

# Migration to Malaysia still remains costly

PORIMOL PALMA

Although the present caretaker government has taken a number of steps to bring discipline to the overseas employment sector, the high cost of migration to Malaysia is yet to see a reduction.

The recruiting agencies are still charging Tk 1.5 lakh to Tk 2 lakh whereas the government-fixed rate for sending each worker to Malaysia is only Tk 84,000.

Following allegation of charging extra money from the job seekers, the interim government dissolved the executive committee of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) and arrested its president MAH Salim. Baira's Kuala Lumpur office, which allegedly extorted money from the workers, was also closed down.

Besides, Malaysian high commissioner in Bangladesh at a recent meeting with the expatriates welfare and overseas employment ministry also requested the government to look into the issue of charging extra money from the workers.

Sources in the ministry of expatriates welfare and recruiting agencies said that the cost could not be brought down because of the 'lobbyist fee' the agencies have to pay to some Malaysians for getting the job demand letters.

The issue of 'lobbyist fee' came to the attention of the authorities recently when a so-called Malaysian lobbyist admitted to the Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia that he had agreements with six Bangladeshi recruiting agencies that pledged to pay him Tk 54,000 for managing each job demand letter from the employers.

The government also collected documents of such agreements, a source in the foreign ministry said, terming the agreements 'very unusual.'

According to sources concerned, the so-called lobbyist went to the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur for securing visa and admitted the fact when asked about reasons for visiting Bangladesh.

Bangladesh High Commission immediately informed the matter

to the home ministry, which then formed a committee led by an additional secretary and represented by the officials of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), Directorate of Passport, intelligence agencies and administrator of Baira to probe into the matter and submit a report within two months.

Contacted, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Abdul Matin Chowdhury said that they have received a letter in this regard.

"We also formed a committee to identify the reasons behind the high cost of migration to Malaysia. We hope that the committee will submit its report within one and a half months at the most. We shall then take decision on the basis of the recommendations," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked what steps the government would take if the probe discovers that 'lobbyist fee' in a manpower receiving country is the reason behind high cost of migration, he said, "Let's get the report

## ACC boss for local anti-graft bodies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday stressed the need to form anti-corruption committees with neutral persons at the local level.

The ACC is going to adopt a new action plan to intensify the ongoing anti-corruption drive and the local committees would play a vital role in this regard, he said at a view exchange meeting at Cox's Bazar Cultural Centre in the morning.

At the meeting that was held as part of his countrywide campaign against corruption, he suggested forming anti-corruption committees in cooperation with the deputy commissioners and with the participation of professionals.

Terming the present environment conducive to anti-corruption drive, the ACC chairman urged all to forge a social movement against corruption.

There might not be the opportunity to raise voice against corruption after two years, he added.

Local people can take a strong stand against corrupt people through non-violent means and raise mass awareness about it, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Gridlock on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Traffic moved very slow on the road almost the whole day yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

A traffic sergeant writes a ticket as the driver honked his horn in a no-horn zone on Dhanmondi Road-8 in the capital yesterday. Honking has been prohibited on several city streets to check sound pollution.

## UP member sued after her extortion case against Ilyas Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An extortion case was filed on Saturday night against a union parishad (UP) member who recently sued former lawmaker and Sylhet district BNP chief M Ilyas Ali on similar charges.

Mashuk Ali of Madanpur filed the case with Biswanath Police Station against UP member Angura Begum saying she demanded Tk 20,000 for installing a government allotted deep-tube-well in his area.

He said he paid her Tk 5,000 on April 5, 2006 but the tube well was not installed, as he did not pay her

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# Manpower export leaps

UNB, Dhaka

Some 1,97,000 Bangladeshi workers have been sent abroad in the last four months, a 20 percent increase in manpower export compared to the corresponding period of last year.

"This is one of the success stories of the government," Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury told reporters yesterday.

Of the workers, 57,000 went to Malaysia, he said after a meeting with a delegation of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) headed

by its ex-president and former MP Mosharraf Hossain.

The meeting discussed various problems facing the Baira in sending manpower abroad and ways to ensure that the Bangladeshi workers are not harassed in foreign countries.

Recently, 400 Bangladeshi workers were sent back from Kuala Lumpur because the Malaysian immigration authorities found dissimilarities in their fingerprints.

The adviser asked the authorities concerned here and Baira to

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## Militants threaten Barisal judge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A militant organisation claiming itself as the Barisal divisional al-Qaeda yesterday threatened the second additional and district sessions judge asking him to stay away from the court.

Cleaning staffs found copies of a letter—written by Sanaullah Hugi who identified himself as a member of the organisation—in different rooms of the District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday morning.

The letter addressed Judge Md Mainuddin Islam and said he had been cautioned many times earlier to abstain from his duties and is now being asked for the last time to stay away from the court, "otherwise no one but Almighty Allah

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## Iran 'agrees' to hold talks with US on Iraq

AP, AFP, Tehran/ Cairo

Iran said on Sunday it has agreed to a request from the United States for talks on Iraq, just over a week after the two archfoes failed to have substantive contacts at a conference in Egypt.

"Iran has agreed to talk to the US side over Iraq, in Iraq, in order to relieve the pain of the Iraqi people, to support the government and to reinforce security in Iraq," foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini said.

"The time and date of the talks and the ranking of the negotiating team will be made public this week," he said according to the state-run IRNA agency.

