

EXPATRIATE WORKERS

Job market in Italy opens after 8 years

JAMIL MAHMUD

After eight years of embargo, the Italian government will allow hiring workers from Bangladesh both in "seasonal" and "non-seasonal" categories starting from this year.

Bangladesh has been included in a list of 30 labour-sending countries while a process of submitting applications is going on at present, which will continue till December 31 this year, said officials.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on October 12 said Italy has included Bangladesh in their "seasonal and non-seasonal workers programme" responding to a request from Dhaka, according to UNB report.

"The Italian government earlier withdrew this privilege as Bangladeshi farm workers violated conditions of this programme by not returning home after each season," he had said.

At present, Italy is home to about 1.45 lakh Bangladeshis who are registered with the Italian government.

Besides, a significant number of undocumented Bangladeshis also live in the European country, said sources at the Bangladesh mission there.

Arfanul Haque, labour welfare counsellor at the Bangladesh Embassy in Rome, said Italian government hires seasonal and non-seasonal workers each year under the "Flussi Decree".

"This year, both categories will be applicable for Bangladesh," he told this newspaper in a WhatsApp call.

Under the present initiative, Italy will hire about 30,850 workers in both categories, he said, adding, 18,000 of them will be recruited under seasonal visa and the rest as non-seasonal workers.

He, however, could not tell how many Bangladeshis will get the opportunity this year.

He said although the number of Bangladeshi workers might not be high, it is important that a new labour market has been opened for them.

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Little Russel was seen writing on his notebook, completely zoned in, sitting on a rickshaw-van at the capital's Curzon Hall area. He told this photojournalist that he loves to read and write, but his father cannot afford to send him to school. One day, when Russel asked to get admitted to a school, the father collected what little money he had and bought Russel pencils and a notebook. Far from being discouraged, he makes full use of the stationery, aiming to become -- in his own words -- a great man.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Won't budge from our principle of secularism: Joy

30 orgs win Joy Bangla Youth Award 2020

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh can never budge from its founding principle of secularism, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ICT advisor and CRI chairperson Sajeeb Wazed Joy.

"Whatever religion we belong to, we are all Bangalees," he said at the Joy Bangla Youth Award 2020 conferring ceremony, organised by Young Bangla on Tuesday night.

Joining from the US, Sajeeb Wazed said the Covid-19 induced restrictions resulted in holding the award giving ceremony online, a testament to making the pledge of Digital Bangladesh a reality, reads a press release of the Centre for Research & Information (CRI).

Referring to the young champions of change who were conferred with this award for transforming lives in their communities, he said, "Each time I look at you, I feel inspired."

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BIWTA staffers separate non-biodegradable waste and silt picked up by dredging machines. This photo was taken on Sunday from the Barishal River Port.

BARISHAL RIVER PORT

Plastic waste slows down dredging work

SUSHANTA GHOSH

When Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (VIWA) started a dredging operation to remove silt from Barishal River Port around October 16, they expected it to be over by now. However, more than a month later, not even half of the works could be completed.

BIWTA officials said it's the huge amount of polythene, plastic and other trash dumped into the water that is slowing down the project. As of yesterday, they have been recovering at least three maunds of junk every day.

"We set out to finish this as quickly as possible. The river needs to be dredged regularly for navigability's sake, but we haven't been able to dredge even half of our targeted 1.5 lakh cubic metres of silt," BIWTA's Assistant Engineer (Dredging) told this correspondent. "A lot of time and money is being wasted because of plastic pollution."

After visiting the Barishal River Port and Kirtankhola river area, it has been found that a huge amount of cloth, ropes, and plastic waste are coming up with the silt. After every 30-40 minute of operation, staffers take cloth, ropes, and plastic waste out of the dredging machines and keep them separately. This is done make disposal and recycling easier. Additionally, after every day, at least one submerged trawler is being collected from the river, the officials said.

The depth of the 40 km long Kirtankhola river is 100-150 feet in the middle side. During low tide, it stands at seven or feet around the port area, said sources within the department. However, launches get stuck on their way to the port if there isn't at least 10-12 feet of depth. This means there's no other way but to dredge the area of silt, and the polythene and plastic waste that comes with it.

