

Cops arrest three human traffickers

Rescue 18 victims in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Detectives in separate drives arrested three alleged human traffickers and rescued 18 fortune seekers in the capital's Ashkona and Fakirapool areas on Sunday.
 The people rescued from a hotel at Ashkona in airport area hailed from different parts of the country and were supposed to be flown to Palau, an island country in the western Pacific Ocean.
 Agents of a Bangladesh-based trafficking gang were supposed to send them to Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia on waterways from Palau, the detectives claimed.
 The traffickers had lured them with highly paid jobs in Palau and took Tk 7 lakh from each, said Shaikh Nazmul Alam, DB deputy commissioner (North) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).
 The agency was deferring flight schedules although each of the victims paid the money beforehand.
 GLC Private Limited took the 18 fortune seekers to Di Rafaz Hotel in Ashkona with a promise to arrange flights for five of them on Sunday morning. As no-one was taken to the airport till the afternoon, one of them called the Detective Branch (DB) of police.

On information, a DB team raided the hotel, rescued the fortune seekers and arrested two traffickers, said Nazmul Alam.
 Arrestees Golam Rabbani and Shahadat Hossain were the agents of GLC Private Limited, Nazmul told a press conference at the DMP media centre yesterday.
 GLC Managing Director Mahamudur Rahman, Manager Babul Hossain and cashier Mahfuzur Rahman had escaped sensing police presence during the drive, he added.
 The detectives claimed the gang used to send fortune seekers to Palau to make them captive for 15 to 20 days there and their local agents used to traffic them to other countries later.
 One of the victims filed a case with Dakkhin Khan police. The detectives said they were trying to arrest the other traffickers.
 In another drive, another DB team arrested alleged trafficker Shafiqul Islam in Fakirapool area.
 Shafiqul, who sent one Abdur Rab to Malaysia around a month ago, had been demanding Tk 2.6 lakh from his family keeping him captive there by his local agents, detectives said.
 The family paid Tk 50,000 for his release, but he demanded more.



Chittagong City Corporation with the help of the police takes down illegal billboards in the city's Sholoshohor Gate 2 area.

PHOTO: STAR

Solution lies in Myanmar citizenship for Rohingyas

Says US official over Asian migrant crisis

AP, Kuala Lumpur
 A senior US official said yesterday that resettlement in a third country is not the answer to the swelling tide of boat people in Southeast Asia and called for Myanmar to give citizenship to Rohingyas Muslims fleeing persecution there.
 Anne Richard, US Assistant Secretary of State for population, migration and refugees, said resettling all Rohingyas refugees in the United States would entice others to leave their homeland.
 "The answer to the issue is peace and stability and citizenship for the Rohingyas in Rakhine state, and that is the solution," she said at the end of a three-day visit to Myanmar.
 "At the moment, there is tremendous persecution and oppression of the Rohingyas in Rakhine state. They do not have citizenship and we are concerned about their human rights," she said.
 Since early May, more than 4,600 boat people from Myanmar and Bangladesh have been brought ashore from Southeast Asian waters. Several thousand more are believed to still be at sea after human smugglers abandoned their boats amid a regional crackdown.
 Some are Bangladeshis who left their impoverished homeland in hope of finding jobs abroad. But many are Rohingyas Muslims who have fled persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, which has denied them basic rights, including citizenship, and confined more than 100,000 to camps. There are more than 1 million Rohingyas living in the country formerly known as Burma.
 Malaysia and Indonesia, which initially pushed away boats carrying the migrants, recently said they would give temporary shelter to the boat people on condition that they are resettled within a year.
 Richard said 18-24 months would be a more realistic time frame for the United States to resettle refugees.
 But she warned that only a small fraction of the world's refugees will be resettled, mainly including torture victims, widows and orphans or those with medical needs.
 "Resettlement is not the solution for most refugees on Earth," she said. "The most important solution is people don't have to leave their country in the first place."

Richard earlier visited some 1,100 Rohingyas and Bangladeshi immigrants who arrived in northern Malaysia by boats last month. She said the immigrants were detained in fairly modern and clean buildings at a facility in northern Kedah state.
 "They are safe right now, but it was clear to me that those people have gone through a terrible, terrible experience. They are not in good shape in terms of their general well-being. They don't know what's going to happen to them next," she said, calling for their status to be reviewed quickly by Malaysian authorities.
 Richard also said she was encouraged that Myanmar attended an emergency conference on the boat people in Bangkok that drew 17 regional countries on Friday. The meeting ended with no major breakthroughs in how to resolve the crisis, but was praised as a good first step in getting the countries to talk face-to-face about the crisis.
 "One thing that was really good was that Myanmar was there and stayed for the whole meeting and was very engaged," said Richard, who attended the meeting. "We hope Myanmar will stay engaged."

