

# Village headman arrested in Thailand

THE NATION/ANN

A village headman in Tambon Hin Kaew in Chumphon's Tha Sae district of Thailand was arrested on human trafficking charges.

The arrest was made after 74 people from Myanmar were smuggled into Thailand, robbed of valuables, and abandoned in a forest in Chumphon's Muang district earlier this month.

It is alleged that while the migrants were in a hidden camp, Thai human traffickers also raped three Myanmar women aged between 18 and 20.

The headman, Prasert Sangkhom, 52, was among four people who with the Chumphon Provincial Court issued arrest warrants for on Thursday.

Police are hunting for the three other suspects, who are believed to have fled to a village on the Myanmar side of the border with accomplices there and to an island in the Andaman Sea.

In related news, an interior ministry taskforce raided a karaoke bar in tambon Sanam Chai in Suphan Buri's Muang district early yesterday and rounded up 10 Myanmar women aged 20-30 and four Myanmar girls under 18.

Police arrested bar owner Chumpol Chan-ngamdee, 53, for opening a service establishment without permission, running a prostitution venue and human trafficking.

Police seized a lot of evidence such as 14 books recording income from prostitution and an air gun from the bar.

The pre-dawn raid stemmed from a tip-off from the Counter Human Trafficking Unit, a non-government group, about Myanmar women being forced into prostitution. It was reported that the woman had to perform sex services to repay B\$50,000 per head commission fee charged for bringing them to Thailand.

(1 Bt= Tk2.33)

## Moderate quake jolts country again

UNB, Dhaka

A moderate tremor jolted different parts of the country, including the capital, yesterday.

Met office sources said the tremor measuring 5.6 on the Richter Scale was felt at 5:34pm.

The epicentre was at Ramechhap in Nepal, 76km of southeast of Kathmandu and 591km of northwest of the Seismic Centre at Agargaon in the capital.

However, there was no immediate report of any casualty.

## Salahuddin

FROM PAGE 16  
BNP leader's elder brother, yesterday said Salahuddin's wife Hasina Ahmed and three of his relatives might leave Dhaka for Shillong this afternoon if they get Indian visa.

Doctors in Mount Elizabeth Hospital spotted three blocks in Salahuddin's heart and he had to undergo surgery for one block in January, he added.

Meanwhile, the BNP yesterday said the party has no update on Salahuddin, who was found in Shillong on May 12, remaining missing for around two months.

"We have no latest information about him [Salahuddin]," said BNP International Affairs Secretary Asaduzzaman Ripon during a press conference at the party's Nayapalton central office yesterday.

## All set for deal

FROM PAGE 1  
week and the frequency could be increased depending on the response.

Another key issue on the agenda of talks between Quader and Gadhari would be the bilateral motor vehicles agreement, which is expected to give a boost to bilateral trade, sources said.

The agreement will obviate the need for transshipment of goods at specified border points. It will enable the trucks of the two countries to move seamlessly into each other's territory, thereby reducing delay due to unloading and loading of goods at the checkpoints, they added.

Quader and Gadhari are also expected to discuss a direct bus link between Kolkata and Agartala via Dhaka. At present, people seeking to travel from Agartala to Kolkata have to get off at Dhaka before boarding another bus for Kolkata.

India and Bangladesh started the first passenger bus service between Kolkata and Dhaka in June 1999. The second bus service connecting Agartala and Dhaka began in 2002.

## How long will they suffer?

FROM PAGE 1

have sought information from the UN to let us know the details," he told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Bangladesh also appears to say that most of the boatpeople are Rohingyas. Now, the only thing left for the trafficking victims is death. And, they are dying.

A BBC correspondent on Thursday reported from alongside a vessel off the southern coast of Thailand that 10 migrants had died and their bodies were thrown overboard.

The fishing boat, carrying about 350 people, has been stranded for a week in the Andaman Sea after it was refused entry to Thailand. The crew abandoned them and disabled the engine. With no food or water, they are drinking their own urine.

The situation, undoubtedly, is the same on dozens of other such vessels that might have set out from the Bay of Bengal weeks before.

The reason why the crew left the boats is the fear of arrest in Thailand, which is conducting a hunt for human traffickers since early May following exhuming of some 33 bodies at its coastal jungle camps.

