



Biman MD, wife in jail over abuse of child worker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested Biman Bangladesh Airlines Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Md Shafiqur Rahman and his wife in a case filed over the abuse of an 11-year-old domestic worker.



A team from Uttara West Police Station arrested them along with two others around 3:30am from their residence in Uttara Sector 9, said Kazi Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Apart from Shafiqur, 55, and his wife Bithi, 40, the other arrestees are Rupali Khatun, 35, and Sofia Begum, 55, both domestic workers at the household.

The arrests followed a case filed by the victim's father, a hotel employee,

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As part of heightened security to prevent sabotage ahead of the upcoming election, security personnel were checking passengers' belongings using a scanning machine at the entrance of Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

US, India reach trade agreement

Announces Trump, claims Modi will stop buying Russian oil

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump announced a trade deal with India yesterday, saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to stop buying Russian oil over the war in Ukraine.

Trump said he was cutting tariffs on Indian goods to 18 percent. He had previously levied 25 percent reciprocal tariffs, plus an additional 25 percent for New Delhi's purchases of Moscow's oil.

Modi yesterday said he had a "wonderful" phone call with Trump and thanked him for reducing levies on Indian products – but made no reference to Trump's assertion about halting Russian oil purchases.

India's refusal to stop buying oil from Russia – which Washington says funds Russia's invasion of Ukraine – has been a bone of contention for months as Trump seeks an elusive end to the war.

"Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a Trade Deal between the United States and India," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Trump said that the United States would lower the

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- ➔ US cuts tariffs on Indian goods to 18%
- ➔ Also removes 25% punitive tariff on India
- ➔ India will buy oil from US, Venezuela

Govt releases draft edn law at its fag end

Seeks public opinion by Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With just nine days to go before the national election, the interim government has published the draft Education Act, 2026, which seeks to phase out coaching centres, private tutoring, and the publication of guidebooks within three to five years of the law's enactment.

The draft states that the government will frame rules to regulate coaching centres, private tutoring, and the publication of supplementary books such as guidebooks and will continue to discourage such practices as part of efforts to phase them out within the aforementioned timeframe.

The education ministry uploaded the draft to its website on Sunday night and invited public opinion until 5:00pm on February 7.

The sudden move has raised questions about both the intent and the process behind the draft, particularly over the short timeframe allowed for public feedback.

"What kind of initiative is this? There is a serious question about the sincerity and willingness behind it," said noted educationist Dr Manzoor Ahmed, who headed the Consultation Committee on Primary and Non-Formal



"We want reforms. And through this law, are we trying to obstruct the intended reforms?"

Dr Manzoor Ahmed, noted educationist

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Defence talks with foreign govts 'ongoing process'

Says Khalilur

UNB, Dhaka

National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman yesterday described negotiations with multiple countries in the areas of defence and others towards the end of the government's tenure as an "ongoing process".

Speaking to journalists yesterday about what would happen to the interim government's commitments if the next government does not carry them forward, Khalilur, who also serves as the high representative on the Rohingya issue, said the question is "hypothetical". Earlier, he held a meeting with Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain at the foreign ministry. Details of their discussions were not immediately available.

Since assuming office, the interim government has undertaken a series of initiatives with the US, Japan, China, South Korea, Turkey and Pakistan across various fronts.

Khalilur also deflected questions regarding his recent appointment

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Port workers call 24hr strike, Ramadan supplies threatened

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The stalemate in import and export activities through the Chattogram port is set to deepen further as workers called for a 24-hour strike starting at 8:00am today to protest the government's decision to lease out the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) to UAE-based operator DP World.

This comes after the workers observed an eight-hour work abstention in the last three days, which halted all types of operations. Humayun Kabir, coordinator of Chattogram Bandar Rokkha Sangram Parishad, said they vowed to wage a tougher movement if the government does not cancel its plan to lease out the NCT.

Meanwhile, the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) until Sunday issued orders transferring 16 port employees, including two key coordinators of the movement, to Pangaon ICT and Kamalapur ICD. None of them complied with the order.

The CPA yesterday issued another order directing the transfer of 15 of these employees to Mongla and Payra ports.

