

Frame regional policy to protect migrant workers' rights

Experts say at consultation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a consultation yesterday said South Asian countries should frame a regional migration policy to protect the rights of their respective nationals working in various countries of the world, who are often denied of their rights.

They also called for strengthening collaboration among the government, NGOs, civil society groups and trade unions to raise voices against exploitation of the migrant workers, who send annually a volume of over \$6 billion remittance, the lifeline of the econ-

omy of Bangladesh.

These views were expressed at a national consultation on 'Safe Labour Migration and SAARC Policy on Anti-Trafficking' organised by WARBE Development Foundation in association with DanChurchAid at the National Press Club in the city to mark the UN Convention 1990 on Migrants' Entry into Force Day.

Speaking as the chief guest, Refugee and Migrant Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) Coordinator Prof CR Abrar said the remittance sent by the workers is the lifeline of the country's econ-

omy, but not enough has been done by the authorities to ensure their rights.

"Transparency and accountability is essential for safe migration," he said, calling on the agencies concerned to initiate projects that directly benefit migrants and members of their families.

The professor of International Relations at Dhaka University also urged the government to ratify the UN Convention 1990 facilitating actions to ensure migrants' rights.

WARBE Development Foundation Chairman Syed Saiful Haque, while presenting a keynote

paper, said all the SAARC countries should ratify the UN convention as well as the ILO conventions to protect their workers both at home and abroad.

Stressing on more involvement and cooperation among SAARC members and framing a comprehensive regional migration policy, he said Saarc should establish a regional migrants' resource centre and have migration information centres at national levels to collect and register national and regional data on migration.

"Saarc countries should have a standard code of conduct for recruiting agents to ensure that workers get better wages and their rights are protected," Syed Saiful Haque said.

WARBE Development Foundation Secretary General Anisur Rahman Khan said migrant rights organisations, trade unions, research institutions, governments and civil society groups should raise their voice and work together for the welfare of the migrant community.

Presided over by Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra Chairman Nurul Islam, the conference was addressed by Rokeya Rafique of Kormojibi Nari, Nur Khan Liton of Ain-o-Shalish Kendra, Sheikh Mojibul Haque of Brac, Rezwana Karim of Manusher Jonno Foundation, Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.



Trade Union Kendra Chairman Md Nurul Islam speaks at a consultation on 'Safe labour migration and Saarc policy on anti-trafficking' at the National Press Club yesterday. WARBE Development Foundation in association with DanChurchAid organised the event.

Political parties protest fuel price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political parties have protested the increase in fuel price and urged the government to cancel the decision saying it will worsen the miseries of people.

Awami League (AL) yesterday asked the caretaker government to withdraw the decision of fuel price hike.

The call came at a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) at the party chief Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi in the capital.

"If the decision is not lifted, peace and stability of the country will collapse," AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam told the reporters after the meeting.

"The fuel price hike will raise the costs of transportation and production resulting an increase of prices of everyday essentials including rice," he said, adding that a fresh two crore people will go

below the poverty line.

The AL leader said farmers would have to face serious consequences due to fuel price hike which would badly hamper agricultural production.

"Under such situation, law and order situation will break down as helpless people could do anything for food and other necessary essentials," Ashraf said, adding that the fresh fuel price hike would multiply the miseries of the common people.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday protested the decision of the government to hike the fuel price and demanded the cancellation of the decision.

In a press release, BNP Secretary General Khondaker Delwar said the sufferings of the people will increase due to fresh hike of fuel price.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manzurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim have protested the price hike of fuel and demanded cancellation of the government decision.

They said the government should stop misuse and corruption to make up the budget deficit.

Workers' Party of Bangladesh (WPB) expressed anxiety over the government's decision of increasing fuel price and demanded the withdrawal of the decision considering people's sufferings.

In a press release, party President Rashed Khan Menon said the excuse of loss of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation could be met by relaxing tax and tariffs on the BPC.

The city committee of the WPB will hold a protest meeting at Shaheed Asad auditorium at Paltan this afternoon.

Gono Forum President Dr

Kamal Hossain and Acting General Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury in a press release also demanded of the government to cancel the decision of fuel price hike.

