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# Axed flights leave migrants in the lurch

RASHIDUL HASAN

The return of several thousand Bangladeshi expatriate workers to their workplaces abroad, particularly in Saudi Arabia, suffered a major blow yesterday due to cancellation of eight flights from Dhaka.

National carrier Biman was forced to cancel five flights, four to Saudi Arabia and one to Singapore, while Fly Dubai cancelled two flights to Dubai, and US-Bangla Airlines cancelled a flight to Muscat, Group Captain AHM Touhidul Ahsan, director at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, told The Daily Star.

Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, managing director and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, said they could not operate four flights as the Saudi authorities did not grant them landing permission.

The Biman MD also said their Singapore-bound flight was cancelled due to shortage of passengers as some cancelled tickets following the enforcement of countrywide lockdown and expiry of the 72-hour validity of the Covid-19 test reports.

Officials said Fly Dubai and US-Bangla Airlines also cancelled their flights due to a shortage of passengers.

With all international flights to and from Bangladesh suspended amid the lockdown, yesterday was the first day of operating special flights. Several hundred migrant workers, who reached Dhaka airport since early morning to catch Biman flights, suffered badly because of cancellation of flights.

Staging demonstrations at the airport and in front of the Biman office in the city's Motijheel, passengers said

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An exhausted migrant worker fell asleep on the floor of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital. Inset, a group of migrant workers gathering in front of the office of Biman Bangladesh Airlines in the city's Motijheel area for their tickets. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON, AMRAN HOSSAIN



## Khaleda slightly improved

Her doctor says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's health condition has slightly improved as her body temperature dropped since she got infected with coronavirus, said FM Siddique, head of the medical team that has been monitoring her.

The doctor made the statement last night while talking to journalists after examining Khaleda at her Gulshan residence.

He also said that the medical team thought Khaleda's treatment was still possible at her residence as her health condition was stable with 97-98 percent oxygen saturation level.

He said, "We've examined her health condition. She's been suffering from a low fever for the last three days. Her

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## Projects hit snags with suspension of flights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several major projects involving Chinese contractors are facing problems due to the week-long suspension of international flights, project officials and contractors said.

They said many people, including experts, in these projects have to come from and go to China on a regular basis, and the suspension from Wednesday was hampering their movement.

Meanwhile, China Railway Group Limited, also known as CREC, contractor for several of the projects including the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project, yesterday urged the authorities to resume Bangladesh-China flights.

The CREC, on behalf of the other Chinese contractors working in Bangladesh, made the

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**ROAD TO FREEDOM**  
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

## Bangalees claim Calcutta Consulate

APRIL 18, 1971  
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

**MISSION IN CALCUTTA IS TAKEN OVER BY BANGALEES STAFF**

The predominantly Bangalee staff of Pakistan's diplomatic mission in Calcutta took over the establishment today and transformed it into a mission of the newly proclaimed provisional government of Bangladesh.

The head of the mission, M Hossain Ali, hauled down the Pakistani flag and hoisted the Bangalee independence movement's green, red and gold standard as the Bangalee staff cheered.

It was the first Pakistani diplomatic mission to declare its allegiance to the government of Bangladesh since the Pakistani Army launched its attack in Bangladesh on March 25.

The Pakistani mission in Calcutta was a deputy high commission.

Hossain Ali, the deputy high commissioner, announced that henceforth the Calcutta deputy high commission "will function as the mission of Bangladesh in India." The move came a day after a ceremony at Baidyanathata, Meherpur that

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Bangalee staff of Pakistan's diplomatic mission in Calcutta hauled down the Pakistani flag and hoisted the flag of Bangladesh on April 18, 1971.

## 44pc Covid infected getting hospitalised

IEDCR finds; says patients dying faster

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

A staggering 44 percent Covid-19 patients had to be hospitalised between late January and mid-April, according to data of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) released yesterday.

It also said hospitalised Covid-19 patients were dying faster.

The IEDCR, analysing data from January 28 to April 15, said the rate of admission in hospital was over 44 percent.

"In the second wave, the virus seems more lethal and the disease seems more severe," Mushtaq Hossain, an adviser to the IEDCR, told The Daily Star.

The IEDCR finds that the total death due to Covid-19

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## Nasa's InSight goes into 'hibernation' in Mars



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa's InSight Mars lander is currently trying to endure the abrasive Martian environment, as it sits on the Red Planet conserving power as its solar panels get covered in dust.

InSight was designed to be powered by solar energy, gathered through dual two-meter panels. It was always expected that the panels would reduce their power output as time went on and dust landed on them, but would still have enough to last throughout the two-year mission.

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### PRAYER TIMING APRIL 18

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:11 12:45 4:45 6:25 7:45  
JAMAAT 4:21 1:15 5:00 6:35 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



### SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN APRIL SEHRI IFTAR

5	18	6:25
6	19	4:10 6:25
7	20	4:09 6:26

## Some of BNP were behind Ilias going missing

Hints Mirza Abbas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas yesterday hinted that some people from his party had hands behind the disappearance of former lawmaker M Ilias Ali.

He urged BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir to find the ones involved in the incident.

Abbas made the remarks at a virtual discussion held to pray for the recovery of BNP chief Khaleda Zia from Covid-19 and to demand that Ilias Ali be returned.

Ilias, who was the organising secretary of BNP (Sylhet division), and his chauffeur Ansar went missing on April 17, 2012, from the capital. The party alleged that the law enforcement agencies picked them up.

The families are still waiting for their return home.

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A Bailey bridge on Netrokona-Kamalkanda road in Kamalkanda upazila of Netrokona collapsed yesterday when an overloaded truck was crossing it. It was constructed around two years ago as a diversion bridge.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Covid death toll passes 3 million

New curbs imposed after India sees record deaths, cases

AFP, Paris

The global Covid-19 death toll passed three million yesterday as the pandemic continues to speed up despite vaccination campaigns, leading countries like India to impose new lockdowns to fight spiralling infection numbers.

It is the latest grim milestone after the novel coronavirus surfaced in central China in December 2019 and went on to infect more than 139 million people, leaving billions more under crippling lockdowns and ravaging the global economy.

An average of more than 12,000 deaths were recorded globally every day in the past week, shooting the overall toll past three million at around 0830 GMT yesterday, according to an AFP tally.

For comparison, three million people is more than the population of Jamaica or Armenia, and three times the death toll of the Iran-Iraq war which raged from 1980-1988.

And the pandemic is showing no sign of slowing down: the 829,596 new infections reported worldwide on Friday is the highest number yet, according to AFP's tally.

The daily average of 731,000 cases registered over the last week is also close to being a record.

India's capital New Delhi went into a weekend lockdown yesterday as the world's second-most populous nation saw record 234,000 new cases and 1,341 deaths.

India now has three times the daily cases of the United States, the world's worst-hit nation, and families are clamouring for drugs and hospital beds.

After a national lockdown a year ago led to an economic

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