

ILLEGAL BOAT TRIP TO MALAYSIA

20 detained in Cox's Bazar

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday detained 20 overseas jobseekers for their suspected links with human-trafficking gangs after members of coast guard rescued them from a small Malaysia-bound fishing boat in Cox's Bazar.

The police move marks a shift in the handling of such cases as law enforcers detain only the human traffickers, not the victims following raids on such boats.

The human-trafficking business has continued for over half of the last decade in the country.

As usual, most of the detainees were lured into the illegal and risky sea voyage through the Bay and Andaman Sea by false promises of lucrative jobs in Malaysia.

"They [jobseekers] were detained under Section 54 of the CrPC," said Pekua Police Station Officer-in-charge Abdur Rakib.

"We will seek permission from the court to arrest all the 20 jobseekers if they do not reveal by tomorrow [Wednesday] morning the names of those lured them into the voyage," he added.

Coast guard members handed over the jobseekers to Pekua police after rescuing them from the boat at Kutubdia channel around 4:00am yesterday.

The fortune seekers, hailing from

Narsingdi, Satkhira, Pabna and Habiganj, would be produced before the court today, Rakib added.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent also reported that police had been detaining human-trafficking victims for over a month to find out clues to help the law enforcers reach the traffickers.

The boat from which the 20 jobseekers were rescued had left from Mognamaghat of Kutubdia in the early hours of yesterday and was probably waiting for taking more people abroad, said Coast guard Kutubdia contingent petty officer Mohammad Mokhtar Hossain.

Mokhtar claimed all of the 20 confessed to have got into the boat to go to Malaysia.

Fishing boats are reported to have been used to carry from 20 to 50 people to large cargo vessels anchored in the southeast off St Martin's Island.

From there, the vessels leave for areas along Thailand-Malaysia border with a total of around 1,000 to 1,200 people on board.

Poverty, unemployment and development programmes, excluding rural areas and its people, facilitate a network of human trafficking rackets spread across the country to deceive hundreds of thousands of people into taking the illegal trip to Malaysia and Thailand, according to migration experts.



Anowar Hossain, his wife Marufa and child Rahin.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Another expat

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reach him by phone several times but failed," said Marufa Khatun, wife of Anowar, father of two -- Rahin, 7 and Raisha, 5.

According to the international media, the kidnapped foreigners were working for the Austrian oil services company VAOS and they included four Filipinos, a Ghanaian, an Austrian and a Czech.

SM Ashrafur Islam, labour counsellor of Bangladesh embassy in Tripoli, told The Daily Star over the phone that the mission was in touch with the Australian embassy, the company concerned and the Libyan authorities in efforts to locate the two Bangladeshis.

A foreign ministry official in Dhaka said they are hopeful about the release of the two as the government has not joined any alliance against ISIS, considering the safety of Bangladeshis working in the Middle East.

With Libya plunging into chaos amid turf war between two rival governments and the rise of Islamist extremists, Bangladesh halted sending workers to the country in May last year.

A trailblazer in cancer treatment

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international standards, but at a much lower cost.

A bone marrow transplant replaces a patient's unhealthy blood forming cells with healthy ones.

Now a US expatriate, Bimalangshu had a modest beginning to his life. Born to a lower middle-class family in Sylhet, he grew on the Chhatak Cement Factory compound where his father used to work.

A bright student of Chhatak Cement Factory High School, he stood second on the scholastic achievement list in SSC in 1975. Two years later, he took the HSC exams from MC College in Sylhet and secured the same position on the academic achievement list.

He studied physics at Dhaka University for his love of physics and mathematics.

There came a turn in his life. In 1978, he went to Budapest under a scholarship to study medicine at Semmelweis Medical School, the oldest medical school in Hungary.

After graduating with a distinction from the college, he received a Gold Medal from the education ministry of Hungary. He then moved to the US and joined the hematology-oncology programme at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1993. After doing a PhD in transplantation immunology, he joined the hospital's BMT unit.

In 2005-06, he came back to Bangladesh to assess how his knowledge in cancer medicine could help his home country.

In 2010, he got involved with the Bangladesh-based AK Khan Healthcare Trust and helped it design a nurse training course and a cervical cancer screening programme for poor women.

Under the programme, his colleague from the US hospital, surgical oncologist AK Goodman set up a clinic in Korail slum in the capital and screened hundreds of women for cervical cancer.

