



The Daily Star



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BANGLADESH UPDATE 2,709 New cases in 24hrs | 2,02,066 Total cases | 2,581 Deaths | 1,10,098 Recoveries | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 600,878 Deaths | 14,262,177 Total cases

Pardoned abroad, punished here

Workers deported from Gulf countries for illegal stay, petty crimes land in jail on return for 'tarnishing country's image'

ZYMA ISLAM

It was a small piece of news published on June 6, hardly noticeable in the slew of coronavirus coverage -- 219 migrant workers deported from Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain have been sent to jail on charges of "tarnishing the image of Bangladesh".

The expatriates, who were in different prisons in the Middle East, landed in Bangladesh jail straight from the quarantine centre in Turag where they were being kept in isolation following their deportation.

Police said they were jailed under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure because they are "all criminals", but the law enforcers don't yet know what crime was committed by them.

"They had gone abroad to work but got involved in different criminal activities instead. We don't know yet what the crimes are, but we have sent 'inquiry slips' to the police stations of the villages they came from to probe on our behalf," said Inspector Md Shafiqullah, the investigation officer.

Meanwhile, a court rejected bail petitions of 38 of those who sought to be

released, and on July 12, it instructed the police to submit a probe report in 10 days.

Criminal records of the inmates sent back from Middle East show that their "crimes" can be broadly categorised into two -- they were either nabbed for being undocumented, or they were imprisoned on petty narcotics charges, including consumption of liquor. In the latter case, the group received state pardons that commuted their sentences.

Md Anisuzzaman, counselor (political) and head of chancery at the Bangladesh embassy in Kuwait, stated that all the inmates sent back to Bangladesh from the Gulf country had received a state pardon from its Emir. They were all in for drug charges and mostly convicted for between five and 10 years.

Mohammad Rabiul Islam, counselor (labour) at the Bangladesh embassy in Qatar, also said, "Ninety of the imprisoned inmates sent back had been given royal pardons by the Emir because they had served two-thirds of their sentences. They were in jail on narcotics charges, while one or two were in on murder charges."

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People trying to salvage anything usable after railway authorities demolished makeshift homes built too close to the rail lines near Tejgaon station in the capital yesterday. Hundreds of homeless people were evicted during the raid.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

FAHIM SALEH KILLING Assistant charged with murder

Court hears stolen money led to gruesome killing

AGENCIES

The executive assistant of tech entrepreneur Fahim Saleh, who was found decapitated in his luxury New York apartment this week, has been charged with his murder, New York police said.



Tyrese Haspil, 21, is accused of killing 33-year-old Saleh, who was co-founder of ride-sharing venture Pathao in Bangladesh and Nepal. He was also the CEO of Nigerian motorcycle ride-hailing and delivery app Gokada.

Haspil handled Saleh's finances and personal matters, according to police.

At an arraignment held just after midnight on Friday, Haspil was ordered held without bail on charges of second-degree murder for the gruesome crime. His next court appearance is scheduled for August 17.

Surveillance video showed Haspil at a Home Depot purchasing the saw

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Lockdown likely in smaller areas

Experts warn the govt measures would be futile without curbs on broader areas

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The health directorate might soon announce the standard operating procedure of locking down small zones, ignoring the expert suggestions for sealing larger areas.

Any neighbourhood in Dhaka and Chattogram cities with 60 or more Covid-19 patients per one lakh people will be locked down and marked as "red zone", according to officials of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) making the plans.

Outside the two cities, the number of confirmed patients will have to be 30 or more for a neighbourhood to be marked red, they said.

This will go against the recommendations made by the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 of imposing lockdown on larger areas, experts said.

"The SOP is now awaiting approval of the director general [of the DGHS]. It will be published very soon," DGHS spokesperson Aysha Akter told The Daily Star yesterday.

Experts said locking down these small red zones would be "futile" because the disease had spread "everywhere".

"The NTAC strongly recommends the authorities to impose complete lockdown in broader areas, considering... the risks across the country," the committee said in its meeting minutes on June 10.

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RED ZONE IN DHAKA, CHATTOGRAM 60 cases per lakh population

RED ZONE OUTSIDE DHAKA, CHATTOGRAM 30 cases per lakh population

Ministry high officials played it for JKG

CEO Ariful tells investigators

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Two additional secretaries of the health ministry and two directors of the health directorate allegedly helped JKG Healthcare CEO Ariful Chaudhury to get the contract for collecting Covid-19 test samples.