The port yards and ICDs have already started facing a pile-up of containers, while export shipments have begun missing schedules, forcing

shipping lines to incur additional fees. Such disruption may affect commodity prices ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, said port users.

The port usually delivers on average 4,000 TEUs of import containers per day, while daily delivery dropped to 1,700 TEUs in the last two days until yesterday morning, according to CPA data.



As a result, more than 5,000 TEUs of import containers have piled up at the port.

Congestion at the inland container depots has already reached an acute level and it might take one to two weeks to clear the piled-up containers, said Md Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association.

Vessels have already started facing prolonged stays at the jetties due to disruptions in loading and unloading operations.

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PURBACHAL PLOT SCAM Hasina given 10 years, Tulip 4 years, Bobby, Azmina get 7 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to 10 years' imprisonment and her niece, British MP Tulip Siddiq, to four years in two cases involving the Purbachal plot scam in Dhaka.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka also handed down seven-year prison terms to Hasina's other niece Azmina Siddiq and nephew Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, each in one of the two cases, said ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

The verdicts were delivered in absentia, and trials in each of the two cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) were completed within 15 hearings, according to court records.

The court found Hasina guilty of abusing her power to illegally secure two plots under a Rajuk housing project in Dhaka's Purbachal for Azmina and Bobby, despite the duo being ineligible.

Tulip, the MP for Hampstead and Highgate in London, was found guilty of influencing Hasina to secure the plots for her siblings, Azmina and Bobby – an allegation she had earlier rejected.

Hasina and Tulip were also fined Tk 2 lakhs each in two cases with an additional one-year imprisonment in the event of default, while Azmina and Bobby were fined Tk one lakh in a case, defaulting which they will have to serve six months more in jail.

Between November 27 and December 1 last year, Hasina, now in India, was sentenced to 26 years' rigorous imprisonment in four other cases involving the plot scam. Her daughter Saima Wazed Putul and son Sajeb Wazed Joy, and sister Sheikh Rehana and Tulip were also convicted in one of four cases each.

From January 12 to 14 last year, the ACC filed all six cases with its Dhaka Integrated District Office-1 over

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Cops fear arms smuggling ahead of Feb 12 polls

TOUSIF KAIUM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Around 5:00am on January 11, a team of Rapid Action Battalion conducted a drive at a house in Raghunathpur in Benapole and recovered two firearms, six rounds of bullets and four magazines.

The words "Made in India" were written on the firearms, according to Mohammad Ashraf Hossain, the officer-in-charge of Benapole Port Police Station.

Police have information that such illegal arms are entering Bangladesh from the India border with the view to fuelling violence ahead of the polls.

At least 30 'linemen', individuals who are involved in firearms smuggling and illegal crossings, are active in Jashore alone, according to the police intelligence database seen by The Daily Star.

Linemen play a central role in border crime, with most being locals with detailed knowledge of remote routes, rivers, chars and hilly trails, and in many cases, information on patrol schedules of law enforcement agencies.

At least 757 other linemen are active across the 26 border districts: 12 in Chattogram, 37 in Brahmanbaria, 99 in Cox's Bazar, 10 in Feni, 38 in Cumilla, 116 in Bandarban, three in Rajshahi, 38 in Chapainawabganj, 16 in Joypurhat, 19 in Naogaon, five in Chuadanga, 16 in Meherpur, 52 in Satkhira, 21 in Jhenaidah, 58 in Sylhet, seven in Moulvibazar, 13 in Habiganj, 32 in Sunamganj,

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Mourners react beside the body of Palestinian Eyad Al-Rabaya, who medics said was killed by Israeli fire, at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Only 11 cases filed over 97 shrine attacks since Aug '24

Study identifies religious intolerance as primary driver

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new study has revealed that only 11 cases were filed despite 97 attacks on shrines across the country over a year and a half following the July uprising, with investigations in 10 of the cases showing "no progress".

The findings were disclosed by Makam: Center for Sufi Heritage, a research organisation, in a report titled "Attacks on Shrines Across the Country in 2024-25", presented at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday.

The study, covering the period from August 5, 2024, to December 31, 2025, documented a pattern of violence that left three people dead and 468 injured.

"The attack on Nural Pagla's shrine in Rajbari created a stir, leading police to arrest several suspects. However, we have seen no progress in

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