

HUMAN TRAFFICKING Bangladeshis among 366 rescued in Mediterranean

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshis were reported to have been among 366 migrants rescued from rickety boats trying to cross the Mediterranean to Italy and at least 20 people were reported to have drowned, Italian police told Reuters on Saturday.

However, the Bangladesh embassies in Italy and Libya could not confirm the exact figure of the Bangladeshis nationals rescued.

Shahadat Hossain, Bangladesh ambassador in Rome, told The Daily Star over phone yesterday, "We are trying to find out whether any Bangladeshis are among the rescued or dead."

Meanwhile, ASM Ashraf Islam, labour counsellor at Bangladesh embassy in Libya, could not provide any details of the incident to this correspondent either.

According to the Reuters report, the survivors, who were rescued in four separate operations, were crammed onto three rubber dinghies and a wooden fishing boat. They were all taken to the Sicilian port of Augusta, where they were questioned on Friday evening by the Italian police unit Interforce, which combats illegal immigration.

The Norwegian ship Siem Pilot went to the aid of one dinghy that sank in the Sicilian Channel, but many migrants were already in the sea when it arrived, Antonio Panzanaro, an Interforce official, told Reuters.

One corpse was recovered but survivors said that at least 20 people had drowned before the ship arrived, he said.

There were 82 women and 25 children among the 366 people rescued, he said. The survivors were mainly from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Bangladesh.

Seven people were arrested from the four boats, including their drivers, on suspicion of people-trafficking, added Panzanaro.

Slightly fewer migrants arrived on Italian shores in the first six months of 2016 compared with the same period last year, but the number of deaths on the route has risen, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

More than 67,000 seaborne migrants arrived in Italy between January 1 and July 3, according to the IOM.

'GUNFIGHT' WITH POLICE Alleged criminal killed in Laxmipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

An alleged criminal was killed in a "gunfight" between police and his cohorts at Makardhos village in Sadar upazila of Laxmipur yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Tareq Hossain, 32, a member of criminal gang 'Bashar Bahini' and son of Abdur Shukur alias Siraj Miah, a resident of the same village.

Acting on a tip off, a team of police conducted a drive in Makardhos area to arrest Tareq when he along with his associates was present there around 3:00am, Assistant Superintendent of Police Mohammad Junayet Kawser said.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, associates of Tareq opened fire on them, forcing the police personnel to retaliate and triggering a "gunfight", the police official said.

Tareq was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot, while his associates managed to escape, he added.

Police also recovered one light gun and six rounds of bullet from the spot.

Villagers suffer

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a project proposal to the authorities concerned to build a concrete bridge over the canal, replacing the damaged one.

Banaripara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Faruk Hossain said they informed the higher authorities of building the bridge.

Robot-controlled

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quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

China has about 172 million vehicles on its road.

Based on an annual increase of 19 million units, there will be 250 million vehicles on China's road in 2020. Pan Guofan, deputy director of the Guangzhou Parking Association, said smart parking technology will help improve efficiency rather than providing a solution to the lack of parking space in cities.

He said parking space should be a major consideration of urban planning, and local authorities should build more multi-story parking lots in urban areas.

Militants among

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attackers involved in some recent attacks are among those who did not submit their information. Police have no clue about them because they remain as the city's "unknown tenants".

For example, the Gulshan café attackers rented and stayed in two flats at Shewrapara and Bashundhara Residential Area hiding their identities before launching the deadliest terrorist attack in the country, killing 20 hostages and two police officers.

Owners of both the houses and several others were arrested for renting out their flats without taking the tenants' information.

"The deadly attack in Gulshan café demonstrates how important it is to have verified information of tenants for national and individual security," DMP Joint Commissioner (crime) Krishna Pada Roy told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said they wanted cooperation from all to keep record of city dwellers in efforts to bring down crime rate.

The bloody Dhaka siege proves that a major disaster can take place if tenants' information is not maintained, he added.

