Asylum sinking terror

JAKARTA: More than 750 Rohingya and Bangladesh migrants have been rescued off Indonesia, police say, as Myanmar undermines calls for a coordinated response to Southeast Asia’s human-trafficking crisis by threatening to boycott a planned summit.

Indonesian police said passengers aboard one vessel carrying 712 people yesterday recounted how their boat sank off the east coast of the huge island of Sumatra after being driven away by Malaysia. Activists estimate up to 8000 migrants are at sea in Southeast Asia.

But the decision by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to turn away stricken boats filled with starving Bangladeshis and ethnic Rohingya from Myanmar has been met with outrage, including from the US and UN.

“According to initial information we got from them they were pushed away by the Malaysian navy to the border of Indonesian waters,” said Sumatra police chief in the city of Langsa in Aceh province, where the migrants arrived. The boat, whose passengers included 61 children, was sinking but Indonesian fishermen ferried them to shore, he said.

Fourty-seven more people from another vessel after the hungry passengers leapt into the water pleading with local fishing boats for help. Nearly 1300 migrants are already sheltering in Aceh after managing to get ashore in recent days.

“Early yesterday, another boat carrying about 300 Rohingya – a persecuted Muslim minority in Myanmar – left Thailand’s waters after authorities repaired its engine and provided some food. A Human Rights Watch has called the situation a deadly game of “human ping pong”.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on Southeast Asia to “keep their borders and ports open in order to help the vulnerable people in need”.

WASHINGTON: At 115, Jeralean Talley is now the world’s oldest person. The African American, who would have turned 117 on July 4, Ms Talley is the oldest person recorded by the Los Angeles-based Gerontology Research Group. An African American, she was born in the southern US state of Georgia on May 23, 1899. Now she lives near Detroit.

Ms Talley told the Detroit Free Press the secret to her longevity came “from above.” “It’s not in my hands or your hands,” she said, pointing towards the heavens.

Kentex “broke law”

MANILA: The Philippines’ labour chief yesterday described the owners of a footwear factory where a fire claimed 72 lives midweek as “immoral”. Rosalinda Baldoz said the owners of Kentex Manufacturing had broken employment laws that were meant to guarantee minimum salaries, pensions and social security.

Coup plot fails

BUJUMBURA: An attempt to overthrow Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza ended in failure yesterday as coup leaders admitted defeat and were arrested or hunted down by loyalist troops. A senior police official said General Godefroid Niyombare, who launched the coup in the central African nation earlier in the week, was still on the run yesterday, but that three other pro-coup generals had been detained.

Train crash toll rises

WASHINGTON: Rescuers with sniffer dogs have found the body of an eighth victim in the mangled wreckage of a train that derailed in Philadelphia, as investigators focused on the engineer’s actions in the run-up to the crash. All 243 people aboard the train have now been accounted for, officials say.

Cops investigated

MIAMI: Sixteen Miami Beach police officers are under investigation after exchanging racist and pornographic emails, officials say. Some of the emails included cartoon characters making offensive remarks and one featured a fictionalised board game called “Black Monopoly”, in which every square said “go to jail”.