

Case against us part of plot by recruiting agency

Say returnee workers refuting allegation of fleeing workplace in Romania

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Returnee workers, who have been sued on charges of fleeing workplace in Romania, yesterday denied the allegations saying that they were actually forced to return home.

At a press conference at Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh auditorium in the city, they said the case filed against them with Motijheel Police Station is based totally on false information and is part of the recruiting agency's plot to cheat them.

They urged the government to help them recover the money that they had spent for going to Romania.

"We went for outing on a weekly holiday and were late by an hour. The company said we would be sent home. We begged pardon for the delay, but the company did not pay any heed to our prayer," said Mohammad Masud, one of the six workers who were sent back home on July 20 and were arrested upon return.

They are now free on bail. Others who were sent back home are Abul Hossain, Mizan Ahmed, Bidhan Chandra Sutradhar, Mohammad Yunus and Humayun Kabir.

"Can an hour delay in returning from outing be a reason for sending us home?" he posed a question.

"We are now helpless. We therefore urge the chief adviser, army chief and others concerned to consider our issue," Masud said, adding that they got to know that the recruiting agency Al Abbas International is forcibly sending workers back so that it could send more new workers and earn more money.

Masud said they paid Tk 3 lakh to Al Abbas for going to Romania in May this year and according to job contracts they were supposed to work eight hours a day, but they were forced to work for 13 hours and were provided with a congested room for living.

"While staying in the room

beyond work hours, we were locked and it was opened only when we used to go to workplace," he said, adding that they even could not buy things for them, rather Abdul Hye, a representative of Al Abbas, used to buy things for them.

Hye also charged them more than the actual price of the food and other items, Masud noted. "Yet, we were trying to work, because we spent a large amount of money for going there," he said.

Two other returnee workers Mohammad Humayun Kabir and Mohammad Yunus were present at the press conference.

When contacted, owner of the recruiting agency Mojibur Rahman Murad said claims of the workers are totally false.

"These six workers along with eight others actually made an attempt to flee to other countries. Other eight succeeded, but these six failed. Therefore, they are now saying that they were late in returning to the place where they were living," he said.

Around 30 workers earlier fled the workplace and the Romanian authorities warned the company, which had recruited the workers, of not allowing to hire workers from Bangladesh if a single more worker flees.

"As these workers seemed to be disobedient the company did not allow them to work there and sent them home," Mojibur told The Daily Star.

"We have job demands for 1100 workers and by this time we sent around 600 workers. European market is very sensitive. If we cannot comply with their rules, we will lose the market. We are therefore very careful about it," he added.

DU cancels fake admission of 12 students

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) Syndicate, the highest decision making body of the university, cancelled the admission of 12 more students on Saturday for taking their admission into the university through fraudulent processes.

The DU authorities earlier issued show-cause notices to the students asking them to give satisfactory answers why their admission would not be cancelled. But none of them could clarify their position in favour of their admission processes.

The committee formed to identify fake admissions to the university has so far identified 230 illegal admissions at different departments and institutes at the university.

With the latest 12, the DU Syndicate has cancelled admissions of 213 students. Admission forgery was first detected at Public Administration department in December, 2006 and 11 fake students were identified.

The authorities then formed the committee with DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider as its convener.

The process to find out admission forgery suffered a setback due to legal complications. One of the 213 students first filed a writ challenging cancellation of his admission and the court had asked the DU authorities to allow the student to continue his academic activities until disposal of the case.

More than eighty students later filed writs and the court gave similar directives to the university. These students are now attending classes and taking examinations, but their examination results will remain pending until the disposal of the writs.

He is now under the treatment of Dr Jahangir Kabir at the United Hospital in the capital.

Sohel's father Md Jahangir Munshi is a poor farmer.

He has already sold out all his properties for the treatment of his son.

Jahangir has appealed to well-off section of the society for financial assistance.

Contributions can be sent to Sohel's Savings Account No 002119166, Janata Bank, Madaripur Main Branch. His cell phone number is 01710782970.



