Journo held

FROM PAGE 12 Meherpur Protidin MAS Emon, its Editor Yeadul Momin and then joint editor Al Amin under the Digital

Emon is a member of the AL's central sub-committee.

All the accused had secured bail from the lower court. Recently, the court ordered their arrest after police submitted the investigation report.

Tigers eye

Security Act.

have lost all the matches except the one drawn Test against Sri Lanka in Pallekele last month.

The Tigers have missed a few key players during this period. Premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan skipped the New Zealand tour to attend the birth of his third child while he and with left-arm paceman Mustafizur Rahman were excused from national duty during Tigers' latest two-Test tour of Sri Lanka to take part in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

However, with the IPL being suspended midway earlier this month, both Shakib and Mustafizur are now available for the Sri Lanka ODIs, lending better balance and strength to the squad.

The Tamim Iqbal-led side could also eye the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League summit as a series win could see them go top of the ladder. The men in red and green currently sit sixth but only trail top-placed England by 10 points. A 2-1 series win would lift them to 50 points, 10 above than England, Pakistan and Australia, who all have 40 points.

And playing in their favorite format at home against a Sri Lankan side missing a number of senior players under the new leadership of Kusal Perera, this may be a golden opportunity for the Tigers to turn their fate around.

Covid spreads

FROM PAGE 12 which has been declared an epidemic by the Indian government.

Across India, the total number of black fungus patients is approximately 8,848, according to an official estimate today.

With hospitals overflowing, the health system overwhelmed in the cities and a shortage of vaccines, experts have warned India could face a third wave of infections in coming

months. "While it (spread of coronavirus) has stabilised in many parts of the country, and overall the burden has been lessened, we have a long way to go with this wave," Dr. V. K. Paul, part of a federal government panel on Covid-19 management, told a news

conference. "For the first time, we have seen that rural areas have been affected in this pandemic."

Total infections in the country stood at 26.3 million, the second highest in the world after the United States, while the country's total death toll was 295,525.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and state authorities have faced widespread criticism for failing to counter the pandemic as many

officials gear up for another surge. The slow pace of vaccination in the country is another major concern.

New Delhi's chief minister said city authorities had been forced to halt vaccinations for those aged between 18 and 44 as supplies had run out. The chief minister of Andhra Pradesh urged Modi to help with supplies as the state had no stocks to vaccinate those aged below 45.

Positivity rate

FROM PAGE 12 In January and February, the positivity rate stayed below five percent and started rising from March 9, indicating a second wave of Covid-19 in the country.

Experts say that the number of tests is too small to know the actual level of transmission.

Infectious disease specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman said, "With these few tests, it is impossible to reflect the reality. In fact, the transmission is much higher than reported. The number of tests should be increased immediately. Otherwise, the hospitals will be overwhelmed

Meanwhile, the health directorate reported 38 deaths from Covid-19 yesterday. With this, the total number of deaths from the disease reached 12,348, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services.

At least 759 Covid-19 patients have recovered, it added.

Of those reported dead yesterday, 25 were men, 13 women, two aged between 11 and 20, two between 21 and 30, three between 31 and 40, two between 41 and 50, 13 between 51 and 60, and 16 over 60, added the release.

Some 3,350 Bangladeshis have returned to the country from India through Benapole since April 26, reports our correspondent.

Of them, 17 tested positive for coronavirus, according to the Benapole Immigration Health Department.

The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research has so far confirmed six cases of the Indian variant in Bangladesh.



A Palestinian policeman walks on the rubble of Arafat City, Gaza's police headquarters in Gaza City, yesterday, following a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants in the Israeli-blockaded enclave.

РНОТО

Israel-Hamas ceasefire holds

Egypt sent a delegation to Israel on Friday to discuss ways of firming up the ceasefire, including with aid for Palestinians in Gaza, Hamas officials told Reuters.

The delegates have since been shuttling between Israel and Gaza, with talks continuing yesterday, the officials said.

Despite confrontations between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters at a Jerusalem holy site on Friday, there were no reports of Hamas rocket launches from Gaza or Israeli military strikes on the enclave as of yesterday morning.

US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that Washington would work with the United Nations on bringing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Gaza, with safeguards against funds being used to arm Hamas, which the West deems a terrorist group.

Besides reiterating his pledge the damage to industry, power

to help organize efforts to rebuild and agriculture in the already Gaza, he on Friday said creating a Palestinian state alongside Israel is the "only answer" to the conflict.