However, talking to The Daily Star last night Masud Ahmed, deputy commissioner of Mirpur division of DMP, said the Shewrapara landlord submitted the forms of three tenants. Police were now verifying the information.

Police officials also cite examples how the information database can help catch law breakers.

On May 28, police nabbed a couple hiding in Sreepur of Gazipur after allegedly torturing their young domestic help to death using their details in Mohammadpur Police Station, said DMP Deputy Commissioner (media) Masudur Rahman.

"Out of the 20 lakh forms distributed among city dwellers by 49 police stations in the DMP area, around 18 lakh forms have so far been submitted with details of house owners, tenants and service staff," he told this paper last night.

Each form can contain information of five members of a family, meaning the 20 lakh forms distributed will cover 1 crore of the city's 1.5 crore population.

On February 29, some three months after police started collecting the information, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia formally requested all to provide the "identification information" by March 15.

The told the media that suspected militants were taking cover in the city in guise of tenants and were attempting to carry out subversive activities.

There were instances where the suspects moved out of their houses safely after committing a crime and then moved into a new one.

The police move sparked concern among city dwellers whether their personal information would be misused.

Three days after the formal announcement by the DMP boss, a writ petition was filed with the High Court seeking an order to stop the process.

But on March 13, the HC cleared the way for the DMP to collect information about residents in its jurisdiction. It said the DMP was allowed to take any step under DMP rules and regulations of 2006 to prevent terrorism and militant activities in the city.

Police said they sought information in three types of forms -- for house and flat owners, for tenants and for mess owners and their tenants.

The form for house and flat owners asks for 17 types of information with photographs.

These are the individual's name, father's name, date of birth, marital status, the type of the house, present and permanent addresses, religion, occupation, work address, educational qualification, mobile phone number, email ID, national ID number, passport number, contact person, and names and details of house helps, drivers, and security guards with their photos.

The tenant's form asks for 15 types of information and photographs and the one for mess owners and their tenants, 13 types of information and photographs.

Asked about the present status of the forms submitted to police station, Krishna Pada Roy said they preserved all the hard copies and would soon install a software programme to make a database of the city dwellers.

National unity

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forged and this unity will continue," she said.

Addressing a press conference at her Gono Bhaban residence, Hasina said the Gulshan attack has undoubtedly hurt country's image although terrorism and militancy have now emerged as a common global challenge.

The issue of terrorism and militancy in the aftermath of recent terror attacks in Bangladesh and other countries came up dominantly in the press conference organised to inform the media about the participation of the PM in ASEM11 Summit in Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar on July 15-16.

The PM said militancy and terrorism is not a concern for any single country. The world is reeling from a dreadful situation and a global consensus has already taken shape against terrorists and militants.

She, however, said local and foreign groups which could not accept Bangladesh's development amidst global economic slowdown might have a hand in the Gulshan attack.

Denying the notion that international media exaggerated the terror news of Bangladesh, the prime minister rather blamed it on the local media, saying international media is not so curious like the local ones in broadcasting live the incidents.

"They broadcast an incident carefully avoiding its horrific side. But our media don't care about it and they even disclose and bring in live telecast of the preparation of the law enforcement agencies against the criminals," she said.

The world media always use local media as its source, she said, adding that during Gulshan terror attack, international media, including CNN, have relied on the news and pictures of Bangladeshi television channels. "So whom will we blame?" she asked.

Hasina said her government is giving importance on sharing intelligence information with foreign countries to identify the people who are behind motivating the sons of well-off families to be radicalised as well as their financier, arms suppliers and trainers.

Erdogan cracks down

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regular troops lost their lives when a group within the army sought to overthrow the authorities by seizing key strategic points in Istanbul and Ankara late Friday.

A total of 104 coup plotters were also killed, the military has said.

The Turkish authorities have made clear they will show no mercy in the wake of the coup which sparked fears of chaos in the strategic Nato member of 80 million people.

