

Crews reach

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Salalah in Oman yesterday, said officials of the ship's operating company.

The vessel freed with 26 Bangladeshis aboard on March 14 anchored at about 9:25am Oman time, said Meherul Karim, general manager of the company--Brave Royal Ship Management Ltd.

Talking to The Daily Star via phone from the Omani port, he also said newly recruited crewmembers have boarded Jahan Moni to replace the 26 Bangladeshis.

He added that they were trying to take the 26 back home by an Oman Airways flight tomorrow (March 21), a day ahead of the previous schedule.

On completion of medical checkups and immigration formalities, the freed Bangladeshis were taken to Hamdan Plaza Hotel and Hilton Hotel in Salalah city in the evening.

Farid Ahmed, the captain of the ship, told The Daily Star from Oman that he could barely express how happy he was to be freed from captivity.

His wife flew to Oman on Friday night to meet him.

Farid said all the crewmembers had talked to their families after reaching Salalah.

The container ship and its crew were released following a negotiation between the pirates and the ship owner and operating firm.

In the following two days, a team of 33 people including 26 new recruits and seven officials of SR Shipping Ltd and Brave Royal reached Oman by air.

According to a rule in Oman, no Bangladeshi crew can be replaced in any part of the country but the Oman government on Sunday gave permission to replace crew of Jahan Moni after a negotiation at the diplomatic level.

Over the phone from Oman, Mushtaq Al Mahmood, newly appointed captain of Jahan Moni, said all 26 Bangladeshis were in good health.

He said they already took charge of the ship that will sail for Greece in three to four days after some repair works.

The Somalis hijacked Jahan Moni in the Arabian Sea off the Indian coast on December 5.

PM opens

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power plant and the 100MW Madanganj furnace oil-based quick rental power plant.

She will lay foundation stone of the 410MW Haripur combined cycle power plant base-load power plant.

The government has set up the two rental power plants in private sector under a fast-track programme to resolve the nagging power crisis.

Desh Energy, a company owned by former FBCCI president Annisul Haque, has installed the Shiddhirganj 100MW plant under an agreement with the government.

As per agreement, the state-owned Power Development Board (PDB) will purchase electricity from the Shiddhirganj diesel-based plant at a rate of Tk 13.32 per unit.

However, the plant was supposed to start commercial operation in November last year. But it failed to do so as per schedule. As a result, the PDB imposed a penalty of about Tk 32 crore on the company, said a power ministry official.

The 100MW furnace oil-based quick rental power plant has been set up by the Summit Group which comes into operation as per schedule. The PDB will purchase electricity from the plant at a rate of Tk 9.75 per unit.

The third plant, the 412MW Haripur combined cycle power plant, for which the premier will lay foundation, will be implemented in the public sector.

State-owned Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh will implement the scheme. The Japanese Marubeni Corporation will set up the plant as an EPC contractor on a turnkey basis. Japanese donor agency JICA has funded the project.

Body focuses

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and for preventive detention of any Bangladesh citizen.

It also upheld the pre-eminence of fundamental rights declaring that laws inconsistent with fundamental rights shall be void and the state shall not make any law inconsistent with any provision of fundamental rights stipulated in part-III of the constitution.

However, citizens' fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution lost pre-eminence due to a number of changes to the constitution. The changes brought to the constitution in 1973 introduced the provision for proclamation of emergency and suspension of some fundamental rights during the emergency period.

It also introduced the provision for preventive detention and later the government enacted the Special Powers Act in 1974 to this end.

Even Article-26 of the constitution, which had declared pre-eminence of fundamental rights, was amended in 1973. It then said nothing in the article shall apply to any amendment to the constitution which deals with the procedure to amend the constitu-

tion. On citizens' fundamental rights, two members of the parliamentary special body told The Daily Star that it is now very difficult to restore the spirit of the original constitution.

They said the situation has become more complicated since 1972. The original constitution of 1972 had banned politics based on religion.

Now a special committee has decided to propose easing the stringent restrictions so that Islamic political parties can continue functioning, they said.

"Everybody has been speaking against the Special Powers Act of 1974. Political parties, when they are in opposition, criticise the act but the successive governments never scrapped the law," a member of the special committee said.

He said the committee will see if there is any scope to do something to better protect fundamental rights.

