

LABOUR UNREST

Kuwait mulls change in sponsor rules

AFP, Kuwait City

Kuwait said yesterday it was considering alternatives for its widely-criticised employee sponsor system after violent protests by foreign workers demanding better conditions.

"We are considering alternatives for the sponsor system to meet international labour standards," Minister of Social Affairs and Labour Bader al-Duwaila told an emergency session of parliament.

Under the system, any foreign worker in Kuwait must be sponsored by a Kuwaiti employer, thus keeping expatriates at the mercy of

their bosses. Other oil-rich Gulf states apply the same system.

The emergency session was called by about 35 MPs in the 50-member parliament to debate violent protests by thousands of Bangladeshi workers in July to demand better pay and working conditions. Around 1,000 workers were later deported.

Parliament's human rights committee had on Monday called for a review of the sponsorship system to try to stop employers from abusing hundreds of thousands of foreign labourers.

Oil-rich Kuwait is home to 2.35 million foreigners, more than two-thirds of them Asians, and over one

million native citizens.

Duwaila told parliament that the government was studying a proposal to set up a public company to recruit foreign manpower in a bid to end so-called visa trading under which employers demand hefty sums in exchange for residence permits.

He acknowledged that senior ministry officials were involved in visa trading, adding that a number had been referred to a special interior ministry department for investigation.

The minister said he has also referred more than 60 local companies for investigation for failing to pay salaries of labourers or not

providing adequate accommodation.

Following the unrest, the government introduced a minimum monthly wage of 40 dinars (150 dollars) for cleaners and 70 dinars (261 dollars) for security guards.

The decision, however, applies only to those working for companies on government contracts. Duwaila said the government was considering expanding it to all.

The average monthly pay for Kuwaiti citizens is around 1,000 dinars (3,740 dollars).

The minister said the government has submitted a draft law to combat people trafficking to parliament for approval.

4 killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Four people were killed and five others injured in separate road accidents in the city, Narayanganj and Chapainawabganj yesterday.

UNB from Dhaka reports: A minor boy was killed in a road accident at Shewrapara in the city yesterday. Police said a Malibagh-bound bus crashed Rabbil, 7, son of Abdul Haque, to death on the east Rokeya Sarani at about 4:45pm while he was crossing the road.

Angered by the accident, local people damaged another bus of the Bikalpa Paribahan.

On information, police rushed in and brought the situation under control.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Our Correspondent from N'ganj reports: Two people were killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Purinda in Narayanganj yesterday.

The dead were identified as Habib and Baten.

The accident occurred at 11:00am when a Narasingdi-bound passenger bus hit their rickshaw from behind leaving the rickshaw puller Habib

dead on the spot.

Later, critically injured Baten succumbed to his injuries in Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Our Correspondent from C'nawabganj adds: One person was killed and five others were injured in a road accident at Sonamore in Chapainawabganj yesterday.

The dead was identified as Humayun Kabir, 22.

Police said the accident occurred at around 2:45pm when a Shibganj-bound passenger bus rammed into a roadside house leaving Humayun dead on the spot and five other injured.

Maddhyapara mining co miners begin indefinite strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinalpur

Miners of Maddhyapara Granite Mining Company Ltd (MGMCL) started an indefinite strike yesterday to press home their 5-point demand, including wage hike, official sources said.

Their demands include a wage increase of 20 percent, 24 holidays a year, mining allowance, transport allowance and provident fund for them.

The miners said they placed their demands to the MGMCL authorities about 6 months ago, but to no avail. Rather, the authorities are threatening the miners to sack them, they alleged.

Sources said some 284 miners have been working in the mining company through an outsourcing company named Bluestar.

When contacted, MGMCL Deputy General Manager Mir Muhammad Abdul Hannan said they held several meetings with agitating miners yesterday to resolve the crisis.

Sources in MGMCL said that according to the project proposal of MGMCL, the miners would not get any provident fund facilities.

Md Mostafizur Rahman, a leader of agitating miners, said that they will continue their movement until their demand is realised.

Husband kills pregnant wife

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A pregnant wife died when her husband allegedly kicked her on Tuesday midnight.

The incident took place at Raushunia Tharigaon under Sirajdikhan upazila in Munshiganj district.

The killer husband Saizuddin, 48, has been hiding since the incident.

Body of Jahanara Begum Jami, 40, was sent to Munshiganj morgue for postmortem on Wednesday.

Badiuddin Bodu, brother of Jami, said his sister was killed after torture but police forced them to file a case of unnatural death.

The couple was married 20 years ago and they have two daughters and one son.

Police said the incident took place over family feuds.

Officer-in-Charge of Sirajdikhan Police Station said the case of unnatural death was filed because Jami's in-law's family said she committed suicide by taking poison.

However, the next course of action will be taken after having the postmortem report, he added.

Oxford Int'l School student wins Ohio University scholarship

METRO DESK

Russell Mahmood, a student of Oxford International School (OIS), was awarded the presidential scholarship of Ohio University, USA worth US\$39000 yearly, says a press release.

He performed extraordinarily well at placement test of the university. His major subjects are Astrophysics and Mathematics.

In his O level Cambridge Examinations Russell achieved 10 A-grades. He also achieved the world highest marks in Human and Social Biology and highest mark in Bangladesh for Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Principles of Accounts. For his outstanding O level results, he received The Daily Star award in 2006.



