

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**191**  
New cases in 24hrs



**15,80,750**  
Total cases



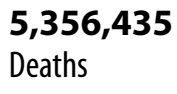
**28,043**  
Deaths



**15,45,259**  
Recoveries



**5,356,435**  
Deaths



**273,406,756**  
Total cases

# He wanted to be 'Don'

Police say after arresting 18-year-old Hridoy, four others over murder of a Mirpur teen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested five people, including three teens, in connection with the murder of a teenager in the capital's Mirpur.

Shahadat Hossain Hasib, 17, was killed on Sunday night over a land dispute in Mirpur's Shah Ali area.

Police arrested the five from Shah Ali area in the capital and Jhalakathi on Thursday night.

One of the teenagers was hired with Tk 2 lakh for the murder, DMP Mirpur division additional deputy commissioner for AZM Taimur Rahman, told a press briefing at his office yesterday.

Eighteen-year-old Hridoy took the contract for killing and two other teens assisted him, said the police officer.

"Hridoy wanted to be a gangster, a don. That's why he started taking the contract for killing," said Taimur.

Police said that the murder was planned by the victim's cousin Bipul who lives in Dubai of United Arab

Emirates.

As part of the murder plan, Hasib was offered a job in a tailoring shop and brought to Dhaka on December 1 from Noakhali, said police officer Taimur.

A person named Mofazzel Hossain Mandol brought Hasib to Dhaka and hired Hridoy as a contact killer.

Hridoy stabbed Hasib and cut his throat in an alley of Shah Ali area and fled the spot.

Later, police analysed close circuit camera footage and identified Hridoy.

He was frequently changing his hideout to escape arrest. He fled to Chandpur from Dhaka, and then moved to Bhola before getting arrested in Jhalakathi, said the police officer.

Hridoy gave a confessional statement before the court and informed about the others. Based on his information, police arrested the rest four accused.

Among the arrested, three have claimed to be teens as police have conducted medical tests to confirm their ages, said ADC Taimur.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana offer prayers at the graves of the martyred family members of the Father of the Nation at the capital's Banani graveyard yesterday. They visited the graveyard on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the country's Victory Day and Mujib Borsho. PHOTO: PID

# Everything goes against Rab

FROM PAGE 1  
ABM Siddiqur Rahman as witnesses.

Visiting the spot on December 5, this correspondent talked to locals and some witnesses. Locals said plainclothes men picked up Elias from a shop while he was hanging out with his friends and got him into a microbus. Later, he was taken to CDA Road-1 where he was arrested.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Peyar Hasan Palok, bench assistant of Chattogram Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2, said: "On November 26 night, we were standing in front of Ayesha Denim shop, a few yards off Elias' outlet. All of a sudden, a group of plainclothes men reached there and looked for Elias.

"When Elias confirmed his identity, they just bundled him into the microbus and left. We informed Elias' family about the incident. About half an hour later, we heard that he was arrested by Rab with a firearm," said Palok, also a friend of Elias.

Md Arif, a rent-a-car driver, who was with Palak and Elias in front of Ayesha Denim, echoed the statement made by Palok.

Mahbubul Islam Babu, proprietor of Ayesha Denim, said Elias and his friends were standing in front of his shop that night. Suddenly, three plainclothes men caught Elias, forced him into a microbus and left.

"Later, we learnt that Elias was arrested with arms," he told this newspaper.

Elias' wife Hazera Hasan Maya, an apprentice lawyer, said, "We [family members] rushed to spot after receiving a call. We initially thought that DB men picked up my husband. In the meantime, we heard that Rab arrested a person in CDA area and we rushed there."

"We saw a microbus and a Rab pickup there. We asked the Rab members about my husband, but they did not respond to our queries," she added.

## VERSIONS OF WITNESSES

Ali Akbar, the first witness named by the Rab in the case statement, is a street vendor. He runs a makeshift shop in

front of a mosque opposite to Popular Crockeries.

Speaking to this correspondent, he said, "I had been gossiping with some other vendors that night. Suddenly, a black microbus reached the area."

"I also saw a Rab pickup near the microbus. A few Rab members asked me about the prices of face masks and winter clothes. They also bought some masks from me. Within a few minutes, a Rab official came to me, asked my name and personal details."

Akbar said when he asked the Rab official why he needed those information, the official replied that they were arresting a man.

