

Establish just system to gain from labour migration

Prof Muzaffer says at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad has called for establishing a just system of labour migration to gain from it and protect the rights of the workers who play significant role in the economic development of the country.

Referring to a study he said in many cases migrant workers on returning home find that the benefits they got from abroad are not even equal to the assets that they had sold for going and working in foreign land.

Prof Muzaffer was speaking as chief guest at a discussion titled 'Rights to mobility with dignity: Challenges and opportunities' organised by Bangladesh Migration Development Forum (BDMF) to observe the International Migrants Day yesterday.

At the programme at Cirdap auditorium in the capital, Prof Muzaffer, also Trustee Board Chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh, said there is a group in the government

that not only take bribes from the unscrupulous recruiting agencies, but also is engaged in sending workers abroad.

Elaborating the sufferings of migrant workers abroad in the absence of a just arrangement by both the receiving and sending countries he said, "Alliance of manpower agents at both the ends leads to exploitation of migrant workers."

He urged the government to take up large-scale skill development programmes, especially in nursing and technical education, and find out employment opportunities in the developed countries.

Prof Muzaffer said the migrant workers must know the rules and regulations of the receiving countries they intend to go and develop their communicative and job skills.

Human rights activist Dr Hameeda Hossain said the government looks only at the money the overseas workers send, not at their rights.

Such attitude is also reflected in the bilateral agreements the government signs with other manpower

receiving countries, she added.

There seems to be no accountability in the total overseas employment process, she said, adding that Baira (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies) should be made accountable for any fraudulent practices by its members.

Coming heavily on the government, BDMF Joint Convener TIM Zahid Hossain said corruption, fraud and exploitation have taken a deep root in the overseas employment process where the middlemen are officially recognised, but are out of the control of the authorities.

Referring to recent exploitation of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia he said, "The government cannot deny its involvement in the victimisation of the migrant workers."

In his welcome speech, Shikha Shasthya Unnayan Karzakram (Shishuk) Executive Director Sakil Millat Morshed said, "We are busy counting the money the migrant workers send, but do not give importance to their human aspects."

In the outsourcing system (through which workers directly cannot get jobs, rather depends totally on recruiting agencies), the workers are being deprived more and more of their rights, he observed.

Mahbub Elahi of Obhibashi Karmi Kalyan Foundation said the government takes pride in saying that it has so much of foreign reserve, but does not feel to take enough care for them who are behind it.

"This attitude must end," he asserted.

Migrants' rights activist Masud Perviz suggested financial transactions through banking channels to stop any fraud in the manpower business.

A returnee migrant Mina Begum, who went to the Maldives 12 years back, called for establishing greater unity among the migrant workers to wage strong movement against the frauds actively involved in the business and realise their demands for humane migration.



Artiste Pijush Bandopadhyaya hands over a CD titled 'Tui Razakar', an album of recitation by him, to Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker at the CD release ceremony at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday while Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutt, 2nd from right, looks on. From left are Maj Gen (ret'd) Harun-ar Rashid, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali and Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiqullah.

Experts for common cyclone warning signal system

Recommendations to govt by January 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An experts team tasked with modernising the cyclone warning system and special weather bulletin service is considering introduction of a common warning signal system for river and sea ports and easy-to-understand and comprehensive messages for people.

"We are thinking about including in the message information on when and where a cyclone is going to hit, how high will be the waves and when people should leave their homes for shelter," said Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury.

A meeting of the team yesterday decided to submit a set of recommendations to the government by January 7.

Meantime, a national advisory

committee is going to take shape in a week for advising on disaster prevention and mitigation, preparedness and emergency response.

Prof Jamilur Reza and some other participants stressed the need for modernising the 1898 signal system through a unified one.

It was proposed at yesterday's meeting that the existing four-level signalling system for river ports and 11-level for sea ports with a six-level common warning system should be replaced with signals 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10. A few participants, however, disagreed saying the signals should change gradually rather than jump.

