

New migrant truck found in Austria

26 refugees on board were from 'Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Syria'; three critically ill kids rescued

AGENCIES

Austrian police said yesterday that they intercepted another truck containing 26 migrants and that three young children had to be hospitalised, days after 71 people died in an abandoned vehicle.

"The three small children had to be hospitalised... because of the extremely bad state of their health. Doctors said they were treated for severe dehydration," police said in a statement about the incident on Friday morning.

"If the journey had continued the situation could probably have become critical," a spokesman from police in Upper Austria state told AFP.

The vehicle, pulled over by police after a chase, contained 26 "illegal foreigners" from Syria, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who said they wanted to go to Germany, police said.

The incident happened near Braunau am Inn in western Austria close to the border with Germany. The Romanian driver, who had refused to pull over for a routine check, was arrested.

On Thursday, an abandoned truck containing the bodies of 71 dead

migrants including four children was found on a motorway in eastern Austria near the Hungarian border, provoking international revulsion.

Autopsies were still being carried out but police think that the migrants, likely from Syria, suffocated from lack of air and had been dead for up to two days before the refrigerated truck was noticed by motorway maintenance workers.

Austria borders Hungary, which has seen more than 140,000 migrants enter from Serbia this year, most of whom then seek to travel onwards to western European countries like Germany and Sweden, via Austria.

The 29-year-old Romanian driver of the van found on Friday, registered in Romania, was arrested. The children and their parents were taken to the hospital in Braunau, where they are now in a stable condition, adds Reuters.

Four children, including a baby girl, were among the dead, presumed to be from Syria and possibly Afghanistan, who were found in the lorry on Thursday. Police said on Saturday they were hoping to help identify the dead refugees by examining mobile phones found on some of the bodies.

SMART BUT NOT ENOUGH

Some of the 29 cattle smugglers captured by Indian Border Security Force, inset, at Shamsrganj of Murshidabad on Friday while they were trying to make 320 cows swim across the Ganges (Padma) into Bangladesh. Of the detainees, eight are Bangladeshis who are now accused not only of smuggling but also of trespassing.

PHOTO: STAR



Growing big

FROM PAGE 1 Industries Ltd at Dhaka Export Processing Zone in Savar in 2000 and steered the company to an average export of \$4 million a year.

A fully export-oriented firm, Leatherex makes sandals, men's shoes, women's pumps, boots and Italian shoes. It now employs some 1,200 people, including about a dozen technicians from Japan, Germany and Italy.

"We opened the footwear factory in Savar to increase value addition and help the country diversify its exports," Nazmul, managing director of the company, told The Daily Star.

"More value addition at home could help us save a lot of foreign currencies as leather, which accounts for up to 80 percent of shoes' value, is locally available."

Leatherex has seen such a growth that it won the National Export Trophy just two years after it began operation, becoming one of the youngest companies ever to have had the feat.

It now makes about half a million pairs of footwear annually.

Four years ago, Leatherex set up a new company altogether -- Venezia Crafts and Leather Goods -- to make eco-friendly leather products such as bags, belts, wallets and crafts items for global markets.

"Venezia has been designing leather goods for Japan, the EU, Gulf and Canada markets. All the products are made combining the natural beauty of

leather with professional craftsmanship," said Nazmul.

In 2011, he set up a joint-venture -- Scarpe e Moda Ltd -- in Dhaka EPZ to make footwear under Italian technical know-how. The joint venture makes products mainly targeting the European and US markets while Leatherex, the mother company, focuses on the Japanese market.

Leatherex Footwear has achieved national export trophies five times -- gold in 2005-2006 and in 2008-2009; silver in 2002-2003 and 2009-2010; and bronze in 2010-2011.

Despite the personal success, Nazmul is worried about the delay in relocating the tannery industry from the capital's Hazaribagh to Savar.

"We have to relocate the hazardous tannery to save environment and also to get more orders from foreign buyers," he said. "Orders will go outside if we cannot relocate the tannery immediately."

Leatherex, Scarpe and Venezia Crafts together now export products worth around \$8 million a year, with a 10 percent annual growth.

The country's leather industry exported products worth a record \$1.29 billion last fiscal year, up 32.12 percent year on year, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

Of the total products, 60 percent go to the EU countries, 30 percent to Japan and 10 percent to the rest of the world.

UN chief calls for refugee action

FROM PAGE 1 with their international obligations," he said.