Owner, 40 others charged

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 was not charged as the government did not permit the investigating officer to do so.
 It took the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) 25 months to submit the charge sheet in the case that shook the world. The delay was caused by government's alleged dillydally in giving permission to implicate its officials and recording of statements of a large number of witnesses.
 Bijoy Krishna Kar, assistant superintendent of police of CID, submitted two charge sheets -- one for killing and another for violating building code -- before the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court of Dhaka.
 On June 28, the court will decide whether to accept the charges.
 In the charge sheets, the CID cited 724 people as witnesses to prove the cases.
 The shoddily constructed commercial building came crashing down on the morning of April 24, 2013, leaving 1,136 people dead and injuring 1,169 more, according to the case statement.
 Media and labour organisations put the number of injured at over 2,500.
 More than two years on, about 100 people are reported missing.
 The man-made disaster triggered a huge outcry at home and abroad over workers' safety in the RMG sector, the country's highest foreign currency earner. In fiscal year 2013-2014, the sector fetched \$24.50 billion in forex.
 The collapse prompted the government and foreign buyers to do more to ensure labour rights and workplace safety.
 Following the incident, three cases were filed -- one for building code violation, one for culpable homicide and the other for murder.
 During investigation, the CID found that Rana and managements of the five factories had forced workers to enter the building against their will, even though the building had developed major cracks the day before.
 That is why charges of murder instead of culpable homicide were brought against the 41, said Bijoy, the investigating officer.
 The accused violated the building code by constructing four additional floors on top of the original five-storey building. Built with substandard materials, the building also had structural flaws.
 The murder case, filed by the widow of victim a -- Jahangir Alam -- was initially tagged with the homicide case. During the probe, however, the homicide case was converted into murder case.

| RANA PLAZA DISASTER April 24, 2013 | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Death: | 1,136 |
| Injured: | 1,169 |
| Accused: | 41 for murder; 18 for violating building code |
| Big shots: | Sohel Rana, his parents, four factory owners, Savar municipality mayor, 11 government employees |
| Now in Jail: | 4 (others on bail) |
| Fugitives: | 26 |
| Witnesses: | 594 in murder case; 130 in other case |

Halima Begum, one of the survivors, said she was happy that the building owner and top government and factory officials were charged with murder. "But I will be happier when Rana and factory owners would be hanged."
 BGMEA President Atiqul Islam said, "Law will take its own course. The law that governs the 16 crore people of the country also governs the garment owners. But it must be ensured that no innocent is punished."
WHY THE DELAY
 The investigating officer told The Daily Star that he had to interrogate a "huge number" of injured victims and their families and also other people concerned with the incident, which took time.
 In September 2014, he sought government's permission to include public officials "responsible" for the collapse in the case. It took several months to get the government nod, which is mandatory to press charges against public officials.
 Asked why UNO Kabir was not charged, Bijoy said they did not find "strong evidence" against him.
 "However, we still wanted to charge him because there are allegations against him. But we did not get government approval," he added.
 The day before the collapse, Kabir reportedly visited the site and declared the building was safe. Following the incident, he was withdrawn from the post.
ACCUSED PERSONS
 The 41 who have been charged with murder are: Rana Plaza owner Sohel Rana, his parents Abdul Khaleque and

Morzina Begum, Savar Municipality Mayor Refat Ullah, its Ward Councillor Mohammad Ali Khan, its Engineer Rafiqul Islam, Sub-assistant Engineer Raqibul Hassan Russell, Chairman of New Wave Bottom Ltd Bazlur Samad Anan, Managing Director of New Wave Style Ltd Mahmudur Rahman Taposh, Chairman of Ether Tex Ltd Anisur Rahman, Managing Director of Ether Tex Ltd Jannatul Ferdous, Chairman of Fantom Apparel Aminul Islam, site engineers Sarwar Kamal, Abu Bakar Siddique and Mohammad Madhu, the then chief executive officer of Savar Municipality Uttam Kumar Roy, its then assistant engineer Mahbubur Rahman, Urban Planner Farzana Islam, the then deputy chief inspector (Mills and Factories Directorate) Abdus Samad, Deputy Chief Inspector (Mills & Factories) Jamsedur Rahman, Deputy Chief Inspector Belayet Hossain, Inspectors (Engineering) Yusuf Ali and Shahidul Islam, Building Inspector Md Awlad Hossain, building contractor Md Nantu, Anil Das, Md Shah Alam Mithu, Abul Hasan, Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan, Monwar Hossain Biplob, Aatur Rahman, Abdus Salam, Biddu Miah, Syed Shafiqul Islam Johny, Rezaul Islam, Abdul Hamid, Abdul Majid, Aminul Islam (2), Nayon Miah, Yusuf Ali and Taslim.
 Designations of the last 13 accused could not be known.
 Anil Das, Shah Alam Mithu and Abul Hasan gave Rana shelter following the incident and helped him flee to India.
 The first 17 on the list are also accused in the second case. Another person charged with violating building code is Mahbub Alam, whose identity was not immediately available.
 Only four accused -- Sohel Rana, Anisur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam and Aminul Islam -- are in jail. Twelve accused, including Rana's father, are on bail while 25, including Rana's mother, have been shown fugitives in the murder case. Mahbub Alam is also on the run.
 Bijoy, the investigating officer, appealed to the court to order their arrests.
 He also appealed that the court drop charges against eight people named in the FIR, including David Mayor Riku, a Spain national and owner of one of the five factories, as their involvement could not be proved.
 The court is expected to give order in this regard on June 28, court sources said.

