

TRAFFICKING TO VANUATU

More than 100 Bangladeshis set to return

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Dhaka

More than 100 Bangladeshis trafficked to the remote island of Vanuatu with the promise of work that never materialized will start returning home this month, an official said yesterday.

The 101 migrants, two of whom are under 18, have been in Vanuatu since November and are living off handouts and rations, but were reluctant to leave because they had taken loans worth thousands of dollars to pay the traffickers, the official said.

"(The) majority of the Bangladeshis are willing to return voluntarily now," Mohammad Sufur Rahman, Bangladesh's high commissioner to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We are expecting about 70 to return in different phases. They may start returning in a week or two. About 30 migrants, including witnesses and perpetrators who helped the traffickers, will not be included for return initially," he added.

Four people have been arrested on trafficking charges in connection with the case and are facing trial in Vanuatu.

Bangladesh is one of the largest exporters of manpower in the world

and depends heavily on remittances from abroad.

According to official data, at least 1 million Bangladeshis secured jobs overseas in 2017 - the highest number ever recorded.

But this depends largely upon unlicensed brokers working in rural areas and opens the door to trafficking.

"The returns will take place over several weeks based on seat availability," said J. Christopher Lowenstein-Lom, a spokesman for the United Nations migration agency, which is funding the migrants' return.

"The first returnees won't be involved in the legal proceedings."

However, one of the migrants, Shahin Khan Mustafa, said he was still unwilling to return to Bangladesh.

"I had a factory in Bangladesh that closed down after I came here. I haven't been able to pay the bank the monthly instalments. I am under a lot of pressure," he said by phone from Vanuatu.

Mustafa said all the Bangladeshi migrants were worried about the future.

"They are all tense," he said. "They don't know how they will pay back all the money that they had borrowed before coming here."

US mayor apologises after violent arrest videos emerge

AFP, Washington

The mayor of Phoenix yesterday apologised after videos emerged showing police in the southwestern US city violently arresting a black family with young children.

The videos, shot by bystanders when the arrest happened last month, show police using foul language while shouting at the family to get out of their car, and threatening to shoot them.

A woman later emerges from the vehicle with two young children. She hands them over to a bystander before being arrested.

Separately, an officer is shown kicking the legs of another man who he is handcuffing against a police car.

"I, like many others, am sick over what I have seen in the video depicting Phoenix police interacting with a family and young children," Mayor Kate Gallego wrote in a statement posted on Twitter.

Calling the officers' actions "inappropriate" and "clearly unprofessional," she wrote "There is no situation in which this behavior is ever close to acceptable."

"As a mother myself, seeing these children placed in such a terrifying situation is beyond upsetting," she said.

"I am deeply sorry for what this family went through, and I apologize to our community."

64 stranded Bangladeshis

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Migration will provide the Bangladeshis with air tickets, Chiranjib added.

On Thursday, Sekander flew to Tunisia from Libya and held a meeting with Tunisian officials the next day. The officials refused to allow the migrants' boat to come ashore, arguing that their migrant centres were overcrowded. But they allowed the Bangladesh envoy to go to the boat where the discussion took place.

The migrants were rescued by an Egyptian boat on Tunisian waters on May 31. Neither Tunisia nor any European country agreed to accept them. The Tunisian Red Crescent has been providing them with food and medicine since then.

Earlier, the migrants were not willing to return to Tunisia. Instead, they wanted to go to Europe -- a proposition that's not possible given Europe's strong stance against illegal migration -- which has seen a sharp rise since Libya plunged into civil war after the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Bangladesh Embassy in Libya, meanwhile, asked the Bangladeshis there and their relatives not to take the risky sea journey to Europe.

Meanwhile, a Supreme Court lawyer filed a writ petition with the High Court on Sunday, seeking its directive on the government to take appropriate action against the travel agencies and human traffickers responsible for the death of

37 Bangladeshis in the Mediterranean Sea on May 9.

The victims, most of whom from Sylhet and Noakhali, reportedly died after their boat capsized in the sea on the way to Italy from Libya.

Emdadul Haque submitted the writ petition, seeking an HC order on the travel agencies, who illegally sent the Bangladeshis through the sea to Italy, to compensate Tk 1 crore to each of the victims' families.