Security personnel search an aircraft of Air Arabia following a bomb hoax at Chittagong airport yesterday. The flight arrived at Shah Amanat International Airport from Sharjah at 1:55pm. (Story on Page 16)

BSF kills one

A CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader on Haripur border under Haripur upazila of the district early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Rahidul Islam, 37, son of late Shamsul Haque of Chandail village under the upazila.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the BSF personnel of Bashantipur camp opened fire on some cattle traders while they were returning home from India at around 4:00am.

Rahidul died instantly while others escaped unhurt. The Indian border guards took away the body.

BDR strongly protested the killing and asked its Indian counter part to return the body.

Sri Lanka relief move endangers trapped civilians: Amnesty

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's move to evict relief workers from its embattled north worsens the humanitarian situation for tens of thousands of civilians who rely on aid, Amnesty International said yesterday.

The London-based rights group said the Colombo government lacked the capacity to provide basic essentials and safety for those who have had to flee escalating fighting with Tamil Tiger rebels.

Amnesty called on the government to allow independent international monitors into the northern Wanni region to oversee and ensure that convoys with food, medical and other essential supplies enter and are distributed.

The United Nations announced it was pulling all its staff from the Tamil Tiger-held north this week after the government gave them two weeks to quit the area ahead of a major military showdown.

Local workers from international aid agencies left behind in the region fear that the withdrawal of international staff will make them more vulnerable to abuses by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Amnesty said.

"Aid agencies provided a lifeline to tens of thousands of trapped civilians," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director.

Nepal Maoist fighters to be integrated into army

AFP, Kathmandu

Thousands of Maoist fighters confined to camps as part of Nepal's peace deal are to be integrated into the national army within six months, the country's new president said yesterday.

In a speech outlining the policies of the recently formed Maoist government, President Ram Baran Yadav also said the ultra-leftists were in favour of private enterprise and would only implement carefully considered land reforms.

"The integration and rehabilitation of People's Liberation Army will be completed within next six months to take the peace process to a logical conclusion," the president said in a speech.

Around 19,000 former Maoist fighters have been staying in United Nations-monitored camps since a 2006 peace deal that ended a decade of civil war and led to the abolition of the monarchy in May this year.

The Maoists went on to win elections and form a government -- with ex-rebel leader Prachanda appointed prime minister -- but still

need to resolve the issue of what to do with their hardened fighters.

President Yadav said that the government will concentrate on "bringing economic and social transformation" to the Himalayan nation and one of the world's poorest countries.

"The government will encourage public-private partnership for economic and infrastructure development and a high-level, scientific land reforms commission will be established to bring

changes in the agriculture sector," Yadav said.

"Private investment will be encouraged to promote and develop the industrial sector, and employment opportunities will be created within the country to end the trend of people going abroad for jobs in the years ahead," he said.

The Maoists have promised a radical reform agenda, but in recent months have shown signs they would be a cautious and considered approach to policy.

2 restaurants, 4 clinics fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A mobile court led by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday fined two restaurants and four clinics and diagnostic centres Tk 35,000 on various charges.

The court fined the two restaurants for selling adulterated foods while the clinics and diagnostic centres due to lack of logistic supports and for not having renewal of their licences.

Rab sources said New Panchitra

Hotel and Panchitra Restaurant in Charpara area were fined Tk 10,000 and 5000 foods while Moitree Nursing Home, Janani Nursing Home, Modina Pathology Lab and Ahmadiya Diagnostic Complex in the town were fined Tk 5000 each.

Assistant Police Super Md Motiar Rahman led the mobile team which was accompanied by Magistrate Md Abu Jafar Rashed, Dr Atiqur Rahman and Sanitary Inspector Md Shamsul Alam.



Police intercept a procession of Jubo Mahila League at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday as its leaders and workers were marching towards the home ministry to press home their demand for permanent release of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

Heartiest Congratulations to the people of Bangladesh

We would like to express our heartiest congratulations to the people of our country on the successful return of Cox's Bazaar & Sundarbans back into the New7Wonders of nature list. Recently, some unscrupulous quarters started to encourage & facilitate the casting of multiple votes by a single person from a single email address through several internet web sites and web portals. As a result of these undesired activities, on September 3rd 2008, Cox's Bazaar and Sundarbans were suddenly excluded from the New7Wonders list. It is mentionable that as per the rules of New7Wonders, it is completely prohibited to cast multiple votes by a single person from a single email address and it is also beyond the rules to run any campaign by any organization without having a formal contract with New7Wonders.

Since the suspension, we were in continuous contact with Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and the New7Wonders Foundation, strongly urging all concerned to take necessary steps to reinstate the two spots. We would like to thank Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and the Official Supporting Committee for taking prompt action in this regard and also express our gratitude to all those who helped in resolving the matter so quickly.

It is also mentionable that Banglalink is the only organization in the country, having formal contractual agreement with the New7Wonders Foundation since last July, subsequently gaining the status of the Official Nominee Supporter of Cox's Bazaar, thus enjoying exclusive rights in promoting this campaign. A huge nationwide campaign has been recently launched by banglalink on August 24th 2008, to promote and generate votes for Cox's Bazaar.

We are glad to inform that the campaign that we have launched will be re-activated with renewed vigor and will continue throughout the year. We also urge the people of Bangladesh to abide by the rules of New7Wonders for the greater interest of the nation and keep on voting for Cox's Bazaar in order to retain it at the top of the New7Wonders list.



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