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Malaysia cancels 55,000 visas for Bangladeshis

Cites global meltdown impact as reason, denies entry to 532 Bangladeshi workers in Kuala Lumpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia on Tuesday cancelled visas for more than 55,000 Bangladeshi jobseekers, which were approved back in 2007, citing the impact of global economic recession on its manufacturing sector.

These workers were scheduled to enter Malaysia gradually.

Labour and Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Engineer Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said the government is aware of the move and trying to negotiate with the Malaysian authorities.

"Yes, the decisions were based on economic reasons. However, we have learnt there are 50,000 to 60,000 vacancies in the plantation sector. We are going to request the Malaysian government to employ these workers in those



Bangladeshi labourers wait for transport after their work in down town Kuala Lumpur on March 10. Malaysia yesterday cancelled work visas issued to Bangladeshi workers as the economic recession hits the country. PHOTO: AFP

plantations," he told The Daily Star.

"If necessary, the foreign minister and I shall go to Malaysia for more detailed discussion," Hossain said.

The Malaysian move is in line with the government's decision not to accept any new applications, its Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said.

"There is no need for foreign labour unless workers are required for certain critical sectors as identified by the government," Malaysia's official news agency Bernama quoted the home minister as saying.

Malaysian work visas are issued conditionally, whereby a jobseeker has to enter Malaysia and complete a medical fitness test within 30 days of his arrival in order to be eligible for the final visa.

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HC issues suo moto notice

Asks govt to explain within Mar 19 why separation of judiciary ordinance not ratified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a suo moto rule on the government to explain by March 19 why the ordinance regarding separation of judiciary was not ratified in parliament on time.

Questioning the legality of judicial magistracy, the HC asked the law secretary and the Supreme Court registrar to explain under which legal authority judicial magistrates are functioning after February 24, the day the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) (amendment) Ordinance expired.

The HC bench of justices ABM Khairul Haque and Md Abdul Hye issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Nabotl Ranjan Chakma.

The immediate past caretaker government promulgated two ordinances in April 2007 amending the code of criminal procedure to separate the judiciary from the executive.

In the rule, the HC said the CrPC (amendment) Ordinance 2007 was not passed in parliament in 30 days after it was placed in the House.

The ordinance expired on February 24, according to section 93 of the constitution which says any ordinance will cease to have effect if not passed in the parliament in 30 days after the session begins.

During hearing of the writ petition, the HC bench sought

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Admin vying for sweeping judicial clout

Forwards 8 proposals to JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Administrative cadres have placed an eight-point proposal before a parliamentary body for sweeping judicial authority including the power to hold trial of some offences summarily.

The Supreme Court's landmark judgment in the Masder Hossain case on separation of the judiciary keeps the executive magistrates, also officials of the administration cadre, from exercising judicial power, legal experts said.

But the administrative cadres defended their proposal saying the authorities need to maintain balance of power and law and order, and protect public interests, said sources.

Bangladesh Administrative Cadres Association on Monday placed the proposals at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on

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Trial could be under military law

Says law minister

UNB, Dhaka

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafiqul Ahmed said the trial of the carnage inside the BDR headquarters 'could be possible' under the military law considering it as a matter of mutinous acts in the disciplined paramilitary force.

"The accused killers can be brought under this act as the BDR is a disciplined force," he said after a review meeting on the mutiny and its aftermath at his office yesterday.

Experts in the meeting reviewed article 5 of the Bangladesh Army Act 1952 and article 4 of the Indian Army Act 1952 to determine whether the killers of army officers at the BDR carnage

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40 BDR men found directly involved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators have found direct involvement of 40 members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) so far in the bloody massacre and looting inside the Pilkhana BDR Headquarters during the February 25-26 mutiny.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday handed over 12 out of those 40 border guards to Lalbagh Police Station in connection with the mutiny case filed with the police station, said a top law-enforcing official involved in the investigation of the case wishing anonymity.

Meanwhile, Pesh Imam of BDR central mosque Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman, a witness to the carnage in Pilkhana, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday afternoon after he fell sick during interrogation.

Those who were found embroiled in the massacre are BDR Subedar Gofran Mallik, Havildar Rezaul Karim, Lance Nayek Gausul Azam, Lance Nayek Yusuf Ali, Sepoys Joyanta Kumar Sarkar, Zamir Ali, Abdul Latif, Sohlab Hossain, Ismail Hossain, Shariful Islam, Rafiqul Islam and Masudur Rahman.

He also said at least one of the captured BDR members admitted that they were present at Darbar on February 25 and he

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Scotland Yard team in city

Faruk Khan to coordinate probes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting personnel of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of USA and Scotland Yard from UK made separate visits to BDR Pilkhana headquarters in order to assist local investigators probing the massacre.

The four-member Scotland Yard team, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning, visited the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters in the afternoon. The two-member FBI team visited Pilkhana Tuesday.

The personnel of the two foreign agencies are to meet and exchange views. They will also separately meet the three local investigation teams.

The government assigned Commerce Minister Faruk Khan to maintain coordination among all three investigation

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Terror struck back at its buster

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The February carnage that played out in the guise of mutiny at the BDR Headquarters bears the hallmarks of terror attacks.

One of the brightest army officers who died in the "armed rebellion" was Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed, best known for his efficient detection and operations against Islamist militants and terrorists.

The Pakistani occupation force had taken the life of his civil servant father during the War of Liberation in 1971. On February 25 at Pilkhana in an independent Bangladesh, Gulzar was killed -- his body found mutilated beyond recognition in a grim discovery that parallels a grisly death fed by deep-seated grudge.

Some government high-ups pointed to



"elements of terrorism" in the carnage, but all spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

"A disciplined force cannot take to such brutality. It appears terror elements were at play," one of them told The Daily Star.

