

## Indian national held at Dhaka airport with fake UK visa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Indian national was arrested at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Sunday night while trying to board a UK-bound flight with a fake visa.

He was identified as Shakhthivel (26).

The man was trying to secure a boarding pass for a Biman flight when an official suspected his visa was fake. Alamgir Hossain, additional superintendent (ops and media) of Airport APBn, told The Daily Star.

Officials then contacted immigration liaison officer of the UK High Commission who arrived there and confirmed the visa of Shakhthivel was fake.

The liaison officer then put a cross mark on the visa, he said. Shakhthivel was later handed over to APBn.

According to APBn officials, Shakhthivel got the fake UK visa from an agent in India's Chennai and entered Bangladesh on January 20 through Benapole border.



Medical representatives of various pharmaceuticals often park their motorbikes on the road next to BSMMU in the capital's Poribagh for hours as they go from doctor to doctor, making it difficult for traffic police to get a hold of them to slap a fine for the violations. This is the way around the problem some traffic cops have found: confiscating their helmets. The riders then have to come to the law enforcers to retrieve it, but not before paying their due. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## COUNCILLOR POSTS IN CCC POLLS

# The mad race for 'unwritten perks'

RASHIDUL HASAN and ARUN BIKASH DEY, from Ctg

By nature, a city councillor's job is not that attractive. On paper, elected councillors may enjoy some local reputation but have little power to exercise. All they get to do is sign certificates and monitor civic services like waste management and street light maintenance in wards.

Despite that, 168 councillor candidates are competing to secure one of the 40 councillor posts in this year's Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) election. A total of 57 women councillor candidates are also battling for 14 reserved seats for women.

In this fierce competition, two supporters of Awami League (AL) died and several were injured during clashes between AL-supported and AL-rebel councillor candidates.

After witnessing such violence, the question that arises is why are candidates so zealous about getting such a minor position?

According to local government experts, a councillor has many unofficial benefits, including establishing dominance in their respective area and controlling tenders for development work to make money.

Under the law, councillors are empowered to issue 17 types of certificates, including those for birth, death, citizenship and inheritance. They get a gross monthly pay of Tk 37,500.

In addition, they attend general and standing committee meetings of city corporations, and can formulate development plans for their wards and submit them for inclusion in development programmes.

Asked why councillor posts are so attractive, Jannatul Ferdous, a former councillor of reserved seat for women under CCC, said although a councillor's duty is limited to routine service-oriented work, those from big political

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## Reopen schools in slums: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the government to take necessary steps for reopening schools in the capital's slum areas where a large number of children were enrolled.

Besides, they urged the government to take steps for the overall improvement in the livelihood of the city's over 40 lakh slum-dwellers, saying they were greatly affected by the pandemic.

Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba), Bangladesh Resource Center for Indigenous Knowledge (Barcik), and Coalition for the Urban Poor jointly organised the discussion on "Covid-19's Impact on Students among the City's Low-income Group Slum-dwellers and what needs to be done" at Poba auditorium in the capital.

Discussions said many privately-owned and NGO-run schools in slum areas were closed amid the pandemic. As a result, children were deprived of their right to accessing formal education while there are concerns that many of them might have dropped out.

They said steps have to be taken so that children can return to schools, maintaining health guidelines. Besides, awareness campaign has to be run among guardians and midday meals should be provided to children at schools once those reopen.

Poba Chairman Abu Naser Khan said many slum-dwellers' children dropped out from schools due to closure amid the pandemic.

"It will be tough to get them back to school again," he said, adding, everyone should come forward to make sure that such children have access to education again.

Delivering the closing remarks, Naser said there should be a change in the existing living condition of urban slum-dwellers in the next 10 years to improve their livelihood.

Abdus Sobhan, general secretary of Poba, said absence from school for about a year might have created psychological changes in children's minds.

He suggested that the government creates a proper database on the situation of students and schools during the pandemic. Besides, he urged the government to declare separate stimulus package for the education sector.

