

### 3 Bangladeshis killed in Saudi road crash

#### 2 brothers among them



#### STAR REPORT

Three Bangladeshi migrant workers, including two siblings, were killed as the car they were in lost control and fell into a roadside ditch in Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

The victims are residents of Cumilla's Manoharganj upazila.

They are Faruk Khan, 23, and Parvez Hossain, 21, sons of Abul Kashem of Mirzapur village, and their cousin Saddam Hossain, 21, son of Abul Basher of Narharipur village.

The accident took place at 5:10pm (Bangladesh time) on Thursday in Al-Qassim area, Faruk's cousin Md Farid told our Cumilla correspondent.

The three were going to their workplace in Taif from Al-Qassim. Two other passengers were hospitalised with serious injuries.

Faruk went to Saudi Arabia three years ago and Parvez six months ago. They worked in an aluminum factory in Taif, Farid added.

Ashikur Hiron, chairman of Jholom Dakkhin Union Parishad, said, "Saddam migrated to Saudi Arabia three years ago."

Debabrata Ghosh, assistant director of District Employment and Manpower Office in Cumilla, said, "All kind of assistance will be provided to the families of the deceased to bring the bodies home."

### China drills deepened int'l solidarity: Taiwan

AFP, TAIPEI

China's huge military drills around Taiwan have only made allies more determined to visit the island democracy and show solidarity, Taipei's foreign minister Joseph Wu said yesterday.

Beijing staged the unprecedented sea and air drills in retaliation for US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan this month, sending tensions to their highest level in decades.

Three US politicians have visited in Pelosi's wake, the latest being Tennessee Senator Marsha Blackburn who met with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen yesterday.



A Ukrainian firefighter extinguishes a blaze in a destroyed college building following an air strike on the town of Sloviansk, Donetsk region yesterday, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

## Ukraine's nuclear power plant back online

### Zelensky says 'radiation disaster' averted; UN nuke agency prepares for inspection

#### AGENCIES

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant occupied by Moscow's troops came back online yesterday afternoon, the state operator said, after Kyiv claimed it was cut from the national power grid by Russian shelling.

The plant -- Europe's largest nuclear facility -- was severed from Ukraine's power network for the first time in its history on Thursday due to "actions of the invaders", Energoatom said.

In an update, the operator said that as of 2:04 pm (1104 GMT) the plant "is connected to the grid and produces electricity for the needs of Ukraine" once again.

French President Emmanuel Macron warned "civil nuclear power must be fully protected".

"War in any case must not undermine the nuclear safety of the country, the region and all of us," he said during a visit to Algeria.

Separately yesterday, the EU presidency vowed to hold an emergency summit on the spiralling energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, which this week entered

its seventh month.

The bloc has vowed to wean its 27 member states off Russian oil and gas in protest against the invasion.

However, anxiety over supply has sent prices soaring, and yesterday both Germany and France reported record electricity prices for 2023.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant has been cause for mounting concern since it was seized by Russian troops in the opening weeks of the war.

In recent weeks, Kyiv and Moscow have traded blame for rocket strikes around the facility in the southern Ukrainian city of Energodar.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said late Thursday the cut-off was caused by Russian shelling of the last active power line linking the plant to the network.

"Russia has put Ukrainians as well as all Europeans one step away from radiation disaster," he said in his nightly address.

"If our station staff had not reacted after the blackout, then we would have already been forced to overcome the consequences of a radiation accident," he said.

Energoatom said the outage was caused by ash pit fires at an adjacent thermal power plant, which damaged a line connecting the only two of the plant's six reactors in operation, reports AFP.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has previously said the situation at the plant is "highly volatile" and "underlines the very real risk of a nuclear disaster".

"We can't afford to lose any more time," the organisation's Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said. "I'm determined to personally lead an IAEA mission to the plant in the next few days."

Kyiv suspects Moscow intends to divert power from the Zaporizhzhia plant to the Crimean Peninsula, annexed by Russian troops in 2014. But on Thursday, US issued a direct warning against any such move.

President Joe Biden, in a telephone conversation with Zelensky, also called for Russia to return full control of the plant and let in nuclear inspectors, the White House said.

Britain's defence ministry has warned that weekend satellite imagery shows an increased presence of Russian troops at the power plant.

### Youth sent to jail over rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Kurigram court yesterday sent a man to jail for his alleged involvement in the rape of a four-year-old child.