Major General (Retd) KM Shafi Ullah speaks at a view exchange meeting between leaders of Sector Commanders' Forum and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) at Sector Commanders' Forum office in the city yesterday.

SAARC SUMMIT

Dhaka to sign SDF, draft SARSO agreements

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will sign the Saarc Development Fund (SDF) agreement at the 15th Summit on August 2-3 in Colombo, aiming to ensure welfare of the people in the region, improve lifestyle and economic growth and alleviate poverty.

It will also sign a draft agreement on setting up South Asian Regional Standards Organisation (SARSO) to expedite intra-regional trade by paving the way for access of products of the Saarc countries to the world market.

A meeting of the council of advisers with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair approved these proposals as well as three ordinances aimed at streamlining the insurance sector.

The interim cabinet approved the Insurance Ordinance 2008 and the Insurance Regulatory Authority Ordinance 2008. It also approved in principle the Insurance Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance 2008.

The meeting further approved a proposal for adjusting "on equity basis" about Tk 574 crore outstanding bill from Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd to the Civil Aviation Authority and a waiver of over Tk 1216 crore as surcharge due from Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Biman Bangladesh aviation company now got a new lease of life free from liabilities.

On the basis of commitment of Saarc member-countries, the initial authorised capital for SDF

has been fixed at 1,000 million SDR (Special Drawing Rights) and initial paid-up capital for the fund fixed at 200 million SDR.

At the 14th Saarc Summit in New Delhi in April 2007, it was decided that resources for SDF could be collected from regional and international sources.

The SARSO draft agreement will be signed in the upcoming Saarc Summit in the Sri Lankan capital. Already, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan have given approval to the draft.

Headquartered in Dhaka, the SARSO will have a governing body, a Technical Management Board, a Director General and a Secretariat.

Under the Insurance Regulatory Authority Ordinance a five-man authority with one chairman and

four members will be formed aiming to ensure development of the insurance industry and guarantee interest of insurance policy holders.

As per the Insurance Ordinance there will be option for life insurance and non-life insurance companies. There will be no general insurance category.

Besides, the council of advisers discussed earthquake preparedness as tremor jolted Bangladesh Saturday night on a moderate scale.

Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman, who went to Geneva for attending WTO meeting, apprised the council of the latest position of WTO and Bangladesh's interests.

Body of one student recovered, two others still missing in Bay

CU CORRESPONDENT

The body of one of the three students, who went missing while swimming in the sea at Cox's Bazar on Saturday, was recovered yesterday.

Sources said fishermen of Sonadia point of Moheshkhali belt of the Cox's Bazar district found the body of Robayer Hasan Rushdi and informed the matter to the police.

Later, family members and police recovered the body at around 5:30pm and sent it to his Ashkar Digheerap residence in the port city in the evening.

Superintendent of Police of Cox's

Bazar Banaj Kumar Majumder said the rest two missing students remained untraced.

Rushdi, 20, son of Hasan Mahmud of Ashkar Digheerap, Rubel Das, 19, son of Ashit Das of Love Lane and Rifat Hossain Shaon, 21, son of Nasimul Gani of South Khulshi in Chittagong, went missing while swimming in the sea at around 1:00pm on Saturday.

Receding tides dragged away seven students of a group of 11 as they went for swimming in low tide at Laboni point of the beach on that day. Four of them were rescued by the present tourists instantly.

CASE AGAINST HASINA Next hearing Aug 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday set August 3 for next hearing on Tk 2.99 crore extortion case filed against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her cousin former state minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

Judge M Ashraf Hossain of Special Court-5 on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises fixed the date for resuming the deposition of the witnesses following time prayer by the defence.

As the court sat yesterday morning, the defence lawyers sought a long adjournment saying hearing on a writ petition for quashing the case is awaiting with the High Court.

In response, the judge fixed August 3 for the hearing.

Earlier, Sheikh Selim was produced before the court amid tight security.