Drop-out from schools might cause rise in child labour and child marriage in slum areas, said Zahangir Alam, coordinator of Barcik. There should be effort that each child resumes study once the schools are reopened, he said.

Khandaker Rebecca Saniat, executive director of Coalition for the Urban Poor, among others, addressed the discussion.

## 'But what about the rest of us?'

Ctg residents worried as no list prepared; vaccination training of health workers yet to start; frontliners to get priority

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The Covid-19 vaccination campaign is about to kick off in the country, however, training of health officials, workers and volunteers in this regard is yet to start in Chattogram.

Not just that, such programme at district level, which was supposed to start on January 23 has been delayed. Asked, Sheikh Fazle Rabbi, civil surgeon of Chattogram, said it would start in a day or two.

He said a total of 28 health workers and 56 volunteers would be trained up to conduct vaccination in 15 upazilas.

"We sent two health officials to Dhaka to attend training. They have already returned. They would train others at district and upazila levels. It would be completed by January 30," he said.

Although the civil surgeon said a list of frontliners who would receive the vaccine on priority basis was ready, he failed to mention the number immediately. "I can tell you the number after seeing the file," he said.

According to sources at the civil surgeon's office, Chattogram district will get around eight lakh vaccines in different stages.

A central storage has been set up at the civil surgeon's office in port city, which has a capacity to store around one lakh vaccines, maintaining the temperature between 2 and 8 degree Celsius. Apart from that, there are seven feeder storages in the city with a capacity to store 10,000 vaccines.

Besides, each of the 14 upazila health complexes can store 10,000 vaccines. One of the upazilas does not have a health complex.

"As per the government guideline, the

frontliners would be given priority for vaccination," said Fazle Rabbi, adding, "We have written to all government, public and private hospitals to send us a list of doctors, nurses and health workers by January 18. We have already got such lists from most of them."

This correspondent spoke to medical officers, health officials and workers in different upazila health complexes to know about their preparations for Covid-19 vaccination programme. Most of them said they are ready to conduct the campaign and the health complexes were equipped to store vaccines.

Monjur Morshed, resident medical officer of Satkania Upazila Health Complex, said their health complex can store around 10,000 vaccines.

"We have sent a list of health workers who would receive the vaccine to the civil surgeon's office as per their letter," he said, adding, "However, we are yet to receive any update on training of health officials and workers who would conduct the vaccination programme."

"We believe, it would not be a difficult task as we have trained manpower who are experienced in Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI) campaigns," he said.

Asked about training the health workers, Dr Selim Akter Chowdhury, chief health officer of Chattogram City Corporation, said the two health officials of the city corporation who attended the vaccination training programme in Dhaka would start training others soon.

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## Fraudster arrested by CITC in capital

His group swindled people out of money by convincing them to fund in fake aid project

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

This is how the plot unfolded:

First, they organised a cultural event. Then they handed over gifts and books to children.

They told people that they are organising the shows with funding from an aid organisation called "CCIC -- Canadian Council for International Co-operation", which has a project to build schools, dams and tubewells and also sanctioned a grant of Tk 17.33 crore in this regard.

In order to withdraw that one has to deposit Tk 43 lakh. The person, who will deposit the money, will become a shareholder of the project.

With this fraud proposal, a group of miscreants has embezzled crores of taka from many in Kushtia and Magura.

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CITC) unit yesterday claimed to have arrested an "IT expert" of this group.

During a drive around 6pm, the CITC team arrested Tanjim Ahmed (28) near Jamuna Future Park in the city, Towhidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of CITC, told this newspaper. Tanjim used to make fake documents and application forms under the name of CCIC, he said.

Once a person deposited the money, Tanjim used to send them fake confirmation messages, said ADC Towhid, who is coordinating investigation into the case.

Earlier on January 17, a CITC team arrested one Md Rubel Ahmed, who used to introduce himself as the CEO of CCIC, from the capital's Uttara.

CITC arrested Rubel after Babul Akhtar, chairman of the Kushtia Betbaria Union Parishad, filed a case against him. One Mujahidul Islam Babul filed another case against Rubel with Khoksa Police Station in Kushtia.

