

MALAYSIA-BOUND BOAT

119 Rohingyas rescued from Bay

AFP, Teknaf

Bangladesh Coast Guard intercepted a wooden boat carrying 119 Rohingya refugees bound for Malaysia as it was about to sink, officials said Thursday, the latest in a spate of trafficking incidents this year.

Nearly one million Rohingya live in squalid camps near Bangladesh's border with Myanmar, many fleeing the neighbouring country after a brutal military crackdown began in 2017.

With few opportunities for jobs and education in the camps, thousands have attempted to reach other countries like Malaysia and Thailand.

The vessel was found in the Bay of Bengal, just off the coast of southern Saint Martin's island, after a tip-off by fishermen, coast guard spokesman Saiful Islam told AFP.

"We found that the boat was taking

water due to engine failure," Islam said. "It was about to sink. Had we not reached there in time, it would have sunk."

Islam said the 119 people on board, including 58 women and 14 children, were heading for Malaysia.

It was the highest number of Rohingya found in a vessel at sea this year, he added.

So far this year, law enforcement agencies have picked up over 500 Rohingya from coastal villages and boats as they waited to board boats bound for Malaysia.

At least seven suspected human traffickers have been shot dead so far in 2019 in alleged gunfights with police.

Trafficking often increases after the monsoon, when calm November seas allow small fishing trawlers to travel long distance.

UN technical team's

FROM PAGE 1

Management Ministry, told The Daily Star on Thursday.

The UN last week set a schedule to visit Bhashan Char to look at the safety features between November 17 and 19.

"The schedule for the visit will be fixed after we get the ToR," Shah Kamal said.

Joseph Surjamoni Tripura, spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency in Dhaka, said the government and UN have agreed to postpone the visit to ensure that the right experts are on hand and all necessary logistical arrangements are in place.

He didn't talk about the ToR required by the government, but said Bangladesh government and UN are discussing the next steps for the UN's assessment of Bhasan Char as a place to relocate the refugees.

"The UN is prepared to move forward with the initial assessment missions at the earliest possible date," Joseph said.

The government took up a housing project in Bhashan Char after some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in the months following August, 2017, in Myanmar. The refugees joined 300,000 other Rohingyas who had fled previous waves of violence since the 1980s to Bangladesh.

Government officials said destruction of forest, hills and risks of landslides in Cox's Bazar have prompted the authorities to build a temporary housing site for the Rohingyas on the 40-square km Bhashan Char, an island 37 miles from the coast of the Bay of Bengal.

Disaster management ministry officials said that the project implemented by Bangladesh Navy has 120 cluster villages that are capable of accommodating 100,000 Rohingyas. The houses are built four feet above the ground with concrete blocks. The entire housing site is protected by a 13-km flood embankment.

There are also 120 cyclone shelters, which will also be used as schools, medical centres and community centres, they added.

Shah Kamal said there are large swathes of land that could be used for livestock farming and fisheries in Bhashan Char.

No respite

FROM PAGE 1

will arrive at a sea port soon, it added.

Onion prices began to rise about two months ago, when India restricted its onion export. But the prices started to rise sharply last week.

Earlier this month, each kg of locally grown onion was sold for Tk 100-120 in the kitchen markets in the capital. But the price jumped to Tk 160 on Tuesday morning and then kept rising.

The prices rose by Tk 30 to 40 every day since Wednesday.

The Daily Star yesterday visited six kitchen markets and several retail stores in the capital's Karwan Bazar, Moghbazar, Farmgate, Mohammadpur, Kazipara and Shewrapara.

Prices of some other essentials, including rice, some vegetables and soybean oil, also increased by Tk 5-10 in the last 10 days.

A kg of fine rice was being sold for Tk 48-50 and coarse rice for Tk 33-35 yesterday.

Besides, prices of bottled soybean oil rose by about Tk 5 a litre, and cauliflower by about Tk 10 apiece.

"We can't help eating onion because curries taste bad without it. But at the same time, we can't afford it," said Mohammad Khokon, a shopper in Karwan Bazar.

Another shopper in Kazipara, Farid Uddin said, "We are buying as little goods as we can."

A few days ago, the Burmese variety of onion was cheaper by Tk 20-30 than the local variety, but the prices came quite close yesterday.

The reporters found each kg of local onion was sold for Tk 240-260 at retail stores and Tk 230-240 at wholesale markets yesterday afternoon. The Burmese variety was cheaper by about Tk 10.

The wholesalers and retailers blamed

The refugees now live in crowded camps in Cox's Bazar where they have almost no work to do.

