

30,970 Saudi visas have to be reissued

Says Baira for migrant workers' employment, as those have expired

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 30,970 new visas for migrant workers' employment in Saudi Arabia are needed to be reissued since those got expired amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies.

These new visas have been dealt by some 288 member organisations of Baira, the association's Secretary General Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman said yesterday.

Besides, there are about 33,961 "visa papers" for employment in Saudi Arabia which are at the pre-stamping stage at present, he told this newspaper by phone.

He said a nominal portion of the expired visas was submitted to the Saudi embassy in Dhaka for reissuance. He refused to mention any number.

The Baira leader said most of the expired visas were yet to be submitted since there have been delay in getting fresh medical reports and "police clearance" certificates of migrant workers, adding, those are required to get the visas reissued.

A stamped employment visa for Saudi Arabia remains valid for three months, he further said.

Baira started to submit expired visas to Saudi embassy for reissuance early last month.

On September 30, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told reporters that Saudi Arabia has agreed to reissue about 25,000 new visas.

The same day, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad said the Saudi embassy will cancel and reissue the visas which were obtained by potential migrants in March but could not be used.

Shameem yesterday said they have urged the foreign ministry, expatriates' welfare ministry, and home ministry for enhancing efforts to resolve problems regarding medical report and police clearance for the fresh migrant workers.

According to industry insiders, besides police clearance

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MOHAMMADPUR GENEVA CAMP

Notorious narcos back in business

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Police checkpoints stand just before the entrance of Mohammadpur Geneva Camp. A few steps into the camp, it's the same old sight that used to be seen at the notorious drug den of the capital before the 2018 anti-narcotics crackdown.

Once again, youths in small groups can be seen busy looking for potential customers, holding packets full of pink tablets.

The illicit drug trade, which was once an "open-secret" at the camp, has found its way back again, due to lax monitoring of the law enforcement officials, alleged locals.

Ishtiaq Ahmed, known as the drug lord of Geneva Camp, who was forced to stay away after the anti-narcotics crackdown, has reclaimed his illegal business, thanks to some unscrupulous law enforcement officials, according to intelligence and camp sources.

Two years after the "War on Drugs", Ishtiaq is now believed to be running the show from India. Molla Arshad, his second-in-command, mostly takes care of the narcotics network in Dhaka, they added.

Meanwhile, camp residents raised question as to how drug peddlers are selling the contraband pills inside the camp when police checkpoints have been set up just outside.

Also known as Bihari Camp, a densely-populated settlement of more than 25,000 Urdu-speaking



In the narrow alleys that interlace this dense sprawling settlement, drug trade goes on unabated despite there being a police checkpoint right at its entrance.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Biharis, is under Mohammadpur Police Station. The camp is not far from the office of the deputy commissioner of police (Tejgaon division), and Adabor and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police stations. The Rab-2 office is only one and a half kilometres away while the ward councillor's office is within walking distance.

The Daily Star visited the camp thrice recently. The place was found to be a hotspot for yaba trade yet again with small groups of youths

waiting for customers.

Visiting the area, these correspondents found several spots at different alleys, which drug-peddlers use as their "points" to sell drugs like yaba, heroin and cannabis.

Going into the Camper Bazar street, right after an eatery, there is an alley on the left side. Half of the alley was crowded with teens and youths selling yaba and cannabis.

"What do you need... brother?" asked a youth, showing a packet

of pink tablets to one of the correspondents. They were asking for Tk 300 a pill. When this correspondent did not show any interest, the youth offered a Tk 50 discount.

Locals said this spot is run by one Beji Nadim and his men. Among peddlers, there are Motki Sima and Lumbu Monu. Parvez and Kalim Jambu are two drug traders there, they added.

Similarly, more spots were found

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COVID-19 Another 14 die, 1,531 new cases recorded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen people died of Covid-19 in the past 24 hours till 8am, raising the death toll to 6,173, said a press release of Directorate General of Health Services.

It also said total infections have increased to 4,30,496, as 1,531 new cases were confirmed during the same time.

The recovery count rose to 3,47,849, after another 1,462 patients were discharged from hospitals during the period, it said.