"I saw a handcuffed man [Elias] inside the microbus. There were a firearm and ammunition on the front seat of the microbus," he added.

Recalling the November 26 incident, Md Riaz, the second witness named by the Rab, said he had been busy with his customers inside his shop (Popular Crockeries).

"I saw a Rab pickup on the street outside. Suddenly, a Rab man came to our shop and asked me to give my personal details."

"When I asked why did they need the information, they told me about the recovery of arms. Later, they showed me the man [Elias] sitting in the back seat of the microbus. I also saw a firearm on the seat of the vehicle," added Riaz, a private university student.

Though the SI claimed to have seized the firearm in front of witnesses, versions of the two civil witnesses contradict the claim.

## WHAT THE RAB SAYS

Lieutenant Colonel M Yousuf, commanding officer of Rab-7, said, "The family of an arrestee makes many claims after an arrest. The Rab arrested him with arms red-handed. There is no scope for framing anyone in a false case."

"Sometimes witnesses become frightened. But be rest assured we don't frame anyone in false cases," he added.

Asked about the claims made by Elias' family, SI Biswajit refused to make any comment on the issue.

# A bond forged with blood

FROM PAGE 1  
by the Bangladeshi people and the armed struggle of the Mukti Bahini against the brutal Pakistani occupation forces.

"Today, as your country becomes a model of growth and development in the region, it has been proven to the world that the fight of the people of Bangladesh was for a just cause. This fight was for fundamental democratic rights."

Just before attending the reception, President Kovind visited the historic Ramna Kaali temple where he inaugurated the renovated temple.

"I look at it as a blessing from Maa Kaali. I have been told that the governments and the people of Bangladesh and India helped restore the temple which was demolished by Pakistani forces during the war of liberation," he said.

This year, the two countries are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Liberation War, the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the 50th anniversary of the two countries' friendship as well as the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

"Let us rededicate ourselves towards fulfilling the dreams of the founding fathers of our nations," the Indian president said on this occasion.

He said Bangladesh has undergone a major socio-economic transformation, especially under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, after the Liberation War.

"India has also witnessed

commendable growth. The economic and social linkages that have been forged between the people of our two nations have also contributed to this shared story of growth and development."

He said India remains committed to assisting Bangladesh in its journey towards a strong economy, partnering with friends from both sides as they proceed to greater prosperity.

"I also urge our business communities on both sides to seize this opportunity to enhance our trade and economic linkages to new heights especially between Bangladesh and our North Eastern Region," he said.

## RAM NATH KOVIND LEAVES DHAKA

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind wrapped up his three-day state visit to Bangladesh yesterday.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen saw him off at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 12:40pm, an official said.

At 1:06pm, the special Air India flight, carrying the president and his entourage, departed.

This was the Indian President's maiden visit to Bangladesh and also his first visit overseas since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Subhas Sarkar, Minister of State for Education, and Rajdeep Roy, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), were part of the presidential delegation.

In March this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi too paid a landmark state visit to Bangladesh.

# Migration cost high, pay low

FROM PAGE 1  
Malaysia Tk 4.04 lakh, Qatar Tk 4.02 lakh, and Oman Tk 3.08 lakh.

This is in stark contrast to government-fixed migration costs for male workers heading to 14 countries in 2017. The highest, Tk 1.66 lakh, is for Russia and the lowest, Tk 97,780, is for Bahrain.

As his attention was drawn to the high migration cost mentioned in the BBS survey, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad said as far as his knowledge, the ministry did not have any such figures. "It may be the case ... but we don't have the figures."

The BBS survey found that the average monthly wage of Bangladeshi migrants was Tk 25,600. The average wage for a male migrant was Tk 27,000 and female migrant Tk 18,000.

An International Organisation for Migration (IOM) data bulletin, published in December 2018, said it took about nine months' earnings for a Bangladeshi migrant worker in Kuwait to recover the recruitment costs, whereas an Indian migrant worker needed less than three months' earnings.

To recover recruitment costs in Qatar, an Indian worker needed more than two months' earnings, a Filipino worker a little over one month's earnings, and a Nepali worker more than three months' earnings.

The bulletin also said low-skilled

migrants returning from Gulf Cooperation Council countries in 2015 reported earnings of \$265 to \$500 a month, and recruitment costs that ranged from \$400 for Filipinos to \$4,000 for Pakistanis.

