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ROHINGYA INFLUX 8 years on, repatriation still elusive

PORIMOL PALMA

While all past attempts to repatriate the Rohingyas since 2017 have failed, the Arakan Army's (AA) sweeping control of Rakhine State has further complicated matters for Bangladesh.

Since late 2023, two lakh more Rohingyas have arrived, joining the million-plus already in Cox's Bazar. In January, funding cuts by a major US donor increased the strain on the interim government.

"We are facing challenges on multiple fronts for reasons that aren't our responsibility," Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mizanur Rahman told this correspondent.

"If this continues, there will be serious humanitarian and security-related consequences."

Meanwhile, Rohingya leaders said hundreds were gathering in border areas across Teknaf amid clashes between the AA and other armed groups, raising the spectre of another influx.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



The Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya has been home to Rohingya refugees since the mass influx of August 2017. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Pak FM claims 1971 issues settled twice; Dhaka disagrees 2 nations decide to boost trade

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Pakistan differed on the unresolved issues of 1971 but expressed willingness to advance bilateral relations, boost trade and commerce, and collaborate in regional and global forums during their first bilateral meeting in 13 years, held in Dhaka yesterday.

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain and visiting Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held the meeting at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon.

The issues that remain unresolved between the two countries include a formal apology from Pakistan for the atrocities it committed in 1971 and the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis. Dhaka also claims from Islamabad its share of assets in the pre-1971 Pakistan.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Dar, also the deputy prime minister, claimed the issues were resolved once in 1974 and again in the early 2000s



Touhid Hossain



Ishaq Dar

when then-president Pervez Musharraf visited Bangladesh.

He said, "The document of that time [1974] is historic and is available in both countries."

Without directly referring to any of the issues, Dar just said: "He [Pervez Musharraf] actually addressed that issue in a candid manner ... and I think between a family, between brothers, once this is done, even Islam tells us to clean your heart."

He said the two nations should focus on moving forward instead of looking back.

Asked if he accepted the claims made by the Pakistan minister, Foreign Adviser Touhid said, "No, I don't. If I did, the problem would have been solved."

"Bangladesh's position is clear; we want settlement of financial accounts, a formal apology for 1971, and repatriation of stranded Pakistanis. We strongly presented our position. And they also

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

ABUSAYED MURDER Cops forced doctor to alter autopsy report five times

Witness tells ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police intimidated the physician who conducted the autopsy on Begum Rokeya University (BRU) student Abu Sayed into changing his post-mortem report five times.

Yesterday, Md Rajibul Islam, head of the forensic medicine department at Rangpur Medical College (RMC), told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that his original report cited multiple pellet wounds and internal haemorrhage as the cause of death, which was homicidal in nature.

He testified as a prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who is in custody and has turned approver.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES Brawl, protests mark EC hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A scuffle broke out on the first day of the hearings on constituency delimitation inside the Election Commission office in Dhaka yesterday while protests were held in several districts.

Supporters of BNP leaders Rumeen Farhana and Khaled Mahbub Hossain Shyamal locked horns inside the hearing room within 15 minutes of the session's start.

Md Ataullah, joint chief organiser (southern region) of the National Citizen Party (NCP), alleged that he was assaulted by BNP men during the scuffle that happened in presence of Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin and other commissioners.

The dispute centred the redrawing of Brahmanbaria 2 and -3 constituencies. Under the EC's draft, three unions of Bijoy Nagar upazila -- Budhanti, Chandura and Harashpur -- would be under Brahmanbaria 2 (Sarail-Ashuganj) instead of the current Brahmanbaria-3 (Sadar-Bijoy Nagar) constituency.

Rumeen, BNP's assistant international affairs secretary, supports the move.

Speaking to reporters about the scuffle, she alleged that Khaled, president of the party's Brahmanbaria district unit, brought 20-25 people who "behaved like thugs".

"They almost pushed me to the ground. If I am pushed, a push in return is inevitable," she said.

"For 15 years I have fought for the leaders and activists of the BNP. And today, they [some BNP men] pushed me," she said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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