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New Bahrain rule may end labour exploitation

1.25 lakh Bangladeshi workers see fresh hope

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 1.25 lakh Bangladeshis working in Bahrain see a light of hope, as the Gulf country has decided to end the labour sponsorship system, which for long has been a way for employers to exploit foreign workers.

The new rule, which will take effect in August this year, will lead to a 'more liberalised and dynamic' labour market, allowing foreign workers to move from one employer to another without having to seek their sponsor's permission, said Majeed al-Alawi, Bahrain's minister of labour, on Tuesday.

Under the sponsorship system, employers retain passports of foreign workers and often do not allow them to

change jobs, sometimes they do not even pay the workers or pay less than the promised wages. Due to the practice, some workers often flee their jobs and become illegal, losing their right to seek justice.

"Sponsorship is not humane. We think sponsorship is outdated," Al Jazeera Online quoted al-Alawi on Thursday. "This will bring our laws into the 21st century," al-Alawi added.

The decision, announced by the Gulf nation, marks a victory for human rights organisations, who have been criticising the controversial practice, citing instances of employers withholding pay and holding onto workers' passports.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) also hailed Bahrain's move, saying it will

bring an end to the practices that caused in many cases sufferings to foreign workers including Bangladeshis.

"Workers will be able to find better jobs if they find their present jobs unsuitable, or if employers do not have jobs," said Baira President Ghulam Mustafa.

Labour sponsorship system is existent in most of the Middle Eastern countries. Some countries however recently started thinking of scrapping it following criticisms from international human rights organisations.

Abdulla Al Derazi, secretary-general of Bahrain Human Rights Society, told Al Jazeera on Thursday that the decision was a 'courageous step'.

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Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha yesterday celebrated the 148th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore along with the 86th birthday of Kalim Sharafi. Photo shows wife feeding cake to the revered Rabindra Sangeet artiste.

PHOTO: STAR

CTG ARMS HAUL
Arrested former NSI man to be taken to TFI cell today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Arrested former director of National Security Intelligence (NSI) Mohammad Sahab Uddin will be taken to the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell in the capital today for further interrogation in connection with the arms haul case.

A Chittagong court on Thursday placed Sahab Uddin on a six-day fresh remand when Criminal Investigation Department (CID) produced him before it with a prayer for 10-day remand.

The CID prayed for the fresh remand after a three-day remand of Sahab Uddin ended without making any headway

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Buddha Purnima today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Buddhists across the country will celebrate their biggest religious festival, the Buddha Purnima, today marking the advent, nirvana (enlightenment) and departure of Lord Gautama Buddha.

On this day, about 2,500 years back, Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Kapilabastu in Nepal in 563 BC, got supreme enlightenment or nirvana at the age of 35 in Gaya in the Indian state of Bihar, and departed from this world at the age of 80 in 483BC.

Buddhists will celebrate the festival at all monasteries as well as different educational institutions across the country today.

The daylong programme celebrating the occasion includes hoisting of the

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Bangladesh Bouddha Sangskritik Parishad brings out a procession from the National Museum in the capital yesterday, marking Buddha Purnima.

PHOTO: STAR

Second notice to Khaleda just to tarnish her image

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has sent the second notice to Khaleda Zia regarding her house only to tarnish her image, said BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday.

He, however, said the matter would be resolved in court. "They [the government] have served a notice and we will give our reply as per law since she [Khaleda] respects the laws. But it was needless to send the notice again as the matter is pending with the High Court," he said talking to reporters at his home in the city's Armanitola.

He said the fresh notice is nothing but persecution of the party chairperson.

Delwar said they think the

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Boy beaten up by stepfather dies in hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A twelve-year-old boy, who was severely beaten up by his stepfather and left untreated for seven days at their slum house, succumbed to his injuries Thursday night at Pongu hospital in the capital.

The deceased, Shah Alam, was a student of a school run by an NGO at Korail slum in Gulshan.

Witnesses said Billal Hossain hit Alam with bricks

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BNP making all party decisions ignoring NEC

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP high-ups in violation of the party constitution are making all decisions to reorganise the party ignoring its National Executive Committee (NEC) that has become ineffective.

As per the party constitution, the NEC has to sit every three months but BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia failed to convene any meeting of the committee in the last three years.

The last meeting of the committee was held on August 26, 2006 at Prodhmantri Bhaban in the city with Khaleda Zia, the then premier, in the chair.