Biden also said he had told the Israelis to stop "intercommunal fighting" in the flashpoint city of Jerusalem. But he expressed his commitment

to Israel once again. "There is no shift in my commitment to the security of Israel, period, no shift, not at all," he Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah

Ali Khamenei on Friday called on

Muslim states to support Palestinians

militarily and financially and help rebuild Gaza, Iranian media reported. Saudi Arabia's King Salman condemned what he called Israeli aggression in Jerusalem and the Gaza

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Palestinian officials on Friday said it would cost \$100m to rebuild

Strip during a phone call on Friday with

impoverished territory struggling under a devastating 14-year blockade.

"People are still out on the streets trying to resume something approaching what was, even for Gaza, normal life before all of this took place," Al Jazeera's Harry Fawcett, reporting from Gaza City, said yesterday. "But everywhere you go around here you see the evidence of what has taken place in the last few days," he added, standing in front a row of bombedout buildings.

As major power infrastructures were hit, Gazans were now receiving 5 hours of electricity per day. Before the bombardment, they used to get 12

Gaza's 13 hospitals are very much under pressure not just from the sheer volume of patients but also shortage in fuel supply too.

World Health Organization spokeswoman Margaret Harris said

on Friday Gaza's health facilities were in danger of being overwhelmed by the thousands of injuries, and called for immediate access into Gaza for health supplies and personnel.

Meanwhile, convoys of trucks carrying aid began passing into Gaza through the Karem Abu Salem or Kerem Shalom crossing after it was reopened by Israel, bringing muchneeded medicine, food and fuel. The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund said it had released \$18.5 million for humanitarian efforts.

One of the most densely populated places on Earth, Gaza has for years been subjected to an Israeli blockade that restricts the passage of people and goods, as well as restrictions by Egypt. Sources said about 1,000 individual

homes have been completely destroyed, 700 have been severely damaged, and another 14,000 home units have been partially damaged. As a result, nearly 80,000 people have become homeless in Gaza.

Faulty process, false promises

FROM PAGE 12

conditions, according to a study report of Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan

two-year job "contracts".

returned between one and two years of migration, 32 between two and three years, and 23 returned more than three years after first migration, stated the report titled "Access to Justice for Bangladeshi Migrant Workers: Opportunities and Challenges", published in March.

Okup, a grassroots migrant rights organisation, conducted a survey of 262 female returnees in Faridpur, Narsingdi, Munshiganj, and Narayanganj who had migrated between 2010 and 2019. The majority of the workers returned between 2018 and 2019.

Non-payment of wages, illness, physical torture, sexual abuse, and excessive work were among the reasons behind their return, the survey found.

The key reason behind 151 women's untimely return within a year of their migration was the "faulty" process under which they were sent, said Okup Chairperson Shakirul Islam. Some of the workers were provided

with false job information, some were falsely assured of higher payment than

they were given, while others were sent without proper training, Shakirul told The Daily Star last month.

Programme (Okup). Over half of these 151 women, 81, They returned before ending their returned in less than three months of migration, 31 within three to six Another 56 female migrants months, and 39 within six to 12 months, Shakirul said.

The report found nearly 95 percent of the female returnees were recruited via local sub-agents and three percent directly by recruiting agents, with the remaining two percent migrating via their family members

EXPLOITATION AT HOME AND

According to the report, 88 percent of the female returnees said they were not provided with a formal job contract and were only told about the employer, job responsibilities, wages and benefits through informal discussions.

Almost 45 percent of returning female migrants said they did not receive the amount of wages and benefits that they had been promised by the agents or sub-agents.

Although the recruitment of female domestic workers to any country is supposedly free of cost as per government rules, 65 percent of the vomen surveyed mostly paid between Tk 5,000 and Tk 1 lakh to migrate. Two percent paid more than Tk 1 lakh. Nearly 43 percent of the

returnees said the agents and subagents had "intentionally abused their lack of knowledge about the migration process" and provided "disinformation" about wages, the employers' family, and the amount of work.

Sixty percent, or 156 returnees reported they often faced physical torture; around 16 percent of all surveyed reported they were sexually abused and exploited.

Just over half the returnees, 133 women, said they had to work around 14 to 18 hours a day, and around 36 percent of returnees had wages of at least one month due when they left their workplace.