It was the biggest challenge to Erdogan's rule in his 13 years as prime minister and now president, with critics saying he was becoming increasingly authoritarian.

But the 62-year-old leader successfully mobilised supporters into the streets to face down the plotters.

'CONTINUE DEFIANTLY'
Thousands responded late Saturday to a new call by the president to pour into the squares to celebrate the "victory of democracy" with mass rallies of flag-waving Turks reported in cities including Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir.

"They may have tanks but we have our faith. We will not leave the squares...but we will continue defiantly," said Erdogan.

Turkish television has shown images of captured suspects forced to lie face down on the tarmac after their arrest while AFP photographers have seen suspects roughly led away pursued by angry mobs.

NTV television said 34 generals of various grades had been detained so far, including several senior army commanders.

Turkey also detained air force brigadier general Bekir Ercan Van and other officers accused of backing the failed coup at the key Incirlik air base used by US forces for raids in Syria.

With Ankara-Washington tensions increasing, Turkey had in the wake of the coup shut airspace around Incirlik as a security measure, forcing the US to stop strikes against jihadists in Syria.

But Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said in a statement the airspace had been reopened and operations against the Islamic State group had resumed.

The putsch added to the turmoil in Turkey after a wave of deadly attacks blamed on Islamic State jihadists and Kurdish rebels fighting the state.

NO CARTE BLANCHE

Former chief of staff Ilker Basbug told Dogan news agency that Turkey should make a distinction between the coup planners and young soldiers "of 20 years old who may have been mistaken".

The crackdown is however not restricted to the military and Anadolu said prosecutors have issued arrest warrants for a total of 2,745 judges and prosecutors across Turkey.

The entire investigation is being led by Ankara prosecutors and those arrested are suspected of belonging to Gulen's group, which Turkey dubs the "Fethullahci Terror Organisation (FETO)".

Gulen's supporters say their group which they call Hizmet (Service) is entirely peaceful.

Erdogan accuses Gulen of running "parallel state", and called on Obama to extradite the reclusive preacher to face justice.

In an interview with Haberturk television, Labour Minister Suleyman Soyulu went even further, saying: "The United States is behind the coup" and adding it had now to hand over Gulen.

Gulen has categorically denied any involvement in the plot and suggested it could have been staged by Erdogan himself.

Meanwhile, Obama has warned Turkey there is a "vital need" for all parties to "act within the rule of law" in the aftermath of the coup.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault warned Erdogan against using the failed putsch as a "blank cheque" to silence his opponents.

However there was no such concern from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who called Erdogan to wish for a "speedy restoration of strong constitutional order".

Erdogan and Putin, who were feuding over the shooting down of a Russian jet until last month, will meet in the first week of August, Anadolu said.

Turkey has also demanded the extradition of eight people thought to have been involved in the putsch who landed in a Black Hawk military helicopter in Greece.

Istanbul authorities have sought to get life back to normal but Washington on Saturday warned citizens against travel to the country due to uncertainty after the coup bid.

Trinamool wants

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Rajya Sabha, told the meeting that the Dhaka incident should be discussed by parliament along with the terror attack in Nice, France. Because terrorism is a pressing issue not only in South Asia but the world at large.

Bandopadhyay and Roy flagged the Dhaka terror attack issue in the context of its demand for a discussion in parliament on internal security.

The raising of the Dhaka terror attack by the Trinamool Congress leaders came a day after Mamata told representatives of Kolkata-based media here that the federal Indian government should share with her administration information about terror suspects who allegedly sneaked into West Bengal after the July 1 incident.

Mamata had also charged that the federal government was not sharing information on terror suspects with West Bengal.

Her remarks at the media interaction set the tone and tenor of what is going to be Trinamool Congress' lawmakers' stand in parliament proceedings starting today.

Mamata had said that the federal government should also apprise the West Bengal authorities about other terrorist activities that have transnational ramifications.