"We consider it a safe place for living. There will be education facilities as well," he said.

Aid agencies say the island was isolated and flood-prone and put conditions that include a regular shipping service between Bhashan Char and the mainland.

Late last month, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mahbub Alam Talukder told reporters that some 6,000 to 7,000 refugees had expressed their willingness to be relocated to Bhashan Char.

UN agencies then decided to send a technical mission to Bhashan Char. It intended to look at the risks of natural disasters, water supply, access to basic services, including health and education, and the freedom of movement within Bhashan Char and to and from the mainland, a UN official said.

Technical experts from Bangladesh government would also accompany the UN mission to Bhashan Char, Senior Secretary Shah Kamal said, adding that he was expecting the UN mission to be satisfied by the facilities built for the Rohingyas.

"Once a group of Rohingya starts living there, I am sure, others will follow suit," said another official of the ministry.

Lightning strikes 18 times on deadly night in Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Lightning strikes killed at least 18 people and injured several more during a deadly night in Pakistan's Thar desert, police said yesterday, describing the deaths as "unprecedented".

Thunderstorms and a heavy downpour caused havoc in several villages, destroying dozens of homes, in an unusual rainfall event that a meteorologist says could be linked to climate change.

It was the lightning strikes in 18 different places which had the greatest impact.

ONION PRICE PER KG IN RETAIL MARKETS

Early November	Tk 100 - 120
Tuesday	Tk 150 - 160
Wednesday	Tk 170 - 180
Thursday	Tk 200 - 220
Yesterday	Tk 240 - 260

supply shortage for the price hike and said the prices may soar further unless India resumed exporting onion.

"Importing onion from India was faster and easier. On the other hand, importing from Egypt and Myanmar takes a long time," said Rezaul Karim, a wholesaler in Karwan Bazar.

Meanwhile, many retail stores in residential areas have stopped selling onion.

"I stopped selling onion two weeks ago. Shoppers haggle too much," said Jakir Hossain, a grocery store owner in Tejutri Bazar area.

PRICES MAY FALL SOON

Senior Awami League lawmaker Tofail Ahmed at a relief distribution programme in Bholia yesterday said the prices of onion "will become normal soon" as around 50,000 tonnes of imported onion will reach the country.

"Different countries are facing onion crisis this year," said the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Commerce.

At another programme in the capital's Dhanmondi, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, "We are trying to identify those responsible for the price hike. I hope that the prices will come down soon."

The wholesalers and retailers blamed



The derailed engine and coaches of Rangpur Express lie beside the rail line near Ullapara Railway Station in Sirajganj yesterday. Around 2:00pm on Thursday, the engine and six coaches of the train came off the tracks. Officials said the rail links between the capital and the country's northern and southern districts were restored around 7:30pm yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SIRAJGANJ TRAIN DERAILMENT Dhaka-Ishwardi rail connection restored 30 hrs after accident

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, back from Sirajganj

Rail connection between Dhaka and Ishwardi was resumed yesterday, 30 hours after it was disrupted due to a rail accident in Sirajganj's Ullapara upazila.

Abdullah Al Mamun, Paksey divisional transportation officer (DTO) of Bangladesh Railway, said both metre-gauge and broad-gauge lines were restored around 7:30pm.

The rail link that connects all the northern and southern districts with Dhaka was interrupted as Rangpur Express, a Rangpur-bound passenger train, derailed near Ullapara Railway Station Thursday afternoon.

Nine compartments of the train, including its engine and power car, were derailed and three of those caught fire. At least eight people were injured and rushed to the upazila health complex.

COMMITTEES START PROBES

Two probe committees, formed by Bangladesh Railway and Sirajganj district administration, started probing into the rail accident yesterday morning.

Paksey DTO Mamun, who heads the probe committee formed by Bangladesh Railway, said, "We started investigating the accident and checking if there was any fault in signal, pointing, engine, or coaches."

He, however, did not disclose any findings. "We would not disclose further details before the probe ends," he said.

Meanwhile, sources in Bangladesh Railway told The Daily Star that either wrong signals or flawed repair work of the rail line was behind the accident.

"Trains now operate digitally and loco-masters cannot change lines even if they want. Everything is digitally controlled from the station. Trains change lines only when signal is open and pointing is okayed by the station," said a railway official, seeking anonymity.

Asked, Abdul Hamid, stationmaster of Ullapara Railway Station, denied the allegation and said, "There is no scope of making mistake as everything is controlled digitally."

No official of Ullapara Railway Station made a mistake that could lead the train to the accident, he claimed.