Party insiders said the NEC has no attachment to the ongoing process of the party's reorganisation although the party constitution says the NEC will control and coordinate committees at various levels in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

According to the constitution, the NEC is empowered to monitor, control and coordinate the activities of the party's associated bodies. But the National Standing Committee has

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AL, BNP likely to seek time for holding councils

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Ruling Awami League (AL) and main opposition BNP may seek an extension from the Election Commission (EC) to arrange for councils to ratify the provisional changes made to their constitutions for registration.

Leaders of both the parties hint they would not be able to hold councils within the stipulated time that ends on July 25.

Before the ninth parliamentary election, political parties were allowed to be registered with the EC by making interim changes to their charters to meet the registration criteria laid out in the Representation of the People Order (RPO).

They however had to give an undertaking that they would have the amendments approved by national councils within six months after the first sitting of the ninth parliament, which was on January 25.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader said they would do their best to hold council in time. But if that is not possible, they would seek more time from the EC.

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10 largest US banks out of 19 fail 'stress tests'

BBC ONLINE

Ten of America's largest 19 banks need a combined \$74.6bn (£50bn) of extra funds to boost their cash reserves.

That is the main finding of the so-called "stress tests" to see if the banks have sufficient capital to cope should the recession worsen.

Bank of America is the most at risk, needing an additional \$33.9bn.

"Our hope with today's actions is that banks are going to be able to get back to the business of banking," said US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

The results should go some way to lift the cloud of uncertainty that has engulfed the US banking sector by providing assurance that the sector would have the capital to handle further losses.

Other banks that need more money include Wells Fargo, which is said to require \$13.7bn, and GMAC, the financial arm of General Motors, which needs \$11.5bn.

Citigroup requires an additional \$5.5bn of funds, and Morgan Stanley has been told to find \$1.8bn.

Some of the banks have already indicated

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Top flu expert warns of a swine flu-bird flu mix

AP, AFP, Mexico City/Bangkok

Bird flu kills more than 60 percent of its human victims, but doesn't easily pass from person to person. Swine flu can be spread with a sneeze or handshake, but kills only a small fraction of the people it infects.

So what happens if they mix?

This is the scenario that has some scientists worried: The two viruses meet possibly in Asia, where bird flu is endemic and combine into a new bug that is both highly contagious and lethal and can spread around the world.

Scientists are unsure how likely this possibility is, but note that the new swine flu strain a never-before-seen mixture of pig, human

and bird viruses has shown itself to be especially adept at snatching evolutionarily advantageous genetic material from other flu viruses.

"This particular virus seems to have this unique ability to pick up other genes," said leading virologist Dr. Robert Webster, whose team discovered an ancestor of the current flu virus at a North Carolina pig farm in 1998.

The current swine flu strain known as H1N1 has sickened more than 2,300 people in 24 countries. While people can catch bird flu from birds, the bird flu virus H5N1 does not easily jump from person to person. It has killed at least 258 people worldwide since it began to ravage poultry stocks in Asia in late 2003.

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Condition of Wazed Miah unchanged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Condition of ailing nuclear scientist and husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Dr MA Wazed Miah, remained unchanged yesterday.

Prime Minister Hasina visited her husband at Square Hospital last night and stayed there for about half an hour from 8:10pm. During the visit, she talked to the physicians about the health condition of Wazed Miah.

Talking to reporters after the visit of Sheikh Hasina, Prof Dr Sanwar Hossain, director of

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Six organisations and the Department of Forest brought out a joint procession from TSC of Dhaka University yesterday, marking the beginning of the two-day Migratory Bird Fair 2009 at TSC. Story on Page 2.

PHOTO: STAR

One killed, 15 hurt as AL, BNP clash in Natore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

One person was killed and at least 15 others were injured in a clash between Awami League (AL) and BNP activists at Hagrahari village in Lalpur upazila yesterday afternoon.

Police said a group led by AL activist Abdur Rashid and the other led by BNP's Choyon Pramanik locked in a feud over a murder case. This soon turned into a violent clash.

The groups, at one point, charged each other with fire-arms and sharp weapons that

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Prayer Timing		
May 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star Coming out tomorrow - Star Campus

Linking Young Minds Together

The Daily Star offers campus based weekly magazine 'Star Campus' - the ultimate magazine for the young generation - a common platform for the college and university students and academicians - to share their ideas, thoughts, dreams, opinions and views. Star Campus is an endeavour to bring into the center stage the visionary aspects of our college and university students, alongside their lifestyle, cultural trends and their multidimensional talents. Star Campus is a magazine broadly based on campus life! It contains articles, academic news, achievements, travelogues, interviews, book reviews, quiz, milestones, academic tips, profiles of educational institutes, cultural and extra-curricular activities in campus, jokes, cartoons, photographs and much more. This is a magazine Of the Students, By the Students and For the Students. Star Campus helps link young minds together.