The committee might again invite constitution experts to have their opinions on the issue. It may again talk to the Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina about it, the committee member said.

passports with the authorities," said an IOM official at Choucha camp. He was explaining why confusion prevailed over the actual number of camp dwellers.

At Djerba airport, 150 km from Choucha, where IOM officials are coordinating the flights for repatriation of displaced people, said the number of flights for the Bangladeshis has been drastically reduced due to fund constraints of the IOM.

In a joint communiqué to the international community of donors on Friday, top IOM and UNHCR officials in Geneva appealed for funds to conduct the biggest ever evacuation and repatriation programme, arising out of the Libyan uprising.

"A situation like this was predicted over 10 days ago when IOM kept warning the world that its funds were running out fast," said an IOM official at Djerba airport.

Nur-e-Alam, first secretary of the Bangladesh Embassy in Switzerland, Saturday afternoon walked into the IOM office at Choucha camp and expressed his desire to distribute about 30 leaflets among the stranded Bangladeshis. The leaflets said the government would soon send some aircraft to take the stranded people home.

"I have come here to convey the message given by the high-ups in Dhaka," said Nur-e-Alam. "Tentatively, the Biman flights would be started from March 20."

Onus on Tarique

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for an acting secretary general. Therefore someone must be appointed to get the post.

Khaleda is leaving the country today for Saudi Arabia on a 10-day visit for her treatment and to perform Umrah. The senior joint secretary general might be asked to continue the routine work of the secretary general until she returns.

Party leaders think appointing a new secretary general would be a great challenge for the BNP chairperson as a number of senior and mid-level leaders are interested to get the post.

Delwar was appointed to the post for the first time in 2007 just before the arrest of Khaleda Zia during the caretaker government.

His good performance led to his being re-elected in the council held on December 8, 2009.

As per the party constitution approved in the latest party council, "The chairman can fill up vacant posts of the national standing committee and national executive committee."

Party insiders said the chairperson may pick one among Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Shamsul Islam, Nazrul Islam Khan, Abdullah Al Noman and Mirza Fakhruul Islam Alamgir as secretary general.

They said some leaders are trying to draw Tarique Rahman's attention on the matter.

Considering their bitter experience in the past, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman must appoint a person who will be loyal to them irrespective of the political situation in the country, party sources said.

Before going to jail, Khaleda had expelled party's former secretary general late Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan for his initiative for party reform to ensure more democratic practices in the party.

A Jamaat-e-Islami delegation, led by its acting chief Maqbul Ahmed, met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office last night.

During the meeting Khaleda told the Jamaat leaders that she would announce an anti-government programmes on her return from Saudi Arabia, said sources.

Being urged to declare the programmes from a common platform, Khaleda said she would discuss the issue with all her allies before making any final decision.

Asked about the discussion, Jamaat's acting secretary general ATM Azharul Islam told reporters that they paid the courtesy call to discuss several issues.

Pressure mounts on Bahrain as fourth protester dies

AFP, Manama

Pressure mounted on Bahrain to exercise restraint and ensure the safety of arrested opposition leaders, as a fourth person died yesterday after security forces quelled a month-old pro-democracy protest earlier this week.

The pressure came as King Hamad promised to press on with reforms.

Overnight, the United States said it was "deeply troubled" by the arrest of several opposition figures and activists in the small Gulf kingdom, urging authorities to ensure transparent judicial proceedings.

"We call on the government of Bahrain to ensure the security of person of all arrestees and to abide by its commitment to transparent judicial proceedings conducted in full accordance with Bahraini law and Bahrain's international legal obligations," said State Department spokesman Mark Toner.

Washington also called on Bahraini "security forces to cease violence, especially on medical personnel and facilities," he said, urging "maximum restraint" by the Bahraini government and that protesters also "engage peacefully and responsibly."

Toner expressed particular concern over the arrests of Ibrahim Sharif, leader of Wa'ad, a recognised political society, and Ali al-Ekri, a doctor who was arrested after criticising conditions at Manama's main Salmaniya hospital.

Bus ploughs

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The injured were rushed to Amtoli Upazila Health Complex. Of them, 12 were shifted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal.

Incensed, locals beat up bus passenger Bazlur Rahman, 60, taking him to be the driver, added UNO Moshir.

Critically injured Bazlur was undergoing treatment at Patuakhali General Hospital.