They said the hike of fuel price would increase the production cost of agricultural products raising the prices of food items.

Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (ML) also demanded cancellation of government's decision to increase the price of fuel.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid in a statement protested the fresh fuel price hike and urged the government to cancel the decision.

Krishak Samik Janata League President Kader Siddique Bir Uttam expressed anxiety over the government's decision of increasing the price of fuel saying it would multiply the miseries of the people.

Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP-Bhashani) Chairman Sheikh Anwarul Haque in a press release demanded of the government to cancel the decision of fuel price hike.

Jatiya Party (JP) Secretary General Shaikh Shahidul Islam in a press release said fresh price hike of fuel will increase the sufferings of low and fixed income people.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (ML) convenor Badrul Alam expressed anxiety over the decision of fuel price hike.

Samajtantrik Dal of Bangladesh Convener Khalekuzzaman demanded cancellation of the decision to increase fuel price.

Bangladesh Jubo Union, Bangladesh Student Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Progotishil Chhatra Jote and Passengers Right also protested the decision of fuel price hike.

8 cheated women back home from S Arabia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight women migrant workers, who fell victim to fraud, were finally brought back home in the past week by the recruiting agency that sent them to Saudi Arabia with a promise to recruit them as housemaids.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-3) Commanding Officer (CO) wing commander Sultan Hossain Nuran yesterday said, "We forced the agency to bring back the women as they were being sexually abused in Saudi Arabia."

"We have information that 300 more women are waiting to be trafficked to Saudi Arabia and other countries," he added.

He, however, declined to disclose the name of the recruiting agency located in Gulshan, saying, "If the name of the agency is disclosed, the members of the gang would go into hiding."

He said the Rab forced the agency to bring back the women after being informed of the plight of the women.

"The victims narrated their sufferings to us and how they were abused sexually in Saudi Arabia," Rab-3 CO said, adding that "Each woman was sent to the country against Tk 1 lakh and before sending them, the women were told that they would work there as housemaids. But the women were cheated."

He further said they would file a case with Gulshan Police Station today.

Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote to take part in local govt elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote (BIOJ) yesterday decided to participate in the upcoming elections of four city corporations and nine municipalities.

The BIOJ central leaders at an emergency meeting at the party's Dikusha central office, took the decision. They said the party's local leaders and activists will participate in the local body elections for the greater interest of the nation and democracy.

But it is a wrong decision of the caretaker government to hold the local government election before the general polls, they added.

They also called on the government to arrange medical treatment for Awami League leader Mohammad Nasim and former prime minister Khaleda Zia's two sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko at home or abroad.

The meeting was presided over by the party Chairman Misbahur Rahman Chowdhury. He expressed concern over the government's latest decision of increasing the prices of petroleum products.



US Ambassador James F Moriarty calls on Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the latter's office in the city yesterday.

Kosovo issue being mooted Says Iftekhar

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has not yet firmed up its stance on the question of recognising Kosovo's independence despite persistent diplomatic maneuvering by US Ambassador James Moriarty, who met Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday for the second time to pursue the issue of recognition of the new Balkan state.

Ambassador Moriarty told reporters that the main purpose of his meeting was to urge the foreign adviser to consider the issue of recognition of Kosovo.

In response, Iftekhar told the reporters, "In such cases, perceived national interest is always the key."

The foreign ministry had already issued a statement on Kosovo, mentioning that the Bangladeshis were overwhelmingly in support of the people of Kosovo for a variety of reasons, he added.

The adviser hoped that a deci-

sion in this regard could be taken soon in consultation with other Islamic countries.

However, he admitted the fact that the OIC-member states are split up on the issue of Kosovo's independence, and the last Islamic Conference of the Foreign Ministers held in Uganda failed to reach a consensus on the subject.

He said the Kosovo issue may come up informally at the forthcoming D-8 meeting to be held in Malaysia because the grouping has no formal agenda on it.

Iftekhar also said Bangladesh attaches priority to "perceived national interest" and the benefits "from such a political matter. He hoped that a formal decision regarding the independence of Kosovo would be mooted soon.

He noted that while the US and some European countries have accorded formal recognition to Kosovo, this has been strongly opposed by Russia, and to a certain extent by China and some others.

