

# Dodgy Saudi firms daily over pay

RAFIQ HASAN

Many Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia are facing utter miseries due to persisting irregular payment of wages, and their employers virtually hold them hostage tactfully preventing them from taking jobs elsewhere.

These companies often keep the expatriate workers' wages pending for months together but they cannot join other companies as their ikamas (work permit) are deposited to their employers immediately after arrival in Saudi Arabia.

The Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh often refuses to help these poorly paid workers on various

pleas, reports received in Dhaka said.

Back home, families of these workers also suffer badly as they went to that country for jobs spending huge amounts but they cannot send money to their families.

In one case, 10 Bangladeshis workers in a cleaning company in Saudi Arabia are not getting wages for seven months.

The company -- Al Khaber-- which have not paid their wages of only 400 riyals a month for such a long time also hold their work permits.

Failing to get any help from the country's embassy in resolving their problem, the distressed workers

went to the Saudi Gazette office and narrated their woes, according to information received from Riyadh.

The Saudi newspaper then contacted the cleaning company but received no reasonable explanation for this. The manager of the company attributed the delay in payment of wages to losses suffered by their firm.

In the wake of media reports on the matter, law officials at the Bangladesh mission took it up and filed a case with the Saudi labour department.

When contacted, Ashfaq

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## Pakistanis favour military rule fearing Indian attack

Says Asghar Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Feeling threatened by the possibility of Indian attacks, the Pakistanis tend to prefer military forces as their rulers who appear to be more reliable in combating the attacker, said Air Marshal (retired) M Asghar Khan of Pakistan at a discussion yesterday.

"As soon as the Pakistanis are relieved of such threats, democracy will begin taking root in the country," he said addressing the discussion on 'South Asian Security and Cooperation' organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) in its auditorium.

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PHOTO: STAR

Some people trying to lift the wheels of a car stuck in a chasm on a road dug up for installing gas pipeline. The photo was taken from the VIP road near Bangla Motor crossing yesterday.

## Int'l Women's Day observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation yesterday observed International Women's Day with a call for women's financial, social and political empowerment to ensure equality.

This year the theme of the day was 'women in decision-making: meeting challenges, creating change'. The day was also observed across the world.

Women in all continents celebrate on the day nine decades of their common struggle for equality, justice, peace and development, despite being divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences.

Different women organisations, political parties, human-rights organisations, socio-cultural and students' organisations, and NGOs had chalked out elaborate

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## DU student, KU official killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A student of Dhaka University (DU) and an official of Khulna University (KU) were killed and 20 others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Paturia highway early yesterday.

The accident occurred near Uthuly when a Dhaka-bound bus from Khulna skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at around 3:00am, police said.

The deceased are Mohammad Mahmud Kader, a fourth year (7th batch) student of Accounting Department and a resident of Muhsin Hall of DU and Zakaria Masud, 35, public relations officer of Khulna University.

Kader hails from Dumuria upazila of Khulna while Masud is from Satkhira.

The injured, whose identities could not be known immediately, were rushed to the Uthuly Health Complex and Manikganj Sadar Hospital. Among them, four are in a critical condition.

## India on alert to prevent trouble after blasts

3 suspected militants gunned down in Lucknow, Delhi

REUTERS, PTI, Varanasi

Armed police in India mounted vigil in Varanasi and Hindu groups called for a strike but the streets of the ancient holy city where bomb blasts killed 23 people were calm yesterday despite fears of a backlash.

Earlier, in the wee hours of Wednesday morning, two other suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists were killed in an encounter in Northwest Delhi, police said.

Tuesday's blasts in Varanasi, one of the holiest pilgrimage centres for the country's majority Hindus, also wounded dozens of people and came barely a week before Holi, the Hindu festival of colours.

It sparked fears of sectarian violence as some police officers suspected the attack to be the work of Islamist militants fighting against Indian rule in disputed Kashmir.

The attack also came just days after clashes between Hindus and Muslims in another city not far from Varanasi.

But there were no reports of trouble on Wednesday as an estimated 3,000 police and special anti-riot forces were deployed in Varanasi alone, police said.

"The city is peaceful. We have taken all precautions. There have been no reports of any untoward incidents," said K.L. Meena, Varanasi's inspector-general of police.

"There have been no arrests so far and police parties are conducting raids at various places since last night," he said.

Analysts and locals said they did not expect the customary, knee-jerk violent reactions because most Indians were weary of violence.

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## POWER SECTOR

# Autonomous body to be formed for policymaking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to form an autonomous body for policymaking in power sector development, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmood said yesterday.

The body, which will comprise representatives from both public and private sectors, will also ensure smooth investment in the power sector.