The bus driver could not be traced.

Toxic gas

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climbed down into the tank and fell unconscious too, said Mostofa Kamal, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sapahar Police Station.

They were rushed to Sapahar Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared Kalam and Salekur dead. Monirul recovered after receiving first aid.

An unnatural death (UD) case was filed in this connection.

Gun attack

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Wahiduzzaman Fakir, died after being shot by the supporters of the incumbent chairman Shahidul Islam, said Jalaluddin, officer-in-charge of Terokhada Police Station.

A group of people, including Imran, brought out a procession of motorbikes in support of Wahiduzzaman, when an armed group opened fire on the rally near Terokhada Eidgah around 9:30am, he said.

Wahiduzzaman's men retaliated and threw brick chips on the attackers and injured at least 12 people in the process.

Later, police intervened and shot around 22 rubber bullets to bring the situation under control, the OC said.

Imran, who received bullets, died on his way to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH). The injured were admitted to Terokhada Upazila Health Complex.

Khulna City Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque, President of Khulna district Awami League Sheikh Harunur Rashid and General Secretary SM Mostafa Rashidi Suja and General Secretary of Khulna City Awami League Mizanur Rahman rushed to KMCH after being informed of Imran's death.

Harunur Rashid strongly condemned the incident and asked police to arrest the miscreants as soon as possible.

French jets strike Libya

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vehicles of Libyan strongman forces.

After an emergency summit in Paris French President Nicolas Sarkozy said French jets were already targeting Gaddafi's forces.

The 22 participants in yesterday's summit agreed to do everything necessary to make Gaddafi respect a UN Security Council resolution demanding a cease-fire, Sarkozy said.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon, British PM David Cameron, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, several Arab leaders attended the meet, along with an African Union representative and an array of European leaders including Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, although Germany is not expected to participate in any action.

Sarkozy said Gaddafi could still avoid the worst if he complied with the Security Council resolution by implementing a ceasefire to allow the diplomatic door to reopen.

"In agreement with our partners, our air force will oppose any attack by Colonel Kadhafi's planes on the people of Benghazi," Sarkozy said, referring to the Libyan rebels' bastion.

Ban Ki-moon, however, said he was troubled by a telephone call from the Libyan prime minister on Friday night.

"He told me that the Libyan government was fully abiding by the Security Council resolution and there will be an immediate ceasefire," said the secretary general.

"But at the same time and overnight they were attacking Benghazi. It is very troubling; whatever they say must be verified."

Since Friday, the Libyan government has insisted it was observing a self-declared ceasefire, shortly after the Security Council voted to authorise the use of force against Gaddafi troops to spare civilians.

The regime said its armed

forces were under attack west of Benghazi, including by rebel aircraft, and had responded in self-defence.

Yesterday, Foreign Minister Mussa Kussa said Tripoli had met all its obligations under the UN resolution and asked Ban to send observers to monitor the ceasefire.

But the rebels, who have been trying to overthrow the Libyan leader for more than a month, said government troops had continued to bombard cities, violating the ceasefire continuously.

British premier David Cameron held Gaddafi responsible for the continued violence and said that "the time for action" had come.

"Colonel Gaddafi has made this happen. He has lied to the international community, he has promised a ceasefire; he has broken that ceasefire. He continues to brutalise his own people," Cameron told British television.

"And so the time for action has come. It needs to be urgent. We have to enforce the will of the United Nations and we cannot allow the slaughter of civilians to continue."

Gaddafi has defied the threats against, telling Sarkozy and Cameron, main sponsors of the resolution authorising military action, that they would regret interfering in his country's affairs.

Earlier, a huge plume of smoke rose over Benghazi, Libya's second city, as thousands of people fled eastward after a series of air strikes and sustained shelling, said an AFP reporter in the metropolitan area.

Correspondents redeployed along with civilians to Al-Marj reported that Gaddafi tanks had entered the Mediterranean city by mid-morning.

A warplane crashed in flames in a residential area of Benghazi, triggering celebratory gunfire from the rebels, but an insurgent commander later admitted it was one of theirs and had been shot down by Kadhafi's forces.

Meanwhile, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has postponed a trip to Russia at the last minute to monitor developments in Libya.

Late on Friday, the French presidency said France, Britain, the United States and Arab countries demanded "that a ceasefire must be put in place immediately, that is, that all attacks against civilians must come to an end."

