

Malaysia detains 196 Rohingya migrants Doubles patrols to find migrant boats

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's coastguard said yesterday it was doubling patrols in its waters to locate boats carrying undocumented Myanmar migrants, after almost 200 were detained on an island in the northwestern Malaysian state of Kedah.

The coastguard said police had detained 196 undocumented Myanmar migrants in the early hours of yesterday after their boat came ashore on a beach on the resort island of Langkawi.

"Based on information the coastguard received, there are two more boats carrying undocumented Myanmar migrants at sea but their exact location is still unknown," the coastguard said in a statement.

Malaysian coastguard director-



general Mohd Rosli Abdullah said authorities were patrolling the northern waters off Langkawi and border areas, and had arranged for air surveillance to be conducted to locate the boats.

The coastguard is also in contact with Thai authorities to identify the movement of the boats carrying the migrants, Mohd Rosli said.

Earlier yesterday, local English daily The Star reported about 200 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar had come ashore on Langkawi. The Rohingya are a mainly Muslim minority in majority Buddhist Myanmar.

The coastguard did not specify in its statement whether the migrants were Rohingyas.

Around one million Rohingyas have fled, mostly to neighbouring Bangladesh, to escape a Myanmar military offensive launched in August 2017, a campaign that UN investigators have described as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

Myanmar's military rulers deny the allegations.

Malaysia, which does not recognise refugee status, has long been a favoured destination for ethnic Rohingyas fleeing persecution in Myanmar or the refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Hopes of 'better future' expose bitter truths

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(BAF) took his lamentations seriously as, in response, the federation's general secretary Kazi Razibuddin Ahmed Chapal said Ruman has mental issues and that he will "take him to a good psychiatrist".

Fast-forward to January 2025, Ruman is no longer in Bangladesh. He is in the USA with his wife Diya Siddique, the country's leading women archer. The pair is seeking that "better future" overseas which their motherland could not provide.

"We left the country for the USA on December 29, hoping for a better future," Ruman told The Daily Star over the phone from New Jersey on Thursday, further informing that they travelled on five-year visas obtained in 2021.

Ruman and Diya both are Olympians, together they won a silver medal in the Archery World Cup in 2021 -- the country's best-ever achievement at that level -- and have won numerous medals for Bangladesh across different international meets.

While Ruman's stock had dropped recently with his performances being on a downward curve, Diya's was



Anti-Yoon protesters march towards impeached South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol's official residence, after investigators were unable to execute an arrest warrant for Yoon in Seoul, South Korea yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SOUTH KOREA POLITICAL CRISIS Investigators halt attempt to arrest president

Some 200 presidential guards, troops clash with investigators

AFP, Seoul

South Korean investigators yesterday abandoned their attempt to arrest impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol at his residence over a failed martial law bid, citing safety concerns after a standoff with his security team.

Yoon, who has already been suspended from duty by lawmakers, would become the first sitting president in South Korean history to be arrested if the warrant is carried out.

The president, who issued a bungled declaration on December 3 that shook the vibrant East Asian democracy and briefly lurched it back to the dark days of military rule, faces imprisonment or, at worst, the death penalty.

"Regarding the execution of the arrest warrant today, it was determined that the execution was effectively impossible due to the ongoing standoff," the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO), probing Yoon

over his martial law decree, said in a statement.

"Concern for the safety of personnel on-site led to the decision to halt" the arrest attempt, the statement said of the confrontation with Yoon's presidential security service and its military unit.

Around 20 investigators and 80 police officers were heavily outnumbered by around 200 soldiers and security personnel linking arms to block their way after entering the presidential compound, a CIO official told a briefing.

"I understand there were minor and major physical alterations," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, adding that buses and cars were also parked to block their way.

Negotiations between the two sides ultimately faltered and the investigators decided to leave for their team's safety, although another execution of the warrant could take place after a review, the official said.

The deadline for the warrant is Monday, leaving it in limbo with just a few days remaining and Yoon defiant, vowing this week to "fight" authorities trying to question him.

