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## Suspension of accreditation cards a threat to free press

Says Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council, in a statement yesterday, strongly condemned the suspension of journalists' accreditation cards and access to the Secretariat, stating that such an order poses a threat and obstacle to independent journalism.

On Friday, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued an order through a press release, which stated that the decision was made in the wake of security concerns arising from a fire incident at the Secretariat.

The order said that journalists' access to the Secretariat via accreditation cards has been suspended until further notice.

The next day, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing expressed regret over the restriction of journalists' access.

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A crowd in front of gate-1 of the Secretariat on Abdul Gani Road as ID cards of officials were being checked before their entry yesterday morning. Security has been beefed up following a fire in a Secretariat building on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## 6 lives lost as bus hits autorickshaw



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Six people were killed when a CNG-run autorickshaw collided head-on with a bus on the Sherpur-Mymensingh road in Sherpur Sadar upazila.

The victims were identified as Maisha Jesmin Mim, 20, her brother Kamruzzaman Emon, 24, Moklesur Rahman Master, 75, his wife Umme Kulsum, 65, Nina Rani, 45, and the autorickshaw driver Lokman Hossain Babu, 55. They were all from different areas of Sherpur.

Quoting locals, Sherpur Superintendent of Police Md Aminul Islam said the autorickshaw, with five passengers onboard, was headed towards the district headquarters.

"When it reached Bhatshala area on Sherpur-

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## Journos to get limited access to Secretariat from today

Says Nahid



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Just two days after suspending journalists' entry to the Secretariat, the government yesterday said they would get limited access there from today.

"Journalists will be granted limited access to the Secretariat from tomorrow [Monday]. Restrictions were imposed to ensure a proper investigation of the recent fire incident," said Nahid Islam, information and broadcasting adviser, while speaking to reporters in front of the Secretariat yesterday.

"Over 3,000 accreditation cards have been issued to journalists, but many of them are reportedly held by non-professionals. This has necessitated a review

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### MIGRANT RETURNEES

## When dreams turn into debts

At least 57pc had taken loans worth Tk 90,000 for medical care

MD ABBAS

Migrant workers leave their homeland with dreams of securing a better future for their families, often financed by hefty loans.

However, many return home afflicted by illness, only to face a double burden -- additional loans to cover their medical expenses.

This grim reality was highlighted in a recent study conducted by the Oviabashi Karmi Unnayan Program (Okup), shedding light on the hidden costs of migration and the harsh challenges faced by returnees.

According to the report, over 57 percent of the returnees had taken loans worth an average of Tk 90,000 for medical care at home after being denied abroad.

In addition to the Tk 4-6 lakh migration cost, many of these returnees incurred additional medical expenses, a financial burden that had previously been overlooked in migration cost analyses.

The study showed the significant yet underappreciated costs of medical treatment for returnee migrants.

Only 30 percent of migrant workers were able to receive medical treatment in their host countries, forcing the remaining 70 percent to return home.

The study added that over 27 percent of the migrant workers said their employers deducted the medical expenses from their salaries.

It also showed that the highest amount paid by male migrants for migration was over Tk 6

### COMMON HEALTH ISSUES OF MIGRANT RETURNEES

- BACK PAIN: 25 PERCENT
- CARDIAC ISSUES: 11 PERCENT
- INJURY-RELATED ISSUES: 11 PERCENT
- CANCER: 9 PERCENT
- KIDNEY ISSUE: 8 PERCENT
- UTERINE INFECTION: 8 PERCENT
- HYPERTENSION: 6 PERCENT

lakh, while female migrants spent between Tk 3-4 lakh.

Shakirul Islam, lead researcher and chairperson of Okup, presented these findings at a programme -- "Health of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers: A Hidden Cost of Migration Burdening Socioeconomic Development" -- at a city hotel yesterday.

Over 52 percent of returnee migrants have physical health issues, while 48 have mental health problems, according to a new study

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## India unlikely to extradite Hasina

Says Adviser Mahfuj Alam

UNB, Dhaka

When Bangladesh awaits India's reply to a request for former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's extradition, Adviser Mahfuj Alam has said the government thinks India would not return her.

