

## Bangladesh's Rohingya Problem

### What is the issue?

Five years after Bangladesh took in thousands of Rohingya driven out of Myanmar, the refugee population is exploding with serious security implications.

### What is Rohingya issue?

- The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim group who reside predominantly in Rakhine state and speak a Bengali dialect.
- They are not recognised by the Myanmar government as an official ethnic group and are therefore denied citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law.
- It is claimed that there were no Rohingyas in Myanmar before the British brought 'Bengalis' to Burma.
- But, there is sufficient evidence to show that the Rohingyas pre-existed the British-engineered migration during the British occupation of the Arakan State in 1823.
- Even those who arrived in Burma post-1823 could not go back to Bangladesh now given that they have no citizenship claims there.
- This effectively makes them a stateless people.
- They are often said to be the world's most persecuted minority.

### What about the involvement of Bangladesh in this issue?

- Bangladesh has been at the forefront in aiding and providing food and shelter for the refugees and trying to create the conditions in Myanmar for their safe return.
- Since 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya, fled as the country's military launched a campaign of terror against the community, including torture, gangrape, mass executions, and the razing of Rohingya villages.
- The Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (Rohingya refugees) settled in the **Kutupalong camp** in Bangladesh (the world's largest refugee camp) and underwent dramatic expansion.

## Finding safe haven in Bangladesh

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have left their ethnic homeland of Rakhine State for the district of Cox's Bazar in Chittagong, Bangladesh.



## What is the status of repatriating of refugees in Bangladesh?

- According to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, there were 926,486 registered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as of May 31 2022.
- In the camps, a sharp increase in their population is witnessed due to peace, absence of violent persecution, assurance of food and medical care, etc.
- In 2017, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation agreement but the two sides had not agreed on a concrete process or on a deadline for completion of the repatriation.
- In 2018, 2,260 Rohingya were identified for repatriation but the attempt failed as they refused to return to Myanmar without assurances for their safety.
- A tripartite virtual meeting was mediated by China in 2021, but the Myanmar military staged a coup and put the repatriation process on ice.

*When China and Russia supported Myanmar on a UNGA resolution on human rights violations against the Rohingya in 2020, India abstained from the vote.*

## What are the current issues with the Rohingyas?

- **Population-** The annual rate of growth of population in Bangladesh is 1%, while the population of the Rohingya is growing at 6 or 7 %.
- **Costs-** The massive Rohingya population is putting an enormous burden on resources and the environment, besides creating conditions for criminal activity and friction in local society.
- **Impact on India-** It carries serious social and security implications for the sensitive Northeast India.
- The Rohingya issue has also been the cause of tensions between India and Bangladesh in the past and continues to carry that potential.
- **Increase in crimes-** Crime such as kidnapping for ransom, petty theft, and dacoity are

increasing.

- **Organised crimes-** Cox's Bazar (a refugee camp location) occupies a key place on the Bay of Bengal, and some Rohingya have been found to be involved in drugs trade and human trafficking.
- **Recruitment hub for extremists-** The Rohingya often has little education, and many are angry and desperate, and vulnerable to radical Islamist ideology.

## References

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