Yoon's security service -- which still protects him as the country's sitting head of state -- has previously blocked attempted police raids of the presidential office. The president himself has ignored three rounds of summons from investigators, prompting them to seek the warrant.

Yoon's legal team -- who raced to the residence and whom AFP saw were allowed inside -- said police had no right to execute the warrant at a "first-class military secret protection facility".

"We express deep regret regarding today's unlawful and invalid execution of arrest and search warrants," the president's lawyer Yoon Kab-keun said in a statement.

Dozens of police buses and thousands of uniformed police had lined the street outside the compound in central Seoul to prevent clashes after rival camps faced off there on Thursday, Yonhap news agency reported.



4 lives lost

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unidentified vehicle in the Hasara area of Srinagar upazila due to poor visibility caused by dense fog, said Abdul Quader Jilani, OC of Hasara Highway Police Station.

The deceased were Md Sobuj, 35, the bus supervisor, and Md Rakib, 25, the driver's assistant.

On December 27, six people from two families, including women and children, were killed and four were seriously injured when a bus rammed into their vehicles at Dhaleshwari toll plaza on the expressway.

Meanwhile in Jashore, Nurul Haque, 28, a representative of a pharmaceutical company, was killed after his motorcycle was hit by a bus on the Jashore-Benapole road in Benali of Jhikargachha upazila on Thursday night, said Bablur Rahman, OC of Jhikargachha Police Station.

[Our Munshiganj and Benapole correspondents contributed to this report.]

India conveys

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The construction of the dam, which will be the largest of its kind in the world with an estimated capacity of 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, was approved last month.

Jaiswal said that New Delhi had also lodged a "solemn protest" with Beijing against its creation of two new counties -- one of which includes a disputed area also claimed by India last month.

Relations between Asian giants India and China, that were strained after a deadly military clash on their disputed border in 2020, have been on the mend since they reached an agreement in October to pull back troops from their last two stand-off points in the western Himalayas.

The two armies have stepped back following the agreement and senior officials held formal talks for the first time in five years last month where they agreed to take small steps to improve relations.

Come up with specific

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If you cannot reduce prices; if you cannot bring peace to people's lives; if you listen to the World Bank and IMF; if you cannot drop the prices of oil, gas, and electricity; and if you plan to impose more VAT; then you are following the same system."

He added that they do not want an unelected government to prolong its stay in power. "If the government attempts to remain in power for long, evil forces will take advantage of the situation."

Prince called for building a "leftist unity," which will be an alternative to the two parties. He, however, did not mention their names.

"The country's religious minorities feel insecure, which is unacceptable," he said, urging the government to take steps to address the issue instead of denying it.

At the rally, Prince announced that his party would hold views-exchange meetings with political parties, organisations, and people from January 10.

The party will also organise a programme named "March for Democracy" across the country from January 20 to 27.

"The Liberation War of Bangladesh was a people's struggle, and the victory is not a gift. We were prepared, and some extended their support because of that. For which, we are grateful. Today, 53 years after independence, those who dare to undermine the 1972 constitution must be held accountable," said CPB President Mohammad Shah Alam.

He added that those playing games over the Liberation War must stop this immediately.

"Some quarters are unnecessarily creating a debate over whether reforms should come first or elections. Reforms and elections are not contradictory; they are complementary to each other. This is an ongoing process," said Shah Alam.

Terming the interim government "weak," he said that the country's law and order is not under control.

Mob beating is taking place and indiscriminate filing of cases and

INTERNATIONAL

Biden awards Trump critic Cheney with service medal

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden on Thursday awarded Liz Cheney, a former Republican congresswoman and fierce critic of Donald Trump, with a citizens service medal, after the incoming president warned she "could be in a lot of trouble" once he takes office.

The ex-lawmaker from Wyoming, along with 19 other prominent figures, was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal "for putting the American people over party," an announcer said during a White House ceremony before Biden handed her the award.

Other recipients of the medal included former US senator Chris Dodd, ex congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy and current lawmaker Bennie Thompson, who chaired the House committee that investigated Trump's role in the January 6, 2021 Capitol riot.

