STAFF CORRESPONDENT

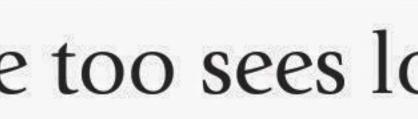
The Immigration department of Maldives started investigating 67 employers who are accused of irregularities in recruiting foreign workers, including Bangladeshis.

The employers, including individuals and local businesses, are accused of "neglecting their responsibilities" over the foreign workers and "administrative action" has been taken against 27 companies, the immigration department said in a statement Thursday night.

The probe has flagged suspected fraud in the issuance of quotas, including invalid documentation and approval of quotas in excess of the number of workers needed for projects, reported local newspaper

Maldives Independent yesterday. After collecting "documentary evidence" related to the cases, the immigration department has decided to work with the police to forward cases to the Prosecutor General's

Taking measures to tackle fraudulent recruitment and corruption in SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Of the 492 upazilas, 480 are scheduled to go to election in five phases this year. Polls were held in 78 upazilas in the first phase on March 10 and in 116 upazilas in the second phase on March 18.

on March 31 in the fourth phase. The EC is yet to announce the schedule for the fifth-phase polls.

dents visited around 60 polling stations in 14 upazilas. In Kishoreganj, the authorities

five polling stations the night before the election day, said Mohammad Tajul Islam, election officer in the district. Yesterday, voting at the remaining

84 stations was suspended over the allegations of ballot stuffing and vote rigging, said Tajul Islam, retuning Tutul. officer of Kishoreganj.

Police Station Shamsuddin were withdrawn over the allegations of their involvement in vote rigging and ballot

In Chattogram, a police constable

was critically injured in a clash Daulatpur upazila for his alleged between supporters of the AL chairman candidate in Chandanaish upazila and law enforcers at Purbo Chandanaish Primary School polling centre.

Police presence has been beefed up at the Holy Rosary Church in the capital's Tejgaon area. The increased security

bullets in lower abdomen. He was airlifted to the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital in the capital from Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) Jahirul Islam at the CMCH Police Outpost.

AL candidate entered the polling centre and tried to occupy it. Law enforcers resisted them, said Afruzul Haque

police, leaving Farhad wounded, said

following the incident.

Banshkhali upazila, police detained a youth with a knife.

In Manikganj, a presiding officer was detained at a polling centre in

involvement in ballot stuffing.

ing officer, Ruhul Amin, at Jionpur Khapara Government Primary School centre around 9:30am, said Assistant Returning Officer Abdul Momin.

Later, two AL rebel chairman candidates -- Abdul Kader, former chairman of the upazila, and Aminur Rahman, former general secretary of the upazila unit AL -- boycotted the polls over the allegations of vote rigging.

voting on time at Motto Government Primary School centre in Sadar upazila due to technical problems in electronic voting machines.

said Presiding Officer Abu Bakar

Visiting different polling stations in Manikganj Sadar upazila, The Daily Star correspondent found low turnout of voters. There was hardly any voter at Porra Government Model Primary School centre around

In Cox's Bazar, supporters of two ter-chase took place between supports candidates traded gunfire near Noknama Government Primary School centre in Pekua upazila around 9:30am, said Mohammad Jakir

PHOTO:

STAR

Station. There was no report of any casualty, he added.

Hossain Bhuiyan, OC of Pekua Police

Three vice-chairman candidates for Ukhiya upazila parishad boycotted the election over allegations of irregu-

Meanwhile, at least 10 people were injured in an AL factional clash at Mirzapur Government Primary School centre in Shailakupa upazila in Jhenaidah.

broke out as supporters of AL chairman candidate Nayeb Ali Joardar ousted the polling agents of AL rebel candidate Shikdar Mosharraf Hossain Sona from the polling station. In Jhalakathi, three persons were

injured as followers of the AL chairman candidate and the AL rebel candidate clashed at Hailakathi School centre in Rajapur upazila.

Besides, scuffle and chase and coun-

Security alert

specific threat either, it said.