It added that "Gaddafi must end his troops' advance on Benghazi and withdraw from Ajdabiya, Misrata and Zawiyah," referring to rebel-held towns attacked or captured by government forces in past days.

"That is not negotiable," it said, warning that if Gaddafi did not comply with Resolution 1973, he would face "consequences" from the international community and "the resolution will be imposed by military means".

Speaking in Brazil, where he was on a visit yesterday, US President Barack Obama said "the people of Libya must be protected and in the absence of an immediate end to the violence against civilians, our coalition is prepared to act and act with urgency."

Warplanes from the United States, Canada and Denmark arrived at Italian air bases yesterday as part of the international military buildup. Germany backed the operation but isn't offering its own forces.

A naval blockade is also being put in place, said Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. France is sending its Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier to the Libyan coast, a military spokesman said.

Russia, however, regrets the armed intervention by foreign forces in Libya, foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said in a statement.

In Moscow we regret this armed intervention within UN resolution 1973 which was adopted in haste," he said.

Tigers sent packing

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nightmare was revisited after two weeks at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The Tigers walked into match needing a victory for a dream passage into the quarterfinals of the showpiece event. And there was a lot of positive emotion involved after their back-to-back wins in Chittagang including a fantastic triumph over England.

Everyone was anticipating that the batting, which has been the weak-link in the team, will come to the party in the crunch game. It did come to the party only to be blown away in a whisker. Thankfully though, the Tigers, chasing commanding Proteas total of 284, did a little better than their forgettable 58 against the West Indies at the same venue on March 14.

The Tigers this time were bundled out for 78 runs in 28 overs, their second largest defeat in ODIs and the largest margin of defeat in the World Cups.

And it was a moment to behold when the whole stadium applauded a mere single that took Bangladesh past 58.

Left-arm pacer Lonwabo Tsotsobe, in his first match in the World Cup, ripped through Bangladesh's top-order by taking three wickets and then left-arm spinner Robin Peterson did the rest by claiming four wickets after Hashim Amla and Graeme Smith had set the tone with their 98-run opening stand to give South Africa a handsome total.

There was always a question mark over Bangladesh's batting even though they won three games including one against the formidable England side. The lack of application and skill in their batting against a disciplined South African attack, minus Dale Steyn and Morne Morkel, once again showed why this question is raised time and again.

It was another shocking experience for the capacity crowd, who had to sweat for grabbing a precious ticket, after the 58 all out episode against West Indies as the wickets fell like ninepins with only one batsman -- captain

Shakib Al Hasan -- reaching double digits (30).

The bewildered fans started to leave the ground when Bangladesh lost half the side for 36 runs and they never recovered from those initial blows and finally all they managed was to overcome their lowest total of 58 they made against West Indies.

The home side were nowhere there their spirited display at Chittagang as it was not only their batting but also the fielding and pace bowling was too poor.

This memory will definitely haunt the millions of cricket fans in the country as this was Bangladesh's second score below 100 in World Cups and they now share the record for most team scores below 100 with Canada, Namibia and Ireland.

All started to go wrong when dashing Tamim Iqbal was too early into the pull against Tsotsobe, caught behind off a healthy under-edge after South Africa had referred it after umpire Daryl Harper missed the deflection.

Then in-form Imrul Kayes left a full Tsotsobe delivery that cut back to shatter the stumps while spinner Johan Botha, who opened the bowling, trapped Junaid Siddiqui in front to deepen the crisis.

Wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim, promoted to bat at number five position, a place Shakib has held for long, but the right-hander was dismissed by a beautiful delivery from Peterson, the low catch brilliantly taken by skipper Smith.

Shakib, who batted at No 6 last time against the same opponents in November 2008, looked confident in the middle but after Mahmudullah Riyad fell to a run out, hopes of a respectable total dwindled fast.

Earlier South Africa showed a clinical batting display after captain Smith had decided to bat first. The South African innings built around three half centuries from Amla (51), Jacques Kallis (69) and Francois du Plessis (52). Smith was the other notable scorer with 45 runs.

Pacer Rubel Hossain picked up three wickets

conceding 56 runs while Shakib took two for 46 runs.

There is a mathematical chance for them if West Indies win today's last group match against India in a margin which one can only imagine.