It was around that time when Bimalangshu started visiting the

health ministry to seek help from the government to scale up the operation of the clinic.

He met the then health minister AFM Ruhul Haque, who wanted to know why the physician was not using his knowledge and expertise in Bangladesh.

Bimalangshu replied, "I would be ready to help the local initiative on one condition: The centre can't be a piecemeal project. Rather, it has to be a centre of excellence and we shall do it right and safe."

Ruhul readily agreed and kept his door open to Bimalangshu.

The physician arranged a partnership agreement between the MGH and the health ministry. And the rest is history.

He ensured that the BMT centre at DMCH operates in line with international standards so that nobody needs to go abroad for the treatment anymore.

Bimalangshu's father Sukumar Chandra Dey, who died in 1993, has been a role model for him. His mother

Monorama Dey was rather a simple but wise and insightful woman.

A father of two, Bimalangshu is fond of music, Rabindra Sangeet in particular. His wife Chandra Dey, also from Bangladesh, is a Rabindra Sangeet exponent.

Their son Shommitro is a college student and daughter Priyana a schoolgirl.

The physician now plans to focus on cancers in women and develop a programme to heal cancerous tumors that can't be treated by BMT.

His wife and children call him a workaholic. It is his workaholic tendencies that made him famous and helped him save numerous lives from the grips of blood cancer.

Dr Mohiuddin Khan, head of the BMT programme at DMCH, said: "Dr Bimalangshu is so serious that when we are out on our round in the morning in Bangladesh time, he is available on Skype despite it is nearly midnight in the US. He talks to patients, physicians and nurses on Skype."

Gunfight over tender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two groups of people yesterday exchanged gunshots in the capital's Bidyut Bhaban in connection with submitting bids for a tender of Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) Ltd.

No one was reportedly wounded in the gunfire but one Mamun, 45, a contractor, took treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital for injuries in his head.

A bullet, however, hit a parked car of Ahmad Kaikaus, additional secretary of power division. Kaikaus was not inside the car, witnesses said.

The civil works division of the DPDC called for a tender of Tk 75 lakh for extension work at its Tejgaon sub-station and construction of boundary walls at Madartek sub-station.

Yesterday was the last day for submitting tenders, Nur Quamrun Nahar, public relations manager of DPDC, told The Daily Star.

The clash ensued around 11:30am in front of the bhaban when one group came out of the building after submitting tender documents and met the other who were going to submit theirs, said a security guard, preferring not to be named.

"They beat each other and hurled several flower pots. A chase and counter chase took place between them. I also heard at least three to four gunshots," he said, adding that the staff and other people fled the area in panic.

DPDC sources said at least four companies -- Powercell Engineering Ltd, M/S Tanvir Traders, Sikder Enterprise and Sikder Construction -- submitted their tenders yesterday.

Abdullah Al Mamun, a sub-inspector of Shahbagh Police Station, said they detained Mamun for interrogation.

In preliminary interrogation, Mamun claimed himself as a contractor and denied his involvement in the clash.

Success 100pc



From left, Jason Harlow, associate director for Global Programmes; Anne-Marie Barron, clinical nurse specialist; and nurse practitioners Jenna Morgan and Colleen Danielson, all from the Massachusetts General Hospital in the US, pose during the celebration of the first anniversary of the bone marrow transplant programme at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

PHOTO: STAR

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Later, a partnership agreement to this effect was signed between the MGH and the health ministry.

The MGH, the first teaching hospital of Harvard University Medical School, provided technical support and training for setting up the facility at the DMCH free of charge, and Bangladesh government procured medical equipment.

The unit conducted its first bone marrow transplant on March 10 last year. Since then, 12 patients have had bone marrow transplants with financial support from the government.

"Thanks to the Almighty, all the patients are alive. And they are doing fine," Bimalangshu, one of the architects behind the collaborative initiative, said in an interview with The Daily Star on Saturday.

Awlad, an assistant director at

This is an outstanding achievement because zero mortality rate in the first year of such a programme is rare in any developing country, said the Bangladesh-born physician.

The country now has a state-of-the-art BMT programme where a Bangladeshi citizen is treated the same way an American is treated in his country, he said.

Bimalangshu lauded ex-minister Ruhul and incumbent health minister Mohammad Nasim for acting as a driving force behind the success.

The MGH trained physicians, technicians, nurses and technologists under the programme that aims at treating blood cancer and thalassemia patients.