Mostafizur Rahman, Joint Director of BIWTA and Barishal River Port Officer, said the operation will be carried out across 30 points on the Dhaka-Barishal route, including a few points at the port area. Dredging work is going on with two machines, he told this correspondent. "If everyone is not aware, the river port will start resembling the Buri Ganga river."

Siddiqur Rahman is a regular at the port. He collects revenues related to goods-transportation at the port. "I've seen launch passengers and staffers indiscriminately dump waste into the river. That's at least 8-10 vehicles everyday."

"Relevant authorities used to monitor the area and keep waste dumping under control, but after the early days of the pandemic, the monitoring has slackened," he added.

"Although dumping garbage into the river is banned, some people are violating it and creating this problem," said Saidur Rahman Rintu, Vice president of the

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DSCC mayor calls for closing shops, businesses by 8pm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday urged all shopkeepers and owners of business establishments to close by 8pm daily, to reduce traffic congestion.

The mayor called upon residents of DSCC areas while inaugurating the 10-storey Sheikh Hasina academic building at Sher-e-Bangla Mohila Mahabiddyaloy in Tikatuli, as chief guest.

He said authorities want to bring the whole city under proper management, and they want to close every shop and business establishment by 8pm, as in many foreign countries, they start closing from 5pm-9pm, depending on areas.

He further said if the establishments start shutting down early, traffic congestion in Dhaka will reduce. The Dhaka south mayor said if everyone goes home early, they will be able to give more time to their family, which is essential.

Before inauguration, the mayor also laid down the foundation stone of Azimpur modern city market, commencing construction work.

POLICE CYBER SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

691 complaints in 48hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Cyber Support for Women, a special cell formed on November 16 to contain the rising trend of online harassment against women, has received around 691 complaints in the last two days.

Of the complaints, 331 were received on Tuesday and 360 yesterday.

The complaints include allegations of cyber bullying, blackmailing, ID hacking and threats, Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general of Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star yesterday.

During this period, the special cell has already been able to settle 170 complaints, which is around 25 percent of the total received ones, he said.

According to cell officials, these complaints were mostly over ID hacking or creating fake social media accounts.

Sohel Rana said for these types of complaints, the cell, composed solely of female officials, has already prepared some templates on how to keep social media accounts secure or report against

fake accounts.

Once one submits a complaint, the officials immediately send those templates to her with guidelines.

In the last 48 hours, 52 complaints are being handled at the "follow up desk" and complainers have been contacted for some relevant information to investigate into those allegations. These complaints will be disposed of upon receiving further information from them, said desk officials.

The remaining 489 complaints have been registered as "complaints for investigation" and necessary legal action will be taken after probe, according to a statement issued by the PHQ.

Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed officially launched the all-woman special wing at an event at the Rajarbagh Police Lines Auditorium in Dhaka.

The cell receives complaints through three platforms -- Facebook page: Police Cyber Support for Women (PCSW); email: cybersupport.women@police.gov.bd or hotline: 01320000888.

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CLOSED FACTORY IN SAVAR

RMG workers stage sit-in for 10-months' arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Workers of A-One BD Ltd, a closed factory of Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) have been staging a sit-in programme demanding arrears of 10 months.

During the past two days, around 700 workers of the factory gathered in front of Ashulia Press Club for the sit-in which took place from 10am to 4pm.

The demonstrators said that at least 1,100 workers of the factory, which is owned by an Italian named Alessandra Ferry, have been living in a dire situation as they haven't been paid in the last 10 months. Neither the factory authorities, nor the BEPZA authorities or the government have taken any responsibility for their payment, said workers.

The factory has remained closed since March, when the pandemic hit Bangladesh. Wages have remained unpaid since January, the workers said, adding that they have been running from door to door of DEPZ authorities to get the arrears.

Asraf Ali, a worker, said they have held several demonstrations and DEPZ officials have assured them at least 18 times that the arrears will be paid. "We cannot provide for our families. It has been

so difficult for us to survive in the last 10 months," said Asraf. "This sit-in programme will continue until we receive our due payment."