Imagine what would have happened if the mass graves were not discovered.

The practice that has been going on for some two decades would have remained the same. The vessels carrying the persecuted Rohingyas or hapless Bangladeshi land on Thai coasts. The traffickers take the boatpeople to jungle camps and torture them until their relatives pay handsome amounts for their release.

However, even after the payment, they are sold to other traffickers in Malaysia or fishing industry in Thailand.

Other than the traffickers, officials and local politicians in Thailand and Malaysia reportedly benefit from this clandestine "slave trade".

Earlier, many Bangladeshis, who were pushed into Malaysia after paying ransom, had landed in jail, served sentences for intrusion and later deported. Those who were unable to pay ransom were tortured to death or forced to servitude.

It is difficult to estimate how many victims faced such deaths or servitude. But, the estimated 6,000

people, as reported by the IOM, who are now floating in the sea, can still be saved.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the US and rights bodies have requested Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia to allow the boatpeople to their shores, conduct rescue operations and provide them with whatever is required for their survival.

The ball is in the three states' court now.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said Southeast Asia's growing refugee problem was due in large part to Myanmar's treatment of Rohingyas and so he wanted to send a "very strong message" to Myanmar that they needed to treat their people with humanity.

He is right. But as members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Malaysia, Thailand or Indonesia never gave a "very strong message" to Myanmar on the decades-old issue.

So, sending a "very strong message" by pushing 6,000 people to death in the sea amid a humanitarian crisis can never be a good idea.

## Four held

FROM PAGE 16

police official said.

During investigation, police came to know that Mahbubul, Sagar and Masud entered the bank after cutting the grill of the window, while Gias and Raihan were waiting at Muradpur intersection with a motorcycle, the CMP chief mentioned.

"When they went into the bank, Ibrahim was sleeping. Masud hit Ibrahim in his head with the iron rod. As Ibrahim screamed, two of them caught hold of his hands and legs while the other slit Ibrahim's throat," Jalil said.

The criminals failed to rob any money from the bank because they could not open the bank vault, he said.

Of the arrestees, Gias claimed to be a businessman, while Arif and Sagar garment workers. Mahbubul is a vegetable vendor and Raihan an assistant of a lawyer, the police commissioner added.

## Bring them back

FROM PAGE 1

involved in human trafficking," he said, adding BGB forces are doing their best to prevent trafficking.

He said it is also necessary to launch massive awareness campaigns to alert the gullible people to the false allure of overseas jobs particularly on private broadcasting media as only 1.8 percent people watch the state-run Bangladesh Television.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque said two teams of officials are now working on two groups of trafficked Bangladeshi people so that they could be brought back safely.

Tackling human trafficking from Bangladesh without a regional mechanism and without resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis is impossible, he said.

Haque called upon the Bangladesh Navy, the BGB and the police to play their roles accordingly in preventing human trafficking through the Bay of Bengal and the border areas.

Habibur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, said, "The human catastrophe would not have reached this proportion had the Navy Coastguards and BGB played their roles accordingly."

Commodore Sayeed, deputy director general of Bangladesh Coast Guard, said a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar was an immediate requirement to address the human trafficking issue, as the boats waiting in the Myanmar waters to carry trafficked people fall outside the purview of their supervision.

Pointing out that traffickers move through 80 points in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf with the help of local brokers, he said the 256 local brokers that the home ministry has already identified should immediately be brought to book no matter how powerful they are.

Cabinet Secretary Muhammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said there are comprehensive laws on preventing human trafficking but their implementation is weak and monitoring over their implementation is even weaker.

Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, deputy commissioner of Chittagong, said, "Relevant laws cannot be enforced due to different pressure groups."

Shah Mujahid Uddin, upazila nirbahi officer of Teknaf, said Sita Pahar (hill) in Myanmar just 40 nautical miles away from Teknaf is a notorious base of human trafficking from Bangladesh and there should be some diplomatic ways to deal with it.

"Local administration cannot always play its role in preventing human trafficking due to involvement of local public representatives in the racket," he said. "Moreover, it lacks the required fund and logistic supports."