Rubel popularly known as "Helicopter Rubel" used to travel to Kushtia and Magura in a helicopter, posing as an NGO high-up.

He then convinced people to invest in projects of the council and allegedly swindled them out of crores of taka, said officials.

On January 21, Rubel gave a confessional statement before a Dhaka court, said court sources. He said he met

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## 'Take vaccine to dispel public apprehension'

Lawmaker Chunnurges president, PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party lawmaker Mujibul Haque yesterday proposed that the president, prime minister, members of cabinet and members of parliament should take the Covid-19 vaccine to dispel public apprehension.

He made the proposal while taking part in the discussion on thanksgiving motion on the president's speech in the parliament.

"The president and the prime minister, members of cabinet and members of parliament should take the Covid-19 vaccine on similar day to dispel apprehension and misconception over vaccination," said the opposition lawmaker.

He made the comments as the first consignment of Covid-19 vaccines -- containing 50 lakh doses of Covishield -- purchased by the government landed in Dhaka yesterday morning.

Bangladesh previously received 20 lakh doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine as a gift from India.

The country has so far purchased three crore doses from India's Serum Institute through Beximco Pharmaceuticals.

Treasury bench MP Momtaz Begom proposed that artists should get priority while administering Covid-19 vaccine across the country, arguing that artists need to work with people.

## HC clears way for trial of ex-DIG prisons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the lower court concerned to continue the trial proceedings against Partha Gopal Banik, a suspended deputy inspector general (prisons) of Sylhet division, in a case filed over recovery of Tk 80 lakh from his residence in Dhaka.

The court rejected a petition filed by Banik seeking cancellation of the charges brought against him and bail.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim passed the rejection order considering that the petition was not presented properly before it.

Following the order, there is no legal bar for the lower court concerned to continue the trial proceedings of the corruption case against the accused, Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told The Daily Star.

Lawyer Abdul Matin Khasru appeared for Banik while lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan argued for Anti-Corruption Commission.

## Two school students among five killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two school students from Faridpur were among five dead in road accidents across the country yesterday.

In a tragic accident at Hamirdi area under Bhanga upazila on Dhaka-Barishal highway, 15-year-old Sakib Fakir and 16-year-old Shahin Mutabbar were killed. They were both students of eighth grade at Brahmananda AS Academy, confirmed the school's principal MA Salam Mia.

Quoting locals, Omar Faruk, officer in-charge of Bhanga Highway Police Station, said, "Sakib and Shahin were going to Bhanga bazaar on a motorbike from Pukhuria bazar. On the way, a speeding truck ran them over when they attempted to overtake it. The two were injured seriously and they were taken to Bhanga Upazila Health Complex. There an on-duty doctor declared them death."

In another bike accident in Dinajpur yesterday, two people died on the spot when their motorcycle collided with a pickup van at Hakimpur upazila. The deceased are Nazrul Islam (50) and Sakhwat Hossain (24).

Mostafizur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Hakimpur Police Station, said the victims were returning to Badarganj from Hakimpur. When they arrived at Nawpara village of Hakimpur-Nawabganj road, their bike collided head-on with a pickup van, leaving them dead on the spot. Police handed over the bodies to family members.

In Manikganj Sadar upazila, an elderly woman was killed while crossing the road at Tara bridge area on Dhaka-Aricha highway. An unidentified vehicle ran over her.

The deceased was identified as Sonia Begum (65). Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Golra Highway Police Station, Monirul Islam, said the woman was seriously injured when she was hit by the unidentified vehicle.

She was rescued by locals and taken to Manikganj District Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

The body of the deceased was handed over to her relatives with the permission of the district administration.



Medical and non-medical waste lie strewn around a dumpster at Chattogram Medical College Hospital, with conservancy workers working shirtless amid hazardous substances while crows and canines dig through it. In late 2019, The Daily Star ran a series of stories about medical waste management in cities across the country and had found that there was no incinerator in the port city to safely destroy medical waste. Over a year later, Chattogram still does not have one. This photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN