

Six arrested over human trafficking

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nganj*

Rab arrested six people, including five women, in Narayanganj on charges of being involved with a human trafficking racket and rescued two victims, including a girl. Kamli Khatun, alias Shima, 32, Minara alias Rina, 35, Sharmin Akter, 29, Jhuma Akter, 28, Shah Jamal, 40, and his wife Rabeya Akter, 27, were arrested during a raid in Shiddhirganj area of the city on Thursday, said Lt Col Tanvir Mahmud Pasha, commander of Rab-11.

In a press release, Rab claimed to have seized several mobile phones.

Rab conducted the raid after another victim, who managed to escape while being trafficked to India, filed a complaint, it reads.

Making promises of a job, the traffickers took her to Indo-Bangla border in Jashore's Benapole. As she refused to cross the border, the traffickers indiscriminately beat her up.

She managed to flee and reached Narayanganj. Later, she filed the complaint, Rab said.

Rab also claimed the arrestees, during primary interrogation, admitted that they had long been trafficking poor women to India.

Both the victims, who were rescued on Thursday, also alleged the arrestees tried to send them to India making promises of a better life, claimed Rab.

Covid claims two more lives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

Besides, 253 people tested positive for the viral infection during the same period, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The positivity rate was 5.06 percent against a total of 5,002 samples tested countrywide, said the DGHS.

The deceased were male and they were from Rajshahi and Mymensingh divisions.

With the latest count, the total number of fatalities rose to 29,302 and the cases to 2,00,6,899, the DGHS added.



Ukrainian servicemen fire with a BM27 Uragan multiple launch rocket system at a position in Kharkiv region, Ukraine, as Russia's offensive on Ukraine continues. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Three more ships with grain sail from Ukraine ports

Kyiv seeks to extend safe passage deal beyond grain; Russia 'ready' for prisoner swap talks with US

AGENCIES

Three grain ships left Ukrainian ports yesterday while the first inbound cargo vessel since Russia's invasion was due in Ukraine later in the day to load, as Kyiv called for the safe passage deal to be extended to other cargoes such as metals.

The July 22 deal marked a rare diplomatic breakthrough as war rages in eastern Ukraine, with Kyiv trying to rebuild its shattered economy after more than five months of conflict.

"We expect that the security guarantees of our partners from the UN and Turkey will continue to work, and food exports from our ports will become stable and predictable for all market participants," Ukrainian Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said on Facebook after the ships set off.

The first grain ship left Odesa on Monday.

"This agreement is about logistics, about the movement of vessels through the Black Sea," Ukrainian Deputy Economy Minister Taras Kachka told Financial Times. "What's the difference

between grain and iron ore?"

The Kremlin said a solution for extending safe passage deal can only be found if linked to lifting restrictions on Russian metal producers.

Yesterday, two grain ships set off from Chornomorsk and one from Odesa, carrying a total of about 58,000 tonnes

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of corn, the Turkish defence ministry said.

The Turkish bulk carrier Osprey S, flying the flag of Liberia, was expected to arrive in Chornomorsk later yesterday to load up with grain, the regional administration of Odesa said.

As the three vessels left Ukrainian ports, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was preparing with most of his

top ministers for his second talks with President Vladimir Putin in 17 days in the Russian resort city of Sochi.

Erdogan wants to translate the success into truce talks in Istanbul between Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Ukraine would like to include ports in the southern Mykolaiv region, to the east of Odesa, in the safe passage deal, though it has been frequently shelled throughout the invasion, reports Reuters.

The city of Mykolaiv itself was set to impose an unusually long curfew from later yesterday to early Monday as authorities try to catch people collaborating with Russia, the region's governor said.

After five months of fighting, President Zelensky spoke of fierce fighting around the town of Avdiivka in the eastern Donbas region and the fortified village of Pisky.

Russia's TASS news agency cited separatist forces as saying Russian and pro-Russian forces had taken full control of Pisky. They also said that fighting was taking place in the city of Bakhmut, north of Donetsk.

MIRSARAI TRAGEDY

Another dies, death toll now 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Another victim of last month's Mirsarai train-microbus collision died at Chattogram Medical College Hospital yesterday, taking the toll from the tragedy to 12.

Mohammed Ayat, 17, of Khandakia village in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila, succumbed to his injuries at the ICU of the hospital, said a doctor.

Six other victims are still admitted at the hospital.

The tragedy happened after a train hit a HiAce on a level crossing in Mirsarai upazila on July 29.

Meanwhile, a Chattogram court yesterday sent the gateman of the level crossing, Saddam, to jail hours after railway police arrested him.

Woman's body found in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Police recovered the body of a woman at her home in Rajshahi city yesterday.

Victim Rupali Khatun, 25, wife of Saudi expatriate Haroon-or Rashid, used to live alone at a rented flat in Daspukur area.

The body bore cuts marks and bruises, said Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge of Rajpara Model Police Station.

Rupali was Haroon's second wife. She often quarreled with her husband over the phone, said Rupali's brother Mohammad Rafiq.

"She was afraid of a divorce," he added.

Police primarily suspected Rupali's death to be a murder, the OC said.

One-year-old dies as house catches fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

A one-year-old girl was burned to death as her home caught fire at Ichakhali in Chattogram's Mirsarai upazila yesterday.

Lamia Akter, daughter of local Mohammad Rajib, and her mother were at home when their house caught fire, said Ichakhali Union Parishad Chairman Nurul Mostafa.