"It is true that the power sector is beset with lots of problems. So, it is essential to form an autonomous body to minimise all criticisms," Mahmood said at a seminar on scope of investment opportunities on renewable energy technologies (RET) in Bangladesh under Asia Invest Programme of the European Commission (EC) in Dhaka. The

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PHOTO: STAR

Waiting for hours to fetch water from Wasa supply line, two women drowse while another gives a blank look at Shankhari Bazar in the capital.

# BDR, BSF to work together to combat border crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) agreed to work together to contain cross border crimes and reduce tension as a three-day border conference concluded in Khulna yesterday.

Matters relating to killing and kidnap of innocent Bangladeshi nationals, smuggling of arms, explosives and drugs, insurgency, push-in attempts by the BSF, and confidence building measures came up for discussion.

The nine-member delegation of BDR was headed by its Deputy Director General Brig Gen SM Golam Rabbani while Inspector General of BSF North Bengal Frontier SR Tewari led the 14-

member Indian delegation.

The BDR team included sector commanders of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Khulna, Kushtia and Rajshahi and two staff officers from the headquarters.

The leader of the Indian delegation made commitment to the head of the BDR delegation that necessary actions will be taken against those found involved in firing and killings of innocent Bangladeshi nationals.

He emphasised measures to stop smuggling of explosives from India to Bangladesh and sought cooperation from BDR in identifying the spots that need construction of barbed wire fencing on Bangladesh-India border.

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## Bangladesh caught in Murali web

BISHWAJIT ROY from Bogra

Muttiah Muralidaran grabbed his 50th five-wicket haul as Bangladesh collapsed after a good start on the opening day of the second and final Test at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium here yesterday.

The home side were seen wanting in technique and application against the champion Sri Lankan off-spinner, who took 5-79 to bowl them out for 234 in the final hour of the day.

After a disappointing batting performance Bangladesh however finished the day with some solace when the new-ball pair of Syed Rasel and Shahadat Hossain made early breakthroughs -- leaving the visitors at 25-2 at stumps.

But it was Muralidaran, who lived up to his billing as a bogey man of Bangladesh despite captain Habibul Bashar won his fifth straight toss in the whole series and scored a fluent half-century.

Bashar's 69 was the only high point of an otherwise sorry Bangladesh batting card that nibbled against the guile and turn of

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## KTS FACTORY FIRE HC asks govt to produce probe reports

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to produce before the court the investigation reports on February 23 fire at KTS Textile and Garments Limited in Chittagong.

It also asked Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the KTS authorities to submit a complete statement of amount paid to the fire victims as compensation and the basis for the computation of such amount.

In its directive, the court further asked the respondents to take steps to provide necessary medical treatment for the burn victims.

The court directives came upon a writ filed by Ain O Salish Kendra

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## NEWMOORING TERMINAL Ctg mayor against pvt management

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday warned of movement against Chittagong Port Authority's (CPA) move to hand over the management and operation of Newmooring Container Terminal (NCT) to the private sector.

The move to hand over the charges of NCT to the private sector was an ill-motivated one and initiated in connivance with some dishonest officials as part of a long-term plan to destroy the premier seaport as well as the country's economy, Mohiuddin Chowdhury said at a press conference at the CCC auditorium.

Referring to his successful movement in resisting the earlier government's move to set up a

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# UNSC likely to meet next week on Iran

IAEA governors debate report on Tehran's nuke drive

REUTERS, AFP, Vienna

The UN Security Council is expected to meet on Iran next week, a senior EU diplomat said yesterday as nuclear watchdog governors met to debate a report on the Iranian nuclear drive that Tehran called "politicised."

Council intervention over suspicions Iran secretly seeks atomic bombs appeared inevitable after Tehran brushed aside a reported Russian offer to allow limited

nuclear research if it swore off industrial fuel production for 7-9 years.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board of governors reported Iran to the council a month ago and called on it to shelve uranium-enrichment work and stop stonewalling IAEA investigations into the nature of its nuclear programme.

But the report by IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei given to this week's board session said Tehran

had generally flouted the February 4 appeal by expanding a pilot enrichment drive, inviting Council intervention that could lead to consideration of sanctions.

The senior diplomat from the EU trio of powers Britain, France and German said the impasse in their and Russian efforts to resolve the crisis by diplomacy with Iran meant the council was expected to begin deliberations next week.

Asking not to be further

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## Arms, explosives recovered from Chhatak border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) recovered two revolvers, eight pieces of power gel explosives, detonators and six bullets at Imdadnagar near the Chhatak border yesterday.

Acting on a tip off, a patrolling BDR team chased a gang of criminals suspected to have entered from the Indian territory at about 5:30am. The gang, however, managed to escape the security forces leaving behind the arms, ammunition and explosives.

The recovered arms and explosives were deposited with the Chhatak Police Station.

Prayer Timing		
March 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation