

Home ministry orders arrest of Rohingyas involved in crime

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The home ministry has recently issued an order to prepare a list of Rohingyas illegally living in the inaccessible hilly areas of Bandarban and to arrest those involved in criminal activities.

The order said a section of Rohingyas living in Bangladesh is involved in drugs and arms dealings as well as other criminal activities.

The home ministry, in the order sent to the offices of district commissioner, police super, and detective agencies, asked for the arrest of suspected Rohingyas to curb human and arms trafficking and other form of crime.

A home ministry insider said a large number of Rohingyas have been living in Bandarban for more than three decades but their involvement in crime was discussed for the first time at a meeting of the home ministry in September.

Newspaper reports of Rohingyas involved in militancy and a series of huge arms haul in the hills of Naikhangchhari by the army, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and

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ROK reluctant to hire Bangladeshi workers

Violation of working contracts, overstay, change of workplace created negative impression

PORIMOL PALMA

The government of South Korea is hesitant to recruit fresh Bangladeshi workers, after about 15,000 such workers violated their working contracts, overstaying their visas and changing workplaces, with some even migrating to Japan for higher salaries, sources said.

"After receiving 8,000 workers in the last few years, Korea was supposed to give another quota of taking 8,000 more workers from Bangladesh, but now it is not showing any interest in this regard," a member of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) said.

The labour ministry of Korea is also not taking workers from Bangladesh under the Employment Permit System (EPS), through which workers themselves can choose the companies they wish to work for in Korea, the Baira

members said.

Until now, about 8,000 workers who went to Korea with working visas had to work according to the choices of the Korean Federation of Small Business (KSMB). Other workers went to Korea with travel visas, but remained since they can earn large salaries, ranging between US\$1,000 to \$1,200 a month.

The workers who have gone to Korea since 2000 also had contracts with Bangladeshi recruiting agencies stipulating that they would not change their companies, but most of them have switched to seek higher salaries. As a result, all of them became illegal because their visas expired.

Two years ago, the Korean government declared a deadline for illegal workers up to August 31, 2005, saying they must return to Bangladesh by this time. But now the Korean government is dissatisfied with Bangladesh, as the workers have failed to heed the dead-

lines, according to sources.

Many workers are also involved with various trade unions in Korea and backed by strong human rights groups. Some have even staged street demonstration against the Korean government's decision to send them back.

"Many workers also go to Japan illegally from Korea for higher salaries, which creates resentment among the employers in Korea. So, the KFSB is now more interested in hiring workers from countries like China, Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka," said MA Salim MP, Proprietor of Silver Line Associate, a recruiting agency.

The government is looking at the issue very seriously and has already asked the recruiting agencies to take initiatives to bring them back, said State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Major Quamrul Islam (rdt).

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PHOTO: STAR

The Dhaleshwari river has devoured half a kilometre of the char Kishoreganj, popularly known as Balughat, in Sonargaon in Narayanganj, which the locals claimed to have evolved about 50 years ago. The river has devoured about half kilometre of the char, forcing the inhabitants awaiting government help to start leaving the locality.

