Myanmar sends 200 Rohingyas to camps

They were captured at sea last month

AFP, Sittwe

Nearly 200 Rohingya Muslims arrested at sea last month by Myanmar's navy after a voyage of hundreds of kilometres have been sent back to Rakhine state, officials said yesterday.

Seasonal calmer waters have seen an increase in the number of Rohingya putting their lives in the hands of traffickers in a desperate bid to reach Malaysia or Indonesia by boat.

But few make it as far as Kawthaung, Myanmar's southern-most tip, where the group of 173 were picked up mid-December.

Images taken yesterday showed 17 men, women and children looking exhausted from their ordeal as they climbed down from a wooden boat on to a beach near western Rakhine state's capital, Sittwe.

Wearing identification numbers around their necks, they lined up on the sand clutching their meagre belongings before being escorted away by armed police.

were taken to Thechaung They camp, while the remaining 156 were transported further north to Ngakhuya camp in Maungdaw township, Rakhine State minister for security and border

affairs said.

Ngakhuya is a processing site for returning refugees on the Bangladeshi border.

"I'm not sure whether action will be taken against them or not," Colonel Min Than told AFP by phone, adding that their fate would be decided by the UEHRD, a government department overseeing Rakhine.

A bloody military crackdown in 2017 forced some 740,000 Rohingya to flee over the border to Bangladesh in violence that has seen Myanmar accused of "genocide" at the UN's top court in The Hague.

Bangladesh has made life increasingly unbearable in the sprawling camps with barbed-wire fences, an internet blackout and the confiscation of phones.

Meanwhile hundreds of thousands more Rohingya remain in Myanmar's Rakhine in what Amnesty International has branded "apartheid" conditions.

They have nearly no freedom of movement and little access to work, education and healthcare.

The captured Rohingya came from both sides of the border, Min Than said, although it was unclear how they ended up on the same boat.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hands Zayed Sustainability Prize to a winner at a programme at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre yesterday as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan looks on. PHOTO: **PID**

Absconding AL duo arrested Payra coal power plant takes off FROM PAGE 1

frozen by the Bangladesh Bank, said Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy inspector general (organised crime) of CID.

Law enforcers recovered Tk 40 lakh in cash and 12 mobile phones from their possession yesterday, Imtiaz told a press briefing

"During the drive against casinos, the brothers fled to Cox's Bazar. They planned to flee to Malaysia through Myanmar, but they failed due to the vigilance of law enforcers," the officer

They later returned to Dhaka and took shelter at a rented flat of one of their employees. They were caught from there yesterday.

The brothers were trying to forge passports to flee to Nepal through India, he added.

To operate the casinos, Enamul and Rupon hired several Nepalese nationals, police said.

Addicted to gambling since their childhood, they became the kingpins of illegal casinos in the capital, Imtiaz said.

During last year's crackdown, the Rab found Tk 5.05 crore in cash, around 8.5kg gold, and six firearms in five lockers in their houses. Seven cases were filed against them.

The CID is investigating four money laundering cases against them.

former Dhaka City South Jubo to the top leadership about one-and-League President Ismail Hossain a-half-month ago. Samrat, Organising Secretary Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, construction agencies said they would resume the mogul SM Golam Kibria Shamim, anti-graft drive if they are directed to and Kalabagan Krira Chakra President do so.

Shafiqul Alam Firoz.

Many possible suspects fled the country at the time. Some of them have started returning to the country recently, assuming that the anti-graft drive was over.

Among them, AKM Mominul Sayeed, president of Haque Arambagh Krira Sangha and expelled joint general secretary of the Dhaka South Jubo League, returned to the country and had been contesting the coming city corporation elections, according to reports.

Sayeed is running for councillor of ward-9 of Dhaka South City Corporation. He was sacked form that post on October 17 last year for being "absent in meetings and staying abroad without permission".

The CID officer was reminded during yesterday's press conference that there were allegations of running illegal against Sayeed.

He said that the CID was only investigating the cases filed under the money laundering act.

"We are investigating nine cases, but Sayeed's case is not one of those,' Imtiaz said.

Those who were arrested during the crackdown last year, gave investigators the names of some influential politicians, police officers and government officials, sources In the crackdown, Rab arrested said, adding that the names were sent

FROM PAGE 1

are going to build another 1,320MW coal-fired plant in the vicinity of Payra seaport.

