



# The Daily Star



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**"A situation has been created here [country], especially by creating fear and panic... no one now dares to raise voice and express their views freely."**  
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR PAGE 3

**"There is no doubt - let me be clear - that the voters should pick the president and the president should pick the justice for the Senate to consider."**  
US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOE BIDEN PAGE 12

**"Hundreds of millions of doses will be available every month, and we expect to have enough vaccines for every American by April."**  
US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP PAGE 11

## Thrown into abyss of abuse

*Women sent to Saudi Arabia for work often end up into slavery, face torture, rape; agency busted for trafficking*

ZYMA ISLAM

The recruiting agency that sent 14-year-old Umme Kulsum to a Saudi employer, who tortured her to death, threw many others into similar pits of abuse.

Details of such incidents came to light on Thursday when Rab-3 raided the office of the recruiting agency, M/H Trade International, and arrested its owner Mokbul Hossain and his associate Parvez for activities which are offenses under the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act.

While dozens upon dozens of women have returned to narrate horror stories of the ordeals they faced in the hands of their foreign employers, most of their recruiting agencies stay out of the purview of law. And nested under that umbrella of impunity, a recruiting agency can send countless women to work abroad under circumstances that can only be described as trafficking.

In 2018, M/H Trade International sent a 28-year-old woman from Dhalpur (T. Akhter) to the city of Ha'il in Saudi Arabia, to work as a household help, for the family of Abdullah Khaled Al. She went as a "servant" as her Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training clearance states, which her employer took to mean "slave".

In the list of abuses that she had to endure, the least horrifying thing was that she was physically beaten. And the most horrifying? She was pushed off the roof, resulting in both her legs fracturing, denied treatment, locked in a room and raped in that state, while her fractured limbs seared in pain.

"I had gone to the roof to hang clothes to dry, when my employer's

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**Illegally parked vehicles and three-wheelers and cars moving against traffic make it seem like there is no right or wrong or any rule on this part of Dhaka-Mawa highway in Postogola area. This creates gridlocks and often subjects people to long tailbacks. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## N'GANJ MOSQUE BLAST CID arrests 8 suspended Titas officers

Death toll now 33

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Narayanganj

Eight officers of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited, who have been suspended over the blast at a Narayanganj mosque, were arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police yesterday.

Jisanul Haque, senior assistant superintendent of CID, said four of the arrestees were engineers whereas the rest were workers.

At a press conference in Narayanganj, Deputy Inspector General of CID M Mainul Hasan said all the accused were arrested from different areas at Fatullah in Narayanganj Sadar upazila.

"The eight suspended officers and workers of Titas were arrested on the basis of evidence of negligence," he said.

The arrestees are Fatullah  
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## A rare and welcome instance

*RHD project saves Tk 286cr, proposes to build 10 more bridges*

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Authorities of a project under the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) have proposed building 10 more bridges under their ongoing-project as they were able to save Tk 286 crore so far.

The Western Bangladesh Bridges Improvement Project, under which 81 bridges are now being built with Japanese finances, sent the proposal to the RHD's Chief Engineer's Office last week, officials said.

The RHD would send the proposal to financing agency -- JICA -- for formal approval, they said.

Meanwhile, the project authorities have already identified and selected 10 bridges that require replacement, they added.

"When the [faulty] procurement process under different projects have been hogging newspaper headlines lately, this example

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## Wasa MD for 11 years and counting

*Board proposes yet another extension for Taqsem Khan, disregarding criticisms*

RASHIDUL HASAN

Ignoring widespread criticism, Dhaka Wasa board yesterday approved a proposal for extending the tenure of their controversial Managing Director Taqsem A Khan by three more years.

The Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) board made the decision in its 97th special meeting held online.

The special meeting's topic of discussion was to send a proposal to the Local Government Division regarding the appointment of Taqsem as Wasa MD for the next three years, according to a notice issued by Wasa on Thursday.

Taqsem has been the MD for the last 11 years. He was appointed for five consecutive terms of varying lengths. His current term expires on October 14.

When he took charge of Dhaka Wasa in 2009, most parts of the capital got flooded after heavy rains. The situation remains the same to this day. Residents still complain of getting dirty and foul-smelling water from Wasa. There is no proper sewer system in about 80 percent areas of the capital. The situation was the same 11 years ago.

A Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report published on April 17, 2019, said 91 percent of Wasa subscribers had to boil the water to make it drinkable and, in the process, burned gas worth Tk 332 crore a year.