"The mother could not save her child as she was stranded in another room in the tin-shed house," he said.

The fire originated from an electric short-circuit around 1:00pm, said Imam Hossain, station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Mirsarai.

On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control in one hour.

Later, they recovered the charred body of the child from the spot, said the fire service official.

US declares monkeypox a public health emergency

AFP, *Washington*

US President Joe Biden's government on Thursday declared monkeypox a public health emergency, a move that should free up new funds, assist in data gathering and allow the deployment of additional personnel in the fight against the disease.

Record hike in fuel prices

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"The price hike is undoubtedly the highest since independence. This will put extreme pressure on the economy... Countless people will be pushed into poverty," said energy expert Dr M Tamim.

"Had the government continued to provide subsidies as usual, the price would not have exceeded Tk 100," the Buet professor told The Daily Star last night.

"The fuel price in the global market is declining and the prediction is that

it will continue [till the end of the year].

"I do not know whether the government has hiked the price to reduce the subsidy... Maybe the IMF loan [that Bangladesh has sought] has a big role here, because the first and foremost condition to get an IMF loan is not to give any subsidy on fuel.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said the hike in fuel prices will further drive up already-high inflation.

"This is not the right time. The hike will increase transport and irrigation costs. We have already seen a hike in urea prices. The latest increase in diesel price will push up farming cost," he said.

"The real income of consumers has been falling for soaring prices. The increase in petroleum prices and its eventual effect on prices of goods and services will worsen their situation."

The government last hiked diesel price in November 2021 from Tk 65

to Tk 80.

And subsequently, transport operators – bus owners and truckers – raised fares, which ultimately affected the people trying to recover from the Covid-induced economic shock.

Petrol price was last hiked in January 2013 by Tk 7 to Tk 96 a litre and the octane price by Tk 5 to Tk 99 a litre. The prices of both, however, were slashed by Tk 10 a litre in April 2016.

hampered, policymakers should immediately sit together to find out the strategy to fill up the production gap, he suggested.

M Asaduzzaman, a former research director of BIDS, said another pressure on farmers is that the government has increased the price of Urea fertiliser.

"Farmers in our country waste irrigation water and fertiliser. The government has to work very proactively to reach out to farmers and make them understand about not wasting water and fertiliser. It will save their money," he said.

Besides, he said, many farmers could not prepare their Aman seedbeds. "So, if possible, the government should provide them with the Aman variety with a shorter lifespan."

The lack of rainfall not only creates a problem for farmers to cultivate Aman, also for the Boro, Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star yesterday. "The low rain means our groundwater will not be recharged and farmers will face problems irrigating during the Boro season."

As the adverse weather across top rice producing countries is threatening to reduce the output of rice, he said, the government should make a good stock of rice by imports before the international price goes up.

Beijing eager to deepen ties

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and Southeast Asia and providing a gateway to the Bay of Bengal – and increasing global standing. These factors also attract the Western world to Bangladesh.

Wang Yi, now on a visit to regional countries including Cambodia and Mongolia, will arrive in Dhaka today morning. He is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen tomorrow.

The Chinese minister is expected to sign and renew a few memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and handover the 8th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge over the Kocha river in Pirojpur to Bangladesh, said foreign ministry officials.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President M Humayun Kabir said China is a major trade partner of Bangladesh, and it has important contribution to the development of Bangladesh's

infrastructure.

He thinks that diplomatic and geopolitical perspectives have now become more important than ever for China.

Humayun, also a former Bangladesh ambassador to the US, said given the escalated tension following US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's recent visit to Taiwan, Wang Yi is likely to seek Bangladesh's reiteration of "One China" principle as part of garnering global support. Bangladesh has always been supporting this principle and so there is no problem with that.

Humayun said Dhaka should say clearly that it is not going to join any security alliance but would go ahead with its economic and social objectives when it comes to its foreign policy.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and close ally of Myanmar, China needs to strengthen its efforts for Rohingya repatriation, he added.

China scraps key

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The world's two largest polluters last year pledged to work together to accelerate climate action this decade, and vowed to meet regularly to "address the climate crisis".

But that deal looks shaky as relations sink to some of their lowest

levels in years, as do agreements on everything from talks on military matters to anti-drug cooperation.

Pelosi yesterday defended her trip to Taiwan, saying that Washington would "not allow" China to isolate the island.

Kathmandu can use Ctg

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She said her government attaches great importance to maintaining good relations with the neighbouring countries, including Nepal.

The premier expressed her gratitude to the leadership and the people of Nepal for supporting Bangladesh during the Liberation War in 1971.

The Nepalese delegation said the two countries may further consolidate cooperation in sectors like power, hydroelectricity, tourism, education, ICT, connectivity, and people-to-people contact.

They noted with great satisfaction that Nepal and Bangladesh have been enjoying cordial relations over the years. They mentioned that this year

holds significant importance for both countries as they are celebrating the 50th year of establishing diplomatic relations.

The parliamentary delegation emphasised high-level visits on a regular basis to strengthen Bangladesh-Nepal friendly ties.

The visiting team appreciated Hasina for her visionary leadership and Bangladesh's recent socio-economic development, which they termed very impressive.

The meeting ended with handing over of gifts from both sides.

The visiting team also met the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before travelling to Tungipara, Gopalganj, via the Padma Bridge yesterday.