



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A mobile court dumps tainted puffed rice seized from an illegal factory into the river at Jinjira in the city yesterday.

## Stop cheating in manpower business: Prime Minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday blamed a section of the manpower recruiting agencies for the miserable condition of the expatriate workers abroad.

She asked the recruiting agencies to take into consideration of the human aspect above profit earning while sending workers abroad with employment.

"Some of you take the path of fraudulence and forgery in sending workers abroad. For the sake of Almighty Allah, please stop such activities," the premier told the manpower agents when the newly elected executive committee of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) called on her at her office yesterday. Baira President Abul Bashir led the delegation.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed the meeting to reporters.

Hasina advised the Baira leaders to increase the funds by their own initiatives so that they can utilise the money for better purposes. Manpower recruiting agencies must take into consideration human aspect of the family and men who they send abroad with employment. They must not be cheated. "Cheating or forgery will not be tolerated," warned the prime minister. "Do business with integrity and sincerity."

She also asked the Baira leaders to find out the expatriates jailed in foreign countries and take effective steps to bring them back home.

About manpower export, the PM asked Baira to look for new markets including in African countries.

She said during her last tenure in office effective steps were taken to encourage the expatriate workers in sending money through proper channel instead of Hundi. Because of the measures, the remittance rose to US\$ 10 billion.

Regarding the working visa problems in Malaysia, Hasina said the same problem was faced during her last tenure of office. Her government had requested the then president of Malaysia Dr Mahathir Mohammad who had provided working visa to 1.5 lakh illegal workers.

"This time we are working hard to get more and more working visa for our expatriate workers and we are optimistic that we will be able to do so like the previous time," she said.

She also informed the Baira leaders that her government is in negotiation with the Malaysian government regarding the release of Bangladeshi workers who are in jail there.

The Baira leaders apprised their problems to the prime minister. She assured them of removing the genuine problems.

## WORKPLACE ACCIDENT

# 213 killed in seven months

Highest number of deaths in construction sector

METRO DESK

Some 213 workers died in 160 workplace accidents across the country in the last seven months from January to July this year, says a rights body's report prepared based on the reports published in the newspapers.

Safety and Rights Society, an NGO working for ensuring safety and rights of workers, yesterday revealed the report after monitoring 16 newspapers during the period.

Of the total victims, the highest number of workers (85) was killed in construction sector, followed by manufacturing (64) and service sector (39), said a press release of the NGO.

The report says that of the total victim workers, 55 were electrocuted while 35 were burnt to death, 31 died after falling

from high places like scaffolds, 19 transport workers, including drivers, killed in road accidents and 17 workers were killed by suffocation from poisonous gas.

Other reasons for the workplace deaths include boiler, chemical or gas explosions, earth, roof and wall collapsed, hit by hard objects and entangled with machines, it says.

The report says most of the electrocutions occurred when iron rods carried by construction workers came into contact with live electric lines passing near the under-construction buildings.

The organisation observes that the workers fall victims of electrocution, as they do not take safety measures wearing helmet, gloves, shoes etc during the work. The main reason why workers fell from high places was due to poorly made scaffolds (macha), it says.

Lack of proper implementation of law, hazardous and aged-old installations, ineffective machinery and inadequate personal protective equipments (PPE) at workplaces were the key factors behind the occupational accidents, said Sekender Ali Mina, programme director of Safety and Rights, adding that most of the workplace accidents could have been prevented by proper safety measures.

The number of deaths set out in the report is likely to be a severe underestimation of the total number of deaths--since many deaths are not reported in the newspapers, he said.

In the month of July, a total of 28 workers--19 from construction sector, six from manufacturing and three from service sector--were killed in separate workplace accidents.

## 'Stop tobacco cultivation in farmlands'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists and development workers yesterday demanded stopping tobacco cultivation in the farmlands for increasing agricultural production.

Their demands came at a human chain jointly organised by the Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) and Prottasha, an anti-drug organisation, in front of the Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University, said a press release.

Tobacco cultivation is expanding day by day posing a threat to the country's food security. To achieve food security, the government should take immediate effective measure to stop tobacco cultivation in the farmlands across the country, they said.

Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance official Syed Mahbubul Alam said the farmers are directly affected both economically and physically due to tobacco cultivation and their farmlands are losing fertility gradually.

Tobacco cultivation should be stopped to protect the farmers, he added.

Ubinig executive director Farida Akhter said the country will face severe food crisis in near future, if tobacco cultivation could not be stopped immediately.

Poba programme officer Toufiqur Rahman Sentu, Nirapod Development Foundation chairman Ibnul Syed Rana, WBB Trust project coordinator Aminul Islam Sujon, among others, spoke at the function.

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