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UAE did not impose restrictions on visas

Foreign minister says UN logos were not erased from vehicles by mistake

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Arab Emirates has not imposed any visa restrictions on Bangladeshi migrants, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud confirmed yesterday. “We saw news in the media that the UAE has restricted visas for Bangladeshis. This is absolutely incorrect. Those who broadcast the news did not do the right thing. They should have verified the information before broadcasting the news because the issue is very sensitive,” he said.

Some media outlets on Tuesday reported that the UAE restricted visas for Bangladeshis over the protest by a group of Bangladeshis expatriates in the UAE.

He said 57 Bangladeshi expatriates were handed lengthy prison sentences for demonstration that is banned in the Gulf country.

The minister was briefing reporters at the State Guesthouse Padma on the diplomats’ visit to the state properties,

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

People queue up at a bank counter as services resumed after days. The photo was taken at the Sonali Bank in Motijheel yesterday.

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‘Mockery of justice’

Says HRW about punishment of 57 Bangladeshi protesters in UAE

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Watch yesterday condemned the harsh punishment meted out to the 57 Bangladeshis by the UAE following peaceful demonstrations.

On July 19, groups of mostly Bangladeshi nationals who live in the UAE carried out peaceful protests in multiple locations across the country in solidarity with the student protesters in Bangladesh.

The following day, the UAE’s attorney general announced an investigation into the protests and just a day later, the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal gave life-term prison sentences to three Bangladeshi nationals.

It sentenced one Bangladeshi national to 11 years in prison and 53 to 10 years, according to the Emirates News Agency.

The court ordered the defendants to be deported upon completing their terms and their electronic devices seized.

The egregiously long sentences appear to have come after only one court session and within 24 hours, the HRW said.

The speed with which dozens of defendants were investigated, tried and convicted raises serious concerns about

Sramik League leader ‘offered’ driver money to torch buses

Arrested driver tells court

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN, Ctg

The president of Chattogram’s Baizid Bostami thana Sramik League allegedly made a “verbal contract” with a human-hauler driver, promising him Tk 4 lakh if he could torch five buses inside the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation depot in Hathazari upazila’s Baluchara area.

DriverSohelRana saidthis in a confessional statement made to Chattogram Judicial Magistrate Awlad Mohammad Junaid on Tuesday.

The case was filed with Hathazari Police Station in connection with an arson case.

Police arrested Didarul Alam Didar, the Sramik League president, and Soheli Rana after BRTC Chattogram’s manager Zulfikar filed the case on Sunday accusing an

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NARSINGDI JAIL ATTACK

How it all unfolded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

It was around 3:30pm on July 19.

At least 3,000 people were gathered at Narsingdi’s Velanagar intersection, a few yards from the district jail.

The day before (Thursday), two student protesters were killed in police firing in the same area.

Around 3:45pm on Friday, police lobbed teargas shells at the gathering from the main entrance of the jail. The agitators initially retreated slightly.

By 4:15pm, they chased away the police, who had to flee through the jail’s southern entrance, giving the mob an opportunity to take control of the jail building.

Once they took control, they resorted to vandalism and arson inside, leading to the escape of all 836 prisoners.

The Daily Star spoke to five inmates who surrendered, nine witnesses and four jail guards.

A 26-year-old witness, who preferred anonymity, told this correspondent, “Around 2:00pm, the attackers first vandalised 7-8 CCTV cameras installed in the area. As time passed, the number of agitators grew. By 3:30-4:00pm, there were over 2,000 of them in the area as locals had joined in.

“Some cops threw teargas shells at them from the north gate or main entrance of the district jail. After retreating a little, around 4:15pm, they chased the police away. Taking advantage of this, they took

control of the jail building and vandalised it. They also set motorcycles on fire.”

Jibon Mia, a 25-year-old inmate from Alokballi Union, said, “Around 5:00-6:00pm, we heard sounds of gunfire and explosions. It was very hot and we were locked in our rooms. Then when hundreds of people came near our cells and began setting things on fire, a jail guard unlocked our doors. We then fled.”