In the petition, he urged the court to direct the government to form a high-powered committee to probe the incidents of human trafficking and identify the travel agencies and human traffickers responsible for the incidents.

The lawyer also requested the HC to ask the government to incorporate a provision of death sentence for the persons responsible for human trafficking in the Manab Pachar Protirodh O Daman Ain (Human Trafficking Prevention Act and Suppression Act) 2012.

Citing the petition, he told this newspaper that travel agencies and gangs of frauds have been violating the people's fundamental and human rights protected by the constitution.

The authorities concerned of the government have failed to protect the fundamental and human rights of such victims, the lawyer said, adding that the HC might hold a hearing on the petition today.

Smith takes

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"It's been spoken about a little bit, but I think at the same time you've got to trust people's preparation," he said.

"I've been around quite a while now and I've played a lot of cricket and you've got to trust the individual's preparation and what they are trying to do."

"It's one thing that I guess learned with experience and I'm reasonably experienced now and I've learned a bit over the last couple of years to sometimes just take the foot off the pedal in the nets and save myself up a little bit."

Australia are seeking their fifth win in six matches when they take on Bangladesh at Trent Bridge on Thursday.



Former officer-in-charge of Sonagazi Police Station Moazzem Hossain being taken out of Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka yesterday after the court denied him bail in a case filed for illegally recording the statement of sexual-assault victim Nusrat Jahan Rafi.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

OC Moazzem sent to jail

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She died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on April 10.

On the same day, the OC was withdrawn as Nusrat's family alleged he was not cooperating with them.

During that time, a video clip showing Moazzem asking Nusrat some humiliating questions did the rounds on social media, drawing widespread criticism. Nusrat had gone to his office to file a complaint against Siraj.

Moazzem was suspended on May 8 for negligence in duty and attached to the office of DIG (Rangpur range).

After 20 days of hide and seek, police finally arrested him from the capital's Supreme Court area on Sunday. He had gone into hiding after police authorities allowed him to leave for the capital, instead of arresting him, two days after a Dhaka court ordered his arrest. The arrest warrant, issued in on May 27, was widely covered in the media.

YESTERDAY'S COURT PROCEEDING

Moazzem was taken to the court premises around 12:30pm in a prison van amid tight security. He was then kept in the court's prison cell for around two hours.

In his dark sunglasses, the ex-OC was looking down while being moved on the court premises. He was produced before the court around 2:15pm and then began the case's hearing.

Supreme Court lawyer Sayedul Haque Suman, who filed the case on May 15, told the court that the police official showed no respect to law despite being a law enforcer.

He should have surrendered to the court right after the arrest warrant was issued, which he did not, the lawyer said, adding that it was disgraceful for the entire police force.

Suman then argued that Moazzem's bail plea should be rejected and he should be sent to jail. At that time, several lawyers shouted and asked

why the police official was not in handcuffs.

Oposing the prosecution, Faruque Ahmed, one of the counsels for Moazzem, claimed that his client had recorded Nusrat's statement for the sake of investigation.

Moreover, Moazzem came to know about the arrest warrant from different print and electronic media platforms. Immediately after that, he tried to get bail from the High Court. He did not go into hiding and was inside the country. He was arrested when he went to the HC to seek bail, Faruque said, adding he client was also feeling "insecure".

At one stage, the judge asked the lawyer, "Has your client confessed his guilt? How did your client feel insecure despite being a police official?"

The lawyer seemed to have no answer. He appealed to the court to grant his client bail.

The court rejected the bail plea and sent the ex-OC to jail.

Magnificent Shakib

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of the campaign, marked his World Cup debut by showcasing his destructive elegance to the full. His utter ease against high pace, as illustrated by those three sixes off Shannon Gabriel in the 38th over. The right-hander finished on an unbeaten 94 off 69 balls with eight boundaries and four sixes.

The pair put on an unbroken 189-run fourth-wicket stand in just 22.3 overs after Mushfiqur Rahim was out in the 19th over, nicking down the leg side off Oshane Thomas.