Addressing the honorees at the start of the ceremony, Biden said: "Together, you embody, and I mean this from the bottom of my heart, the essential truth: we're a great nation, we're a great nation because we're a good people."

Cheney served as the vice-chair of the committee. Describing Liz Cheney, the White House said in a statement Thursday that she "has raised her voice -- and reached across the aisle -- to defend our Nation and the ideals we stand for: Freedom. Dignity. And decency."

Indian duo self-immolate in Bhopal waste protest

AFP, New Delhi

Two people in India set themselves on fire yesterday to protest against the disposal of hazardous waste from the decades old Bhopal industrial disaster, local government officials said.

Images on social media showed two men dousing themselves in liquid before being engulfed in shooting flames, although officials said the men survived.

The protests erupted yesterday after authorities moved hundreds of tonnes of hazardous waste -- remaining from the world's deadliest industrial disaster in the city of Bhopal 40 years ago -- to the town of Pithampur for disposal.

"The self-immolation attempt was unfortunate, but both people are safe now," said Priyank Mishra, the administrative head of Dhar district where Pithampur is located.

A long convoy of trucks with a police escort ferrying the 337 tonnes of waste -- sealed inside containers -- arrived in Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh state overnight Wednesday.

The waste dates back to the December 1984 disaster at the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal -- when some 3,500 people were killed in the immediate aftermath of a chemical leak, and up to 25,000 are estimated to have died overall.

Twenty-seven tonnes of methyl isocyanate swept through the city of over two million people after one of the tanks storing the deadly chemical shattered its concrete casing.

AL should not be allowed to contest polls

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Shafiqur urged the interim government to hold a fair election after carrying out urgent reforms, reports UNB.

"In this election, the people will choose whom they love, whom they can trust," he said.

Saying the AL smuggled Tk 26 lakh crore out of the country in their 15-and-a-half-year rule, the Jamaat amer said the people of the country will reject the party.

The Jamaat leader further said that political leaders who have held power since the country's independence

have betrayed the people's trust to varying degrees.

However, this oppression crossed all limits in the last 15 years, he said.

Shafiqur said Jamaat wants foreign friends, not masters, reports BSS. Bangladesh was not freed from Pakistani rule to become subordinate to others, he said.

Referring to the high prices of essentials, he claimed that the Awami League is still active in the market. And new syndicate has also wiggled in its place there.

Urging the government to keep the prices of essentials under

control, Shafiqur said, "We don't want to see any syndicates -- old or new. We want to help the government destroy the syndicates with all our powers."

He also promised to stand by the victims of the July-August uprising and demanded visible initiatives from the government in this regard.

Natore district Jamaat Amer Mir Nurul Islam presided over the meeting, where leaders from various levels, including the party's central Assistant Secretary General Rafiqul Islam Khan, spoke.

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"weak," he said that the country's law

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indiscriminate filing of cases and

arrests for money is going on, the CPB leader said, adding that people are expressing doubts about the government's reform initiatives.

Former CPB president Mujahidul Islam Selim called upon all progressive and left-leaning parties to form a new Juktafront (united front). He also urged the people to refrain from voting for boat, paddy sheaf, weighing scale, and plough symbols, saying that the parties using these electoral symbols are the same.

"If someone else comes and says that voting rights will not be ensured, that they will remain in power at any cost, carry out reforms, and stay in power until those reforms are completed, I would say such actions would not be different from what the Awami League did," he added.

"We want to bury the Awami League's narrative. However, if anyone seeks to discard its narrative by undermining the Liberation War, I want to tell everyone that we surrendered arms, not our training."

The CPB leader added that the Jamaat-e-Islami has no right to do politics in the country as it worked as the auxiliary political force of the Pakistan occupation force during the Liberation War.

After the rally, the party took out a procession and marched through Shahbagh and several other places.

Austria's three-way coalition talks fail

AFP, Vienna

Austria's three way coalition talks to form a new government failed yesterday, with the head of the liberal party announcing its withdrawal from the negotiations.

The far-right Freedom Party (FPOe) topped September 29 national polls for the first time ever, winning 28.8 percent of the vote, ahead of the ruling conservative People's Party (OeVP) with 26.3 percent.