The UN chief said he was "horrified and heartbroken" by the loss of lives in the Mediterranean and the grim discovery of more than 70 bodies crammed inside a truck that was abandoned near the Austrian border with Hungary.

Indications are that many of the victims were Syrian refugees, including children.

The UN chief called for a "collective political response" to avert "a crisis of solidarity."

He called on states involved to "expand safe and legal channels of migration."

On Thursday 71 people, thought to be Syrians, were found dead in a lorry in Austria. Some 200 others are feared dead after two boats sank off Libya.

Ban said he was "horrified and heartbroken" at the latest loss of life.

"A large majority of people undertaking these arduous and dangerous journeys are refugees fleeing from places such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan," he said.

"The international community must also show greater determination in resolving conflicts and other problems that leave people little choice but to flee," he added.

Ban called on nations to observe international law on asylum requests, and not to "force people to

return to places from which they have fled if there is a well-founded fear of persecution... This is not only a matter of international law; it is also our duty as human beings."

He said: "This is a human tragedy that requires a determined collective political response. It is a crisis of solidarity, not a crisis of numbers."

Ban also urged more action against people smugglers, a call echoed by White House spokesman Josh Earnest.

"The violence and instability in North Africa and the Middle East isn't just destabilising the immediate region but is starting to have a destabilising impact on other regions of the world too, including in Europe," Earnest said.

Some 200 people are feared to have drowned after two boats capsized on Thursday as they tried to cross from Zuwara, west of Tripoli in Libya, to Italy.

About 100 bodies have already been found and Libyan workers are continuing to search for 100 other people who are still unaccounted for.

Some survivors were rescued having spent the night in the water, clinging to life jackets.

"The Mediterranean Sea continues to be a death trap for refugees and migrants," said Ban in a statement.

The UN chief announced plans to convene a special meeting on September 30, on the sidelines of the

UN General Assembly, to discuss global concerns about migration.

Police in Italy detained 10 suspected traffickers after a separate incident in which 52 people were found dead in the hold of a ship off the coast of Libya on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Hungarian police said they had arrested four people over the discovery of the bodies of 71 migrants, thought to be Syrians, in an abandoned lorry in Austria, near the Hungarian border.

The victims were 59 men, eight women and four children who are thought to have been dead for about two days.

Officials said the victims probably died after suffocating in the vehicle, before it crossed into Austria from Hungary. Among the victims was a girl aged between one and two years old.

Tens of thousands of migrants from conflict-hit states in the Middle East and Africa have been trying to make their way to Europe in recent months.

A record number of 107,500 migrants crossed the EU's borders last month.

Some of them pay large sums of money to people smugglers to get them through borders illegally.

The UNHCR says more than 2,500 people have died trying to reach Europe so far in 2015, not including Thursday's deaths.

[From BBC, AFP]

11 hours in the sea

STAR REPORT

Mohammad Ali can't exactly say how the night was for him. He and his fellow passengers held hands of each other while floating in the sea on the dreadful night of August 27 and beyond as their boat sank off the coast of Libya.

Ali started a risky journey towards Italy along with his wife and four children on a boat carrying some 400 migrants, according to the BBC Bangla.

The family got on the Europe-bound boat at 8:00pm (Libyan time) on Thursday. There were people from Africa, Syria and Pakistan. There were a few families of Bangladesh, but he knew only three others in the boat.

"In an hour of beginning the journey, the boat's lower part got leaked. In few minutes, it capsized," said Mohammad Ali, who hails from Narayanganj and has been living in Tripoli for the last 10 years.

Most of the passengers had life jackets. "We floated in the sea from 2:00am to noon Friday," said Ali.

An engineer, Ali used to live a good life with a good residence and a car in Tripoli. Yet, why did he want to go to Europe through a dangerous sea journey?

"It is for security and education of the children," he said. According to him, at best one or two boats face accident a year. Otherwise, people often are going to Europe using the same way.

"It was our fate. So we got into trouble," said Ali. He said each of them paid Tk 50,000 in Libyan currency to brokers.

Twenty-four

FROM PAGE 1 concerned and waiting for further guidance.

All detainees were safe and in good health and the mission had already started negotiation with the Libyan authorities for early release. "Kindly note, Bangladeshi workers have earned good reputation here in Libya. We are hopeful that all will be released soon."

However, ASM Ashraful Islam, counsellor (Labour) of Bangladesh embassy in Libya, earlier had put the death toll at eight.