In her condemnation of the Dhaka

terror attack, Mamata had earlier tweeted that "terrorism has no boundaries and has no religion" and called for a united fight against terror. She had also decried BJP West Bengal unit's call for stopping movement of Dhaka-Kolkata Moitree Express train in the wake of the July 1 incident, saying it has nothing to do with the train service.

Trinamool sources said at yesterday's all-party meeting convened by the federal government to discuss issues to be raised and debated in the monsoon session of parliament, the party broached the subject of Dhaka terror attack and its implications not only for West Bengal in particular but India in general.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged all the political parties to keep national interests above any other considerations. He said that "we represent both the people and parties and there is a need to keep national interests above anything else".

Briefing the media after the meeting of leaders of parties in both the Houses of parliament, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Ananth Kumar said the government assured the leaders of an open-minded approach and would facilitate discussion on issues raised by various parties during yesterday's meeting.

3 US cops shot dead

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Baton Rouge Police spokesman L'Jean Mckneely said.

Police told reporters authorities are seeking more than one suspect and said the public should be on the lookout for people dressed in black and carrying long guns.

One officer was listed in critical condition at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, while another was in fair condition, hospital spokeswoman Kelly Zimmerman said. The third injured officer was taken to another hospital and his condition was unknown.

While the scene of the shootings was contained, police warned residents to stay away from the area.

It was not immediately clear whether there is a link between yesterday's shootings and the recent unrest over the police killings of black men.

President Barack Obama has been briefed on the shootings and will be updated throughout the day, the White House said.

Obama has sought to balance concerns about police abuses, largely against African-Americans, while paying tribute to fallen offi-

cers. He attended a memorial service last week for five Dallas police officers killed by a black ex-US soldier at the end of a protest against fatal police shootings of two black men, the one in Baton Rouge and another in Minnesota.

It is a time of especially heightened security across the country, notably in Cleveland and Philadelphia, hosts to this week's Republican National Convention and next week's Democratic National Convention, respectively, which are expected to formally nominate Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton for the election.

"We demand law and order," Trump said in a Facebook posting yesterday afternoon.

The shootings occurred around 9:00am local time (1400 GMT) about a mile from the Baton Rouge Police Department headquarters, where dozens of people were arrested earlier this month while protesting the death of Alton Sterling. The 37-year-old African-American father of five was shot and killed at close quarters by law enforcement officers on July 5.

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Of the 20 speakers, only six representatives of private universities were given the chance to speak. The others included two ministers, high-ups of law enforcement agencies, and leaders of the ruling AL and its student wing, Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Two BCL leaders made the demand for allowing student politics in private universities, describing it as a means to counter militancy.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, some private university teachers said they didn't get any scope for sharing views with the government high-ups at the meeting. They could only listen to what others said.

The teachers had hoped that there would be an open discussion where they would point out problems and give suggestions.

"We wanted to share some thoughts on the issue that has become a major problem in our society. But the scope was very limited," said a teacher at a leading private university on the condition of anonymity.

Around 300 participants, including teachers, administrative officials and students of private universities, attended the meeting on "Public safety and law and order" at the auditorium of Krishibid Institution, Bangladesh.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan presided over the meeting, and Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid spoke as the chief guest.

The meeting began with the observance of one minute's silence in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks at Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan and Sholakia Eidgah in Kishoreganj.

In the inaugural speech, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque said such an atmosphere should be created at the campuses of educational institutions so that militancy cannot sow its seed there.

"We want to fight militancy and terrorism, and we need your suggestions and cooperation," he said.

Presenting the keynote paper, Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, recommended formation of anti-militancy committees comprising teachers and students at universities, organising more cultural and extracurricular activities and giving counselling to vulnerable students.

Mohammad Imran Khan, a final-year student of Independent University, said that in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks, they now face questions for being students of private universities.

Then spoke the BCL general secretary and its president. Both demanded that student politics be allowed at private universities.

BCL General Secretary SM Zakir Hossain said the authorities of private universities cannot shun responsibilities for the recent killings in the name of Islam.