FROM PAGE 16

"nothing new." Police usually did so

during special days, he said. Meanwhile, the DMP on its official news portal last night said they had issued no red alert fearing attacks in the city, despite differ-

ent media outlets reporting such. There is no

In the afternoon, however, several officials said the measures stemmed from threats of militant attacks on religious establishments.

Hayatul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of Diplomatic Security Division at DMP, said he was asked to beef up security in the area, which would remain for the next two days.

Sources in the DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit, said the arrangements were taken following information on possible attacks.

Police in Chattogram also beefed up security in key establishments and religious institutions. They raided different hotels yesterday and gathered information on the current boarders there.

Following heightened security, most diplomatic missions in Dhaka, including the ones of the United States and United Kingdom, issued security alert for their citizens living in the country.

"The US Embassy is looking into reports about the need for heightened vigilance in Dhaka," said a security alert issued yesterday. It added that all routine consular

services would remain available. The British High Commission in

Dhaka issued an almost similar alert.

of the AL chairman candidate and an

independent candidate at Purbo

Indrapasha Primary School and

Nijamia School centres in the same

Zahid Hossain was detained with two

licensed firearms and 22 bullets near

upazila chairman candidate, fired five

shots in the air to scare away a group of

men who attacked him in Nijamia area

Former chairman of Baraia Union

Jahid, supporter of an independent

Third phase too sees low turnout, anomalies

comes ahead of the March 26 celebrations. The photo was taken yesterday.

FROM PAGE 1 Commission Secretary Helal Uddin

were peaceful."

were peaceful. "We have withheld the polls in Katiadi upazila over irregularities. But the elections in other 116 upazilas

Ahmed said the elections, by and large,

He further said Kishoreganj Additional Superintendent of Police Shafiqul Islam and Officer-in-Charge of Katiadi Police Station Shamsuddin were withdrawn over allegations of their involvement in the irregularities.

"We will investigate the matter and take actions against whoever is found involved in the irregularities." On low voter turnout, Helal said,

about voter turnout in the elections." It is not a matter of concern for the EC how many voters cast ballots in the polls. The commission rather cares whether the voting was peaceful

"The commission does not bother

"A quarter, which is not participating in the election, is running campaigns, asking voters not to go to the polling stations," he alleged.

Election to 122 upazilas will be held Yesterday, The Daily Star correspon-

found proof of ballot-box stuffing at

ASP Shafiqul and OC of Katiadi stuffing, said the RO.

The constable, Farhad, was hit by

for better treatment, said Inspector Around 9:00am, supporters of the

Tutul, the ASP in the district.

Voting at the centre was suspended

At another polling centre in

Law enforcers detained the presid-

Voting was suspended at the centre, he added.

The authorities could not start

Polling began around 10:20am, Siddique.

12:20pm.

in the afternoon. Later a vigilance team, comprising a magistrate, arrested him. Elections were held almost peacefully in Chapainawabganj, Satkhira Locals and police said the clash

upazila.

his house.

and Barishal, which saw a low voter turnout. In Pirojpur, supporters of an AL rebel chairman candidate in

Mathbaria upazila allegedly attacked the AL candidate and his followers at Gulishakhali Bazar in the upazila around 10:00pm on Saturday, leaving at least 10 people injured.

Election in the upazila will be held on March 31.

Biman 'hijacker' carried toy gun in backpack

FROM PAGE 1

gers and crew members were evacuated to safety. A commando team entered the

aircraft and neutralised the suspect. Gunned down, the suspect died later, said the state minister in parliament earlier this month.

It was known from several sources that Polash was carrying a toy gun but it remained a mystery how he boarded the Dubai-bound BG 147

flight with it. The ministry and Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) have been claiming that there was no secu-

rity lapse at the Dhaka airport.

"The security staffers couldn't Chattogram airport and all the passen- notice the plastic gun during screening as there was no battery or metal screw with it. That's why the scanning machine didn't ring any alarm while the backpack with the toy gun inside was passing through it," Mohibul Haque, secretary of civil aviation ministry, told The Daily Star at his office yesterday.

Citing the probe report, the secretary said the security staffers of the airport, however, could see a long object but the image was hazy as it was wrapped in a cloth.

"It was negligence on the part of the staffers involved in security checking as they should have opened the back-



pack," he also said.

message said.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh has already suspended five the secretary. The five were involved in security

checking of the passengers and their terminal of the airport.

Asked how Polash carried the "explosives" like items as claimed by Polash evading the eye of security staffs, Mohibul Haque said the probe found there were no explosives with the man.

"Actually the youth was carrying in another bag some plastic pipes with wire attached to those. The security staffers also could notice the items during the screening but they didn't challenge him as they considered

by spiral binding," Mohibul Haque with a draft SOP," said Mohibul

This was another mistake, he added. RECOMMENDATIONS

The probe body made several recommendations including preparing a standard operating procedure (SOP) to be followed by the security staff of all airports to ensure "foolproof" security.

It also recommended identifying responsibilities of law enforcement agencies and other authorities concerned in case of any incident like the February 24 hijack bid.

"We have already taken an initiative

employees for negligence in duty, said those as harmless items tied together steps have already been taken in line

Haque. For example, he said, the security officials and staffers involved in checking at airports will not be allowed to carry mobile phones while on duty. It

would be strictly monitored. According to the draft SOP, a secu-

work for over 20 minutes at a stretch. Besides, all the airport staff will

are carrying out their job properly. all shops, except for two at the domes-

Wireless man's war

Road. It was around 8:15pm. There, he met a son of Gazi Golam Mostafa, the then president of Dhaka City Awami League, who alerted him to the looming

danger. "He informed me that the Pakistani army was mobilising troops at the cantonment and may launch attacks tonight on Rajarbagh Police Lines and other parts of the city. He requested me to

lines," Shahjahan said.

black night," said Shahjahan, now 73, as

From Netrakona's Kendua, the father of six sons is now in Dhaka to attend the Independence Day's programmes to be held at the police lines.

Reaching there, the policemen found routine roll call going on. They then held with whatever arms and ammo they

Then came the question of collecting arms. To get them in hand, they would need to get into the armoury.

A group of the policemen rushed to

Uddin to get the keys. But the RI said he would not hand it over without permission from the higher authorities. Then they took the keys forcibly and

the residence of Reserve Inspector Mofiz

among the police personnel.

One group spread out across Shahidbagh, Malibagh and Moghbazar

Another took position in Chamelibagh, Shantinagar and Bailey Road areas. This group later marched

co-fighter Monir took two rifles and 20 bullets and ran towards the wireless base station in Rajarbagh. Shahjahan took charge there. About 40 minutes later, they received a

message from a police patrol team in Tejgaon Industrial Area. The team's code was Charlie 7.

Shahjahan replied. "About 35 to 37 trucks loaded with decision: a resistance would be put up Pak army are proceeding towards Dhaka

"Charlie 7, Roger [received and under-said. stood and out," he answered. The message was clear. The Pakistani

army had left the cantonment. Except Shahjahan and Monir, all the others then left the Rajarbagh station with their arms.

the Pagla Ghanti (alarm bell)

Right at that moment, someone rang

Everyone started to rush. The main armoury had already been emptied. So the policemen broke the lock to the reserve armoury, armed themselves and started chanting slogans: Bir Bangalee ostro dhoro, Bangladesh swadhin koro [Valiant Bangalees, take

The flag of the independent Bangladesh was flown.

barracks, rooftops, beside the pond there up an armed resistance. and around the base.

Don High School (now Eastern Plus Market). A barricade was set up in front of the school. In the meantime, Shahjahan and Monir were waiting for the next message.

Around 11:30pm, a Pakistan army vehicle, coming from Chamelibagh, stopped in front of the barricade. Some of them got down to clear the road.

started firing at the Pak army from the

"Right at the moment, the policemen

city from the cantonment. Over," the others were injured. "Then began a war. A fierce war," he

> While the Bangalee policemen were firing single shots, the Pakistanis were firing indiscriminately from LMGs (light machine guns), heavy machine guns, and mortars.