About the allegation of the faulty repair work, Al-Fattah Md Masudur Rahman, chief engineer of railway west zone, said, "The small repairing work is a continuous process. We cannot clearly say if there was a fault in the repair work before the investigation finishes."

"WOULD CHECK IF IT WAS PLOTTED" Nurul Islam Sujan, minister at the Ministry of Railways, yesterday visited the accident spot.

Anyone responsible for the accident, including railway officials, would be punished if proven guilty, he said while visiting the spot.

"We are also checking if it was plotted," he said.

On Tuesday, another massive rail accident took place as Dhaka-bound Turna Nishita Express rammed Chittagong-bound Udayan Express at Mandobagh Railway Station in Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria.

DR Congo rebels kill six members of same family

AFP, Goma

Rebels have killed six members of the same family in eastern DR Congo, local officials said yesterday, more than two weeks after the Congolese army launched an offensive to root out insurgents.

Officials said a man and his five children had been killed and three other people injured in the assault late Thursday in the Beni region, an area plagued by armed groups.

Abrar begged for his life

FROM PAGE 1

activists of the university unit Chhatra League, of the murder.

According to the charge sheet, Mizanur Rahman Mizan, a roommate of Abrar, played the key role in the incident.

Mizan had informed Mehdi Hasan alias Robein, organising secretary of Buet Chhatra League, that he suspected Abrar as a Shibir man.

Abrar was brutally murdered on the false suspicion.

Based on the suspicion, Robein had uploaded a message on a Facebook group of the Buet's 15 and 16 batch students of Sher-e-Bangla Hall on October 4.

Later that day, accused Amit Saha, Ifti Mosharraf Shokal, Akash Hossain, Khandafer Tabakkarul Islam, Moniruzzaman Monir, Meftaul Islam Jion and some other accused held a meeting, led by accused Robein and Ishtiaq Ahmed Munna, at the canteen of the dormitory.

The next day, other accused Hossain

Mohammad Toha, Akash Hossain, Majedur Rahman Majed, Morshed Amartya Islam, and Moyaz Abu Huraira held another meeting, led by Moniruzzaman Monir, at the guest room.

The meeting decided that Abrar would be beaten to death, says the charge sheet.

On October 6 evening, accused Mustafa Rafid told Ifti and Robein that as he would leave for his village home, Abrar should be caught that night.

A little later, accused Toha and Shamsul Arefin Rafath informed Ifti that Abrar returned to the dormitory from home.

All the accused then met at room-2,011. After 8:00pm, Robein and Shokal accused Ehtashamul Rabbi Tanim, Muntasir al Jemy and ASM Nasmus Sadat to go to Abrar's room where they found him asleep.

Tanim woke up Abrar and said he has to go to room-2,011. As Abrar asked for the reason, Tanim said he would know the reason after going there.

fast bowlers in the morning because of the moisture. They [Bangladesh] bowled well, were tight initially. We put away loose deliveries and that was our way of putting pressure. And later on, the pitch didn't assist them and we capitalised on them," he mentioned.

Jayed picked up Ajinkya Rahane to break a 190-run fourth-wicket stand with Agarwal but Ravindra Jadeja came on to keep the runs ticking. When Agarwal finally fell to off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Umesh Yadav took the attack to the cleaners with an aggressive unbeaten 10-ball 25 with Jadeja unbeaten on 60 to take India to stumps six wickets down.

Except Jayed, who hit the seam on a regular basis to extract help from the surface, Bangladesh's other seamer Ebadot Hossain and the two spinners all went for runs.

Although not in the habit of picking pacers in Tests, Domingo insisted the Tigers will back the pacer after his impressive showing. "We think he is a really good Test bowler. He has consistent

lines and lengths. He bowled really well in this game. I have read a few articles where it was written that he hasn't picked up wickets in the domestic system, but we think he is one of our leading Test bowlers, and he will have a big role. He is definitely a guy we need to back."

With three days still to go, the Tigers are staring at defeat. India are likely to bat one more session and ensure they do not need to bat again. Domingo was hopeful that an extraordinary innings from a Bangladesh batsman could do some good after the batting lineup crumbled in the first day for just 150 runs.

"It was a tough day. Full credit to India. They have absolutely dominated us in the last two days. Still three days to go. It is a very tough situation, but it provides a great opportunity for somebody to jump out of the box. There are so many guys who are averaging 20 or 30. We need somebody to make that big 100, 150, 200 like Mayank did today. So it is a great opportunity for our batsmen to do that in the second innings," Domingo added.

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