The Mehr news agency said the talks would take place in Baghdad.

Hosseini said the talks would go ahead after the United States made

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# 35 killed in attack on Kurdish officials

## 10 more die in Baghdad market blast

AFP, Arbil/ Baghdad

A suicide bomber killed at least 35 people yesterday when he ploughed his explosives-laden SUV into local administrative offices in the northern Iraqi town of Makhmur while 10 other Iraqis died in Baghdad market bombing, officials said.

"The new toll for those killed is 35," said Kurdish regional health minister Zirian Abdel Rahman, adding that the toll could be higher since not everyone was evacuated to the hospital in the regional capital of Arbil.

"All the dead are men, but there are women and children among the 115 wounded," he told report-

ers, adding that many of the wounded were in serious condition.

Police said the bomber hit a compound housing Makhmur's local administration and the offices of two Kurdish political parties.

"We were holding a meeting in my office when there was an explosion outside, which smashed the windows," said Abdel Rahman Bilaf, the mayor of Makhmur, which lies 300 kilometres (180 miles) north of Baghdad.

Bilaf was speaking as he was treated for cuts to his face in a hospital in the city of Arbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan.

"A man in an army officer's

uniform driving a Chevrolet four-by-four pulled up and said he was expected at a meeting," said wounded policeman Ziad Ibrahim.

"We let him in and he drove to straight to the party offices and the car exploded," he explained, also speaking from his hospital bed.

Police Brigadier General Mohammed Alwagaa told AFP from Mosul that a senior police officer was among those killed in the attack.

Makhmur is a mixed town on the border between the Kurdish region and Iraq's Nineveh province. Abdel Rahman said the compound was hosting a meeting of local officials when the attack took place.

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# Minimum capital requirement for banks raised

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday decided to increase the amount of the required minimum capital for commercial banks to 10 percent of their risk-weighted assets from the existing requirement of nine percent.

The decision was taken in a bid to reduce the risks different banks face as well as to bring international standard in the banking system, a high official of the BB said. He said commercial banks will be notified about the central bank's decision today.

"We will ask the banks to meet the minimum capital requirement by December 31," the official added.

According to existing regulations, each bank has to retain at least Tk 100 crore or nine percent of its risk-weighted assets, whichever is higher, as the minimum capital.

The BB sources said the central bank will also make a move to amend the Bank Company Act 1991 to increase the amount of the required minimum capital to Tk 200 crore from the existing requirement of Tk 100 crore.

The council of advisers to the caretaker government already approved a finance ministry proposal in this regard, which is currently being processed by the law ministry.

With the BB's latest decision to increase the amount of the required minimum capital for banks, the banking sector will have to mobilise more than Tk 1500 crore by the end of this year.

According to the existing rules, the banking sector should have had a total capital of Tk 13,788 crore in 2006 but the amount was Tk 12,288 crore, the BB data of December 2006 show. The data also show that overall capital deficit in the sector

was Tk 1,500 crore that year.

According to the data, capital deficit of nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) was Tk 3,412 crore while specialised banks had a deficit of Tk 39 crore.

Local private banks and foreign banks operating in the country, however, as a whole showed a brighter performance as the private banks had a capital surplus of Tk 530 crore while the foreign banks' capital surplus was Tk 1,421 crore.

Among the private banks, Oriental Bank had a capital deficit of Tk 663 crore and Social Investment Bank Limited (SIBL) had a deficit of Tk 27 crore. Sources said SIBL recently got out of its capital deficiency by issuing right shares.

Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the BB, welcomed the decision saying it will not be a

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## Ashraful scare for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh vice-captain Mohammad Ashraful has been admitted to a private hospital on Saturday night after suffering from a high temperature.

The premier batsman did not travel with the team which left Dhaka yesterday morning along with India for Chittagong to play the third match tomorrow and the first Test of the two-match series starting from May 18 at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

There is only a slim chance that the dashing right-hander will play the final one-dayer in the port city although his temperature has subsided slightly.

It was learnt that the team-management had decided to send him to hospital in the hope that it could help the ace batsman, who felt sick soon after the completion of the second one-dayer in Mirpur on Saturday, recover from the fever quickly.

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## Hannan Shah sued again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yet another case has been filed against Brig Gen (retd) ASM Hannan Shah, adviser to the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, along with his son Rezaul Hannan on Saturday night.

Kapashia thana Awami League General Secretary Ruhul Amin filed the case with Kapashia Police Station (PS).

With this latest extortion case, the total number of cases filed against Hannan Shah after the end of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government's tenure stood at four.

Complainant Ruhul Amin, a lecturer at Kapashia Degree College in 2001, alleged in the case statement that as Hannan Shah, a candidate for Gazipur 4 (Kapashia)

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## BSF kills 1

A CORRESPONDENT, Meherpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) killed a Bangladeshi trader near Kathuli border of the district on Saturday night.

The dead, Afajuddin Kalu, 27, hailed from Kathuli under Gangni upazila of the district.

Maj Ashraf, second-in-command of Mirpur BDR Battalion, admitted the incident and said they have sent a letter to the BSF inviting them to attend a flag meeting and asked them to return Kalu's dead body.

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PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court raids a television assembling factory at Noyatola in the capital yesterday. The factory owner was fined Tk 24 lakh for fake branding of TV.

Prayer Timing		
May 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		