

## Doubly victimised

### Gulf War victims forced to pay lakhs for UN compensation

By Reaz Ahmad

A section of officials and employees at the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) are realising at least Tk four lakh as illegal toll daily from Gulf War victims for disbursement of the compensation money provided by the UN, the victims alleged.

The money is shared by "most" of the officials and employees, they claimed.

The toll is being realised although 1.5 per cent of the compensation money is deducted officially for meeting administrative costs.

Officials there said four hundred Gulf War victims are called at the BMET at Kakrail in the city daily for payment of compensation, which varies between Tk one lakh and Tk two lakh. The payment started on June 1 and will continue till August 1.

Some 71, 321 Bangladeshis returned home from Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf War in 1990. The United Nations Compensation Council (UNCC), created after the war, so far sanctioned Tk 983 crore to the Bangladeshis victims. Of it, Tk

925 crore has already been paid, the officials said.

This correspondent spent several hours daily at the BMET office in the last few days and noticed that officials and employees were demanding toll openly from the victims.

Dozens of the compensation seekers standing in eight queues told this correspondent that they had to pay illegal toll ranging from Tk 5,000 to Tk 1,000 each. "Otherwise, the officials sitting at the counters unnecessarily harass us by asking for one document or the other. They simply deny payment till we grease their palms," one of them said.

Another victim, M. Chowdhury, who came from Sylhet for his compensation money said, "I was lucky to get the money by paying Tk. 600. But I saw another victim paying Tk. 1,000."

A poor widow from Chandpur had to pay Tk. 5,000 to get Tk. one lakh compensation money payable to her husband, who died after returning home, another victim said.

Sometimes, deals are made through 'dalals' (brokers) who are members of a so called

Kuwait-Iraq Returnees' Association. But the victims said it was a self-styled association formed by some unscrupulous people in connivance with the officials and employees. None of them are its member, the victims said.

Asked why they did not lodge complaint with the authorities concerned, they said the office of the Director for UNCC affairs at BMET office was under lock and key for the last few days.

This correspondent tried repeatedly to meet The Director General of BMET, but he refused to talk.

Sources close to the DG said he took office barely two weeks ago, and is under 'heavy pressure' from a strong lobby of officials who have been realising such toll illegally for years.

The DG, a former official of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, gave a verbal warning to the dishonest officials and employees, but to no effect, the sources said.

The Daily Star also reported in late 1998 that Tk. 26 lakh was realised as illegal toll by a



The Sena Kalyan Sangstha (SKS) establishment on the river Buriganga. This is the photograph of the Sangstha's storage facilities, taken on Wednesday showing encroachment of the river. We inadvertently published the photograph of another illegal structure describing it as a SKS establishment. We regret the mistake but will publish the story of that illegal construction very soon.

## Sena Kalyan Sangstha's note of protest, our reply

Manager, Real Estate Division of Sena Kalyan Sangstha, Major Fakharuddin Khan (Rtd) has sent the following note of protest to The Daily Star:

The Sena Kalyan Sangstha hereby puts on record their serious protest against the publication of the news item entitled 'Sena Kalyan grabs Buriganga' published in the front page on Tuesday, July 4, 2000. This is totally incorrect and baseless.

For your information, we may mention here that Sena Kalyan Sangstha has entered into an agreement dated 3.12.1998 for purchase of 2.15 acres of land with its rightful owners, situated at All Bahar Mouza of Shampur, Dhaka.

We have now been doing earth filling work to level the ditches and holes without any hindrance or damage or encroachment on the river Buriganga. The land is being purchased with a view to use as Sena Kalyan Sangstha's cement godown for storage of cement, which are products of Sena Kalyan Sangstha's factory at Mongla. We have not grabbed any land of the river Buriganga and the published news item has given a distorted information to the public and thereby, we feel, that the image of Sena Kalyan Sangstha has been damaged.

We do not have any employee or representative named, "Narayan". So the information published in the paper stating to have been gathered from "Narayan" is incorrect. Mr Ershad Ali Chowdhury, Asst. Estate Officer of Sena Kalyan Sangstha was in fact contacted over telephone. He stated that since he joined the Sangstha about a few months ago he is not aware of the project or work.

