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## Manpower export falls 19pc

### Reluctance to hire foreign workers main reason

RAFIQ HASAN

Reluctance of many a country to hire foreign workers, militant trade unionism of expatriate Bangladeshis and the government's restrictions on undocumented overseas job-seeking have resulted in a 19 percent slide in manpower export in January to May this year from the corresponding period in 2004.

According to sources at the expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry, the recent decline in manpower export was also due to an unwillingness of receiving countries to recruit unskilled workers. They now seek skilled or at least semi-skilled workers.

However, the remittance earning of the country in the same five months this year increased from the corresponding period of the last year by about the same percentage, mainly thanks to an increased hiring of skilled and professional people abroad.

The upward trend in remittance reflects the rising employment of

skilled people abroad," said a high official of the ministry.

The sources said a total of 91,447 Bangladeshis went abroad for job in January-May this year, posting an 18.85 percent decline from 113,056 in the same period in 2004.

The remittance earning, on the other hand, went up by 18.73 percent in that period this year, with the country fetching \$17.37 billion against the \$14.63 billion remittance received in the corresponding period in 2004.

Officials at the ministry said the government's recent initiative to keep close watch on people going abroad for overseas job has discouraged many to leave the country before receiving job confirmation.

The government also had to temporarily suspend manpower export to some countries like Jordan and Brunei following aggressive demonstrations and strikes by some expatriate Bangladeshis. While manpower export to Malaysia is yet to resume though a bilateral memo-

randum of understanding was signed back in October 2003.

On the other hand, governments of some countries, particularly those of the Middle East, are dissuading foreign workers from creating job opportunities for their countrymen. Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are on this list.

The officials said the recent trend among the expatriate Bangladeshi workers of involving in militant trade unionism painted a negative image of the country abroad.

The workers attacked the Bangladesh embassy in Kuwait in April this year and observed strike, suspending normal operations in many public and private organisations. After the incidents, the authorities concerned have become cautious in hiring workers from Bangladesh.

In May, Bangladeshi workers at a factory in Jordan went on a strike. As a result, fresh manpower export to that country remained suspended for a couple of weeks.

## RAB TORTURE Businessman's condition worsens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health of the garment factory owner, who suffered multiple fractures due to torture by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), deteriorated, and the elite force yesterday formed a four-member team to probe the Friday night's incident.

"Haunted by Friday's experience, he has been having fainting fits, frothing at the mouth," Tania Sultana Joya, wife of Abu Bakar Sultan Bidhan, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Relatives fear Bidhan, who is

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## DU FAZILATUNNESSA HALL Students keep 5 teachers confined for 14 hrs

Provost resigns

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of students of Fazilatunnessa Mujib Hall of Dhaka University kept five teachers confined in the TV room of the hall for almost 14 hours until yesterday afternoon to press the authorities for meeting their 13-point demand.

Provost of the hall Prof Nasrin Ahmed resigned on Sunday saying the students' agitation was "politically motivated" and "pre-planned."

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## Bidisha finally gets back Eric

