

UAE introduces new rule to check trafficking in underage camel jockeys

UNB, Dhaka

Children from Bangladesh will need separate passports from September for travelling to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Major-General Saif Al Shaafar, Under-Secretary of the UAE Ministry of Interior, announced that only nationals of seven countries, including Bangladesh trafficking in underage camel jockeys, would need to have separate passports for their dependants.

Children from these countries, whose citizens were required by law to issue separate passports for their dependants in connection with the ban on underage camel jockeys, can still come into the country on their parents' passports during the six-month grace period that ends in September.

The measure aims at preventing children from being smuggled into the country as camel jockeys, since the authorities discovered several cases of violations regarding passports of children arriving in the country accompanied by people,

who claimed they were their parents, but had in fact no direct relation with them.

The new rule has triggered several reactions among citizens of the aforementioned seven countries, particularly those residing in the UAE.

Some of them rushed to their diplomatic missions to get separate passports issued for their children before the summer holidays.

Many fear that if they go out of the country, they will not be allowed to re-enter with the old passports.

Others who were outside the country and wanted to return are confused whether they will be allowed to bring in their children, while still on the parents' passports, or they will need to have separate passports in their home countries.

Clarifying the issue, Brigadier Saeed Mattar bin Bleilah, Director of the Dubai Naturalisation and Residency Department (DNRD), said immigration authorities have given a grace period of six months starting March 31, the date when the new rule came into effect, for parents to obtain separate passports for their kids.

"Those who are residents of Dubai and are outside the country can come

in at any time between now and September with their children on their passports," he said, explaining that once inside the country, they can approach their embassies to obtain separate passports for the kids.

"After obtaining separate passports, they will have to submit applications for new residence visas for the kids, going through the normal application procedures, including the payment of visa fee," he said.

He said the residents who have separate passports for their kids in their respective countries have nothing to fear with regard to the status of their visas.

"If the kids are mentioned in the residence visa stamped on the parents' passports, they will be allowed to enter with their new separate passports. Upon arrival, the passports will be taken away by the immigration personnel at the airport, and they will be asked to report to the DNRD to apply for the residence visas for the kids," Brig Bin Bleilah added.

According to figures released earlier by the officials at the Ministry of Interior, around 49 per cent of the smuggled camel jockeys were brought by uncles and nine per cent by cousins, who pretended to be their parents.

'Restore original Women's Dev Policy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's rights activists yesterday demanded immediate cancellation of the amended National Women's Development Policy and restoration of the original policy framed in 1997.

Rejecting the amendments to the policy, they said the government has brought changes to the fundamental aspects of the policy, curbing the rights of the women.

Amendments were brought to the policy in May 2004, deleting several provisions such as direct election to the parliamentary seats reserved for women and equal rights to employment, business, economic activities and inheritance, they said at a view exchange meeting in the city.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) organised the programme, with its President Hena Das in the chair.

How is it possible to ensure gender equality and guarantee the principle of non-discrimination without equal rights to power and economic resource and equal effective representation at the highest policy-making level? asked Ayesha Khanam, general secretary of BMP.

Shirin Akhter, president of Karmojibi Nari, said the government is always talking about women's empowerment and on the other hand, it is imposing restriction on women's participation in politics and administration.

With the help of the extremist forces, the government amended the policy mysteriously without involving the officials, said the speakers.

They said the government has offset all the achievements of the country and undermine the spirit of the liberation war through such an act.

The government is also trying to gradually suppress the protests by women by framing different policy in a planned way, said Sultana Kamal.

The speakers called on the rights organisations to carry on tough movement against the amended policy.

Farida Akhtar of Sammilita Nari Samaj, Hamida Hossain of Ain O Salish Kendra, Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, editor of the Sangbad, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of the Bangladesh Observer, Sohrab Hossain, associate editor of the Jugantor, Prof Mamtaz Begum, Rasheda K Chowdhury, Mahmuda Khatun and Zakia K Hasan of Norwegian embassy also spoke.

Decision to send VDP women as housemaid protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday protested the government decision to send women members of Ansar-Village Defence Party (VDP) as housemaid to Saudi Arabia.

They said these women were enrolled in Ansar-VDP to maintain law and order, but the government is sending them abroad as housemaid tarnishing the image of the country.

The discussion on 'Sending of Ansar-VDP women to Saudi Arabia as housemaid' was organised by Thengamara Mahila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) in the city.