He said the trafficking racket in Myanmar abuses the mobile telephone signals from Bangladeshi oper-

ators' towers in the border area for telecommunications and mobile money transaction. This must be immediately restricted, he added.

Md Shah Alam, additional deputy inspector general of Police, said there are good laws prohibiting all kinds of human trafficking but legal actions are not taken against the traffickers as expected.

There are counter trafficking committees headed by a deputy commissioner at district levels, and upazila nirbahi officers at Upazila levels and UP chairmen at village levels. Still, human trafficking goes on, he said.

The big fishes involved in this heinous crime must be brought to book at least on charges of money laundering as a huge amount of money is laundered as ransom, he added.

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said the government has to put an end to the culture of impunity and bring the culprits to book with an iron hand.

Kazi Reazul Hoque, full time member of the NHRC, chaired the workshop.

## UN urges new Israeli govt to scrap settlement plans

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon deplored Friday the latest plans to build Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories and urged the new Israeli government to scrap the construction projects.

Ban made the appeal after the Israeli parliament late Thursday approved Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new right-wing government, which is facing a crisis over the way forward to make peace with the Palestinians.

The UN chief said he "strongly deplores the advancement of settlement activities on three occasions over the past three consecutive weeks" in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

He pressed the "government of Israel to halt and reverse such decisions in the interest of peace and a just final status agreement."

The United Nations has repeatedly called on Israel to halt the construction of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, which it has branded as illegal and a move to erase the prospect of a Palestinian state.

Israel maintains the settlements are not being built on occupied land, but rather on Israeli territory.

"The international community will not recognize unilateral actions on the ground and that the status of Jerusalem can only be resolved through negotiations," Ban said in a statement.

## Dinosaur

FROM PAGE 16

However, he found it had one major difference.

The surface of the skull corresponding with the brain's olfactory bulb was unusually large.

This finding implies a powerful sense of smell.

"This feature means that Sauroornitholestes sullivani had a relatively better sense of smell than other dromaeosaurid dinosaurs, including Velociraptor, Dromaeosaurus, and Bambiraptor," Jasinski said.

"This keen olfaction may have made S. sullivani an intimidating predator as well."

Jasinski reported his findings this month in the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science Bulletin.

The specimen, roughly 75 million years old, was discovered by paleontologist Robert Sullivan in the Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness Area of New Mexico in 1999.

When first described, scientists believed it was a member of Sauroornitholestes langstoni, a species of theropod dinosaurs in the Dromaeosauridae family that had been found in present-day Alberta, Canada.

S. sullivani comes from the end of the time of dinosaurs, or the Late Cretaceous, and represents the only named dromaeosaur from this period in North America south of Montana.

At the time S. sullivani lived, North America was split into two continents separated by an inland sea.

This dinosaur lived on the western shores in an area called Laramidia.

Numerous dromaeosaurs, which are commonly called raptors, are known from more northern areas in Laramidia, including Alberta and Montana.

However, S. sullivani represents the only named dromaeosaur from the Late Cretaceous of southern Laramidia.

Though a distinct species, S. sullivani appears to be closely related to S. langstoni.

Finding the two as distinct species further shows that differences existed between dinosaurs between the northern and southern parts of North America.

At less than 3 feet at its hip and roughly 6 feet in length, S. sullivani was not a large dinosaur.

However, previous findings of related species suggest the animal would have been agile and fast, perhaps hunting in packs and using its acute sense of smell to track down prey.

"Although it was not large, this was not a dinosaur you would want to mess with," Jasinski said.

## Do not push

FROM PAGE 16

counterpart Thursday night to discuss the situation of migrants in the Andaman Sea and possibility of Thailand providing temporary shelter for them.

US ambassadors in the region were intensely engaged with governments to encourage a rapid humanitarian response, he mentioned.

The United States notes that nearly 3,000 people have landed this week in Indonesia and Malaysia, where they are receiving assistance, the spokesperson added.

"We appreciate the steps taken by the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand to assist these migrants, and urge continued coordination with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organisation for Migration," he said.

The United States is discussing ways that it can continue to support the regionally-led efforts in this crisis.

"We plan to send a senior delegation to the regional conference hosted by Thailand in Bangkok on May 29," Rathke said.