"46 rescued alive from the Mediterranean out of 54 Bangladeshis. Rest are dead," he said in two text messages at 7:28pm and at 8:42pm on Friday.

The vessels sank after leaving Zuwara, a major launchpad for smugglers shipping migrants to Italy by exploiting a security vacuum in Libya where rival governments are fighting for control four years after the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi.

At least 112 people were killed when the boats capsized, reports CNN. At least 198 people were rescued, while 30 to 40 others remained missing, said Mohammed Al-Misrati, a spokesman for the Libyan Red Crescent.

Hundreds of migrants have attempted to reach Europe by land and sea. So far this year, at least 2,373 have died as of this week, the International Organisation for Migration said.

Libya has been a transit for many of the African and Asians to get into Italy by the Mediterranean for long.

Recently, when Libya has been going through internal conflicts with the rival governments fighting for control, exodus of migrants from the country seems rising.

For security reasons, Bangladesh in June shifted its embassy to Tunisia from Libya where an estimated 60,000 Bangladeshis work.

On Friday, a foreign ministry statement said the rescued Bangladeshis include four families with children. They were hospitalised and released after first aid.

BBC Bangla quoted Mozammel as saying that the Bangladeshis nationals of four families were reportedly trying to go to Italy.

But the boat overturned one hour after sailing off due to a leakage beneath the vessel. Two children -- one six-year-old and another of six months -- died instantly. Four members of two families went missing.

Earlier yesterday afternoon, Labour Counsellor Ashraful Islam said three women and seven children were sheltered in a Bangladeshi expatriate's house in Tripoli and the 36 men were in the detention centre.

In the past, there were efforts by some Bangladeshis to take the sea journey to Europe, he said. But in those cases, no families having women and children were involved.

The four families, who had been on board, might have been influenced to move to Europe for security as well as a better life.

"Besides, there is a huge illegal syndicate which is running a business of sending people to Europe [from Libya]. The Bangladeshis have surely been lured by it," Ashraful added.

He also urged the Bangladeshi expatriates in the North African country not to take the dangerous sea journey.

Fool's oil

FROM PAGE 1 Masjid in the capital.

He had many such vials of different sizes containing different kinds of "magical oils" in his bag. A gentle massage or consumption of the oils would heal any of the diseases, claimed Babul Mia.

So what's in these so-called potions that can cure so quickly that most advanced medicines available on earth even fail to cure in years?

"Different herbs, reptiles and other animals," claims a laminated leaflet kept in front of his makeshift shop on a pavement.

The list of animals includes snakes, mongooses, frogs, crows, varanidae, owls and other birds, some of which are endangered species. He kills them to make his "cure-alls", which may put him behind bars.

Trading, importing, exporting or possessing some of the animals he kills to make the oils is a criminal offence under the Wildlife (Protection and Safety) Act 2012, said Tapan Kumar Day, conservator of forests (wildlife and nature conservation circle).

According to section 14 (a) of the act, one could spend one year in jail or pay Tk 50,000 fine or both. If someone repeats the offence, the jail term may go up to three years and fine to Tk 2 lakh.

"Do you know you could be jailed for what you do?" these correspondents asked Babul in the afternoon of August 14.

"No. I've been in the business for around 30 years now. Before me, my father ran this for around 70 years. But we never heard anything like what you said," claimed the 60-year-old man, who currently lives in the city's Badda area with his family.

Where did Babul learn to make the oils?

As for academic studies, he couldn't go beyond the second grade. But according to the leaflet, he learnt the "secrets" of making the oils during his seven-year-long apprenticeship with a shaman in Kamrup (which he spelt as Kamruk), a district in India's Assam known for tantric practices.

And his business is going quite well. He has some 100 regular customers, with new ones seeing him every day, he boasted.

Each vial of the oils costs between Tk 30 and Tk 500 and his daily sales range between Tk 200 and Tk 800, he claimed.

"I sell the oils for the benefit of the people. I also earn my living through this," said the self-proclaimed philanthropist shaman, who has fathered as many as nine children.

Some stuffed birds and animals were lined up on a plastic sheet on the footpath to draw people's attention and he surely succeeded in doing so as a curious crowd formed around him soon after the shop was laid out.

No matter what Babul says to fool the gullible commoners, physicians are far from buying his claims.