He however, denied to have stated that BIWTA filed a case against Sena Kalyan Sangstha for encroaching the river Buriganga or that the matter was settled.

The picture printed on the first page with reference to the said news item is not of the site in question.

**Our reply:** In the report, The Daily Star did not question the ownership of the land but pointed out that its project over 2.15 acres of 'land' encroached upon the River Buriganga. But why the Sena Kalyan Sangstha is calling the news item baseless is not understandable. We reiterate our position and challenge the Sena Kalyan Sangstha to prove that it is not earth-filling and damaging the river. What authority and right they have to cause such colossal damage to the river by filling earth to fill up the 'ditches' by their own admission.

BIWTA officials at Sadarghat and its head office at Motijheel confirmed that the project was 'totally illegal'. A top BIWTA official told The Daily Star that the Sangstha's installation at Shyampur

## WTO cell at commerce ministry

By Rafiq Hasan

The government has set up a cell at the Ministry of Commerce to deal with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), according to sources concerned.

The cell was set up in response to demands from the business community.

Headed by a deputy secretary of the ministry, the cell will be guided by a national committee comprising top business leaders of the country.

The decision to set up the cell was taken at a meeting chaired by Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil in May this year. The meeting also decided to form two committees — a core committee and a general committee — to expedite activities of the cell.

The core committee will comprise representatives from different ministries including commerce, finance, foreign affairs and agriculture, Planning Commission and business representatives.

Another meeting chaired by the minister on June 11 formed a committee headed by Mahabur Rahman, president of the International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh, to make recommendations for constituting the general committee, the sources said.

Business leaders at the meeting had demanded creation of a WTO Division instead of a cell. But the minister told them that

## Dhaka favours PTA

### BIMSTEC appreciates progress in sectors marked for cooperation

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, July 6: Bangladesh today supported the creation of a Preferential Trading Arrangement (PTA) in the run up to a Free Trade Area (FTA) with India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand and road and rail links among these countries for fostering economic cooperation in the region.

Addressing the third meeting of BIMST (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand) Economic Cooperation at the ministerial level, Bangladesh Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury said "we support the idea of formation of an inter-governmental group to prepare a concept paper on creating a preferential trading arrangement amongst BIMST-EC member-countries."

The PTA is an intermediary stage ahead of free trading area among BIMST-EC countries. The idea was put forward by the five-member grouping's Economic Forum when it met for the first time three days back in the Indian capital.

Stating that regional cooperation provides the basis for economic development of BIMST-EC countries, Chowdhury said the coming together of this economic grouping could

serve as a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN which has enjoyed one of the highest growth rates in the world.

Emphasising the potential of BIMST-EC to work as a link between South Asia and South East Asia, he said an integrated transport system linking Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand would have a "direct and positive effect in the process of development of the Economies of these countries."

The Economic Ministers of BIMST-EC, at their last meeting here in April this year, agreed to expedite work in promoting road and rail links among member-countries, Chowdhury said, adding Economic and Social Cooperation in Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) has already taken steps to promote Trans Asian Railways and Asian Highways Projects.

"These links will be through our countries and will be of great importance to us," he asserted, adding transport and communication are critical for development of economic cooperation in the region.

Earlier, inaugurating the BIMSTEC ministerial meeting, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh asked the member countries to tap the

## India rejects OIC resolution on Kashmir

NEW DELHI, July 6: India turned down today a call by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) urging self-determination in Kashmir, and said it was an internal matter, reports Reuters.

Foreign Ministers of the OIC adopted a resolution at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur last month calling for a fact-finding mission to disputed Kashmir where it said civilians were being killed.

An Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Kashmir was an internal matter. "Such resolution is an internal matter," he said.

The idea was floated at the BIMSTEC Economic Forum meet on July 3, that also recommended forming a joint Chamber of Commerce to promote private sector-government interaction under the bloc.

In a joint statement at the end of the meeting, the BIMSTEC members appreciated the progress made in the six sectors identified so far for cooperation and hoped action plans for each sector and sub-sector would be monitored for early implementation.

