

'Just want to return home'

Stranded in Vietnam, 27 Bangladeshis stick to their demand of repatriation; embassy tells them to go back to work

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh embassy in Hanoi is asking the 27 Bangladeshis stranded there to go back to work in Ho Chi Minh City, but the workers are sticking to their demand of repatriation at the earliest.

Facing abuses and threats by the manpower brokers, these Bangladeshis travelled to Hanoi on July 2 to seek embassy help for repatriation.

They could not be repatriated at the time as their passports were confiscated by their brokers and they did not have airfare.

The embassy, in collaboration with the Vietnamese authorities, sheltered them in hotels.

"Vietnamese police and our embassy are giving us two options -- returning to the factories or going to the detention centre," Shital Chandra Sarker, one of the 27 Bangladeshis, told The Daily Star by phone on Monday.

He said they don't want to go to work because the Chinese agent, with the help of Bangladeshi brokers -- Mostafa, Jabbar, Saiful and Atiq -- has been abusing and extorting them over the last six months.

He said they all paid Tk 3.5 lakh to Tk 4 lakh to go to Vietnam where they were promised \$500 or more basic monthly salary, but once they arrived in between January and February, their passports were confiscated by the brokers.

They were not provided any regular jobs but supplied to different factories and paid \$100 to \$150 a month when they had work.

"We were also not provided decent meals or accommodation. We gave money to our brokers to send home as we did not have options to go to the money exchange, but they stole that money," Shital said.

Brokers also threatened to kidnap those who spoke out.

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This teenager spends her days crafting little bouquets and necklaces out of flowers and selling them around Dhaka University, with her loyal companion, a pet rabbit, right beside her. This photo was taken yesterday when the duo was hard at work, getting roses ready for sale.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

METRO RAIL PROJECT

24 Thai engineers to be brought in by charter flight

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The metro rail authority has taken a number of initiatives to bring back foreign engineers and consultants to speed up the construction work of country's first metro rail project amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the initiatives is to bring back 24 Thai engineers in a charter flight, as regular flights between Bangladesh and Thailand has remained suspended, officials said.

Besides, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), which is implementing the project, also wrote to the Foreign Ministry to give special waiver for Japanese nationals involved in metro project so that they can return to Bangladesh, they said.

The development came as the authorities are trying to accelerate the construction work, which remained halted for more than two months after the government declared a national holiday in late March to contain spread of Covid-19 in the country.

The project -- formally known as Mass Rapid Transit-6 or MRT-6 -- is being implemented to build an elevated mail line from capital's Uttara Third Phase to

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Shahidul Alam wins CPJ's Int'l Press Freedom Award

UNB, Dhaka

Prominent Bangladeshi photojournalist Shahidul Alam has been awarded the 2020 International Press Freedom Award alongside three others from Iran, Nigeria and Russia.

The awardees were announced by the Committee to Protect Journalists. "All four have been arrested or faced criminal prosecution in reprisal for their reporting," said a report on the committee's website.

Alam is a renowned photojournalist and founder of Pathshala Media Institute and Drik picture library.

In August 2018, Alam was detained after posting a video to social media about student protests in Dhaka. He spent 102 days behind bars, and said he was beaten in custody, before being freed in November 2018.

The other awardees are: Mohammad Mosaed (Iran), a freelance economic reporter; Dapo Olorunoyi (Nigeria), co-founder, CEO and publisher of the Nigerian newspaper Premium Times, and Svetlana Prokopyeva (Russia), a



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First death anniversary of Ershad marked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party yesterday observed the first death anniversary of its founder HM Ershad through various programmes maintaining social distance and health directives in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

JP Chairman and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament GM Quader, along with central JP leaders placed wreaths at the grave of former President Ershad on his Pally Nibas compound at 11am.

Along with the central and local leaders, Quader observed a minute of silence and offered prayers seeking divine blessings for his departed soul.

Later, they participated in a discussion on the life, works and politics.

4 CASES AGAINST 'CASINO BROTHERS' Charge sheet likely next week: CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They owned 20 houses, 128 apartments and 25 acres of land in Dhaka and its nearby areas.

Besides, they have 91 bank accounts, where around Tk 208 crore have been deposited so far and the current balance is around Tk 19 crore.

Following several months of investigation, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has found these property and cash details of "casino brothers" -- Enamul Haque Enu and Rupun Bhuiyan.

CID officials said the brothers got involved in gambling at the club with help of gold trader Joy Gopal Sarker, general secretary of Motijheel Wanderers Club.

Terming Gopal a casino ringleader, Imtiaz Ahmed, deputy inspector general of CID, said they arrested him recently.

Talking to reporters at the CID office yesterday, DIG Imtiaz said, "We have almost completed investigation of four money laundering cases out of five and are hopeful to submit charge sheet of these cases next week."

In reply to a query, DIG Imtiaz said they are bringing charges against 51 people in these cases. CID officials said the brothers in 2014 became acquainted with Joy Gopal and started a casino in the club.

Warnings fall on deaf ears

DSCC to set up cattle markets in city

HELEMUUL ALAM

National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 on Friday suggested not to set up cattle markets in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Chattogram cities as a preventive measure against the pandemic.

Ignoring that, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has given approval to set up five such markets in the capital.

According to DSCC officials, they did not receive any official order to not set up makeshift markets, and therefore, did not refrain from doing so, disregarding the suggestion.

"If the government gives orders to not set up markets, we will follow instructions," said DSCC Chief Executive Officer Shah Md Emdadul Haque.

He said they had decided to set up 14 markets but have approved five so far. They are yet to decide on the nine other proposed markets, and will do so after issuing re-tender.

Emdadul said DSCC has 75 wards, and if they consider one market for 10 wards, they need at least seven such markets. He

also pointed out that there is a lack of open spaces in DSCC areas.

"Where will people buy cattle if there is no market?" he said. "We will take necessary measures so that traders and customers follow health guidelines properly."

DSCC markets will be at Leather Technology College in Hazariabagh; Postogola cremation ground; Little Friends Club in Gopibagh; Mirpur Section-1 and 2; and near Moitri Sangha in North Shahjahanpur.

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has also given work order to set up three makeshift markets, while three are already being set up. It, however, decided to arrange them in areas surrounding the city and cancelled some markets, considering the pandemic.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said they have already cancelled some markets supposed to be at Bhashantek, Teigaon and Uttara Sector-10, 11 and 12.

He said there was huge pressure to set up markets, but even then, he did not allow markets within the city.

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With no traffic in sight, two bus drivers started a race at Hemayetpur on Dhaka-Aricha highway on Sunday, which ultimately resulted in the vehicles grazing each other and one even being pushed against the divider. It's fortunate that this complete disregard for traffic rules didn't result in a major crash, but unfortunate that such incidents are not uncommon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Plight of non-coronavirus patients escalate in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With most doctors not attending chambers for over three months, patients in Chattogram are being compelled to seek health-related suggestions from staff members at various dispensaries, leading to irrational use of antibiotics which can have adverse health impacts in the long run.

Unless emergency, many are avoiding government hospitals as those are treating Covid-19 patients. Besides, getting admitted to clinics is also quite difficult, they said. Consultants are not visiting the clinics after the outbreak.

Though many physicians started telemedicine services after stopping private practice, it's almost impossible to connect with them over the phone, according to patients.

The lines either stay busy or they remain unavailable, they added.

Amid such circumstances, people are in a way forced to resort to staffers at local dispensaries for their "suggestions".

For example, when 70-year-old Subhash Chowdhury (not his real name) felt sick last week, his family tried to contact consultants over the phone from the numbers provided by Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

None answered.

Tarit Chowdhury, son of Subhash, said, "Then I went to a pharmacy near our house in Chawkbazar and described the salesperson about my father's condition. He gave some medicines but my father's condition continued to deteriorate."