The accused is Lalsu Mia, 21, of the district's Nageshwari upazila, said police.

Police arrested him Thursday night and produced before the court yesterday, said Nabiul Hasan, officers-in-charge of Nageshwari Police Station.

The victim's father filed a rape case with Nageshwari Police Station against Lalsu, said police.

According to the victim's family, she was receiving treatment at Kurigram General Hospital.

### Slit-throat body of woman found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Police recovered the slit-throat body of a woman in Joypurhat's Panchbibbi upazila Thursday night.

Jotna Kundu, 65, wife of Hari Kundu, was found dead at her home near Hari Bashor intersection, said police.

Nishit Kundu, 32, younger son of the couple, was arrested in connection with the murder, said Mohammad Nur Alam, superintendent of the district police.

Nishit is a drug addict. Police suspect his involvement in the murder, he added.

The body was sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital.

### One more dies from Covid

UNB, Dhaka

Another person died from Covid and 196 people tested positive for the virus in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, reported the Directorate General of Health Services.

With this, the total number of fatalities rose to 29,321 and the caseload to 2,010,944.

The daily case test positivity rate rose to 4.15 percent from Thursday's 4.38 percent as 4,721 samples were tested.

The mortality rate remained unchanged at 1.46 percent.

The recovery rate remained static at 97.22 percent as 278 patients recovered during this period.

### 3 electrocuted in Kishoreganj

UNB, Kishoreganj

Three people, including two cousins, died by electrocution and three others were injured in Kishoreganj's Bhairab upazila yesterday.

The dead are Deb Lal, 15, his cousin Milon Lal, 30, and Mobarak Hossain, 25, said police.

The injured are Abdullah, Sunny and Akash.

The six people were electrocuted while moving an electric pole on a road in the municipality area of the upazila, said Golam Mostafa, officer-in-charge of Bhairab Police Station.

Later, locals rushed them to the Bhairab Upazila Health Complex where the doctor declared the three dead on arrival, said the OC.

## A sheer waste of public money

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Rauf, however, had signed off on the ponds' readiness when they were being handed back, according to documents, copies of which The Daily Star has obtained.

This apparent disconnect between the local government and a government agency is happening over a project that many of the intended beneficiaries and an expert have called unnecessary, because locals already have easy access to drinking water.

The DPHE spent around Tk 5.77 lakh to re-excavate each pond, construct walkways, barbed-wire fences around it, plant coconut trees on the banks, install a tube well and water tank with pond sand filters (PSFs) and UV filters.

Talking to people of Aligao, Enayetpur, Dharmapur and Kamdia villages, it was found that almost all houses in those areas have their own drinking water facilities. People collect drinking water from tube wells or submersible pumps. No one wanted to drink the pond water.

"The aim of the project was to encourage people to use surface water. We have done a survey in collaboration with a development partner and found the groundwater declining in this area," DPHE Executive Engineer Rezwan Hossain said recently.

He said they had not conducted a feasibility study on whether locals need this source of drinking water before implementing the project.

The groundwater level in Gobindganj upazila was between 6.5-9 metres, according to the survey conducted in May last year, after the DPHE's project was already completed.

Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan of Rajshahi University's geology and mining department said, "There is no shortage of drinking water when the groundwater level is between 6.5-9 metres. Implementing such a project

in an area where there is no salinity or arsenic in the groundwater is a waste of resources."

It is more important to utilise surface water for drinking in areas such as Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj where the groundwater level has gone down, he said.

Abdur Rashid, 58, a resident of Aligao village, told The Daily Star, "People of the village have been using this pond for fish farming for decades after taking lease from the zila parishad. We have no scarcity

authority and taken lease of the pond. I have been farming fish in the pond for the last six months," said Saiful Islam of Enayetpur village.

He claimed that almost all the ponds re-excavated by DPHE have been leased out for fish farming.

Md Belal Uddin of Aligao village said he got a three-year lease of a re-excavated pond last year for Tk 40,000 but had to transfer the contract to Aligao Uttarpara Manab Unnoyan Club following a village arbitration.

Abu Talha, vice-president of the



of drinking water here. No one is interested in drinking the water purified from the pond."

Rahmat Ali of Enayetpur and Amin Molla, a farmer in Kamdia village, said the same about drinking water facilities in their villages and that the government installed those facilities without conducting a needs-based assessment.