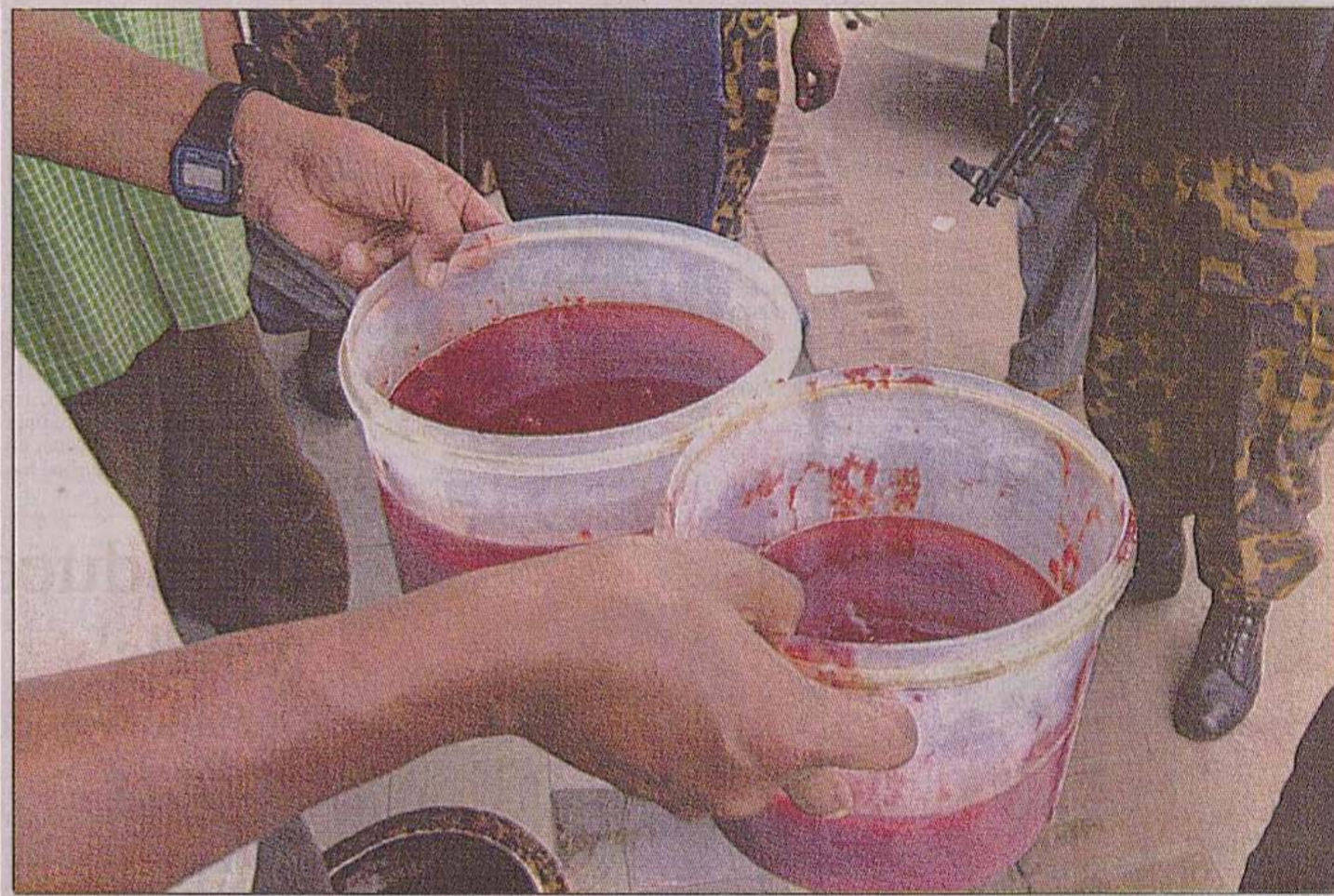
UNB, Dhaka

After a long 45 days' tug-of-war, Eric, the only son of Ershad and Bidisha, went back to his mother yesterday from under his father's care in the broken home.

The move was made after an agreement between Ershad and Bidisha. The lawyers of the two parties brought the child together from Ershad's President Park residence in Baridhara to Bidisha's Niketon house after Ershad signed the agreement at about 10:00am. Bidisha had signed the deed earlier.

According to the agreement, Eric will stay a week alternately with his

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A mobile court in a drive against selling of adulterated food seizes harmful chemicals ready for mixing with food at the Midnight Sun Chinese Restaurant at Asad Gate in Dhaka yesterday.

## Floods still rage in fury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With onrush of water from the Indian Assam hills, deteriorating flood situation in 40 upazilas of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Bogra and Sirajganj districts has added to the sufferings of more than a million people.

All the rivers and tributaries in the Brahmaputra basin have marked a little rise while those in the Gages basin receded during last 24 hours.

Dharla, Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Ghaghot, Kartoa, Bangali rivers were flowing above the danger levels at different points of the seven northern districts.

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## DHAKA-CTG EXPRESSWAY Malaysian firm wants to invest Tk 6,000cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian construction company Azimat Consortium has proposed to invest over \$900 million (equivalent to about Tk 6,000 crore) to build 270 kilometre long Dhaka-Chittagong expressway on build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis.

It is for the first time that a foreign company has come up with proposal to implement such a big project in the roads and highways sector in Bangladesh.

The company has proposed to transfer the highway to the government after construction and operation for 30 years. It will realise the money through toll collection from the vehicles.

As the government will not have

to invest any money in the project, the Ministry of Communications is actively considering the proposal, sources said.

The main objective of the expressway is to augment the Chittagong port activities by ensuring rapid supply and delivery of export and import items from the capital to Chittagong and vice versa.

The expressway with six lanes, each 12 feet wide, will have facility for plying of all kinds of vehicles including slow moving ones as there will be separate tracks.

