



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at a meeting with the delegation of Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) led by its President Mahbul Alam at her office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

# Take steps to expand trade ties with Maldives

## President asks Bangladesh envoy

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday emphasised the need for further boosting bilateral and commercial ties with the Maldives through exporting more Bangladeshi skilled and semi-skilled manpower there to help its public and private sectors.

The president made the remarks when newly appointed Bangladesh Ambassador to the Maldives Rear Admiral ASMA Awal paid a courtesy call on him at Bangabhaban.

He said the Maldives could recruit more skilled and semi-skilled manpower including doctors, engineers, university teachers and ship-builders from Bangladesh.

Zillur asked the envoy to take effective measures so that Bangladeshi manpower could be massively recruited in the country's public and private sectors where some 45,000 Bangladeshi workers are already involved in various occupations.

A public university is under implementation in the Maldives where Bangladeshi teachers can be employed to play an important role in developing the educa-

tion sector of the Maldives, he said.

He said the Maldives could import more Bangladeshi products, including the world class cargo ships.

The envoy apprised the president that he has already communicated with some business enterprises of Bangladesh and they have also expressed willingness to increase trade with the Maldives.

Awal told the president that he would try his best to expand market for Bangladeshi products in the Maldives which has presently obtained the ratio of per capita income around 5,000 US dollar.



Muklesur Rahman, deputy managing director of Eastern Bank Limited, hands over a photocopier to Prof Mahub Ullah, chairman of Development Studies department of Dhaka University, at a ceremony at the chairman's office yesterday.

## US embassy closed Sept 5, 7

UNB, Dhaka

The United States Embassy will remain closed on September 5 and September 7 in observance of the US Labour Day and Shab-e-Quadr.

This closure includes the Consular Section and the American Centre's Archer K Blood Library and Student Advising Centre, said a US Embassy press release.

Emergency services for American citizens will be available.

# 20 committees to probe CCC corruption, says mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor M Manjur Alam yesterday said 20 standing committees of the CCC would look into irregularities or corruption took place in the past.

"We may also appoint auditor who will look into whether any corruption or irregularities took place in the past," he said while replying queries at a view exchange meeting in the city yesterday.

The CCC mayor attended the meeting

and an Iftar party organised by Chittagong Journalists' Forum Dhaka at the Chittagong Samity Building in the city.

Asked about his position at BNP, Manjur said he is a primary member of the party and anticipating honourable position at the party's Chittagong City unit.

"If they [BNP] give me a post at the party's Chittagong City unit, I will take that," he said.

Replying to another question whether he faces any difficulty in dis-

charging his duty the, the mayor said, "The Chittagong City Corporation is a part of the government and I am getting full support from the government as a mayor."

"Recently the government has approved a development project involving Tk 87 crore ahead of the cricket world cup. It shows that I am not facing any problem," he added.

The CCC mayor said the city corporation would help the government in modernising the Chittagong port.

# Scavenging to ruin

MD MAHAMUDUL HAQUE

One day a dog bit his leg and took away a bit of his flesh while both were fighting for the same scrap of food from a dumpsite at one stage of collecting recyclable materials by the latter.

"After taking food, I have to drink dirty water from water bodies as no one allows me to drink from shops or hotels seeing my dirty clothes and dirty work," said Bhandari, a 50-year-old tokai (informal waste collector), at Agargaon in the city.

Even, he cannot take bath after collecting such materials due to lack of alternative dress. He always suffers from various diseases due to such unhygienic practices and sustains injuries while collecting waste with bare legs and hands.

Not only Bhandari but about 120,000 people, including tokais, who work in recycling trade chain of Dhaka city, also have to face such inhuman conditions along with tremendous health and safety risks.

In the informal sector, tokais scavenge in dustbins, dumpsites and or roads for recyclable materials with their bare hands and sometimes with the help of merely a stick.

They mainly collect plastic made materials, broken glasses, papers and wooden materials to sell in vangari (scrap) shops.

Tokais are in the most vulnerable condition in Dhaka city in terms of health, hygiene and safety at workplaces as well as their living, says a recent study of Safety and Rights Society, an NGO working for safety and rights of workers.