Several freed inmates said hundreds of crude bombs were detonated, adding that some of them were reluctant to leave but were forced out by the mob.

Abdul Ahad, another prisoner from Karimpur area, said, “The attackers set our cell on fire. Some people broke the lock and forced us out by beating us, even though many of us didn’t want to leave.”

Khokon Chandra Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Narsingdi’s Detective Branch of police, said, there were six Hiaces [microbuses] waiting in the Chinispur area near the jail building. “We are suspecting those were stationed there to carry the escaped inmates away.”

According to the Narsingdi’s superintendent of police and the jail authorities, all of the 826 inmates either escaped or were forced to.

Meanwhile, 85 weapons, 9,000 bullets, and official documents were looted. Additionally, 15 spots on the jail premises, including offices and residences of the jail supers and the jailer, as well as the guards’ quarters and vehicles used for jail operations, were set ablaze.

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Judicial body to only probe deaths of 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman-led judicial commission will only probe the deaths of six people during the quota protest on July 16.

The commission will visit the scenes once the situation becomes normal and will seek information from citizens about the deaths and violence that took place between July 5 and 16.

People will be able to provide the commission with information directly or by email and registered posts until August 6, Justice Diliruzzaman told journalists after a meeting with some executive and judicial officers at the Supreme Court auditorium yesterday afternoon.

“We [commission] will work in accordance with the terms of reference where the issues of six persons [deaths] have been mentioned. The following incidents [of deaths] took place after the gazette notification [forming the

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Chinese Moon probe finds water in soil samples

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Chinese scientists have found a mineral “enriched” with water in lunar soil samples returned from the Moon by the Chang’e 5 mission.

This discovery “revealed the presence of trace water” from a “much higher latitude” than any previous missions and could power future missions to the Moon amid an ongoing “space race” between the US and China.

Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences found that “water molecules can persist in sunlit areas of the Moon in the form of hydrated salts”.

The findings, published recently in the journal Nature Astronomy, offer fresh clues about the chemical and physical form of Moon water, an advance that could shape how minerals are extracted for rocket fuel on the lunar surface.

While samples brought back by Apollo astronauts decades earlier suggested the Moon was likely completely dry, recent discoveries suggest the Earth’s closest neighbour indeed has reservoirs of water.



HC rejects Prof Yunus’ plea to scrap charge framing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summarily rejected a petition filed by Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and six other officials of Grameen Telecom, challenging a Dhaka court’s order on framing charges against them in a case.

The case was filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission on May 30 last year against Dr Yunus and 13 others on charges of misappropriating about Tk 25.22 crore of Grameen Telecom Workers’ Profit Participation Fund and money laundering.

Yesterday, the HC also ordered the lower court concerned to finish the trial of the case in next one year.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Kazi Ebadoth Hossain delivered the order

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Emergency personnel work at the accident site of a Saurya Airlines plane that caught fire after skidding off the runway while taking off at Tribhuvan International Airport, in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday. All 19 on board except the pilot died in the crash, police said. The plane was scheduled to fly to Pokhara.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Broadband restored on trial

Mobile internet still off, says Palak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday restored broadband internet on a trial basis across the country.

However, mobile internet will remain suspended for now.

All internet services were shut down on July 18 amid widespread violence centring the quota reform protests. On Tuesday night, broadband internet services were partially restored in selected areas.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for telecom and ICT, said efforts are on to restore mobile internet and they might be able to do so by Sunday or Monday. He said they would hold meetings with the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh on Friday and Saturday.

He made the comments at a press conference at the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission in Dhaka yesterday. Before that, he held a meeting with International Internet Gateway operators.

Asked about people’s complaints of slow internet since its partial restoration on Tuesday night, Palak blamed it on technical issues.

However, those involved in the restoration process, requesting anonymity, said the telecom regulatory body has instructed the IIG operators to block some social media platforms.

Besides, the government instructed the internet service providers to shut down their cache servers, which speed up frequently accessed data, they said, adding that it slowed down some key services.

Asked when people can access social media platforms, Palak said they are taking experts’ advice on the issue.

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