"Students now want student politics in all private universities. They cannot accept the decision that they have to get enrolled in the universities by signing bonds that prevent them from doing

politics," he said, adding that the students should know the history of Liberation War, culture and heritage of the country.

BCL President Saifur Rahman Sohag said there must be active politics at private universities.

"It is said that madrasas and private universities are free from politics. But in reality, there exists silent politics which means militancy and terrorism," he said.

Earlier on Friday, BCL announced forming committees at all private universities as part of its efforts to fight militancy in the country.

DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said, "Terrorism and militancy are not only problems of law and order, they are also social, national and global problems. We have to rid the nation of the problems."

In the past, students from madrasas used to indulge in terrorist activities, but now students from private universities are getting involved in such activities, he said.

"Private universities should observe the days of national importance with more cultural activities," he said, urging all to cooperate with them in this "war against terrorism".

Terming militants "cancer", Prof Atiqul Islam, vice chancellor of North South University, said his university would root it out from the campus through "operations".

Mentioning the initiatives taken by his university, he said, "No one is above suspicion. We will keep everyone under surveillance."

He said they want to work closely with government experts and law enforcement agencies to eliminate the menace.

"We must own the problem and work with everyone to solve it," he added.

Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, the VC of World University, proposed introducing a system under which teachers at all private universities must go through police verification after recruitment.

Enamul Haque Shamim, chairman of the trustee board of Port City International University in Chittagong, suggested keeping a watch on public universities.

Pointing out several problems at private universities, Prof Abdul Mannan, chairman of the University Grants Commission, said the boards of trustees of some universities consider themselves above law and don't bother to respond to the UGC's inquiries.

Some universities don't hold syndicate meetings regularly, he said.

Mannan also suggested incorporating a topic on Bangladesh's emergence in the syllabus of every department at private universities.

Sheikh Kabir Hossain, president of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh, called upon the guardians to raise their children with more care and give them moral education at home.

Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed said the country is now at the crossroads and national unity is a must for overcoming it.

Pointing to the masterminds behind

the recent terrorist attacks, he said, "We know who are playing behind the scene... Don't play with the monster. The monster you're playing with for your petty interests will wipe you out."

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid alleged that some universities carry out activities that encourage students to choose the wrong path. Some so-called teachers are behind these activities.

He urged all to wage a social movement against militancy. "To wage the movement, we all need to play due role from our respective positions."

Nahid urged teachers to infuse human and moral values into students.

Pointing at parents, he said, "Always keep an eye on your children and give them proper lessons of religion. If you find any major change in your children, contact us and also their teachers."

The principals of two English-medium schools -- Scholastica and Manarat International School and College -- also spoke.

Currently, there are 95 private universities in the country. Of them, 85 are running academic activities with more than 4.63 lakh students.

'We know

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Then the police commissioner immediately asked all police personnel to go there, he added.

"Our police force was ready that day. We could have entered there [the restaurant] within half an hour. But we were trying to establish contact with the attackers to know about the hostage and the others confined there."

They had taken initiatives one after another for an amicable solution, he said, adding that later the army-led commandos ended the 12-hour hostage crisis just in 13 minutes.

The cafe attackers killed 20 hostages, 17 of them foreigners, and two police officers. The army commandos later killed five attackers and an employee of the cafe.

Similarly, based on intelligence, police set up checkpoints at Sholakia. This is why police came under attacks while searching the bodies of the people trying to enter the area, Kamal said.

Two policemen and a woman form a nearby house were killed during the attack. Police later shot dead one alleged attacker.

"I want to say that our law enforcement agencies are doing their job with due diligence. They have shown their patriotism as they have been trying to resist militancy putting their own lives at risk," he said.

Addressing those involved in terrorist activities, the minister said: "If you think that you would stop the advancement of Bangladesh by killing some people, you are mistaken. Our people have stood against you."

Asaduzzaman said the whole world was now speaking up to get united to resist terrorism and militancy.

"Let us come forward to resist militancy together," he said.