SCOREBOARD
Full scoreboard of the World Cup Group B match between Bangladesh and South Africa at the Sher-e-Bangla stadium on Saturday:

SOUTH AFRICA
Amla b Razzak 51
Smith s Rahim b Mahmudullah 45
Kallis c b Shakib 69
Duminy c Rahim b Rubel 17
du Plessis c Tamim b Rubel 6
van Wyk b Shakib 5
Botha run out 12
Peterson not out 22
Parnell b Rubel 0
Tsotsobe not out 4
Extras: (lb-3, w-4) 7
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs) 284
Did not bat: Imran Tahir.

Fall of wickets: 1-98, 2-107, 3-141, 4-223, 5-245, 6-249, 7-273, 8-280

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shafiqul	5	0	44	0
Rubel	8	0	56	3
Razzak	10	1	47	1
Naem	7	0	42	0
Mahmudullah	10	0	46	1
Shakib	10	0	46	2

BANGLADESH
Tamim c van Wyk b Tsotsobe 5
Imrul b Tsotsobe 4
Junaid lbw b Botha 2
Nafees b Tsotsobe 5
Mushfiqur c Smith b Peterson 3
Shakib c van Wyk b Peterson 30
Mahmudullah run out 5
Naem b Peterson 8
Shafiqul b Peterson 0
Razzak c Peterson b Tahir 0
Rubel not out 8
Extras: (lb-5, w-3) 8
Total: (All out in 28 overs) 78
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-15, 3-21, 4-21, 5-36, 6-58, 7-61, 8-61, 9-62

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Botha	7	1	23	1
Tsotsobe	5	2	14	3
Parnell	4	1	4	0
Peterson	7	3	12	4
Tahir	5	0	20	1

Result: South Africa won by 206 runs

Man-of-the-match: Tsotsobe

Sri Lankans vote for rebuilding: president

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's president said yesterday his party's landslide victory in local elections was an endorsement of the government's focus on rebuilding rural areas after decades of civil war.

Results showed that Rajapakse's United People's Freedom Alliance swept 205 of the 234 councils that went to the polls Thursday, the first local election since the island's 37-year-long ethnic war ended in May 2009.

"The people's verdict has proved the fullest confidence they kept in the government," Rajapakse said in a statement.

"The people's verdict has endorsed our programme to develop this country."

Rajapakse has vowed to double the country's per capita income to over \$4,000 within the next five years as the island recovers from the effects of the separatist war estimated to have claimed 100,000 lives.

The main opposition United National Party was crushed in Thursday's vote and was reduced to just nine councils.

The Tamil National Alliance, a party of minority Tamils, won 12 councils after fielding candidates in the island's former war zones.

The main minority Muslim party won four councils while the balance went to small regional groups.

Since government troops defeated the Tamil Tiger separatist rebels, Rajapakse has tightened his grip on power by securing a second presidential term and winning parliamentary polls last year.

Thursday's vote was held mainly in rural areas. Polls in urban areas were put off until after the cricket World Cup, which is being co-hosted by Sri Lanka along with Bangladesh and India, ends in April.

Rajapakse has vowed to speed up post-war infrastructure development across the island, but minority Tamils accuse him of ignoring their needs.

Khaleda, Blake

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adviser Osman Farruk, Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed were also present.

Blake said Grameen Bank is an important microfinance institution that employs many people especially women. The US thinks Prof Yunus is a dignified personality.

A number of senators and congressmen expressed concern over the matter, he said after the one-hour meeting that started at around 7:30pm.

The US diplomat said the leader of the opposition agreed with him on the matter and the two also discussed some other issues including terrorism.

Osman Farruk said BNP chief Khaleda and Blake discussed the issue of cooperation between Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries.

Blake, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a four-day visit, is expected to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today. The issue of Prof Yunus' removal from Grameen Bank is likely to figure prominently at the meeting.

A spokesperson of the US Embassy in Dhaka told The Daily Star that Blake will meet the prime minister but the schedule has not been confirmed. He will also meet Dr Yunus.

The US assistant secretary will hold a meeting with top US officials in the South and Central Asian region.

Blake will travel to Benapole, where he will be briefed on immigration and trafficking. He will also talk to students and the media at the American Corner in Jessore, said the US Embassy in Dhaka.