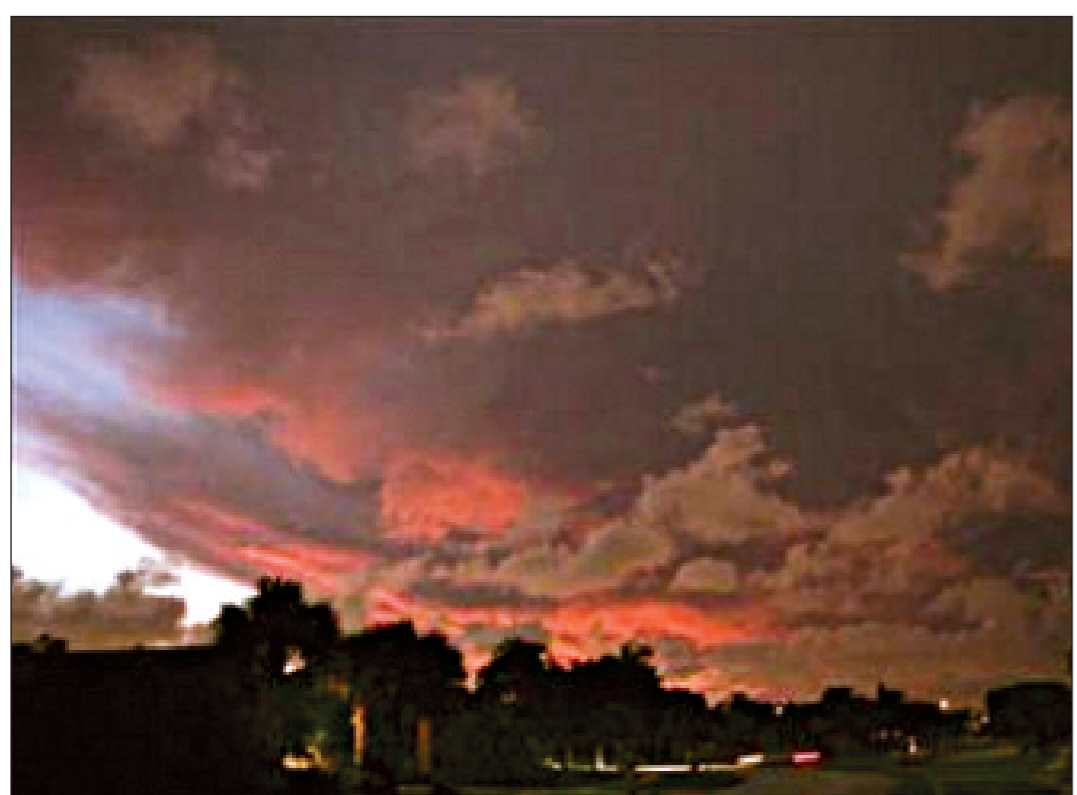


PHOTO: REUTERS

The sun sets through storm clouds over a neighbourhood in the path of hurricane Wilma in Palm Beach County, Florida on Saturday. Wilma flooded Mexico's Caribbean beach resorts, smashed homes and killed at least two people on Saturday in a slow-moving rampage across the Yucatan peninsula.

Wilma picks up speed, heads for Florida

AP, Key West

Hurricane Wilma drifted northward away from the Yucatan peninsula Sunday morning but furious winds and rain were still punishing Mexico's Caribbean coastline, where the storm killed at least seven people.

More residents were urged to evacuate yesterday and businesses and emergency officials prepared rescue and relief plans as forecasters predicted Hurricane Wilma would pick up speed "like a rocket" on a course toward Florida.

The southern half of Florida's peninsula was under a hurricane warning Sunday in anticipation of Wilma, a Category 2 storm with 100 mph sustained wind. Although still far from the state, Wilma's outer bands of rain caused street flooding

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Twenty girls trafficked from Monga-hit Dimla 2 escapes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Two out of some 20 girls, including teenagers and children, trafficked recently to the capital from the district's Monga-afflicted Dimla upazila have luckily managed to flee the dire straits awaiting them, according to a case filed with the local police station on October 19.

In the case the complainant, Rezia Bewa, mother of two of the victims, of South Kharibari village, accused a five-member gang led by Alifuddin, son of Azizar Rahman of Gayabari village, for the crime. She also expressed the fear that the remaining girls, including her daughters, may either have already been smuggled abroad or engaged as sexworkers in Dhaka.

Rezia said Alifuddin and his gang took her daughters and three other girls of the neighbourhood to the capital with promises to provide them there with 'good jobs' as domestic helps at affluent households. Rezia and her neighbours let their daughters go with the gang in the hope that they would thus escape the miseries of the severe Monga, a near-famine situation now ravaging the entire northern region, she told the press.

The five girls named by Rezia as trafficked from Kharibari village are Shimu Akhtar, 15, and Ronifa Akhtar, 9, daughters of Rezia, Sharmin Akhtar, 10, daughter of Alam Hossain, Yasmin Akhtar, 14, daughter of Ishaque, and

Laila SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

18 more down with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eighteen more patients with dengue fever, a viral disease transmitted by Aedes mosquito, were hospitalised in the last three days in the capital.

The spread of dengue may, however, halt by the end of this month with the onset of winter, said officials of the health department of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Among the 25 people who were hospitalised, nine were released from hospitals yesterday, DCC sources said. Of the rest 18, four were admitted yesterday, three on Saturday and 11 on Friday.

Nasim Us Seraj, senior insect control officer of DCC, said with the current rainy days the spread of dengue will hopefully end. "Then our activities will be focused on Culex mosquitoes," he said.

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SAARC SUMMIT

Drafts of 2 accords finalised

UNB, Dhaka

Saarc officials have so far finalised two draft agreements concerning customs management and avoidance of double taxation, while negotiations continue on two more deals expected to be signed at the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka next month.

A senior foreign ministry official said the negotiations on protection and promotion of investment, and Saarc arbitration centre are yet to be wrapped up.

The official said the Saarc Standing Committee of the foreign secretaries of member states, which will sit in Dhaka on November 9, is expected to give the final stitches to the remaining two agreements.

Sources said India wants to set up the Saarc Arbitration Centre in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, the Committee of Experts on Safta that had a meeting in Kathmandu on October 18-19 has not yet reached a consensus on

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2001 VOTERS' LIST

64 lakh names wrong, 27 lakh omitted

Finds NDI survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There were as many as 64 lakh potentially erroneous names on the 2001 voters' list, while over 27 lakh eligible voters may have been disenfranchised in the October 1, 2001 parliamentary elections as they were not registered as voters.

These are the findings of a rigorous voters' list survey conducted by the Washington-based non-profit organization, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). NDI conducted the survey three years after the September 2001 voters' list preparation and revealed a brief of the survey outcome during an August 17 press conference.

