

# Female migrant workers fall victim to middlemen

## Awareness campaign at grassroots level a must

MAHUBA ZANNAT, back from Manikganj

Khodeza, a 40-year-old migrant worker from Manikganj, went abroad to change her fate but had her dreams shattered when she came back home recently only to find that her husband sold their house in the meantime.

A resident of Singair upazila and wife of a drug addict, Khodeza went to Bahrain four years ago to work as a housemaid as she had no other alternative way to get out of debt.

Her husband married another woman after 20 years of their conjugal life and used to torture Khodeza and put pressure on her to give money for drugs.

To get rid of such agonising ordeal, Khodeza went to Bahrain but now she had no place to live in.

Like her, many women in Manikganj district flew to different Middle Eastern countries in order to change their fate but without knowing what lies in store for them. Even most of them fell victim to brokers and came back empty handed.

Around 200 or 300 women went abroad from the area in the last three months, according to the migrant workers who came back

even without receiving their salary.

"I came back to my husband as he divorced his second wife and insisted on my return, but I found that my husband has sold out my house. Being dejected, I have divorced my husband and now I am trying to go abroad again," said Khodeza who is now living at her parent's house.

The social position of women who went abroad is more or less the same as Khodeza's. Husbands of most women grabbed the money from their wives and then married another woman. They are also branded as 'spoiled'.

Still, many women are eager to go abroad although there are many cases of workers coming back home within a month as the brokers arranged tourist visas for them in exchange of Tk 50,000.

The influence of the brokers is so strong that the women are ignoring the issue and dreaming of going abroad.

Josna, a 30-year-old woman, who is disappointed with society as well as her 'worthless' husband, is trying to go abroad as a housemaid.

"I don't know where to go, I just want to leave this society," she said. Her husband has been unemployed for long and they are living

in her parent's house.

The middlemen are active in Singair upazila of Manikganj. They can easily lure the women who fell victim to dowry and river erosion. Also, illiteracy is another factor that helps the brokers victimise women, said the activists working to protect the rights of migrant workers in the area.

Though the recruiting agencies claimed that they take Tk 35,000 from each migrant worker, most women have to spend Tk 60,000 to 80,000 for overseas employment.

"We have nothing to do in this case as the women, caught in the trap laid by the brokers, usually come to us after spending a lot of money," said Senior Executive of Al-Baraka International limited Arif Hossain Khan.

"We have a pre-departure training centre where we provide training for women trying to go abroad as workers," he added.

Many recruiting agencies as well as BAIRA has pre-departure training programmes, but that cannot stop the women from falling into the clutches of brokers due to lack of awareness at the grassroots level. A few organisations such as BOMSA, RMMRU and Shawti are working to make the

workers aware about the issue.

Brokers can target the women easily due to absence of awareness programme of the government at grassroots level, said Sumaiya Islam, Project Director of Bangladesh Ovibasi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA).

The delay in finalising the Overseas Employment Policy on the part of the government also forces thousands of women to go to the brokers, she added.

Director General of Bangladesh Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) SM Wahiduzzaman said that the word 'middleman' has no existence in immigration ordinance and that the immigration department should check the trend of female migrant workers going abroad through unauthorised process.

The government should launch awareness campaign in this regard as female migrant workers send more remittance than male workers, said Ali Haider, secretary general of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA).

It is also vital to finalise the Overseas Employment Policy, which was drafted in November 2004, he said.

## PM exchanges Eid greetings

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanged Eid greetings with cross section of people at 'Pradhan Mantri Bhaban' at Sher-e-Banglanagar in the city on Wednesday.

The happy occasion turned into a commoner's day, as men, women and children of all strata converged in a long queue in the Prime Minister's official residence to exchange Eid greetings with her.

Earlier, the prime minister also hosted an Eid reception for the members of the diplomatic corps and other invited guests at the same venue.

Heads of diplomatic missions in Dhaka and other members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of UN bodies and development agencies attended the reception, besides ministers, judges, top political leaders, senior civil and military officers, and editors of national dailies.

The prime minister exchanged Eid greetings with them.

The gate of the 'Pradhan Mantri Bhaban' remained open for all on the occasion of the holy Eid.

People from every nook and corner of the metropolis, as well as far-flung areas of the country thronged there to have a glimpse of their leader and exchange traditional Eid greetings with her.

MPs, educationists, intellectuals, officials, retired bureaucrats and military personnel, political leaders, university vice-chancellors, cultural personalities, poets, artists, freedom fighters, women activists, lawyers, journalists, physicians, labourers, vagrants, and slum dwellers came there to grace the occasion.

## 75 posts lying vacant in 24 govt high schools in 4 districts

UNB, Comilla

Seventy-five posts of teachers are lying vacant in 24 government high schools, out of 26, in Comilla, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria and Laxmipur districts, seriously hampering the academic activities.

Two posts of headmaster, six posts of assistant headmaster and nine posts of teacher remained vacant in Comilla while four posts of headmaster, two of assistant headmaster and 18 of teacher in Chandpur.

