



Migrants try to cross through a razor wire fence deployed to inhibit the crossing of migrants into the United States, seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on Monday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thousands trafficked into online crime in SE Asia

UN warns; Laos, Philippines, Thailand are among other nations identified as main countries of destination or transit

AFP, Geneva

Hundreds of thousands of people are being coerced in Southeast Asia by criminal gangs into carrying out online scams, often under the threat of torture, the United Nations said yesterday.

Many have been trafficked into working in online criminality and face serious violations such as torture or sexual violence, the UN said in a report.

“People who are coerced into working in these scamming operations endure inhumane treatment while being forced to carry out crimes,” UN human rights chief Volker Turk said.

“They are victims. They are not criminals.”



The scale of the scourge in Southeast Asia is difficult to gauge because of the practice's clandestine nature and gaps in the response by authorities, the report noted.

However, it said that credible sources indicated that at least 120,000 people across Myanmar may be held in situations where they are forced to carry out online scams.

Estimates in Cambodia are at around 100,000, it added.

Laos, the Philippines and Thailand are among other nations in the region identified as the main countries of destination or transit.

The scam centres generate revenue amounting to billions of dollars a year, the UN said.

Victims come from across the Asean region, mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Asia and further afield from Africa and Latin America.

Most people trafficked into the online scam operations are men, although women and teens are also victims, the report said.

The illicit networks benefited from the Covid pandemic, which in some countries saw casinos closed under public health measures.

This led to casino operators moving to less regulated spaces, including conflict-affected border areas, and online, the report said.

The Covid crisis also left many migrants more vulnerable, stranded in countries and out of work due to border and business closures.

Lockdowns also saw people spending more time online and susceptible to becoming targets of online fraud, the report said.

Live parasitic worm found in woman's brain

Say Aussie doctors

AFP, Sydney

A parasitic roundworm typically found in snakes has been pulled “alive and wriggling” from a woman's brain in a stomach-churning medical first, Australian doctors said yesterday.

Baffled doctors performed an MRI scan on the 64-year-old Australian woman after she began suffering memory lapses, noticing an “atypical lesion” at the front of her brain.

It was an eight-centimetre (three-inch) roundworm, called *Ophidascaris robertsi*, which researchers said was a common parasite in kangaroos and carpet pythons — but not humans.

“This is the first-ever human case of *Ophidascaris* to be described in the world,” said infectious disease expert Sanjaya Senanayake.

“To our knowledge, this is also the first case to involve the brain of any mammalian species, human or otherwise.”

Researchers believe the woman was infected after foraging for edible shrubs near her house, which were likely contaminated with parasitic larvae shed in snake faeces.

The parasite, which appeared as a “stringlike structure” on brain scans, was then identified through DNA testing.

“It is never easy or desirable to be the first patient in the world for anything,” Senanayake said.



Passengers wait at Stansted Airport, north of London, yesterday after UK flights were delayed over a technical issue. Flights to and from the UK were experiencing disruptions after Britain's air traffic control systems were temporarily hit by a technical fault. PHOTO: AFP

US to counter growing size of China's military

Says senior US defense official

AFP, Washington

The Pentagon plans to field thousands of drones within the next two years to help counter China's numerical edge in personnel and military hardware, a senior US defense official said Monday.

Beijing's main advantage is “Mass. More ships. More missiles. More people,” Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks said at a military technology conference in Washington.

“We'll counter the PLA's mass with mass of our own, but ours will be harder to plan for, harder to hit, harder to beat,” she said, referring to the Chinese military.

The goal is “to field attritable autonomous systems at scale of multiple thousands, in multiple domains, within the next 18 to 24

months,” Hicks said.

Deploying “autonomous systems in all domains” will be less expensive and “put fewer people in the line of fire”, she said.

“We must ensure the PRC leadership wakes up every day, considers the risks of aggression, and concludes, ‘today is not the day’ — and not just today, but every day, between now and 2027, now and 2035, now and 2049, and beyond,” she added.