About 60 percent work of the 1,320MW Rampal power plant in Rampal upazila of Bagerhat has been completed and is expected to start test run in December this year, according to officials.

These plants are at the heart of the government plan to produce 40,000MW electricity by 2030 when coal would produce 35 percent of the

power from about 2 percent now. The BCPCL acting MD said the Payra plant was built by a 50:50 joint venture between state-run North-West Power Generation Company Bangladesh and China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation.

Its construction began in 2016. He said the total cost of the

project was about \$2 billion, with 80 percent coming from the Exim Bank of China At present, the cost of generating a

kilowatt-hour of electricity is \$0.070 to \$0.075, but it would come down

IN PAST 5 YEARS Generation in MW

2014-15 2015-16 2016-17 2017-18 2018-19

when the entire plant begins fullyfledged operation, he said.

Khurshedul Alam said the two units of the plant were capable of generating 660MW each. The unit that went into test production yesterday is expected to go for fullcapacity production this month.

The second unit is also almost ready for production and will start to supply power to the national grid within four months.

The second unit would cost \$200 million less than the first power plant, Khurshedul said.

Officials concerned had said the plant has been built using state-ofthe-art ultra-supercritical technology,

which has greater efficiency and lower emissions. It can fully capture bottom ash, fly ash, Sulphur and Nitrogen, all of which can harm the environment.

The dredging of the river channel adjacent to the Payra power plant would be complete within a couple of days, paving the way for ships capable of carrying around 30,000 tonnes coal to dock.

The Rampal project -- being built by Bangladesh India Friendship Power Company (BIFPC), a joint partnership between India's stateowned National Thermal Power Corporation and Bangladesh Power Development Board -- has drawn flak for its location.

It is near the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world and a world heritage site declared by Unesco in 1997.

Activists are concerned that the Rampal plant, which is less than 10 miles from the Sundarbans, would cause environmental degradation as it would require increased river traffic, dredging, and could pollute the air and water.

China police kill kidnapper armed with explosives AFP, Beijing

Police in China shot and killed a kidnapper who held three people hostage using a homemade gun and explosive devices, local authorities said yesterday, in a rare case involving firearms in the country.

The incident took place in Hohhot, capital of the northern Inner Mongolia region, on Sunday at around 11:00 am (0300 GMT).

The suspect, surnamed Zhou, had fired the gun as a threat, Hohhot police said on their account on the Twitter-like Weibo platform.

Later that evening, officers 'decisively shot and killed the suspect" before successfully removing the explosive devices from the hostages.

The case is under further investigation, they said.

Incidents involving homemade explosives have occurred elsewhere in China, such as northeast Liaoning province, where three people were injured in an attack on a police station last March.

In July 2018, a 26-year-old man set off a small explosion outside the United States embassy in Beijing, injuring his hand and sending smoke into the air.

Still, gun violence is rare in China, where the government tightly restricts the ownership of firearms.

There are no official statistics on gun-related deaths.

Last March, a person wielding a gun killed five people in Inner Mongolia before being arrested.

In June 2017, a bomb blast killed eight people and injured dozens outside a kindergarten in eastern China and in November the same year, three people were shot dead and six others wounded in southern Guangdong province.

Israel's left-wing parties unite ahead of elections AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's left-wing Meretz and Labor-Gesher parties said yesterday they had joined forces ahead of March 2 elections, to boost their chances against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing base.

Israel's political scene is in turmoil ahead of the third national vote in less than a year after neither Netanyahu nor his centrist rival Benny Gantz were able to form a coalition following September polls.

With Israel's two major political blocs almost neck-and-neck, smaller parties and coalitions could emerge as potential kingmakers after the upcoming elections.

The new left-wing joint list called 'Emet" -- "truth" in Hebrew -- was agreed by Labor-Gesher leader Amir

Outrage over circular on publication of info

FROM PAGE 1

pictures and videos of patients and officials at upazila health complexes remedies. Formulation of such rules health services inside hospitals and family planning offices across and regulations, bypassing those without permission is not allowed. "Consent on the authenticity of the information must be taken from the authorities before publishing it," it said The ministry also directed the officials concerned to implement an eight-point directive, including introducing visitor's entry pass for every public hospital and maintaining register books for visitors. The circular said a patient can have a maximum of two attendants. It also asked all on-duty physicians, nurses and other hospital staffers to make sure their ID cards are visible.

health directors, civil surgeons, and journalistic ethics, there are judicial

POWER GENERATION

Officials of law enforcement

Longest bridge

division. With an area of 3,400sqkm and population of over 20.37 lakh, the district does not have any direct road link to Barishal.

