



Nagin Pahar was once a prominent and large hill in Chattogram city's Bayezid area, but years of hill cutting by local influentials has reduced it to its current height -- lower than the fifth-floor window from which this photo was taken on Wednesday. In its original form, it spanned the area now occupied by residential buildings. Efforts are underway to erase the remains of the hill that was once a landmark of the port city.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

LABOUR MIGRATION TO MALAYSIA UN experts decry appalling state of Bangladeshis Voice concern over fraudulent recruitment of migrant workers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN experts yesterday expressed dismay about the situation of Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia despite going there through the official labour migration process for a better future.

"The situation of Bangladeshi migrants who have lived in Malaysia for several months or longer is unsustainable and undignified," the experts said, according to a statement of the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) issued today.

The experts noted that many migrants find on arrival in Malaysia that they do not have employment as promised and are often forced into overstaying their visas.

Consequently, these migrants risk arrest, detention, ill-treatment and deportation, they added.

They also expressed concern that large sums of money were being generated through the fraudulent recruitment of migrant workers by criminal networks operating in Malaysia and Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

CAAB engineer killed as bus rams his bike The vehicle crashes into safety fence of HSIA 3rd terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An engineer at CAAB died yesterday after a bus ramed his motorcycle near the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka before crashing through the boundary wall in front of the airport's third terminal.

Muidul Islam Siddiqui, 40, was a senior sub-assistant engineer at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), his brother-in-law Masud Rana told The Daily Star.

Yasir Arafat Khan, chief of the Airport Police Station, said the incident occurred around 10:00am when a Raida Paribahan bus lost control and ramed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Over 60pc voter turnout in 1st phase

No major incident of violence reported;
Modi expected to win rare third term

AGENCIES

The first of India's almost one billion voters cast ballots yesterday in the country's multi day election, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks a rare third term on the back of issues such as growth, welfare and Hindu nationalism.

The vote pits Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) against an alliance of two dozen opposition parties that promise greater affirmative action and more handouts while stressing what they call the need to save democratic institutions.

Nearly 970 million people are eligible to vote in the seven-phase exercise, the world's largest election, which runs through the peak of summer until June 1, with results set for June 4.

Election Commission figures after

polls closed on Friday's first day of voting estimated voter turnout at over 60 percent, with the small northeastern state of Tripura top of the list at 79.90 percent and the northwestern state of Rajasthan at the bottom at 51 percent. TMC controlled West Bengal reported 77.57 percent voter turnout.



"Polling for the first phase...recorded high voter turnout despite the heat wave," the panel said. "The voting percentage is likely to go upwards when reports from all polling stations are obtained."

The election in the first phase passed off peacefully barring stray violence in West Bengal's Cooch Behar and an IED blast in Chhattisgarh that left a CRPF commandant injured, the polling has so far been peaceful. Sporadic incidents of violence were

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Diagnose dengue with ease at home

Govt institute develops '100pc'
accurate dengue antigen kit

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

People who suspect that they have dengue may soon breathe a little easier as they will not have to take on the hassle of a hospital visit to confirm or dispel the fear.

Once in production, a kit will allow them to check in the comfort of their own homes whether they are infected with the mosquito-borne disease, and at an affordable price.

The Bangladesh Reference Institute for Chemical Measurements (BRiCM), under the science and technology ministry, has developed a dengue rapid antigen kit that is capable of detecting all serotypes of dengue, said officials of the organisation.

They said they were ready for production but were yet to receive any order from any government or private organisations.

The Directorate General of Drug Administration approved the kit for commercial production in January.

"After scrutinising everything, we gave the drug licence to BRiCM and authorised them to start production on January 15 this year," Md Abdul Malek, deputy director of DGDA, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Bangladesh government has to import a huge number of test kits from abroad, spending foreign currency. Officials said if government hospitals use local testing kits, it would ease the pressure on the forex.

Mala Khan, director general of BRiCM, said they have been working to develop the kit since 2021 when dengue started surging in the country.

They developed the protocol and submitted it to the Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) in March 2022, and then the clinical trial of the kit took place at the National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre between December 2022 and August 2023.

The sensitivity of the kit was proven to be 100 percent accurate as it did not produce any false report till date.

MALA KHAN
Director general of BRiCM



The BRiCM DG said the kit they developed would cost Tk 120 including all taxes, which is cheaper than imported kits.

Led by Mala Khan, a group of scientists, including Mamudul Hasan Razu, Raisul Islam Rabby, Javed Bin Ahmed, Khandkar Sharif Imam, Md Rahat, Nafisa Chowdhury, and Md Shohel, developed the kit.

Mala said the kit had no cross-reactivity with other types of viruses like Zika, Chikungunya, and Covid-19.

She said in almost every case, blood samples are collected at hospitals or diagnostic centres with the help of specialised manpower for testing.

"But in the case of the dengue rapid antigen kit, it is possible to test fingertip blood using the lancet without the help of expert manpower," she said.

"The sensitivity of the kit was proven to be 100 percent accurate as it did not produce any false report till date."

Mala said this would reduce the cost of healthcare, save the government foreign exchange and have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the country.

"We have the most modern technology and are ready to produce 50,000 kits a day," Mala said.

BRiCM officials said they have written to the health ministry through the Ministry of Science and Technology on January 21 to purchase their testing kits but were yet to receive any order from them.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Iran plays down Israeli attacks

Signals no further retaliation;
global leaders call for calm

REUTERS, Dubai

Explosions echoed over an Iranian city yesterday in what sources described as an Israeli attack, but Tehran played down the incident and indicated it had no plans for retaliation - a response that appeared gauged towards averting region-wide war.

The limited scale of the attack and Iran's muted response appeared to signal a successful effort by diplomats who have been working to avert all-out war since an Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel last Saturday.

Iranian media and officials described a small number of explosions, which they said resulted from air defences hitting three drones over the city of Isfahan in central Iran. Notably, they referred to the incident as an attack by "infiltrators", rather than by Israel, obviating the need for retaliation.

A senior Iranian official told Reuters there were no plans to respond against Israel for the incident.

"The foreign source of the incident has not been confirmed. We have not received any external attack, and the discussion leans more towards infiltration than attack," the official said.

Jonathan Lord, head of the Middle East security program at the Center for a New American Security, a US think tank, said that "seems to indicate that Iran is seeking to step down off the ledge, minimise the impact of the attack, and perhaps walk back down the escalation ladder from here".

Israel said nothing about the incident and its ally

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Parents and attendants along with child patients sitting outside Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday afternoon. A fire broke out in the Cardiac ICU around 1:45pm, following which people left the wards of the children's hospital. Inset, fire service officials and the hospital's security staffers inspecting the damage after the fire was doused. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

No political cases filed against BNP activists: PM



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that there are no political cases filed against BNP leaders and activists.

"The cases against them [BNP] are related to different crimes. They committed offences. So, legal action is being taken against them," she said.

The premier made the remarks while addressing an event arranged in Gono Bhaban to exchange views with the central committee members of Bangladesh Krishak League on the occasion of its 52nd founding anniversary.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5