

Refugee ID for 2 Myanmar girls likely

SANJOY RAY | GUWAHATI, March 6

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has accepted the application filed by two Myanmar Rohingya Muslim minor girls seeking refugee status, and is considering giving 'refugee identity card' to the duo currently housed at an observation home in Guwahati.

The two 'persecuted' Rohingya Muslim girls, who were convicted for illegally entering India by the Juvenile Justice Board, Guwahati on February 26, have expressed reluctance to get repatriated to Myanmar citing threat to their lives, and instead want to live in Jammu and Kashmir.

"They had expressed their desire to stay in Jammu and Kashmir. They had stated that some of their relatives have already fled Myanmar and are staying in Jammu and Kashmir as refugees," official sources told this reporter, adding that the fate of the two girls should be clear by the end of this month.

The Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) in Guwahati at the instance of the UNHCR has already done the necessary documentation in this regard and is in touch with the UNHCR in New Delhi.

Nandita Deka of HRLN, when contacted, said, "We have done all the necessary documentation work that was required to be done by us as per the norms. It is now the prerogative of the UNCHR to take a call on the issue. If required, we would facilitate them further."

Although the JJB, Guwahati convicted the duo, it however in its judgement had reserved repatriation initiatives for the girls for the time being and had even written to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Myanmar embassy and also to the State government to facilitate the right atmosphere.

It had also set off the remand period for both the minors, meaning that the period of stay at the observation home (Children's Home, Jalukbari) since their arrest would be treated as the total remand period and hence, they would not be subjected to any further remand.

The Rohingya girls were detained at the Guwahati Railway Station by the Government Railway Police (under the Foreigners' Act and Passport Act) on June 6, 2015 when they were about to board a train to travel to Jammu & Kashmir, which reportedly has the highest number of persecuted Rohingya Muslims in India.

The minor girls had claimed that their parents were killed by miscreants and they somehow managed to sneak into India through Tripura.

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