

THAI TRAFFICKING RING Malaysian involvement suspected

AFP, Kuala Lumpur
A labour rights group yesterday said it has received reports of undocumented migrant workers going missing in Malaysia and called on authorities to investigate whether a deadly human-trafficking operation uncovered in neighbouring Thailand was reaching across the border.

The call by Malaysian NGO Tenaganita came as Thai authorities said six more bodies were found near a site along the two countries' borders where the remains of 26 migrants were found over the weekend in a mass grave.

Glorene Das, director of Tenaganita, said the group has over the past year received testimonies from illegal migrants and refugees about missing loved ones. She said the testimonies indicated Malaysians were involved in human smuggling.

But she cautioned that Tenaganita had received no eyewitness accounts or proof to that effect, nor any firm information on whether Malaysia also is home to any camps where migrants are held against their will. Das called on Malaysia's government to "investigate who they are and to continue the investigations so that the people involved can be prosecuted."



Suspected migrants from Myanmar or Bangladesh line up after they were detained by police outside the southern Thai city of Hat Yai yesterday. Dozens of migrants were rounded up on May 6 and 7 in southern Thailand as authorities crack down on trafficking networks, prompting people traffickers to switch tactics, taking large groups of migrants to Malaysia or abandoning their camps, according to rights groups. PHOTO: AFP

High-tech ops uncovered Thai human trafficking ring

THE STAR ONLINE
The mass grave of Rohingya refugees found in Songkhla recently was uncovered through unprecedented cooperation and effective use of high-end technology, said an anti-human trafficking body.

The international group, Freeland Foundation, said close cooperation between the police and NGOs with the use of telephone forensics technology had enabled investigators to detect and catch members of the international human-trafficking syndicate responsible for the burials and kidnappings.

On Monday, Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said there was "no evidence" of Malaysian involvement in the smuggling ring operating in Thailand. Rights groups have long accused Thai authorities of turning a blind eye to -- and even being complicit in -- people-smuggling.

8 Malaysia-bound fortune seekers rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cig
Bangladesh Coast Guard yesterday rescued eight Malaysia-bound fortune seekers from a boat at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port. Four alleged brokers were also detained from the boat that the eight had boarded to go to Malaysia illegally by sea.

Slowly, normalcy returning to Nepal

13-day mourning for quake victims ends as death toll hits 7,802

AFP, Kathmandu
Dressed all in white and with their heads shaved, survivors of a Nepalese earthquake that killed more than 8,400 people ended 13 days of mourning yesterday as the broken capital began picking up the pieces.

As authorities released figures showing nearly 300,000 homes were destroyed by the quake nationwide, mourners gathered around a Hindu temple in Kathmandu for a series of ceremonies that concluded at dusk. Groups of mourners dressed in white, the men with their heads shaved and women with uncombed hair, drew religious symbols in the sand before building small fires at the famous Pashupatinath complex on the banks of the Bagmati river.

In a corner of the temple complex, where hundreds of cremations have been performed in the past fortnight, Hindu priests recited chants and threw petals over offerings of rice and other foods. The mourners took ritual baths in the river, offering prayers for their departed loved ones and making donations of bedding, mats, umbrellas, clothing and fruit for temple workers.