Advocate Sahara Khatun stood for Hasina who had earlier been exempted from appearing at the court in person during the proceedings.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna unit of Jatiya Party yesterday extended full support for Talukder Abdul Khaleque, a candidate supported by AL-led 14-Party alliance, for the KCC mayoral post.

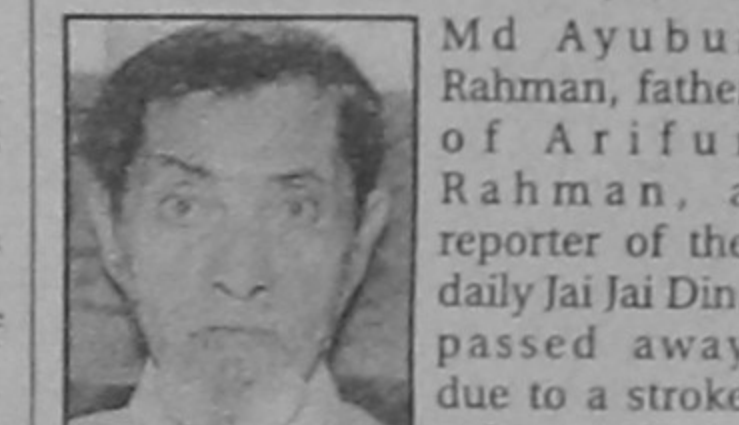
The JP support was announced at a press conference held at the Khulna Press Club VIP lounge yesterday morning.

President of Khulna district unit of Awami League Sheikh Harun-ur-Rashid and general secretary of party's Khulna City Unit Mizanur Rahman were present in the press conference.

General Secretary of Khulna district unit of Jatiya Party Shafiqul Islam Madhu asked all local JP leaders and workers to begin to work in favour of Talukder immediately.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra



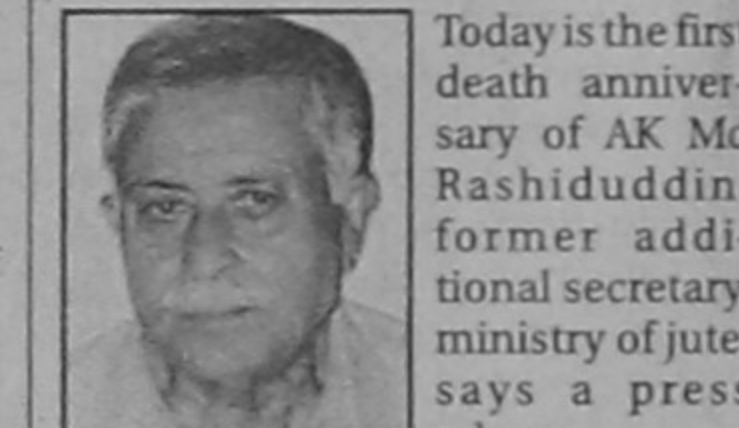
Md Ayubur Rahman, father of Arifur Rahman, a reporter of the daily Jai Jai Din, passed away due to a stroke at his residence in Bogra town yesterday at the age of 67.

He left behind his wife, four sons, a daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Dakshin Bogra graveyard after namaz-e-janaza yesterday.

His kulkhwani will be held at his residence after Asr prayers on Wednesday.

Death anniversary



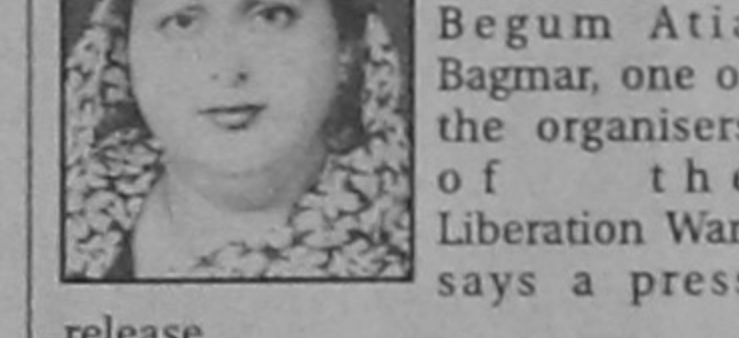
Today is the first death anniversary of AK Md Rashiduddin, former additional secretary, ministry of jute, says a press release.