According to experts, migration costs have shot up in Bangladesh as recruiting agencies have to pay a lot to get those visas, which is known as "visa trading".

Several middlemen in labour sending and receiving countries are involved in such prohibited "selling and buying" of work visas, ultimately increasing the cost of migration and causing labour exploitation, they said. Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program, said although migrant rights groups have long been vocal for reducing migration cost, the situation remained unchanged as most recruiting agencies involved in such malpractice were not brought to book.

In most cases, workers pay money to the middlemen or intermediaries who work on behalf of recruiting agencies, he said.

In such a situation, there is no accountability regarding how much a middleman will charge a worker, Shakirul said.

To reduce migration cost, he suggested the government can take an initiative under which it will pay

the recruitment cost to the recruiting agencies.

Later, the worker can reimburse the government, he said, adding, "This way, charging workers high will reduce."

On "visa trading", Shariful said Bangladesh alone cannot reduce the migration cost and that the labour receiving countries have to come forward.

The government needs to discuss the matter with recruiting agencies and find out the "real" migration cost, he said.

He also said if workers' skills could be developed, then it would help reduce migration cost.

Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, secretary general of the immediate past committee of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said it was not possible to send workers abroad at the government-fixed rate.

He said when the cost was fixed, the airfare for Dubai was about \$150 (about Tk 12,891) and for Saudi Arabia \$300 (about Tk 25,800). Now those fares are Tk 70,000 to Tk 80,000 and Tk 80,000 to Tk 1.10 lakh.

He urged the government to take effective steps for reducing migration costs and suggested the introduction of "labour airfare" that is between \$250 and \$300.

# Malaysia opens doors, finally

FROM PAGE 1  
taint the whole process.

Asked about the cost of migration, he said his target is to set the migration cost for sending workers to Malaysia at a "level that will be viable for poor job seekers".

"It will be much less," he said, adding that it will depend on successful signing of the MoU with Malaysia, which is home to some 800,000 Bangladeshi workers.

As per the Malaysian human resources ministry statement, recruitment of Bangladeshi workers will be open to various sectors including plantation, agriculture, manufacturing, services, mining and quarrying, and construction.

Asked, an official of the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur said, "How can you reduce migration cost when job seekers themselves agree to pay it?"

According to sources in Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur, a powerful lobby in both countries is behind labour recruitment arrangements and it wants only 25 Bangladeshi agencies to be allowed for recruitment in Malaysia. There can be 250 other recruiting agents to assist them.

This is almost a similar case that happened in 2016 through the G-2-G Plus mechanism under which the Malaysian government selected only 10 Bangladeshi agents to recruit workers, although the Bangladesh government had proposed names of

745 recruiting agencies.

The members of the syndicate were: Noor Ali of Unique Eastern Pvt Ltd, Ruhul Amin of Catharsis International, Ghulam Mustafa of Prantik Travels & Tourism Ltd, Mohammed Bashir of Rabbi International, Zainal Abedin Zafar of Al Islam Overseas, Ruhul Amin of Amin Tours & Travels, ASM Khairul Amin of Career Overseas Consultants Ltd, Tuhin Siddique Ome of ISMT Human Resources Development Ltd, Arif Alam of Passage Associates and Shaikh Abdullah of Shanjari International.

Asked about the malpractices, Noor Ali, managing director of Unique Eastern, one of the 10 recruiting agencies, admitted that the migration cost was high but said they had no control over it.

"Jobseekers don't come to us directly. They go to brokers... there are six to seven layers of brokers. So, we cannot control the cost," he had said at a press conference at The Westin Dhaka on August 30 in 2018.

Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, secretary general of the immediate past committee of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira), said it is a matter of concern if Malaysian government selects recruiting agencies in Bangladesh.

"It will lead to another syndication and monopoly in the sector just like what happened in 2016-2018,"

he said, urging the Bangladesh government to strongly prevent such attempts because such syndication did not work last time.

Noman said no other country sends workers to Malaysia under any such syndicated agents.

Andy Hall, an independent labour migration researcher on Malaysia, told The Daily Star that there were a number of Malaysian companies that incurred export bans in the US and Europe because of the companies' record of forced labour and charging high fees from migrant workers.

