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Anxiety grips migrants as Gulf flights stay halted

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

With one day left before his visa expired, Mohammad Julhas, 28, could not afford another cancellation.

His younger brother, Akash Islam, said Julhas was scheduled to fly to Jeddah on February 28, but the flight was cancelled. "After two days of uncertainty, we received a message on March 2, just before midnight, saying Biman had arranged another flight."

Julhas reached Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by 11:00am yesterday and eventually boarded a plane at 3:55pm.

"For two whole nights, my brother couldn't sleep as his visa had only one day of validity left," Akash told The Daily Star.

Julhas's case reflects wider fallout, as a total of 182 Middle East-bound flights were cancelled from Dhaka and Chattogram airports over the last four days following US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliatory attacks.

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Bangladesh defender Kohati Kisku makes a lunging tackle against China's Wurigumula during their AFC Women's Asian Cup fixture at the Western Sydney Stadium on Tuesday. Peter Butler's charges, ranked 95 places below China, eventually went down 2-0 but made a massive impression on their continental debut with fearless football, going toe-to-toe with the defending and nine-time champions. Story on Page 15.

PHOTO: AFP

SITAKUNDA MURDER CASE 7yr-old victim dies in hospital; neighbour held

Police say arrestee tried to rape child before slitting her throat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a man in a case filed over the murder of a seven-year-old girl, who was found with her throat slit at Sitakunda eco park on Sunday.

The girl died at a Chattogram hospital yesterday. According to police, she was also subjected to attempted rape.

Addressing a press briefing at Sitakunda Model Police Station following the arrest, Chattogram Superintendent of Police Mohammed Nazir Ahmed Khan said the arrestee was identified as Babu Sheikh, 50, from Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila. "He was a neighbour of the victim."

Earlier, around 1:30am yesterday, the victim, Jannatun Nayema Ira, succumbed to her injuries while undergoing treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital's intensive care unit, according to Dr Selim Kashem Chowdhury, an ENT consultant at the hospital.



Accused Babu Sheikh

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Police likely to revert to old uniform

TOUSIF KAIUM

Police Headquarters (PHQ) is now moving to revert to the former uniform of Bangladesh Police that was replaced just three months ago following a procurement process worth around Tk 141 crore.

The development comes after 96.5 percent of the respondents in an internal survey of the police wanted the previous uniform back.



New uniform



Old uniform

Less than 1 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the current attire. Traffic Police reported near-unanimous opposition to the present design as it is clearly visible, especially at night, officers said requesting anonymity.

"We will place our survey results before the government through proper procedures -- the next steps will be taken in line with the government's decision," said AHM Shahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general (Media and Public Relations).

The newly-formed government is keen to restore the previous uniform, which was introduced in 2004 when the BNP was in power, said several senior PHQ officials on

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'TRICKED INTO WAR'

Report uncovers trafficking pipeline that forces Bangladeshis into Russian army to fight as expendables in Ukraine

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and KEERO ADHNAN AHMED

Bangladeshi men are being flown out of Dhaka, routed through Saudi Arabia and the UAE, before being taken to Moscow and forced onto the frontlines of Russia's war in Ukraine.

The route -- using a combination of religious and tourist visas through Middle Eastern transit hubs -- is part of what rights groups describe as a trafficking pipeline feeding civilians into the Russian armed forces.

The findings were disclosed yesterday in a joint report by Bangkok-based Fortify Rights and Ukraine-based Truth Hounds, titled "I Was Tricked into the War", at a press conference at Drik Gallery in the capital's Panthapath.

With early access to the findings, this newspaper published an article the day before yesterday titled "Over 100 Bangladeshis Sent to the Front, 34 Dead; report".

MUCH WIDER PATTERN
The report shows that Bangladesh is part of a much wider South Asian recruitment pattern.

According to data published by the Ukrainian Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, as of February 2026, at least 751 Sri

AT A GLANCE

- Pilgrimage visas used as cover
- South Asia key recruitment hub
- Hundreds killed, many trapped
- 1,876 recruited; 448 confirmed deaths

Lankans, 851 Nepalis, 170 Indians, and 104 Bangladeshis had been recruited into the Russian army.

The data also shows that at least 275 Sri Lankans, 116 Nepalis, 23 Indians, and 34 Bangladeshis have so far been killed in the fighting between Russia and Ukraine.

Researchers said the figures indicate that South Asia has become a key recruitment ground for Russia's military efforts, with brokers exploiting economic hardship and established labour migration routes across the region.

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BFIU seeks bank details of Asif Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) has sought detailed banking information on Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain, spokesperson of the National Citizen Party (NCP) and a former adviser to the interim government.

According to officials familiar with the development, the BFIU -- the anti-money laundering wing of Bangladesh Bank -- on Monday issued letters to all banks, asking them to provide information related to Asif's accounts following a complaint.

Banks have been instructed to submit, within three working days, account opening forms, transaction statements, and all relevant documents related to his accounts.

The Daily Star called Asif Mahmud last night for comments but could not reach him.

Meanwhile, in a Facebook post last night, Asif Mahmud said, "Tomorrow I will personally make my bank statement

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Triceratops skeleton set for multi-million dollar auction sale

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A triceratops skeleton, a fixture in a Wyoming museum for decades, is set to go under the hammer, marking a rare occasion where a publicly exhibited dinosaur fossil enters the auction market at a time of unprecedented demand for prehistoric remains.



Named "Trey," the fossil will be available for bids between March 17 and March 31 on Joopter, the online auction platform established by Grammy-winning artist and producer Pharrell Williams. Its pre-auction valuation stands between \$4.5 million to \$5.5 million.

Dating back over 66 million years to the late Cretaceous period, Trey was unearthed near Lusk, Wyoming, in 1993 by Lee Campbell and the late Allen Graffham, a commercial palaeontologist renowned for his many significant discoveries.

This 17-foot-long (5.3-metre-long) herbivore

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BORDER CROSSING

Blasts in Kabul as Afghan, Pak troops keep up fighting

AFP, Kabul

AFP journalists in Kabul heard multiple explosions and gunfire yesterday, as Afghan and Pakistani troops keep up their border battles.

The blasts in the Afghan capital were heard alongside anti-aircraft weapons and gunfire from across the city, and came as the Afghan defence ministry said "the fighting is still ongoing" against Pakistani forces.

An AFP journalist in Jalalabad city, between Kabul and the frontier, reported hearing explosions and various weapons being fired.

At the nearest border crossing, around 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Jalalabad, residents in Torkham told AFP the days-long fighting was continuing.

The neighbours have clashed along the frontier since Thursday, when Afghanistan launched a border offensive in response to Pakistani air strikes.

The latest casualties include three children killed Monday in a "crime committed by the Pakistani military regime" in Kunar province, Afghan deputy government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said.

At least 39 civilians have been killed since Thursday, the Afghan government said, a toll which Pakistan has not commented on.

The UN children's charity said it was "alarmed" by reports of child casualties in the conflict, and called on

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Children celebrate Dol Purnima at Dhakeshwari temple yesterday, tossing clouds of colour into the spring air. Their laughter rises with the purple dust as the premises turned radiant with festive joy.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Israel's strike plan triggered US attack on Iran: Rubio

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HASANAH ISLAMIC BANKING
البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 4

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:05	12:45	4:30	6:04	7:30
JAMAAT 5:15	1:15	4:45	6:14	8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
14	4	5:01	6:04
15	5	5:01	6:05
16	6	5:00	6:05