Prof Jamilur Reza said weather bulletins should be easy to understand basing on the study of wind pressure, speed and temperature. The team will also propose introducing community radio and

announcement in local dialect.

The team will finalise its proposals by January 7.

Food and disaster management Adviser Tapan Chowdhury told the meeting that the ministry is going to propose a 30-member national advisory committee before the advisory council.

The chief adviser will nominate a convener for the committee while the director general of Disaster Management Bureau will be its member secretary.

Sources concerned said names of Prof Jamilur Reza and Prof Ainun Nishat were in the proposal for convener.

The proposal came through a standing order on disaster in 2004 but no move was later made in this regard.

4 JMB men jailed for 14 yrs in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

A court here yesterday sentenced four Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadres to 14 years' rigorous imprisonment each in an explosive case.

Chittagong Divisional Judge Shafiqul Karim in his verdict also fined them Tk 50,000 each, in default, to suffer three years more in jail.

The convicts are JMB Chittagong Region Commander Javed Iqbal alias Mohammad, Naimuzzaman alias Sohag, Ayub Ali alias Abu Jar and Jahidul Islam alias Sumon alias Boma Mizan.

The court, however, acquitted accused Mashur Rahman alias Uzzal as the charge brought against him could not be proved.

Three of the convicts were present at the court yesterday while Boma Mizan has been absconding.

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Police recovered huge quantity of explosives and arms from a house at Nur Para in Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila on December 13 in 2005.

Charge sheet of the case was submitted on March 23, 2006 while the charge was framed on September 5 this year.

After hearing 13 witnesses the court pronounced the verdict yesterday.



Cadres of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) who were sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment are being taken to jail from a Chittagong court yesterday.

Repression of minorities still rife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although many things have changed during this caretaker government, repression of minorities is still going on, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

No governments since independence could take any effective measures to stop violence against ethnic and religious minorities in the country, they said.

According to newspaper reports, at least 22 incidents of repression of indigenous people took place in September, they added.

Samprity Mancha or Platform for Harmony and Peace organised the seminar in cooperation with the Institute for Environment and Development (IED) at the National Press Club, with Prof Ajay Roy in the chair.

Prof Ajay presented the history and present scenario of the repression of minorities in this sub-continent as well as in the country while Associate Professor Gobinda Chandra Mondol delivered the keynote speech.

Advocate Hameeda Hossain of

Ain o Salish Kendra, Justice Golam Rabbani, Prof Syed Anwar Hossain, writer and journalist Shahriar Kabir, Deputy Editor of Jugantor Sohrab Hossain, former lawmaker Promod Mankin, freedom fighter Rokeya Kabir and Executive Director of IED Numan Ahmed Khan spoke at the seminar.

It is the duty of the state to protect the rights of all citizens, but all the successive governments have failed to do so, the speakers said.

The minority people have faced inhuman torture by the majority community in the wake of Babri Mosque issue in 1992 and after the 2001 general elections, they said.

Expressing concern that the number of incidents of torture of minorities goes up after the national elections, they urged the government to take necessary steps so that no such incidents take place after the next election.

Concern Universal-Bangladesh and Terre des hommes-Italy organised the national level lessons sharing workshop at city's Spectra Convention Centre aiming to share the lessons learned by defining problems that arose from the implementation of C-BAT Project.

A total of 235 local government officials received formal training, 30 victims were rescued and six victims were reintegrated under the project from October 2005 to December 2008.

\$1 lakh Brunei support for cyclone victims

UNB, Dhaka

Brunei Darussalam has contributed 100,000 US dollar for cyclone victims in Bangladesh.

Brunei Ambassador Dato Seri Laila Jasa Haji Abdul Rahman Bin Abdul Hamid handed over a cheque of the amount to Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday.

"This generous contribution reflects the solidarity of the Brunei government and people with us," said Iftekhar.



Cadet College Club executives

Shafiqur Rahman and Air Cdre Mirza Akhter Maruf (R) have been elected president and secretary general of Cadet College Club Limited for 2008, says a press release.