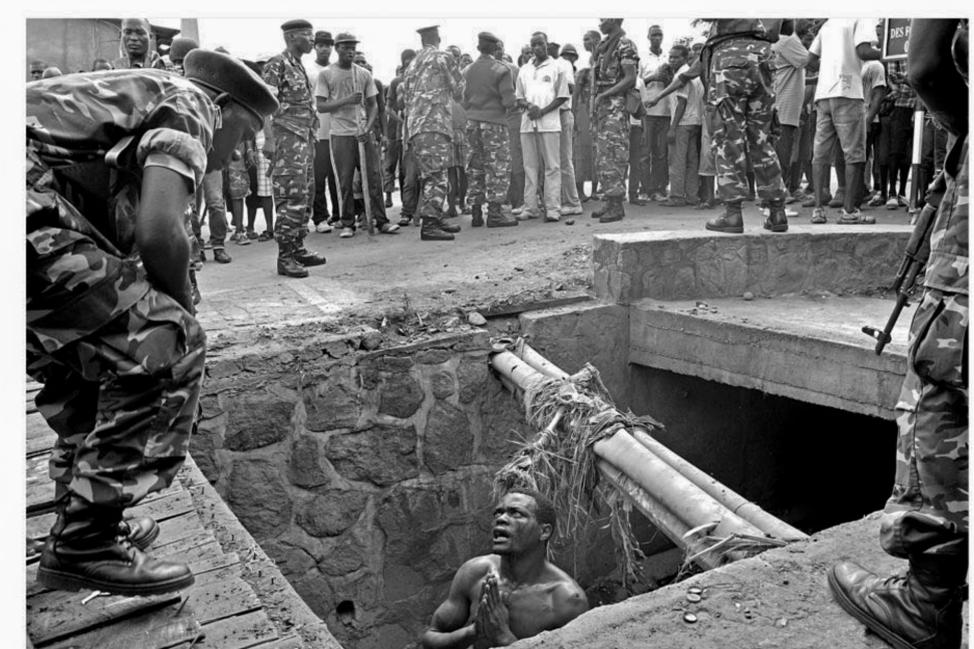
"The loss is unbearable. We can only pray they find a home in heaven," said Chuda Bhakta Shrestha, who lost his 61-year-old wife, 32-year-old daughter and granddaughter, aged four, when their Kathmandu home crumbled. "We have to find a way to continue our lives and find the courage to start anew... There is no alternative other than to carry on," said the 61-year-old.

Secret tapes of Sarkozy ruled legal in inquiry

BBC ONLINE
A French court has ruled that wire-tapped conversations between ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy and his lawyer can be used as evidence in an ongoing corruption investigation.



The decision is seen as a blow for the centre-right leader, who is likely to bid again for the presidency in 2017. Mr Sarkozy is suspected of promising a sought-after position to a judge in return for information on another case. But he was already being bugged as part of the earlier investigation.



A man begs for help from the military from a gutter where he had hid himself yesterday to escape a lynching by a mob at the Cibitoke district of Burundi capital, Bujumbura. The man suspected to be an 'Imbonerakure', or member of the Youth League of Burundi's ruling party was finally saved by the army. At least three people were killed in clashes in Burundi today in protests over the president's bid for a third term. PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lanka sets September date for war crimes probe

AFP, Colombo
Sri Lanka's new government yesterday said an investigation into allegations of war crimes would begin by September, amid international pressure to account for atrocities committed during the island's decades-long separatist conflict.

Germany restricts spy cooperation with NSA

AFP, Berlin
Germany's secret service has severely restricted cooperation with its US partner the NSA in response to a scandal over their alleged joint spying on European officials and companies, media reported Thursday.

The foreign intelligence agency BND this week stopped sharing Internet surveillance data with the US National Security Agency (NSA), passing on only fax and phone intercepts, the reports said. Berlin now demands that the NSA provide a justification for each online surveillance request, reported the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily, public broadcasters NDR and WDR, and national news agency DPA.

1 killed in athletes' suicide pact in India

AFP, New Delhi
Indian authorities launched an investigation yesterday after a young female athlete apparently killed herself by eating poisonous fruit in a suspected suicide pact following alleged harassment at a state-run sports facility.

North Korea would use nukes if 'forced': Official

CNN ONLINE
When officials informed us that we'd be granted a sit-down interview with a high-ranking member of North Korea's inner circle with no preconditions, it was a real surprise. Senior figures in Pyongyang don't do interviews, especially not with the international press.

report has alleged large-scale human rights abuses -- murder, starvation and torture of inmates in a network of brutal prison camps -- Park denied that such camps exist. In spite of all the sanctions, the DPRK sees no option but to pursue its nuclear weapons program. Park maintained that his country does indeed have the missile capability to strike mainland United States and would do so if the US "forced their hand."

The announcement comes just days after US Secretary of State John Kerry urged the government to ensure accountability for war-time atrocities and work towards ethnic reconciliation, during a visit to the island. Kerry echoed longstanding demands of ethnic minority Tamils to investigate cases of thousands who went missing or were killed towards the end of the conflict, which claimed some 100,000 lives between 1972 and 2009.