Three posts of headmaster, four of assistant headmaster and seven of teacher are lying vacant in Brahmanbaria while three of assistant headmaster and 17 of teacher in Laxmipur.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Human chain

Coalition of Local NGOs, Bangladesh will form a human chain demanding drive by joint forces to free forest, water bodies and khas land from illegal occupation and encroachment. Venue: Mukhtangon. Time: 1:00pm.

### Rotary meet

The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.

## Bomb found in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Police recovered a powerful bomb, weighing about three kilogram, from a road at Kabir Hat Pourasava in Noakhali Sadar Upazila on Thursday night.

Local traders first noticed the bomb in a sack. They informed the police, who removed the bomb and deactivated it plunging into a bucket.

Meanwhile, Awami League Joint Secretary Obaidul Kader alleged that the bomb was planted there to kill him as he had programme on that day.

However, he postponed his programme because of load shedding and went back home safely.

## FOOD POISONING

## Three die in Habiganj

UNB, Habiganj

Three women, including a minor girl, died and nine others fell seriously ill after taking homemade pitha (cake) at Fakirabad village in Sadar upazila early Thursday.

The dead were identified as Monu Begum, 35, her aunt Fulbanu, 60, and niece Soma Akhter, 6.

Hospital sources said the family of 'Aher made' patisapta pitha with flour on Wednesday night on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. Later, the family members along with other relatives ate those 'pitha' and fell seriously ill due to food poisoning.

They were admitted to local Modern Hospital where three of them died before 6:00am on Thursday.

## Youth dies in police custody

BDNEWS, Munshiganj

A youth was allegedly beaten to death in police custody in Munshiganj on Wednesday.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Suman of Sirajdikhan upazila. He was arrested by Sirajdikhan police on Monday from Ichhapur in the town.

Police, however, claimed that he committed suicide.

Police said Suman tried to commit suicide by wrapping a blanket and was rushed to the Ichhapur Health Complex in a critical condition where he succumbed to his injuries in the evening.

## Obituary

Guitarist and singer Niloy Kumar Das passed away due to cardiac arrest at the Centre Point Hospital in Chittagong on January 11 at the age of 45, says a press release.

His body was brought to Dhaka and he was cremated at Postogola crematorium on Thursday.

He left behind his parents and a sister. His father Sudhin Das is an exponent of Nazrul song.

His shradha (post-funeral rites) will be held on January 21.

## Alhaj Abul Khair

Alhaj Abul Khair, a former Sonali Bank official, passed away due to cardiac arrest at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city on Thursday at the age of 80, says a press release.

He left behind five sons and two daughters.

He was buried at Mirpur Intellectuals' Graveyard.

## Badrunnessa

Badrunnessa, wife of late Haji Noor Mohammad of Nabiganj in Narayanganj and mother of photo-journalist Haji Md Zahirul Hoq, passed away at her Dhanmondi residence in the city on January 11 at the age of 84, says a press release.

She left behind three sons and a host of relatives.

She was buried at her home village.

## Majeda Ahmed

BSS, Dhaka

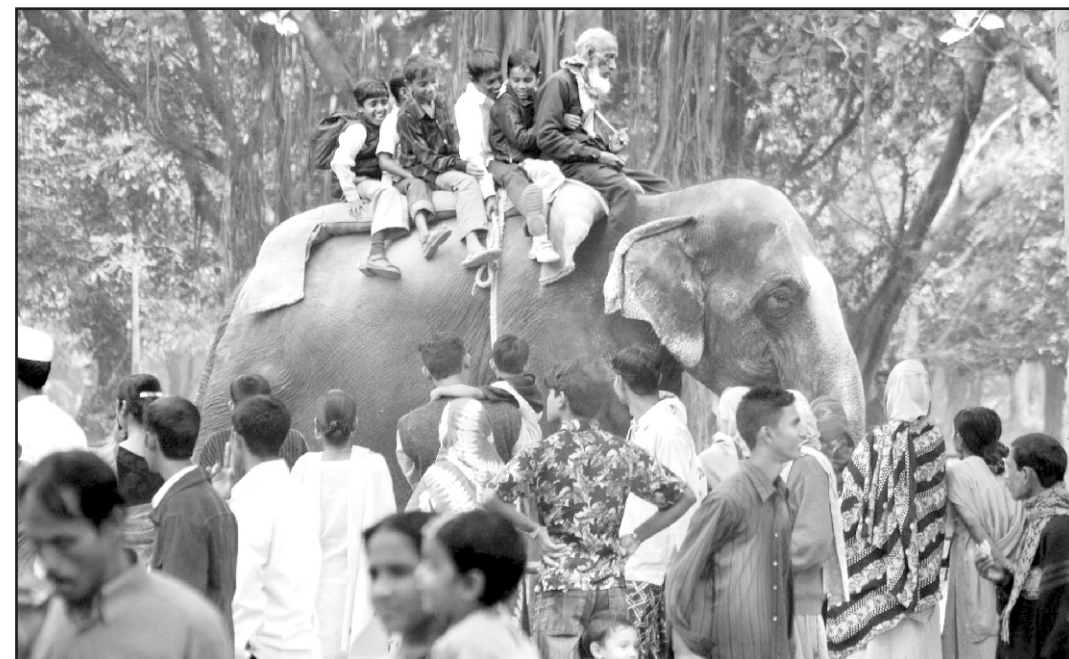
Majeda Ahmed, wife of former superintendent of police late Momtaz Uddin Ahmed, died of old-age complications at the Apollo Hospital here yesterday morning at the age of 90, family sources said.