Also, the recent meeting of Islamic Foreign Ministers in Uganda failed to reach a consensus on the contentious matter.

Apart from Kosovo, Darfur and Bangladesh's peacekeeping role featured in the talks with the US ambassador yesterday, Iftekhar said.

Moriarty was appreciative of Bangladesh's role in peacekeeping in general, though with regard to supply of some specific equipment to Darfur, such as helicopters, there could be some constraints on the part of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh had offered Bell helicopter for Darfur, which will not be useful over there at the moment. Bangladesh has peacekeepers in Darfur.

Iftekhar said Ambassador Moriarty informed him of some additional US support for Sidra-affected region.

"Bangladesh and the US are two friendly countries and there is always much to talk about between us," Iftekhar said.

Remove illegal structures in DU, Mirpur zoo areas

Home ministry asks authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday asked the authorities concerned to remove the illegal structures erected on the government land in the city's Dhaka University and Mirpur areas.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order at the ministry with Home Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin in the chair.

Around 100 families now staying illegally on the railway's land near Curzon Hall of the university will be evicted to pave the way for

constructing a female dormitory.

Decision was also taken to evict around 500 to 600 families living on the government's land near Mirpur zoo immediately, sources said.

While briefing newsmen, Home Secretary Abdul Karim said the country's overall law and order situation remains satisfactory.

He refused to comment whether emergency would be lifted fully ahead and during the elections to the local government bodies.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, who was also present at the meeting, told journalists that

his forces are kept alert to tackle the situation if chaos takes place in the transport sector centring the price hike of petroleum products.

He, however, informed that he had no information about any anarchic situation in the country since the government hiked the prices of all petroleum products on Monday night.

LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal, Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif and senior officials of the police department, home ministry, Bangladesh Rifles and Coastguard officials attended the meeting.



The traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) yesterday seized over 300 CNG-run auto-rickshaws that did not calibrate their meters according to the new fare structures within the given deadline. The picture was taken from in front of Traffic Bhaban in the port city.

DU Day celebrated

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University celebrated 'DU Day' marking its 88th founding anniversary amid festivity and much enthusiasm yesterday.

The celebrations brought together former vice-chancellors, faculty members and students.

Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz inaugurated the celebrations by releasing balloons on the TSC premises. Later, he led a colourful procession joined by teachers, students and staffs of the university.

The day's programme began with a 'laser show' presentation by the students of the faculties of science, biological science and pharmacy, at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) auditorium at 9:30am.

After the presentation, a Japanese drama titled 'Eksho Bosta Chal' (hundred sacks of rice) was staged by the students of Music and Drama Department.

Later, a discussion was held, with DU Treasurer Prof Syed Abul

Kalam in the chair. VC Prof SMA Faiz was present as the chief guest.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Anisuzzaman stressed the need for holding Dhaka University Central Students' Union election and university's hall unions' election.

It would help raise awareness among students about their social and political responsibilities, he added.

He also said maintaining university's proper residential status is important to maintain the standard of education at the university. Former VCs Prof Maniruzzaman Miah and AK Azad Chowdhury stressed the need to increase the allocation in the research and academic sectors of the university.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Prof AFM Yusuf Haider and Prof Kazi Zaker Hossain also spoke.

In the afternoon, two friendly soccer and volleyball matches were held on the university playground. The university cultural team presented a cultural show at the TSC auditorium in the evening.

Kafé Mukti launched

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Dhaka launched Kafé Mukti at the North South University (NSU) in the city on Monday with a view to providing economic opportunities to vulnerable groups of women to improve their social and economic conditions, says a press release.

Nestlé and NSU jointly organised the launching of Kafé Mukti, a showcase on public-private partnership for promoting corporate social responsibility towards rehabilitation of the vulnerable people.

IOM is being supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Royal Danish Embassy for this project.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) organises a roundtable on 'Saarc: Short window of opportunity'. Venue: BEI conference room. Time: 4:30pm.

Dialogue

ActionAid Bangladesh organises a policy dialogue on 'Grassroots voice on post Sidra aid reality'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:30am.

Brac talk

Brac Human Rights and Legal Services organises a talk on 'Health rights through litigation: Bridging the gap between public health and law'. Venue: Brac Centre Inn. Time: 3:30pm.