He breathed his last at the National University Hospital in Singapore on this day last year.

On the occasion, fateha will be offered at his grave.

All have been requested to pray for salvation of his departed soul.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 11th death anniversary of AK Md Rashiduddin, former additional secretary, ministry of jute, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil and food distribution among destitutes will be held at her residence (House no-10, Road-18, Banani) in the city.

EARTHQUAKE

DU to shift 600 students to safer places

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities yesterday decided to shift around 600 hundred resident students of three DU dormitories to safe places at the university, observing their current places are too frail for the earthquake.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of DU syndicate, the highest decision-making body of the university, after an earthquake shook the capital and parts of the country in the early hours of yesterday.

Hundreds of panicked resident students of DU dormitories rushed out of their rooms and for

safety following the tremor and some of them spent the night under open sky.

The meeting decided to shift around one hundred students from 30 rooms of Mohsin Hall to the hall auditorium, university gymnasium and provost quarter of Shahidullah Hall, which is virtually abandoned for many days.

It also suggested shifting some 400 students of East Building of Jagannath Hall, which was declared too frail for the earthquake in 2006, to the other four buildings at the hall and around 50 female students of Honours Building of Rokeya hall, which was identified vulnerable for the earthquake on April, to the Fayjunnessa Chhatra Hall, the building for the MPhil and PhD researchers of the university.

Some thick cracks were identified at the first floor of the Mohsin Hall, beneath the 30 rooms, in April. DU authorities sought a report from Bureau of Research Testing and Consultation (BRTC) of the Bangladesh Engineering and Technology (Buet) on the cracks.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz told The Daily Star that BRTC submitted its report to the university authorities yesterday and suggested removing students from the vulnerable rooms.

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'Release BCL gen secy Rotan'

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Dhaka University (DU) students formed a human chain on the campus yesterday demanding immediate release of detained Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) General Secretary Mahfujul Haider Chowdhury Rotan.

Students under the banner "Manobadhikar Sacheton Sikkhar Brindo" formed the human chain at the footstep of Aparajeo Bangla at around 11:00am.

Later, the students submitted a memorandum to the DU Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz at his office and urged him to take immediate steps on behalf of the university to ensure the release of Rotan.

Qulkhwani

METRO DESK

Qulkhwani of Abdur Rahim, former joint secretary and father-in-law of Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, will be held after Asr prayers today at the Dhannondri residence in the city, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for his departed soul.

Shameem Ara Begum

METRO DESK



Qulkhwani of Shameem Ara Begum, wife of Colonel Syedul Kabir (Director Admin at BDR Headquarters), will be held at BDR Officers' Mess at BDR Headquarters in the city after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Friends, relatives and admirers are requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for salvation of her departed soul.

She passed away due to prolonged motor neuron disease at Combined Military Hospital Dhaka in the city on July 24 at the age of 42.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

A seminar on 'Humanism of Aroj Ali Malubbar and Aksaya Kuman Dutta' will be held. Venue: Centre for Advance Research in Humanities, DU. Time: 4:00pm.

View exchange meeting

Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB) will organise a view exchange meeting on sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescent. Venue: FPAB Dhaka branch office. Time: 10:00am.



Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Moderately heavy rainfalls are also likely at places, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 34.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.5 degrees Celsius at Sylhet and Sandwip. The sun sets in the capital at 6:43pm today and rises at 5:27am 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 | 33.1 | 27.2 | 74 | 69 |
| Chittagong | 32.4 | 25.8 | 77 | 92 |
| Rajshahi | 33.5 | 27.0 | 89 | 74 |
| Khulna | 33.7 | 27.2 | 75 | 68 |
| Barisal | 32.6 | 26.8 | 71 | 69 |
| Sylhet | 34.5 | 24.5 | 89 | 80 |
| Cox's Bazar | 32.0 | 25.2 | 66 | 78 |

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Sohel Munshi, a student of class seven of Ghunshi High School in Madaripur, has been suffering from heart disease.