Ariful told it to police during interrogation.

He also said these officials were planning to misappropriate a portion of Tk 500 crore allocated to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) on March 11 to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

"The two DGHS directors asked Ariful to submit the proposal to the directorate," said a detective branch (DB) official involved with the investigation.

The investigators further learnt that JKG had made around Tk 3.5 crore by issuing fake Covid-19 test results.

Ariful didn't deposit the money at banks, police said, adding that he kept the amount in cash to some people.

"We have identified them and will soon

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PLASMA THERAPY FOR COVID-19 Experts bemoan 'complete anarchy'

They say indiscriminate use poses serious health risks, call for a guideline

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Although plasma therapy holds hope for the treatment of critical Covid-19 patients, indiscriminate use of it in the absence of a guideline is posing serious health risks in the country, experts said.

The government only last month gave permission to three public hospitals -- Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Rajarbagh Police Hospital -- to conduct randomised clinical trials of plasma therapy for Covid-19 patients.

But many hospitals in the country have already been providing plasma therapy to Covid-19 patients without such a guideline in place.

Prof MA Khan, a haematologist at DMCH, termed the current situation "hopeless", saying, "There is a complete anarchy over plasma therapy in Bangladesh."

Plasma therapy for Covid-19 involves taking antibodies from the blood of a person who has fully recovered from the novel coronavirus and transfusing these antibodies into a critically ill Covid-19 patient, to help improve their immune system.

"In most cases, the plasma therapy is given to a patient at the last moment, which is not advisable," said Prof Khan.

He told The Daily Star that he sent a proposal to the national technical advisory committee over formulating a policy on plasma therapy on June 20, but was yet to receive a reply.

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Shahed's gang delivered 'accident' victims

His hospital delivered ghost bills

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MUNTAKIM SAAD

A middle-aged man from Sylhet's Companiganj came to the capital's Uttara at his relative's house in May last year. He was waiting for a rickshaw in front of Regent Hospital when a car hit him from behind.

His leg was injured in the incident. He had to get treatment at a cabin for just one day at the hospital, yet the bill was around Tk 50,000.

Asked, the hospital authorities told him that he was treated in an ICU.

To solve the problem, he called his relative -- an additional deputy commissioner of police.

The police official later intervened and escorted him to Mohakhali before he was put on a Sylhet-bound bus.

"We later came to know that the Regent Hospital used to charge horrifying

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Workers salvage cement bags from a lake and people go across it by boats after the narrow bailey bridge, with a load-bearing capacity of 15 tonnes, collapsed while a truck carrying around 47 tonnes of cement bags drove over it yesterday morning, officials said. The bridge on Barungi Beel in Bogura's Gabtali upazila linked the flood-hit Sariakandi upazila with the rest of the district. Engineers said they will sue the truck owner and its driver. Over a couple of lakh people will suffer until a new truss bridge is constructed and open to traffic in about a week.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Essential' trip indeed!

Of Tk 4.98cr for feasibility study to build stadium by the Padma, Tk 70 lakh for 20 officials going to UK, Australia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly two years ago, the government took up an around Tk 5 crore project to conduct a feasibility study for an international cricket stadium proposed to be built near the mighty Padma in Manikganj.

Launched in October 2018, under the youth and sports ministry, the project was supposed to be completed by June 2019. Later, it received a one year extension, which also ended in June this year.

But the National Sports Council, the implementing agency, could not even appoint a consulting firm to carry out the study yet, despite getting a one year extension.

While the project was running behind the schedule, the council spent a staggering Tk 70 lakh out of Tk 4.98 crore project on foreign trips of 20 officials as "a component of the project".

Under the "study tour", the 20 officials, evenly split into two groups, will travel to Australia and England to gather experience on how stadiums over there were built and are maintained, according to project documents.

A roster has also been outlined in this regard.

Two 10-member parties, one for England and the other for Australia, will feature four officials from the National Sports Council (NSC), three from the youth and sports ministry, two from the Planning Commission and one official from the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning ministry.

About the issue, experts say such kind of expenditure in the name of project tourism was a waste of public money, which should be stopped.

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