The United States says China is its consequential challenge and is seeking to deter conflict with Beijing, especially over the democratic self-ruled island of Taiwan.

In a periodic assessment of US defence needs and priorities, the Pentagon in last October declared China a “pacing challenge”.

Idalia gains hurricane force

Barrels towards Florida

AFP, Miami

Storm Idalia strengthened into a hurricane yesterday as forecasters predicted it would intensify and become “extremely dangerous” before making landfall in the US state of Florida.

“Idalia now a hurricane. Expected to rapidly intensify into an extremely dangerous major hurricane before landfall on Wednesday,” the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said in a 0900 GMT public advisory.

Major hurricanes are usually a Category 3 or higher on the five-level Saffir Simpson scale — storms that the NHC says can cause “devastating” and “catastrophic” damage.

At the time of the advisory, Idalia was about 370 miles (600 kilometres) south-southwest of Tampa, Florida, and packing maximum sustained winds of 75 miles per hour (120 kilometres per hour).

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis warned the storm could have major impacts along the Gulf of Mexico, telling a news conference on Monday that evacuations would take place and residents should prepare.

US President Joe Biden spoke with DeSantis earlier on Monday and approved an emergency declaration for the state, promising it would have his full support, a White House spokesman said.

Various NHC warnings have been put in place in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina as heated Gulf of Mexico waters turbocharge the storm.

“There is a danger of life-threatening storm surge inundation along portions of the Florida Gulf Coast... including Tampa Bay and the Big Bend region of Florida,” the NHC said in its latest advisory.

Greece wildfire largest ever recorded in EU

AFP, Brussels

A forest blaze in Greece is “the largest wildfire ever recorded in the EU” and the bloc is mobilising nearly half its firefighting air wing to tackle it, a European Commission spokesman said yesterday.

Eleven planes and one helicopter from the EU fleet have been sent to help Greece counter the fire north of the city of Alexandroupoli, along with 407 firefighters, spokesman Balazs Ujvari said.

The EU's civil protection service said the fire has burnt over 810 square kilometres — an area bigger than New York City.

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Dated : 29/08/2023

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)
for
Shortlisting of Firm
for

Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation and Management (O&M) of a Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System (to be upgraded) of Rustompur Toll Plaza at 193th Km of Dhaka (Katchpur)-Bhairab-Jogodishpur-Shaistaganj-Sylhet-Tamabil-Jaflong (N-2) Road under Road Division, Habiganj of Road Circle, Moulvibazar for **2 (Two) years**.