These shamans, or kabirajs, as they are locally known, have no scientific knowledge about diseases and their treatments, said M Amjad Hossain, professor and head of Orthopedic and Trauma Surgery at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Sometimes, people with displaced bones take so-called medicines but the bones reattach themselves in a natural process and the shamans take credit for this, he said.

"They are actually exploiting general people's ignorance to do business," the doctor said, adding that there are many such Babuls across the country.

Molester so mighty?

FROM PAGE 1 withdraw the previous assault case. Another case was filed against three people including Shahidul on the following day with the same police station.

But police said they could not arrest the accused as they were on the run.

However, the victim's family members alleged that the police were not arresting the "criminals" intentionally as they were bribed.

On August 23, two days before the last incident of assault, the victim at a press conference at the Dinajpur Press Club claimed the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Chirribandar Police Station is favouring the alleged assaulters in exchange for a bribe of Tk 3 lakh.

OC Anisur Rahman, however, refuted the allegations.

The prime accused Ohidul, a 35-year-old teacher of Karenthat Degree College, had made an illicit proposal to the woman in December last year, the victim told The Daily Star.

As she rejected the offer, Ohidul spread a nude video clip in the village and upload it on different websites, saying that she was the woman shown in the clip, the victim's family members said.

But a local journalist who watched the video clip told The Daily Star that there was no resemblance between the victim and the woman in the video. The victim also told the police that she was not in the video, the OC said.

However, after being rejected by the victim, an arbitration, organised in January by Ohidul's father, a locally influential person, issued "Fatwa" against the victim and her family, prohibiting villagers from socializing with them, the victim said.

None of the victim's family members were present at the arbitration, she said.

Jalal Uddin, a member of Auliapukur Union Council, who was present at the arbitration, told The Daily Star on July 27, the day the first case was filed, that none of the arbitrators had seen the video in question.

"Though I was present at the arbitration, I protested the decision," he said on July 27.

OC Anisur Rahman said they came to know about the arbitration only after the July 10 assault on the victim and her family members.

Anisur said when the victim's father went to the village mosque on July 10, Ohidul's father Abu Bakkar Siddique forcefully took him [victim's father] to his house.

When the victim and her husband rushed there to her father's rescue, Ohidul, his father and some locals beat them up, Anisur said.

He claimed that he'd gone to the village after reading about the incident in a local newspaper and asked the victim's family to file a case but the family showed reluctance.

Eventually the victim's family filed a case on July 27, accusing nine people including Ohidul, Monsurul Islam, 32, son of Mokbul Hossain, Rakibul Islam, 34, son of late Khayer Uddin of Kachaldanga village.

The Daily Star could not verify this account of the police officer. However, the victim at the press conference on August 23 charged the OC with changing the FIR in favour of the accused.

But the OC told The Daily Star yesterday that they had arrested one accused Atab Ali on July 28, one day after the case was filed. The other eight, accused of assaulting the victim in the first case, obtained bail from a Dinajpur court on July 29 and later Atab too got bail, the OC said.

"After an accused is released on bail, we have nothing to do but the investi-

gation is on," he said. "There is no scope for changing the FIR as claimed by the victim. It is totally false."

On August 25 evening, when the victim and her brother were returning home after consulting with a lawyer about the first case, Shahidul Master, brother of Ohidul, along with Monsurul and Rakibul caught them near a pond in Kachalganga, the victim's husband alleged.

They gagged their mouths so that they could not scream for help, he added.

The trio tied the victim and her brother to trees near the pond and molested her badly and beat her up mercilessly, her husband said adding, "They [the trio] shouted, 'how dare you file a case against us.'"

The trio fled the spot as a motorcycle was passing by with its lights on.

Later, that motorcyclist [unwilling to disclose his name] gathered people. Then the victim and her brother were taken to Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital around 11.50pm. "While fleeing the spot, the criminals threatened us loudly to keep silent about the incident, otherwise, they said we will face death," the victim's husband said quoting the motorcyclist.

Describing the physical assault on her, lying in a bed of Dinajpur Medical College Hospital bed, the victim said, "All these happened just because I filed the case against them and turned down his [Ohidul's] illicit proposal."

Dr. Seema Basak of the hospital's gynaecology ward confirmed the victim was sexually assaulted.

The Daily Star could not contact Ohidul or his family as they were not receiving phone calls.

OC Anisur said that after the August 25 incident, they raided the houses of the accused but could not arrest anyone. "We are trying to nab them," he said.