



Plumes of dark smoke fill the sky as a fire devastates a Rohingya refugee camp in Balukhali, Cox's Bazar. Nearly 2,000 shanties were burnt to the ground yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Illegal Saudi visa trade busted

KSA arrests 2 ex-officials of its Dhaka embassy, 2 officials of interior ministry, 8 Bangladeshis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Saudi anti-corruption authority recently arrested four Saudi officials, eight Bangladeshis and a Palestinian on charges of corruption during issuance of visas for Bangladeshi migrant workers.

Among the arrestees are two diplomats, Abdullah Falah Mudhahi Al-Shammari and Khaled Nasser Ayed Al-Qahtani, who face charges of taking Tk 154 crore in exchange for finalising the issuance of work visas to Bangladeshis while they were working in Dhaka.

Al-Shammari was the deputy ambassador and Al-Qahtani was the deputy head of the Consular Section at the Saudi embassy in Dhaka. Sources said both of them returned to the gulf country after they were suspended two

months ago.

The Oversight and Anti-corruption Authority of Saudi Arabia, known in Arabic as Nazaha, yesterday tweeted: "They acknowledged receiving parts of the money from the arrested [Bangladeshis] residents inside Saudi Arabia and invested the rest outside the kingdom."

The authority initiated a criminal case into the matter.

The authority did not mention the exact time of the arrests.

The anti-corruption authority in coordination with the Saudi home ministry first arrested two officials of the ministry for "forcing a resident to sign a 23,000,000 SR financial commitment to a foreign investor" after taking SR 60,000 from the investor,

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## Massive fire tears thru Rohingya camps

2,000 homes gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Nearly 2,000 Rohingya homes were gutted in a massive fire that razed through the cramped refugee camps in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday afternoon.

Around 15,000 people were rendered homeless and were forced to spend the night under the open sky, said Mohammad Shamsuddoza, additional refugee relief and repatriation commissioner.

Around 2:45pm, the fire originated in Block B of Balukhali Camp 11 under

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## 3 killed as blast ravages commercial building

Over a dozen suffer burns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people were killed and at least 50 injured in a fiery explosion at a commercial building in the Science Lab area of Dhaka yesterday.

The area surrounding the three-storey "Shirin Mansion" looked like a warzone after the blast on the second floor around 10:50am shook the neighbourhood and engulfed it with thick black smoke.

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A blast at a market on Mirpur Road rocked the area near Science Lab intersection yesterday morning. Three people were killed and at least 50 others were injured in the explosion and the subsequent fire. Officials said flammable gas accumulated somewhere in the building could have caused the tragedy.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## SITAKUNDA OXYGEN PLANT BLAST

# Lax monitoring, lack of safety gear to blame

Say investigators; death toll now 7

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

The absence of workers' safety equipment and a lack of inspections of heavy machinery are to blame for Sunday's explosion at the Sheema Oxygen Plant in Sitakunda's Keshabpur, said probe officials.

The probe committee, headed by Additional Deputy Magistrate Rakib Hasan, went to the site yesterday and found no fire hydrant system, helmets or other safety gear.

There was no certified engineer to monitor the fitness of the machinery and equipment. That role was carried out by skilled workers who had knowledge of operating the machinery, said Md Tofazzal Hossain, explosive inspector in Chattogram.

One of the valves in the 'column' of the oxygen line had heavy gas pressure, which was noticed by a worker. But they did not know if the pressure would be released automatically or not.

"While handling the valve, something went wrong and it triggered the explosion," Hossain said.

Besides, the plant's explosive licence had expired last year, he added.

The licence from the Department of Environment had also expired on August 28 last year and was not renewed, according to Ashraf Uddin, assistant director for Chattogram district's DoE.

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