Size shrinks for fund shortfall

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 allocation to ensure that the budget stays in the neighbourhood of Tk 295,000 crore.
 Some Tk 97,000 crore has been earmarked for the Annual Development Programme. In the last fiscal year, ministries and divisions managed to spend Tk 51,000 crore, and the figure is unlikely to exceed Tk 70,000 crore in the next fiscal year, said the official.
 When the budget will be revised, the remaining amount in the ADP will be diverted to implement the new pay scale for government staffs.
 In the current fiscal year, Tk 42,998 crore was kept for salaries and allowances of government employees and pensioners. In the next fiscal year, about Tk 60,000 crore will be needed for the purpose.
 The total revenue earning target for the next year has been set at Tk 207,721 crore, up by 27 percent from this year's.

The National Board of Revenue has been tasked with fetching Tk 176,370 crore, but tax officials said they would be able to collect Tk 155,000 crore at best.
 To achieve the target, Tk 41,370 crore would be needed in addition to what the NBR managed to collect this year. And the NBR officials are banking on heightened monitoring and GDP growth to bring in that sum.
 The total budget deficit would then come down to Tk 85,835 crore.
 Of the sum, Tk 56,651 crore would be managed by bank borrowings and savings instruments, and the rest from foreign assistance.
 As in the past, it would not be possible to achieve the revenue generation and expenditure targets in the next fiscal year, said the official.
 "So, it would not be difficult to maintain the budget discipline," added the official.
 In a recent report, the IMF said routine deviations were observed from the original budget figures in the past several years in Bangladesh.
 Consistently, both the revenue and expenditure turnouts fell behind the budget targets, said the multilateral lender.
 Over the last four years, revenues fell short of the budget targets by around 4 percent on average, said the IMF.
 Similarly, expenditure outturns fell behind by 8.5 percent vis-à-vis the budget.
 The main problem associated with the pattern is that while revenue forecasts in budget documents are merely projections, the expenditure allocations are legal spending authorisations, said the IMF.
 "Thus, if revenues fail to materialise, there is a risk that the line ministries may still execute in full their spending envelopes, leading to larger-than-expected fiscal deficits and financing needs."

No ad hoc step

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 the CPD, said at a media briefing at the Cirdap in the capital.
 Debapriya said this in response to reporters' queries on black money, capital flight and benami properties (bought in the name of someone else, not the one who financed it).
 The CPD yesterday shared its independent review on Bangladesh economy for the outgoing fiscal year. CPD Executive Director Prof Mustafizur Rahman was also present there.
 Debapriya said if enacted, the law would make the entire process transparent, and there wouldn't be any need to ponder over the issue of money whitening every year.

In its 2014 report, Washington-based Global Financial Integrity cited that \$13.16 billion (Tk 102,648 crore) was illegally moved out of Bangladesh between 2003 and 2012.
 Explaining why such a law is needed for Bangladesh, Debapriya said anti-money laundering measures were not giving solutions to the issues of capital flight and overseas investments by Bangladeshis. Besides, the National Board of Revenue doesn't have any mechanism to find out about the properties of Bangladeshis outside the country.
 The law must ensure that the life of an honest taxpayer gets easier, and those who want to disclose untaxed money and benami properties can do so without any hassle, he said.
 The economist said if one didn't disclose black money, super tax rate (two or three times the usual rate) should be imposed on them.
 Referring to benami properties, he said if the real owner didn't disclose it, the person against whose name it had been bought should be made co-owner of the property.
 This type of law is not rare in the world. Neighbouring India enacted Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act in 1988, which was amended this year to put an end to such transactions, and empower the government to recover such property, he said.

2.76 lakh govt posts vacant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Around 2.76 lakh posts remained vacant under different ministries, divisions and offices of the government, State Minister for Public Administration Ismat Ara Sadeq told the House yesterday.
 Of the vacant posts, 44,542 are first class, 41,326 second class, 121,438 third class and 69,281 are fourth class, according to the state minister.
 In a written reply to lawmakers' queries, she said recruitment of staff was an ongoing process and the Public Service Commission usually appointed first class and second class employees against requirement of the

ministries and departments.
 On the other side, different departments and divisions recruit third class and fourth class employees as per their respective recruitment policy, she informed the House.
 Replying to another query, Law Minister Anisul Huq said next hearing of the August 21 grenade attack case and the August 21 grenade attack killing case would be held on June 1 and June 2 respectively.
 In a written statement, the minister informed the House that hearing of 290 witnesses had been completed in the two cases and 346 more witnesses would testify.

Earlier, the sixth and budget session of the 10th parliament began at 5:30pm with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.
 At the beginning of the House proceedings yesterday, the Speaker nominated a five-member panel of chairpersons. The panel chairpersons would preside over sittings of the House in absence of the Speaker and the deputy speaker.
 The panel members are lawmakers Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Matin Khasru, Dharendra Debnath Shambhu, Fakhrul Islam and Begum Shirin Naim. They would chair the sittings as per numerical order, the Speaker told the House.