

PART I
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME NETWORK

SLAVE TRADE booms in DARK TRIANGLE

Transnational traffickers lured some 2.5 lakh Bangladeshi fortune-seekers through sea route in 8 years, held them in Thai jungles for ransom, used them as slaves

EMRAN HOSSAIN and MOHAMMAD ALI ZINNAT with SWAPAN PANDEY MARTIN

Promising jobs in Malaysia, transnational human traffickers held about 2.5 lakh Bangladeshi captives in Thailand for ransom over the last eight years and realised crores of taka from them, The Daily Star can report.

Lured into the trap, many of the country's poor people make the voyage in cargo vessels through sea to Thailand first, hoping to cross into Malaysia overland.

But before the jobseekers can make it to their final destination, their dreams turn into a collective nightmare. Held in cramped and filthy conditions in Thai jungles for months or even years, they are often beaten and starved for ransom.

Thailand is a strategic location for holding victims in remote mountains dotting that country's coast, said a Bangladeshi expatriate in Malaysia who turned broker.

"The migrants are confined in Thailand to realise the ransom before they are sent to Malaysia, because in the past some jobseekers fled from Thailand without paying. It is better to settle the business at the right time," he told this newspaper by phone on condition of anonymity.

Only on Saturday, the Thai authorities found 26 bodies from mass graves where trafficking victims from Bangladesh and Myanmar are suspected to have been buried in an abandoned jungle camp located in Sadao district of Songkhla province.

In October last year, Thai police rescued 134 trafficked victims confined in a Southern Thailand rubber plantation deep in a jungle. The BBC had reported all the victims were Bangladeshi, but the Bangladesh authorities said 118 were Bangladeshi nationals while the rest 16 were Rohingyas from Myanmar.

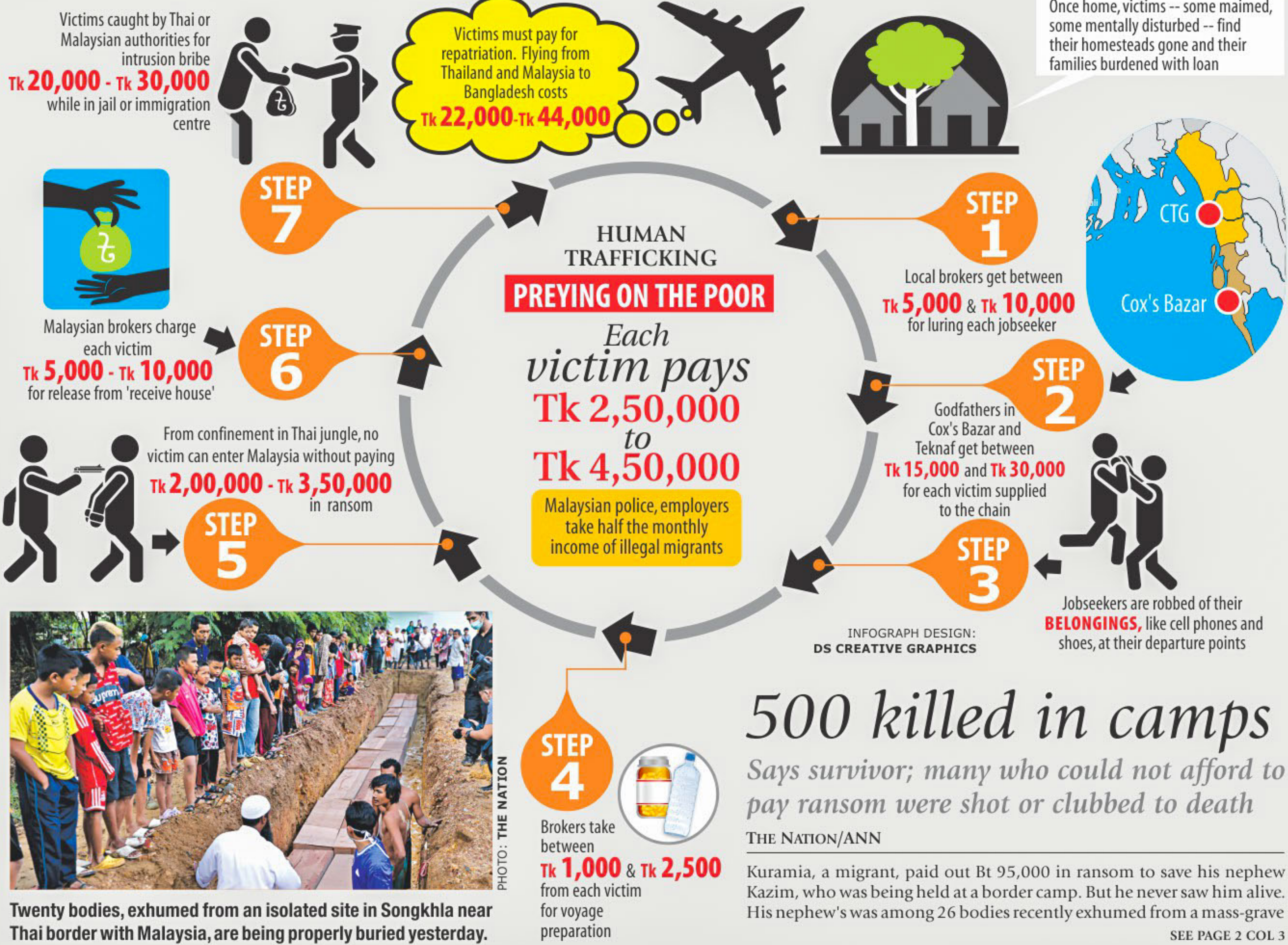
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WATCH OUT FOR PART II

People being abducted and shipped abroad. Traffickers find Rohingyas as their easy targets



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Qaeda unit behind Avijit killing?

Rab, police doubt reported claim

STAR REPORT

Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) has claimed responsibility for the murder of writer-blogger Avijit Roy, AFP reported citing a US website that monitors extremist groups.

In a video posted on jihadist forums on Saturday, AQIS leader Asim Umar said this organisation carried out the attacks on Avijit and "other blasphemers" in Bangladesh and Pakistan, according to the website of SITE Intelligence Group.

Police and Rab said they were yet to be sure about the authenticity of the post.



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Pintu dies in jail

It's a killing, says family; Khaleda blames PM, others for 'murder'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu died of "cardiac arrest" yesterday.

He was 48.

The BNP assistant organising secretary was "brought dead" to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital from Rajshahi Central Jail at 12:15pm, Brig Gen AKM Nasiruddin, director of the hospital, told The Daily Star.

Relatives of Pintu have left for Rajshahi to bring the body to Dhaka. His namaz-e-janaza would be held in front of the party central office in Naya Paltan at 11:30am today.

Rois Uddin, head of cardiology department at RMCH,

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Traffic not as heavy as usual in Dhaka yesterday since many opted to stay indoors amid the heat of the summer. The photo of the heat haze was taken in front of the Crescent Lake.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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