"These companies have committed to paying full cost of foreign workers' recruitment. They will not be recruiting workers from Bangladesh if the workers are required to pay fees," said Hall, who is now residing in Nepal.

Globally, supply chain is coming under serious scrutiny over whether environmental and labour compliance is being maintained. There are already examples of Bangladesh sending workers to Qatar under the ethical recruitment model, he said.

"Why shouldn't the Malaysian government follow that and put in place an open and transparent system?" Hall asked.

Lots of migrant workers paying hefty sums end up being poorer and exploited, he said, adding: "Bangladesh surely does not want her people to be poorer. So, she should negotiate accordingly."

FIGHTING COVID

# Boris Johnson thanks British Bangladeshis

UNB, Dhaka

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has thanked the British Bangladeshis for everything they have done in their struggle against Covid and said they look forward to the next 50 years of friendship between Britain and Bangladesh.

"Let's look forward to the next 50 years of friendship between Britain and Bangladesh. Joy Bangla," he said in a video message as they also celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence.

The British premier mentioned that just this week the UK donated over 4 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines to Bangladesh through Covax, the vaccination alliance.

"So, get boosted now for yourself, for your friends and your family," he said, noting that thousands of "fantastic" doctors and nurses of Bangladeshi heritage at this moment are working in NHS (National Health Service), providing care and comfort and saving many lives.

Johnson said the best thing they can all do to support their efforts and keep them safe is to get "booster" jabs as soon as possible. "So please go online and book your booster job to protect yourself and everyone else from the Omicron variant."

The British PM said the faster they are all protected, the faster they can overcome this new threat. "And press ahead with building back better and building back greener. Britain will do that in partnership with Bangladesh in the spirit of 50 years of friendship," he said.

## Letter after letter

FROM PAGE 1  
ministry would come forward when it needs to ensure migrant workers' wellbeing and provide them with any support.

The ministry took swift actions whenever migrant workers faced problems during the Covid-19 pandemic and pre-pandemic times, he added.

About the new opportunities to send workers abroad, Imran said at present Bangladesh has an agreement with Seychelles under which Bangladeshi workers are going to the African country, but the number was not large.

Besides, the ministry is working on sending workers to European countries like Romania and Greece, he added.

At the briefing, Ahmed Munir Saleheen, secretary of the ministry, said Kuwait has recently showed interest in hiring nurses from Bangladesh through the government-run recruiting agency Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited.

He said they are hopeful that about seven to eight lakh people would go abroad for jobs in 2021-2022 fiscal year.

On reducing the high migration costs, he said the ministry would take prompt action if it receives any written complaint in this regard.

Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training Director General Shahidul Alam also spoke at the event.

## PROGRAMMES

The expatriates' welfare ministry will hold a programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital today from 10:30am to observe the International Migrants Day-2021.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen will be the chief guest of the event.

Like previous years, selected Non-Resident Bangladeshis will be awarded with the commercially important person (CIP) status for their contribution to the country's economy.

Besides, district employment and manpower offices and technical training centres under the ministry will observe the day by holding separate programmes across the country.

For the second year running, the International Organisation for Migration in Bangladesh will host the virtual "Concert for Migrants" to mark the day and help raise awareness about safe migration.

The concert will be streamed live on IOM Bangladesh's Facebook page and telecast on Jamuna Television from 11:00pm, says a press release.

On the occasion, Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra, Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program, Bangladesh Ovivashi Sramik Forum, Association for Social Development of Bangladesh, and Samajtantrik Sramik Front yesterday called upon Bangladesh and receiving countries to uphold migrant workers' dignity, says a separate release.

# Putin tells Pope they can jointly 'protect Christians'

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin wished Pope Francis a happy 85th birthday yesterday, telling the Catholic leader they could jointly protect Christians.

The comments come after the pope earlier this month said he was ready to travel to Moscow to visit Patriarch Kirill,

the head of Russia's Orthodox Church.

"It is difficult to overestimate your personal contribution to the development of relations between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches and to the strengthening of Russian-Vatican ties," Putin told Pope Francis, according to a telegram released by the Kremlin.

"I am sure that through joint efforts we can do a lot to protect the rights and interests of Christians, as well as to ensure interfaith dialogue."

Putin over his more than two decades in power has made the Orthodox Church a key pillar of his rule, casting himself as a safeguarder of traditional values.