There will also be entry and exit points at all the district headquarters that the proposed expressway crosses.

The proposed expressway to be

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Zealots take away the tin sheets brought to build the roof and fence of an Ahmadiyya mosque at Dakkhin Khan, Uttara in the capital yesterday.

## Zealots vandalise Ahmadiyya mosque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local zealots yesterday vandalised an under-construction Ahmadiyya mosque in presence of police at Dakkhin Khan in city's Uttara, causing panic among the sect members.

The Ahmadiyyas alleged that the religious bigots have been obstructing the construction work since it began in February this year.

"They are bitterly opposed to construction of the mosque and have long been trying to deter us in many ways including attempts to establish the land as disputed," Afzal Ahmad Kader, amir of city unit Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sub-inspector Bari of Uttara Police Station was present during yesterday's attack on the sect, said

Arman Ali Sarkar, a local Ahmadiyya.

Akhtaruzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Uttara Police Station, however, told The Daily Star that he had sent SI Bari on receiving a complaint from the local Ahmadiyyas.

The Ahmadiyyas yesterday morning resumed the construction work of the mosque on a six-katha land that they claim to have bought from three daughters of Hazi Faiz Uddin. But soon a guard of Gram Sarkar showed up and asked them to stop the work.

"We have heard what you have just said but let us decide whether to stop the work," Sarkar said in response to the guard's call.

Minutes after, the member who sent the guard, burst into the site with some 40 people and started

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AHMADIYAAS Film on persecution to be screened at House of Lords Babar assures them of rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday assured the Ahmadiyyas that it will do everything necessary to uphold the democratic and fundamental rights of the sect.

The government assurance came two days before a documentary on Ahmadiyya persecution in Bangladesh to be screened at the British House of Lords on July 20.

A question-answer session and discussion on human rights condition in Bangladesh will follow the screening of the documentary 'Muslim or Heretics'. Nayeem Mohaimin, a Bangladeshi citizen, has made the film.

Sources said the House of Lords

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## Saifur hints at oil price hike

### Purchase committee okays appointment of 4 PSI cos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The finance minister yesterday hinted at a fresh hike in petroleum prices to check depletion of foreign exchange reserves.

"Our [foreign exchange] reserve is under serious pressure," M Saifur Rahman told reporters after a meeting of the Cabinet Purchase Committee that approved purchase worth Tk 289 crore, including payment for oil import.

The committee okayed the import of 1.22 lakh tonnes of urea fertiliser worth Tk 220 crore and the appointment of four pre-shipment inspection (PSI) companies.

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## Case against 3 JCD muggers sent to speedy tribunal court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The case against three Dhaka College unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders for mugging Tk 12 lakh was shifted to a Speedy Trial Court, Dhaka yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza of the court will hear on charge framing against the JCD men today. The accused are Golam Ohab Liton, 24, science and technology affairs secretary, Azizul Haq, 23, a member, and Mohammad Ruhul Amin, assistant general secretary.

Motijheel police on June 28 pressed charges against them, showing 25 people as prosecution

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## Rules for use of project cars in the offing

### Draft rules to allow use of vehicles of projects transferred to revenue budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to finalise the draft rules regarding the use of cars bought under different development projects.

As per the new draft rule, the cars under the development projects that were transferred to the revenue budget will not have to be handed over to the government transport pool.

On the other hand, the cars under the development projects that have not been transferred to the

revenue budget will have to be handed over to the transport pool, sources said.

A high powered meeting with the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office Kamal Uddin Siddiqui in the chair yesterday discussed the matter and decided to remove all loopholes in the rule regarding the use of project cars.

He expressed dissatisfaction over the misuse of expensive cars bought under different development projects.

Government officials could not

give the actual number of misused cars and clarify the whereabouts of around 4,000 project cars that were not handed over to the government transport pool, sources said.

The meeting asked the secretaries concerned to prepare a detailed report on where and how those project cars are being used. The meeting decided to give fresh letters to the ministries concerned for knowing the actual picture.

Earlier The Ministry of Establishment wrote letters to over

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## Noab, BSP say wage board should be free of govt influence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspapers Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) and Bangladesh Sangbadpatri Parishad (BSP) yesterday said wage board for the journalists and newspaper employees should be independent of government influence in order to function effectively.

In a joint statement, Noab President Mahbul Alam and BSP President Mainul Hosen said the government has no right to dictate terms of reference for the wage board.

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