Besides, nearly 18 percent of the women were sent abroad using fake medical certificates despite being screened as "unfit" in the first medical test, the report added.

RECRUITMENT MALPRACTICE **GOES UNPUNISHED**

followed the arbitration Okup cases of 123 female returnees who filed complaints with the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) in 2019. These were mostly to recover unpaid wages and compensation for forced labour, torture and abuse, and medical treatment costs.

Only around 31 percent of the complaints were resolved

December 2019, with the remaining unresolved as of the time Okup's research was completed. Penalties

against recruitment practices should be brought to the fore while ensuring justice for migrant workers, said Okup's Shakirul recently Issues such as the extent to which

unethical recruitment practices are responsible for a migrant worker's return after exploitation should be discussed whenever access to justice is discussed or analysed, he said

"Our research says such malpractice is responsible [for untimely return]. So, they must take the responsibility, he added.

Shakirul suggested establishing a neutral arbitral tribunal to deal with such cases, arguing the existing BMET arbitration could create a "conflict of interest" since BMET is involved in the recruitment process. Contacted recently, Shamsul Alam,

director general of BMET, said they regularly take action against recruiting agencies upon finding them guilty. Recruiting agencies are summoned

complaints are filed against them, the DG told The Daily Star.

If they are found noncompliant with a job contract, then they have to pay compensation. Besides, recommendations are issued to suspend the license of guilty agents, he added.

Migrant workers' woes rise further clinic, emergencies and hospitals, to resolve the same problem," he

Several thousand workers, who failed to travel to Saudi Arabia due to the suspension of Biman flights, said they are fearing that visas would expire if they fail to return to their workplaces

The fresh suspension of flights will create an uncertainty over several Bangladesh workers' thousand return to Saudi Arabia, said sources at the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) and the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB).

Biman currently operates flights to three destinations in Saudi Arabia --Riyadh, Dammam and Jeddah.

The airline operates 18 flights a week to these destinations. THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

As per the Saudi Arabia General Authority Civil Aviation (GACA) circular, the Saudi government requires those who intend to travel to the gulf country from non-restricted countries should have medical insurance that covers the risk of Covid-19 and still be in institutional quarantine.

According to the new advisory, all travellers must obtain medical insurance to cover their treatment for

Covid-19. "The insurance should cover the

including institutional quarantine for a period of up to 14 days," it says.

Saudi citizens and accompanies are exempted from institutional quarantine if they have been fully vaccinated or passed 14 days after taking the first dose, or recovered from Covid-19. Otherwise, they have to complete a seven-day home quarantine.

The exemption also applies to passengers who have passed 14 days after receiving two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, two doses of the Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccine or two doses of the Moderna vaccine and one dose of the Johnson&Johnson vaccine and possess a vaccination certificate. The vaccination certificate must be certified by the health authorities from the country of vaccination.

Saudi Arabia also demanded that the airline submit a passenger list to the country's authorities four days before departure.

SUFFERINGS & UNCERTAINTY

Harun Mia, a Saudi-bound worker, told this correspondent that he came to Dhaka Airport on Friday to catch his flight scheduled in the evening.

"After knowing that I need to book a hotel for institutional quarantine, I rushed to the Saudia office. There, I cost of treatment in any outpatient found several hundred others waiting

Another migrant worker Anisur Rahman said Saudi officials did not cooperate properly for them to resolve their problems regarding the new travel advisory.

"My visa will expire on May 24

[tomorrow]. I will be not be able to return to my work place if I fail to go there before the expiry," said Kabir Liton Mia, a sibling of migrant

worker Abul Kalam, said his brother had to pay about Tk 65,600 to book a hotel for seven days of institutional quarantine upon entry to the Gulf country. The booking money was paid to the

respective airlines that arranged the quarantine facility. Kalam's company already paid the airfare, Liton told this newspaper by phone.

Mahfuzul Haque, secretary general of the Recruiting Agencies Welfare Association of Bangladesh (Rawab), said the Saudi government's latest health advisory will create new challenges as it will increase the cost in sending Bangladeshi migrant workers to the Gulf country.

He said some tour and travel agencies in Bangladesh have been charging between 1,000 riyal (Saudi currency) and 2,000 rival to just

arrange seven days of institutional quarantine in Saudi Arabia.

Besides, airfare for the Gulf country has already increased amid the pandemic and reached to more than Tk 70,000 per ticket, while quarantine facilities and tickets were not even available at present.