The election of the executive committee of the club was held on December 13.

Other office-bearers are vice president - Maj Khandker Badrul Hasan (R), joint secretary general - Ashraf Hussain, treasurer - Rafiqul Islam Tipu, and members -- M Musleh Uz Zaman (FCC), Maj Mahbub Ur Rahman (R) (JCC), Shamsul Ahsan Kamal (MCC), Wg. Cdre Md Alamgir, OCSC, (R) (RCC), Rezaul Haque (SCC), Shaikh Ehsanul Habib (CCR), Md Hasibur Rahman (BCC), Md Abul Hashem Sarker (PCC), Tamanna Shegufta (MGCC), Dr Ehsanur Rahman (CCC) and Syed Rafiqul Haque (WPCC).

30 underprivileged students get ITHS scholarship

International Turkish Hope School (ITHS), an English medium school, extended its hand to the underprivileged students living in different parts of the country such as Jhenidah, Habiganj, Feni and Dhaka, says a press release.

ITHS management selected 30 underprivileged students from among 5000 students from different schools through scholarship exams.

As part of ITHS scholarship programme, the selected students will benefit from free school admission and tuition fees, free hostel admission and tuition fees, free accommodation, school uniform and stationeries.



Students take a scholarship exam under the ITHS scholarship programme recently.

PPRC RESEARCH PAPER

Shelter for Sidr-hit people underscored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rehabilitation measures should be taken for the worst-affected communities such as farmers and fishermen and the affected families be provided with shelter to facilitate immediate revival of economic activities in the cyclone-devastated areas.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), said this yesterday while presenting a research paper titled 'From relief to recovery: Challenges of transaction' at its office in the city.

The research paper suggested that a micro-mapping approach should be taken to ensure effective utilisation of resources and proper rehabilitation of cyclone-affected

people as even the worst-affected districts were not uniformly affected.

The research conducted by the PPRC showed that 22 percent, 60 percent, 43 percent and 57 percent areas of Bagerhat, Borguna, Pirojpur and Patuakhali districts are affected by Sidr while the remaining areas of the districts are not affected at all.

If only Southkhali union in Sharonkhola upazila in Bagerhat is considered, 100 percent areas of only four villages -- Rayenda, Uttar Southkhali, Dakshin Southkhali and Bogra -- are affected, it added.

The research also identified several problems in the areas, such as unavailability of labour and the people's unwillingness to work.

In the wake of a 'general policy embargo' on normal micro-credit operation in the coastal region and unilateral action by NGOs, micro-credit sector plunges into disarray and small and medium micro-finance institutions fear immediate shutdown while disbursement of fresh loans has come to a halt, the research paper said.

"To revive economic activities, adequate fresh capital must be provided to genuine affected people and for repair and construction of shelters," Hossain Zillur said.

He also called for long-term regional plan to repair embankments and concerted efforts by the government and non-government organisations to build houses for the affected people.

Show respect to Bir Shresthas, freedom fighters

Naval chief urges all

UNB, Noakhali

Navy Chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam called upon all to show appropriate respect to the Bir Shresthas as well as freedom fighters to make the spirit of Liberation War meaningful to the future generation.

He said this when he was exchanging views with the local elites and local government representatives while visiting Begumganj, the birthplace of Bir Shrestha Ruhul Amin yesterday.

He was visiting Begumganj to pay homage to the Bir Shresthas on behalf of the Bangladesh Navy.

The Navy Chief inspected the ongoing construction works of Bir Shrestha Ruhul Amin Academy, Library and Museum and also gave assurance of all sorts of help and support for its every development.

He donated a computer to Bir Shrestha Ruhul Amin Academy from his own fund.

He also requested all to come forward to help the recent Sidr victims irrespective of party affiliation and beliefs.

Among others, Commodore Commanding Chittagong, senior officers from Naval Headquarters, high civil and military officials were present, said an ISPR press release.

