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Escape from Khartoum horrors

JAMIL MAHMUD

Ali Sheikh had to leave home with his family after being confined there for around two weeks amidst a civil war in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

After staying at a hotel for a few days, they got a chance to escape the city on May 2, as a bus would transport them to Port Sudan.

From there, they and many other stranded Bangladeshis were taken to Jeddah and then brought back home yesterday on a Biman flight.

However, the journey was not as easy as it reads.

While boarding the bus that would take them to Port Sudan, another city in the Northeast African country, the to-be-evacuated Bangladeshis found themselves smack-dab in the middle of firing between the clashing rival factions of the Sudan military government.

The violence has been going on since April 15.

The 136 returnees -- making up the first batch of 700 stranded Bangladeshis to be repatriated from Port Sudan via Jeddah -- were provided with immediate cash and food support at HSIA by the government and the International Organisation for Migration.

Ali and his family, who had been living in Khartoum for 18 years, had to run back into the hotel and could only come out again when the gunfight eased and another bus came to take them to Port Sudan.

"The bombings destroyed everything in Khartoum. There were airstrikes that hit buildings adjacent to my home. We could not sleep at night amid the sounds of heavy bombing and gunfire. I don't even know if my house is still standing," Ali, who worked at a private company in Khartoum, told The Daily Star at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

They came back home on Sunday -- almost empty-handed, carrying only one small luggage, leaving most of their belongings back in Sudan.

With them, 132 other Bangladeshis were flown to Jeddah from Port Sudan in three Saudi Air Force planes.

They were supposed to be transported by ships through the Red Sea, but as those were unavailable, the Saudi authorities arranged several aircraft.

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According to the Bangladesh government, there were around 1,500 Bangladeshis living in Sudan. All of them will be gradually evacuated and brought home, officials said.

Abdul Kashem, 48, was in the first batch.

Empty-handed, he left his home in Khartoum over two weeks ago and had been wearing the same set of clothes and was able to shower only twice since then.

"There were incidents of looting by men in uniform. They took away [almost all] my belongings," said Kashem, who had been living in Sudan for 12 years.

Meanwhile, Moni Rahman had to come back to Bangladesh leaving her husband behind at Port Sudan, as the family has three clothing shops in Khartoum that need to be run.

"He stayed back hoping the situation will improve. These shops are all we have."

She said though she had to spend a night under the open sky during the evacuation process, the Bangladeshi community in Khartoum had done everything they could to ease her journey back home.

Meanwhile, Shaki Akhter, a Bangladeshi mother of three, doubted whether she would make it out alive, with her electricity and water supply

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A passenger shed at a bus stop near the Golf Club Gate being used as a nursery for plants, barring people from using the seats. Such sheds were built across the DNCC areas at late Mayor Annisul Huq's directives. Now, years after his passing, most of them are either on the verge of ruin or are being used for the wrong purposes. The photo was taken on Sunday.

SPORT

AFA, bKash join hands

The Argentine Football Association and bKash Limited, the largest mobile financial services provider in Bangladesh, yesterday announced a partnership to promote further financial inclusion through sports. With this brand endorsement initiative, bKash becomes the first and only Bangladeshi brand partner of the reigning FIFA World Cup champions Argentina. The Bangladeshis wholeheartedly supported Argentina, and the world champions now endorse bKash which embodies the spirit of human aspiration.

STORY ON PAGE 11

OFFSHORE GAS EXPLORATION Petrobangla drafts new negotiation guidelines

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Petrobangla has prepared a draft of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for offshore gas exploration that improves the state-owned company's bargaining position when it sits down for negotiation with global oil companies.

The new PSC replaces the profit share model of the earlier version: it is based on the revenue share model.

In the 2019 PSC, profit was shared only after the recovery of the foreign company's exploration costs, with the Petrobangla's share of profit being 55 percent for shallow sea blocks and 50 percent for deep sea blocks.

In the new draft, profit will be shared based on total income from a gas field, according to Petrobangla officials involved with the proceedings. In other words, it is a revenue-sharing contract.

The contractors will now get a revenue share of up to 65 percent

from the offshore gas field including the shallow and deep-sea blocks.

A revenue sharing contract model would be better for Bangladesh, said Badrul Imam, honorary professor at the University of Dhaka's geology department.

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"It is because under the profit-sharing contract model, as we know from past experience, the provision of cost recovery always makes Bangladesh a loser."

International oil companies (IOCs) show inflated exploration costs and recover excess money, according to Imam.

"And we have no mechanism or

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Biman 787 suffers glitch on return flight from Tokyo

ZYMA ISLAM and RASHIDUL HASAN

The weather radar system on the Biman aircraft that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina used to fly to Tokyo broke down on the return flight to Dhaka.

The aircraft, a Boeing 787 that joined Biman's fleet in 2018, dropped off the PM at Tokyo International Airport (Haneda) on the morning of April 25, refuelled, and departed for Dhaka an hour and 45 minutes later.

During the return leg, the pilot noticed that neither of the two weather radar systems were working.

Deprived of a functioning weather radar, the pilot had to navigate the plane through the pitch-black darkness of the evening sky before safely touching down at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 11:17pm.

The pilot-in-command, Captain Ishtiaque Hossain, after landing in Dhaka filed a technical log, which The Daily Star obtained a copy of.

The technical log states that "Both WXR [weather radar] systems return

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EROSION HITS EMBANKMENT

Bangladesh Water Development Board is dumping sand-filled geo bags in the Dhaki river to protect an embankment from erosion in Khona Kheyaght area of Khulna's Dakope upazila. Locals say some villages are at risk of erosion as about 200 feet of land has already been eroded by the river over the last few years. They demanded that the WDB resolve the problem permanently. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

THE RISE OF BENGAL TIGER: TRADE & INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND JAPAN

H.E. SHEIKH HASINA

Chief Guest

Minister, Government of Japan

2023 The Prime Minister of Japan

An MoU was signed between Asian-Entech Power Corporation (A concern of Doreen Group) & Marubeni Corporation on 27th April at the Trading and Investment Summit in Japan in the presence of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for joint investment & development of 600 MW solar power projects in various locations in Bangladesh.

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