The TIB findings also showed that nearly 45 percent of the subscribers got inadequate amounts of water, while about 35 percent complained of

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## ZERO BORDER KILLINGS BSF makes the promise, yet again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief of Indian Border Security Force yesterday pledged to bring the killing of Bangladeshis along the border down to zero, a promise made by the neighbouring country on numerous occasions but never been fulfilled.

"I must say that our policy is to bring down the border killing to zero.... We are committed to do that," BSF Director General Rakesh Asthana said during a joint press conference after the end of the four-day DG level talks between Border Guard Bangladesh and BSF at Dhaka's BGB headquarters.

In the first eight months of this year, 33 Bangladeshis were killed along the Bangladesh-India border. According to rights group Ain o Salish Kendra, 15 people were killed along the border in 2018, and the number rose to 43 last year.

BGB DG Maj Gen Md Shafeenul Islam led a 13-member Bangladesh delegation to the 50th DG-level conference, which began on September 16, while his Indian counterpart led a six-member team.

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## Dreams dashed

*Dr Bijon leaving Bangladesh, still holds hope of returning*

GOLAM MORTOZA

Reputed scientist Dr Bijon Kumar Sil is leaving Bangladesh for Singapore today with a heavy heart.

He is undecided whether to come back, but said he wants to return.

"I have been frequently travelling between Bangladesh and Singapore. But this time, I feel sad. I was not informed whether or not I will not get a work permit [in Bangladesh]. The reason why I feel dejected is that we created a Covid-19 test kit, but we are yet to get approval. At the same time, I assumed that I would get my work permit in a short time," he said in a frustrated tone.

The Gono University authorities said they applied for a work permit for Dr Bijon and submitted all the documents needed.

Another point is that once a work permit is given, the recipient has to leave Bangladesh and complete the visa procedure and then they can enter the country.

So, it is a procedural requirement for Dr Bijon to leave the country. But Gono University and Gonoshasthaya Kendra do not want him to leave.

"Gono University has submitted necessary documents for a work permit and we are assuming that it will take some time to complete the process. I am fully respectful to the due process and regulations," he said.

Dr Bijon said he was born and grew up in Bangladesh, but currently he is a citizen of another country.

"I'm a citizen of Singapore but Bangladesh is my birthplace. I don't want to even think that I will not get permission to work in the country

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## Ahmed Shafi laid to rest

*'Son not allowed to speak at funeral'*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Chattogram

Hundreds of thousands of people took part in the namaz-e-janaza of Hefazat leader Ahmed Shafi in Chattogram's Hathazari yesterday.

The supreme leader of Hefazat-e-Islam was laid to rest on the premises of Al Jameyatul Ahlia Darul Uloom Moinul Islam Madrasa, popularly known as Hathazari Madrasa, after the Janaza.

The prayer was conducted by Moulana Yousuf, Mohtamim (director) of Shilok Mohiussunnah Madrasa, which was established by Shafi.

Moments before the Janaza, Shafi's son Anas Madani was about to say something addressing the crowds. But a commotion was heard on the speakers instead. Insiders said a Hefazat faction did not let him speak, terming him a collaborator.

Anas refused to

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**Partially rotten hilsa fish are being processed with salt, inset, at a shop on Barishal's Port Road. Massive piles of the fish will be shipped to faraway districts across the country. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Onions start rolling in at land ports

STAR REPORT

Onion-laden trucks yesterday started entering Bangladesh from India through different land ports after the Indian government lifted a temporary ban on onion export on Friday evening.

At least 25 Indian onion-laden trucks entered Bangladesh through Sonamasjid, Bhomra and Hili land ports as of yesterday afternoon.

Some 300 onion-laden trucks, which were ready to enter Bangladesh through Bhomra port of Satkhira, left stranded at Ghojadanga land port of Indian side for five days after the Indian government's sudden ban came on Monday.

A total of 14 Indian onion-laden trucks entered through Bhomra border around 1:00pm, sources at the port told our Satkhira correspondent.

Mohsin Hossain, superintendent at Bhomra land port, said onion import from India started yesterday after a five-day halt.

An Indian C&F agent told our Satkhira correspondent by phone that they received an official letter in this regard from the Indian customs authorities on Friday.

Bhomra customs sources said importers there faced difficulties after some 300 onion-laden trucks got stuck at Ghojadanga since the ban announcement was made by India without any prior notice.

Mostafizur Rahman, general secretary of Bhomra C&F Association, said they found about 40 to 50 percent of the imported onions in the 14 trucks to be rotten.

He said the 300 Indian trucks were supposed to carry about 25 tonnes onion each.

Romesh Padual, an Indian truck driver, said he was  
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