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Nightmare over

337 Bangladeshis heave sighs of relief after returning from war-torn Yemen; another 136 to come tomorrow

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPLOB

They had had a two weeks' nightmare in the war-torn Yemen. Trapped amid deadly fighting, they witnessed untold miseries of people caused by clashes between the Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led Arab allied forces in the Middle East country.

The Bangladeshi expatriates in Yemen found themselves helpless amid the ongoing violence. They had been waiting to escape but did not dare come out of their houses in fear of falling in the line of fire.

"The attacks were not that severe during daytime but after dark, it was nightmare. There were continuous bombing and firing all night," said Mohammad Arman, who used to work as a mobile service mechanic in capital, Sana.

"For about two weeks, we could hardly sleep. The fighting was escalating gradually in Sana as both sides were launching the attacks furiously. It was alarming for the residents of Sana," he told The Daily Star at Dhaka airport.

Amran and 336 other Bangladeshis, who were evacuated from Yemen on April 12 and brought to the south Indian port city of Kochi by two Indian ships on Saturday, finally arrived home early yesterday.

Two special flights of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the Bangladeshis landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 4:30am and 5:15am.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam was at the airport to receive them.

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In his hurry, Zakir of Barisal grabbed whatever he could before he had to rush out of Yemen. He forgot his shoes. And for over a week he never got the opportunity to buy a new pair. Zakir, top, could not even buy from the duty-free shops at Shahjalal International Airport since the shops were closed when 337 formerly stranded workers returned from Yemen early yesterday. Happy faces, right, on their return home.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



BOAT CAPSIZE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

700 feared dead

REUTERS, Rome

As many as 700 people are feared dead after a boat carrying migrants capsized off the Libyan coast overnight, in one of the worst disasters seen in the Mediterranean migrant crisis, officials said yesterday.

Twenty eight people were rescued in the incident, which happened in an area just off Libyan waters, south of the southern Italian island of Lampedusa, an Italian coast guard official said.

If confirmed, the disaster would be one of the worst seen during the decades-long migrant crisis in the southern Mediterranean and would bring the total number of dead since the beginning of the

year to more than 1,500.

"At the moment, we fear that this is a tragedy of really vast proportions," Carlotta Sami, a spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, told SkyTG24 television.

The Italian official confirmed that navy vessels were involved in the operation, which was being coordinated by the Italian coast guard in Rome. But he said details were still being evaluated.

The boat is believed to have capsized when migrants moved to one side of the overcrowded vessel when a merchant ship approached.

"The first details came from one of the

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New video shows ISIS cruelty

30 Ethiopian Christians executed

AFF, Tripoli

The Islamic State jihadist group yesterday released a video purportedly showing the executions of some 30 Ethiopian Christians captured in Libya.

The 29-minute video purports to show militants holding two groups of captives, described in a text on the screen as "followers of the cross from the enemy Ethiopian Church".

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Storm kills eight in 2 districts

STAR REPORT

Tree fall and lightning killed at least eight people as nor'wester lashed Kishoreganj and Mymensingh on Saturday night.

Hundreds of houses were destroyed and many establishments affected. Crops and a vast tract of vegetable fields also bore the brunt of the storm.

Five people, including two of a family, were killed as trees fell on them during the thunderstorm that hit Pakundia, Kotiadi, Bajitpur and Kuliarchar upazilas, a correspondent from Kishoreganj reports.

The dead are Hazrat Ali, 35, and his seven-year-old son Rijon Miah of Kazihati village in Pakundia; Shital Chandra Barmon, 32, of Kuliarchar municipality; Abdul Mannan Miah, 60, of Kazirchar village in Kotiadi; and Rima Akter, 10, of Tatalchar village in Bajitpur.

A large tree collapsed on a tin-shed house at Kazihati village, leaving Hazrat and his son Rijon dead on the spot, said Hasan Al Mamun,

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Ershad asked not to join campaign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The returning officer of Dhaka South City Corporation has directed Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad not to campaign for any candidate in the forthcoming city polls.

Election campaign by Ershad, who is a special envoy to the prime minister, would violate the electoral code of conduct, RO Mihir Sarwar Morshed told The Daily Star last night. "We have already sent a

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Awami League supporters show black flags and block BNP chief Khaleda Zia's motorcade when it reached Muscat Plaza area in Uttara yesterday. Khaleda went to Uttara to campaign for her party-endorsed Dhaka north mayor candidate Tabith Awal.

PHOTO: STAR

VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

7 Bangladeshis hurt, their 4 shops torched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven Bangladeshis were assaulted and their four shops were burnt by criminals at Johannesburg in South Africa on Saturday night.

"Some locals forcibly entered the shops in Thokoza last night [Saturday] and beat up the Bangladeshis there," said a Bangladeshi, Sheikh Mizan, in a Facebook message sent to The Daily Star yesterday.

The expatriate alleged that more than 100 Bangladeshis were hurt and dozens of their shops were looted in similar attacks in Johannesburg and Durban last week.

The riots are believed to be fuelled by widely-held beliefs that the country's economic woes are being caused by foreign nationals, according to international media.

Daud Ali, deputy high commissioner at the Bangladesh mission in Pretoria, in an email said almost all the shops in the two South African cities were being kept closed.

However, he claimed that the number of Bangladeshi shops looted there last week would not be more than 15. It is estimated that some 70 to 75 Bangladeshis were affected in the areas, he said.

Several people, mostly from Pakistan, India and China, were killed in the last two or three days' violence in the country.

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PM bashes media for Khaleda coverage

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday questioned the taste of newspapers and TV channels for giving "huge" coverage to Khaleda Zia, who is "responsible for causing miseries to the nation during her 92-day destructive activities".

"I inaugurated some development programmes digitally yesterday [Saturday] while Khaleda Zia

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WAR CRIMES

8 Jamalpur 'Al-Badr men' charged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday pressed five charges against eight Jamalpur "Al-Badr men" for their alleged involvement in crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

The charges include murder, abduction and torture.

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BLOODY CLASH BETWEEN JUBO LEAGUE FACTIONS

28 injured in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

At least 28 people were injured, eight of them bullet-hit, in a clash between two factions of Jubo League over establishing supremacy at Jamshing in Savar on the outskirts of the capital yesterday.

Five shops and houses in the area were also vandalised by the activists of the youth front of the ruling Awami League during the clash.

Police arrested six activists in connection with their alleged involvement in the incident.

Witnesses said supporters of Minhaj Mollah, councillor of Savar Municipality and

a Jubo League leader, had clashed with the followers of Nazrul Islam, joint-secretary of Savar upazila Jubo League, in the evening.

The clash ensued between the two groups over establishing supremacy in the area, locals said.

Abdul Motaleb Miah, OC of Savar Model Police Station, said eight activists with bullet wounds were admitted to Enam Medical College Hospital.

The injured include Jubo League men Minhaj Uddin Mollah, Razib Miah, Abbas, Antar Mollah, and Minhaj's wife Nargis Begum.

Shroud of Turin back on display

BBC ONLINE

The Turin Shroud has gone back on public display in the Italian city's cathedral, after a break of five years. The 4.4-metre-long (14-ft) cloth is on show until 24 June.

Viewings are free but

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