One probable route for the masterminds of the killings was to spur the border guards with the theories of "grievances" and

money, the government high-ups believe. Some believe "terror elements" infiltrated the BDR through the route of recruitment in recent years.

Gulzar was known as one of the brightest army officers of the country. His voice was last heard by friends and colleagues over cellphone

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Four army officers laid to rest

Body of Maj Hakim identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two army officers killed in a chopper crash on Monday and two during the massacre at Pilkhana BDR Headquarters were laid to eternal rest yesterday at city's Banani Army Graveyard.

The officers buried with state honour are Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam, general officer commanding of 55 Infantry Division and Jessore area commander, Lt Col Shahidul Islam (the pilot), Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed and Lt. Col Elahi Manzoor Chowdhury.

The bodies of Col Gulzar and Lt Col Elahi Manzoor were identified after a DNA test on Tuesday.

The body of Maj Ahmed

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Water crisis in city worsens

HELEMUL ALAM

With the summer still more than a month away, water crisis in the capital is worsening, and supply of stinking water is adding to sufferings of the city dwellers in many areas.

Severe load-shedding, excessive dependence on ground water, and worn out Wasa (Water and Sewerage Authority) supply lines mainly account for the water crisis.

The areas badly affected by the crisis include part of Mirpur, Monipur, Moghbazar, Hazaribagh, Shantinagar, Basabo, Gopibagh, Manda, Madartek and DIT plot and Teker Gali area of Gandaria.

Residents of these areas alleged that they are either getting insufficient water or stinking water for the last few months. Around 250 people depend on Shantinagar Wasa pump to meet their daily requirement of water for over a month now as they get stinking water from the supply line, locals said.

"I take water from the pump twice everyday as water supplied through Wasa lines emit bad odour," said Soma, a 12-year-old girl. Kamal Hasan, a resident of Moneshwar Road at Hazaribagh, said, "We are getting Wasa-supplied water only for 15 to 20 minutes around midnight for the last few days."

A resident of Senpara Parbata, Apu, said they get very small quantity of water only after midnight.

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Residents of Shewrapara queue up to collect water provided in special tanks as WASA tries to tackle the severe shortage of water supply in the area. PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Dhaka MPs wake up to water crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the parliament (MPs) from different constituencies of Dhaka feared a big movement if the government fails to resolve the city's existing water crisis immediately.

They expressed the concern at an emergency meeting held at the ministry yesterday with LGRD Minister Syed Ashraf Islam in the chair in the wake of water crisis in different parts of the capital.

Referring to the recent agitations for water in Mirpur area, lawmakers indicated that more agitations might take place in other parts of the city if such crisis continues.

They said the water crisis is mounting in the city day by day and it should be addressed immediately to avert a greater movement.

Syed Ashraf said the lawmakers of Dhaka will be engaged in dealing with the water crisis. "A government order defining the role of MPs will be issued within a week to cope up with the water crisis," he told the meeting.

He said the MPs along with Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) officials would monitor the situation and take immediate steps to resolve problems.

State minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak, LGRD secretary Sheikh Khurshid Alam and managing director (MD) of Wasa

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

WB offers \$62.20m to clear air in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

The government has successfully concluded negotiations with the World Bank (WB) for a \$62.20 million Clean Air and Sustainable Environment (CASE) project.

An official release says CASE is an innovatively designed project that aims at integrating environment and transport concerns towards a common objective of improving Dhaka's air quality.

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Govt mulls scope for whitening money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government in the next fiscal year's budget is likely to give again the opportunity to legalise undisclosed money.

"I am opposed to the idea of giving such opportunities. But when such a demand was made, I did not say no to it," Finance Minister AMA Muhith told reporters after meeting representatives of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) in his office yesterday.

He said some pay tax and some take the opportunity of legalising undisclosed money without paying tax; it is not ethical. However, many are making proposals for the scope to legalise undisclosed money. This is why the

issue can be considered in the next budget, he said.

DCCI President Jafar Osman said, "We do not want this money to be used for buying houses and cars. The scope to legalise the money should be given in such a way that it is used in generating employment."

Even though past governments were opposed to legalising undisclosed money, they gave the opportunity anyway. The last caretaker government in its two budgets also gave the scope to legalise undisclosed money.

However, the previous governments said they were not giving the opportunity to legalise black money, rather to disclose undisclosed money.

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AL leader held over mutiny link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday arrested Awami League leader Torab Ali, also president of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) welfare association for retired BDR members, in connection with the February 25-26 mutiny at the BDR headquarters.

Members of Rab-2 arrested Torab, president of Ward-48 AL unit and the father of high-profile criminal Liton alias Leather Liton, at his Moneshwar Road residence at around 7:00am.

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Upazila representatives remain jobless

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Elected upazila-parishad representatives are still idling their time away one and a half months into the local-government elections as the ministry concerned is yet to define their line of work in the absence of necessary laws.

Upazila-parishad elections were held on January 22. Chairmen and vice-chairmen took oath on February 22 and 23. Experts say at present there is no law on upazila parishad as the present government kept from ratifying the Upazila Parishad Ordinance 2008 promulgated by the immediate-past caretaker government.

The elections were held according to the

expired ordinance. The government however introduced a bill to parliament on February 24 to revive the upazila parishad act of 1998, with a few amendments. The bill scraps the controversial provision in the act which made it mandatory for the parishad to take suggestions from local lawmakers.

According to the proposed bill, lawmakers would still be advisers to the upazila parishad in their respective constituencies.

Dr Tofael Ahmed, member of the defunct Local Government Commission, told The Daily Star that the government should push through the proposed bill as soon as possible and

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