Mahfuzul said many Bangladeshi migrant workers were not able to get both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine and this was another major area of

Around 50,000 employment visas of Saudi Arabia are currently pending at different stages, said the Rawab leader. WHATS BIMAN SAYS

A top Biman official said we have informed our concerned offices about the conditions given to us by the Saudi government.

"Our officials there are trying to manage the hotels [for quarantine] We are trying to figure out how to book these hotels at a low cost, which will take some time. Apart from this, there is a condition to give the passenger list four days before departure. That is also a reason for temporarily suspending flights to Saudi Arabia," he added.

Saudi Arabia is the largest expatriate income market for Bangladesh. At least 26 lakh expatriates are working in different sectors in the country.

Weather

Fishermen have been advised not to go into the deep sea. Those who are already there should return to the coast by today, says a special bulletin of the Met department.

According to the regular bulletin Bangladesh Meteorological Department, a low pressure area is very likely to form over the North Andaman Sea and the adjoining eastcentral Bay of Bengal in the next 24

A trough of westerly low lies over West Bengal and adjoining areas, extending up to North Bay, it said.

thundershowers Rain or accompanied by temporary gusty winds are likely to hit some places in Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions and one or two areas in Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions, as well as the regions of Jashore, Kushtia, Cumilla and Noakhali.

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere in the country.

Bangladesh's several including Dhaka, Khulna and Barishal divisions, are currently witnessing a mild to moderate heat wave and it may continue, according to the weather department.

Day and night temperatures are likely to remain unchanged in the country.

Indira urges Sadat

FROM PAGE 12

its consequent repercussion on the Indian sub-continent. It was believed that Indira Gandhi had appealed to Sadat to use his good offices to persuade Pakistan President Yahya Khan to stop the bloodshed in Bangladesh and assure security to its people.

RESISTANCE CONTINUES

Bangladesh Liberation Forces seized a passenger steamer, Rocket, and sentenced 17 non-Bengalee on board to death following a the verdict of people's court, reported Associated Press (AP). This indicated resistance was continuing in East Pakistan despite Pakistan Army's claims of crushing it, AP added. The vessel was operated by a private Pakistani river service. It was further reported that such incidents maintained a "climate of terror" preventing politicians from collaborating with the regime and frightening West Pakistani civil servants who had been assigned to work in East Pakistan. The Liberation Forces were also seizing barges and burning cargoes of jute on their way to market towns.

BHUTTO'S SOLUTION

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, leader of West Pakistan's majority party, warned today that Pakistan was in danger of disintegration unless a quick political solution was found for the crisis in East Pakistan.

"If the situation in Pakistan continues to deteriorate, and events are moving fast," Bhutto told a group of newsmen, "We cannot guess what will happen. The economic crisis in Pakistan was alarming even before the events in East Pakistan. The solution is urgent and it can only be found by the leaders and representatives of the people."

"To insist here that the elected representatives of the people are power hungry in wanting to assume office is like calling President Nixon power hungry for wanting to occupy the White House after he was elected, Bhutto said.

"On Dec 7 the people made their choices and the result was three forces in the country--the government, the Pakistan People's Party and the Awami League. Now the Awami League is banned so there are only two forces. We must accept that political reality."

Bhutto called for a moratorium on foreign debt repayment.

There is a food crisis. There is labour unrest. There is total loss of confidence on the part of the peasantry. There is a fall in production with no immediate likelihood of improvement. We speak a lot in this country about the hostile foreign press. Well, if we want a better press we must have a nation which is not a graveyard in the community of

nations," said Bhutto Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

China's Mars

FROM PAGE 12

The Mars probe and rover are expected to spend around three months taking photos, harvesting geographical data, and collecting and analysing rock samples. The six-wheeled, solar-powered,

(530-pound) 240-kilogramme Zhurong is named after a Chinese mythical fire god. China has now sent astronauts into

space, powered probes to the Moon and landed a rover on Mars -- the most prestigious of all prizes in the competition for dominion of space. The United States and Russia are

the only other countries to have reached Mars, and only the former has operated a rover on the surface. Several US, Russian and European

failed in the past, most recently in 2016 with the crash-landing of the Schiaparelli joint Russian-European spacecraft. The latest successful arrival came in

attempts to land rovers on Mars have

February, when US space agency NASA landed its rover Perseverance, which has since been exploring the planet.