Another worker, Ujjal Hossain, said DEPZ authorities had said that the workers will be paid after auctioning the factory, but then the auction was stayed after a High Court order. "We demand the PM's intervention in this matter," said Uzzal.

Taslina Akter, president of Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati, said, "We along with some workers of the factory tried to urgently discuss the matter with DEPZ authorities. They said they can't do anything until the stay order is withdrawn."

Contacted, Abdus Subhan, general manger of DEPZ told the Daily Star that workers will get salaries of three-and-a-half months and they have already paid two months' salaries.

"We were trying to pay the rest of their salary by auctioning the factory but a stay order from the HC on October 20 has stalled this process. The stay order was issued following a dispute with the bank," said Abdus Sobhan.

"We are trying to vacate the stay order through the Attorney General's office," he added, "A hearing may take place next week."

Verdict in DU student rape case today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The verdict in the case filed over the rape of a Dhaka University student in the capital's Kurmitola on January 5 will be given today. Judge Begum Mosammat Quamrunnahar of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-7 of Dhaka is scheduled to read out the judgement in presence of the lone accused Md Majnu around noon, court sources said.

On November 12, the tribunal set the date after conclusion of arguments from both the prosecution and defence. Earlier, the tribunal recorded statements of 20 out of 24 prosecution witnesses, including the victim and the case's complainant.

On January 5, the DU student was raped while she was walking from Kurmitola bus stop to a friend's house near Shewra Rail gate around 7:30pm after getting off a university bus.

The next day, the girl's father filed the case with Cantonment Police Station, accusing unknown people.

On January 8, Rapid Action Battalion arrested 30-year-old Majnu from Shewra area.

Bangladesh, Qatar commit to strengthen bilateral relations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ambassador of Bangladesh in Qatar, Jashim Uddin, has emphasised on recruitment of more skilled workers and professionals in the Gulf country from Bangladesh.

He raised the issue during a meeting with the Secretary General (foreign secretary) of Qatar's foreign affairs ministry Hassan Al Hammadi on Tuesday.

During the meeting, both officials discussed several issues concerning bilateral relations, including strengthening trade cooperation. They agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), said a press release of the embassy.

The Bangladesh envoy said more than four lakh Bangladeshi expatriates are currently living in Qatar and that their presence is "one of the key pillars" of bilateral relations between the two countries, it said.

At the meeting, the ambassador thanked Qatar government for ensuring treatment of Bangladeshi expatriates amid the coronavirus pandemic.

He also highlighted Bangladeshi expatriates' contribution in economic developments of both countries and discussed aspects of the Bangladeshi community's well-being in Qatar.



The entirety of Sylhet division was cut off from electricity supply following a blaze at a power plant on Tuesday. The literal darkness prevailed for 31 hours until power was restored at around 6:10pm yesterday. This photo of Zindabazar point was taken soon after the neon signs and lights turned back on.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

WORLD TOILET DAY 2020

Improve sanitation to combat impact of climate change: WaterAid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even in 2020, one in four people around the world does not have a toilet. For Bangladesh, while 48 percent of the population has access to basic sanitation facilities, the rest only have access to limited and unimproved sanitation, a WaterAid Global Report has found.

The global charity organisation released the report to mark the "World Toilet Day 2020" yesterday.

The report -- titled 'Living in a fragile world: The impact of climate change on the sanitation crisis' -- highlights the link between poor sanitation and the transmission of fatal but preventable illnesses, and examines how these are compounded by the effects of climate change, a press release said.

Tim Wainwright, Chief Executive, WaterAid UK, said "WaterAid's report shows that climate change has intensified the sanitation crisis, with increasingly frequent and extreme weather events destroying toilets and sanitation systems, putting the health and lives of millions of people around the world at risk."

According to the report, Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world when it comes to the impact of climate change. Two-thirds of Bangladesh sits less than five metres above sea level, leaving these areas highly susceptible to river and tidal flooding. Drought, rising sea levels and cyclones also significantly impact access to clean water.

A lack of clean water, decent toilets, and hygiene claim the lives of around 800 children under five every day. In total, around 829,000 lives are lost due to this problem every year.

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