His both valves have been damaged.

He is now under the treatment of Dr Jahangir Kabir at the United Hospital in the capital.

Sohel's father Md Jahangir Munshi is a poor farmer.

He has already sold out all his properties for the treatment of his son.

Jahangir has appealed to well-off section of the society for financial assistance.

Contributions can be sent to Sohel's Savings Account No 002119166, Janata Bank, Madaripur Main Branch. His cell phone number is 01710782970.

HC rules against Aug 15 politics

FROM PAGE 1

Following the Awami League government's decision, August 15 was used to be observed with due respect at the state level with the national flag flying at half-mast all over the country and at Bangladesh missions abroad.

But, on August 8, 2002 the erstwhile BNP-led four-party alliance government issued an order cancelling the observance of National Mourning Day and a public holiday on August 15.

Supreme Court lawyer Advocate Md Mozammel Haque, Mollah Mohammed Abu Kawser, and MA Malek, all leaders of Awami League front organisations, filed the writ petition against the cancellation as a public interest litigation (PIL) in August last year, praying to the HC to direct the authorities to declare August 15 as National Mourning Day and a public holiday.

The petitioners stated that the nation achieved its independence through a bloody war in 1971 led by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, but on August 15, 1975 Bangabandhu and most of his family members were murdered by some disgruntled army personnel.

The petition submitted that the nation is obliged to observe August 15 as National Mourning Day for the murder of the man who played a unique role in the creation of Bangladesh.

Star, "During the apprenticeship period a child tends to make a lot of mistakes so we have to make up for the damage to our production, so we do not pay the children."

According to Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) statistics, there were 17 thousand Jamdani looms in the villages of Noapara, Rupshi, Tarabo, Khalpar under Tarabo union alone in 1947, with every family owning one.

After 1971, the number of looms fell to around nine thousand in 17 villages under Rupganj and Siddhirganj upazilas.

A BSCIC survey in 1999 found the number of looms to be 2,845, which fell to 2,519 in 2002. The number of Jamdani weavers in these villages is now 5,669.

Azizur Rahman, 36, a weaver from Noapara, is a plot owner at the Jamdani Industrial Estate and has been involved with the Jamdani industry for the last 30

times. They are not allowed to leave their looms, other than for lunch break and toilet, during these hours.

"On the first year of my apprenticeship I used to hurt all over my body at the end of a day's work. I especially had cramps in my legs and severe back pain," Mustakim said.

While employers bear the expenditure for common and minor diseases, they don't pay for any other treatment. Mustakim had three attacks of jaundice in the last year and had to pay for the medication himself.

His cousin Mamun, 12, who also works at the same unit as Mustakim, said, "Sometimes I miss my parents so much that I can't stand it, but we have no alternative to this life, our parents are so poor."

Both boys want to study in school but poverty forces them into child labour just to stay alive.

Jamdani industry thrives on child labour

FROM PAGE 16

young as five years old, as apprentices for two years to teach them how to weave. During this learning period the children are not paid anything but provided food and clothes. They are also given Tk 20 as pocket money every week.

They are allowed to visit their parents during the two Eid festivals in a year.

On completion of the apprenticeship period, the child labourers are employed for two further years on bondage. For this period the employers strike an agreement with the children's parents, usually for three to ten thousand taka depending on the child's age and experience. They pay half of this amount in one instalment to the parents.

The child labourer gets paid the remaining half on completion of his contract.

One Jamdani maker, who employs children, explained the basis for the wages to The Daily

Star, "During the apprenticeship period a child tends to make a lot of mistakes so we have to make up for the damage to our production, so we do not pay the children."

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