## Reject those

FROM PAGE 16

politics of killing won't be tolerated in Bangladesh... those trying to destroy the country will be shown no mercy, and their trial will surely be held on Bangladesh soil."

She also observed that the BNP-Jamaat clique was trying their heart and soul to destroy the country at a time when it was moving forward under Awami League leadership. "They're the enemy of people; they're the enemy of humanity."

Briefly describing the heinous activities of the BNP-Jamaat alliance unleashed for 93 days from January 5, Hasina said they had killed over 150 people who were innocent and poor.

Talking about the victory of her niece Tulip Siddiq in the recently held UK general election, the PM said the successors of Bangabandhu were even winning in the international arena because of higher education. "But, the BNP chairperson has taught her sons looting and corruption for which one of her sons is now hiding in the UK," she regretted.

Former Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam and State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Shikder, among others, spoke at the rally with district AL President Moinuddin Mondal in the chair.

## Uproar at city school

FROM PAGE 16

M Tamim, member of the school's trustee board, announced the decision before the agitating guardians around 2:30pm.

Later, notices announcing "summer vacation" till May 25 were hung on the gates of the girls' and boys' wings of the school.

"We have heard about several allegations against her. For now, she has been withdrawn from all kinds of activities," said Tamim, also ex-special assistant to the chief adviser of a caretaker government.

He said they would investigate the allegations against her and take action if she is found guilty.

The male staff, accused of sexually assaulting a grade-I English medium student, was yet to be identified, said Tamim.

The staff allegedly took the student, who studies in day shift, to a quiet place inside the school compound at knifepoint on May 5.

The staff assaulted her sexually and tried to rape her. But she managed to escape, as several other girls saw this and screamed for help, alleged several guardians.

Only a couple of days later, a fifth-grader girl of the school was sexually assaulted, alleged some guardians. They, however, couldn't mention the date and time of the incident.

A middle-aged woman, whose nieces study at the school, alleged that her nieces received threats that they would be given transfer certificates if they shared the stories of sexual assault with anyone outside the school.

A guardian, whose daughter studies in day shift, said they had to take to the streets as the authorities didn't pay heed to their demands for probing the allegations and bringing the culprit to book.

Tamim said the mother of the grade-I student complained to them about the incident on May 9, and they immediately formed a three-member probe body.

The probe body, which includes the victim's father as its member, was initially given three working days to submit a report, and later given a three-day extension. It was supposed to submit the report yesterday.

## Thailand ready

FROM PAGE 16

In Phang-nga province, UNHCR officials yesterday went to provide initial relief to 106 Rohingya people, abandoned earlier on islands in Kura Buri district, and get information about them in a bid to try to help them be resettled in a third country.

The 106 Rohingya people were rounded up on Thursday by the Royal Thai Navy and forwarded to the Phang Nga Immigration Office. A total of 25 children and women were sent to the Phang Nga Children and Family Home.

UNHCR official Serg Burtomio said the agency had worked with the Thai government in helping the Rohingya for two years and so far the trafficked migrants could be divided into Bangladeshi and Rohingya, so the aid differed.

While Bangladeshis could be sent back to their country, the Rohingya were in a tricky position and in need of temporary protection. Hence, the agency and the Thai government had helped send 65 of them, so far, to a third country and was considering doing the same for many more.

Thousands of Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar via Bangladesh are stranded on boats as regional governments block them from landing.

Many of the boat people are Rohingya, a minority in Myanmar's Rakhine state, that the United Nations has described as one of the most persecuted groups in the world.

## Modi takes home

FROM PAGE 16

Indian firms, and also included deals in the telecom, steel, solar energy and film sectors, she said.

They included an agreement for the China Development Bank to fund a power plant for India's Adani Power, as well as a steel project between Indian conglomerate Welspun and two Chinese firms, according to a list released by Indian officials. No individual deal values were given.

Modi welcomed potential Chinese investment in sectors including housing, renewable energy, high-speed rail, metro, ports and airports, adding that India was eager to draw on China's expertise in mass manufacturing.

"We are very keen to develop the sectors where China is strong," he told the business forum ahead of the signing ceremony. "We need your involvement."