However, a final report of the survey results was recently made

available to The Daily Star by NDI, at a time when the Election Commission is set to prepare a fresh voters' list this November ahead of the next parliamentary polls billed for late 2006 to early 2007.

NDI's nationwide sample survey, conducted in 2004, covered 33,776 voters in 150 centres, covering both rural and urban constituencies. This, however, represents only four percent of total voters registered in 2001.

The survey findings reveal that one out of every 12 names - or 8.5 percent - in the 2001 voters' list may be an error, representing in total 64 lakh names that are potentially erroneous.

Besides, NDI found that one out of every 26 eligible voters - or 3.8 percent - may not have been registered, repre-

senting 27 lakh 20,000 eligible voters missing from the 2001 voters' list.

Despite this broad spectrum of errors, the NDI survey did not find significant evidence of widespread intimidation in the 2001 voters' registration process.

NDI did calculate, however, that the number of registered voters exceeded the voting-age population by 10.1 percent. In the last parliamentary elections, 7 crore 49 lakh and 50,000 persons were recorded in the voters' list, as compared to 6 crore 80 lakh 8,000 voting-age persons counted in the 2001 population census.

The census took place in February 2001, while the voters'

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Nigerian plane crashes

Half of 117 passengers survive

AFP, Lagos

More than half the 117 passengers and crew on board a crashed Nigerian airliner survived the disaster, a spokesman for the government of the state where the plane came down told AFP.

Nigerian rescue teams raced to recover injured survivors after the plane crashed in a remote rural area.

"More than half of the people on board survived," said Adeola Oloko, chief press secretary to the government in Oyo State north of Lagos, where the aircraft came down, announcing a major rescue effort.

A message had been broadcast across Oyo State calling for all health workers to make their way to the crash

site in the town of Kishi, 400km north of Lagos, he said.

The Bellview Airlines Boeing 737 airliner took off at 7:50 pm (1850GMT) Saturday from Lagos on a scheduled service bound for Abuja and rapidly vanished from radar screens, aviation officials said.

"We lost contact with it about three minutes after take-off," said a Bellview staff member at the firm's office in Lagos domestic airport.

Officials initially said that there were 116 people on board, but a copy of the flight manifest passed to reporters listed 111 passengers and six crew.

President Olusegun Obasanjo's

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Noman tells of 'adequate' steps to fight bird flu

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Minister of Fisheries and Livestock Abdullah Al Noman yesterday said the government has taken adequate measures to avert possible attack of the 'bird flu', urging the nation not to be panicked by the situation.

"Three high powered committees have already been formed and they were asked to monitor the situation round the clock," Noman told the news agency.

He said the fisheries and livestock offices at the district and upazila levels have also been instructed to strengthen vigilance to ensure bio-safety at the grassroots level poultry firms.

The government Thursday formed a 29-member task force headed by Iqbal Mahmud, joint

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ADAMJEE EPZ

Plot handing over may start by Nov

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) will be able to start handing over industrial plots of Adamjee EPZ to foreign investors by next month, Bepza Executive Chairman Md Zakir Hossain said yesterday.

"Thirty two foreign investors have contacted Bepza for plots to set up industrial projects in Adamjee EPZ. And the development work of the EPZ is almost complete," Hossain said after witnessing a lease agreement signing ceremony between Bepza and Kwun Tong Apparels Ltd., a Hong Kong-based company.

The company has signed the agreement with Bepza for 29 industrial plots of the Adamjee EPZ to set up its \$19 million plant, Fashion City.

Bepza Member (Investment promotion) Md Shahjahan and Kwun Tong Apparels Ltd. Managing Director S a n j e e v

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Sehri-Iftar			
Ramadan	Oct	Sehri	Iftar
19	24		5-28
20	25	4-40	5-28

Prayer Timing		
October 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	4-46
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-28	5-43
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

PRICE SPIRAL OF ESSENTIALS

Even beggars feel the pinch

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Begging is no longer a secured source of living as it used to be until recently. The condition of the common people, which has been on an economic roller coaster, is affecting the beggars' income, too.

The price spiral of essentials, continually pushing up the living cost, has put the middle and the lower middle class people in great financial constraints. And, since they are typically the most frequent alms-givers, the beggars are also feeling the pinch of the price spiral.

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A group of professional beggars sits idle on the footpath near Curzon Hall of Dhaka University yesterday, as almsgivers' capacity to donate has drastically shrunk in the wake of the price spiral of essentials.



PHOTO: STAR

SI jailed for 21yrs in arms case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced a police sub-inspector (SI) to 21 years' rigorous imprisonment for possessing illegal firearm and ammunition while he was on duty in 2002.

Judge Mohammad Mofakkarul Islam of the Special Tribunal-13 handed down the sentence in presence of the convict SI Tariqul Alam.

On January 13, 2002 a team of detective branch (DB) of police went to Tejgoan Police Station and

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