"Our observation is that they have made a political decision that they will not return her. We are hearing as such," the adviser said when asked whether the issue was discussed or whether they have any observations regarding Hasina's stay in India.

Mahfuj was talking to reporters after attending a dialogue titled "Establishing New Bangladesh: Internal Reforms and Foreign Policy" in Dhaka yesterday.

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam also joined the dialogue moderated by Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin.

After Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain on December 23 revealed the government sent a note verbale requesting Hasina's extradition, India's Ministry of External Affairs confirmed it received the diplomatic message. Its spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, however, said they would not comment on the matter for now.

A day later, Bangladesh foreign ministry's spokesperson Mohammad

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## Hydrogen trapped in Earth can power world for 200yrs

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Earth's subsurface holds trillions of tonnes of hydrogen gas, enough to fuel human activities for nearly 200 years and break our dependence on fossil fuels, a new study suggests.

US Geological Survey researchers say there could be 5.6 trillion tonnes of hydrogen in rocks and underground reservoirs.

While the study, published in the journal Science, acknowledges that most of this hydrogen reservoir could be inaccessible, it estimates that harvesting just 2 percent could power humanity for about two centuries.

A growing body of research is touting hydrogen as a clean energy source that could well replace fossil fuel in vehicles, industrial processes and in electricity generation.

The gas is projected to make up nearly a third of the future energy supply in many sectors with its global demand expected to rise fivefold.

Previous studies have shown that hydrogen can be produced by splitting water molecules using electricity, leaving behind oxygen and hydrogen. Natural chemical reactions in rocks are known to release hydrogen but, until recently, very little was thought to be produced this way.

This changed when geologists found huge natural reservoirs of hydrogen gas in Albania and West Africa.



## Crashed plane was shot at from Russia

Says Azerbaijan president, claims some in Moscow tried to cover up

REUTERS, Baku

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said yesterday that a passenger plane that crashed last week, killing 38 people, had been damaged by shooting from the ground in Russia, and he said some in Russia had lied about the cause of the disaster.

President Vladimir Putin on Saturday apologised to Aliyev for Wednesday's "tragic incident" in Russian airspace involving the plane after Russian air defences engaged Ukrainian attack drones. A Kremlin statement did not say Russia had shot down the plane, only noting a criminal case had been opened.

"Our plane was shot down by accident," Aliyev told state television yesterday, adding that the plane had come under some sort of electronic jamming and had then been shot at while it was approaching the southern Russian city of Grozny.

"Unfortunately, in the first three days we heard only absurd versions from Russia," Aliyev said, citing statements in Russia that attributed the crash to birds or the explosion of some sort of gas cylinder.

"We witnessed clear attempts to cover up the matter," said the Azerbaijani leader, who has close ties to Russia and was educated at one of Moscow's top universities.

Aliyev said he wanted Russia to accept it was guilty of downing the plane and punish those responsible for fatally damaging the aircraft.



(From L to R) Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy and Mushfiqur Rahim -- three of the stars of defending champions Fortune Barishal -- enjoy a light moment with team manager and CEO Sabbir Khan during a practice session at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday ahead of today's opening match of Bangladesh Premier League T20.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## BPL 11 kicks off in Mirpur today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League T20, the country's only franchise-based T20 tournament, will get underway at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur today.

In opening day's fixtures, reigning champions Fortune Barishal will take on newcomers Durbar Rajshahi at 01:30pm while Rangpur Riders will face Dhaka Capitals in the second match at 06:30pm.

Like the previous editions, the matches will be held in Sylhet [January 6 to 13] and Chattogram [January 16 to 23] as well. A total of seven franchises, including three brand new ones, will take part in the competition, which will conclude in Mirpur on February 7.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is leaving no stone unturned to make the event a grand success. The BCB has ensured DRS technology will be available for the entire tournament while digital perimeter boards will add a different vibe to the grounds.

Fans will be offered free water

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