## JS in unending quorum crisis

### Ruling party MPs leave House once session gets going

By Nazmul Ashraf

The parliament sans the opposition continues suffering from quorum crisis as many Treasury Bench members start deserting the House when it goes into dull session.

The House proceedings have become more tedious since the passage of the new national budget on June 29. And with the passage came to an end the ruling party lawmakers' blistering speeches against the boycotting opposition parties during a general discussion.

Falling short of quorum, that is presence of at least 60 members, halfway through the day's sitting has become a regular phenomenon in the current budget session that began on June 5.

Presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina always helps the House to have a quorum, though. Being the House leader, Hasina attends the session almost every day and stays back for quite sometime. But the Treasury Bench members depart soon after she leaves the House, even for a brief period.

And, the session goes on without quorum — some 40 to 50 MPs being present most of the time. Interestingly, no-one brings the crisis to the notice of the Chair. It is the opposition lawmakers who would point out the crisis. Lawmakers of pro-government faction of Jatiya Party prefer to ignore it.

The Chair is supposed to adjourn the House for restoration of quorum only when the matter is brought to his notice.

The chronic quorum crisis in the current session was at its worst yesterday, private members' day.

With the prime minister being outside the capital on a state function, the truant Treasury Bench members got a free hand yesterday. Most of them did not turn up while others left unattended without facing any obstruction from the Whips.

A handful of front-ranking leaders in the Treasury Bench preferred gossiping to the dull proceedings. Deputy Leader of the House Zillur Rahman was caught off the guard when the Chair drew his attention to a

## World Cup back on German stage

### New Zealand's abstention shatters South Africa's 2006 dreams

ZURICH, July 6: Germany will stage the 2006 World Cup after a neck and neck vote with South Africa on Thursday as the Fifa executive committee ignored its president's call to give it to an African nation for the first time, reports AP.

In the final round of voting at Fifa headquarters, Germany had 12 votes and South Africa 11 with one abstention.

England and Morocco were eliminated in the first two rounds.

The dramatic vote at the end of a four-year campaign by all the bidding countries came as the two leading candidates went into the third round tied at 11-11.


That meant that the two members who had voted for England in round two had to decide whether to go for South Africa or Germany, which last staged the World Cup as West Germany back in 1974. But New Zealand's Charles Dempsey decided to abstain. Blatter announced at a news conference.

If the New Zealander had voted for South Africa to make it 12-12, it would have gone to Blatter's casting vote and the Germans probably would have lost. His decision to abstain was a shock for the South Africans.

"He had promised us that, if England were eliminated before the final round his vote would



Legendary German footballer Franz Beckenbauer (C) is flanked by Fifa President Joseph S Blatter and Fedor Radmann, a member of the German bidding team, after the Fifa executive committee designated as host of 2006 World Cup. —AFP photo



www.uniqa.com

A leading American Internet appliance development company needs **professionally experienced Database Developers, C Programmers, Web Developers, and Web Graphics Designers** for their offshore development office at Dhaka.

<b>Database Developers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be highly experienced in multi-tier client/server Database Programming using SQL and PERL/CGI</li> <li>• Experience in web-based development is a strong plus</li> <li>• Programming experience on Linux servers is a strong plus</li> </ul>
<b>C Programmers:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be very strong in C</li> <li>• Programming experience in Linux is a strong plus</li> <li>• Knowledge of TCP/IP programming is a strong plus</li> </ul>
<b>Web Developers:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be highly experienced in web development (including HTML, JavaScript, PERL/CGI, etc.)</li> <li>• Should be able to design commercial websites (including e-commerce solutions, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Web Graphics Designer:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have experience in graphics design for web pages</li> <li>• Should have experience in widely used graphics packages (like Adobe PhotoShop, Macromedia Director, and GIF editors)</li> <li>• Knowledge in HTML and other web development languages is a strong plus</li> </ul>

CV or resume by email only to:  
[uniqa@bol-online.com](mailto:uniqa@bol-online.com)