"On the third day, he lost consciousness. Desperate, we went to three clinics but none admitted him. They checked his temperature and found it to be normal. They also checked oxygen saturation in his blood through 'pulse oxymetre' and found it to be normal."

Tarit said when he asked why they were not admitting his father, the clinic authorities said he would need to undergo treatment under a consultant but at present none were visiting their clinics.

"We were able to admit him to a private clinic on request from a BMA leader. After tests, it was found that electrolytes (essential minerals) in my father's body were not balanced," he said. "If he had received proper treatment in the primary stage, he would not have to suffer so much."

This correspondent spoke to staff members of a number of dispensaries over the week. Wishing anonymity, they said

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Nurul Islam laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nurul Islam, chairman of Jamuna Group, one of the biggest conglomerates in the country, was laid to eternal rest with state honour in the capital's Banani graveyard yesterday.

The noted businessman was buried at 2:30pm, Mohammad Alamgir Alam, a director of Jamuna Group, told The Daily Star.

Infected with Covid-19 and other complications, Nurul Islam breathed his last at Evercare Hospital on Monday, aged 74.

His namaz-e-janaza was held on the Jamuna Future Park premises.

As a freedom fighter, Nurul was given a guard of honour. Officials and employees of Jamuna Group were among those who attended the janaza following health safety.

Shamim Islam, son of Nurul Islam, recalled his father's contributions to the welfare of the country.

Livestock ministry to take measures to stop smuggling of animals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Fisheries and livestock yesterday decided to take strict steps to stop smuggling of sacrificial animals from India.

The ministry also took initiative to stop smuggling of harmful steroid and hormone-type medicines to ensure sacrificial animals are healthy and safe.

The ministry took the decision following an inter-ministerial meeting held on July 9, which decided on measures to ensure healthy animals during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha at its office yesterday.

The ministry on July 13 issued letters to the Cabinet Division and Public Security Department following the decision, requesting them to take necessary steps in this regard, said a press release.

The Cabinet Division has been asked to take necessary steps so that district administrations in border areas conduct mobile courts to stop smuggling of sacrificial animals and stopping use of fake money. The Public Security Department has been requested to run mobile courts through BGB and Bangladesh Police to stop smuggling of animals before Eid.

The ministry in another letter to the public security department asked them to ensure security of customers and traders and stop harassment relating to online sale.

Lawmaker's son rams police van in port city

He was also involved in 2018 fatal hit-and-run incident in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Shabab Chowdhury, son of lawmaker Ekramul Karim Chowdhury of Noakhali-4 constituency, has rammed a police patrol van with his car in Chattogram city's Lalkhan Bazar area, and locked into an altercation with police personnel.

Though the incident occurred on Saturday night, it came to light on Monday night. Police, however, claimed it was a misunderstanding and the issue was resolved later.

During the incident, the MP's son was driving the car, confirmed Officer-in-Charge Pranab Chowdhury of Khulshi Police Station to The Daily Star.

"A patrol team of Khulshi Police Station was returning from Khulshi Baghghona area and Shabab's car rammed the police van in Lalkhan Bazar area in the night. An altercation ensued between him and the on-duty police personnel. The issue was later settled through discussion," said OC Pranab.

In June 2018, Shabab was allegedly involved in a hit and run incident where a man was run over and killed by the luxury SUV that Shabab was driving, near Mohakhali flyover in the capital, according to eyewitness accounts.

After the incident, BRTA officials confirmed that the Audi SUV which had left behind its license plate at the scene of the incident, was registered to Kamrun Nahar Shiuli, wife of lawmaker Ekramul.

However, no charges were brought against Shabab in that incident, after his family reportedly settled the case with monetary compensation.

Shabab could not be contacted for comments, despite repeated attempts.



A large number of people gather every day in front of the Teacher-Student Centre at Dhaka University, to avail a free meal that has been organised by good samaritans. However, many of them seem to have very little regard for social distancing or health guidelines. One can be fined for being without a mask in public, but its enforcement doesn't appear to be too strong. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN