

The Daily Star

TODAY'S ISSUE 20 PAGES

COMMITTED TO People's Right to Know

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XII No. 142

DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 13, 2002

www.dailystarnews.com

20 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: TK 7.00

Tip of a *hundi*-berg

Recruiters send over Tk 1000cr a year to Saudi Arabia through unofficial channels only to buy workers' visa

RAFIQ HASAN

Recruiting agents in the country siphon off more than Tk 1,000 crore a year to Saudi Arabia through *hundi* to 'buy visa advice' for 1.2 lakh workers, sources concerned said.

The agents buy 'visa advice' from Saudi employers at Tk 75,000 to Tk 90,000 each and the whole amount is sent through *hundi* due to lack of any official system of sending money there.

On the other hand, around 12 lakh Bangladeshi workers in that country send home at least Tk 5,000 crore per year through *hundi*.

"This shows only the tip of an ice berg," one source said seeking anonymity.

According to a recent study by the International Organisation of Migrants (IOM), unofficial channels of sending money to Bangladesh from abroad

have 'at least six advantages' over the official system. This significantly contributed to the growth of *hundi* business.

The advantages are unofficial exchange rate is higher than official rate, migrants are not required to go to banks or pay any commission, illiterate migrants can avoid processing of papers and money is delivered quickly. Besides, many migrants prefer unofficial channels as they want to avoid banks for fear of getting caught for their irregularities and many others go for this, fearing that banking documents may be lost as banking services in Bangladesh are poor.

Government officials in Bangladesh, however, claimed that because of a massive drive to increase the flow of remittance through official channels, it

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2001-02 workers' remittances from 9 countries (taka in crore)

| Period | Saudi Arabia | UAE | UK | Kuwait | USA | Qatar | Oman | Bahrain | Malaysia |
|--------|--------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|---------|----------|
| July | 535.12 | 101.86 | 25.31 | 124.26 | 113.20 | 40.93 | 39.44 | 27.13 | 11.23 |
| Aug | 474.41 | 88.29 | 32.49 | 113.43 | 127.34 | 36.20 | 39.90 | 24.85 | 20.52 |
| Sept | 493.96 | 105.45 | 46.11 | 111.44 | 133.27 | 35.00 | 48.68 | 21.43 | 18.64 |
| Oct | 462.33 | 107.73 | 34.09 | 125.34 | 160.51 | 41.90 | 40.87 | 25.53 | 19.38 |
| Nov | 484.10 | 122.15 | 34.83 | 123.23 | 169.80 | 41.21 | 46.34 | 25.08 | 22.35 |
| Dec | 441.01 | 102.77 | 34.88 | 144.38 | 173.79 | 46.00 | 55.18 | 23.48 | 19.04 |
| Jan | 784.49 | 121.75 | 52.88 | 143.40 | 162.86 | 50.17 | 58.77 | 24.88 | 25.46 |
| Feb | 557.69 | 119.33 | 47.42 | 149.67 | 186.73 | 44.52 | 49.45 | 27.85 | 27.39 |

Source: Bangladesh Bank



PHOTO: AFP

Argentina's striker Hernan Crespo (L) is comforted by a teammate at the end of the final first round match of Group F against Sweden at Myagi Stadium yesterday, and an Argentinian fan cries after the match that saw his team kicked off the World Cup.

Adios Argentina

AFP, Miyagi

Sweden ousted pre-tournament favourites Argentina from the World Cup's 'Group of Death' here yesterday after the pair drew 1-1 in a dramatic encounter.

Argentina dominated the opening half and missed a stack of chances but looked headed for defeat after a brilliant Anders Svensson free-kick 14 minutes after the restart put the Swedes in front.

Hernan Crespo bagged a late equaliser on the rebound after Ariel Ortega saw Swedish keeper Magnus Hedman push out his 87th-minute penalty.

But the draw was not good enough for the Argentinians, who needed a win to avoid crashing out in the first round for the first time since 1962 and whose earlier loss to England eventually proved fatal.

Swedish coach Lars Lagerback said his team had ridden their luck as the Argentinians threw everything into attack.

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Grameen Match Report

DHL Spec Report

Most wanted criminal Titon arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Naim Ahmed alias Titon, one of the 23 most wanted criminals in the city, was arrested by detectives in the Dhaka Cantonment area yesterday morning.

Thirteen plainclothes policemen of the Detective Branch (DB) team No. 4 went to the Cantonment Police Station on a microbus through the Zia Colony Gate in a bid to arrest Titon.

The detectives with the backup of a mobile team from the police station cordoned off a three-storey building on the Road No. 9, opposite the Garrison Cinema Hall at about 3.00am, said sources in the DB. Inspector Shahnur Khan led the operation.

Some policemen climbed the wall, locked all doors of the house from outside and waited in an ambush until sunrise.

After Fajr prayers, the team found



Khandaker Naim Ahmed Titon

the landlord walking on the rooftop. The policemen told him that they came to arrest one of the accused in

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Speaker's rulings draw AL flak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar Tuesday issued two rulings, prompting his predecessor Abdul Hamid and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina to label his actions as extra-constitutional.

Chief Whip of the House Khandakar Delwar Hossain also contradicted one of the rulings, but the speaker was unfazed.

The speaker ruled as unconstitutional a parliamentary committee formed by the opposition Awami League to resist 'state-sponsored terrorism, torture and communalism'.

"Only the House can form parliamentary standing committees with the members of parliament... formation of parliamentary committees by anybody else is beyond the constitutional provision," he said,

termining the AL-formed committee extra-constitutional.

He quoted Article 76 of the Constitution that dwells on the formation of parliamentary standing committees.

Also at a press briefing at his parliament office yesterday, Hamid accused the speaker of violating the Constitution twice through his Tuesday's rulings.

Earlier Tuesday, rebutting sharply to the speaker's rulings, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina termed the ruling illegal. "As chief of the Awami League Parliamentary Party I do have the right to form such a committee and the speaker has no right to rule against my action," she told reporters after the AL Central Working Committee meeting Tuesday night.

She said the speaker's ruling aims to stop the opposition from looking into widespread repression by the government. "It's not an affair of the House and so the speaker can't rule on it in the House."

Speaker Sircar gave the ruling after BNP lawmaker Fazlul Haq Milon drew his attention on the AL committee.

Sheikh Hasina recently formed the "Committee to Resist State-sponsored Terrorism, Torture and Communalism" with Deputy

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Shazneen case Deposition of Latifur Rahman concludes

STAR REPORT

Deposition of the second prosecution witness in the Shazneen rape case, the victim's father Latifur Rahman, ended yesterday before the Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka.

After the three-hour deposition, he was cross-examined by lawyers of the principal accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid.

The cross-examination remained incomplete as the court

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Shazneen

Hartal shifted to Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League has shifted its countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal to June 16 from June 15.

The hartal date has been shifted due to the ongoing higher secondary certificate (HSC) examinations, a party press release said yesterday.

The AL called the hartal on Tuesday to protest what it called 'massive' taxes on the poor in the new budget, attacks on opposition activists, harassment of people in the name of BDR raid on terrorists as well as to protest the recent murder of a female student at the BUET.

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Haji Selim held again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Awami League MP of Lalbagh-Kamrangirchar area Haji Mohammad Selim was arrested in the city's Motijheel area yesterday evening.

Detectives picked up Haji Selim at about 7:30pm on his way home from office at Motijheel.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of the Detective Branch (DB) Mohammad Kohinor Miah told The Daily Star that the Awami League leader was arrested for his involvement in crimes under the Section 54 of the

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