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ROUGH SEAS DELAY RETURN OF 20 ROHINGYA WHO SOUGHT SHELTER IN SAINT MARTIN’S

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials said, 20 Rohingya refugees who sought shelter on Saint Martin’s Island after being caught in stormy weather at sea could not be sent back due to rough conditions. Around 11:00 am last Friday, a fishing trawler carrying the group came ashore on the island’s northern beach. Among the passengers were 16 men, 3 women, and a child – five of them from the same family.

Acting chairman of Saint Martin Union Parishad, Foyezul Islam, told Prothom Alo that the refugees are currently in BGB custody, along with the seized trawler.

Citing the Rohingya, he said they fled Myanmar amid continued fighting between the country’s military and the insurgent Arakan Army.

Several of them had previously been imprisoned, and after



Rohingya refugees who sought shelter on Saint Martin’s Island after being caught in stormy weather at seaCollected

being released, they chose to escape by sea. But as the weather worsened, their vessel veered toward Saint Martin’s coast. A BGB officer told Prothom Alo that the group will be repatriated as soon as the weather improves.

Multiple sources familiar with the border situation said clashes between Myanmar’s armed forces and the Arakan Army began in Rakhine State in February 2024.

After nearly 11 months of fighting, the Arakan Army had seized control of around 80 per cent of the region, including Maungdaw, by 8 December of that year.

As a result of the unrest, an estimated 150,000 Rohingya have newly entered Bangladesh over the past 18 months, according to the UN refugee agency UNHCR.

Source: en.prothomalo.com

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BJP LEADER SUVENDU ADHIKARI TO MARCH FOR 'ROHINGYA-FREE BENGAL'

The Bengal BJP, led by the leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, said on Saturday that he would take to the streets from next month demanding a Rohingya-free Bengal in a bid to counter Trinamool's "Bangla-Bangali" narrative in the run-up to next year's Assembly elections.



"As the leader of the Opposition, I, along with party workers and the people of Bengal, will take to the streets from August 17. Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee gifted this homeland to Bengali Hindus, and we will protect it," Adhikari said.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee has mobilised her party's rank and file to flag the BJP's alleged anti-Bengali narrative by highlighting the "atrocities" on Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled states. As a counter, the BJP is accusing Mamata of protecting the Rohingya and Bangladeshi Muslims in Bengal as her "vote bank".

At the July 21 Martyrs' Day rally, Mamata instructed her party to organise protests and political events in each of the state's 341 blocks to highlight the alleged atrocities against Bengalis in BJP-ruled states.

A BJP source said Adhikari's counter-narrative focused on the alleged protection of the Rohingya by the ruling party.

BJP insiders added that the party had been demanding a special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral roll to delete names of illegal voters in Bengal on the lines of the exercise in poll-bound Bihar.

Adhikari claimed that if an SIR was conducted in Bengal, over 1.25 crore names of false voters could be weeded out.

"If 50 lakh names of false and fake voters have been deleted from the electoral roll in Bihar, the number in Bengal will be 1.25 crore," he said.

However, Adhikari said all Indian Muslims and Hindus would be protected under the SIR.

"I can assure all Hindus, Indian Muslims and those who came from Bangladesh following religious persecution that they will face no issues. If Modi is at the top as the guarantor, the leader of the Opposition is also a small guarantor here," said Adhikari, who had earlier claimed that there are 17 lakh Rohingya in Bengal.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh mocked Adhikari over his "guarantee," saying: "How can he guarantee anything when no one even knows which party he'll be in next year? Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled states have been facing atrocities, and that is why Mamata Banerjee has called for protests. The BJP is trying to divert attention from the actual accusations."

Mamata had questioned Adhikari's claim about 17 lakh Rohingya in Bengal, wondering how such a number could exist in Bengal when the community's estimated global population was some 20 lakh.

"You should study before making such statements. Where did you get 17 lakh from? There may be people from Myanmar, but does that mean everyone is a Rohingya?" Mamata asked at her July 21 rally.

Source: telegraphindia.com