At that point, West Indies may have breathed a sigh of relief because they appeared shell-shocked up to that point as first Soumya Sarkar (29 off 23 balls), then Tamim Iqbal and Shakib kept dispatching their bouncers -- which they would not stop bowling -- with ease. While historically Bangladesh have been uncomfortable against the fast, short ball, they have not looked so in this tournament as they dealt with South Africa, New Zealand and England pacers pretty comfortably. However, they have rarely attacked it with as much authority as they did yesterday.

Tamim was on 16 off 27 when Soumya departed, guiding a bounce to slip after he had hit the previous one for six over point off Russell, and in Shakib's company Tamim started attacking more -- cutting and pulling West Indies skipper Jason Holder for four in the 10th over. A forceful back-foot cut through the covers off Gabriel

showed that Tamim was regaining some form, but he was unlucky to be dismissed for a 53-ball 48 by a brilliant piece of fielding from Sheldon Cottrell, who fielded a straight drive off his own bowling and threw down the stumps at the striker's end with a diving Tamim found just short.

But the real show started when most Bangladesh fans would have started despairing -- when Mushfiqur walked back dejectedly with the score on 133 for two. Shakib, who had been unrelenting with his assault on the short balls from West Indies' all-pace attack, carried on in his vein as West Indies also helped with a predictable line of attack.

"They had two areas -- either full or short," Shakib said after the match.

When he was not employing the short-arm pulls to the square leg or fine leg fence, he was fetching bouncers from outside off stump to the boundary in front of square on the leg side. He displayed his full complement of cut shots, for which no captain has yet been able to set a field when Shakib is in form, and he has been in this World Cup. When West Indies over-pitched, Shakib pummeled them over the top or along the ground straight back past the bowler. He was lucky when on 55 as a top-edged pull landed safely between Gabriel at fine leg and the backpedalling wicketkeeper Shai Hope.

Liton was an equal partner as, after a watchful initial period, he started to unfurl his wide array of strokes, mixing adventure with the class those who saw

his century in the Asia Cup final would be well acquainted with.

Earlier, at the halfway stage, West Indies' 321 for eight appeared to be a good total, especially after they were 159 for three in the 33rd over. Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, under fire because of his iffy form in the first three matches, had gotten things off on the right foot for Bangladesh with a maiden to start off against Chris Gayle, who was also tied down by Mohammad Saifuddin at the other end before surrendering his wicket to the young pacer. Mashrafe ended his opening spell wicketless, but only having given 24 runs off seven overs.

After a 116-run second-wicket stand between Hope and Evin Lewis, it was Shakib who broke through by getting Lewis caught at long off for 70, and then dismissed Nicholas Pooran in the 33rd over. However, Shimron Hetmyer took advantage of poor bowling from Mustafizur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mosaddek Hossain to erect a 83-run partnership in just 7.2 overs with Hope. Mustafizur, however, redeemed himself by claiming the wickets of both Hetmyer for a 26-ball 50 and Andre Russell in the 40th over, after which Bangladesh pulled things back.

It later turned out that they did not need to as it deprived Taunton's Bangladesh faithful -- of which there will be more after yesterday -- a chance to see some more overs of fine, attacking batting from the Tigers.

Liton's perfect

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accomplishing the second-highest successful chase in World Cup history, with 8.3 overs to spare. Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will rightfully be touted as the hero of the match after his back-to-back ton but even though Liton Das may not quite be the unsung hero, the right-hander's contribution to the cause will leave a mark, and indeed something any supporting batsman can learn from.

Much is expected of the seniors in the side and after Soumya Sarkar's fiery knock at the top, Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan provided the perfect foundation for Tigers to pull off an epic feat against the formidable Windies pace attack. However, after Tamim fell unfortunately and Mushfiqur Rahim followed suit soon after, the chase indeed appeared a mountain too high to surmount.

Many times, Bangladesh have stuttered from such positions and the pressure was beginning to tell, but how Liton organised his batting effort to support Shakib after the loss of two key wickets was telling.

The most spectacular facet of his innings was how unspectacularly he resorted to normalcy. Liton's presence during the front end of that 189-run unbroken partnership was inconspicuous to say the least. It was exactly what was needed too as Shakib kept firing on all cylinders.