Termining Saudi Arabia a very insecure place for maids having an age group 25-35, the speakers alleged that the Saudi Sheikh's treat women like products.

"Who will ensure the security of these women when there are a number of cases of sexual abuse of Bangladeshi women who earlier went to Saudi Arabia and other Middle-East countries as maid? they posed the question.

The speakers alleged that as the ministry concerned failed to pay their salary regularly, it is sending them abroad as maid.

Presiding over the discussion, Sultana Kamal, executive director of

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Charge d'affaires of the US Embassy Judith A Chammas called on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her office at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

Poor's access to microcredit a must to combat Monga

Research recommends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ultra poor people, who consume food around 1600 kilo calorie per day and are left out of the poverty alleviation net, need special government and non-government attention with access to microcredit and skill development to combat seasonal famine Monga in the northern districts.

Setting up of agro-based industries and small and medium enterprises (SME) to create employment opportunities along with the introduction of quick high yielding varieties (HYV) of crops

are also important factors to face the crisis.

A research on 'Selected poverty-stricken areas in the northern Bangladesh' made the recommendations which were revealed at a dissemination session of its findings at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Dr AMM Shawkat Ali, former agriculture secretary, conducted the research funded by Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (Rib).

The research on 1,267 households of 4 selected villages in Rangpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram also

recommended checking of river erosion, use of common resources including ponds and lowlands and monitoring and evaluation of resource flow channelled through Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme.

Food insecurity and seasonal joblessness during September and October when the hard-hit ultra-poor are forced to migrate to other districts for jobs or fall back on money lenders is known as Monga, said Shawkat.

The non-income dimensions of poverty presents a more dismal picture, he said, adding that 99 percent of the sample households have only traditional lighting facilities, 37 percent are unable to purchase new clothes, 72 percent do not have access to reading materials, and their sanitation facilities are unhygienic.

Sixty-five percent of the households depend on quacks, pirs and fakirs, he added.

Shawkat said, "The surprising thing is that 93 percent of the respondents do not have the access to credit from the government or NGOs when Bangladesh is believed to be the inventor of microcredit."

The migratory nature of the char people could be the reason for which the NGOs do not come up with credit programmes, the participants in the research observed.

The research revealed that 54 percent of the sample respondents are agricultural labourers having no agricultural land and the others are engaged in various occupations. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents have no training on income generating activities.

The Monga situation also exists in some other districts like Noakhali, Comilla or Faridpur from where people can immediately come to Dhaka, which is not possible for the people of Kurigram or Nilphamari due to financial crisis, Shawkat noted.

Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, Dr Jahangir Alam, member director of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, Dr Hamida Hossain of Ain O Salish Kendra, and Md Aktaruzzaman of Planning Commission were present at the presentation moderated by Rib Chairman Shamsul Bari.



Sammilita Ainjibi Samannaya Parishad forms a human chain in front of the Bar Library in the city yesterday demanding separation of judiciary.

Improve standard of edn to cut poverty

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called on the government to take effective measures to improve the standard of education and increase the enrolment of students in order to eliminate poverty.

Expressing concern over the

dwindling allocation for the education sector, they also called for proper utilisation of the resources through efficient management.

The Campaign for Popular Education (Campe), an NGO, organised the seminar on 'Poverty and education' at the LGED Bhaban in the city.

Presenting a keynote paper, noted economist and President of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) Dr Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad said there has been a total confusion about the literacy rate and related issues as the figures provided by different sources vary widely.

He said the net enrolment at the primary level is 87 percent while the figure for the secondary level is about 53 percent and the adult literacy rate is just under 50 percent.

Although the overall progress has been significant, expansion of education is still a matter of concern, he added.

But the quality of education at the primary level is extremely poor, Dr Kholiqzaman said, adding that of

those who complete primary education, only 1.6 percent, as found by a study, have all the required competencies.

"This means that 98 percent or more fail to achieve the required standard of education at the primary level."

The schools and colleges in rural and small towns are ill-equipped in terms of teaching aids and quality of teachers and from the point of view of management and supervision, he said.

Quality education is a must for the poor in order to acquire the capability to break out of the poverty syndrome, said Dr Kholiqzaman.

He suggested involving local communities in addressing the problem, particularly in rural areas and small towns.

Dr Shawkat Ara Hossain, Dr Ahmedullah Miah, Harun-ur-Rashid, M Habibur Rahman, Mostofa Kamal, and Campe Director Rasheda K Chowdhury also spoke at the seminar chaired by ANM Eusuf, advisor to the Campe.