"I strongly believe that this century belongs to Asia," he said as he sought to stress historical links between the two countries.

But they have followed significantly different economic paths in recent decades, with China rising to become the world's second-largest economy while India has lagged behind, although Modi's election raised hopes for reform among investors.

Earlier during Modi's visit Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed him in Xian, the capital of his ancestral home province Shaanxi, in what his host said was an unprecedented gesture.

Nonetheless relations between the

Tamim, however, said he was unaware whether the report was submitted yesterday.

PROTESTS

Several hundred guardians, ex-students of the school and Bangladesh Chhatra Union activists formed a human chain around 11:00am in front of the girls' wing of the school on Iqbal Road to press home the demand for brining the culprit to justice.

The guardians demonstrated also on Thursday on the school premises and demanded that the probe report be submitted by Saturday (yesterday).

"They have to submit the report... They have to tell what had actually happened," a former student of the school told this correspondent.

Around 12:00noon yesterday, agitating guardians entered the school through the main gate and demonstrated on the compound. At one point they demanded that Rector Zeenatun Nesa come out and speak to them.

As the rector didn't show up, some of the protesters damaged her office door.

Later, Belayet Hossain, principal of the school, came out and tried to calm them but failed.

He claimed they had already installed CCTV cameras at the school and removed male sweepers and canteen staffs from the girls' wing as per the guardians' demands.

The guardians yesterday said they would again stage demonstrations in front of the school at 11:00am on May 23.

SUMMER VACATION

On the school authorities' sudden decision to announce summer vacation till May 25, a senior teacher said, "The vacation has been announced hurriedly. We were supposed to go on summer vacation from next week."

Seeking anonymity, the teacher said they usually enjoy summer vacation for a week.

According to the academic calendar prepared by the education ministry, summer vacation in secondary schools began on May 14 across the country.

However, the schools affected during the nationwide blockade in the first three months of this year can cut their vacations short by a week, according to the ministry decision taken last week.

White House spokesman Eric Schultz said Washington continued to raise its concerns with Myanmar over migrants that are fleeing "because of dire humanitarian and economic situations they face at home out of fear of ethnic and religious violence".

Meanwhile, Malaysian vessels yesterday intercepted a boat crammed with migrants after the Thai navy towed it away from Thailand - the latest of a number of vessels pushed back to sea by governments ignoring the UN's call for an immediate rescue.

Thousands of people are adrift in the Andaman Sea after smugglers abandoned their vessels following the Thai crackdown on human trafficking. Many of the migrants are thirsty and sick.

Migrants aboard the vessel were visibly distressed on the packed deck under a blazing sun, a Reuters witness said. Women were crying and some waved their arms and shouted.

The boat had been towed back to sea by the Thai navy twice after drifting for days. On both occasions, the navy fixed its engine and supplied it with food, water and fuel before towing it out of Thai waters.

The migrants told the Thai navy that they wanted to go to Malaysia, the officer on a patrol boat told Reuters. "We fixed their engine and showed them where Malaysia is," the officer said.

After, the boat entered Malaysian waters, where it was intercepted, he said. He declined to give his name.

world's two most populous nations are soured by a long-running border dispute that saw them fight a brief war in 1962, and on Friday Modi told Premier Li Keqiang that China needs to "reconsider its approach" to their ties.

"Our relationship has been complex in recent decades," Modi said in Beijing, adding there were issues that "trouble smooth development of our relations".

His comments stood out from the usual public declarations by diplomatic visitors to the Chinese capital, who normally stick to uninterrupted pledges of friendship and good relations.

Both countries are members of the BRICS grouping of major emerging economies, but China has vowed to pour investment into India's arch-rival Pakistan as it rolls out infrastructure development plans across Asia, much of which bypass India.

Modi yesterday also opened a centre for Indian and Gandhian studies -- referring to the former Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi -- at prestigious Fudan University.

Modi was elected in a landslide victory at polls a year ago, and said Friday that democracy was an advantage for his country, but when a group of Indian students studying at Fudan chanted his name as he arrived, suspicious Chinese security guards moved towards them before being waved off.

"We just wanted to greet him," one of the students told AFP.