Fifty-year-old Awlad Hossain is among the patients who benefited from the programme.

Awlad, an assistant director at

microfinance organisation ASA, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in November 2013.

When a local oncologist advised him to undergo 50 radiotherapies, he contacted Prof Mohiuddin Khan, director of the BMT Unit at the DMCH, for suggestion.

Prof Mohiuddin then put him in touch with Bimalangshu.

Awlad had his bone marrow transplant on January 8 this year, and was under intensive care of the BMT Unit until his release on February 5. He is now going through post-BMT procedures.

"I had lost hope. Now I feel well. All other patients, who received treatment at the BMT Unit, are also doing fine. I am hopeful I will be fully cured soon. This type of facility should be expanded," said Awlad.

Bimalangshu said the initiative has so far touched the lives of a few but it needs support from the government as well as the private sector to cover a large section of the population.

The next challenge for the unit will be to switch from autologous BMT to allogeneic transplantation which is more sophisticated. It is necessary because patients with certain types of blood cancer and thalassemia don't benefit from autologous transplant, he said.

A team from the DMCH and the MGH would organise a "cancer walk" in the capital today to raise public awareness about the importance of donating bone marrow.

They hope to get further support from the government and the private sector to establish the country's first bone marrow registry: Bangladesh Marrow Donor Programme.

To that end, a fund raising initiative will be launched today for setting up a laboratory where cancer patients and bone marrow donors could get registered.

Bimalangshu said a data base of bone marrow donors has to be prepared so that patients in need of allogeneic BMT can find their ideal matches.

Statistics on cancer patients are hard to find as the country doesn't have an ideal national database.

Bimalangshu said many die from blood cancers and thalassemia every year simply because they don't have access to treatment.

"The MGH is ready to help set up the lab. But Bangladesh government and the people have to lead this effort," he said.

Senior MGH administrators, including Dr David Bangsberg, director of MGH Centre for Global Health, Dr Thomas Spitzer, director of Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, and David Ryan, clinical director of MGH Cancer Centre, have been fully supportive of this collaboration, he said.

Prof Mohiuddin Khan, director of the BMT Unit at the DMCH, praised the policymakers and experts from the MGH for playing a key role in the noble initiative.

A prizefighter's odyssey

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the role of a true leader on the field and is an inspiration to many off it.

"Oh, your captain with bad legs was brilliant," was how a lady at the Adelaide Airport yesterday described Mashrafe once she was convinced that we, a few travelling journalists, were from Bangladesh and were covering the ICC World Cup.

She was hardly aware of anything about Bangladesh, but the lady, like many others, noticed with curiosity

how Mashrafe, sporting those pair of knee braces, braved the pain barriers while bowling at considerable speed and creating those outswingers to herald the death of two supremely fit English batsmen at the Adelaide Oval on Monday.

His bowling figures of 2-48 hardly tell the true story.

"I need to strap both my knees carefully before wearing the knee braces ahead of every game. These things have now become a part of my

body. I need to be cautious before every delivery to keep my rhythm and balance okay. Diving is almost prohibited for me. The most disturbing aspect is the pain I feel with every stride. But I know I will have to live with it," Mashrafe will say if you are very close to him.

Mashrafe is the only cricketer in this World Cup who is a prime suspect of breaking down at any moment. And he knows it more than anybody else. But if you ask him he will proudly

announce that he would happily embrace it again while sporting that beloved Tigers shirt.

Against England he walked carefully between overs and took time to massage his creaking knees, yet he was barely able to run without a grimace, but he is not a man to give up fights for his nation.

Mahmudullah Riyad was adjudged man of the match for his maiden hundred; Mushfiqur Rahim got attention for his consistent batting; Rubel

Hossain got the deserved accolades for his brilliant bowling.

But the best thing that happened on Monday was when all the players jumped on their grounded captain after the fall of the last English wicket.

Inspiration is not a commodity that you can buy, it is something you acquire. And this is something the "Narail Express" has acquired with years of devotion. A man who has been married to injury ever since the 2003 World Cup in South Africa, had missed

more matches than he played but whenever he came back, he came back to give the nation something to cheer about.

His honesty, dedication, devotion and love for the game are unmatched. Ask Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim or a young Taskin Ahmed; everybody will say: "He is unparalleled."

But ask Mashrafe and you will get a humble answer: "People love us too much but in return we give them too little."