Liton did not waste his time trying to get in and play big shots, he dealt in singles while allowing his natural flair to take over on loose deliveries. It worked immensely well from the beginning. If Shakib had looked a bit unsettled after the loss of Tamim and Mushfiqur, the all-rounder gradually settled into a more match-winning groove, playing some immense shots to take the game away from the West Indies.

As is often the case, when a set batsman has to look to persevere during a key chase, another one has to take on the mantle of run-making responsibilities. Liton had struck just one boundary during his first 23 off 28 deliveries but he launched into the Windies bowlers when Shakib edged closer to his ton.

A magnificent slashed six over third man off Sheldon Cottrell took the partnership past 100. Having brought up his fifty and with Tigers past 250-mark, he then came into his own. He sent Shannon Gabriel thrice over the fence in consecutive deliveries to signal his and Shakib's dominance.

He missed out on a ton, remaining unbeaten on 94 off just 69 deliveries as Bangladesh pulled off victory but, in many ways, how he paced his innings and supported Shakib was more crucial to the Tigers than just the runs he scored.

Beijing rejects US criticism of UN envoy's Xinjiang trip

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday rejected US criticism of the UN counterterrorism chief's visit to the restive region of Xinjiang as "absurd" after Washington warned it could serve to legitimise Beijing's crackdown on Muslim minorities.

Chinese authorities have placed an estimated one million people, many of them ethnic Uighurs, in internment camps in Xinjiang that Beijing downplays as "vocational education centres" needed to steer people away from extremism.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Vladimir Voronkov, the United Nations under-secretary general for counterterrorism, visited China from Thursday to Saturday, adding his trip was "very successful".

Money in banks

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"But that money is not for looting We know the people who have looted banks in the past."

She added, "Many looted a lot of money from banks and some of them are in prison on the allegation of corruption."

Hasina also censured those who criticised the budget by saying it was "ambitious" and had "impossible revenue collection target" and "the government lacks capacity to implement it".

"If we do not have capacity, how the total budget outlay of Tk 61,000 crore of 2008 reached over Tk five lakh crore this year?"

She further said her government brought down poverty rate to 21 percent from 41 percent. "If we cannot implement our budget, how this poverty rate came down?"

Hasina said Bangladesh made remarkable progress in terms of managing economic system. The country's GDP is growing fast like many other countries and "many term Bangladesh a development mystery."

She urged the critics to refrain from doing unnecessary criticism. "Do not create confusion among countrymen."

She said they have taken some ambitious targets as it is necessary for the development of the country.

Hasina said the government analyses annual development programmes midway of a financial year to modify and correct its plans. "Besides, we also analyse which development programmes need more money and which need less."

"We have to do it as it is a reality that all development projects cannot continue at the same pace," she said.

After the prime minister's speech, the House passed the supplementary budget of Tk 15166.18 crore for fiscal 2018-19 to meet the increased expenditures under 37 ministries and divisions.

Hasina placed the Appropriation (Supplementary) Bill 2019 which was passed by a voice vote.

In the supplementary budget, The Election Commission Secretariat got the highest additional allocation of Tk 2447.88 crore, followed by the defence ministry's Tk 1600.64 crore, and local

government division's Tk 1542.84 crore.

Besides, the Power Division got additional allocation of Tk 1276.79 crore and the public works ministry Tk 1182.93 crore.

After the passage of Appropriation (Supplementary) Bill, the supplementary budget now stands at Tk 442,541 crore.

The original budget for the outgoing fiscal 2018-19 was Tk 464,573 crore.

In the supplementary budget, the allocation of Tk 37,348.05 crore was reduced for 25 ministries and divisions.

Different ministries, divisions and institutions sought the additional amount under 34 demands for grant.

ALLEGED ROOPPUR GRAFT
Opposition lawmakers criticised the alleged irregularities in purchasing furniture and other household products for officials and employees of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Hasina on behalf of Housing and Public Works Minister SM Rezaul Karim said a former leader of BNP-backed student organisation Chhatra Dal was involved in the corruption.

"We have already taken action against the accused," she added.