She is survived by four sons and five daughters.

The first namaz-e-janaza of Majeda Ahmed was held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Jumma prayers and the second janaza at Shantinagar area in the city.

She was buried at Banani Graveyard.

Qukhwani of Majeda Ahmed will be held at her 156, Shantinagar residence on January 16 after Asr prayers, family sources added.



People in their hundreds flock to the National Zoo at Mirpur in the city yesterday as the Eid holiday hangover still persists. Picture shows cheerful children enjoying an elephant ride.



Dhakabashi took out a colourful procession in the city yesterday to celebrate Eid.

## One killed in launch, steamer collision

UNB, Chandpur

One person was killed and another reported missing as a launch and a steamer collided in river Meghna at Mohonpur under Matlab Uttar Police Station on Tuesday night.

Sources said MV Ababil-2, a Dhaka-bound empty launch from Chandpur, hit the Barisal-bound steamer with over 600 people aboard, killing one person and injuring seven or eight others.

The dead was identified as Mohsin Mirza, 25, of Karbandh village in Matlab Dakkhin Thana of Chandpur district. Another youth was reported missing, but his identity could not be ascertained.

Passengers said the unknown youth fell into the river from the

steamer after being hit by the launch.

BIWTA officials said the accident took place at about 9:00pm when the launch was returning to Dhaka to carry the homebound people and hit the steamer amid dense fog.

Of the injured, Khokon, 30, Suman, 16, Shaheed, 15, Jewel, 16, and Selina Shabnam, 26, were sent to Dhaka in critical condition.

Later, the steamer anchored overnight at Chandpur terminal and started its journey again on Barisal-Khulna route Wednesday morning.

Master of the steamer Enayet Hossain filed a case in this connection.

## Eid-ul-Azha celebrated in Chittagong

BSS, Chittagong

Eid-ul-Azha, the second largest religious festival of the Muslims, was celebrated in the port city and district with the spirit of sacrifice and total surrender to the Almighty Allah.

A total of 222 Eid congregations at mosques and selected open spaces including three big ones at M A Aziz Stadium and Jamiatul Falah Mosque were held in the city under the auspices of Chittagong Central Eid Jamaat Committee (CCEJC) and Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

Other major Eid congregations were held at Andarkilla Shahi Jame Mosque, Laldighi Maidan, Parade Maidan, Masjeed-e-Baitus Sharf at Kadamtali, Pologround Railway Public High School Maidan, Shah Amanat Shah (Rh) Dargah Maidan, Metropolitan Police Line Maidan, Agrabad Jamboree field, Bayzeed Bostami (Rh) Dargah Mosque.

Large numbers of Muslims attended the Eid prayers seeking divine blessings for the continued peace, prosperity and stability of the country as well as Muslim Ummah.

As the prayers over, affluent people offered their sacrificial animals by slaughtering those in the name of Allah in commemoration of the supreme sacrifice made by Hazrat Ibrahim (A).

Authorities concerned took adequate security measures by deploying RAB, BDR, Police and Ansars at various strategic points in the city to keep vigil on law and order.

Important city corners and public buildings were illuminated and improved diet was served in the hospitals, jails, orphanages, and also in youth and juveniles centres run by the social welfare department.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia exchanges Eid greetings with diplomats at a reception at the Pradhanmantri Bhaban in the city on the Eid day.

## Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day observed

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Awami League (AL) and its front organisations observed the Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day with due respect across the country on Tuesday.

On this day in 1972, father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned home from Pakistan after confinement in jail during the nine-month-long war leading to the independence of Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu, arrested from his Dhanmondi residence in Dhaka on the night of March 25, 1971, was taken to the then West Pakistan and kept in prison.

As part of the programme, party flag was hoisted at Bangabandhu Bhaban and all party offices.

AL leaders and workers also placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum here at 7:00am.

Gopalganj district AL also placed wreaths at the graveyard of Bangabandhu at Tungipara.



## Mild cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may occur during late night until morning, Met Office said.

Mild to moderate cold wave may continue to sweep over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and the regions of Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur, Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali, Sitakunda and Comilla.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 28.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Chittagong and Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 7.4 degree at Jessore and Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:32pm today and rises at 6:44am tomorrow. The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.6	10.4	99	68
Chittagong	28.4	13.4	81	44
Rajshahi	25.3	7.7	94	68
Khulna	26.8	9.5	91	60
Barisal	27.0	9.2	95	75
Sylhet	23.8	12.8	100	78
Cox's Bazar	28.4	14.4	71	72



Piles of animal garbage still lie on the street at Naya Bazar in the old part of the city yesterday, emanating stink and causing hazards to environment.



Paltan area, one of the busiest areas in the city, wore a deserted look yesterday as most city dwellers left for their village homes to celebrate Eid.