Ministry Division	: Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, Road Transport & Highways Division.
Agency	: Roads and Highways Department.
Procuring Entity	: Superintending Engineer, RHD, Road Circle, Moulvibazar.
Procuring Entity District	: Moulvibazar.
EOI for Selection of Operation & Management (O&M) Operator	: Time Based Contract.
Title of Services	: Title: Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation and Management (O&M) of a Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System (to be upgraded) of Rustompur Toll Plaza at 193 th Km of Dhaka (Katchpur)-Bhairab-Jogodishpur-Shaistaganj-Sylhet-Tamabil-Jaflong (N-2) Road under Road Division, Habiganj of Road Circle, Moulvibazar for 2 (Two) years .
EOI ref No.	: 01/EOI/SE/MRC/2023-2024.
Date	: 29-08-2023
Procurement Method	: Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
Source of Fund	: GoB
Programme Name	: Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation and Management (O&M) of a Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System (to be upgraded) of Rustompur Toll Plaza at 193 th Km of Dhaka (Katchpur)-Bhairab-Jogodishpur-Shaistaganj-Sylhet-Tamabil-Jaflong (N-2) Road under Road Division, Habiganj of Road Circle, Moulvibazar for 2 (Two) years .
EOI Closing / Submission Date & Time	: With all supporting documents, the EOI must be submitted at or before 12:30 pm on 04-10-2023 in sealed envelopes.
EOI Submission Place	: Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD, Road Circle, Moulvibazar.
Brief Description of Assignment	<p>The Dhaka (Katchpur) – Bhairab – Jogodishpur – Shaistaganj– Sylhet–Tamabil - Jaflong (N-2) Road is the busiest & most important National Highway connecting Dhaka City, Sylhet City, Tamabil Land Port and Jaflong. Huge numbers of heavy trucks and vehicles ply the road every day. The RHD is responsible for safe, efficient and congestion free movement of the vehicle on the road. The department needs to collect toll as per government policy and guidelines as well as to control the overloading to protect the service life of the roads. Considering all these things, RHD intends to engage a reputed and bonafide firm for management and operation services of toll plaza located at 193th Km of Dhaka (Katchpur) – Bhairab – Jogodishpur – Shaistaganj– Sylhet–Tamabil - Jaflong (N-2) Road. The services to be provided by the firm includes but not limited to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning, Upgrading/Migration of Existing Toll Collection System to Modern Secured Electronics/Computerized on-line real time web-based multi-station toll monitoring system establishing connection with BRTA vehicle database for automatic vehicle classification which can be monitored (all transaction including laden weight, additional charge (if any) and vehicle footage) Real-Time simultaneously from the Toll Plazas, RHD Sylhet Zone Office, RHD Moulvibazar Circle Office, RHD Habiganj Division Office and RHD Head Office;Operation and Management (O&M) of upgraded real-time web based Modern Electronic/ Computerized Toll Collection System.Collection of Toll Revenue from vehicles crossing the Toll plaza for 2 (Two) YearsMaintaining upgraded Modern Electronic/ Computerized web based on-line real time multi-station toll monitoring systemEstablishing link with BRTA data base using radio frequency identification (RFID) system.Ensure Traffic Management, Safety and Security support within the Toll Plaza area.Ensure Total Backup Support round the clock including all required hardware and software.Supply of all types of toiletries, stationeries, cookeries etc. for toll plaza.Networking with the Bank for Auto Data Transfer of Collected Toll.Insurances.Technology Transfer and Institutional Training.If government decided to provide “Unified Toll Collection System” then it should be adopted without extra charge or claims.
Experience, Resources and Delivery capacity Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Firm should be nationally or internationally reputed.Interested Consultancy firms must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (Registration Certificate, Registered Address, Legal Status, Brochures, Successfully completed Similar Experience Certificates (During the last 7 five years), Average annual turn-over of the last 7 years, Availability of Appropriate Skills among Staff etc.).A Firm may constitute Joint Venture to enhance their capabilities. Interested firms may associate with other firm (Local or Foreign) to enhance their qualifications. The formation of joint venture shall be done on non-judicial stamp paper of value BDT 300. The share and role of each partner of the joint venture shall be mentioned clearly in the agreement.Key Professionals – Operational Director cum Manager, System Analyst cum Project Manager, Programmer cum Software Engineer, Database Administrator, Network Engineer, System Maintenance Engineer etc.
Other Details	: Submission of EOI shall be in closed envelope mentioning the name and address of the applicant, EOI ref. no. & date addressing the EOI issuing authority in 2(Two) copies; 01 (One) marked as “ORIGINAL” and other as “COPY” in separate envelope in the form of bound book, both the “ORIGINAL” and “COPY” shall be inside a single envelope. The applicant shall put the page number on EOI documents serially and authorized person shall sign on every page.
Name of Official Inviting EOI	: Mohammad Jahangir Alam
Designation of Official Inviting EOI	: Superintending Engineer, RHD, Road Circle, Moulvibazar.
Address of Official Inviting EOI	: Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD, Road Circle, Moulvibazar.
Contact details of Official Inviting EOI	: Tel: +88-02-41110074, Mobile: +88-01730-782669 Email semou@rhd.gov.bd & serhdmoulvibazar@gmail.com

The interested applicants should visit the toll operation site and existing equipment there on before submitting the EOI.

The client shall not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the firms in connection with the preparation and submission of the EOI.

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

GD-1312

(Mohammad Jahangir Alam)
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Road Circle, Moulvibazar