



The Daily Star



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PANDEMIC-HIT OVERSEAS JOB

Returnees see bleak future

2.72 lakh returned in 7 months; govt efforts for their economic reintegration fail to yield expected outcome



JAMIL MAHMUD

After years of struggle, Mostakim Alam landed a job at a digital printing shop in Kuwait as a computer operator. With earnings of Tk 1.20 lakh a month, all was going well.

Then came the novel coronavirus, bringing with it a sudden and impactful cascade of disruptions to his life. Losing the job, he eventually returned home in May from the Gulf country where he had been working for six years.

Over six months on, the 30-year-old from Khulna's Paikgachha upazila is now finding it hard to maintain his family.

"I am unemployed now," Mostakim, a father of two, told this newspaper by phone recently.

The condition of Masum Mia, 24, is better off to some extent.

After remaining jobless since his return to the country on May 10 from Bahrain, the migrant from Brahmanbaria started a small tea-stall in his area last month. He worked in Bahrain for eight years.

Now, he is struggling to make ends meet with the income from his shop. His six-member family, including his parents, depend on him.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



A launderer washing a white sheet in the Buriganga river in the capital's Keraniganj yesterday morning. Clinics, decorators and other businesses in the area send their bed sheets, tablecloths, chair covers, and other fabrics to such launderers to be washed. During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, however, washing clothes in the polluted waters of the Buriganga could increase health risks rather than providing customers with clean materials.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PROTHOM ALO EDITOR Editors' Council concerned at charge framing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sampadak Parishad expressed grave concern about the charges pressed against Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman and nine others even though he was not present at the event where student Naimul Abrar Rahat died after being electrocuted.

The Sampadak Parishad's (Editors' Council's) concern was expressed at a virtual meeting held on November 21 and November 26, 2020.

The meetings were presided over by Mahfuz Anam, president of the parishad.

On November 1 last year, during the year-ending programme of Kishore Alo, a publication of the Prothom Alo, a student of Residential Model School and College, Abrar, died in tragic circumstances when he accidentally came in contact with a live electric wire.

Following the incident, a SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt establishing countrywide rail network

PM says after laying foundation stone of rail bridge over Jamuna

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is working to establish a rail network across the country for providing transportation to people and goods at a cheaper rate.

"There will be a rail line from Dhaka to Chattogram, Chattogram to Cox's Bazar and Ghundum. We'll build the railways stronger and we have plans," she said.

The prime minister said this while laying the foundation stone of 4.8km long double-line dual-gauge Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Railway Bridge over the Jamuna aimed at increasing the rail communication between the capital and Western zone of the Railway.

She said that the government will set SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Infection spikes by 32.5pc this month

Experts sound alarm as 54,723 Covid cases recorded in Nov, compared to 41,281 in Oct; deaths also see 8pc rise

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

With winter sweeping over the country, Covid-19 cases have risen by 32.5 percent this month compared to the number recorded last month.

During the first 29 days of October, 41,281 confirmed Covid-19 cases were reported, while the Directorate General of Health Services reported 54,723 confirmed cases in the same days of November.

Experts said the rise is related to the drop in temperature as the country enters the winter months, and warned that the trend may continue as December is the coolest month in Bangladesh.

With the increase in the number of patients, hospitals in Dhaka are struggling to meet the rise in demand for intensive care unit (ICU) beds for coronavirus patients with comorbidities, sources said.

"The virus loves the cool weather. Already we are observing a rising trend in new cases this month. It will probably rise further during December because December is the coolest month in our country," Dr Mahbuba Jamil, head of the virology lab at Institute of Public Health (IPH), told The Daily Star.

The number of deaths from the highly transmissible virus has also SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

TACKLING 2ND WAVE Pvt hospitals should increase ICU capacity

Says health minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday urged private medical college hospitals to prepare for providing a hand to the government designated Covid-19 hospitals in tackling the "second wave" of the pandemic.

The minister asked the private hospitals to double their Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity.

"The government hospitals have already started making preparations, you should too... Private hospitals have around 1,200 Covid-19 dedicated beds -- around 10 percent of its SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Sculpture, idol are different

Says new state minister for religious affairs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed State Minister for Religious affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan yesterday said sculpture and idol were different and there were sculptures in almost every country.

He urged people to be tolerant, saying that the ongoing crisis and can be resolved through discussion.

Those who oppose the sculptures of Bangabandhu lack understanding of the issue, the junior minister told reporters after a meeting with ministry officials.

Many countries have pictures on coins and Bangladesh has pictures of Bangabandhu on money, Faridul said.

Religion-based organisations, including Hefajat-e-Islam, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, have been demanding that the government cancels its plan to set up a sculpture of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the capital.

Different ministers have been arguing that Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran have sculptures.

Faridul in a statement said, "We all know more or less that there are some bad people in every community SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Would remove all sculptures if I could

Says Mamunul of Hefajat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefajat-e-Islam leader Maulana Mamunul Haque yesterday said he would remove all the sculptures in the country if he had the legal, moral and political capacity.

Mamunul, joint secretary general of the Qawmi madrasa-based platform, further said their stance was against sculptures, not against Bangabandhu in any way.

"I fully respect Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the great leader of the country's Liberation War, as a late Muslim leader, and pray for the salvation of his departed SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Top, three locals in Sylhet's Dakshin Surma upazila going through garbage and fishing out discarded medical waste at the city corporation's garbage dump. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, they take no precautions like wearing masks or gloves as they handle material that may well be infected. They then resell these, like syringes, left, although local clinics are supposed to dismantle the syringes and burn them, and discard potentially hazardous materials.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Recover 1.38 lakh acres of forestland

JS body sets March 2021 deadline for govt to begin eviction of grabbers

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body has set March next year as the deadline for launching eviction drives to recover 138,000 acres of reserve forestland grabbed by 88,000 individuals and organisations across the country.

The decision came at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment, forest and climate change ministry at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

"The committee asked the ministry to complete by December 20 the list of grabbers and prepare documents containing their addresses, data on occupied land area, land record numbers and the dates of grabbing," Saber Hossain Chowdhury, the chief of the parliamentary watchdog, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BUSINESS ONE-FOURTH OF TAXPAYERS FILE RETURNS

Deadline ends today as NBR is reluctant to extend time

Only one-fourth of 50 lakh plus registered taxpayers have filed their annual income tax returns until end of the last week with the National Board of Revenue saying it is not going to extend deadline for submission beyond November 30. It means that taxpayers, who would be unable to file their returns today, will have to submit returns by seeking time from the field offices of taxes. And holders of Taxpayers Identification Numbers (TIN), except for certain cases, will face fine for failure to furnish their income returns this year.

STORY ON B1

Our beloved father Annisul Huq, left us on 30th November, 2017.

On behalf of our mother Rubana Huq, we request you to keep our father in your prayers.

Navidul Huq
Wamiq Umaira
&
Tanisha Fariaman Huq