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of the collection of essays of Prof Hayat Mahmud will be held to mark his 70th birth anniversary. Venue: Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium. Time: 5:00pm.

Four killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least four people were killed and 30 others injured in separate road accidents in the city and in Barisal in last two days.

The dead were identified as police constable Mohammad Sazzadur Rahman, 24, and Abdul Bari, 32, of Rajarbagh Police Lines, Abul Mannan, 36, a civil staff officer of Bangladesh Army, and Rina, 2.

Police constable Mohammad Sazzadur Rahman, 24, was killed when a speeding truck hit his motorbike from behind at Hotel Sheraton crossing in the city at about 6:30am yesterday.

Sazzadur was rushed to the Rajarbagh Police Line Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

In another accident, constable Abdul Bari, 32, a rescue team member of Rajarbagh Police Lines, was crushed under a wrecker while he was detaching a bus from the wrecker at Sonargaon Hotel Crossing on Monday night.

Witness said the wrecker overturned and crushed the constable when a speeding truck hit it from the behind.

Meanwhile, army civil staff Abul Mannan, 36, was crushed under the wheels of a truck while he was going to his office by his bicycle at South Manikdi under Cantonment Police Station at about 7:00am yesterday.

On information, police recovered the body but failed to seize the killer truck and its driver.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: A minor girl was killed and 30 passengers were injured when a Barisal-bound passenger bus fell into a roadside ditch near Gournodi bus station early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Rina, 2, daughter of Nur Alam.

Mentally ill mother kills her baby

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mentally disordered mother slaughtered her two-month-old daughter at Sayedabad in the city yesterday evening.

The killer, Lipi Rajbangshi, 20, is the wife of Gopal Chandra, a hawk. Police arrested her with the kitchen knife used in the killing.

Quoting the family members, the police said they saw Lipi running out of the room with bloodstains on her clothes at around 5:00pm. They then caught her and found that she has slaughtered her daughter.

Recently, Lipi also tried to commit suicide by stabbing herself, the police said.

Obituary

A CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Mokim Uddin Ahmed, former deputy secretary and a freedom fighter, passed away due to various physical complications at Gastro Liver Hospital and Research Institute in the city on Monday at the age of 65.

He left behind his wife, three children and a host of relatives and admires to mourn his death.

He was buried with state honours at Pirdangi graveyard under Sadar upazila in Thakurgaon after two namaz-e-janazas at Azimpur in the city and Pirganj yesterday.

Shahjahan Siraj

BSS, Chittagong

Shahjahan Siraj, general secretary of Chittagong north district unit of BNP, passed away due to a heart attack at a clinic here early yesterday at the age of 55.

He left behind his son, daughter, wife, mother and a host of relatives and admires to mourn his death.

Siraj suffered a heart attack at his Jhoulata residence in the city at about 5:00am and family members brought him to Centrepont Hospital where he died at about 6:45am.

Shahjahan Siraj was elected general secretary of BNP Chittagong north district unit in 1993 and had been discharging his responsibilities till his death.

A large number of leaders and activists of BNP and its different front organisations visited the clinic to see their ill leader.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at Jamiatul Falah Maidan at noon yesterday. Leaders of different political parties attended the janaza.

Death anniversary

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Dr Shibtosh Roy, an arsenic expert, says a press release.

Dr Shibtosh who worked at Dhaka Community Hospital was killed in a road accident at Taraganj in Rangpur in 2001.

On the occasion, Dhaka Community Hospital will organise elaborate programmes, including discussion and essay competition.



Heavy rainfall likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at most places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to very heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over Chittagong, Rajshahi Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal divisions, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

It also said heavy to very heavy rainfalls may occur at places over Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna, Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 32.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Satkhira and the lowest of 23.1 degrees at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:50pm and rises at 5:15am tomorrow.

The 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	29.3	24.8	97	88
Chittagong	27.0	24.2	96	90
Rajshahi	27.8	26.0	96	99
Khulna	31.4	25.3	97	97
Barisal	30.5	25.0	100	97
Sylhet	26.8	25.4	94	92
Cox's Bazar	29.5	24.4	98	92