All of a sudden, a shell hit a workshop at Rajarbagh, breaking off a pillar. The entire area turned dark as the

electricity went off.

Shahjahan got puzzled for a while. Then he discovered that he had a big weapon: a wireless set, with which he could spread the message to all police stations and units in the districts and sub-divisions of erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. He thought he should alert the people

that the Pak army began its attack and that The policemen took positions in the the Bangalee policemen had already put Without further delay, he wrote a

A group of 10 to 12 were at the roof of message in English. It was around 11:55pm. "I took the microphone of the wireless

set and started delivering the message," he said. "Base for all stations from East Pakistan Police. I say again Base for all stations from East Pakistan Police. Very,

took shelter in a small space under the very important message for you. Keep water tank, throwing their arms away. By note. Keep listening, watch. We are already under attack by the Pak army. Try to save yourself. Over and out." Shahjahan could not stay anymore at

5:00am, they were captured by the The army men got them out of the space by using bayonet. They were merci-

tic terminal.

butts. Later, all detainees were kept together. There were around a hundred captives in

were cooking staffers. The Pakistan army brutally tortured

"At one stage of torture, I passed out,"

afternoon of March 26. The Pak army released him in the afternoon of March

After his release, Shahjahan went to his village home in Kendua of Netrakona, walking. It took him four days.

of his brothers left for India. Later, he returned and fought the Liberation War Shahjahan said he confronted with

enemies in Dharmapasha, Kalmakanda, Durgapur and Haluaghat zones. After the war ended, he surrendered

Rifles headquarters in Mymensingh. He rejoined the police force as an assistant sub-inspector in 1972 and was

later promoted to the post of subinspector. Regrettably, the war veteran had been

sent into forced retirement in 1985.

"That's another story. [I] will tell you that some other day," concluded the man,

spread this message in the police opened the armoury. There were mostly .303 rifles and those were distributed The horror that would unfold a couple of hours later was well beyond his imagi-They all took position. nation. "I still shudder at the thought of the

he shared the memories of the incident with The Daily Star on March 20 at the Rajarbagh Police Lines, the very place that was among the first hit on that towards the then Intercontinental Hotel, fateful night. As many as 150 police- Shajahan recalled. men were massacred there.

After meeting the AL leader's son that night, Shahjahan, who was 25 then, walked straight to the barrack and informed 15 to 20 others what he heard. All of them put on uniforms and rushed to the administrative building.

a discussion and immediately reached a

up arms and free Bangladesh]."

Around 9:30pm, Shahjahan and his

"Charlie 7 for base," the message said. "The base for Charlie 7, you are loud and clear. Send your message. Over,"

roof," Shahjahan recalled. Two army members died, and a few the wireless station after sending the

The attackers then opened fire on

baggage on that day at the domestic

said, referring to the probe report.

to prepare a complete SOP. And some

He and his fellow operator, Monir,

rushed to the roof of the four-storey

administrative building, and joined

around 50 policemen already holding

Pakistani Army personnel could not enter

continued the attack. They brought in a

tank and destroyed two main gates of the

we ran out of bullets, we had to fall back,"

"We fought as long as we could but as

The Pakistan army then massacred

many policemen inside the base. They

torched four barracks of Provincial

Reserve Forces by using gunpowder. The

"Around 150 policemen were killed,"

The army captured Rajarbagh around

"They pulled the dead bodies to trucks.

We were watching it from the roof," he

said, adding he along with other police-

men climbed down the pipes and tried

Five of them, including Shahjahan,

The army men then regrouped and

the Rajarbagh Police Lines till 2:00am.

Despite their heavy preparations, the

defensive positions there.

message.

police lines.

flames rose high.

he said.

he said.

4:00am.

to hide.

rity scanning staffer is not allowed to

remain under vigilance whether they As per the recommendations, the Shahjalal airport has been cleared of

total, Shahjahan recalled. Of them, 25-30

Shahjahan said. He regained consciousness in the

Around a week later, he along with two under Sector-11.

his weapons at the then East Pakistan

who now lives in his village in Netrakona. lessly beaten with hockey sticks and rifle