#### LEASES FOR FISH FARMING

In April, July and August of this year, this reporter visited seven re-excavated ponds and found that individuals, social and religious organisations were farming fish there.

"I have contacted the zila parishad

club, said, "We have been farming fish in this pond for the last seven months. We have seen DPHE re-excavating the pond for the last two-three years to provide safe drinking water. We know that fish farming is completely prohibited there. But since the zila parishad is giving the lease, we have taken it for the development of the club."

Another pond of Enayetpur village has been leased out for three years to the village mosque committee for Tk 30,000.

Some villagers alleged that this was a quarter of the actual value of the lease.

Abdul Rahim, secretary of

Enayetpur Mosque Committee, also said they knew about the pond's actual purpose, but took the lease because the zila parishad was giving it.

Ataur Rahman, who got the lease of the Arajai Piarapur village pond, and Saiful Islam of Enayetpur both said the zila parishad administrator leased out all the ponds under a project for fish farming holding a ceremony.

This correspondent also found that the Chalita village pond has been leased out to a former Chhatra League leader of Dhaka College, and the Shihigao village pond to another person named Saiful Islam and Maklaim village pond to one Jahidul Islam.

The Daily Star has also obtained copies of a number of deeds signed by Gaibandha Zila Parishad CEO Rauf.

Rauf said, "The decision for leasing out comes from the zila parishad authorities. I am only the implementer of the decision."

He refused to disclose the number of ponds leased out for fish farming.

Zila Parishad Administrator Ata said, "Only one pond in Aligao village, which was re-excavated by the DPHE, has been leased out. The rest were not.

"We cannot lease out the ponds," said Ata, but when asked why they had leased out the Aligao pond, he said they did it because it was unfit for provide drinking water.

During a recent visit to some of those ponds, it was found that portions of boundary fences and many bricks of walkways were removed, and the coconut trees had died.

The DPHE signboard bearing the instructions, "Re-excavated protected pond: Bathing, washing, fishing, farming in this pond is completely prohibited" was found either damaged or removed.

## BRT set to miss new deadline

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A defects liability period is the period during which a contractor is legally required to return to a site to repair any defects that have appeared in that work after the completion.

Documents show the overall progress of the project is 79.24 percent as of August 24.

Currently, the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is working on a 16km road, and Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) is constructing a 4.5km elevated road for the Bus Rapid Transit Line-3.

As per the target set by the project authorities earlier, BBA's work was supposed to be completed by August this year but it could achieve 72.35 percent progress, as shown in the documents.

On the other hand, 99.61 percent of RHD work was supposed to be completed by August but it achieved 82.09 percent.

As per the new plan, the two agencies will target completion of the work by March next year, meaning the proposed deadline of December 2022 will also be missed.

If RHD and BBA have to complete the work within March next year, their monthly average construction progress should be 2.23 percent and 3.60 percent respectively.

But the monthly average progress of RHD and BBA was only 1.56 and 1.40 percent since August last year, show documents, indicating that they may not meet the new deadline if they do not increase the pace of work very significantly.

Shafiqul Islam, managing director of DBRTCL, yesterday said they were still hopeful about completing physical work within December "if the contractors work with their hundred percent capacity ... But the reality is we did not get 100 percent from them ever..."

He was briefing reporters at

the project site in Gazipur during his visit along with the DBRTCL directors.

Asked when the BRT will be functional, he said they cannot start operation until the corridor is ready, and "there is an uncertainty over when the work will be completed."

As per the plan, he said, the majority of work would be completed within December this year and it may take up to March next year to complete the rest. "We hope to start the operation of BRT within June next year."

Briefing reporters, Shafiqul Islam also said the physical work at the main corridor remained suspended officially. "The work will start when the contractors take safety measures completely and the consultants give approval," he added.

"We will allow them to work once they ensure 100 percent safety, even if it takes 10 days or 15 days. We will not compromise on safety."

Replying to a question, he said they did not receive any fresh safety plan from the contractors yet.

### 87pc women say

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only 1 percent went to law enforcers after the incident, a reflection of the stigma and lack of social or legal support extended to victims.

This is also reflected in the help extended by onlookers to women being harassed. The survey revealed that 44 percent victims were not provided any help while they were being harassed in public.

When asked why public places were unsafe, 48 percent respondents said a lack of respect towards women was the sole reason, 19 percent said overcrowded public transport was to blame, and 10 percent believe that the absence of appropriate laws was a potential reason.