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SHAH CEMENT

# 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 bound for Saudi Arabia and one for Singapore, while Fly Dubai cancelled two Dubai-bound flights, and US-Bangla Airlines cancelled a flight to Muscat, Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul 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 the Singapore-bound flight was cancelled due to shortage of passengers as some cancelled tickets following the enforcement of countrywide lockdown and the 72-hour validity of the Covid-19 test reports of others expired.

The airport director said Fly Dubai and US-Bangla Airlines also cancelled their flights due to shortage of passengers.

Several hundred migrant workers, who gathered at the Dhaka airport since early yesterday to catch their Biman flights, suffered badly from cancellation of flights.

Staging demonstrations at the airport and in front of the Biman office in the city's Motijheel, the passengers said they had to endure sufferings after spending huge amount of money to reach Dhaka from different districts amid the

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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

# Signs of progress at nuke talks

Say Iran, China

REUTERS, Vienna

A new understanding is emerging at talks aimed at salvaging Iran's nuclear deal with global powers, Tehran's chief negotiator said yesterday according to Iranian state media, as China's delegate also reported progress.

Abbas Araqchi said after a meeting of remaining parties to the 2015 deal that the Iranian delegation had submitted proposed texts on nuclear issues and the lifting of sanctions, and that work on a common text, "at least in areas where there are common views", could begin.

Iran has breached many of the deal's restrictions on its nuclear activities in response to the U.S. withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions against Tehran under President Donald Trump.

Araqchi was quoted as saying that, while serious disagreements remained, "a new understanding appears to be emerging."

The second round of talks began on Thursday in a luxury Vienna hotel. The United States, making a new diplomatic push in the Middle East under Joe Biden's administration,

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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

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

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# Mirza 'behind Friday attack on Quader's home'

Some AL leaders claim

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Some ruling Awami League men yesterday alleged that Abdul Quader Mirza is the mastermind behind Friday's bomb attack on the residence of his elder brother Obaidul Quader, also the general secretary of the party.

Terming the attack a "drama", they claimed that Quader Mirza, who is the incumbent mayor of Basurhat municipality, did it with the aim to falsely implicate his rival.

Around a dozen AL leaders of Noakhali's Campaniganj upazila, led by the unit president freedom fighter Khizir Hayat, came up with the claim at a press conference in the upazila yesterday.

They also demanded the immediate arrest and punishment of Mirza.

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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

# Teen raped in Sirajganj, accused in hiding

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A teenage girl was raped allegedly by a neighbouring youth in Sirajganj's Belkuchi upazila on Thursday.

The victim's brother filed a rape case against Nur Mohammad, 25, of the same upazila, with Enayetpur Police Station on Friday, said police.

Quoting the statement, Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the police station, said the girl went to a local market on Thursday afternoon.

The accused picked her up from there, took her to an isolated place, and raped her. On information, the victim's brother filed a case, the police official added.

The girl was sent to Sirajganj General Hospital for medical tests, he further said.

The accused went into hiding ever since the case was filed. Police are trying to arrest him within the shortest possible time, he said.



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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