A total of 11,795 samples were tested at 115 authorised laboratories across the country in the 24 hours, and of those, 12.98 percent tested positive.

Of the total tests conducted so far, Covid-19 cases were detected in 17.03 percent of patients, the release added.

Among total infections, 80.80 percent of patients have recovered, while 1.43 percent died.

Meanwhile, 13 people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8am on Friday while 1,845 fresh cases were recorded in the same 24-hour period.



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Salma Begum breaks down during the press conference.

'Arrest culprits who destroyed evidence'

Demands Rayhan's mother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Mother of Rayhan Ahmed, who died after being tortured in police custody, said the people who helped destroy evidence and helped prime suspect Sub-inspector Akbar Hossain Bhuiyan to flee must be arrested.

Rayhan's mother Salma Begum spoke to journalists at a press conference held at their house in Sylhet city's Akhalia Nehripara area yesterday afternoon.

She said, "We are still in the dark about why they detained and tortured my son in the outpost. The arrested police personnel are not giving confessional statements, which is also suspicious."

Salma said, "My son went out of home wearing a blue shirt, and we found him at the hospital wearing a red one. We want to know who did that as well."

She also said Rayhan's phone was not handed over to the family yet. In the press conference, she thanked Sylhet district police and others who helped in arresting Akbar.

Sylhet City Corporation Councillor Mokhlisur Rahman Kamran read a written briefing at the conference, where he thanked all concerned who helped to protest and urge for justice to be served faster.

Rayhan (33), a resident of Akhalia Nehripara area, died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital at 7:50am on October 11, around an hour after he was admitted there by police.

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TORCHING OF BUSES IN CAPITAL

BNP trying to take revenge on people Arson attackers won't be spared

Says Obaidul Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP is again trying to take revenge by burning people after voters rejected the party in the election.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, came up with the remarks at a virtual conference at Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi.

Saying that the killing of people and terrorism are BNP's political culture, Quader said in past they had killed people using petrol bombs and in arson attacks.

He said the recent incidents of bus torching was quite similar to BNP's sabotage and setting fire to vehicles in 2013.

There is video footage of the bus burning incident which showed an old and familiar story, he said.

Quader said law enforcers are trying hard to unravel the mystery of a phone conversation centring Thursday's incident.

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Warns home minister; casts suspicion on BNP

BSS, Dhaka

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday issued a note of warning that stern action would be taken against those involved in arson attacks on buses in the capital.

"Those who are involved in violent activities as well as setting fire on buses... none will be spared," he told journalists at his official residence in Dhaka.

The minister said BNP could not accept the election results because its candidate was defeated in Dhaka-18 by-polls. Law enforcement agencies have received some conversations among BNP leaders relating to the arson attacks on buses, which proved BNP's involvement in violent activities, he added.

He said BNP wanted to make the elections questionable whenever they were defeated. "We have identified many

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Conspiracy of undemocratic 'evil forces': Workers Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern and condemnation over the torching of several buses in Dhaka, Bangladesh Workers' Party yesterday said such subversive incidents is the outcome of conspiracy of undemocratic "evil forces".

In a joint statement, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Fazle Hossain Badsha said it seems such incidents are old strategy aimed at paving the way for rising of undemocratic power.

The two lawmakers from the party also

said such terrorist activity is a deep-rooted conspiracy to destabilise the country, when Bangladesh along with the whole world is passing an economically hard time due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

They said an ad-hoc initiative will not work to thwart such a situation.

"Law enforcement agencies become active whenever such subversive incidents take place. Moreover, political programmes are also enforced. But taking long-term strategy is better rather than taking ad-hoc based activities to thwart such subversive activities," reads the statement.

LAW REVIEW: SHIPBREAKING Legal framework in place to protect the environment

LAW DESK

Earlier this week, Department of Environment (DoE) in Chattogram fined Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, owner of Saleh Carpet Mill and former city administrator of Chattogram City Corporation, Tk 1 lakh for leasing out land to Hanga International, a factory that recycles scrap metal and iron from shipbreaking yards. It also fined Sonaichhari Union Parishad Chairperson Monir Ahmed Tk 1 lakh for issuing trade licence without DoE clearance.