WEATHER TODAY graphic with sun and cloud icons.

Intermittent rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Intermittent light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at most places over the country till 6:00pm today.

Heavy to very heavy falls are also likely at places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions, Met Office said predicting slight fall in day temperature over the country during the period.

Highest temperature 32.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 24.1 degree Celsius at Bogra.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm today and rises at 5:20am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

4-hour strike in newspapers, news agencies July 17

Bss, Dhaka

Journalists, press workers and employees will observe a four-hour token strike from 11:00am in all newspapers and news agencies on July 17 to press home their demand for formation of the 6th wage board.

Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) held a joint meeting at Jatiya Press Club yesterday to make success the strike.

Co-convenor of the Oikya Parishad Fazole Imam chaired the meeting.

The journalists and press worker leaders demanded immediate formation of the 6th wage board, declaration of 60 per cent dearness allowance and implementation of previous wage board in all newspapers and news agencies.

They blamed the ministry of information for dilly-dallying to announce the new wage structure. They said the SSKOP will announce its final course of action if gazette notification is not made by July 17. The extended meeting also urged all to join a rally and demonstration on July 17 to make the agitation a success.

Obituary

UNB, Dhaka

Abdul Hafiz, a former Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) lawmaker, passed away due to cardiac arrest at the Millennium Heart Centre in the city yesterday at the age of 70.

He left behind his wife, two sons, three daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Hafiz was elected a Member of Parliament (MP) from Nilphamari-4 constituency on BNP ticket in 1991.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in a message of condolence has expressed deep sorrow at the death of Hafiz.

She recalled his contributions in the Liberation War and the anti-autocracy movement.

Khaleda prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Ratish Chowdhury

Ratish Chowdhury, former director of Uttaran Group of Garments and younger brother of Khitish Chowdhury, former chairman of Habiganj Poursava, passed away at his home at Sayestanagar in Habiganj on July 10 at the age of 78 due to old-age complications, says a press release.

A lifelong bachelor, he left behind a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

His Shraddha will be held at his house on July 22.

DHAKA TODAY

Memorial meeting

Dhaka University Teachers' Association organises a meeting in memory of Prof Sitara Parvin who was killed in a road accident in the USA on June 23. Venue: University Club Bhaban. Time: 5:00pm.

Blue for Peace

The family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria will observe Blue for Peace programme demanding the trial of the killers. Venue: In front of Rajakshi Complex, Uttara. Time: 4:30pm.

Discussion

Youth Against Hunger will hold a discussion to finalise its 10-point demand with noted economist Dr Attur Rahman as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

Protest meet

The Committee to Resist Changes in National Women's Development Policy organises a protest meeting. Venue: Central Shaheed Minar. Time: 4:00pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Economic Association organises a seminar on Tenggatila gas blowout with its President Dr Kazi Kholiqzaman in the chair. Venue: Planning and Development Academy Auditorium, Nilkhet. Time: 3:00pm.

Roundtable

The architecture department of North South University, in collaboration with the Institute of Architects Bangladesh,

organises a roundtable titled 'The Education of Architecture in Bangladesh-Future direction.' Venue: NSU campus, Banani. Time: 10:30am.

BC seminar

British Council organises a seminar on 'How to apply for a UK student visa' for students who are planning to apply for their student visas for studying in the UK. Venue: British Council Auditorium, 5 Fuller Road. Time: 3:00pm.

Science week

The inaugural ceremony of the 28th National Science and IT Week-2005 will be held with Brac University Vice-chancellor Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury as chief guest. Venue: Notre Dame College. Time: 3:00pm.

Dhaka Post

The weekly Dhaka Post celebrates its 15th year of publication by holding a seminar on 'Syndicated News' with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Purbani International. Time: 3:40pm.

Inauguration

The newly constructed City Bus Terminal will be inaugurated with City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: Syedabad Bus Terminal. Time: 12:00 noon.

Earthquake meet

A meeting of Bangladesh Earthquake Society will be held. Venue: Brac University, Mohakhali. Time: 3:00pm.



Dr Nazia Khanam speaks at a lecture on 'Socio-economic problems of expatriate Bangladeshis and their solutions' in the city yesterday. On her right is Dr David Chees Man and on her left is Justice Abdur Rouf. The Council for National Agenda organised the lecture.