Bogra road crash kills 3

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

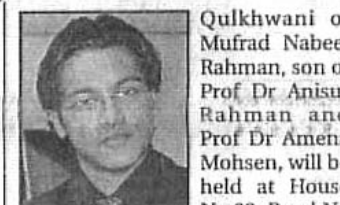
At least three people were killed and 30 others injured in a road accident at Dighalkandi area on Bogra-Rangpur Highway under Bogra Sadar Upazila yesterday.

The victims were identified as Asad Ali, 35, Rashidul, 22, and Golam Rabbani, 20.

The accident occurred when a Kurigram-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch losing its control, leaving three people dead on the spot, police said.

The injured were rushed to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra.

Qulkhwani



Qulkhwani of Mufarr Nabeel Rahman, son of Prof Dr Anisur Rahman and Prof Dr Ameena Mohsen, will be held at House No 23, Road No

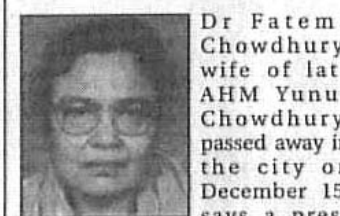
4, Dhanmondi in the city after Maghrib prayers today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will also be held.

Nabeel, grandson of former commissioner of taxes Mizanur Rahman, passed away at the Apollo Hospitals, Dhaka following an acute liver failure on Sunday afternoon.

His family members have requested all to be present at the Qulkhwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Obituary

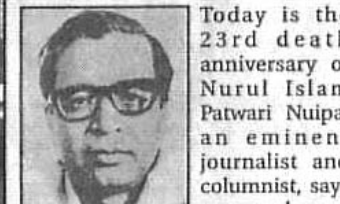


Dr Fatema Chowdhury, wife of late AHM Yunus Chowdhury, passed away in the city on December 15, says a press release.

She was buried at Banani graveyard.

Fatema was retired Chief Medical Officer, BCIC. She also served as Medical Officer for the Chittagong Port Trust.

Death anniversary



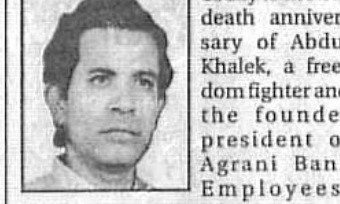
Today is the 23rd death anniversary of Nurul Islam Patwari Nuipa, an eminent journalist and columnist, says a press release.

He was the editor of the Dainik Bangla, Ittefaq, Dainik Barta, Shaptahik Bichitra and Kishore Bangla.

On this occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at Baitul Aman Housing Society, Shyamoli in the city after Asr prayers.

His relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Abdul Khalek



Today is the 6th death anniversary of Abdul Khalek, a freedom fighter and the founder president of Agrani Bank Employees' Union, says a press release.

On this occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his 64/3, Maniknagar residence in the city tomorrow.

His relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

WEATHER TODAY

Mild cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Mild cold wave, which is sweeping over the regions of Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Jessore and Chuadanga, may continue, Met Office said, adding that night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

Highest temperature 26.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 8.4 degrees Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:15pm today and rises at 6:36am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.3	14.0	59	57
Chittagong	25.6	17.6	85	60
Rajshahi	25.6	09.2	68	74
Khulna	24.6	12.3	68	90
Barisal	26.0	12.5	69	79
Sylhet	26.7	13.6	71	81
Cox's Bazar	26.5	18.8	85	66

"This donation by Marks & Spencer is another generous offer and I am delighted this help can be targeted towards children who face a cold winter having lost so much in the cyclone," said Choudhury.

Diwan said Marks & Spencer had been exploring ways how to assist after the cyclone and following a meeting with the British High Commission we are pleased to be able to assist in the relief effort in this way by donating children's clothing made in Bangladesh skilled labour."

Marks & Spencer is a British retail company with over 600 stores located throughout the UK and 219 franchise stores world-wide operating in 34 countries.