

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 Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMRU) Coordinator Prof CR Arbar 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, Rezwon Karim of Manusher Jonno Foundation, Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.



PHOTO: STAR

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 (ALCW) at the party chief Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dharmodin in the capital.

"If the decision is not lifted, peace and stability of the country will collapse," AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful 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," he said, adding that a fresh two crore people will go

RANGPUR UNIVERSITY

Plan to start academic activities this year

UNB, Dhaka

The government is planning to start academic activities of the newly established Rangpur University from the current session with six subjects on its curricula under two faculties.

"We are thinking to start student admission in six subjects under two faculties from this year's academic session," Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman told newsmen after a meeting with eminent personalities of the greater Rangpur region living in Dhaka at the education ministry conference room yesterday.

The meeting took the decision to start the academic activities of the university with six subjects - Bangla, English, Economics, BBA, Mathematics and Computer Science -- from this session under the two faculties of Humanities and Social Science and Science and Engineering, said an official release.

The meeting decided to increase the number of subjects to 11 within the next five years. A competent and experienced director will also be appointed for the Rangpur University project.

The meeting underscored the need for formulating a master plan in this regard.

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 Khandaker 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 Sramik 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 Badruddin Alami 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 Judo Union, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Progotishil Chhatra Jote and Passengers Right also protested the decision of fuel price hike.

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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 Nurani 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 Dilkusha 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's Chairman Misbahur Rahman Chowdhury. He expressed concern over the government's latest decision of increasing the prices of petroleum products.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Max	Min	Morning	Evening	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	29.3	24.8	97	88		
Chittagong	27.0	24.2	96	90		
Rajshahi	27.8	26.0	96	99		
Kulna	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		

Heavy rainfall likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowsers 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 Sathkhira 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 Max Min Morning Evening Humidity in percentage

Dhaka 29.3 24.8 97 88

Chittagong 27.0 24.2 96 90

Rajshahi 27.8 26.0 96 99

Kulna 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



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA
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

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

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.

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

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.

The adviser hoped that a deci-

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

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