile, many people drowned as

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29 MINTO ROAD to welcome opposition leader after 2 decades



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DIPAN NANDY

From 10 Downing Street, the UK equivalent of the US's White House, to the Gono Bhaban, the official residence of the prime minister of Bangladesh – the head of state in every democracy has iconic residences and palaces provided to them by the state during their tenure.

In contrast, the United Kingdom doesn't seem to provide official residences for their opposition leader, and the political system does not formally designate such a position in the US.

But did you know Bangladesh stands out in this regard?

Have you heard of 29 Minto Road, the official residence of the leader of the opposition in Bangladesh?

Don't worry if you didn't know about it; you are not alone. The red-and-white building has faded from public memory, having not been inhabited by anyone for over two decades.

But this is about to change. The house, once neglected and in disrepair, is coming back to life.

The Public Works Department has started renovation work at 29 Minto Road for the leader of the opposition in the 12th Parliament, GM Quader.

The PWD started the renovation work after Eid-ul-Fitr following an application by GM Quader.

Contacted, GM Quader said, "I have been told that it will take three months to renovate the house. I hope to move into the house when the renovations are completed."

HISTORY OF 29 MINTO ROAD
Minto Road is one of the safest areas in Dhaka. It is also known as "Mantripara" (ministers' area).

According to the PWD, house number 29 was built on two and a half acres of land during the British period for the then government officials to live. After independence, the house was earmarked for the leader of the opposition.

The house was last used by the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia in 1996. But she didn't live there. She used the building as her political office until 2001. Since then, no other opposition leader has moved into the house.

After the 10th parliamentary

election in 2014, opposition leader Raushan Ershad of the Jatiyo Party requested for it, but the house was not allotted to her. Following the 11th parliamentary election in 2018, the house was allotted to opposition leader HM Ershad, but he never moved in.

A RECENT VISIT

During a recent visit, this correspondent found the main gate of the establishment open, without any security guards, while renovation workers were on-site.

The courtyard features green grass and various trees – including pine, radhachura, krishnachura, mango, jackfruit, papaya, and banana. Around 30 people, who work in various government departments, live in a semi-pucca tin-shed house on the premises.

Mahbub Hasan, PWD executive engineer, said due to the prolonged absence of an opposition leader, unauthorised individuals had taken up residence in the house, but they have all been served notices to vacate.

"Hopefully, renovation works will be finished in the next two months," he said.

Ishraque sent to jail in treason case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent BNP leader Ishraque Hossain to jail in a case filed over committing treason by resorting to lies in October last year.

Judge Mohammed Ash-Shams Joglul Hossain of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Ishraque, also former mayoral candidate of Dhaka South City Corporation, appeared before the court and sought bail in the case, said defence lawyer Taherul Islam Tauhid.

During yesterday's hearing, the lawyer told the court their client got anticipatory bail for six weeks from the High Court on February 29.

The case was filed with Paltan Model Police Station on October 29 last year against Mian Zahidul Islam Arefy, who introduced himself as an "adviser" to US President Joe Biden.

Ishraque and retired Lt Gen Hasan Sohrwardi, were also accused in the case.

One Mahiuddin Sikder from Gopalganj filed the case with Paltan Model Police Station against Arefy, Ishraque and Sohrwardi.

34 more hospitalised with dengue

UNB, Dhaka

Thirty-four more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Of the new patients, eight were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Currently, 131 patients are receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, 2,628 dengue cases have been reported since January 1, said DGHS.

Recovering canals top priority: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday said the information on dengue patients by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) contains anomalies, making it difficult for them to take action.

The DSCC teams visit dengue patients' homes and conduct operations within 300 yards of the houses to kill Aedes mosquitoes. However, they are having trouble locating the patients' addresses due to inconsistencies in the DGHS information. It also wastes their time, said Taposh.

He made the remarks at a press briefing organised at Nagar Bhaban, centring the fourth anniversary of his taking office.

Taposh said they have evicted over 100 illegal structures, recovering 57.724 acres of land worth over Tk 4,900 crore. Moreover, DSCC has renovated and established 11 playgrounds in the last four years, while the process to build five more is ongoing.

Regarding the relocation of chemical depots from Old Dhaka, he said they will start drives after Eid-ul-Azha. He also claimed that in his four-year tenure, they have constructed 41 new STS and reduced waterlogging.

Taposh also said what could not be accomplished in 40 years in Dhaka city was achieved in four years by the DSCC.

The mayor said implementing the inner circular ring road and completing the development works on four canals, alongside Adi Buriganga channel, are their priorities in the upcoming year.

Return Anwara park to DNCC

Atiqul to metro authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday said the metro rail authorities should hand over the Farmgate Anwara park to them as soon as possible.

He said the park was handed over to the metro authorities for constructing a yard. The work is over but now it is being heard that a shopping mall would be built there.

"But we want to keep it as a playground..." he said, speaking at a programme in Dhaka.

Atiqul came up with the demand a day after a group of protesters gave an ultimatum to the metro authorities to return the park to the public within the next 30 days.

The group comprising of rights activists, environmentalists, and teachers have warned that if the park is not handed back to the people within a month, they will launch a tougher movement.

“Only from the banks, Tk 12,000 crore has been plundered. This isn't my statement; it's the statement of the CPD. About 12 percent of our GDP has been lost this way.”

RUHUL KABIR RIZVI
BNP senior joint secretary general



“BNP leaders are suffering from mental trauma. That is why they are making absurd comments. BNP has a right to wage movement but if they carry out arson attack, we will take actions.”

OBABDUL QUADER
Awami League general secretary