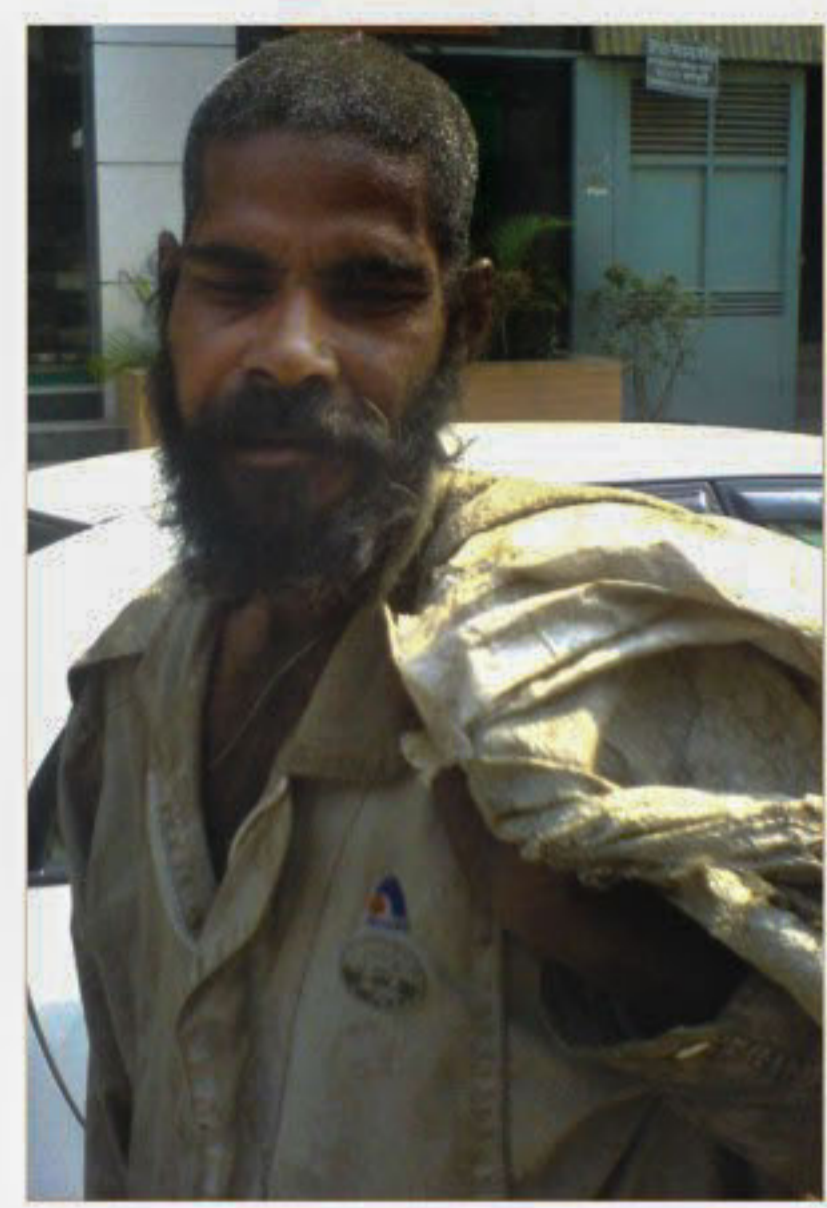
They always suffer from various diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, skin diseases, back pain, gastric, ulcer, headache, cold, fever and jaundice, says the study titled "A Study on Occupational Health and Safety Situation of Tokais in Dhaka City."

They do not know how to maintain health and safety and do not use any safety equipment during garbage collec-

tion, says the study. It says most of the tokais are illiterate and tender aged and live in rented slums or open spaces in the city.

They mainly sustain injuries to hands and legs by handling broken glasses or other hard objects and to shoulders by carrying sacks of garbage on it, says the study.

Sumon, 9, at a dumpsite near Glass Factory Mor of Mohammadpur in the city



Bhandari

said, "I have never gone to school as I have been doing this (waste collection) work for two years. I earn about Tk 80 working ten hours a day by selling the materials I collect."

Replying to a query, Sumon said he suffered from fever, cold and jaundice several times last year due to such working conditions.

Shahana, 25, said, "I suffered from skin diseases, back pain, dysentery, jaundice

and other diseases in last one year." "I fell victim to such diseases for working in such hazardous conditions," she added.

The study of Safety and Rights says most of the tokais believe that they become ill because of handling dirty and toxic substances in unhygienic environments.

Another study titled "Plastic Waste Recycling: Impact on Health" recently conducted by Waste Concern Consultants, an NGO, says among all tokais in the plastic recycling sector, tokais are the most vulnerable group, considering the income and average age level as well as exposure to hazards.

Almost 70 percent of them suffer from three or more diseases of various kinds per year, it adds.

More than 80 percent cases they come to this profession as no other option is open for them to earn while only around 4 percent of them think it is a good source of earning, the study adds.

Almost all of them have no registrations and only 49 percent of them get some health services for work related health problems from government, NGOs or other organisations, it says.

The survey says only 48 percent of the tokais use sticks during garbage collection without any safety equipment like, boots, gloves or masks.

The government and NGOs should take initiatives for providing tokais with protective equipment like masks, gloves, aprons, boots as well as training to protect them from injuries or diseases, said Sekender Ali Mina, programme director of Safety and Rights.

Maqsood Sinha, executive director of Waste Concern, said the 2nd draft for National 3R strategy (reducing waste, reusing and recycling resources) for waste management has been prepared jointly by his NGO and the environment department giving priority to health and safety for the informal waste collectors, including tokais.



A waste picker collects recyclable materials in a dumpsite at Paribagh in the city yesterday with bare hands risking his life.

PHOTO: STAR

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