The shipbreaking industry, although highly profitable, has severe adverse impacts on the environment: these include air pollution, and discharge of hazardous wastes like oil, asbestos and heavy metal.

Laws of Bangladesh also acknowledge the harmful impacts of shipbreaking. Section 6D of Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 states that every ship-owner, importer and yard user must ensure that no shipwreck or shipbreaking causes environmental pollution and health hazards through discharge of hazardous waste. Section 12 of the act lays down the provision for attaining Environment Clearance Certificate (ECA) from DoE director general before establishing any industry or project.

Rule 7 of Bangladesh Environment Conservation Rules 1997 classifies industrial establishments into categories such as green, orange-A, orange-B and red. Shipbreaking is listed in orange-B. As per the rules, such establishments must first obtain a location clearance certificate and then ECA after furnishing necessary documents (including a no objection certificate from local authorities).

In response to the High Court Division's directions in the judgment of a public interest litigation filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association, The Ship Breaking and Recycling Rules, 2011 was formed, which is applicable for regulating yards used for ship recycling.

Under the rules, the local authorities may allow a yard to be used for ship recycling upon availability of valid documents such as DoE authorisation for handling hazardous waste, license for Ship Recycling Facility Plan (SRFP) and approval from Ship Building and Ship Recycling Board.

Rule 46.1 states that any yard operating ship recycling activities without SRFP shall be fined a maximum of Tk 5 lakh, and the yard lease agreement can be ceased. Non-compliance with such regulations shall be dealt with laws such as Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 and Environment Court Act 2010.

Rape accused found dead in Barishal jail

Authorities claim it was suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A man, who is an accused in a case filed for raping his daughter, was found dead in Barishal Central Jail early yesterday.

Tail authorities claimed that the man, aged 40, from Bakerganj died by suicide.

Prasanta Kumar Banik, superintendent of Barishal Central Jail, told The Daily Star that the man was sued by his wife on September 30 on the charge of raping his speech-impaired daughter.

The accused had been detained since October 1 for trial in that case, he said.

The man was sent to a hospital outside the prison for DNA test on November 9; since then he had been in the quarantine ward at the jail hospital, said the official.

Around 3am yesterday, he was informed by jail guards of the incident, said the jail official. "I rushed in and found the man hanging with mosquito net from a water pipe in the bathroom," he added.

The body was recovered in the early hours and sent it to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. "We started investigation to find out the reason behind the suicide," said Prasanta.

The body will be handed over to the relatives after the post-mortem, he said.

Meanwhile, a security guard at the jail named Kawsar Hossain was suspended and a departmental case was filed against the security guard Ansar Ali Mondal for their negligence in duty, confirmed jail Superintendent Prasanta Kumar.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Newspaper sales have been suffering for months now, as the pandemic hit the industry hard. But with the reopening of offices and other institutions, people must go out into the streets now, and hawkers are seeing their lost customers come back. As the country slowly goes back to how it was before, sales are also reflecting that trend. This photo was taken yesterday at the capital's Bijoy Sarani.

RAIDING HOUSE OF 'CRIMINAL' Cops fall victim to mob beating

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Three policemen fell victim to mob beating when they went to raid a house in Narayanganj to arrest an alleged criminal early yesterday.

Locals attacked the law enforcers, terming them "robbers" at Jalkuri Paschim Para in Siddhirganj upazila, said the policemen.

A three-member police team conducted the drive to arrest one Billal Hossain, an accused in a criminal case, around 12:30am, said Assistant Sub-Inspector Nuruzzaman who led it.

When the team knocked on the door, the residents started hurling expletives at them instead of opening it, he said.

At one stage, someone began announcing through loudspeaker from the nearby mosque that robbers attacked the house, said the ASI.

Later, 30 to 40 people with sticks in their hands rushed to the spot and attacked them, said the police officer. "Locals beat us, tore our uniforms and confined us. They also threatened to kill us, if we enter the house," said ASI Nuruzzaman.

"We repeatedly identified ourselves that we are policemen, but they didn't care," he told The Daily Star.

On information from police patrolling the area, additional law enforcers rescued them, he said.

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