By river, one can go to Bhola's Bheduria from Barishal by launch in two hours or speed boat in 40 minutes. The individual has to travel around 30 minutes on road to reach Bhola Sadar upazila from Bheduria.

From Laaharhat Ferry Ghat in Barishal, one can also reach Bheduria by launch. There is also a ferry running between the terminal and Ilshaghat of Bhola Sadar.

The feasibility study report said passenger and goods transportation from Bhola relies on boats and launches and it was affecting district's socio-economic the development.

Dipak Kumar Adhikary, a banker in Bhola, said his family lives in Barishal. "If there is a bridge, many like me would be able to go to work from Barishal every day.

Manik Gupta, an official of a pharmaceutical company, said they sometimes face trouble to supply medicine to Bhola from Barishal due to delay in the ferry service caused by bad weather.

Several traders in Bhola also said businesses suffer losses due to the absence of a bridge.

"A direct bridge connectivity our problem," would solve Osman Goni, a businessman from Charfesson upazila, told our Barishal correspondent.

The feasibility study report reads, "Completion of this project will bring enormous social and economic benefits to the people living in Bhola in particular and to southern part of the country in general.

"It is recommended that the bridge project be taken up for execution at the earliest."

THE WORK

November 5 last year, On Transport and Bridges Road

Minister Obaidul Quader said the construction of the Barishal-Bhola bridge would begin soon.

The work on formulating the bridge's Development Project Proforma (DPP) was going on and talks were underway over the funding, he said at a view-exchange meeting with officials of Bridges Division and BBA at the capital's Shetu Bhaban.

China showed an interest in financing the project, he added.

Starting in 2017, the feasibility study ended in August last year, an BBA official said.

It was prepared by STUP Consultant Private Limited of India, COWI Consulting of the UK, and Bangladesh's Development Design Consultants Ltd and DevConsultants Limited

The study projected that the traffic volume (motorised traffic per day) through the bridge would be 6,990 in 2024 while 15,620 in 2034 and 56,701 in 2054.

"Although the feasibility study is done, we asked them to do some review and hope that their work will be completed soon," Quazi Muhammad Ferdous, chief engineer of BBA, told The Daily Star recently.

"We will request the ERD to look for donor(s)," he said.

On behalf of the government, Economic Relations Division with development negotiates partners for funding different projects.

The chief engineer said China and South Korea had already shown interest in funding the project.

Since the Bhola-Barishal Bridge does not have any proposed rail line, its cost will be much lower than that of the 6.15km Padma bridge, he said. The cost of Padma Bridge now stands at Tk 30,193 crore.

"So far the study says the river [Tentulia] won't be as difficult as the Padma [for river governance]," said Ferdous

Copies of the circular have also been sent to directors of all public hospitals and clinics, all divisional

the country.

Media personnel are critical of the government's restriction on publishing hospital's information.

"Such a move would certainly hamper press freedom ... In fact, it is hostile behaviour towards the media and a blow to press freedom, Sohel Haider Chowdhury, general secretary of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He questioned the move, saying all mainstream media outlets run news reports maintaining journalistic norms and professionalism.

Sohel demanded the circular be taken down immediately.

Talking about the issue, Supreme Court lawyer barrister Jyotirmoy Barua said, "If anybody violates jurisdictions, is not legally right

He termed the government's move a violation of people's fundamental rights mentioned in the constitution. 'Hospitals deal with life and

death ... this is absolutely an arbitrary exercise. Asked, Md Asadul Islam, secretary

(health service division) at the health ministry, said the move was made "just to ensure journalistic principles.

"With patients, hospital is a restricted place. Whoever goes inside must take permission from the ward in-charge," he said.

Asked whether ward in-charges were given the authority to allow reporters in, he said journalists would be referred to the hospital director."

Peretz and Meretz head Nitzar Horowitz, who want to combine forces against the prime minister's Likud party.

"Peretz and Horowitz stressed the message of union and hope of political change which will be at the social heart and the political direction of the next government after the end of the Netanyahu era," they said in a joint statement.

Labor-Gesher and Meretz won six and five seats respectively in September in the 120-seat Knesset and must clinch at least 3.25 percent of total votes cast in order to enter the legislature after the March polls.

Netanyahu is Israel's longest-serving leader and has vowed to continue his premiership despite being charged in three separate corruption cases.

Khulna through

FROM PAGE 1

qualifier at the same venue.

The second qualifier, scheduled for tomorrow at the same venue, will see Chattogram square off against yesterday's first qualifier loser, Rajshahi Royals.

Going into the business end of the tournament, Dhaka lost their rhythm. Dhaka captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also acknowledged that fact as the charismatic leader mentioned during the post-match press conference that losing two matches in a row at the end of the tournament cost them.

While the Dhaka skipper was left to rue their sudden loss in momentum, Rajshahi Royals skipper Andre Russell will get another chance to see his team bounce back from yesterday's 27-run thumping.

Mob beats 3 FROM PAGE 1

The mob chased the alleged thieves for about one and a half kilometres and managed to catch the three in Prembagh village of adjacent Abhaynagar upazila, said police.

The mob beat up the thieves, leaving two of them dead on the spot. The other died while being taken to Abhaynagar Upazila Health Complex, the police official added.

He said three other cattle lifters nanaged to flee.

Police seized a pick-up from the spot. Locals said the thieves had prought it with them to carry the cattle.

The three bodies were sent to Jashore Sadar Hospital for autopsies.

Making life a little easier for farmers

FROM PAGE 1

to sponsor via iFarmer website, and then release the funds to iFarmer to set it up

Now, the platform is focusing on to create an alternate, sustainable financing option for the livestock farmers.

"The initiative is very good as no other NGO gives us loan for rearing cattle in a small scale. And this is also interest free," said Nazmul Haque, a farmer in Kurigram, who has been rearing 18 cattles for the last two months.

iFarmer is now working in two northern districts -- Kurigram and Lalmonirhat. The organisation has 1,000 farmers with 800 cattle.

"We have a database of 10,000 farmers. From this database, we chose the farmer and then give cattle to them after scrutinising the need assessment," said Fahad Ifaz, cofounder and CEO of iFarmer, told The Daily Star.

He said the organisation partnered with Green Delta Insurance to provide insurance for all existing farm projects so that in the event of untoward circumstances the sponsor's capital can be refunded.

Currently, iFarmer has four options for investors. For example, if anyone invests Tk 30,000, they will get 18 percent return of sponsorship in one year, if anyone invests Tk return, said Fahad.

The third option is investing Tk 40,000 with 8 percent return on sponsorship in four months and the fourth option is investing Tk 80,000 with a 15 percent return on

iFarmer has also piloted a

The initiative was taken to solve the challenges of the farmers in remote parts of the country who often face a crisis of capital and are mostly unbanked.

"iFarmer intends to play a crucial role to help farmers of our country through an innovative investment model while giving the middleincome population a unique chance to be part of farming," he said.

Now, iFarmer is aiming to become a platform for agriculture value chain financing, where on one side farmers will be able to create a profile, get credit and performance ratings and on the other side individual sponsors and financial organisations can invest and earn a healthy return. In the future, iFarmer intends to go beyond livestock and work with high value crops and agricultural products.

"We are on a mission to impact the lives of farmers in a positive way

40,000, they will get 22 percent by giving them access to finance, knowledge and the market," said Jamil M Akbar, co-founder and COO of iFarmer.

> Since its official launching, the company has been working with 1,000 farmers, training them and facilitating finances to those who are selected and verified and have attracted sponsorships from more than 150 people for 800 cattle.

What makes iFarmer different is that it turns a complex problem into a digital marketplace. They are taking care of access to capital for farmers, training them on smart agricultural practices and providing the market for farmers. In doing so, they intend to create an alternative source of capital for farmers and create an efficient and inclusive supply chain of selected agricultural commodities.

They won the "Startup with the Most Social Impact" award from the Swiss Embassy in Bangladesh in 2018. iFarmer was also one of the top five businesses at the UNDP Youth COLab, a finalist of Echoing Green Social Impact Business 2019, and a winner of UNCDFs Fintech Innovation Fund for Women MSMEs 2019

iFarmer has been incubated by Toru and has partnerships with Start-up Bangladesh and CARE International.

sponsorship in six months. goat farm which give 36 percent return after 18 months with initial investment of Tk 10,500